

organs over the methods and direction of foreign policy." Everything here, he continues, "depends on precisely which forces within the ruling circles control the government."

It is not hard to imagine which forces Nyporko would prefer to see presiding. Although there may be "no difference in principle" between the two parties, because they both support some degree of capitalism, "they nevertheless wage a sharp struggle with each other for the right to influence domestic and foreign policy." In his analysis of the divisions within the Democratic Party, he

suggests, relying heavily on American analysts, that "struggles" between Congress and the President are especially helped by certain Democratic deviations, most of which are dovish as well as anti-executive. Far more Democrats than Republicans are singled out as spokesmen for "progressive forces."

And while Democrats in Congress may oppose a Democratic President, a more useful situation, Nyporko suggests, is one in which a Congress predominantly of one party deters a President from the opposition party. Not surprisingly, he would prefer to see a Republican President elected in 1980, along with a Demo-

cratic Congress. Nyporko's paradigm is the Nixon presidency, the checks-and-balances tension of which he calls "unprecedented." "From 1969 to 1973," he gleefully notes, "Congress passed 149 different resolutions reducing executive power." The conditions of "divided rule," he goes on to argue, "can only assist progressive tendencies." Even so, his first preference, of course, would be that "progressive forces" (unnamed) form their own party, under the guidance of the Communist Party USA, or work successfully within one—guess which?—of the two American political parties. (As Nyporko puts it, the "more liberal one.") Perhaps Barry

Commoner's "Citizen's Party," formed since the book was written, fits the bill.

The important thing about all of this is that analyses like Nyporko's do have an effect on Soviet foreign policy. Clearly the Kremlin is aware, as Nyporko reveals, of the potentially great power of the American President; but it also sees, and rather counts on, the weakening of executive power as a result of congressional overreaction to, among other things, the "mistaken" Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the Vietnam war, and Watergate. It is not hard to see how something like the invasion of Afghanistan might follow from that. □

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

### Podhoretz vs. Horner

Since its release, *Kramer vs. Kramer* has bounced Carter and Kennedy, the Ayatollah, and the imminent Third World War from dinner-party conversation in the city where I live—which is Washington, no less, where movies are only "culture," and not usually in the same league with politics for serious social discourse. It's as if the case of Ted vs. Joanna were under consideration by the Supreme Court. This says something for the film as political event, not drama—an understanding of its significance John Podhoretz demonstrates in his review ("The Talkies," January 1980).

I share in Mr. Podhoretz's criticism of those who employ the women's movement ideology as a cover for selfishness and irresponsibility. However, I find in myself and among friends who share this general criti-

cism surprisingly strong support for *Joanna*. I say "surprisingly," because no reviews I have seen construe the movie as primarily a sympathetic portrait of *her*. Given her jargonized lines, and given the fact that her act of desertion is undermotivated (whether by script defect or "really" is, I believe, not possible to say—a major flaw in the film), a sympathetic response is necessarily a political, not a dramatic, reaction.

Against Mr. Podhoretz's conclusion that the film—or the story itself—"outside" the film—presents a partial and overdue indictment of a liberated woman as "a cop-out artist who has failed to hack it in what is the most taxing and important job there is," I have heard raised, and have raised myself, the following questions:

1. If Joanna is seriously more culpable than Ted, does that imply, as

Mr. Podhoretz concludes, that the ideology she uses to make good her escape from an imagined sense of injury exists for, and is promoted primarily for, that purpose? If an ascendant ideology can be abused, to what extent does that discredit the ideology? This is not a simple question to answer.

2. Because of Joanna's desertion, which represents to Mr. Podhoretz "the flight of privileged American women from their natural responsibility," Ted "must become a mother to the kid to whom he is already an affectionate father." Where affectionate? *In pecto*? We see no evidence of his affection before her flight. Joanna's "natural responsibility"? What is Ted's natural responsibility? His involvement in career extends well beyond the responsibility of family support. He is significantly responsible to self and ambition, as

Joanna has not been during the five-year period encompassing toilet training, shoelace tying, and the guidance which has made Billy a good, sensitive, loving, and brave child. Billy is not the product of what Mr. Podhoretz calls a "lousy mother." Ted himself, in the courtroom scene, indicates he does not consider her a failure.

3. Mr. Podhoretz asks why Joanna did not take Billy with her, if she loved him. Her desertion is inexcusable, but... If she *had* taken him, or had continued to take *full* responsibility for him at home, within the marriage, she would have fared about as well as Ted did, when *he* took charge. Worse, probably, since she had to *start* a career. Like Ted, she would have lost jobs and taken salary reductions. There would have been for her only what she got at home before her flight: no praise, no promotions, no victories over competitors. We live in a productively competitive society, where a chief source of joy is work well-done, and recognized as such. Those who cherish meritocracy must acknowledge that to exclude women from its rewards (and its pains) is to create a climate in which many women reject the value of the competitive and productive ethic as a way of preserving a sense of their own importance. Worse, they are teaching their children to reject it too.

