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COMMENT

DETERMINED EFFORT IN WAR NOT CARRIED INTO PEACETIME

William James noted that wars bring out strong commitments and great deeds which do not seem to carry over into peacetime. The North Vietnamese were crafty and persistent in their struggles to take over all of Vietnam. Now that they have done so, they do not seem to know what to do. The economy in North and South Vietnam is stagnating, people are living poorly, there is no impulse or activity to improve things.

Another neglected postwar situation is in the Falkland Islands, which no one hears about since Britain and Argentina fought over them. But Gary Hughes in the Courier-Mail of Brisbane, Australia took a look and found a discouraging aftermath. The presence of the military is costly and Britain will have spent more than 4.5 billion dollars by 1987 to keep the island British - but the inhabitants are not benefiting. The economic situation has actually deteriorated and they are resentful.

Writes Mr. Hughes: "Two years after the invasion, absentee landlords still own 2.4 million acres or 80 per cent of the land in the Falklands. The biggest single landowner, with 43 per cent of all land, is the Falkland Islands Co... A minor property boom has seen the price of the average Port Stanley home with its stone walls and iron roof jump from \$9,500 to \$16,500 in the past twelve months. But only absentee landlords have benefited."

One can see why the dedication and determination of wartime does not carry over into peacetime - the "moral equivalent of war," as James called it. The special privileges of the few and the deprivation of the many destroy the common purpose. A just solution of the land question would be the right place to start in order to improve the common interest.

Not that the Falkland Islands would have been better off if Argentina had won them over. Perhaps the best result of the war was the overthrow of the military dictatorship in Argentina and the re-establishment of democracy. But this has not brought better times to Argentina, either. The massive problems remain - inflation, unemployment, a huge foreign debt. Political solutions are not enough. Nations must learn to cope with the economic problem in a fair and fundamental way.

There is some talk of land reform for the Falklands - but it is the usual thing - buying out the landlords and redistributing land. Who is going to pay for this is the question bogging it down. The sane and simple solution of the taxation of land values still eludes leaders everywhere - even in the faraway Falklands.

R.C.