

warning to the free world." In a letter to the INS, Sagermark wrote: "You Americans are really blind, being so afraid of the Kremlin. What you ought to be afraid of is Big Brother."

But he has high hopes for his homeland.

The new generation of Swedes is not as content as the last, he says, so the "downfall of the Swedish welfare state is coming very rapidly now." He wants to go back, to fight the centralized power of the Swedish government. "I suppose," he

sighs, "that you can't do away completely with bureaucracy, but if you try to abolish it completely, maybe you can reduce it."

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arts & letters

movies

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Reviewed by John Hospers

• As a drama, **THE FORMULA** is incredibly complex and hard to follow: the names and faces of the various persons involved in some way in this intricate plot sweep by us too quickly for us to recognize them when they recur, and their relevance to the story is often quite obscure. Probably it was clear enough to the film makers, but for an audience seeing the film for the first (and only) time it requires a great degree of concentration to take it all in, and even then not everything fits; anyway, by the time it's half over the viewer is too confused to care. Because of this artistic flaw, the film may have more difficulty getting its message through than if it had been clear and simple—and since the message is a fabrication out of whole cloth, this may be a blessing.

A Los Angeles cop (George C. Scott) is placed in charge of investigating the death of a friend and fellow cop, and a tortuous trail of leads and red herrings takes him to Germany. There, after endless problems and complexities, and the company of an extremely attractive but double-crossing companion (Marthe Keller), he tracks down the secret formula for made-from-coal synthetic fuel that fed the Nazi war machine until 1945 and that (in the film) American oil companies possess but are purposely withholding from the market until such future time as Arabian oil supplies and the high profits therefrom become exhausted and the customers have been bled to death by high prices, while all the time a cheaper and better substitute (the German formula) was available but kept secret. Scott's mission is to find the formula and publicize it to the world, thus breaking oil tycoon Marlon Brando's monopoly of it.

The film exemplifies what Ayn Rand has called "package deal morality." Brando is an oil man, and he also has people killed—we are to accept these two as a package, so that our indignation at murderers will extend to oil men, tarring both with the same brush and guiding us to the conclusion that all oil men do these things. Scott is properly indignant at the revolutionists of the Baader-Meinhof gang, saying to one of them, "You think the people who sent you out to kill are different from the people you kill"—a nice point, which establishes him as a nice guy; but he also throws in a few licks at Chile's government, and apparently we are expected to accept such remarks along with it as part of the package.

Most viewers will not take highly to this film as drama: the plot developments are so hard to follow that many other films about Germany, such as *The Odessa File*, shine out as beacons of clarity by comparison. It is to be hoped that they will not accept it as history, either. According to *Science* magazine (Nov. 1980), American oil companies learned no priceless secret from the German synfuels industry; indeed, they actually helped to construct it: Standard Oil built a synfuels plant for aviation fuel in Germany as late as 1939. ("Trading with the enemy" would indeed be a legitimate charge, though it is mentioned in the film in only one line. And nothing whatever is said about the Communist takeover of East Germany, though one scene occurs there, or about the Russians' use of German oil scientists as slave labor: the film is against the Nazis, and we can't complicate that by being against the Communists too.) After the war, when 175 tons of documents about the German synfuels industry were captured by the American Technical Oil Mission, the documents were examined and abandoned because they contained nothing that wasn't already known. Besides, cheap oil was becoming available, and the German synfuels processes were very uneconomical. "I don't see any conspiracy at all," said Arnold Krammer of Texas A&M University in his article, "Fueling the Third Reich" (*Technology and Culture*, July 1978); "the formulas were well known." The US Bureau of Mines built a German-style syn-

fuels plant in Louisiana, Missouri, in 1949, but it had to be rebuilt in order to be practical. The process was no secret; it was examined and found not to be feasible under current conditions.

The oil conspiracy idea, however, provides a good sounding board for limousine liberals George C. Scott and Marlon Brando, for whom making the film was apparently something of a crusade. Scott becomes boringly preachy in his abuse of the oil tycoon (Brando): "You're not in the oil business," he spits at him, "you're in the oil shortage business." Brando, however, who is supposed to utter the villainous lines, replies with a rather good one when Scott reprimands him for destroying the American dream: "Oil is the American dream—without it there ain't no America."

• Impressions of comic effects are probably as subjective as anything in the arts. For my money, Gene Wilder tries so hard for laughs that the effect seems strained. Richard Pryor has a real comic flair, and in **STIR CRAZY** he plays a kind of cross between the Good Soldier Schweik and the loser-with-an-instinct-for-survival who starred in *Seven Beauties*. Some of the situations are quite funny, and considering what a rogue's gallery of losers is collected together in this film, it is much easier to laugh at them than with them. Easiest of all is to forget about the whole thing the minute it's over.

• **THE MAN WITH BOGART'S FACE** does look somewhat like Bogart, until you see him in a facial close-up, and the voice and mannerisms also resemble his. His sidekick does look somewhat like Gene Tierney, and there are other Hollywood figures of the '40s and '50s recognizable to movie buffs of that period, with repeated name dropping to make sure we get the point, if there is one. The detective story, what there is of it, is flimsy and dull and too obviously there just to induce a nostalgia for those early films. There is also a conscious cultivation of similarities to *The Maltese Falcon*, with jewels instead of the bird, complete with an unconvincing replica of Sidney Greenstreet. But to compare this film with one of John Huston's

best is a kind of sacrilege. It's much more enjoyable to see such films over again than to pay money to see sleazy imitations, either of Bogart or of his films.

