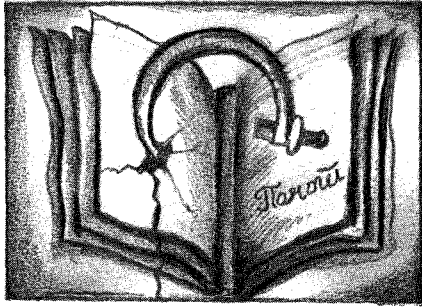


sweeping claims to truth whether it be from the party or a literary giant.

Solzhenitsyn's creative and historical work is epic in nature. Voinovich is a satirist capable of laughing at himself and others while Solzhenitsyn feels responsible for saving Russian history, language, and literature. It grates upon other Soviet émigré writers that Solzhenitsyn is not on the publishing circuit and stays in his high white house.



Voinovich seems to have agreed with the more modest claims to truth of Vasily Grossman, the Soviet author of *Life and Fate*, which he smuggled out of the Soviet Union in 1980. Grossman, who died a victim of gross Soviet repression, believed in the spontaneous acts of human kindness which had little to do with the absolutist claims to the Good made by fascists, Communists, or religion.

When shooting sacred cows, it's important to make the distinction between the cow and the sacred. In 2042 Voinovich makes one consider which is which in a most entertaining way.

*Michael Warder is executive vice president of The Rockford Institute.*

## A Public Benefactor

by James E. Person Jr.

*Frock Coats and Epaulets: Psychological Portraits of Confederate Military and Political Leaders* by Alf J. Mapp Jr., Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press.

"Of all the frauds that ever have been perpetrated on our generation, this 'psychography' is the worst," wrote Douglas Southall Freeman a few weeks before his death, adding, "How dare a man say what another man is thinking when he may not know what he himself is thinking!" This criticism is what the distinguished biographer of

Robert E. Lee and George Washington strove to impart to the many aspiring historians and biographers who had over the years approached him for advice. One of them, Alf J. Mapp Jr., now long established as a formidable scholar of American history in his own right, has not by design sought to match Freeman's famed exhaustive detail in the book at hand, which itself is a revised edition of a book originally published a quarter-century ago. He has, though, produced compelling and insightful short biographies of six military and political leaders who arose in the American South during the four-year existence of the Confederate States of America.

Respecting Freeman's above-mentioned remarks, delivered before a meeting of the Chicago and Richmond Civil War Round Tables in 1953, Mapp has not written psychographies in *Frock Coats and Epaulets*, but instead lively, anecdotal biographies, striving throughout to let his six principals — Jefferson Davis, Judah P. Benjamin, Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, Joseph E. Johnston, and Lee — each tell his own story in his own words. Psychological guesswork, therefore, has no part in the book, with each of the portraits augmented by information culled from contemporary newspaper accounts, official Confederate war records, private family papers, the published reminiscences of the subjects' relatives and of Confederate veterans, and important historical works published since that national conflagration which Jackson called the "Second War for Independence."

As might be expected, these six studies at times overlap. "The man who is a mere spear carrier in one chapter, or perhaps is only a disembodied voice from the wings, may be the chief protagonist in the next," writes Mapp in his foreword. Read as a single unit, *Frock Coats and Epaulets* thus provides a prismatic view of the subjects' characters. The reader sees Johnston, for example, through the admiring eyes of Lee, the wary eyes of Jackson, and from the bitterly frustrated, fed-up-to-the-eyebrows perspective of Davis. A composite portrait slowly emerges, and with it a deeper understanding of the complex figures Mapp has chosen to examine.

Mapp's primary concern, he writes,

"is not with military or political strategy, but with individual character." Considered as such, the Davis, Lee, and Stuart studies are especially well rendered. Davis, whose story opens the volume, stands revealed as the sort of man of whom legends are made; indeed, some of the episodes of his pre-presidential military service in Mexico and on the American middle border bring to mind excerpts from the legend of Davy Crockett. In "Robert E. Lee: Man of Disciplined Fire," Mapp departs from Freeman's perception of the great Virginian as a "simple man" and traces the influence wrought upon Lee's contemporaries and the course of American history by the general's levelheadedness and strong sense of patriotism and honor. Mapp offers convincing evidence that Lee's code of *noblesse oblige* was construed as weakness by some subordinates, notably Longstreet, and contributed indirectly but significantly to the Confederate disaster at Gettysburg. Stuart emerges as a grand and romantic figure: the chivalrous self-styled "Knight of the Golden Spurs"; perhaps the world's last major military figure who spoke, rode, sang, and fought like a figure from the works of Dumas or Malory. Fifty years after Stuart's death at Yellow Tavern, the last of his like — if any existed — were cut to pieces, horses and all, by machine guns on the mechanized battlefields of Belgium and France.

