

being debated that would make it harder to strike. "Rau believes a little bit of everything, but not all of it," writes commentator Herbert Kremp in the conservative national paper, *Die Welt*.

On foreign policy, Rau couches his statements even more vaguely. "We continue to insist," he declared, "that Pershings and Cruise Missiles must be negotiated away, just as the Soviet equivalent weapons must be. I will, as chancellor, initiate action in our alliance and towards the Soviet Union [regarding the matter]." His low tones and pleasant demeanor at the Ahlen meeting reflected the motto posted under his microphone: "Reconciliation Instead of Separation."

The reconciliation Rau is after, though, may be hard to find even within his own party. True, Willy Brandt paid lip service to Rau's position in the party journal *Vorwaerts*, telling fellow Social Democrats that "Rau is better" than a more ideological candidate. Rau wants to win an absolute majority, as he did in North Rhine-Westphalia, but if he is to gain power a coalition government seems

almost inevitable (no recent poll has the SPD winning more than 48 percent).

Many Social Democrats feel that coalition should be with the Greens, a group Rau refuses to have anything to do with. But the Greens are not going to go away. The SPD-Green coalition in Hesse, complete with a Green party minister of environment, was established after Rau was named the SPD candidate for chancellor. In the meantime, the rest of the SPD—which doesn't have the populist role to play—is biting into the government with more than the usual dose of venom. The SPD faction leader in the Bundestag charged on January 3, for example, that Minister of the Interior Zimmerman "endangers . . . the well-being of the state" in his interpretation of confidentiality laws in the wake of recent spy scandals. Attacks on the government's "piggish" social welfare cuts and charges about the "pitiless egoism of the right wingers" came from members of the same party that sponsors Rau's gentle statements. Rau may represent a new kind of politics, but the rest of the SPD continues the strident campaigns of the past.

The same differences pop up in foreign policy. Rau—like many a West

German politician of the left and right—has visited with officials in Moscow and with East German boss Erich Honecker. But he has not been involved in the Social Democratic party's campaign to conduct an independent foreign policy. Indeed, he's covering all bases, as demonstrated by his trip to Washington in early February. Social Democratic leaders, meanwhile, have gone so far as to conclude a model pact with East Germany on chemical weapons, one that in some respects supersedes international agreements between the Soviet Union and the United States. Egon Bahr and Willy Brandt say that the party, if elected, would immediately begin working to turn such drafts into real treaties. Rau hasn't had much to say about that, either.

At the beginning of Rau's candidacy it looked as if the bumbling chancellor, Helmut Kohl, might make up for all of Rau's internal party problems. Back in September, only 32 percent of Germans polled by the national weekly *Stern* magazine said they'd prefer Kohl as chancellor, while 43 percent chose Rau. But by December the gap between the

men had narrowed to a virtual tie. Although Kohl is still viewed as a problem for his party—"Kohl is a handicap for the Christian Democratic Union," read the headline of a lead story in the national news magazine *Der Spiegel* this January—Rau's "image success" apparently isn't permanent.

Pollsters right now are divided over who will win in 1987. But the West German economy may in the end be what breaks the "image" candidate. In Germany, which had an inflation in the 1920s that makes Argentina's today look insignificant and where unemployment encouraged the rise of National Socialism, economic points count more than others in an election. Although unemployment at 9.3 percent remains high, 3 percent growth is predicted for next year, and the stock market is booming. Most relevantly, *Stern* reports that the traditionally dour Germans are feeling more optimistic than they have in years—some 61 percent said they were looking forward to the next year, just about double the 31 percent who had hopes for the next twelve months back in 1981. For such a grumpy country, that's a change more interesting than any momentary shift in election tactics. □

## THE NATION'S PULSE



### MAKING IT

by Bruce Bawer

Standing in line at the supermarket checkout recently, I was intrigued to notice that the cover of the current issue of *Vogue*—a periodical to which I ordinarily do not pay a great deal of attention—boasted a "special report" on my hometown, little old New York. How could I resist? Eschewing the diverse attractions of the latest *Newsweek*, *TV Guide*, and *National Enquirer*, I grabbed *Vogue* and found my way to the "special report."

