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POLITICS & PATRIOTISM

by David Brooks

War in the Balkans
Carlson • Ceaser • Hawkins • Lindberg

the weekly Standard

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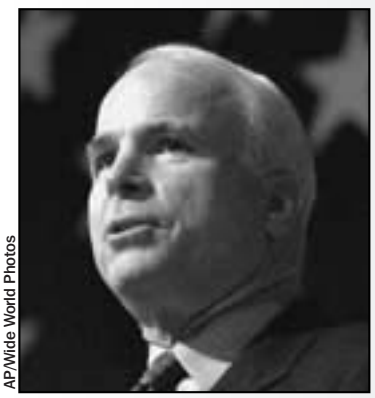

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Books & Arts

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The School-Choice Juggernaut

Despite the best efforts of its opponents in the educational establishment, the cause of school choice continues to gain steam. This week, the investment banker Ted Forstmann and Wal-Mart executive John Walton will announce plans to expand their privately funded initiative to restore competition to the country's inner-city schools.

Last year in Washington, D.C., Forstmann and Walton offered more than 1,000 scholarships to poor parents to send their children to schools of their own choosing. Not surprisingly, the program was overwhelmed with applications. Now they are taking the cause nationwide. Forstmann and Walton are each putting up $50 million, and have raised another $70 million in matching contributions. This will allow about 40,000 poor kids to attend private schools in cities across the country. This week, when they announce the winners of those scholarships, Forstmann and Walton will also reveal that hundreds of thousands of students applied for fellowships, despite little in the way of a major publicity campaign. What makes this even more remarkable is that the fellowship requires a matching contribution averaging about $1,000 from these lower income parents. So, as Forstmann puts it, hard-up parents who currently get something—public education—for free, are lining up to pay to get a chance for their kids to escape the system.

Just as significant for the long-term prospects of school choice is the roster of supporters the two have signed up. The national board of advisers for the Children's Scholarship Fund includes Hollywood mogul Michael Ovitz, Joseph Califano, Henry Cisneros, Andrew Young, Martin Luther King III—all certified liberal Democrats. Their presence testifies to the bipartisan, and increasingly trans-ideological, appeal of school choice. The establishment should be worried—and it is. How worried? Earlier this month, the teachers' unions poured more than $500,000 into a single school board race in Milwaukee—where an independent-minded coalition of parents, teachers, and politicians has struggled to make the school district a showcase of charter school and choice programs. The unions hoped to defeat the reelection of at-large school board member (and vociferous school choice champion) John Gardner; he was attacked in a polished and predictably distorted series of radio, TV, and newspaper ads. It didn't work: In an election that was widely considered a referendum on Milwaukee's growing voucher program, Gardner trounced his union-backed challenger. Even better, reform candidates swept all the board's open seats, leaving the unions with only two remaining allies on the nine-member board. "The status quo in the Milwaukee Public Schools was turned on its head Tuesday," the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported after the upset. It's about time. And now for the rest of the country . . .

Poetic Justice

The National Poetry Competition is not only Great Britain's most prestigious poetry prize. It's the most generous, paying £5,000 for the poem that's judged the best. And it's meant to be the most fair, since all submissions must be previously unpublished and submitted anonymously. But it's possible to tell a bit about the poet, or so the judges must have thought when they awarded this year's prize to "Horse under water," a poem in Jamaican dialect about using a dead horse as bait to fish for sharks:

hundreds of teeth iiiiiichin to bite me dead
an i liff de knife but it move slow
for everything cep dis killer move slow in de water
but fear drive my hand
an i slash him in de stomach

The three judges surely thought they had discovered a fresh new voice out of Britain's Caribbean community. But you can't take anything for granted. The crowd was "shocked," according to the Plymouth *Western Morning News*, when a 62-year-old white woman from Cornwall—and an unpublished one at that—showed up at the awards ceremony two weeks ago to claim her prize. Her name is Caroline Carver. She began writing poetry as a hobby about five years ago.

"I don't think they expected a white woman," Carver said. "However, everyone was far too polite to say so."

Take That, New Hampshire

One of the silly little rituals of American politics is the quadrennial fight over which state will host the first presidential primary. New Hampshire, of course, clings

Scrapbook

fervently to its first-primary tradition, and always threatens to make life miserable for any candidate, or party, that doesn't honor it. Thus it was amusing to note that the executive committee of the South Carolina Democratic party voted last week to hold its primary next February 26. This, it turns out, not only angers New Hampshire, it's against national Democratic party rules, which require other states to wait until March. And while the Democratic National Committee has no real power to dictate when South Carolina holds its primary, the DNC is now threatening to reduce by 25 percent the number of delegates South Carolina will be given at the Democratic convention. This, and other threatened punishments, don't seem to have fazed the chairman of South Carolina's Democratic party, Dick Harpootlian: "They're going to put us in bad hotels and give us bad seating at the convention," he said. "If that's the best these sissy boys can do, I think we'll be having a primary on February 26."

Labor of Love

According to a fascinating story last week in the *New York Times*, the Labor Department "will neither confirm nor deny" that it is investigating the use of volunteer labor by America Online, the nation's leading online service and portal to the World Wide Web. For years, it turns out, AOL has given free access to its services to people who log on to the service from home and do useful things like rat on other users who use profanity in AOL chat rooms.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the notoriously fractious nature of online "communities," a number of disgruntled volunteers have parted company with AOL on unfriendly terms. And now they've gone running to the feds. Not for back pay, they say, but to draw attention to their grievances: AOL didn't appreciate their efforts; they got kicked off AOL for life because of badmouthing; they did more for the company than paid employees; the "free service" they got for their efforts used to be worth more because AOL used to be more expensive than it is now; yadda, yadda, yadda.

If the Labor Department doesn't just laugh at this, it means some federal bureaucrats don't have much real work to do. After all, why do something as grubby as protecting immigrant Chinese girls working in a sweatshop in Los Angeles, when you can make a name for yourself by going after AOL on behalf of middle-class folk who once had a hobby, but then got bored with it?

Press Release of the Year

The Scrapbook is in receipt of a remarkable revelation by the National Center for Public Policy Research. The Center issued the following press release last week: "Sun Plays Key Role in Global Warming." No kidding.

The intent was to draw attention to recent research on climate change, suggesting that industrial pollutants may have less impact on the earth's climate than some global-warming enthusiasts argue. Probably true. As is this claim in the release: "global warming is largely due to the sun and not man." Can't imagine anyone will disagree.

Casual

The Poor Man's Viagra

At Bar Betico Mata in Turrialba, the beer is cheap, the cuisine is hearty, and the service is congenial. But I don't think they take American Express. Actually, I don't think they take Visa either. They might not even take U.S. dollars. At Bar Betico Mata, you won't find too many people speaking English. It's a cubbyhole with six or seven tables where the locals hang out and the tourists, put off by the chicken-shack exterior, are few. Yet it's a good place to swill Imperial—Costa Rica's most popular beer—and sink your teeth into a juicy strip of fried beef wrapped in a corn tortilla, textured and warm.

Situated in a lush valley, surrounded by fog-covered mountains, a rain forest, and some of the best whitewater rapids in the world, Turrialba is my friend J.C.'s hometown. We went out for drinks there the other night, beginning at Betico (which comes from Beto, which comes from Berto, which comes from Alberto) Mata's. J.C.'s father, Don Orlando, joined in. The don has worked in the nearby farmlands all his life. Today, he owns coffee plantations and sugar cane fields, and he built Costa Rica's first processing plant for macadamias, to process the nuts from his groves. He is well respected in this town, and many passersby stopped in to shake his hand.

The don, who is a friend of Beto's, came up with the names of the bar's two famous *hamburguésas*, the Big Mata and the Super Mata. But the establishment mainly serves bite-sized appetizers known as *bocas*. After a few chicken and cheese taco *bocas*, we moved on to *salchichón*, or fried sausage. One variety had the appearance of Spam but, after I'd eaten it, the don assured me it was made from only the finest horse.The local specialty is *huevos de tortuga*: a shot glass filled to the rim with Bloody Mary mix (and a dab of Worcestershire sauce), garnished with a floating turtle's egg the size of a ping-pong ball. Turrialba is the only town in Costa Rica licensed to serve this delicacy. "Don't chew it, just swallow it," advised the don, who called it "the poor man's Viagra."

Before long an Indian-looking fellow walked in, somewhat ragged, with a guitar slung over one shoulder and a grin that bared all five of his teeth. To my surprise, the don leapt up and beckoned him to join us.

His name was Ricky and he's from El Salvador. Don Orlando befriended him a year ago, and they like to get together for drinks, music, and good company. Ricky serenades for a living, and the don had hired him to play for us. His life's dream is to perform 2,000 different songs and enter the *Guinness Book of World Records*—quite a feat considering most of the songs are in English, a language Ricky doesn't speak. He's rather excitable and eagerly plays a few riffs of Luis Miguel and Julio Iglesias. He also performs tangos, an impassioned "*A Mi Manera*" ("My Way"), and Beatles tunes like "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "Yesterday."

I was intrigued by this improbable pair, the landed *patrón* and the toothless troubadour. "I'm trying to help him out," whispered the don. By getting him singing gigs? I asked. "No," he said, "by referring him to my dentist." It's a start.

The don then clamored for an improvisational number. Ricky took up the challenge with ease and cranked out a song about our revelries. When he sang the words "Don Orlando," everyone at Beto's, including the cooks behind the counter, started to cheer and laugh. Then the don reached for the guitar and started strumming. Ricky had been teaching him a few chords, and the two sang a duet, a song they'd composed about the Bar Betico Mata.

As the evening progressed, we moved on to other locales, settling finally in an outdoor café. "Tell us a story," said Don Orlando, and Ricky became more animated than ever. His Spanish was rapidfire, and J.C., my interpreter, had trouble keeping up.

Ricky recounted some high points of his serenading career, like the time he was sauntering along on horseback with a couple of fellow musicians when, in mid-serenade, a branch snagged his guitar right out of his hands. Ricky gestured expansively, throwing up his arms. Another time, he accompanied a client to propose. The man's beloved, looking down from her balcony, was not impressed and dumped out a bucket of water that missed the rejected lover but left Ricky drenched.

As the night wound down, we performed a rousing rendition of Billy Joel's "Piano Man." The crowd in the café applauded, and Ricky downed another shot of guaro (sugar-distilled alcohol, resembling clear tequila). I was already dreaming of my next trip. We'll ride horses through farm country and hunt alligators and listen to Ricky play his 2,000th song.

Victorino Matus

Correspondence

Against Kosovo

William Kristol and Robert Kagan's editorial challenges the GOP to stake out the territory between Pat Buchanan and McGovern Democrats ("Kosovo and the Republican Future," April 5/April 12). That is either a vast plateau or a narrow ridge, but in either case it need not be occupied, as they suggest it should be, by Republicans who think the United States is right to engage militarily in the Balkans. It is hard to describe such senators as Paul Coverdell, Pete Domenici, and Pat Roberts as captive to either conservative or liberal isolationists, even if they did vote against a resolution supporting the Clinton administration's ill-considered policy on Kosovo.

These senators, and many others who opposed the resolution on Kosovo, also supported the expansion of NATO—precisely because they believe that the United States must lead in Europe. But one can believe that and still oppose direct U.S. engagement in Kosovo.

An essential element of leadership is the ability to motivate others to do what they would not do otherwise. Were the United States truly leading our European allies, the administration would be convincing them that containing Slobodan Milosevic and an expansionist China are priorities for all of us, but that the United States cannot do both.

The real challenge to American global leadership—and to the Republican party—is to draw distinctions among the threats we face, "from Baghdad to Beijing to Belgrade." Beyond the alliterative convenience such a reference offers to clever editorialists, there is little that links these as threats to Western ideals.

Lawrence Di Rita
Potomac, MD

I am livid over William Kristol and Robert Kagan's recent stand on sending ground troops into Kosovo. My opposition to this has nothing to do with my feelings for Bill Clinton. American lives should not be entrusted to a draft dodger who loathes the military. He has proven to the American people how much he loathes the military by cutting our forces in half and by deploying them more often than any other peacetime president.

The Republicans who oppose this do so because of our love for America, not our hatred for Bill Clinton. As for John McCain, I have to wonder about his motives. Could it be that he sees this as an opportunity to pull ahead of George W. Bush in the polls?

Clinton lacks the moral authority to lead this country into a quagmire and expend our resources in order to leave whatever kind of legacy he intends to leave. He sees himself as another Winston Churchill or FDR. He has wistfully spoken about how the presidents who are considered to be "great" have

led the country through successful wars. That should make Kristol and Kagan wonder and question Bill Clinton's real motives for his actions.

Nell Williams
Lafayette, LA

What foreign policy do William Kristol and Robert Kagan suggest? Arming the Kosovar Liberation Army (already being supported by an outside country) as our new spectator sport? Or the Rambouillet fiasco?

The first rule of deal making is that everyone gets something—not everything—they want, but enough to live with. Kosovo got autonomy for three years and after that, by inevitable logic, independence. Yugoslavia got 26,000 troops quartered on its soil waiting to pounce at the first "infraction." Some deal.

This is the "feel your pain" administration. The Yugoslav pain, to which we have contributed, is economic. Some "nation building," properly wrapped, might be graciously received. For ribbon, guarantee that the part of Kosovo that is their sacred ground will remain Yugoslav.

For the KLA, who started the terrorist guerrilla conflict, what results from an equitable partition will be theirs. This is at least the start of a deal. If our real agenda is peace in the Balkans (and not Clinton "legacy building"), then a little ingenuity beats a big stick and a pile of rubble.

Pat Shaver
Falls Church, VA

The immoral ends of this treacherous, anti-American administration are bluffs, lies, cover-ups, and death.

William Kristol and Robert Kagan's defense of the Kosovo policy makes me realize my error in not understanding their underlying philosophy sooner.

Patricia P. Greenhood
Los Altos, CA

William Kristol and Robert Kagan's support of the Kosovo policy, because they don't want to be indifferent to "human suffering," exposes their inability to think in principles. They seem to forget that their argument is employed by those who want to increase government power while the individual is expected to abandon his own interests without limits to his sacrifice.

Now, with the help of Kristol and Kagan, this liberal idea is being applied to our foreign policy. As the individual must surrender to the welfare state, the nation must surrender to other countries, and allow its own interests to disintegrate.

Only with the policy that we will deploy our military solely to repel threats to the rights of the American people will the United States project its strength as a superpower.

William Van Nest
Wayne, NJ

the weekly Standard

Now She Tells Us

Just past sundown on April 12, Chuck Bartels of the Associated Press had some news he thought might be of interest to the most famous woman in Cabot, Arkansas. So he rang Paula Jones's doorbell—it plays the spooky five-note theme from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*—and informed her that Judge Susan Webber Wright had sanctioned the president for contempt of court in the *Jones* v. *Clinton* litigation. Hearing this, the plaintiff danced a quick, barefoot circle on her front porch, hands held high over her head. "Ah! Ta, ta, ta, ta, ta," she trilled. Then she stopped: "That's all I have to say." Undeterred and no doubt hoping to secure a quote that contained some actual words, Bartels asked whether Jones thought a finding of contempt against the president was "healthy for the country." To which she replied: "I could care less." Goodbye.

Here, at last, Paula Jones, upper-middle-class nightmare *extraordinaire*, has learned to speak the language of well-bred society. For hers is the approved and near-universal response to Judge Wright's ruling: vague satisfaction mixed with abject boredom.

The president can live with his contempt citation and won't appeal. The president's congressional defenders can live with the ruling—Rep. Barney Frank waves it off as "not a surprise"—despite having spent most of a year denying what the judge now says "no reasonable person would seriously dispute." The *Washington Post* embraces Wright's 32-page memorandum as the sensible grownup's Clinton-scandal Holy Grail, a *proportionate* response: "Finally, someone has gotten this right." The *New York Times*, without evident irony, calls this apparently conclusive courtroom verdict "appropriately symbolic." To which judgment the paper's star columnist Maureen Dowd, a Pulitzer Prize for her Jones/Lewinsky pieces fresh in hand, adds a delicate little seasoning of atmospheric gestalt: "This whole farce is *so over*." Ah! Ta, ta, ta, ta, ta.

To be sure, Judge Wright's April 12 essay is not entirely without its pleasures. "Contrary to numerous assertions," she writes, "this Court did not rule that evidence of the Lewinsky matter was irrelevant or immaterial to the issues in plaintiff's case." And, she adds—contrary to numerous other assertions vehemently advanced, throughout the controversy, by the Democratic party—Bill Clinton was unmistakably guilty as charged by the House impeachment managers. There can be "no factual dispute" and there is "simply no escaping the fact" and "the record leaves no doubt" and "the record demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence" . . . that the president defied the orders of a federal judge by responding to questions from Paula Jones's attorneys with "intentionally false" answers "designed to obstruct the judicial process." Perjury and obstruction of justice, in other words. Nice of her to say so.

