



R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Stone Dead

It is only right that someone step forward to serve the needs of this country's ignoramuses. We have built vast libraries and schools for those who want to know what's what. We have trained teachers and scholars to dispense knowledge. But we have done very little for those who do not want to know the truth, who find the requisite thinking painful and the facts inscrutable. Something has to be done for the meatheads.

The great philanthropist Andrew Carnegie built libraries for those who would seek the truth, but it is only now that a great American has come forward to serve the ignoramuses. The philanthropist's name is Oliver Stone, and, whether history eventually ranks him with Carnegie or not, let us thank him for giving the stupid among us something to think they think about. Stone has stepped forward from Hollywood, California, to serve the needs of those neglected Americans who have no minds.

Stone gave us a fantasy about the war in Vietnam entitled *Platoon*. He gave us a fantasy about capitalism entitled *Wall Street*. Now he gives us a fantasy about the assassination of John F. Kennedy entitled *JFK*, exploiting the murdered President's name. All of these movies are made for those dolts who cannot remember the facts, and so Stone's message is a soothing one, to wit, that the facts do not matter. They have all been falsified by conspirators, hordes of conspirators. Just remember the fantasy, and maybe two or three facts. In the movie *JFK*, it is a fact that the President died, his brother died, and Martin Luther King, Jr. died. *Ipso facto*, Stone attests, the deaths were "all linked."

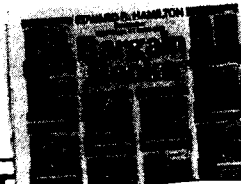
Well, there is no arguing with an ignoramus (and, incidentally, to watch Stone fan-

tasize in a CBS interview and on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, it appears that he is pretty much an ignoramus, too). The ignoramus is too benighted to understand simple fact, orderly thought, or the rules of evidence. In *JFK*, Stone, a practiced dope-fetcher, tells the dopes that President Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy that included a group of New Orleans homosexuals, Cuban exiles, the FBI, the CIA, the American military, and the martyred President's successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson. Stone believes such enormities cry out for renewed investigation, though, given all the conspirators in the land, I cannot imagine whom Stone would trust to conduct it.

Stone claims that all he wants is to open sealed records of the House committee that investigated the assassination in the 1970s. It challenged the notion that only one gunman fired, but otherwise pretty much endorsed the Warren Commission's findings. Mr. Stone, if you will allow me, I fear you are just skimming the surface of our national evil when you make such a milquetoast recommendation. Any committee so soft on the Warren Commission is obviously part of the conspiracy, and, anyway, you and your meatheads are already convinced that there was a conspiracy to kill the Kennedys and Dr. King. Now you should be urging an investigation into the coverup!

True, the leader of the coverup, Lyndon Johnson, is dead. Or at least he is reportedly dead. (You might want to investigate this, too. It is hard to believe as powerful a man as Johnson would just up and die.) But many of Johnson's aides are still around, for instance former attorney general Nicholas Katzenbach; former secretary of defense Robert McNamara; and former Sancho Panza to President Johnson, Bill Moyers. And where has former secretary of state Dean Rusk been all these years? An investigation is in order.

Let us have an independent counsel (won't Lawrence Walsh have time on his hands soon?) subpoena Johnson's aides and have them testify as to what they saw in those dark days of the 1960s. If Pentagon generals plotted to thwart the good President Kennedy's attempts to end the Vietnam war, McNamara is the man to ask—and is it not interesting that he served both Kennedy and Johnson? Then there is Bill Moyers. He was Johnson's shadow. What



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did he know about the coverup, and when did he know it? Scores of other Johnson aides are all over Washington. An energetic independent counsel could surely dig up the dirt.

Getting the government to act is going

to necessitate a massive public relations campaign. Fortunately, Mr. Stone loves this country. Surely, he will make available all profits from *JFK* for the campaign ahead. Every meathead in his audience believes as much. □

from the outside world for over half a century, and he in his ignorance believed that he could have both Communism and a productive economy. He ended up with neither.

It is arguable that, as leader of the now-defunct Soviet Union, he failed at everything he attempted, aside from brushing his teeth three times a day, always wearing a clean shirt, and never failing to tie his shoes in the morning and to come home to the right house at night. He was the only major world leader to endorse Marcos over Corazon Aquino in the Philippines. On the eve of a crucial congressional vote over contra aid, he urged a Sandinista invasion of Honduras. He supported state terrorism that provoked the United States to its first convincing military actions since Vietnam.

Through his every botch he remained confident, never betraying any sign whatsoever that he recognized his error or that he was willing to modify his strategies to better serve liberty. In his attempt to transform the Soviet satellites of Eastern Europe into Gorbachevian regimes he lost every one. He lost the Baltics with erratic policies that saw him one day promising freedom to Lithuania for a ransom of \$33 billion, the next day sending in the Red Army, only to withdraw it ignominiously later. Soon all the Baltics were in ferment. His treatment of the ethnic minorities of the USSR was equally catastrophic. He encouraged discord in order to implement the old policy of Divide and Rule, and achieved only unmanageable turbulence.

