

A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

ANTHONY EDEN AND GRACE NOTES. It seemed the final grace note of Anthony Eden's life that he died what used to be called "a good death." When, on the Caribbean island of Barbados, he knew the end to be approaching, he asked to be flown home so that "I can die in England." There, three days later, the Earl of Avon succumbed in his sleep, surrounded by his family.

"Graciousness" is the word that was commonly used to describe a man who, in 1957, resigned as Prime Minister over a series of events that were certainly ungraceful and, many thought, disgraceful. The Suez invasion, in collusion with France and Israel, shadowed the remaining twenty-one years of Anthony Eden's life. Yet the obituaries in January consistently praised Anthony Eden for his steadfastness in the face of temptations to appeasement, citing in particular his dealings with Hitler and Mussolini prior to World War II. Eden might have preferred that somebody would have raised at least the possibility that the Suez invasion was another such instance of steadfastness. In the eyes of those who thought Sir Anthony Eden had been done in by his friends, especially by Dulles and Eisenhower, he was made the victim of his virtue. (In this issue of *Worldview* a review by Anthony James Joes suggests that it was precisely "steadfastness" in resisting Mussolini's ambitions in Ethiopia that forced Mussolini into alliance with Hitler, pointing up the fact that there is no limit to the ironies of virtue in international relations.)

One of the last of Anthony Eden's published statements was written for *Worldview* and appeared in our January, 1973, issue. Titled "United States Diplomacy and the Free World," the article makes instructive reading, both for understanding Anthony Eden and for appreciating the problems posed to "the Carter era" of U.S. foreign policy.

Eden had few doubts about what should be the central purpose of "the foreign policy of any democratic nation today." That purpose "must be directed toward neutralizing or demolishing threats to its liberties." Such threats, he believed, came from totalitarian governments and from "so-called revolutionary organizations [which are] the thin end of the wedge opening the door to total anarchy." Anthony Eden did not espouse a course of unremitting con-

frontation, but in making accommodations "it is important to know where to draw the moral line; one must sometimes sup with the devil, but not fatten him."

Throughout the article the emphasis is on the importance of consultation among allies. "Though there can be exceptions to consultation for reasons of urgency or some other exceptional cause, the fewer they are the stronger the alliance will be." No doubt that line was written in rueful remembrance of his undoing at Suez, when the U.S. disowned, and thereby doomed, British policy.

While not explicitly critical of Dr. Kissinger (whom Anthony Eden called "Nixon's Mercury"), he warned against "any tendency on the part of the United States to regard the world as composed of only two significant blocs, the United States and the Soviet Union. This is to play the Soviets' own game, which refuses to consider the countries of Eastern Europe as viable in their own right." One thinks of Gerald Ford's clumsy attempt in the television debates of last fall to make a similar point about the independence of Eastern Europe. With oblique reference both to the Arab petroleum dictatorship and to the logic that led to the Helsinki agreements, Eden cautioned: "Appeasement of terrorism and offers of aid and comfort to those who will not or dare not take action against it is to ensure disaster." He offered his own definition of appeasement: "Seeking immediate concessions to gain a little present ease in a spirit of insubstantial optimism for the future." And he added: "Solzhenitsyn was right to inveigh against the spirit of Munich as 'a sickness of the will of successful people.'"

President Carter is on record with a number of statements about South Korea and Taiwan that have sent jitters, if not tremors, through U.S.-Japan relations. Of particular relevance therefore is Eden's repeated emphasis upon the importance of working closely with Japan. On this score he is implicitly critical of the way in which the "breakthrough" to China was handled, and cannot restrain himself from taking a slap at John Foster Dulles, whose obstinacy, Eden suggested, prevented such a breakthrough as early as 1954.

"I have never thought," he wrote, "that diplomacy should take place in the marketplace; the better method is by open covenants secretly arrived at." In



addition to the "open covenant" with Japan, Anthony Eden underscored the need for continuing commitment to NATO. "It must never be forgotten that Russia's objective is to pry apart the countries of NATO and to establish herself as the dominating power over Europe. The continuing buildup of Russian military power in Europe by land, sea, and air supports this purpose and cannot be explained otherwise." Obviously, there are many today who do try to explain that buildup "otherwise," but Eden clearly perceived their arguments as being beneath reply. "The Marshall Plan and the negotiation and establishment of NATO were the two most successful international achievements of the postwar era."

In that article, which is not unlike a final testament, Anthony Eden looked to the future of cooperation among those nations that, he firmly believed, bore the burden of freedom in the world. More important than "the machinery of consultation...is the spirit to use it." He left no doubt that he had long since despaired of the United Nations as an agency that could supply the machinery of consultation. The double standard evident specifically, but by no means exclusively, in its dealings with Israel had discredited the U.N. as a moral or politically positive force. Eden concluded his own "view of the world" with the argument that "some link in machinery between the free nations across the world for diplomatic and political purposes is necessary." He proposed that it "would be prudent to keep membership [in such a new organization] to a round dozen at most," and nominated the U.S., Canada, Brazil, the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, and Australia. Acknowledging that "the lead would have to come from the United States," he had no objections to the new machinery being headquartered in Washington. It is not inconceivable that such a proposal might be given new currency by a Carter Administration that has highlighted the need for stronger consultative ties among America's allies.

Anthony Eden's "testament" focuses on what he described as "the more hopeful prospects that can be noted on the international scene." His definition of hopeful, however, was in response to an assessment of world affairs that can be accepted by the most somber "realist." Paraphrasing Churchill's famous comment on Clement Attlee's humility, it might be said that Anthony Eden had a great deal to be realistic about. For his last two decades he seemed to many, perhaps to most, a ghost from crises past. Yet, even allowing that every test is not Munich redivivus, one wonders if his sense of moral determination was not far ahead of his time, and ours. However that may be, in his life the notes of grace far outnumber those of disgrace. May he rest in the fullness of that peace that, whatever his failings, he tried to establish in part on earth.

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.