

emies of the governor, and other perceived ne'er-do-wells. One Republican's district was deliberately drawn five blocks away from his house. Another Republican was drawn out of her own House district; when she declared for the state Senate, she was then drawn out of her Senate district. A number of Republicans uprooted their households and relocated in order to run for reelection in their own districts. When 15 Republicans and one Independent were "paired" into single House districts (no Democrats were paired except for one delegate who had declared for the state Senate), Republicans filed a lawsuit against the plan in U. S. District Court. The judge concurred that it was a dreadful case of blatantly partisan gerrymandering but said that he could do nothing about it. Another case, filed in circuit court by rural Southside localities, charged that the plans for a new serpentine and two other districts diluted communities of interest and violated state constitutional contiguity and compactness requirements. They also lost.

The Justice Department rejected the plans of five localities. One county, Powhatan, took a strong stand and re-submitted its plan, appealing directly to the U. S. Attorney General after its local elections (as well as those of other localities) were postponed indefinitely by the Justice Department. Powhatan's case is particularly interesting because it illustrates inherent problems with re-districting. Black population has declined from 20.46 percent to 15.57 percent of the total population and is scattered in communities throughout the whole of the rural county—making compact black districts an impossibility. Justice also ordered a change in how Powhatan included the resident state prison population in the county's black-majority district plan—although felons do not vote in Virginia.

In his letter to the U. S. Attorney General, Powhatan Board of Supervisors Chairman R. Lee Ware asked for intervention to prevent the Justice Department from "wittingly or unwittingly damaging the community and polity" of the homes of the county's residents. Ware noted that Justice's black-majority district boundaries "loop, squiggle, and jog across uncrossable terrain without regard to either geography or actual communities of people." He emphasized that "Powhatan is not two communities, one white, one black. We are

one community, black and white." He added that the department's order "is both philosophically wrong and practically destructive—wrong for all concerned, and destructive of a whole-cloth community." "[W]e not only reject, but are offended by, the suggestion that federal voting-rights statutes mean to imply that only a white can in public life represent the interests of white citizens, or that only a black can in public office represent the interests of black citizens." Indeed, the more a community is integrated—the more it has penetrated the "intermediate color line" of housing and jobs—the more difficult it is to fulfill the federal mandate.

Powhatan is now proceeding under the assumption that Justice will permit their local elections to be held in November—after a year's delay. Currently, Brunswick County is fighting Justice's decision to reject its new plan and to cancel its November election. Justice is also looking askance at a new state statute permitting local-option referenda for directly elected school boards, and 20 localities with that question on November's ballot may have to postpone or cancel their referenda. Virginia remains the only state in the nation without an elected school board option. (Additionally, Virginia has no elected judges.)

In a supreme twist of irony, the preclearance requirement and the 1965 U. S. Supreme Court *Mann v. Davis* decision, which initiated the reapportionment mandate of "one man, one vote" (now called "one person, one vote"), has resulted in banned voting for months or years in some localities, in less representative government by duly elected officials (as well as less direct democracy), and in decreased turnout for baffled, disaffected voters who see no natural logic in being "moved" to other districts marked by geographical and political disorder.

The same federal officials who find South Africa's segregated townships reprehensible apparently see no inconsistency with approving the deliberate, de jure, reservation-like partitioning of communities to prejudice electoral outcomes. As Ware commented, "The federal authorities are convinced that everyone in the South is racist, and they are making sure that the South knows it is still under Reconstruction."

In order to escape from under the federal boot of preclearance, not one com-

plaint—founded or unfounded—can be filed to Justice against a state for a full ten years. Don't look for that to happen in Virginia any time soon. The ambitious lawmaking majority and the special interest groups know how to wield absolute power when they've seized it.

Anne Marie Morgan writes from Chesterfield.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

The New America



Yeah, I know we've got two Southerners running on the Democratic ticket. Don't rub it in, OK? As Miss Scarlett used to say, I'll think about it tomorrow. Let's talk about sports.

