

EDITORIALS



THE SOLITARY HART

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

And so it has begun. On a cold damp rock in Red Rocks Park in the Colorado outback, Gary Hart has declared his candidacy for the Republic's highest office. And now it will get worse. The cruel and inexorable sacrifice of the Solitary Hart was written in the stars long before his vague Senate years, his days in the 1972 McGovern campaign, or that pregnant moment when he changed his name from rustic Hartpence to functional Hart. The same turn of history's wheel that required presidential candidate Jerry Brown in the 1970s requires candidate Gary Hart in the 1980s.

Candidate Hart's ordeal will be gruesome. The Rape of the Sabines was horrible, but brief. The victimization of Mr. Hart could last for months. Megalomania has heavily insulated him; he may never notice the blows raining down, or the snickers. Yet shrewd observers in both parties saw it all coming long ago. Their only question is when will Mr. Hart's handlers carry him off.

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When they do an aggrieved Mr. Hart will condemn the press, for in the end it is the press that will finish him off. His recriminations will be understandable but wholly unjustified. He has used the ingenuities of the press corps brazenly, and when they catch on they will take offense. It is in the nature of their art.

Along with modern communications' evolution into that instantaneous production line of information and disinformation that we call the media has come a crowd of mountebank presidential candidates. Their constituency is not regional or sociological. It is primarily the isolated population that labors at the media's production line, filling it with the output of their cameras, their recorders, their word processors. To the media the mountebanks come, representing no fixed groups or principles or even a body of coherent ideas. Instead the mountebanks produce a sensation, designed for the media's special needs: sound bites, visuals, an original persona—the goofier the better, at least for a while.

All presidential candidates cooperate somewhat with the media's needs. Certainly Ronald Reagan did. But the

media's mountebanks cooperate totally, and just as the media's first need is an unconventional candidate with a meteoric rise, another of their needs is Dunkirk—the candidate collapses! Even more desirable is the candidate's collapse into a cloud of weird vapor. This is a particularly cruel twist, for many a media mountebank's irregularities were encouraged by the press. In the end, however, candidate Brown was sent off as Governor Moonbeam. How will they send off the Solitary Hart?

Consider his recent heroics. He did not declare his candidacy in his home town or 'midst a sea of passionate followers. There were no herds of leaping fanatics pledged to die for him. On the great day of national salvation the Solitary Hart bundled 450 journalists—cameras and microphones in hand—into a bus for a fifteen-mile ride to one of nature's telegenic marvels. No other voters were present aside from an occasional park ranger, one of whom notified the arriving press, "We call this the lower South parking lot." Hart drove up to the media event in his own white, mud-splattered jeep; and with a curiously sad-looking family braved the chill wind, hatless and without a topcoat—the media mountebank never

appears before the cameras fully clothed.

Then with the cameras clicking and whirring he enunciated in this soaring and thoroughly preposterous setting an eight-minute dithyramb, its ideas brief and incoherent but proffering slogans for every taste, media bites for all mankind. Still he is a goner. For many weeks now the press has been chipping away at the gimcrack monument that he presented them in place of a personality, to say nothing of a character or a set of principles. The Solitary Hart claimed that ideas would be his theme. Actually, he snagged the press with this monstrosity of a monument and now the press pursues the monstrosity into stage two of a mountebank's media life, the collapse. The questions are personal and now grow treacherous. The Solitary Hart in Campaign '84 was a veritable gasbag. Now he is ominously reticent. His replies are laconic, framed in resentment. The unusually numerous opponents who have appeared from the Democratic ranks bespeak the low hopes held for candidate Hart. But all are so bland and alike that it is doubtful one will enter the 1988 convention a clear winner. The party of progress may be forced to revert to a smoke-filled room. It could be worse. □



SAFE SEX IN MOSCOW

The moral and intellectual dismantlement of America, always proctored so zealously by Americans of a progressive cast of mind, has now advanced sufficiently that the Marine guards at our Moscow embassy are making love not war. The Secretary of State, oblivious to the humiliation visited upon his government by Soviet penetration of the inner reaches of our embassy, contemplated flying off to Moscow trailed by a mobile home for his private meetings. No insult, no matter how public, registers on the brains of Americans accustomed to working in their underwear.

Ever since the late 1970s the Soviets

have been eavesdropping brazenly on our diplomats and infiltrating our embassy staff, but enlightened opinion remained nonchalant. Until recently, two hundred of the embassy employees have been Soviet citizens, as though they were the citizens of just another democratic society. When it was reported that fifty of these were double dipperers, drawing salaries from the United States Treasury and the mysterious KGB, former Ambassador Arthur Hartman, according to a *Washington Post* source, took the position that "I don't have any secrets here." He also had but one string on the low E of his grand piano.

I refer to early 1986 when "vandals" somehow secreted themselves in the Ambassador's official residence and brutalized its piano just before two hundred guests arrived to hear Vladimir Feltsman, a Soviet virtuoso and dissident, perform on it. "It's a terrible thing to do to a piano," Mr. Hartman innocently opined. Actually the Soviets are capable of far more terrible acts, but as Americans have continued their stupendous essay into self-dismantlement they have ignored the nature of the Soviet regime even as they have stripped away the moral content of their own regime, leaving them looking a little stupid. Consider their braying following President Ronald Reagan's perfectly unobjectionable assertions that the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union is evil. Consider the snores that were heard when the *Wall Street Journal* reported last Oc-

tober that the American embassy then under construction was full of bugs, or when it was reported that so intense was Soviet microwave bombardment of our embassy that diplomats feared for their health.

