
EDITORIAL



IN FOREIGN PARTS

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

In Sen. Christopher J. Dodd's now widely celebrated rebuttal of the President's speech on Central America only one statement stung me as perhaps plausible, to wit: the senator's claim that he had been to backward regions and seen for himself how poverty breeds revolution. Had I spent any time in such remote parts? No sir, I had not. So, Senator Dodd, I have rectified the situation; last month, I tapped *The American Spectator's* chief foreign correspondent, Mr. Taki Theodoracopulos, and told him to pack all the requisite travel equipment, ointments, tonics, and anti-malarials. Together we traveled to one of those little lands where as a Peace Corps volunteer Senator Dodd learned the elements of New Age statecraft. We went to Monte Carlo.

There was a grand prix motor race there, and we went down to see firsthand how the guerrilla movement fares. As Taki observed, conditions in Monte Carlo support Senator Dodd's thesis 100 percent. There is very little poverty and almost no guerrilla activity. Perhaps the left-wing Democrats now crippling our foreign policy in Central America could arrange grand prixes for Nicaragua and El Salvador. Yet how does one put on such a wide-open affair as a grand prix in a place like Marxist-Leninist Nicaragua?

I see Senator Dodd, even now, ensconced with his Third World advisers planning the Managua Grand Prix. The Ferraris and Renaults shall be stripped of all frivolous kapitalist advertisements, bedizened instead with wholesome revolutionary exhortations; once the checkered flag has fallen it is off to the presidential palace and the victory ball, the Sandinists having decorously left their AK-47s in the cloakroom, the local members of the Chamber of Commerce having sworn

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post column syndicated by King Features.

to refrain from lewd references to the profit motive; all the palaver is of parks and schools and day-care centers. This vision is an old favorite with left-wing Democrats: unimpeded by CIA plots, the Marxist-Leninist regime turns "moderate," prosperous, harmless to the United States or any living thing.

It is of course a pipe dream. It has never taken place anywhere on this diverse and occasionally amusing orb. Yet somehow the left-wing Democrats see all Marxist-Leninist regimes as abounding with potential friends. They hear of leftist revolution in the jungles and envision young men and women sitting by late-night campfires talking of the libraries they will build once the last agent of the *ancien régime* has been reeducated, strumming big Gibson guitars, and singing old Joan Baez songs, the kind that supplied so much inner warmth to Senator Dodd and his cohorts when they were waging America's youth revolution in the glorious 1960s.

Actually the prerequisite for prosperity in Central America is political stability. In the 1960s and early 1970s the economies of the region were expanding robustly. What brought them a cropper was OPEC and the ensuing worldwide recession. Then



the noble revolutionaries began their butcherings, butcherings that the left-wing Democrats ignore whenever they wax eloquent on anti-revolutionary savagery in Central America. Life became more dangerous.

If the Marxist-Leninists win, kiss *au revoir* to grand prixes or to any other kind of economic elixir in the region. After all, is there any Marxist paradise on earth that is not an economic shambles? Cuba? Russia? Poland? Hungary and East Germany, we are told; so why do those countries need all the border guards? If the left-wing Democrats now rendering impotent American foreign policy with the same discredited analyses they applied to Angola and Southeast Asia before these went Communist in 1975 were serious about bringing economic growth to Central America, they would not allow a Communist takeover.

With the Panama Canal so close and American cities well within missile-range, Central America is indeed within our sphere of influence. There is still time to end the violence, and history has shown repeatedly that the only way to end the violence of Marxist-Leninists is with superior power. Ask Lech Walesa. □

MASTERS OF DISASTER

Last month the National Elementary School Chess championship slipped from the grasp of New York City's Hunter College Elementary School, which did not seem right. The Hunter College Elementary School is populated by children of the New York intelligentsia. They were beaten by a team from Indianapolis, Indiana, a team composed of inner-city kids with no Ph.D.'s in their lineages, a team billed as "The Masters of Disaster"! Were the eggheads from New York victims of street-gang mayhem? Not at all, they were victims of persistence, that incalculable element in the human spirit that allows for marvels in the face of all

sociological findings to the contrary.

