the weekly Standard

SEPTEMBER 7, 1998 • $3.50

1968

A REVOLTING GENERATION THIRTY YEARS LATER

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

PLUS:
Christopher Matthews
on 'The Death of Outrage'

the weekly Standard

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 49 • SEPTEMBER 7, 1998

Cover by Michael Doret

Books & Arts

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except for combined issues dated July 6-July 13, Aug. 10-Aug. 17, Nov. 30-Dec. 7, and Dec. 28-Jan. 4) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-303-776-3605 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.50. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The Weekly Standard Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Natalie Harwood, 1-610-293-8540.

A Different Sort of Worldwide Web

The Taliban, the militant rulers of Afghanistan who also play benevolent landlord to terrorist Osama Bin Laden, are in an undeniable public-relations tailspin. Their two-year reign, if you believe infidel Western foreign correspondents, has been a roundelay of compulsory dress codes, public amputations, executions, and other displays of ill temper.

To combat these negative stereotypes, the Taliban is now circumventing the American media and (rather as Charles Manson recently did after his ninth denial of parole) taking their case straight to the public at www.taliban.com, their new Web site, which is part of a larger Islam WebRing ("Got a neato Islam site? Click here to join!"). Perusing www.taliban.com, one quickly discovers that the Taliban is misunderstood, a devout group, a single-minded group. Section headings include "Jihad," "The True Meaning of Jihad in Islam," "The Types of Jihad," "Propagating, Publicising and Informing on Jihad," "Financing the Jihad," and "Jihad: The Forgotten Obligation."

So sue them—they like holy war. But at heart, the Taliban, it seems, is a band of peace-loving nest-builders. Other headings include "Why Women Should Stay in Their Houses" and "Taliban Restrict Women to their homes because . . ."

There is even a chat room to foster understanding and the free exchange of ideas. At least as freely as one dare exchange ideas on a Web site that encourages visitors to "Strike a Dharb [deathblow] to the Enemy of Islam."

As one Mohammad Tajik writes, "The other day I wrote comments criticizing the Taliban. But it was so stupid of me to say things like that without knowing the whole story. . . . I just want to apologize for my comments." Wise move, Mohammad.

Bill Clinton's Greatest Hits

"I would hope every American adult, even those who smoke, would think, as I had to when I became president and I had this occasional bad habit of having my cigar once in a while, I would hope they would think about not doing it in public, not doing it around children, not setting a bad example. I think we adults have a responsibility to try to set a good standard for our young people and to basically say everybody's got a lot of problems but being self-destructive is not a way to deal with them."

MTV interview, August 11, 1995

Women of the *Times*

Another revealing sign of the incredible parochialism of the *New York Times*. On August 28, the *Times* ran a story on how women view Clinton, based on "dozens of interviews across the country." The story found that while "women" are disappointed in the president, many would vote for him again.

But the unintentionally interesting aspect of the story was the sort of women the *Times* saw fit to quote. Scott Shuger of *Slate* listed them by occupation: shareholder activist; novelist; author and editor; graduate-school dean; volunteer; hair-salon owner; university public-relations executive; producer; writer; English professor.

It's appalling that there's not one feminist performance artist on that list. Will no one give voice to the voiceless?

Just Deserts

So what's Bill Clinton's reward for pushing the (ill-advised) Chemical Weapons Convention through the Senate last year? Being undercut by the arms con-

Scrapbook

trollers at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons—the bureaucracy that oversees compliance with the chemical-arms treaty.

In the aftermath of the missile attacks on the Sudanese factory implicated in the production of VX nerve gas, the administration very publicly staked its credibility on soil samples taken outside the factory that contained a chemical known as Empta, used to make VX. So along come the OPCW bureaucrats with an excuse for the chemical's presence in the soil samples. According to a story in last Thursday's *New York Times* ("Possible Benign Use Is Seen for Chemical at Factory in Sudan"), agency spokesman Donato Kinigier-Passigli said an exhaustive search of scientific literature showed Empta might have "legitimate commercial purposes," including as an anti-microbial agent and fungicide. Of course, it's never actually been used for a commercial purpose, but who's to say the Sudanese aren't great pharmaceutical innovators.

This type of sophistic quibbling, endemic to the "arms-control community," shows how little multilateral agreements like the Chemical Weapons Convention can be expected to accomplish. Not as little, however, as what the Clinton administration is likely to learn from the experience.

The Voucher Constituency

Support for school vouchers and education tax credits is on the rise—and not just among Republicans. The annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll on attitudes toward public schools found that 51 percent of Americans now favor the government's paying part or all of a child's private-school bills. That's up from 45 percent in 1994. When asked specifically about vouchers that would pay for tuition, 52 percent favored the idea. And even though vouchers are a pet policy of Republicans, 51 percent of Democrats (and only 47 percent of Republicans) favored vouchers that would pay all of a student's private-school tuition.

A similar story emerges with educational tax credits, another Republican-led reform. The poll showed that 66 percent of Americans favor tax credits that partially cover the cost of sending a child to private school. Tax credits that cover the full cost of private school are less popular—only 56 percent in favor. Again, more Democrats than Republicans (61 percent to 57 percent) favored full compensation.

This may explain the narrowing "education gap." In 1994, when asked which party was more interested in education, the Democrats had an edge of 17 percentage points; this year it fell to only 11. It looks like Democrats are secretly more supportive of Republican school reforms than Republicans themselves.

Correction

Last week's article on the Laborers' International union, "A Corrupt Union and the Mob," mistakenly attributed a quotation to Arthur E. Coia, father of the union's current president. It was not Coia but rather his pal, New England mafia boss Raymond L.S. Patriarca, who was overheard by the FBI meddling in union elections and espousing the operating philosophy, "Hit them, break their legs to get things your way."

Casual

My Fleet Street Days

Most high-school textbooks claim the First World War precipitated the breakup of the British Empire, but it's hard to believe British newspapers didn't have something to do with it. Outside of San Francisco, Great Britain consistently produces the worst daily journalism in the civilized world, newspapers unmatched for sleaze, inaccuracy, and bad writing. Everybody knows British newspapers are terrible, and if I had been paying closer attention I might not have returned a call the other day from Allan Hall, the New York correspondent for the *Daily Mirror*.

I might even have recognized Hall's name. A longtime tabloid hack, Hall is well known in England for his groundbreaking dispatches from the New World: "Bill Gates Has An Insatiable Sex Drive," "Don Johnson Weeps For Wife While Seducing Blonde In Booze Clinic," "Jacko's Wedding Album: He Wore Black And A Lot of Grease; She Wore A Miniskirt." Hall spent a chunk of the early 1990s covering the Lorena Bobbitt dismemberment trial, keeping readers back home up to date with evocative follow-ups such as "Sliced Stumpy Works Again: Severed Penis Man Claims He Can Have Sex." Hall has also chronicled former tennis champion Billie Jean King's struggle with eating disorders ("Billie Jean Binge Agony").

Unfortunately, on the day he called my office I'd never heard of him. "What do you think of the Monica Lewinsky thing?" Hall asked. The interview was short and dull. I let loose with a few trite observations. He thanked me and hung up. I did think it was odd when an editor from the *Mirror* phoned my house from London a few hours later to ask where he should send the photographer to take my picture. But I ignored the message and went out to dinner. And that was it.

Until a week later, when I got a message from my father. "Caught your piece in the *Mirror*," he said. "Are you leading a double life?" He seemed to be snickering on the phone. Confused, I called him back, and before long I had the piece in my hands. It had my byline on it. Identified as an "expert commentator" and a "political staff writer with Washington magazine THE WEEKLY STANDARD," I went on for 750 words about Clinton's sexual technique—"a quickie here, a feel there, a grope somewhere else"—as well as his political prospects ("he lives to cheat another day"). The article became more overheated with every paragraph, and by the end the imagery matched the tone: "The house is on fire and the clock is ticking. Bill Clinton is medium rare, scorched in places, but he will pull himself from the ashes."

Sure he will. Unless, of course, the lame duck's fair-weather friends take the impeachment bandwagon by storm. Or the jackboot of oppression sings like a canary. Or some other exotic coupling of clichés occurs. In which case, the piece predicted, "he really can go to the Big House for serious time."

Who writes like this? According to the *Mirror*, I do.

Pretty embarrassing. For a moment I considered calling the paper's editor to make threatening noises. Then I realized he'd just laugh at me. No reason to waste a transatlantic call on that. And anyway, I figured, it's not like anybody but my father is going to see it. Who reads the British tabloids?

For starters, British people. Within a day, a particularly florid selection from the piece was reprinted by the *Independent* in London. Then, last week, I got a call from a woman named Annette Witheridge at the *Scottish Daily Record* wondering if—as an expert commentator familiar to the British reading public—I'd like to share my insights into the Monica Lewinsky affair. Not a chance of that, I said. Let me tell you about a funny experience I recently had with another British journalist.

She didn't sound surprised. Those are the perils of working with editors thousands of miles away, she explained. "Once the story gets to London, who knows what happens?" You mean you've heard of this sort of thing before? Sure, she said. "It just happened to Jonathan Turley. Actually, I was the reporter who wrote it. He called here pretty miffed."

No wonder. Americans familiar with Turley from his television commentaries on the Lewinsky scandal might be surprised to learn that the sober-minded law professor writes like a British tabloid reporter when he writes for British tabloids. According to Turley's August 21 article in the *Scottish Daily Record*—"The Mud Is Sticking And The President's Sinking"—Clinton already has one foot in the Big House. Indeed, writes Turley, "the American public is now so disgusted with him he can never recover. Impeachment lies just around the corner."

It does? Not according to the real Jonathan Turley, who still seems baffled by how his name wound up on a Scottish newspaper article. "Something remarkable happened in the course of editing," Turley says. "I called Miss Witheridge and asked her to issue a correction. She's never called me back." One suspects she won't. At least until the next scandal.

TUCKER CARLSON

the weekly Standard

Foreign Policy and the Republican Future

Bill Clinton's foreign policy is in tatters. Republicans are pointing this out, and they're right to. But can they go beyond criticizing Clinton? Can they articulate a coherent alternative to his policies? It so happens that their political interests coincide with the interests of the nation. Foreign policy represents a huge opportunity for Republicans over the next two years, if they have the wit to seize it. They will have to realize, though, that taking advantage of this opportunity requires rethinking some of their own presumptions and prejudices.

The meltdown of administration foreign policy is undeniable. In Iraq, whose regime President Clinton once rightly declared the most serious danger confronting the world, the American policy of denying Saddam Hussein the ability to build weapons of mass destruction has collapsed. In the Balkans, Milosevic is once again engaged in ethnic cleansing, while Washington, having threatened military action, does nothing. North Korea promised in 1994 not to build nuclear weapons and was rewarded with U.S. aid; now it's building them. India and Pakistan have exploded nuclear weapons, punching a huge hole in the administration's non-proliferation policy. In China, Clinton's appeasement has produced no results except alarm among our Asian allies and demoralization among the advocates of democracy.

As for President Clinton's new "war" on terrorism, it is becoming less and less clear that the cruise-missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan made a dent in the terrorist networks, or that the administration really has the stomach for such a "war." Meanwhile, even the mainstream press now acknowledges that American military capabilities have been allowed to erode to a level that should prompt serious concern. Our forces are stretched desperately thin and are probably incapable of meeting even one major crisis, let alone two. In addition, after years of trumpeting its success in managing the global economy, the administration seems unable to contain the Asian economic crisis. And in Russia, where U.S. policy had aimed to nurture a democratic, pro-Western society, past successes are in jeopardy.

For the last six years, Republicans have occasionally supported and frequently sniped at Clinton in each of these areas. It is obviously important to point out the particular errors and deficiencies of the administration's policies in different parts of the world. But now it is time to go beyond that critique and explain to the American people what would be the underpinnings of a Republican foreign policy. After all, it was a Republican president, Ronald Reagan, who (over the opposition of much of the Democratic party) carried out the most successful foreign policy of any administration in the last half-century. Republicans ought to remind Americans of that—as well as of the fact that Reagan succeeded Jimmy Carter, whose foreign policy Bill Clinton's increasingly resembles.

> IT IS TIME NOW FOR REPUBLICANS TO GO BEYOND SNIPING AT CLINTON AND EXPLAIN WHAT WOULD BE THE UNDERPINNINGS OF A REPUBLICAN FOREIGN POLICY.

Republicans should articulate the broad principles of a Reaganite foreign policy. Let's keep them simple. The three M's of American foreign policy should be: Military strength, Morality, and Mastery.

Military strength. We need to spend much more on our armed forces. We need more money for readiness, more for R&D, more for procurement, more for troops, more for missile defense, more for everything. Republicans can't and shouldn't run for the presidency in 2000 promising to increase defense spending by only a few billion a year. To present a real alternative to Clinton-Gore and to build the kind of military we will need in the years to come, Republicans must advocate a reversal of the cuts that have been made in defense

since the end of the Cold War. To his credit, Senate majority leader Trent Lott has called for hearings in September to reexamine defense spending. The rest of the Republican party should follow Lott's lead, shun the dodge of claiming to be "cheap hawks," and honestly tell the American people that a lot more spending is going to be needed. Let Clinton be the "cheap hawk." Republicans should be real hawks.

Morality. With the exception of the Reagan years, recent Republican administrations have tended to pat themselves on the back for how "hard-headed" and "realistic" they are about the moral complexity of the world in which we live and the limited possibility of grounding our foreign policy on moral principles. Ironically, Bill Clinton has followed the same course, especially in his dealings with the Chinese dictatorship: He's managed to combine the strategic vision of Jimmy Carter with the moral vision of Richard Nixon.

