
EDITORIAL



THE MARION STONEHEAD REDEEMED

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

I wonder whose idea it was to send Mr. Muhammad Ali, Esq., as presidential envoy to explain American foreign policy to African heads of state. The story has been chastely banished from the headlines, but we scholars must not flinch from such episodes. Let the others avert their eyes. We shall ponder the travesty and be improved by it.

If the idea did not have the authentic savor of our President's populist whoop whoop, I would have laid the ensuing opéra bouffe to the mischievous designs of Donald Segretti or the Bulgarian secret police. Possibly there was a drunk loose late at night in the State Department's operations center. Perchance, Ham's bartender had a hand in it. But no, this is the administration that has unveiled such inimitable bladder scenes as Dr. Peter Bourne, Bert Lance, the Hon. Andrew Young, B.D., Midge Costanza, Ham, Jody, Billy—halt! the room begins to spin. No President in history has been so closely associated with a barrel full of monkeys. Somewhere in the wilds of Ohio the descendants of Warren Gamaliel Harding rejoice. The Marion stonehead is redeemed.

A retired pugilist with a penchant for hallucinating in public—make him our Clark Clifford for Africa! Here is Carterism with its grinning face. Imagine, there he was in Africa, Howard Cosell's legendary heavyweight champion of the world—an agglutination of Plato, Hercules, and St. Theresa of the Little Flower—and what happens to him? He is rendered schizo when interviewed at the Dar es Salaam airport by a handful of Tanzanian Dan Rathers. Would Joe Frazier ever have writhed so pathetically? Of course not, but then Joe Frazier was always a man of dignity. In the 1960s and 1970s this always put him at a PR disadvantage when he confronted Ali.

Think of what the Carter White House pulled this time! Our government actually sent a plane to snatch

Ambassador Ali up from a remote sparring session somewhere in metropolitan Madras, where some disappointed stringers for Western news services were stuck with him: he aging gracelessly, they praying for a newsworthy moment. Then came the news that Ali was to be made a diplomat. Suddenly it was 1971 again. The stringers perked up. The champion perked up. Once again he was The Greatest, and off the entourage went to the Dark Continent.

The thing was a piece of populist cleverness, until sometime on February 3 when word began to spread through the Carter White House: Our 250-pound Richelieu has run amuck

at the Dar es Salaam airport, *and there is nothing we can do about it—Not Even An Entebbe-Style Raid!* Our foreign service officers try to stifle him, but he gibbers on. They try to assist him with the questions, but he grows irritable. There is no chance he will go home early, and he has already called President Brezhnev one of the "two baddest white men in the world." How will Secretary Vance ever explain that one to the Politburo?

Well, whose masterpiece was this? Was it the work of Patt Derian, Richard Holbrooke, C. William Maynes, or Richard Moose? All are Assistant Secretaries of State, and all are capable of such marvels. How about Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

David Aaron, Special Advisor to the Secretary of State Marshall Shulman, or Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff W. Anthony Lake? Come on boys, break from your meditations on ways to reassure the Soviets of our peaceful intentions. (How about lavender uniforms for the 82nd Airborne? Could we turn the dishes of our early warning radar system into solar collectors? Let's replace the stars on our bombers with flowers. Hey, we could commission Salvador Dali!)

What I want to know is which of you beauties decided to send Ambassador Ali to visit the presidential palaces of Africa? I know all about your incomparable understanding of and respect for the Third World, but what did you expect President Nyere to say when Ambassador Ali rope-a-doped into his office? What could a man who failed his military intelligence test say to this graduate of Edinburgh University? Of course Ali will always have a very special meaning for you children of the 1960s, but Woodstock, Simon and Garfunkel, Peter Max, and strobe lights do not have the same resonance in Africa and other foreign lands.

It was patronizing to send Muhammad Ali to Africa. And, remembering Ali's eccentricities, it was reckless. We sent high-level presidential advisors to India and Pakistan. Why send a retired boxer to Africa? 'Twas a botch. Yet when the administration began congratulating itself on this botch ("The impact he's having is tremendous," said Hodding Carter III), the thing took on an even more pernicious dimension.

