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That Fracas Over Wallace



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EVERY now and then, like a lightning-flash in a thunderstorm, some sudden event illuminates a dark and turbulent scene, and we can all glimpse briefly things that are normally cloaked in shadows and confusion. One such event was the recent public fracas over what Alabama Governor George Wallace said, back in early March, to a visiting group of foreign journalists. Seldom have our liberal media been caught more flatfootedly.

The prospects for a large Wallace vote in the 1976 Democratic convention have been growing better almost day by day. Around the campfires of rival candidates, the apprehension has begun to approach the level of panic.

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MEANWHILE, early in March, Wallace had given a long, rambling interview to a group of foreign journalists during which he touched on the origins of World War II. There was no immediate uproar.

But on May 8, the *Washington Post* opened the assault:

"Alabama Governor George C. Wallace told a group of foreign journalists he wishes the United States had been allied with Japan during World War II instead of with Russia and China.

"I think we were fighting the wrong people, maybe, in World War II," said Wallace in one of the rare statements of any length he has made on foreign policy issues. "In fact," he told a Japanese journalist, "I wish we had been on the same side in World War II."

When the United Press picked up the story and rewrote it for its national wire, it had the *Post* quoting Wallace as saying that the United States should have cultivated the friendship of the Japanese and the Germans during World War II. In this and equally poisonous variants, the "news" rocketed around America.

"Picture the lewd delight under the hill tonight!" You could almost hear the snickers of pleasure, the soft smacking of lips, as America's liberals received this apparent confirmation that their hated enemy was pro-Nazi and a historical ignoramus to boot.

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IT TURNS OUT, however, that the *Post* and the United Press viciously misrepresented what Wallace really said.

What Wallace actually said was that if the United States had pursued a friendlier policy toward Germany and Japan "50 years ago" — i.e., in the decade after World War I — "there wouldn't have been any Hitler" and the Soviet government might have been better contained."