In his last months he suffered a weird coup and returned without a clue as to how far Russian opinion had moved. Promising a peaceful transition at the end of his idiotic reign, he almost provoked a civil war by denying the republics self-determination and repeatedly changing his plans. Now, heading into retirement, he leaves behind him an amazing thing: Russia shrunken. For nearly a thousand years Russia has increased in size by feasting on its neighbors. Now Russia has receded to dimensions not seen since the twelfth century.

"The danger of civil war—or nuclear war—are [sic] far less today than a couple of years ago, let alone at the beginning of the 1980s," the great Russian dissident Vladimir Bukovsky wrote recently in the *New York Times*. "The demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States are the best things that ever happened to us all, East and West, in this century." And we owe much of this to a splendid incompetent. History can be amazing. □

The Great Bungler

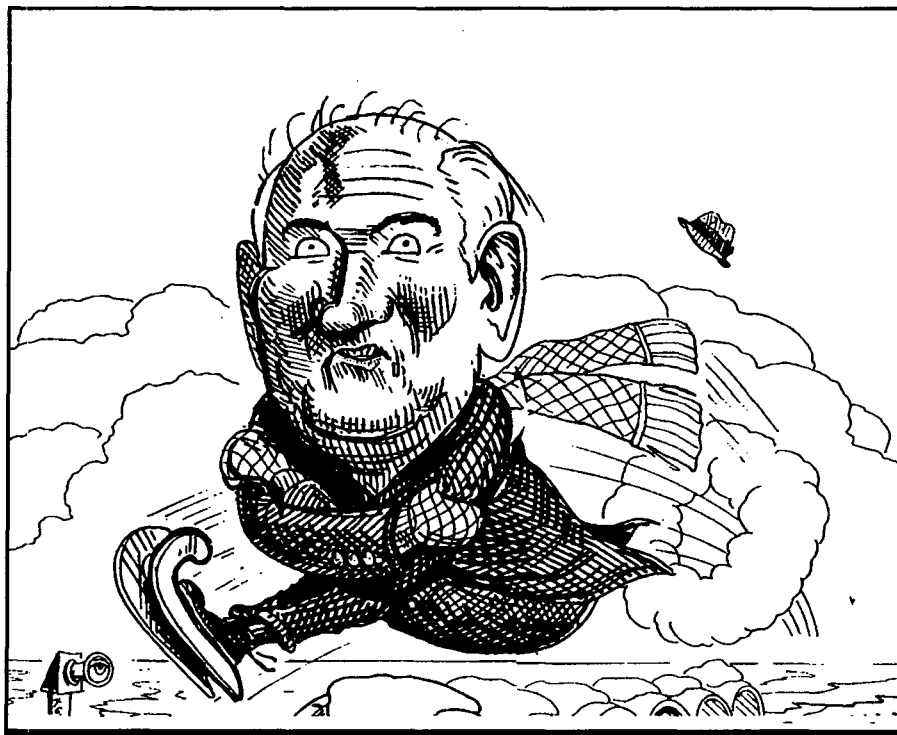
Observe the slightly crumpled and uniquely contemptuous figure of the Hon. Mikhail Gorbachev. As world leaders go, his kind has never been seen before: by turns haughty and indecisive, he has been dictator of an imploding dictatorship, generalissimo of a dissolving war machine, and in the end president of a nonexistent country.

During his seven-year rule he sent his armies out to crush liberty . . . and he drew them back. He let his thugs ambush young men in the Baltics . . . and he drew them back. He bloviated about reviving his economy with "socialist markets" . . . but he only bloviated, and the economy steadily collapsed. That such a unique bungler would so awe the world suggests that our time, too, is unique. Many of its greatest figures and most passionately discussed issues have no substance at all outside of the TV studio of their birth.

Mikhail Gorbachev is the only dictator

in the history of the world to send his country goose-stepping into the dark. He is the only reformer in the history of the world to propound change from something to nothing. He won the Nobel prize and he will win further prizes. He will go down as a giant, not because he succeeded but because he failed repeatedly. In his repeated failures he made the world a better place. I can think of no national leader quite like him—not Mussolini, not Jimmy Carter, not even one of the fat French or Spanish Bourbons.

He came to power with a problem: his chief constituents, the military and the KGB, were having dreadful trouble stealing from the West, and what technology they could steal they could only with the utmost difficulty use. The Soviet economy was not up to modern times. So, with no idea of what he was getting into, President Gorbachev promised reform. He came from a closed society that had been walled off





Pat's Answers

by Tom Bethell

One week after announcing his presidential candidacy in New Hampshire, Patrick J. Buchanan held a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington. Standing near the coffee urn was Ralph Z. Hallow, who has been covering the campaign for the *Washington Times*. He said that, on the whole, Buchanan had been given a better reception by the mainstream press than might have been expected. Clearly, the media had been expecting a dull horse race in '92, and may have been grateful to Buchanan for spicing things up. Also, I suggested to Hallow, Buchanan has been around Washington for years and has many friends in the press corps, even among those who disagree with his views.

