

A VIEW OF THE WORLD

Abraham Martin Murray

QUESTION AND ANSWER. "Blind Ambition," CBS's version of John Dean's self-serving exploits, ended with Dean being asked, "Could Watergate happen again?" The question remains unanswered, the picture fades and out. Very dramatic. In fact the question was answered many times during the series' several evenings. At each commercial break we were told, "After these messages blind ambition will continue." Just so.

GET CARTER. *Commonweal*, the liberal Catholic journal, asked a clutch of twenty-one contributors to comment on presidential politics in 1980. Our Richard John Neuhaus was almost alone in thinking Carter would and should be reelected. Victor Ferkiss, political scientist at Georgetown, favors Jerry Brown, who "at least knows what century we are living in." Irving Louis Horowitz of Rutgers worries about war and wants an alternative to Carter, who represents "a leadership for whom Democratic party politics ultimately requires military engagement." Murray Polner of *Present Tense* thinks "spirituality" is the big hidden issue. "Politicians who begin to speak morally and ethically...will find the ear of many people." Sounds like Jimmy Whatsizname might qualify. Critic Saul Maloff wants a woman candidate who will bear the socialist banner boldly and, after losing the race, make clear that "the office, at least until it is transfigured, is unfit for occupancy by anyone of civilized taste." While favoring Kennedy, Robert Hoyt of *Christianity and Crisis* "would really like to make Gene McCarthy Head of State for life in charge of talking-to-the-people-about-the-nature-of-politics, with Carter or Kennedy or somebody running the government." Political sage Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity School joins those who favor a less qualified leftism: "I remain convinced that the real inert (electorally) majority is not the conservative one Barry Goldwater thought was there in 1964 but one that would respond to a genuine socialist candidacy, such as could be offered by Mike Harrington or Ron Dellums." Whether he means Mike Harrington the writer or Mike Harrington the congressman, one wonders why Mr. Cox overlooks George Whatsizname who ran in 1972. Although unsure about how it might be done, most of *Commonweal's* contributors feel strongly that we need a candidate who is "independent of the rich," "cares more about people than profits," will "wage war on the big corporations," and things like that. In a more practical vein, Mark

Taylor, who teaches English at Manhattan College, endorsed W.H. Auden's ideal for government: "Absolute monarchy, elected for life by lot."

HEAVY CLUBB. *Worldview* contributor O. Edmund Clubb is regularly cited as one of the more distinguished victims of Joe McCarthy's crusade to purge the State Department of those responsible for "losing China." Many would expect Clubb to cheer the way in which Carter has terminated the "fiction" of Taiwan's representing China. Clubb's cheer is exceedingly restrained: "The Carter move has clearly placed Taiwan's future in jeopardy." Writing in *The Nation*, Clubb contends that "Peking will probably not protest too much the 'unhelpful' American stance with respect to modernization of the Chinese military establishment. After all, in the Chinese civil war of 1946-49 the Communists inherited a goodly supply of American arms from the defeated Nationalists; and when by American assumption, Taiwan may be 'reunited' (forcibly or peacefully—it makes no difference) with the mainland, the Chinese will automatically gain possession of the store of sophisticated American weaponry provided the Nationalist regime over the last three decades, which will continue to be supplied in the years that lie ahead. Peking can be expected to exhibit an Oriental patience with respect to the inscrutable ways of those strange Americans. But China's near neighbors—our West Pacific allies Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines—cannot be expected to remain indifferent to the growth of China's military power..." Skeptic Clubb concludes: "It remains to be seen what contribution a strengthened China with Middle Kingdom philosophy will make to world stability; and the would-be purveyors of American goods have yet to discover how a poverty-stricken China will be able to pay for them."

WHEN CATHOLIC MEANT CATHOLIC. It used to be that non-Catholics worried about the power of an authoritarian Church that, through its "magisterium" headed by the pope, could dictate, even "infallibly," all things pertaining to faith and morals. That seems like a long time ago. This month Paulist Press is publishing *Newness of Life: A Modern Introduction to Catholic Ethics* by James Gaffney of Loyola University, New Orleans. Herewith his definition of Catholic ethics: "A broad system of ethical

tradition that has been part of a religious culture associated with the Roman Catholic Church and shared partly by other Christian communities since the great divisions of Christianity took place." In the days of infallible authority one at least had something to disagree with.