And yet, together with her many big-shot fans, how curiously subdued Judge Wright is about the whole business—as she has been all along. One year ago this month, Wright summarily dismissed Jones's complaint against the president on the truly incredible reasoning that no rational Arkansas jury would find Clinton's indecent exposure sufficiently "outrageous" to constitute a tort. Had Clinton told the truth about Monica Lewinsky, the judge now stubbornly insists, she would still have reached the same conclusion. And when, she asks us to believe, did it first occur to Wright that the president might *not* have told the truth? Not until his televised August 1998 pseudo-confession.

By the evidence of her contempt citation, Susan Webber Wright has learned nothing new since then. She has simply held her tongue. *Now* she tells us—long after the announcement might have had some meaningful effect on the Senate impeachment trial—that Bill Clinton's criminal activity is proved beyond question and "not acceptable" in a president.

Well, sort of "not acceptable," anyway. The matter will be referred to the Arkansas Supreme Court's Committee on Professional Conduct, which exercises disciplinary authority over Clinton's law license. Nothing much will happen there, of course; former governor Jim Guy Tucker, who was twice convicted of Whitewater felonies by Kenneth Starr and pleaded guilty to a third, still has *his* law license. It's the thought that counts, we suppose. Like the thought embodied by the only practical penalty Judge Wright has imposed on the president: a demand that he reimburse her court and Paula Jones's attorneys for the expenses they incurred as a result of his deceit.

The president violates the law. A major federal investigation ensues. He and his aides lie to and about that investigation for eight months. He marshals the executive branch of government and his

political party, the Democratic party, to sustain the lie during a spectacular impeachment proceeding in Congress. And his only punishment is a one-day scolding from a district court judge—plus a couple thousand bucks.

It means something that this result should win such a widespread, sleepy welcome. It means that an influential chunk of America believes a mild rebuke of Clinton appropriate because it expects no better man than he in the Oval Office. The problem is not so much the president's contempt for Susan Webber Wright. The real problem is our political culture's cynicism about—genuine contempt for—the presidency itself. This is a problem from which no court can offer us relief.

—David Tell, for the Editors

The National Interest

The war in Kosovo is going badly. The Clinton administration has compounded its initial disastrous misjudgment of Slobodan Milosevic with an inadequate military strategy driven more by fear of negative polls than by the imperative of victory. The Weekly Standard has learned that General Wesley Clark has told senior administration officials that NATO can't win without ground troops, but the Clinton administration continues to quake at the thought of a ground war.

One bit of good news, however, has emerged from this crisis. The war has usefully illuminated the faultlines in elite opinion about the goals of American foreign policy and the purposes of American power in the post-Cold War world.

On one side is, if we may say so, a rather motley combination of neo-isolationists who simply don't believe the United States should much concern itself with overseas matters not directly threatening the American homeland; of Clinton despisers who don't trust the administration to do any serious thing seriously (not a ridiculous position, but one that implies an utterly passive foreign policy for the next two years); and of ultra-sophisticated "realist" intellectuals who have divined that America has no interests in the Balkans and who claim that to combat Milosevic's aggression and brutality is merely to indulge in soft-headed liberal internationalism.

And just who are these self-indulgent, soft-headed liberal internationalists who, in the words of one young sage, "applaud America's intervention in a place like Kosovo . . . because they see plainly that we have no national interests there"? Well, they include, in no particular order: Jeane Kirkpatrick, Caspar Weinberger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, Richard Perle, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, John McCain, Bob Dole, Richard Lugar, Chuck Hagel, Chris Cox, George W. Bush, and Elizabeth Dole. All have called for victory in the war against Milosevic. All have insisted that ground troops may be necessary to achieve that victory. All understand what the sophisticates do not: that there are profound moral reasons for our involvement in Kosovo, yes; but that there are profound national interests at stake, as well.

Some of these interests concern the future of NATO: As Kissinger says, "NATO cannot survive if it now abandons the campaign without achieving its objective of ending the massacres." Some of these interests concern the credibility of American power against adversaries from Baghdad to Pyongyang. As Brzezinski notes, "It is no exaggeration to say that NATO's failure to prevail would mean both the end of NATO as a credible alliance and the undermining of America's global leadership." And some of these interests concern the fundamental question of the kind of world we want to live in—where peace and civilized behavior reign, especially in strategically vital parts of the world like Europe. As the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, a victory against Milosevic will "set back the forces of irrationality that threaten the coming millennium, establishing the precedent that somewhere, sometime the world will draw a line that barbarity will not be allowed to cross."

Are these American interests that are worth pursuing or not? For most of the post-Cold War decade, this question has been avoided. Kosovo has brought it to the fore. At the beginning of the Cold War, there was a "great debate," which, happily, was won by the hard-headed internationalists. They understood that American moral and strategic interests often converge. It is too early to know who will win today's debate, but one thing is heartening: A creditable group of major political figures understands that the principles of Truman and Reagan remain the best guide in our new and increasingly perilous post-Cold War world.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol, for the Editors

The Milosevic Expert

by Tucker Carlson

While writing his account of the 1995 Dayton peace accords, Richard Holbrooke had a dispute with his publisher. Holbrooke, still flushed from his starring role in the agreement that halted the fighting in Bosnia, wanted to call his book, *To End a War*. Random House, fearful of being overtaken by events in the Balkans, pushed for a safer title, *Precarious Peace*. During an interview with C-SPAN, Holbrooke explained how he had prevailed in his negotiations with book editors: "They said, 'But, you know, if this book comes out and the wars resume, we're gonna look like fools.' I said, 'It's not gonna happen.'"

Two years later, both Holbrooke and Random House have been proved wrong. War has erupted again in the Balkans. Slobodan Milosevic, portrayed in Holbrooke's book as Machiavellian but responsive to reason, has turned out to be bloodthirsty and unpredictable. Meanwhile, despite the publisher's fears, *To End a War* has been a great success. Praised enthusiastically by critics, the book is about to be reissued in paperback. These days, virtually nobody is calling Richard Holbrooke foolish.

Kevin Chadwick

Richard Holbrooke

Which is odd, since as the Clinton administration's longtime Milosevic expert, Holbrooke, the former special envoy for Bosnia and Kosovo, could be held as responsible as anybody for NATO's profound misreading of the Serb leader. But he hasn't been, at least not in the press. Instead, the blame has fallen squarely on the hapless secretary of state, Madeleine Albright. Less than two weeks after the NATO air campaign began, the *Washington Post* ran a front page story explaining that military leaders at the Pentagon had known from the beginning that Albright's strategy in Kosovo was flawed, even ludicrous. Unnamed four-star officers were quoted as saying they had never believed that bombing alone would force Milosevic to comply with American demands, but had agreed to carry out Albright's plan anyway because, as one put it, "we have civilian control over the military."

Two days later, the *Post* printed another, even more pointed attack on the secretary of state, headlined, "Albright Misjudged Milosevic On Kosovo." Again, unnamed Pentagon officials put distance between themselves and what the *Post* referred to as "Albright's war." This time, even the head of the CIA, George Tenet, went out of his way to disassociate himself from Albright, letting it be known that he had long expected Milosevic to step up the slaughter of Albanians if NATO bombed Kosovo.

None of this went over well at the State Department. Albright is famously thin-skinned—she once told a biographer that if 99 percent of the press coverage she receives is positive, her goal is to "eliminate the one percent"—and, by all accounts, she was distraught over the *Washington Post* stories. Albright's staff tried to figure out the identities of the anonymous sniping generals (Marine Corps commandant Charles Krulak is a major suspect), while friends and advisers tried to calm her, apparently without success. "Madeleine's upset about *everything*," says someone who knows her well. "She should have just brushed it off. She's secretary of state. We're in the middle of one of the most controversial policy processes ever, and all of us have to be prepared to take a share of the hit, fairly or unfairly. That's what life is like."

So far, that's not what life has been like for Richard Holbrooke. Holbrooke knows Milosevic better than perhaps anyone involved in the administration's Balkans policy. At Dayton, the two spent countless hours walking the grounds of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base; after dinner, they chatted over drinks at nearby Packy's All-Sports Bar. In *To End a War*, Holbrooke describes "midnight steak and shrimp dinners" the two shared and sing-alongs they attended at the Officers' Club. (At one point, Milosevic, an American pop culture buff, joins in a rendition of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy.") Holbrooke and Milosevic never became friends. On the other hand, it's clear Holbrooke never considered him an irrational madman. Yet, so far the *Washington Post* has run no reassessments of Holbrooke's diplomacy.

To his credit, Holbrooke seems to be reassessing his own understanding of Milosevic. One of the more heated debates now taking place at the White House is

over how to deal with Milosevic when the current bombing campaign ends. If, for instance, Milosevic were to send a message to the Contact Group indicating his willingness to cut a deal of some sort, should the United States negotiate with him? Clinton, ever flexible, has not yet decided. For his part, Holbrooke, though technically no longer a part of the administration, has taken a much harder line in White House meetings, arguing that Milosevic is a criminal and that further negotiations of any kind would serve only to legitimize his rule.

Holbrooke is also in the process of rewriting his prior perceptions of Milosevic. Literally. If his book's characterization of Milosevic seems at times close to affectionate, Holbrooke has said, it is only because he knew when he wrote it that he might have to negotiate with Milosevic again. Eager to correct what in retrospect looks like credulity, Holbrooke reportedly is writing an epilogue for the paperback edition of *To End a War* that will depict Milosevic as a monster.

Holbrooke's explanation for his apparent change of heart over Milosevic is convincing, but it may not be enough to help him in Congress. Holbrooke's nomination to be ambassador to the United Nations has been stalled on the Hill for months. Officially, Holbrooke is the victim of a dispute between the White House and the Foreign Relations Committee over a U.N. arrears bill sponsored by senators Jesse Helms and Joe Biden. Privately, some staffers admit that many Senate Republicans simply don't like or trust him.

They're not alone. Holbrooke has a remarkable number of enemies in Washington. Even friends concede he can be an abrasive self-promoter. Press accounts, while invariably noting his intelligence and diplomatic skills, are almost uniformly critical of his personality. (In one now-famous *Vanity Fair* profile, Holbrooke's second wife, Blythe Babyak, described him as "the ultimate Washington nightmare husband," a person whose "idea of heaven was watching himself being interviewed on TV.")

Holbrooke knows he has a bad reputation, and has worked to make friends on the Hill. Last month, he traveled to Belgrade for a last-ditch talk with Milosevic. After seven hours of futile negotiations, Holbrooke went to the roof of his hotel to do an interview with CNN. Before saying almost anything else, Holbrooke let viewers know he was "very grateful" to Sen. Helms, who "said this trip was all right." Back in Washington, members of Helms's staff watched Holbrooke on television and laughed. "He's a terrible kiss-ass when he wants something," says a Helms aide.

Holbrooke might want to start sucking up to Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma. Shortly after Clinton nominated Holbrooke to the U.N. post, Inhofe called Helms and informed him that "under no circumstances" should he let Holbrooke's nomination out of the Foreign Relations Committee. The war in Kosovo has only hardened Inhofe's position. "We're going to oppose the nomination," says Gary Hoitsma, Inhofe's press secretary. "If they're going to push him, we're going to have a huge debate. We just don't think it is appropriate for the man who was the architect of the Balkan debacle to be representing the United States at the U.N."

Architect of the Balkan debacle? Holbrooke hasn't been in an official policy-making position for years. In title at least, he is merely an investment banker in New York. Sen. Inhofe doesn't buy it. Look at the incompetents running the war, says Gary Hoitsma. Holbrooke, he says, is the only one capable of screwing things up this badly: "He's the only one with intellect enough to be the intellectual author of the mess we're in."

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BILL CLINTON'S WAR?

by Tod Lindberg

CONSERVATIVE OPINION OVER THE KOSOVO campaign seems about equally divided between those who consider it a debacle turning into a morass and those who consider it a fiasco turning into a quagmire. These views prevail across the spectrum of where-we-go-from-here opinion—that is, among the bug-out crowd, the march-to-Belgrade crowd, and everyone in between.

There are two reasons for this. One is, quite simply, that the war (not that anyone at NATO headquarters or in the Clinton administration likes that term) began badly, continues haltingly, and doesn't look to be ending any time soon, at least not short of retreat and humiliation. The other reason can be summarized as follows: Bill Clinton.

Where to begin? Well, probably with the draft-dodging during the Vietnam war, then the decades of lies on that subject, continuing through gays-in-the-military and Mogadishu, not omitting Haiti and phony photo-ops at Normandy, on to Monica's services during phone conversations with congressmen

about sending troops to Bosnia, proceeding to dog-wagging in Sudan and Afghanistan, all while North Korea festers, Saddam sneers, China spies, readiness deteriorates, and generals get cashiered for conduct far less indiscreet than their commander in chief's—culminating at last in an ill-conceived Balkan war during which the world's foremost authority on talking your way out of a jam has been unfailingly incoherent. Bill Clinton is, in this view, the White House occupant least qualified to be commander in chief in the history of the Republic.

In short, the war, such as it is, has been personalized around Clinton: The war's failure is his failure, and his particular failings as a leader practically foreordain a bad outcome along precisely the lines we are seeing. Only Bill Clinton could be arrogant and historically ignorant enough to sit in the White House picking the targets for U.S. bombs, à la LBJ. Only Bill Clinton could make the decision on the relationship of ground troops to U.S. war aims on the basis of polling. Only Bill Clinton could start bombing without an inkling of what to do should bombing fail to achieve the objective—except continue bombing.

In response, some throw up their hands, saying that the commitment of U.S. prestige to this venture is worth sacrificing because under this president, failure is inevitable. For those conservatives who believe, with Sen. John McCain, that once you're in it, you have to win it, the concern is still rather Clinton-centric: The project has been to create a political consensus that will drive the president's actions—to lead from the rear by pushing. Hopes for success are not high.

But in the same spirit of preparing for all contingencies so conspicuously absent from the administration's thinking, it wouldn't hurt to consider another possibility, however remote: What if we win?

There are various possible definitions of victory, of course. Do we need to eliminate the Milosevic regime and put the Serbian leader on trial for war crimes in the Hague in order to consider the outcome satisfactory? Or would we settle for a conditional capitulation by Belgrade that would include Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo and a peacekeeping force there, paving the way for refugee resettlement? And surely it is the case that the administration will be presented with opportunities to declare victory and cease hostilities, regardless of whether the declaration means anything. But suppose at the end of the battle, even the administration's severest critics find they must concede that the rout they anticipated did not take place.

The exercise in contemplating the possibility of victory is useful for this reason alone: It reveals ways in which the emphasis on the persona of Bill Clinton is misplaced.

Were this merely Bill Clinton's war, we would be contemplating, mutatis mutandis, Bill Clinton's victory. Our hero, in this scenario—perhaps initially ill-advised by his feckless underlings—would have stayed the course through early adversity while mustering the resources to win. In the end, there would stride Bill Clinton, liberator of Kosovo, conqueror of Belgrade, protector of the Albanians, keeper of the Balkan peace, and, by the grace of God, builder of the bridge to the 21st Century Pax Americana. Imagine the size of the statue on Bill Clinton Boulevard in Pristina; perhaps at home we could rename Baltimore/Washington International Airport after him.

There is something wrong with this picture, is there not? True, in the event things turn out well, Clinton will deserve more credit than conservatives will be willing to give him. But there will be many other places to look for the origins of the victory. Start with NATO, where a capable general, Wesley Clark, whose record of commitment to a decent outcome in the Balkans is second to none, has so far been hobbled by hesitant political leadership. But credit will be due the collective NATO political leadership as well, for hanging together through a difficult time and demonstrating the alliance's commitment to civilized conduct in Europe. Foremost, of course, will be the credit due the sheer fact of U.S. power: Without the United States, the nations of Europe would have been unable to stop the horror on their doorstep.

Bill Clinton plays a role in all of this, of course. And he has made plenty of mistakes that are clearly his own. But come what may, it's important to frame the issue correctly. The proposition being tested in Kosovo comes down to this: Is U.S. power and prestige in the world today so overwhelming, that even Bill Clinton can wield it relatively effectively?

Tod Lindberg is editor of **Policy Review.**

Go in on the Ground

by William R. Hawkins

U.S. and NATO aircraft are now engaged in operations few anticipated when the strikes against Serbia began. Transports are moving Kosovar refugees to "temporary" homes outside the Balkans and bringing in relief supplies for hundreds of thousands in camps in Albania and Macedonia. Warplanes are hitting economic targets—the Yugo auto factory in Kragujevac, a heavy-machinery plant in Krusevac—in an intensified effort to pressure Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw from Kosovo. Though heavy industry is a "strategic" target, the impact on Serbia's military capabilities is long-term at best.

