the weekly Standard

SEPT. 28, 1998 • $3.50

BILL CLINTON, SOLIPSIST-IN-CHIEF
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

HELL NO, WE WON'T GO!

FRED BARNES • ERIC FELTEN
ANDREW FERGUSON • DAVID FRUM
JAY NORDLINGER • THE EDITORS

the weekly Standard

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 3 • SEPTEMBER 28, 1998

Cover by Daniel Adel

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.

Sidney Blumenthal's Perjury Trap

Presidential aide and ex-journalist Sid Blumenthal could conceivably be in legal as well as professional peril if it can be proved that he played a role in circulating stories about the lives of Rep. Henry Hyde and others. The Scrapbook has learned that, in a deposition for his libel lawsuit against Matt Drudge, Blumenthal denied under oath talking to journalists about Hyde and other public officials.

It is thus hardly surprising that Blumenthal released a statement late last Thursday specifying he "was not the source or in any way involved with this story on Henry Hyde." *Salon* magazine's notorious scoop the day before had revealed the adulterous affair during the late 1960s of Rep. Hyde, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Hyde is presiding over the hearings on whether to impeach Blumenthal's boss, Bill Clinton.

Like all carefully lawyered statements emanating from the Clinton White House, Blumenthal's denial elicits the question, What does he mean when he uses the word *this*? Does he mean that he was the source for, or in some other way involved with, *other* stories on Henry Hyde?

In his statement, Blumenthal goes on to assert that he didn't "urge or encourage any reporter to investigate the private life of any member of Congress." Again, as Clinton made clear in his grand-jury discourse on the English language ("It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is," the president said at one point), words bear close scrutiny. So what precisely does Blumenthal mean by the words *urge* and *encourage* and *investigate*?

Perhaps Sid's role in the White House—besides feeding the first lady's fantasies of a vast right-wing conspiracy out to get her husband—is merely to play matchmaker between friendly reporters and friendly private investigators like Terry Lenzner. That wouldn't involve any urging or encouraging; nor would the reporter himself need do any investigating, if the president's private eyes had already done all the snooping. And, while we're on the subject, The Scrapbook supposes that Sid may be using the word *private* in some special Clintonian way. Was Hyde's affair really *private*, for instance? Matrimony, as the justice of the peace always points out, is a public institution. And Hyde's liaison involved not just him but the woman herself, and was discovered by her husband.

Interesting questions, these. Important ones, too. The White House has promised to fire anyone with fingerprints on the Hyde story. The FBI, at the urging of House Republicans, is considering an investigation of whether dirt is being dredged up to intimidate the members of Congress who may soon sit in judgment of the president.

Salon has denied any White House involvement in its scoop, but that's hardly the end of the story. The *San Francisco Examiner* reported on Saturday that *Salon* rushed its story into print because it learned that two "political operatives" were "leaking details of Hyde's affair." According to *Salon* managing editor David Weir (who was interviewed by the *Examiner*'s Matt Beer), one of the operatives was Terry Lenzner, a private eye "hired in the past by the White House to check out Clinton opponents." So *Salon* confirms that Terry Lenzner was spreading stories about Henry Hyde. A Lenzner spokesman denies it to the *Examiner*.

Looks like the FBI has its work cut out for it.

The Blumenthal Files, Cont. . . .

Presidential aide Sidney Blumenthal denies spreading nasty rumors to help the president (see above). Really? In a fascinating article for the *Nation* last March, veteran left-wing journalist Doug Ireland followed up on an MSNBC report that Clintonites had been digging into the sexual preferences of Ken Starr's prosecutors.

"As both a journalist and as someone who's gay," wrote Ireland, "my interest was sparked, and I began making calls to determine whether the outing accusations were true. Three members of the media confirmed to me that Sidney Blumenthal, the White House media counselor, had indeed been spreading such stories: They'd heard him do it. These reputable members of the Beltway media agreed to tell me what they knew only if guaranteed complete anonymity; they were afraid of losing access to White House sources, and of possible reprisals. Two said that Blumenthal had told them directly of the same-sex orientation of a member of Starr's staff, and a third said he had been present for a conversation in which Blumenthal made such a comment to a third person."

Ireland also confirmed Blumenthal's nasty habit of going after unfriendly reporters. "Two of the members of the media I spoke to about the Starr allegations," wrote Ireland, "also said Blumenthal had described at least two other media figures to them as gay. One of those sources, as well as other people who know Blumenthal, described

Scrapbook

him as fascinated by sexual gossip that they said he recycles as part of his defense of the Clintons.

"When I called Blumenthal, he branded the outing charges a 'complete lie.' When told my sources said they had heard the outing information from his lips, he reiterated, 'They did not.'"

That's Accountability

Gordon MacDonald is one of the three pastors President Clinton now summons for weekly prayer and guidance—what he calls his "accountability group." And he included MacDonald, senior minister at Grace Chapel outside Boston, for a special reason. The president told MacDonald he'd read his book, *Rebuilding Your Broken World*. Twice. But he's taken little of the advice MacDonald offers. MacDonald was head of a large mission agency 12 years ago when he was caught in adultery. What he did next is instructive.

MacDonald quit his post and began two years of rehab on his life and marriage. His advice for the truly repentant? Withdraw. Go on retreat with your spouse. Spend time—months, maybe longer—in "quiet places." Don't defend yourself or complain about others. He writes: "This is no hour for plotting what the politicians call a comeback." He and his wife, Gail, found "we just might accomplish more for people" by praying "than all the speaking and writing we might have ever done." What's especially needed is discipline, MacDonald writes, and this "usually means restrictions: being relieved of certain responsibilities."

Sound advice, for sure. Just don't expect Clinton to take any of it.

Sex and the EEOC

At his press conference last week alongside Vaclav Havel, Clinton offered examples of work he'd like the government to buckle down to: One of the top items on his list was the elimination of the backlog at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. People say that this president is too distracted from his work to be effective, but here's one area where he really might still make a big difference. One-fifth of the EEOC's caseload in 1997 consisted of sexual-harassment cases, up from only one-tenth in 1991. These cases could be resolved very quickly indeed if every defendant, not just the Perjurer-in-Chief, were permitted to use Clinton's definition of sex.

It Didn't Start with Clinton

Here's a fascinatingly contemporary-sounding dispatch from the June 21, 1963, *Time*, on Great Britain's Clintonesque "Profumo Affair":

> Significantly, the unpardonable crime of ex-Secretary of State for War John Profumo was not that he was indiscreet and a potential security risk but that he lied to the House of Commons in initially denying any relationship with Christine [Keeler]. Moreover, he lied stupidly, since he might have saved his dignity and his seat as an MP by admitting his misstep. As a limerick that made the rounds of Westminster last week had it:
>
> *'What on earth have you done?' said Christine.*
> *'You have wrecked the whole party machine.*
> *To lie in the nude*
> *Is not at all rude,*
> *But to lie in the House is obscene.'*

Casual

Literary Tippling

A tippler I take to be someone who boozes in small quantities but regularly, stopping just short of actual drunkenness. Your tippler tends to operate on the sly, if not the sneak. He ducks into a bar for a quick one. He keeps a bottle in the office, maybe a flask in the car. The thought of being cut off makes him ill. He can't, poor devil, help himself. He needs his drink.

Exchange the word drink for the word print, and I am, as I have long known myself to be, a classic tippler, literary division. I do not—cannot—leave the house without reading material. Living on the sixth floor of an eight-story building, I usually manage to get in a paragraph on the elevator. I read in bank and supermarket lines. I read during television commercials, and, in the battle between telly and text, seven times out of ten text wins. When driving alone, I keep a magazine or book on the empty seat next to me. I get in a paragraph or two at a stoplight and am usually interrupted by a honking—and slightly ticked—fellow driver.

The families of literary tipplers, like those of alcoholics, do not have it easy. All they can do is go along with the program. Too often they turn into literary tipplers themselves. My wife, a woman of great natural refinement and hence lovely manners, I notice has begun to read with her breakfast and, sometimes, lunch. My own tippling over the years, which cannot have been easy for her, has driven her to tippling on her own.

Naturally, I tipple in the House of Commons, as the English used to call the bathroom. Practicing silence, exile, and cunning of a kind perhaps never dreamed of by the young Stephen Dedalus, I recently read the better part of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* there. Large stretches of Anthony Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time* were also devoured in the House of Commons, not to speak of innumerable long magazine pieces. "I am sitting in the smallest room in my house," wrote the German composer Max Reger to a hostile critic. "I have your review before me. It will soon be behind me."

Ought writers to prefer not to be read in the bathroom? I am not at all sure that they oughtn't to be pleased—just as they ought to be pleased to know that readers have taken their books into the hospital with them. It is in such places—bathrooms, hospitals—that one reads what one really wants to read, not something that one feels one ought to read. Years ago an editor who asked me to write for him, after telling me that he couldn't pay me a fee, added that his paper was read with great enthusiastic intensity. "They take it to the john," he said, implying no higher compliment was possible.

My literary tippling often but not always entails prose I do not need to read with the keenest concentration. I don't tipple with things I have to make notes upon or that I will myself be writing about. Some genres are more tipple-worthy than others: letters, diaries, novels for which one hasn't the highest expectations. I can also tipple with fairly serious books: I mentioned Joyce, and my current bathroom book is Suetonius's *Twelve Caesars*. Poetry, however, doesn't tipple well. Nor does philosophy. Movie criticism makes a nice tipple.

At its most intense as a pure addiction, literary tippling takes the form of reading while walking. In Evanston, Ill., where I live, one of the local sights is the writer Garry Wills walking the streets, his nose in a book or magazine. An acquaintance of mine claims this is a very great affectation—that it can't really be done. He is wrong; it can be done. I know because I have done it, and on quiet streets sometimes do it still. The great historian Macaulay is said to have been able to read while threading his way through the most crowded London streets. A good man, Macaulay.

What is the meaning behind this need—this insistent and incessant need—for taking in all this print? So much to read, so little time, might be one answer, though it would not be mine. Reading beats actual experience, might be another, though here I seem to recall Wallace Stevens writing to a young poet that he ought to read less and think more—probably good advice, even though I myself read it and didn't think it up on my own.

No, my pleasure in almost perpetual reading has to do with the love of the sentence as a tranquilizer. Something there is about an elegantly turned sentence or a well-made paragraph that calms me and makes me feel that order is possible and life is, against all strong evidence to the contrary, perhaps just manageable. So pleasing is this sensation that I feel, like the tippler from another realm, that I really must have another one—and as soon as possible.

You wouldn't, by any chance, happen to have a spare paragraph on you, would you, pal?

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

AN ARGUMENT FOR REALISM

Robert Kagan uses his review of James Chace's biography of Dean Acheson to launch another attack on "realism" ("How Dean Acheson Won the Cold War," Sept. 14). He is right to point out that the Truman administration used power to create a liberal postwar settlement, and he is certainly entitled to his beliefs about the appropriate role of moral considerations in current American foreign policy. But he is wrong to imply that the issues in the realist-liberal debate are simple and wrong to say that any disagreement among realists means that "realism is a hollow concept, useless for analyzing American policymaking."

Realism can be seen as either a prescriptive approach to foreign policy (nations should act from considerations of power and material interest) or a descriptive one (nations generally do act this way, and if they do not, they pay a price because international politics is a dangerous and unforgiving game). The latter conception is the one favored by most realists themselves, and is the basis for their occasional prescriptive suggestions. In other words, properly understood, realism is a theory of the way the world works. Those who find the theory convincing pay attention to certain kinds of issues and expect that certain kinds of actions will have certain kinds of consequences.

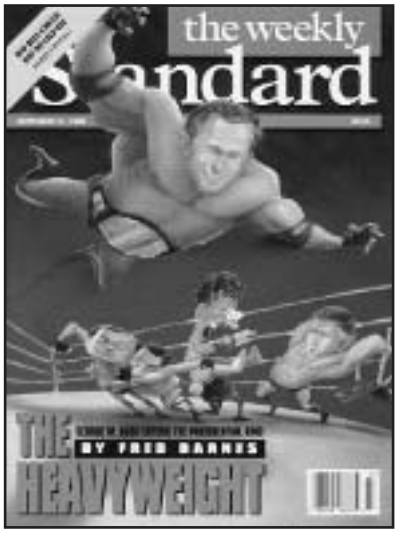
So realists do not act as if they have been faxed a common and detailed set of talking points on the issue of the day from central headquarters, but rather simply share a series of concerns and general attitudes. They fight among themselves all the time about how to define and balance competing American interests in individual cases, what the precise consequences of alternative policies are likely to be, and what degree of risk policymakers should tolerate.

The result may be messy, and Kagan may see it as "useless for analyzing American policymaking," but it is probably less so than his implicit alternative, which I take to be an approach that privileges questions of principle instead of power. He and his confreres will inevitably spend a comparable amount of time debating how to define, reconcile, and implement competing moral and ideological principles in particular cases. The difference is that their deliberations might yield recommendations of dubious value, since they will be only distantly related to how most nations—including ours—have actually behaved throughout most of history.

GIDEON ROSE
NEW YORK, NY

ON BOOMERS

Christopher Caldwell's article on the revolting generation of 1968 does not go as far as we need to if we are to understand the non-phenomenon of that ostensible political move-



ment of the 1960s ("1968: A Revolting Generation Looks Back," Sept. 7). He neglects, or ignores, an atypical but central figure of the movement, Guy Debord, who no doubt learned from Jacques Ellul.

Debord, born in 1931, was not a member of the generation in question, but he was one of its intellectual leaders. His thought combines both the "lifestyle" and "socialist" wings of the 1960s movement, but goes farther than either by recognizing the "spectacular" nature of modern society. That the movement would necessarily be "based on nothing," as Caldwell now argues, Debord recognized in 1967, when he published the first of his theses in *The Society of Spectacle*. "The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation." Debord never became a media star or crawled to a position of power and respectability like the protesters who graduated from the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. He made movies, wrote books, drank, loved, thought, and took his life in 1994.

Our tedious, but apparently endless national pastimes of whining and consumption have more to do with an inability or unwillingness to live directly than with generational differences.

WARREN HOPE
HAVERTOWN, PA

MORE FLEET STREET DAYS

It's a moot point who should be dismissed for the insomnia cure that is Tucker Carlson's piece "My Fleet Street Days" (Casual, Sept. 7). But since you Americans are so concerned with accuracy, perhaps you will now indulge me in putting the record straight on numerous points.

1) I am not the New York correspondent for the *Daily Mirror*. I am a freelance writer who called Master Tucker on the day in question representing the *Sunday Mirror*, and told him so.

2) "The interview was short and dull." Dull—I agree. Short—if you count 23 minutes, at an average speaking rate of 200 words per minute, short. My phone record backs this up. And I do take shorthand, unlike most American journalists.

3) It was made clear to Master Tucker that a photographer would be calling him later to take a picture of him for the piece that would go into the *Sunday Mirror* under his byline. This phone conversation was overheard at my home by one Michael O'Regan, a journalist and media consultant to Anthony Pratt, a billionaire in New York who specializes in paper-recycling, possibly that used for your Page Six. He is willing to testify—just like old Bill—before a grand jury about this fact. Moreover, would I lie to my paymasters that he was willing to be photographed if he wasn't?

4) "Ignoring the message" and going

Correspondence

out for dinner says more about Master Tucker's manners than anyone calling from London, especially as he voiced no objection to having his photo taken.

5) "Pretty embarrassing," he finds, to "write like this." Why? Because he is suddenly talking to an audience of millions—6 million people read the *Sunday Mirror*. How many people read THE WEEKLY STANDARD, apart from Newt Gingrich and his dog? What elitism is it that drives a young-fogy talking head to be "embarrassed" because his tortured prose is put into the language of everyman? I presume that he must be embarrassed at being thought of as common, because there is no argument in Master Tucker's piece that he disagrees with the sentiments he expressed against William Jefferson Clinton.

