

# A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

## HUMAN RIGHTS, SOUTH KOREA, & THE U.S.

By inflicting arbitrary and harsh punishment upon its citizens, South Korea continues to test the patience and judgment of the United States. It poses the hard questions of how important Korea is to American interests, how much support the U.S. should continue to extend to South Korea, and how it can most effectively respond to the repressive measures of President Park Chung Hee.

If we include the cost of the Korean War, the United States has spent over \$35 billion since 1950 to allow South Korea to defend itself against North Korea. The U.S. now maintains hundreds of nuclear weapons and 40,000 troops in the Republic of Korea. If the conditions in South Korea were those that obtained in the 1960's, such expenditures might readily be justified. During the sixties South Korea showed impressive economic growth and seemed to be developing a relatively open political process. It was, in fact, pointed to as a showcase of Southeast Asia. In the last five years, however, the advances have been reversed and an open political system converted into a highly oppressive regime. President Park has effectively constituted himself as a dictator. Guaranteed lifetime rule, he has, nevertheless, crushed opposing political parties, smothered public dissent, hobbled the media, the courts, the universities, labor unions, and religious groups. In mid-March he forced the dismissal or resignation of over four hundred university professors, reviewing the list of names personally. And he has imprisoned leading cultural and political figures.

How should this continuing train of abuses affect U.S. policy toward Korea? Specifically, there is in the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 a provision that directs the President to reduce or stop military or economic assistance "to any government which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, including torture, or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; prolonged detention without charges or other flagrant denials of the right to life, liberty, and the security of the person." It would be possible to frame an accurate description of conditions in South Korea that would allow the application of this provision.

An alliance with any country involves a balance of benefits and disadvantages. South Korea has shifted the relative weights of these measures. Now is the time for our political leaders to say openly that the continuation of the oppressive actions of South Korea endangers continuing U.S. support of South Korea.

**Sweden's Bergman-Bergman's Sweden.** The Swedes have a reputation of being highly self-critical. The tactics employed by the police when

they arrested and questioned Ingmar Bergman, one of the world's greatest living film directors, affords them a proper occasion for such criticism. While rehearsing a play at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, Mr. Bergman was seized by two plainclothesmen, taken to police headquarters, and questioned for over three hours about his income tax. His passport and personal documents were taken from him. Bibi Anderson, who has appeared in many of his pictures, was subsequently questioned for more than twenty-four hours.

The manner of Bergman's arrest and humiliation has caused Swedes to examine once again the nature of their welfare state. Some defend it and the need to "treat everyone alike," including Bergman. Others defend it but reject the "need" to cut all down to one size. And others grow increasingly concerned about the impersonal power of a government in which everyone is equal in the sight of the computer. The questions raised by Bergman's case resonate within and outside of Sweden.

**Of Intelligence Leaks.** When Daniel Schorr made arrangements to have published a section of the House Select Committee's report on intelligence operations, he did not automatically become a witch onto whom one should try to pin a broom. But neither was he transformed into a Galahad of the Press. The questions raised by his action were almost immediately entangled in a great ball of wax concerning authorized leaks, intelligence activities, Congressional responsibility and competence, rights of the press, etc.

What makes the discussion of these issues both necessary and difficult is that they involve rights in conflict. In a democracy there will inevitably be a tension between the rights of a free press and the need of an intelligence community to maintain a measure of secrecy. The tension is not resolved by those who regard such tensions as Gordian knots to be severed by single-edged arguments that would place all rights, responsibilities, and virtues on one side (such as those who would simply abolish the CIA or the ACLU, which would "Abolish all clandestine activities in foreign countries during peacetime," trusting, apparently, that any war would last long enough to establish the needed network of clandestine agents).

But back to Schorr. The report he had was one of many in existence; much of it was already known; the House still had the option of releasing the entire manuscript; he could have let it be known that he had the unpublished ace up his sleeve; what he released for publication has directed attention from the report to him and the question of leaks.

It would, nevertheless, be foolish to get hung up on Daniel Schorr and his discretion or lack of it,

rather than on the question of what the House Committee was directed to assess: the proper function of intelligence operations; the question of how they function; and provisions to ensure that they function properly. This is the area that deserves continued scrutiny.

