

versions, subversions, perversions—I'm beginning to mirror Barthelme!—suggest that life is *unbalanced* and *unruly*.

Barthelme does not write a progressive work. He interrupts the journey to insert other plots, rulebooks on fatherhood, meaningless bits of dialogue (unflattering to women) and these in effect take control. They command his attention, suggesting that "stops" along the journey are more significant than the end. He apparently gives up the quest for final solutions. He prefers to rest and play it safe.

We may not like his strategy, but it is merely an underlining of previous positions. The interruptions are viewed as the main event or, better yet, as cancellations. There is no meaning except retraction and rebellion.

Barthelme should "logically" offer blank pages to affirm the meaninglessness of words, plots, fatherhood. But he cannot escape from his own condition. (He again resembles his heroes.) He writes; he creates; he designs pages. Why? The answers are not clear. Perhaps he understands that despite the sudden fall of fundamental questions (which cannot be answered *here and now*), he must not run away from his talent. He accepts his "burden"; he fathers new worlds of belief, action, faith—or anti-worlds of these—and achieves results.

The "end" of *The Dead Father* is curiously moving. We expect the journey to continue—there have been many false starts and conclusions—and when "bulldozers" the last word, buries the pleading father (who asks "one minute more"), we are unhappy. So is Barthelme. We share with him the illusion that the father is more than a "word," that he exists and dies. How odd! Although the entire book is so determinedly lifeless, it refuses to surrender to this condition.

Barthelme is aware of the irony. He is such an intelligent resourceful writer that he compels us to walk on the edge with him, to look down at "large gaps" of meaning, and yet possess impossible love for our strange condition. He is master of ceremonies, offering these to cleanse our hearts and minds.

Ultimately, Barthelme is deceptive. He usually masquerades as smooth writer, but he cares about age-old questions. It is time to reread him and to think of these lines from "Daumier," a piece in *Sadness*: "There are always openings, if you can find them, there is always something to do." He considers our spiritual condition; he opens new worlds. But we must continue on separate paths, wondering about the enigmatic interrelationships of art, spirit, and life.

Revolution in Cuba

HERBERT L. MATTHEWS

Scribners, \$15

ROBERT K. LANDERS

One afternoon in January, 1959, as they strolled in the garden of a villa in the fishing port of Cojimar, Herbert Matthews suggested to the newly triumphant Fidel Castro "that the power he now held in his hands could do great harm, as well as great good, for Cuba." At this, Castro "stopped in his tracks with a startled look on his face, turned toward me and put his hands on my shoulders. 'But how could I do harm?' he asked in astonishment. 'We have the most wonderful plans for Cuba!'"

Those plans since have unfolded, of course, to reveal such wonderful features as political prisoners by the tens of thousands and forced-labor camps, but Matthews remains nevertheless enthralled by Castro's idealism. ". . . Fidel Castro and the men and women who during the past two decades fought and worked with him to make the Cuba Revolution," he writes now, "have responded to and acted upon idealistic motives. They have sought to make a better Cuba for the Cuban people and to achieve for Cuba a stronger, more dignified position in world affairs."

Matthews first met Castro in the Sierra Maestra in February, 1957, only a few months after Castro's calamitous (only a fraction of the force of 82 survived) "invasion" of Cuba from Mexico in a twin-engined yacht. *United*

Press reported, and it was widely believed, that Castro had perished in the effort; and so, to dispel this debilitating belief, Castro sent out for a foreign journalist, who turned out to be Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times*.

Penetrating Fulgencio Batista's lines to get that historic interview (conducted in whispers in a thicket of woods) must have required considerable enterprise on the part of the then-57-year-old Matthews, but that cannot have been a requirement with which he was unfamiliar; as a war correspondent, he had been with the Italian army in the Abyssinian War, with the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, and in Italy and North Africa in World War II: his friend, Ernest Hemingway, in 1938, in a blurb for Matthews' book on the Abyssinian and Spanish wars, had called him "the straightest, and ablest and the bravest war correspondent writing today."