But the American people have always differed from the elite in their insistence that our foreign policy reflect our principles. And the American people are right. Our principles are fundamental to our national strength. It is no accident that the most serious threats to American interests today come from dictatorships, in China, Iraq, Iran, Serbia, and North Korea. Under Reagan, democracy bloomed in Latin America, in the Philippines and South Korea, and eventually in Central and Eastern Europe. No one today can doubt that support for democracy was profoundly in our strategic interest, as well as consistent with our principles. Morality at home will be an issue over the next two years. Morality in foreign policy should be, as well.

Mastery. When Bill Clinton took office, the United States was the world's preeminent power. Reagan and Bush had rallied our allies to victory in the Cold War and the Gulf War. The world looked to the United States for leadership, and the United States had both the strength and the will to provide it. In six years, Clinton has squandered this inheritance. We are now at a tipping point. Either we are going to be endlessly trying to "cope" with problems that are increasingly difficult to cope with—to "manage" situations that become inherently less manageable—or we are going to move aggressively to shape the international environment.

There is no middle ground between a decline in U.S. power, a rise in world chaos, and a dangerous 21st century, on the one hand, and a Reaganite reassertion of American power and moral leadership, on the other. Some Republicans think that what is needed is merely better "management" of foreign policy, a more "adult" approach to the world. But they are wrong. What is needed, now as in 1980, is a complete reversal of the current failed foreign policy and a restoration of a foreign policy of American leadership and, yes, mastery.

We wish there were already a conservative and Republican consensus on this agenda. But there isn't, any more than there was a consensus in support of Reagan's agenda in the late 1970s. Republicans in Congress and elsewhere need to criticize and attempt to correct Clinton's foreign policy over the next months wherever possible. But the most significant intellectual and political battles in the next two years won't be between Republicans and Clinton. They will be for the mind of the Republican party. And it is not too much to say that on the outcome of these battles will hinge the possibility of successful American leadership for the 21st century. ♦

Dare to Do Nothing?

by Tod Lindberg

As Washington gears up for the arrival in the House of Representatives of Kenneth Starr's report on President Clinton's impeachable offenses, a particularly virulent strain of wannabe conventional wisdom has been making the rounds. It is that Republicans would prefer (if they put party ahead of country) to keep a weakened Clinton in office for two more years—because an incumbent President Gore running in the 2000 presidential race gives them the heebie-jeebies.

The proponents of this view are many. Most prominently, former vice president Dan Quayle said in Iowa last week that "in strictly partisan political terms, it would be better to keep [Clinton] in office." Many other Republicans, while they stroke their chins with high seriousness as they talk of resignation and impeachment before the cameras, take the view off-camera that they would be fools to remove the Clinton albatross from the neck of the Democratic party.

If you are a risk-averse Republican member of Congress with little appetite for trying to take down a president whose job-approval rating is still over 60

percent, the idea that you are being a political tough guy rather than a wimp is no doubt quite appealing. Too bad it's wrong. For their own good, Republicans who are seriously flirting with this view ought to take a closer look at the implications of the Dare to Do Nothing scenario. It would be bad for the country—and bad for the party.

If Kenneth Starr produces a nothingburger of a report against Clinton, discreet on sex and minimalist on obstruction, then, obviously, the House isn't likely to do much of anything. But what should the GOP do, assuming a report that's a cross between the *Penthouse* letters section and *J'accuse*? House Republicans must, on principle, act. Not to do so would make it difficult if not impossible for the party to speak on matters of public morality, honesty, and integrity.

> REPUBLICANS SHOULD NOT DELUDE THEMSELVES THAT THERE IS ANY ADVANTAGE IN LEAVING A WOUNDED CLINTON IN OFFICE.

There is, moreover, a problem in principle with willfully leaving an emasculated, powerless president in office. The nation depends on a strong and unified executive. Our enemies, who are still out there, will interpret a powerless president as a powerless United States—a dangerous judgment even if we remain strong, and all the more so if it happens to be correct. If the world's sole remaining superpower collapses on itself, the international vacuum created thereby will suck all manner of unsavory creatures out of the woodwork. We worked hard for our Pax Americana. We ought not to be cavalier about what is required to sustain it.

There is, too, the potential danger of a fragmented executive. As the power at the White House weakens, the power of the cabinet departments and independent agencies is apt to increase. A discredited, despised president may find it difficult to keep control. Suppose the Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously opposed a military action the president thought necessary—and leaked their opposition to the press. Could Clinton go ahead with it? Right now, he would probably have a harder time than George Bush did overcoming Colin Powell's reluctance to fight the Gulf War. This ought to give sober men pause.

Now let us give pause to those intoxicated by polit-

ical power. The scenario under discussion is one in which the president is so badly damaged that Republicans face an apparently costless choice: squash Clinton like a bug or spare him. On one hand, two years of a bruised and battered Clinton; on the other, a Hawaii-tanned, rested Al Gore. On one hand, a race in 2000 against a party fractured and dispirited by a White House adrift; on the other, a race against an incumbent who will have had two years or so to consolidate his position in the party and demonstrate his presidential qualities to the American people.

If that seems like an easy political choice, it's only because the premises underlying it are dubious. Consider first the assumption that Clinton stays flat on his back for two years. If the president survives politically, he will have survived a process with a beginning (the Starr investigation and report), a middle (the congressional inquiry), and, more to the point, an end—a decision by the House not to go forward, perhaps a vote of censure. Clinton's focus now is surely on how to get to that day, because that is the day he puts this matter to rest, gets this behind us, gets on with the business of the American people, etc.

IN OFFICE, CLINTON WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD HIS REPUTATION. REMEMBER THE LEGEND OF THE COMEBACK KID.

For his political opponents, the Monica scandal then becomes one more entry in their catalogue of Clinton horribleness, along with the draft dodging, Hillary's cattle futures, Vince Foster's papers, Filegate, the Rose Law Firm billing records, etc. But that's all. It will no longer have political salience, a capacity to wound afresh. The political culture will have assimilated all there is to know about the affair, much as the stock market is presumed to efficiently assimilate all there is to know about a company. The political culture will reach an assessment of Clinton's remaining strengths and weaknesses, much as the market determines a share price. And most important for the president and his friends, trading in Clinton shares will continue the next day.

And who knows what the price of Clinton will be a year from now? The political market is more volatile than Wall Street. Anyone who continues to beat him over the head with Monica will be seen as carping obsessively. Clinton will have an opportunity to rebuild his reputation. It won't be easy; the final two years of a second term never are. But even diminished, the power of the White House is awesome. He does not lack political skills. And the sheer fact of his survival will feed the legend of the Comeback Kid. Clinton will be in a position to jeer at Republicans in the style of the pop band Chumbawamba: "I get knocked down/But I get up again/You're never going to keep me down."

We are not short of examples of how long a year can be in politics, much less two. Consider Newt Gingrich. A year ago, following a failed coup attempt against him within the House Republican leadership, the speculation was whether he would last in the speaker's office until January or have to go by fall. Now his position in the House is as strong as it has been since the failure of the government-shutdown strategy in 1995-96. He may be Mr. Least Unacceptable; but that is not nothing. He has surely been badly damaged politically by his own ethics problem; but he is still alive, and his poll numbers are rising.

The next problem with the Dare to Do Nothing scenario is its faulty view of the process about to unfold. The mistaken assumption here is that there will come a moment when Republicans, with the cool precision of surgeons, will be able to flick or not flick the scalpel whose blade can sever Bill Clinton from the body politic. There is, in truth, little likelihood of such a moment.

Republicans control the House, but they do not control this process, at least not in the sense that they and they alone can shape it. Democrats matter. And Democrats are subject to political pressure as well. Even if the instinct among Democrats on Capitol Hill were to stand united behind the president and to offer their daughters as White House interns in a show of solidarity (and that is *not* their instinct), they would still have to explain themselves to their constituents and contend with political opponents out to unseat them.

If this process actually arrives at a life-or-death moment for President Clinton, it is apt to arise only with substantial Democratic support. If the House's sentiment on impeachment were so uncertain that it might not command majority support, it would be foolish in the extreme to bring it to the floor for a vote. And if the sentiment were bipartisan and substantial, it would be difficult not to go ahead with it. While it may overstate the case to say that the process has a life of its own, it is not so easily manipulated against its own momentum.

Finally, there's the Gore factor in the Dare to Do Nothing scenario: Gore the incumbent, Gore the healer, Gore the Invincible. Run away, run away.

Not so fast. This is the biggest mistaken assumption of them all. Note that Al Gore has been hiding lately. That's because he is in a brutal position. Politics doesn't get any tougher than this. Will Bill Clinton

survive? If he does, does that mean you should support him? What does supporting Clinton do to your own aspirations for 2000? Is there a way of being supportive without appearing supportive? Or is it better to appear supportive without actually being supportive? Is loyalty a virtue or an impediment? How do you please hard-core Starr-hating Democrats without alienating the middle? Is House minority leader Dick Gephardt an ally in saving Clinton or a rival in the post-Clinton era? How do you know whether you should trust him? When you say "put this matter behind us," do you mean with Bill in the big chair in the Oval or with Al in the big chair in the Oval? How wobbly should Bill be before you kick him over? Would somebody else kick him over for you? Aaaargh.

All of these questions need to be addressed in real time as this story continues to unfold. And the decisions Gore makes will have consequences. I find it difficult to believe that even the greatest politician, which Gore is not, could play this out without error. More likely, at the end of the road, rather than invincible, Gore will be wobbly himself.

Moreover, if Gore does end up running the show, the cleanup work will be immense. For six years now, the Democratic party has been organized around Bill Clinton, who was supposed to carry on through 2000 and then transfer party control to his heir apparent, Gore. Even absent scandal, this isn't an easy political transition. Recall the bloodshed and hard feelings when the Bush people took over from the Reagan people in 1988-89. If Gore moves into the White House before January 2001, there will be a huge amount of wreckage to clean up: Hard feelings are nothing next to the anger, betrayal, and recriminations at the end of this process. The party will be in tatters. And, oh no, whom should the new president pardon?

Another example from the career of Newt Gingrich: At least since 1993, the House Republican conference has been organized around the leadership of Gingrich. Does anybody seriously imagine that Democrats would have done something, had there been something to be done, to save Newt Gingrich in January 1997 if it had looked like the Republicans were about to eject him from the speaker's office? Would partisan Democrats in the House have reasoned that they would be better off with a weakened Speaker Gingrich than with a potentially strong successor? If so, they would have miscalculated badly. This was a speaker who, after being badly weakened, still reached a tax-cutting balanced-budget agreement with the White House—not exactly a liberal Democratic priority.

No, House Democrats were quite sincere in their expressed desire to see Gingrich thrown off the cliff. They understood perfectly well that this would plunge House Republicans into chaos, and that chaos would constitute genuine political opportunity for Democrats.

Gerald Ford did not have an easy time of it when Nixon left office. His party got pounded at the polls. Congress made a successful grab for executive power. Saigon fell. The economy was a mess ("Whip Inflation Now!"). He faced a robust primary challenge. He lost the presidency to Jimmy Carter.

That strikes me as a more likely political model for the aftermath of Bill Clinton's collapse than the model the Dare to Do Nothing crowd is relying on. When Republicans say the president should step down, they should mean it. It's a matter of principle, sure. But since when can you have only one good reason for saying something?

Tod Lindberg is editorial-page editor of the **Washington Times.**

Boris and the Economists

by David Brooks

These days, Russia's economy depresses everyone. But it's worth remembering that just a few years ago, it was a glamorous and promising story. In the early nineties, when communism was freshly dead, Moscow was awash with Western experts telling the Russians how to reform their economy. These people were like public-policy rock stars, and hordes of us reporters followed them around like groupies, hoping to get a smidgen of the wisdom they were pouring into the ears of the new Russian reformers. And they had plans. Privatization plans, currency plans, fiscal plans. The magazine *International Economy* used to print plans side by side, and it was like looking at the gold-star book reports tacked up on the wall in a fifth-grade classroom. If you had stood up in a hard-currency restaurant in Moscow and bellowed, "Did anybody drop a plan for ruble convertibility in the lobby?" you would have seen everybody in the place dive for his briefcase.

Well, things didn't work out the way we all envi-

sioned. Looking back, it was sheer hubris to think that a bunch of economists could reshape or even importantly influence the entire Russian economy. A few of the visiting profs used to talk like superstar surgeons rescuing their patients. There was a huge and absurd gap between the specificity of their economic programs and the actual chaos of Russian life. But more embarrassing in hindsight was the amount of slavering attention that was given to all the different plans and their authors. The false supposition was that the guys holding the press conferences were running the country.

We also didn't appreciate how much cultural capital, in the form of basic qualities like trust, it takes to run a modern economy. When you went into a Russian apartment building, you'd notice the apartments were neat and nice, but the hallways were dark and stank of urine. The inhabitants didn't even trust one another enough to work together to make their common areas safe and habitable. Foreigners always remarked on Russians' rudeness, which made life more brutal than in, say, Central Europe. But somehow these cultural understandings were rarely factored into people's perception of the economic landscape.

Boris Yeltsin

Kevin Chadwick

Most important, the technocrats and their camp followers underestimated the human capacity for evil. We didn't anticipate the extent to which a few rich oligarchs would grab everything and crush competition and change, the way in which thugs would stoop to kill bankers, the extent to which bribery and corruption would replace normal economic logic when it came to doing deals, the extent to which smart Russians would see that plunder was a good way to get rich while entrepreneurialism was fruitless. The prevailing view in those years, as I recall it, was that of course the nomenklatura was enriching itself. Of course the top Commies were privatizing things to themselves. But once the marketplace got established, the efficient bureaucrats would thrive and the bumbling ones would go bankrupt. A middle class would be established that would perpetually support reform. Everything would gradually sort itself out. In retrospect, that reasoning seems painfully innocent.