**The Canal.** Serious consideration of a new Panama Canal treaty is being postponed. While the reasons for postponement are not negligible, they are far outweighed by the reasons for negotiating a new treaty with deliberate speed.

Ever since the 1903 treaty, when Panama agreed to grant the U.S. exclusive control of a canal zone in perpetuity, it has been a source of continuing benefit and intermittent friction, much of the friction arising from the charge that the benefits are divided inequitably. To that charge has now been added the increasingly strong demands for Panamanian sovereignty over "Panamanian land." Both the forces of nationalism and Latin American voices strengthen Panama's desire and intention to establish greater control of the canal. Furthermore, in the years since 1903 the value of the canal to the United States has declined in economic and military terms.

In February, 1974, these considerations led Secretary of State Kissinger to sign with Foreign Minister Juan Tack an Agreement on Principles that was expected to lead to a new treaty. Opposition soon mounted. Both houses of Congress produced significant numbers who challenged the value of a new treaty; a Panama lobby opposed to a new treaty developed in the U.S.; and the Pentagon made more evident its jaundiced view of a treaty that would give up something of "substantial strategic importance."

The opposition to a new treaty remains, but the international pressures for a new treaty continue to build up. The conflict may be postponed, but it cannot be avoided. The issue of a new treaty should be one of the items discussed in Presidential campaigns. It will certainly be on the Presidential desk after the election.

**Uruguay.** Recall the days when Uruguay was the democratic showplace of South America? And Spain was the repressive regime of Western Europe? Well, a number of Uruguayans who dissent from the law-and-order regime imposed by President Juan Maria Bordaberry and are not to be numbered among the thousands imprisoned in a maximum security prison have found Spain a more congenial place to work, think, and write.

Meanwhile, the declining economy of Uruguay has been reversed, inflation has been slowed, and real wages are almost stabilized. The International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank once again look favorably upon this small country. The prisons are full and the economy flourishes.

**China.** One hundred million people is a lot of people. Even 50 million is considerable. When

statistics about the population of a country can vary in numbers as impressive as these, they must be very uncertain, soft, or misleading. Yet the best available estimates about the population of China vary in just such numbers. The figure widely accepted now is 800 million, and that figure frequently appears as the basis for extrapolated estimates of future needs and resources.

What emerges from the best studies about China is that the Chinese do not know the size of their population or the rate of population growth. But this is not the only item of information about China that is shrouded in uncertainty and guesswork. In such matters ignorance is inconvenient but not disastrous. The danger lies in attempting to discover and order the "facts" according to one's political preference. The alternative course is to remain skeptical about apparently solid claims until the research is done and the evidence is in. (For which, on one topic, see the article by the Londons in this issue.)

**Political Responsibility.** The Administrative Board of the U.S. Catholic Conference has recently issued a statement on the political responsibility of citizens. Some important points extracted from the full text:

1. Christian social teaching demands that the welfare of society as a whole be promoted; citizens and church officials should work toward that end.
  2. The church's responsibility in the area of human rights demands both the promotion of human rights and the condemnation of violations of these rights. Actions that follow from such responsibilities inevitably have political consequences and touch upon public affairs.
  3. The church's participation in public affairs is a genuine contribution to the political process, not a threat to it. All members of society have a right to speak to public policy issues.
  4. The formation of a religious voting bloc is specifically disavowed. Citizens should examine the full range of interests and vote as they judge best.
  5. Major issues of public policy are the concerns of all citizens, not the preserve of a single religious group.
  6. In alphabetical order these issues include the following: abortion, the economy of the country, education, food policy, housing, human rights and U.S. foreign policy, and military expenditures.
- The full text comments on each of these issues, occasionally stating positions the Board believes should be considered or advocated. Neither novel nor polemical, the statement presents a sound, rational basis for the role of citizens and the Church in helping to formulate the policies of this country. (Full text available from U.S. Catholic Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.)

*Abraham Martin Murray is the collective name of those who contribute to "A View of the World." The opinions expressed sometimes coincide with those of the editors.*