

This was rather pathetic; but as the crises have become deeper, the response of the present Administration is not pathetic but, frankly, delusional and dangerous. It is to *will* to be in control, without adjusting to the realities. They seem to imagine that they will in fact buy up every economy, police the world, social engineer the cities, school the young. In this fantasy they employ a rhetoric of astonishing dissociation between idea and reality, far beyond customary campaign oratory. For example, they proclaim that they are depolluting streams, but they allot no money; forty "demonstration cities" are to be made livable and show the way, but the total sum available is \$1.5 billion; the depressed area of Appalachia has been reclaimed, but the method is an old highway bill under another name; poor people will run their own programs, but any administrator is fired if he tries to let them; they are suing for peace, but they dispatch more troops and bombers. This seems to be just lying, but to my ear it is nearer to magic thinking. The magic buoys up the self-image; the activity is either nothing at all or brute force to make the problem vanish.

In between the ideality and the brutality there occurs a lot of obsessional warding off of confusion by methodical calculations that solve problems in the abstract, in high modern style. A precise decimal is set, beyond which the economy will be inflationary, but nobody pays it any mind. We know at what average annual income how many peoples cause what percentage of disturbances. A precise kill-ratio is established beyond which the Viet Cong will fold up, but they don't. Polls are consulted for the consensus, like the liver of sheep, without notice of signs of unrest and even though the Administration keeps committing itself to an irreversible course that allows for no choice. And they are everlastingly righteous.

In more insane moments, however, they manufacture history out of whole cloth, so there is no way of checking up at all. They create incidents in order to exact reprisals; they invent (and legislate about) agitators for demonstrations and riots that are spontaneous; they project bogeymen in order to arm to the teeth. Some of this, to be sure, is cynical, but that does not make it less mad; for, clever or not, they still avoid the glaring realities of world poverty, American isolation, mounting urban costs, increasing anomie, and so forth. I do not think the slogan "The Great Society" is cynical; it is delusional.

Perhaps the epitome of will operating in panic—like a case from a textbook in abnormal psychology—has been the government's handling of the assassination of John Kennedy. The Warren Commission attempted to "close" the case, to make it not exist in the public mind. Thus it hastily drew firm conclusions from dubious evidence, disregarded counter-evidence, defied physical probabilities, and perhaps even accepted manufactured evidence. For a temporary lull it has run the risk of a total collapse of public trust that may end up in a Dreyfus case.

3.

Common people, who do not have to govern, can let themselves feel powerless and resign themselves. They respond with the familiar combination of not caring and, as a substitute, identifying with those whom they fancy to be powerful. This occurs differently, however, among the poor and the middle class.

The poor simply stop trying, become dependent, drop out of school, drop out of sight,