

# Soundoff continued

## A reply to the Iran editorial

Dear Editor:

Some years ago, when the world was young and I was a fearless underground press editor, I wrote a four-word headline most critical of the Shah of Iran (exact wording available upon request) which brought me warm congratulations from the dissident Iranian students of Berkeley, California. But that was back when such dissidents were some sort of left-technocrats, still carrying the torch of the Enlightenment, and not Islamic fundamentalists, and we could appreciate each other. Now, however perhaps I'm getting middle-aged? I can find nothing sympathetic about recent Iranian behavior and I therefore would like to take this opportunity to make several mildly dyspeptic observations regarding your chortling editorial of January

30th entitled "The Hostage Crisis: A Bitter Defeat For The U.S.", in which the United States is accused of having an altogether too "weak and fluctuating" policy regarding barbarians.

My general line of objection to the editorial, aside from its piercingly shrill tone, is that the writer puts the U.S. into something of a "double bind," in which either the "doveish" policy usually followed or its "hawkish" opposite seem to be equally worthy of condemnation; damned if you do, damned if you don't. Whatever subjective needs such a line of analysis may fill for the writer of this unsigned, name not, by local journalistic convention, available even on request editorial, it seems to me to be less than astute political criticism and rather tricky journalism. It isn't very neighborly, either,

come to think of it, but that gets us off into a whole different subject, etiquette, one no longer much taught.

To start with, the "bitter defeat" point raised in the headline and in paragraph two is dubious indeed. One could as well argue, if one were fairly disposed, to view it as neither "bitter," since the U.S. acted with uncharacteristically doveish restraint, for the most part, anyway; nor as a "defeat," lest the impression be communicated that the writer is good buddies with kidnapers and credits such with "sweet victories" for behaving in ways most civilized people find downright tacky.

It also, by implication at least, calls for some other, unspecified, course of action—but which? What, Mr. CMS. Editorial writer, would you have said if the U.S. had blasted the

hostages free, or, perhaps, had kept Iran's money and left the hostages to rot? I think I can guess what you would have said then.

Furthermore, it wasn't, reportedly at least, "U.S. gold" from Ft. Knox but frozen Iranian assets that were to be turned over in exchange for the hostages' why gratuitously make it worse than it has to be? More "skinnykid machismo" perhaps? Please excuse if you are female. And regarding the perhaps ill-considered but hardly "arrogant" invitation to the sick old Shah to receive treatment in the U.S. it could well have been construed as ingratitude and cowardice by you and everyone else if the opposite course had been taken, and surely, the U.S. would do the same for Pierre should Albertans ever stage a Canadian equivalent of the

Ayatollah's coup. And in any case, when the Shah left for Mexico by mutual agreement, why would that have to be construed, as you did, as "admitting defeat" instead of, say, admirable flexibility and willingness to compromise? Your interpretation sounds to me like a case of "Heads I win, tails you lose."

More importantly, it is patently and mischievously false to assert that the U.S. tried to "bomb, invade or otherwise seriously maim the audacious Iranian regime; if that sort of thing had happened, they'd all have been granted their oft-expressed wish for martyrdom, probably along with who knows how many others here and everywhere else. Things like the ill-fated rescue attempt are only "bad" by hindsight; when and if they work, people like you are likely to be when you grow up will turn them into lucrative video, film and instant book fortunes, as with Entebbe. Aside from the hindsight issue, we are once again confronted with your silly posturing, although this time you are fluttering with the doves instead of scolding insufficient American hawkishness. It is not at all a good idea to equate the helicopter raid with raining molten megadeath on simple camel jockeys; as a noted Canadian author has put it, "never cry wolf."

Regarding your confusing statements on American "agony," it is not at all clear to me whether you cite it to show that even the American citizenry correctly perceived the depths of U.S. humiliation, or whether you intended to stress the way the media "intensified" domestic reaction to the point of creating widescale "breast beating." Presumably not the latter, since you rather touchingly refer to your grandmother's tears for the rescue team members who perished in the desert. I'd rather not think that CBS orchestrated the tears of your grandmother and other Americans, and doubt that you think so either, so why didn't you make at least one kindly observation here, to the effect that crises can still bring out something like a "collective conscience" in America if the crisis is a worthwhile one. But here as elsewhere it is difficult for the reader to be sure which shell your pea is beneath.

