

A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

NEW YORK—JULY '76. It's time for some second thoughts about that great festival weekend of July 4. To be sure (and as is said without end), everyone was nice to everyone else, there were no riots, and maybe Mayor Beame is correct in thinking it marked "the beginning of the upswing for New York City." We do not wish to be churlish, but it should also be noted that the celebration had about it the smell of nostalgia for a largely fabricated past. This was most marked by the focus on Operation Sail. While some of us think it nice that the media gave center stage to New York Harbor, to which the nations of the world symbolically came to pay homage, it is significant that attention was directed toward sailing ships rather than space ships, the past rather than the future. The anniversary weekend came and went without one memorable speech recorded, without one specific, not to mention compelling, declaration of what we hope America to be. The high point of the Bicentennial was shaped by what literary critic Frank Kermode calls "a sense of endings." Having put Colonial coats and cannons back into mothballs, perhaps we can all agree it was fun—and now get to work on a better future for the American people and their influence in the world.

SOUTH AFRICA. Some of that American influence might be intensified on John Vorster, Prime Minister of South Africa. Of course everyone has regularly decried apartheid (well, almost everyone), and everyone with any sense knows that South Africa continues to be in a strong position to resist external pressures, but the deaths resulting from the June riots in the black townships of Johannesburg and Pretoria have created a climate for change that should be exploited. U.S. policy—even in this time of domestic transition—can make a real difference. For example, the "homeland" of Transkei is scheduled for independence, so to speak, in a matter of a few months. For the people belonging to the tribal groups assigned to the homeland, independence is no cause for celebration. It means they lose all rights in South Africa, even though many of them will have to spend the rest of their lives working for the whites in South Africa. Like the other designated homelands, Transkei is a pitifully fragmented fiction of national sovereignty. Gatsha Buthelezi, head of the Zulus (see "Courage Within the System," *Worldview*, July-August) calls the citizenship provisions being forced on the homelands "ideological insanity." John Scott, a white South African journalist, notes that by the end of the century "there will be 19 million black foreigners living in South

Africa and doing most of the work, and a white minority government looking after the affairs of 6.6 million whites....We will be the only country in the world with three times more foreigners than [citizens]."

The more strict Afrikaaners urge that the whites give the bulk of the territory to the majority blacks, dispense with black labor, and retreat into a racially pure South Africa. This has about it the appearance of formal justice, although it would mean the economic destruction of South Africa and is therefore not likely to become public policy. The policy that is being pursued by Vorster's government might be significantly modified were the United States to make clear that it will not be mollified by changes in "petty apartheid"—the day-by-day racial segregation rules—but to insist upon a major restructuring of "grand apartheid," the model of "separate development" itself. Most immediately, the U.S. should leave no doubt about its refusal to grant any degree of recognition or legitimacy to the "independence" of Transkei and other homelands. South Africa now needs American help and understanding in protecting itself from the explosive scenario unfolding in Rhodesia and elsewhere along its borders. As odious as cooperation with South Africa may be to some, South Africa should at least be made to pay a price for such cooperation in terms of greater justice for the millions of black Africans within its borders.

UGANDA. At the other end of Africa was the action between the Israelis and "Field Marshal Dr." Idi Amin Dada. Amin's left-handed congratulation of Israel for its daring rescue of more than a hundred hostages at Uganda's Entebbe airport is endearing—much like the wit and wisdom of Al Capone. Except no one has accused Capone of eighty thousand murders, which is the conservative estimate of the number of people Amin has had killed in intertribal rivalries (see Thomas Patrick Melady's "Four Years of Amin," *Worldview*, May, 1975). In times ancient and modern there has been a cultivated taste for lovable gangsters, and Amin is much celebrated by some circles as an "original." Perhaps he really will break with the Palestinian terrorists, as he has said he would. Israel will not, we trust, be so foolish as to give him the compensating aid he has requested. U.S. policy, in accord with a growing number of African nations disillusioned with Amin, should probably be to isolate his regime as rigorously as possible. Whatever other hardships, economic or otherwise, this may work on the people

of Uganda, they are not likely to compare with the costs of Amin's continued murderous misrule.

