

A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

THE CLEARER VIEW FROM HARVARD. Whatever else you want to say about China, you have to admit they've made a great success of economic development. That at least is the conventional claim, and it has been backed up by a chorus of experts over the last decade or more. The experts know about the Chinese success story because they were told it by the Chinese themselves, which should be proof enough for any unprejudiced observer. A recent issue of *Items*, an organ of the Social Science Research Council, reports on a conference dealing with China's economic development and provides us with insight into the ways of scholarship.

At the conference Professor Dwight H. Perkins of Harvard acknowledged that there are different ways of finding out what is happening in China and that there have been "considerable disagreements and debates" about which way is best. "Fortunately," the report continues, Dr. Perkins "does not survey the various alternative estimates and the methodological debates they have created, choosing instead to use the available data reported by the Chinese themselves which, although limited in quantity, have been shown to be relatively reliable.... This conclusion is given very strong support by the papers presented at another conference sponsored by the Subcommittee on Research on the Chinese Economy held in Washington, D.C., in 1975." Having information given to you certainly must make things easier. "Perkins uses these data to support his identification and analysis of five major areas in which the Chinese have been significantly more successful than other developing countries in achieving the objectives of economic development...."

Now, in a hostile act apparently aimed at embarrassing the élite of American academe, the Chinese claim that all along they weren't telling the truth. Harrison Salisbury, just returned from China, reports: "The [economic] cost of the anarchy, sabotage, and lack of incentive stemming from the Cultural Revolution and ensuing leadership conflict is impossible to calculate. Some industrial managers estimate that nearly two years of production were lost. One official said the task of analyzing real production figures, compared with falsified statistics issued during the political fight, was so vast that it was unrealistic to expect precise new figures within the next three years. 'It will take at least another year,' he said, 'just to find out where we actually stand.'"

The view from Harvard Square gives one a perspective on Chinese affairs that is likely denied to those whose minds are preoccupied by contact with the day-by-day confusions of China itself. We predict that the more seasoned China experts will not be taken in by China's sudden switch to seeming candor. Knowing the infinite subtlety of the Oriental mind and the games within games it is capable of playing, the experienced sinologist will not lightly abandon the reliable data that have worked so well for him in the past.

THE SOUL OF SOUTH AFRICA. Every careful observer of South Africa notes the ways in which that apartheid society is peculiarly rooted in its religious past and present. It is hard to get into the mind of the South African, white or black, and therefore much easier simply to "transfer" our American racial experience in trying to interpret that tortured society. Even harder is getting into the soul of South Africa. But a special issue of *Missionalia* magazine is a big help toward that end. It contains the papers and discussions of the 1977 congress of the South African Missiological Society. Entitled "Church and Liberation," the special issue conveys the anguished reflections of Christians from all the churches as they try to come to terms with faith and moral obligation at this moment in South Africa's history. The issue is available for \$5.20 from *Missionalia*, 31 Fourteenth Street, Menlo Park, 0081 Pretoria, South Africa.

SADAT AS SHOWBIZ SUPERSTAR. Some years ago the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was created to give the numerous Jewish organizations a more united voice. And thus came into being another Jewish organization. Some think the Conference superfluous, but its unique contribution has become more evident since President Sadat's awesomely courageous visit to Jerusalem. The Conference's contribution is to advance the proposition that there was nothing awesome or courageous at all about what Sadat did. It is simply another instance of hard-line Arab aggressiveness against a poor and embattled Israel that is continuing its thirty-year "struggle for peace." The Conference's is an engagingly novel proposition that should be valued by those who believe the widest possible range of viewpoints should be entertained in political discourse.

According to a February 16 release from the Conference, the "charming and charismatic Egyptian" is "the inventor and superstar of media diplomacy" who has in no way softened his "hard line position of refusing to bargain with Israel." This despite the fact that Israel has "in fact offered broad and far-reaching concessions, taking great national risks, in seeking to satisfy Arab demands." For example, "Israel has offered [to Egypt] the return of full sovereignty over the Sinai Peninsula." Still the "obdurate" Sadat presses insatiable Arab demands. "For all of Anwar Sadat's star quality as a media personality, he cannot in truth guarantee Israel's security." The Conference notes that Sadat cannot even guarantee "what policy his own successor will follow." The Conference may have a point there. Why strike a deal with anyone who might not be in power five years from now? Presumably this is not a consideration with respect to Mr. Begin's leadership.

