

Ah-nold can't happen here

By MITCHELL L. MOSS

New Yorkers, along with the rest of the world, are fascinated by Arnold Schwarzenegger's emerging as front-runner for governor of California if the incumbent is recalled.

But it could never happen here. New Yorkers would never elect an Austrian bodybuilder as a city councilman, much less governor or mayor. Unlike California, we value brainpower over brawn.

No state puts a higher premium on body worship than California. It is the epicenter of breast implants, personal trainers and steroids.

In New York City, everyone knows that brains and bucks trump good looks and big biceps.

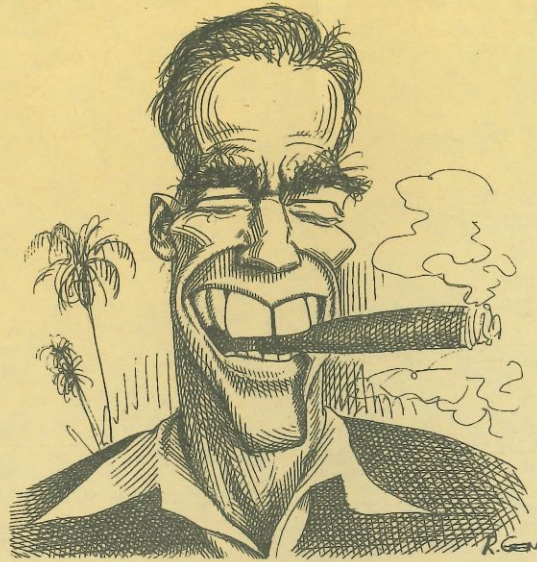
It's no accident that the nation's great movie studios were built in the Los Angeles basin, that Walt Disney's animated figures made their home in Anaheim and Charles Manson's cult started in the beachfront community of Venice. California is a land of fantasy where celluloid dreams and nightmares take on a life of their own.

Austria may have been Schwarzenegger's birthplace, but only in California could he convert his muscles into movie stardom and go from being "The Terminator" to favorite for governor.

California produces the fiction that pervades our movie houses and television channels. New York, by contrast, is a place of nonfiction. Every morning, when Americans turn on their radios, they hear Don Imus broadcasting from Astoria, Queens. Or they flip on their TVs and watch the "Today" show from Rockefeller Center, "The Early Show" from Fifth Ave. or "Good Morning America" from Times Square. Every night, the major network news programs originate in Manhattan.

When the nation wants to know what is going on in the world, they rely on brainy men and women working in New York to explain what's what.

When the nation wants to escape from the drudgery of everyday routines, nothing can match Southern California, where the sun always shines,



every home has a swimming pool and the news consists of celebrity gossip, weather reports and smog alerts.

New Yorkers are the best informed people in the nation. We have four major daily newspapers, three all-news radio stations and an all-news cable channel, plus hundreds of community newspapers. In Los Angeles, the largest city in California, there is one dominant daily newspaper, and management had to import an editor from New York City to get anyone to take the paper seriously.

New Yorkers — like Californians — understand that it is sometimes useful to bring an outsider into government, to bring a fresh approach to the rough-and-tumble world of politics. Mike Bloomberg got elected mayor because New Yorkers realized that the crisis facing the city after Sept. 11, 2001, required the skills of a businessman rather than those of a professional politician.

But New Yorkers would never elect someone like Ah-nold to public office. We take our government too seriously to turn it over to a bodybuilder who has spent his adult life reading lines from a movie script.

Moss is on the faculty of New York University's Wagner School.

most Jews were against that concept. But over time, more and more would come to accept partition — just as more and more Muslims would turn against it.

Israel and the Palestinian Arabs each claimed that the entire territory belonged to them on religious, historical and national grounds.

But at least among the Jews, there were more who believed that separation would be the way to end the fighting.

I was a correspondent for The New York Times covering the UN back then, and I remember a Jewish diplomat taking me aside and writing one word on a piece of paper: partition.

I was startled at his adventure-someness, for as far as I could tell, virtually all Muslims believed then that no state but an Islamic one should exist on what they considered entirely Muslim territory.

The struggle continued. Decade after decade, it went on.

In the beginning years, only a devout Jew or Muslim could understand the complex religious and national passions that had started it.

Day in and day out, Israel faced war from terrorist organizations. This was, of course, long before 9/11 when we Americans suddenly, brutally discovered what that is like.

This year, there was a major advance for Israel: President Bush's decision to go to war against Iraq. Saddam Hussein had been for three decades one of Israel's major enemies — and will be again, if his fascist regime ever comes back from the grave.

Meanwhile, seeking Muslim

road map that has escaped the attention of too many American commentators, including this one.

"In 2003, Israeli planners will have to operate under the assumption that the dismantling of the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure will be incomplete, and should a Palestinian state nonetheless be established, its complete demilitarization will not be reliable." That was the polite way Dore Gold, former Israeli ambassador to the UN, put it in a journal of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

His statement addresses the unhappy possibility that the Israelis may make an agreement that sets up an independent Palestinian neighbor without meeting Israel's life-long and intense need for defensible borders.

There is another way of establishing secure borders. That is a fence on the Israeli side loaded down with sensors that can spot terrorists.

Somehow, that idea does not thrill either the Palestinians or the Israelis.

"The thought that a Palestinian state next to Israel would be a peaceful neighbor is ludicrous. . . . The Arab world is presently comprised of 22 states of nearly 5 million square miles. . . . There seems to be no need for another Muslim Arab state, especially for one that would serve as an advance base for the ultimate destruction of Israel." That statement is from an organization called Flame, which dissects Arab statements with a red-hot scalpel.

That does not make it necessarily wrong, does it?

E-mail: rosecolumn@aol.com