

# A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

**POPE JOHN PAUL II.** Initial reactions: A non-Italian! A Pole! From a Communist country! What could they have had in mind, "they" being the College of Cardinals that elected Karol Wojtyla, archbishop of Krakow, to be the Supreme Pontiff of over 700 million Catholics around the world?

It was some comfort to realize that the surprise was shared by most people, even those who spoke with the easy confidence of the true insider, like the celebrated Catholic theologian, Hans Küng, who shortly before the conclave explained on several occasions why it was inevitable that the new pope would be Italian. Well, as Küng himself might say, no one's infallible. Comforting, too, to learn that not everyone was caught by surprise, that, for example, George Williams, the noted Protestant theologian at Harvard, had predicted a week before the papal conclave that Wojtyla would probably be elected.

From surprise to surmise. The new pope is not only the first non-Italian in over 450 years, the first Polish pope in history, but he is a learned man, a phenomenologist, a skillful diplomat, and a writer. He has written a number of works on Marx; he has had a long, difficult, and successful ministry as a churchman within a Communist country, and he has given special attention to social ethics. What will this particular combination of abilities and experience mean to Catholics, and to others? To stick simply to international issues, what effect will it have on Catholics who see themselves as liberal or radical, on Catholic conservatives, on Polish people and their Communist rulers, on the Communist parties of Eastern Europe, on the leadership in Moscow?

We can begin with one of the issues Roger Mithrith raised in the last issue of *Worldview* when he wrote of the legacy of Paul VI, the upcoming meeting of the Latin American bishops in Puebla, and the importance of who was elected to succeed John Paul I. One of the major issues that will be considered at Puebla will be the relative merits of socialism and capitalism and the political systems associated with each. One of the notable features of the Catholic Church in Latin America today is the emergence of theologies of liberation whose analytical tools for diagnosing social ills and whose strategies of overcoming these ills derive from Marxist theory. After more than a decade of development and attendant publicity this is not startling news anymore, but it is still something to conjure with. Those who are drawn to theologies of liberation frequently see themselves as radicals, as progressives, as those who must combat and overcome not only oppressive oligarchies and the evils or ills of capitalism but traditional, conservative, or reactionary attitudes and theologies within the Church. These people now have as leader of their church a

man who is highly conversant with Marxist theory and who has more intimate experience with socialism than does any Latin American. He might well have more to teach theologians of liberation than to learn from them.

And Catholic conservatives. Are they suddenly to have a pope who supports their own views, their own fears? Not likely. He is critical of Marxist theology and he has struggled hard and successfully against leaders of Poland's government. But he has lived with and dealt with Communists. The relation between Church and State in Poland is neither a mutual embrace nor armed confrontation but an arm's length accommodation.

Poland's Communist leaders early sent congratulations to the new pope and agreed to allow Poles who could afford it the freedom to travel to Pope John Paul's investiture. An instance of nationalism over ideology? (On a completely different note, it is interesting to observe that the Jewish leaders at Krakow sent a congratulatory cable to John Paul II, calling him their Krakow *landsman*.) There can be little doubt that Poland's church has gained greater leverage, but there must be uncertainty about how it will be used. The USSR has given little publicity to the election of Wojtyla, but a pope from Eastern Europe raises a host of questions: Will the Catholics of, say, Lithuania or the Ukraine press harder for religious liberties? Will issues of human rights be given even more attention? How will the Pope evaluate Eurocommunism? What will be his stance between East and West?

There are, for the moment, more questions than answers, but the questions themselves are new. Past concepts must be reconsidered and altered. Altogether, the oldest continuous institution in the world has provided one of the most surprising, disconcerting, and exhilarating moments of our time. *Viva Papa!*

**SALT.** Toward the end of October and the eighth round of negotiations came word that the prospects of a successful conclusion were promising. "In addition to being serious and businesslike, the afternoon meeting was constructive," said Cyrus Vance, never one to overstate. Good. SALT is one of the major issues this government and this administration is currently coping with, the outcome of which is decidedly uncertain.

