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EDITORIAL

MIDDLE EAST JAWBONING

In the Middle East, things fall apart; the Camp David center does not hold. Prime Minister Menachem Begin takes umbrage because Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak wants to bypass Jerusalem on his trip to Israel. Begin, under pressure from his right-wing supporters, who are unhappy about the impending withdrawal from the Sinai, fires back that if Mubarak boycotts Jerusalem, he will pass up Cairo. Things would be going a lot more smoothly, he adds, if the sainted Sadat were still alive.

Mubarak has his own domestic malcontents (most Egyptians, it seems), but his real fears originate elsewhere. While he must not jeopardize the reversion of the Sinai, he cannot let the Arab nations, whose friendship he is cultivating, see him groveling to Israel.

And what is Washington doing in the face of these hitches in the Camp David process? Secretary of State Haig says blandly, "We are satisfied that relations between Israel and Egypt are moving ahead . . . and the whole peace process will continue after April with more vigor." In the absence of a Middle East policy, the United States refills the old Nixonian prescription of massive doses of arms to complaining nations. Dr. Weinberger has been pushing them in Jordan and firming up an agreement with Saudi Arabia on the Awacs.

Asked at his March 1 press conference what success he had in Riyadh, Weinberger said, "We got it." The same day, the Saudi defense minister was quoted by an Arab daily as calling reports that an agreement was reached "baseless."

Such double-speak, coupled with Weinberger's arms-bazaar mentality, is no substitute for diplomacy. The region is now a tinderbox, and time is running out for the Camp David accords. Has Washington resigned itself to war as the only way out of the impasse?

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THE 'SOCIAL ISSUE' GAME

FAMILY FEUD ON THE LEFT

BARBARA EHRENREICH

What makes the New Right "new," compared with the familiar conservatism of men like Barry Goldwater, is its insistent emphasis on issues related to sexuality and the family. In dealing with other New Right themes—militarism, racism and various schemes to accelerate the upward flow of wealth—the left is on firm, or at least well-charted, ground. But bring the discussion around to the family (as in "profamily") and the ranks of the left fall into disarray. If the other side is, for chastity, piety and other values bred in *Little House on the Prairie*, is the left, then, opposed? If they are the "moral majority," is everyone else, as one self-effacing button proposes, a member of an "immoral minority"?

One novel position that has been gaining ground is that the left ought to try to co-opt the profamily position for itself. Betty Friedan offered the feminist—some would say postfeminist—version of this approach in her book *The Second Stage*. More recently, former New Leftist Michael Lerner has offered an all-encompassing left-wing profamily program, which was recently summarized in *The Nation* [see "Recapturing the 'Family Issue,'" February 2]. His program has generated so much controversy that *In These Times* praised it for being "one of the few live issues in an otherwise somnolent left." For those of us who have not been dozing peacefully through the Reagan era, Lerner's proposal is still worth taking seriously—if only as a cautionary example of what can happen if we rush off, full of unthinking enthusiasm, to meet the right on its own turf and with its own symbols.

Lerner's proposal stems from the insight that
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EDITORIALS.

Darkness at Noon

It is difficult not to feel a genuine sense of tragedy when reading Oriana Fallaci's interview of Mieczyslaw Rakowski (published in *The Washington Post* of February 21). Rakowski is Deputy Prime Minister of Poland. Throughout the period when Solidarity was a legal organization, he was a strong advocate of compromise with it. As the representative of the Polish Communist Party, he negotiated many of the most useful and imaginative agreements with the union before martial law was imposed. For a long period, Rakowski was also the editor of *Polityka*, easily the most interesting and open of the theoretical journals published in Communist Europe. He is not, by any manner of means, a fascist. And yet, in the interview he delivers himself of this door-slamming phrase: "In politics the individual does not count."

If this is true, Rakowski's own efforts in the last decade have been in vain. One can sense some of the confusion he

feels in his reply when Fallaci asked him why he admitted that he had not slept on the night of December 11, after learning that martial law would be imposed two days later:

Because I was sad, because we had failed, because this was a necessary yet tragic decision, a national disaster. And also because I was aware that we were about to take a historic step, about to write a new chapter in the history of Poland.

Obviously, not every statement in those sentences can be simultaneously true. A decision deemed by the party to be "necessary" cannot be "a national disaster"—lesser Poles are incarcerated for lesser criticisms. Nor can it easily be the prelude to "a new chapter in the history of Poland." Nor, if what Rakowski says about individuals is correct, can this be right:

My opinion counted and with my writing I have been fighting the foolish in my party and in my government long before the others. I have been preaching the need for reforms and of independent unions long before Solidarity.

