
heart and mind, and that the "God" of Torquemada or Khomeini fits *our* notion of the Supreme Being and His will to which we are all subject. President Reagan and Secretary Haig may grasp the notion of human rights at this stage of our history—how it should serve our freedom, our welfare and our mission—but we wish that their understanding were rooted in intellectual responsibility rather than in political stipulations. The directive must be not benignly to ignore the human-rights issue but to take it from the liberal monopoly and effectively prove that it is *our* issue.

Incidentally, among those who were most instrumental in Mr. Lefever's demise was Senator Charles Percy. His reasoning seemed rather murky and shady, which confirmed our suspicions: one of the least decent aspects of politics is a lack of clarity in political deeds. Senator Percy is an unusual individual, with a face so honest that one immediately feels uneasy before such excessive uprightness. Whenever he is in trouble he is obsequious to conservatives; when he feels firm in the saddle he panders to liberals in a most oily way. Some perceive such maneuvering as a splendid independence of mind. To us it looks as if Senator Percy has less elusive aims than independence *or* mind.

Nonproliferation

In terms of simple human logic, the Israeli action against the Iraqi nuclear reactor is perfectly consistent and rational. We in America are against the proliferation of nuclear facilities that *could* produce atomic weapons—and Israel has come up with a practical solution to our concerns.

Mr. Louis Nizer, the famous New York lawyer and writer, has offered a more complex—political, legal or moral—analysis of the event. In an article in a recent *Chicago Tribune*, he proved that Israel's decision was fully justified by the principles which have long been

recognized by American, international and even Islamic law—if only someone involved in the ensuing dispute were willing to accept the inconvenience of honestly and thoroughly reading the appropriate canons, statutes and codices.

As for the way the Reagan administration handled the matter, we once again received the uncomfortable impression that the most basic tenets of our foreign policy are far from being securely and thoughtfully fixed. Even the *Wall Street Journal*—which, God knows, wishes Reagan to succeed—found it necessary

to chide our accord with the United Nations' censure; their editorial was entitled "Andy Kirkpatrick"—a characterization of our U.N. representative's meandering which looks like it is right on target. What disturbs us about the Reagan team's erratic approach to foreign policy is its lack of any philosophical sense of the word and the concept of *alliance*. During the 1970's most of our allies got the feeling that we understand neither word nor concept. To prolong this state of affairs would seem to be a very risky business in today's world. □

JOURNALISM

Confusion

In a strange and rather curious article, one Mr. Sidney Zion has accused the American music industry, especially the big record companies, of having deliberately polluted American popular culture with rock 'n' roll music, thereby nearly obliterating the great American heritage of songwriting and popular music that has existed since the turn of the century.

Mr. Zion is obviously a liberal but not a fool—as Senator Jackson once said about himself—and he wages a valiant fight in defense of the excellence, the devastating charm, of early jazz, swing and other treasures of American popular music from Handy to Gershwin to Jerome Kern. The current resurgence of interest in performers like Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Tony Bennett he calls a renaissance of taste. He hopes that the declining teen-age record market will usher in more sensible preferences for a musical style more sophisticated than the crudely primitive rock. Yet his treatise suffers from confusion and shallowness. He does not, or cannot, explain why an entire generation abandoned the refinement of Ellington and the poetry of Nat King Cole to worship at the feet of crude protoplasmic machines like Elvis Presley, animated sex

objects like Mick Jagger and singing radic-lib agitators like Bob Dylan. Mr. Zion seems not to understand that popular music is always an expression of ideas (even primitive ones) and trends which are first conceived by centers of culture other than entertainment and show business. The ideas that governed a young, rapidly expanding America whose optimism and socioeconomic robustness rhymed well with healthy patriotism expressed itself through the energy and the painful social concerns of jazz. America—mobilized against the Depression in the 1930's and prepared to defend the world's freedom in the 1940's—found its musical emblem in the dynamism and joyfulness of swing. America of the 1960's—debilitated by sociopsychology, liberal inertia and suicidal defeatism—found its troubadours in the degeneracy of rock.