6) The 200-plus words he expends at the beginning of the piece about my work is evidently an attempt to denigrate my reputation. Good. I never thought that journalism was much deserving of reputations anyway—my mother still thinks I play piano in a whorehouse. What it does do is serve as a kind of litmus test, proof of the kind of person poor, virginal Master Tucker likes to deal with—or rather not. He could easily have mentioned air crashes, the Los Angeles riots, or a young girl from Belfast whose father had been shot in the Troubles whom I took into the Oval Office to meet Bill Clinton, as examples of my dispatches from these shores. But no matter—those great stories he mentioned were all true and—just fancy that—there were millions who wanted to read them. And I never once stooped to the levels of the *Washington Post*, that tawdry rag, which recently mentioned the sex in the White House in all its lurid detail.

7) He should think himself lucky that I called him an "expert commentator." On the Friday night when I needed to get someone in Washington—and quick—to interview for this piece, I called the Associated Press office and told them I needed someone "right wing" who doesn't mind having a go at Clinton.

"You want Tucker Carlson at THE WEEKLY STANDARD," replied the man at the other end of the phone. "He's a right loony—he'll say anything."

Clearly.

I can live with my reputation, but I wager that Carlson will be crying into his Brooks Brothers handkerchief if he thinks the big boys, the real journalists, have such a high opinion of him.

ALLAN HALL
NEW YORK, NY

TUCKER CARLSON RESPONDS: ***Gingrich doesn't have a dog.***

BRING ON PRESIDENT GORE

Tod Lindberg's almost-thorough analysis omits the biggest Gore issue: the certain continuing fallout from the campaign-finance scandal ("Dare to Do Nothing?," Sept. 7). If Janet Reno buckles under the pressure to appoint an independent counsel for Vice President Gore, then he will be a significantly weakened candidate in 2000—especially if Republicans make significant gains in the House and Senate this November. Ultimately, if nothing else, the Republican National Committee should churn out grainy, black-and-white ads reminding the electorate of LaBella and Freeh's unanswered memos.

If Republicans partake of the political backbone now so generously being provided them by Bill Clinton, they will have little to fear from President Gore.

THOMAS E. TYLER
PHILADELPHIA, PA

FLAT-TAX PARLOR TRICKS

John Hood raised some valid political objections to otherwise sensible provisions of the flat-tax proposal ("Tax Reform: Fantasy & Reality," Sept. 14). The most relevant objection relates to the fact that under the flat tax, rich "coupon clippers" appear to pay no federal income tax. Economists are correct to point out that investors would, in fact, be taxed under the plan at the corporate level. Hood observes that the fact that the investor would not be taxed at the personal level leaves the flat-tax proposal wide open to left-wing demagoguery. However, a simple modification of the proposal—without changing any of its substantive provisions—would blunt any charges that rich investors go untaxed by the flat tax. In the current system wealthy investors who own stock are taxed both at the corporate and personal levels—double taxation. Under a straight flat tax, stock dividends are untaxable, so if the investor's income is paid in dividends, it is only taxed at the corporate level.

With a bit more paperwork, each investor's share of corporate taxes paid could be included on his or her individual tax returns. This accounting sleight-of-hand goes to the heart of the charge that under a flat tax "rich people would not pay taxes." They would pay taxes, and it would say so right on their tax returns.

JAMES J. KRAMER
HOUSTON, TX

THE SPEECH THAT WASN'T

What a pity that Paul Begala's inspiring and historic words are now lost forever (SCRAPBOOK, "The Mea Culpa Speech Clinton Rejected," Aug. 31). Wouldn't it be wonderful if President Nixon's Oval Office recording system were still operational? If it were, we would eventually (after the inevitable legal battles and endless appeals) be able to hear the actual words with which the president rejected the Begala draft.

Come to think of it, even if those words had been recorded, they very well might have been erased, accidentally of course; probably by an intern whose name no one in the White House now remembers.

LEONARD FROMM
COLD SPRING, MN

THE WEEKLY STANDARD
welcomes letters to the editor.
Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number.
All letters should be addressed:
Correspondence Editor
THE WEEKLY STANDARD
1150 17th St., NW
Washington, DC 20036.
You may also fax letters: (202) 293-4901.

the weekly Standard

Impeach the Perjurer

During his January 17 deposition in the Paula Jones civil suit, President Clinton was asked this rather simple question: "At any time, were you and Monica Lewinsky alone together in the Oval Office?" Clinton answered, "I don't recall," and then launched a longish speculation about how it was "possible" that she had brought him documents to sign "once or twice" on weekends. The Jones lawyers next tried several times to pin down the president on whether he and Lewinsky had ever been alone together in the hallway adjacent to the Oval Office. Clinton responded that Lewinsky had once been in the hallway to deliver a pizza—but "I don't believe she was there alone" and "I have no other recollection" of such a circumstance. "I don't believe we were alone in the hallway, no."

One more attempt, then. "At any time, have you and Monica Lewinsky ever been alone together in any room in the White House?" Clinton squirmed a bit at this all-encompassing query. "I think I testified to that earlier," he finally said. "I think that there is a, it is—I have no specific recollection" of any encounter with the woman beyond a "general memory" of the pizza and documents, and "I don't remember" anything the two had ever said to each other.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS GUILTY OF SYSTEMATIC, BALD-FACED PERJURY. WHICH FACT, IT SEEMS TO US, IS ALL ANYONE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT CONGRESS AND THE NATION MUST DO NOW.

But by the testimony of Monica Lewinsky—and Betty Currie, six current or former Secret Service officers, and a Navy steward—she and Clinton were indeed alone together, in and around the Oval Office, on many occasions over a two-year period ending late last year. Less than three weeks before Clinton's January deposition, they had a long private conversation there about Lewinsky's subpoena in the Jones case. And seven months after Clinton's deposition, at his grand-jury appearance on August 17, the president himself suddenly remembered that he had done something wrong "when I was alone with Ms. Lewinsky" in the White House.

In other words, the memory lapse about being alone with Lewinsky—claimed by Bill Clinton under oath on January 17—was a lie. And there were many, many other memory lapses, each of them, too, a lie.

In the Jones deposition, the president was asked when he had last spoken to Lewinsky. He replied, "I don't remember." Had she already been served a subpoena at the time? "I don't know." Had Clinton ever mentioned to Lewinsky the possibility that she might be called to testify in the Jones litigation? "I'm not sure"; he may have made an innocent joke about it in her presence. What had been Lewinsky's reaction to this purported joke? "Nothing that I can recall." Had the president ever given gifts to his intern? "I don't recall." A hat pin? "I could have" given her a hat pin, but "I don't remember."

All this forgetfulness was false. Most of it is proven false by Clinton's own subsequent grand-jury testimony. He *did* "remember a conversation about the possibility of her testifying," the president acknowledged on August 17. There were at least three such conversations in December 1997, and about the last of them Clinton now concedes, "I knew by then, of course, that she had gotten a subpoena." At this final meeting, Clinton and Lewinsky explicitly discussed the hat pin. And then, the president told the grand jury, he gave her *additional* gifts—just 20 days before he swore in federal court that he couldn't specifically remember ever doing so.

Bill Clinton's memory, it appears, is unique in the annals of cognitive psychology. The president does not dispute that twice in the days immediately follow-

ing his Jones deposition he summoned Betty Currie to the Oval Office and made her listen to an (inaccurate) account of his relationship with Lewinsky: e.g., "We were never really alone." Clinton was not here coaching Currie with answers to questions she might later be asked, he assured the grand jury. He was merely trying "to understand what the facts were" and "quickly refresh my memory." Our president works very hard to remember things that aren't true, and is content to forget a great number of other things that are.

In fact, the only matter about which his memory has ostensibly functioned with almost super-human precision is sex. At his Jones deposition in January, he could not have been more certain that he had "never" had an "extramarital sexual affair" or "sexual relations" or "an affair" with Monica Lewinsky. And it was "absolutely true" that they had not had a "sexual relationship." And it "would not be the truth" if anyone said otherwise.

Before the grand jury in August, of course, the president abruptly recovered his memory of "inappropriate intimate contact" with the young lady, his magic phrase for repeated acts of oral sex. But he also emphatically remembered that his earlier, finely parsed sworn statements on the subject were entirely honest. When the Jones lawyers asked him whether he'd ever had sex with Lewinsky—"as I understood this term to be defined" and as "most ordinary Americans" would understand it—Clinton did not, he now claims, think they were asking him about fellatio. He thought, instead, that they were asking him about anything and everything *except* that.

The president's lawyers are the only people alive who pretend to believe that Bill Clinton believes he was not questioned concerning oral sex during his Jones deposition. And a disbelief in Clinton's asserted state of mind while under oath, they insist, is not enough to establish that his testimony constitutes criminal perjury. Courtroom answers that are "literally true," however unresponsive to questioning, are not perjurious, the White House points out. And answers to "fundamentally ambiguous" questions "can never be perjury." And "nobody can be convicted of perjury based on only one other person's testimony."

As applied to the Lewinsky scandal, this is a thoroughly dishonest portrait of the perjury statutes. The case law is crystal clear. The literal truth of a witness's testimony is not judged against his private interpretation of reality; words must be analyzed "in their common sense and usage." A question asked of that witness does not become "ambiguous" simply because he later invents some alternative linguistic universe in which more than one factual answer might be possible. The so-called "two witness" rule for determining perjury is not in force when feigned forgetfulness is alleged; "false memory" perjury can be proved by circumstantial evidence alone. And *no* witness or evidence is required at all when two or more sworn statements are flatly inconsistent—when, for example, you claim to have forgotten something in January and then remember it in August.

The president of the United States is guilty of systematic, bald-faced perjury. Which fact, it seems to us, is all anyone needs to know about what Congress and the nation must do now.

Washington is nervous over the prospect of impeachment. Many in the city, their eyes on the polls, would welcome some workable second choice. And so a grand-compromise "plea bargain" deal is now in the air—recently endorsed even by the *New York Times*, whose editorial page has all year long been an honorably stalwart critic of the president's appalling behavior. The deal would work like this: Clinton would confess to perjury. He would be censured (and perhaps fined) by Congress. He would be promised, in return, that he could retain the presidency, that Kenneth Starr's Lewinsky probe would be suspended, and that Clinton would never be indicted for any crime revealed by that probe.

This deal is not so tidy as it looks. Congress has no power over the independent counsel's office, and so cannot assure the president that Kenneth Starr will cease and desist. Congress cannot unilaterally fine any citizen, including the president; that would be an unconstitutional "bill of attainder." So Clinton would have to formally accept such a penalty—and thereby enshrine an extraconstitutional congressional disciplinary power over every future president. The presidency as an *institution* would be permanently weakened, even more than it has been already.

And absent such a fine, censure would become a purely rhetorical reprimand of Clinton—a mere slap on the wrist. Which would be worse than useless. Presidential adultery, the White House now lamely but correctly contends, is not an impeachable "high crime or misdemeanor." But repeated presidential *perjury* surely is. An American president leads the nation by deed and word. If his deeds are repulsive and his words cannot be trusted, then he cannot lead. And if our politics makes such an official judgment about the president's character, but then leaves him in office *anyway*, it will be sanctioning a future in which White House perjury—and a chief executive without effective authority—is tolerable.

It is not. The country needs a real president—a new president, Albert Gore—as soon as possible. Congress should provide us one. Clinton must be removed from the White House.

—David Tell, for the Editors

On DeLay, On DeLay

by Fred Barnes

When House speaker Newt Gingrich and other Republicans met with a delegation of social conservatives on September 17, the first piece of advice came from Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation. "Please kill censure," Weyrich said. Gingrich didn't obfuscate or waffle. "I won't schedule [a vote on] it," he said. Thus died the idea of censuring President Clinton now for his misdeeds in the White House sex scandal—instead of impeaching him later. Then, a few minutes after Gingrich had gone, it dawned on those Republicans remaining that someone other than Gingrich would have to declare censure dead. The speaker has a formal role in impeachment and is seeking to hold himself aloof from partisanship these days. Almost instantly, House GOP whip Tom DeLay stepped forward. He'd be happy to speak on the House floor, he said, and drive a stake through censure's heart. And so he did.

Kent Lemon

Tom Delay

DeLay, humorless and glowering, plays a menacing bad cop to Gingrich's good cop. But his role in the House, especially on impeachment, goes well beyond that. DeLay is more powerful and commands a larger following than any other whip in decades. Nominally, he's number three in the hierarchy, but he has enough clout to thwart Gingrich on occasion. More than any other leader, he reflects the sentiments of House Republicans, again notably on impeachment. Of course, DeLay helped shape those sentiments in the first place.

Next to Gingrich and Judiciary Committee chairman Henry Hyde, DeLay is the most important House Republican on impeachment. Why? Because his anti-Clinton zeal is not likely to flag. His loathing of Clinton—his policies, his politics, his wife—is "visceral," a senior Republican says. And if Gingrich and other GOP leaders begin to waver on impeachment, DeLay will surely try to firm them up. The true significance of DeLay is that his presence increases the likelihood that Clinton will be impeached.

DeLay's most significant role is that of relentless prod, pushing Gingrich and others to be more conservative and more outspoken on nearly every issue. And he's always willing to be out front. He was the first GOP House leader to zing President Clinton publicly after the sex scandal broke and demand Clinton tell the truth. He was the first to urge Clinton to resign. And he was the first to call for the release of all documents handed over by independent counsel Ken Starr. DeLay takes on jobs that Gingrich and majority leader Dick Armey reject or find too unpleasant. He waylaid the campaign-finance-reform bill for five months with stalling tactics. And he wooed angry social conservatives back into the Republican fold at a "values summit" last June.

On impeachment at least, DeLay usually says what Gingrich thinks. The speaker has taken a vow of public silence on impeachment. His strategy, says a House Republican, is "to say nothing and tell people to listen to Tom DeLay." Privately, Gingrich can barely contain himself. At a meeting of House Republican leaders, also on September 17, he listened avidly as DeLay and Bob Livingston, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, lambasted the idea of merely censuring Clinton. Mocking his promise not to attack Clinton, Gingrich stuffed his tie into his mouth and bit it. Finally, he declared: "This is not going to be over until [Clinton aide] Bruce Lindsey comes up here and testifies under oath about his role." Lindsey has claimed attorney-client privilege in refusing to answer Starr's questions about his talks with the president on the scandal, and he probably won't be eager to testify before Hyde's committee either.

What makes DeLay unique as whip is that he and Gingrich sometimes don't agree—and DeLay speaks out anyway. He sees himself, an aide says, as "an independent operative for conservative issues." This makes Gingrich nervous. The speaker "has not told DeLay to stop," according to a Gingrich aide, "but he's not telling him to do it either. Trying to tell him to stop wouldn't do any good anyway."

It certainly wouldn't have on the question of giving the White House an advance peek at the Starr report. When DeLay learned that Gingrich was considering a deal with House Democrats on this, he began organiz-

ing opposition among GOP members. In his office, DeLay has set up an operation, run by aide Tony Rudy, to keep members engaged on impeachment. The office sends them talking points and proposed editorials, and schedules radio-talk-show appearances for them. Had the deal gone through, Clinton and his lawyers would have had 48 hours to examine the report before its release. But it fell through mainly because DeLay stirred outrage among Republicans.

DeLay and Gingrich have never been close pals. In 1989, DeLay backed Edward Madigan against Gingrich for House GOP whip. Gingrich won. After Republicans captured the House in 1994, DeLay defeated Gingrich's best friend in the House, Bob Walker, for the whip's job. Soon, he and Gingrich clashed again when the speaker trimmed the budget for the whip's office. And the biggest rift occurred when DeLay backed the failed coup against Gingrich in 1997, then admitted his role in it. For a while, they were scarcely on speaking terms. "Newt eventually decided to put everything about the coup behind him," says a DeLay ally. "But he'll never trust DeLay with his innermost thoughts."

Nor does DeLay want to hear them. On March 27, he went to the House floor and called on Clinton to stop stonewalling and tell the truth. "Leaders do not live by polls alone," he said. "Without trust and respect, they are as nothing, and any title they hold is a mockery." DeLay didn't notify Gingrich of his speech. On August 18, the day after the president admitted a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, DeLay sent out a press release calling for Clinton's resignation. When Gingrich and DeLay discussed that subject later, the speaker was miffed to learn the release had already gone out.

