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The Fright Peddlers

*Thomas H. Kuchel**

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE are keenly aware of the grave and evil hazards to our freedom and to our way of life which international communism is eternally dedicated to destroy.

I . . . speak of another danger we confront, not as dread or as foreboding, but equally offensive and evil to all reasonable, rational, free American citizens.

It is the danger of hate and venom, of slander and abuse, generated by fear and heaped indiscriminately upon many great Americans by another relative handful of zealots, in the ranks or clutches of self-styled "I am a better American than you are" organizations.

In every day's deluge of mail at my office, there are generally a hundred and even two hundred letters which I describe simply as "fright mail . . ."

It is incredible that so many Americans have been so cruelly swindled about a U. S. Army troop exercise in Georgia called Water Moccasin III, instructing our soldiers in counter guerilla warfare—and witnessed by 124 foreign military officers from Canada, the Republic of China, France, Great Britain, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam.

Just listen to some sample quotes from my mail on Operation Water Moccasin:

From Sacramento:

This morning on radio, I heard the most fantastic thing I have ever heard. U. N. troops coming to America for some kind of "a war to invade America." Mr. Senator, these things are being said over the radio, and he would not say them if they were not true.

From Hollywood:

It is unconstitutional to quarter American troops in American homes, so how come these pagan, ruthless, brutal, godless savages?

* United States Senator from California.

[Note: Senator Kuchel authorized the Editors of this Law Review to publish, as his contribution to this Symposium, extracts from his address to Congress as reported in the Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 88th Congress, First Session; Vol. 10g, No. 79; May 28, 1963. This article is, in effect, a brief digest of that address.]

Yes, we know of the U. N. plans to place Mongolian and Congolese troops over our dear United States.

They write:

Fifteen thousand United Nations troops already here. Oriental troops in Mexico, waiting to occupy California. Sixteen thousand African troops, already in Georgia, with rings in their noses and ears. A war to invade America. A U. N. take over. Let's get out of the U. N. Investigate NATO.

Lunatic columnists, apostles of hate and fear on radio and television; and loony letters to the editor provoke their share of fright mail.

The curious fact is that the fright peddlers, from the simpletons to the wretched racists, all claim to be conservatives.

They are anything but patriotic. It is curious to me that they all have generally the same aims: Get the United States out of the U. N. Stop all foreign aid. Repeal the income tax. Abandon NATO and bring our troops home from Europe.

It is ironic that these very aims are very likely identical to the real hopes and aspirations of the Kremlin.

And I find it hard to believe that the followers of the fright peddlers are all wholly oblivious to the anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and outright racism of many of their "saviors."

I am going to read a letter of the kind which arrives now and again. I cite the letter not to "prove" that all right wing extremists are bigots or that a majority are; I really do not know how many are, perhaps very few.

I cite it merely to show that this type of person has often found a new respectable home in an extremist right wing group that denies being bigoted.

The letter, from Westminster, California, reads in part:

Sirs: I am a member of the Birch Society and I know many other members and every one of them are decent Americans who are interested in constitutional government and free enterprise and a real education for their children, and who mean to have it in spite of the grip that Jew communism that you support has on our country and government. * * *

On this law by superior force that is called integration what do you think is going to be gained by that, the Jew press, radio, TV, and papers all scream the law of the land, who do you think believes it. . . . If you want integration let's start with the Jew schools. And synagogues.

When are you going to stand up like a white man.

That is more than enough to illustrate my point—and to complete this autopsy.

My conclusion is simply this: Perhaps 10 percent of the 60,000 letters I receive each month fall into the category of fright mail.

Can these cruelly swindled victims of the fright peddlers be shocked into a reappraisal of their swindlers and be reclaimed as valuable and effective contributors in the fight against the real enemy? I do not know.

But I believe it is time such an attempt is made.