

rality play: Not only does she narrate others' frailties, she reminds us of how much they and we have in common. To some extent power corrupts, but obstinacy, overreaction, the prideful refusal to admit error that compounds error, self-delusion—a failure of reason—are no one's monopoly. Folly may be a child of power, but so are we all prone to folly. On the other hand, the true morality play also holds out hope. Humans have not only created prodigies of technology, art, medicine, and theoretical physics but have also produced models of the modest and intelligent statesman who creates effective government: Solon, the Antonine emperors, Charlemagne, Maria Theresa, the Jeffersonian generation. When power is wedded to humility, responsibility is its child. **WV**

**THE UNRAVELING OF AMERICA:  
A HISTORY OF LIBERALISM  
IN THE 1960s**

by **Allen J. Matusow**

(Harper & Row; 542 pp.; \$22.95)

*Larry Tool*

Today the turbulent '60s beg for historical focus. The passions of the period are spent, its issues are muddled, its partisans hoarse. Firebrands have become fathers, communards have become landlords, ex-students scramble for university tenure. Even the bright mirror of nostalgia has grown dim from constant use. For those of us who shaped or were shaped by the '60s the time has come to entrust our memories to the historians, who will edit and interpret them for posterity. "Where have all the flowers gone?" Gone to textbooks every one.

One does not envy these historians. Who among that cautious fraternity will prove bold enough to pass judgment on a whole generation of quarrelsome critics—at least while that generation is still on the scene? Memoirs and diaries have appeared; institutional histories have been assembled from bulging files; surprisingly good biographies (Lyndon Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr.) have begun to accumulate. But the Class of '88 wants to know what the '60s were really about, and no provocative general interpretation has yet been offered. *The Unraveling of America* does not quite take this bull by the horns, but Allen Matusow has at least stepped into the arena. Two cheers.

For Matusow the essence of the '60s is the ordeal of liberalism. His account is woven from three kinds of narrative: The

ambiguous. Did Andrade, the first director of São Paulo's Department of Culture, wish merely to preserve the past within Brazil's social revolution, or was he parodying the capitalist conception of progress in the Third World? We may find a partial answer in yet another of the book's transformations. Just before his transfiguration, Macunaima modifies the second line of his slogan to "Brazil *will* be a place of wealth." The change implies both a prophecy and a redefinition. Wealth is now no longer judged by the standard of international economics, but, perhaps, by the rich resources of the people and by the cultural heritage that Andrade has brought to light. **WV**

**THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING**

by **Milan Kundera**

translated by **Michael Henry Helm**

(Harper & Row; 314 pp.; \$15.95)

*Gerald Freund*

If Kundera had set out to write a love story, he might have had better success, but he would have written a far less interesting book. This new novel by the celebrated Czech author, who now makes his home in Paris, is an incisive, compelling, and mostly despairing political work. The political pattern is delicate, but pervasive.

It requires considerable ingenuity for a writer to engross a reader in his own deep concerns without their becoming crude interruptions in an interesting and often psychologically fascinating work of fiction. Kundera has that talent. Nevertheless, because he is a totally involved political intellectual, Kundera tends to force rather than lead his reader, who participates in none of the critical choices and decisions. Little is entrusted to the readers's independent thought or imagination. There are no silences, none of the pregnant pauses so important to the works of Kundera's favorite composer, Beethoven, whose imperative "*Es muss sein!*" he quotes again and again to glittering literary effect. But then Kundera is not an organist listening for cathedral reverberations. The only echo he wants is that of his own voice. Perhaps he wants to drown out the cacaphony of political sloganeering and torture-chamber screams.

Whatever the reasons, we are not, finally, unsympathetic with his impatience. It is an understandable flaw when one considers that Kundera reveals himself through his protagonist, Tomas, as an exile with no possibility of finding a cultural "home." He is in an enforced state of painful loneliness and taken up by his guilt for having escaped the bitter fate—in many cases death—of his Central European intellectual friends who chose not to flee Russian domination. Kundera's cry of pain and ambivalence is understood through the experience of the fictional Tomas. A surgeon, he initially escapes Czechoslovakia to a good hospital position in Switzerland after the Russian invasion of 1968. But then he follows his lover, Tereza, back to Czechoslovakia and to ignominious humiliations. Among his many conquests, Tereza is the only woman Tomas loves. For Kundera, she represents the singular muse he tries to follow. Unlike Tomas, he did not follow her "home," for he would no more have found his "home" in Czechoslovakia than he had anywhere else. Still, Kundera cannot help wondering what might have been his fate; and Tomas, his invention, wanders purgatively until he finally finds a level of existence with Tereza in which he can live a truly loving and self-reconciled life. Through Tomas, Kundera finds an imagined state of grace. But there is still no way "home" for Kundera, for while his present life allows freedom of expression, he speaks in a cultural wasteland—different, but in the end the same as life under the heel of the Russian conqueror.

