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12/19/65

Dear Sol,

Two ads in today's Washington Post indicate that whatever has happened to Ivan, Ivan Obolensky Inc., is still in business. There is a rather large display by Grantenos for the book "Shame of the Nation", by Philip Stern, crediting the book to Ivan Obolensky, Inc., New York, and in the book-review section, that of the Herald Tribune, there is a review of the new book, "The Beggar", also credited to Ivan. These do not, of course, rule out the possibility these books were in the works and that, after commitments for publication, Ivan folded. But they also indicate the continuance of a corporate entity.

There is some news with us, only partly good. Vanguard has written me that they are "very interested" in my book and asked if I have yet contracted for it. I replied that I haven't and, I suppose, I'll hear from them soon. I would prefer almost any of the other houses where the book is now being considered but which, for various reasons, cannot move as fast. Because I think I detect a possible serious intent in several of the others (all of whom know the submission is multiple) when I was in New York Monday and Tuesday I avoided phoning Vanguard. Their letter awaited me on my return.

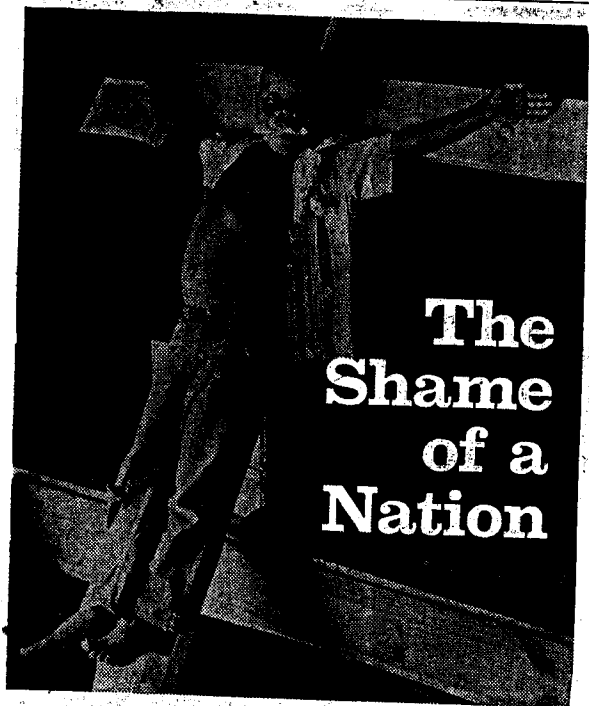
I apparently have some medical difficulties the nature of which has not been determined but the potential of which is not pleasant. There has been a change in my bowels. Stool examination a week ago revealed microscopic blood. There have been since then two blood tests, the results of which I do not know, there is to be further stool examination and several lower-abdominal examinations scheduled for January 4 and 5. The tentative diagnosis when I first reported this to the doctor was nerves, coming from the tensions and conditions of our lives. I hope that this diagnosis, not several months old, holds. But in the event this turns out to be more serious, if there is any legal thing I should do by way of preparation, please let me know. As of now, I do not plan to return to New York unless there is a specific reason for doing so. The book is now at Little-Brown (editorial approval three weeks ago, sent to Boston for policy determination), Houghton-Mifflin (apparently approved by reader, on desk of editor last Monday), Norton (where it was introduced by salesman with high praise as book and money maker, to President, who saw me and is reading himself, interrupted, unfortunately, by board of directors meeting), Bantam (delivered last Monday p.m.), Hawthorn (two weeks ago), and Parallax, an affiliate of Grove but not part of the corporate structure, where the President, a lawyer, has read and approved and where their expressed concern is over the "package", by which I think they mean whether they can arrange for Grove distribution, as they did with Malcom X book, for they are new.

Should I have occasion to return to N.Y., I will try and make it between Xmas and New Years, because I have to be on a liquid diet beginning a.m. the third, and, of course, have to be here the 4th. and 5th. But unless a publisher asks me to, I won't.

I have kept working, am not borrowing trouble, and have completed a manuscript with which I am not satisfied but nonetheless will now submit in the Dutton Animal Book

Award before the 1st. When the contest closes, rest to all.

