

LETTERS

Clarity

YOUR PAPER HAS ALWAYS BEEN LUKEWARM ON gay issues, but your editorial "AIDS Plan Merits Thought..." (ITT, June 10) shows your homophobia clearly. While you take the Reagan administration to task at every turn on other issues, you're in bed with them on AIDS.

Your editorial spouts the same tired refrain that privacy must be "weighed against the threat to another's life that failing to test and notify entails." Testing will protect no one. In fact, it may lull "negatives" into thinking that safer sex rules do not apply to them. Testing is an expensive way to tell people the same thing. If you test positive, you either stop having sex or use condoms. If you test negative, you either stop having sex or use condoms. Testing, discrimination aside, is an expensive farce.

It's absurd that your June 10 issue carried articles on an obscure leftist in Portugal and Wall Street mergers but no report on the Third International Conference on AIDS. Your AIDS coverage is too little, too late. My money can be better spent—discontinue my subscription.

Marshall McClintock, Ph.D.
Arlington, Va.

AIDS slippery slope

YOUR EDITORIAL ABOUT AIDS TESTING (ITT, JUNE 10) is misguided and wrong. The issue is an important measure of one's political approach to the AIDS crisis. And it has already been politicized, like it or not, by right-wing political forces who correctly see AIDS, and AIDS antibody testing, as a tremendous opportunity to advance their authoritarian (and racist, sexist and homophobic) political agenda. For us to withdraw from this battle, as your editorial advised, means giving up the high ground and seriously weakening further efforts to stop the spread of AIDS.

Immigrant testing for infectious diseases may have ample precedent, as you say, but does that make it morally right? There's a rich irony in the prospect of the USA (single largest exporter of AIDS in the world today) screening out immigrants who carry the AIDS virus. And what about the thousands of persons, eligible for immigration amnesty under the Simpson-Rodino Bill, who will be denied and deported because they were exposed to AIDS while living in this country? What if their native countries, following the U.S. example, refuse to take them back? Your editorial is irresponsible in endorsing immigrant testing, without making mention of the tragic results that can be expected to follow.

Your concern for persons unknowingly exposed to AIDS by other AIDS carriers is meaningless as long as you accept the view that their main defense is widespread testing. How will testing (either voluntary or mandatory) serve to protect them? By itself, it will not. In order for testing truly to protect these "unknowing victims," you must publicly report the test results and, since no amount of reporting will reach everyone, you must physically isolate the AIDS virus carriers. I doubt if this is what you had in mind, but other pro-test advocates have thought it through more completely. Senators Jesse Helms and Alan Simpson have both pointed out, approvingly, that the logic

of testing leads to detention and quarantine. They're for it; we're against it. But if we both embrace testing as a technique for AIDS control, we've started down the same slippery slope.

Education always has been, and remains, our best weapon against AIDS. It is more effective, and no more expensive, than testing. It doesn't discriminate, require lists, or give falsely alarming nor falsely assuring "scientific" answers. It assumes that we are all at risk and should all adopt similar lower-risk practices.

Franz Martin
Los Angeles

There is no AIDS test

IT SEEMS UNLIKELY TO START CALLING THE Somozan bandits in Nicaragua "Freedom Fighters" or Oliver North "a misguided patriot," but on an issue that strikes much closer to home for many of your readers, your June 10 editorial buys into the language used by this dreadful administration to misdirect attention and effort in the AIDS crisis.

To talk of an "AIDS test" or to say that persons whose blood contains HIV antibodies are "infected with the AIDS virus" is to concede the premises of people who want to round up unpopular minorities, eliminate opposing views and otherwise turn the mainstream against the Bill of Rights (the drug and pornography scares work to the same ends). The most important thing to say in any discussion of AIDS testing is that *there is no AIDS test*. The present blood test does not register the presence of HIV, the virus widely (but not universally) declared to cause AIDS. It indicates only the presence of HIV antibodies—exposure, not infection.

