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# THE CONTINUING CRISIS

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• December through to January 8, and out in California, full of brag and bounce, Ronald Reagan & Associates are donning their makeup and their costumes, going through final rehearsals, and preparing for the great flight into Washington for their first four-year stand.

• In Washington the sense of anticipation grows. Everyone is on Ron's side. But when he appointed James Watt to head the Department of the Interior, there were some hem-hems from the flower-sniffers. They had been willing to give Mr. Reagan the benefit of the doubt, but bringing in a man who actually disagrees with them—well that is going too far. The sham will be repeated many times. The cultural abyss between Ronald Reagan and the energumens of regulation, environmentalism, feminism, and all the other enthusiasms of the New Age is unavoidable. It will be only a matter of time before they are howling for his scalp.

• Christmas was celebrated across the length and breadth of the Republic, and once again the doughty American Civil Liberties Union was helpless to do anything about it. "Merry Christmas" resounded repeatedly from the leathery lungs of smug believers; but non-believers were left with no legal recourse other than to hunker down, saddened by the knowledge that their tax dollars were being expended to decorate public buildings with such seasoned brummagem as Santa's smirker, Christmas bells, and, in some instances, *angels*. Nonetheless, there were hopeful omens. In Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, police are, at this moment, hunting down a "surly" Santa Claus who took \$200 from the Shrewsbury Citgo station, long a local cultural center. Shrewsbury's Christians consoled themselves, noting that the beefy thief used no weapon. But a police spokesman was quick to point out that "he used real tough language"—notwithstanding the fact that the attendant was a lady. "We'll get this guy," the cop pledged, filling many minds with delightful scenes of a manacled Santa before the cameras, a police lineup abounding with Santas, Santa in the dock!

• And there was more. In London, England, a Santa Claus who had been hysterically passing out chocolate from a sleigh drawn by two miniature Shetland ponies became such a nuisance that Magistrate Mrs. Evelyn Davies banned him from central London until mid-January, and for good reason. According to Ohio State University Professor Steven Jones, Santa Claus is actually a "sexist fertility symbol" whose "male figure is a fairly common sexist

theme in folklore through which male characters usurp female roles." No wonder an eight-foot effigy of the accursed man was hung by the neck in Burlington, North Carolina.

• On December 3, former "Weatherman" leader Miss Bernardine Dohrn, 38, surrendered to authorities, still spouting revolutionary bombast and baloney. But time exacts its price. "Once she was beautiful," the *New York Post* declared. "But now," the world's greatest newspaper went on, "the cheeks have turned to chalk, the face has lined with age, the eyes sit above deep bags. The lips that once spoke hate are pinched and suspended from jowls. The once pert and pretty figure has sagged. But the hate is still there." Miss Zona Sage, 35, director of Berkeley, California's rent stabilization board, was arrested on suspicion of using spray paint to adorn the side of a liquor store with the slogans "Amazon Liberation Army" and "Smash Pornophy (sic)." Fire fighters in DuQuoin, Illinois, were called to the home of Mr. Robert Krummerich where a water bed had burst into flames, and on December 15, Mr. Dave Winfield was given \$25 million to play baseball.

• In Hayward, California, Superior Court Judge John Purchio awarded \$133,000 to a woman after a series of foot operations left her with a big toe sticking straight up. The Sam Reiter family of Holbrook, New York, is suing its neighbors, the Jerry Fishbeins, for \$8 million, after receiving crank letters from the Fishbeins such as one allegedly written by a fictitious and apparently semi-literate doctor: "Dear Mrs. Reiter, As your body is slowly being eaten away by cancer and you will slowly get thinner, and become mentally incompetent (sic) like you shall become. . . we would hereby request, instead of being buried in the ground, we would like to use your remains for scientific evaluation in the continuing research of terminal cancer." The Fishbeins and Reiters have had a long-standing disagreement. In Chicago, Mr. Medhi Farrokhi [Iranian] has been sentenced to six years in prison for raping a nineteen-year-old mentally retarded woman. Claiming unfamiliarity with American customs and limited facility with English, Mr. Farrokhi will appeal his conviction to the Illinois Supreme Court.

• Mr. Mark David Chapman, the fanatical Beatles fan who actually murdered John Lennon on December 8, made the anticipated not-guilty plea on the grounds of insanity, though it is still uncertain precisely what Beatles records will be used in his defense. Doubtless we all have our favorites. In Los

Angeles, a drunk who had been ordered by police to walk home due to his sozzled condition, was seriously injured when run over by a riderless motorcycle. In Bonners Ferry, Idaho, Mr. Nick Hill, 21, is recuperating after having a small fetus removed from his brain, where it had been, unbeknownst to Hill, all his life. Any suspicions that the fetus was the unwanted consequence of unusual sexual conduct were allayed by doctors who speculated that the fetus might actually have been an undeveloped twin. Mice whose parents have been alcoholics should not drink, according to researchers at the University of Colorado. Professors Gene Erwin and Gerald McClearn have found that hereditary factors definitely influence the normal mouse's dependency on spiritous drink.

