

Carré that was adorned with nothing but the accumulated and ennobling dirt of decades. He established an artistic credo: Purity, Poignancy and Tradition—and ruthlessly went about cultivating and preserving it. Not too consciously, I presume, he sensed that there was a cultural treasure in having septuagenarians play with syncopated and improvisational excellence, faithful to their almost dogmatic canon of musical heritage. The generosity of his untiring efforts, together with his fascination with their results, was what Allan had to offer New Orleans, and the city knew how to accept it. One must notice that it all happened in the '60s, when Allan—fighting fiercely with his musicians' arthritis or sclerosis and for their elementary financial survival—promoted the cult of precious oldness. At exactly the same time, Mr. Sammler, the great philosopher from Saul Bellow's novel, was cruelly crucified for his age and wisdom at Columbia University by the frantic cohorts of the youth cultists, who invaded the American civilization and maimed it to the extent which even now, 10 years later, is still felt. And Allan won: a Yippie of today is a manic-farcical occurrence, while Willie Humphrey, way into his seventies, gathers pious admiration from today's teenagers, who sit cross-legged on Preservation Hall's grimy floor and inhale "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." Apparently, precious oldness never ages.

There are other consequences. This time, I observed a new breed of young street musicians on the Quarter's corners. The last decade was cluttered with youth in contrived attire—from ragged military gear to tuxedo-cum-jeans to Peruvian bowlers-on-Newport-socialites—who spouted their drugged political rock platitudes around St. Mark's Place or Haight-Ashbury. Something different can now be seen around the Pontalba Buildings. Young men dressed like hardhats at a labor union convention play instrumental music all around—blues and bop and cool jazz—in a joyous but

unobtrusive manner, mindful of small contributions, but very much concentrating on the flawlessness of an improvisational solo. On a Sunday afternoon, at the corner of Royal and Conti, I especially enjoyed a young man in a Pendleton shirt and Florsheim black dress shoes, whose rendition of "Frankie and Johnny" made me stop and listen. He used a weird sort of electronic zither with an amplifier for accompaniment.

"What's that?" I asked. "An autoharp," he answered sternly, as if surprised by my ignorance. "It's made by the Pennsylvania Dutch." I must admit that his version of the sinister old ballad sounded quite cheerful, optimistic, and rejuvenated with the help of that peculiar instrument. It became quite clear to me how much the Quarter is under the sway of Preservation Hall, Jaffe and their unintentional conservatism. □

## The American Proscenium

### The Visit

Pope John Paul II came to America for a visit. He was the central figure in a six-day drama and brought a message. The drama turned out to be a projection of personal warmth infused with moral authority in a manner unknown in this century. Millions of people responded avidly and, taking into account the Pope's prior feats in Mexico and behind the Iron Curtain in Poland, he has clearly emerged as a world leader on a scale yet to be assessed by history.

Wojtyla's message was that purity of faith and doctrine is the most reliable weapon in the crucial fight for human civilization against the forces of totalitarianism in the East and nihilism in the West. American liberals, progressives, feminists, utopians, relativists, slogan-eers and theologian-rock-singers decided not to let him get away with this. Thus, at the prayer service at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, one Sister Theresa Kane, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, sternly instructed the Pope to admit women to "all the ministries of our church." Sister Kane believes that "the top social ills of our society are sexism and racism." This is no small progress from the Scriptures, in which we can find only the dull and outmoded opinion that "Sin maketh nations miserable." We can assume that the contemporary contempt for the salvation

of souls, an overwhelming concern for sages and saints throughout Christianity's history, is a social ill of minor consequence in her scale of things. Sister Theresa, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, "was smartly dressed in a brown suit and beige blouse" when she embarked on teaching the pontiff her lesson.

The reporting of the episode sheds a further light on the press' peculiar manipulation of democracy, statistics and opinion-forming practices. According to the same *Tribune*, of 5,000 nuns present at the service, only 50 rose up to show their solidarity with Sister Theresa's entreaty. This is 1% of the audience. However, the *Tribune* allowed two nuns to voice their support for Sister Theresa and two for the Pope. This looks pretty much like a draw in the battle of canonical views, but only to a naive eye. To journalistic sophisticates, it was obvious that Sister Theresa's opinions soundly trounced those of the Pope: her supporters were permitted the space to elaborate eloquently and at length on the superiority of Catholic feminism, while those on Wojtyla's side were permitted only a limited reservation that was made to sound both feeble and feeble-minded. As the *Chicago Tribune* obviously liked the drama better than the message, its reportorial mechanism of suppressive censorship demanded that those opinions which did not fit the mold of liberal-totalitarian

militancy be skillfully subdued.