Although the popular media (along with ITT) has begun to make the leap from "HIV antibody positive" to "infected with AIDS," the implications of testing positive are completely ambiguous. The person so labeled may or may not be infected, may or may not be infectious, may or may not go on to develop AIDS. True, the Centers for Disease Control propose that a certain percentage of those with HIV antibodies should be placed in each of these categories, but at this point, for any individual, a positive test is a warning signal, nothing less but nothing more.

Since a sexual partner may have had the virus but no antibodies at the time of testing or may have been exposed after testing, to rely on test results is a poor way to protect health and life. "To test and notify" offers only the illusion of security to the unexposed and certain damage to the people who will certainly be stigmatized. The only

effective civil liberty here is the right to precise information on how to avoid exposure. You don't need to know the antibody status of another person to insist on the use of a reliable condom or to content yourself with massage and masturbation. Anti-sex, anti-ACLU crusaders like Nat Hentoff are simply using people's fears of AIDS to further another agenda.

Today we have cancelled a recent two-year renewal of our subscription and gifts to both our families.

G.P. Gilbert, J.M. Matthew
Jersey City, N.J.

Editor's note: We did not mean to withdraw from the battle for AIDS education. Education is more important than testing at this point, but the issue has been politicized by those hoping to capitalize on public ignorance and fear of AIDS. We believe this may have tragic consequences as legislatures are stampeded into programs that ignore the advice of the medical community and others most knowledgeable about the disease.

It is certainly true that near-hysteria in some quarters about AIDS is fueled by homophobia, but AIDS is not a gay disease, it is simply a disease that in this country initially struck the gay community. Now, however, the incidence of new cases of AIDS infection among gays is declining sharply, thanks to educational efforts, while the disease is beginning to appear among the general population and may well begin increasing exponentially without adequate education.

The priority for public funding should be for educating the public and for research for a cure for AIDS. But testing is also important. There is an AIDS test, no matter that it is imperfect. Test results must be kept confidential where that is possible. But in principle we see no reason why an AIDS test for immigrants is different from similar tests that have long been mandatory for venereal and other diseases. This is the position the American Medical Association took at its recent convention. We agree with it.

Feticide

JOEL BLEIFUSS' READING OF THE ATTEMPT TO ban amniocentesis in India as a result of peoples' preference (7,999 out of 8,000) for aborting female fetuses (ITT, May 20) raises some vital questions.

If abortion isn't murder, there is little basis for complaint that more female fetuses are aborted than male fetuses. If human beings are not destroyed through abortion, then what can parents who abort female fetuses be accused of? Sexual discrimination against non-persons? The de-

struction of x-chromosomes?

On the other hand, if "female feticide" through abortion is considered "new-found evidence" for those practicing "infanticide," as the article states, then abortion is the murdering of babies by more technologically advanced means than were previously available.

Abortion on demand gives women a degree of control over their lives. It is considered necessary by a lot of people who know first-hand what happens to many unplanned and unwanted children and their parents. But it is also the destruction of human beings. Bleifuss has pointed out this contradiction. We have a choice. We can make abortion unnecessary and impossible. Or we can accept our complicity, for any number of reasons, in this particular form of murder.

Joe DiStefano
Philadelphia

Crime and racism

SALIM MUWAKKIL'S PIECE ON THE GROWING black prison population (ITT, June 10) offers a chilling commentary on the inability of the left to speak persuasively about serious social issues. The rising rate of imprisonment for black men speaks volumes about the marginalization of the black poor, but hysterical innovations of genocide, racism and the legacy of slavery have little weight with a crime-weary public. Most people in prison are victimizers as well as victims. Their violent behavior undermines civic and neighborhood life, most of all in the communities where they live. Criticism of the justice system that does not offer a persuasive program to reduce predatory behavior by low-income males will inevitably be regarded as utopian. It is sad that not one person quoted in the article spoke of the need for jobs, improved education and other programs that might improve the conditions of low-income people. We need redistributive justice, not campaigns to open the prison gates.