Bridges and fuel storage areas have been hit. These are part of a plan to hinder the movement of enemy troops and supplies. History shows, however, that such efforts are unlikely to lead to an enemy collapse in the absence of a ground offensive that takes the initiative away from enemy planners. Troops free to dig-in at positions of their own choosing move less and use fewer supplies than troops engaged in combat. They have the luxury of time, to move by circuitous routes, to fortify concealed positions, and to amass supplies.

Strikes against Serb army and police units in the field have been hampered by the dispersal of enemy units in small pockets, using villages, forests, and hills as cover. This deployment would spell disaster in the face of a NATO ground attack. Small, scattered units would be quickly overrun. Serbian leaders have the advantage of knowing they do not have to plan for this danger. President Bill Clinton has said repeatedly that the use of ground troops is "off the table." More important, the Serbs know that no American or NATO army is moving towards the Balkans.

Unless that happens soon, the president will have foreclosed the use of ground troops. NATO last fall estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 troops would be required to drive Serbian forces from Kosovo with minimum casualties. Even with the access Albania has granted to its airspace, ports, and "military infrastructure," it would take months to assemble an offensive ground army, and one month has already slipped away.

With ground forces in position, by contrast, the threat of an invasion of Kosovo and of the destruction of Serbian authority in the province would powerfully spur diplomacy—far more so than the bombing campaign, which is likely to provoke increasingly hostile international (and perhaps domestic) reaction as it bogs down in a war of attrition. The administration should remember Haiti: Strongman Raoul Cedras refused to vacate his office until Colin Powell personally informed him that the 82nd Airborne Division was on its way. Likewise, in the Gulf War, Iraqi forces stood their ground in Kuwait despite a far heavier

bombardment than is taking place in Kosovo. Only when Saddam Hussein saw that the U.S.-led coalition was about to launch its ground war did he begin to negotiate seriously and pull back forces from Kuwait.

Instead of learning from these successes, the Clinton administration is locked into a pattern of failure, repeating in Kosovo mistakes it has made in Iraq. In 1996, power projection via bombs and missiles failed to persuade Saddam to respect the Kurds' "safe haven" in the north. More recently, they failed to secure the readmission of U.N. weapons inspectors to Iraq. Sporadic airstrikes to "punish and degrade" Iraq's military capabilities have been fruitless.

Clinton was encouraged to intervene in Kosovo by the "success" of his policy in Bosnia. But while it is true that U.S.-led airstrikes preceded the negotiations in Dayton that produced a settlement for Bosnia, they were not decisive. Rather, it was the Croatian ground offensive to retake Krajina that turned the tide. Richard Holbrooke, Clinton's negotiator at Dayton, affirms this in his memoir *To End A War*: "The success of the Croatian . . . offensive was a classic illustration of the fact that the shape of the diplomatic landscape will usually reflect the balance of forces on the ground. . . . We could not expect the Serbs to be conciliatory at the negotiating table as long as they had experienced nothing but success on the battlefield."

The success the Serbs have experienced in driving 500,000-plus Kosovars into exile and decimating the Kosovars' civil leadership and guerrilla movement cannot be reversed from 20,000 feet. Bridges and buildings can be rebuilt, but Belgrade knows that if NATO troops ever take control of Kosovo, the province will be lost. That is why the Serbs refused to sign the deal at Rambouillet in February. Clinton has pledged ground troops to *keep* the peace, but he cannot stomach the thought that they are needed to *win* the peace.

Much is at stake in the administration's choice of strategies for Kosovo. Future force levels and weapons configurations will be determined in the light of lessons now being learned. Clinton has embraced the "revolution in military affairs" that is the Pentagon fad of the 1990s. This doctrine bases power projection on precision strikes from manned and unmanned aircraft based on land and sea, with infantry limited to "infestation" teams calling in long-range precision strikes from behind enemy lines. This is the approach being used against Serbia—though with British commandos filling the role of the infestation teams because Clinton (and, reportedly, an even more adamant Gore) refuses to involve U.S. troops on the ground.

If this approach to warfare prevails, it will further shift defense spending away from ground troops and their support. Already U.S. Army active-duty combat divisions have been reduced from 18 in 1991 to 10. The last time the U.S. Army had only 10 active divisions was in 1950. In the crucial count of infantry, the United States has fewer battalions than in 1938, and ammunition stocks for the Army and Marine Corps are some $1.7 billion under war requirements.

In Kosovo, an air campaign has failed to prevent the worst from occurring. When the day of reckoning

comes, it will be not just the reputation of the Clinton administration that is at stake, but the credibility of the United States and NATO. Escalation to a ground war in Serbia will raise the cost of intervention. But wars should never be entered under the illusion they will be cheap. Technology may well have made it too easy to launch, with a volley of missiles, a campaign that still must be finished with bayonets.

Escalation on the ground will bring the best chance of winning. Potential adversaries around the world are watching to see whether the United States is content to play at push-button warfare or is willing to pay the price of victory.

William R. Hawkins, senior research analyst for Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Ca., wrote "Ground Troops Win Wars," in the September 21* WEEKLY STANDARD. *The views expressed here are his own.

FRENCH RESISTANCE

by James W. Ceaser

PERHAPS THE ONLY HAPPY SURPRISE so far in the NATO campaign against Serbia is that our major allies, Britain, Germany, and France, have for once proved as tough as Washington. Indeed, as the bombing campaign entered its fourth week, popular support in Europe was increasing. Far from being pressured by peace movements, the "third way" politicians Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder and the cohabiting French team of Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin are all moving up in the polls.

Like many aspects of the war, the absence of popular opposition to the bombing campaign has clearly caught these governments off guard, and understandably so. Many of today's top officials in NATO countries spent significant parts of their careers opposing military campaigns led by the United States; these are people who know something about peace movements. What they seem not to have anticipated is that, now that they themselves are making policy, they are unavailable to lead an opposition against it. And of course they are fortunate in their adversary: Slobodan Milosevic is a man with whom no one on the left could even begin to identify. As for those on the moderate right, they have either encouraged firm action against the Serbs or, where they have expressed doubts, have done so generally on prudential grounds.

This benign political climate has no doubt encouraged President Clinton to believe that time is on his side. Kosovo may lie in ruins, with much of its population exiled or killed, but the war strategy appears to be safe from the only thing that could derail it: a crack in the alliance. The president has so far done a much better job in routing any likely sources of mass popular opposition than he has in waging an effective war policy against Milosevic.

Still, there are rumblings, primarily in France, of a nascent anti-war movement. A close reading of the press there reveals a curious alliance of thinkers of the right and left, which stretches far enough into the respectable center to provide eventual cover for a much larger group. Any such movement in France—still the country on which many intellectuals focus—is sure to echo across the rest of the continent. What unites these thinkers is not so much an old-style appeal for peace, as a polemic against America and the "Fun-Military-Industrial complex" it represents. The events in Kosovo, they say, cannot be seen in isolation from—indeed they are closely tied to—the great issue of our times: America's hegemony over Europe and its accompanying claim that universal norms might play an active role in the conduct of world affairs.

Opposition to NATO's policy was pronounced first by Jean-François Kahn, a leading intellectual of the far right. As the bombing began, Kahn wrote, "For the first time since 1945, our country finds itself engaged, where no vital interests are at stake, in a destructive conflict that has been sought and determined by the United States." The ground for this policy, Kahn went on, had been systematically prepared by the great media outlets of the West, among which CNN figures prominently. Kahn's arguments were followed up last week in a front-page article in the prestigious left-of-center daily *Le Monde*, where the Parisian philosopher Daniel Bensaïd evoked the Cold War shibboleth of moral equivalence—this time between an American-led NATO and Milosevic: "The barbarism of ethnic cleansing is not a barbarism of 'another age,' opposed by the unified force of the absolute good of 'civilization.' Milosevic and NATO are twin contemporary forms of modern barbarism."

The views of these intellectual outsiders have found echoes among those much closer to governing parties. Max Gallo, a leading intellectual of the left, joined with Charles Pasqua, a former Gaullist minister of the interior, to make the following appeal: "In contrast to a B-52 diplomacy, which had no better results in Vietnam than it is likely to have elsewhere, the cor-

rect path is clear: France must make her European partners understand that there can be no solution to the Balkan problem, nor to problems elsewhere in Europe, except that made by a European Europe." In other words, America out (and Russia in). Observers of France may recall that it was Gallo who took the lead earlier in this decade in trying to stop Euro Disney, which he depicted as a Trojan mouse infiltrating the citadel of European civilization and threatening to "bombard France with uprooted creations that are to culture what fast food is to gastronomy."

But pride of place for invoking hegemonic America to oppose NATO action in Kosovo goes to Washington's old nemesis, Regis Debray. For those who may have forgotten, Debray is the scion of a wealthy French family who made his early career fomenting Third World revolutions with Che Guevara. In a lengthy and "philosophical" article, again in *Le Monde*, Debray contended that the Kosovo crisis demonstrates just how far Europe has become America's colony. Not only militarily but in thought and culture, argues Debray, Europe has adopted the "seal of American foreign policy and made it our own: moral idealism plus technological superiority . . . the idea of right plus the machine." This combination of universalism and technology represents a "flight from political reasoning." All of Europe has been "deprogrammed" to adopt American ways of thinking. A mind has become Americanized when it simplifies everything, when "the notion of time is replaced by that of space, when historical thinking is replaced by technological calculation, and political thinking by moralistic thinking." Above all, the Americanized mind is one that cannot appreciate historical context. It finds its purest expression in a media-saturated world. "With CNN, all the planet becomes America."

Debray sums up America's relation to Serbia as follows: "a stop and go empire, arrogant and without memory, moved by a Manichaean mythology, sees itself invested with supreme power, a power of life and death, over a region that in a sick state of its own suffers like no other from an excess of memory." The Kosovo situation, for all it reveals about the crisis of Europe, represents for Debray an opportunity. A NATO failure would force Europeans to realize the extent to which they have become Americanized—"as uncultured and shortsighted as their leader." Kosovo can become the opportunity to rescue the European mind from Americanism.

As detached as these views may seem from anything happening in the Balkans, they draw on a long tradition of European intellectual thought that has invoked the symbol of America to generate opposition to any notion of universal norms. This tradition extends as far back as the Romantic reaction against rationalism, when the German poet Heinrich Heine described America as "that pig pen of freedom / inhabited by boors living in equality." In the current phase of the struggle, the far Right champions the particularistic forces of nationalism against America while the postmodern Left celebrates the free-floating idea of "differences." In both cases, the defeat of America is understood to be the real battle of our times.

This general line of argument, in less virulent form, has a wide following in European intellectual circles, and it has proven itself quite capable in other circumstances, such as during the Gulf War, of generating sentiment against any kind of military venture led by the United States. If this discourse has so far remained largely on the sidelines during NATO's bombing of Serbia, it is only because its exponents feel that it is too fine a position to be endangered by any association with the likes of Milosevic.

But the few intellectuals who have been wielding this discourse have positioned themselves adeptly. It is not their argument that Milosevic can be excused, but that the American mind is utterly too coarse to solve the problem. NATO's policy—America's policy—is one without subtlety and comprehension: It is clueless. These intellectuals are trying to attach their longstanding argument against "Americanism" to the possibility of a failure of the Kosovo war strategy. If people wake up at some point to see that this policy has produced no worthwhile result on the ground—if Clinton's Kosovo policy becomes the international equivalent of his ill-fated siege in Waco—then these thinkers hope to extract a victory for their larger argument against universal norms. Their position also offers the political bonus of a foreign scapegoat. If the policy fails, Americans will have only themselves to blame; Europeans can shift the onus onto America.

Whatever his initial motives may have been in starting the bombing in Serbia, President Clinton has come to engage not just the credibility of the United States and of NATO, but also the standing of a philosophical position about the role that universal norms may play in the conduct of world affairs. At the moment it is far from clear how all this will turn out. No one can have great confidence in an administration that has shown so little judgment; an administration that, even for the sake of a legitimate moral cause, engages in shameful manipulation by upping the ante of moral rectitude to distract attention from mistakes of prudence. It is no wonder, under the circumstances, that European intellectuals would want to hedge their bets.

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Politics and Patriotism

From Teddy Roosevelt to John McCain

By David Brooks

Almost everywhere John McCain goes on the campaign trail, he gets the Hanoi Hilton introduction. A local poobah will be up on the podium, and he'll be saying what an honor it is to welcome Senator McCain to town. Except that when he says the word "honor" it's with an extra ripple in his voice so you know he means it. And then he mentions the day in 1967 when McCain was shot out of the sky by a Vietnamese ground-to-air missile. He may tell of the broken leg and arms McCain suffered during ejection, and the mob of Vietnamese villagers who found him when he hit the ground and savagely beat and bayoneted him. And then the introducer goes into McCain's five and a half years in the POW camp, two of them spent in solitary. The introducer's voice is down an octave, and at three-quarters speed for dramatic effect. He's genuinely inspired by his tale, and the audience is emotional. And meanwhile Senator McCain sits there waiting to get up and speak, listening to the story for the millionth time. He wears an expression appropriate to a man who is modest but moved—his mouth is flat and stoical and his eyes have that 1,000-mile stare.

This 30-year-old wartime episode has become the constant companion of McCain's public life. "To be honest," he says in a private moment, "I get uncomfortable when they keep talking about it. Not because I get flashbacks or nightmares. But I can't tell you how many have performed greater acts. And after all these years it bores me. After all these years you'd rather talk about something else."

But McCain plays his role, knowing that the story, endlessly retold, has its uses. His gripping campaign video plays it to the hilt, complete with North Vietnamese photos of McCain being dragged away by the Vietnamese mob, then lying half-dead in the POW camp. But the story has deeper uses as well. Because McCain isn't just another politician running for president. He is also a traveling icon. He personifies heroism and patriotism. And through him, audiences are able to savor patriotic sentiments, which in this day and age, they don't otherwise have many opportunities to express.

All politicians stand in front of American flags, but McCain more than most believes in stoking patriotic fervor, and in cultivating patriotism as an end in itself. He uses the word "patriot" more than just about any other living politician, even where it is almost out of place. "Patriot" is one of the two words he wants on his tombstone. ("Compassionate" is the other.) And he concludes most of his major speeches with a story of American heroism. Sometimes he tells about a group of Marines who were abandoned on the *Mayaguez*, and who fought on alone until they disappeared into the mists of history. Sometimes he finishes with the story of Roy Benavidez, a Green Beret who dropped in to rescue a twelve-man American patrol that had been surrounded inside Cambodia in 1968. Benavidez managed to drag several of the men to safety despite suffering seven serious gunshot wounds, twenty-eight shrapnel wounds, and bayonet wounds in both of his arms.

"I fell in love with my country while I was in prison," McCain told an audience at a ceremony honoring Ronald Reagan last year. "I had loved her before then, but like most young people, my affection was little more than a simple appreciation for the comforts and privileges we enjoyed and usually took for granted. It wasn't until I lost America for a time that I realized how much I loved her." Now on the campaign trail, the loss of patriotism is one of McCain's constant themes. "The spirit of America is dissipating," he warns. "People are not proud any more of their institutions. They are not eager for public service, or willing to work for a cause greater than themselves."

It's fascinating to watch McCain and the people who introduce him trying to articulate their patriotism, because for most of this century, patriotism has been the most tongue-tied of the sentiments. Patriotism has

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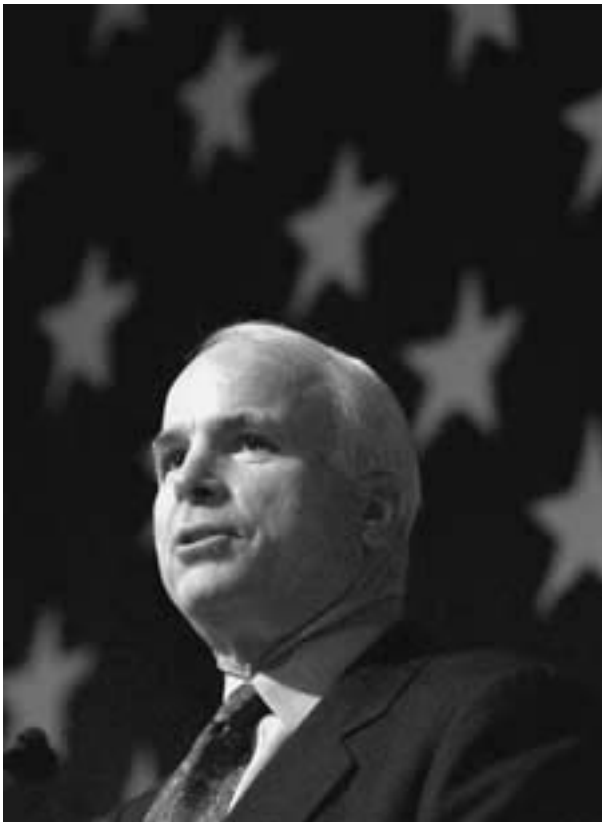

AP/Wide World Photos/Bob Galbraith

John McCain addresses California Republicans on Feb. 26

had what historian Michael Kammen calls a "spasmodic" history, but patriotic eloquence went into long-term decline after World War I. The volunteers in that war marched off to France to great rousing crescendos of patriotic bluster. The horror they discovered in the trenches and on the no-man's-lands made all that high-flown talk seem false, or disgusting. The English poet Robert Graves recalled that after the war he could hardly bear the sound of patriotic rhetoric, and Ernest Hemingway wrote in *A Farewell to Arms* that the stockyards-like slaughter of the war made it embarrassing to hear words like sacred, glorious, and sacrifice.

