

editorial opinion

Shirlee's sallies

by Shirlee Iden



Where's the big stick?

Once upon a time there was an American president who had a simple philosophy of foreign relations. "Speak softly, but carry a big stick." Teddy Roosevelt is quoted as having said: "Three-quarters of a century later, the resident of the White House has mastered the smooth rhetoric, speaks eloquently for human rights, but keeps his big guns hidden." World-wide horror has been expressed as the Russians put on trial two open critics of the Soviet system. Alexander Ginzburg and Anatoly Shcharansky were both convicted and sentenced, but the trials were secret, closed and akin to the "show trials" of the Stalin regime. The world had a crowded agenda this week, for the trials went on just as Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Andrei Gromyko sat down with all pomp and ceremony to negotiate a new Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. In fact, the timing of the trials was openly labeled "a slap in the face" to the Carter administration by the world press. President Carter called the trials a travesty and accused the Soviets of violating the 1975 Helsinki human rights accord. He said the trials were "an attack on every human being who believes in basic freedom and is will-

ing to speak for these freedoms or fight for them." YOU HAVE to give the president a good grade on words, but what about some action? Yes, what about the stick? An area Congressman said the "ultimate weapon" would be the breaking off of the SALT talks, but noted there are many other actions our government could be taking. We still sell wheat to the Russians, it has been pointed out. We still export our technology. They get medical information and right now we are preparing to send oil drilling equipment to help them expand their energy sources. "We give and they take," said one area activist for Soviet Jewry. "This country does nothing but mouth words and they thumb their noses at us." Shcharansky was just convicted of spying for the CIA despite the president's denial, and the president's credibility is at stake. Another worker for the Detroit Committee for Soviet Jewry said Shcharansky and Ginzburg are just symbols of what can happen now and more if no one speaks out. "They pick up American businessmen, they tickle up newspaper people

and no one stands up and screams. Everyone asks why America stayed silent in World War II when they knew about concentration camps and didn't act. Don't they realize the same thing is happening now?" A FEW months ago, I missed a chance to interview Avital Shcharansky, the 27-year-old wife of Anatoly Shcharansky. She was in the area speaking out for her husband, accused of spying for the CIA. The frail young woman collapsed under the physical and emotion strain of her travels and we never met. But I can't help thinking of her now. I'm told her short-cropped dark hair is sprinkled with gray. She's spent all her time fighting for Anatoly, dropped out of school, indeed out of life. Married one day, she left the Soviet Union the next day and hasn't seen her husband since. Now he has been sentenced to 13 years in prison and labor camps. Hundreds of thousands of people marched with Avital Shcharansky the other day in Paris and prayed with her this week that the Soviets would not impose the death penalty. Even President Carter and Secretary Vance sympathized. Now, where are the sticks?



Hors d'oeuvres

by Lynn Orr

Frozen lunch — for real?

I hate to pack lunches. Persons who aren't offended by the odor of peanut butter at dawn's early light probably don't mind locker room routines. I've discovered a good reason to forgo sensibilities and endure the racket of rattling brown bags before 10 a.m. If I pack it, at the least I'll know what my son is consuming at noon. It used to be that chicken was chicken and fish was fish. Now with the latest innovation in school lunches, figuring out the ingredients in what passes for lunch could get difficult. Like many others, the Farmington School District will be serving pre-packaged frozen food supplied by a corporation in that line of work. The board recently adopted the concept of the frozen food lunch, while the details of what kind and who's selling it will be worked out before September rolls around.

For those of you wondering why Farmington will be serving lunch to elementary children, turn to the state. Michigan school districts are required to provide lunch for all students beginning this fall under a new state mandate. Farmington dropped its elementary lunch program several years ago, but now is forced to provide lunch to students who want it.

Thus it's fairly easy to see that districts were scrambling to come up with some economically palatable way to provide lunch, since the state legislators failed to provide funding for the lunch program. The local districts once again got stuck with the bankrolling of the program. Currently, the district is hoping the lunch program will break even or receive a minimum outlay of cash. Projected costs of the meals are about 65 cents each for the student. And at that price, I presume a number of parents will take advantage of the opportunity to dump the brown bag routine. But I hope those parents take some time to examine what their children will be eating. I can't say as the lunch samples impressed me.

WITH ALL the information and awareness focused on nutrition, it's sad to see lunches containing starch and sugar. Trustee Janice Roldink, during a sampling of one company's food line, asked why fruit couldn't be frozen in its natural juices rather than sugary syrup. I thought that was a good question. Food corporations are bent on selling sugar products, relying on the adage that you've got to give kids what they want, catering to the junk food junkie in all of us. But I don't understand why applause without sugar costs more than applause with sugar, and I'm not sure I buy the kids' taste argument, either. If the menus included whole wheat bread rather than white, would the children dump them any less? I doubt it.

