

The positions Stern takes, however, make sense in the framework of the refugee historical tradition. From this perspective, the study of German history has but two overriding purposes: to be an object lesson to foreigners and to serve as a means of contrition for Germans. For example, those German history surveys assigned to my generation in college—with their interminable references to national failures, lost turning points, and squandered revolutions—resembled prosy religious allegories which describe the sinner's descent into a self-incurred perdition. Such preaching has apparently influenced Stern, who expresses approval of Ludwig Dehio's demand for

“unconditional recognition” by the Germans of their “terrible role” in twentieth century history. Perhaps this role has by now been made to appear too terrible, in the sense that any interpretation of the past that puts the Germans in a particularly bad light can expect an enthusiastic hearing among large segments of the American academic community. This has certainly been true of the responses to the Fischer debate. Here sympathy for a scholar battling against some political opposition to his work came to be viewed as the struggle of an honest and wise radical against the cumulative force of his country's whole evil history embodied in its then-present Christian Democratic re-

gime. The almost ritualized outcries, often sanctimonious and uninformed, that came from American scholars against Germans being unwilling to face up to their past, probably raised more questions about historians on this side of the Atlantic than about those on the other. They showed that it is high time that Americans trained in German history, move beyond the pious hysteria of their teachers, and examine their field outside the realm of bad theology. Insofar as they can manage this, they shall follow in the footsteps of those post-World War II European historians, who in writing on the Great War, decided to bury old axes, and no longer merely to grind them. □



Confessions of a Cigar Snob

Author's note: Since the Great American Saloon Series has run dry due to the milk-sop nature of most Alternative contributors, a few nonsaloon pieces on pleasant indulgences might be in order. If no one else steps forward in the next few issues, the author threatens, time allowing, to follow this short essay with further confessions of a liqueur snob, a book snob, a pipe snob, a snuff snob, a beer snob, a hotel snob, a food snob, a political snob, and—if a less frowzy periodical can be lined up—a magazine snob. You have been warned, so pick up your spoon handles or crayons and get cracking.

A DEAR OLD VIENNESE friend, now in his nineties but still a great smoker, once confided to me that he knew the Weimar Republic was doomed when he began noticing too many good cigars falling into the hands of the wrong sort of people.

It's not a bad rule of thumb. Something is seriously wrong with any society in which too many pimps can afford Lincoln Continentals and too many pipsqueaks can afford Havana Coronas. And, sooner rather than later, the quality of both the Coronas and the Continentals begins to skid.

Fortunately for those of us who are more interested in creature comforts than mobility, cigars seem to have avoided their grand climacteric longer than the American automobile—despite the zealous efforts of Playboy propagandists and others bent on popularizing and plasticizing the good life. We can probably thank the big city political bosses of a generation ago, who were usually caricatured with large, fuming stogies clenched between their teeth, for keeping the cigar from becoming a status symbol for

smart young moderns. God bless the ward heelers.

There are, it is true, hundreds of garbage brands, usually sold over drugstore counters, but this is hardly a new development. Rubbishy cigars have always been with us, from the foul green cheroots smoked by Paraguayan peasant women (and occasionally their brats) for at least three centuries, to the Tijuana Smalls, tasting more of paper than tobacco, that came on the market at about the same time that a number of jaded, middle-aged trendies were developing a morbid interest in a different sort of smoke with a similar sounding name—which must have occurred to the ad agency writer who christened these legal but highly offensive pseudocigarillos.

Unfortunately, the bulk of mass-produced American cigars are not pure tobacco products. A small note on most of the popular labels shamelessly confesses that the cigars “are made predominantly of tobacco with significant amounts of nontobacco material added,” which is rather like a Mother Superior explaining that the nuns in her charge are primarily virgins but with substantial amounts of nonvirgins tossed in. An honorable exception on the domestic market (unless they have made a recent policy change) is the Antonio & Cleopatra line of cigars produced by American Brands. In particular, their maduro (dark) wrapper version is a full, even smoke. As I recall, they use African Cameroon leaf which provides a good, spicy aroma and flavor. Rum River Crooks, another and even more modestly-priced American cigar, is still, I believe, pure tobacco—Pennsylvania or Connecticut leaf most likely. But the leaf is not particularly noble and the rum flavoring and aroma put off many smokers. Still, they

deserve an honorable mention amidst so many synthetic monstrosities.