4. Is not Ted's act of heroism—handling job and home alone—the permanent and unpraised condition of millions of divorced women?

5. Ted's isolation from his family before Joanna left was *his* form of desertion. Mr. Podhoretz says that the "Sisterhood" has made desertion by mothers "acceptable and even

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laudable." There is, unfortunately, some truth in what he says. Even so, it must be admitted that there exists an older, stronger brotherhood which justifies Ted's style of desertion and which is only now being examined for immoderation.

Desertion of a child is, always and everywhere, impermissible. But, discounting for dramatic exaggeration, is it not possible that, over the long haul, Joanna did all three of them a favor?

Constance Horner  
Washington, D.C.

John Podhoretz replies:

It is plug-in-your-own ideology time at the movies. Mrs. Horner's letter further convinces me that *Kramer vs. Kramer* is the decade's great cinematic litmus test. *Time* magazine and most of the other critics share Mrs. Horner's view of Ted Kramer before the fact: that Ted was a stranger to his son until circumstances bound them together. I, for one, do not believe this, in spite of the convenience of the theory, and even in spite of the movie itself, which talks a lot about Ted's workaholic nature. Nonetheless, the first scene between father and son, in which Ted incompetently makes breakfast for the two of them, gave me the impression of an "affectionate" and good-natured father. Later on, Ted does yell at Billy for spilling Hawaiian Punch on some of his worksheets; this scene appears to be set up in order to demonstrate Ted's insensitiveness, but he actually comes off rather well. After all, Billy did know that he wasn't supposed to drink the punch in the living room.

I am frankly perplexed by Mrs. Horner's sympathetic evaluation of Joanna. There can be no defense for the desertion of a child—not worries about career, money, or health. Joanna is Billy's mother. If she leaves him behind, it is he who is the real cause of the desertion. Despite the talk of the last ten years, women who abdicate their motherhood can receive no valid defense. This is why the movie weakens when it attempts to give Joanna's side of the story; all it can do is rail verbally against Ted, because it cannot face, or measure up to, the indefensible. In real art, such an act can be explained and the person who commits it can even be viewed sympathetically and understandingly: Anna Karenina is the supreme example of this, and a very fitting one in this instance. Robert Benton, *Kramer vs. Kramer*'s writer/director, simply chickens out when he meets the real challenge. If he had faced it and struggled with it, *Kramer vs. Kramer* might well have made the extraordinarily unpretentious and

rare leap into greatness to which too many movies pretentiously aspire.

And finally, the ascendant ideology that is women's liberation has not been abused by a type like Joanna. It has merely been comprehended, internalized, and acted out to its logical letter.

#### Strategic Mite?

In his article, "The Seven Lessons of SALT" (December 1979), Kenneth Adelman recognizes the futility of endeavoring to place substantive, bilateral constraints on arms growth and notes that the value of SALT treaties may lie ultimately with the pressure they exert periodically to subject America's defense posture to public review. Unfortunately, Adelman fails to capitalize on this opportunity to make a genuine contribution to the debate on the fundamental assumptions underlying U.S. strategic doctrine, offering in its place a simplistic analysis of U.S. military capabilities and the standard right-wing elixir for America's "dangerous" military decline: massive across-the-board increases in defense spending and the deployment of every new weapons system the Pentagon manages to concoct.

While it was hoped that SALT II would raise critical questions about the direction of U.S. defense policy and the Soviet strategic threat, the debate has centered around budget numbers, percentage changes in nuclear inventories, and the precise date on which the Russians will acquire strategic "superiority." Instead of giving the general public greater insight into the theoretical framework within which this obsessive preoccupation with nuclear "inferiority" is justified, writers like Adelman have obscured this deeper issue and have concentrated chiefly on "setting into motion pressures which, over time, [will] redress the strategic imbalance," the nature of which they never bother to define.

Adelman's first "lesson" is that "U.S. strategic might is dwindling mightily." What exactly is meant by this is unclear. No attempt whatsoever is made to define such terms. The question therefore becomes: By what standards is strategic might measured and on what grounds could it be said that it is dwindling? No reply is forthcoming.