After the war, the new style was cooler and more taciturn. The new patriot was not silver-tongued and blustery, as Teddy Roosevelt had been; he was understated in the mode of Humphrey Bogart or Gary Cooper. By World War II, the verbose Romantics, like George S. Patton, seemed archaic in a world of Eisenhowers and Marshalls. By and large, the letters soldiers wrote home were not filled with the high idealism that marked the letters of soldiers in the Civil War.

And since then, America has struggled to rediscover a compelling patriotic language, though John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan made attempts. These days, patriotism has been domesticated into a set of innocuous rituals, largely affixed to sporting events. We sing the national anthem before baseball games. We chant "U-S-A" every two years at the Olympics. On Memorial Day, towns across the country hold parades at which Little Leaguers march waving small flags. Patriotic instincts probably run as deep in America as they ever have, it's just that public expressions of patriotism tend to be nebulous.

Moreover, the shapelessness of our patriotism seems symptomatic of a larger loss of definition throughout American culture. And many people, including McCain, seem to look to a new, crunchier patriotism as a way to heal our cultural woes.

America isn't in a state of moral degradation and decay, as some of the Cassandras fear, but neither is it in a state that should make us content. If you drive around the country, looking into the cultural institutions of the middle class, you do not find widespread depravity or picturesque collapse reminiscent of the last days of Rome. Instead you see a nation that is good-hearted and bourgeois, and nobody should castigate the bourgeois virtues since they are responsible for most of the good things around us. But if there is a flaw, it is that American society may now be too bourgeois; it is tranquil to a fault. It is, as many social critics have noticed, characterized by a pervasive nonjudgmentalism. Alan Wolfe calls this small-scale morality; Allan Bloom called it easygoing nihilism. Whatever its name, it is radically anti-contentious. Americans today are suspicious of vehemence, of people who radiate certitude. American culture recoils from those who try to "impose" their opinions or lifestyles. It is unfriendly to those who seem too passionately attached to higher ideals or who otherwise threaten to shake things up.

The public leaders who succeed tend to be soggy synthesizers. Winning politicians today weave together divergent ideas and march under oxymoronic banners: compassionate conservatism, practical idealism. They no longer aggressively push hard-edged creeds, as their counterparts did during the confrontational Reagan-Thatcher era. Instead they hold genteel and pluralistic "national conversations." They empathize. They aim to show they can bring people together, not drive them apart. Even in the heat of the impeachment fight, neither party wanted to appear guilty of "partisanship," redefined as a political sin.

The current mood of squishy tranquillity may be a sign of instinctive conservatism. A little status-quo-loving calm may be an appropriate response to a decade as prosperous as this one. It's not the end of

civilization if Americans withdraw for a few years from politics and crusades and enjoy their sport-utility vehicles, their Jewel CDs, and their organic lawn care products.

On the other hand, nobody is going to identify this decade as a high-water mark of American idealism. As social critics from time immemorial have reminded us, affluence carries its corruptions. When a people turn toward the easy comforts of private life, they inadvertently lose connection with higher, more demanding principles and virtues. "What worries me most," Tocqueville wrote about America, "is the danger that, amid all the constant trivial preoccupations of private life, ambition may lose both its force and its greatness, that human passions may grow gentler and at the same time baser, with the result that the progress of the body social may become daily quieter and less aspiring."

This seems to be what McCain and others are getting at when they speak of the enervation of the American spirit. The fear is that we have become a nation obsessed with risk avoidance and safety. We allow soft sentimentalism to replace demanding moral principles. We shrink our time horizon, becoming disconnected from our common past and less mindful of our future. We detach from public and political life and look on everything that does not immediately touch our own lives with an indifference that is laced with contempt. In short, in seeking to avoid the Scylla of overpoliticized turmoil, we may founder on the Charybdis of underpoliticized complacency.

McCain and others seem to sense that the way to combat some of these trends is to reattach people to the meaning of America, its highest ideals and transcendent glories. In other words, patriotism can serve as an antidote to the temptations of affluence. It can provide a counterpoint to enervation, inspiring people to live up to their principles. It can act as a countervailing force to excessive individualism, reminding people of their common bonds and reengaging Americans in national life. It can help inculcate virtue in the young. And it can protect against embourgeoisement, enlarging an otherwise pragmatic spirit that reduces life to the prosaic and mundane.

It's natural that Americans should look instinctively to patriotism as an alternative to many of these worrying cultural and political trends. We have done so before. A century ago, just as now, many Americans

UPI/Corbis Bettmann

Teddy Roosevelt, on his Western tour

felt that the national spirit was being dissipated by affluence and comfort. Then, just as now, there was a widespread sense that life had become miniaturized and that all the grand causes were gone. For us, it is the end of the Cold War that makes the current challenges seem small and unheroic. For Americans a hundred years ago, it was the closing of the frontier and the fading memory of America's great, just conflict, the Civil War. As America emerged as a wealthy industrial nation toward the end of the 19th century, her citizens were settling into middle-class lives. Commuter suburbs were springing up. And people were beginning to wonder whether they were losing the hardy virtues of their ancestors, the yeoman farmers and the sturdy pioneers. To many, the age seemed overcivilized, extravagant, and too self-regarding.

So they were ready to listen when, at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his famous lecture on the closing of the frontier. Turner argued that it was the pioneer experience that defined Americanism: "The frontier is the line of most rapid and efficient Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe." It was the act of settling a new land, and

moving West to settle new territories, Turner continued, that bred all the distinctive qualities of the American character:

> That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and evil, and withal that buoyancy which comes with freedom—these are the traits of the frontier.

But the 1890 census, Turner noted, informed Americans that the frontier had closed. The land all the way to the Pacific had been settled. So, Turner wondered, what would happen to the American spirit now that there was no more wilderness to conquer. What of "American energy . . . continually demanding a wider field of exercise"?

Others wondered the same thing. And so there arose a myriad of patriotic organizations designed to revive in the young the ideals of sacrifice exemplified in the Civil War and the vigorous spirit of the pioneers.

In the 1890s, the Women's Relief Corps championed the celebration of Memorial Day, launched a campaign to introduce the flying of the flag over every schoolhouse, became a driving force behind the creation and the adoption of the Pledge of Allegiance, lobbied for flag-desecration laws and the national anthem, and distributed curriculum guides such as "Methods for Teaching Patriotism in the Public Schools" and "A Patriotic Primer for the Little Citizen." Meanwhile, the WRC's brother organization, the Grand Army of the Republic, sponsored pilgrimages to historic sights, donated flags to schools and other institutions, raised money for patriotic monuments, promoted patriotic rituals, and supplied schools with nationalistic textbooks. In 1900, the GAR helped New York State develop a 350-page *Manual For Patriotism* to be used in the public schools. In her recent history of this movement, *To Die For*, historian Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary describes a typical primer published in 1903. It taught the alphabet through the military conquests of the Spanish-American war, so B stood for Battles, F for flag, P for Philippines, R for Roosevelt, and Z for the zeal "that has carried us through / When fighting for justice / With Red, White and Blue."

On Columbus Day in 1892, 100,000 American schools performed a ritual: A flag was brought to the front of each school, escorted by a color guard, and raised up the pole. Led by Civil War veterans, the assembled students shouted, "Three Cheers for Old Glory." Then they recited the Pledge of Allegiance, which had been written the previous year by Francis Bellamy, raising their arms, palms up. They sang "America." And then they listened to an oration, written by a committee headed by Bellamy and issued to schools across the country, which detailed the national narrative behind the rituals: the settling of the frontier, the growth of democracy, and the emergence of America as a great and wealthy power.

One of the people who worked most diligently to carry the pioneer ethos into the post-frontier age was Teddy Roosevelt. By the time Turner delivered his closing of the frontier lecture in 1893, Roosevelt had already published the first volumes of his history, *The Winning of the West*. He'd already tried his hand at ranching. He'd already talked over the ideas that led his friend Owen Wister a few years later to write the fabulously successful novel *The Virginian*, which largely created the western hero. And TR's political career can be described as the pioneer spirit applied to public office. As a police commissioner, reformist governor, and president, he battled corruption in the manner of a frontier lawman. In the spirit of continent-crossing, he pushed for the Panama Canal. With his friend the conservationist Gifford Pinchot, he helped westerners develop the resources of their land, while also preserving the first national parks where Americans could go to be revived by wildness. And most important, his foreign policy was the pioneer spirit made manifest. One of the benefits of his foreign policy, he believed, was to confront 20th-century Americans with the sorts of challenges the wilderness had provided to earlier generations.

One hundred years ago this month, on April 10, 1899, Teddy Roosevelt went to the Hamilton Club in Chicago and delivered a speech called "The Strenuous Life." His point was that just as a great individual must undertake ambitious tasks, so must a great nation. "A mere life of ease is not in the end a very satisfactory life, and above all, it is a life which ultimately unfits those who follow it for serious work in the world," he declared.

Roosevelt urged an increase in military spending and called upon the United States to take a greater role in the Philippines. But his real concern was the moral health of the nation. Roosevelt accepted that America was to be an affluent, commercial nation, but he was horrified by the prospect that it would be only that. Throughout the speech there are jabs at those who think of nothing but making money. "We cannot sit huddled within our own border and avow ourselves merely an assemblage of well-to-do hucksters who care nothing for what happens beyond," he said. And Roosevelt held out China as an example of a nation that

had fallen into decline because it had succumbed to the temptations of easy comfort. "We cannot, if we would, play the part of China, and be content to rot by inches in ignoble ease within our borders, taking no interest in what goes on beyond them, sunk in a scrambling commercialism, heedless of the higher life, the life of aspiration, of toil and risk."

In short, TR saw foreign policy activism and patriotism as remedies for cultural threats he perceived at home. He wanted an America that would be perpetually striving and industrious. And he and the millions of other Americans who worked for this cause created the three things you need for a patriotic revival. They created a national narrative, recounting the emergence of a people: the story of westward expansion. They created a public philosophy, a creed that explained Americans to themselves and organized their thinking about the future: the public philosophy of what might be called muscular progressivism. And they created a patriotic sentiment, an emotional style and a set of rituals that people could use to express and pass down their love of country: all the flag waving and pledging and speechifying.

And it seemed to work. At the beginning of the century, America practically burst with energy and nearly exploded with self-confidence. Corporate empires were built, industries established. Cities leapt skyward. The public buildings completed during that era bowl you over with their strutting exuberance. America emerged as a world power.

But World War I wasn't all that put an end to that patriotic ethos and the public philosophy that undergirded it. They had another more serious flaw, which has made them impossible to revive: They were racialist. They were self-consciously racialist (which gives them a candor startling today), based on pseudo-Darwinian ideas about the superior races' obligation to uplift the lesser ones. In *The Winning of the West*, Roosevelt traces the "perfectly continuous history" of the Anglo-Saxon race from King Alfred through George Washington and up to the cowboys. Then he goes on to explain why the superior races must conquer the inferior:

> The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drove the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him. American and Indian, Boer and Zulu, Cossack and Tartar, New Zealander and Maori—in each case the victor, horrible though many of his deeds are, has laid deep the foundations for the future greatness of a mighty people. . . . It is of incalculable importance that America, Australia, and Siberia should pass out of the hands of their red, black, and yellow aboriginal owners, and become the heritage of the dominant world races.

We no longer divide races into superior and savage. We no longer teach the westward expansion as one long triumph for progress and civilization. And yet the pioneer ethos, and Teddy Roosevelt's attitudes toward foreign lands, were built on these theories. If we are going to encourage a new 21st-century patriotism and preserve the vigorous virtues that the pioneer ideologists rightly celebrated, we can't just re-brew the elixir that worked in the past. We will need another national narrative, and another public philosophy to guide us.

Already one attempt to replace the pioneer ethos has emerged, but it has failed. In 1993, Nathan Glazer published an essay in the *Public Interest* entitled "American Epic: Then and Now." He argued that the tale of westward expansion dominated the American mind up until at least the 1930s. But now, he continued, the dominant creed is multiculturalism. The pioneer epic, Glazer wrote, was about free land, free institutions, and free men—Columbus, Daniel Boone, Lewis and Clark. The multicultural epic "celebrates quite different voyages: the middle passage, the Trail of Tears, the immigrant ship, the underground railway, the tenement trail from slum to suburb."

Anybody who has children in school knows how thoroughly the multicultural narrative has replaced the pioneer narrative. Nowadays, Harriet Tubman is better known among school kids than almost any Founding Father. Anybody who follows politics is aware of how thoroughly the multicultural public philosophy has triumphed. Now when candidates say they want a staff that represents America, they don't mean a staff that represents distinctly American values. They mean a staff that "looks like America," with requisite tokens from each of the multicultural groups, all bringing their own distinct vantage points to the table. A group that "looks like America" is diverse, not unified.

Multiculturalism holds that America is special because it is a nation of nations. It's a microcosm of the world. Championing diversity and celebrating difference are held up as our vocation. But multiculturalism, it is now clear, fails as an effective public philosophy. Whatever you may think of its merits as a creed, it indisputably has failed to achieve what a public philosophy is supposed to achieve. It doesn't lift most people out of themselves and involve them in public life.

To be sure, many people deeply identify with heroic tales of oppressed minorities. Their lives are given meaning by these struggles. And the vast majority of Americans would never dream of being *anti*-multicultural. They watch with a sense of vague approval as their children compose their Sacagawea book reports. They go to Disney movies like *Pocahontas* and *The*

Hunchback of Notre Dame and sing along with the multicultural pieties. But all this stuff doesn't move them very much either. Multiculturalism doesn't remind most people of our common bonds or renew pride in country. It's simply unrealistic to expect a nation to embrace an ethos that prominently features guilt and self-flagellation. So it's no surprise that faith in public institutions has plummeted as the multicultural ethos has achieved hegemonic control over the schools and public discussion. If multiculturalism is the only public narrative on offer, then most people will cease to identify with public narratives and withdraw from public life.

The public philosophy based on the pioneer experience is obsolete. And the multicultural ethos is too parochial and divisive. What sort of public philosophy might reenergize American public life and guide us through the next decades?

There is no shortage of people stepping forward to suggest one. Gary Bauer, among others, is attempting to articulate a public philosophy that melds patriotic sentiment with biblical morality. Pat Buchanan is trying to create an American version of blood-and-soil populism. Michael Lind has a nationalist public philosophy that links Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln, FDR, and Lyndon Johnson—a sort of Great Society nationalism for the 21st century. Michael Joyce and William Schambra of the Bradley Foundation are working on a public philosophy based on local communities and civil society.

But it's interesting to turn back to John McCain, because he is a centrist figure in American politics and because, of the leaders who seem to have thought most about patriotism and the national identity, he is a relatively centrist figure in American politics, in tune with mainstream culture.

Like most people in America, McCain has learned the etiquette of the multicultural creed, and he is sympathetic to many of its goals. He loudly calls upon the Republican party to be the party of inclusiveness and boasts of his sensitivity to Hispanic concerns. He supports some bilingual education programs and urges his party to move beyond affirmative action debates. But, also like most people, McCain is clearly dissatisfied with the multicultural vision. America is a diverse country, but it cannot be just that. It is united by something more than its diversity, and when McCain talks about his patriotism, he is groping to articulate what that is.

Right now his sentiments are vague. He talks about the military. "I have never had a prouder moment in my life than after Desert Storm," he says. And he tells stories of military heroism, like the one about Roy Benavidez in Cambodia. But personal courage is not the same as patriotism, because it doesn't indicate what cause the hero serves. So McCain gropes, struggling to articulate a solid goal in the midst of slippery swamps.

"I believe we are an unfinished nation," McCain often tells his audiences, as if he were trying to recapture the spirit of the pioneer with frontiers left to con-

quer. He swells with pride as he describes the accomplishments of the high-tech industries, sensing that there is something quintessentially American in the energy, risk-taking, and mobility of the Silicon Valley work force. He also talks about America's role as the sole superpower, sensing that America's creed must somehow explain and celebrate its dominant position in the world. But if you compare McCain's approach to politics with, say, TR's conscious effort to preserve the pioneer spirit, it remains indistinct. TR had westward expansion, but McCain has no central narrative to organize his thinking, and no public philosophy to explain America's purpose.

