

AND THE CHANGING FACE OF POWER

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The media are deluging us with end-of-the-year, end-of-the-decade, even end-of-the-century & end-of-the-millennium bird's-eyes of what "it" all meant, means, even will mean in straight time & time-warps. As I hear-see it all, or at least too much of it, I check out certain themes--discontinuities (what's ceased, or at least ceased to count?), changes (what's still with us, but wearing a different face?), continuities (what's the same, hasn't changed?), & absences (what's not been in play, thank God; & what I'm sad hasn't been in play, or of enough influence). "Critical consciousness" is what some folks like to call this perpetual bombing of the human scene with gamma-ray-like questions. This Thinksheet looks at something whose face has been changing at an accelerating pace, viz power, with justification & justice as Kleiglits. As it's to be a one-page, I'll hardly even get a good start. But it could be worth your while, will be if you don't stop thinking at the end of the page.

1. The **military** dimension of power has been losing face. Deng slaughters students, but the world sees it as a revelation not of the power of China's old-men's-club dictatorship but of their insecurity, their weakness. Ceausescu slaughters Romanian citizens, shouts at the live ones & is shouted down & within hours executed. El Salvadoran death squads are their own worst news. Castro & Ortega are ridiculously, & at USSR expense, armed to the teeth; but Costa Rica's president, with no army at all, has more force. Force, that's the question. The USA has "Armed FORCES," but on the geopolitical scene they're good only for squashing itty-bitty countries (Grenada, Panama)...Wisely, in 1945 we forbade Japan to develop a military independent of us, but otherwise granted national sovereignty: wisely, Israel has long offered the Palestinians national sovereignty with police but without military (& unwisely the PLO continues to reject the offer, killing any Palestinian leaders who think the offer a good deal).

2. Was justice served, or disserved, in the instances above? Would it have been more just to let the post-WWII Japanese redevelop their military, & would the result be a closer approximation of justice if Israel lets the Palestinians arm (Israel being, at one point, only seven miles wide)?...And what would be the net gain/loss for justice in S.Africa if a white racist government is replaced by a black racist government?

3. As military power has been (1) getting a worse name (Vietnam, Afghanistan), (2) appearing ever more ambiguous in costs/benefits analyses, & (3) facing increasing competition in the force fields of local & global life, military nonviolence has been looking less & less visionary, "impractical." Muscle-force is looking more foolish, and soul-force (Skr., *satya-graha*, lit. "being grasped by truth"--Ghandi's battlecry) has been looking more & more wise. In S.Africa, Christian missionary C.F.Andrews convinced Ghandi of the *satya* correlation between India's *a-himsa* ("no-harm") & God's action in his only Son, whom he let be unjustly killed, & through whose death & resurrection we are "justified" by grace through faith. I think it's not just evangelical zeal for the justification-by-Jesus message that leads me to believe that this message will gain space & strength as the message of militarism becomes less persuasive. Francis Fukuyama's prophecy is, I think, at least half right: military dreaming, the hope of "winning" territory & markets by armed force, is due for a steady decline in spite of continuing small brushfire wars.

4. The emerging heros toward the end of this millenium are, none of them, military. Gorbachev has more **diplomatic** force than anybody else now on the planet, but he's managing to keep the Red Army on leash even as the "evil empire" falls apart. (He's not sending tanks into split-off Lithuania; next week, he's going there himself, with only his teeth in his mouth.)...Einstein & Sakharov lent the force of their minds to develop "the bomb," but the **moral** force of their hearts to the greater fight for peace.Lennie Bernstein's Christmas concert in E.Germany this week, with musicians from all Warsaw Pact nations & most NATO nations, was a parable of **cultural** force: the iron curtain went up & stuck there, or collapsed at the orchestra's feet....**Economic** forces chipped through, & finally penetrated, the Berlin Wall....**Spiritual** force....