A vanishing phenomenon on the cigar scene is the small local or regional American manufacturer. There used to be dozens of these, some of them very nice, but as with local breweries they are either folding or being absorbed. A few still remain, a good example being the Ibold Cigar Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, which puts out a modestly priced line of smokable mass manufactured cigars. These may not win any awards in international competitions, but they are a surviving specimen, little the worse for wear, of what was once a thriving and diverse selection of domestically made cigars. Worthy of individual mention are two of their maduro wrapped items, their Brevas and their Black Peters, which are very much in the old American stogey tradition.

For sheer, unabashed shoddiness, however, a foreign product of nearly a century ago is still without peer. Anyone familiar with the not-so-glorious history of the old Royal Italian Army knows that it was riddled with corruption and jobbery. One result was the humiliating massacre at Aduwa, where a large, modernly-equipped Italian force was wiped out by primitive Abyssinian levies—an event that seems to have traumatized an impressionable lad named Mussolini, who tried to get even some years later.

A less historically significant symptom of corruption was Italy's army-issue cigar in the reign of Victor Emmanuel I. The crooked contractors who produced it stopped at nothing, adding vast quantities of alien material including straw and mud—items better suited for raising earthworms than for rolling cigars. According to tradition, there were even times when the Italian Army cigar achieved the complete opposite of the ideal—the most ingenious of the grafters somehow managed to concoct a cigar that was 100 percent tobacco-free! No doubt the anticancer lobby, had it been around at the time, would have loudly applauded.

If, for old time's sake, you ever feel the urge to savor something akin to the old Italian Army cigar, you can still find Tuscan-style cigars in some Italian-American grocery stores. One firm, Barodi, even produces them in the States. However, such a course is only recommended to the most masochistic of nostalgia enthusiasts.

At the other end of Western Europe, in Spain (more precisely, in the sun-drenched

Canary Islands), one finds cigars of a much higher order. The tobacco trade in the Canaries dates back to the sixteenth century when early Spanish explorers introduced tobacco plants from the New World and made the first attempts at cultivating them in the Old.

The Canary Islanders are still at it today, and with the help of a number of anti-Castro émigrés—many of them the former heads of old Cuban cigar firms who brought seeds and expertise with them—they are producing some of the finest cigars available in the world today. *Casa Buena*, *Don Sancho*, and *Flamenco* are all good lines, available in a wide range of shapes and sizes including, in the case of *Flamenco*, the once familiar but now rather rare "torpedo."

The mass exit of the old proprietary and managerial classes from Cuba has created a curious cleavage in the cigar world. Most of the old, revered Havana brands—*Punch*, *Bolívar*, and *Upmann* to name a few—now fly under two flags, each using the same name but with different assets and liabilities. Exile *Punches*, for example, are produced by the old management in Tampa, Florida, while the Cuban government still exports cigars under the same brand name. The tobacco in the Tampa *Punches* is Havana seed grown elsewhere and not quite up to original Havana standards which require that special blend of soil, sun, and soul unique to Cuba. However, they are made with a measure of care and quality control that is absent from all but the most expensive Castro-era Cuban cigars. Other émigré firms hold forth in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

The best available Cubans are sold in London, Moscow, and other foreign capitals, but these usually cost an arm and a leg. In London, it is not unheard of to pay a pound for a good corona-sized Havana, well-wrapped, well-preserved, and made of prime leaf. That comes to \$2.40 a throw, which is rather steep by any standard.

The best course for those who enjoy good smoking but would just as soon avoid bankruptcy is to cultivate a taste for out-of-the-way cigars that, if not masterpieces, are at least good examples of regional taste and craftsmanship.