As you probably know, in four years jocks and TV cameramen from around the world will converge on Dixie for the next Olympic Games. Atlanta beat out Athens (the one in Greece) for the privilege of playing host that year, a victory all the sweeter because 1996 will mark the 100th anniversary of the modern Games. Georgia in July is not where I would choose to exert myself, but I guess the folks who make the decision aren't the same ones who do the exerting. Anyway, those of us who enjoy secondary sweat will be seeing a lot of it.

We'll also be seeing a lot of Atlanta, which is pretty much the point as far as the boosters are concerned. Years ago, W. J. Cash wrote about the skyscrapers going up in Southern towns with "little more use for them than a hog has for a morning coat" that these buildings were erected just for the glory of it, another "native gesture of an incurably romantic people, enamored before all else of the magnificent and the spectacular." That observation helped me understand the Knoxville and New Orleans World Fairs, financial catastrophes but nevertheless successes, and it helps explain Atlanta's obsession with the Olympics, too. Besides, Scarlett's hometown and this quadrennial festival of commercialism and jingoism were made for each

other.

On the bright side, there's no question that the Barcelona Olympics were great for the morale of Catalonia, and the 1996 Games could be equally bracing for the South. My buddy Chris was impressed, for instance, by how the International Olympic Committee was bullied into using Catalan as one of the official languages at Barcelona. "The sports commentators," he wrote me, "mindlessly reading what they were handed, told us that 'Catalan is not a dialect of Castilian,' which is technically correct. Similarly, Southern English is not a dialect of Nebraskan." Chris wants to start a campaign for both Yankee and Southern English announcements in Atlanta, and I think that's a splendid idea. It would be deeply satisfying to hear "The javelin competition will begin momentarily" also rendered as "The spear-chuckin' contest is fixin' to commence directly." You all want to form a national committee?

Anyway, seriously, the Atlanta Games could be very good for the South. But *that's not the way they're shaping up*. As it happens, I was in Atlanta just after the Olympics, when Atlantans were all agog about what they'd let themselves in for. At supper one night I listened to Michael Lomax, the articulate chairman of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, who had just returned from Barcelona and was talking about how Atlanta is going to do it better. What he had to say was troubling. Although Barcelona managed to present itself as both an emerging world city and the proud capital of a proud region with a distinguished history and culture, it sounds as if Atlanta is fixing to pretend that it's not a Southern city at all. When a couple of us objected that Atlanta's plans seemed to be ignoring the city's history and regional context, Lomax cheerfully agreed. Atlanta has been the capital of the New South for the last hundred years, he said, and it's time to move on. "We plan to present Atlanta as the New America." Now, *that's* a scary thought. Take away its history and its status as the South's de facto capital and the only thing remarkable about Atlanta is the number and variety of its "table-dancing" establishments.

But I do understand the impulse. In the first place, Catalonia can afford to be proud: it's pretty much carrying the rest of Spain economically. The South, though, is still to some degree a colo-

nial dependency. Emphasizing our cultural distinctiveness and separatist history could be bad for business, discouraging outside investment—and nowhere does that argument carry more weight than in Atlanta.

Moreover, like Michael Lomax, most members of Atlanta's political elite these days are black, and when V. S. Naipaul toured the South not long ago, he was struck by black Southerners' almost willful lack of interest in their own and their region's history. Although Naipaul may not have met a representative sample, his observations certainly apply to Lomax and his colleagues, but this is the first post-segregation generation, and like first-generation immigrants elsewhere in the U. S. they may prefer to emphasize their American future, not a past that they find painful. Personally I'd rather they forget it ("move on," as Lomax put it) than dwell exclusively on their historical grievances, but I hope those aren't the only choices.