DeLay performs as bad cop even when he's not fully on board with the strategy. After the story broke on September 18 about Henry Hyde's affair in the late 1960s, DeLay wanted to make public a letter to Hyde referring the matter to his own committee for investigation as part of the Clinton impeachment probe. Gingrich balked at this. He rewrote the letter, edited the supporting materials, and insisted all of it be sent to FBI director Louis Freeh, not Hyde. DeLay was unfazed. He marched to the press room with the letter and, without a wink or a smile, blamed the White House for smearing Hyde. "We will not be intimidated by this kind of sleazy activity," he said. Gingrich's sentiment exactly.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

MR. IMPEACHMENT

by Eric Felten

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S "REBUTTAL" to the Starr report denies there are grounds for impeachment because the report fails to provide unambiguous evidence of perjury. Any members of the House inclined to take the word of David Kendall and Charles Ruff, the lawyers who penned the rebuttal, will want first to consult one of their colleagues, Rep. Alcee Hastings. The Florida Democrat is Congress's resident expert on impeachment, and his expertise is hard-won: Hastings is the only congressman who has himself been impeached. And his story, his own political preferences notwithstanding—Hastings lately called for the impeachment of independent counsel Kenneth Starr—is unrelievedly grim for the president.

Hastings, then a federal judge, was impeached 426-3 by the House in August 1988 for taking bribes from the bench and committing perjury. Appointed by Jimmy Carter in 1979, Hastings was the first black district-court judge in Florida. But early in his tenure, Hastings got into trouble. One of the first cases he was assigned was the trial of Tom and Frank Romano, who were accused of bleeding a Teamsters pension fund. The two were convicted of racketeering, facing serious jail time, and the court seized from them $1 million in ill-gotten gains.

Enter William A. Borders Jr., Washington attorney and an old friend of Hastings. Borders met with one of the Romano brothers and suggested that, for the right price, his pal the judge could fix the case. Frank Romano agreed to give Borders $150,000; in exchange, the brothers would be released on probation and get back their forfeited $1 million. Borders collected a down payment on the $150,000; Hastings returned more than $800,000 to the Romanos; and Borders then collected the balance due, taking a suitcase full of cash from Romano. And then Borders was arrested: It wasn't Frank Romano he had been conspiring with, but Paul Rico, an undercover FBI agent.

Borders was convicted of conspiracy and sentenced to five years in jail. Not so Hastings, against whom the case was much less solid. Borders was the one who offered the deal; Borders was the one who picked up the cash; Borders was the one caught red-handed. But

there was no direct evidence that Hastings was actually part of the plot. There were phone conversations between Borders and Hastings that the FBI had recorded—but none in which a bribery deal was explicitly discussed. Prosecutors argued (none too convincingly) that the recordings showed Borders and Hastings conspiring in a mysterious code language. The key piece of circumstantial evidence was somewhat more persuasive: Hastings returned the forfeited cash just as Borders had promised he would. Pure coincidence, Hastings argued. And Hastings's arguments proved compelling enough that a jury acquitted him of all charges in 1983.

What with the Constitution's protection against double jeopardy, Hastings had every reason to believe that his acquittal had ended the matter. It hadn't. Several years later, a panel of federal judges complained to Congress that Hastings had lied at his trial and manufactured phony evidence to exculpate himself. Under the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act, the judges asked the House to impeach Hastings. It did, and that's how Judge Alcee Hastings ended up before a Senate impeachment committee in the summer of 1989, being tried on the very charges of which a jury had already acquitted him.

Alcee Hastings

Kent Lemon

"What we're doing here is impeaching a jury verdict," Hastings said at the time. "A fair trial for Alcee Hastings is no trial." Hastings sought to have the articles of impeachment dismissed by a federal court. No go. "It is an acquittal that cannot be overturned," said Rep. John Bryant, acting as "prosecutor" in Hastings's trial by the Senate. The Texas Democrat explained that "Judge Hastings cannot be prosecuted again. But he can be removed from office."

On what grounds could Hastings be removed from office? The Senate, after all, wasn't looking at much of anything new in the way of evidence. By definition, the judge was being impeached on evidence that had not met the criminal standard of proof. If the evidence didn't prove Hastings's guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt," then what standard were senators using when they voted on the charges against Hastings? Some of the senators hewed to the criminal standard and voted "not guilty"; some looked to the civil standard, "a preponderance of the evidence," and voted to convict; others chose the middle ground—"clear and convincing evidence"—and split on whether that standard had been met. When the Senate voted in October 1989, it was a close thing. The votes of two-thirds of those present are needed for a conviction. Hastings was removed from office for conspiracy and perjury by a vote of 69 to 26.

Hastings did not slink away. As he declared on the Capitol steps, "My momma had a man." The disrobed judge returned to Florida, where he had become a celebrity in the black community—an icon of how the system railroads African-Americans. After a failed bid for governor, Hastings had the last laugh on Congress. He ran for the House in a predominantly black district in 1992 and won. The Senate had removed him from the bench, but it had never ruled that he couldn't hold another high office. Judge Hastings became Representative Hastings.

The Hastings precedent does not bode well for Clinton. Alcee Hastings maintained his innocence at a criminal trial and was acquitted. But because the Senate suspected he had been guilty, it decided his protestations of innocence under oath had to be perjury. Such a standard for proving perjury is one the president cannot possibly survive. Clinton makes much of the fact that his current agonies stem from a civil case—*Jones* v. *Clinton*—that has been dismissed; but Hastings had a much stronger claim: The underlying criminal case against him had been disposed of when the jury had found him not guilty. Hastings was never caught in a demonstrable lie; Clinton's sworn lies, by contrast, have been extensively catalogued.

Then there is the Supreme Court precedent to contend with. Hastings wasn't the only federal judge to be impeached and convicted by the Senate in 1989: There was also the inauspiciously named Walter Nixon, who—unlike Hastings—was removed from office after being convicted of perjury in a criminal trial. But Nixon's impeachment trial, like Hastings's, was conducted before a 12-member special committee instead of the full Senate. Nixon challenged his impeachment in court, arguing that, since most of the senators voting against him had not sat through the

presentation of the evidence, he had been denied due process. He won in a lower court, and the impeachment was overturned. Hastings then asked for his impeachment to be overturned as well. The U.S. District Court in Washington reinstated Hastings, but it was a short-lived victory.

Soon Nixon's case was before the Supreme Court—and it's here that things start to get really ugly for Clinton. The Nixon case gave the justices an opportunity to rule on this fundamental constitutional question: Can the courts second-guess Congress when it comes to impeachment? Nixon's lawyers argued that the courts could enforce due process and evidentiary standards; the solicitor general argued to the contrary that the Constitution couldn't be more clear when it declares that "the Senate has the sole power of trying impeachment cases." The justices ruled 7-2 that the Senate's "sole power of trying impeachment" means the courts cannot interfere. Nixon's conviction stood. And so too the impeachment and conviction of Alcee Hastings.

That is why, once the Starr report was delivered to Congress, the president's lawyers lost any right to challenge its findings in court. It is Congress, not the courts, that determines the admissibility of evidence for impeachment; it is Congress, not the courts, that determines whether the evidence is strong enough to prove perjury. And no doubt the Office of Independent Counsel had the Hastings and Nixon cases in mind when preparing its report to Congress. No doubt, because the solicitor general who convinced the high court not to meddle in impeachment was none other than Kenneth Starr.

Eric Felten, a Washington writer, wrote for* THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about CNN's nerve-gas smear.

CLINTON'S LAST FRIENDS

by Jay Nordlinger

AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE LAST WEEK, Bill Clinton received one question he clearly relished: Would his current troubles harm his cherished race initiative? No, Clinton answered—especially given "the response you've seen from some sectors of the American community," which has "reinforced and acknowledged the centrality of this issue to the work of the last six years."

Clinton's words were typically dense, but his meaning, for once, was unmistakable: Black Americans support him strongly. And he is clinging to them as never before.

It is Clinton's most predictable move, really: When he finds himself in a jam, he makes a beeline for his black supporters. They, in turn, provide him the absolution and comfort he seeks. Many black Americans regard him as one of their own, a southern liberal who is steeped in their history. They are skeptical of a legal system that has frequently been unjust to them. They stress the theme of redemption in broken lives. And they suspect that Clinton's predicament is somehow related to his sympathy for them, a sympathy disdained by the white majority.

> SIXTY-THREE HOUSE DEMOCRATS OPPOSED RELEASING THE STARR REPORT. NEARLY HALF WERE BLACK. MAXINE WATERS CALLS THEM "FAIRNESS COPS."

Says Roger Wilkins, the civil-rights veteran and scholar, "Clinton is a very shrewd character. He knows that his rapport with black people is terrific. He sees how black people react to him—at church and so forth—and so he knows that if he goes to see black people, he's going to get a warm bath." Besides which, Clinton has "a habit of using black people as props."

Back in January, only days after Monica Lewinsky was made known to the world, Clinton phoned Jesse Jackson, someone with whom his relations had been testy. Would the reverend come to the White House to watch the Super Bowl? He would. The White House had another problem then, too: No one there could find Betty Currie, the president's secretary and a key participant in the Lewinsky affair. Would Jackson help out? Yes again. He managed to reach Currie and counseled her to adopt a "storm-survival strategy." "Choose prayer over panic," he urged. Small wonder that Clinton adviser Paul Begala would say later, "Jesse Jackson has been as good a friend as we've had in this. Oh, he's been good."

Meanwhile, in those critical first days, black members of Congress were mounting a defense of Clinton, lashing out at his accusers and stiffening the resolve of nervous fellow Democrats. John Lewis—reminding the country that he had devoted his life to "the principles of justice"—complained of a "five-year campaign"

waged by a Clinton-hating "juggernaut." He dared the president's enemies to defy "the Great Teacher" (Jesus) and "cast the first stone." At Clinton's State of the Union address, black congressmen took care to occupy the aisle seats, the better to cheer the president, embrace him, and pour encouragement into his ear.

And so it went. In March, Clinton journeyed to Africa, taking with him Jackson and Currie. In mid-August, shortly before Clinton faced the grand jury, Jackson made a return visit to the White House, where he huddled with all three Clintons. A week and a half later—when the public was jeering at the president's disastrous Map Room speech—Clinton spoke at a black church in Oaks Bluff, Mass., "trying out his lines of contrition," as Wilkins puts it. "The people here understand and feel your pain," Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree assured Clinton. "We're going to the wall with this president," vowed the writer Henry Louis Gates. "We believe in forgiveness and we believe in redemption," said Anita Hill. Afterward, Clinton joined in the singing of "We Shall Overcome."

When independent counsel Kenneth Starr at last submitted his report to Congress, 63 Democrats voted against releasing it before the White House had had a chance to review it. Nearly half of those Democrats were black, acting, Maxine Waters contended, as "fairness cops." (Six members of the black caucus voted in favor of immediate release.) Lewis argued that black congressmen recognized "more than others how this system can discriminate." William J. Jefferson admitted that "we start out discrediting the Starr report and looking at it with a jaundiced eye." Charles Rangel declared that "black communities across the country want us to protect this president." Rangel and his colleague Elijah Cummings were invited to flank Clinton at the president's next Saturday radio address.

How united is this front? Polls indicate that black Americans approve of Clinton's performance in office by about 90 percent. In a *New York Times* survey taken last week, the number of black respondents saying that Clinton should be impeached was negligible. Says Julianne Malveaux, a columnist and television pundit who describes herself as "left of liberal," Clinton "has been friendly to our community: This is part of the payback for that."

Wilkins states that he knows one thing "to a moral certainty": "Clinton is more at ease physically and psychically with black people than any other president we've had." John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson were good—"particularly Johnson"—but "nothing like this." Wilkins remembers Clinton at Lani Guinier's wedding, "happy as he could be, rubbing shoulders, politicking: There wasn't a false note in anything he said or did." Congressman Donald Payne agrees that Clinton is "a completely different type of politician for us," consistently alive to black traditions and black concerns.

The perception that Clinton is being persecuted by a wrathful mob is widespread. Black-oriented talk shows are now dominated by the subject. One congressional staffer says that Clinton's problems stem from the conservative fear that the president is "too friendly

to blacks": "A lot of black people feel that way, from my mother on down." Maxine Waters proclaims in interview after interview that "this president will not be railroaded, if the Congressional Black Caucus has anything to do with it." Says Payne, "We've seen lynchings—lynchings of all types—and we're determined to have a semblance of fairness here."

Wilkins relates the experience of attending a party soon after the Starr report reached Congress. He approached one of the most prominent black leaders in the country and asked him what he thought of it. "It's just what Hoover did to Martin," the man said. Come again? Starr, the man insisted, is doing to Clinton exactly what FBI director J. Edgar Hoover did to Martin Luther King in the 1960s. Charlie Rangel had made the same charge as early as February 1, on Jesse Jackson's television show: "Didn't they really do the same thing to [King]? Didn't the FBI try to tape and get people to make accusations against him and destroy him?" Malveaux, too, makes the identical point, unprompted: Hoover, she says, "would attempt to manipulate Dr. King's life through illegal tapes. So for our community, it's kind of like, 'Been there, done that.'"

Clinton, observes Wilkins with wonderment and irritation, "plays black people in a very sophisticated and very cynical way. He uses black people to talk to white people." Wilkins cites several instances from the 1992 campaign, and also from Clinton's one and a half terms. He recalls particularly Clinton's speech at the Memphis church where King delivered his final sermon. Clinton "stood up there in the pulpit, working his cadence—really moving it. Then he said what Martin would say if only he could be there. Now, understand: I knew Martin King very well. I worked for him. And it would never, ever occur to me to think that I knew what Martin would say, especially 30 years after his death." Says Wilkins, "The fact that this personally irresponsible human being has been going around lecturing black people about behavior drives me nuts."

Clinton wears his esteem among black Americans with obvious pride. It is likely that nothing in his political life is more important to him. He counts on black heroes like John Lewis to validate him as a moral figure, a politician worthy of the liberal pantheon—the Kennedys, Johnson, even King. His support in the Congressional Black Caucus is perhaps the brightest ray for him in an exceptionally dark autumn.

Still, black opinion about Clinton is not unanimous—even in Congress. Few statements on the scandal have been so bracing as that of Cynthia McKinney, representative from Georgia. She said that Clinton's "reckless behavior" had "brought us to the brink of a constitutional crisis. His lost credibility means he is no help to me raising my son. His leadership is missing in action on Capitol Hill. He has shattered the confidence of too many people in my district. We are all poorer because of the mistakes of a man who has squandered a historic opportunity, disgracing himself in the eyes of the world and his family." His punishment, McKinney concluded, "will be that he has to face that reality every morning for the rest of his life."

For Bill Clinton—who may legitimately be said to have replaced Jesse Jackson as "the president of black America"—there could hardly have been a more wounding rebuke.

Jay Nordlinger is associate editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

A Way to Oust Saddam

by Robert Kagan

SEVEN MONTHS AFTER the Clinton administration backed down from its confrontation with Saddam Hussein, the disastrous consequences of that retreat are on full display. Whether or not Saddam makes good on his threat to throw out the U.N. weapons inspectors, he has now enjoyed almost two months without U.N. inspections. What does the administration believe he's been doing with all the free time?

Former weapons inspector Scott Ritter has been warning Congress that the day is not far off—maybe a matter of a few months—when Saddam will suddenly present the United States and the world with a horrifying *fait accompli*: He will have his weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver them. If that day comes, no sanctions, no threat of sanctions, no angry U.N. resolutions, and no threat of "force" will be of any use. Saddam's new weapons would dramatically shift the strategic balance in the Middle East, putting at severe risk the safety of Israel, of moderate Arab states, and of the energy resources on which the United States and its allies depend.

