er drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

These words—magnificent and familiar—do not support Kazin's notion that the Civil War threw faith radically and irremediably into doubt. Instead, they support another of his arguments: that the American tendency to moral assurance, especially in the hands of a great creative intelligence, could respond to unprecedented American travails such as slavery with a gripping and individual theology.

Kazin tries too hard to tie race, the moral struggle that looms largest in American history, into the very different question of why Americans, set free of compulsion, stick enthusiastically to God and religion. Some writers who agonized over the slavery question did experience it as a challenge to their views of the nature of God, but others did not. One of Kazin's weaker moments is his attempt to complicate Stowe's theology in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) into "a continuing Christianity all her own," merely because she saw that the organized church had fallen short.

It seems finally somewhat reductive of religion to argue that the urgency of its appeal can be felt only in times of public moral crises that rise to the awful heights of the Civil War. So high a standard for God wrestling also keeps Kazin from seeing anything akin to his writers' questing sensibilities in today's public discussions and expressions of faith that so infuriate him. Were American religion, then or now, radically public and conventional, the space would be much reduced for the kinds of bold theological excursions honored in this book. Fortunately, Kazin's own analysis offers ample evidence that such is not the case.

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What to Make of China?

THE GREAT WALL AND THE EMPTY FORTRESS.
By Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross. Norton. 352 pp. $29.95

THE COMING CONFLICT WITH CHINA.
By Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro. Knopf. 245 pp. $23

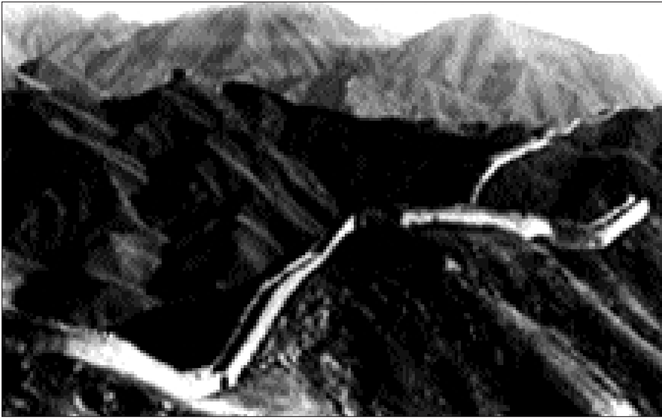
by Anne Thurston

American perceptions of China have traditionally alternated between distaste and adulation. The pendulum has swung again. Deeming the scenario "unlikely but not unimaginable," veteran journalists Ross Munro and Richard Bernstein devote an entire chapter of *The Coming Conflict with China* to a chilling scenario: in 2004, China blockades Taiwan; soon the missiles are flying. Taiwan asks for help, and the United States steps in. "And," predict Bernstein and Munro, "no matter how we intervene, there's going to be a good chance of some kind of direct shooting war with China." Such an outcome is not in China's interests, but "it is in the interests of the ruling clique." The China of Bernstein and Munro is to be feared and contained.

For those seeking the certainty of a new cold war, China offers easy prey. The country has the world's largest standing army, fastest-growing economy, and biggest population. Its annual trade advantage over the United States has passed $40 billion. Its government promotes an assertive, often anti-American nationalism. China undertakes corporate espionage against the West; this year's congressional hearings probed (to no avail) for evidence of political meddling as well. But while there's ample ground for wariness, the present hysteria (a term increasingly invoked by China scholars) is hardly justi-

fied. The swinging pendulum reveals less about China than about us.

China has never been easy for Americans to understand. Even the facts sometimes seem contradictory. In sheer size, the Chinese economy is one of the top three in the world—yet the average per capita income is less than $1,000 a year, and more than a quarter of the country's 1.3 billion people live, by World Bank standards, below the level of poverty. China may become a major global power early in the next century, but today it is perhaps the weakest of the four powers in Asia (behind the United States, Russia, and Japan). Although the Chinese people now enjoy their greatest freedom in nearly 50 years, Americans will not soon forget the pictures of tanks rolling into Tiananmen Square. China falls well below the major powers in technology, standard of living, educational level, military might, and political values. And what of that massive army? In *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross quote military specialists who call the People's Liberation Army "the world's largest military museum" and "a junkyard army." China is a complicated place.



