

# Editorial

## Cloudy Days on the Campaign Trail

This was to have been a time for searching debate over the issues confronting the United States, a time for Americans to make what Richard Nixon called "the clearest choice" between presidential candidates in this century. But, like most campaigns, the 1972 version has degenerated into an unseemly carnival, with barkers from both sides filling the air with charges of scandal and leaving the more meaningful issues completely unplumbed or thoroughly beclouded.

Of course, while the sideshows may be entertaining, they are also deeply disturbing and raise questions that demand answers.

*On the Republican side:* Last year the Agriculture Department decided to raise milk price supports to a level that would guarantee dairy farmers an annual half-billion dollars in additional income; did this have anything to do with the contributions of more than \$300,000 that subsequently flowed from dairymen's associations into G.O.P. campaign coffers? In recent weeks who tipped off the big grain exporters to the impending sale of wheat to the Soviet Union, guaranteeing them a substantial windfall? Who was behind those second-story men who broke into the Democratic National Committee's offices at the Watergate apartment complex in Washington—or are we to believe that the seven men later indicted for the job were freelancers, as the Administration would have it, and were not acting in behalf of somebody higher up?

*On the Democratic side:* Just what would George McGovern's tax reforms cost the man who earns \$12,000 a year or \$20,000 or, for that matter, any sum you'd care to name? His economic advisers have so completely balled up their estimates that not even the candidate seems to know for certain. On the subject of campaign finances, was the charge of irregularities in the McGovern operation merely a smoke-screen thrown up by Republican National Chairman Robert Dole to obscure the G.O.P.'s own embarrassment

over the Watergate affair, or is there something to them?

None of these questions should go unanswered. The dairy deal has a distinctly sour smell about it; the wheat windfall suggests that someone has reaped more than his fair share of profits; and the bugging of Democratic party offices is more than just a cute caper that can be laughed off. It is scarcely comforting to know that various agencies of the Justice Department have been conducting investigations into the last two cases; it is, after all, Mr. Nixon's Justice Department, this is an election year, and there are limits to the impartiality we can expect under such circumstances. As for McGovern, his frequent backpedaling on his economic program suggests that he has not really thought the thing through, or that his staff has been guilty of a deplorable degree of sloppiness. The indecisiveness raises the question whether McGovern is as capable a leader as the presidency demands.

What is unfortunate is that such episodes as the Watergate burglary and McGovern's economic miscalculations have so dominated the news that a number of other matters have not received enough attention. Some tax reforms are clearly necessary, but McGovern has dodged the subject of how they can be achieved without blunting individual enterprise, and Nixon has ducked behind vague promises

that, if he is reelected, nobody will have to shell out more money. Our defense budget is hideously swollen, but McGovern made the political blunder of proposing too large a cutback too soon. So, instead of a much-needed debate over the size of our defense outlays—do we really need those B-1 bombers, for instance, or Trident submarines at \$1 billion apiece?—we have the administration putting out statements to the effect that, with McGovern in office, we would have to spend \$1 billion on "little white flags" to run up all over the world.

On Vietnam McGovern did not enhance the appeal of his antiwar position, courageous and correct as it is, by talking about how he would "beg" Hanoi to release U.S. prisoners. Nixon, meanwhile, emphasizes that he has reduced the U.S. force from more than 550,000 men to fewer than 40,000 but says nothing about the 125,000 American casualties sustained since he took office or about the cost to all sides of the saturation bombing campaign that he launched. Now we learn, as a result of the Lavelle case, that a good deal of bombing was being carried out without the knowledge or approval of civilian authorities.

It is tempting to ask, in light of all these irregularities, "Who's in charge here?" But the effort would probably be wasted. That is to say, nobody would reply. Ronald P. Kriss

## Big Daddy's Big Mouth

Adolf Hitler, of all people, seems to be enjoying something of a vogue these days. His latest admirer is the erratic President of Uganda, General Idi Amin Dada, known as "Big Daddy" to his unfortunate people. Hard on the heels of his edict banishing some 55,000 Asians from his country, Amin cabled Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the United Nations, to praise the Arab assassins who slaughtered eleven Israeli athletes in the Olympic games in Munich. In his message, a copy of which he was thoughtful enough to send to Israel's Premier Golda Meir,

Big Daddy declared: "When Hitler was the Prime Minister and supreme commander, he burnt over six million Jews. This is because Hitler and all German people knew that the Israelis are not people who are working in the interest of the people of the world."