The Clinton administration clearly has no idea how to handle this imminent and devastating threat to American interests. Clinton officials want Americans

to believe that winning votes in the U.N. Security Council constitutes a policy for dealing with the Saddam menace. They dismiss Scott Ritter as "clueless." But this Clintonian charade is a mammoth deception that will cause real damage in the world. The unstated but de facto policy of the administration is now this slender hope: If and when Saddam builds his weapons of mass destruction, the United States will still be able to deter him from aggression against his neighbors. This must be mighty comforting to the folks in Jerusalem, Riyadh, and Kuwait City, as well as to anyone else who cares about American credibility and Middle East peace.

It has long been clear that the only way to rid the world of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction is to rid Iraq of Saddam. Last week, Paul Wolfowitz, a defense official in the Bush administration, laid out in testimony before Congress a thoughtful and coherent strategy to accomplish that goal.

The Wolfowitz plan calls for the establishment of a "liberated zone" in southern Iraq much like the zone the Bush administration created in the north of the country in 1991. The zone would be a safe haven for opponents of Saddam's regime. They could rally and organize, establish a provisional government there, gain international recognition, and set up a credible alternative to Saddam's dictatorship. Control of the southern zone would give Saddam's opponents a staging area to which discontented Iraqi army units could defect, as well as access to the country's largest oil field. Arab officials have told Wolfowitz that the effect on Saddam's regime would be "devastating." Wolfowitz predicts that the creation of such a zone would lead to "the unraveling of the regime."

Unlike some of the ideas circulating on Capitol Hill, which suppose that Saddam will be toppled without any military action, the Wolfowitz plan rests on a guarantee of military support to protect the opposition within the liberated zone. If, as would be likely, Saddam sent his tanks to wipe out this new threat to his regime, the United States would have to be ready to defend the Iraqi opposition with overwhelming force. The United States could not again stand by while an uprising was crushed by Saddam.

Some on the Hill have been looking for an easy way out of the Iraq crisis, hoping that a few million dollars for the Iraqi opposition will by itself take care of the problem. But any serious effort to oust Saddam must also be backed by U.S. military might.

Republicans and Democrats on the Hill should advance the Wolfowitz plan in two ways. They should continue pressing the administration to support the Iraqi opposition—with money, weapons, and political recognition. And they should now pass a resolution authorizing the president to use force against Iraq as part of a strategy of removing Saddam from power.

The administration has proven itself incapable of carrying out a credible policy against Saddam. There is a real alternative to the present charade. Congress ought to let Americans know that.

Robert Kagan is a contributing editor to **THE WEEKLY STANDARD.**

When I Was a Pointyhead

by Robert D. Novak

I HAD ARRIVED LATE FOR A RALLY in the south Alabama town of Robertsdale on the first day of George Corley Wallace's 1970 campaign for governor. Late on that early-spring evening, some 5,000 Alabamans—all white, predominantly male, and many wearing bib overalls—turned out for fried fish and Wallace's oratory. He had just begun speaking when I tried to slip in unobtrusively.

But Wallace spotted me. "There he is!" he said in his patented sarcastic drawl. "The man from the *Washington Post*! Now why do you think they send these liberal columnists all the way down here to Robertsdale, Alabama? They know our movement is at stake, and they come here to see it die. I want this effort to continue! The eyes of the country are on you! You have the power in your hands!" His audience turned, thousands of malevolent eyes glaring at me.

"Were you scared?" Wallace asked me later that evening as I rode with him to his next stop. Like so many journalists, I had been made a prop in his political campaign.

The polls showed Wallace running behind his erstwhile protégé, Gov. Albert Brewer, in his effort to regain the governorship. Wallace explained to me that night he had to convince Alabama voters that they needed Wallace as governor to serve as a watchdog to make sure that unreliable rascal, President Richard M. Nixon, did not drift in the direction of that liberal governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller.

It worked. Wallace in Alabama in 1970 replayed his 1968 independent presidential candidacy by assailing Wall Street, the national news media, international corporations, academia, and the U.S. Senate, all categorized as "pointyheads."

Was it play-acting? Wallace did have a reflexive populistic resentment of the liberal elites. But it is going a little far to describe him, as did some obituaries last week, as a forerunner of both the Nixon and Reagan majorities, and a midwife of political realignment. Wallace discarded populism with ease in his declining years.

Certainly, he was never a conservative. He had been a big-government, bread-and-butter politician who largely ignored the race issue in 1958 when he lost his first run for governor to a segregationist. He then vowed never to be "outsegged" again. He never was. But in frequent off-the-record conversations with him over 20 years, I never heard the crude racism that frequently characterized his entourage. He often described his heartfelt commitment to school segregation, but after blacks started voting in Alabama, he piously declared he had been wrong. I really doubt he cared very much about the issue one way or the other.

What he cared about was politics. Pressed by Lyndon Johnson's Justice Department to integrate schools, Wallace lashed back by challenging LBJ proxy candidates in 1964 primary elections outside the South. He did so well that he concocted a grandiose scheme for 1968 that, typically, left strategic loose ends. He would run as a third-party candidate, balanced between Republicans and Democrats, deadlocking the Electoral College and sending the presidential election to the House of Representatives, where Wallace figured anything might happen.

UPI/Corbis-Bettmann

George Wallace on January 14, 1963, delivering his "segregation forever" speech

As the candidate of his own American Independent party, Wallace in 1968 offered more than "segregation forever." He anticipated Ronald Reagan in appealing to the northern working man, sick of racial unrest but also bitter toward anti-war protesters and feeling betrayed by his labor union and the Democratic party. Wallace went north with a dozen Alabama labor leaders in his entourage, praised the recently assassinated Robert F. Kennedy, and called for an end to tax exemptions for giant foundations so "you could lower the working man's tax." But he committed a

monumental error. He wanted as his running mate Albert B. (Happy) Chandler of Kentucky, former governor, former senator, and former commissioner of baseball. A good-ol'-boy Democrat, Chandler would have enhanced the ticket's populism. Right-wing ideologues bankrolling Wallace vetoed Chandler as too "liberal," particularly on race. Wallace picked a Republican: Curtis LeMay, the legendary "bomb 'em back to the Stone Age" Air Force general.

At an early-October press conference in Pittsburgh when Wallace finally unveiled LeMay, reporters deftly led the cigar-chomping aviator into a rambling discussion of atomic warfare. I shall never forget the excruciating pain on Wallace's face when LeMay suggested nuclear annihilation was no worse than death from a rusty Bowie knife. That night at a rally in Toledo, Secret Service agents shielded LeMay from reporters eager to resume their philosophical dialogue. The general was seen no more the rest of the campaign.

Early the next morning at his Toledo hotel, I dropped by Wallace's suite to ask him about LeMay. He kept me for close to two hours, raging that the "damn Republicans" had foisted on him "an idiot" who would not appeal to the working man. Even so, Wallace came tantalizingly close to depriving Nixon of enough northern support to block a majority of the Electoral College. Wallace always claimed, incorrectly, that he was responsible for Humphrey's not being elected. In fact, he almost helped Humphrey beat Nixon.

In his seminal 1969 book *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Kevin Phillips was the first to figure out that Wallace "tapped rather than shaped a protest," that his party's supporters were "in motion between major parties" and not a new political force. As a young Nixon campaign staffer in 1968, Phillips tried hard to get the Republican candidate to match Wallace's hard-edged rhetoric appealing to the alienated lower-income American. Nixon would not do it, but neither would those voters go back to the Democratic party. Wallace's 1968 voters were destined to become part of Ronald Reagan's Republican party, while Wallace would go back to being a conventional post-segregation southern Democrat.

In the week he was shot and forever disabled, Wallace captured the working man's vote to win the Michigan and Maryland Democratic primaries. "If I was on my feet," he told me years later, he would have been on the 1972 Democratic ticket. That was delusional. Crippled or not, he had no place in the National Democratic party. His chance had come and gone in 1968.

It was a long goodbye for George Wallace. In 1978, he decided not to run for the Senate—unwilling, he told me, to drag "my half-dead body" around the Capitol. Yet, he ran and won for governor again and again, in 1970, 1974, and 1982. He ended up as the candidate of labor unions, school teachers, and trial lawyers—a typical Democrat who survived in the newly Republican Deep South because he was remembered as the populist of bygone days.

Robert D. Novak is a nationally syndicated columnist.

Qaddafi's Victory

by John R. Bolton

The collapse of America's Libya policy—nearly lost in the recent crush of news—should not be allowed to pass unnoticed, for the Clinton administration's reversal of almost seven years of consistent policy on the Pan Am 103 bombing is highly damaging. Not only does the administration's surrender of our long-standing position undercut its own "war on terrorism," it also heightens the concurrent crisis in our Iraq policy. Like Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Libya's Muammar Qaddafi is on the verge of escaping United Nations sanctions, a goal the two have been pursuing since the Gulf War.

Heretofore, the United States has insisted that the two men suspected of destroying Pan Am 103 be surrendered for trial either here or in Scotland—here because 189 of those who died in the explosion were Americans; Scotland because 11 people on the ground were killed when the plane crashed near Lockerbie, Scotland, on December 21, 1988. Now, secretary of state Madeleine Albright proposes that the accused be tried before a Scottish court in the Netherlands. Enormous uncertainties remain about how the proposal would be implemented if the Libyans accepted.

Although the next step is far from clear, several consequences of the administration's retreat have already emerged. First, the possibility of the suspects' receiving the death penalty if convicted has been eliminated, since Scottish law, unlike U.S. law, does not provide for capital punishment. While the administration has never been a strong death-penalty proponent and thus may not feel it has given much away, the Libyans have eagerly pocketed the concession and are beginning to bargain for others.

Second, by giving in to the Libyans on the location of the trial, the Clinton administration has hopelessly muddied its supposed new policy against international terrorism. Leaks to the effect that Washington would accept trial of the Pan Am 103 suspects in a third country originally appeared in July, before the bombing of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. But, incredibly, even after those bombings, as the United States was retaliating with cruise missiles against terrorist camps in Afghanistan and a nerve-gas production facility in Sudan, the administration went ahead and made official its retreat from a key demand on Pan Am 103.

One can certainly argue that the Bush administration's reliance on U.N. sanctions against Libya was incorrect and that a military response would have been more effective. But even if this is so, it can hardly excuse the current retreat. More Americans died in the destruction of Pan Am 103 than in the embassy bombings, yet our policy in the former is legal maneuvering, while in the latter it is cruise missiles. What is the justification for pursuing two utterly contradictory approaches simultaneously? We can be certain foreign allies and foes alike are wondering which policy is serious. As is so often the case, the Clinton administration cannot explain.

A third consequence of the administration's shift is the fresh wound to its own credibility. It presented the new policy to Libya as a "take it or leave it" proposition. Since the original Bush-Clinton demand that the trial take place in the United States or Scotland was already "take it or leave it," one wonders who will be gullible enough to think this latest version not subject to still further revision. Certainly not the Libyans. After only a momentary hesitation, they began demanding further negotiations and concessions, just as they have done, ceaselessly, since they first faced the prospect of economic sanctions in 1991.

Here is where the administration's gambit is doomed. Secretary Albright argues that if Libya fails to produce the defendants for trial in the Netherlands, increased sanctions will be justified, but she is surely blustering. The administration is on the verge of abandoning the U.N. sanctions against Iraq, and by its incompetent diplomacy it has already effectively abandoned the U.N. weapons-inspection system. There is no reason to think that the Clinton team will do better in the case of Libya. On the contrary, by ratcheting down U.S. demands, Washington leaves the Libyans in a stronger position than ever to chip away at whatever sanctions remain in place. This is already happening. After the Security Council voted unanimously on August 27 to suspend sanctions upon delivery of the defendants, the presidents of four African neighbors violated the sanctions by flying to Libya to celebrate the 29th anniversary of Qaddafi's accession to power.

The lesson to derive from the administration's failing Pan Am 103 policy is a warning applicable not only in Libya and Iraq but in a host of other places as well. Even apart from the unceasing Lewinsky scandal, President Clinton's foreign policy is disintegrating before our eyes. The hard men leading dangerous countries, from Beijing to Belgrade, undoubtedly see this—and understand better than we our increasing vulnerability.

John R. Bolton is senior vice president of the American Enterprise Institute. During the Bush administration, he served as assistant secretary of state for international organizations.

The Solipsist-in-Chief

By Charles Krauthammer

It was a remark of dazzling, if unintended, self-revelation. But its perversity being subtle, it went entirely unnoticed. It does not deserve such obscurity.

During his press conference with Vaclav Havel on September 16, Bill Clinton was trying to demonstrate his engagement in world affairs. He cited the following evidence: "I had a good talk with President Chirac of France, who called me a couple of days ago to talk about some of our common concerns and the U.N. inspection system in Iraq and other things. So I feel good about that."

Feel good? Just days before, Saddam Hussein had announced the termination of that very U.N. inspection system. Having called the American bluff, he shattered the system of constraints placed on him after the Gulf War to keep him from developing the most terrible weapons on earth.

In February, Clinton had himself warned in a speech to the nation of the perils of such an Iraqi breakout: "Iraq still has stockpiles of chemical and biological munitions, a small force of Scud-type missiles, and the capacity to restart quickly its production program and build many, many more weapons." He explained why it was firm American policy to force Saddam, if necessary, to comply with the inspection regime: "What if he fails to comply, and we fail to act? . . . Some day, some way, I guarantee you, he'll use the arsenal."

But now Clinton feels good about his chat about this colossal foreign-policy failure. It feels good to talk with a head of state.

But Jacques Chirac is not just any head of state. He is a head of state who has been singularly destructive of American policy toward Iraq. He has been staunchly supportive of Saddam in the Security Council. He has refused to back any American action to force Iraqi compliance, has sought to embarrass the United States when it threatened to do so, and has pushed openly for an end to restraints on Saddam. In seeking to thwart the United States in the Gulf, Saddam has had no better friend than Chirac. You might expect the president of the United States to feel bad about that.

Not this president. He feels good because for him national interest pales beside personal interest. Indeed, for him national interest does not extend beyond personal interest. This is *l'état c'est moi*, writ small. Very small. Phone call small. The Chirac phone call was heartening to Clinton because it served as a prop for his collapsing presidency. A call from the president of a serious country about a dramatic world event shows, does it not, that Clinton still counts among world leaders, that his hollow presidency still has some life. Americans may find it hard to look him in the eye, but foreign leaders are still happy to talk to him on the phone.

> ALL PRESIDENTS ARE AMBITIOUS. BUT OUR GOOD PRESIDENTS, EVEN OUR MEDIOCRE PRESIDENTS, DID NOT CONDUCT THEIR PRESIDENCIES SOLELY TO VALIDATE THEIR OWN WORTH.

And it does not stop with France. Why, just "yesterday, as it happens," said Clinton, "I got calls from the presidents of Mexico, Brazil, and the prime minister of Canada, all thanking me for what I said on Monday [re: the world economy] and saying they wanted to be a part of it. So I feel very good about where I am in relation to the rest of the world."

Now, under normal circumstances with less deranged presidents, such giants of the world stage as Mexico, Brazil, and Canada covet the attention of the American president. This American president, however, covets theirs. Under normal circumstances, the president of Brazil is grateful for a mere mention; he'll kill for a state visit. For Bill Clinton, a phone call from Brazil is an emblem of his prestige, his

Charles Krauthammer is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

standing "in relation to the rest of the world." Yet more proof that he is not what he appears: a political corpse.

So he feels good. These calls are the diplomatic equivalent of phone sex: It's not the message that counts but the feeling conveyed. They give Clinton the feeling of relevance. Indeed, they recall his immortal protest at an April 1995 press conference, when he was still reeling from his crushing defeat in the 1994 congressional elections: "I am not irrelevant."

The mission of Bill Clinton's life has always been to escape irrelevance; to transcend the provincial anonymity of his Arkansas boyhood; to seek in recognition, "political viability," honor and applause, validation of his worth, his very existence. To prove himself relevant has been the mission of his life. It is now the mission of his dying presidency.

Clinton's need for such validation is endless and constant. It explains his unnatural love for the rope line, his thirst for approval and applause, his indiscriminate desire for the adulation of audience and acolyte. It makes his life a maw for the instant and shallow gratification delivered by people he barely knows. It explains his lifelong dream of the White House: Being the most bountiful trough on the planet, it is the Holy Grail for the creature that is forever feeding.