Tomas's odyssey is fictionalized as a succession of erotic encounters, described with a strange lack of eroticism. In each encounter Tomas seeks to find "the millionth part dissimilarity," the unpredictable individuality he desperately needs for his creative as well as political life. He exults in the differences he discovers en route to and in intercourse—different nuances of

first presents an Elizabethan tragedy of presidential politics, stretching from John Kennedy's hopeful inaugural to Lyndon Johnson's bewildered retirement; the second is a critique of Keynesian economics and the War on Poverty; the third is a careful but inconclusive chronicle of the decline of the Civil Rights movement, the rise of Black Power, the New Left, and the "counter-culture."

From these three parallel tales Matusow draws two commonplace morals: *Pride Goeth Before a Fall* and *Bad Philosophy Maketh Bad Policy*. The pride in question is that of liberal intellectuals, who infected Kennedy with their dreams of being able to engineer prosperity, legislate civil and social equality, and halt communism through development and counterinsurgency. The bad philosophy is Keynesian "pump-priming" and the War on Poverty. Keynesianism, Matusow unconvincingly argues, produced record inflation and undermined middle-class support for reform. The War on Poverty, he demonstrates, aroused hopes it could not fulfill and left a legacy of bitterness and despair. Liberalism succumbed not to its opponents but to internal contradictions.

"Reared in the liberal tradition" himself,

Matusow expresses regret at producing a chronicle of liberal failure. He wishes his history did not confirm the current neo-conservative "wisdom" about Keynes, the welfare state, and liberal internationalism. He did not intend to write an admiring aside on Milton Friedman. Simple honesty, he contends, has made him do so.

Matusow is a good writer and a careful scholar. His narrative succeeds, but his interpretation is inadequate. The first difficulty is a matter of omission. One would expect the Vietnam war to be the centerpiece of any survey of the '60s. Matusow considers only its economic aspect: "Vietnam was the only poverty program that actually worked." Regrettably, he ducks the larger question of liberal foreign policy altogether. This makes it very difficult to understand a decade whose tone was set by John Kennedy's heady exhortation to look outward: "We shall pay any price, bear any burden...." Ignoring the ways in which reform was a response to external events, Matusow is hard pressed to explain why the Great Society was sacrificed to Vietnam or why the rhetoric of protest shifted back and forth so glibly from local improvement to global revolution.

A second difficulty is Matusow's ten-

dency to regard history in general and the presidency in particular as a laboratory for the testing of ideas. Between 1960 and 1968, he argues, something called liberalism was tested and found wanting. By implication, we must now "try" something else. By this method, however, any outlook that triumphs seems adequate; any outlook that fails seems inadequate. The unraveling of America in the '60s proves nothing about liberalism except that a majority of the American public grew tired of the persons and programs that were advanced in its name.

This volume, one of Harper & Row's New American Nation Series, is more a farewell to reform than a history of the '60s. Matusow's effort demonstrates that liberalism was an important theme, but perhaps not the best theme for a study of the period. Sixties liberalism did not begin in 1960, nor was 1968 really the liberal *Götterdämmerung* Matusow portrays. In American politics, ideas almost never achieve clear-cut victories or suffer clear-cut defeats.

The crisis of the '60s was fundamentally a crisis of public authority. The characteristic cry was that the emperor had no clothes. This was clear to many observers at the time. It has since become equally clear that this crisis is characteristic not of liberalism

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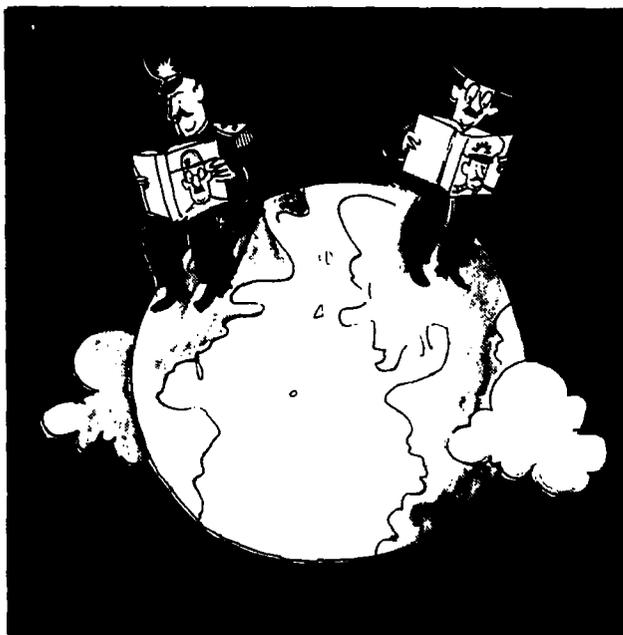
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in particular but of the modern state in general. During the '60s it was a liberal regime that endured the dramatic erosion of consent by the governed, but dissatisfaction with authority actually peaked under the neoliberal regime of Richard Nixon. It persists today even under the "conservative restoration" of Ronald Reagan.