Nearly two decades after receiving that encomium, then, Matthews was in the mountains of Cuba, interviewing a dead man. In the resulting series of articles—which was later to lead *National Review* to quip that Castro got his job through *The New York Times*—Matthews revealed to the world that Castro—whom he described as the head of "a revolutionary movement that calls itself socialistic" and that was seeking "a new deal for Cuba, radical, democratic and therefore anti-Communist"—was "alive and fighting hard and successfully in the rugged, almost impenetrable fastnesses of the Sierra Maestra at the southern tip of the island."

Not content merely to correct the false report, Matthews created a legend, one which was perhaps even more false. Yet this should not have been too surprising; Matthews was, after all, essentially a war correspondent, and the manufacture of heroic myth happens to be the tropism of the war correspondent. Usually confined to one side of "the story," the war correspondent easily comes to feel more sympathy for his suffering subjects than obligation to his remote readers; and, as well, to regard war as the inescapable

reality, justifying almost any brutality, so long as his subjects mean well, so long as they are, in a word, idealists.

And thus, as it seems to me, has Matthews all along comprehended Castro and his revolution. "My own approach to the Cuban leaders and their Revolution," he writes, "has always been influenced by my respect for their character and ideals. . . . The impulse behind true revolutionary action must be spiritual, which is to say moral and/or patriotic, not material and not simply an exercise of power." He now grasps that Castro "had no fixed or precise political ideas of any kind while he was in the Sierra," but whether the Cuban leaders appear to him as democrats or anti-democrats, Communists or anti-Communists, he preserves intact his respect for their "ideals." He does not, to his credit, entirely ignore ugly fact ("The worst that can be said of the revolutionary regime—at least as I see it—is that the practice of holding political offenders in prison and rehabilitation labor camps goes on, year after year."), but neither does he permit it to interfere with his "respect," with his belief "that Castro is himself groping for a form of government and society that respects human dignity and self-development."

If Matthews does not wholly ignore "the worst," it cannot be said that he approaches Castro's Cuba with excessive skepticism, or even consistency. In dismissing allegations of torture being in use in Cuba, he declares, "I am as certain as I can be of anything that Fidel Castro and his close associates would not authorize or knowingly stand for the use of physical torture." But earlier, in explaining "revolutionary justice," he remarks, "A revolution is a law unto itself; it makes its own laws, which is almost like saying that it is lawless. The revolution in effect says: 'Necessity knows no law; the revolution is necessary.' A lot of traditional legality, morality, and some hard-won fruits of civilization are brushed aside in the process."

Matthews judges that Castro's "radical social revolution" has been "an impressive accomplishment, and clearly

an inspiring one to a majority of the Cuban people, especially the young." One wonders how Matthews can truly know, without benefit of free elections, how inspiring to the majority it is. Supposing that somehow he does know, and that the revolution is as he judges, one wonders why, in that case, Castro and his revolution cannot abide a free press or free elections. Matthews notes "how quickly popular moods can change," and points out that "When the Cubans had freedom of the press they abused it through venality and corruption; when they had elections they were, with few exceptions, fraudulent. . . ." But that hardly seems like much of an answer.

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(Continued from page 355)

an expression for which I am unable lexicographically or by imagination to discern an orthodox meaning. Dr. Daniel C. Maguire more recently added four pages [Feb. 27] to the extensive criticism already received by the Vatican's new statement on sexual ethics. In the interests of that ecumenical cross-fertilization to which he appeals early in the article, may this Anglican and former professor at an Episcopal seminary proffer modestly the following observations.

In his petition to St. Thomas for support that "human actions are good or evil according to circumstances," Dr. Maguire conveniently fails to animadvert that the concern is not with what makes an action intrinsically good, but with what circumstances can render it evil: *Unde si aliquid desit quod requiratur ad debitas circumstantias, erit actio mala* (*Summa Theologica* I II, qu. 18, art. 3). Moreover, I invite Dr. Maguire to demonstrate a single example in which the Vatican's sexual ethic differs from that of St. Thomas.