Yet Rakowski still refuses to see Solidarity as the vindication

of his many warnings and criticisms. A bit later he refers to its members in classic Stalinist as "demagogues and anarchists." The only person for whom he has any kind words is Archbishop Jozef Glemp, hardly a natural ally for a reformist Communist.

Some of what Rakowski says is probably factually untrue. It is difficult to believe that the martial law operation was not planned long in advance. Of course, all governments have contingency plans and emergency police for sudden eruptions and breakdowns. But the military takeover was a carefully executed operation, involving selective mass arrests, or perhaps selective arrests on a large scale. According to Rakowski, the decision had not been taken when Solidarity was offered membership in a National Conciliation Front on November 4. But why, in that case, did the government offer Solidarity such a humiliatingly small number of seats in the front? It requires the Christian charity of an Archbishop Glemp not to suspect an element of provocation in such an offer.

As for Rakowski's denials of Russian involvement in the purge, they only serve to confirm what must be obvious—that the Warsaw government allowed, as a matter of course, an enormous level of Russian involvement in Poland's daily affairs. The government may have become so habituated to this situation that it came to seem a normal one, but it is hardly an assertion of independence to claim, as Rakowski does, that:

Let's say that maybe he [Marshal Viktor Kulikov, commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact] came to remind us that he was the head of the Warsaw Pact, and don't-you-forget-it. Well, not exactly to us, maybe, but to the hotheads of Solidarity.

Since Kulikov had arrived in Warsaw without an invitation at the end of November, this seems a rather generous attitude on Rakowski's part. Generous, though, might not be the word to describe this admission: "Of course, we cannot deny that next to us there is this huge ally." This is perhaps the most grudging tribute ever paid by a ranking Warsaw Pact official to the motherland of the October Revolution.

Rakowski belongs to a dying breed in a dying system. There was a time when loyal men and women in Eastern Europe would voluntarily sacrifice their all for the Soviet Union. Many of them made that sacrifice in a way they had not dreamed of, but the fact remains that there were such people and that they distinguished themselves in a life-and-death battle with Hitlerism. That credit has now run out entirely. The Moscow system is sterile, and it therefore cannot reproduce. No new Rakowskis are coming forward to fill the ranks of the party. The Russians must now rely on opportunists and mediocrities as their proxies. And these people will, as even Rakowski did in the end, transfer their power to the army rather than share it with their fellow citizens.

Rakowski's father was murdered by the Nazis. He has tried and failed to be both a good socialist and a loyal party man. His first wife has joined KOR, the Polish dissident group, his second wife has joined Solidarity, one of his sons

has applied for political asylum in West Germany and the other one lives in Spain. It's all over.

So now Rakowski is reduced to double talk. Lech Walesa "is not under arrest. He is simply interned." The next lot of trade unions, if permitted at all, will have "the right of striking, not of disrupting." These, as Rakowski may have known in his Marxist youth, are distinctions without a difference. Some may say that the mere fact of his granting such a candid interview is a cause for mild optimism. Nobody who understands its true pathos could really make such an unkind mistake.

Setting the Record Straight

Three weeks ago we published a version of Susan Sontag's February 6 speech at Town Hall in New York City. Although we disagree with much of what she had to say, we thought she had addressed an important issue: the attitude of the left to communists and communism.

Accordingly, we asked Sontag for permission to reprint her remarks, and she gave it. She made two requests, however. First, she said that she had revised the original speech for publication and wanted us to use the new version rather than the one she had delivered at the Solidarity rally. And she also asked that she be allowed to append a rebuttal to the comments of our contributors. To these requests we agreed. However, when her text arrived, we noticed that while it included most of what she had said at Town Hall, some of her remarks had been deleted.

In one omitted passage, Sontag contended that those who read the *Reader's Digest* between 1950 and 1970 would have been better informed about the "realities of communism" than those who read only *The Nation* or the *New Statesman*. Since we had initially decided to publish Sontag's statement in part because she had referred so explicitly to *The Nation's* coverage, we would have happily included that particular remark, and made a point of telling our readers in an editorial preface that she had made the deletion.

Meanwhile, the *Soho News* had published a transcript of her speech (without her permission), and we told our readers that too. For our trouble, the usually perceptive Alexander Cockburn of *The Village Voice* accused us of "hypocrisy," apparently under the assumption that we had chastised the *Soho News*. And then an unbylined writer in *The New York Times* of February 27 implied that *The Nation* had "edited" the Sontag speech to eliminate her criticism of "liberal publications."

Let's set the record straight.

On the matter of Sontag's message: we thought it was simplistic. We are pleased, however, that it generated some acute debate in our pages, for example, Jacobo Timerman's article last week, in which he wrote, *inter alia*:

The world is not symmetrical, and I will not alienate

myself from the world because it becomes difficult to tolerate asymmetry. Despite the difference that exists between one horror and another—slavery in Saudi Arabia and martial law in Poland, etc., etc.—I set no priorities; one has to join all the battles. Despite certain terrible similarities, every horror defines itself: communism is communism; fascism is fascism.