Art Seeger

## The billion dollar God business

Dear Editor:

I would like to start out with a definition from good ole Miriam Webster: Faith! faith! allegiance to duty or a person; loyalty.

Also I would like to add a personal comment; faith is good, as a matter of fact it provides relief and relaxation to many people. Of course I am speaking of faith in God. Now to get down to the reason I am writing this letter.

In my opinion any person or group of persons who make personal gains by using God's name in fraudulent practices or just plain con games and preying on peoples' "faith" are dangerous people and should be dealt with accordingly.

Recently I read an article in an international magazine that told of the number of "TV Evangelists" who are milking the public of their hard-earned money with false promises and fraudulent shares of "Outreach stock." I am not going to condemn any of the followers of these respective "Churches" but I should like them to know what is going on in some of them.

We have all watched the TV commercials paid for by Rex Humbard's Church but did you know that in 1973 the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission issued cease and desist orders on 12 million dollars worth of gospel bonds sold by Rex Humbard because he didn't have the assets to

back up these bonds? Granted, by pleading for emergency donations, he was able to get the orders lifted and in June of 1973 he and his sons bought a \$650,000 vacation home complex in addition to their mansion in Akron, Ohio. This went nicely with their four million dollar Cathedral, private jet, \$250,000 mansion and 10 million dollar office tower.

Another popular TV ministry is the Praise the Lord Club (PTL) of Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1979 the PTL Club grossed \$51 million dollars. The reason we know this is because the Federal Justice Dept. of the United States forced them to open their books for inspection by their Federal Communications Commission because they want to see if they are broadcasting "fraudulent and misleading" appeals for money for overseas missions and instead spending it on overhead and operating costs.

In 1978 PTL leader Jim Bakker announced that he and his wife were "giving everything to PTL" but they soon bought a \$24,000 houseboat, and their salaries and benefits rose \$90,000 a year. Maybe they should change it to "Pass the Loot" Club.

In my opinion the granddaddy of all is Garner Ted Armstrong who, from the \$75,000,000 dollars a year donated by his listeners and viewers, lives like a maharaja

with his own private jet, mansion in California, elegant sports cars and alleged female believers in bed. Garner Ted's father Herbert the founder of the World Wide Church of God was also charged by his followers with self enrichment and in 1979 the California attorney general filed a receivership suit accusing Herbert and treasurer Stanley Radar of "pilfering at least \$1 million a year for themselves." Gold bullion owned by the sect was also reported missing.

Radar was accused of taking \$700,000 a year from the church, he also had three homes, a horse stable, a Mazzerati, a Mercedes and a limosine.

Famed Oklahoma Evangelist James Roy Whitby was in 1978, convicted of swindling \$25,000 out of an 83-year old lady and in 1979 was charged with selling over \$4,000,000 of worthless Gospel Outreach Bonds. Whitby is in jail now, thank God.

Bethesda Christian Center at Wenatchee, Washington - a gospel church, a radio station, school, magazine, publishing house, college and gas station was quite shocked when administrator James Eyre was jailed for embezzlement. They also found that \$1,000,000 was reported missing and another \$340,000 that people had lent to the church had vanished as well as over one million dollars that members had put into investment deals such as

diamonds.

Bishop Lucious Cartwright and Pastor Albert Hamrick of St. Phillips Pentecostal Church in Washington, D.C. were sent to jail in 1976 for absconding with \$250,000 while they were administering food stamp distribution. They bought a car, an ice cream parlour and a band building, heavenly interest!

"Reverend Ike" Eikeckenkoetex said to his flock one day, "Be proud of the way I look, because you spend one thousand dollars per week to buy my clothes." Reverend Ike's church the United Church and Science of Living Institute is estimated to gross from six million to 15 million dollars per year.

Reverend Marvin Horan got three years in prison for the bombing of two elementary schools in Charlston, W. Va.

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association makes approximately 40 million dollars per year and this puts him in 6th place out of the top twelve Evangelical money makers.

The list goes on and on, stories of promised healing only leading to personal anxiety and a loss of \$210,000 by a young man paralyzed in a car accident and then victimized by "The Way" Bible Society. Along with his initial outlay of \$210,000 he gave \$10,000 for a new Cadillac, and a further \$11,000 for a new BMW plus \$13,000 in miscellaneous gifts.