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The Shame of a Nation

- "... INEXPRESSIVELY MOVING."
Walter Lippmann
- "... LITERALLY STUNNING."
Robert L. Heilbroner
- "... ARTISTIC AND CONSCIENCE-PROVOKING."
Sargent Shriver
- "... CARRIES TREMENDOUS IMPACT."
Chicago Tribune

These are samples of the reaction produced by this new, dramatic, photographic essay on American poverty, *The Shame Of A Nation*.

Not since the photo-journalistic artistry of James Agee and Walker Evans, of Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White has the face of American poverty been so vividly and movingly portrayed.

The lean but moving text by Philip M. Stern, author of the best-selling *The Great Treasury Raid*, and the striking photographs of Washington photographer, George de Vincent, are the result of a year's time and research and 27,000 miles

of travel throughout the U. S.

**YOU CAN READ IT IN AN EVENING
... BUT YOU'LL REMEMBER IT
FOR A LIFETIME!**

The Shame of a Nation

by PHILIP M. STERN

Photographs by GEORGE DE VINCENT

Foreword by Vice President
HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

Ivan Obolensky, Inc., New York

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Briefly written 12/19/65

The alms race

THE BEGGAR. By F. M. Esfandiary. Ivan Obolensky. 141 pp. \$3.95.

The only adverse criticism I have of this book is that the publisher has seen fit to insert a paragraph in the front matter explaining that this story of a crippled beggar is really a parable of justice and an allegory on the absurdity of punishment. I am annoyed, perhaps more than I should be, by this act of condescension to the reader—or is it perhaps evidence of editorial faint-hearted doubt that the author has made his meaning clear?

In either case, the explanation is quite supererogatory. Mr. Esfandiary (who has been a member of an Iranian Olympic team and of the UN's Conciliation Commission for Palestine) needs no editorial sandwich-board, for he writes plainly, he has organized his story with great economy, and his meaning is quite clear.

In the Arab village in which he lives, Ali, a beggar with withered legs, undertakes to raise five lira for a widow who has befriended him. When he arrives with the money, however, he finds the widow's bed already occupied by a muscular woodchopper. Ali keeps a vigil outside, sleeping under rags in a nearby shed. He awakes to find the house on fire and the widow and the woodchopper dead. When the villagers' intention to execute Ali for the supposed arson and murder is foiled by a friendly witness, they don't return him to the streets until exacting a cruel and senseless punishment to teach him not to be lazy.

Although both in length and conception, *The Beggar* is closer to a long short story than a short novel, it is the most sophisticated and successful of the books reviewed on this page.

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MURRAY HILL 9-7400

December 21, 1965

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

Dear Harold:

Thanks for your note of December 15. I'm sorry that we missed you but that visit to Grossingers was a kind of command performance since we had our National Civil Rights staff meeting there and I was, unfortunately, one of the important participants in the meeting.

I'm delighted to hear that there is interest in several publishing houses. I am delighted also to hear that Bob Wohlforth has offered to go over any contract you're offered by any publisher. My guess is that he, with his special know-how, would be far more helpful as an adviser, in this respect, than I would be.

Nancy came home for a short stay Saturday afternoon. She is now finished with college though her formal graduation, that is the ceremony and all that crap, will not come until June. Her current plans are to go back to Philadelphia early in January to look for a job and an apartment. She plans to live in Philadelphia at least until May or June, hoping to do so on the basis of her earnings as a public school teacher. She will take one course or so at the U of P, probably an education course, and will continue to work with the U of P Chorus and Madrigal Singers Group so that she can participate as a soloist in the several concerts which are scheduled for the spring. She will also be applying to the University of Chicago and Columbia University and possibly one or two other places for admission to take her Masters and, she hopes, for some kinds of fellowships to help pay for her Masters Degree. Last night we had a kind of informal at home to which we invited all the people who have known and loved Nancy for a long time and whom she loves. The total got to be quite

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substantial before the evening was out. But it was a wonderful kind of informal party.

I'm continuing to root for you and the book because I want so much to see you and Lil do well, something to which you're very much entitled.

Sincerely,



Sol Rabkin

SR:mef