It's not clear that with a different set of Western advisers, or even no advisers at all, Russia would be in better shape than it is. Most of the economic advice was no doubt sound. Nor is there an obvious answer to the question, "What advice should have been given instead?" Nonetheless, it is arguable that advice from law and order experts like FBI agents should have been given as much priority as advice from macroeconomists. But for a whole host of reasons, in part having to do with the cultural prejudices of our policy community, law and order didn't seem as pressing as monetary policy. It is also deeply revealing of how our policy world works that in this great historic moment of the founding of a regime, the people who were most prominent in Russia and in the West were economic specialists. It was economists in Russia like Yegor Gaidar who were the shining knights of reform. And the most famous and purportedly influential Western advisers were economists from the IMF and the universities. There were relatively few of the sort of political generalists America was lucky enough to have on hand at its own founding, like Alexander Hamilton and James Madison.

In Russia in the early nineties, everyone understood the importance of establishing the rule of law, but somehow when discussion among the policy johnnies at places like Harvard's Kennedy School got going fast and furious, economic considerations always seemed more significant than cultural, moral, and political-theory questions. In the academic world especially, economists seem as hard-headed and self-confident as the political theorists seem detached and confused.

Looking back, the person who had the best grasp of events may have been Boris Yeltsin. Lacking much economic knowledge, he at least knew how to deal with concentrated power. He had already smashed what was left of the power of the Communist state. As Russian president, he backed the privatization plans, which, however insufficient in themselves, were the best hope for dispersing economic power. In the years since, despite all his erratic behavior, Yeltsin has sometimes tried to break up the oligarchy (at other times, of course, he's clung to it for survival). Even the firing of the Chernomyrdin government five months ago can

be seen as a last desperate effort to do that.

Of course Yeltsin has failed. The oligarchs have won. And the president now seems sad and pathetic. But I suspect history will regard Boris Yeltsin as a giant. In his own earthy way, he understood how power could shift and flow, even if he never understood how capital could shift and flow. At bottom, he learned from the failure of Marxist theory. Economics doesn't determine everything.

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THE CULT OF DIANA

by Waller R. Newell

THIS TIME LAST YEAR, I arrived in London just days after the death of the princess of Wales. The city was paralyzed by the rites of mourning. Every park and monument was piled yards high with floral tributes, sometimes for blocks. Amidst the bouquets were thousands of tiny, elaborate shrines—photos nestled among burning candles, adorned with pieces of costume jewelry, teddy bears, and ribbons. These handmade shrines had a New Age quality, evocative of many religions but obedient to none. One showed the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus and John the Baptist, suggesting a parallel to Diana and her two sons. In a giant chalk drawing made by a street person on the Embankment, a dark-haired Diana merged with a Hindu goddess; the picture, entitled "Tears for a Princess," was surrounded by burning tapers, with a kind of causeway marked off on either side, evocative of the cargo cults of New Guinea, full of chalk inscriptions, prayers, and poems left by passers-by. When I started taking photos, the self-appointed priest ran toward me shouting, "You're the ones who killed her!"

The effect was bizarre, the overall impact simultaneously moving and embarrassing. The crowds were hushed, not only from reverence but also from the sheer stupefaction of those like me who could not explain how millions of people in the land of the stiff upper lip had suddenly descended into paganism. The outpouring, moreover, was not just a British phenomenon. The funeral service in Westminster Abbey was seen on television all over the world. For Diana, in her apotheosis, was no longer just the princess of Wales. She was, as one of the floral tributes proclaimed, "Diana of Love," our first global celebrity princess.

This Diana stood for moral abstractions like Peace and Compassion. Her televised obsequies—complete

with Elton John's musical eulogy (a reworked tribute to Marilyn Monroe), its CD proceeds designated for charity—were in a line of celebrity love-ins going back to the counterculture of the sixties and the peace movement of the eighties: from the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" (1967) to John and Yoko's "Give Peace a Chance" (1969) to the mass celebrity anthem in aid of African famine victims, "We Are The World" (1985). Through these rituals of virtual community, celebrities function as a new global opinion elite, aiding the impoverished of Bangladesh, battling landmines, or championing Tibetan Buddhists on no authority other than their fame. However worthy the causes, what the cult of Diana has in common with the earlier celebrity-led effusions is that it places few demands on its followers. No need to know much about actual events or issues or the background to public policy. Just have the right gut feeling. Diana married the venerable glamour of the royal family to the New Age aristocracy of caring.

By the end, of course, Diana far transcended the Windsor connection. Once she divorced herself from the royal family, she was caught up in currents she did not comprehend. She became an icon, and onto her millions of people around the world projected their yearnings and fantasies. If celebrities are the new opinion elite of our increasingly depoliticized culture, in death Diana, who loved the company of the glitterati, became their celestial monarch. At a recent tribute, *Baywatch* star David Hasselhoff prayed to her to end the rain, and claimed she did.

Waller R. Newell

Diana as a Hindu goddess, on a London street

Today, vast participatory rites of spontaneous sentimentality about moral and political issues not only encroach on the sphere of religion, they are celebrated as if they were more authentic than action grounded in narrative history and received wisdom. People today do not, for the most part, acquire their perceptions of major events from schools (where the teaching of history has languished) or from reading. They receive them from the mass media—television, movies, and popular music. A worldwide satellite feed of celebrities singing that Mankind Is One is more real to a young person, more in tune with the quicksilver impulses of his adolescence and the vagueness of his education, than the dense complexities of diplomacy, strategy, or political psychology.

Before the rise of the counterculture, it was assumed that the right to influence public opinion was linked to one's personal integrity and relevant expertise. But with the sixties came a new kind of celebrity that is with us still, the millionaire anti-hero. Albert Schweitzer and Eleanor Roosevelt yielded to Jack Nicholson, Mick Jagger, and Madonna as cultural heroes and role models. The counterculture scorned the bourgeois virtues as hopelessly hypocritical and alienating. Thus, the more unrestrained you were in your personal life—the more titanic your excesses and luxuries—the better-suited you were to preach the new anti-morality. The proletariat of Marxist theory gave way to the celebritariat of the stylishly disaffected, hip, and hedonistic. Who needed knowledge of policy, history, ideology, or culture to embrace the values of Love and Peace? All you needed was the right vibes, freedom from hang-ups, and a faith that the system must change. Today's celebrity can escape censure for the most disgraceful behavior if he or she embraces the right causes. No one better typifies the new fame than Diana's friend and most public mourner, the aging rock star Elton John. A profile in *Vanity Fair* last year revealed an overgrown adolescent whose restless boredom, when he's not recording or performing, seeks relief through a staggeringly vulgar consumerism.

As people adjust to a new world of global economic processes and moral crusades, such as environmentalism, they are urged to "think globally, act locally." The middle realm of nation-states, each with its unique historical pedigree, seems to fade. So does the need to know much about the past or even to appreciate political realities as elementary as the difference between liberal democracy and tyranny.

Views grounded in knowledge, evidence, and tradition are seen as outmoded in an emerging world without borders. The Left searches for a new International of the dispossessed (students, environmentalists, aboriginals), while on the right, Peter Drucker tells us that our heritage of constitutional government, stretching back to Locke and the *Federalist Papers*, with its checks and balances and tendency to overregulation, is the chief remaining impediment to global

economic efficiency. Both sides are seeking (as Jonathan Schell put it) "to reinvent politics, reinvent the world." If destiny is determined by global processes, why attend to the civic culture of one's own country?

It turns out, however, that caring about distant abstractions is no substitute for engaging with one's own culture and traditions. To the extent that the new utopian visions are believed, they lead to fatalism and ennui. Into the psychological vacuum flows the pantheism of the New Age, the pseudo-religion that conjures forth the cyberspace kingdom of Love, Peace, and Caring, peopled with celebrity courtiers—and reigned over now by Diana.

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Surrendering to Saddam

by John R. Bolton

In the most stinging indictment yet of the Clinton administration's Iraq policy, United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter resigned last week. He wrote that Washington's unwillingness to hold Iraq to the letter of numerous Security Council resolutions "makes a mockery of the [U.N. weapons-inspection] mission." In an interview, Ritter was even more emphatic: "I've poured my heart and soul into disarming Iraq, and this means I was wasting my time. It means we lost the Gulf War. . . . The whole world should be shamed by this."

And particularly the Clinton administration. It has been worse than incompetent regarding Iraq: It has been duplicitous. In early August, faced with renewed defiance by Saddam Hussein, the administration radically altered longstanding American policy. Instead of threatening—and if necessary using—force to compel Iraqi compliance with U.N. mandates, the administration is backing down. Worst of all, the president's agents steadfastly maintain they haven't changed a thing.

There have always been three broad approaches to handling post-Gulf War Iraq. First, containment: Some strategists believe that simply deterring Iraq's use of weapons of mass destruction will protect our interests and that intrusive U.N. inspections intended to eliminate such weapons are unnecessary. Second is the administration's policy, which one official calls Whack-a-Mole: Support the weapons-inspection mission (UNSCOM) and continued economic sanctions,

and whenever Saddam acts up intolerably, whack him with military force. Third is the policy I support: Admit that the administration's middle-ground approach is not sustainable, will not achieve its objectives, and will fritter away America's position of strength. Only overthrowing Saddam Hussein can eliminate the Iraqi threat to peace.

The administration has now clearly adopted the first policy, while continuing to give lip service to the second. Had the policy been changed because the administration concluded that sanctions and inspections had failed, or that the containment model was superior for reasons of either cost or benefit, it could (and should) have said so. It could have explained why its calculus had changed and defended its new approach. Some would have applauded. Others would have objected vigorously to reneging on the vow to eliminate Iraq's weapons-of-mass-destruction capability and shifting to a policy of containment. And the debate would have been on.

But instead of announcing the change of policy forthrightly, the secretary of state has chosen to mislead. Hailed at the time of her swearing-in as one who could explain foreign policy to the American people, Madeleine Albright has apparently decided to spin them instead. She asserts in public that our policy is to "keep Saddam in his cage," but she does something quite different behind the scenes. Consider just one aspect of the deception. NBC, then the *Washington Post*, reported that for several months the Department of State had discouraged UNSCOM from mounting aggressive "challenge" inspections of Iraqi sites suspected of involvement with weapons of mass destruction. The *Post* said that Albright herself had telephoned chief U.N. inspector Richard Butler on August 4 to cancel two inspections poised to be launched from Baghdad.

Confronted with this report, Secretary Albright denied it: "I have never told Ambassador Butler how to do his job." Pressed for details, according to the *Post*, "she and those speaking for her declined to answer further questions about her August 4" conversation. Just days later, however, the secretary not only acknowledged speaking with Butler, but she argued that UNSCOM should not muddy the waters by proceeding "with intrusive inspections [the Iraqis] would have blocked anyway." "In this context," writes Secretary Albright, Butler "came to his own conclusion that it was wiser" not to proceed with the UNSCOM inspections. This is too cute by half. The press has reported overwhelming evidence that the administration made comprehensive efforts to rein in UNSCOM over a period of several months, even using the CIA to hamper UNSCOM's work. Butler is saying publicly, "I will not preside over an empty shell," and speculation about his own resignation is now inevitable, fueled by leaks from the U.N. secretary general's aides.

In fact, Albright is as good as arguing that if UNSCOM refrains from offending Saddam, Saddam will not offend us. The conventional term for this policy is appeasement. Secretary Albright understandably prefers recycled bluster: "We have ruled nothing out, including the use of force." Foreign diplomats, however, understood exactly what Albright was doing, and one of them said to the *Washington Post*, "Madeleine was very sensible, very realistic in avoiding a crisis with Iraq." Perhaps she, like the president she serves, needs a better strategy for dealing with the truth.

RHETORIC IS NOT POLICY, ESPECIALLY IN DEALING WITH THE HARD MAN IN BAGHDAD. WHOM DOES MADELEINE ALBRIGHT THINK SHE IS DECEIVING?

Rhetoric is not policy, especially in dealing with the hard man in Baghdad. Why is the secretary dissembling with her fellow citizens when the object of her policy—Saddam Hussein—understands better than anyone else that American policy has been dramatically reined in? Whom does she think she is deceiving, and for what purpose? Even when rhetoric yields to action, as in the cruise-missile strikes against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan, one wonders about the administration's real objective. Thus, in explaining the strike in Sudan, Albright and her colleagues assiduously avoid mentioning that Iraq may be producing chemical weapons in Sudan in an attempt to evade the UNSCOM inspection regime. Nor do they address why military action against terrorist groups makes sense, though such action against Saddam apparently does not.

Our ability to rally international coalitions in difficult circumstances depends on many things, including the strength of our interests, the resources at our disposal, and the character of our leaders. Most of all, it depends on our leaders' straightforwardness and the American people's consequent willingness to trust the government with difficult global responsibilities. The worst result of the administration's malfeasance on Iraq is not that it has allowed Saddam to escape from the "cage" that Secretary Albright talks about so much. It is that Americans and the rest of the world now see plainly a hollowness at the center of the Clinton foreign policy that no amount of spin can hide.

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1968: A Revolting Generation Looks Back

By Christopher Caldwell

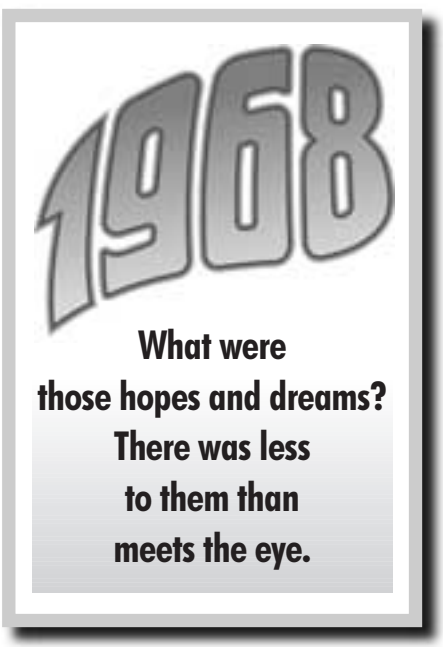
Thirty years ago this month, Bobby Kennedy died. What might have been? Did hope exit with him? Or was he over rated?

