

The President of one of Africa's democracies is abroad. In his absence, Leninist revolutionaries stage a coup d'etat. After seizing a number of hostages, including part of the President's immediate family, the coup attempt crumbles when it fails to win the support of the country's tiny military force and is repulsed by troops from a neighboring country.

The scenario for a Hollywood thriller? The synopsis of a novel by Frederick Forsyth? No. The events just recounted occurred at the end of July in Gambia, one of Africa's few democracies.

Gambia is a tiny West African country with a population of some 600,000. Indeed most Americans would be hard-pressed if asked to locate it on a map. Yet it remains one of the most important countries on the African continent because of its political system. Gambia is a rarity in Africa — a fully-functioning, multi-party parliamentary democracy. In Gambia, the media operate freely. Trade unions are not brutally repressed and the courts maintain independence from the government.

Gambia is hardly an idyllic paradise. Its economy, primarily based on agriculture, is unable to alleviate the problems of poverty which persistently plague most of the Third World. Illiteracy remains very high.

The Gambian Gambit

By Bayard Rustin
Chairman
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Yet, despite its problems, Gambia has remained a peaceful country in which political groups have resolved differences through the ballot box. Indeed, the country faced so little internal violence that it functioned with a standing military force of 500.

The calm that had characterized Gambia was shattered on July 29th when a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla force led an assault on the Presidential Palace and the radio station in the capital city of Banjul. The intervention of 5,000 troops from Senegal (reportedly aided by Great Britain) and the failure of the guerrillas to win support from the Gambian military and the general population ended in the restoration of the duly elected Gambian government.

President Dawda Jawara, who was in England at-

tending Britain's royal wedding when the coup was launched, is insistent that the guerrillas were trained and armed by an outside power. The Senegalese have been more precise in pinning the blame. They have released photographs of Soviet Kalashnikov rifles which were captured from the rebels. It has also been revealed that a Soviet ship unloaded sixty Soviet-made Lada cars in Gambia's capital four days before the attempted coup. The Senegalese assert that, not coincidentally, the guerrillas knew precisely where the cars were located when they moved into action and used the Soviet-made autos in their military actions.

The direct complicity of the Soviet Union and its surrogates is difficult to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt. However, the preponderance of evidence suggests that the guerrillas enjoyed the support of the USSR and its allies. Such blatant outside intervention in the internal life of a sovereign state deserves to be roundly condemned by international public opinion. Yet many African states have been notably silent in voicing their opposition to this latest instance of Soviet meddling in African affairs. While this silence is clearly dishonest, it is also reflective of the widespread fear by many African leaders of Soviet intervention in their own countries.

The very fact that the coup in Gambia was at all attempted indicates that its Leninist perpetrators were counting on success. They were prepared to abandon even the semblance of due process and fair competition in the arena of electoral politics and to act in a violent and ruthless fashion. For small Third World countries such as Gambia there are only two ways to resist such attacks: arming to the teeth and creating a garrison state which heavily

taxes already overburdened economies or else counting on the intervention of more powerful allies.

The former approach is untenable and undesirable. The latter approach is filled with uncertainty about the reliability of allies in the face of foreign-backed aggression.

Clearly, there are no easy answers to providing protection for fragile democracies and independent states such as Gambia. However, it is equally clear that the answer does not lie in the abdication by the United States and the West of their responsibilities to the world's more democratic and less repressive governments.

The case of Gambia is not an isolated instance. Rather, it is indicative of a trend that should give pause to those who oppose an active American or Western role in the world.

Coping

The Cause Of Stress Racism: Part XI

By Dr. Charles W. Faulkner

Stress is caused by the frustration that results from one's perception that he or she will be incapable of reaching a desired objective. If one thinks that the ability to reach a goal is deficient, the resulting stress will cause an abnormal excretion of enzymes within the body that could cause a headache or heart attack. The fear of failure could cause the victim to refuse to participate in an activity that he or she feels incapable of successfully completing.

One thinks, "I'm going to fail anyhow, so why waste the time trying." Some people might even attempt to commit suicide if forced to participate in a fearful endeavor. Whether the perception of failure is justified or not is often irrelevant. If one thinks that he or she will fail, the stress is identical.

Everyone, black or white, experiences stress resulting from personal insecurity similar to the above. However, the stress that is felt by blacks is far more profound and constant than that suffered by whites.

When a white person goes to a job interview there is at least a feeling of possible acceptance and the accompanying hope. The black person, on the other hand, is deluged with self-doubt. The fear of failure is intense and ever-present. Although blacks would like to have the same kinds of jobs, homes, wealth and education that whites have, they constantly question whether they will be accepted: "Will the white employer be prejudiced?" "Will I be rejected because I am black?" "Is the white person more educated than I?" "Am I too dark-complexioned for the job?" "Are they really serious about hiring a black person?"