Moreover, attributing black imprisonment to "racism" plays right into the hands of conservatives who see criminality as an integral component of black lower-class culture. Differential rates of imprisonment are a telling commentary on our history of racial injustice, but solutions must start from the recognition of crime as a serious problem. No society, capitalist or socialist, can tolerate widespread victimization of law-abiding citizens in streets, apartments and public conveyances. If non-coercive measures cannot be developed to reduce criminal behavior, imprisonment will be demanded by an irate and fear-ridden public.

Mark Naison
Brooklyn, N.Y.

SYLVIA

SOME POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ABUSIVE TELEVISION WATCHING.



People who keep their fingers pressed on the Remote control button so that they can watch every T.V. SHOW AT ONCE, ARE RARELY CALLED TO TESTIFY AT CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS.

7-17

by Nicole Hollander



Klaus Barbie's career in South America: Terror did not end with the Holocaust

By John Friedman

THE TRIAL OF KLAUS BARBIE FOR CRIMES against humanity is expected to end soon, but most of the foreign journalists departed long ago.

Barbie's absence from the courtroom shifted attention to his victims. But victims often seem less interesting to the media than the torturers.

Those who sit patiently and listen to the terrible suffering of the Holocaust are forced into silence—witnesses to the witnesses. Even Jacques Vergès, Barbie's contentious attorney, rarely speaks after the victims have testified.

A recurrent theme of the trial has been that Barbie's deeds in France should be remembered, that the lesson of the Holocaust must be: never again.

However, the pain that Barbie brought to thousands did not end in 1944 but continued into the '80s, when Barbie became a bridge between European Nazism and Latin American fascism. He is part of what Marcel Ophuls, the French filmmaker, has called the "diaspora of the torturers."

Unlike his victims who were left to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives after the war, Barbie received help in the post-war years from many sources. Within two years after the war had ended, he was work-

ing for American intelligence, spying on the Russians and European Communists.

While Sabina Zlatin, the woman in charge of Izieu, the home from which 44 children were deported by Barbie in 1944, was desperately trying to bring to justice the French informer who had betrayed the children to the Gestapo leader, Barbie himself was living comfortably in Germany—on the American payroll.

While Ita Halaunbrenner—whose husband had been shot by Barbie, whose eldest son had been deported by him to Auschwitz, and whose two youngest children were deported from Izieu—was still grieving, Barbie and his family were sent in 1951 along the "rat line" escape route to Latin America by U.S. officials.

In the late '60s, when Lise Lesevre, now in her 80s, was trying to regain the use of vertebrae broken by Barbie during a torture session, Barbie was rising to wealth and power in Bolivia as an adviser on interrogation and torture to numerous dictators and generals.

In Bolivia, Barbie taught President Hugo Banzer how to use the army for internal repression through various means including the use of concentration camps. Before Barbie, the Bolivians interrogated prisoners simply by beating them up. After Barbie, they turned to electrical torture.

A version of the Lyons trial could be held in La Paz, Bolivia with different witnesses telling similar stories.

For example, Mirna Murillo was tortured by Bolivian soldiers in the early '70s, after she was arrested for belonging to the ERN, the National Revolutionary Army, a small and ineffective guerrilla force. Her guards boasted to her about a lecture on interrogation that Barbie had recently given at the prison, according to Isabel Hilton, co-author of *The Nazi Legacy*. Others confirmed that Barbie had an office on the fourth floor of the Ministry of Interior and supervised internal security matters.

As a government adviser, he persuaded officials to buy certain weapons, including armored cars that were useful on the streets of La Paz. At the same time, as a private arms dealer, he received a substantial income from such sales, enabling him to buy several houses and travel abroad freely.

Besides having influential friends in La Paz, he also had influential friends in Lima, Peru. Thus, in 1972 when he was seen on Peruvian television and subsequently identified as Barbie (he had changed his name to Klaus Altmann), he avoided his pursuers, including Nazi-hunter Beate Klarsfeld, by slipping across the border back to Bolivia with a Peruvian police escort.