In any case, just because I understand what Atlanta's doing doesn't mean *I like it*. *The South, as a friend of mine* is fond of saying, is a region with more than a future, and I'm happy to say that ignoring Atlanta's heritage may be easier said than done. Several events have been scheduled for nearby Stone Mountain, for instance, and Lomax acknowledged that that's going to be a problem. It'll be easy enough to get rid of the hoopskirted hostesses, but the visages carved in the "Mount Rushmore of the Confederacy" will be a little harder to obscure, and if the television cameras don't linger on those figures it will be a triumph for Atlanta's p.r. people. (Alas, we can probably also count on announcers informing us that it was on Stone Mountain that the founding of the second Ku Klux Klan was marked with a giant flaming cross, a fact that few Atlantans, nostalgic or otherwise, want to dwell on, and I'm with them there.)

A taste of what we can expect from Official Atlanta in the next four years was given to viewers of the Barcelona Games' closing ceremonies when the city unveiled the mascot for the 1996 Games, a blue, computer-designed noid called "the Whatizit." (Incidentally, the dancer inside the Whatizit turns out to be a graduate of my university, a former head cheerleader—in case you wondered what cheerleaders do when they grow up.) Even the thing's name speaks to

the city's loss of identity, and its form—well, one Atlantan described it as just "a g--damn comma," but at least five others took pleasure in telling me that, despite its tennis shoes and lightning-flash eyebrows, it looks like nothing so much as a spermatozoon. (Its race is indeterminate, but we may hear demands for equal time for ova.)

Come to think of it, though, this spermiform critter may be appropriate in a way: Michael Lomax told me that 120,000 condoms were distributed at the Olympic Village, and the Dream Team wasn't even staying there. (He joked about the opportunities for commercial tie-ins. Atlanta humor.) I also read in the paper that visiting Atlantans were impressed by the absence of bikini tops on Spanish beaches and by Barcelona's popular co-ed bathroom with see-through walls. Where's Franco when you need him?

Anyway, even some non-Establishment Atlantans aren't wild about the Whatizit. The city's alternative newspaper found one young woman who liked it ("It's cute, the big blue body and the big eyes"), but even she didn't like the name. Another reader complained that "there must be some venerable symbol of Atlanta culture that bespeaks our heritage as well as our future." Even as a symbol of the future, he said, "I prefer to believe the future holds something a little more inspiring for us than an amorphous blue blob." A recent arrival added, "Just moving here from the North, I was expecting so much more. I was expecting something representative of the South, like Southern hospitality, which is known throughout the country, not some animal that no one knows what it is or what it's about." Exactly. The man who said that, by the way, is black.

It wouldn't have been hard to come up with something better. I can do it myself. So Georgia, like the rest of the South, is no longer a rural kind of place and you don't want to use the obvious peach, or peanut? OK, I can live with that. Colonel Rebel (the little Yosemite Sam-like figure usually shown saying "Forget, Hell!") is unemployed, now that Ole Miss has retired him, and so is Chief Nockahoma, who used to pitch his teepee in the Braves' outfield, but even I can see that those guys would have some drawbacks.

Let's just think about animals. One Atlantan suggested roadkill, and I kind

of like that, but maybe it's not cuddly enough to be commercial. A great choice would have been Br'er Rabbit, a symbol rich in associations: the trickster figure of African-American folk culture lovingly exploited by a white Atlanta newspaperman and now known worldwide thanks to Walt Disney. It's almost a metaphor.

But if he wouldn't do (and it might be misunderstood), then how about Pogo Possum? I think it was Roy Blount Jr.—if not it should have been—who suggested once that Pogo was an appropriate mascot for the entire South, and Pogo's a Georgian, from just down the road in the Okefenokee Swamp. He's cute, he's smart, he's lovable, he's marketable, he's native, and nobody has to ask "What is it?" But no, Atlanta has stuck us with this meaningless, embarrassing *nothing*—in Union blue, no less. Every nation gets the capital it deserves, I guess, but what has the South done to deserve Atlanta?

You'll be hearing more about the struggle for the soul of the 1996 Olympics—or, more precisely, the struggle about whether they are to have any soul. As a matter of fact, you may be hearing more from me next month, if I can bring myself to write about the Georgia state flag controversy.

John Shelton Reed writes from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and gets his exercise by not owning a remote control for his television.

