

EDITORIAL



SWEDISH DREAMS OF EMPIRE

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Last month members of the worldwide peace movement temporarily had to ease up on their demonstrations against American militarism. These are turbulent and unpredictable times, and last month the world's greatest threat to peace was Sweden. To see Sweden, of all nations, lusting for violent confrontation must have been very distressing for peace activists everywhere. Remember the Stockholm Peace Congress? Remember the Swedes' exemplary neutralism over the past few decades? Yet in Sweden the pendulum has apparently swung back again.

Imagine! A small, obsolescent Soviet submarine runs aground while on a training mission in Sweden's tricky coastal currents, and the Swedish military starts rattling the saber. The Swedish politicians make political hay. Meanwhile the life of every youngster on that submarine is endangered, and the Soviets are depicted as warlike and devious—the same old stereotype. Such primitive political grandstanding was never committed when Mr. Olaf Palme and his Social Democrats ruled in Stockholm. Palme is now in the minority, however, and the Swedes are engaging in the same crude anti-Sovietism as the Reagan Administration. It will not be good for Europe.

Last month the Swedes followed a very reckless course. Why all the menacing oratory? Why all the fatuous legalism? Why not simply salvage the sub and send Moscow the bill? After all, the Soviets were obviously embarrassed enough. Is it really wise to intensify their deep sense of insecurity? Is it prudent to humiliate them when they have so

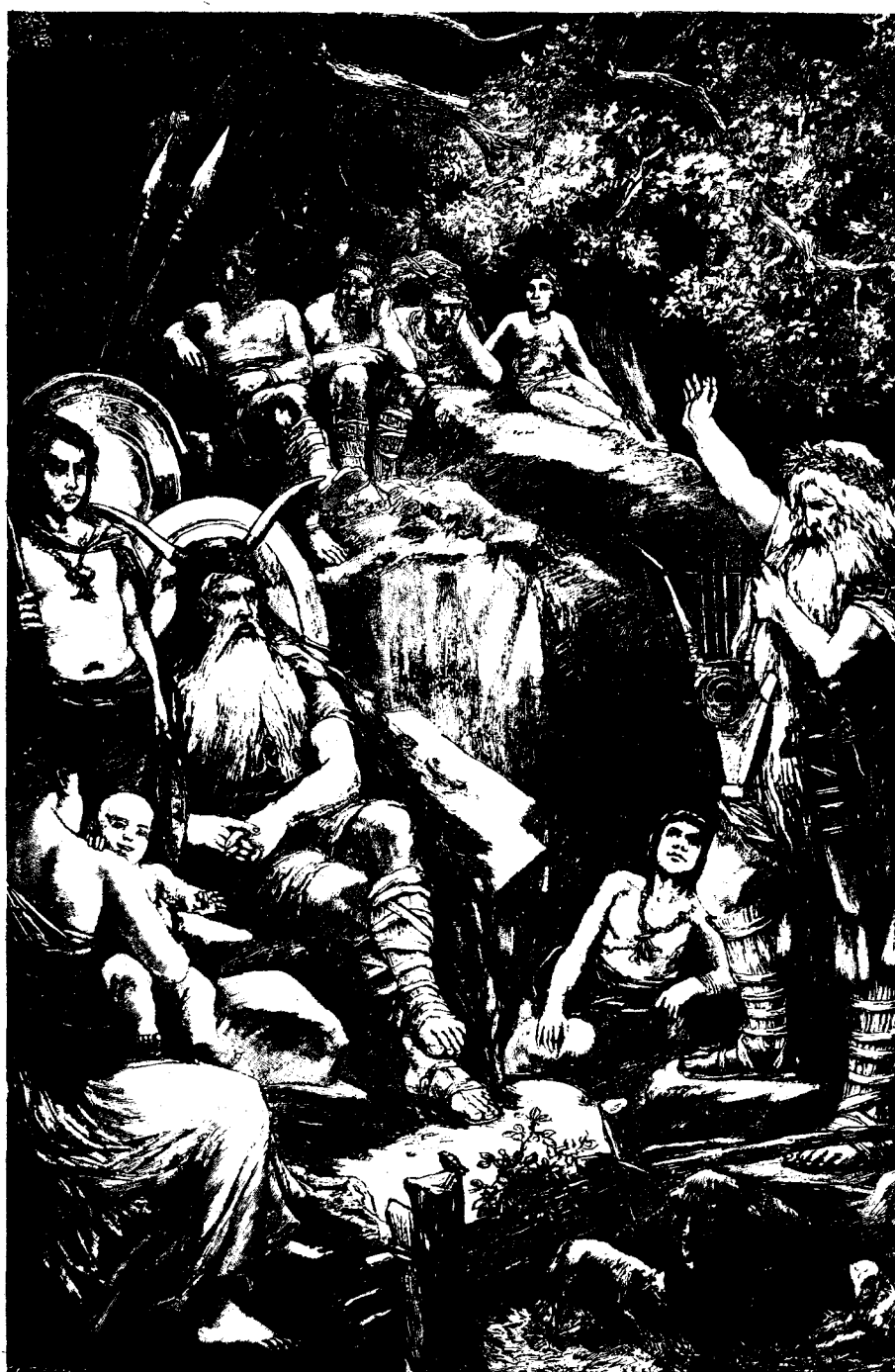
many other worries: their defensive action in Afghanistan, the bellicose Poles, another uncertain wheat crop, and all those malicious charges in the Western press claiming the Soviet Union has developed the ghastly chemical and biological weapons now being used to annihilate Southeast Asians. With the Swedes acting like cowboys what chance will there be for a nuclear-free zone in Scandinavia?

