

anism—temptations which had sometimes led them to seek politically wrong things for religiously right reasons. Politics is not a species of piety nor is statecraft the application of some gospel; and religious men, if they are to speak wisely within the secular city, must have learned the tragic realities of power. If they are to pursue justice they must first lose their innocence.

These seem to me basic and perennial truths, and I believe *worldview* has done valuable service for the nation's religious-political communities by insisting upon them. But the radical differences between the present situation and the situation ten years ago is this: the old danger was that many religionists did not take politics as politics seriously; the present danger is that they no longer take religion as religion seriously. If the old problem was of a religious totalitarianism into which believers attempted to assimilate politics, the new problem is of a political totalitarianism under which everything, including religion, falls. In his contribution to the new book *Movement and Revolution*, Peter Berger writes of "the several totalitarian features of contemporary pan-politicalism." One of these features surely is the new view of religion as being, at its most "relevant," a sublimated form of political action.

In our day, the churches seem finally to have learned that they could no longer exist in a merely monological stance towards the world, that they must learn from secular experience as well as teach, judge, and correct it. But it would be a tragedy both for religion and for politics if the lesson had been learned by the churches naively or only too well. The result would be the passing from one monological psychology—the religious—into another—the political. And this last state would be worse than the first.

In the age of angry and polarized politics upon which we have entered, the insights of religions which refuse to become mere agencies for conformity are desperately needed. As the Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx reminds us, a religion which strives for total relevance and identifies itself completely or uncritically with the ethos and aspirations of a particular age is finally irrelevant. "If the church becomes identical with the 'world' and 'improving the world' and means nothing more than this, she has already ceased to bring a message to the world. She has nothing more to say to the world and can only echo what the world discovered long since."

The dialogue between religion and politics is as important—more important—today than it was when *worldview* was founded. But the changes in our society itself seem to me to reverse the emphasis which must now be made. The call to a total political involvement is shouted on every street-corner, and Berger's "pan-politicalism" threatens to engulf us. Religion's transcending, and frequently detached, word must again be asserted.

William Clancy

## DISENGAGEMENT AND EUROPEAN STABILITY

As the East and West German governments begin, however uneasily, a crucial dialogue, it again becomes possible to imagine a change in the divided condition of Europe. At the same time, the American popular mood of foreign political and military retrenchment has produced new talk, within the Administration as well as in Congress, of American troop withdrawals from Europe. The two elements in the situation admirably coincide: they ought, rather, to interact. As matters now stand we may see an American withdrawal during the next few years which spontaneously removes the single most important advantage the West possesses in attempting to influence what the whole of Europe is to become.

The objective of East German diplomacy is to consolidate and legitimize the German Democratic Republic. The Soviet interest, both in the German talks and in the European Security Conference it seeks this year, is to consolidate its bloc: to make formal and permanent the relationship of the East German states to the USSR—including, by implication, the right the Soviets claim to intervention in Eastern Europe when that is necessary to preserve the "conquests of socialism."

It is not at all clear that the West European or American governments have anything like so coherent a view of what they want, or might expect, of change in Europe. The mood in the West—which has dominated policy in the absence of clear argument—is for stability and "normalcy," although in this case the norm is a quarter-century

of abnormal interstate relations in Eastern Europe. For Americans there is, as well, a fading interest in Europe and a preoccupation with the Asian crisis. There is also, among some Americans, a real sense of common interest with Russia: we are both the vulnerable inheritors of world domination, and anything which threatens the established pattern of politics seems to threaten both of us. Time thus has consolidated the postwar condition of Europe, and even Americans have become (reactionary?) defenders of the status quo.

But what time consolidates time can also undo. If the inadvertent American empire is over-extended in Asia and cracked at home, the Soviet situation is not much better. The bloc of satellite states created in Europe at the war's end was to defend Russia and its political system. Today, that defensive zone itself has become the source of Russia's deepest insecurities. Today, neither the United States nor any West European state—least of all Germany—has designs on Soviet territory or the Soviet regime. The threat to Russia today is political contamination by Czechoslovak-style Communist "liberals," or more political mutinies like that of Rumania, or more popular uprisings on the Hungarian and East German precedents. As the Soviet home reality sours, an intellectually sterile leadership falters in its task of bringing about the long-promised new socialist civilization, and the party oligarchy itself again encounters inner divisions and factionalism.

Thus it is not at all certain that Eastern Europe cannot yet touch off an uncontrollable crisis. To attempt to canonize the status quo in Europe may be the worse tactic—for the Soviets and for the Western states. To pull out American troops without obtaining a political settlement in Europe may see the facade of stability preserved, but it removes one of its supports.

Reciprocal troop withdrawals are necessary, with the objective of a Europe entirely free of foreign troops and foreign bases. "Normalization" surely means guaranteed autonomy for all the European governments, freedom from foreign intervention. There have been dozens of plans drafted since the mid-1950's for European "disengagement," plans which acknowledged Soviet security sensitivities and certain real Soviet interests in what happens within its neighboring states. It is on these lines that European—and Soviet—security still has to be sought.

But the prospect we now face is of a significant unilateral American withdrawal from Europe which leaves instability behind. We seem thoughtlessly on the move towards abdicating responsibility in Europe, as if that were the way to correct our disastrous overreaching of responsibility in Asia. If so we may complete, with astonishing illogic, the undoing of stability in both places.

William Pfaff

*worldview* has invited a number of contributors and long-time friends to write guest editorials while James Finn travels in Latin America.

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