
THE CONTINUING CRISIS



• February 4 to March 6 and Mr. Mark David Chapman, accused murderer of Mr. John Lennon, keeps thumping for that forgotten masterpiece, *The Catcher in the Rye*. "My wish is for all of you to someday read *The Catcher in the Rye*," he notified, *The New York Times*. "All my efforts will now be devoted toward this goal for this extraordinary book holds many answers." Ronald Reagan thumps for cuts in the tumid Carter budget and for tax reductions. His cuts still leave an ever larger mound of boodle for the Feds and a higher tax burden for the *popolo minuto*, but the do-gooders and the parasites howl anyway. And Dr. Cronkite retires.

• The great man's departure came on March 6, the first Friday of Lent. It was a very solemn affair. Tears were shed in the CBS newsroom. Idiots rushed to their television sets for a last glimpse of the oval-shaped vacuum that was Dr. Cronkite. The reverence accorded the man in his last days was even more witless than the pageantry accorded the return of the hostages. Here was a man who in all his public years never passed on any hint of intellectual substance, yet people esteemed him an authority. He left no books, no essays, not even a heroic or romantic escapade. He dwelt in the land of bromides and feigned attitudes. Wars covered from a newsroom, government policies rendered in thirty-second expositions, humanity observed from the back seat of the CBS corporate limousine, from film clips, from peering over the soup bowls of the giants of our time—never was there any indication that he understood any of the thousands of news stories he reported, or that he knew more about them than the few words he uttered during the evening news. In a nation hankering for grandeur and denied substance he became the master of bland ceremony, and through it all he never more than intimated the existence of an adult brain. My guess is that in the years ahead he will try to make up for all of his vacuous exertions. He will become a minor pest.

• Buckingham Palace announced the engagement of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer, a nineteen-year-old kindergarten teacher; and Mr. David Berkowitz, the convicted "Son of Sam" murderer, has reportedly fallen in love with Mr. Louis Quirros, a transsexual who lived but a bouquet's throw from Mr. Berkowitz's cell until prison officials removed him "for his own safety"—a shockingly judgemental decision that is bound to elicit protests from prison reformers and from members of the mental hygiene movement in general. General Idi Amin emerged from the relative obscurity in which he has lived since a combination of political and social problems forced him to flee Uganda. Before a group of foreign correspondents in the sacred city of Jedda he implored the Reagan administration to allow his 22 children to receive an American education complete with hot lunches, capitalist econom-

ics, political pluralism, the whole shebang. Now a resident of Saudi Arabia, the former Third World eminento spends much of his time sleeping and planning the liberation of Uganda. He has totally eliminated the thunderous snoring characteristic of his sleep during the presidential years and has even adopted the life of strenuous domesticity made fashionable by the late John Lennon. "I cook food for my family," the retired dictator solemnly confirmed, "I iron clothes and sweep the floor very efficiently."

• Interest in Mrs. Rita Jenrette's memoirs, which she says will be published this spring, intensified when her husband ex-Congressman John Jenrette notified the *Columbia* (South Carolina) *State* that he had had intercourse with her on the steps of the U.S. Capitol as his colleagues, during a late-night session, were taking their liberties with the rest of us. Nor was the Hon. Jenrette the only solon moved to romantic flights in the shadow of the Capitol. On February 4, Representative Jon C. Hinson (R. Miss.) was arrested in a men's room at the Longworth Office Building and charged with felonious sodomy. Also charged was the Hon. Hinson's accomplice: Mr. Harold Moore, a Library of Congress employee. Two hours before, Mr. Kerry L. Jones, a staff member of the Democratic Study Group, and Mr. Jetton S. Douglas, a lobbyist for Children's Rights, Inc., had made the same mistake. Vindication was felt at the offices of the *New York Review of Books* when it was reported that the wife and a son of former Cambodian prime minister Lon Nol were arrested in Fullerton, California on charges of child abuse; and a thirty-seven-year-old college boy with the historic name of Jerry Rubin was sentenced to do community-service work for attacking Edward Teller with a piece of cake, despite Mr. Rubin's claim that his act of battery was "a symbolic protest against nuclear power."

• Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland was installed as Prime Minister of Norway amid much laughter throughout the Scandinavian country. The forty-year-old former Oslo shopping bag lady is not only Norway's first female prime minister but also its youngest. Furthermore she has the most absurd name in all of Norwegian politics, a factor that in itself may have accounted for her popularity with the fun-loving Norwegians. Apprehension continued to spread throughout America's Preppy community over the relative scarcity of Preppies in the Reagan administration. Thus far the only member of the "Preppy Pantheon" from *The Official Preppy Handbook* to enter the government is Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush, and apprehensive Preppies cannot forget that it was Ronald Reagan himself who not long ago scorned Poppy Bush as "a Preppy, a Yalie, a sissy"—a very chilling formulation. And while on the subject: Mr. Henry S. Huntington assumed room temperature on February 16. Mr. Hunt-

ington, Yale '04, had been a leading Presbyterian minister until he took up the cause of nudism, ultimately becoming the first president of the International Nudist Conference and America's leading nudist theoretician. Mr. Huntington died at the Unitarian-Universalist House in Philadelphia, fully clothed.