Actually, through the whole imbroglio the USSR behaved very

well—a point that doubtless has not been missed by such thoughtful American observers as Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* and George Kennan, the seasoned student of Kremlin affairs. In the face of every Swedish provocation the Soviets were restrained, mature, and even somewhat droll—the sub's captain drawing his forefinger across his throat when asked the fate awaiting him back home—ha ha, that is a good one.

As for the captain's insistence that the sub had foundered owing to a faulty gyro and inclement weather, I find the explanation perfectly reasonable. Surely the Swedes are familiar with the technological wizardry of the Socialist Fatherland. In Russia a lot of junk wobbles off the production line. How well I remember the adventure of the South Korean Boeing 707 that, while on a commercial flight in April of 1978, wandered into Soviet air space undetected by the Soviet air defense system. Norwegian radar had spotted the plane immediately, but it was not until the airliner lumbered over one of the comrades' heavily guarded, top secret military installations—a flight of at least 18 minutes—that they caught on and scrambled to their MIGs. In the ensuing hysteria they blasted away at the plane killing two civilians and wounding ten others. Then they lost the plane completely for an hour and a half. The thing flew all over northern Russia before landing on a lake.

I have long held that it was during this chilling episode that the world experienced World War III. The Soviets are worriers. As soon as they lost sight of that damaged airliner my guess is that they let fly against all their enemies with every missile in their arsenal. It is just that things do



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not work very well in Russia. We do know that a few days later President Brezhnev looked very haggard during meetings in West Germany. According to the press, he consumed a bottle and a half of vodka.

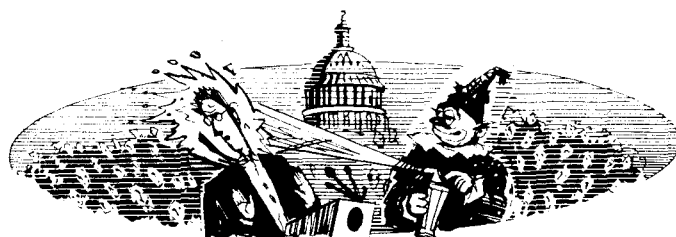
What should have been borne in mind by everyone last month is the point Kennan recently made in the *New Yorker*, to wit: The USSR is essentially a defensive power. If that sub was indeed gathering intelli-

gence information, let us recall that Russia has been invaded many times. Swedish armies have fallen upon the Russians as recently as 193 years ago. The Russians have legitimate defense interests in the Baltic, as this

frightening display of Swedish chauvinism makes clear. □

For a highly cerebral response to this editorial, see "Current Wisdom" on page 42.

CAPITOL IDEAS



GOOD WRITER GREIDER

by Tom Bethell

I have my doubts as to whether William Greider's article on David Stockman, published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, gives readers a particularly accurate impression of the budget director's thinking. George Gilder, a friend of Stockman's, says he is convinced that it does not. Someone else close to Stockman described it as "dishonest."

The problem with the article is that its overall effect is to magnify greatly such differences of opinion as exist between Stockman and other members of the Administration. (This magnification became even more distorted, of course, in the television camera's lens, where, curiously enough, the great ballyhoo about the article seems to have begun.) The distortion is analogous to that created by bar graphs that fail to depict all percentage points below a certain level, thus magnifying the differential.

The point is that someone in Stockman's position, in his dealings with Congress and the Administration, is bound to deal with the "moving parts" at the margins of the system. Rep. Phil Gramm is someone he can deal with; Rep. O'Neill remains unbudgeably opposed to everything that he stands for. In the course of months of conversation, then, it is not surprising if Stockman

is occasionally impatient with Gramm, with whom he is working, but says not a word about O'Neill, who remains outside his orbit of negotiation. A 27-page article that presents these marginal conflicts as the Stockmanian Universe is therefore misleading.

This criticism is in no way intended to exonerate Stockman from the folly of exposing himself to such tried-and-false, award-winning journalistic tactics. I am only sorry that he had to find out in such a painful way that Greider was not his "friend" after all.



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It is difficult to make the argument that an article is distorted if the victim of that distortion himself maintains a discreet silence on the subject. My impression here is that some sort of a "deal" may have been struck between Stockman and his Hay-Adams friend. (I am guessing here, with only a few hints to go by; despite repeated messages left at the *Washington Post*, Greider declined to come to the phone to confirm or deny.)

Stockman may, I suspect, have agreed to preserve a chastened silence about the article. In turn, Greider may well be suppressing further isolated quotes which could be more damaging to Stockman. Notice, incidentally, the oddity of Stockman's very muted complaint that there was an "honest misunderstanding" between them on the important matter of whether he would be quoted directly. (It is difficult to believe that Stockman sat through 18 sessions with a tape recorder running on the table without unequivocally establishing whether or not he would be quoted.)

At several points in the article, Greider skillfully makes his (not Stockman's) points by means of well-disguised editorials inserted between the Stockman quotes. Here's an example: "Stockman's interest was made clear to the others. He wanted a compromise on the tax bill which would substantially reduce its drain on the federal treasury and thus moderate the fiscal damage of Reaganomics." Note the conflation of