Instead of providing an explanation, Adelman proudly asserts that SALT II has permitted defense-minded individuals like himself to "awaken Americans from their torpor to the coming strategic inferiority." The apocalyptic tone of this pronouncement is matched only by the

# MAD AT THE MEDIA?

Did you ever try to complain to a newspaper or a network about the way it treated an issue of concern to you?

Perhaps you have sent a letter to the editor—only to find that it was never printed.

Or did you write to Walter Cronkite—and get back one of those meaningless form letters thanking you for your interest in CBS News?

Or you could have picked up the phone and talked to an editor or some other official. The chances are that after you explained what was bothering you, he explained that they "stood by their story," or that it was all matter of "news judgment."

The chances are that you felt frustrated and defeated. And you may have felt even more defeated if, as often happens, you saw them do again the very same thing you had complained about.

If this has ever happened to you, you belong to a very large club. What can you do about it except stew?

Well, if you had \$45 million or so, you could buy your own newspaper and do things as they should be done. Too bad you don't have \$45 million.

But if you have .000003 of that—just \$15—you can do something almost as satisfying. You can join Accuracy in Media, America's media watchdog organization.

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that you can write in concert with thousands of others to exert pressure on the media moguls to correct them.

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imagery it is meant to conjure of the dissolution of our strategic deterrent, a caricature of which is displayed on the next page for those who do not immediately acknowledge the gravity of the situation. It is a picture of a soldier emasculated to the point where only his skeletal structure remains.

While not conducive to a serious examination of the realities of stra-

tegic power, these promotional methods do serve a useful purpose, as the second "lesson" soon reveals.

Adelman prescribes the time-honored conservative remedy of across-the-board increases in defense appropriations. This recommendation is based on the observations that the "U.S. is falling behind the Soviet Union militarily," which is "nothing

new," and that, more importantly, "the U.S. is *seen* as falling behind militarily." He then goes on to make expenditure comparisons of both superpowers which supposedly lend validity to his initial claim that Western strategic might is in jeopardy and that the Soviets will soon achieve global supremacy unless measures are taken to prevent the U.S. from continuing to "disarm itself."

While it should be evident that such simple comparisons do not in themselves constitute sufficient grounds for examining the relative strengths and weaknesses of American and Soviet defense postures, Adelman acknowledges the considerable political utility of stressing these differences when discussing the issue publicly.

The value of this simple yet extremely effective tactic has not gone unnoticed. Adelman is pleased to note that "only one-tenth of the public now considers the U.S. militarily superior to the USSR while one-half believes the Russians have forged ahead."

In the absence of a critique of the doctrinal foundation on which U.S. deterrent strategy is based and sufficient proof of the vulnerability of existing weapons systems, Adelman's concerns about the destabilization of the strategic balance simply remain unjustified. To insist as he does that the Soviets will soon acquire "superiority" in the strategic realm without adequately explaining what it means, and then to reveal how easily the public can be manipulated into sharing the same perception, is intellectually dishonest.

So confident is Adelman in his argument for the continued escalation of strategic force levels that at one point he ventures so far as to say that in the recent past, "the U.S. was disarming itself so fast that nothing new was left to propose to the UN disarmament crowd," a reference to President Carter's decision to forestall development of the B-1 bomber, MX missile system, and Trident submarine programs.

Think of it! Throughout our global military empire are poised thousands of warheads capable of literally incinerating the Soviet Union should it attempt a preemptive first strike. Yet to question the desirability of deploying still more atomic weapons is to be roundly dismissed by Adelman as either a guilt-ridden Soviet sympathizer seeking to "balance the power of the United States," a "coward... motivated by the fear of not looking sufficiently progressive," or a "guru of the state, church, and academia" who still clings to "fashionable canons." No allowance is made for critics intent on exposing the suppositions underlying his reasoning for thorough inspection.

Adelman is dishonest with himself in refusing critically to examine his theoretical assumptions and dishonest with his reading audience in not making those assumptions explicit. He does not define his terms and takes pride in manipulating the opin-

(continued on page 39)

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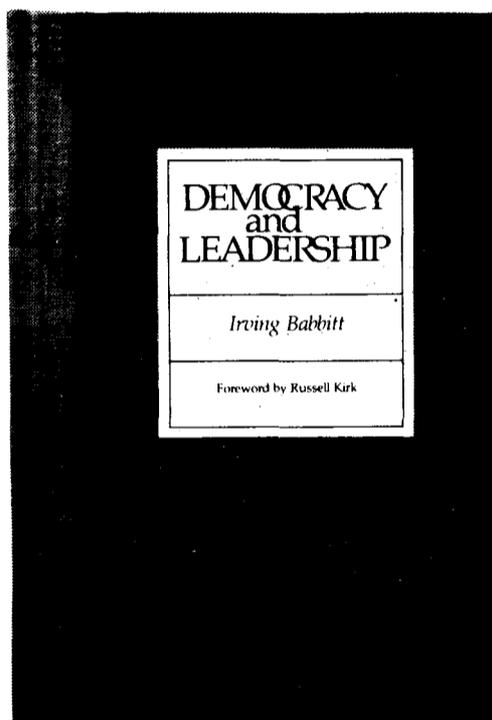
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# C U R R E N T W I S D O M

