

## NOTEBOOK

**P**ERONISM OF THE WEEK: "You cannot be president of the United States if you don't have faith. Remember Lincoln, going to his knees in times of trial and the Civil War and all that stuff. You can't be. And we are blessed. So don't feel sorry for—don't cry for me, Argentina." —George Bush, January 15, campaigning in New Hampshire

**C**ONSPIRACY I: The most diverting part of the new book *Secret Life: Firsthand Accounts of UFO Abductions* by David M. Jacobs (forthcoming from Simon and Schuster) is the foreword by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Harvard psychiatry professor John E. Mack. Mack, once known for his touchy-feely approach to assuaging nuclear anxiety (he defended the Chernobyl cover-up on the grounds that it kept Soviet children "more optimistic"), warns of "a huge, strange interspecies or interbeing breeding program that has invaded our physical reality and is affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people and perhaps in some way the consciousness of the entire planet." Although such a scenario is at variance with "prevailing notions of reality," Mack implies that our ignorance may be due in part to media distortion. Oliver Stone, call your office.

**C**ONSPIRACY II: A January 13 *New York Times* report on the memorial service for the nine victims of the City College stampede provides startling new clues to the real reason for the calamity: "The Rev. Lawrence E. Lucas, pastor of the Resurrection Roman Catholic Church in Manhattan, suggested to the crowd that the Dec. 28 tragedy was an 'orchestrated disaster' that backfired. He said he felt the tragedy was intended to give the police an excuse to attack youths and to usurp power from the students." Another minister, the Rev. Timothy P. Mitchell, said the deaths were a "painful reminder of the racist, capitalistic, individualistic society in which we live." The Rev. Al Sharpton, under indictment and running for the Senate, was unavailable for comment.

**C**LOSE SHAVE: The Egyptian minister of the interior, General Abdul Halim Musa, chose an unusual setting to deliver a law and order message: the Cairo Book Fair. Speaking on January 15, he warned that the bid for power by Algeria's Islamicists was no Egyptian problem: the "vacuum" that existed in Algeria does not exist in Egypt. Nor would there be any tricky experiments with elections of the sort that got out of hand in Algeria. "We know our proper dimensions here," he added. There was "no contradiction" between the

emergency decrees by which Egypt is governed and the "expansion of democracy." Musa is relatively enlightened by the standard of Egyptian ministers of the interior. These are usually tough cops who put their spurs in Asyût, in upper Egypt, hunting down Islamic fundamentalists. Last year Musa's predecessor General Zaki Badr, provoked a storm when he instructed the headmen of the country's villages to hunt "the bearded ones." Badr was sacked after he embarrassed his government by saying it was fine to kill 1 percent of the people to keep the others safe and prosperous.

**T**HE ALMIGHTY: In China freedom of religion is guaranteed by the 1982 constitution. However, as recent Asia Watch report details, there is a little fine print. First, you must choose from among five state-sanctioned religions: Buddhism, Daoism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam. Each comes with Party-sanctioned theology, clergy, and, liturgy, which you are free to accept unquestioningly. You may encounter what a Party document refers to as "the religious real estate problem left over from history," which is short for the state's pillaging of places of worship over the past few decades. But chill. Although you may not pray in an unauthorized place of worship, you are free to set up your own, so long as you register with the municipal, county, and village patriotic associations, as well as various Religious Affairs Bureau offices, any of which may wish to investigate you for counterrevolutionary tendencies. Your organization may not accept money or literature from "foreigners whose aim is infiltration." Last, you may not evangelize, proselytize, congregate in groups larger than thirty, engage in "feudal and superstitious activities," or acknowledge the authority of the Vatican. Other than that, you're on your own.

**D**EPARTMENT OF RACIAL PURITY:

