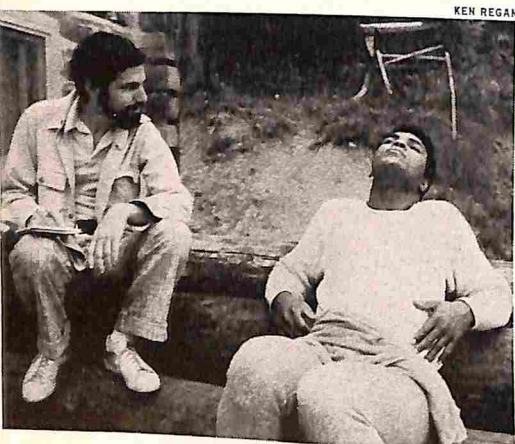


A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

For this week's Sport preview of the George Foreman-Muhammad Ali title fight in Zaïre, Nairobi Bureau Chief Lee Griggs revisited the capital city of Kinshasa. When he was last there in 1962, the city was known as Léopoldville, the country was the Congo, and the story was about a bloody revolution. "Needless to say, things are much more pleasant today," says Griggs. "The sight of a press card in the old days often provoked soldiers into prodding you with bayonets or banging you in the kidneys with rifle butts. Today they wave you through roadblocks and even smile on occasion."

Griggs quickly learned, however, that many of the old frustrations of news gathering had persisted. "The telephone system remains a shambles, punctuality is still nonexistent, and appointments are seldom kept. The old Belgian bureaucracy has been embroidered upon and enhanced, and the *matabish*, or bribe, is still in full flower."

Meanwhile, in the U.S., other TIME correspondents interviewed



KEN REGAN

members of Foreman's family and reported on the special financial arrangements of this multimillion-dollar bout. Their files went to Senior Editor Laurence Barrett, Reporter-Researcher Jay Rosenstein, and Sport Editor Philip Taubman, who prepared to write this week's story by visiting both fighters at their U.S. training camps.

"George Foreman is a private person who is clearly not comfortable in the presence of inquiring reporters," says Taubman. To penetrate that privacy, Taubman tried to corner his publicity-shy subject at his training camp

TAUBMAN & ALI AT DEER LAKE

in Pleasanton, Calif. For a week Taubman shadowed the champion during his daily workouts and while he played with his dogs and horses. One day after a home-cooked meal of frankfurters, the two sat down together in Foreman's house while the champion watched and analyzed old fight films. "Foreman has a certain simple dignity about him," reports Taubman, "an unpretentious quality that makes him a refreshing athlete."

If Taubman had difficulty getting Foreman to talk, Ali was hard to stop. At the challenger's training camp in Deer Lake, Pa., Taubman vainly tried to squeeze questions into Ali's nonstop monologues. "Even at 6 in the morning when I joined him for his roadwork, he ended a three-mile run along a quiet country lane by showing me how he will beat Foreman. There, at a deserted intersection, Ali started throwing jabs and combinations at me. Not close enough to reach me, but close enough to scare me." Taubman may have flinched from Ali's punches, but not from forecasting the challenger's downfall on Sept. 24. His prediction: "Foreman in six."

Ralph P. Davidson

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