

But both she and the movie warm up once we return to England. The turning point is the famous skinny dipping scene where the Reverend Beebe, George Emerson (who met and kissed Lucy in Italy), and Lucy's brother frolic naked—and full frontal, at that—in the forest. It is Forster's small tribute to the god Pan, and it works better in the movie than it does in the book. The scene is both touching and hilarious and brings us closer not only to these three characters, but also to Lucy and her priggish fiancé, Cecil Vyse, who happen upon the scene. Until then, the audience is alternately amused and bored but never drawn into the story. Now the movie finally comes to life. Miss Carter begins—well, not exactly to act, but her pouts become more ex-

pressive; and Maggie Smith stops being merely fussy.

If Forster had had his druthers, the story would have ended with the Reverend Beebe running off with Cecil Vyse. But as the year was 1908 and he wanted to publish, the plot revolves around the competition between Cecil and George Emerson for Lucy's hand and the gradual unwinding of Lucy's self-deception as to where her true affections lie. Of course, we know that George will win. George has passionately kissed Lucy under the golden Tuscan sky in a field of violets, while Cecil only reads of such things in books. George is all awkward instinct, while Cecil is a cultivated cad. But the working out of the tale is full of pleasures, and Forster added the nice

touch, which Mr. Ivory has delicately kept intact, of making Cecil quite sympathetic once Lucy has dumped him.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's screenplay has kept the witty bits in the novel while mercifully excising the gay didacticism. She and John Mortimer are the best current practitioners of the "Masterpiece Theater" school of screen-writing. My only complaint is that she did not try to do more for the character of Mr. Emerson, George's bohemian father, who does not come off in either the book or the film. She has also cut some interesting lines at the end of the novel. George and Lucy have eloped to Florence and are back in the Room pawing each other and not paying much attention to the view.

George makes two remarks about Lucy's cousin Charlotte which add a necessary final note to this interesting character. As it is, we are left with an unfair impression of the spinster. I would wager that Miss Jhabvala kept the lines in her screenplay, and that Mr. Ivory edited them out for the sake of a more romantic fade-out.

But such are the demands of the medium; you can only work so much exposition into a scene whose main purpose is to show the handsome blond actor Julian Sands finally getting a full repast on Miss Carter's lips. As it is, we should be thankful that the Merchant Ivory team was able to translate a beautiful small book into such a fine film with no further insult to either medium. □

## POLITIQUE INTERNATIONALE



### THE COLONEL'S COMEDIANS

by Taki

If you think comedy is dead, you should have been in Europe the week following the Libyan raid by Uncle Sam's air force. In fact, if it wasn't so pathetically funny—as well as predictable—one would have to call it the greatest anti-Western and anti-American propaganda show since Idi Amin used the press as a platform for his murderous buffoonery.

And speaking of buffoonery, there is a lady (well, she's not, really; what I mean to say is that she counts herself among the wimmin) by the name of Kate Adie, who is the BBC's *soi disant* reporter in Tripoli. Mind you, she's nothing of the kind. What she is, is a good old-fashioned propagandess, reminding me at times of that other female defender of radical leftist causes, Christabel What's-her-name. Adie's coverage of the raid made it obvious even to Arab-loving people like myself that her script had been written by the Libyan Information Ministry. The whole TV coverage was made up of shots of weeping children, grieving mothers, and outraged Libyans singing hymns of hatred against Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and the United States.

To call the BBC's coverage of the

bombing raid selective would be a gross understatement—a bit like calling Qaddafi unstable. No mention was made of the way Libyan authorities monitored and censored TV film, nor were the viewers made aware of the tight control imposed on journalists in Tripoli. Which only goes to prove that there are more pinkos running key posts in the BBC than there are radiation victims in Chernobyl. What those closet commies did manage was to make sure the viewers remained in the dark about the reasons for the raid, while no effort was made to put the attack into the context of the many outrages perpetrated by Qaddafi's murder squads against civilians.

But back to high comedy. Greece, as usual, led the way. The flim-flam man himself, Andreas Papadoc, was the first prime minister outside the Arab world to congratulate Qaddafi for surviving the raid. (I wish you a long and happy life, and hope that you continue to win your battles against women, children, and the unarmed.) But soon after, word got out that the embattled Yankee tourist may not be flying over this summer, and the greedy ones got worried. Not for long, however. A modern Trojan Horse was constructed and sent into every American living room. It came in the form of a 60-second television commercial using the actor E. G. Marshall. This is the message Marshall delivered in a stentorian voice, and the

one that is sure to win the false advertising prize for the year: "Greece, that loving and lovely land, is getting a bum rap. The terrorist act against a TWA jet was not a Greek incident. Quite the opposite. It was Greece that provided safe haven. Indeed, the world's leading aviation agencies have declared Athens airport safe and secure."

