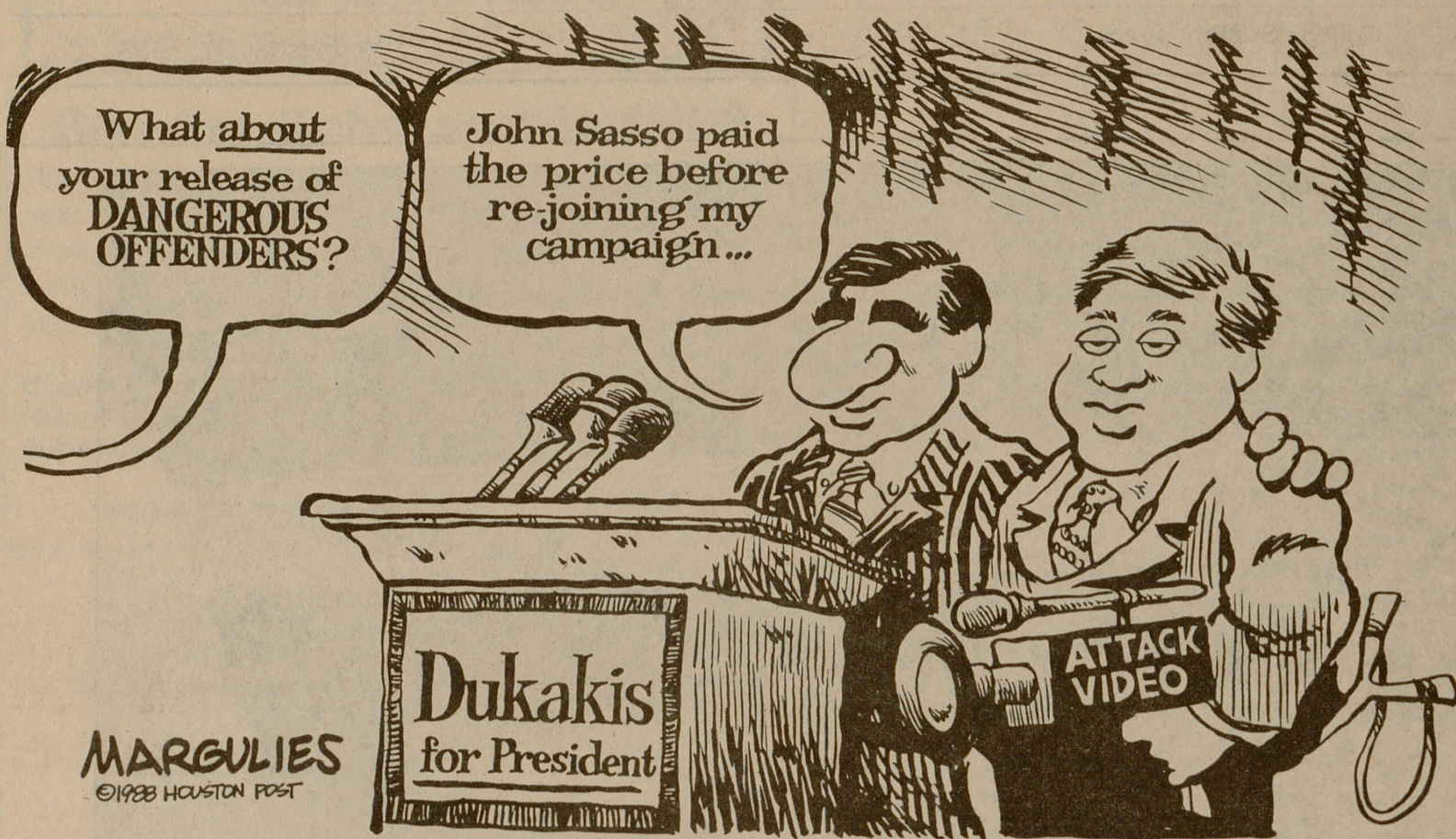


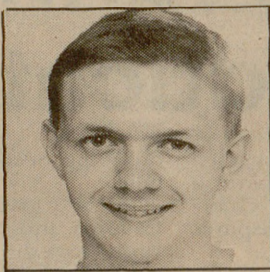
Opinion

Mail Call



Olympics provide example of capitalism's superiority

This week the 24th Olympiad began with a muffled bang. The South Korean games will be the first time since 1972 that the Olympics has been at full force, with a record 161 countries competing.



Timm Doolen

The United States and the Soviet Union swapped boycotts in 1980 and 1984, making both games incomplete. Many African countries refused to participate in Montreal in 1976, for purely political reasons, making 1988 the first time in a long time that a wide scope of nations has competed.