The element flickers and flares irregularly but, when it does, it flickers and flares without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin, as the phrase has it. The Masters of Disaster are black, and for one reason or another black kids are not supposed to be chess champions. Nor for that matter are poor kids, nor Hoosier kids. Thus there are a lot of anomalies here worthy of our attention.

One is the question of race. Decades have elapsed since the civil rights movement carried the day, yet we are, alas, no closer to the goal of a color-blind society, a goal which any serious-minded student of human nature knows must be realized for enduring racial harmony. The complexities of race in America are such that only a genius would attempt to discuss it wisely, and he would need far more space available to him than a mere column. Here there is only space to say that we shall continue to depreciate human achievement as long as we look at Americans as whites and blacks or, for that matter, Poles or WASPs. And there are good biological reasons to drop these categories—racial and ethnic particularity is less and less possible in a land like ours, and according to our ideals it is less and less creditable.

Social science has told us much that is true about human beings, but it has also told us some things that are palpably untrue and certainly it has diminished the wonder of human achievement by insisting on quantifiable explanations for human behavior. Elements that cannot be quantified get short shrift in social science, and persistence or willpower are such elements. They are also the elements chiefly responsible for such achievements as were attained last month by the Masters of Disaster.

Two-and-a-half years ago a fifth grade science teacher at Indianapolis's School 27, because he liked

chess and the students around him, suggested that the kids play chess. Adept of the social sciences might have considered this absurd, and their charts and statistics would back them up. When the fledgling team members grew mutinous after ten minutes of practice, the social scientists might again have pointed to their statistics; and when the kids got flattened in competition the social scientists could have pulled out all their cant about endangering the fragile self-images of poor blacks.

The kids at School 27 did indeed

get flattened, hence their now forbidding nickname, Masters of Disaster. Yet they were not so fragile. The aforementioned unquantifiable elements seemed to be activated by defeat, and elementary school kids who could not sit still for ten minutes became kids who trained two-and-a-half hours nightly, five nights a week, and on Saturdays, for two years. Visions of excellence did not intimidate them but goaded them.

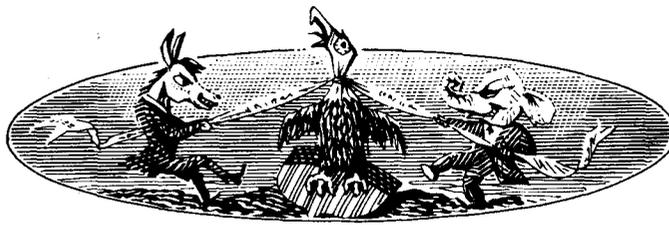
How does one explain it? Some say it is because these kids are street tough. Others say it is because chess

is all they had to do. The explanations run from the sensible to the bizarre, but one thing we can all agree on is that these chess players had the desire to persist through arduous practices and through defeats. Today this desire to achieve is always undervalued, yet it is essential to all human endeavor.

The question is how does one instill it in young people? Is it luck or a gift? In Chicago, one of the Republic's most successful teachers of inner-city children, Marva Collins, insists that the desire to achieve is the result of

devoted teachers holding high expectations for themselves and their students rather than low expectations. She puts the burden on teachers first, then students. I believe she is right. That is why congratulations are in order not only for the chess players of School 27 but also for their coaches who no longer have to teach their charges how to cope with being patronized in defeat but rather with being celebrated in victory. The latter condition is always more dangerous to the human spirit. □

C A P I T O L I D E A S



THE BISHOPS' BRAIN

by Tom Bethell

In the press release it was billed as a "debate." Did you know that Catholic churches put out press releases and hold televised debates with parish priests talking about such things as "a return to a MIRVed world," "vertical proliferation," and "strategic implications for super-power relations"? Let the record show that in May 1983 St. Peter's Church in the nation's capital held such a debate, heralded by a press release headlined: "Bishops' Top Adviser To Appear In Capitol Hill Debate."

