

A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

FROM DETENTE TO... Last February it was widely believed that President Ford's strong suit in his campaign to become an elected President would be foreign policy. *Time* declared (February 16) that Ford would emphasize the then popular concept of détente with its alleged promise of a more secure peace. "To defend détente," said *Time*, "the President also has to stand up for its chief architect, Kissinger. Says a top presidential adviser: 'Ford can't let Kissinger become a political football among his opponents.'" A few months later and Ford himself has withdrawn the term détente from circulation, and Kissinger quips, with reference to the assault upon Mr. Teng in Peking, that the attack upon him is in the "poster campaign" stage. In truth, former Governor Reagan has made an immense impact upon the style, and probably the substance, of this Administration's foreign policy. In further truth, the policies associated with détente were likely a great deal more fragile than they appeared. If we are shocked by Kissinger's rapid decline from "Superman" cover-boy to "political football," it is possibly because we forgot that a Secretary of State cannot be President at the same time. America has not—in the full sense of power and legitimacy—had a President in three years. The jerrybuilt arrangement with which we've made do is quite understandably collapsing as the term of the emergency expires and the prospect of a more legitimate Presidency draws nearer. In short, the U.S. does not now have a foreign policy, only an uncertain continuation of certain policies for the time being. Therefore generalizations about the U.S. role in international affairs—whether sanguine or desperate—should be made with caution. A year from now we might again know what U.S. foreign policy is about. Meanwhile we drift—which, as some see it, is desperate enough.

LOVE AND HATE. Sunday, April 4, the eighth anniversary of the killing of Martin Luther King, Jr., and our local church showed a film about him and his work. After that, a few members who had known him personally, and others who had marched with him or wished they had marched with him, talked about the power of redemptive love in bringing about change. They recalled the debunking of nonviolence put forward by some black "militants" in the late sixties and agreed that that kind of revolutionary shuffle is pretty much a thing of the past. A black youth too young to remember when Dr. King was alive wondered if what Governor Jimmy Carter says about the power of love and reconciliation isn't a little like Dr. King's message. Some older members admitted they saw a connection between the two. The connection may have been more apparent at the moment, because the film had given a lot of attention to Congressman Andrew Young, Dr. King's chief aide

and a strong supporter of Carter. Campaign politics aside, the morning left one impressed by the perduring power of the belief that the force of love is greater than that of hatred. A winsome thought, and just maybe more realistic than the realists who scorn it....If it is only sentimentality, however, it was abruptly checked by reading the *New York Times* that Sunday. In Brazil General Geisel is reported to have jailed a few more dissidents; one must assume most such incidents are not reported....Even liberal democrats murmur approvingly about the neatness and efficiency with which the military took over in Argentina, and the dogma that development and a semblance of democracy cannot go together thus receives further confirmation in the minds of many. ...The book review section of the *Times* has a charming piece by a certain Jane Kramer from *The New Yorker*. She is pleased by a book on Mediterranean women, because it makes clear that male/female relations are rooted in hatred. Celebrating the demolition of "the myth" that there might be something like power in love and gentleness, she hails those who are "strident and murderously strong." Another recent volume, much acclaimed, contends that rape is the most accurate and comprehensive metaphor explaining the relationship between the sexes throughout history. The thought occurs that the only overt celebration of hatred and resentment permitted in intellectually respectable circles today is that which issues from the fringes of various feminisms....The more important thought occurs that one ought to be better disciplined about Sundays—go to church more, read the *Times* less.

SOLZHENITSYN AND SOBER OBSERVERS. Realism, it has often been remarked, is more a boast than a school of thought. Describing the BBC interview with Solzhenitsyn published in this issue, *Time* magazine says: "As a prophet [Solzhenitsyn] has a vision so simple, single-minded and absolute that it cannot cope with a real and complex world. If he was right in his broadcast, the only alternative is the Apocalypse." The only alternative to what? Present policies, presumably. *Time* editors add: "Most sober observers of world affairs are not likely to fall under his spell." Readers of the interview will no doubt judge for themselves who best understands the realities and complexities of our world and who has succumbed to the sundry spells being peddled in high places, and low.

