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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On 'The Broken Promise of American Life'

I was born and raised, educated from the first grade of grammar school through the fourth year of college, in Monmouth, capitol city of Warren County, Illinois, 120 miles southwest of Rockford. My most enduring and lively memory of the Maple City is of the saying, "A Swede is a Nigger turned inside out," an aphorism intended to be insulting and as offensive to the Colored People as to the Scandinavians. When I read an article such as Mr. Fleming's "The Broken Promise of American Life" (Perspective, July 1991) I feel that I must be missing something. I don't understand how an attempt to revive in Monmouth a utopia of the Good Days of Yesteryear that never, in fact, existed, will help us to solve the current political and social problems of the United States.

One more memory does emerge from the mist and murk of the past. On the night of December 6, 1941, the citizens of Monmouth went to sleep safe in the knowledge that they had nothing to fear from Hirohito because they had been assured by Colonel Robert McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune* that the Japanese would never send out a fleet to challenge the might of the American Navy.

—The Rev. Roland Thorwaldsen
Beaumont, CA

On 'Georgetown University'

Jerry Russell's article (Cultural Revolutions, August 1991) was most appropriate. As a 1943 Protestant graduate of Georgetown, I treasure the memories of that university, with its real Catholic philosophy. Through the years, however, I have seen the liberal-left and almost Marxist takeover of a once great school.

The alumni publication is nothing more or less than a propaganda hymn to social welfare and socialist foreign poli-

cy. You can expect to find all the bleeding hearts' photos or quotations on page after page. That GU should even quote Senator Kennedy, let alone show his picture, says much for how low GU's moral judgment has fallen.

—Vincent W. Allen
Melbourne Beach, FL

On 'Motel California'

Why was it necessary for John Shelton Reed (Letter From the Lower Right, May 1991) to take a cheap shot at Bob Jones University? ("I feel about California the way some of my Baptist friends feel about Bob Jones University, that it's a caricature of their tradition, an exaggeration of some of its features to the point of ugliness.") Since Bob Jones University is not a Baptist university, why should Baptists feel one way or another about the institution? Why didn't you use Methodists, or Nazarenes, or Brethren, or anybody else instead of Baptists? I am not a Baptist, but the ones I know think Bob Jones University is a fine school. (And no, I am not an alumnus of Bob Jones.) I think you were in California too long and have come back with some strange thoughts.

The May 1991 issue of *Chronicles* was entitled: "Conservative Movement R.I.P.?" No wonder, with articles like the ones Mr. Reed writes.

—Richard M. Birch
Marianna, PA

Mr. Reed Replies:

It's quite possible—in fact, it's likely—that I have the wrong Baptist friends, but what I wrote accurately summarizes their opinion of BJU. My own benign view of the place was presented in these pages ("Dr. Bob's Unusual University," May 1986). Those who don't keep back issues can find the essay reprinted in *Whistling Dixie: Dispatches From the South* (University of Missouri Press).

On 'Nathan Milstein'

J.O. Tate's review of Nathan Milstein's memoir (June 1991) includes the statement that Beethoven "didn't know how to write for the violin," but this is not a fair summary of Milstein's comments. The passage that caught Mr. Tate's eye must have been the one on page 204: "Horowitz once told me, 'Beethoven wrote for the piano as if he were composing especially for bad pianists!' I may not agree with that, but I must admit that for my taste Beethoven did not know how to compose for the violin. (In his violin concerto all the passages are crafted as if written for the piano.) That's why I don't like all of Beethoven's violin sonatas, only three or four of them. The violin part in the others is not interesting or rewarding."

The difficulty may arise from Milstein's use of the word "passage," which in music means the rapid playing of sequences of single notes; if so, Milstein reserves the right to praise Beethoven's

melodic and chordal writing for the violin.