—America Online symposium

The striking thing about the rash of 1968 commemorations—the articles, the documentaries, the books—is that none of the reminiscing parties has identified the grievance that blew the lid off the civilized world 30 years ago. Until they can, another question is bound to take center-stage: Why *30* years? Who commemorates the 30th anniversary of anything.

The best answer thus far has been provided by Jacques Julliard, editor of the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Thirty years, he points out, is a generation, and now is the natural time for the most generation-conscious generation of all to assess its achievements. "All of a sudden," he writes, the '68ers "are historical."

In other words, it's the *generation* of '68, not any particular event it lived through, that is being celebrated. The events of that year—the assassinations, the riots, the wars—are pretexts for a discussion of that generation's "ideals," their "hopes," their "dreams." But what were those ideals, those hopes and dreams? There was less to them than meets the eye. Reduced to its essentials, the generation of '68 was pushing an agenda of self-aggrandizement that, thanks to the baby boom, it happened to have the size and social standing to carry out.



Vietnam was of course the focus of most American campus politics, but that hardly explains the student uprisings in Mexico, England, Ireland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and France. And most of the political/cultural business that late-sixties youth in America deluded themselves they were mobilizing around had *already happened*. Timothy Leary was ejected from Harvard for his LSD demonstrations in 1963. The Civil Rights Act passed Congress in 1964. Medicaid and other Great Society legislation became law in 1965. Even the vaunted "end of hope"—which the young radicals flatter themselves they bore so bravely in the wake of assassinations—was old hat. The "Port Huron Statement" of the Students for a Democratic Society bemoaned a loss of ideals in 1962, even before President Kennedy was killed.

Early SDS activist Todd Gitlin, in *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, described his own intellectual predicament with considerable honesty: "Asked to write a statement of purpose for a *New Republic* series called, 'Thoughts of the Young Radicals,' I agonized for weeks about what it was, in fact, I *wanted*."

If not even the participants could figure out what they wanted, it's hardly surprising that the student movement—judged as a political movement—was a failure. In November 1967, only 10 percent of Americans favored withdrawal from Vietnam. A year later, the hated Richard Nixon was elected president. It is a commonplace to describe Nixon's success in 1968 as a right-wing reaction to sixties protest. But even Democrats behaved as if the political landscape were shifting rightwards—and well before Nixon's triumph. Robert Kennedy, debating Eugene McCarthy during the California pri-

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maries, backpedaled on withdrawing American troops from Vietnam. And in response to McCarthy's suggestion that suburbs should share the cost of public housing, Kennedy (the great racial "healer") accused McCarthy of wanting "to take ten thousand black people and move them into Orange County."

Hubert Humphrey, too, seemed to think the country's heart was on the right. "I think we ought to quit pretending that Mayor Daley did anything wrong. He didn't," said Humphrey after the police clashes with rioters at the Chicago convention. "The obscenity, the profanity, the filth that was uttered night after night in front of the hotels was an insult to every woman, every mother, every daughter, indeed, every human being. . . . You'd put anybody in jail for that kind of talk."

True, opposition to the war rose, but contemporaneous polls showed distrust for the student anti-war movement rising *pari passu*. In fact, according to William Strauss and Neil Howe, in *Generations*, the largest pro-war subgroup in the late sixties were baby boomers who had not attended college. (A quarter-century later, this same cohort would show higher support for the Gulf War than any other group.) Between sixties protesters and their antagonists lies an insufficiently explored division—that of class. The working classes had almost nothing to do with what we call "the sixties." As Robert Daniels remarks in *The Year of the Heroic Guerrilla: World Revolution and Counterrevolution in 1968*:

> The chances of igniting popular revolution by means of New Left-style confrontation are nil. Where the great majority have become reasonably well fixed in matters of creature comforts, they are much more likely to respond to disorders and provocations by turning to those leaders who claim to represent order and tradition—in other words, the right.

What a giveaway that "creature comforts" is! For Daniels and New Left-sympathizers like him, the best and the brightest cared about "ideals," while the proletariat clung to "creature comforts" like so many head of livestock. Daniels betrays an enduring secret of the sixties protesters: an elitism that played itself out in a poignant semi-ritual whenever the police were called in to quell a campus takeover. As Roger Rosenblatt notes in *Coming Apart: A Memoir of the Harvard Wars of 1969*:

> Many of the cops who busted University Hall were the sons, nephews, cousins, and grandsons of all those Irish immigrants who . . . had been treated like the servants they in fact were by generations of rich Harvard boys. . . . The boys called all the servants Biddie and Mack and passed them in the street as if they were walking through them. . . . Even if history was not haunting their minds, there was always the cops' resentment of the fact that students as privileged and cosseted as Harvard's should act as they did. The students—often seen as arrogant and unlovable—might rail against Vietnam, but there was scant danger of their going there. They were protected, as the sons and nephews of the cops were not.

The anti-draft demonstrators, that is, sought the very *opposite* of Power to the People. What's striking is how few of the '68 generation are bothered by such selfish elitism, even in retrospect. Indeed, as he bemoans the unfortunate spread of sixties hedonism "down through less educated and less philosophical strata of the Sixties Generation," Daniels seems still to partake of the heedless upper-class contempt that marked 1968-style leftism.

A Left that turns its back on the working classes has for three decades been a norm disguised as an anomaly. Is it worth noting that of all the postwar developments despised by the sixties protesters, the ones despised most fervently and most unanimously—from Levittowns to the modern kitchen—were the most egalitarian ones? The ones that the protesters themselves had grown up taking for granted?

What 1968 did was introduce a politics in which the problems of production and prosperity are assumed solved. A good standard of living was no mean achievement for Depression-era men who had spent their teens and twenties dodging German and Japanese gunfire. But their children wanted something more exalted. They had little use for Marxist dogma. Franco-German student agitator Daniel Cohn-Bendit made this plain when, at the height of the May 1968 unrest in Paris, he referred to the Communist literary icon Louis Aragon as a "Stalinist piece of s—." But the students valued Marx as a progressive credential, provided his writings could be watered down and rendered relevant by one of the growing number of gurus of "alienation." Herbert Marcuse, for instance, who sought to synthesize Freud and Marx into a psychoanalytic socialism that would honor states of mind. Or Erich Fromm, who tried with less success to use Marx's recently translated *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* to apply the concept of "alienation" not just to the Labor Theory of Value but to the housewife trapped in a prefab house full of soulless appliances in a treeless suburb.

Theodore Roszak was the first to describe where these new strands of political argument were leading,

in his brilliant 1969 book, *The Making of a Counter Culture*. Roszak claimed that "technocratic" social organization and a pervasive managerial ethos had created a "Myth of Objective Consciousness," which impoverished human relations, making life lonely and frightening at any income level. The "prime strategy of the technocracy," he warned, "is to level life down to a standard of so-called living that technical expertise can cope with." Given that, the young were right to be "distrustful of authority and suspicious of leadership," even—and especially—of old-style communism, which *took for granted* a dehumanizing industrial order. Alienation, not immiseration, was "the central political problem of our day."

AP

Hippies taunting National Guardsmen at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago

Roszak's insight was largely right. But the politics that arose from it was directly in conflict with the politics that had gone before—indeed, with ideology as most people *still* understand it today. The Left split into a "socialist" political wing and a "Woodstock" lifestyle wing. As in cartoons where the coyote saws off the roadrunner's branch and it is the tree that falls, the Woodstock limb survived and the socialist tree collapsed. It was the newfangled and faddish-looking political tendency that proved enduring. Compare the legacy of the Beatles with the legacy of the Industrial Areas Foundation. Compare the legacy of birth-control liberalization with the legacy of SDS's economic position papers.

The victory of lifestyle politics over class politics had huge consequences. It broke the lower classes' monopoly on grievances against society; the well-off—or subgroups of them, presenting themselves as "women," or "gays," or "students"—could suddenly be "alienated," too. And they pushed their claims of oppression under a wholly new type of political discourse. The Myth of Objective Consciousness could not—by definition—be dethroned through rational argument. As Herbert Marcuse said, "A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization." Because that civilization was so reasonable, so democratic, to argue on *its* rational terms was merely to make oneself a dupe of power. So sex and drugs and, most of all, "feelings" became appropriate weapons in the political arena.

A politics of production was replaced by a politics of feelings. This new politics turned the lack of a broad-based Marxist-style radicalism in America, long lamented by the Left, into a colossal advantage for the United States—even, paradoxically, a key to American global hegemony three decades later. American progressives were far more supple in adapting to new social priorities than the European Lefts bound to their Communist/laborite institutions. In fact, with its international abortion harangues, its racial quotas increasingly imitated in other countries, its "recovery" industry, its pushing of "women's rights" on traditionalist societies, the United States has assumed a role none would have predicted for it in the 1960s: It has become the world capital of left-wing politics.

One danger was clear from the outset. To dethrone expertise was to dethrone authority, and once you do that you run the risk of replacing it with a new set of crackpots, cults, and con artists, as Roszak realized. "It is the cultural experiments that draw the giddy interest of just those middle-class swingers who are the bastion of the technocratic order," he wrote. If the counterculture were to fail to overturn the technocracy, it could well leave things worse than before:

> It isn't far to go before the counter culture finds itself swamped with cynical or self-deceived opportunists who become, or conveniently let themselves be

> turned into, spokesmen for youthful disaffiliation. . . . And then, for good reason, the counter culture begins to look like nothing so much as a world-wide publicity stunt. One can easily despair of the possibility that it will survive these twin perils: on the one hand, the weakness of its cultural rapport with the disadvantaged; on the other, its vulnerability to exploitation as an amusing side show of the swinging society. . . . If the counter culture should bog down in a colorful morass of unexamined symbols, gestures, fashions of dress, and slogans, then it will provide little that can be turned into a lifelong commitment—except, and then pathetically, for those who can reconcile themselves to becoming superannuated hangers-on of the campus, the love-in, the rock club. It will finish as a temporary style, continually sloughed off and left behind for the next wave of adolescents . . .

Any politics arising from elite complaints and based on feelings rather than "objective conditions" was open to abuse. It was only a matter of time before lifestyle demands were masquerading as political ones, and self-interest as social conscience. This might explain why anti-Vietnam student protests all but stopped after Nixon announced the end of the draft in 1970, even though the next three years would see the most ferocious bombing of the entire war. What could put a bigger crimp in one's lifestyle, after all, than getting blown to pieces by a grenade in the Mekong Delta?

That's why it is reasonable to ask whether sixties youth ever really shared the Roszak diagnosis, whether they really *were* in revolt against "technocratic totalitarianism" and "elitist managerialism." For the aging counterculture has become today's seatbelt-law culture, the product-liability culture, the no-smoking culture, the speech-code culture. The 1968 generation has extended the "unfreedom" of Marcuse's technocracy into areas that the old American elites could scarcely have imagined.

In every country where it once existed, the counterculture has since bound itself intimately to power and government. If the protesters of the sixties despised technocracy, it was clearly not the authoritarian aspects they objected to. In a masterful piece of reporting in the *Financial Times* this spring, Andrew Jack revisited a protest at France's elite Ecole Nationale d'Administration in 1968. He showed that those ENA grads who had refused their diplomas as an act of political protest were today all in powerful government positions. They made a big show of giving up the trappings of hierarchy, but exhibited a red-in-tooth-and-claw unwillingness to relinquish hierarchical power.

Many proud scions of 1968 are given to complaining that today's historians dwell too much on the superficial, libertine, recreational side of the year. But the more we learn about the sixties, the more it seems that it was the *political* side (the socialism, the anti-war protests) that was recreational. The seemingly recreational, the sex, the drugs, the fashion, the identity politics—that was where the serious business was taking place.

The most nuanced understanding of this paradox can be found in Paul Berman's 1996 essay collection *A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968*. Berman examines the problem of prosperity from another angle. Stanley Rothman and Robert Lichter before him had described the liberation the activists sought as being "freedom from guilt over one's privilege," but Berman is more specific. He notes that the parents of the '68 generation had all survived the Depression; in France, many of the leaders' parents were Holocaust survivors. This made it next to impossible for the young to assume moral authority, for "their own childish lives were singularly free of suffering or heroism." But such an explanation goes only so far. Otherwise, why should the sixties in Germany and Japan—where the Oedipal conflict was, to say the least, different—have so closely resembled the French and American ones? If as astute an observer as Berman can't name the specific grievance of the sixties, it is worth entertaining the radical possibility that there was none.

Perhaps the sixties was based on nothing.

Or, more precisely, a something that is a nothing: the sheer demographic mass of the generation that is now celebrating itself. More babies were born in 1948-53 than had been born in the previous 30 years. By 1970, fully 18 percent of the adult population was

between 18 and 24. By 1980, with the entire baby boom having found its way into the electorate, those born between 1946 and 1962 made up 38 percent of the voting-age population—as they will, more or less, until boomers begin to die of old age in significant numbers. Roszak noticed the all-importance of mere demographic bulk: "The young seem to *feel* the potential power of their numbers," he wrote. "They have been pampered, exploited, idolized, and made almost nauseatingly much of."

That's because, in a democratic society dependent on technology and newly dominated by mass media, to be a *big* generation is almost *ipso facto* to be an *elite* generation. Let's look first at technology. The very "technocratic" society Roszak speaks of spawned a need for administrators and a massive increase in college attendance.