For those of you who remember the exciting splendor of the Olympics four years ago in Los Angeles — well, don't expect as much this time. The Eastern Bloc is back and in fine form. The Soviet Union, United States, and East Germany will all be vying for the same precious medals.

We Americans won't feel as attached to the Seoul games as we were to the L.A. games in 1984. When the Olympics were in Los Angeles, we felt patriotic as we swept the games, winning many golds. In Seoul, the Americans watching the games will feel somewhat distanced; Asians will dominate the crowds, and the few Americans present will feel displaced in a culture that's not their own.

And with the Olympics across the Pacific, we in the United States will be hearing Wednesday morning's results on Tuesday night's news, psychologically furthering the distance we feel from our country's team.

Theoretically, the Olympics is supposed to be the one international event that is devoid of political overtones, but that's false.

The medal count has evolved into a political contest of superiority. The team that walks away with the most medals is somehow smug in the fact that their country outshined all others in the world. The real political ramifications of the sports are shallow at best, forgotten weeks after the closing ceremonies.

The real significance of these Olympics is not ON the playing field, but rather the field itself. The games are in South Korea, the emerging Asian nation whose rival to the North is definitely not emerging.

At the end of World War II, the Japanese surrendered in Korea — to the Soviet forces in the North and to American forces in the South. A year after the U.S. withdrew its forces from southern Korea, the North Koreans invaded the South (isn't that just like a communist?), aided by Communist China.

After the Korean War, the line between South Korea and North Korea was fixed along the 38th parallel. It was then as it is now, Eastern versus Western ideology transplanted in Asia. The Communists are on one side of the demilitarized zone, the Capitalists on the other, which gives us an opportune chance to analyze the modern day difference between the two, though roots extend back forty years.

South Korea has gone from a war-torn nation in the early fifties to having one of the five largest cities in the world. In the last 25 years, it has gone from a poor country dependent upon farming, to one of the world's most productive nations, making everything from shoes to ships. South Korea has higher than a 90 percent literacy rate, and many respected universities.

North Korea on the other hand, is remarkable for having resisted change for the past forty years. Its military might is impressive, but its economic weaknesses are more staggering. North Korea has been a self-imposed, isolated economic island since its existence. Changes are being made, but ever so slowly in the communist nation.

The truth is, without considerable financial help, North Korea could not have supported the Olympic games like its neighbor to the south. Japan hosted the Olympics in 1964, and soon after started becoming a rival in the world's economic market. South Korea, like Japan before it, is becoming a model Capitalist country, and this Olympiad is proof positive.

Some of the college students in South Korea are protesting their government to call for re-unification of North and South Korea. That's about as likely as (and in some respects similar to) the United States selling Alaska back to the Soviet Union.

North Korea and South Korea are divided not by land but by two differing ideologies that show the triumph of capitalism over communism.

North Korea is still a poor country, dependent upon its larger allies for economic survival. South Korea is a modern first-world nation who is economi-

cally vital enough to lay out three billion dollars to host the 24th Olympics. The North/South Korea comparison is just a miniature of the rivalry between West/East Germany, and even the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

The big difference between the United States and the communist countries is exemplified by the fact that the U.S. Olympic team is the only one in the world that does not receive ongoing financial aid from its government. Our team is funded through private donations from corporations and citizens.

The Soviet Union and its satellite countries are funded almost wholly through its governments. For the next two weeks, we'll hear daily reports of the Americans winning many medals, and the Soviets winning slightly more. But in a country like the Soviet Union, where the athlete's training is supported by the government (i.e. he gets paid to be an athlete), do we expect less of the Soviets?

It has gotten so bad that this year the Soviet government is actually awarding prizes to Russian medal winners. A Soviet champion could receive up to 12,000 rubles, roughly equivalent to a five-year salary in the U.S.S.R., for his participation in these amateur Olympics.

The United States may not win as many medals as the Soviets at these Olympics, but if we win any significant amount (and we will), it will once again show the world that a team funded solely on private donations from a country's citizens can beat a team funded exclusively by its government; showing that capitalism works effectively, at least more so than communism.

I believe the true spirit of the Olympics comes from the Americans, the West Europeans, the Canadians, the Africans, and many more, who cross the finish line because they love their sport and have trained hard for years to be among the best in their event.

They do it not for fame or money, but for themselves and their country.

They compete because they want to, not because they must.

This desire, which burns in the hearts of the Olympic teams, is a product of freedom of thought, freedom of trade, and freedom of choice, all ingrained in our democratic ideals.

Timm Doolen is a sophomore computer science major and columnist for The Battalion.

