

## Of Gentlemen Sportsmen

By the time you read this the U.S. Open will be in full cry. Tough, unsmiling professionals will be hitting balls back and forth with machine-like regularity, and Cyclops, the mechanical eye that overrides human decisions, will be resolving close matches. It is Aldous Huxley come true, with a little Orwell thrown in for good measure. Let's face it, tennis ain't what it used to be.

I went on my first tennis circuit exactly 52 years ago. It began on the French Riviera, Cannes, Nice, Monte Carlo, then on to Rome, followed by the French Championships at Roland Garros Stadium in Paris. After that we crossed the Channel to Bristol, Newcastle, and eventually to Wimbledon, the grandest tournament of them all. When Wimbledon was over the good players crossed the Atlantic for the American grass-court season—South Orange, New Jersey, Newport, Rhode Island, Southampton, Long Island, and then on to Forest Hills, New York, for the American Championships, as they were then called. Lesser players like myself went on to play a smaller circuit in July and August—Venice, St. Moritz, Klosters, and so on. By the middle of September everyone went home until the following March and the French Riviera. There were some South American tournaments, but with mainly local contestants. Tennis was an amateur sport played by talented sportsmen who accepted free travel tickets and small, nominal amounts to make up for their expenses. The biggest under-the-table payment back in 1956 was Yaroslav Drobný's \$400 gift from the Hamburg tennis club. I was given hospitality and 25 bucks at the Volpi Cup in Venice. Both Drobný and I were called shamateurs back then.

A recent book with an unfortunate title—*A Terrible Splendor*, by Marshall Jon Fisher—has brought back not only pleasant memories but a small

amount of nostalgia. It's about the decade leading up to World War II, and the focus is on one of the most famous matches in Davis Cup history. In today's professional tennis world, the Davis Cup has become a nuisance, something most top players try to avoid in order to save themselves for bigger purses. Back then it was the highest accolade, and those who were picked to play for their country wore the title with pride. Half a century later, I am at times referred to as a former Greek Davis Cup player, and although Greece has hardly passed a round all these years, it is still a great honor.

The Davis Cup was equal in prestige to the Grand Slams of today, except, of course, one played for glory only. Donald Budge was a hard-hitting redhead from California who, in 1938, won all four Grand Slam singles titles in the same calendar year, a feat only matched by the great Australian Rod Laver in 1962, and then again in 1968. In the 1937 Davis Cup final round he faced the German baron Gottfried von Cramm, a great stylist who had won the French Championships two years in a row. The Davis Cup tie between Germany and the United States was played that year at Wimbledon, on grass, and Budge was a heavy favorite as he had beaten Cramm two weeks before at the Wimbledon championships in straight sets. The stage was set for good *versus* evil, democratic America against Nazi Germany, but things were not as simple as all that. The tie went down to two rubbers each when Budge and Cramm walked on the center court for the fifth and deciding match. Budge was a popular player, but Cramm was a great sportsman and gentleman. The trouble was that he was gay, and the Nazis were looking for an excuse to get rid of him, both for being upper class and for his homosexual tendencies. His tennis fame until then had protected him, but Hitler was reluc-



tant to ring him and wish him good luck before the match. Looming over the match was Germany's coach, the American Bill Tilden, still considered the greatest player ever, as he managed to win Grand Slams into his late 30's. The trouble was Tilden was also gay, and the American powers that be had snubbed him.

Once the match between gay and straight, evil *versus* good began, Cramm played like a god, winning the first set 8-6, and the second 7-5. Budge won the third and fourth 6-4. When he pulled out the fifth set 8-6, Budge did not collapse and writhe on the turf, nor kiss the court in the current fashion. He quickly ran to the net and extended his hand to the baron. Cramm came up, took Budge's hand, and said, "Don, I want to thank you for making it possible for me to play the greatest match of my life." Hitler is still turning over in his grave.