As early as 1960, the United States had more undergraduates than farmers. Education spending rose from $742 million per year at the end of World War II to $7 billion in 1965, while the university population tripled from 1955 to 1970. In a democracy, this is an extraordinary concentration of power—not just in raw numbers of people, but in per capita education, training, and credentials. Now, mass media. If Jacques Ellul is right that "propaganda" is only the sum total of mass media buzzing around society, then the largest age cohort in society—that is, the largest advertising market—will almost automatically create a spontaneous rah-rah campaign on behalf of its wishes and its politics.

Over the long haul, as a result of technological and media conditions *already in place*, the generation of 1968 was able to suck power away from both the generation above and the generation below. The "Silent Generation" of 1930-1945 was pushed aside by sheer force of numbers. That there was never a president from that generation has nothing to do with its temperament; rather, by the time they grew old enough to *produce* presidents, around 1992, their cohort accounted for an anemic 13 percent of the electorate, vastly outnumbered by the boomers who produced and elected Bill Clinton. Once the boomers came of age, these two generations shared responsibility for running a technological society. The difference is that the younger generation had been specifically educated in huge numbers to run such a society, while the older generation had not.

Meanwhile, "Generation X," those born after 1960, have gained a reputation as listless slackers not because they're lacking in inner resources but because, by the time they began arriving in the workforce in the early 1980s, all the positions on the most promising career tracks were clogged to overflow by baby boomers jealously protecting their status.

Napoleon said that to understand a man, you have to know what was happening in the world when he was 20. Napoleon's aphorism is based on the premise that at 20, people are still suggestible, that they're still being *influenced*. But the 20-year-olds of 1968, because of their preponderance, have always been influencers. As university attendance ceased during the 1960s to be an exceptional privilege, the exceptional discipline that once characterized university was felt to be more onerous, and the 20-year-old boomers demanded libertarian changes. At 50, this very same generation has ruthlessly reimposed a presixties moral regime to keep the streets safe and the campuses quiet—in other words, to keep their own 20-year-old children in line. Some legacy. What kind of revolutionaries spend their entire maturity seeking to undo the revolution they made as children? I'll tell you what kind: ones with no values, only interests. Those sociologists who look at the '68 generation as having brought about some kind of sea-change in human character are wrong.

Todd Gitlin is closer to the mark in a portrait he draws of the New York Democratic activist and congressman Allard Lowenstein, who laid the groundwork in 1968 for both the McCarthy and the Kennedy campaigns. Lowenstein, Gitlin writes,

> had a knack for galvanizing bright, competent, earnest, well-placed, go-getting young men and women—student government presidents, college newspaper editors, seminarians, Peace Corps returnees. By upbringing, training, and ambition, these children of affluence were winners. They had been raised and schooled to believe in the promise of America and they hated the war partly because it meant that the object of their affections, the system that rewarded their proficiency, was damaged goods. They were the inheritors of the vision of a moral America, and they did not want their moral capital squandered.

Today, they run the country. One of them sits in the White House. If they did not overthrow "the system," it is because the system served their needs well. Because of their numbers, the '68 generation—or at least the university-educated segment of it—was destined to be a ruling elite no matter what they did. Their "revolution," from the moment they left home for college, was aimed at carving out—in the heart of drab, prefab, egalitarian, one-size-fits-all America—a niche that was fit for such a ruling elite to live in. In this, the rebels of 1968 proved to be winners indeed. ♦

Bill Clinton's Quiz Show

The Steep Decline of Liberal Moralism

By Noemie Emery

Richard Goodwin, a liberal light little seen since the Johnson era, emerged recently to lecture us about sex and mendacity, defending President Clinton from the sex-crazed hordes bearing down on him. Sex, he told us in a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed piece, is never an issue, and lies are lies only sometimes, depending on who tells them and what they are about. Lies told to divert, obstruct, subvert, or otherwise interfere with the Starr investigation or the Paula Jones lawsuit are completely legitimate. Why? These cases have "nothing to do with politics," Goodwin said, "nothing to do with the public issues that influence our well-being as citizens . . . I myself enjoy reading about sex, all kinds of sex. But I do not disguise my purely prurient interests with the claim that some important public interest is involved."

But Goodwin and his kind were not always so forgiving about lies in high places, or about lying in general. They once believed in America as a great moral construct, and in the presidency as its expression, an office intended to represent and embody the nobler side of the nation. They believed in law, and in truth, as irreducible values. They identified with lawmen, not with liars and felons. And they *hung tough* about the truth.

> AMERICAN LIBERALS ONCE BELIEVED IN LAW, AND IN TRUTH, AS IRREDUCIBLE VALUES. THEY IDENTIFIED WITH LAWMEN, NOT WITH LIARS AND FELONS.

In the late 1950s, Goodwin himself played Kenneth Starr, to the William J. Clinton of Charles Van Doren, the tousled-haired scion of an intellectual dynasty who was even more winsome than Clinton himself. The case was a government investigation of *Twenty-One*, a rigged quiz show that Van Doren appeared on, in which, to keep audience interest high, attractive contestants were fed answers to questions, and others, less lovable, were told to miss questions when the sponsors thought it was time to let them go.

In the film *Quiz Show*, Goodwin (played by Rob Morrow) is the white knight, conscience personified, the legitimate voice of the wrath of the nation, the counterpoint to the pervasive corruption around him. The only problem is that, by Goodwin's current standards, there was no reason at all for the state to go after the show, as the deceit revealed in Van Doren and others was rather less sinister than that of which Goodwin wants Clinton absolved. The *Twenty-One* scandal fell far short of the events that should interest the voters or the government (according to this view). No evil intent was expressed toward the audience—merely a wish to give it a more intense and dramatically scripted viewing experience than chance alone would provide. Some people got money they didn't deserve, but the ones handing it out were the sponsors, who appeared happy to spend it.

And the motives of the rigged contestants were no worse than Clinton's: He wanted sex, they wanted money—two understandable human objectives, and the giving of both was largely consensual. No outside parties seem to have been damaged. No one died on foreign shores; no government policies were changed. So why then did Goodwin harass all those people 40 years ago? What was all the fuss about?

Seen today, *Quiz Show* appears as a template, a model for deceit and exposure. As in Watergate and Whitewater and this current scandal, there is a crime and a cover-up; then a stonewall; then a breakthrough; then a deluge. There are defectors and turncoats; tapes made; accusations of lunacy. An ex-contestant, kicked off the program for terminal nerdiness, threatens to expose the producers; his rantings are taped, and then edited to make him sound crazy and discredit his tale in advance. This works for a time, but more proof emerges: Another contestant mails

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himself a registered letter, containing the questions to be asked of him, and the answers to them, two days before the (live) program is aired. Threats are made, but there is soon yet more evidence: A John Dean defects. A Linda Tripp gets scared, and starts taping. A Monica Lewinsky shows up with a dress. As the pressure rises, Van Doren stonewalls with charm, the same charm that has made him a national cover boy.

But the real parallels are with the kinescope tapes (not yet videotapes). Mesmerized, Goodwin/Morrow

Archive photos

Rob Morrow, at right, plays Richard Goodwin in Quiz Show.

sits through hours of reels, observing the performance of cheats on the hot seat, watching their displays of scripted sincerity as they pretend they are genuine. They furrow their brows. They pat their brows (not wipe them—that would look wrong, they are told). They stumble and hesitate, as instructed. They—yes—bite their lips. In time, when Hollywood makes the real Clinton movie—think *Quiz Show* plus *Nixon* plus *Primary Colors*—there will doubtless be many canned shots such as these, as the star is taken through many screenings, hair changing somewhat in color and contour, but with never a change in tone of voice: "I didn't inhale"; "I was never drafted"; "I never slept with that woman" (or that woman or that woman); "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky," and "I never told anybody to lie, not a single time." And Richard Goodwin may have a part in this flick, too—not a star turn, like his role in *Quiz Show*, but a bit part, a walk-on; a Rabbi Korff reprise from the Watergate saga, helping the lead limp off stage.

Goodwin, alas, isn't the only Camelot relic to miss the point. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., too, has been weighing in, clucking that not only were Clinton's tiny white lies unimportant but that even thinking about them is in the poorest taste. "If Mr. Clinton is not being truthful, his deceptions have to do with his sex life," he informs us. "Most people have lied about their sex lives at one time or another. You lie to protect yourself, your spouse, your lover, your children. Gentlemen always lie about their sex lives. Only a cad would tell the truth about his sexual affairs."

Well. Gentlemen may lie, and perhaps have done so, but the definition hardly applies in this case. This, after all, is no gentleman. This is our President, the man who sics his henchmen on women who threaten his power. Do gentlemen trash ladies, who both accept and reject his advances? Do gentlemen deny ladies their rights to fair trials? Do gentlemen lie under oath? How about trying to mislead the public, defaming the names of many dead people who are blameless of crime, if not of sin? Gallantly, Dick Goodwin names other adulterers (including some about whom nothing has ever been proven), but he, like Schlesinger, must know that this isn't the point. How many times were John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Franklin Roosevelt sued for harassment? How many women were they accused of assaulting? How many were they accused of trying to threaten or blackmail? When did they lie under oath?

Goodwin and Schlesinger—those relentless critics of Nixon and Watergate—are now quick to defend lies and liars. What made them so? Could it be that the liar in question is the first Democrat to be elected president since 1976, and the first one to be reelected since 1944? Goodwin and Schlesinger were Kennedy hangers-on, who spent the years after 1963 in search of successors, none of whom seemed to pan out. Camelot II died in 1968 with Robert F. Kennedy. Camelot III drove off Dike Bridge at Chappaquiddick in 1969. Schlesinger tried to spin this last episode into a growth experience for Edward M. Kennedy, but no one was buying, and in 1980 it became clear that this horse had been sidelined.

There followed 12 years of heirlessness (and Republican presidents) until 1992, when the charisma gap was made up by Bill Clinton, assisted by Hillary, a

badly dressed Jacqueline Kennedy who vowed to run rings around Mrs. Roosevelt. But the closest Clinton could come to FDR (or to JFK, for that matter) was a few weeks on crutches. The Clintons lost health care through their own misjudgments and since then have been forced to play defense. After much tawdriness, it has become clear that the Clinton White House is Dogpatch, not Camelot IV, and that 35 years of liberal preening have given us only a smoother, glad-handing Richard Nixon, with merely the very worst traits of John Kennedy.

So how do you admit that things turned out this badly, when your whole stock in trade is your morals and prescience? You don't. You pretend (a) that nothing is wrong or (b) that whatever is wrong doesn't matter. At this stage, Plan A is impossible, so Plan B has been wheeled into action. When the stench from the Rose Garden is too strong to ignore, you try to describe it as attar of roses, and not the manure it really is. If there are lies, damned lies, and statistics, there are also damned lies and lies that don't matter. Damned lies are lies told by your enemies. Lies that don't matter are told by your friends.

And when your friends don't like laws, laws too don't matter and can be skirted with impunity. Clinton is a man who enforces laws for other people that he feels no obligation to follow; a man who lies and breaks laws with no remorse or compunction; who utters the truth only when cornered; who believes in one law for himself and another for others; who breaks codes that he himself signs into law. This is a lawless executive, the prime threat to civil and orderly government. And in this, Arthur Schlesinger sees merely a pretext to muck about in the seamy affairs of Our Leader, and he calls Clinton's defenses the acts of a "gentleman."

"Many people seem to feel that questions no one has a right to ask do not call for truthful answers," Schlesinger says. Oh? What a pity those in the dock during the Watergate hearings never knew that they could decide for themselves what their tormentors had a right to ask, and could tailor their answers accordingly.

This strikes at the heart of the law. Politics is above all the great confrontation between law and power; the battle to save law from the transgressions of power; to make sure power stays on law's side. This is our central political drama. It is transnational, it is bipartisan, and it is eternal. It is what politics is. It was the issue in 1215, in 1640, in 1688, in 1776, in 1974, and it still is the issue. It is the struggle to make sure that the great field is level, for otherwise all resolutions formed on it are questionable, corrupt, illegitimate.

The case against Clinton is not that his interests are prurient, but that he is suspected of breaking the law, of tilting the playing field unfairly in his own direction, of violating campaign-finance laws in the 1996 election, of looting a savings and loan back in Arkansas, of witness-tampering. True, he is the first president whose genitals and bodily fluids have become objects of public discourse, but this is a tangential matter. Sex is merely one of the forms that his law-breaking takes. The problem is breaking the law.

And law used to matter to liberal moralists—including to *Quiz Show* scourges. Apparently not anymore. ♦

Sex and the Anglicans

By Diane Knippers

Bill Clinton isn't the only one who's apologized (or feigned an apology) for sex this summer. Anglican bishops formed their own *mea culpa* choir at the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England in July and August. Most of their regret was sex-related.

Every 10 years, Anglican bishops from all over the world gather in Canterbury to discuss matters of importance to the 76-million strong church. Although the conference has no controlling power over the U.S. Episcopal church or the Anglican churches in other nations, it sets a broad direction. This year, the gathering lasted three weeks. Over 750 bishops attended, about 130 of them Americans.

It was a Yankee who precipitated the first round of apologies, even before the conference opened. In an interview in the *Church of England Newspaper* in July,

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John Spong, bishop of Newark, portrayed himself as a scientifically minded modern intellectual and dismissed Africans as "fundamentalists" who have "moved out of animism into a very superstitious kind of Christianity." Probably the most radical Anglican bishop, Spong not only advocates same-sex marriages and the ordination of homosexuals, but also seeks to jettison basic Christian doctrines such as the divinity and resurrection of Christ. His views put him squarely at odds with the leaders of the dynamic and growing Anglican church in Africa.