Mapp's knowledge of Civil War history is solid, and his handling of the material is sure. A few serious errors mar the text (Chickamauga was *not* a Confederate defeat; General McDougal's first name was Irvin, not Charles), but they are to be noted but not dwelled upon, for Mapp has otherwise demonstrated a sure knowledge of his subjects, a fair-minded hesitancy to judge them, and great skill in the telling. "The creators of noble books about noble men are public benefactors," wrote Dumas Malone of Freeman. For such portraits as he has rendered in his superb *Frock Coats and Epaulets*, Mapp has established himself, with his mentor, as a public benefactor.

*James E. Person Jr. is editor of Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800 in Detroit, MI.*



## Letter From Eastern Europe

by Rolf Dammann

### *Let's Go Poland*

Conversations with those who have traveled throughout the Eastern Bloc reveal that group tours, not solo travel, are the rule rather than the exception. For a hefty fee, vacation moguls will relieve the prospective tourist of three major brain drains: consular relations (visas), hotel accommodations, and transportation. Group tour-guides will provide the serious history enthusiast with spectacular points of reference, such as the exact location where Vladimir the Impaler planted a spike in the forehead of some nameless peasant. Gray areas are all but eased with the aid of old standbys such as Harvard University's *Let's Go Europe*, which offers valuable insight into the realm of local cuisines and washroom oddities.

If your idea of adventure, however, is to foment encounters with local police officials, veer into restricted areas, pound a few cold ones with East Bloc soldiers, and subsidize your trip in some perfectly acceptable ways, you won't get much help from that soft-cover you've been touting. Based on a recent sojourn in Poland, I thought it appropriate to offer some casual advice to those who are flirting with the idea of driving, rather than flying or railing from West Berlin to the Polish city of Wroclaw.

For openers, you will be required to leave the 750-year-old city for East Germany through the Drewitz checkpoint, so don't waste the time going to Checkpoint Charlie (for East/West Berlin traffic only) as you will be turned away. If, upon entering the complex of DDR transit routes, you suddenly realize you have neglected to discard publications of a political character, resist the temptation to conceal them under the seat—they will be

found. I chose to scatter my copies of *The American Spectator*, *Chronicles*, and *National Review* around the inside of the car so as to suggest their presence was a mere oversight on my part.

Although I did not expect the East German soldiers to recognize Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn on the cover of *The American Spectator*, I was surprised to find they didn't acknowledge the bold-faced "Marxism: A Dying God" caption on the *Chronicles* cover. Moreover, most of their attention was directed at an art book that featured tasteful surf scenes with female bathers and plastic chairs. The border police at the Forst and Zasieki checkpoints responded accordingly, thus ensuring that I could leave the publications with English-speaking friends in Poland.

In transit through the DDR, one might consider taking a brief but forbidden detour, off the highway and into the surrounding villages. Driving at night, we passed an oblong billboard adorned with the U.S. commander in chief and an upright cruise missile. Searching for my camera in the back, I matter-of-factly glanced out the back window in time to see a set of headlights pull out from a side avenue 100 yards to our rear and dim. Expecting we would be scanned with binoculars, I turned on the interior light, raised a road map for 30 seconds, and wound my way back to the highway—a set of headlights in tow. When we reached the border, an officer glanced at the license tag and asked me why I had stopped 40 kilometers back. The phrase "I was lost and reviewing a road map" is an indispensable accessory for the East Bloc traveler.

Shortly before crossing the East German/Polish frontier, you are asked to declare, in writing, every gold watch, diamond ring, and dollar in your possession. After completing said task, you are asked to give verbal confirmation of your itemization. Immediately after nodding your head in the

affirmative, you are hustled into a broken down shed for a game of "hide and go seek." Much to my chagrin, the soldier found the \$100 I had "forgotten" to declare; and to my relief didn't bat an eyelid. When he discovered a \$50 bill in my friend's back pocket, he spouted a torrent of abuse, although he never did confiscate that \$50, as is customary. I can offer no insight as to why they go through the motions of playing out such charades without actually enforcing the rule of law, but it certainly adds to the charms of a trip behind the Iron Curtain.

At the conclusion of business on the East German side, you might elicit a smile rather than a frown by asking the distance to Breslau (city in German province of Silesia renamed Wroclaw by Poles after the war). Refrain from asking the same question of a Polish soldier on the other side unless you care for a 15-minute history lesson covering some 500 years of Prussian occupation.

After passing through the Polish checkpoint, attempt to maintain the posted speed limit for the first 15 kilometers or you will be ticketed. Although the maximum fine is 1,000 zloty, don't be deceived: the smiling Polish police officer will gladly hand you two 1,000 zloty fines—payable on the spot, of course. Even though the speed limits change every 50 yards along some stretches of road, and even though the signposts are literally hidden behind bushes, don't waste your breath arguing. Two-thousand zloty is only \$3.00 dollars on the black market anyway.

Under optimum conditions, the fun begins with the hunger pangs. Traveling south on a near-deserted roadway, we came upon the lone rest stop, some 60 kilometers into Poland. The only people visible when we pulled into the lot were three youthful soldiers loitering behind an army personnel-carrier. Inside the cafeteria, as one might imagine, were numerous Polish sol-