## Harper's

A Mr. William Rodgers speaks his mind, as dogs howl in the night, garbage cans tip over and roll clamorously and idiotically through empty alleyways; sirens are heard, fire breaks out in the attic, there is an explosion down below, and still Mr. William Rodgers speaks of Alger, about whom Mr. Allen Weinstein has written a book titled, simply, *Perjury*: One of the people honored and admired by those whom I have known for a generation bears a name that for years was a metaphor for malevolence and the sound of serpents. He has endured a prolonged injustice that was born in passions, sustained by fears, and aged by indifference. His name, Alger Hiss, still stirs deep forebodings in some... the non-heroes of our time have won: notably Richard Nixon, whose entire political career was taprooted to inflaming domestic fears of a nearly nonexistent American defection to Communism. Then, too, among the more odious victors was the celebrated superpatriot, and patron saint of law enforcement, J. Edgar Hoover, who died peacefully in his sleep in 1971 without ever having to answer for the humiliation, anxiety, violated rights, and deaths he and his agents inflicted on heaven knows how many citizens. It took Watergate, Spiro Agnew, corporate corruption on a worldwide scale, the Pentagon Papers, and the Vietnam war to open the taps of vindication. Then it required....

[March 1980]

## The New York Times Book Review

Mr. Paul Cowan, author of *The Making of an Un-American*, reviews a flawed masterpiece, which, nonetheless, is essential reading for the earnest intellectualoid:

If there were a truth-in-packaging law for books, Edmund White's "States of Desire" would violate it. For he subtitles his book "Travels in Gay America" but rarely mentions lesbians, or settled homosexual couples....

[February 3, 1980]

## The New York Post

Stirring news of Marlon Brando leaping to the cause of sorely oppressed amphibia:

Superstar Marlon Brando, who commands upwards of \$2 million per picture, has agreed to put in some free time on his latest flick if the producer adds a scene featuring Brando and a drowning frog.

Brando presented the offer to Steve Shagan, producer (and writer) of *The Formula* as he completed an 11-day shooting assignment on the set.

The corpulent actor, who's drawing \$2.7 million for the part, asked Shagan to create a scene in which Brando's character—a money-hungry tycoon—rescues the drowning frog from a swimming pool.

Brando, who feels the scene would convey a strong ecological message, will work two extra days, at no pay, if Shagan agrees to the new scene.

[January 22, 1980]

## The New York Review of Books

Dr. Graham Hughes, professor of law, introduces readers to another one of those novel points of the Liberal Mysteries:

The charge that we coddle criminals and neglect victims is often heard as a cry from the hysterical right but it embodies a substantial, if distorted, truth. Criminals do get a lot more attention than their victims for many reasons. First, victims frighten us.

[March 6, 1980]

## The New York Times

Dr. George Yaney, professor of history at the University of Maryland, dares to speak out on behalf of freedom, justice, and the Soviet way:

To the Editor:

Your coverage of recent events in Afghanistan rests entirely on the presumption that the U.S.S.R. is endangering world peace by violating Afghanistan's sovereignty. Conversely, your reporters and editorial writers assume world peace to be equivalent to the preservation of national sovereignty.

But surely national sovereignty is a dead idea. World peace demands international management, not national independence. If Soviet leaders have found an effective way to intervene in the squalid little sheikhdoms and shahdoms along the Soviet Union's southern border, we should congratulate them, for it is our work they are doing. Is it not obvious by now that world management requires the effective use of power? And is it not equally obvious that the Soviet Union is the only country in the world possessing both the means and the will to exercise power?

No one can doubt that the U.S. possesses power. So do Japan, Germany and other modern democracies. But no statesman in these "free" nations has the stomach or imagination to exercise power in any cause broader than the defense of his country's own boundaries. Only Russia seems to comprehend that the world must be managed....

This is not to say that modern democracies have no function in the world. We are very good at rhetoric, and we should continue to supply the world with words and dreams. We are also good at running markets and factories. No one can match us in quality control and the interchangeability of parts.

When it comes to the exercise of power, however, we are well advised to wash our hands of the matter. Thus far, our contribution to world peace consists largely of inept dictators, demagogues and kings who use our money to equip armies they cannot control. We have labeled this state of affairs "freedom" and "national sovereignty," which, in our quaint effrontery, we equate with world peace.