In Latin America Barbie became a cult

hero of the far-right. "Some of the most savage and professional killers of the Italian ultra-right" as well as fascist sympathizers from Germany, France and even Switzerland gathered around him, according to Hilton and her co-authors.

Barbie was in touch with Germans such as Hans Ulrich Rudel, the former Nazi air force officer who was an adviser of President Stroessner of Paraguay and Gen. Pinochet of Chile.

In turn, Barbie helped his friends by either hiring them for the Bolivian government or by introducing them to drug dealers such as Roberto Suarez who needed recruits for his own private army.

The only witness who testified about Barbie's activities in Latin America before the court in Lyons was Gustavo Sanchez, the former interior minister of Bolivia under leftist President Siles Zuazo. Sanchez played a key role in Barbie's arrest and expulsion to France in February 1983.

At this point, what Barbie says or does, however, is far less important than the record that is being compiled. As Marek Halter, a French writer, said in a panel discussion one evening after the trial had recessed, the current period provides a brief window to fix into memory and history the facts of the Holocaust.

The trial is performing this task. But before it is too late the facts of what the Nazis did after the war in Europe and Latin America should also be recorded.

John S. Friedman is a co-producer of Marcel Ophuls' forthcoming film, *Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie*.

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Constitution

Continued from page 13

But conspiracy, in my opinion, was not what the Constitution was all about. There is no question that the 55 gentlemen at Philadelphia set out to engineer a political document that would transfer power upward in the social scale (as the show implicitly notes). They were supposedly there just to reform the Articles, which almost everyone agreed were in need of strengthening (and whose deficiencies could in fact have been patched up without wholesale revision). If word got out they were violating their instructions the enterprise would have been sunk. Thus the secrecy rule. But this is not quite the same thing as a counterrevolution. For one thing, they had strong political support among the artisans and proletarians of the towns (whose independent perspective is totally ignored by the exhibit). For another, few Revolutionaries of 1776 had ever envisioned constructing a democracy in the first place. The republics they sought were never intended to grant political power to women, slaves or propertyless white males. In the 18th century, that was barely thinkable. (Though while the exhibit is right not to beat up anachronistically on the Framers for not living up to 20th-century standards, it might well have given at least passing attention to the way a world view that dismissed women, blacks and proletarians as inherently unworthy of civic participation supported particular gender and racial class interests.)

A radical project: By 1787, to be sure, in large part due to the impact of the revolutionary process itself, there were sharp disagreements over the proper extent of the propertied white male franchise and the bal-

ance of power between local and national institutions. But in the context of the monarchies and tyrannies of the day, the Constitution, for all its quite deliberate attempt to limit popular power, remained an astonishingly radical project.

The slightest smidgen of comparative perspective would have illuminated this fact. The Framers—unquestionably the new nation's elite—were small fry in the global—especially European, especially English—scheme of things. This is why the Framers (after they had reluctantly agreed to grant the safeguards of the Bill of Rights) were ultimately able to convince enough of the white male propertied small farmers—the overwhelming majority of the voting population—that taken as a whole the Constitution represented a multi-class compromise that would work to the benefit of the majority.

To raise such questions is to underline the number of opportunities "Miracle" missed. Imagine a show that considered the U.S. Constitution in comparison to other, more recent post-revolutionary state-making projects. The Framers were the first, but not the last, to worry about the possibility of a post-triumph flight of capital and skills (c.f. Cuba), to wrestle with the proper balance of national versus local/regional power (c.f. Zimbabwe), to puzzle over how to maintain in power the coalition that led the revolution (and which naturally defines itself as essential to its preservation) while maintaining an openness of access to political power (c.f. recent debates in Nicaragua). This exhibit sought to make the origins of the Constitution accessible to modern folk, but for all its trappings of involvement, it in fact places the document on a pedestal and promotes veneration rather than understanding.