On the quotation about the *Reader's Digest*: we didn't edit it out as *The Times* suggests. We edited it into the preface because she had edited it out of her revised text. And we were pleased that a number of our commentators pointed out that fact.

On the merits of the comparison itself: we leave to others the pleasurable task of analyzing our editorials and articles of thirty years ago. But we thought our readers might be interested in the education they may have missed by not being exposed to the *Reader's Digest* all those years.

First, there is the helpful vocabulary. Communists, for example, are referred to as "Red slave drivers and sadists," and Soviet policy as "the Kremlin's harvest of hate." Second, there are bold forecasts, such as "Why Red China Won't Break with Russia," the title of a July 1957 article, and the repeated predictions of the imminent collapse of the Soviet empire. Third, there is the inside dope from behind the Iron Curtain. Who, for instance, is "the most hated man in Yugoslavia"? Marshal Tito, of course. Then there is the foreign policy analysis, which may be encapsulated in the question heading an article by David Lawrence: "Is Peaceful Co-Existence the Answer?" (No; it is "the counsel of despair.") Finally, there are the menace-from-within reports by the magazine's stable of experts on the U.S. Communist Party, including J. Edgar Hoover ("Red Spy Masters in America"), Max Eastman ("Outlaw the Communist Party!"), the *Saturday Evening Post* ("Stalin's Plans for the USA") and Whittaker Chambers ("What Is a Communist?"). We don't pretend that this is a representative sample—we could have mentioned "How Far Has 'Creeping Socialism' Crept?"—but it gives a taste of the fare the magazine was regularly serving to its readers.

On a final, more serious matter, let us make clear that we disapprove of the lawsuit Sontag recently filed against the *Soho News* claiming infringement of copyright because the paper published her speech without permission. Our feeling about such a suit is that it is inimical to freedom of the press, harmful to the writing and publishing community generally and, if successful, would set a dangerous and sticky precedent.

We should know, since we are involved in another, very different copyright infringement case (involving our publication of a news article about Gerald Ford's memoirs, *A Time to Heal*), which reconvenes this week in New York Federal District Court with Judge Richard Owen presiding. One of the issues of *The Nation* case is what is news. Fred Friendly, David Halberstam and Richard Reeves all testified that what the *Nation* published was news. We think what Sontag said was news too. But it is bad news to us that so many of our colleagues in the news business want to focus on such non-news as "editing" that didn't take place or

"hypocrisy" that wasn't there, rather than to explore the merits of the issue.

UNFAMILIAR QUOTATIONS

Friedrich Nietzsche on Disarmament

"No government will now admit that it maintains an army to satisfy occasional desires for conquest; rather, it is supposed to serve a defensive purpose. As their advocate they summon that morality which justifies self-defense. But this means: assigning morality to oneself and immorality to the opponent, because he must be considered aggressive and eager for conquest if our state is necessarily to consider the means of self-defense. In addition, one declares him—who no less than our state denies aggression and claims to maintain an army for defensive purposes—a hypocrite and cunning criminal, who only too gladly would pounce upon a harmless and unskilled sacrifice without a fight.

"Thus do all states face each other now: they presuppose bad intentions on their neighbor's part and good ones on their own. This premise is, however, an inhumanity, as bad and worse than war: indeed, it is already at root the invitation to and cause of wars, because, as I say, it brands the neighbor with immorality and thereby seems to provoke hostile intentions and deeds. The doctrine of the army as a means of self defense must be as thoroughly renounced as the desire for conquest. And there will come, perhaps, a great day, on which a people, remarkable for wars and victories, for the highest development of military order and intelligence, and accustomed to make the heaviest sacrifices for these things, cries out of its own free will: 'we shatter the sword'—and dismantles its entire armed forces to their foundations. To make oneself defenseless, while one was the most defensible—that is the means to real peace, which must always rest upon a peaceful disposition. The so-called armed peace, as it prevails in every country at present, is that disquieted disposition which trusts neither itself nor its neighbor and, half from hatred, half from fear, will not lay down its arms.

"Better to go under than to hate and fear, and far better to go under than to make oneself hate and fear—this must also become the highest maxim of every individual sovereign society! Our representatives should know that they are laboring in vain when they work for a 'gradual reduction in the military budget.' On the contrary: only when this burden is at its greatest will the God who alone can help be at hand. The tree of military glory can only be destroyed at a single blow, by one stroke of lightning; but lightning comes, as well you know, from the clouds—and from on high."

(Translated by Daniel Johnson)

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