Consider, by contrast, the area for which Russia has assumed responsibility. Life there is far from perfect, but peace they have. Hungarians are not killing Rumanians; Azerbaijani are not butchering Armenians; Moslems are not massacring infidels. Russians do their work

crudely, but they do their work. Who are we to condemn them?

Before our illustrious President undertakes to lecture the Russians on the finer points of Jefferson's shabby philosophy, let him ask who it was, after all, who saved Europe and the world from Napoleon and Hitler.

[January 23, 1980]

## Mother Jones

More gaseous *pensées* from the estimable Doctor Drummond, M.D. What follows is not to be read near an open flame or in the presence of those suffering emphysema or vasomotor rhinitis:

The work of men is so filled with soiling and the smearing of blood that it presumes the eventual cleaning up and caretaking by women, even as it denigrates those "feminine" functions. It was rational and humane to evacuate pregnant women and young children from the Three Mile Island vicinity, but we shouldn't necessarily ascribe these qualities to the officials there—since it would have been rational and humane to evacuate everyone. No, I suspect that the men assigned to "fix it" were eager to banish the generative presence of humanity from the workplace where such a monstrosity could be created. Behind those solemn faces under their hard hats was a child-like glee at being able to play without any mummies around, for a while.

[February/March 1980]

## Publishers Weekly

The courageous and eloquent bull of a nascent Flaubert up from the locker room:

PUBLISHERS/EDITORS. I have read nearly 1000 reviews of adult fiction during the past two years. All but one had as the underlying theme of the work: heterosexuality; the status quo as norm; and mainstream society representative of reality. In short, all adult fiction published in the past two years was written in the same old way about the same old stuff, with only slight variations on a theme. My agent has been circulating my novel on women & sports for the past few months with no takes. The work is witty, humorous, very Feminist, revealing of the life-style of women athletes, clearly not representative of one kind of status quo reality, and written with a zest that is typical of women athletes. Why this ad? To pose the question: Is the sole responsibility of publishers to sustain so-called norms and status quo behavior in literature and to not permit any other type of same on the market? From my observations that seems to be true. To date, no adult fiction on women & sports and their life-style appears on the market. Friends said I was crazy to place this ad. I said, maybe there is at least one publisher willing to take on a novel on women & sports, clearly not representative of the same old stuff, written in the same old way, and take the responsibility as well as offering the public something else to read. Requests for completed manuscript on women & sports may be had by telephoning (203) 226-4560.

[February 8, 1980]

## Esquire

A report on the astounding treachery of America's infamous elites from Mr. Richard Reeves, legendary sociologist:

You see signs in the lives of young black males that America has reached a consensus on the unreachable and that narcotics are part of an unspoken policy of psychological genocide—an effective tactic when combined with colonialist tricks like finding and co-opting potentially dangerous young leadership, getting them to Harvard or the state assembly before they foment rebellion.

[November 1979]

## The United States Senate

Senators S.I. Hayakawa and Alan Cranston send an urgent "Dear Colleague" letter containing much useful information for the lively bodies of our government's upper house:

Dear Colleague:

We wish to inform you of the VD NATIONAL HOTLINE, sponsored by the American Social Health Association. This HOTLINE is the only round-the-clock VD information and referral service providing toll-free epidemic intervention to callers from the 48 continental states. The American Social Health Association, located in California, is the only national voluntary health organization which deals strictly with venereal disease research, education, prevention, and control.

[February 1, 1980]

## The Environmental Defense Letter

The redoubtable newsletter of the Environmental Defense Fund provides vigilant nature lovers with still more evidence that even when the EDF has no idea what it is doing it is doing good:

The snail darter's fate is still unclear. Though completing the [Tellico] dam will destroy the fish in the Little Tennessee River, its only natural habitat, populations transplanted to other nearby rivers still survive. If they become successfully established, the key to their survival may well have been EDF's own lawsuit against Tellico Dam in the early 1970's, before discovery of the snail darter or passage of the Endangered Species Act. Had EDF's suit not delayed construction originally, the snail darter might have become extinct before anyone knew it existed.

[November/December 1979]

## The New York Times

A brief biographical note on one of the United States Congress's most revered statesmen, the Hon. Michael O. Myers:

Mr. Myers had one brush with the law after being elected to Congress the second time. He pleaded "no contest" to charges that he beat a waitress and a security guard at an Arlington, Va., motel. Mr. Myers had been at a party after swearing-in ceremonies and was wearing a gorilla mask at the time.

[February 7, 1980]