McCain, of course, is a politician, not a public philosopher (TR fancied himself both). McCain's job is to promote policies. And in this he is more specific. In fact, if you look at his policies, you can begin to imagine a national narrative and a public philosophy that might be erected around them.

All politicians have to translate the virtues they possess into an agenda that requires those virtues. The main task of a politician who relies more than most on nationalist sentiments is to explain why the nationalist virtues—courage, steadfastness, honor, pride—are necessary to solve domestic problems. And as a result, politicians who make patriotism a hallmark of their careers tend to fasten on the word "reform." They hold up some vision of an American ideal which they argue has been betrayed by corrupt and parasitic interests. They then insist that it will take a courageous warrior to beat back those interests and ram through reform. Like others before him, McCain adopts this approach. "I want to reform. I've been a reformer all my life," he says, before rattling off his reform credentials in campaign finance, defense spending, and the tax code.

But these days McCain is most famous for his foreign policy views, especially his response to the war over Kosovo. Aside from his apparently millions of appearances on the talk shows, McCain has delivered two major foreign policy addresses of late—one in Kansas just before the Kosovo adventure got started, and one at a think tank in Washington on April 13.

Taken together, they have a clear message: America's moral destiny is wrapped up in its status as a superpower. If America ceases to assert itself as the democratic superpower, promoting self-government around the world, it will cease to be the America we love. McCain is unabashed about the great legacy our parents' and grandparents' generations left us. "The United States is the indispensable nation because we have proven to be the greatest force for good in human history," he declared in Kansas. "We enter the new century a peerless mature power. . . . Given that our experiences this century will inform our leadership in the next century, we should prove to be an even abler champion for mankind."

You'd think all Americans would want their country to remain the world's sole superpower. After all, the game theorists teach us that nations always seek to maximize their power. But in fact, if you look around the op-ed pages, you discover that many are ambivalent. Many liberals believe that multilateral power is more ethical than American power. Many on the right believe that a superpower America means a Leviathan state that will trample on communities. Realists don't like mixing morality and foreign policy, whereas isolationists see foreign policy as a one-way ratchet that can corrupt a nation's values but never improves them. Then there are the people on the right and left who don't believe American culture or the American leadership class is strong enough to sustain an ambitious foreign policy. And finally, there are those who believe that the global marketplace and the Internet make talk of America's global destiny obsolete.

None of these people is any less patriotic than John McCain. They just have different versions of what America means and draw different policy implications. When McCain holds up America's superpower status as a key to America's identity in the next century, he is starting to fashion a distinct and controversial public philosophy. At the level of policy, McCain is more assertive in places like Kosovo than those who are ambivalent about America's supremacy. He is willing to commit more resources than they are to preserving America's superpower credibility. And he is willing to use American power more aggressively in defense of American values. For example, McCain said in his speech last week, "I think the United States should inaugurate a 21st-century policy interpretation of the Reagan Doctrine. Call it rogue-state rollback, in which we politically and materially support indigenous forces within and outside of rogue states to overthrow regimes that threaten our interests and values."

This approach to foreign policy hints at a coherent view of America's past and future, which, if developed, could organize America's faith in itself. It starts with the fact that America is no longer a nation crossing the prairies or freeing the slaves. Instead, the narrative that explains America today is the story of the country's rise to pre-eminence in the 20th century. It is the story of Eisenhower and Marshall and MacArthur and Truman and Kennedy and Reagan. After all, America's progress in this century is no less

heroic than its progress in the 18th and 19th centuries. But unlike the tales of the Founders and the pioneers, the 20th-century narrative hasn't yet coalesced in the public imagination to form a new American epic.

Nonetheless, the American heroes of the century now ending do exemplify certain ideas that apply to the next one. They made maintaining America's global supremacy their priority, knowing that if the country were to slip into the ranks of middling powers, it would be a catastrophe, not only for American confidence and values, but also for the world, since no other nation is equally fit for world leadership. Furthermore, these heroes were institution builders. They built the structures that kept the peace and protected freedom through the Cold War, and they helped restore or introduce democratic institutions in places like Japan and Germany, treating defeated enemies with magnanimity and vision.

In particular, America's best 20th-century leaders thought institutionally. And today many of America's institutions need reform. The most effective part of John McCain's stump speech is the "Are you proud?" passage. He runs down a list of institutions and asks: Are you proud of the state of the presidency? Are you proud of the campaign finance system? Are you proud of the tax code? Are you proud of a budget process that rewards special interests? These questions answer themselves and suggest an agenda for domestic reform that is the counterpart to America's role in the world.

But there is something else the heroes of the American Century exemplify: citizenship. They dedicated large parts of their lives to public service, believing it the most honorable of professions. They believed, too, that public service requires certain virtues, like duty, loyalty, honesty, discretion, and self-sacrifice—virtues that can always use reinforcement in Washington and across the land. Citizenship implies a set of habits and obligations that counteracts the decentralizing tendencies of American life, the impulses to autonomy and self-expression. And the duties of citizenship join people across class, race, and region to involve them in the political fate of the nation—in the task of self-government.

This is where, at the beginning of the 21st century as at our Founding over two hundred years ago, politics and patriotism come together: in self-government. They come together in the individual's self-government that makes possible self-sacrifice and virtue; they come together in the civic self-government that underlies healthy social institutions; and they come together in the political self-government that is America's achievement and model for the world. It wasn't until John McCain lost America for a while, he says, that he realized how much he loved her. Perhaps it's only after we've forgotten the meaning of our patriotic pride for a while that we're now ready to realize how central to us is, in the words of James Madison, "that honorable determination which animates every votary of freedom to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government." ♦

David Duke, Louisiana's Long-playing Nightmare

By Matt Labash

New Orleans

Record collections, like medicine cabinets, tell more about a person than they'd ever want us to know. So after trekking to the Mandeville, La., home of David Duke—congressional candidate and former Grand Wizard of the KKK—I ask to see his platters. At first, he refuses. But then, not recognizing the danger of a stranger searching for the vinyl equivalent of hemorrhoid cream, he foolishly relents.

Mandeville is a perfectly landscaped, white-flight suburb that nestles on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain just outside New Orleans—the greatest music city in the world. So I hold out hope that Duke's listening taste is miscegenated with Louis Armstrong or Professor Longhair—but no. "I don't have any objection to black music," Duke says "it's just not really my style." Instead, he displays his nerd rock (Dan Fogelberg, Cat Stevens), his showtunes

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(*The Sound of Music* soundtrack), his German composers (Beethoven, Wagner), and, oh yes, his Hitler speeches. At least I think they're Hitler speeches. When I pull out the album cover, it says "Hitler." As Duke violently shoves it back into the stack, refusing to let me read the rest of the title, he says, "That's just speeches. Don't use that, 'cause you're gonna use that against me. . . . I have a lot of historical stuff."

And how. There's the "White Man's Bible," the Oktoberfest beer steins from his frequent trips to Bavaria, the cluttered library that has a variety of titles from *Dune* to the works of Ezra Pound to the vintage 1940s Hitler scrapbook with ornately serifed German text. ("It's a historical book, it's a collector's item," he explains.) But back to the record collection. What does it reveal? That Duke is one of the few Dan Fogelberg fans who is also a Nazi. Should this surprise us? Probably not. Though Duke has made token efforts to renounce his past, it's long been known that he sold white supremacist literature out of his office when he was in the state legislature, that he'd rant at the bumbling Nazis in *Hogan's Heroes*, that he once favored the Führer's combover as opposed to the sideburns-free, Baptist-choir-director coif he currently sports.

Here in Louisiana, Duke long ago ceased to shock. Sure, now that he's running for Bob Livingston's House seat in a May 1 special election (Livingston having retired after Larry Flynt threatened to expose his past indiscretions), and even though he's polling in single digits, reporters are streaming in to play kick the cripple. *Meet the Press*'s Tim Russert hosted him in the middle of the Kosovo crisis in order to savage Duke over his new book, *My Struggle*—scratch that, *My Awakening*. It's a 717-page dump on African-American anthropology (blacks seem "lethargic" when working in cold weather) and on "The Jewish Question." After his *Meet the Press* appearance, Duke got 50,000 hits on his Web site, where he sells everything from books to beer-can huggies.

The non-Duke supporting locals, however, regard him not as an appalling curiosity, but as a disease. Not just any disease, mind you, but herpes simplex: Duke lies dormant for several years in between elections, which he usually loses. He subsists by selling his mailing lists and literature. Then, at the most inopportune moments, he flares up, embarrassing the state.

While everybody insists Duke's on the fringe, he enjoys an uneasy peace. Some state Republicans, like Governor Mike Foster, who has refused to denounce Duke, are afraid to give him publicity or rile his supporters. State Democrats, who are largely conservative, also refrain from publicly disparaging Duke. Not only do they hope to sop up his sizable working-class-Democrat support, but the national party can't help but root for Duke to ascend to prominence, since he's useful for fund-raising, and for poking Republicans in the eye (ironically, Duke was a Democrat until 1989, and if he were to win, he'd join Democratic senator Robert Byrd as the only former Klansmen currently serving in Congress).

Tag along to any political event with Duke, and you'll see he gets a gentle ride. At a Chamber of Commerce candidates' luncheon in Metairie, Duke and I are talking about his favorite subject (the Jews), when we are interrupted by Jack Capella, the former DA of Jefferson Parish and a one-time prospective candidate for Livingston's seat.

"Good luck, brutha!" Capella says, as he pumps Duke's hand.

"Decided not to get involved in this one, huh?" Duke asks.

"With you involved in it," Capella says, "who's gonna beat you?"

As Capella walks away, a very pleased Duke nods conspiratorially in his direction, "You should talk to him." So I do. Out of Duke earshot, I ask Capella if he thinks Duke could actually win. "He's always been on the fringe, and we ignore him," says Capella, cracking an indulgent smile. "We talk to him—'Go David!' But it's kind of like your crazy uncle. He's your family, you know he's there, you say hello, and then you leave."

Accurately handicapping an election in Louisiana is as perilous an endeavor as playing the ponies. On occasion, you'll hit, but as Damon Runyon cautioned, "All horseplayers die broke." The difficulties are largely the fault of Edwin Edwards, the perenially indicted former governor, who once joked that he had a lot in common with Duke, being himself a "wizard under the sheets." When not bedding women half his age or shooting dice in Vegas, Edwards decided to vanquish his opponents by overhauling election law. In an effort to rid the Democratic party of Republican pretenders who registered to run Democrat since they couldn't win as Republicans, Edwards instituted open primaries. If a candidate doesn't win at least 50 percent of the vote, there is a runoff between the top two candidates, regardless of party.

Republicans, of course, have grown in number, and today the state often sees rowdy, crowded fields where moderates cannibalize each other's support, and fringe candidates sometimes slip into the runoff. What this means is that any yobbo with an entry fee and a dream can make serious mischief in elections,

and in Louisiana, they often do. Surveying the field at two candidate forums, it becomes clear that Duke may not even be the lead eccentric.

For instance, there's Democrat Darryl Ward, a former muffler salesman who won't crack one percent but who's been arrested several times. He sports a white Panama hat and yells at his Alliance for Good Government interrogators, punctuating his non-sequiturs with "Amen and Amen!" Then there's Patrick Landry, a Republican electrician who vows never to be involved in a Livingston-like scandal, since "I'm a 33-year-old virgin." ("He's got the 33-year-old male-virgin vote sewn up," confides Duke.) Rounding out the bottom tier is S.J. LoCoco, an ornery seersuckered surgeon, whom unfamiliar voters sometimes call "Mr. Rococo."

Kevin Chadwick

David Duke

At the bottom of the top tier is Republican Rob Couhig, owner of the minor-league New Orleans Zephyrs baseball team. Couhig is spending a small fortune to get taken seriously, but may be undermining his efforts with mailers that read, "Rob isn't afraid to step up to the plate. Born with a handicap—he's blind in one eye—Rob Couhig has more vision than anyone you'll ever meet." Next comes Monica Monica—"Monica squared" to her friends—a painfully chipper ophthalmologist who vows not to get on the congressional health plan (who cares?). Then there's Republican David Vitter, a sanctimonious state representative and 64-point-plan type who has brought ethics complaints against Edwards's gambling junkets and who incessantly decries cronyism, a habit that reflects poorly on a man's character in the home of Huey Long and Edwin Edwards (not a single legislative colleague has endorsed Vitter).

Leading the pack is Republican Dave Treen, a former governor who trails only Duke in name recognition but who, at 70, is fighting ring rust—he hasn't held elective office since 1983. While Treen is liked by the electorate and even his opponents, he has one problem, according to Harry "Chinese Cowboy" Lee, the all-powerful 351-pound Democratic sheriff of Jefferson Parish who endorsed Treen (and who is Chinese and a cowboy). Treen's "age is his only downside," says Lee. "That, and the fact that he's a very dull person." Actually, as governor of freewheeling Louisiana, Treen was thought to be so unnecessarily deliberative when making decisions that Edwards famously cracked: Treen "takes an hour-and-a-half to watch *60 Minutes*."

Playing spoiler in this five-parish district that's gone Republican for 21 years is the staunchly conservative Democrat Bill Strain, a state representative from David Duke's home parish of St. Tammany. Thus far, Strain's been a phantom, having aired his first ads just last week and skipped all the candidate forums. But local sages say Strain has a good chance of finishing in the money just by siphoning off the Democrats' 20 percent of the electorate, who'll be confused by so many Republican contenders.

Then there's Duke. Local wisdom has it that Duke is completely washed up, which may be wishful thinking. Since Duke gained national prominence some ten years ago, his non-KKK stump issues have been largely appropriated by others (and Chamber of Commerce diners don't much care to discuss the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*). His anti-welfare, anti-immigration, anti-affirmative action screeds, which he veers into no matter what questions are proffered, have a quaint 1994 sort of feel. But his Kwanzaa-vs.-Christmas, our-schools-are-going-to-hell, preserve-our-heritage rhetoric is straight from this morning's headlines and can still fire up white voters. While there is not as compelling a reason to vote for Duke in a field so conservative that even the grandfatherly Treen has called for the public execution of drug dealers, Duke still appeals to the contingent known local-

ly as the "F.U. vote"—disgruntled about race, disgruntled about having to wear shrimp-boots for a living, disgruntled about you name it.

In fact, so enthused is Duke about Louisiana's First District (where black voters have generally been gerrymandered away) that two hours after Livingston resigned, Duke announced his intent to run. In this district, which contains a sliver of Orleans Parish, the white-flight suburbs of Jefferson Parish and the north shore, as well as rural farms, Duke has a chance to play spoiler. It was out of Jefferson Parish, the most affluent in Louisiana, that he was elected state representative in 1989. In his home parish of St. Tammany, he engineered his election as the executive director of the parish's Republican party. And in the northernmost Washington Parish, a rural area so bedrock in its backwardness that some south-of-the-lake Louisianans prefer to call it Mississippi, Duke signs can be spotted high atop towering pines: signs, by the way, that come not from this congressional race, but from Duke's gubernatorial run in 1991.

Right now, Republicans are drawing solace from what little polling has been done, which shows Duke in sixth place, though within ten points of everybody but Treen. But as Ken Johnson, spokesman for Rep. Billy Tauzin says, "Anybody who rules Duke out just doesn't know Louisiana politics." And while some locals think Tauzin was alarmist or publicity-hungry for making noise about picking a unity candidate to keep Duke out of the May 29 runoff (an inevitability, as no one will pull 50 percent in the May 1 election), Tauzin possesses what other state Republicans might benefit from: an appreciation of history.

It is an established fact that Duke supporters don't like talking about their man to pollsters: Just how many Duke supporters are flying under the radar, is the question. In his 1990 Senate race, Duke was outpolled by incumbent J. Bennett Johnston 60 percent-23 percent, but he ended up losing by only 54 percent-43.5 percent. In his 1991 run for governor, Duke was outpolled by incumbent Buddy Roemer by a full 10 points. He beat Roemer by 5 points, only to get stomped in the runoff by Edwin Edwards who benefited from "Vote for the Crook, It's Important" bumper stickers, as well as from the 70,000 black voters who were registered statewide in two days (not an option, in this lily-white district). While Duke detractors like to illustrate his diminished influence by pointing to his Senate bid in 1996 (he failed to make the runoff, scoring just 12 percent of the vote in a race where Democrat Mary Landrieu beat Republican Woody Jenkins), the circumstances were unique. Afraid that a Republican wouldn't make the runoff against two strong Democratic candidates, state Republicans rallied behind Jenkins as a unity candidate (which is unlikely to happen in this race).