Ambition is universal in politicians. But insatiable need is not. All presidents are ambitious or they never would be president. But our good presidents, even our mediocre presidents, did not become president or conduct their presidencies solely to validate their own worth.

Ronald Reagan was ambitious to enact an agenda and spread an ideology. George Bush lacked those polestars, but he saw himself as an aristocratic steward whose role it was to guide America through great crises, such as the breakup of the Soviet empire and the invasion of Kuwait. Jimmy Carter's agenda was not political but moral: His ambition, both internationally with human rights and domestically with personal probity, was to bring a new uprightness to American political life.

Eisenhower and Truman, of course, were men who knew who they were long before they became president. Nixon, by contrast, did not. Indeed, the one president of our time who comes the closest in psychological hunger to Clinton is Nixon. For Nixon, too, the presidency was a way of validating his worth. And in the end, that insecurity, that need to have and use the office to prove himself and to show *them*—the elites, the snobs, the Kennedys—was his undoing.

Nixon's narcissism was nervous and transparent. Clinton's is masked by the charm and cool of a sociopath. But now the charm is gone. Clinton stands naked. All that's left is the hunger, and we stand aghast at the sheer volume of his personal need.

As Clinton has seen himself exposed, as he's watched his spiral descent into mortified irrelevance, his solipsism has acquired a desperation. And in that desperation lies national danger. Personal survival is everything, and he'll take the country through anything—through seven months of surreal dissimulation, for example—to ensure it.

America is caught in his psychodrama. One day, he observes that perhaps his troubles will help heal the nation. Another, he runs about giving speeches, raising money, and going through the motions of governing. "White House officials," explained ABC's Chris Bury, "insist the president finds it therapeutic to focus on his job." On yet another, he feels good about a phone call from France about a policy failure that endangers the United States. Lines between self and other, between Clinton and country, had always been blurred. Now they have disappeared entirely.

Until now, having a therapeutic presidency hardly mattered. The country was living off the accumulated capital of a half-century of astonishing diplomatic and economic success. With the enemies of the United States still in stunned retreat from their defeats in the Cold War and the Gulf War, and with the economy humming, there was no obvious harm in having an entirely personalized presidency. The luxury of having a narcissist-in-chief can be tolerated when there really is no need for anyone at the helm. But now there is.

Saddam has broken out. The Balkans are seething. Greece and Turkey are nearing a showdown over Cyprus. The Middle East will erupt next May when a Palestinian state is unilaterally declared. North Korea has just attempted the launching of an orbiting satellite, which means that it is working on three-stage rockets, and three-stage rockets can reach anywhere on earth, including the United States. And, oh yes, the world economy is teetering.

The world looks to America. And what does it see? A man who feels good to be relevant.

The articles of impeachment drawn up against William Jefferson Clinton will list lying under oath and obstruction of justice. We should add: solipsism. The world's "indispensable nation" can no longer be led by a man incapable of seeing, or feeling, anything beyond himself. ♦

Yes, It *IS* Like Watergate

By David Frum

Weirdly enough, the very grossness of President Clinton's misconduct has proven to be his best defense. The details of Kenneth Starr's report to Congress are so lurid that it's hard at first to see past them (this is almost certainly the first government document in history whose readers have flipped past the executive summary to get to the footnotes). And by apologizing again and again for an "inappropriate" relationship with Monica Lewinsky, the president helps to keep attention focused on the mesmerizing smuttiness of his affair. That way, attention is diverted from the president's hanging offense—his unrepentant lying under oath.


Michael Ramirez

What the Clinton team most wants to go unnoticed are the parallels between the Clinton scandals of the 1990s and the Nixon scandals of the 1970s. But that parallelism is so glaring that Clinton defenders can no longer avoid acknowledging it, if only for the purpose of denying it: *Look Chris/Geraldo/Keith,* goes their refrain, *however appalling the president's behavior—and I'm not defending it!—it in no way resembles Watergate.* Indeed, *It's not Watergate* is now Team Clinton's favorite talking point, replacing *She's a cheap tramp from a trailer park*; *He invited them to stay in the Lincoln Bedroom because they were his friends*; and *She was fantasizing*. Like those earlier talking points, this one will soon become inoperative.

David Frum is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

What was Watergate about? At bottom, it was an attempt by a president to conceal his wrongdoing by corrupting the institutions of government. And what is the Lewinsky affair about? The very same thing. Yes of course the details of the two scandals vary: Details always do. Yes, too, the tone and style of the two scandals, and of the two presidents, could not differ more. Watergate was grand opera; Lewinsky is *Oh! Calcutta!* But from the point of view of the law and the Constitution, the Lewinsky scandal is almost eerily like Watergate. All unhappy coverups, it turns out, are alike.

In both cases, the president suborned perjury: Nixon from the Watergate burglars, Clinton from Monica Lewinsky. In both cases, the president eventually found himself blackmailed by those he had suborned: James McCord and the Watergate burglars wanted cash; Monica demanded a fancy job in New York (*not* as somebody's administrative assistant). In both cases, the president tampered with witnesses. Nixon tried to coax John Dean into lying; Clinton coached Betty Currie.

Even more striking, in both cases, perjury often manifested itself in the form of too-convenient amnesia: President Clinton swore that he could not remember ever being alone with Monica except when she delivered pizza to him; Nixon aide Dwight Chapin went to prison for six months for his failure to recall Donald Segretti's 1972 dirty-tricks campaign. Chapin's fate was sealed by Charles F.C. Ruff, now President Clinton's White House counsel and then a

Watergate special prosecutor, who persuaded the Supreme Court not to hear an appeal. Chapin's defense, like Clinton's today, was that he provided the grand jury with legally accurate answers to ambiguous questions.

In the Lewinsky scandal as in Watergate, the president's subordinates illegally leaked private information about perceived enemies. It was for having Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatric records stolen and then disseminated that Charles Colson went to prison; we are still waiting to see what will happen to the Clinton Defense Department officials who leaked to the *New Yorker* information from Linda Tripp's confidential Pentagon personnel records.

Then as now, the president baffled his subordinates by stonewalling when it seemed that a swift confession and apology might still have saved him. Nixon stonewalled because he knew that full disclosure of his role in the Watergate burglary would lead to the exposure of even more glaring illegalities: the wiretapping of journalists and mistrusted staffers, the illegal campaign donations, the Ellsberg break-in. Clinton stonewalled for reasons we can still only surmise.

Then as now, the president and his men insisted that their troubles had nothing to do with their own actions and were entirely the work of malicious, out-of-control prosecutors. As the Nixon White House complained in June 1973, suggestions in the press that the president knew of the coverup

> appear to be part of a careful coordinated strategy by an individual or individuals determined to prosecute a case against the President in the press using innuendo, distortions of fact and outright falsehood. This manipulation of the press involves an unprecedented assault on judicial and administrative due process. Its objective, stated in the simplest terms, is to destroy the President.

And then as now, in the last resort both presidents looked the nation in the eye and flat-out lied—Nixon unctuously, Clinton brazenly.

But the Starr report reveals an even more disturbing parallel: the abuse of the federal government's intelligence and security agencies. Section XI-C3 of the Starr report, subtitled "Whatever Just Happened Didn't Happen," tells the following amazing story. On Saturday, December 6, 1997—the day after the president learned that Monica Lewinsky had appeared on the list of potential witnesses in the Jones case—Monica showed up at the northwestern gate of the White House at 10 in the morning with a parcel of gifts for the president. She had been told that the president would be meeting with his lawyers and that she should leave the gifts with Betty Currie. But Currie could not immediately be found. As Lewinsky cooled her heels at the gatehouse, a guard let slip that the president was in fact meeting with another woman. "Livid," the report says, Lewinsky stormed off and telephoned and "berated" Currie. Two hours later, she was called back to the White House for her first meeting with the president in two months. He was, she happily e-mailed a friend, unusually affectionate with her. And he promised to prod Vernon Jordan to find her a job.

While the president was mollifying Monica, Betty Currie was warning the gatehouse guards that the president was so angry about their blabbing that he wanted somebody fired. The president himself called the watch commander into the Oval Office for a dressing down—and then demanded the guards keep their mouths shut about the morning's event. The watch commander returned to the gatehouse and ordered that no record of the incident be kept.

The events are so richly absurd—one woman in the president's office, another woman banging at the door; the president smilingly calming the angry woman and then chewing out his big-mouthed guards as soon as he has shooed her out the door—that it's possible to lose sight of their real meaning. After months of being nothing more than an irritating nuisance, Monica had suddenly became a potential danger. If Monica testified truthfully in the Paula Jones suit, it would strengthen Jones's case—and maybe encourage other women to come forward. It was urgently important that Monica be persuaded to perjure herself, and the Secret Service officers' indiscretion had complicated that task. An honest entry in the log book about Monica's appearance, gifts, and temper tantrum would make things even more complicated: It would offer substantial evidence that Monica and the president were lying when they disavowed any sexual relationship between them. So the log had to be doctored. And here the story stops being funny. Just as Richard Nixon urged the CIA to lie to the FBI to shut down the Watergate investigation, so Clinton was urging the Secret Service to engage in deception to shut down the Paula Jones lawsuit. He was, in other words, annexing the Secret Service to his own personal obstruction of justice.

Perhaps the most important political question posed by Watergate was this: For whom do the security forces of the United States work? Are they the president's henchmen, obliged to obey his every command on the theory (as Nixon memorably phrased it) that "When the president does it, that means it is not illegal"? Or do they owe their loyalty to the law and the Constitution? Watergate affirmed that it was the second course that is the correct answer, but President

Clinton and his party apparently require a reminder.

Perhaps his party needs it even more than he does. Ever since Watergate, the Democrats have basked in unprecedented moral self-regard. This is actually quite an anomalous situation. Before 1970, it was the Democrats—the party of the urban machines and the one-party South—who were usually thought of as the more crooked of the two great parties. It must have taken considerable humbug for Democrats who remembered how Kennedy had won in 1960 (the $5-a-vote West Virginia primary win; the ballot stuffing in Chicago) and how Johnson wiretapped his political enemies in 1968 to summon up a great whoop of indignation at the news that the '72 Nixon campaign had rifled the Democratic National Committee's files. But largely thanks to Watergate, since 1972 the Democrats have become the nice-people's party: the party of genteel good-government reformers, earnest schoolteachers, and Episcopalian bishops.

The Clinton scandals ought to cause the nice people to rethink. The scandals have exposed Clinton's supporters in Congress and the country as willing to condone law-breaking in some ways more blatant than Nixon's: Nixon at least never personally perjured himself before a grand jury. And they have called into question the morality not just of a single man but of an entire administration: While two of Nixon's cabinet officers (attorney general John Mitchell; commerce secretary Maurice Stans) were convicted of crimes, five of Clinton's officers are now under the shadow of the law. Former agriculture secretary Mike Espy has been convicted of taking bribes. Former HUD secretary Henry Cisneros has been indicted and will be tried in November for lying to the FBI in an effort to conceal blackmail payments to a former mistress that were considerably larger than one would have thought him able to afford on a politician's legal earnings. Former commerce secretary Ron Brown escaped investigation only because of his accidental death. Both labor secretary Alexis Herman and interior secretary Bruce Babbitt are being probed by independent counsels.

But it is going to take more than allegations to make the nice people rethink. One of the great lessons of the Clinton scandals is the brute power of fact. Washington insiders, privy to all the details that proximity to power brings, have presumed Clinton guilty of lying under oath since January and have condemned him for it. But it's only since August—when Clinton moved from being a presumed liar to a confessed one—that the nation's disgust for the man has begun to catch up to the capital's. For those who had followed the Lewinsky matter closely, Clinton's admission changed nothing; for everybody else, it changed everything.

The same will be true of the terms of Clinton's eventual punishment. It is not because Nixon was indelibly disgraced that he was forced to resign; it is because he was forced to resign that he is indelibly disgraced. If Clinton holds on to office, the public will very reasonably infer that the evidence was not there that would justify removing him. An administration that ought to be discredited as corrupt will instead slide into the history books as "controversial." Censure, censure plus a fine—neither of these will mean anything.

> IF CLINTON HOLDS ON TO OFFICE, AN ADMINISTRATION THAT OUGHT TO BE DISCREDITED AS CORRUPT WILL SLIDE INTO HISTORY AS "CONTROVERSIAL."

In fact, given Clinton's amazing ability to "accept responsibility" in one breath and claim innocence in the next, any punishment less than impeachment will be seized on by him as both an escape and carte blanche to continue lying, stonewalling, and obstructing justice in the two years remaining to him as president.

This is a political as well as a legal danger. For not until Clinton has been disgraced will his party be discredited for nominating and defending him. If there are any Republicans who imagine that they can eke out a greater political advantage by letting the Clinton scandals dribble on without a resolution than by proving perjury and obstruction in the Senate, they are deluding themselves. Clinton said early on that there could be only one survivor of the struggle between him and Ken Starr, and he was right. If the case against Clinton is somehow not borne out, the sleaze of the past eight months will unfairly but ineluctably splash back on those who have accused him.

The appetites that led Clinton into perjury and obstruction are so ludicrous and so pathetic that it is hard for Americans to see the perjury and obstruction as criminal. But crimes are crimes, whether the person responsible for them is in the end a sinister figure or a sad one. And in a republic of laws, crimes must be punished. The alternative is to blur forever the force of law and to leave Clinton's example intact as a permanent temptation to future presidents. ♦

A Church Grows in China

By David Aikman

From the externals, you couldn't have guessed that the gathering was in any way remarkable. The dozen or so participants came one by one, over several days, to a spacious, sparsely furnished suburban house in one of China's most populous provinces. Most of them were men, in their forties or older. They were dressed in simple slacks or shorts, with well-worn open-necked shirts and sandals. Several carried cell phones, the ubiquitous sign of serious business in China. Only the presence of two American reporters was unusual. We had come to observe the deliberations of seven key evangelical leaders and their assistants, representing by their estimate some 15 million Chinese Christians.

The seven had come together out of desperation. Despite China's increasing openness in the last 20 years, the repression of religious believers has not abated. In particular, Protestant Christians who spurn government-approved congregations and meet instead in private "house churches," known collectively as the "house church," are continually threatened. Indeed, these leaders confirmed that repression is worse now than at any other time since the vicious campaign against "spiritual pollution" in 1983-84. In parts of China, it is more intense now than at any other time since the last years of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1970s.

As a result, these leaders, for the first time ever, chose to speak out, addressing their own government and the world, using their own names, and allowing themselves to be photographed for publication in the West. After two days of prayer and discussion, they drafted a "United Appeal of the Chinese House Church" and asked that it be given the widest circulation in China and beyond.

The appeal—of which a slightly abbreviated text appears nearby—calls on China's government to take cognizance of the growth of evangelical Protestantism in recent decades, to release all Christians imprisoned for their faith, to begin a dialogue with house-church leaders, to stop harassing the house church, and to cease using terms like "evil religion" and "cult" to designate orthodox Christian believers simply because they won't join the official church.

"This is the first time that we have talked openly," said Zhang Rongliang, 48, a long-established leader of the Fang Cheng Fellowship. Several million strong, this group takes its name from the county in Henan province where Zhang preaches. "We have been persecuted so long that we have to fight [as if this were] the last fight," he says. "Even if it is getting worse, we would like people in the outside world to know that we are holding on to our faith."

Zhang, who never finished elementary school, has had firsthand experience of persecution. A Christian since the age of 12, he was first arrested in 1974 and jailed for six years on the charge of "counterrevolution under the guise of religion." His actual offense: evangelizing the peasantry and organizing new Christians into churches that refused to cooperate with China's official Protestant church, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), so named because it is independent of foreign missionaries and thus supposedly self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-managing.