• The anti-social habits of pet lovers continue to make headlines. In Minneapolis, Mr. William Reed and Mr. William Warren suffered multiple stab wounds during a New Year's eve fracas over a puppy, its ownership, and precisely who had hurled it from a third-story window. A Washington, D.C. teenager cremated herself upon hearing of her dog's death, and on December 21, Iran demanded \$24 billion for the return of our State Department personnel. On December 24, President-elect Reagan called the Iranians "criminals" and "kidnappers," and on December 26, President Carter broke his collar bone.

• The son of Senator Edward Kennedy was arrested for possession of marijuana. Mr. Robert Fox of Howell, New Jersey, who married a 34-year-old transsexual after a "whirlwind courtship" two months ago, murdered her after discovering evidence of various infidelities amongst her private effects. Soviet-Polish relations warmed and cooled continuously throughout the month, and Mr. Richard L. Gates, an illiterate tailor from Philadelphia, surrendered at least six hostages in Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania, when authorities promised that they would teach him to read.

• Finally, sulking, saintly, and imbecilic, the Wonderboy of 1976 prepared to abscond to his refuge deep in America's peanut country. Had anyone predicted such a debacle four years ago? Only the readers of *The American Spectator* know for sure, and perhaps they will take heart in hearing that since then our circulation has increased from 13,500 to 31,000, a 130-percent increase. Fittingly, on December 31, the *Washington Post* listed *The American Spectator* as Washington's "in" magazine, replacing the *New Republic*. —RET

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*The American Spectator* was founded in 1924 by George Nathan and Truman Newberry over a cheap domestic ale in McSorley's Old Ale House. In 1967 the Saturday Evening Club took it over, rechristening it *The Alternative: An American Spectator*; but by November 1977 the word "alternative" had acquired such an esoteric fragrance that in order to discourage unsolicited manuscripts from florists, beauticians, and other creative types the Club reverted to the magazine's original name. *The American Spectator* is now published monthly at 102 West Sixth Street, Bloomington, Indiana. Second class postage paid at Bloomington, Indiana, and additional mailing offices.

A one-year subscription (12 issues) costs \$15, outside the United States \$17. Foreign air mail rates sent on request. All correspondence (manuscripts, subscriptions, threatening letters, federal grants, etc.) should be sent to *The American Spectator*, P.O. Box 1969, Bloomington, Indiana 47402, (812) 334-2715; New York office, (212) 724-3799. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes. ISSN 0148-8414.

Published remarkably without regard to sex, life-style, race, color, creed, or (most redundantly of all) national origin.

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Volume 14, Number 2, February, 1981.

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PAID CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE OVER 31,000

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# EDITORIAL

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## JIMMY: AT THE END OF THE REVELS

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

You hold in your hands the ultimate souvenir of the Carter Administration, the official presidential portrait of James Earl Carter, Jr., commissioned by *The American Spectator*, executed by Jeff MacNelly, and donated by us to the government of the United States, the sole proviso being that the government accord it exposure and visibility commensurate with that which the French government has given the *Mona Lisa*. Go ahead, take another look. Does MacNelly not capture the full punitiveness of the Carter era? Admittedly, commissioning a Pulitzer-Prize-winning cartoonist for a presidential portrait is without precedent, but then having a cartoon presidency is without precedent also.

When the Wonderboy arrived in Washington four years ago, full of solemn oaths and clever plans for establishing the New Jerusalem right there on the ruins of Gomorrah, one of his first acts of genius was to end the government's lavish policy of commissioning cabinet members' portraits. Thus with this one audacious stroke his administration came several thousand dollars closer to getting control of what was then a \$358,000,000,000 budget. There was grumbling, but the great helmsman of the populist whim-wham stuck courageously to his guns; no portraits. Here should have been a presentiment of all the loony episodes that lay ahead. Let history record, however, that the giants of the press corps sensed nothing amiss. They called him brilliant. He was the political genius of 1976. Anon, with the plaster falling from the walls, the chickens refusing to lay, and the cow gone plumb dry, Jimmy consulted Rafshoon. In the fullness of time he appeared at a press conference, his hair now parted on the left. This time the journalists called him enigmatic. As late as early 1980 they called him enigmatic! By then he had used a