The *mauvaise langues* have it that Marshall fell off his chair twice while reading this drivel. But being the good trooper that he is, he finally managed to finish the commercial. Personally, I would give Marshall an Oscar for his performance, because as everyone including the last bearded thug in Beirut knows, Athens is a "safe" haven for terrorists as long as they shoot Yankees but leave citizens of the Republic of Grease minding their olives.

The trouble is that Qaddafi's and Assad's heroes occasionally manage to murder Greeks, too, even if they are Greek-Americans. This is what happened when three TWA passengers were blown out of the airplane after a female terrorist had planted the bomb. Her subsequent denial to the three major networks—as well as to the Greek government—was vintage Marx Brothers. That old clown Tsimas, a man I've written about before, who heads the Greek anti-terrorist squad, once again put on heavy make-up and in an accent



Taki Theodoracopulos is a European editor of The American Spectator.

which is half Anthony Quinn playing Onassis, and half Zero Mostel in *The Producers*, declared the female terrorist innocent because "she denied having planted the bomb." The fact that she flew to Athens, Rome, and right back to Cairo was explained by Tsimas in quasi-Freudian terms: "She loves to fly, she feels liberated."

Needless to say, it required all the control I could muster not to roll on the ground when I read what the 39th non-President of the USA had to say following the raid. The peanut-brained Georgian once again shot himself in the foot when he said we were wrong to bomb Libya because if he had lost a daughter as had Qaddafi (a fact I suspect is as false as the denials issued by Palestinians after every outrage—at worst, Qaddafi adopted the victim after her death; at best, it never happened) "he would have sworn as long as his life existed to retaliate." Apart from the terrible syntax, the peanut-skinned one conveniently forgot that only this past December Natasha Simpson, the eleven-year-old daughter of an American newspaper man, along with other innocent people, young and old, were brutally slain at the Rome airport. I wonder what he would have said had Miss Lillian, Rosalynn, and that ghastly Amy been blown out of a jet long ago?

And speaking of non-presidencies, what about Bettino Craxi, the Italian version of Carter, a man who makes Neville Chamberlain look like Patton? Craxi's continued appeasement of Arab terror has not spared Italy from terrorist attacks. Yet the day after the raid, Italian newspapers parroted Tass in denouncing the attack. Ironically, most of the newspapers in Italy are owned by my old friend Gianni Agnelli, who on April 18 was a dinner guest of the "man whose tongue speaks with death, bombs, and flame" (no, not my prose, but that of a lasagna paper; sorry Mario). Yes, you guessed it. Agnelli had dinner at the White House, along with Jerry Zipkin, Ronald Perelman and Claudia Cohen Perelman (Perelman owns pantyhose shops), and other such luminaries, including the greatest phony since Baron Munchausen, Karim Aga Khan, the man who is said to collect rather than pay taxes.

Now there's nothing wrong with dining with Agnelli. I've done it hundreds of times. But it is wrong to have the major partner of Qaddafi to dinner, and then bomb his partner. Qaddafi, you see, owns as little as 12 percent or as much as 15 percent of Fiat, the auto giant that is controlled by the Agnelli family, and whose CEO is Gianni. Gianni made Qaddafi partner in a ma-

jor coup (his words) in 1979, and by doing so gave the murderer the kind of cachet he's been unable to buy despite millions of dollars spent.

But not to worry. Though the Europeans were as supportive of the American retaliation as, say, McGovern was of Eagleton back in 1972, we Yanks were not far behind. There is a fat man by the name of Jimmy Breslin who writes a column in the *New York Daily*

*News*, and who hates Ronald Reagan more than he hates the police. Any police. He called Reagan a baby killer and left it at that. NBC television outdid even the fat man. It gave a platform to Abul Abbas, the mastermind of the *Achille Lauro* seajack, and never even charged him a fee. Unlike the poor Greeks, he got his message across free.

But the best, as always, was my old friend Armand Hammer and Sickie.