For those with robust appetites, there are the dark, strong sun-cured tobaccos of Brazil, available from *Seuerdieck* and *Dannemann*, firms that grow and hand-make their own cigars in Bahia. These are genuine but a little risky—sometimes loosely wrapped and with an occasional hair that betrays the scarcity of depilatories among the buxom Negresses who roll the cigars on their thighs. They are good, coarse, reactionary cigars from a good, coarse, reactionary part of the world. For some reason, they are particularly popular with Germans. Even Walter Ulbricht, the late Communist boss of East Germany, found them irresistible, despite their fascist taint.

Far milder in taste (though not in aroma) are the delicate cigars of the Philippines. These too date back to the early years of Spanish exploration and conquest. *Isabella* leaf, a special strain developed in the Philippines and named after Spanish royalty, goes into the best of them, hand-made and marketed by firms like *Alhambra*. Brazilian and Sumatran leaf also go into most of the best small Dutch and Danish

whiffs—brief, tasty smokes suitable for occasions when one can't really do justice to a full-fledged cigar. *Schimmelpenninck*, *Ormond*, *Karl I*, and *Larsen* are all old houses that turn out a good variety and there are also several sound English imitations (*Mannikins* springs to mind). Like good Sherry, the best whiffs are invariably dry—sometimes too much so for American palates.

The best the British Empire (may it rest in peace) had to offer came from Jamaica. The late Sir Winston Churchill, perhaps as much for political reasons as out of real preference, always favored *Royal Jamaicans*, still made and widely exported along with several less expensive but worthy brands like *Mario Palomino*. Jamaican cigars have less character than Havanas but they are even, light, and usually well-made. The Dominican Republic, endowed with most of the right natural elements, also exports cigars—good raw material but finished products that are uneven at best.

For the really sentimental imperialist, however, the most appropriate smoke of all is a Burma cheroot—a dark, slender cigar chopped off at both ends and specially cured. As the economy of independent Burma slowly sinks back into the stone age, the supply of cheroots to the outside world dwindles. But several creaky old firms still manage to deliver an occasional batch of plantation bundles to the wharf which ultimately find their way to smart London tobacconists like *Bewlay's* and *Green's*.

Green's has dubbed its cheroots *Call of the East* and, with their wafting, almost incense-like fragrance, that is exactly what they are—a very pleasant change of pace, especially for retired Blimps, former tea planters, and readers of *Kipling*.

Having taken your pick from the above array, you really should choose a decent cigar clipper. If it is good it will probably have been made in Solingen, West Germany, although some interesting examples (usually more eye-catching than functional) are also produced in Sweden and Italy. Strange people, the Germans—they produce both the worst cigars and the best cigar clippers in the world. Favorites from my own collection are an enormous monstrosity made of ramshorn and silver, and a brass and pewter piece with a sharp, wedge-shaped blade surmounted by a constellation of Baroque putti in bas-relief, not one of them so much as puffing on a cigarillo.

All that remains now is the purchase of a nice, solid mahogany humidor (cedar-lined) and the mapping out of a cigar zone somewhere in the house. Opposition from the fair sex may be formidable—at the turn of the century, when he was already well into his fifties, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) still had to waddle off and smoke behind some particularly wide palace pillar whenever old Queen Victoria put in an appearance. After she died, he made up for so many lost smokes that his lungs soon gave out.

However, assuming that the General Directress of your own household is somewhat more pliant, and a territorial treaty can be signed, have a few friends over who are capable of enjoying a decent smoke and are also up to a good night's tipling and conversation. As *Thackeray* observed in one of his minor essays, "Honest men, with pipes

or cigars in their mouths, have a great physical advantage in conversation. You may stop talking if you like—but the breaks of silence never seem disagreeable, being filled up by the puffing of smoke—hence there is no awkwardness in resuming conversation—no straining for effect . . ."

