

in the unforgettable imagery of that hilarious and perceptive work by Dwight Macdonald, *Confessions of a Revolutionary*, reporter Lerner, advancing through Germany at the end of World War II, leaped from an army jeep to confront an elderly shell-shocked German farming couple, asking them: "Do you feel guilty?" after which he proceeded to a gala banquet with Red Army generals, wolfing down caviar and toasting each other with champagne.

I hated Max Lerner when, leaping on the "consensus" bandwagon in the 1950s, he ignored all conflicts and problems and celebrated *America as a Civilization*.

I hated Max Lerner when, in his insufferably clotted and tedious column in the *New York Post*, he began to boast about being the "patriarch" of his newly-burgeoning family.

I hated Max Lerner when he abandoned that family to take up permanent residence in Hugh Hefner's Playboy Mansion, there celebrating the sleazy joys of hedonism.

I hated Max Lerner when he became a pro-Vietnam War liberal and then a Reaganite.

And now I hate Max Lerner especially when, now—of course—a neocon, he emerges, at the age of 180 or whatever, out of his residence at the Playboy Mansion (Hefner himself having thrown in the towel on the hedonic life), to join the Smear Bund in their assault on Pat Buchanan. (*Washington Times*, Oct. 8) But leave it to Max to add that special Lernerian twist, in which he shows himself not at all different from the Original Lerner of long ago. In his newspaper column Lerner com-

mits his foul act in the course of a running smear of Charles Lindbergh (the excuse is a review of a documentary on the Lone Eagle) in which Lerner shamelessly resurrects the old, discredited Rooseveltian-Stalinist lies about Lindbergh being pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic.

So, Max. Here we are again, old buddy. What goes around comes around, eh? After fifty-five years we can close the books at last. Marxist, Veblenite, Stalinist, 50s consensus-man, pro-war liberal, Reaganite, neocon, what in Hell's the difference? Nothing's changed. Two constants loom through all the gyrations of your life. You've always been a pompous, humorless egomaniac. And you've always worshipped at the shrine of war and the State. So what else is new? ●

From the Bench Down With the D-e-e-fense

by M.N.R.

I'm going to say it flat out, and damn the consequences: despite the "purists," I hate games and teams that emphasize defense. Games of defense are invariably slow, thuggish, and B-O-R-I-N-G. And as an allied point, I don't care much for "well-balanced teams" where everyone is "unselfish," either. What I like and what we see all too little of, are games that stress offense and are studied with heroic superstars. What the true sports fan craves is excitement, not games that are slow, grinding, and low-scoring, and who cares about purism (whatever "purity" is supposed to mean in this context?).

For example, one of the potentially most exciting sports of them all—pro basketball—is rapidly going to Hell in a handbasket because of the influence of the slow, boring, and incredibly thuggish Detroit Pistons. Since victorious dynasties get imitated by other teams, the prognosis for pro basketball is grim unless the Pistons can be toppled. Surely, by the way, it is no accident that the advanced hooliganism of the Pistons reflects the state of affairs of the "community" from which they hail. Detroit, a city which has taken on something of the aspect of Beirut, and which makes New York City look like Palo Alto, "celebrated" this summer's (yes, basketball is now virtually a year-round game) victory by murdering a few of its citizens. Such are its "folkways": like city, like team. Except, of course, the Pistons don't actually play in Detroit, since any sports arena there would soon get to look like Dresden, 1945.

In sports as everywhere else in our culture, however, official opinion is dominated by media experts, and these experts exalt the "great defense" of the Pistons, who keep all of their opponents below 90 points a game. What's so great about low scoring? The "great defense" is, of course, accomplished by thuggery: by physically preventing the offense of the other team from shooting. And that has been accomplished by the referees losing their nerve over the years, and failing to crack down and penalize hooliganism. Basketball, unlike football or boxing, is not supposed to be a contact sport. In fact, in order to keep the highly-paid thugs in the game, the solons are now moving to change the rules so that no one can foul

out—which will be a disaster.

To be specific, Michael "Air" Jordan is far and away the greatest basketball player today, and in a just basketball order his Chicago Bulls would have won the championship for the past two years, and future teams would attempt to emulate Jordan rather than the muggers from Detroit.

D-e-e-fense is also what everyone saw—and scoffed at—in this year's World Cup soccer. Since the media critics have no emotional or economic ties to professional soccer, they were free to vent their spleens at the boring, low-scoring game that is inexplicably beloved in the rest of the world. Being diffuse and scattered, soccer play is inherently tedious at best, but few people realize that

soccer is much more defensive, and hence monotonous, than it was in the days of my youth. (Yes, I played compulsory soccer in high school, and definitely managed, soccer being the game it is, to stay out of the action all of the time while pretending to be an eager participant. In those antediluvian days, soccer had five forwards, and only two full-backs, and the result was a relatively high-scoring game (say 5-4, instead of 1-1). Then the defense took over, there are only a couple of forwards, and every one else spends the game huddling in front of their goal, so that scoring has almost become a lost

art. A one-run lead becomes virtually insurmountable. Yecch! Two basic rule changes are needed to salvage soccer: (a) eliminating the "offsides" rule, which prevents anyone from starting to dribble the ball unless at least two defenders are in front of you; and (b) imposing a strict

maximum on the number of defenders who can be in the back third of the field.

Fortunately, there is hope. Pro football has been moving in the opposite direction, favoring the offense. Let the purists bewail the loss of the "good old days" of the slow, crunching offense and defense, of the Green Bay Packers, and the subsequent low scoring. The last couple of decades have seen the triumph of the quar-

terback and the forward pass: and hence, a satisfyingly explosive and high-scoring offense. This year, a new and even more offense-oriented strategy, the "run-and-shoot," is coming to the fore. A creation of the legendary coach, Mouse Davis, the "run-and-shoot" is highly forward-pass-oriented, putting no less than four wide-receivers (pass-catchers) plus only one running back on the team, so that every play is either a pass or a fake-pass (the "draw"). Not only that—and here the strategy relies on the brightness and quickness of the quarterback and the four receivers—every play is an "option

play." In contrast to orthodox strategies where the coach spells out the precise details of each play in advance, the five key players react quickly and on the spot to whatever defense is put up against them.

In his illuminating article on the "run and shoot," Bob Oates writes that most football observers and coaches "instinctively abhor it. To NFL traditionalists, football is a game of muscle and power. They distrust the run-and-shoot because it is a game of mind and finesse." (Bob Oates, "The Mouse is Roaring," *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 3, 1990. Also see Thomas George, "See How They Run and Shoot," *New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1990.)

This fall may tell the tale. Mouse Davis is the offensive coordinator for the Detroit Lions. And several other NFL teams will be stressing run-and-shoot: the Houston Oilers, the Atlanta Falcons, and the Seattle Seahawks. If these teams do well, the entire league may throw in the towel and move to run-and-shoot. ●

D-e-e-fense is what everyone saw -- and scoffed at -- in this year's World Cup soccer.

Sports, Politics, and the Constitution

by M.N.R.

"The personal is the political" is today's common leftist chant. It is also a formula for totalitarianism, for regimenting every aspect of our daily life. Relations with friends and spouses, whether or not you open a door for a female or use a deodorant, every twist and turn of life is scrutinized to root out the "politically incorrect."

The only way to combat this