

# A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

**CAMBODIA** today presents a series of ironies. At the end of last December the government of Pol Pot had agreed to allow foreign tourists to visit the temple ruins of Angkor. Less than a month later Vietnam had invaded Cambodia and Pol Pot was said to be in the Elephant Mountains of southwestern Cambodia, from which he was waging guerrilla attacks.

Vietnam's aggression against its neighbor had strong repercussions in Peking, Moscow, and Washington; in the countries of Asia and of Europe; in the heads of a number of ideologues to whom it gave large political headaches; and in the U.N. At the U.N. Andy Young said that the exchanges between the partisans of Cambodia and those of Vietnam made it one of the most interesting times he could remember at that institution. For saying that, Mr. Young was rebuked by a delegate from Kuwait, who reminded everyone that they were discussing the killing of women and children as well as armed combatants.

The delegate was, of course, correct. What is happening in Cambodia is another cruel imposition on a people that has already been severely punished. But Andy Young was also correct. The fight between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians released and exposed the ironies long latent in that area. Consider:

The American people were told in the Sixties that one of the reasons the U.S. was fighting in Vietnam was to restrain the spread of communism, particularly the threat of communism represented by the Chinese colossus. Cambodia, under Prince Sihanouk, was one of the "domino" countries we were concerned about; the Khmer Rouge, supported by the North Vietnamese, was the immediate threat. Now, years later, the U.S. and China are normalizing relations at a dizzying pace; China and Vietnam have armed forces facing each other across their common border, Vietnam having decided to turn to the Soviets for various kinds of aid; Pol Pot, who inflicted a savage government upon his people under the rubric of communism, is attacked by Communist Vietnam, which drops American-made cluster bombs from American fighter-bombers on Cambodian targets; and Sihanouk, released from years of house arrest in Cambodia, comes to the U.N. to ask protection for the sovereignty of his country. Asked to comment on the fate of Cambodia, Sihanouk says that two men are primarily responsible for the transformation of Cambodia into a Communist country—Messrs. Nixon and Kissinger. Also at the U.N., some of the nonaligned coun-

tries anguish over whether they will be nonaligned with Cambodia or with Vietnam. And Sweden, which has long adopted a role as the conscience of international affairs, warns Vietnam to withdraw its forces or risk losing millions of dollars in nonmilitary aid that Sweden and other Nordic countries give it annually.

Meanwhile the Security Council was put to the test on a matter that is both serious and continuing. In 1974, acting on the initiative of the Soviet Union, the General Assembly adopted a definition of aggression, stated that no territorial gain resulting from aggression should be recognized, and condemned aggressive war as a crime. When a resolution based upon these principles was presented, the Soviets vetoed it. Benjamin B. Ferencz, who was executive counsel at the Nuremberg war crimes trial, described this act precisely in a letter to the *New York Times* (January 21, 1979):

The Soviet veto of the resolution seeking the withdrawal of foreign military forces was a cynical repudiation of rules which the Soviet Union helped to create. The USSR has fouled its own nest and created a precedent which may boomerang. The Council's inability to be bound or even guided by its own standards underscores the impotence of the present system and the need to create a more effective international machinery for securing the peace of the world.

**MOSCOW.** It's not always fun to live in the U.S. embassy, even in such a politically important post as Moscow. Especially when you cannot leave, cannot receive mail, and cannot receive visits from friends. These are the conditions under which seven Soviet Pentecostal refugees have been living since June 27, 1978.

The five members of the Vashchenko family and the two members of the Chmykhalov family have committed the high crime of trying, for seventeen years, to emigrate legally in order to escape religious oppression. After the Soviet police seized the teen-age son of the Vashchenko family they decided not to leave the U.S. embassy, in which they sought aid, until he was released. They did talk to him by phone after he was released, but because he had been tortured and beaten he urged them to stay at the embassy.

A number of organizations have urged the U.S. Government to continue to grant asylum to these religious refugees until they are granted permission to emigrate. The emigration—need it be pointed

out?—would be consonant with the Helsinki Agreement that specified a number of rights, including the right to emigrate.