A bit later on, the creator of *Vanity Fair* sums it up for all of us who have known the pleasure of a really good cigar. "I vow and believe," he concludes, "that the cigar has been one of the greatest creature-comforts of my life—a kind companion, a gentle stimulant, an amiable anodyne, a cementer of friendship. May I die if I abuse that kindly weed which has given me so much pleasure!"

Actually, those of us who are overfond of it are much more likely to pay the ultimate price than its detractors. Sigmund Freud, U.S. Grant, and Emperor Friedrich I of Germany (Kaiser Wilhelm's unfortunate father), all cigar devotees, literally croaked from various forms of mouth and throat cancer. But there's a price tag on everything and, besides, as the air gets more and more foul, abstinence is less and less likely to buy much extra time from the grim reaper.

At any rate, when the old gentleman does come for you, I hope you'll have the decency to offer him a cigar. □

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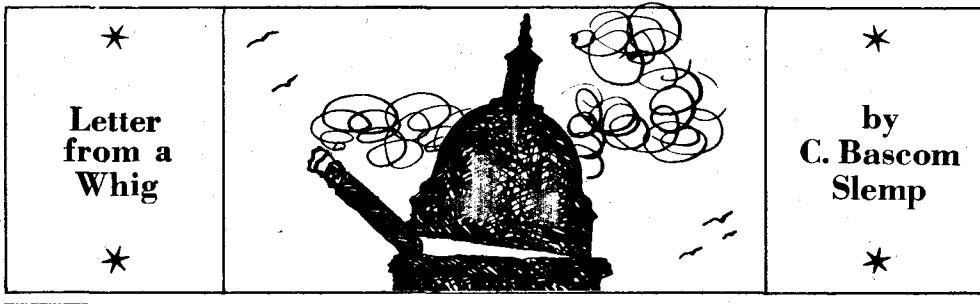
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Home for Re-Election

(Washington)—CONGRESS WAS finally able to recess for the November elections on October 17, giving our national legislators precious little time to hit the campaign trail back home. Although few members of Congress had much to look forward to in their districts, the delay in the recess pleased no one.

The delay in the recess was the result of a stalemate between Congress and the White House over the question of U.S. military aid to Turkey.

Opponents of U.S. military aid to Turkey had added an amendment to a routine resolution allowing for continuing appropriations for various Federal agencies which would have cut off the U.S. aid. Because of that amendment President Ford twice vetoed within forty-eight hours what ordinarily would have been only a stopgap funding bill. Unable to override the veto twice, Congress and the White House agreed to a last-minute frantic compromise. The language finally accepted by the White House (reluctantly) permits the United States to continue its military aid to Turkey until December 10, provided that Turkey does not ship any additional arms to Cyprus during the interim period.

The Administration had opposed the Congressionally mandated cutoff, arguing that it would undermine the U.S. position to secure a negotiated settlement between the Greeks and Turks on the Cyprus question.

Since assuming the Presidency in August Ford has vetoed five bills, only one of which—the railroad retirement bill—Congress has been able to override. But despite this record the Ford Administration is not held in particularly high esteem on either side of the political aisle in the nation's capital. Republicans in particular are concerned with what political commentator Kevin Phillips recently called the "massive crisis of leadership and government by a clique of second-rate incompetents." Ford has not been the salvation the GOP had hoped for.

Congress' Unfinished Business

Most Congressional staffers, and indeed many legislators, had hoped that Congress would not have to come back for a long session after the November elections. During Congressional recesses committee staffs (although not Congressional offices) usually go on a ten-to-four schedule, and staffers also like to catch up on their long-accumulated IOU "freebie-luncheons" from Washington's illustrious lobby corps. But the Ninety-third Congress is apparently not going to have any such luck. Senate Major-

ity Leader Mike Mansfield (D.—Mont.) has said that Congress will remain in session until it expires on January 3, 1975.

Any rumors to the contrary, most of the controversial legislation before the Ninety-third Congress will be carried over to the new Congress, mainly because of the gains the Democrats expect to make in the elections.