PERHAPS CONSCIOUS OF THE OFFENSE BISHOP SPONG HAD CAUSED, AMERICAN BISHOPS WERE UNUSUALLY QUIET DURING DEBATES ON SEXUALITY.

The first apology came from retired American bishop Alex Dickson. At a pre-Lambeth spiritual retreat for some 400 bishops and others, Dickson asked the 50-plus Americans to join him in confessing how grieved and ashamed they were of Spong's insult to African Christians. "He has insulted you. We are ashamed for him, we are ashamed for ourselves," Dickson said. "We ask your forgiveness, and we assure you he does not speak for us." The Africans responded by embracing the Americans in individual acts of reconciliation.

Spong himself came under increasing pressure to apologize. In a public debate, a (white) South African bishop accused him of "intellectual racism." Spong made matters worse by reiterating his remarks. It was his experience in Kenya, he said, that "people who were relatively uneducated" were coming from "animistic religions" into "a very superstitious kind of Christianity." This brought outrage from the Kenyans. Bishop Eliud Wabukala said his church's converts to Christianity included thousands of university graduates. "Put my name down," he told a reporter from the American paper *United Voice*. "If he wants a scholarly paper, I am happy to challenge him."

Spong tried again. He had only been attempting to clarify how cultural differences between the developed and developing worlds require that the Gospel be communicated differently. "In the process of saying that," he explained, "I've been heard to insult Africans, for which I am really sorry."

A second contretemps also flared before the conference. Duncan Buchanan, another (white) South African bishop and the chairman of the conference "subsection" on sexuality, unilaterally invited representatives of outside caucuses of gay and lesbian Anglicans "to tell their stories." Participants in the sexuality subsection protested Buchanan's highhandedness and preferential treatment of pro-gay advocates. If any personal testimony were to be heard, they said, it should include that of former gays and celibate gays. After a lengthy debate, the invitation was rescinded by a 2-1 vote. Describing himself as "shell-shocked and traumatized," Buchanan apologized to his fellow bishops for failing to consult them. (The canceled hearings then took place unofficially—and English bishop Peter Selby seized the occasion to apologize for the cancellation.)

When it finally convened, the Lambeth Conference dealt with a wide range of issues, from international debt to technology to religious persecution. But sex was the most riveting topic, and the most divisive. The media spokesmen for the conference frequently sounded like Clinton White House aides, asking plaintively, "Can't we put this sex stuff behind us and talk about real issues?"

During the last week of the conference, after prolonged back-room machinations and fervent prayer, the bishops considered a resolution on human sexuality, along with a series of amendments. The majority thought the first draft too weak and voted 2-1 to add the phrase "rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture."

As finally adopted, the resolution "upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage." It warns against blessing same-sex unions or ordaining those involved in them. It condemns "irrational fear of homosexuals" (amended from "homophobia"), commits to listening to the experience of homosexuals, and assures all "baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation," that they are "full members of the Body of Christ." The resolution was adopted by a resounding 526-70, with 45 abstentions. Interestingly, although the presiding bishop of the Episcopal church, Frank Griswold, abstained, a majority of the American bishops voted for the resolution—despite the fact that the U.S. church had foisted this debate on Lambeth in the first place by tolerating, though not officially sanctioning, the ordination of practicing homosexuals in its more liberal dioceses.

Perhaps conscious of the offense Bishop Spong had caused, the American bishops, both conservative and liberal, were unusually quiet during the debates on sexuality. Robert Johnson, bishop of Western North

Carolina, told the *United Voice*, "We realize that the rest of the world thinks this is our issue. We want to enter this in a good spirit and not come on like gangbusters." Conservative leader John Howe, bishop of Central Florida, explained his silence saying, "I wanted to be sensitive to the charges that the Americans always come to throw their weight around."

Nevertheless, some American bishops did speak. Catherine Roskam, bishop of New York and one of eight American women bishops at Lambeth, opposed the amendment condemning homosexual practice. A previous speaker from Nigeria had warned that condoning homosexuality would be evangelistic "suicide." Roskam asserted that in her region, it was "evangelistic suicide" to condemn homosexual practice. Conservatives might have the votes to pass the amendment, she said, but it would be "a Pyrrhic victory, and we will have a divided church." Bishop Catherine Waynick of Indianapolis also opposed the amendment, saying, "Our call is not to correctness. It is to love."

The same horror of "correctness" in personal ethics may have motivated Bishop Griswold's incomprehensible effort to explain the church's "pluriform [pluralistic?] views." This innovative wording was met with confusion and derision. One African bishop asked a reporter, perhaps not so innocently, whether it had anything to do with "chloroform."

Most bishops were unapologetic about the final resolution on sexuality—which the London *Times* called a "surprisingly and uncharacteristically trenchant dismissal of the liberal position." But there was no celebration, simply quiet relief. James Stanton, bishop of Dallas, who leads the conservative American Anglican Council, called the resolution "good news for the American church and for our ministry in American society." He continued, "It is time for those bishops who seek to revise orthodox Christian teaching to submit to the mind of the whole church and the teaching of Scripture."

Supporters of gays and lesbians were stunned by the vote. Richard Holloway, archbishop of Scotland, said, "I feel gutted, I feel betrayed, but the struggle will go on." He characterized the archbishop of Canterbury's speech supporting the resolution as "pathetic." That created another firestorm, and so Holloway too apologized. He said he had been referring to the archbishop's speech and its impact, not to the archbishop himself.

As the Lambeth Conference ended, Ronald Haines, bishop of Washington, D.C., made public a "Pastoral Statement to Lesbian and Gay Anglicans" signed by over 100 bishops, half of them Americans. The statement "apologize[d] for any sense of rejection" that gays and lesbians felt because the Lambeth Conference had made it impossible for their voices to be adequately heard. The bishops pledged "to reflect, pray, and work for [homosexuals'] full inclusion in the life of the Church," while acknowledging that the signers differed on what full inclusion meant.

Several other U.S. bishops were also quick to signal their dissent. Utah's Carolyn Tanner Irish bemoaned an "undercurrent of fearfulness concerning homosexuality" that overshadowed the discussions at Lambeth. Jerry Winterrowd, bishop of Colorado, claimed his vote for the resolution was strictly pragmatic. "Frankly, the African church needed that vote to take back with them," he said. "They are under a great deal of pressure politically because the Muslims are watching."

What Westerners on the right and left are learning is that Anglicanism has been geographically and demographically transformed. Today's statistically typical Anglican is not drinking tea in an English vicarage. She is a 26-year-old African mother of four. The largest Anglican church is in Nigeria. The Western churches were vastly overrepresented at Lambeth; Stephen Noll of Trinity seminary near Pittsburgh noted that the average American bishop represented up to 10,000 lay men and women, the average Nigerian bishop up to 200,000. Despite the imbalance, the orthodox Anglicanism espoused by Africans, Asians, and South Americans carried the day at Lambeth. The center of Anglicanism is now in the southern hemisphere.

> TODAY'S TYPICAL ANGLICAN IS NOT DRINKING TEA IN AN ENGLISH VICARAGE. SHE IS A 26-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN MOTHER OF FOUR.

One result is dismay for those who long championed multiculturalism and Third World causes. Picture these liberal American bishops, who came of age in the sixties and once fancied themselves on the progressive edge of every noble cause. The "oppressed" whose plight they so long championed have taken over their church and rejected their liberal legacy. History is passing this generation of clerics by, and they hardly know what's happened. Perhaps they will yet come to appreciate the orthodox view: that, for all the pomp a group of Anglican bishops can still muster, the church is ultimately guided not by their opinions but by an altogether different sovereign Power. ♦

Clinton v. America?

Bill Bennett's Book of Outrage

By Christopher Matthews

William J. Bennett has beaten Kenneth Starr into print. While *The Death of Outrage*, Bennett's new lickety-split critique of the Clinton-Lewinsky farrago, is no *Book of Virtues*, it is guaranteed to make its author the hottest guest on the TV talk-show circuit. What the short, little book lacks in shelf life and number of pages, it packs in both immediacy and punch. If it was written fast, it will also be read fast—and that's all to the good, for the argument its author makes is one America needs to hear right away.

Wisely, Bennett begins at the heart of the matter. It's not what the Lewinsky affair tells us about Bill Clinton, he postulates in the opening pages of *The Death of Outrage*, but what our handling of the affair tells us about ourselves: "Once in a great while a single national event provides insight into where we are and who we are and what we esteem. The Clinton presidency has provided us with a window into our times, our moral order, our understanding of citizenship."

Such stakes here are higher than the presidency of a thus-far successful politician. Clinton can leave at the end of his term in two years, or he can go much sooner, depending on the quantity of evidence against him and the quality of the prosecution. But much more important is what remains once he is gone. Much more important is who wins the argument: those who say Clinton's conduct with a twenty-two-year-old office intern and his cover-up matters, and those who say it doesn't. Will this spectacle teach us to seek and elect leaders of personal rectitude for our country, or will 1998 be remembered as a year-long course in how to be French?

"On Bill Clinton's behalf, in his defense," Bennett argues,

Free Press

William J. Bennett
The Death of Outrage
Bill Clinton and the Assault on American Ideals
Free Press, 160 pp., $20

> many bad ideas are being put into widespread circulation. It is said that private character has virtually no impact on governing character; that what matters above all is a healthy economy; that moral authority is defined solely by how well a president deals with public policy matters; that America needs to become more European in its attitude toward sex. If these arguments take root in American soil—if they become the coin of the public realm—we will have validated them, and we will come to rue the day we did. These arguments define us down; they assume a lower common denominator of behavior and leadership than we Americans ought to accept.

The worst thing you can say about President Clinton's behavior is that it has produced the argument that his private behavior doesn't count. It does. In claiming a zone of privacy, Clinton made an arguable point. But, as Bennett notes, that zone does not in fact apply to Clinton's case:

> It would matter whether a president had a discreet, isolated, long-ago affair, or whether he were a serial (and still-practicing) adulterer. It would matter if a president had been put on notice—if he knew his personal life would be under intense scrutiny—and still decided to run the risk and indulge in an affair in the Oval Office, with young staffers. It would matter if the president used his public office to assist in, and cover up, his private flings. It would matter . . . if there was genuine contrition, a change of heart, a change of ways.

Sadly for Bill Clinton, none of these mitigating factors is present. What we now confront is a president of the United States conducting an eighteen-month "lapse of judgment" with a starstruck intern at the bottom of the White House food chain, a liaison so reckless that "Monica Lewinsky" is now better known to the world than "Jacqueline Kennedy."

Sadly for the country, the traits Clinton has been caught exhibiting in the Lewinsky mess are equally evident in the conduct even he would count as public. They are as vividly on display in the good that he's done as president as they are in the bad.

It begins, for Bennett, with desecration. Clinton has "defiled the office of the presidency of the United

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Cigared Mr. Clinton, Virginia, 1996. Mr. & Mrs. Clinton don conquistador masks, Mexico, 1997. Mrs. Clinton shows muppet Oscar her husband's golf balls, New York, 1997.

States." All those months he was Monica-izing, he was renting out the Lincoln Bedroom and greeting generous foreign gun-runners in the East Room. He was working the White House like a cash cow to fund those saturation TV ads he and his pal Dick Morris were whipping out. Is there any citizen who could imagine behaving that way in that place? Isn't there a secular reverence that moves all of us when we enter the White House? If Americans do not care about the manner in which presidents live their lives, why did we build that glorious mansion to honor it?

After the desecration, however, Bennett notes the deception that inevitably follows. "A person innocent of what the president is accused of doing would be shouting his innocence from the rooftop," *The Death of Outrage* argues. "He would not wait for a subpoena."

Bennett points to a "seamless web of deceit" that connects Bill Clinton's private and public life, his private failings and public failings. Watch the president and you see the same system of behavior, the same predictable chain of steps, in every situation that requires cover-up: stonewalling denial, followed by a chorus of denials by Clinton's surrogates, followed by a carefully couched confession, followed by even more denials.

Recall the Gennifer Flowers affair. After denying it during the 1992 campaign, Clinton admitted to a one-night stand with the Arkansas singer during his January deposition with the Paula Jones attorneys. Soon thereafter the Clinton clean-up brigade was out in the streets. "I mean, I think I know the definition as well as anybody," James Carville gamely allowed. "If I groped with somebody in a bar in 1977, I don't call that having sex."

The use of flacks is a big part of the Clinton pattern. It allows him to lie frugally while forcing his loyal staff to exhaust their political currency like sailors on weekend leave.

"I never asked anyone to lie," he told the country. Tell that to George

Stephanopoulos whose recent article in *Newsweek* begins with his painful recollection of what he calls the "worst morning" of the 1992 Clinton election campaign. It was the day John King of the Associated Press showed him a copy of a document his candidate had assured him for months did not exist: Bill Clinton's April 1969 draft notice.

Stephanopoulos has witnessed the same sad spectacle being replayed again and again the past seven months, as Clinton made use of his current staffers and surrogates to disseminate his current lies: "He sat back silently and watched his official spokespeople, employees of the U.S. government, mislead the country again and again and again."

And then, after the Clintonian desecration and the Clintonian deception, comes the Clintonian exploitation. In 1991, I covered a Cleveland meeting of the Democratic Leadership Council. Arkansas governor Bill Clinton was the star speaker, attacking the evils of racial quotas, saying all the right things for his moderate-to-conservative audience.

But by year's end, Clinton could be seen scooting across the ideological tundra. With Mario Cuomo holding back from the 1992 presidential race and Paul Tsongas talking the centrist line on hard issues like entitlement reform, the Arkansas governor saw green grass growing off to the left. No more talk of sacrifice from the man Tsongas would baptize the "Pander Bear." Not only had Clinton used and discarded the Democratic center on which he'd launched his presidential bid, he began to destroy it. Working the senior citizens down in Florida, he blasted Tsongas for daring even to talk about limiting Social Security.