In prison, Zhang was handcuffed and beaten with sticks and the stock of a gun to force him to deny his faith in writing. He didn't give in. Arrested again in 1990, he was tortured by guards who stood on his legs, stretched wide apart. He was also beaten with a rubber nightstick. Since another 14-day arrest in 1994, Zhang has combined two lives: that of a fugitive, keeping one step ahead of China's Public Security Bureau, and that of a minister, traveling with other Christian leaders to as many as 20 provinces on leadership and training missions for the church. His only means of communicating with other Christians and family members is a cell phone, which he quickly replaces when any of his house-church contacts is arrested.

Others of the leaders had similar tales. Shen Xianfeng, 41, of the China Gospel Fellowship, also based in Henan, has rheumatoid arthritis and walks with crutches. During one stint with 30 other Christian leaders in Henan's Xinyang Re-education Through

David Aikman, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., is a veteran foreign correspondent.

Labor Camp, guards beat him with his own crutch. He was released from prison last February only after fellow Christians and family members forked over some $135, and he has been on the run ever since. Other Christians told of being beaten up in prison by other inmates on orders from prison guards or tortured by electric shock. A particularly vicious device used against Christian prisoners in China, as well as against Tibetan Buddhists and other dissidents, is what the Chinese call *dian bang* ("electric stick"), an electrified police baton designed to inflict pain and terror.

But the repression doesn't seem to be accomplishing its purpose. One Christian leader, who belongs to the "Born Again" house-church group (numbering possibly 2-3 million), said simply, "The Chinese house churches have been persecuted for a long time. Every time we are not defeated, we grow stronger."

The current crackdown on house-church Christians has been underway for at least four years, since Communist authorities became worried about the rapid growth in the number of zealous Christians deep in the countryside. One fear voiced in both the official press and internal party documents in the early 1990s was that Christian activity might generate opposition to the regime and eventually undermine Communist rule in China, as it did in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe. Another concern was that China might fall victim to another religion-based peasant rebellion like that of the Taipings, who nearly overturned the Qing dynasty in the mid-19th century, or the Boxers, defeated only after a 55-day siege of Peking in 1900. What especially irritates the authorities in Beijing is the house church's independence.

In 1995, a year after the enactment of strict new regulations requiring registration of all Christians, a tough-minded atheist, Ye Xiaowen, was put in charge of the Religious Affairs Bureau, the party-controlled agency responsible for supervising religious activity in China. The country's president, Jiang Zemin, told a meeting of the Religious Affairs Bureau in 1995, "We are engaged in a secret struggle against the church." Ye himself, in June 1997, described unregistered house churches as "evil, illegal organizations that undermine social order." U.S. officials believe that Ye, whose attitude toward religion may have been reinforced by a tour of duty in Tibet, is digging in his heels with the support of other senior party hardliners, despite signs in other areas of Chinese life of a cautious opening up to political reform.

Underlying Beijing's uncertainty about how to deal with the country's fervent Protestant community is its astonishing growth of the house church in the last two decades; officials of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement say that the increase may have been tenfold in certain regions. In official documents, Communist party officials often express bitterness about what is happening. "In our opinion, the scope of illegal religious activities in our town is increasing rapidly, the spread is getting wider and wider, there are more and more people taking part,"

A United Appeal of the Chinese House Church

(slightly abridged)

1. We call on the government to admit God's great power and to take account of the new growth of Christianity in this generation.

2. We call on the authorities to release unconditionally all house-church Christians now serving in labor-reform camps. . . . All those imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel should be released.

3. The approximately 10 million members of Three-Self churches and the 80 million believers who worship in house churches are all part of mainstream Christianity in China. The 22 million people of Taiwan can no more represent mainland China's 1.2 billion than the Three-Self church can represent all Chinese Christians.

4. We call on the central leadership of the Chinese Communist party to begin a dialogue with representatives of the house church in an attempt to reach mutual understanding, to achieve reconciliation, to lessen confrontation, and to begin an open-hearted exchange.

5. The definition of "cult" must be spelled out. It should reflect international standards and not whether people attend or don't attend Three-Self churches.

6. We call on the legal authorities to cease their attack on the house churches. History has proved that attacks on Christians who fervently preach the Gospel only bring harm to China and its government.

7. The Chinese house church is a channel through which God's blessing comes to China. The persecution of God's children blocks this channel of blessing.

Henan, August 22, 1998

griped a party screed about Protestant evangelism in the town of Hua Dou in Guangdong province last June.

Actual figures are impossible to verify. By government estimates, some 10 million Chinese belong to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. But the number of Protestants who refuse to have anything to do with any government organization is far larger—estimates range from 20 to 80 million. Officials in Beijing say that some 4 million Chinese belong to the Catholic Patriotic Association, a party-supervised church set up in the 1950s to control Roman Catholics. In addition, there may be as many as 8 million underground Catholics loyal to Rome.

The Christian surge in China became evident in the late 1970s. After Mao Zedong's death and with the ascendance of reformer Deng Xiaoping in 1976, social controls all over China relaxed. Among others, long-imprisoned pastors and evangelists were allowed to go home, and when they got there, they trained young followers and sent them out in turn as itinerant evangelists all over China. The house-church movement took off, entirely outside official channels; it operated on the principle that, as one itinerant evangelist in Zhejiang province put it, "believers absolutely cannot be controlled by non-believers." Preachers taught a dynamic and radical faith modeled on Biblical accounts of early Christianity. Said Zhang Rongliang, "The Chinese church is like the Book of Acts. Things are still very backward here. The meetings sometimes last all day, and the shortest ones are around three hours long."

Though it is impossible for an outsider to verify the reports of miraculous healings associated with certain preachers, they are so widespread that Communist-party officials have publicly complained about them. The authorities are also made nervous by evangelical preaching not tailored to the restrictions imposed on the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Though often sincere Christians, TSPM pastors are obliged to keep their preaching generic, mainstream Protestant. They are specifically forbidden to discuss issues like abortion, for example, and are discouraged from bringing up politically incorrect teachings such as the Second Coming of Christ incompatible with Marxism. By contrast, house-church evangelists wander all over China preaching the Gospel as boldly as they can.

For this audacity, house-church leaders pay the heavy price that we have noted. More than three quarters of the house-church activists encountered on a 10-day reporting trip to five Chinese cities said that they would be immediately arrested if they were spotted by police. One leader from Henan Province said that some 30 of his fellow prisoners in Xinyang Re-education Through Labor Camp were Christians imprisoned for unauthorized evangelism.

David Aikman

Zhang Rongliang and other house-church Christians meeting to draft their appeal to the government

Prodded by members of Congress, President Clinton finally raised the issue of China's persecution of Christians during President Jiang Zemin's visit to Washington in November 1997. In response, Jiang agreed to receive a White House-sponsored delegation last February. It consisted of three clerics: National Association of Evangelicals president Don Argue, Catholic bishop Theodore E. McCarrick, and New York rabbi Arthur Schneier. Chinese officials, including Jiang, received them politely and listened to requests to free imprisoned Protestants and Catholics named by the delegation.

But the persecution continued. One development

that seems to have spurred the house-church leaders to issue their public appeal was the intensification of arrests and persecution after President Clinton's summit visit to China in June 1998. Zhang Rongliang explained, "The American government put pressure on China, and the Chinese government got angry and decided to crack down on Christians."

That assertion may reflect an oversimplified view of Chinese politics, but its urgency should not be dismissed. The Christian leaders we met with implored us to ensure that their appeal reached the highest levels of government in China and outside as soon as possible.

It did. Just as she set off for China two weeks ago, U.N. human-rights commissioner Mary Robinson was given the house-church appeal both in the original Chinese and in English translation. Robinson's visit is connected with China's agreement to sign the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights next month—a public affirmation by Beijing that China takes human rights seriously. Whether this paper commitment has any substance, time will show. Certainly, words can have tremendous power. China's house-church Christians may not gain respite from the current crackdown soon. But by speaking out, and by putting their names and faces on the line, they have demonstrated a kind of courage, that, if history be any guide, can have a lasting impact on their country. ♦

Ground Troops Win Wars

By William R. Hawkins

Meeting with the top brass last week at the National Defense University in Washington, President Clinton pronounced himself satisfied that "our forward-deployed and first-to-fight units are highly ready." But ready for what? The cruise missiles the president launched against terrorist targets last month demonstrated a certain kind of readiness. But the strength required for an isolated act of retaliation is far short of the robust capability needed to wage and win wars. At the September 15 meeting, the senior generals and admirals who head the military services and regional commands were less sanguine than the president. They told him that they are having trouble sustaining forces prepared for an extended conflict.

How can this be, just seven years after U.S. forces won one of history's most lopsided victories? In 1991, the United States led a coalition of European and Arab states and fielded an army of 500,000 soldiers to expel the Iraqi invader from Kuwait; yet today it is isolated diplomatically and unable to wield effective military power.

It is often said that the triumph in the Gulf War showed that the United States had learned from its defeat in Vietnam. In the Gulf, the White House gave the military a free hand to develop a strategy and win the war, which it did quickly, with few casualties.

On the other hand, the Gulf War in some ways was more like a major battle. Kuwait was freed, but this was the minimal American objective—and a defensive objective at that, pursued by offensive means, as was the goal of preserving the security of South Vietnam. In both wars, the American military, better armed than its adversary, performed with skill and valor and won all the major battles; yet military victory failed to break the enemy's will. In both wars, the enemy government was left intact, free to move again when the time was ripe. In both wars, operational success was combined with strategic failure, producing long, drawn-out conflicts that sapped American will and undermined our coalitions.

The years since the Gulf War have seen Iraq repeatedly defiant. Thus, in August 1996, Saddam Hussein sent three Republican Guard armored divisions and his secret police into the Kurds' "safe haven" in northern Iraq, where the U.S.-backed resistance to Saddam was also based. The only protection the area enjoyed was American, British, and French air patrols policing the "no-fly" zone—useless against

William R. Hawkins is senior research analyst for Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-CA. The views expressed here are his own.

a ground force. The United States responded to this offensive by launching 44 cruise missiles against air-defense sites and expanding the no-fly zone. But the air strikes changed nothing on the ground and even prompted France to drop out of the no-fly patrols. Saddam's regime successfully expanded the territory under its authority. While Baghdad has suffered some reverses in the area since, they have come at the hands of Kurdish guerrillas, who, though poorly armed by U.S. standards, at least are on the scene.

In other words, American strategy dealt only in an irrelevant dimension. The demonstrated emptiness of the "over the horizon" American posture invited a new confrontation. This came in the winter of 1997-98, when Iraq suspended U.N. weapons inspections. In response, the United States deployed forces that looked powerful. Four aircraft carriers (two large American ones and two smaller British ones) mustered about 130 combat aircraft. Another 200 U.S. warplanes sat on airfields around the region, and the British provided additional strike fighters. In the background, a naval armada held hundreds of cruise missiles at the ready.

Nevertheless, this was a smaller force than the one used for the five-week air campaign of 1991. Back then, the United States deployed six aircraft carriers with 300 warplanes, plus 650 more from the Air Force; and France, Canada, and Italy, as well as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, joined Britain in providing additional air power. No such support was offered in 1998.

The smaller size of the air and missile forces available in February 1998 was offset to some extent by improvements in precision weapons and intelligence about targets. Still, if the 1991 bombing campaign did not destroy Iraq's arsenal of missiles and warheads, or its military-industrial infrastructure, or, most important, the regime of Saddam Hussein, a lesser effort was hardly expected to accomplish those goals either. President Clinton acknowledged as much in his address at the Pentagon on February 17, when he said, "Let me be clear: A military operation cannot destroy all the weapons-of-mass-destruction capacity." At least, not a military operation confined to air and missile strikes.

U.S. field commanders, moreover, feared that Iraq would respond to air strikes with another ground offensive into Kuwait, for which the United States was unprepared. No wonder allies were reluctant to support a U.S. strategy that could not change the fundamental situation. The planned air campaign was then redefined as merely a threat to get Saddam to allow inspections to resume. The campaign never took place.

Even if it had, and even if it had succeeded in forcing the resumption of inspections, the Iraqi threat would have remained, because inspectors on the ground—though they afford the best chance of finding and destroying Iraq's laboratories and workshops—are constrained by the fact that they are operating in a country controlled at every level by a hostile dictator. Only by changing the regime can the United States end the dangers posed by Iraq's weapons programs. It cannot do this from 10,000 feet or from over the horizon.

IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM, SPECIAL FORCES IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY CAN BE MORE PRECISE THAN ANY "SMART" BOMB.

A military posture designed to minimize ground engagements poses a danger to America's world position that extends far beyond the crisis in the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, such a posture has wide acceptance, in theory and in practice. The Quadrennial Defense Review released by the Pentagon in 1997, and the response to it by the outside experts of the National Defense Panel, both endorsed a continued emphasis on air and missile power at the expense of troops on the ground. And, predictably, the U.S. response to the bombing of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania was a string of cruise-missile strikes on August 20. Cruise missiles are designed to take out point targets, like the pharmaceutical/chemical-weapons plant in Sudan, which was successfully destroyed; but they are not designed for saturation bombing of area targets, such as the terrorist training camps in Afghanistan that also were targeted. Not surprisingly, terrorist sponsor Osama bin Laden escaped and his network suffered only superficial damage.

In the war with terrorism, special forces in direct contact with the enemy can be more precise than any "smart" bomb. But U.S. military programs are headed in another direction. Forty percent of the money allocated to the Pentagon's top 20 modernization programs for the period 1997-2001 will be spent on three new aircraft. Buying all of the tactical aircraft planned for the next 20 years will cost some $400 billion. Additional billions will be spent on bombs and missiles to arm them. In contrast, only 8 percent of the budget will go for Army modernization, to cover

everything from armored vehicles and artillery to anti-tank weapons and helicopters. The Marines, who make up a quarter of the nation's ground troops, get even less attention.

The Quadrennial Defense Review called for further reductions in ground forces (manpower cuts of 15,000 Active Army, 45,000 Army Reserve and National Guard, 1,800 Active Marine, and 4,200 Marine Reserve) to pay for the acquisition of high-tech aircraft and missiles. The cuts in the Reserve and National Guard were justified on the grounds that "the need for a large strategic reserve has declined." The National Defense Panel, with its emphasis on "long-range precision strikes," said "reductions in both the active and reserve components [of the Army] can be expected." The Army has already shrunk from 18 divisions with 727,500 troops in 1991 to 10 divisions with 495,000 troops. Some of the Army's victorious units came home from the Gulf only to be disbanded.

Kevin Chadwick

The last time the Army fielded only 10 divisions was between World War II and the Korean War. The National Defense Panel went so far as to urge abandoning the goal of maintaining sufficient ground forces to fight two nearly simultaneous major regional wars. The last time the United States did this was in the 1970s, when President Nixon proclaimed a "one and a half war" standard at a time of disillusionment with "land wars in Asia" and anywhere else. The Nixon Doctrine was quite similar to President Eisenhower's posture 20 years earlier, when "massive retaliation" by nuclear weapons was thought likely to render ground combat obsolete. Under President Carter, the Nixon Doctrine became the rationale for the near-collapse of American conventional forces, necessitating President Reagan's crash rearmament. When the use of ground troops was out of favor during both the 1950s and the 1970s, American foreign policy was infected with a neo-isolationist malaise.

This is not to say that Air Force and Navy aviation programs should be neglected. Control of the air is vital. Indeed, American ground troops have not had to fight without the benefit of air superiority since the early days of World War II. So important is air support to the Army and Marines that both services have invested heavily in their own aviation programs (helicopter gunships and, for the Marines, fighter-bombers). The problem has been integrating air and land combat forces in the face of airpower enthusiasts' claim that aerial bombardment has made ground operations obsolete.

Naturally, the promise of bloodless power projection appeals to political leaders. The loss of 18 Army Rangers in Somalia led to a hasty withdrawal by President Clinton. Even Ronald Reagan, after a terrorist truck-bomb killed 241 servicemen in Beirut, called U.S. forces home, leaving Lebanon to slide into Syria's orbit. President Clinton has committed ground troops when political change was the goal, as in Haiti and Bosnia, but only amid great concern that lives might be lost. It may be that Americans have become too decadent to get their hands dirty—and thus pose little danger to regimes willing to take risks.