But these are trivial matters, as many suspect. The more unsettling suspicion is that the media's liberal commentators have embarked on a devious campaign that is designed to drive a wedge between the drama and the message. After his visit, most of the media complained that there was a queer contradiction between a pastor who was so charismatic, so human and humane, so propeople, propeace and antiviolence—and the fact that he was embracing such obsolete views on principles, morals, existential conduct within and without the Church. The disconsolate writers at *Time* magazine wondered how they could reconcile those immense crowds with the fact that "... the U.S. is a pluralist, secular, sexually permissive society, and in the past two decades Americans have come to view with suspicion all institutions and authority, social, political or religious."

It would be difficult to find a more striking example of the liberal press' cynicism and prevarication than *Time's* mixture of demi-intelligence and ill will, ignorance and falsehood. There's no conflict between American pluralism and the Pope's universalism: after all, Catholic, which means universal, denotes an enlarged vision of pluralism, even if the history of Catholicism contains some chapters of exclusionary fanaticism. Whether America is secular can be largely disputed; the separation of church and state does not presume a society divorced from religion, as the American 19th century amply demonstrated. Our sexually permissive society was brought about during the '60s and '70s by the enthusiastic accounts by *Time* and its media confreres of every kind of behavioral aberration. Besides, we do not truly know how much of the American society is sexually permissive, since *Time*, and its colleagues, lavishly report on Esalen, vaginal art, est, Studio 54 and male stripteasers, but ignore any example of contrary mores; thus we do not know what segment of this society practices Manhattan-Los Angeles-San

Francisco manners, and how many are avoiding defloration at twelve—the latter is not newsworthy and so becomes a part of the mass of suppressed truth. Those polls which debunk *Time's* image of this society are naturally played down, if not passed over in silence. The same technique applies to respected institutions and effective authority: *Time* does not like them, thus the yearning for them does not exist in the picture of America which is officially prescribed by the liberal media establishment in New York City.

Then the Pope comes and millions of people suddenly seem to crave authority, institutions, coherence, normalcy, tradition—and a leader who would be able to restore them to their natural role in society. A *Chicago Tribune* columnist called it "magic," with a sort of undigested bitterness. But isn't it time that other people of good intentions notice these cravings? Isn't it time that an American, or a group of Americans, should continue what Wojtyla so propitiously initiated? (CC)

### *The Brigade*

Over the last few months, plenty of people in the U.S. have agonized over what to do with the Soviet combat brigade stationed in Cuba. Most want to do something about it, though no one is absolutely positive about what should be done. A substantial amount of enlightened, pragmatic, sober, seasoned, well-informed, erudite, expert and liberal columnists, commentators, analysts, Kremlinologists, specialists, savants, scholars, intellectuals and intellectualoids have been firmly repeating that the Soviet encampment is of little importance, that a Soviet military unit 90 miles off Miami Beach does not pose any threat to our security, let alone to the luxury hotels along Collins Avenue.

They just keep forgetting that in our time's global strategy and tactical planning, image counts as much as fact, or, perhaps, even more.

### *An Anniversary*

The fortieth anniversary of the beginning of World War II recently passed without much comment. The anniversary of another event intimately related to that war passed almost totally unnoticed. The conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet "nonaggression" pact, nominally a "peace" agreement, but actually a deal for a German-Soviet partition of Eastern Europe, was the immediate trigger of the world's greatest war. It completed the work of that other great "peace" agreement, the Munich pact, though at least at Munich one party imagined that it was obtaining peace. Curiously, Munich remains rather more vivid in recollection.

In 1938, the Red Army's Director of Military Intelligence for Western Europe, General Walter Krivitsky, defected to the West to escape Stalin's slaughter of the Soviet officer corps. In an article published in the Russian exile journal *Socialist Courier*, Krivitsky warned that Stalin wanted to reach an agreement with Hitler, and had already made feelers for this through trade missions to Berlin. His story has since been confirmed by captured Nazi documents. His warning was greeted by the liberal crooners in the Western press with the same disgust as they now use to dismiss objections to the unverifiability of the SALT II agreements.

The true story of the prelude to World War II is not just more interesting than its fashionable versions, but it is perhaps of considerable relevance to our own time. After all, the West today, as in the 1930s, is confronted by not one, but two totalitarian states which are utterly hostile to it and which hate each other. And both of these states follow essentially Stalinist premises in their foreign policies, the Chinese openly and proudly, the Soviets more quietly. (Even Khrushchev never repudiated any important part of Stalin's *foreign* policy, and his successors have partly rehabilitated Stalin.) Of course the situation today is quite different in its geographic