His oil company was doing business as usual with the Libyans before, during, and after the raid. And if I know my old friend, he will soon be dining once again at the White House, along with Jerry, Karim, and the pantyhose one. And why not? The President works hard and needs to be amused after hours. Why not have clowns to dinner? In Reagan's America, too, comedy is king. □

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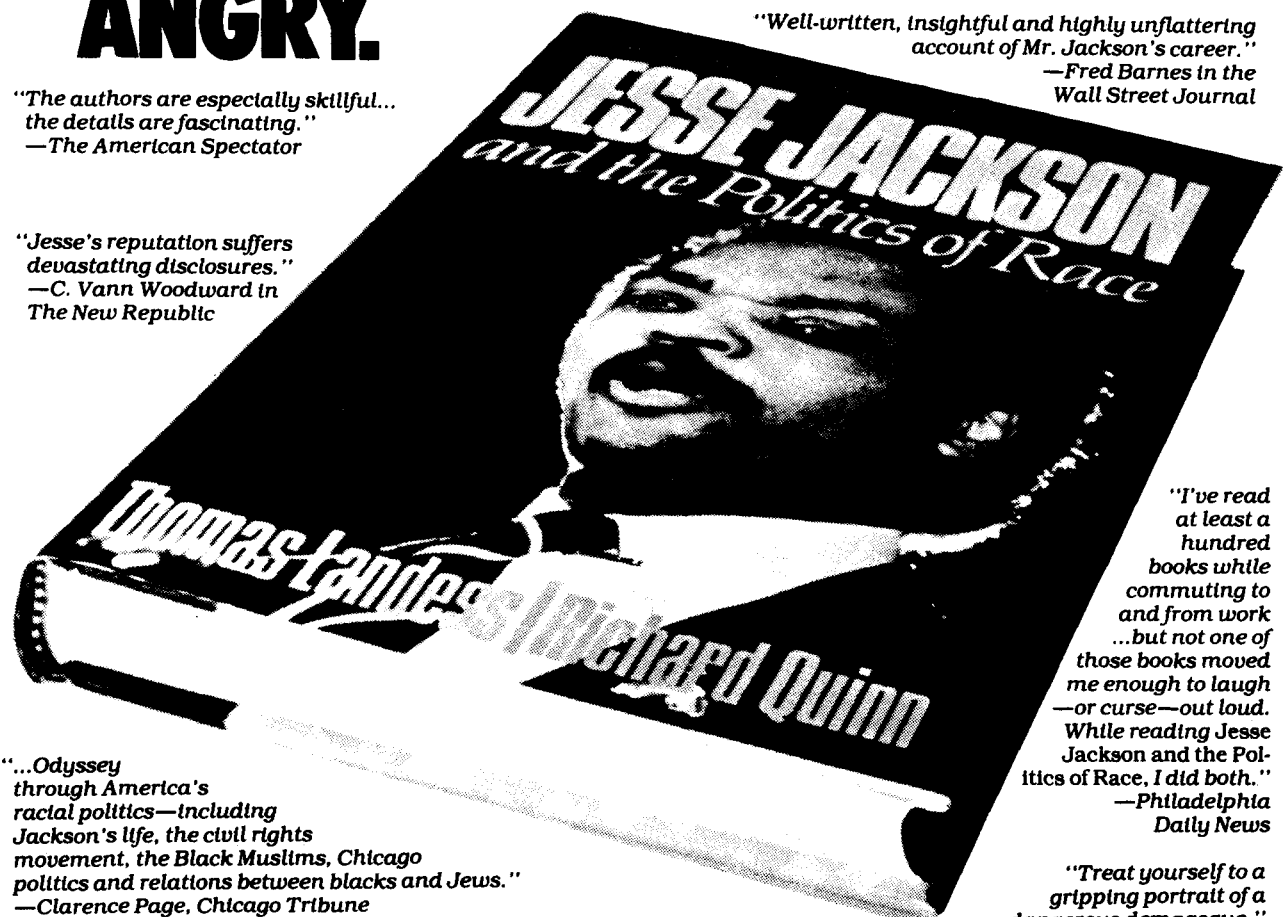
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# BOOK REVIEWS

American intervention in the Korean war did achieve its initial objective of saving South Korea from the Communists. But our failure to dictate a peace quite reasonably led to it being considered a no-win war—a test of America's resolve in resisting Red expansion, to be sure, but also a classic case of running to keep in the same place, and a gruesome example of the price which might be demanded by a policy of containment. Neither a "good war" nor by any normal standards a small war, it has failed to attain either the righteous mythology of World War II or the romantic heart-of-darkness pessimism that is one currently popular approach to our Vietnamese involvement. The 35th anniversary of the war's opening guns, like previous anniversaries, passed almost without notice, and there is no national monument, controversial or otherwise, to those who fought in Korea, save for a recent (and typically unimpressive) commemorative stamp. The electronic media generally remind us of the conflict only by re-running Hollywood films about it, most postwar productions being bleakly low-key. Like T. R. Fehrenbach's history *This Kind of War*, which called for non-conscript "legions" to fight dirty but necessary wars of containment on behalf of a flabby-minded America, some films brooded over our will to withstand a Communist enemy—a concern encouraged by reports of GI prisoners collaborating with that enemy and, very rarely, being converted to Marxism. But as time passed, the entertainment media began telling us more about contemporary bugaboos than the realities of a past war.