Dr. Maguire made but half-hearted appeal to the Bible on the question of homosexuality, to be sure, but let us at least honor his appeal and send

him there. When St. Paul, facing a complex of situations similar to those faced by the Vatican today, apodictically listed active homosexuals among those who cannot possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6, 10), he abstracted completely from any question of circumstance or "meaning." Neither in the Bible nor anywhere in the classical tradition of Catholicism can one find moral justification for homosexual activity, and Dr. Maguire knows this as well as I do.

(REV.) PATRICK HENRY REARDON

Collegeville, Ind.

To the Editors: Reading your featured Feb. 27 Maguire "satire," "The Vatican on Sex," I sensed at once the contentious tone condemning with faint praise; presently saw words like "universalizability" and "fundamentalistically" as apt echoes in an over-all hollowness. In progress I noted marginally several specious straw-men in Maguire's cantankerous ersatz of points the Vatican, he says, *should*

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CORRESPONDENCE



Sexual Ethics

Collegeville, Minn.

To the Editors: In his article, "The Vatican on Sex" [Feb. 27], Daniel C. Maguire quotes Pope Paul's address to a group of theologians in Rome in October, 1966, in which he says that the magisterium could teach and protect the faith without the help of theologians (*absque sacrae theologiae auxilio*), relying on the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Popes, too, have the right to be quoted in context. Pope Paul told the International Congress on the Theology of Vatican II:

"Without the help of theology, the magisterium could indeed safeguard and teach the faith, but it would experience great difficulty in acquiring that profound and full measure of knowledge which it needs to perform its task thoroughly, for it considers itself to be endowed not with the charism of revelation or inspiration, but only with that of the assistance of the Holy Spirit . . .

"Deprived of the labor of theology, the magisterium would lack the tools it needs to weld the Christian community into a unified concert of thought and action, as it must do for the Church to be a community which lives and thinks according to the precepts and norms of Christ."

The direction of the Pope's remarks was the contrary to what Daniel Maguire indicated and the Pope rather acknowledged the dependence of the magisterium on the work of theologians. (REV.) KILIAN MCDONNELL, OSB
President, Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research

Jacksonville, Fla.

To the Editors: Having of late employed the epistolary medium to introduce your readers to his ethical category of "post-personal" [Feb. 13],

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MR. KISSINGER'S SAFARI

Africa is truly a dark continent for most Americans. Few of us would do well in specifying just which countries are included in sub-Saharan Africa, from which Secretary of State Kissinger recently returned, and the lack of knowledge—and interest—which this betrays does not help in the formulation of a rational United States policy toward that region. Yet it is essential that such a policy be arrived at, as recent events in Angola demonstrate all too well.

Secretary Kissinger has had his fair share of criticism lately, but he deserves high marks for the positions he took on his African excursion. The trip was belated, of course; while going here, there and everywhere during his years in office, Mr. Kissinger had never before set foot in that area—although, given the nature of U.S. policy toward the region, this omission might have been just as well. For whatever the pious protestations for the record, U.S. African policy in practice favored white minority rule. Most recently, Mr. Kissinger was so anxious to combat what he saw as a Soviet triumph in Angola that the U.S. even acted in tacit collaboration with the racist South African regime. It was this general stance of colonialism and white supremacy that the Secretary had to turn around for the sake of a rational U.S. policy toward the area in the future, and happily his trip did represent a large step in this direction.

In one sense, it might be thought that what Mr. Kissinger came out for in Africa would be accepted commonplaces of U.S. foreign policy. After all, what he espoused in his talks with African statesmen were principles on which this country is supposedly based: majority rule, self-determination, interracial justice, human rights. Yet it was precisely a lack of clear dedication to such principles that led to a deformed U.S. policy toward the region,