Alas, the report turned out to be less than special. It offered little more than the usual superficial survey of trendy restaurants, fashionable department stores, and high-toned hostelrys. But leading off the whole thing was a

*Bruce Bawer writes for the New Criterion, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Times, and other publications.*

keynote piece that I found myself reading all the way through, and then (since the man in front of me was buying enough groceries to stock a fallout shelter) reading all the way through again. Written by one Joan Juliet Buck, it was entitled "New York: Life at the Center of the World," and it went—in part, at least—like this: "Today, any man who is a real man has to measure himself against New York City, and that goes for any woman, too. To refuse is to be a pacifist, a coward, and a ninny." Indeed, "the duty of everyone alive is to participate in its existence . . . to stay away from New York is to live in the past and to refuse the challenge of opportunity." For "the past century has made New York America's capital, no matter what the official truth is: and the last five years have made New York the center of the world."

The center of the world! As I slipped the magazine back into its rack, it occurred to me that I'd run across a lot of pieces like that lately. They all had that same breathless, hyperbolic quality, as if the writer were trying desperately to convince himself that, yes, New York in the eighties is Mecca, Camelot, and Shangri-La rolled up in one. Why, I wondered, was it so important for them to believe this nonsense? Shouldn't the important question be whether living in a given place contributes to one's happiness and sense of fulfillment?

It's not, after all, as if the city has, in the past five years, become the center of anything that it was not the center of before. It is, as it was a generation ago, the headquarters of American garment production and of publishing, the

home of the stock market, the location of great art museums and theaters and the New York Public Library and the United Nations. It is, as it was a generation ago, the city that young Americans migrate to in order to make their lives a little more interesting.

What's changed, though, is that these young Americans—who are now coming, as Miss Buck observes, in greater numbers than ever—are no longer drawn to Gotham so much by its real attractions as by the unprecedented and unrealistic hype of a hundred Miss Bucks. What started it all? Maybe it was Frank Sinatra's 1980 recording of "New York, New York," the song of the immortal if meaningless line: "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere." Or maybe it was Woody Allen's shamelessly romantic 1979 film *Manhattan*; or maybe it was the 1977 election of Ed Koch, that

nauseating stereotype of a New Yorker who has become something of a one-man ad campaign for the Big Apple.

Wherever it began, the upshot is that hordes of young Americans, convinced that New York is The Only Place To Be, have swarmed into town, their determination to Make It There pathetically imprinted on their faces. Their other identifying characteristics are equally unmistakable. They refuse to live in Brooklyn or Queens or the Bronx (indeed, they make a point of boasting that they don't know their way around those dull Outer Boroughs). They laugh at tourists. They sport T-shirts that say "Welcome to New York—Now Go Home." They hang on their walls a copy of that *New Yorker* poster depicting a Manhattanite's view of America, with everything west of the Hudson exceedingly vague. They reside

in sections of the city that used to be known as slums but have now turned into high-rent districts because these onetime out-of-towners are willing—nay, eager—to live there, among the chic New York rats and cockroaches, the chic muggers and pushers, the chic falling plaster and smell of urine in the hallway. One day a year or so ago I was standing with one of these new New Yorkers on the grimy front steps of his crumbling apartment building when he proudly nodded in the direction of a prostitute who was plying her wares not ten feet from us. "That's our local hooker," he boasted. "They don't have those back home!"

Most of these young immigrants come to New York boasting that they are artists of some kind—painters, poets, singers, musicians, dancers, actors, novelists. (Sometimes all seven at

once.) To be sure, most of them support themselves by working as waiters, secretaries, and the like, but even if they never actually get around to creating anything, they persist in considering themselves to be artists and feel no qualms about identifying themselves as such. They would not get away with this back home, or even try to—but New York is different. It's not the real world to them but is, rather, an Emerald City, a Fairyland, a place to live out their dreams. They perceive New York's dirty streets, dangerous subways, and armies of street people not as real problems but as colorful fantasy problems, like the nasty apple trees, evil monkeys, and sleep-inducing poppies that Dorothy encountered on her trek down the Yellow Brick Road. The city's one big movie set to them; watching them walk down its streets,

one has the feeling that they spend each day imagining that a camera is on them, tracking their passage up Fifth Avenue, past the Plaza Hotel, into Central Park. It is the presence of the imaginary camera, one senses, that gives their lives meaning. They are at the Center of the World, and the world is watching. (But of course it isn't.)