The programs and protests of the '60s were attempts to include the excluded within the social and political covenant. These efforts became explosive because they uncovered a prior and larger doubt about the nature and worth of that covenant itself. What, it was asked, is the purpose of American power? Until we can once again agree on an answer to that question, every increase in the power of government will continue to be offset by a decrease in its authority among the governed. And America as a whole will remain what it has been since 1968—substantially ungovernable for any purpose higher than sheer survival.

### **CAN PAKISTAN SURVIVE? THE DEATH OF A STATE**

by Tariq Ali

(Verso Editions [London]; 237 pp.; \$7.95)

### **JINNAH OF PAKISTAN**

by Stanley Wolpert

(Oxford University Press; xii + 420 pp.; \$24.95)

Arnold Zeitlin

A Pakistani friend visited New Delhi earlier this year for the first time since 1945. Naturally he took a tourist bus tour. As the vehicle rolled past No. 10 Aurangzeb Road, the guide, a Hindu who recognized that his rider was from Pakistan, leaned over and whispered, "That's Mr. Jinnah's house."

"Now why couldn't he have told the whole bus?" asked my friend, recalling the incident. "Why can't the Indians be proud of the fact that the founder of Pakistan lived in New Delhi?"

Pakistan was founded thirty-seven years ago, but such is the impression that its founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, has left in contemporary India that it is difficult, even in trivial matters, for any Indian to regard him dispassionately. As Jinnah shifted position over the decades—from ardent Indian nationalist before World War I, with credentials more worthy than those of Mohandas K. Gandhi, to founder of the Muslim state wrenched in 1947 out of the Indian sub-

behavior, of sounds, of smell. But the sexual act is different from and devoid of love, insists Tomas—and Kundera too. Though these rutting excursions exalt women by confirming their distinctiveness, paradoxically they demean them, making them vehicles of comfort and means of promoting Tomas's—and the author's—self-worth.

For Tomas, only Tereza is not a means but an end; and it is not for her erotic self but because of her utter fidelity and self-abnegation in face of his philandering, and because she has insinuated herself into his poetic memory "which records everything that charms or touches us, that makes our lives beautiful." Tereza remains devoted to Tomas even when she leaves him in Switzerland to return to Czechoslovakia. Tomas has a deeply empathetic understanding of the origins of her needs; but even when he follows her back to Czechoslovakia, his fidelity is more enforced than voluntary. He is captured by her compassion—"that curse of emotional telepathy"—and so follows her out of fear of loneliness rather than out of conviction. Implicit in this narrative event is Kundera's fearful recognition of his own betrayal, or what he thinks was betrayal, and an assertion of the reason that he took a different course.

Kundera did not come West as a cultural voyeur but to find what he believed was a thriving source of his own cultural identity and a vital spirit of independence. He found neither, and that is his lament throughout the work. What alone compensates for this disappointment is his understanding of why the vibrant cultural life of an earlier Europe has come to a standstill, and for this he has compassion.

"There is," Kundera writes, "nothing heavier than compassion." "Lightness" is what ultimately alienates Kundera's Tomas from his steadiest erotic muse, Sabina. The third of his four principal characters, she was betrayed by her father and thereby acquired "a longing for betrayal" that leads her not only to leave her homeland (and, unlike Tereza, not to return) but to leave lovers as well, and all she might believe in. Kundera understands but despises this moral degradation and feels exonerated of it.

The lover that Sabina takes when she escapes to Switzerland is Franz, a respectable married physician and the fourth of Kundera's quartet of characters. She dominates him sexually and in every other way. Franz, though physically powerful, needs to be submissive. The paradox of their lives together is that Sabina would never have tolerated the physical violence and dominance of which Franz is capable, but she does not believe that a lasting sexual relationship can be without violence. Sabina disappears from the story when Kundera has made his point that the "unbearable lightness of being"—of having no inexorable place in life—is her permanent identity. Franz, honorable but eventually pathetic, is traced to his death on an obscure South Asian border, where he is shot down because he demands to do good and is not understood. "The exquisite noise of European history was lost in an infinite silence," Kundera writes after describing that death volley. Here the intruding author is clearly ambivalent about the idealists who would change the world but have neither the ideas nor the power to do so. He honors their resolution, the categorical imperative that drives them, but he despairs to the point of cynicism about the hopelessness of their gestures. Only in these passages does Kundera reach a tragicomic note. But the novelist/observer's cynical bite, this sadness at the consequence of what he calls sentimentality, keeps the novel from reaching comedy.

As Sabina represents the "unbearable lightness," modern life's imperviousness to meaning, Tomas, the character subservient to the author's will, represents the virtue of heaviness. He acts on an overriding necessity—Beethoven's "*Es muss sein!*"—in following his love and on an inner compulsion to return "home," where he knows he will face degradation. Tomas's action is compelling. For Kundera that act would have required a difficult "weighty resolution," an action based on a metaphysical truth that he could not drive himself to find. Kundera made the tortured choice not to return, to stay in the private hell made public in these pages.

This, then, is a political novel with a decided difference. It tells not one but several equally true and meaningful stories: that of the author/narrator Kundera, who creates the images of the disastrous history not only of his country but of European culture; and those of the characters, especially Tomas,