**HOLOCAUST & TV.** When we saw the television version of the Holocaust we were reminded of G.K. Chesterton. Or, rather, one of his pertinent observations: If something is worth doing, it's worth doing badly. After admitting, even insisting upon, the banalities, the distortions and discrepancies in the show, and after agreeing that the horrors of the historical Holocaust resist an accurate transmission to television, we thought it was worth doing—even badly. Better this than nothing. It does remind older people of what we dare not forget and it does lead younger people to investigate further.

If that is true in the United States, to which our experience of the Holocaust show was limited, is it also true in Germany? The first reactions were not promising. Before "Holocaust" was to be shown it was shunted off to regional stations rather than the main network, and a number of Germans expressed either indifference or resentment to the projected series. Some of these attitudes persisted even after the opening episodes, but the surprise was that the actual viewing audience was more than twice what had been anticipated and that the response was running more than 2 to 1 in favor of the series.

In a debate in the lower house of Parliament, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt referred favorably to the series, saying that it was important to the German people "in view of the decision each of us must make for himself in the course of this year on the statute of limitations." The statute he referred to applies to capital offenses committed in World War II and is scheduled to expire at the end of this year. The chancellor's wife said: "I was deeply shaken. Above all, the young people should see the series." It was presumably the younger viewers who called the regional television stations, asking "How could it happen?" "How many people knew?" After all these years, these are still good questions.

**PEOPLE** is not, we are forced to admit, our favorite magazine. Our lack of enthusiasm has nothing to do with the fact that it sells a few more copies than *Worldview*. And, in fact, we never bothered to analyze why our indifference was tinged with a faint repugnance. But a recent ad for the magazine, which brought together the usual jumble of people, made it immediately clear in several sentences. The sentences were devoted to Joshua Nkomo, one of the leaders of the guerrilla movements that are trying to replace the government of Ian Smith in Rhodesia. Serious issues involved here. Worth discussion. The approach of *People*? Nkomo now "says bloodshed's the only way. He could end up president. At 6'5" and 350 pounds, he's big enough for the job." Given such standards for measuring political qualifications, we now know how to proceed. Get a measuring rod and a scale. We have just heard that John B. Connally has entered the race for

the presidential nomination. Maybe "Big John" has heard of the new standards.

**JOHN PAUL II.** It has been a long time since Stalin asked of the pope, "How many divisions does he have?" That ironic question was to boomerang when the allegiance that the pope was able to command proved an obstacle to Communist designs in Eastern Europe. Today no one, least of all the present Soviet leaders, would pose such a question about John Paul II.

One sign of Soviet concern was the meeting in Rome between John Paul and Andrei Gromyko, apparently initiated by the Soviets just before the pope left for Mexico. When Cardinal Karol Wojtyla was elected to the papacy, it was almost immediately clear that his appeal extended beyond his fellow countrymen to other religious ethnic groups in Eastern Europe and Lithuania. The months since his election indicate that he is going to be a vigorous, theologically conservative, politically engaged, peripatetic, unconventional modern pope. If his actions and statements are to become predictable it will not be soon. Referring to Eastern Europe, he has said that "the days of the silent church are over." It is too early to say what his emphasis on human rights and religious freedom will mean in Europe. It is clear, however, that during his first year as John Paul II his voice will be heard—speaking to particular issues—in Europe, in South America, in the U.N. That's not bad for a start.

**CHINA.** While much has changed in China in the years since Mao died, some significant government policies have apparently survived intact. For example, the official attitude toward religion. A recent news story in the *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)* pulled together the comments of a number of people who are knowledgeable about and, in different ways, interested in the missionary question.

According to Father Simon Smith, executive secretary of the U.S. Jesuit Missions, China claims that it allows freedom to practice religion but in practice prohibits the propagation of any religion. Charles Freeman of the U.S.-China task force says that there are no indications that the Chinese will welcome missionaries to the People's Republic any more now than they did in the past, and the State Department does not intend to ask for changes in that policy. All of the leaders of missionary efforts were very sensitive to the issues involved and stressed that the Chinese culture must be highly respected. But perhaps the best comment was that of Father Eugene Toland of the Maryknoll order. If missionaries are allowed into China, he said, the Chinese might be more surprised with the changes in the Church than the missionaries are surprised by the changes in China. Amen to that.

*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.*