There are several other considerations that indicate Duke may not yet be finished. Nobody knows how many voters the middling moderates are pulling from Treen. Nobody knows if the Democrat Strain, finally rousted from hibernation, might soften Treen's support. Most important, low turnout is expected to benefit Duke. And in an off-year special election that takes place on the same day as JazzFest, anyone who has seen Duke's record collection can safely report that he is the candidate least likely to lose voters to Buckwheat Zydeco.

ANYONE WHO HAS SEEN DUKE'S RECORD COLLECTION CAN SAFELY REPORT THAT HE IS THE LEAST LIKELY TO LOSE VOTERS TO BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO.

On the other hand, maybe Duke is washed up: If so, he says, that's fine: "I still have my ideas." A lot of ideas, in fact—some about blacks (they are less buoyant and have wider nostrils, which help them draw more air during fistfights), and the rest about Jews. Get Duke off the stump, where he almost sounds normal, and into private conversation while rambling across the 24-mile Pontchartrain Causeway in his Cadillac, and you'll be treated to a distended exegesis on the Jews' responsibility for everything from the Russian Revolution to the Gulf War to airport metal detectors. When I ask him if he has any Jewish friends, he looks incredulous. "Of course I have," he says, "my dentist."

At times Duke almost seems pitiable, as he slaloms between crusty catfish plates after lunch at the Chamber of Commerce hall, picking up discarded campaign literature ("Don't want to waste anything," he says). Or sitting in an empty television studio, feeding live to *Hannity & Colmes*, where he gets so beat up that his cosmetic surgery looks to be coming undone (this appearance resulted in several hundred sympathy e-mails, and God knows how many beer-can huggy sales). But he is unperplexed. Driving home from the studio, I ask what ever became of his Grand Wizard outfit. "Oh, it's probably all packed away in the attic somewhere for the grandchildren to marvel at," he shrugs. "If I'm ever broke, I can sell it to Sotheby's." ♦

I Love Zhu, Zhu Love Me: Clinton's China Policy

By Peter D. Feaver

Chinese premier Zhu Rongji's visit to America was not supposed to end this way. Leading up to the summit on April 7-9, administration aides had proudly announced that trade negotiators had agreed to double the air traffic between China and the United States. But in the end, that modest step—along with a couple of one-liners from Zhu about stamping warheads "made in China" to avoid misunderstandings about nuclear espionage—was about all the Clinton administration had to show for its policy of constructive engagement with China.

Premier Zhu left hastily, without the biggest prize: entry for China into the World Trade Organization (WTO). This would have opened Chinese markets to more American goods, but on terms allowing China to minimize competition from American companies.

The WTO deal collapsed because China was unwilling to make enough concessions to satisfy Congress. Administration officials privately estimated that they had secured 95 percent of what they needed to make the deal fly. Some even worried that Zhu had promised more than he could deliver, at a time when unemployment is skyrocketing in China. But the White House realized that after months of news about Chinese espionage in U.S. weapons labs, Beijing's crackdown on democracy activists, and illegal Chinese contributions to the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign, even 95 percent of a loaf was not enough. The whole loaf would be needed to get the protectionist big-labor wing of the Democratic party—not to mention the growing chorus of China hawks in the Republican party—to swallow an agreement with Beijing.

Exhausted trade negotiators blamed the Kosovo crisis for distracting the White House during the crucial endgame, when the president should have thrown his prestige behind the effort. For his part, the president, in a belated effort to mobilize public support for the deal, blamed China-bashers for exploiting the various spy, campaign-finance, and other controversies to usher in a new Cold War. No one at the White House apparently thought to blame China for the espionage, campaign meddling, and domestic repression that have provided grist for the "China-bashing" mill.

In any case, the real reason the WTO deal collapsed lies elsewhere. The WTO deal came to nothing because the administration's China policy as a whole has failed, and failed in such a way that it is almost impossible for the administration to confront the Chinese on any serious matter. Because the administration had been weak on China for the preceding six years, it had to get "tough" on the country's bid to join the WTO.

As for why constructive engagement has failed, begin with the fact that it is logically incoherent. Even the most atavistic cold warriors in Congress and elsewhere could not have killed it had the policy been sound and beneficial to the country. And even the most attentive president could not have saved a policy so flawed. Indeed, until the administration addresses the internal contradictions of constructive engagement, it is dooming U.S.-Chinese relations for the next century and paving the way for a crisis so grave that the next administration will long for the comparative triviality of the Balkans.

The Clinton administration's constructive engagement with China rests on a simple claim: If we treat the Chinese as an enemy, we will certainly turn them into an enemy, but if we treat them as a friend, we may possibly make them a friend. The near-term costs—downplaying China's challenges to our interests and overlooking its irregularities in honoring its commitments—are justified by the potentially high payoff from a friendship.

It sounds good, and sophisticated exponents like Harvard's Joseph Nye are careful to qualify the idea so as to reinforce its plausibility. But when translated into practice by the bumbling Clinton administration, constructive engagement turns out to be rife with contradictions. With the exception of a few Asia watchers in the Defense Department, where the policy originated and its limits are best understood, the Clinton administration has proved extraordinarily inept in imple-

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menting it. Far from acknowledging and compensating for the inherent limitations of their policy, our leaders seem to have been seduced by their own propaganda.

There are at least two fundamental weaknesses in the Clinton administration's China policy as currently practiced. First, constructive engagement grossly overstates U.S. influence on Chinese behavior, perceptions, interests, and domestic politics. This is ironic, for the Clinton administration defends its policy as a less ambitious alternative to the hard-line options of containment and confrontation. But the truth is, constructive engagement is much the most ambitious course.

It assumes, to begin with, that Washington can frame the way the Chinese perceive the United States. Constructive engagement promises that if we avoid demands and embrace concessions, the Chinese will see us as reasonable and friendly rather than as weak and hostile. When we overlook a Chinese challenge to preserve engagement, however, the Chinese can draw one of two inferences: that a weak United States is unwilling or unable to defend its interests, or that a strong United States is accommodating and reasonable. Constructive engagement depends on their drawing the latter inference.

To secure that result, the administration must manage Chinese perceptions with extraordinary adroitness, for even if U.S. behavior is consistent, it remains subject to various interpretations; any given act of accommodation can be construed to mean either that we are irresolute or that we are friendly. The policy thus entails one of the most ambitious perception-management operations ever attempted. Success depends not so much on whether the United States takes the proper actions but on how Chinese leaders perceive U.S. actions and the new strategic environment they engender.

Consider just a few of the perceptions the administration must manage in order to shape the thinking of Chinese decision makers:

(1) The Chinese must interpret U.S. policy as "reasonable accommodation" rather than as "irresolution" or "submission to Chinese demands." Specifically, the Chinese must believe that

• U.S. policy reflects confidence in the future rather than apprehension of growing Chinese power, and

• U.S. concessions are generated by a desire for cooperative relations rather than by Chinese ultimatums.

(2) The Chinese must perceive the United States to be a "secure and stable power" rather than a "declining power." Specifically, they must believe that

• the United States will always be a leading player in Asian-Pacific affairs and will not be markedly less powerful relative to China in a few decades than it is now, and that

• the growth in Chinese power is not inexorable; instead, Chinese missteps, such as a failure to reach accommodation with the United States, could derail the expansion of Chinese military, political, and economic influence.

(3) The Chinese must perceive that if they challenge the United States they will be worse off than if they cooperate. Specifically, they must believe that

• there is a readily identifiable limit to the concessions the United States is willing to grant to China;

• Washington's failure to contest the last Chinese challenge does not lower the likelihood that the United States will contest the next Chinese challenge; and

• the alternative to the current policy is one less favorable to Chinese interests, not more favorable.

The Clinton policy also assumes that if we make the existing world order look benign, China will realize it has a stake in that order—in short, that Washington can change how China conceives of its interests. The trouble is, the existing world order consists of rules more or less tailored to Western, especially American, interests. If China is determined to rewrite the rules to be more congenial to Chinese interests, then constructive engagement collapses and may even be counterproductive (by hastening China's accumulation of the power it needs to reshape the world order).

Constructive engagement, then, amounts to a gamble that China's growing stake in the existing order will trump any interest China has in reshaping the order. If the gamble pays off, it will be unprecedented. Every rising power in history has sought to rewrite the rules in its favor rather than conform its interests to the system as it is.

Furthermore, the ambitions of constructive engagement do not end there. This policy is so bold as to assume that Washington can shape China's domestic order. Constructive engagement promises that U.S. cooperation will undermine the position of the hard-liners and reinforce that of the soft-liners inside China. In reality, the United States has very little influence over the distribution of power within the Chinese government, which derives chiefly from both the success or failure of economic reform and the ability of the government to contain political reform. Every concession by the Clinton administration can be simultaneously seized upon by both the hard-liners ("See, the United States is weak, so let us press our advantage")

and the soft-liners ("See, the United States is reasonable, so let us be reasonable").

The administration has smuggled so many grandiose assumptions into its supposedly modest engagement strategy, it is no wonder the policy has failed to deliver any meaningful payoff.

The second fatal weakness in the Clinton administration's China policy is that it promises a virtuous cycle of cooperation but in fact traps the United States into a vicious cycle of concessions.

Constructive engagement assumes that American concessions will be matched by Chinese concessions, which in turn will facilitate cooperation. As currently practiced, however, the policy enmeshes the administration in a vicious cycle of capitulation. It prompts decision makers to think, in response to every disagreeable Chinese action: If we mollify them on this point, then we leave open the chance that a friendship will emerge; but if we challenge the Chinese on this point, then we accelerate the process whereby enmity develops. When the issue is thus framed, avoiding confrontation always turns out to be preferable. No matter how egregious the Chinese provocation, the United States always has a choice—confront or accommodate—and accommodation prolongs the game, leaving open the chance that the Chinese will moderate their behavior.

Kevin Chadwick

Put it another way: If under constructive engagement the Clinton administration views "starting another Cold War" as an outcome to be avoided at all costs, then it will never deem the time right to get tough with China. To break this cycle, policy makers must voluntarily abandon constructive engagement—or be faced with some extraneous pressure, such as the need to get Congress to go along with China's joining the WTO.

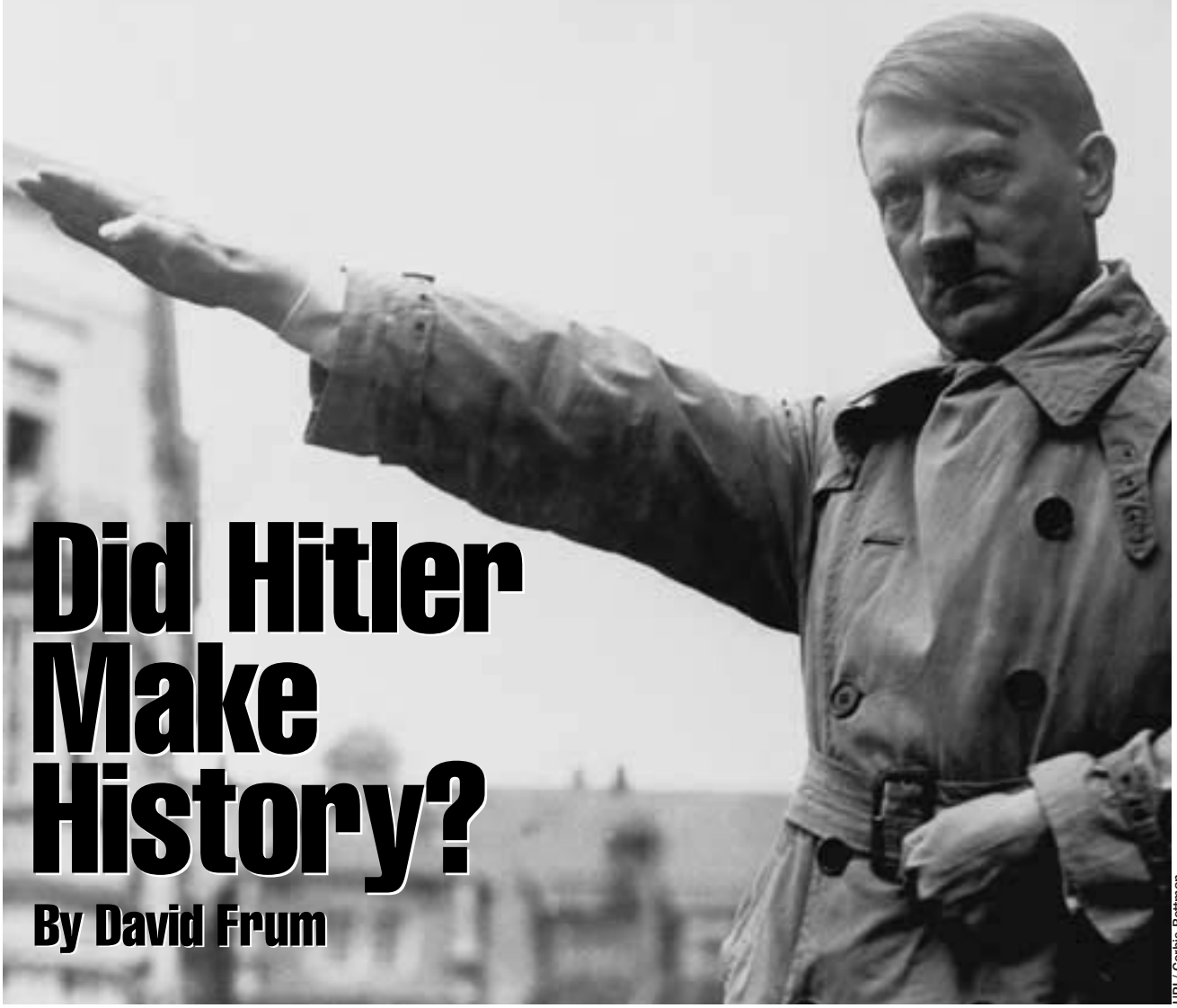
The longer the game is played this way, the greater the pressure to avoid confrontation. By now, the long series of concessions to the Chinese is a sunk cost invested in the relationship. After every Chinese challenge, the administration confronts the following calculus: How do the costs of acquiescing to China in this instance compare with the costs of starting another Cold War? Given that the administration was willing to let pass all the previous challenges, surely it shouldn't jettison the policy just for this latest challenge. The greater the cumulative concessions already made, the bigger a new Chinese challenge must be to justify switching tracks. A player committed above all to avoiding "making an enemy" will be willing to endure ever higher provocations.

The almost pitiable laments from the White House in response to reports of Chinese nuclear espionage are simply the latest case in point. Only when the Chinese started lobbing missiles at Taiwan in 1996 could the Clinton administration bestir itself to deviate, however briefly, from the path of accommodation. All other challenges, great and small, it explained away.

Established powers need not always expend precious resources trying to check the rise of competing states. Given U.S. business interests and a public weary of bearing a superpower's burdens, the Clinton policy does have the virtue of appealing to the voters' desire to enjoy peace. But one of the great tragedies of constructive engagement is that even in cases where mutual compromise is called for—China's admission to the WTO, for instance, might actually be in the U.S. interest—concessions may be impossible because too much has already been conceded.

Before long, then, we would do well to reconsider the logical foundations on which this policy rests. The Clinton administration is selling appeasement (but calling it constructive engagement) on the grounds that it is less costly and less onerous than the alternatives. In fact, the Clinton policy will work only if the United States is able to influence Chinese decision makers in extraordinarily subtle ways.

Perhaps the administration does have it in its power to influence how the Chinese perceive, think, and calculate. If so, Bill Clinton will go down in history as one of the more farsighted statesmen the United States has produced. But if not, his China policy is setting up the United States for a catastrophe. ♦



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Did Hitler Make History?

By David Frum

It's a reminder of socialism's lingering prestige that people still refer to the tyranny that ruled Germany as "fascism" and the tyranny that ruled Russia as "Stalinism"—as though one country had succumbed to a vast ideological system and the other simply to the evil of a single man. It would make much more sense to put it the other way around: Russia fell to "communism" and Germany was captured by "Hitlerism."

This is hardly pedantic quibbling. Americans now face European war for the first time since 1945. And this war has been understood by the Clinton administration and sold to the American public as a reprise of World War II half a century ago: the same sort of evil dictator, the same sort of racialist genocide, the same sort of mass suffering.

It's crucial, for this account of the war in Yugoslavia, that we believe Hitler's rule in Germany was not a unique catastrophe but remains to this day a live option, a political temptation to which other countries might give in, just as China, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, and—for that matter—Yugoslavia independently succumbed to communism.

IAN KERSHAW
Hitler
1889-1936, Hubris
Norton, 845 pp., $35

Indeed, Hitler's uniqueness may become one of the great foreign policy questions of the next century, analogous to the bitter dispute that once roiled America's universities and think tanks over whether the Soviet Union was merely continuing the (nasty but limited) policies of czarist Russia or whether it sought to realize the insatiable ambitions of Communist ideology.