Nothing could raise the moral hairs of enlightened American opinion until the KGB's ladies of joy disarmed our Marine guards. Possibly the alarm grows from rumors that the concomitant breach of security is the gravest since the melodious Walkers, but do not bar the notion that enlightened opinion's alarm grows from the thought that the Marines may not have engaged in safe sex, as the phrase has it.

Now these ignorant American servicemen are being accused of fraternizing with the enemy—a charge unfamiliar to the ears of most Americans. During our years of moral and intellectual dismantlement it has become *outré* to

refer to any foreigner as an enemy other than an occasional Chilean or a South African bigot.

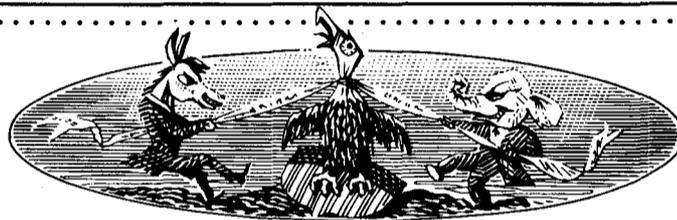
Enlightened American opinion is offended by the thought that the Soviet regime is our enemy or that in terms of virtue it is at one with the Nazi regime, though it is anti-Semitic, despotic, and aggressively opposed to democracy. For years businessmen such as Armand Hammer have been accorded applause for fraternizing with the Soviets. So have politicians, private citizens, and intellectuals of the glassy-eyed variety such as Gore Vidal who recently returned from a seance with Mikhail Gorbachev, extolling his political virtuosity in terms Vidal could not even apply to Lincoln.

If the accused Marines have their wits about them—and the Marine who hired William Kunstler has at least half a wit about him—they will argue that

they were merely strengthening relations between the superpowers, relieving tensions, engaging in people to people diplomacy. They will repeat the high-minded vaporings of all the upper class Americans who have paraded to Moscow for years assisting in the great work of creating moral and political symmetry between the Soviet tyranny and this woebegone democracy.

Somewhere in *The Unquiet Grave* Cyril Connolly said of the British of the late 1930s what can be said of many Americans today: "We have developed sympathy at the expense of loyalty." Connolly was a small man speaking of small things, but the line can also be applied to large matters. While attempting to understand the Soviets our loyalty to America has diminished to the point that Marines join diplomats in panting after the agents of the Soviet state, oblivious to the indignity. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



OLD DEBATES, NEW TWISTS

by Tom Bethell

There is something rather delicious about the potential arms control agreement on intermediate range missiles. For many years, as Irving Kristol pointed out in the *Wall Street Journal*, our allies have been "piously and disingenuously stressing the importance of arms control negotiations as one alternative to an expensive and politically unpopular buildup of NATO's conventional military forces." Now they may get rather more arms control than they had bargained for. With the Americans threatening to pull out their cruise and Pershing II missiles, West European leaders might well consider this the forerunner to further U.S. "decoupling" from Europe.

Even if an INF Treaty is signed, the Europeans should congratulate themselves for having inveigled us into subsidizing their welfare states for far longer than anyone might have expected at the end of World War II. And of course there will be voices aplenty in the U.S. to say that we should go on paying for the poor dears because they

can't possibly be expected to stand up to the Red Army—never mind that their population and GNP exceed that of the Soviets, by a considerable margin; or that their technology is more advanced.

I need hardly say that there are major problems with the proposed INF "zero option," as with all arms control delusions, but I am on balance inclined to hope that it comes to pass. The resulting turmoil in the Western Alliance will constitute a good test of the rival theories of NATO held by Irving Kristol, and by Norman Podhoretz of *Commentary*. Kristol posits that Euro-

pean weakness is a result of their subsidization. Thus he would predict greater European resolve in the face of an American pullback. On the other hand Norman Podhoretz and his followers believe that European weakness is part of a more general "decline of the West." Podhoretz, therefore, would predict a further decline in European resolve in the face of American withdrawal.

Kristol's view is the more optimistic: the Europeans are basically sound but we have skewed their incentives, in typical Yankee fashion, with dollars. Podhoretz is more pessimistic: the West

is in a more fundamental state of decay. Thus we must all hang together—rather than separately from the rope we have so eagerly sold the Soviets. (By temperament I would be inclined to agree with Podhoretz, but there is no denying that economic incentives act powerfully even on those who do not understand that their behavior responds to such incentives; therefore Kristol's view should be put to the test.)

Notice that the prospective treaty is by no means *intended* to test these rival theories. Nothing, you can be sure, is further from the minds of that trio of arms control enthusiasts, George Shultz, Paul Nitze, and Ronald Reagan. In fact, Reagan's hunger for a treaty—a piece of paper signed by the Russians that he can take with him into the history books—is itself a sign of quite gratuitous Western weakness, and as such constitutes good evidence for Podhoretz's world view.

It will be interesting to see what happens. My own guess is that a strange bedfellow alliance of nervous Europeans, politically alert Democrats, and traditional U.S. conservatives will derail the treaty. It probably won't be signed

Strange New Respect

The award this year goes to Charles Everett Koop, Surgeon General of the United States, for putting condoms before continence.

The Strange New Respect Award is given to public figures who arrive in Washington with conservative reputations but who "grow" because they find that their previously held opinions are considered unfashionable. Accordingly they apostasize, preferring the good opinion of the news media to their own opinions. Sometimes their change of heart is heralded by a *Washington Post* "Style" section article, quoting a source as saying that they are looked upon with a "strange new respect."

Next year, after the November election, a special award ceremony will be held: "From the Party of the Right to the Right Parties: Strange New Respect in the Reagan Years." It will honor the Most Strangely Respected Reaganite.

The SNR Committee is reported to be considering several candidates, but sources say that Nancy Reagan has the inside track. —TB

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