"I've conquered New York," an immigrant from one of the loveliest towns in the Midwest told me recently—meaning not that he had prospered or found contentment on the banks of the Hudson, only that he had survived. He was chain-smoking, was pale and nervous and tired, was living in a horribly overpriced East Village loft in what looked from the outside like an abandoned building—but, hell, he was still here! He'd *made* it. □

---

## POLITIQUE INTERNATIONALE

---



### A TOUCH OF CRASS

by Taki

To add my two bits to what Peregrine Worsthorne and his critics had to say in the pages of *TAS* about Anglo-American relations would be a bit like trying to sell a publisher yet another collection of Virginia Woolf's letters. *Un peu trop*, as the French say. So I will do the next best thing and add my ten cents on a subject that is relevant to Peregrine's anti-Reaganism and anti-neoconism and also dear to my heart. To wit, why is it that our cousins the Brits seem at times to worry more about Washington's foreign policy than about the grand tour the Russkies periodically take to such romantic places as Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Kabul, not to mention that randy little capital Havana?

Mind you, when I say the Brits I don't mean Mr. Worsthorne, a man whose manners are so impeccable I would forgive him even if he tried to get me fired from my job (which he once did). And speaking of manners, here's a story about Soviet manners as opposed to American ones.

In November 1973, I returned to my birthplace—as well as that of selective

*Taki Theodoropoulos is a European editor of the The American Spectator.*

democracy, upper-class buggery, and anti-Turkish sentiments—after covering the Yom Kippur War for the leading Athens daily, *Acropolis*. The publisher gave a party in my honor, and invited some of the Athens-based foreign diplomats. Two Russians were among the first to arrive, the cultural attaché and the third secretary of the consular section. As soon as my host finished introducing us the two began praising the guest of honor, calling my prose immortal and going so far as to compare my dispatches from the Arab-Israeli war with those of that blind Greek who reported the Greco-Trojan conflict long ago in the *Iliad*.

Now as one Chinese stamp collector told another, "Philately will get you everywhere," and I must admit that I was awfully flattered. Not only did the two Russkies become my new best friends on the spot, I found myself sticking closer to them than that painted-up propagandist, Christabel Hitchens, sticks to rich Washington hostesses. And our friendship survives to this day. Oh, I almost forgot. There were American diplomats there too, but if memory serves, they were busy discussing a Dallas Cowboys football game the Armed Forces radio had

broadcast that afternoon. There was certainly no philately from the American corner for the greatest Greek writer since Homer.

Which brings me to the point I'm trying to make. American diplomats go abroad to do a job, namely to advance the foreign-policy goals of whatever administration happens to be in power. This is not the case with the Soviet "diplomatic" corps. All Soviet diplomats, and I mean *all*, have strict instructions when abroad to proselytize and infiltrate the media of the country they're in, and to try to infiltrate the key centers of power. So imagine what lengths the Russkies must go to when in contact with bigger fish than Greek hacks, or how flattering they can get in the presence of big lasagnas of countries slightly more important than the Olive Republic of Grease.

Such wiles have not been lost on the Brits. Adding to that, a large segment of the British elite continue to perceive the Soviet Union as their wartime ally who stood fast against Hitler while America dilly-dallied about entering the war. Even before that, the Soviet Union was looked upon by leading Brit

intellectuals as the most progressive society in the world, and countless of them paid groveling visits to the land of the Gulag.

Furthermore—and this is most important—as early as 1950, the Communist party of Great Britain understood that as a result of its lack of popular support, it would change its strategy from trying to obtain Parliamentary representation to infiltrating the centers of power—including Parliament. That move proved so successful that moderate members of the Labour party admit that many trade unions, the media, and their own party are heavily tainted. In fact, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the U.S. House of Representatives has heard evidence in the past that the Soviet investment in propaganda is between \$3 and \$4 billion per annum. (Compare this with the kind of moolah Uncle Sam spends in order to win friends and influence people—and cry.)

The thug who runs this small-budget operation is a beaming Russkie by the name of Leonid ("Call me Lenny") Zamyatin, and his task is rather simple. It is to discredit or to promote—according to the needs of Soviet