

Democratic senators during Congress's summer recess? Who else is conducting a purge of its uniformed police, or paying its living writers the highest compliment—the latest being Georgi Vladimov, just stripped of his Soviet citizenship. What makes Russia so special? According to Soviet cosmonaut Valentin Lebedev writing in *Pravda* about 211 miserable days spent in orbit last year, it's home. He

simply could no longer put up with cleaning his teeth with his fingers.

•It took 300 years or so, but America has finally sent a black man, Guion Bluford, Jr., into space, but who scheduled the nighttime launch? President Reagan seemed to spend the entire month in the company of women, not that it made them any happier. They hated his jokes ("he doesn't seem to recognize in himself

the mind-set that leads to such blunders," a Susan H. White of Farmington, Connecticut explained), accused him of neglecting his adopted son, and offered no sympathy when it was learned that the President emerged from all his talks with them with further loss of hearing in his right ear. Meanwhile Stanford University's decision to establish a Ronald Reagan presidential library

on that campus has provoked outrage from Reagan critics on the faculty. "I can't imagine when the students and faculty get back they are going to like this at all," said political science professor John F. Manley in calling for a delay in the planned ad hoc faculty committee report on the proposed library. Just hold on a minute, Prof. Manley. Let's impeach him first! —WP

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Whose Future?

The article by Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter on "Polling the Future" (*TAS*, August 1983) was said to be part of a larger study of "elites and social change" sponsored by Smith College, Columbia, and George Washington U. The conclusion, based on surveys comparing journalism students and businessmen, is that the "current revival of traditional attitudes will prove to be even more shallow than the modest revival of the 1950s." I don't know what sampling technique was used for the journalists and businessmen surveyed, but its randomness is questioned by the fact that the students were those at Columbia School of Journalism and NYU Business School.

How can an article bottomed in large part on a sampling of two schools in New York City purport to reflect the "Nation's Pulse," your department in which it was published? There are other schools "out there," you know, such as the top journalism schools at Northwestern, Missouri, and Stanford, and a host of business administration schools in the South, West, and Midwest, including the one in your own backyard. If soundings of such schools followed the pattern of the New York schools, I would be convinced. I would also be vastly surprised.

—J.C. Watson
McLean, Virginia

Unsafe at Any Speed

I really hate to create a schism in the ranks of bicycle haters but I must take exception to your suggestion that they be shunted to country lanes ("Pedalophilia," *TAS*, August 1983).

I have learned to hate them because I drive country lanes! If you wonder at their gall when city cycling, you would be amazed to see

them in the country. Like abandoned housedogs once they get into the wild, they romp and weave (look, no hands!) down narrow blacktops, at 22mph in 45mph zones. They often move in packs, especially the deadly serious exercise quacks (who can be spotted by the little water bottle on their frames) who know that bounty hunters like me will roar down on lone cyclists, horn blasting and the cross hairs of my Oldsmobile hood ornament centered exactly 8 inches left of their left pedal.

Although dealing with them is more fun in the country than in the city, we both know that they have no right to exist so I believe you really ought to stick to that theme rather than slough them off on us.

—Foster C. Smith
Staff Vice President
Corporate Communications
The BF Goodrich Co., Akron, Ohio

In Praise of Bad Writing

Mr. Reid Buckley may be a novelist, but he is certainly not a reader. In his review of Anthony Burgess's *The End of the World News* (*TAS*, August 1983) he failed to recognize the basic structure of the book. Two mediocre dramatic productions (a musical about Trotsky's 1917 visit to New York and a popular biography of Freud) are framed within a third story which is revealed to be actually a third artifact of the end of the world.

Much of the merit of the book centers on the irony of two of the three surviving artifacts of the world being so bad, and the third (the account of the physical end of the world) not being much better. The end of the world is as culturally complete as it is physical. As any Joycean knows, the stereotypical should be spoken of stereotypically, the clumsy clumsily, the inelegant

inelegantly. (See Hugh Kenner's "Uncle Charles Principal" in his *Joyce's Voices*.) The irony would be lost if the cultural remains of the world were masterpieces. The world would not have ended culturally.

To accuse Burgess of presenting "bad stuff" and of "bad writing" is to miss most of the book. In *The End of the World News*, Burgess has written of bad stuff in appropriately bad language. That is good writing.

—Dennis Perkinson
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Denis Mack Smith

In the article called "Happy Birthday, Benito" by John Lukacs (*TAS*, August 1983) there appears the statement "contrary to the asseverations

of many historians (as in the recent third-rate biography by Denis Mack Smith) . . ."

Mr. Lukacs is entitled to say that he disagrees with the conclusion drawn by Smith and those "many historians," but it seems to me that he is not entitled to call Smith's book "third-rate" unless he furnishes his evidence, a procedure which plainly would have been out of place in his article. His statement therefore becomes what the young people call a cheap shot. I would like to believe that Mr. Lukacs is not as supercilious as he sounds.