• There's this one group, see, who have a special kind of ESP that enables them to be **SCANNERS** and tap directly into the brain circuits of other people and drain them of whatever is in their minds (brains?). And then there's a second group that can do the same thing, at war with the first. Whoever wins can presumably win the world. But there are no clues as to who is likely to win in any particular struggle: we just have to watch and see, usually who frowns the most, whose nose bleeds first, and, in one sequence, whose head is blown off first. Since there are no "rules of the game" available to the viewer, no probabalistic expectations can be calculated, and the whole thing becomes a guessing game without clues. It's not that different from the battle of warring clans in Westerns, except that there's no goodies versus baddies here, since they're all baddies using futuristic ESP techniques. Nor does anyone, by the time it's half over, really care who wins; the audience is there only to see the shocking visual effects and the explosions of human bodies, which are greeted with cheers and sadistic glee. One would do better to stay home and consult his own ESP on what film to see instead of this one.

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language

Yet Another Four More Years

By Richard N. Mitchell

That last president (much to the satisfaction of our typesetter, who never *did* manage to get the chap's name right) has disappeared yet again, this time for good. We'll have no more mush from the wimp to kick around. *Nil*, however, *desperandum*. He leaves behind a whole mush factory bustling with busy wimps. There'll be no dearth of kicking these next four years.

That Department of Education where the wimps make mush may actually be our departing president's only perpetration destined to live in history. (All *right*. So it *won't* live in history. Would you believe *social studies*?) And for a while there we were afraid we might lose the whole

blooming thing, and all because of some idle and off-hand vote-grabbing grandstanding by the other guy. (We'll print his name as soon as our typesetter says he's ready. In the meantime, though, that typesetter, who is also our staff augur and the only pundit in America to divine correctly the meaning of the turkey on the White House lawn, has glumly pointed out that the name of the new president rhymes exactly with the name of the Prime Minister of a land with triple-digit inflation.)

Well, we needn't have worried. The president-elect hasn't said another word about closing the Department of Education since just before the election. And now he has found a secretary, who says that he's *not* signed on as captain of the *Titanic*. So we can expect that he will not only keep steering that boat but that he will also take care not to shake it. And he seems a good man for the job. After all, you don't get to be a genuine Doctor of Education by subjecting the pretentious claptrap of your professors and colleagues to the unkind and elitist scrutiny of logical thought. And you won't last long as the commissioner of higher education out in Utah unless you know how to live and let live with the unions and the bold innovative thrusters and the institutes for the study of the problematical parameters of prediagnostic preassessment, to say nothing of the legislature and all the deans of the teacher-training academies. But, on the negative side, it must be said that the man *did* take the job, and we do have to wonder why someone who was once a master sergeant in the US Marine Corps would want to sink into such company.

Politicians are in favor of education. The millions of government employees who operate the public schools have convinced the politicians, and us, that what they do in the schools is education. That is a lie. The public schools do provide massive public jobs programs, ready outlets for the countless products of the manufacturers of materials and devices and pseudobooks, sempiternal subsidies for enthusiasts and charlatans, and a captive clientele for the ministrations of the social adjusters and the values clarifiers. Education sometimes does happen in the schools, but only as the result of individual enterprise and never out of institutional intention, which is, in any case, and which *must* be, in a government agency, vigilant against the antisocial and elitist influences of individual enterprise.

So send not to know for whom T.H. Bell toils. He toils for government, which flourishes best in the absence of the informed discretion that Jefferson prescribed as at once the fruit of education and our surest protection against government. But don't despair. It's going to be a

long, cold winter in the DED. There may be icebergs.

Richard Mitchell is the author of Less Than Words Can Say and the publisher of the Underground Grammarian, from which this column is adapted.

books

What a Bureaucrat's Really Like

Public Choice.

By Dennis C. Mueller.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1979. 310 pp. \$35.50. \$7.95 paper.

Reviewed by Lester Hunt

“**B**ut above all, the courthouse: The center, the focus, the hub; sitting looming in the center of the county's circumference like a single cloud in its ring of horizon.” That is how William Faulkner describes the satisfaction with which the pioneers in his story *The Courthouse* view the building, the seat of their government, which they have built with their own hands. Its calm Georgian architecture represents the government they have established, which stands for the public interest and not private interest; it is aloof, above it all.

On the face of it, their attitude does not quite make sense. As Faulkner makes very clear, this building and this State are *both* something they have made with their own hands. Indeed, being democrats, they believe they *are* the State. Do *they* seek the public interest more than their own? Are they above it all?

As fanciful as it might sound, the idea that the State is somehow not of this earth is a very important theme in Western political philosophy. Plato imagined a State run by kings who are also “philosophers”—that is, by people who do not see from the limited, selfish perspective of ordinary mortals but understand the human world as a whole and do everything for the good of the whole. He was describing an ideal system, of course, but, as Nietzsche later said, he was also trying to say what the State really is, behind “the barbarically distorted shell” that it shows to the world. He thought that we only understand the State when we understand what the perfect State would be like: in its perfected form, the State would not be human at all; it would be divine. This is also the point of Rousseau's doctrine of the General Will: in a State that is truly a State, and not a mere war of pressure