Indeed, Milstein finds Beethoven's concerto more "profound" than Mendelssohn's and, when asked which violin concerto is the greatest, unhesitatingly says: "I would put Beethoven's concerto first on my list. It is a miracle, something that seems to have come out of thin air, like some sort of divine message. You can discuss the revelations of his concerto endlessly. One of my favorites is the cadenza in the first movement, in which Beethoven varies the main theme in such a way that the listener keeps waiting for its return with increasing tension. And when it comes, it's like heavenly song!"

Here the "song" is clearly distinct from the "passage" work. Milstein's appreciation of Beethoven's composition for the violin is considerably more complex than Mr. Tate seems to have noticed in his review.

—Wm. F. Rickenbacker
Franconia, NH

Mr. Tate Replies:

Mr. Rickenbacker has said not a word about my numerous *other* contentions about Nathan Milstein's disappointing book. I think that's because I was justified in my comments, and in my view as a whole.

Since he himself quotes Milstein as saying that "Beethoven did not know how to compose for the violin," I suppose that Rickenbacker sees complexity where I see smugness and confusion. I note that Milstein's variously disrespectful, ambiguous, self-contradictory, or deprecatory comments about Beethoven on pages 43, 53, 120-121, 148, and 158 were not cited by Mr. Rickenbacker. On page 183, Milstein sneers at Brahms. I don't take sophomoric swaggering very seriously — not from octogenarians, anyway. And I don't have any "difficulty" with the word "passage," either. On the contrary, I think it's Milstein who has a "difficulty" — with the word "book."

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

YUGOSLAVIA, the political centrifuge of the Balkans, is spinning its constituent nations into tenuous independence. Long-standing religious and ethnic animosities have finally erupted into bloody internecine warfare, and it appears that nothing and no one can prevent this crazy-quilt entity of three major religions, three alphabets, and at least five proud national identities from rushing headlong not into the 21st century, but rather back into its own dark, violent past.

The Western news media have, by and large, already assigned the Serbs a lion's share of the blame, because they retain in power a reactionary hard-line Communist named Slobodan Milosevic; they prefer a centralized Yugoslav government propped up by the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army; they carry the baggage of centuries of Turkish oppression, a mysterious religion — Eastern Orthodox Christianity — and cultural backwardness; and last, because they're, well, Serbs. Compared to the supposedly democratic,

Westernized, enlightened Slovenes and Croats, the Serbs and their culture appear to many American journalists, to use H.L. Mencken's devastating description of the American South, to be the "Sahara of the Bozart."

Enter the prince and the patriarch — not quite riding white horses, but still wearing white hats.

It will certainly surprise, perhaps even shock those American journalists and other citizens who meet Crown Prince Alexander Karadjordjevic to discover an urbane, personable, stylish man in his 40's. Prince Alexander is given to colloquialisms such as "fed-up" and has a delightful, down-home sense of humor. He hardly fits the stereotypical image of the rough-hewn, unlettered Serb or the regal personality more familiar, albeit off-putting, to American democrats: formal, stately, above-it-all. Nor is he a political wallflower. "I'm not a politician," he told a gathering of Serbian Orthodox in Washington last May. "I'm the unifying force."

Though born abroad after Josip Broz Tito's Communist partisans dethroned the Yugoslav monarchy at the end of World War II, Alexander regards himself as a Serb, though also quixotically as a Yugoslav. Descendant of King Peter I of Serbia (1903-1918) and, from 1918, the new kingdom later known as Yugoslavia, Alexander is the rightful claimant of the erstwhile Yugoslav throne. Lest this seem too fanciful or even silly to anti-monarchical Americans, the prospects of his return to Belgrade as king are not as remote as may appear at present. As Yugoslavia proceeds to its destiny as the black hole of the Balkans, Serbs and Croats alike may look to any potential source of political light and stability — even a monarch from the Karadjordjevic "dynasty."

That certainly is Alexander's hope. "My role is kind of like a big ambassador" for democratization and cooperation in a post-communist Yugoslavia. "It's very important to have Yugoslavia," he insists, since the demographics