If SALT is successfully negotiated and the Senate approves, much of the credit should go to a man who is not there. I refer, of course, to Paul Warnke, who resigned from his post as director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) not long before the latest round of negotiations got under way. Warnke accepted appointment to that post

amidst a great flurry of criticism from those who believed that, confronted with the Soviet position, he would not be sufficiently tough-minded or hard-nosed. That strong Senate opposition has not faded away. The inevitable rumor, when he resigned, was that he had been cast in the role of the sacrificial lamb, the price for relatively easy passage of any SALT accord through the Senate being his administrative head. Well, let's not completely discount that. But it is also reported that Warnke had strong personal reasons, that he accepted the post only under presidential pressure and on the condition that he would leave when the treaty negotiations seemed safely under way. That being accomplished, he was true to his agreement and resigned.

Whatever the reason for the resignation, Warnke served competently, openly, honestly, effectively. May his successor do as well.

**A LEGACY OF VIETNAM.** It would be foolish to view all the atrocities so systematically and so long committed in Cambodia as the consequences of a single cause, and that cause being the large-scale sowing of bombs and mines by the U.S. Air Force during the war. But the heavy U.S. involvement should give added weight to a concern that is properly ours in any case. We have, in this century, become all too familiar with the crime of genocide. But Cambodia (Democratic Kampuchea) may have the distinction of devising and institutionalizing a new abomination and a new crime: *auto-genocide*. The evidence continues to pour in, the stories of refugees transform allegations into testimony commanding belief. Men, women, and children, the weak and the old are slaughtered cruelly and arbitrarily.

Taking note of some of this testimony, Amnesty International (AI) drew up a "Statement on Human Rights Violations in Democratic Kampuchea" and submitted it to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights via a U.N. subcommission. Now, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights last met in March, 1978. At that time it discussed the question of human rights in Democratic Kampuchea, but in the face of such gross violations as were reported and in the vastness of its wisdom it was unable to reach any conclusion.

Having dealt with large bureaucracies in the past, AI is long-suffering and persevering. The information contained in its present statement, one is interested to note, will be duly considered at the next meeting of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights—March, 1979.

**—AND GEORGE MCGOVERN.** The returns on Senator McGovern's proposal are probably all in by now, and they add up to what one might, in a despondent mood, predict. Senator McGovern, you recall, was exercised by the violence and mayhem the present government of Cambodia is inflicting on

its people, but instead of simply lamenting the fate of that people he suggested something should be done about it. Specifically he suggested that a collective force under the United Nations flag intervene.

He was instantly lectured by some on the right who asked him to recall his past misspent efforts to limit U.S. military involvement and withdraw U.S. troops from Southeast Asia and who then proceeded to ask him why he was surprised to see what his Cambodian "friends" were doing to each other now.

On the left front the Senator fared little better. One representative response came from John L. Hess. Writing in the *New York Daily Metro*, Mr. Hess said: "The Senator has, alas, confirmed suspicions that we peaceniks voted for a bubblehead in 1972." Mr. Hess, one understands, has drawn proper lessons from our recent bloodied past. So, too, he notes, have others, including the *Wall Street Journal*, with which he is usually in ideological disagreement but with which he joins hands on this issue as he quotes approvingly from its editorial pages:

One of the few good things to come out of the sordid end of our Indochina campaign was a period of relative silence from the people who took us through all its painful contortions. They should have the grace to maintain their quiet for at least a while longer.

Few things could illustrate better the bankruptcy of much present thinking about issues of war and peace. It is as if people like Hess and the editorial writers of the *Wall Street Journal* were jealous of the ability long attributed to the military—"They are always prepared to fight the last war"—and wish to claim it as their own. And the lesson of Vietnam, for them, is: don't intervene. (The lessons of World War II and the course of genocide in Germany are apparently too hazy in the memory to have much effect.)

If, as is apparently the case, we are forced to say that there is no international community or that it is too weak to condemn the abominations committed by Cambodia, Uganda, and other countries, too divided to take any concerted action, that is reason for deep regret. We might even think the absence of such a community a severe enough deficiency to attempt to remedy it. The reaction of Senator McGovern is altogether more sound than many of his critics, the touching thing about his proposal being that he hoped the U.N. could at this point represent that community.

In the meantime we remain advised by others superior to McGovern that we should be quiet. And surely, if we are quiet long enough, our silence will be matched by an unnatural silence from Cambodia.

*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.*