ETHIOPIA. The Executive Committee of the National Council of Churches recently called on the government of Ethiopia "to give public notice of the welfare and whereabouts of the deposed Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abunu Theophilos." In fact a number of high church officials have been detained or are otherwise unaccounted for. It is often hard to know who is in charge within the military regime that overthrew Haile Selassie in September, 1974. As a result, major government policies frequently have an on-again-off-again character. For example, the huge "popular march" of peasants to secure the northern province of Eritrea has apparently been called off. But the pressure upon churches and other groups showing the least taste for independent action is definitely on. As this is written, reports arrive of a new wave of executions in Ethiopia. Perhaps we will soon know what happened to Abunu Theophilos and others.

PERSECUTION. In Mozambique, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Zaire, and a dozen more African nations the persecution of Christians seems to be accelerating. This seems strange in a continent where Christianity is supposedly growing faster than anywhere else on earth. The explanation may be in the famous formula of Tertullian, fittingly an African Church Father, written more than 1,600 years ago: "*semen est sanguis Christianorum*" (the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church). One hopes for less costly approaches to religious growth.

In Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, and today in Africa and elsewhere one small group, numbering only a few million worldwide, has borne more than its share of persecution. In fact the treatment of the Jehovah's Witnesses is almost a litmus test of modern religious persecution. Tens of thousands have reportedly been put into camps or driven into the wilderness by the new Mozambique regime, often with fatal consequences. There and in Angola the Roman Catholics are also under special pressures for their former collaboration with the Portuguese colonialists. Reports on religious persecution in Angola and Mozambique issued by Protestant ecumenical agencies are generally cautious and tend to focus on the fate of Protestant churches, which seems a somewhat narrow approach for agencies that profess to be humane in their concern.

Again, it is not only religious organizations that are under the gun, but, as the Mozambique government puts it, any group that is "divisionist, arising from the evils of the fascist-colonialist society such as racism, regionalism, and elitism." A club called the Mozambique Negroes Association has been closed down. It was previously closed down by the Portuguese for being a hotbed of African nationalism. In the redistributions of injustice some people never make it to the right side.

ANGOLA. The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi, is now reported to be challenging what was thought to be the secure control of the country by the Cuban-aided Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. If these still vague reports are proved true, a quite new situation would require response from other African nations and, at least indirectly, from the U.S. The execution of four "mercenaries" in July, including one American, despite appeals for mercy from many heads of state, might contribute to undercutting former assertions about the humane intentions of the Popular Movement. The reported resurgence of the National Union, whatever else it means, will be welcomed by South Africa, since it will keep Angola from effective collaboration with other black African countries bent upon military action toward the south. Most observers, however, expect no sudden reversal of the Popular Movement's success, but a long and indeterminate period of guerrilla warfare. For the ten thousandth time in history's horror, it is the little people who pay the price as control of their villages alternates from one warring party to the other. Church relief agencies again warn of hunger that threatens thousands of deaths.

INDOCHINA. One bloodbath that was the topic of much conversation not long ago was the bloodbath in Indochina that some said would follow U.S. withdrawal. Others have since expressed satisfaction that the bloodbath has not happened. In fact that debate is still not settled. Certainly in Cambodia, where 500,000 to 600,000 people—about a tenth of the population—have died from reprisals, disease, or starvation, "bloodbath" would seem to be the appropriate term. In the view of Prince Sihanouk, now exiled, and other observers, the Khmer Rouge, once acclaimed as liberators, are engaged in a policy of genocide aimed at the elimination of any element that might challenge the control of what is referred to simply as "the Organization."

In Vietnam, now formally united, the picture is more mixed. Italian journalist Tiziano Terzani covered the Vietnam war for the West German news magazine *Der Spiegel* and wrote a book, *Giai Phong! The Fall and Liberation of Saigon*, generally admiring of the Communist leadership. He has now returned from Vietnam with sobering stories of food shortages, reeducation camps, and signs that widespread reprisals may be on the way. Daily life, he reports, is worse now than during the war, although in Saigon things are somewhat easier since the *bo doi* (soldiers from the North) have the ready cash to keep enterprises such as the black market and prostitution going. "Now Saigon is being kept alive by the *bo doi*. They are the new Americans."

An ominous indication reported by Reuters is that foreign missionaries are now being expelled from Vietnam. These are Canadian, French, and other European missionaries who have been in Vietnam,

North and South, for many decades. Serving variously under the Japanese, the French, the Viet Minh, Saigon, and Hanoi, such people were in their quiet way probably the best friends the Vietnamese had among foreigners; or, for that matter, among nationals. Their expulsion would seem to presage an official drive against religion and other "colonialist institutions and attitudes."