But since I'm writing you anyhow —thanks for publishing my favorite magazine. —Vernon W. Glasser
Palo Alto, California

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EDITORIALS



THE SPOTSWOODIAN PRONUNCIAMENTO

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

The judiciary's conceptions of free speech continue to fluctuate much as the moods of the late Mussolini continued to fluctuate to the very end. Last month a Kansas City court decided that a TV journalist cannot be suppressed as she reads the news from behind an aging visage prettified according to her tastes rather than to those of her boss, and throughout the journalistic profession the colleagues were gleeful.

Several days prior to this decision, a judge in our nation's capital handed down an opinion on freedom of expression that might well make every commentator in the Republic the timid prey of ambulance chasers. This monstrosity would practically eliminate free expression. Yet the colleagues entered scarcely a peep. Their traditional warnings about how the average American fears and hates the Bill of Rights went unuttered. The story was buried.

In a case involving a Marxist professor's allegations of libel against the columnists Rowland

Evans and Robert Novak, Chief Judge Spotswood W. Robinson III of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia made the most blatant assault against the First Amendment in recent memory.

In essence it is his judgment that commentary is not "privileged opinion" and therefore insulated from libel when it "appears without any recitation of the underlying facts" or when the recitation of those underlying facts is in some way unsatisfactory to some lawyer and his client or potential client. A United States District Court judge had earlier dismissed this suit on the grounds that the columnists' remarks were opinion hence protected under the First Amendment. Now Judge Robinson tells us that opinions that "suggest" facts can be considered libelous unless the writer scrupulously presents all opposing facts.

The judgment is, of course, preposterous. Yet as we have discovered in recent years preposterous judgment held by a tiny minority of enemies of freedom can become the law of the land if those enemies of freedom are properly positioned in the Republic, and a seat in the United States judiciary is about the best place from which to slam down tyranny on the lowly Yank. Contrary to Judge Robinson's vision of opinion, all opinion assumes some facts, at least in the mind of the opinion-holder; and to insist that the opinion-holder recite the other fellow's side of the story is to put a very heavy ball and chain on us all.

When the Hon. Tip O'Neill says, as he did last month, that the Reagan Administration is "telling the middle class that it serves our nation's interest for us to take from the needy and give to the rich," is he really libeling the President until he gives Ron's side of the story? How much time or print is going to have to be accorded Tip to get his message across? How much of his blah are we going to have to endure?

Judge Robinson's formula is thoroughly inimical to the free society and utterly insensitive to the practicalities of public discourse. His associate, Senior Circuit Judge George E. MacKinnon, revealed the decision's folly in his concurring opinion when he wrote: "Newspaper readers are likely to assume that articles appearing on the op-ed page, especially nationally syndicated editorial comments . . . are intended to express specific opinions. It is also customary for the newspaper to limit the space available for syndicated columnists to express their editorial opinions. This requires that their views be presented in very condensed form. The primary focus of such articles is opinion and they are generally so understood. Under these circumstances, readers of the opinions of nationally syndicated columnists are less likely to be misled by the omission of some facts that

persons named in such articles might consider to be necessary."

So much for Judge Robinson, but what are we to make of the colleagues' tight-lipped response? My view is that they are a timorous lot, unconcerned about the First Amendment until they themselves feel the heat. A press mouthing homogenized opinions is fine with them so long as they can keep those opinions under the sway of sentimental liberalism. A more far-sighted course to follow would be to promote the American Civil Liberties Union's position that all expressions about public issues be immune from libel laws. Keep the ambulance chasers out of the editorial pages—they are meek and dreary enough what with all their truckling to suffering homosexuals, Third World revolutionaries, and other frauds I dare not mention lest I rouse from slumber Judge Spotswood W. Robinson III.

EAST GERMAN JOCKETTES

Last month the halls of public comment echoed with complaints that the East German woman athletes in the world track and field championships could hardly be distinguished from the men. Frankly, I was flabbergasted. Had I not heard the grumbling myself I would have been expecting solemn testimonials to East Germany's progressive ways, especially from the feminist orators. What the East Germans have achieved is precisely the goal of recent American public policy, is it not? As I see it the Marxist-Leninists are to be commended. Moreover, shooting up their female discoboli with male hormones to make them hairy and strong is eminently more intelligent than passing legislation that declares sameness between the sexes and threatens legal action against those who do not go along with the delusion.

That has been the American way, or at least the American Liberal's way, for over a decade; and it has led

to the most unmanageable follies, a datum that universities, corporations, and the government are beginning to discover. There are fundamental biological differences between the male and the female, and those differences naturally conduce toward differences in taste and behavior. The East Germans have been intelligent and even humane: better it is to face up to these differences and to resort to modern endocrinology than to deny their existence and to call in the feds whenever some wretch follows intellect's imperative and draws sensible distinctions.

Equality of opportunity is a fine and equitable democratic ideal. Passing laws to assure that the ideal becomes reality has not been our folly. Rather, our folly has been to deny reality, to attribute every discrimination to bigotry, even those discriminations that are based on irrefutable differences. This has led to an incalculable growth in litigation and bitterness, to say nothing of the



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