WILL CHINA GO COMMUNIST? Mr. Deng Xiaoping briefly let a hundred flowers blossom, only to discover that most of them had a distinctly non-Marxist hue. The *Liberation Army Daily* reports with alarm that students, when asked what they want most in life, answered, "Good work and high wages." So the regime has launched a new educational campaign, thirty years after the Revolution, on the merits of communism. After people got a peek at the good life of the bourgeois imperialist warmongers the official press is reminding them that the reason China has been so slow to develop is the terrible poverty before the takeover in 1949. Asserts the *People's Daily*, "Some young people do not know much about the history or present condition in China. They do not realize that the low production levels and backward science and technology in China are due to its extremely backward state before liberation, which was the result of imperialist and feudal rule." A Michael J. Parenti, unknown American leftist, is having his book *Democracy for the Few* plugged by the regime. Says Peking, this important work "exposes the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy." One should not begrudge the Parentis of the world a readership, although Mr. Deng could have saved a lot of trouble by having his visit to the U.S. include more televised shots of Southern sharecroppers and the Bronx. As it is, the small and faction-ridden Communist party will have a hard time persuading China's millions that things will be better, come the revolution.

THE DEATH OF RELIGION. As the Shah of Iran slinks about in search of refuge and the pope unveils his divisions in Eastern Europe, it is easy to forget that religion has died in the modern world. Again, China maintains its determined hold upon scientific reality. Last month Peking University began a course on religion, including Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and others. New China News Agency explained: "It is important that the origins, development and death of religions be analyzed from the viewpoint of dialectical materialism and historical materialism in order to propagate atheism."

BELATED LIBERATIONISM. More than fifteen years ago Johannes Metz, a European Catholic theologian, called for the development of "political theology." In the last decade that call found loud response, especially from Latin America, in the form of "liberation theology." Last month a group of North American theologians declared

their discovery of liberation theology and issued yet another manifesto in its support. (Signers include Robert McAfee Brown, Frederick Herzog, M. Douglas Meeks, and Lewis S. Mudge.) We live, they say, in a world of "oppression, exploitation and alienation," but one sign of hope is that the voices of the oppressed have in recent years "challenged our complicity in such realities." Who are these voices? "Third world citizens, women, blacks and members of other oppressed minorities, students, working people, at home and abroad." Now, let's see, whom have we left out? And who is the "we" guilty of complicity? We are "the professional middle-class people in situations of privilege, purchased at the cost of misery to others." The non-student, non-black, non-minority, non-female, non-working, privileged middle class, of course. We hear God's call in "human cries for liberation from racism, sexism, classism and imperialism, as well as from personal sin and guilt." The personal bit has to do with our complicity in racism, sexism, classism, etc. The signers call for a "new way of doing theology that pays as much attention to the social sciences as earlier theology paid to philosophy." Clearly these pioneers are on the edge of an important nineteenth-century breakthrough. Boldly they proclaim, "We cannot be satisfied simply to defend the *status quo*." They are obviously in for a fight with the majority of theologians, who, one is to assume, subscribe to the proposition that we must be satisfied simply to defend the *status quo*. The manifesto concludes that "no theology is ever as valuable as one genuine act of solidarity with exploited social classes." That is undoubtedly true of some theology that has recently come into fashion.

SURVIVING THE PEACE. *Sh'ma*, a "journal of Jewish responsibility," has solicited views on how the Jewish reality has been changed by the incipient peace in the Middle East. It hasn't changed very much, answers Hans J. Morgenthau, distinguished scholar, chairman of *Worldview's* editorial board. "The peace treaty [is] the starting point for a difficult and treacherous road, at the end of which there might be peace in the Middle East." The Arab states "can create havoc in the Middle East, if they play their cards right and, more particularly, if they manipulate adroitly their quasi-monopoly of oil." "These problems," Morgenthau concludes, "are much more likely to call for our attention in the immediate future than are the intangible effects of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty upon Israel, the Diaspora, and relations between the two."

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.