Here at home there is a rising call for "normalization" of relations with the newly united Vietnam, and even for economic aid, which some Americans believe we are obligated to render by virtue of our war crimes or because of much-disputed clauses in the 1973 Paris peace agreement. While there are difficulties in using diplomatic recognition as leverage for influence, the clear obligation of the United States is to make any aid contingent upon the protection of basic human rights. Whatever crimes the U.S. may have committed in Vietnam, that responsibility should not be compounded now by complicity in strengthening further terror. With regard to Cambodia, it is generally agreed that both diplomatic relations and aid are out of the question for the present.

POLAND. In connection with basic human rights, a major but little remarked achievement of the past year was the changing of the Polish constitution. The Party wanted to redraft the constitution on several key points, including a statement that would make civil rights dependent upon the fulfillment of "duties to the state." Leading the opposition that insisted that civil and other rights are inherent in human dignity was Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, Primate of Poland. He was joined by writers, artists, and other intellectuals who, much to the surprise of observers, forced a major debate also within the Party itself. Not only were the proposed changes finally turned back but, at least on paper, new concessions were won for freedom of religion and intellectual activities. The insecurity of freedom is universal, but Wyszyński and his allies have set a particular example of the courage to say *No* when the denial of freedom touches upon the very core of belief about the sanctity of the human person.

ABORTION. The sanctity of the human person is what many people in this society believe is involved in the question of abortion. Spokesmen for the Catholic Bishops Conference and several diocesan newspapers are charging that the Democratic Party's platform has practically written off the anti-abortion (or, as they prefer, the pro-life) vote. Bishop Bernardin of the Bishops Conference notes that on most of the other really "hot" subjects the platform simply skipped over the issue. Thus nothing definite is said about capital punishment, gay rights, or court-ordered busing. But abortion is addressed in a statement that declares a constitutional amendment to limit its incidence "undesirable." At the New York convention back in July Carter was making efforts to

gruntle disgruntled feminists who felt he was not strong enough on their issues. Consummate politician that he is said to be, we suspect that in the weeks ahead he will be making much more determined efforts to appease the much more numerous Roman Catholic constituency—and the millions of Protestants, especially Southern Baptists, who favor societal protection for the unborn.

SANCTITY II. And some people believe sanctity is a word that should again be associated with U.S. commitments to other nations. "Sacred honor" and all that is no doubt the quaint kind of thing they have in mind. Especially is it in mind in connection with what ought to be done about Taiwan. Canada gave in to Mainland China's blackmail when it refused to let Taiwan enter the Olympic games under its official name and flag as the Republic of China. In a sense, everyone else participating in the Olympics also gave in, no doubt setting a provocative precedent for the politicizing of sports when the games are scheduled for Moscow in 1980. At the same time, the "Japan formula" for establishing full relations with the People's Republic while maintaining low-profile relations with Taiwan is becoming very popular. What seems to be overlooked is that the United States is not Japan but the nation upon which both Japan and Taiwan depend for security. Sacred may be too strong a word for our tie with Taiwan; but despite its undoubted injustices, that little island is one of the most secure, prosperous, and free outposts in all of Asia. After Vietnam many Americans are weary of talk about proving that our word can be trusted, but in some instances that is precisely what is at stake.

GOING IT ALONE. Finally, we are not as worried as some about a "loss of nerve" in U.S. leadership. The remarkable thing is that for seven years we have gotten along, as it were, without leadership. This point was underscored by a recent mimeographed letter from Robert Strauss, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. "Since 1969...we have been governed by: A President and a Vice President who were forced to resign; One appointed President and Two appointed Vice Presidents; Six Attorneys General; Five Secretaries of Commerce; Four Secretaries of Defense; Four Secretaries of the Treasury; Five Secretaries of Labor; Four Secretaries of HEW; Four Secretaries of Interior....Add to this, Four CIA Directors; Three FBI Chiefs; Four Directors of the Office of Management and Budget...." and so forth. Mr. Strauss might seem to be urging that we keep the present team in office, but that apparently is not his intention. To the anarchist—or maybe it's just the Italian—in our blood, it does suggest the possibility of throwing the rascals out and not replacing them at all.

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.