Letter From Budapest

by Thomas Molnar

Communism, Nationalism, Liberalism



I chose the three words in my title because they summarize the situation in Eastern Europe, a situation simple yet complicated, tragic yet full of hope. I apologize for the clichés, but they become more profound as this article proceeds.

Notwithstanding those who advertise

the "clear and present danger" of a communist comeback (and who would otherwise become intellectually unemployed—without compensation), there is no such danger, not even locally. This does not mean that no nostalgia for communism exists, for it does: among masses of people whom privatization reduces to an even deeper misery and among intellectuals who regret the passing of the good old times when books were inexpensive, the classics abounded, theater and concert tickets were low-priced, and Marxism provided grit for engaging discussions and camouflaged, subtle arguments. Even reliably anti-communist bourgeois will openly tell you that "ten years ago it was better": a steadier income, safety in public places, less crime, more expeditious methods of dealing with criminals, and a public philosophy ostensibly in favor of social issues and economic rescue for the underprivileged (retired people). This may sound strange to Westerners who think in black and white, but consider this: there are now close to three hundred thousand unemployed in Hungary, and the government coldly forecasts a half-million of them by the end of the year! And the iceberg of privatization, a nice word for savage capitalism, shows a growing stratum of brand-new multimillionaires whose dollars and marks are invested in massage parlors, drug deals, or luxury restaurants.

This explains the relatively flourishing status of the former Communist Party, now called "Socialist," whose members, when told they will not be legally penalized but should at least show repentance, ask: "For what?" For the reintroduction of capitalism and the spreading misery in the coming cold winter?

Yet, I repeat, communism is dead and gone, and what we see in Yugoslavia and Rumania can be explained by Balkan attitudes as old as the Turkish occupation. As far as the other countries are concerned, from the Baltic states to Croatia (minus the incredibly savage war), progress has begun with brilliant initiatives and a tenacious will, showing signs of hope that Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, etc., are heading in the right direction.

But what *is* the right direction? This is where two of the terms used in the title become clearer. Contrary to Mr. Bush's excursion in Latin with the *pax universalis* (who whispered it in his cars?), no such thing is likely to emerge by a long shot. Improvement—and it

may take several decades—must choose between two paths: *either* nationalism or liberalism. As a Budapest newspaper explained it the other day, there is no such thing as "national liberalism"; the two words, at least in Eastern Europe, are incompatible, regardless of what Western think-tanks conclude. Yet, since politics is also the playing with words, the governments now in power, as well as the opposition parties, aim at regimes and policies that would be both liberal and nationalistic, fully aware that this remains a pious wish. After all, throughout the 19th century *this* was the issue: in Russia the conflict was between populists and partisans of a Western orientation (Herzen and Turgenev vs. Bakunin and Dostoyevsky); in Hungary, between the nationalist Kossuth and the moderate Deak; and in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Rumania between similar *frères ennemis*. This is not due to split national personalities but to geopolitics and history: one nation's circumstances and experiences determine its policies and choices.

But let me concentrate on the Magyar dilemma. By temperament, Hungary is inward-looking, its treasure is not the future but rather memories to which each great turn of events adds an indelible note and symbol. Prosperity on a collective level is looked upon as a stroke of fortune, almost distractedly, not something for which essential things and lifestyles should be sacrificed. Liberalism does exist in this *sui generis* milieu, but it is the liberalism of 150 years ago, when the Anglophile Count Széchenyi introduced horse races and modern banking, built the first permanent bridge over the Danube, and launched numerous enterprises. He was a liberal who died in despair (somewhat like Simón Bolívar a generation before him), disappointed by the obstacles, both foreign (Habsburg) and domestic (a certain inertia and ceaseless conflicts). Ever since, liberalism has chalked up notable victories but has remained the spirit of a relatively small minority, by no means a mass-mentality. Thus if it reappears, it cannot enjoy full independence; the nation would not as a whole *trust* it, finding in it a foreign factor. Not that nationalism would be liberalism's exact and purposeful opponent; but it is something *else*, hardly articulable in any modern ideological or party language. "State liberalism," if there is such a thing, would be what people would under-