Once in office, Clinton showed the same ability to use and discard, serving up Lani Guinier as his civil-rights enforcement chief, then dumping her without a word. He asked Barbara Jordan to develop a sound immigration policy, then had some middle-level non-entity dismiss her report.

All photos AP Photo

Mr. Clinton gestures to Congress, Washington, 1998. Mr. Clinton whispers to Willard Scott playing Santa Claus, Washington, 1996. Mr. Clinton laughs, Washington, 1997.

Monica was not the first Clintonite to get the "that woman" treatment, nor is Betty Currie the first party Clinton has used to take the heat for him. "She and Betty are friends," he said in the January 17 deposition to explain the Lewinsky visits. "That's my recollection." On the eve of the 1996 election, he performed a similar buck-passing on the issue of campaign contributions from foreigners. That, he said, was an affair which concerned the poor slobs over at the Democratic National Committee.

It's especially timely to recall Clinton's use and dismissal of Democrats who adhere to traditional values. The man who basks today in the bicoastal love of Santa Monica and Martha's Vineyard got elected by winning the hearts of regular folk in the fly-over country between. Recall his words of allegiance. He would champion those who "work hard and play by the rules." He would make abortion not just legal and safe but "rare." When is the last time anyone heard such words spoken from the Oval Office?

Bill Clinton reminds one of that character in the 1981 movie *Body Heat*—not the horny lawyer, played by William Hurt, who gets lured into trouble by Kathleen Turner, but the creepy mobster-husband played by Richard Crenna. This is the character who taunts his sexual rival by saying the world is divided between those who are "willing to do what is necessary" and the weaklings who are not.

The man in the White House passes the test. So did the Rhodes Scholar who wrote in 1969—to an ROTC commandant, the man who'd saved him from the draft, the man he'd just double-crossed—that his motive was, in its own unabashed way, pure: in his words, his "political viability," his electoral ambition was at stake.

Such breathtaking expedience has been the theme of the Clinton rise. He went to Georgetown University because he wanted to get to Washington. He got out of the draft by promising to join an ROTC outfit but instead headed back to England. He went to law school because he needed the usual license to run for office. He went back to Arkansas after school because that was his political base. He covered up his embarrassing draft record, his modest drug use, and his 1960s-style campus sex life all in the same cause: "political viability."

Seven months into 1998, the same ambition and cover-up are joined in do-or-die alliance. To remain president, he has calculated, he must continue to keep the real Bill Clinton from public view. "I want you to listen to me," he told the entire country in January, his finger pointed at the nation like a perverted Uncle Sam recruiting poster. "I'm going to say this again. I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky." As George Stephanopoulos wrote, "This was no impulsive act of passion; it was a coldly calculated political decision."

Americans are a practical people, and Bill Clinton enjoys a high job-approval rating for practical reasons. Whatever his personal demons and delusions, he placed grown-ups like Lloyd Bentsen, Leon Panetta, Alice Rivlin, Robert Rubin, Frank Raines, and Jack Lew in charge of the economy. He has risked the anger of organized labor to forge a foreign policy that placed the biggest bets on free trade. He is, with all his faults and all his narcissistic lust for "political viability," a recognized world leader.

Unfortunately, as William Bennett's critique in *The Death of Outrage* demonstrates, there seems to be in fact no way to expel the bad from Bill Clinton's nature while retaining the good. The good is of a piece with the bad. Any verdict against Clinton, even a reprimand, would not just address his bad qualities but weaken the moral authority of his good qualities—and diminish the power of our presidency for as long as he holds it.

That makes the next months of American history particularly tricky. We have an uninterrupted democracy stretching back to the eighteenth century. Unlike the French, we haven't had a Second Republic or Third, Fourth, or Fifth. We have only the one we started with. In deciding about his last two years in office, the good citizen might attempt the maturity Clinton has shown at his best, not the passion he pursued at his worst. Otherwise, this year of the French will end as badly as it began. ♦

Dear Daughter, Dear Dad

Michael and Jana Novak Talk About God

By Victorino Matus

When it comes to American Catholics now in their twenties and thirties, the words "well grounded in the faith" do not spring immediately to mind. We are, for the most part, an astonishingly undereducated generation, calling ourselves Catholic—or "culturally Catholic," or "raised Catholic," or "Catholic, I guess"—with little idea of either the content of the faith we sometimes profess to hold or the discipline necessary to hold it.

This is not, one should observe, entirely our fault. In the years after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, a great number of those who would become our teachers in the 1970s and '80s, responsible for passing along the faith to a new generation, seemed to imagine that the

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Roman Catholic Church was about to disappear—that the reforms of Vatican II were not ends in themselves, but were rather pointers to the eventual dismantling of everything ever believed before. Though our teachers had been well taught themselves, why should they bother teaching well in turn? Why, when they lived in such exciting times, should they pass along archaic, pointless, and soon-to-be-extinct doctrines and dogmas?

Then Pope John Paul II came along, and as a result, Vatican II became firmly integrated into the ancient teachings of the Church, a new catechism eventually appeared, theologians started to show a new seriousness, vocations to the priesthood began rebounding—and, though it took twenty years, a new spirit took hold among teachers of the faith. But it was, in many ways, too late for my own middle generation of twenty- and thirty-somethings.

One such twenty-something is a young woman named Jana Novak, who compiled a list of the most challenging and provocative religious questions of her generation and casually faxed them to her father. He claims that he jumped at the opportunity to try to answer her questions. As he puts it, "A father dreams of this. In fact, the hardest part of being a father is feeling, from the first moments in the delivery room onwards, especially with my daughters, utterly useless."

But, in fact, it wasn't quite that simple, for Jana's father happens to be the widely published neoconservative Catholic thinker Michael Novak, author of *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, *The Joy of Sports*, and the bestselling *Belief and Unbelief*. During the 1970s, Novak fought fiercely against communism, insisting—rightly, as it turned out—that the troika of Catholicism, capitalism, and democracy could triumph over the Soviet Union. He battled, often alone and sometimes in dangerous circumstances, the "liberation theology" that dominated Latin America, insisting—again, rightly—that the Christian faith is different from and deeper than a leftist economic program.

And now, after he has influenced people all over the world and won dozens of international honors (among them, fifteen honorary doctorates, the million-dollar Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, and the Anthony Fisher Prize given by Margaret Thatcher), his own daughter has the nerve to ask him how he can think religion is so important.

Pocket Books / Karen Novak

Michael and Jana Novak
Tell Me Why
A Father Answers His Daughter's Questions About God
Pocket, 321 pp., $24

One suspects the elder Novak could have become apoplectic. He dedicated his life to theological insight, only to have his own child asks him why he bothered. But he eagerly writes back, hoping to engage her in serious religious thought. She replies with ever more specific questions—some reaching down to such hot-button issues as gay marriage and sex, and some reaching up to the very existence of God. And he replies, and she replies, and the result is *Tell Me Why: A Father Answers His Daughter's Questions About God*, a new kind of Christian apologetics for the 1990s.

With father representing the older tradition and daughter arguing on behalf of confused youth, *Tell Me Why* presents the clash of generations—one generation firmly grounded in the principles of its faith, the other drifting on a sea of confusion. The elder Novak tackles one question after another with vigor and insight.

When asked, for example, to explain religion's relevance, he declares that it is important because it is *true*. "You wouldn't want to turn to religion merely for comfort, security, or peace of mind (although that's what atheists say religion is for). Because if religion isn't true, you wouldn't find peace of mind or comfort or security anyway."

The reader may not always be satisfied with his responses. But Jana is even less satisfied and often insists that her father stop meandering and cut to the chase: "I like your comments so far," she writes at one point, "but at times you've been pretty abstract and, for me, haven't given a practical conclusion."

She puts the classic "problem of evil" sharply and well, describing a friend who lost her faith while visiting poverty-stricken Haiti: "She told me that if God existed, He couldn't let people live in such horrible conditions; it was easier to believe He must not exist, because to have Him exist and allow this misery was too much to comprehend."

In careful and thoughtful language, Michael Novak explains,

> The evils and horrors we see make us doubt either that God is omnipotent or that He is good. But it is not as if the Jewish and Christian Bible doesn't confront that doubt head-on. Look at the sufferings of Job and the "suffering servant" in Isaiah (Chapter 53)—look at the Son of God bleeding on the cross, nails in His hands and feet. . . . The God of the Jewish Testament sent trials and afflictions upon everyone He loved, . . . Abraham, Moses, Job, David—all without exception.

When Jana's questions in *Tell Me Why* shift from broad theological challenges to issues like abortion, her father stresses that

> the key word is respect: respect for mutual friendship; respect for the mysteries of a woman's body; respect for the sanctity of sex; respect for human life and liberty (including the freedom of the infant to choose, in time, for herself). Once the habit of such respect spreads throughout a population, people may be surprised by how different the visage of our culture will become: a culture of friendship.

There is something almost mythic in this exchange between one of the leading Catholic thinkers of our time and a daughter whose questions and notions so accurately reflect the confused state of the younger generation. "Not all of my questions have been answered," she decides. "Each reply my father gave made me think of several other points I was curious about. This book could have stretched to a thousand pages and I probably would not have been satisfied." The father exhausts every line of argument, and still his daughter remains unsatisfied.

Of course, for Michael Novak, the exercise is more than just a stimulating conversation. At stake is a family inheritance of immense importance—the inheritance of belief. "What I leave you, Jana, is the inner life of our faith. It has kept our family going through wars and peace for perhaps a thousand years, in the visible lustrous chain of God's love." It is this handing down of religious tradition that epitomizes the true dilemma facing Jana's poorly catechized generation. What will come of those of us like her remains hard to say.

Jana, however, does conclude with some optimism that she "will continue on the path" down which her father's answers have started her. The two classic twentieth-century works of Christian apologetics are G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* and C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, and if *Tell Me Why* doesn't belong with them, it is primarily because there is little in the Novaks' exchanges that will seem of interest to a genuine non-believer. But for the lost generation of half-believers, unsure of what it means to believe, Jana and Michael Novak have composed a helpful book. ♦

Honorable Soldiers

Debunking the Myth of the Vietnam Vet

By Joe Sharkey

The last American forces left southeast Asia twenty-five years ago, but we are still being startled by "revelations" about the Vietnam War, most recently the CNN-*Time* magazine joint report that American troops attacked a Laotian village with illegal nerve gas during a covert operation to kill American defectors in 1970.

If true, the report would have exposed a nearly thirty-year Pentagon conspiracy to cover up the use of nerve gas on innocent villagers and our own soldiers. Though the CNN-*Time* blockbuster was quickly debunked as bits of old junk clumsily assembled by an overreaching reporter's ambition, the widespread credence the report initially received was a sharp reminder that we still haven't come to terms with Vietnam. A quarter-century after the choppers hoisted the last Americans off the rooftops of Saigon, journalists are still fumbling with their notebooks, trying to grasp what happened.

One place they should start is with *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of Its Heroes and Its History*, the new book by B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley. Hard-nosed, provocative, and courageous, *Stolen Valor* masterfully and on occasion gleefully debunks some of the popular canards and much of the anecdotal record about Vietnam veterans.

Though the book is long (seven-hundred pages, including indices and notes), its mission is clear and focused. *Stolen Valor* is not an attempt to argue the rightness of what most people now think the benighted idea of sending American troops to support the South Vietnamese. "It is not my desire to refight the Vietnam War," Burkett wisely states in the book's prologue.

Rather, the authors aim to demolish much of the conventional wisdom about who actually went to Vietnam. That conventional wisdom, firmly entrenched now after years of reinforcement, essentially consists of two myths: First, that poorly educated draftees, a disproportionate number of them black and Hispanic teenagers, did most of the fighting and dying; and second, that Vietnam veterans constitute a uniquely dysfunctional demographic subgroup plagued with suicide, drunkenness, drug addiction, mental illness, unemployment, crime, and homelessness (the consequences of which afflict society at large).

In response to the first myth, *Stolen Valor* shows that more than two-thirds of the 2.7 million men who went to Vietnam were volunteers, as were about 75 percent of those who died, the average age of whom was nearly twenty-three. Furthermore, the average Vietnam soldier was far better educated than his counterpart in World War II.

And in response to the second

A Vietnam veteran, Joe Sharkey is a widely published journalist and author. His most recent book, Lady Gold, *a novel co-authored with Angela Amato, appeared in August.*

myth, *Stolen Valor* shows that addiction, unemployment, and homelessness among Vietnam veterans is lower than the national average for comparable age-groups. The often-repeated assertion that more Vietnam veterans died afterward by their own hands than were killed in combat simply isn't true. Suicide rates for Vietnam veterans are no different from those for corresponding non-veterans.

Shooting down flimsy statistics and junk social science is easy, and Burkett and Whitley dispense with that quickly in *Stolen Valor*. They then move on to their main campaign, which is to expose the role of reporters, film-makers, and academics in the three-decade-long perpetuation of these pernicious myths—myths laced with ideological scorn, the authors argue, deriving from antiwar activists exploiting their growing cultural influence after the war.

An infantry officer awarded the Bronze Star in Vietnam in 1968, Burkett didn't come home from the war with a chip on his shoulder. Like most who went to Vietnam (excluding, of course, the thousands who did not come home), he assimilated and got on with his life. Not until 1986 did Burkett begin to appreciate the power of the poisoned mythology. Easing comfortably into middle-age, prospering as a Dallas stockbroker, Burkett was asked to serve as a co-chairman of the Texas Vietnam Memorial, which had been delayed for years because of tepid support from business and civic groups.