This must not be allowed to happen. So concludes T.R. Fehrenbach in one of the best books ever written about the importance of ground combat, *This Kind of War*, published 35 years ago, after Korea. Fehrenbach could see where military technology was headed, but he also saw the truth of enduring principles. As long as armed force remained an instrument of national policy, he said, soldiers and citizens must be prepared for all forms of war.

"A modern infantry," he wrote, "may ride sky vehicles into combat, fire and sense its weapons through instrumentation, employ devices of frightening lethality in the future—but it must also be old-fashioned enough to be iron-hard, poised for instant obedience, and prepared to die in the mud." ♦

Literary Starr

The Independent Counsel's Report Hits the Bookstores

By Andrew Ferguson

Several commercial publishers have now come out with their own editions of the Starr Report, and none of the book covers contains blurbs. You can only wonder at the missed opportunity. The newspapers and magazines are chockfull of stirring possibilities. "It's raw!"—*Time*. "Excruciatingly vivid!"—*Newsweek*. "Overflowing with graphic accounts of sexual escapades!"—the *Washington Post*. "Good to the last drop!"—the *New York Review of Books*.

I made that last one up. The *New York Review* has yet to weigh in on the Starr Report, and I'm betting that their reviewer will hate it in any case, although Gore Vidal might enjoy parts of it. Indeed, as the world knows, the notices have been far from unanimously favorable. Reviewers have sniffed at what they consider the report's dry prose, specious argumentation, and leaden pacing. But such criticisms are unfair. If courtesy to the reader is taken to be the first principle of good writing, as it should be, then Ken Starr and the other lawyerly authors of the Starr Report get high marks.

"Most readers are in trouble half the time," wrote E. B. White, and Starr takes great care in laying things out as directly as possible for his intended audience of congressmen, who are liable to be in trouble much more than half the time. Many readers will have difficulty following Starr's labyrinthine story-line and swirling cast. For their sake he has decided to open the report with a *dramatis personae*, identifying everyone from the president to the White House receptionist, and a two-page chronology of significant events. Its first entry is ominous, carrying in eleven words the grim, premonitory rumbles of danger: "November 1992: William Jefferson Clinton elected president of the United States." From here the entries proceed, with a kind of stark inevitability, to their logical culmination. "Independent Counsel submits Referral [on impeachment] to Congress." The last entry seems an unavoidable extension of the first.

In between them lies the story of the Lewinsky affair. Character is plot, say the creative-writing teachers, by which they mean (I think) that stories must unfold organically from the characters who cause them to happen. That is surely the case with the story Starr has to tell. Its outlines are slowly growing familiar: the first sexual encounter in November 1995, then the next, and the next, until, at last, after the sixth bout of oral sex, when Monica is reassured that the president has memorized her name, they settle down to "their first personal conversation." But all this gab-gab-gab is too much for the president. Shortly afterwards he orchestrates a painful breakup. This is followed by Monica's banishment to a remote post at the Pentagon—the wilderness months, as Churchill might have described them, relieved only by a half-dozen sessions of phone sex. (Some kinds of gab-gab-gab are more tolerable than others.) Suddenly, without warning, the president resumes the in-person sex, then causes another break-up, and the romance dissolves into the usual ugly stew of recriminations, resentments, jealousies, and more phone sex. Not to mention affidavits, depositions, grand-jury testimony, and—the denouement, still to come—impeach-

Photos: AP/Wide World Photos

Kenneth W. Starr, et al.
The Starr Report
The Independent Counsel's Complete Report to Congress on the Investigation of President Clinton
Pocket, 512 pp., $5.99

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of The Weekly Standard.

ment hearings.

It's not exactly *Romeo and Juliet*. It's too believable. And like all believable stories it is propelled by character—at its heart, the characters of Monica and Bill. Starr presents them, as a skilled storyteller must, through the accretion of exquisite detail and telling incident. Consider, for starters, their first sexual encounter. It is evening. The scene is Leon Panetta's office, a place not normally charged with sexual electricity. Yet the president and the intern find themselves unexpectedly alone. Wordlessly, Monica turns her back to him and lifts her shirt-tail, to expose the straps of her thong underwear rising above the back of her pants. This is all it takes, and as you read of her offer, and of his acceptance, you know them both instantly. Baboons do the same thing.

What are we to make of Monica? From other sources, we know she graduated from the high school that served as the model for *Beverly Hills 90210*, and anyone who says the show defamed the school's students owes its creator Aaron Spelling an apology. Monica bubbles and burbles in the president's presence, but when the romance sours she can hiss and claw, too. She is gifted in the arts of extortion. It is she who suggests enlisting Vernon Jordan in her job-search payoff. She says frankly that she "wants a job she doesn't have to work for." And when she's offered one—at the U.N., where no one has to work for anything—she rejects it as beneath her. She repeatedly lies to the president, saying she's told nobody of their encounters. ("Nobody" at first means an assortment of eleven roommates, college pals, and co-workers; now it means everybody.) She sends him vaguely threatening letters. And of course she does, in the end, rat him out to the cops.

But this dark side of Monica emerges only after she's been involved with Bill Clinton for many months; she's learning from the master. Earlier in the story, Monica—though scheming and recklessly ambitious and clumsily manipulative—is merely star-struck and given to crushes. The love notes she sometimes sends are adorned with little bears. She's eager to please in whatever way possible, chatty and chirpy, a walking exclamation point. She is guileless enough to have assumed at first that her famous dress was stained with "spinach dip." Most likely this early Monica is closer to the young woman as she really is. And if you want conclusive evidence of her innocence, look no farther: As late as December 1997, she was one of the few remaining human beings who thought Bill Clinton was capable of telling the truth. When he praised her intellect, she believed him. When he told her he missed her, she believed him. And when he hinted he might marry her someday, she believed that too.

Being a college graduate, Monica is only semi-literate, and the long passages Starr reprints from her letters are always footnoted "spelling and punctuation corrected." (*Meow*, Ken!) In prose as elsewhere, the style is the man—or in this case the Valley Girl. When she writes to the president about "looking in your eyes while you explored the depth of my sex," you know she's at least read Anaïs Nin. And now she's read Walt Whitman, too, thanks to the president, who gave her a leather-bound edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Of all the gifts from the president—the hat pin, the scarf, the signed copy of a reprint of his 1996 State of the Union address—this was the most precious, because, I don't know, it was just, like, so . . . oh heck, let her tell it:

> I have only read excerpts from *Leaves of Grass* before—never in its entirety or in such a beautifully bound edition. Like Shakespeare, Whitman's writings are so timeless. I find solace in works from the past that remain profound and somehow always poignant. Whitman is so rich that one must read him like one tastes a fine wine or good cigar—take it in, roll it in your mouth, and savor it!

All photos: AP/Wide World Photos

Ah yes: that damn cigar. Already it's the stuff of legend, an off-the-shelf gag for the joke writers of Leno and Letterman, a national symbol looming over the Clinton White House like a brown-leaf Washington Monument. So let's get this over with right now:

> January 7: . . . The president "was talking about performing oral sex on me," according to Ms. Lewinsky. But she stopped him because she was menstruating and he did not. Ms. Lewinsky did perform oral sex on him. Afterward, she and the president moved to Oval Office and talked. According to Ms. Lewinsky: "He was chewing on a cigar. And then he had the cigar in his hand and he was kind of looking at the cigar in . . . sort of a naughty way. And so . . . I looked at the cigar and I looked at him and I said, we can do that, too, sometime."

And sure enough:

> March 31: . . . In the hallway by the study, the president and Ms. Lewinsky kissed. On this occasion, according to Ms. Lewinsky, "he focused on me pretty exclusively," kissing her bare breasts and fondling her genitals. At one point, the president inserted a cigar into Ms. Lewinsky's vagina, then put the cigar in his mouth and said: "It tastes good."

Our president is an interesting man. He is large, he contains multitudes, but in many ways he is curiously restrained. His efforts to tamper with witnesses and otherwise impede the administration of justice, though persuasively established by Starr, have a constipated quality. You can account for this reticence by assuming a fear of getting caught, or a gift for trimming honed to perfection by long experience. But how to account for the nature of the sexual dalliances themselves?

He wants to keep them a secret, for example, yet insists that the doors to the hallway or the bathroom, where the encounters occur, remain open. This is one of the many oddities established as a routine during their first occasion of intimacy. After kisses and minimal small talk, they retire to the shadowy hallway between the Oval Office and the bathroom. She performs oral sex on him, but he pushes her away before she can "bring him to completion," in Starr's gentle euphemism. She asks him why. He tells her he doesn't know her well enough. They've just met, after all, and some things are too intimate for strangers to share. So perhaps he masturbates into the bathroom sink.

An interesting man, a complex man. And occasionally Starr's gift for characterization fails him, for his account of the president often raises more questions than it answers. On Valentine's Day, for instance, Monica places a classified ad to the president in the personals section of the *Washington Post*, quoting a passage from Shakespeare, who is timeless. The next time he sees her, two weeks later, he tells he saw it and thanks her for it. We never learn how it came to the president's attention—the two were incommunicado at that point—but it is no longer unreasonable to imagine the president of the United States lingering over the ISOs in the local paper. When he's not doing the work the American people sent him here to do.

His vanity is vast. One time when Monica pesters him to allow her to perform oral sex on him, he refuses, caressing her cheek and saying compassionately: "Every day can't be sunshine." This is one of the report's deathless bits of dialogue, destined for a permanent place in the national *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* alongside Watergate's "But it would be wrong" and "Twist slowly, slowly in the wind." Another example: He calls her at six o' clock one morning, waking her up, and suggests they have phone sex; as soon as they are through, the president announces: "Good morning! What a way to start the day!" And finally, near the end of their affair, he grants her request to bring him to completion by saying, "I don't want to disappoint you." Then the moron gets spinach dip on her dress.

What are we to make of the president's habits, particularly his refusal, on eight of their ten encounters, to allow Monica to bring him to completion? It might appear that the president is somehow guided by scruple: I will go this far and no farther. Armchair experts have speculated about his penchant for oral sex—how he perhaps thinks it isn't really sex, thus not adultery, thus not a sin. The scruple is absurd but at least it's a scruple. But you can overthink the president's sex life, rather quickly in fact. After all, this withholding of ejaculation—this refusal to satisfy his intern with intercourse—this furious "self-pleasuring"—*this may be what he likes*. When he pushes Monica away and hunches over the bathroom sink, "finishing the job himself," he is finally having sex with someone he loves.

Starr has been chastised for including sexual detail in his report, of course. The criticism is silly, since the president's perjury turns on whether he had sex, and where and when and how he had it. (The *who* is stipulated.) But as you read along, you see the sex shade into the lying, and the lying radiate outward until it subsumes his staff and his friends, and then the legal system and eventually the country, and you realize that the story of the president's various forms of misbehavior is in fact indivisible. The sex is the perjury is the abuse of power. One final example will prove the point: It was the president's pleasure, on at least two occasions, to expose himself to his intern and instruct her to perform oral sex as he spoke on the phone. One of these calls, we know now, was to congressman Sonny Callahan, and we know further, thanks to reporting by John Kass of the *Chicago Tribune*, what the subject of that call was: to lobby Callahan's support for sending troops to Bosnia.

Callahan is chagrined, as you might imagine, and issued a statement to Kass. "I do not have any recollection," Callahan insists, "of any inappropriate behavior or comments from the president during my conversation." It's unclear how the congressman could have sensed that something was amiss. (Maybe if he'd heard a sudden "Good Morning!") Do we really need to know, as the critics say we do not, that the commander in chief was having oral sex as he considered sending troops to a war zone? Well, yes: It would certainly be nice to know. In some instances, it appears, the president's famous facility for compartmentalization fails him—as it doubtless has before, and surely will again.

In the interest of critical balance, and in hopes of frustrating the blurb-pluckers, I should note that the Starr Report fails as literature in important respects—slow in spots and bloodless throughout, and occasionally disjointed in its storytelling. As a legal document, it may have its shortcomings also. But it must be read. ("It must be read!"—THE WEEKLY STANDARD.) Don't be deterred by the ponderous prose, the zig-zag organization, and above all don't be put off by its length. It's a fat book, yes, but the extent of Clinton's miscreancy is pretty big, too; if you want a shorter book, find a different president to impeach. The Starr Report, in any case, is intended to be more than literature—more, even, than a legal document. It is meant to be an emetic, to induce at last the great national upchuck of Bill Clinton. And on this count it will succeed beyond its authors' wildest expectation. ♦

REFUSING CONSENT

Robert Knight Criticizes the Age

By David Plattner

It is with more than a touch of sarcasm that Robert H. Knight entitles his new critique of relativism *The Age of Consent*. This is Knight's preferred moniker for the present era, a time in which phony tolerance has become a governing principle. Knight explains that tolerance, "like any other good thing," was "originally a virtue." Now the word implies "heavy-handed liberalism, officially sanctioned sexual deviancies, group privileges, big government, and hostility toward Judaism and Christianity."

Robert H. Knight
The Age of Consent
The Rise of Relativism and the Corruption of Popular Culture
Spence, 253 pp., $27.95

In many ways, *The Age of Consent* is a unique analysis of all that's gone wrong in late modern times, filled with the author's wide-ranging examples of outrageousness. But in other ways, Knight has followed a well-worn track, and his book reflects the frustration of many conservatives—especially religious ones—over the corruption of American culture.

As Knight sees it, religion and the family have spent the last three decades under siege from powerful, malignant forces. All of these influences have conspired to entice average, decent Americans into scorning the idea of objective truth and turning their backs on religion. They have abandoned their former values and welcomed relativism with open arms, eager to indulge a newly liberated sensual appetite.

Beginning with a chapter called

A student at Yale University, David Plattner was a 1998 summer intern at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

"The Way We Were," in which he remembers a better past and inveighs against a host of current ills, Knight seeks examples of decay in such places as our decline in civility and the increasing vulnerability of the Amish. He goes on to dissect relativism and materialism—the first "the siren song of decadence" and the second "the religion that fails." The key villain is materialism, which he takes as encompassing both sensualism and the love of physical things. It is thus the sexual revolution—linked, as a form of materialism, with the avariciousness and commodification more traditionally understood as materialism—that has been a persistent and horrific enemy of Judeo-Christian morality, chipping away at the American soul.

Knight is very much at home when examining television, the film industry, and popular music—his three great poisoners. Devoting four chapters to TV, he bemoans the immorality of such shows as *Melrose Place*, *NYPD Blue*, and *Married . . . with Children*, which glorify homosexuality, adultery, bad parenting, and the disobedience of children. Knight laments a small-screen wasteland of "young adults consumed with casual sex, money, drugs, and autonomous lifestyles. Missing entirely is a sense of generational continuity, community ties, religion, and family. All of these require deferred gratification, which does not lend itself to sensational television."

Knight's analysis is on the mark, but he himself hints at the problem: It's no easy thing to generate viewers for wholesome and life-affirming shows among a population habituated to sex, drugs, and violence.

The Age of Consent is equally scalding about movies and popular music. Knight blames Hollywood for establishing a decadent agenda in its films and shoving it down the throats of a susceptible public. As for rock 'n' roll, it appeals perpetually to the weaker, lustful side of the human being, encouraging deplorable behavior. The bad effects of pop-culture build and build, as "a constant diet of sleaze makes one more accepting of sleaze, either on one's own part or when it is embraced by others."

For all of his anguish, however, Knight closes with a sense of optimism. He suspects that a backlash has set in among millions of citizens. Relativism, he writes, is "being exposed as a malevolence that wears a mask of benign tolerance." More important, it is contributing to a revival of religion: "Unquenched by the numbing pursuit of material and physical comfort and nonstop amusement, the soul is crying out for real sustenance, the kind that only God can fill because He happened to make us that way." Knight's final sentence expresses the hope that "the Age of Consent" will give way to "an Age of Faith."

Knight is on firm ground when attacking the degradation of popular culture, though he sometimes seems unduly willing to blame previous thinkers for originating the modern degradation he decries. He brands Socrates, for example, an egomaniac, asserting that the philosopher's "seemingly selfless act" in accepting the Athenians' sentence of death was "ultimately narcissistic." Knight faults Socrates for denying the "individual's capacity"—which "wittingly or unwittingly gave aid and comfort to totalitarians of all stripes."