Mr. Zion researched his article among singers, songwriters, broadcasting executives and music-industry mavens. The latter tried to convince him that rock's subcultural wave had never been promoted—the country "wanted it" and the record industry responded. It's hard to imagine a more blatant and cynical lie, and Mr. Zion didn't buy it. He quotes a certain Mr. Ahmet Ertegun, president of Atlantic Records, a radic-chic millionaire, the darling of transvestite capitalism à la *Women's Wear Daily* and one

of the most powerful pushers of behavioral nihilism within the Liberal Culture's establishment. Mr. Ertegun told Mr. Zion:

There's nothing we can do to make a record sell . . . the public creates the demand; we simply fill it. That's all there is to it.

So much for all the hoopla we've seen on TV screens and in the release copies regarding the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Janis Joplin, The Who, etc., etc., etc. Then, Mr. Ertegun expresses his taste:

I think that the rock-and-roll writers are lyrically head and heels above the Gershwins and Cole Porters for poetic content. I think Mick Jagger and Keith Richard write better lyrics than any of those old writers.

This qualifies Mr. Ertegun as either a cynical murderer of all literary criteria, or an idiot—at least in our eyes.

One thing has to be added: *where* did Mr. Zion publish his welcome, if inept, observation? Surprise! In the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. As if he were unaware of what the *Times* and its venerable "critics" have con-

tributed to those years of calamity and abomination. Mr. Zion seems *not* to correlate facts which clearly indicate that the respectable media—like the *Times*, CBS or *Time* magazine—never lifted a finger against the onslaught of rock barbarity and illiteracy, against the savaging of every socio-civilizational norm by all the Mick Jagers and punk-rockers, against the utter trashiness of the Alice Coopers and Ramones. That's why such subcultural garbage was able to invade the popular culture in triumph for more than two decades. Now the *Times* seems to have rediscovered taste. □

We, the Hypocrites

In a prominent, smugly dignified editorial, the *Chicago Tribune*—that tower of artful hypocrisy—shows how, in a single masterstroke of cant and duplicity, one can make the good guys look very, very bad, thus preserving for oneself the glory of being infallibly correct. The editorial was a statement supporting (suddenly) Proctor & Gamble's decision not to advertise in TV shows with excessive sexual permissiveness and violence. In it the *Chicago Tribune* preaches:

Far better to cope with the evils of TV this way than to do nothing—which would ultimately be to invite back the book-burners, moral vigilantes, and thought police of worse times and other places.

The book burners, vigilantes and thought police, in the *Tribune's* code, are those who (for the last 30 years) have claimed that liberal ideas would ultimately turn the American culture into a moral and behavioral jungle. It has finally happened. And the *Chicago Tribune* (one of the most effective disseminators of ideological and cultural nihilism for the last decade) now dons the mantle of a defender of reason and morality. It seems that if one can buy a baseball club, he can perform any juggling trick with his identity, his past, his bygone sins and come out pure and righteous. All one needs is to own a newspaper. □

Precision of Thinking & Writing

The title in *The Nation*, a journal of leftish purity in the service of liberal "decency," over a review of two books written by convicted criminals about their prison experiences reads: "Notes from Our Gulag."

The Nation hates Solzhenitsyn for his anticommunism, his anti-Marxism and his contempt for American liberalism. Still, if they intend to use his emblematic word for their own purposes, editors of *The Nation*, an organ of self-anointed decency, should practice one primordial decency and at least read the target of their phobia. If *The Nation's* editors ever did read Solzhenitsyn, they would discover that *Gulag* means a territory where people who are completely innocent (by any Western, democratic, liberal standard) are jailed and tortured by a totalitarian state power in defiance of any existing law. This description hardly fits San Quentin, Leavenworth or any other federal correctional institution. But at *The Nation*, who cares about such details? □

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