These and similar questions are deeply imprinted on the subconscious mind of the black person. Having been burdened with questions of self-doubt for most of life, the black person is under the continuous burden of tension during nearly every encounter with whites.

This constant burden produces intolerable stress that has resulted in an enormous and tragic increase in strokes, hypertension and heart attacks in the black community. Many blacks have felt the stress within their bodies for such a long period of time that they are unaware of it until it takes their lives. Stress in the black community is the No. 1 enemy of black physical health and emotional well-being. Every black person experiences it to some degree yet few have learned how to cope with stress and save their own lives.

There are many ways to release stress: Excessive eating, habitual smoking, irritability, arguments and crying. Stress can cause insomnia, acute neurosis, tension, chills, forgetfulness, acute perspiration, drug dependency, alcoholism and sexual dysfunction. These symptoms tend to be more destructive to the individual than the causes of stress.

Plain Talk About The Law How To Write A Letter To The Editor

"How can I have any affect on what's going on in my country, my county, or even my community?" is a question that clients often ask the community educators at North State Legal Services. These people usually have interesting ideas and special insights about what's going on around them, but are frustrated because they don't know how to get people to listen to them. The best answer we can give people in this situation is that they should write letters to the editors of newspapers.

Did you know that the letters-to-the-editor column is among the best read sections of a newspaper? A study was done which looked at the number of people who buy a certain kind of newspaper, the number of people who end up reading each newspaper that's bought, and the percentage of those people who are likely to read the letters-to-the-editor column. The results showed that if a letter of yours is printed in a small town weekly paper, at least a few thousand people are likely to read it. And if it's printed in a big city daily paper, at least a few million people are likely to read it. When was the last time you spoke before a few million people? If you write a letter to the editor and it's printed you'll probably address the largest audience you'll ever have, including a wide cross section of society, and many elected officials, too, who read that column to get an idea of how the public is feeling. And you won't even have to put on a neck tie or dress and get nervous!

Here are a few tips on how to make the best use of this powerful tool for sharing your ideas:

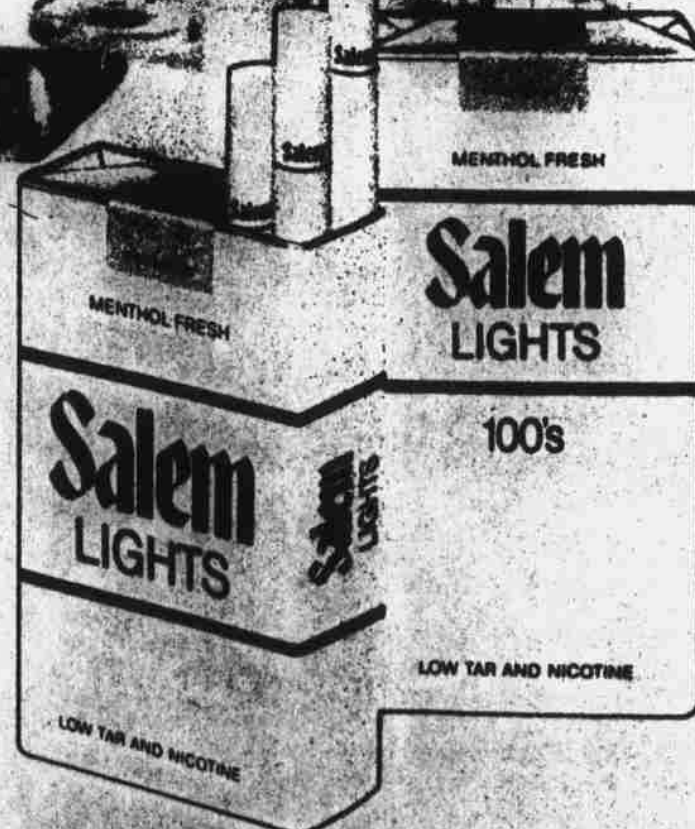
- 1) Use a typewriter, double space, and use only one side of the paper. Or write neatly in ink.
- 2) Keep it simple and brief — 200 to 250 words is usually as long as the letter should be.
- 3) Deal with only one topic.
- 4) Plan your first sentence carefully. It should be short and interesting.
- 5) If you're going to be critical make sure you're constructive. It might be good to begin with a word of agreement or praise and end with a constructive

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Hypertension, strokes and heart attacks are the results of stress. It is not unusual for the stress-prone person to have skin rash, brittle fingernails, hair breakage and suffer many major medical maladies — all directly traceable to stress. Black people characteristically experience such symptoms.

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