When Burkett optimistically set out to call on prominent business people in conservative Dallas, he was flabbergasted at the reactions he encountered. At big defense-contract companies which had profited handsomely from Vietnam, he heard repeated expressions of disdain for Vietnam veterans. Even the Dallas chapters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, dominated by World War II vets, conveyed contempt. Well-adjusted Vietnam veterans were the exception, he heard again and again.

Finally, Burkett says, "The truth slapped me in the face. America accepted this pervasive stereotype, and it was constantly reinforced. . . . An entire generation of veterans had been tainted with the labels of victim, loser and moral degenerate." In the public perception, Vietnam veterans are "losers, bums, drug addicts, drunks, derelicts—societal offal who had come back from the war plagued by nightmares and flashbacks that left them with the potential to go berserk at any moment."

Burkett began paying attention to the news media's routine attitude toward Vietnam veterans—noticing, for example, how reporters invariably gravitate to the scruffy, self-proclaimed combat vets in boonie hats and camouflage fatigues, many of them sporting oddly mismatched Special Forces regalia, who always seem to show up front-and-center at public events to spout "gruesome and horrifying descriptions of their experiences on the Vietnam battlefields" and myriad covert missions.

B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley
Stolen Valor
How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of Its Heroes and Its History
Verity, 700 pp., $31.95

What's wrong with the picture, Burkett decided, is that these ragtag Hectors with their "wildly improbable tales" and anguished cries of woe simply do not resemble "me or anybody I knew who had served in Vietnam—even those who had been horribly wounded or captured and tortured by the enemy."

For decades, local papers and national news services alike have bestowed credibility on these impostors. So too, in virtually every movie made about Vietnam, Hollywood has dramatized the crippled Vietnam vet still harboring hideous secrets—unfolding tales of My Lai-style massacres by the score, phantom POWs left behind to die in captivity, deranged commandos dealing drugs on behalf of the CIA and assassinating any brave Rambo who tried to stop them. As CNN and *Time* showed, the stories keep on coming.

Now that Vietnam vets are well into middle age, the myth has even spawned progeny, from the birth defects said to plague the children of veterans to second-generation would-be Rambos like Russell Weston Jr. (the forty-one-year-old who, after storming the U.S. Capitol on July 24 and murdering two policemen, was described by his family as believing he was an Army general pursued by Navy commandos determined to prevent his spilling unspecified secrets).

Back in 1986, when he began to notice how effectively the professional Vietnam vets were spinning the news media, Burkett decided that reporters were not demanding an answer to a simple question: "Were these men really there?"

That they had not been there turned out to be the answer more often than even Burkett believed at the start of what would become a ten-year odyssey to accumulate thousands of military records. Sometimes they had never even been in the military. Others had actually been in Vietnam—but as cooks, truck mechanics, or clerks, nowhere in the vicinity of the events in which they claimed to have participated. All in all, *Stolen Valor* uncovers the records of more than 1,700 men who have publicly (and sometimes to great celebrity) made false or grossly distorted claims about service in Vietnam.

Burkett finally concluded that "a massive distortion of history" was being perpetuated on the subject of Vietnam. Along with the usual suspects in the media, the "enablers" of this distortion included veterans' agencies and medical and social workers, Burkett decided. Anxious to keep the customer pipelines filled as

World War II vets die out, clinicians recruited Vietnam veterans into well-funded, long-term treatment programs for "post-traumatic stress disorder," a relatively modern psychiatric diagnosis that has been lavished on Vietnam veterans. Another therapeutic gold mine was discovered in complaints about physical and emotional problems (including violent flashbacks) caused by long-ago exposure to Agent Orange, a defoliant used in Vietnam.

Over the years he spent tracking down records, Burkett became something of a legend at the National Archives and at military records facilities, which he bombarded with endless requests under the Freedom of Information Act. He also developed a network of acquaintances, including some conscientious print reporters, who kept him apprised of questionable Vietnam claims.

Prominent among these reporters was Glenna Whitley of *D Magazine*, a Dallas monthly, who encountered the indefatigable Burkett in 1990 when she was writing about the epidemic of post-traumatic stress disorder among middle-aged Vietnam veterans and decided that much of what she was hearing sounded false. When Burkett decided to write a book to set the record straight, he turned to Whitley for help. A fluid writer, she managed the difficult task of helping Burkett organize his voluminous research into a coherent, rational argument.

Some of *Stolen Valor*'s stories of media suckering, at both the local level and the highest penthouses of journalism, are priceless. There's Larry Hogue, the wild-eyed lunatic gullibly portrayed on *60 Minutes* as an out-of-control Vietnam veteran menacing an entire Manhattan neighborhood. There's Brian Dennehy, the tough-guy movie character actor who regularly claimed to be a wounded veteran (but never went to Vietnam, claim the authors). There's Shelby Stanton, the best-selling author, who has appeared on his book jackets in Special Forces outfits and claims two tours in Vietnam as a commando (never happened, the authors say). And then there's the magnificent Scott Barnes, Arizona dress shop owner and self-described Vietnam covert-action warrior, surfacing in 1992 to train-wreck the presidential campaign of wacky military buff H. Ross Perot—who abruptly quit the race when Barnes persuaded him that secret


Corbis

agents working for the opposition were planning to tap his phones and insult his daughter. Barnes, Burkett declares, never served in Vietnam.

Finally, there's Joe Yandle, convicted of murdering a liquor store clerk in 1972. The cause of Yandle, who claimed that the horrors and atrocities of Vietnam service had made him into a heroin addict subject to violent flashbacks, was championed by the Vietnam Veterans of America, which generated a massive letter-writing campaign and persuaded both *60 Minutes* and the *Boston Globe* to take part in a campaign to secure his release from prison. In 1995, after *60 Minutes* had run its third piece in support of Yandle, Massachusetts governor William Weld commuted the sentence of the Vietnam hero who had flipped out because of post-traumatic stress. Military records, say Burkett and Whitley, show that Yandle, far from being a much-decorated hero, was a clerk who never saw combat.

Burkett and Whitley self-published *Stolen Valor* after mainstream publishers told them that Vietnam books in general don't sell, especially ones that fail to genuflect to the orthodoxy. That remains to be seen. For me, a reporter who is also a Vietnam veteran, *Stolen Valor* goes on the shelf somewhere near Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*, David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*, and a few other books whose lasting value is that they make more comprehensible some of the epic complexities of Vietnam, which was the central cultural event of my generation.

The book ends with Burkett's iconoclastic assessment of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., which he refers to as "America's Wailing Wall." Burkett, who knew some of the men whose names are engraved on the black granite, feels oddly alienated during his visit to the monument—and he finally realizes why when he notices that the area around it has become a flea market where scruffy men in combat fatigues peddle memorabilia and perpetuate the false Vietnam myths. Panhandlers and POW-MIA hustlers work the hushed crowds like vendors at a ball park, while mental-health counselors guide groups of post-traumatic stress victims on emotional field trips.

The only tinny note in *Stolen Valor* comes when the authors say that America should issue an "apology" for the myths it has accepted about those who went to Vietnam.

Burkett puts it better at the moment he first gazes at the 58,209 names on the memorial's wall and thinks, "These men wouldn't want our pity; they would want our respect." ♦

Spun Yarn

The Adolescence of the Political Novel

By J. Bottum

It is the mark of boys to mistake *how* things work for *why* they work, to become fascinated with the mechanisms that make the wheels go 'round and forget to watch where the train is going.

Spin, a racy and fast-paced debut novel by a twenty-six-year-old former California Republican political operator named Tom Lowe, has just this as its ostensible theme. But *Spin*—widely advertised as giving to Republicans the richly deserved skewering the Democrats received in *Primary Colors*—turns out to have immaturity as its theme in an even deeper sense than its author intends.

Tom Lowe
Spin
Pocket, 304 pp., $23

In his thinly fictionalized story, Lowe relates the adventures of a pretty-boy character named Jim Asher who—matching Lowe himself in every detail—returns as a young man from the Gulf War, joins as an unpaid volunteer an unsuccessful Republican campaign for Senate, rises rapidly through the party ranks, leads a wild life of drinking and leching, becomes the youngest press secretary of a speaker of the California Assembly, and leaves politics in disgust. And along the way in *Spin*, Lowe unpleasantly caricatures many of his old friends—fellow passengers in the train wreck of Michael Huffington's 1994 Senate campaign and the special 1995 California Assembly election in which four Republican campaign workers eventually pleaded guilty to arranging a decoy Democratic candidate.

The picture *Spin* paints in rather broad strokes is of a young man whose intelligence and will—finding no limits in the rewarding world of political campaigning—bring him to disaster. But Lowe's solution is not the reformation of an empty self. It is rather the rejection of what he declares the emptiness of party politics. The most that the author and hero of *Spin* alike can affirm at the end is a vague libertarianism. When the moment at last arrives in which one must take charge of one's own thoughts and choose a destination, the boy gets off the train.

Anthony Trollope captured the boyishness of politics in his series of Victorian parliamentary stories—still the best political novels ever written—with the character of Phineas Finn, a handsome and rising young politician for whom the process of getting elected is so much more interesting than anything he might do in Parliament. Indeed, politics becomes for Phineas almost indistinguishable from sex, as he unsuccessfully courts one young Whig heiress after another in search of the ineffably lovable combination of beauty, money, and political influence.

Of course, Trollope knew that Phineas would remain a boy—wouldn't become a novel's proper hero—until he learned the concrete application of abstract ideas that makes up the political life of an adult. But somewhere during the century since Trollope, people seem to have forgotten the limits of boyish fascinations. There was something of a boom of political fiction in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but even in the best of those political tales—Allen Drury's *Advise and Consent*, Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah*, Gore Vidal's play *The Best Man*—you see an artistic preference for describing the mechanisms of power rather than the uses.

Something of a milestone was reached with the 1972 Robert Redford film *The Candidate*. The Oscar-winning script by Jeremy Larner relied to some degree on the hackneyed notion that candidates enter politics filled with ideals only to be compelled to betray them. But that was mostly a conventional front to hide the fact that the movie was actually fascinated not with candidates and their ideas but with the professionalism of political campaign managers.

And virtually every political novel and movie since has taken political candidates as little more than animated occasions for the real work of political professionals. Even the 1996 *Primary Colors*, ostensibly a barely disguised personality study of Bill Clinton as a modern Phineas Finn running for president, turned out to be mostly about the nuts and bolts of campaigning.

With Tom Lowe's *Spin* as a political tale, however, we have at last reached the point where candidates and ideas have ceased to exist. Since the book is set inside the Republican party, unavoidable references are occasionally made to "policy wonks" and opponents of abortion. But such folk are immediately mocked and quickly dismissed as having nothing to do with the real life of the party. Spinning a fast line to the media, making it with the girls on the campaign trail, getting drunk whenever possible, and winning elections are the only things that count in politics. And when they pall, the solution is to reject politics.

Lowe writes a fast if somewhat foul-mouthed prose and has a quick if somewhat prurient imagination. Those too are marks of a talented boy. But what we need is a political fiction—and a political reality—for adults. ♦

J. Bottum is Books & Arts editor of The Weekly Standard.

Presidential Timber

January 17th, 1744
Q: Who cut down the cherry tree?
George Washington: I cannot tell a lie. To the best of my recollection—I want to be as accurate as I can here—my memory is that as far as I know I was never in the same field as the cherry tree. The cherry tree in question.

January 20th, 1744
Q: Is it true, as has been reported, that you performed what may be called a "hatchet job" on the cherry tree?
GW: It is not. That statement is not accurate. I may have, I may have from time to time picked cherries off the tree and maybe rolled them around in my mouth. But I am not a tree-feller. I cannot tell a lie.
Q: Just to be perfectly clear, you did not cut down the tree?
GW: I am not a tree-feller.

January 21st, 1744
Q: Many Virginians have become aware that you are under investigation for the allegation that you cut down the cherry tree. Did you have any kind of relationship to the tree that could have been misconstrued?
GW: I'm going to do my best to cooperate with the investigation. I want to know what they want to know from me. We are working very hard to comply and get all the requests for information up here, and we will give you as many answers as we can, as soon as we can, at the appropriate time, consistent with our obligation to also cooperate with the investigations. I think it's more important for me to tell the people of Virginia that there weren't improper actions, and I think that's all I should say right now, so I can get back to the work of the colony.

January 22nd, 1744
Q: Forgive us for raising this while you're dealing with important issues of puberty, but could you clarify for us, lad, exactly what your connection is with the felled cherry tree, including any chips or kindling you may have left?
GW: Let me say, first of all, I want to reiterate what I said yesterday. The allegations are false and I would never ask myself to do anything other than tell the truth. Let's get to the big issues, about the nature of the arboricision and whether I suggested anybody not tell the truth. That is false. I cannot tell a lie.

January 26th, 1744
GW: I want to say one thing to the Virginian people. I want you to listen to me. I'm going to say this again. I did not initiate destructive behavior with that vegetable, not a single time—never. These allegations are false. If you look closely and not listen to rumors peddled by the Tory broadsheets, you will see, I believe you will see that the tree is still standing.

August 17th, 1744
GW: As you know, in an interrogation in January, I was asked questions about my connection to a particular fruit-bearing organism. While my answers were botanically accurate, I did not volunteer information. Indeed, I was party to an association with this organism that was not conducive to growth. It constituted a critical lapse in judgment and manual control, as my grip on the handle must have slipped on the occasion—a failure (I cannot cannot cannot tell a lie) that I regret deeply. Now, this matter is a private matter between me, my hatchet, and the greater Virginia Sawyers' Guild. It's nobody's business but ours. Thank you, and may almighty God—the God of your choice—bless you all.