Robert Altman's 1970 *M\*A\*S\*H*, the most popular film ever made about the Korean (or was it the Vietnamese?) War, regarded it as a meaningless if bloody joke. The more distressingly "sensitive" doctors of the TV series, afflicted with Woodstockian clichés and haircuts, thought nothing of packing a howitzer's breech with cement lest anyone have the bad taste to use it in defending their hospital; yet even President Reagan, in an era when old and honored Regular Army units are deactivated to serve the unfathomable needs of half-souled Pentagon bureaucrats, took due notice of the breakup of that

Wayne Michael Sarf is the author of *God Bless You, Buffalo Bill: A Layman's Guide to History and the Western Film*.

## THE KOREAN WAR—PUSAN TO CHOSIN: AN ORAL HISTORY

Donald Knox/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/\$24.95

Wayne Michael Sarf

most famous unit of all, the fictitious 4077th MASH. While it is depressing to think that the most influential vision of the Korean struggle may prove that of Alan Alda, the mere fact that some still think of it, despite its massive bloodletting, as a "small war"—let alone, in Harry Truman's ghastly phrase, a "police action"—suggests a hole in the collective memory. For once a blurb writer does not exaggerate as the dustjacket for Donald Knox's *The Korean War* proclaims that it "may well have been this country's most quickly forgotten full-scale war." This "oral history" proves a suitable shock treatment for historical amnesia, opening with American mobilization for the first uphill battles against the North Koreans and ending six months later after a seesaw of rousing success and shattering rout.

Now the notion of an "oral history" of almost anything, but particularly a war, has a curious appeal; Dee Brown even claimed his ludicrous *Bury My*

*Heart at Wounded Knee* as such, despite its reliance on standard Indian Wars sources. Romantics may attribute the appeal to the origins of mankind's earliest epics, or to some "Amazing Stories"-like vision of our Cro-Magnon ancestors huddled awestruck as a sage, features dim in the firelight, tells of the mammoth-slaying heroes of the race. More credibly, we can blame our own desire to get what we hope are the facts "straight from the source," in the unaffected speech of everyday life, without the distorting intervention of historian or journalist. Who needs a Gibbon or a Macaulay—or even an Ernie Pyle or Michael Herr—when we can have Private Smith tell us the real story as he lived it?

However, replacing narrator with editor may merely throw each reader into the democratic plight of being his own historian, to sort out truth for himself—with the added disadvantage that the editor, not the reader, has after all pre-selected the informants and usually asked all the questions. Even a careful historian may ask the wrong

questions, or believe the wrong answers, perhaps convinced that he alone has been vouchsafed some previously hidden truth—as was the late Dr. Thomas Marquis in crediting those wizened Cheyenne Indian veterans of the Little Bighorn fight who told him that Custer's men had actually achieved self-annihilation by shooting themselves or each other. As the Cheyennes had never revealed this tale to anyone else (including their own descendents) the good doctor doubtless felt that he, unlike other whites, had encouraged them with his open mind. Instead he seems a victim of men whose trust he thought he had earned. (Or, as one thorough student of the battle remarked to me, with some heat, "Those Cheyenne sons-of-bitches lied to him.")

Alas, there is always that problem of reliability. How can the lay reader judge contradictory testimony? Should a compiler of oral accounts attempt to resolve these contradictions for him, or use his own wisdom in letting an informant's narrative stand alone? And then what of letting those he chose to suppress speak for themselves? Sometimes data may simply be hurled at us. *Newsweek's* Peter S. Prescott accused Peter Manso of simply publishing the *research* for his "oral biography" of Norman Mailer, dismissing Manso's excuse for reproducing, sans analysis, contradictory accounts ("One can assume there is more truth in a montage than in a monolith") as "the worst sort of baloney, an abdication of responsibility." One can also abdicate by failing to do supplemental research and/or letting an informant's fantasies take over; Merle Miller's *Plain Speaking* let Harry Truman tell of how the great captain MacArthur had kept the President waiting prior to their historic confrontation on Wake Island. It was a uniquely dramatic eyewitness account—unique in part because other eyewitnesses swore that MacArthur had done no such thing.

Modern warfare has of late been a popular subject for bestsellers titling themselves "oral histories" and illustrating the problems of the genre. Al Santoli's *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War* featured one informant who later recanted his story of being taken prisoner by the North Vietnamese. Mark Baker's *Nam* offered conveniently anonymous accounts and provoked suspicions of outright fabrication voiced by *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. Studs Terkel's