I'm about convinced that the problem with nutritional lunches is not cost, nor taste. It's simply a matter of big business. It DOES cost money to change your style. And if you have a captive market (such as a bunch of school districts in a hurry to purchase something), why muck it up by paying attention to nutritional precepts?

THE STATE mandate allows capitalism in all its glory to take advantage of economically-pinched school districts and parents and children who might buy lunches presuming federal guidelines guarantee good food.

That assumption is erroneous. Federal guidelines are behind the times, and federal minimum standards provide just that—the minimum.

For those lazy parents like me who might want to opt for the school lunch to avoid the brown bag business, I have one last suggestion. Offer to give your child the lunch money along with the option to pack his or her own lunch. It won't save you any money, but your home ingredients most likely will end up as the nighttime meal if your children are anything like my child.

Kids these days have their economics down pat, and I'd rather see an influx of comic books and baseball cards (we throw out the bubble gum), rather than the starch and sugar offered up to meet legislative nonsense.

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Here comes (ouch) the sun

There's another conspiracy afoot. "Another conspiracy?" you may well ask. You might even have thought that the country has endured all the conspiracies possible to endure—Watergate, Koreagate, Billy Carter and a rather obscure one involving body snatchers which was dubbed Cemeterygate. But wait, there's another. This one's been going on for such a long time that the populace had started to believe it was the natural course of things. Yes, friends, I'm talking about Morninggate. Did you ever notice how most things are scheduled for persons who like getting up in the morning. Take breakfast for instance. (Take it, please, I can't abide it.) Who's idea was it to make it the height of normalcy to eat in the morning? I don't mean a civilized sip of the black turpentine called coffee and a nibble of burnt toast. I'm talking about those awful breakfasts that Ozzie and Harriet used to eat. With orange juice, toast, eggs, ham, hash browns, milk and sweet rolls. YUCK. That sort of meal should be deferred until noon. If the television series wanted to show a typical family, they'd get Ozzie and the camera would zoom in on a scene that would resemble a gathering of catacombs. Mom would sit there at the table with a blank stare trying to keep the lids up. Dad would have adopted a similar attitude. Conversation would be limited to a few simple, required sentences such as "Do you want more coffee?" and the suitable reply, "Umummmurflennymehmmmm." For emphasis, the answering party could give a semi-conscious nod of the head.

For years we've been told that it's all-American to get up at the crack of dawn. Only moral degenerates stayed out until after midnight and stumbled out of bed after 11 a.m. Banks close after 5 p.m. Stores close at 5:30 p.m. on some days. Entire towns have been known to shut down at sunset. What's a poor night person to do? If things were open at a decent hour of the night, the night person could find a job that didn't require getting up until 11 a.m. Take a look at popular literature and you'll see Morninggate at its devious best. What happens at night? TERRIBLE CRIMES and robbery. The good people who were robbed are always in their robes. Obviously being good people they're sleeping at 3 a.m. The bad guy was seen slinking away in a wrinkled trenchcoat and mismatched socks. He's so awful he doesn't have anyone who cares enough to make sure he's dressed properly when he leaves the house to rob the Good Guys. Even the detective, a peripheral Good Guy in popular fiction, is usually home catching some z's at 3 a.m. The moral of this little scenario is usually that only the bad guys are out at night. Eating at 8 a.m. is said to be healthy. Eating at 3 a.m. is said to give you nightmares. I don't know why. There's only a five-hour difference. The only people who can get away with eating at 3 a.m. in popular culture are pregnant women. Especially if they want something exotic, like Polish dill pickles or sardine sandwiches. Finally, when will someone ask about the sunrise? Why can't it be scheduled for 11 a.m. so everyone can enjoy it?

The Flip Side

by craig piechura

Epiphany among the palm trees

The mental picture I have of it is crystal clear. It's high up in the Hollywood Hills, and you park your car—preferably a convertible—on the precipice that overlooks the glittering lights of Los Angeles. I wanted to duplicate the mental image so badly. But the closest I got to it in spirit was a glimpse of the ramshackle "Hollywood" sign through the sulphur smog. I spent a good part of two evenings winding my way through residential neighborhoods of Beverly Hills, running into dead ends and class cul-de-sacs. A friend of mine who didn't have a vision humored me and went along for the unrequited ride. I've seen that spot in pictures. It's been depicted on record albums. I've seen couples in more than one horror movie park up there on a lover's lane and gaze languidly down on the lights of L.A. while a stalker lurks in the shadows. So where is this place? It's probably on the back lot of Universal Studios and I, like a turkey, fell for it. To add to my disappointment, the radio was playing a new rock song called "Hollywood Nights" by Bob Seger. The rollicking record talks about a midwestern guy (Bob Seger) looking down on the lights of L.A., "wondering if he could ever go home." There's a line in the song that the Hollywood Hills were giving him chills. Well, they burned me. If Bob Seger can have his west coast epiphany, why can't I have mine?

