

PENTHOUSE

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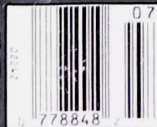
SWAGGART
THE LADY
THE STORY
THE PICTURES

**THE RIDDLE OF
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**PERILS OF ROCK
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**CARDINAL OF
THE KREMLIN**

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WOMEN'S WORK ... AFGHAN-STYLE

While the Reagan administration is publicly pledged to supporting the anti-Communist Afghan guerrillas against the Russians, privately one arch-Republican is said to be disgusted by the way the resistance fighters are treating female refugees. Widows in the Pakistan refugee camps, Maureen Reagan has been fuming, aren't even allowed to ask for food.

"Under the strict interpretation of Islamic law that their leaders are imposing, a man must ask on their behalf," a friend of the First Daughter explains.

The Refugee Policy Group, a nonprofit organization that monitors camp conditions, says that a backlash against Communism is fueling religious zealotry that is more intense than before the Soviet invasion. Urban Afghan women used to hold professional jobs. In the villages, they did agricultural work.

"In the camps, women have



to stay inside walled mud compounds and wear veils in company," says the group's Emily Copeland. "At ration distributions, the widows will stand off under a tree as the male heads of families jostle for food."

In a study for the group, Julia Vadala Taft writes of another custom in the camps: "Females must defer to the males during mealtime. Since females can't fight the *jihad* (holy war), they are perceived as less useful to the society and less in need of suste-

nance. Therefore, men and boys five years and older eat first, and the remaining allocations are provided to the women and girls."

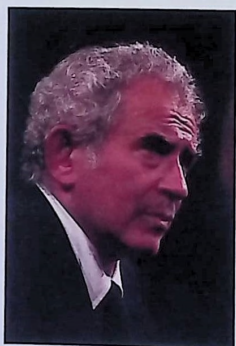
The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has succeeded in establishing 76 primary schools for girls in the camps (against 486 for boys), and two middle schools (there are 161 for boys). Fearing it wouldn't get teachers or pupils, the international body hasn't set up any female secondary schools. One is operated,

however, by the International Rescue Committee, a voluntary American relief organization. When its girls' program opened, the group received a letter threatening a "powerful explosion in your center" unless the "girl classes" immediately ceased. "It is quite clear to every mindful Muslim" that the Communist coup succeeded because Afghanistan had allowed the "corruption" of coeducation, the letter said. The Rescue Committee's center isn't coeducational, but staff took the hint. "We bus in the students, so they aren't hassled," a staffer says.

Though the bomb threat seems to have been so much saber rattling, relief workers aren't sanguine about the fate awaiting women who return to their homeland when the Soviets finally withdraw. "Those of them who were westernized before the invasion may be better off emigrating," one worker says. "We expect the fundamentalist backlash to really take grip, like in Iran."

AIDS-MANIA AMONG THE RICH AND FAMOUS

AIDS experts had just finished trashing Masters and Johnson's conjecture that the disease may be transmitted through casual contact when the maven of macho, Norman Mailer, surfaced with his views on the disease in *Citizen Cohn*, Nicholas von Hoffman's new bio of the late Roy Cohn. The homosexual Cohn and the keeper of the "sacred sperm"—Norman is legendary for his bizarre reasoning against birth control—occupied adjacent Cape Cod summer cottages. Recounts the book, at dinner with friends one evening, "Norris [Mailer's wife] and



Norman . . . talked about putting lye around the outside of [Cohn's] cottage so that AIDS wouldn't be spread."

This was before Cohn even had the disease, which

eventually was to kill him. Besides which, the AIDS virus isn't transmitted through the air. Nor can Norman catch it through his sacred tootsies. "It is shocking for someone supposedly as educated as Mailer to think AIDS can be spread casually," exclaims Carisa Cunningham of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, the country's largest AIDS-education organization.

Another media crowd pleaser is cited in Von Hoffman's book as worrying to acquaintances that Cohn's final illness was God's punishment. Barbara Walters, a longtime friend of the grand inquisitor of the McCarthy period, "hadn't approved of some of the things Roy had done," says

the book. She "thought perhaps what was happening to him was a judgment." Though taunts that AIDS is "God's wrath" are common from the homophobic Religious Right, Walters thought Cohn had liver cancer, so she presumably believed the "penalty" was being invoked for reasons other than his sexuality. "But to say that any disease is a punishment can only create stigma, prejudice, and fear. It would be helpful if she would keep her ideas to herself," seethes Christopher Babick, head of the People With AIDS Coalition, an educational and medical referral group that is run "by and for" people who suffer from the disease.