That was a reference to Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, a parish priest in Falls Church, Virginia, and director of the Office of Justice and Peace at the U.S. Catholic Conference in Washington, D.C. According to one or two bishops, Hehir actually wrote the recent Bishops' Letter, 44,000 words long, on nuclear weapons and deterrence. Since then he has attained a kind of celebrity as a behind-the-scenes manipulator of Roman Catholic bishops—the sort who over a period of years were bullied into thinking they were "irrelevant." Having been bullied for so long they are now only too happy to have someone like Hehir whisper "peace & justice" in their ears to make them relevant again. (Hehir has been photographed whispering into the ear

of Washington Archbishop James Hickey, for example, while Hickey was testifying before Congress. Hickey seems to be a soft touch for the peace & justice crowd. He gives sermons in which the words "grow" and "growth" occur two or three times a sentence. Perhaps one day he will tell us what these veiled, ideologically charged words mean.)

Rev. Hehir (pronounced "hair") is an intelligent, fast-talking cleric of leftist persuasion. He specializes in ambiguity—rather odd, one might think, for a parish priest. (He calls himself a "radical centrist.") When Rep. Henry Hyde asked him whether he thought Christianity and Marxism were compatible, Hehir said that this was "a much disputed question." Likewise, "it is too early to make a real judgment on liberation theology," he told a reporter in Washington. He is fluent in the by-now increasingly exposed verbal camouflage of the contemporary Left: commitment, challenge, conscience, compassion, coalition, community, change, and, of course, concern. He's big on initiatives and negotiations (and let's not forget global interdependence), and a protégé of Stanley Hoffmann, the Harvard ambiguity specialist.

In the church press release Hehir got top billing—above a senator, a congressman, and the former heads of the Central and Defense Intelligence agencies. No doubt this was

correct news judgment, too. Hehir was the man to watch. This was to be his "first major public appearance" since the Bishops Conference in Chicago, as though he were some Hollywood star or Las Vegas performer. At the Bishops Conference, remember, the Catholic hierarchy fell into line with the media and the academy (not to mention Moscow) by saying we should "halt," not "curb," the production of nuclear weapons, and then seemed to think it was due credit for bravery because the Reagan Administration disagreed. The bishops had become relevant at last.

Their pose was one of heroic independence. But their wordy document was filled with an unedifying cloud of clerical evasions, omissions, and quarter truths. Behind the episcopal front lurked the church's by-now thoroughly leftist bureaucracy, and there, in its midst, sat Father Hehir, with his fast patter about a MIRVed world. You see, people like Hehir tend to win political battles in an institution like the Catholic Church because traditionalist clergymen by definition are not interested in learning whether MIRVing is a good or a bad thing. They are more interested in sin, for example, and their devil does not come in the guise of technology, as seems to be the case with our recently relevant bishops. As a result, the position of the church emerges as misleadingly skewed toward political activism.

St. Peter's Church was already packed full by 8 p.m. Some of the people in the pews seemed vaguely familiar, and with a sinking feeling I began to suspect that this was in part the same group I had seen at last month's IPS reunion—an itinerant flock of nuclear disarmers and all-purpose leftists ready to show up at a few hours' notice and cheer their heads off the minute someone said "growth," "commitment to change," or "peace & justice." Here they all were, wedged into the pews, perhaps eagerly waiting for Hehir to tell them tonight that the arms race was sinful. Evidently this was something more than a gathering of curious parishioners. The press release said: "Contact: Bill Hinkes," followed by the telephone number of New Jersey Congressman Frank Guarinini's office.

The church has been turned into a big TV studio, with bright lights, cable TV on hand, those familiar bundles of electric cords taped to the floor, and—wouldn't you know it—a bearded priest sitting on a table in back, swinging his legs, and advertising his caringperson status. "The Poor Have Suffered Enough" said the button on his lapel.

In front of the altar was a table with microphones and in the center sat the gaunt, intense figure of Bryan Hehir. To one side were his supporters, former CIA head William Colby and Senator Patrick Leahy, to the other

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