

PARTING SHOTS

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He saw 'Patton'
twice . . . but here are
some movies
Nixon shouldn't see

by WILLIAM ZINSSER

Anyone care to join me in a game of insomnia?

Two weeks ago I learned (from Hugh Sidey in *IFE*) that President Nixon liked the movie *Patton* so much—he identified with General Patton as a man who acted boldly in a crisis—that he asked to see it again, and five days after that he invaded Cambodia. Now I find myself making lists, between 2 and 4 a.m., of movies I don't want the President to see.

One is *The Ten Commandments*. I wouldn't want him to identify with Charlton Heston as Moses. I worry particularly about the scene where Moses goes up onto a mountain to wrestle with the problem of dissent among his people and, while there, is told by God what his policy should be. I'd like to be sure that Nixon consults Congress too.

I hope summer's reruns on the White House TV set don't include *Moby Dick*, with Gregory Peck as Captain Ahab, or *Samson and Delilah*, with Victor Mature as the biblical hero. My concern is that Nixon might only remember two stubborn leaders bent on avenging past defeats—and forget that neither one got out alive. I don't even want him to see *High Noon*. It's hard for any American man or boy not to identify with Gary Cooper, resolute among the fainthearted. But let's face it: only a fool would go out in that street alone.

Let us defend the President, too, from seeing any James Bond movies like *Goldfinger* or *Thunderball*. To imagine oneself as Agent 007 is almost irresistible, for Bond is a man who always wins and is totally confident because he owns the latest weapons. That's fine if you're a man who always wins—and if it does any good to own the latest weapons.

Speaking of which, I don't want the President to see *2001*, mainly because of Hal. He's the computer who, chided for a possible mistake, reminded his accuser that "I am incapable of making an error."

And please, Mr. President, don't see any Charlie Chan movies. They're not a good guide to the subtleties of the Oriental mind. I mean, it would be a mistake to try to outguess Hanoi by assuming that the man in charge looks and talks like Warner Oland. Nobody looks and talks like Warner Oland.

That also goes for *Tarzan* movies



'Ten Commandments'—Charl

'High Noon'—Gary Cooper



'Tarzan'—Johnny Weissmuller



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'Charlie Chan'—Warner Oland



'Of Mice and Men'—Gregory Peck



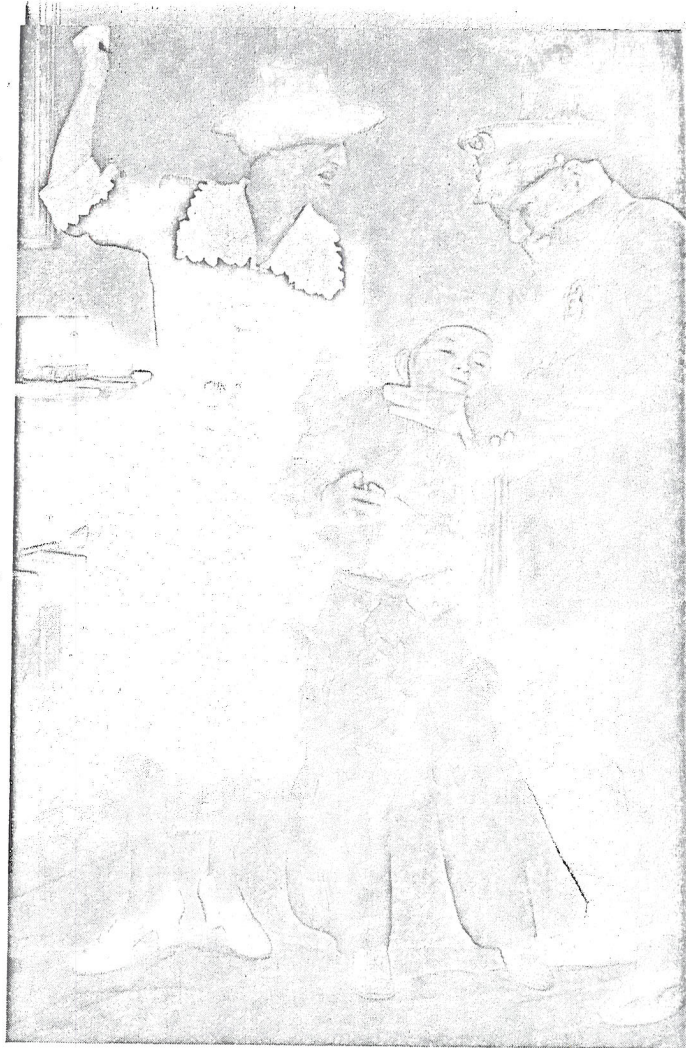
'Mary Poppins'—Julie Andrews

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and the African mind. We all identify with Tarzan: who doesn't want to swing through the trees with Jane in her jungle mini? But those films just aren't an up-to-date view of Africa as a basis of foreign policy. The natives don't run around carrying spears and grunting; they run around building nations, and they might resent it if the President, on a state visit, stepped out of Air Force One and said "Me Dick."

As for how to handle the alienated student generation, I don't want Nixon to see *Andy Hardy* and identify with paternal old Judge Hardy—or, rather, with paternal old Lewis Stone. It looks easy enough as Stone does it, calling the errant Mickey Rooney into his den for a man-to-man talk that leaves the boy moist-eyed with gratitude for the wisdom of age: "Gee, Dad, you're right—I never thought of it that way." No kid in 1970 says "Gee." Or "You're right."

Which also means that the President shouldn't see W. C. Fields in *The Bank Dick*—Fields didn't believe in meaningful dialogue with the young. Or, for that matter, *Mary Poppins*. Now there's an authority figure. In fact, in any test of authority between Mary Poppins and George Patton, I wouldn't bet on Patton. ■



'The Bank Dick'—W. C. Fields

Here is one he should see

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, the story of a happy staff. All set? Kissinger, Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Moynihan, Sneezy, Bashful, Grumpy—"Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it's off to work we go."