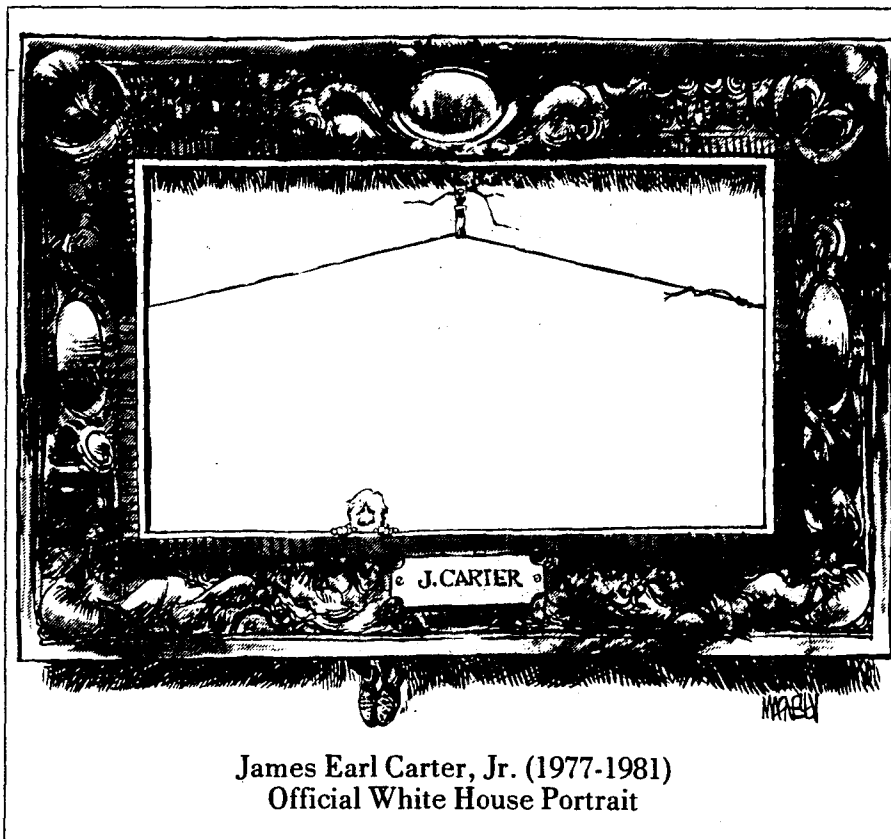
canoe paddle to fight off a sea-going rabbit. He had dangled Baptist salvation before the aghast Park Chung Hee, South Korea's Buddhist dictator. At the Venice summit he visited strange monks. He grew. He experienced. In fact, in the first three years of his presidency, Jimmy personally experienced things that Grant, deep in the sauce, had only dreamt of.

American foreign policy became a ribald joke before the world. American domestic policy wheezed and groaned as more and more flapdoodle was piled onto it. Galoots and wretches manned our government. Our culture seemed to proclaim most proudly the worst of fourth-rate vulgar. Europeans long given to patronizing us for our putative callowness suddenly fell silent. Was that the sound of Soviet tanks revving up off to the east or was it just a growl from the Politburo? By 1980 things had grown serious.

Jimmy Carter was the worst president in American history. Those who find that judgment harsh are quite simply without an historic sense, without judgment, and without character. They are in all likelihood the same people who through most of the past four years were moved to sophistry and euphemism while Jimmy grinned and tumbled headlong into the White House china. The same critical standards that they had so recently applied to the Ford administration became mysteriously defunct until it was too late in the farce to matter. Few would admit that Jimmy was an ignoramus. Jimmy had embraced all the idiocy and idiotizing of their subculture, so they sealed their lips. But their subculture had, after twenty years of self-indulgence, grown seedy and whistle-brained. Their subculture was American liberalism. By 1976, it was only a blowsy likeness of its old self.

In any assessment of the Carter glory one must also indict the adepts of decrepit liberalism. Lost in their unctuous reveries they proclaimed Jimmy plausible, and by election time 1980 believed that the voters would perceive him as plausible too. Though by practically every measure he appeared a loser, the New Age liberals still believed Jimmy could pull it off. They even believed Jimmy had come out of the last debate unscathed. Does one need any more evidence of their capacity for self-delusion?

By the end of the 1970s this New Age liberalism had become illiberal, irrational, and inhumane. It had become a series of poses assumed by the precious and the opportunistic frantically attempting to stay on top. If there is one key to understanding the preposterous vagaries of the 1970s it is the realization that during that decade celebrity and preferment generally went to those who could accurately calculate the drifts of the Zeitgeist and then intone the emergent solemnities without laughing. Remember the curious exculpation of such louts as John Dean? Would he so readily have been accepted as a "writer" and "commentator" had he remained unrepentant and refused to affect the self-guilt, self-improvement, I-am-better-for-having-been-a-creep soap opera that accompanied his conscience-raising? Remember the great leaps into *Jugendkultur* of such highbrows as Galbraith and Schlesinger? Self-respect, integrity, dignity, and intelligence had very little to do with making it in the 1970s. All depended on cunning and a prevenient nose for the fashionable pose. A shapeless dynamic like this was bound to give great leverage to the balmy. Doubtless there is justice in this. After all should not lunatics, too, influence our civilization? Think of the influence of the rich and the powerful. Reasoning like this was almost irrefutable in the late 1970s.



James Earl Carter, Jr. (1977-1981)  
Official White House Portrait