• The women of the fevered brow suffered a setback when it was revealed that Mrs. Stella Walsh, the Olympic track star of the 1930s who died last year, was actually half male. The unusual criminal career of Miss Nancy J. Cain was apparently put on ice when she was charged with fraud by wire and impersonating a federal officer. Presenting herself at countless fraternity houses across the country as a federal agent in need of money and he-man protection, the five-foot three-inch, 230-pound Miss Cain hornswoggled dozens of college boys into loaning her money and flying with her across the Republic in search of imaginary culprits. And police have accused Mr. Joseph S. Smietana, 35, of being the "tick-picker" of Great Falls, Montana. For over a year this savage has terrorized the community by talking his way into women's homes, apprising them of the presence of bugs in their hair, and in many instances actually roving over their scalps extricating fictitious insects. Finally, in Muskegon, Michigan, police have cracked the "Beauty Bandit" case by arresting Michael A. Tracy, a twenty-two-year-old police reservist. Over the past 24-and-a-half months he has entered 17 beauty salons, availed himself to the professional skills of the beautician, and absconded with his hair still in rollers. Mr. Tracy has requested psychiatric counseling.

• Another of President Carter's policies has been heaved aside, this time his attempt to modernize our military but at a sensible cost. In Frankfurt, West Germany, U.S. Army and Air Force officials have banned the on-base use of roller skates by uniformed personnel. In Bellingham, Washington, Dr. Robert Hunter, president of the American Medical Association, shocked an apple-cheeked audience at Western Washington University's Food Perspectives Fair by coming to the defense of "junk foods." Scoffing at "rigid vegetarianism," he described it as "a major cause of malnutrition in America."

• Evidence of America's growing fuddy-duddyism mounted throughout the month, and by late February it was announced that the United States Treasury would not pay the bills of a CETA-sponsored jaunt in which thirteen disadvantaged children and their eight government advisers journeyed from Florida to take in Broadway shows. All this anguish could have been prevented, for, as the learned Miss Gloria Steinem declared, "had the media done its job" Ronald Reagan would not have been elected. It was a hell of a thing to say during Dr. Cronkite's last days.

—RET

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EDITORIAL



THE PEARL HARBOR OF THEIR YOUTH

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Last month the National Broadcasting Company presented what the Edmund Wilsons of the television art call a "dramatization" or a "docudrama" of the Kent State shootings. On May 4, 1970, during an anti-war demonstration sparked by the American military action against North Vietnam's Cambodian supply lines, four students were killed by harried National Guard troopers.

For more than a decade American forces were in Vietnam. Forty-seven thousand one hundred and ninety-two Americans were killed in combat. One hundred and fifty-five thousand four hundred and nineteen were injured. Eight million seven hundred and forty-four thousand served there. Since our withdrawal several million Southeast Asians have perished, and hundreds of thousands now risk their lives to get the hell out. Yet the events animating the imaginations of television's Chekhovs and Ibsens have been tales of American ignominy. It moves me to wonder.

Why, for instance, does NBC feel the need to do a melodrama on Kent State? Through all those years, involving all those men, could there not have been a few instances of American gallantry or prowess? Would they not make engrossing drama also? Of 225 million Americans, how many have thirsted for a "dramatization" of this tragedy? Is this really what the people want to watch? You know that the moguls and the sages of NBC will come forth with all sorts of esoteric proofs. I, for one, shall await their sophistries with relish.

NBC's scriptwriters could have written the drama of their Kent State spectacular into dozens of other events of the 1960s and the early 1970s, and ordinary Americans would have watched attentively. However,

to a highly ideological elite in the television industry (an elite whose hallucinations were nicely described by Whit Stillman in last month's issue), Kent State has become the Pearl Harbor of their youth.

"Where were you when you heard they bombed Pearl Harbor?" is a question with peculiar resonance for a generation of Americans. "Where were you when you heard about Kent State?" is the equally resonant question for younger Americans; yet these younger Americans compose not a generation but an elite, an activist element which, from college campuses, opposed the Vietnam war.

Today the Associated Press tells us that a 14-year-old runaway captured

in a famous photograph as she knelt over the body of a freshly fallen student "became a national symbol of outrage." The truth is somewhat more complicated. "In 1970 . . . the public had thought the Kent State shootings justified and the Justice Department had disposed of them with a perfunctory investigation," the historian Alonzo L. Hamby has written in his cool, scholarly history of recent America, *The Imperial Years*. Yet for an articulate minority there was indeed a sense of outrage, and now that minority is intent on attributing that outrage to an entire nation.

I do not know where I was when I first heard about the shootings at Kent State, but I know where I was a couple of days later. I was in Chicago taping a television talk show with

John Filo, the young photographer who snapped the Pulitzer Prize-winning picture of the kneeling girl. I remember the conversation vividly. There were others on the show—Pete Rozelle of the National Football League, a Chicago sports writer, and the head of the National Organization for Women. The primary topic of discussion was not Kent State—though Mr. Filo had just come from there—but women athletes and their relations with the National Football League. To Mr. Rozelle's apparent surprise the two groups were not on good terms. The lady from NOW was very much of the opinion that women football players could be just as effective as men in the NFL were it not for "institutionalized sexism," cradle-to-grave discrimination—the kind that stunts women from birth! That afternoon Kent State was given short shrift.

When we did discuss it there was no outrage. Rather there was bewilderment and sadness. To this day, I believe a sense of sadness is most fitting. We can be sad over the loss of life at Kent State, and the deaths of our soldiers in Vietnam. Of more immediate concern we can be sad over the shabby treatment of the veterans of that war, and over the gruesome condition of the South Vietnamese, the Cambodians, and the Laotians now living and suffering under their heroic North Vietnamese liberators.

As for the Associated Press's talk of national outrage over Kent State, it is at one with NBC's harping on this tragedy. Both are examples of the stupendous propagandizing brought down on the American people every day. The sobering fact is that the American people are one of the most strenuously propagandized people on earth.

Is the average Russian any more



Adapted from RET's Monday column in the Washington Post.