Nevertheless, there are a number of appropriations bills pending before Congress which require action, and the Rockefeller confirmation hearings have yet to be completed. A lame duck Congress might also be inclined to vote for the politically sensitive Congressional and super-grade civil service pay raises.

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Great American Series

On Dealing with Congressmen:

First you gotta kick 'em in the _____, then you bring 'em to their knees, lie 'em down flat, and sit on 'em.

Then while you're sitting on 'em, you say, "Now that I've heard your side of the story, here's my plan."

—L. Baines Johnson

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

The much-talked-about trade bill will probably not be brought to the floor of Congress for a vote before next June. Disagreement between both houses of Congress, and disagreement between Congress and the Executive branch, as well as the extensive floor battles that will accompany the legislation, are the reasons given for the delay. There is also little chance that the already defeated no-fault insurance bill and the consumer protection bill (called by some the National Agency to Disrupt Economic Rights—NADER) will be revived. But along with the proposals for national health insurance, these will be high priority items for the Ninety-fourth Congress.

Congress' Most Inflationary

Because of Congress' continuing inability to offer any substantive proposals to combat "Public Enemy Number One," inflation, the Connecticut State Taxpayers Association (a nonpartisan citizens lobbying group) has come up with a scale to measure "excessive wasteful or nonessential federal spending, of the sort that produces deficits and runaway inflation."

Grover Rees, the Executive Director of the Taxpayers Association, said the "Spending

and Inflation Index" is the first roll-call vote analysis strictly limited to Federal spending issues; it contrasts with the ratings of special interest groups which cover a variety of issues.

The Spending and Inflation Index covers thirty votes, among them votes for public works projects, the Amtrak railroad program, foreign aid, UN programs, and mass transit operating subsidies. A Congressman who voted for every spending measure listed in the Index favored over \$10 billion in what the Taxpayers Association regards as excessive inflationary spending. The \$10 billion represents approximately two-thirds of this year's federal budget deficit.

Rees said the Connecticut State Taxpayers Association has previously concentrated on state issues, but that the national survey was prompted by the "pressing need to do something about inflation on a national level. . . . As individual citizens who are suffering because of irresponsible Congressional actions, we decided to take the initiative in providing the hard, cold facts on inflation. Now maybe other citizens across the Nation can act on these facts."

One hundred twenty-three Congressmen received a rating of 0 percent, thereby earning the not-so-sought-after "Most Inflationary Award." Thirty-six Senators also earned the "Most Inflationary Award" by scoring under 10 percent on this index. The most inflationary single state Congressional delegation was Connecticut's. Four of the state's six Representatives, including Republican Bob Steele and Democrat Ella Grasso (both candidates for that state's governorship), and Democrat Senator Abraham Ribicoff earned the award.

Gold Heist

According to the "Washington Observer" newsletter, Dr. Peter David Beter claims that the gold from Fort Knox has been stolen by David Rockefeller. As part of our continuing effort to keep our readers aware of the latest conspiracies, this story deserves some quotation.

"Beter's fantastic charge, which no one would listen to if Watergate hadn't proven that conspiracies and dirty work are often afoot at the highest levels has resulted already in a Congressional investigation. . . . Beter claims that Public Law 93-110, passed September 21, 1973, took the gold away from the Fed and it was sold to David Rockefeller at \$42.22 per ounce, although worth over \$150.

"He says that the gold has been flown to Holland, which is considered safer than America because of the tight control over the little country exercised by Queen Juliana and the Rockefellers' Bilderberg front man, H.R.H. Prince Bernhard. Holland is virtually 'owned' by Juliana, the richest woman [sic] in the world even though the Royal Dutch Shell Co. is actually controlled by the Rockefellers."

Congressional Sociological Balance

In the spirit of the affirmative action notions guiding federal judges and bureaucrats in their search for acceptable sociological compositions, the following "perfect" formula for a Congressional caucus was recently devised by a Capitol Hill aide: