

THE CONTINUING CRISIS



•One of the soggiest Mays on record has elapsed, but as the rains abate and the summer sun glints over the horizon, hope rises that at last America has another Gandhi, a replacement for the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and in sync with the times—for this replacement is a woman! The candidate is Miss Tawana Brawley. She and her unscotchable advisers—the Rev. Al Sharpton and her lawyer, Mr. C. Vernon Mason—are making a heroic stand against the entire New York state power structure. Miss Brawley, as all conscientious Americans will recall, is the teenage black girl whom several white men raped, enscribed with racial slogans, encrusted in canine manure, and left in a common garbage bag on November 28 in Wappingers Falls, New York. Miss Brawley's lawyer, ably abetted by the pious Rev. Sharpton, simply will not allow the crime to go unpunished; and now they have uncovered evidence that despite his vaunted liberalism, Governor Mario Cuomo has confected an elaborate cover-up utilizing the vast resources of the Ku Klux Klan, the Irish Republican Army, organized crime, and *Commentary* magazine. Yes, our agents tell us that the Rev. Sharpton could soon divulge that *Commentary* magazine, the well-known neoconservative organ, has an agreement to supply Wappingers Falls' rapists with the specially treated dog manure used by them to complete their discreditable acts of sexual congress. Doubtless in time the Rev. Sharpton will divulge the names of those who supply Wappingers Falls' rapists with their requisite garbage bags, but for now neither the redoubtable Miss Brawley nor her venerable Mum will participate in Attorney General Robert Abrams's grand jury proceedings, for as Mr. Mason declaimed on May 24, "We say to all New York, 'Bob Abrams, you cannot come with an illegal subpoena to an illegal grand jury that's set up to cover up the dirty, bloody tracks of these perpetrators. You can't come with that because just like Rosa Parks, Dr. King, Gandhi shut that whole system down, today we're saying No.' " It is about time that someone had the guts to say it!

•On May 14 Miss Sarina R. di Bonaventura and Mr. Philip Steven Birsh were married in a private ceremony at

the Greentree estate of Mrs. John Hay Whitney. Miss di Bonaventura, the great-granddaughter of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his lovely wife Eleanor, was until recently a secretary at Columbia Artists Management in charge of the coffeemaker. Mr. Birsh is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Birsh. In Monrovia, Liberia, police have broken up another ritual murder ring, this one involving six people who hoped to procure better political jobs by finishing off two young boys. The Food and Drug Administration reported on May 11 that fewer defective condoms are showing up on the United States market and none contained defects that are life-threatening.

•In London the British government announced a massive campaign against an outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy that turns theretofore docile cows into "raging beasts." Unfortunately, the government does not intend to extend the campaign to include the large herds of upper-class English girls who enter the U.S. every month manifesting precisely these symptoms. Polish labor unrest extended through much of the month, and the Pope spent twelve days on a four-nation visit to South America where he inadvertently effected a row between himself and General Alfredo Stroessner, Paraguay's leader, by letting slip an impolite observation about the General's boots.

•Governor Mary Lou Dukakis's daughter, Andrea, vivacious and look-

ing for all the world as though she had just had a top-of-the-line electrolysis servicing, notified the citizenry of California from the steps of the San Francisco City Hall that until some time in May "My father did half the housework and half the cleaning" plus all the grocery shopping. On May 12 President Ronald Reagan announced at a Republican fundraising dinner that he will support George Bush despite Miss Dukakis's testimonial to her father's mastery of domestic policies. Five days later Attorney General Edwin Meese revealed a major cause of the looming conservative crack-up by dismissing his enormously able spokesman, Mr. Terry Eastland, a frequent contributor to this journal. Simply put, Mr. Meese's generation of conservatives does not have much appreciation for the younger generation that will live to write the older generation's biographies.

•In San Diego, California, Judge J. Morgan Lester was badly bruised when a porta-potty erupted beneath him. The Judge, having taken a break from jogging, entered the facility without authorization and was relieving himself when a forklift raised the porta-potty and hauled it and the intruder a short but painful distance. In New York City, Miss Jean Benes died when her companion of two years, Mr. Milton Eberenz, folded her into a convertible bed and simply had done with her foul disposition. Mr. Eberenz is charged with second-degree manslaughter. In Deer Park, Long Island, Mr. Thomas Jeffer-

son was arrested for setting his girlfriend's bed afire while she was recumbent upon it. Mr. Alger Hiss's memoirs have been published. He calls them *Recollections of a Life*. Mr. Kim Philby died in Moscow, alas, of natural causes; and the Maryland farm of Mr. Whitaker Chambers was declared a national historical landmark by the patriotic interior secretary, the Hon. Don Hodel.

•Mr. Pete Rose, manager of the Cincinnati Reds, received a thirty-day suspension and \$10,000 fine for crudities directed at an insentient umpire. The government announced that unemployment dropped to a fourteen-year low in April, and various national polls gave Governor Dukakis a 10-13 point lead over the principal passenger in Air Force Two. Britain's Press Council ruled that newspapers may with impunity refer to homosexuals as "poofs" and "poofers." The Associated Press reports that a Madison, Wisconsin man accused of exposing his private parts to women while posing as an underwear model has been convicted of three counts of lewd and lascivious behavior and four counts of trespassing. The culprit's name was not included in the report, but Madison is the home of the *Progressive* magazine, and reasonable readers can conclude that one of that magazine's editorialists has again been up to his old tricks. What is more, there may be a few *Progressive* writers in retirement in Hudson, Florida, for there an outbreak of robberies perpetrated by nude thieves has struck terror among retirees. Most recently a convenience store was robbed of three lottery tickets, cigarettes, and a lighter by a man wearing gray bikini briefs on his head and gray socks on his hands.

•In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Cajuns were added to the state's growing list of officially designated minorities over the vociferous objections of fuliginous state legislators. The World Health Organization has honored Cuba's chief jailer, Mr. Fidel Castro, for giving up his cigar and setting a "smoke-free example" for his countrymen similar to that set in this country by the tiresome Dr. C. Everett Koop, Surgeon General of the United States, who early in the month declared nicotine an addictive drug. Four hundred Missouri bullfrogs shipped to England to scare off cats



from country-house ponds were recalled when environmentalists raised another of their inscrutable complaints. Australian health authorities denounced the toad-slime cocktail, an hallucinogenic potion created by the infamous Hippies of Brisbane from the skin of the cane toad. Karl A. Wittfogel, the social scientist who after his 1939 break with Communism distinguished himself as one of its most scholarly critics, died, as did Mr. Morris (Red) Ruden-

sky and Mrs. Bernadette K. Devine. •Former White House Chief of Staff Mr. Donald Regan gave new meaning to the Reagan Administration's term Star Wars when he revealed in his kiss-and-tell memoirs Mrs. Nancy Reagan's interest in astrology; and on the very day that Mr. Regan's revelation became known Mr. Carroll Righter, the syndicated astrologist, expired—a fact to conjure with. In Los Angeles, California, gourmands who delight in that city's delicacies were put on alert when

Mr. George Jimenez, 26, was sentenced to a month in the hoosegow for baking his wife's six-week-old kitten in a microwave. In April Miss Guadalupe O. Rodriguez, 25, also of Los Angeles, was charged with felonious animal cruelty for incinerating her boyfriend's parrot in a conventional oven. There is an alarming trend here, and it does not bode well for Los Angeles cuisine. On May 15, Soviet troops began to depart Afghanistan, and on May 28 President Reagan began his fourth summit with

Mikhail Gorbachev. Finally, Mr. David Nelson, a student at Chicago's Art Institute, achieved the limits of art when at a school exhibition he displayed his portrait of the late Mayor Harold Washington clad in lingerie. Black leaders were enraged. Police confiscated the portrait. The fearless defenders of art who administer the Art Institute apologized in newspaper ads, and only the American Civil Liberties Union came to Mr. Nelson's defense. —RET

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Does the Pope Love America?

To those of us who equate the idea of moral equivalence between democracy and Communism with moral obtuseness, the encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, is difficult to understand, let alone defend. That Reid Buckley even attempts to defend this document is itself an accomplishment that I must admire ("Does the Pope Love America?" *TAS*, May 1988). I also agree with Buckley that the only way this statement by John Paul can be defended is to see it as a message that is not concerned with our lives here on this earth but with "that breach in being through which our transcendent destiny is revealed to us." In this context, one in which we are summoned to "sanctity," no political system is adequate, and consequently, the sharp differences between East and West are ultimately irrelevant.

But if the Pope's teaching is interpreted in this way, as a manifestation of Christ's dictum that our true kingdom is not of this world, then the encyclical is itself irrelevant whenever it criticizes the economic policies of the West. A religious statement that is dedicated to having us transcend our "base nature" cannot expect also to tell us what political and economic policies we should follow, since these policies and systems are designed to accommodate natural man.

Religious leaders have, of course, recognized this dilemma, and have modified Christianity so as to have Christ's kingdom embrace this world as well as the next world. But in doing so, in accepting religion as immanent as well as being transcendent, the Christian religion has had to defend its statements in the same way as other statements: by reason based in human experience. Consequently, those statements in the encyclical that deal with political and economic issues must be judged by the same criteria as secular statements. And to the extent that *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* suggests that there is little dif-

ference between Communism and capitalist democracy, the Pope's statement should be condemned by anyone who is not sympathetic to Communism—including, of course, Reid Buckley.

Even a debater who is as clever as Buckley cannot have it both ways: If the encyclical is to be relevant to our political life, the Pope is wrong in some important ways. If, however, we accept Buckley's interpretation, and see the encyclical as essentially a call to religious transcendence, then the encyclical has nothing to say to our political questions—and Buckley's victory is not one that John Paul would appreciate.

—Lawrence W. Hyman
Ridgewood, New Jersey

That many Americans care more about their ski trips and cars than about the state of their souls is manifest. We are a soft people, willing to watch allies be consumed by an Evil Empire to the East, looking the other way while our unborn are wiped out, impassive as our society buckles from vicious crime and sexual perversion.

Conservatives, particularly conservative Catholics, spend much of their time thinking about these abominations. But with all our cogitating, I don't think I know anyone who has ever come up with a gem like this: "The cause of these evils is our economic system."

Indeed, when the likes of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin lecture us on morality and capitalism, we naturally defend our system—and demand to know why the Chicago liberal doesn't focus on the *real* causes of our moral decay. Yet when even sterner lectures come from Rome, conservative Catholics exhibit a softness all their own.

And it isn't because most of them regard the Pope's latest socio-economic treatise as infallible (some pietists do, admittedly). Most realize that prescriptions for world exchange-rate reforms, or phenomenological discourses about

"underdevelopment," don't fall under the divine guarantee.

No, conservatives get puppy-like about John Paul II because he's a Pole and suffered under Communism. (Why *that* is so bad now escapes me; it is, after all, merely one of two Structures of Sin.) He was also probably the victim of a KGB plot, and he opposes the killing of innocents. I like him for that too.

But would someone please explain why many of the Catholic right's best minds shrug—or endorse him—when John Paul attacks our economic system root and branch? They didn't shrug at Bernardin and Company. They told him, indignantly, that the fire was three miles down the road.

I'd trade our economic system and its fruits for a morally healthy society with a klutzy, Wojtyla-like system. (Where he'd pay for his ski trips and indoor pool without American Catholic dollars in that case is anybody's guess—as would be the source of funds for that incredible Vatican deficit, which is far worse than any but the most disreputable government's.) But isn't it crazy to address our moral decay with a call for structural economic reform?

—Roger A. McCaffrey
Ridgefield, Connecticut

Reid Buckley's piece, if I may be so bold, got so wound up in the fine print that it missed the key point of the Pope's encyclical—the political impact. My Catholic training tells me that England was a sinful society in 1940. Yet if Pius XII had started hurling anathemas at Churchill while Hitler was at the gates, that would have been inexcusable. For the Pope who bear-baited in Poland, chased Cardinal O'Connor out of Jerusalem, and elevated Mgr. Obando y Bravo, to pretend otherworldliness when the evidence indicates otherwise is plain irresponsible. On the other hand, that silly grin he wore when snapped at his shameful meeting with Arafat was eerily Carterish, so

maybe the poor chap is, as the French say, "un peu detraque!"

—John Poulin
Flin Flon, Manitoba
Canada

"... A good ole boy, associating intimately only with two other divine males..." responsible for "... legitimated religious bigotry, racism, classism, imperialism, clericalism, and all the other isms you can think of..." This insight was reported in the religious press as an observation on the Holy and Undivided Trinity by the distinguished Roman Catholic theologian, Sister Madonna Kolbenschlag.

In Reid Buckley's article "Does The Pope Love America?" he explains that John Paul II can't approve of us because we are "a philosophically corrupted society." The Holy Father could contribute mightily to our regeneration by cleaning out the polluted metaphysics, epistemology, and morality which flourishes in that odd ecclesiastical entity "the American Catholic Church."

—The Reverend Roland Thorwaldsen
Rector, St. Stephen's Church
Beaumont, California

Reid Buckley replies:

Regarding Rev. Thorwaldsen's letter: something can be polluted only if an agent contaminates and thus transmogrifies its essential character—as, say, the rotting cadaver a pure spring well. Such as Sister Madonna Kolbenschlag may disgrace their Order; they pollute only themselves. The metaphysics, epistemology, and morality of the *Catholic Church* remain untouched.

Regarding Mr. Poulin's letter: comparing the U.S. (or the West's) political situation today with England's vis-a-vis Nazi Germany in 1940 strains mightily. Nor would the point of the comparison be relevant, even if it were apt. Just as the Pope is not (solely) a temporal ruler, he is not (solely) a "states-

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