Notwithstanding such complexities, we must get it right. American relations with China will be critical to global politics and the prospects for peace and prosperity in the 21st century. As Nathan and Ross point out, "No global problem can be solved without China." And, they stress, we cannot understand China without taking account of its past. *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress* examines China's legacy—as the Middle Kingdom and purveyor of civilization and culture, and, beginning some 150 years ago, as an empire beleaguered by foreign powers. Chinese nationalism, the authors argue, is powered by contradictory feelings of pride and humiliation. These feelings generate soul-searching among intellectuals and leaders alike about why China is weak and how it can become strong, how it can reclaim lost territory, and how it can regain a leading position in the world. Sovereignty is the preeminent concern. China's first objective, the authors write, is to "restore and maintain territorial integrity." In their view, "PRC diplomacy seeks to reclaim the lost regions of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, to block outside support for separatist movements in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia, and to deter invasion and military pressure on all fronts by building up the capacity for internal security and border defense."

Far from being irrational, Nathan and Ross argue, China's international behavior represents reasonable strategic steps in a long-standing quest for security. In this light, the country's actions become defensive rather than aggressive. Treating its security concerns as genuine, the authors argue that China, as well as its neighbors, can be secure only when the nation joins a world system that it has a hand in shaping. Nathan and Ross are not alarmed over China's rise. To them, any attempts at containment would be foolhardy; a new cold war would be a "needless mistake."

Nathan and Ross do raise questions about the future of China's foreign policy. Noting all the official positions Jiang Zemin has conferred on himself, they point out that such titles are neither necessary nor sufficient to retain power in China. Whatever his office, Jiang will not become a new supreme leader like Mao

Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Instead, his power will depend on his ability to retain the support of the generals. Factional politics may continue to dominate, and China's ability to carry out a coherent foreign policy may be challenged in the years to come. If so, China's dissatisfactions with the world beyond its borders could be magnified, and with them the challenges to Western diplomacy. Nonetheless, Nathan and Ross conclude that American policy toward China must be built on cooperation, not conflict. They suggest that the United States work to integrate China into multilateral institutions, including the World Trade Organization. To promote continued political liberalization in China and stable U.S.-China relations, they counsel expanding educational and cultural exchanges with China as well.

Bernstein and Munro, by contrast, recommend preparing for the worst. After acknowledging that war is unlikely, they proceed to offer prescriptions that would push China to the wall—reducing the trade deficit, suspending most favored nation status, continuing to deny China membership in the World Trade Organization, supporting Radio Free Asia, and funding "various Chinese groups living in the West who publicize Chinese human rights violations and who themselves strive to form the nucleus of a democratic movement in China." This, they argue, will "prevent China from becoming the hostile hegemon that could interfere with American pursuit of interest in Asia." In truth, such efforts at containment would surely increase the peril. *The Coming Conflict with China* would become self-fulfilling prophecy.

An honest debate about such matters is impossible, Bernstein and Munro contend, because of the powerful China lobby, dominated by the American business establishment and committed to an omnipotent China. In truth, as others have noted, countervailing views are voiced by human rights organizations, the right-to-life movement, organized labor, and environmental groups. In describing the factors influencing American policy, Bernstein and Munro ably explore the link between economic self-interest and the public pronouncements of such "old China hands" as Henry Kissinger. But the two authors neglect the media's tendency to oversimplify and sensationalize complex topics, and its implications for America's China policy.

Reading these two books together demonstrates the difficulty of achieving a new consensus on that policy, now that the old consensus lies shattered by the end of the Cold War and the tragic suppression of protesting Beijingers in 1989. The Middle Kingdom's entry onto the world stage marks a historic shift and a challenge to statesmanship. But to argue that the United States must gird itself for conflict is decidedly premature.

> ANNE THURSTON, *a former Wilson Center Fellow, is the author of* Enemies of the People *(1987) and* A Chinese Odyssey *(1992), and collaborated with Li Zhisui, Mao's personal physician, on* The Private Life of Chairman Mao *(1995).*

The Good News About Race

AMERICA IN BLACK AND WHITE:
One Nation, Indivisible.
By Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom. Simon & Schuster. 640 pp. $30

by James Patterson

To many Americans—including such specialists as Andrew Hacker, in his widely discussed *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (1992)—race relations in the United States seem altogether dismal. Recent developments, notably the racial polarization of opinion over O. J.