From Slovakia to China, faltering Communist regimes have resorted to ultranationalism to stifle calls for liberty, to foster the appearance of national unity, and to justify encroachment upon their neighbors. It may be that these combinations of authoritarianism, nationalism, and aggression are fading shadows soon to be banished by the brightness of constitutional democracy.

But after the horrific events of our century, who'd want to predict it? If they are not fading—if Slobodan Milosevic represents the future—then we will likely find ourselves spending considerable time debating whether he and men like him are repeating "what was done in the name of Germany" (in the chilling phrase of the German defense minister Rudolf Scharping). And so, half a century later, we have acquired a new and compelling reason to understand what did happen in Germany—and the man who made it happen.

It's at just this juncture that the first volume of Ian Kershaw's massive biog-

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raphy of Hitler appears, the climax of four years of critically praised and commercially successful books about the Third Reich: Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and Henry Turner's *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power* in 1996, John Lukacs's *The Hitler of History* in 1997, Ron Rosenbaum's *Explaining Hitler* last year, and, this year, the English translation of Brigitte Hamann's *Hitler's Vienna*, the definitive work on Hitler's youth and "lost" years.

Kershaw sums up the current state of Hitler scholarship with awe-inspiring comprehensiveness. He takes nothing for granted. One source for Hitler's early years, for instance, is a memoir written in the 1950s by August Kubizek, a young man from Linz who briefly lodged with Hitler during Hitler's Vienna period, 1908-1913. The two attended the opera together, which fact inspires footnote 110 to chapter two:

> [Kubizek] mentions Hitler's admiration for Mahler, "at that time the conductor" in the Opera. Whether Hitler experienced Mahler conducting during his first two stays in Vienna cannot be established, but he and Kubizek could not have seen Mahler together, since Mahler's last performance, before leaving to take up his appointment at the New York Metropolitan Opera, was on 15 October 1907.

On the strength of his research, Kershaw authoritatively declares settled a series of problems that Hitler's biographers have been gnawing at for years. The claim that Hitler's paternal grandfather was Jewish: false. The story that Hitler fearfully hurled himself under the bodies of his comrades during the gun battle that crushed the November 1923 Munich *putsch*: false again. The rumors of extreme sexual abnormality: dismissed with scarcely a mention.

These are all probably sound conclusions, but the combination of minute detail and abrupt judgment makes *Hitler* an often blurry reading experience. Kershaw will summarize an entire library of research in a single sentence. That's a great achievement, but it results in a book that is as much bibliography as biography, and one that all but the most serious reader will have trouble grappling with and absorbing.

Kershaw wants to be rid, once and for all, of the myth of Hitler as the demonic god: the Miltonic Hitler, the Hitler of superhuman evil. This is the Hitler who haunts most popular writing about the Nazis and appears even in some of the more serious accounts.

Kershaw's Hitler is instead a distinctly mediocre man. Hitler always insisted that he'd arrived at his political views suddenly. He claimed to have discovered anti-Semitism in a single fatal encounter with a Jew in a Vienna street, staring at

the man's face and wondering "Is this a German?" He asserted that he had charged into a political career at the end of 1918 as he recovered from British gas and heard the terrible news of the German surrender. The Hitler of *Mein Kampf* is a character out of nineteenth-century Romanticism, always being clapped by grand volcanic moments of passion and prophetic insight.

Some writers believe we should take Hitler at his words: Lucy Dawidowicz, for instance, held that Hitler's murderous hatred of the Jews did indeed take form in October-November 1918 and that his occasional tendency to avoid explicit references to Jews and to instead denounce "profiteers," "exploiters," and "international finance" was inspired by his sense of what he could get away with at the moment and what he could not. Others, like John Lukacs, date Hitler's conversion to extreme anti-Semitism to his witnessing of the abortive 1919 Bolshevik coup in Bavaria, some of the leaders of which were Jews.

But Kershaw's Hitler is not at all Romantic: He's a completely derivative person who read few of the books he claimed to have read and thought little for himself. Kershaw disagrees with Brigitte Hamann's argument that Hitler came to his anti-Semitism in Munich after the First World War. Rather, according to Kershaw, he absorbed it early from the gutter newspapers first of his hometown of Linz and then of Vienna.

Kershaw deals with Hamann's evidence—the recollections of those who knew Hitler that he complained of the lack of statues to Heine in Germany, praised Jewish courage in the face of persecution, and liked the music of Offenbach—by pointing out that the mental atmosphere in pre-war Vienna was so poisonously anti-Semitic that the young Hitler could have spilled a lot of bile before anybody took any notice of it. Then, too, the dealer who sold the watercolors Hitler lived by was Jewish, and Hitler—always the opportunist—took care with his words around people who might repeat them to the man who provided him his livelihood.

What came late to Hitler were not his hatreds, but his ambitions to act on them. His interest in ultranationalist politics was stirred, Kershaw maintains, by the army instructors who hired him to give postwar political instruction to the shrunken German Army. Kershaw makes much of Hitler's passivity during the Bolsheviks' attempted coup in Bavaria and the military counter-coup in 1919, arguing that through all the tumult of that year, Hitler's main aim was to avoid being demobilized and having to find a job. "Hitler," he remarks, "did not come to politics, . . . politics came to him—in the Munich barracks."

In every respect other than his capacity for evil, Kershaw's Hitler is a limited man. This is no Napoleon, who committed great crimes but also great acts of statesmanship. Kershaw aptly quotes a remark of Plutarch's: "When destiny raises a base character by acts of great importance, it reveals his lack of substance." Hitler, Kershaw says, was an unperson, with no private identity beyond his public acts. Which means that his biographer must "focus not upon the personality of Hitler, but squarely and directly upon the character of his power—the power of the Führer."

HITLER'S AGRICULTURE MINISTER HAD TO WAIT THREE YEARS TO DISCUSS GERMANY'S FARM PROBLEM WITH THE FÜHRER.

Kershaw's Hitler is not even a great politician. The Munich *putsch* was idiotically organized, with no attempt to neutralize the army that made short work of it. *Mein Kampf* was boring and sold badly, especially the second volume released after Hitler's notoriety from the *putsch* had faded. He hated administrative work and idled away his post-*putsch* days while his associates tried to rebuild the Nazi party, with little success.

Hitler owed his success to economic crisis: Without the inflation of 1923, he could never have made his *putsch*; once stability returned, his party's share of the vote fell to 2.6 percent. Had the Great Depression been averted, he would have faded entirely away. Kershaw emphasizes how much Hitler's career owed to the complicity of others: the army units that provided weapons to nationalist paramilitary forces in 1919-20, the crazed Russian émigrés who helped finance him, the biased judiciary that repeatedly failed to punish Nazis. And finally, of course, the boneheaded politicians and army officers who permitted Hitler to assume the chancellorship in 1933. Hitler's first English-language biographer, Alan Bullock, saw this pattern as evidence of Hitler's cunning. Kershaw sees it as a reminder of the larger social forces at work. His chapter on January 1933 is tellingly entitled: "Levered Into Power."

Nor is Kershaw's Hitler even very much of a dictator. Kershaw is much impressed by the school of modern history that sees the Third Reich as the opposite of a totalitarian regime: Hitler was simply too lazy and slovenly to run a government in the way that Stalin did. Hitler's agriculture minister Walther Darré tried vainly for two full years to get an appointment to discuss Germany's worsening farm problem. Kershaw bitingly describes the corruption and chaos of Hitler's peacetime regime, with the state treasury treated as Hitler's personal exchequer and businesses lavishing bribes on cronies to extract favors from the crumbling apparatus of government:

> A flood of legislation emanating independently from each ministry had to be formulated by a cumbersome and grossly inefficient process whereby drafts were circulated and recirculated among ministers until some consensus was reached. Only at that stage would Hitler, if he approved after its contents were briefly summarized for him, sign the bill (usually scarcely bothering to read it) and turn it into law.

If Hitler felt pressed for time, "legislation that had taken months to prepare could simply be ignored or postponed, sometimes indefinitely."

The collapse of legal institutions and the weakness of the central dictatorship turned Germany into a kind of demented feudal system. The most important chapter in Kershaw's *Hitler*, "Working

Photos: Norton

Above: Hitler addresses the Reichstag, 1934. Right: The "German Day" rally in Nuremberg, 1923, and "The Führer as Animal Lover," a postcard from 1934.

Towards the Führer," quotes to powerful effect a 1934 speech by an official in the Prussian agriculture ministry.

> Everyone with opportunity to observe it knows that the Führer can only with great difficulty order from above everything he intends to carry out sooner or later. On the contrary, until now everyone has best worked in his place in the new Germany if, so to speak, he works towards the Führer. Very often, and in many places, it has been the case that individuals . . . have waited for commands and orders. . . . However, it is the duty of every single person to attempt, in the spirit of the Führer, to work towards him. Anyone making mistakes will come to notice it soon enough. But the one who works correctly towards the Führer along his lines and towards his aim will . . . have the finest reward of one day suddenly attaining the legal confirmation of his work.

But what was the spirit of the Führer? Given the radicalism of Hitler's own rhetoric and the barbarity of the men he chose as his closest associates, the disorder of the regime touched off what Kershaw calls a "Darwinian struggle," with victory going to the cruelest, the most ruthless, and (of course) the most anti-Semitic. "Hitler's personalized form of rule invited radical initiatives from below and offered such initiatives backing, so long as they were in line with his broadly defined goals."

Kershaw's dry style unwittingly denies the Hitler story much of its drama: Ron Rosenbaum, by comparison, describes the complicity of the German judiciary in Hitler's crimes with a blood-boiling fury. Rosenbaum agrees that Hitler was essentially a petty criminal, not a demon god, but he makes that criminality vivid and contemptible in a way that Kershaw never quite manages.

Kershaw, however, has his reasons for writing dryly, and they are stated flatly at the beginning of the book, when he explains his refusal to dwell on the stories of Hitler's twisted sexuality: "And even if the alleged repulsive perversions really were his private proclivities, how exactly they would help to explain the rapid descent of the complex and sophisticated German state into gross inhumanity after 1933 is not readily self-evident."

As Kershaw sees it, Hitler is not the most important part of his own story. The real protagonist is the German state, and the important puzzle Kershaw wants to unravel is not why Hitler did what he did, but rather why the Germans did what they did.

This is probably not the best frame of mind in which to attempt a biography, and it may explain why Kershaw's *Hitler* so often seems listless. Unlike Brigitte Hamann, who sleuths out the details of Hitler's time in Vienna and brings the most malignant sections of that glittering, horrible city to life, Kershaw does not seem at all sure that the biographical approach will teach us anything worth knowing.

Perhaps it is for this reason that so many reviewers have described his book as "biography for the 1990s." The phrase is meant as praise, of course, implying that the book is up-to-date. But unfortunately it also implies that the book reflects the 1990s academic aversion to the human personality in history. Ker-

shaw singles out some leaders for special praise, but the most he will concede even to his heroes is that they have "symbolized the positive values of the century, have epitomized belief in humanity, hope for the future."

Even Karl Marx conceded that human beings make their own history (though he added that they do not make it precisely as they will). Now we seem bent on out-Marxing Marx, and eliminating even Hitler—surely the one man without whom the twentieth century would have been different—in favor of the impersonal collection of people, institutions, and ideas we call "Germany."

This is not a formula for moral responsibility. Even Daniel Goldhagen, a man given to rhetorical excesses (to put it mildly), returned in the best sections of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* to the responsibility of the individuals who ran the killing machine for Hitler: It was not "the German state" that did these things, but individual people like Fritz Müller of Salzburg, who served in a particular place at a particular time and is even now collecting a pension from his government; and Karl Shulz of Königsberg, who served somewhere else and now lives in a little flat in the south of Spain; and half a million more like them.

So, too, the caustic brilliance of Henry Turner's *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power* is that it never for one moment forgives the villainy and incompetence of the politicians and soldiers who let Hitler take power—and it musters its outrage not in a utopian spirit but in a grimly realistic one. The most practical option in 1933 for stabilizing the country and heading off Nazi dictatorship was a military coup and an authoritarian regime run by officers of the old aristocracy—and Turner believes we can blame men who failed to seize their chance to ward off a catastrophe they had every reason to foresee.

Look again at Kershaw's description of Hitler in power. To say that what really shaped Germany in the 1930s is the spontaneous action of individual Germans—"ordinary citizens denouncing neighbors to the Gestapo, . . . businessmen happy to exploit anti-Jewish legislation to rid themselves of competitors"—is to minimize the importance of the dictatorship under which that spontaneous action occurred.

Ordinary citizens often want to be rid of their neighbors, and businessmen often want to do down the competition, but it's seldom that they can invoke the unconstrained power of the state to do it. The fact that Hitler was sleeping till noon, eating a leisurely lunch, going for a walk, signing a few papers, and then screening movies until the small hours of the morning does not remove him from responsibility—not just the moral responsibility, which Kershaw concedes, but the operational responsibility as well.

In *Explaining Hitler*, Ron Rosenbaum wisely reminds us of Hitler's comment when challenged back in the 1920s over the seeming chaos of the Nazi party: "Nothing happens except by my will." Hitler chose to run his government this way, and these methods yielded for him the results he wanted. His government achieved considerable success in achieving his top priorities: cementing his power in place, murdering the Jews, waging war, and surrounding him with cheering crowds. If it was not so successful at managing the farm problem, that was by his decision and a result of his choices.

OUR IGNORANCE OF HISTORY IS WHAT LEADS US TO IDENTIFY THE NAZIS NOT ONLY AS THE WORST EVIL, BUT AS THE ONLY EVIL.

But if Kershaw's Hitler is a Hitler for the 1990s in his insignificance, he is also a Hitler for the 1990s in another way. *Hitler: 1889-1936, Hubris* is a book that, for all its deficiencies, makes particularly useful reading now in our new time of dictators and ethnic hatred. One can believe that Hitler's personality is both more interesting and more important than Kershaw thinks, and still accept Kershaw's contention that Hitler's evil is not the whole of the story. In 1984, Milton Himmelfarb published in *Commentary* a justly famous essay on Hitler's extreme personal culpability entitled "No Hitler, No Holocaust." That's very true. But one can add, "No German Army, no Holocaust either."

As decisive as Hitler was to Germany, had Germany been something other than the dominant technological, military, and economic power in Europe, he would have been far less significant to the fate of the world. Without Germany, Hitler is Idi Amin. What made Hitler dangerous to non-Germans—including the almost entirely non-German Jews who died at Auschwitz and Treblinka—was the meeting of the wrong man with the wrong country. That's why it was obtuse of Vice President Al Gore to call Slobodan Milosevic a "junior-league Hitler" (and not only because he meant "minor-league"). A minor-league Hitler simply isn't a Hitler.

One of the saddest consequences of America's increasing ignorance of history is its progressive identification of Nazism not only as the worst evil, but as the only evil. Much of the time, the use of Nazis as all-purpose bad guys is merely ridiculous—as when Steven Spielberg has Indiana Jones tangling with a Nazi expedition in Egypt in the 1930s, when Egypt was a British protectorate.

But at crucial moments it can be genuinely dangerous, and we are now, in April 1999, at one of those crucial moments. Suppose that some ordinance required us to refrain from invoking Hitler in any but the most extreme circumstances. What impact would it have, I wonder, if President Clinton were forced to say that the Serbs' expulsion of the Kosovars is the worst human-rights offense in Europe since the Turks expelled two million Greeks from Anatolia in 1922? It's true, of course—but doesn't it seem to lack the same urgency? After all, Americans do not typically remember to reproach themselves for having stood idly by in 1922.

By comparing anything to Hitler, we have already decided its moral meaning: We are saying "this is the worst thing there could be." But what Hitler ought to teach us—and the scholars who write about him ought to remind us—is that there are gradations even in wickedness. And those gradations matter. ♦

B&A

YAHOO!

An Entertaining Economy

By Mark Gerson

With so much in print—most of it worthless—claiming to explain the unprecedented economic growth of the last decade, it's tempting to ignore Michael Wolf's new book. But that would be a mistake. Wolf, a lawyer with a media and entertainment practice, offers in *The Entertainment Economy* an insight into today's economy that is both fascinating and convincing.

MICHAEL J. WOLF
The Entertainment Economy
How Mega-Media Forces Are Transforming Our Lives
Times, 314 pp., $25.00

Consider the economics of a missile, a mousetrap, and a movie. In some ways, they're quite similar. The money that goes into a missile sustains a manufacturer, workers, soldiers, nearby stores and restaurants, and their suppliers. The money that goes into a mousetrap sustains a manufacturer, workers, delivery people, stores, and their suppliers. The money that goes into a movie sustains a studio, actors, crews, theaters, and their suppliers.