collective consciousness that is pervading the community and draining people's energy." Each sentence this man uttered had about 15 buzzwords like "consciousness" in it. He had an Ace bandage wrapped around his feet and a baseball cap on his head. But most of the people of California are relatively normal. They may own more foreign cars than we do, but they drive on the same side of the street. They probably jog or play tennis instead of racketball or bowling, but they're even more concerned about property values and community standards than the normal people of Michigan. The middle class might cost a little more in California but it's still thriving. And I don't exclude myself from that contingent. I didn't wear an Instamatic camera around my neck or bring the family dog on the plane with me, but I drove around California in a rented, air-conditioned Monte Carlo. And what could be more middle class than that?

DESPITE THIS disappointment, and the fact that you people have to be subjected to the obligatory "How I spent my summer vacation" column, California wasn't as repulsive as I imagined it. I was afraid because I'm allergic to slick, trendy lifestyles. I break out in a rash at the mere mention of meditation, hot tubs, Hurricane sandals and Perrier mineral water. It was all there. I was right in the thick of it. Yet, in spite of myself, I managed to have a good time. Sure, there were crazies out there. But that's to be expected in the state that brought you Patty Hearst and Richard Nixon. There was the guy on the Frisco bus with three gold rings in his ear, telling anybody who was listening what a great town San Francisco was. It was a great town, he raved on, because it had nine hospitals and eight of them had emergency rooms. He spoke from personal experience. On the same bus was an older street survivor who held more than 30 unused envelopes in his lap. Each envelope was filled with assorted papers—newspaper clippings, candy wrappers and important-looking documents. As he sat down, he flipped through the envelopes in a very deliberate fashion until he came to a certain one. He then placed the bus transfer inside its special envelope. First bum I ever saw with a filing system.

ON THE BERKELEY campus I came across an LSD casualty who was walking along, talking very loudly to himself about the "counter productive

THERE WAS A DINGY bar we frequented that most suburbanites would have avoided, but most of the trip was filled with predictable Americans. I made the mandatory stops at Fisherman's Wharf, Disneyland, the San Diego Zoo and Big Sur. I hung onto the Rice-a-Roni cable car straps. Oh, but you'd rather hear about the Tijuana bar. Everybody would. I don't have the heart to tell them it's not the steamy, seamy strip everyone envisions. At least not from my experience. Most of Tijuana's offerings are not somebody's "seester" but rather leather coats, leather purses, leather bowling bags and onyx chess sets. I bought a bottle of Pernod down there but my buddy nearly went broke trying to take advantage of the south of the border bargains. He now owns a leather jacket, a Mexican blanket, an onyx chess set and a leatherette Backgammon board. Luckily, he bought these required items or I don't think the customs people would have let us back in the states. But you still want to hear about the Tijuana bar. It reeked of bug spray in a valiant effort to keep the cucaracha (the cockroach) out. The ambience of the place didn't encourage one to linger long. We were the only gringos in the bar and everybody else at the rail was seriously involved with a quart of Tecate brand beer. We sipped on a pequera Carta Blanca.

A TV set was the center of attention because Mexico was playing Italy in the soccer finals. Mexico was losing 3-0, which made my friend nervous. I gulped my beer from the bottle and talked to a short guy next to me in rudimentary English. I would've used some of my high school Spanish on him but the opportunity to say "Yo senior, Pepe no es mi hermano, es mi primo," didn't present itself. I don't have a cousin named Pepe. I may be back in Michigan behind the typewriter, but, as Mose Allison once said, my mind is on vacation and my mouth is working overtime.

From our readers

FHS graduates defended

Editor: This letter is in regard to a letter written by Helen Beck about the Farmington High School graduation ceremony. She was wrong in her accusations about the seniors. The Farmington High School seniors received their degrees with pride and dignity. True, some students were yelling and screaming during the ceremony; however, those students were a minority. In every high school class it seems that a few students always spoil it for the rest. Take, for example, Swing-Out which is an ending activity that every senior looks forward to. This year

Swing-Out changed to Reflections. Why? Because a few seniors from the class of '77 did not know how to control themselves. Who shames the class of '78 had to fight so hard for Reflections because of the actions of a few. The majority of the seniors acted properly during the entire ceremony. They processed in order, listened attentively to the speakers, received their diplomas proudly, were thoughtful during the Benediction and recessed with dignity.

School with more honor. This year's was the best. Farmington High School seniors received their degrees with pride and dignity. It is to be noted that you looked at the minority and came to your conclusion. I am sure your letter will convince a few that all seniors lacked proper behavior. But those of you who will listen, please do. The majority of seniors were proud, respectable and full of dignity. I ought to know: I was one of those seniors who felt that way.

LORI KENNY
Farmington

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