At the same time, of course, Buchanan has been less than favorably received by many conservatives. A peculiar asymmetry of American politics is that, whereas liberals have no enemies to the left, conservatives have no friends to the right—which helps explain the “conservative crackup” that our editor-in-chief has been documenting for a book to be published this spring by Simon and Schuster. It's fair to say that Buchanan's candidacy has exposed a considerable rift among conservatives—I was about to use the cliché “the conservative movement,” but I'm not sure that there is any such thing, and it's certainly not moving anywhere right now.

The most important charges against Buchanan are isolationism and protectionism. Vice President Dan Quayle told the *Washington Post*, “I take strong exception that a conservative foreign policy is one of isolationism, protectionism, ‘Fortress America,’ ‘Come Home America.’” Republican National Committee Chairman Clayton Yeutter has criti-

cized Buchanan's “very protectionist views on trade.”

Is Buchanan guilty of these charges? There must have been fifty journalists present when the candidate entered the Press Club ballroom. A dozen TV cameras were rolling, quietly waiting for potential gaffes. Buchanan's opening statement, relevant to the “isolationism” charge, was not mentioned in the papers I saw the next day. His voice had that familiar hoarse, whispery, quality, conveying a sense of fires banked, of indignation controlled, and sometimes, of patience wearing thin:

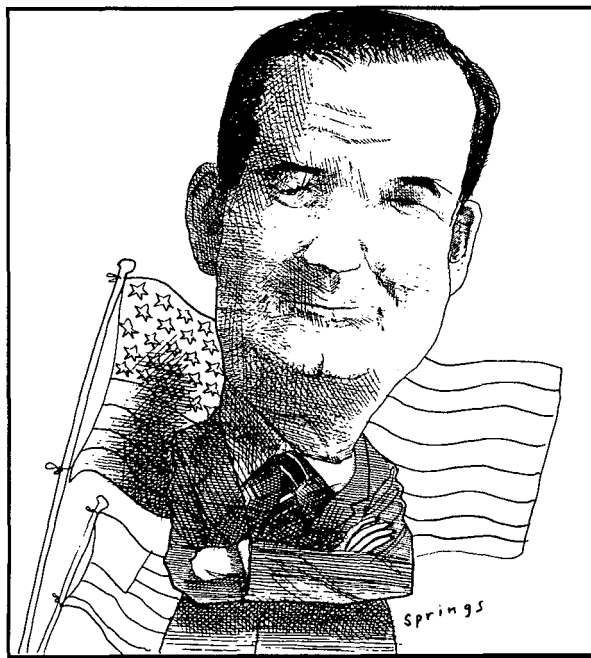
“Instead of being thirty-seventh in line—as we were in recognizing the republic of Lithuania—the United States should recognize Russia today, and Ukraine today, as free and independent states,” he said. “What is President Bush waiting for?” The isolationist seemed to be urging a greater degree of foreign-policy activism upon the President, and he went on to urge the U.S. recognition of Croatia. Referring to “the war of aggression in the Balkans,” Buchan-

an characterized as “shameful” the U.S. “refusal to recognize Croatia, and to give moral support to that beleaguered people. Why is there no room at the inn”—here he looked up at the cameras, the tension increased, the whispery voice hardened—“Why is there no room at the inn of Mr. Bush's New World Order for the infant states of a new Europe, when there is plenty of room for Deng Xiaoping?”

In one of his last columns before launching his run for President, Buchanan asked where the Americans were in the Serbian assault on Croatia—a war neoconservatives have remained remarkably silent about. “Why is the liberation of autocratic Kuwait more important to the West than the liberation of democratic Croatia from Stalinism?” he asked. He concluded by observing that it was time for the Sixth Fleet to show up in Dubrovnik.

A couple of days before Buchanan's press conference, the *Washington Post* published an editorial strenuously opposing Germany's impending recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. “Hands off Yugoslavia” has also been the position of the Bush Administration. Lurking behind feeble calls for more negotiation, more time for the feckless European Community to do something, we see a patent nostalgia for the old Yugoslavia, long regarded by U.S. foreign policy elites as the prize jewel in the Communist bloc. The truth of the matter is that we just can't bear to see it break up, and are nudged with dire warnings of “fascism” if it does.

But the twentieth century's wars, hot and cold, have followed hard on the heels of the unification of many ethnic fragments into new entities, e.g., Germany, Italy, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union. Ignoring the factitious plan to unify Western Europe, which has proceeded as far as it has only through bureaucratic stealth (and will



Tom Bethell is The American Spectator's Washington correspondent.