

on September 3, 1939. (If all this sounds a little like something out of *Hogan's Heroes*, it isn't surprising—so do Hitler's adversaries, born, like him, of the democratic flesh and blood of a free West. "Never has a simpler document been issued in history with consequences more far-reaching or more pregnant with hope," the *New York Times* reported on "the results of an intimate conversation between Chancellor Adolf Hitler and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in Herr Hitler's private apartments" on September 30, 1938.)

By contrast, Stalin, as befits a good strategist, was always at least a step ahead of destiny. If Professor Topitsch exaggerates Stalin's genius for long-term thinking, his error is insignificant, for the Soviet totalitarian system, already perfected by the time Hitler seized power, was most effective in compensating for the individual shortcomings of its engineers, an advantage the National Socialist system would never possess. In any case, Professor Topitsch's contention that Stalin had duped Hitler as he would later dupe the Allies is utterly plausible.

What gives support to this contention is the existing record of diplomatic and military moves made by the Soviets in the direction of Germany, particularly after the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939 ("Now I have the world in my pocket!" the euphoric gambler is said to have exclaimed). Professor Topitsch demonstrates how, by opening and closing the tap of hostility (i.e., by intermittently violating and observing the terms of the "Boundaries and Friendship Agreement"), Stalin manipulated Hitler—his main hope for a destabilized Europe—into a world war from which he, Stalin, would emerge as the sole victor.

It is true that the Generalissimo had overestimated his own army and underestimated Hitler's impulsiveness: "Operation Barbarossa," the "treacherous" attack on Russia, came at least six months too soon. But the magnitude of this one miscalculation—tactical, not strategic—should not, Professor Topitsch argues, blind posterity to the truth about Stalin's grand design.

That design is now the map of continental Europe, and it is easy to

see why the author of *Stalin's War* states unambiguously that his book "has been written more for the English-speaking than for the German reader." That it has received so little attention, here or in the United States, is in itself an alarming sign. For there is no time like the present to remind the heirs of Chamberlain on both sides of the Atlantic that the harvest of Yalta was sown in Munich by those who like to reap.

Andrei Navrozov is poetry editor for Chronicles.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Dulce et Decorum

One of the most moving war memorials I know is on a wall outside the reading room of the British Museum. It is a simple plaque with the names of a hundred or so librarians killed in the Great War. Librarians. Think about it.

That plaque makes a point, doesn't it, if not perhaps the one it was intend-

ed to make. Are we better off because those young men died? I don't know. Maybe it would be easier to say if I were Belgian.

Here's another. A few years ago, hiking in the hills above Lake Como, my wife and I came across a little chapel dedicated to the memory of local lads who died in World War II. It was decorated with freshly cut flowers. The boys it commemorated had fought for Mussolini.

Now, to have left that beautiful place to die in the sands of North Africa or the snows of Russia—well, obviously, the right or wrong of their cause is important, but why shouldn't their parents and girlfriends have built that chapel? Who could fail to be touched that, 40 years later, they still brought flowers and burned candles?

I'm told that the Vietnam memorial attracts more visitors than any other site in Washington. I'm sure that many who go there believe that the cause in which those servicemen died was futile, even wrong, but surely no one goes to gloat or to scoff. There are some lines—are they from Housman?—something like:

Here we lie who did not
choose

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Makings of a Modern City by Scott L. Bottles, Berkeley: University of California Press. A paean to the automobile—and wide open (or urbanized) spaces—by an articulate real estate salesman.

Tornado: Accounts of Tornadoes in Iowa by John L. Stanford, Ames: Iowa State University Press. The author, a physics professor, has dedicated this unprepossessing handbook on a force of nature to the Lord, "who designed the earth and the skies."

Seeds of Change by Henry Hobhouse, New York: Harper and Row. The most recent reprint of the well-known account of how the manipulated environment manipulates its manipulators.

Politics and the Ethiopian Famine, 1984-1985 by Jason W. Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb, Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, Inc., distributed by Transaction Books, New Brunswick, NJ; \$9.95. Condemned by Ethiopia's Marxist government and by many of the 47 Western aid organizations subsidizing it, this report outlines why unconditional humanitarian aid to tyrannies kills instead of saves.

The Hunger Machine by Jon Bennet with Susan George, Cambridge: Polity Press. Disregarding Ethiopia, Cambodia, the USSR, and other worthless bits of history, the authors question the world, but never their own wisdom.

The Fatal Impact: The Invasion of the South Pacific by Alan Moorhead, New York: Harper and Row; \$25.00. Rousseau lives, in this conscience-stricken account of a Lost Paradise.