Uganda's strong man thus joins some truly distinguished company. There is Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi, whose only criticism of Hitler is that he did not do a more thorough job on the Jews. There is Egypt's President Anwar Sadat, who worked for the Nazis during World War II. And, of course, there is South Vietnam's former Premier and Vice President, Nguyen Cao Ky, who once expressed admiration for Hitler for the way he went about getting things done. Quite a roster, that.

R.P.K.

# Saturday Review of THE ARTS

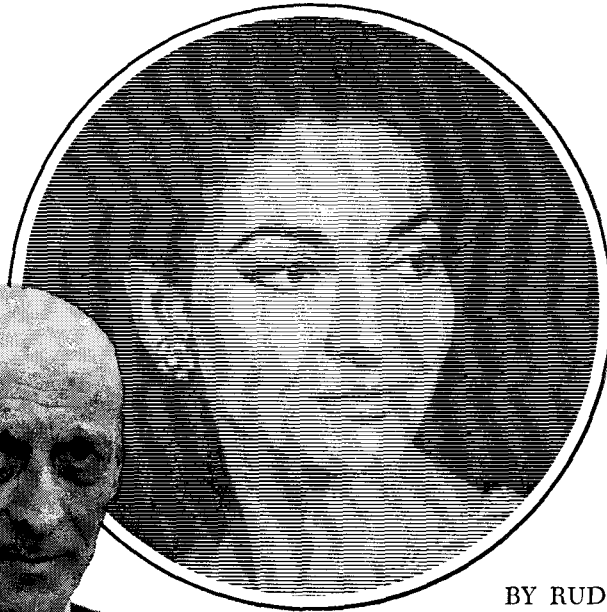
## BING REMEMBERS CALLAS...

but not too fondly,  
in this episode  
from the impresario's  
twenty-two years at  
the Metropolitan Opera.

I first heard the name of Maria Callas in 1950, and it was attached to unbelievable stories about the range of her voice and the variety of the roles she played. In November I wrote to Erich Engel at the Vienna State Opera:

... Do you know Maria Callas, who, I understand, sang in Buenos Aires and who is now recommended to me as the best existing Aïda, etc., and even suggested for the Queen of the Night? Could you very kindly drop me a confidential note advising me whether in your view Miss Callas is vocally really as outstanding as I am led to believe. How would you compare her vocal qualifications for instance with Ljuba Welitsch? I gather she does not look well and is an uninteresting actress. Does the beauty of her voice make up for all these defects? I should be most grateful to hear from you as soon as possible.

Engel was very positive: her performances at the Colón [in Buenos Aires] were considered worthy of the highest attention; her coloratura techniques as Norma had been regarded as astonishing. Moreover, her repertory was in-



BY RUDOLF BING

credibly varied—she had been praised in various houses as Turandot, Norma, Aïda, Fidelio, Kundry, and Isolde. She was considered an unusually intelligent artist, with a great career ahead of her. Moreover, the Colón was a big house; if she had filled that one, she could probably sing anywhere.

I had had my fill of [the agent] Li-duino Bonard on the previous spring's trip to Italy, and Max Rudolf [Bing's artistic adviser and a member of the Met's conducting staff] wrote to him about Miss Callas. Bonard replied, "This artist will be very glad to get in touch with you to sing at the Metropolitan Theatre, as such an important one. She would prefer to come to New York for

the opening of the season and to stay for a month. During this month the artist would like to sing 8 performances with a fee of 700 Dollari each performance and the travel-expense."

This was now a matter I had to handle, and I turned wearily to negotiations with Bonard, by mail. We would need twelve to fourteen weeks, I wrote him, and for an artist unknown in America I could not offer more than \$400 per performance. The reply arrived within ten days:

I have spoken with the artist *Maria Callas Meneghini*, who is very glad to agree with you to stay in New York longer than two months, if necessary.

Regarding the conditions is alright 600 Dollars each performance; but I retain to reduce the conditions to 500 Dollars.

Again I offered \$400 and presently received the surprising reply:

Maria Callas Meneghini is very anxious to be in the company of this very well known Theatre and she agrees to accept 200 Dollars each performance.

Of course she would like very much to know how many performances she could have during the two months of her staying at the Metropolitan. Also she is asking in

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