I met Budge in 1955, and he coached me for one year. He had turned pro after 1938 and made a decent living playing exhibitions, but certainly had not cashed in on his fame. Cramm was sent to jail for homosexuality in 1938, later spent four years in the German army, resumed tennis after the war, married Barbara Hutton, and was killed riding an Egyptian taxi in 1976. I'd met him in the Sudan, where my father owned factories and Gottfried had been working for Krupp. We became fast friends and played tennis every morning before the Sudanese heat became unbearable. I won the Sudan Open in 1959, with Gottfried cheering me on. He was among the finest gents and sportsmen I have ever known. <

# An American Prophet

by George W. Liebmann

*"A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country;  
and among his own kin, and in his own house."*

—Mark 4:4

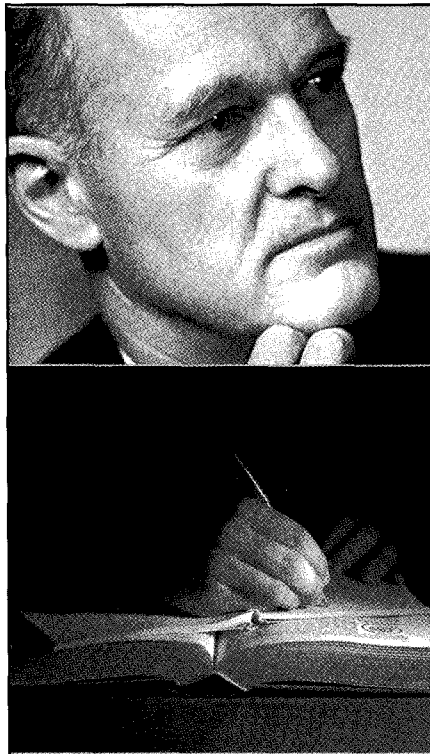
**George Kennan: A Writing Life**  
by Lee Congdon  
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books;  
208 pp., \$25.00



A half-dozen biographical essays or theses have now been written on George Kennan, including John Lukacs's recent and compelling *George Kennan: A Study of Character* (2007). This latest endeavor, by Lee Congdon, is an effort to assess Kennan as a literary figure rather than as a political one. In this, the author only partially succeeds: His background as an historian assures that his paramount interest is in Kennan's political ideals, not his literary style or form. Yet Congdon has provided a succinct and useful summary of Kennan's essential ideas.

He begins with a reference to Kennan's interest in his own antecedents, what Kennan memorably referred to in a passage (not cited by Congdon) as "the golden chain that binds the generations." Kennan found in this inheritance a tendency toward practicality, to empirical rather than deductive approaches to human experience,

*George W. Liebmann is the author of several books, including Diplomacy Between the Wars: Five Diplomats and the Shaping of the Modern World.*



Melanie Anderson

to intellectual independence which "limited his ability to form intimate associations with others . . . [making him] a man apart, an observer of, rather than a participant in, modern life." Congdon refers to Kennan's father in particular, a reticent man, but one with an aesthetic sense. Kosuth Kent Kennan was more than a "tax-lawyer," however, as Congdon describes him; he was also a figure in the Wisconsin progressive movement and the draftsman of America's first state income-tax law.

Congdon has little to say of Kennan's Princeton career, which was neither academically nor socially successful. Further inquiry or mention might nonetheless have been pro-

ductive. Kennan himself thought the most helpful course he took at Princeton was one in economic geography, a subject almost totally neglected in today's schools and colleges, even in graduate schools of international relations. In an earlier time *Goode's School Atlas*, with its stress on economic production and trade routes, was a staple of American education.

Kennan viewed the writings of his grandfather George Kennan on Russia as excessively indulgent toward the revolutionaries, with their "preposterous and indiscriminate campaign of terrorism" and on account of what Congdon calls "the extent to which their criminal actions had provoked a response that fell upon them and others less guilty." This was the theme of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*: The dilettantes of revolution called forth reactions that were comprehensive and terrible in their effects. There are, as has been said, no liberal police forces and few liberal armies. This was foreseen by Jacob Burckhardt in the 19th century. A contemporary writer of espionage novels, Alan Furst, facetiously alluded to

the Russian revolution that would change the world, which it certainly had—provoking counterrevolutionary fascist regimes in Hungary, Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal and Germany. Fine work, Com-