As to all the fuss over Palestinians and the West Bank, people tend to forget "the right of Jews to live in the ancient Biblical lands of Judea and Samaria." The statement continues: "Just as Arabs have the right to live in Israel, so do Jews have the right to live in the West Bank." Just as? That seems fair enough. Just as Arabs live under Israeli sovereignty, Jews could live in the West Bank under Palestinian sovereignty. But that is probably not what the statement intends.

Vance is wrong to call Israel's West Bank settlements illegal, the Conference says, because Jordanian control of the area dates only from 1948, when it was seized "by force of arms." The inference is that sovereignties that were established so recently as 1948 and after a history of violence need not be taken too seriously. Presumably Israel is an exception.

In truth, statements such as those issuing from the Conference of Presidents are an embarrassment to people who care deeply about a secure Israel in a more stable Middle East. Among many pro-Israel Americans, support for Israeli policy has seldom been so low as in the last few months. Their anxiety over the intransigence of the Begin government will not be relieved by the Conference's cheap shots at President Sadat, nor by fundamentalist religious appeals in support of territorial aggrandizement.

CHURCHES AND THE MIDDLE EAST. *Where We Stand* is a just-published booklet containing statements of American churches on the Middle East conflict. Edited by Allan Solomonow and with an introduction by Charles Angell (see his Excursus, "Difficult Days for Jewish-Christian Relations," in the December issue of *Worldview*), *Where We Stand* is a reasonably complete and very useful summary of approaches ranging from that of the United Methodists and Antiochian Orthodox to the National Council of Churches. Supporters of Israel will think some statements "evenhanded" against Israel, and it should be kept in mind that official

statements do not necessarily reflect the attitudes of the millions of people for whom they sometimes presume to speak. The Christians of America tend to be more pro-Israel than the formal pronouncements of their churches might suggest. Since President Sadat's peace initiative, however, the gap between people and pronouncement may be narrowing.

"All of the statements reflect a startling consensus of the American churches," writes Father Angell. The consensus is "that there are two recognizable peoples in the Middle East conflict, Israelis and Palestinians, each entitled to self-determination; that this double claim to a single land necessitates mutual recognition, mutual negotiations and mutual compromise between the two parties involved." (The booklet is available for \$1.00 from Middle East Peace Project, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012.)

NO PATENT ON PEACE. There was this neat British-American plan worked out with the guerrilla fighters against white supremacy in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Then that sneaky Ian Smith, who had a record of molesting the comatose lion of British imperialism, came up with his own proposal for majority rule. He enlisted the support of the most popular black leaders, including the very impressive Bishop Abel Muzorewa, and, as of this writing, it seems they are in the final stages of working out an agreement for the democratic transference of power. At first American and British response to these developments was one of distress that their plan had been disregarded. Spokesmen predicted that any settlement that did not include the guerrilla fighters would lead only to further civil war, which seemed like an excellent way to encourage further civil war. There are hopeful signs of more sober second thoughts, however, and it now looks like the British and American diplomats are resigned to a new order in Zimbabwe, even if it does come about by nonviolent means.

NEPAL DEMOCRAT SAVED. B.P. Koirala, the former prime minister of Nepal, whose interview with associate editor Theodore Jacqueney appeared in the January-February *Worldview* ("We Are Abandoned"), has been acquitted of all treason and sedition charges lodged against him and has been released from prison.

One of the Third World's leading advocates of electoral, constitutional democracy, Koirala was jailed on charges that could have led to a death sentence. He has been an active social democratic leader in his country, and social democrats throughout the world appealed to King Birendra of Nepal for Koirala's release.

Koirala is expected to return to New York for medical treatment for a reported circulatory ailment.

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.