HEALING FALSE DIVISIONS. One spell being broken in the American churches is the long-standing separation of social justice from evangelism. In 1975 the much-debated Hartford Appeal urged the churches to a more confident assertion of Christian truth claims. That, said

Hartford, would also enhance Christian credibility and effectiveness in society. Now the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches has adopted a "Policy Statement on Evangelism Today" calling for a reversal of a trend it says has been going on for the past twenty-five years. Denominations belonging to the NCC, says the statement, have "minimized" the kind of evangelism in which "people are confronted with the Gospel and called to...discipleship." "Instead of social awareness and action being seen as natural expressions of Christian discipleship to which people are called by evangelism, social action was thought to be a contrast and corrective to evangelism." Asking for an end to the "false division" between evangelism and justice, the statement commits the NCC to cultivate a new and lively synthesis between the personal and public dimensions of religious existence. One hopes the declaration represents a real change and is not merely, as some insiders suspect, a sop offered critics who have charged that NCC activism has too often been neither rooted in the faith nor accountable to the faithful.

A SANE MILITARY BUDGET. Started by Norman Cousins and others in the late 1950's, SANE is an embattled but still surviving peace organization. In a much-publicized internal fight in the sixties a more activist faction led by Benjamin Spock prevailed over the Cousins group and aligned the organization with what was then the mainstream of the protest movement against the Indochina war. Today SANE calls itself "A Citizens' Organization for a Sane World" and focuses on reducing the military budget and on "conversion" to a peacetime economy. Recently SANE sent out its report card on all the members of the House, rating them by their action on eleven "key military votes" on which SANE had taken a position. All the votes were on amendments: SANE favored ten and opposed one; the ten SANE favored were defeated and the one was adopted. If, as some warn, the U.S. is perilously close to dismantling its military establishment, they haven't heard about it at the Washington office of SANE.

ABE NATHAN. Perhaps best remembered for his unauthorized flights of many years ago between Israel and Cairo, Abe Nathan has demonstrated a penchant for the unauthorized and, some think, slightly zany. His passion is peace, and his deep suspicion is that the passion is not shared as fully as it might be by some governments. For the last several years Nathan has been trying to keep a Peace Ship afloat "somewhere in the Mediterranean" from which the Voice of Peace broadcasts to all sides in the Middle East conflicts. He writes that the ship and station are manned by "an international crew of volunteers, among them some of the best disc jockeys from England and Australia...who provide the kind of music that makes the Voice of Peace the most popular station in the Middle East." Most expenses are underwritten by commercials, and the

hope is to get more Arabs and Israelis, especially students, in actual dialogue on the air. So far, says Nathan, it's hard to get the Arabs, who, of course, face a greater chance of retaliation. The Peace Ship has been trying to cross the Suez Canal, which, it is thought, might symbolize "a new era of reconciliation," but so far permission has been denied. (For information on the Peace Ship write: P.O. Box 1111, FDR Station, New York City 10022.)

ECUMENICAL DIRTY TRICKS. At least that's the way some people describe what happened at the Christian-Islamic conference in Libya, February 1-5. As it turned out, it was mainly a Vatican-Islamic meeting, since the World Council of Churches declined the invitation from the erratic Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, Libyan president, who reportedly spent over a million dollars bringing everyone together in Tripoli. Although official delegations were small, the meeting attracted over four hundred observers and reporters, chiefly from Muslim countries, where the conference was very big news. In the Western media the chief news broke when it seemed the Vatican delegation had agreed to a communiqué condemning Zionism and affirming the "Arabism" of the city of Jerusalem. Cardinal Serge Pignedoli, leader of the delegation, immediately repudiated the offensive sections of the declaration, and the next day a front-page statement in *L'Osservatore Romano* asserted: "The Holy See declares that it cannot accept [these sections] because their content does not correspond in essential points to the position, known to all, of the Holy See."

What happened is that the chief members of the Vatican delegation were not given a chance to see the full text of the declaration before it was presented in Arabic to the closing session. Just in case he might find out too soon what he had agreed to, Cardinal Pignedoli was taken at this point to the palace of Colonel Qaddafi for a lengthy private audience....It is hard to believe that Qaddafi and the Imams of Araby thought they could get away with such a clumsy stratagem. But maybe Sadat of Egypt is right when he says Qaddafi is "a mental case and you can expect anything from him." In any event, the Christian-Islamic meeting could have been of historic significance, perhaps the first time since the Crusades that the two faiths had entered into this kind of formal exchange. The Libyan affair, however, will be remembered chiefly for the joint declaration that was not joint. One hopes something can be salvaged from this false start, for there is no doubt that Christian-Muslim relations will continue to be important to the questions of war and peace in the Middle East, and elsewhere. A final irony: the more worldly-wise Vatican might in this instance have listened more carefully to what their presumably less experienced colleagues at the WCC had to say about treating with Qaddafi.

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.