Francis Bacon, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and a range of other Western thinkers similarly come in for harsh judgments in *The Age of Consent*—sometimes unfairly, as when Knight ascribes the famous line about unhappy families that begins *Anna Karenina* to Dostoyevsky rather than Tolstoy.

Despite such missteps, *The Age of Consent* is a persuasive—even an occasionally witty—volume. Knight accomplishes what he sets out to do. Readers predisposed to his view, of course, will find their position amply confirmed. And perhaps those who haven't yet grasped the weaknesses of a faithless time will be induced to think twice about an age of boundless consent. ♦

The Last Samurai

Akira Kurosawa, 1910-1998

By J. Bottum

They called him the "Emperor," and when he died on September 6 at the age of eighty-eight, the newspaper obituaries were filled with stories of Akira Kurosawa's imperious—and imperial—arrogance.

Steven Spielberg did pause to declare the Japanese film-maker "the pictorial Shakespeare of our time," and from around the globe came tributes to his stature as the last of the giants, the director of such world classics as *Rashomon* (1950), *The Seven Samurai* (1954), *Yojimbo* (1961), and *Kagemusha the Shadow Warrior* (1980). But mostly what people seemed to want to remember were the anecdotes of Kurosawa's lordly pride: his famous disdain for the press, his haughty refusal to take off his sunglasses for photographs, his near bankrupting of the entire Japanese film industry in the early 1960s, his demand that the medieval castle built as a set for the 1957 *Throne of Blood* be completely rebuilt because the car-

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

penters had used inauthentic (and invisible) steel nails, his stormy resignation from the 1970 American production of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* after he was denied absolute artistic control, his description of World War II as primarily a personal inconvenience in his 1982 book *Something Like an Autobiography*, the three years and $10 million he spent creating accurate samurai costumes for the 1985 epic *Ran*.

There were signs that a corresponding modesty, even insecurity, matched his fabled arrogance. Born in 1910, the sickly son of a physical-education instructor, Kurosawa took his first job at a Japanese film studio in 1936 only after failing the entrance examination for art school, and throughout his directing career he allowed himself to be underpaid. (When he complained that the actor Minoru Chiaki received too much for starring in *The Seven Samurai*, Chiaki replied, "It's not that I'm too expensive; it's that you let yourself go too cheap.") For ten years at the peak of his fame—between the money-losing 1965 *Red Beard* and the Soviet-backed 1975 *Dersu Uzala*—he could find investors for only one film, the 1970 tale of Tokyo slum dwellers, *Dodesukaden*, and when it proved a critical and financial failure, he fell into a massive depression that culminated in an attempted suicide in December 1971. He picked his favorite actor, Toshiro Mifune, out of a 1946 audition for amateurs when he recognized in the would-be actor's rude glares a fellow shy man's overcompensation.

But then there are his works—the thirty films Kurosawa made from the 1943 nationalistic story of the birth of jujitsu, *Sugata Sanshiro*, to the 1993 tale of an aging teacher, *No, Not Yet*. It is the works, for more than the life, that teach a lesson not in the triumphs of artistic arrogance but in the benefits of artistic modesty. To see these movies again all in a row, as video-cassettes now allow, is to recognize something about how art actually works—about how art actually comes into existence through specific artistic forms like the poem, the novel, the symphony, the movie, and never through some abstract and general notion of *Art* with a capital *A*.

When Kurosawa was trying only to make films, he succeeded in creating great art. But when he set himself to creating great art, he succeeded only in making films—some of them interesting (like his Japanese setting of Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths* in 1957) and some of them dull (like his 1955 *Record of Living Being*, an indecipherable tale of a Japanese father who wants to move his family to Brazil out of fear of radioactive fallout), but none of them capable of standing beside his own best work. The perfection of such grand historical romances as *The Seven Samurai* and even such little comic gems as *Sanjuro* (1962) prove the success of Kurosawa the artist. The painful sincerity of his translation of Dostoyevsky in *The Idiot* (1951) and the unwatchable pretension of *Akira Kurosawa's Dreams* (1990) prove the failure of Kurosawa the *Artist*.

Alfred A. Knopf

Kurosawa directing in 1951.

In the decade and a half following the Imperial Army's surrender in 1945, Kurosawa interspersed his samurai tales with a series of attacks on the postwar society developing in Japan. Among these social commentaries, only *Ikiru* (1952) stands out. Painting the last days of a modern, soulless bureaucrat diagnosed with cancer, the film is a profoundly uplifting account of the power of imminent death to transform for good what remains of a dying man's life. And it is simultaneously a deeply depressing account of the failure of that man's death to teach anyone else what he has learned in dying.

The other social films from this period do not, for the most part, survive their moment. *No Regrets for Our Youth* (1946), based on the true story of a prewar professor imprisoned by the military government for leftist views, seems mostly to be a denunciation of all anti-communism as militaristic. *One Wonderful Sunday* (1947), a tale of a poor couple wandering through the poverty-stricken cityscape of American-occupied Japan, rejects emerging Japanese capitalism. *Scandal* (1950) is a screed against the postwar emergence of sensationalist tabloids and scandal sheets. *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960) viciously attacks modern, corporate Japan as murderously corrupt.

Even at their worst, however, these films remain tightly focused ventings of Kurosawa's sometimes misdirected moral outrage—their force deriving not from a belief that the *Artist* must pronounce on the great moral issues of the day, but from an artist's taking up the cudgels against what strikes him as an immediate and specific abuse.

Kurosawa would not always stay so disciplined. With his 1991 censure of America in the anti-atomic-bomb story *Rhapsody in August*, for example, he posed instead as the great, Olympian moral pronouncer. Widely mocked for its absurd casting of Richard Gere as a Japanese-American, the film deserved sterner criticism for its picture of present-day Nagasaki as a shrine to the peaceful Japanese Buddhists pointlessly martyred by the bloody American military. *Rhapsody in August* ends with a scene of an old woman with an inverted umbrella

running in slow motion against the rain, so beautifully photographed it almost rescues Kurosawa from his attempt to blame all the war's casualties on the United States. But at last, even its cinematography fails to make the film represent anything more than the kind of moral imprecision that comes from the sheer, unfocused desire to deliver moral pronouncements—an imprecision that is far, far worse than simple error.

There is a second lesson in artistic modesty to be learned as well from the Emperor Kurosawa's work, beyond even the lesson that art lives only in the disciplined limitations of a specific artistic form. It is a lesson about the particularity of stories—about the impossibility of translating even the most general truth from one location to another without destroying it.

Following hints given by the director himself, film critics have traced the influence of traditional Japanese theater on Kurosawa's work. The strangely mannered walk and inflection of the female characters in *Throne of Blood*, for instance, derive from conventions found only in *Noh* plays. But movie-making is fundamentally and originally a Western form of art, and Kurosawa always admitted his debt to American and European directors, often naming in interviews John Ford and Frank Capra and showing, in his color epics *Dersu Uzala* and *Ran*, what he learned from David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*: the use of motion pictures to paint still lifes and panoramic landscapes.

His modern crime stories, in particular, reveal the influence of American film noir. In 1948, he made *Drunken Angel*, a story of an alcoholic doctor and a neighborhood gangster that proved to be his breakthrough from journeyman director to full-fledged film-maker. In 1949, he released *Stray Dog*, a Raymond Chandler-style account of a policeman descending into the criminal underworld to search for the pickpocket who stole his gun. And in 1963, he made *High and Low*, one of his best and most underrated films. Based on a story by the American mystery writer Ed McBain, but transferred from New York to Tokyo and transformed from a police procedural into a moral study, *High and Low* is a brilliantly realized tale about whether a rich man should pay the bankrupting ransom demanded when kidnappers mistake his chauffeur's son for his own.

Western directors have often returned the compliment. *Rashomon* was Kurosawa's (and Japan's) first film to receive international recognition, winning the "Golden Lion" at the 1951 Venice Film Festival, as well as the Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 1952. Telling over and over again with different narrators the story of a rape—concerned, ultimately, with the impossibility of deriving certain knowledge of an incident from witnesses' accounts—it was remade as a weak 1964 American film, *The Outrage*, with Paul Newman and Edward G. Robinson. *Yojimbo*, Kurosawa's 1961 tale about a samurai who tries to play both sides in a small town divided between two warring families, was refilmed in 1964 by Sergio Leone as *A Fistful of Dollars*, a spaghetti western starring Clint Eastwood, and again in 1996 as *Last Man Standing*, a 1920s gangster movie starring Bruce Willis. John Sturges smoothly remade *The Seven Samurai* as the 1960 American western *The Magnificent Seven*, and George Lucas has often declared Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress*, the 1958 story of the attempt to smuggle a samurai princess out of enemy territory, to be one of the originals for his own 1977 *Star Wars*.

AP/Wide World Photos

Kurosawa at Cannes in 1980.

And yet, such recasting of Kurosawa's mythopoetic classics back into the idioms and locations understood by American and European directors already begins to show the impossibility of achieving perfect translation—begins to show why the truths conveyed in a story cannot be separated without damage from that story's particular setting.

The Magnificent Seven is a nice film, but it doesn't have nearly the stature of *The Seven Samurai*. Indeed, there is something forced in Sturges's western that the viewer never feels in Kurosawa's Japanese tale. This comes partly from the American version's cutting of an hour and a quarter from Kurosawa's two-hundred minute script. But in the resetting of the story from Japan to Mexico, other changes are forced as well, and with them is lost what makes *The Seven Samurai* one of the greatest movies ever made: a general and universal insight into human nature that is displayed only in the story's specific and particular setting.

In Kurosawa's version, the headman of a poor village decides to hire warriors to help protect the barley harvest from a gang of armed and mounted bandits. The film is full of surprisingly comic moments. When one of the villagers objects that samurai won't fight merely for the food that is all they have to offer in pay, the headman explains, "Find hungry samurai." After great effort, the village collects seven samurai to lead its defense, and in some of the best battle scenes put on film, the bandits are all killed—along with four samurai.

The American version follows this precise plot-line, as a Mexican village

sends out for gunfighters to defend it against a gang of *pistoleros*. And yet, in *The Magnificent Seven*, the mythopoetic characters start to blur and lose their fine definition. Two figures from Kurosawa's film, the boy-samurai learning the code of *Bushido* and the farmer's son pretending to be a samurai, are awkwardly joined into a single young gunfighter in Sturges's translation. The social divisions between bandits, peasants, and samurai make little sense in the New World setting. And the eternal sorrow at the changes happening in the world, which Kurosawa can evoke by having all the slain samurai swordsmen killed by the bandits' gunfire, cannot find a counterpart in an American western.

This inability to translate Kurosawa at his most mythopoetic—at the moments in which he has the most to tell us about human nature—shows even more clearly in the transition from *The Hidden Fortress* to those portions of *Star Wars* that concern the rescue of the Princess Leia. There is an actual hidden fortress in the Japanese film, a hiding place from which a samurai general sneaks his feudal princess, together with her family's treasury. But the other hidden fortress in the film is something far earthier and far more human than George Lucas felt free to put in *Star Wars*.

The climactic battle scene in The Seven Samurai.

Even as the young princess learns the cost of being a ruler, both how to sacrifice herself and how to accept the sacrifices others make for her, the general is conveying to safe territory their only true hidden fortress: the virgin womb of the last royal daughter, the one hope for the clan's survival.

But perhaps the clearest proof of the failure of translation—the impossibility of separating the truths that stories tell from the settings in which they tell them—comes in Kurosawa's own attempts to recast in Japan the mythopoetry of European stories. The director himself acknowledged the artistic failure of his versions of Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* and Gorky's *The Lower Depths*. But he never penetrated to understanding why they failed, and the greatest gap in his films between artistic will and artistic success lies in the Shakespearean movies he believed among his greatest triumphs: his retellings of *Macbeth* in the 1957 *Throne of Blood* and *King Lear* in the 1985 *Ran*.

The failure is caused in part by the absence of Christianity. Those who are not Christian are obviously able to appreciate Dostoyevsky and Shakespeare, but Kurosawa was a non-Christian in a way impossible for anyone reared outside Japan: He lacked the expectation of redemption that is, thanks to the inescapable conditioning of Christianity even for non-Christians, the structure that underlies all Western stories. The disaster of Kurosawa's version of *The Idiot*, set on the half-Russianized northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, derives first from the film's dropping of Dostoyevsky's vision of an effete and corrupt national capital seen through the eyes of an innocent from the provinces. But it derives even more from Kurosawa's inability to convey holiness convincingly. Dostoyevsky's Prince Myshkin is a hero marked by God as a holy fool precisely because of his sufferings. Kurosawa's protagonist is hero in spite of his sufferings.

The samurai princess points to the path of escape in The Hidden Fortress.

The death of the Macbeth character in Throne of Blood.

Throne of Blood is Kurosawa's most play-like film, most stylized and most driven by dialogue rather than visual effects. The self-created punishments of over-powering ambition and the supernatural elements of *Macbeth* all seem to translate well into the early mediaeval Japanese setting. But grim as Shakespeare's vision is in *Macbeth*, Kurosawa's even grimmer vision at last overwhelms the Shakespearean source. Kurosawa cannot convey the outrage of the universe at usurpation, the rule of a murderous and unrightful king, because he does not believe in it. His Macbeth murders to gain the throne of a lord who had in his time murdered his own lord to gain the throne. There is no rightful ruler in Kurosawa's universe, and thus no end to the succession of murders down through the ages.

Even the visually stunning *Ran*, which some think Kurosawa's finest film, at last breaks on the director's inability to explain why the story should seem so especially tragic. Oddly and awkwardly for a retelling of *King Lear*, *Ran* is Kurosawa's least dialogue-driven film: Shakespeare stripped of language; emotion and narrative expressed only in windswept landscapes and tear-stained faces. Lost in *Ran* is the unique breaking of the audience's expectation that comes with the death of the beloved youngest child. The universe in *King Lear* is deranged because Lear is deranged, and it is unbearable that Cordelia dies after he returns to sanity—that his sufferings should prove unredemptive. In *Ran*, Kurosawa so rapidly destroys the audience's expectation of redemptive suffering that the tragedy of the king's beloved child's death bears no extra weight.

There are further problems with the translation Kurosawa attempts in *Ran*. Shakespeare wrote other plays and deliberately used other settings (notably *Henry IV*) to speak of the transfer of power from fathers to sons; *Lear* is a play primarily about fathers and daughters. When Kurosawa makes the king's three children sons instead of daughters, he weakens the play's display of violated tenderness. Forced to use other motives to drive his story, he introduces a new and contradictory subplot in which the oldest son's wife—the daughter of a lord killed by the old king—is determined to revenge her father by destroying her husband's clan.

Among Kurosawa's films with modern settings, only *Ikiru* and *High and Low* seem likely to keep a general audience. It is rather on the basis of his samurai-era films that his reputation will remain as one of the greatest directors who ever lived: the philosophically disturbing *Rashomon*, the mythopoetic *The Seven Samurai* and *The Hidden Fortress*, the comic celebration of the samurai in *Sanjuro*, and *Kagemusha*, the saddest and most humane of all his movies.

There are lessons in all of this, lessons in artistic modesty taught by a man with the nickname of the "Emperor," famed and remembered for his artistic arrogance. There is the lesson about the existence of general art only in its specific forms, and there is the lesson about the existence of universal truths only in specific stories. Together they amount to something any artist would be proud to have taught us. ♦

All photos University of California Press

The madness of the King Lear character in Ran.

Not a Parody

Democratic national chairman Steve Grossman, introducing President Clinton at a September 14 $50,000-per-couple fund-raising lunch in New York City: "You have demonstrated at least in my adult lifetime a higher commitment to the kind of moral leadership that I value in public service and public policy than any person I have ever met. . . . Our prayer for you today and for the first lady and for the vice president and for Tipper is that you will continue to provide the kind of moral leadership to this country that has enriched the life of virtually every citizen."