In a democratic society much of what the average citizen knows about government comes from examples set by his elected officials. To solemnly assert things that are not true, i.e., that the Ali mission was successful and intelligent, is to further degrade many a citizen's understanding



of international relations and of those who practice international relations. Our President, the one who was once given to saying "If I ever lie to you, don't vote for me," could serve the

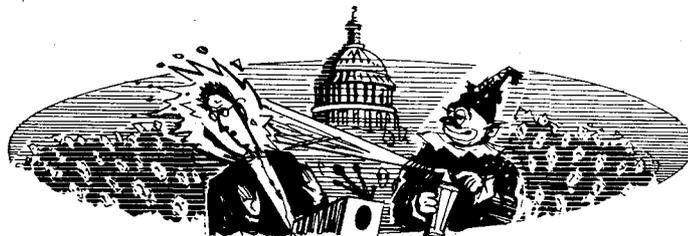
commonweal well by asking his aides to stop lying about this ignominious pratfall.

And a final point. Is it not about time for him to dismiss the afore-

mentioned Machiavellis? Last summer he dismissed his four most competent cabinet members to demonstrate a new seriousness in his domestic policy. Now he implies

there is a new seriousness in his foreign policy. How about dismissing some of those who made such a hash of it in years past? The nation's sports fans will be grateful. □

C A P I T O L I D E A S



THE SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENZA

by Tom Bethell

An unexpected bonus deriving from the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, not to mention the oppression of the Russians themselves, has been the westward migration of some of the residents of these countries—those who were fortunate enough to escape—and a corresponding shot in the arm for intelligent opinion here. I find myself much in agreement with such Slavs and Russian emigrés as I occasionally meet. They often have quite original minds and, needless to say, are a refreshing contrast to our own wilted weeds, homegrown at St. Grottlesex.

I'm afraid the problem is that our local flora are "coming down with something"; in a word, ailing, like the Ayatollah. By contrast the Eastern Europeans have already been exposed to the germ and either resisted it or caught a mild case of the illness. As a result, they are now "inoculated" against its further ravages.

This disease, called egalitarianism (a virulent strain of the more general disorder, socialism) is currently galloping across the American continent, north and south, at a fearful speed. That is why the Soviet Empire, for all its horrors, strikes me as being basically in better health than the West. The Soviet-dominated lands have indeed been laid low by the invading microbial armies, but somehow the disease never quite "took," by some miracle. So now they (I sense) are on the road back to

health. We, on the other hand, have only just begun to feel the first flush of fever.

Meanwhile, it occurs to me that Ben Wattenberg and others roosting comfortably at centrist think tanks could do us all a great favor by stanching the flow of those articles and commentaries which, by saying that America is "moving to the right," play into the hands of the National Education Association, Ralph Nader, Americans for Democratic Action, and other left-wing

institutions (who use these articles as press releases, if I'm not mistaken). Far from moving to the right, America has been moving steadily to the left for the past ten years at least. This has not been noticed because conservative opinion has been effectively labelled as "ideology," whereas left-wing opinion now marches about the land in the guise of reasonableness, status quo, and conventional wisdom.

It is perfectly true that the rapid onset of the egalitarian illness has

summoned forth from the body politic a number of *antibodies*, but it would be a great mistake to interpret the appearance of antibodies as a sign of national health. They are a reaction to illness.

Well, I won't go on about this right now. I'll save a fuller discussion of the subject for the future.

This month I wanted to say something about my favorite Slavs (come to think of it, I'm not sure that is the right word, and now I worry that I might be hauled up before some Ethnic Tribunal). At any rate, I am sure that Lev Navrozov won't object if I describe him as a Caucasian, since he came to the U.S. several years ago from Russia (perhaps somewhere near the Caucasus Mountains). He is described sometimes as a "dissident Soviet writer," although he might object to that use of "Soviet." He is also the author of *The Education of Lev Navrozov*, a book I have not so much as glimpsed in any bookstore, new or secondhand.

But I have much enjoyed several of Navrozov's articles in magazines such as *Commentary*. He must be the only writer in America capable of writing about such topics as SALT verification and CIA estimates of Soviet military strength in such a way as to be not only readable but actually funny.

So I was pleased to be able to hear him speak at a recent conference held in Washington by Accuracy In Media. As I came in, Navrozov was telling a story about an airliner that



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