The Maine Woods by Henry David Thoreau, New York: Harper and Row. A reprint of a charming classic, by the man who was not afraid to be foolish.

To flee and shame the race
from which we'd sprung.
Life, to be sure, is not so much
to lose,
But young men think it is, and
we were young.

The librarians, the fascist conscripts, the Vietnam draftees — no doubt all were scared young men. But they did not choose to flee, and the memorials honor them for it. We can sympathize with their causes or not, but we shouldn't deny those who wish to remember their kin and countrymen. Maybe we should even honor them, too.

These thoughts came to mind last spring, as I was walking across the beautiful, flowering campus of the

Southern university where I teach. I passed the pedestal where "Silent Sam" usually stands. Sam is a statue of a Confederate infantryman, and he is a memorial to the university's alumni who died for the Confederacy. That month Sam had been removed for a much-needed cleaning after years of exposure to pigeons and rival football fans with paint cans.

By the empty pedestal stood a young man, obviously showing a visiting couple around. All were Yankees, by their accents. "They've sent it off to be cleaned," I heard him say. "Eight thousand dollars! Can you *believe* it?"

Well, yes, as a matter of fact I can. In *The Last Gentleman*, Will Barrett, Mississippian, tells this story:

When I was at Princeton, I blew up a Union monument. It was only a plaque hidden in the weeds behind the chemistry building, presented by the class of 1885 in memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice to suppress the infamous rebellion, or something like that. It offended me. I synthesized a liter of trinitrotoluene in chemistry lab and blew it up one Saturday afternoon. But no one ever knew what had been blown up. It seemed I was the only one who knew the monument was there. It was thought to be a Harvard prank.

Will was wrong to do what he did. But Princeton was more wrong not to know what he'd done. Maybe Walker Percy, Mississippian, is slandering Ivy Leaguers here, but I doubt it. Say this for the South: If somebody blew up Silent Sam, it would be noticed.

And I'm afraid, in fact, that it's only a matter of time before somebody does come gunning for him. We're going through a spell of Confederacy-bashing down here. Some black folks are starting to object to state flags that incorporate the Confederate battle flag, for instance, and the Ole Miss administration has dropped that same flag as an official school symbol (largely, I gather, because coaches said it repelled black recruits — first things first). Last word from Maryland was that some schoolteacher was lobbying to change the pro-Confederate words

of "Maryland, My Maryland" ("Huzzah! She spurns the northern scum," for example). There's even a move afoot to change the name of the Dixie Classic Fair in Winston-Salem; the objection is apparently to the very word "Dixie." It's nice, I guess, that we've solved all the real problems of race relations down here and can now take up the symbolic ones.

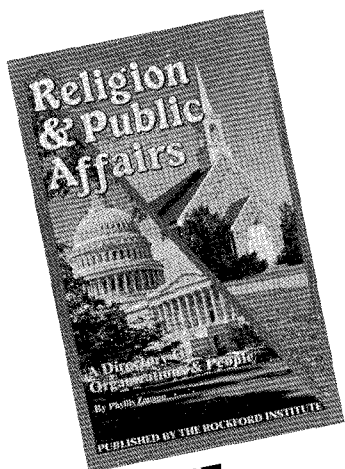
I'm actually more sympathetic than you probably suppose. Maybe it is time that we recognized that to many of our citizens, rightly or wrongly, the symbols of the Confederacy don't stand for freedom and self-determination, or for a heritage of sacrifice and honor and duty, or even for hell-raising, good-timing, don't-tread-on-me rebely, but for white supremacy, plain and simple. Given that, they're entitled to their objections. Maybe we ought to get government out of the act and let those who value the Confederate heritage celebrate it privately.

But Silent Sam is a different matter. Like the Vietnam memorial, he doesn't honor a cause; rather, he honors some brave men who died in one. And notice I said "in one," not "for one." We can't know what motives impelled those men, but we do know that they were defending their families and their homes. And I mean *their homes*: not the shores of Tripoli, not even the halls of Montezuma, but, say, New Bern, North Carolina.

True, Sam was put up by the United Daughters of the Confederacy at a time when nearly all of the university's alumni, students, and governors saw the Lost Cause as a glorious one. That's no longer so, and some want us to acknowledge that somehow. Fair enough, but surely we can find a better way to recognize that change than by denying our alumni their memorial.

Maybe we can learn from still another memorial, an extraordinarily sweet and fitting one, in the chapel of New College, Oxford. It just lists the names of the scores of graduates who died for their country in the First World War — including a half-dozen whose country was Germany. That memorial honors the dead, and speaks well of the living, too.

John Shelton Reed is an East Tennessean with relatives on both sides of the Late Unpleasantness.



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