Berzsenyi-bashing day in *Battalion*

EDITOR:

I am writing to express my disgust with Lydia Berzsenyi's column in the 16 *Battalion*. Her article takes issue with Gov. Michael Dukakis' 1977 veto that would require public school teachers to lead students in the Pledge of Allegiance. It also does a very job of using McCarthy-style smear tactics to the issues involved and impugn the character and patriotism of an honorable

The fact is that Gov. Dukakis vetoed this piece of legislation on the advice of the Massachusetts Attorney General and members of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. He was advised that previous decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional to coerce someone into taking an oath against their will. The issue involved here is not one of patriotism but one of personal freedom and the limited powers of government. Governor Dukakis stood up for the constitutional right of the individual to decide for himself, rather than being subjected to the dictates of government.

Massachusetts school children still say the Pledge of Allegiance daily. His only limited the state's ability to harass those who, for religious or other reasons would not.

Conservative columnist James Kilpatrick stated in a recent article, "The Supreme Court was right in 1943 and Dukakis was right in 1977." I was relieved to see that Kilpatrick was able to voice his disagreement with Dukakis on substance matters, without involving himself in the personal attacks and political demagoguery associated with this issue. I only wish Ms. Berzsenyi possessed a similar level of maturity and sophistication.

Ms. Berzsenyi seems to have the misguided notion that standing on a high moral platform and being showered by red, white and blue balloons is patriotism while standing in defense of the Constitution is not. I can see how someone watching the Republican national convention might have gotten that idea. I only hope that the majority of Americans do not possess such a simplistic view of reality.

William L. Hancock, Jr. '87

Pledge 101: A history lesson

EDITORS:

Lydia Berzsenyi might better have understood the unconstitutionality of the 1977 Massachusetts pledge bill that was vetoed by Gov. Dukakis had she studied her history lessons.

A look at the 1943 Supreme Court's decision, *West Virginia Board of Education vs. Barnette* (on which the veto was based), helps illustrate why our teachers leading the pledge does little to teach children the virtues of freedom and patriotism.

The ruling was intended to protect Jehovah's Witnesses from being forced to pledge allegiance to a governmental entity (a secular institution) when, by their creed, they offer allegiance only to their God. They had been jeered, beaten, tarred and feathered as well as castrated by "True Americans" who had hoped to force uniformity and their version of patriotism on them. A wave of hysteria in Kennebunk, Maine, where 2,500 "blue bloods" sacked and burned the local Kingdom Hall after they deemed that their patriotic well-being was threatened by Witnesses whose love for their country was second only to their love of God.

Justice Robert H. Jackson in the majority opinion wrote, "To believe that patriotism will not flourish if patriotic ceremonies are voluntary and spontaneous instead of a compulsory routine is to make an unflattering estimate of the appeal of our institutions to free minds."

Aren't there plenty of other reasons to be a proud and patriotic American? Relax, Lydia, the foundations of our great country are stable and legitimate enough to withstand a (gasp!) voluntary pledge of allegiance (like the one Massachusetts children are now using). The compulsory pledges are necessary only where authority is unjustified (I'll bet they're mandated in the Soviet Union). Fortunately, there are open minds that are wary of this empty sloganeering election year alarums and opportunists who are hungry for votes.

Steve Ridge

EDITOR:

Since Lydia Berzsenyi has seen fit to bring up the issue of the Pledge of Allegiance again I believe it is time to address the hidden issue behind this controversy — whether or not patriotism is enhanced by mandating it through government legislation.

Today, the Pledge of Allegiance is a symbol of our national pride and honor for our country. We are free to recite the pledge at any time or place. When the government passes legislation requiring a person to either recite the pledge or threatened with a fine or other such punishment, it has the effect of cheapening this patriotic symbol and undermining one of the basic principles behind it — freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression means that you are not only free to think and say what you want, but also that the government cannot tell you what to think and what to say.

If government legislators try to tell you what to say, even if it is something you agree with 110 percent, you should be concerned because they are overstepping the boundaries set before them by the Constitution.

By vetoing that 1977 bill, Gov. Dukakis demonstrated that he has a deep understanding and respect for the basic principles that make our country great. Dukakis had supported legislation banning the recitation of the pledge, then only then would Berzsenyi have grounds to question Dukakis' patriotism.

There are grounds, however, to question the judgement of Vice President Bush. Bush said that he would not hesitate to sign into law a bill that the Supreme Court had advised would be unconstitutional. Both governors and presidents have an oath to uphold the Constitution.

Bush's statement, which I believe he still stands by, is both rash and irresponsible. Bush has also done a great disservice to the Pledge of Allegiance by trying to exploit it as a partisan campaign issue.

Mike Thomas '87

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

The Battalion

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