But there is also a crucial difference. Missiles are rarely used—and can't be reused. One mousetrap easily replaces another—and a good one needn't be replaced for a long time. A movie, however, can be released in the theater—and then again on video, on network, cable, or satellite television, and, soon, over the Internet. Popular movies generate more business for everyone involved with them, from the actors to the assistant producers to the studios. Licensing deals extend a movie's reach to lunch boxes, dolls, clothing, and soundtracks. An imaginative marketer can continually extract value from the fixed cost of a movie—and there has always been an abundance of imaginative marketers in America.

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About the only business better than a hit movie is the Internet. To make money from a movie, a studio must invest in a script, pay a lot of people, deal with a lot of egos—and then suffer the mercurial taste of the public. But the value of great Internet companies such as American Online, Tripod.com, and Ragingbull.com is created by their customers. AOL has chat rooms, Tripod has member homepages, and the Raging Bull has financial bulletin boards. The costs of enabling all this—and thereby delivering viewers to advertisers—is minimal. Internet companies enjoy the benefits of scale economics without significant fixed costs.

But—and this is Wolf's insight—the virtuous circle enjoyed by Internet companies in fact appears throughout the entertainment economy. Entertainment goods create enormous wealth, and this wealth creates demand for more entertainment goods.

Indeed, the entertainment industry is perhaps the only field left for real growth. We already spend only 2 percent of GNP on food; we already produce inexpensive durable goods that are actually durable; and we no longer need as many missiles as before. While other industries continue to prosper, Wolf shows how many of them actually depend on the entertainment economy.

Who, for instance, is the leading distributor of toys in the United States? The answer turns out to be McDonald's, whose alliance with Disney resulted in a 23 percent increase in U.S. sales of Happy Meals. Who provided Garth Brooks with his greatest concert audience? Wal-Mart, as his concert was broadcast in 2,400 of the company's stores the day his album *Double Live* was released. How does Citibank plan on attracting a billion customers? By creating an on-line service that establishes emotional bonds with customers.

With Internet, cable, and satellite technologies pounding the cost of distributing information down to almost nothing, there should be little doubt that entertainment will occupy an ever more secure place at the center of the American economy. This obviously has enormous sociological implications, which Wolf—writing about business—doesn't fully analyze. But his book offers an opportunity for us to consider what direction we are headed.

A generation ago Daniel Bell worried about "the cultural consequences of capitalism," just as two generations ago Joseph Schumpeter identified capitalist societies' "creative destruction." A certain type of economy automatically reinforces the moral virtues that sustain it: Farming crops at dawn, mining coal until dusk, and serving customers in the family drugstore all require hard work, responsibility, punctuality, cooperation, and respect. People who trade stocks, produce movies, and build Web sites may have those virtues, but they can prosper without them.

Advertising—the engine of the entertainment economy—has often called on people to free themselves from the burdens and obligations of the virtues that fuel capitalist prosperity. An economy successful enough to become an entertainment economy was not built by people who really believed that they "deserved a break today," or that "all it takes is a dollar and a dream." Such nonsense was tolerable when the influence of entertainment was softened by the requirements of the real world; it is quite a different situation when entertainment *is* the real world. The moral vigilance that was unnecessary in earlier eras of capitalism is the first great challenge of the entertainment economy.

The second great challenge of the entertainment economy is described by the comedian Chris Rock, who said, "It used to be that music was here today, gone tomorrow. Now it's here today, gone today." Rock's insight has enormous sociological implications—impli-

cations that were best plumbed by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. "A native of the United States . . . clutches everything, he holds nothing fast, but soon loosens his grasp to pursue fresh gratifications." For Tocqueville, the abundance of opportunity in America can be literally maddening.

The entertainment economy offers an infinite number of outlets for enjoyment. We live in a world of opportunities to view thousands of things, travel cheaply almost anywhere in the world, communicate easily and for free, and work in new and unestablished sectors of the growing economy. It is a world that has made possible Jeff Bezos and Jerry Yang—young men who have made great fortunes transforming the economy.

But for every founder of Amazon or Yahoo! there are thousands more who wonder which of the infinite number of possible routes is the shortest to success. Even those who do not fancy themselves a Bezos or Yang are left wondering which of the new and old products of the entertainment economy will satisfy them. Are these people necessarily happier than their forefathers who knew they would be farming the fields every day until they died? The self-evidence of the answer suggests just how formidable the challenge of the entertainment economy will be. ♦

B&A

Fire and Frost

A New Life of America's Poet

By Christopher Caldwell

For fifty years it has been a big project of the American academy to rescue the poet Robert Frost from his admirers—to show that his traditional rhyming sonnets and odes were not merely beautiful ditties, that his blank-verse narratives of ordinary New Englanders were more than just nice stories.

In 1947, the critic Randall Jarrell mocked the stage-Yankee persona of the most popular American poet since Longfellow, calling him "the Only Genuine Robert Frost in Captivity." But he also identified an "Other Robert Frost," a virtuoso who differed from Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot only in his resolute defiance of modernist convention (hardly a failing, to Jarrell's ear) and his absence of pretense. Lionel Trilling too confessed to having come around—after years of typical academic snickering at the greeting-card aspects of the poetry—to see Frost as not merely a genius but a "terrifying" poet.

Jarrell and Trilling were right. But their claims for Frost, relayed to a later, less literary generation of critics, have rendered Frost almost unenjoyable outside of the academy. At times, indeed, that seems the driving purpose of modern scholars—most ridiculously Duke's Frank Lentricchia, who credits Frost with "subverting" popular literary anthologies merely by writing poems that weren't actively stupid. The sad upshot is that no one can any longer lovingly spout lines from Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" or "Desert Places" or "The Gift Outright" without fearing that every opportunity for enjoyment hides a chance to expose oneself as a rube.

JAY PARINI
Robert Frost
A Life
Henry Holt, 514 pp., $35

For anyone looking to rediscover a straightforward, more purely poetic Frost, unmuddied by irony-mongering, it's promising that he should have a biographer like the Middlebury professor and poet Jay Parini, who admits that Frost has been his favorite poet since the ninth grade. His unfeigned enthusiasm, visible on every page, insulates Parini from many earlier biographers' flaws. It does not, however, bring with it any special virtues.

Frost was born in 1874 in San Francisco to William Prescott Frost, a melancholic, dipsomaniac Harvard grad so rebellious that during the Civil War he ran away from his Massachusetts home to join the *Confederate* army. He was an aspiring poet, a political hack, and one of the most gifted journalists in San Francisco until tuberculosis killed him at age thirty-four. Frost's mother Belle was a Scottish immigrant with a lot of poetry in her head and a religious enthusiasm that would take her through a half-dozen denominations before she landed on Swedenborgianism.

Frost took a bit from each parent. From his father, he got his habit to go his own way and fall into depression over it. When his high-school sweetheart and (later) wife of forty-two years hesitated to marry him, he threw her engagement ring into a stove and took off for the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia, possibly to commit suicide. From his mother, he got his taste for Scottish ballads and a tendency (despite private religious skepticism) to take the religiously orthodox viewpoint in any late-night discussion.

He was a late bloomer who lacked stick-to-it-iveness, a dropout from Dartmouth and Harvard who drifted into chicken and apple farming and teaching. At thirty-four, he was still grateful to get his poems published in the newspaper of Pinkerton Academy, the New Hampshire prep school where he taught. As a 1990s academic, Parini is excellent on Frost the educator (adored by his students and recognized for his innovations by the state of New Hampshire) and Frost the autodidact (ignorant of modern languages, but a considerably more formidable classicist than either Pound or Eliot).

In 1912, at thirty-eight, thanks to an annuity left by his grandfather and the sale of his farm, Frost was able to move his family to England. There he worked on the lyrics of his first book, *A Boy's*

Christopher Caldwell is senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

Will (1913) and wrote most of the blank-verse narratives that form his masterwork, *North of Boston* (1914). He also wrote dozens of the poems that, re-jiggered, would seed his later collections. In 1915, he returned to America famous.

It's surprising to realize, given the figure Frost later cut as poet, performer, and national symbol, that he had written the bulk of his great poetry by the time his fourth and most autobiographical volume, *New Hampshire*, took the Pulitzer Prize (the first of his four) in 1924. Thereafter, Frost's life was a mix of public acclaim and private desperation—particularly in the 1930s and early 1940s when, amidst a succession of prestigious university appointments, honorary degrees, and rich speaking deals, he lost a daughter to disease, his wife to a heart ailment, and his son to suicide, while his only sister and another daughter descended into insanity.

Frost in New Hampshire, c. 1950

All Frost biographers of the last quarter-century have worked in the shadow of the monumental—and monumentally flawed—authorized biography written by Lawrance Thompson, a Princeton critic whom Frost rashly hired for the job in 1942. By 1945, Thompson loathed his subject and would devote the remaining three decades of his life to compiling a phonebook-sized work of character assassination. In one oft-ridiculed passage, Thompson sought to enlist Frost's lifelong love of baseball to paint him as evil, vindictive, and cutthroat:

> In Salem, when he became the best pitcher on his grammar school team, he dreamed he would some day achieve renown as a hero in the major league of his choice—and even a baseball could serve as a lethal weapon if carefully aimed at the head of an enemy batter.

In another passage, he recounted a story told by the poet's daughter Lesley about Frost pointing a gun at his wife and himself and asking the toddler which one she wanted to see alive in the morning—this despite Lesley's later assertion that it was most likely an image from one of the vivid nightmares that plagued her. It's possible this hatchet job *helped* Frost's reputation in a perverse way, providing an identity badge ("evil loner") of the sort modernist critics love to attach, for a poet who was neither gay, drunk, suicidal, nor Communist enough to stoke biographical interest otherwise. But that does not keep Thompson's book from being the most unfair literary biography of the late twentieth century.

Parini sides against Thompson, and with such revisionists as William Pritchard, who largely dismissed the book in his excellent *Robert Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered*; and Stanley Burnshaw, whose fond and delightful *Robert Frost Himself* exposed the pettiness and jealousy that fired Thompson.

But, nice though it is to see anyone weigh in on the anti-Thompson side of *l'affaire* Frost, one no longer particularly needs such a corrective. What is needed is a reckoning with Frost's relation to modernism. Was he part and parcel of the Pound-Eliot movement, merely effecting his modernist project through *superficially* traditional (or, as Lentricchia would put it, "subversive") means? Or was he exactly the reactionary he appears, our best American link back to the pre-modernist poetry that now needs rediscovering?

Frost helped get Pound released from the mental hospital where he was held in lieu of a treason conviction after World War II, and his relations with Eliot were cordial. But he had little respect for the willful obscurity and flaunted erudition that were the stock-in-trade of high poetic modernism. Of Eliot, he said, "I don't think a thing has to be obvious before it is said, but it ought to be obvious when it is said."

Not just Frost's modernism but his Americanism can be called into question. John Evangelist Walsh's great 1988 study of Frost's English years, *Into My Own*, invites us to discard this simple idea of Frost's American-ness—which is particularly bold of Walsh, in light of Frost's later stage persona as the repository of all America's folk wisdom. "I had nearly a perfect life over there," Frost said of his English years, "a romance such as happens to few." In fact, Frost expressed an urge to "stay with them until I'm deported" and became the mentor and friend of the exquisite lyric poet Edward Thomas, who was killed in World War I before he'd published more than a few dozen poems. "Edward Thomas was the only brother I ever had," Frost would recall. "I hadn't a plan

for the future that didn't include him."

This line of inquiry doesn't interest Parini. He falls into the tendency of conventional Frost critics to read the poet almost exclusively through the American literary tradition (with a feint at German romantic philosophy), viewing Emerson as Frost's most significant literary ancestor. Parini shows little curiosity about Thomas—or anyone else who crossed Frost's path, for that matter. The American critic Louis Untermeyer, Frost's friend who followed a mission as an anthologist parallel to Frost's as a poet, scarcely makes an appearance except as the addressee of Frost's epistolary rants.

Parini adds little to what close readers of Frost will know already. What's more, much of the story is told through raw interviews with a handful of subjects, which are poured, unedited, into the text. The effect is appalling. The book reads less like a serious biography than an interminable magazine profile. Or worse, a life for ninth graders. Here's Parini on Frost's upbringing: "One's early experience is, of course, essential in the formation of character." On *A Boy's Will*, his first book published in England: "It was gratifying to find such enthusiasm for his work in the country that had produced Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth." Until finally: "The heights of Parnassus had been scaled."

Part of the problem is that this is not a biography so much as a bare-bones life interrupted by indigestible gobbets of criticism—which, moreover, are only occasionally Parini's own. His reading of "West-Running Brook," for instance, brings in the critics Robert Faggen, William Pritchard, and Reuben Brower—and in a sense that's lucky: When Parini ventures an original interpretation, the results are disastrous. Take his gloss on Frost's splendid "Once by the Pacific."

The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before.
The clouds were low and hairy in the skies,
Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.
You could not tell, and yet it looked as if
The shore was lucky in being backed by cliff,
The cliff in being backed by continent;
It looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Someone had better be prepared for rage.
There would be more than ocean-water broken
Before God's last Put out the Light *was spoken.*

Frost in Vermont, 1921

Photos: Henry Holt

Parini finds this "depressing" and, with astonishing obtuseness, adds, "Like Dylan Thomas after him, Frost was prepared to 'rage against the dying of the light.'" But clearly it isn't Frost who'll be doing the raging here. Parini has taken a poem that is self-evidently an intimation of God's apocalypse and read it as a warning that the poet is gonna get really, *really* mad if he has to look at those crashing waves any longer. If the poem's narrator is "preparing" for anything, it's to get squashed like a bug.

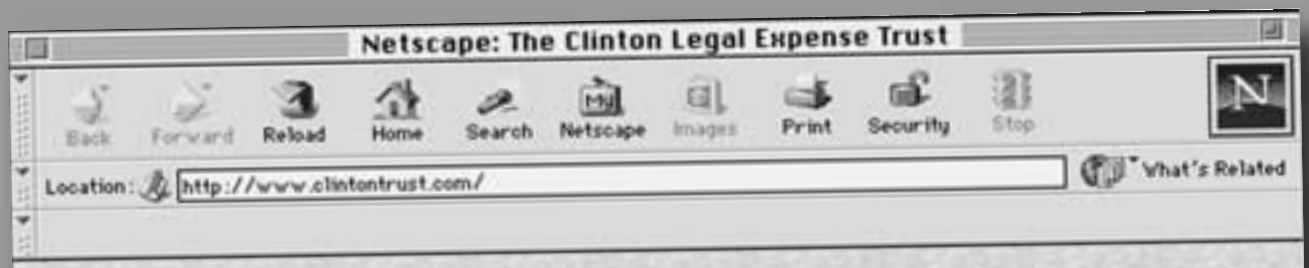
Parini makes other stumbles. Surely the title of Frost's late poem "The Wind and the Rain" echoes not Hardy's "During Wind and Rain" but Feste's song from *Twelfth Night* (*A great while ago the world begun / With hey, ho, the wind and the rain*).

Frost's "Acquainted with the Night" may be a stark and ghostly terza-rima sonnet, but Parini is stretching the point when he calls Dante's meter "appropriate for a poem about the descent into darkness." Dante also wrote the *Paradiso*, after all, and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" uses a string of terza rima sonnets to build what is, of all serious poems in English, probably the most sunlit and outdoorsy. And it is hardly confidence-inspiring to see Frost's main poetic rival Edwin Arlington Robinson referred to as "Edward."

Parini calls this a labor of love. There's no reason to doubt him, but he has failed to put Frost on the page, either as a poet or a person. This is a biography that, lacking any sense of the biographer's art, takes us neither out far nor in deep. ♦

"Contempt of court, obstruction of justice...believe me, they don't come cheap." ***—Janet Reno***

Parody



The Clinton Legal Expense Trust

Welcome to the World Wide Web home of The Clinton Legal Expense Trust, the fund established to enable Americans to help defray the financial burden of legal fees facing the President and First Lady. This week we are fortunate to have a message from the true "chief law enforcement officer of the United States," Ms. Janet Reno.

A Special Appeal From the Attorney General

Dear Fat Cats,

Mr. Bruce (Buddinsky) Lindsey, who thinks I'm thin-skinned and emotionally friable (I've been told), has just informed me that some people supposedly will not relish being addressed as "fat cats." But I'm sure you won't mind it at all. To me, a fat cat is just about the dearest, coziest thing I can think of. Maybe that's because I am the owner of a couple of corpulent felines myself. Their names are Jeremiah Fuzzbudget and Mr. Billy Jean King and they are just the fattiest cattiest kittys ever. Yes you are! (They're right here.)

Anyway, when the President called to ask me to issue this plea, I jumped at the chance. I guess it's no secret that for the whole second term he's been ticked off at me over all those Independent Counsels I was pressured into appointing. (Also, I wouldn't "get friendly" in the elevator after someone got "Roman fingers" on a certain state occasion.) In any case, what with one thing and another, I've been in the doghouse so long people started calling me "Buddy"!

Now that Judge Susan Webber Wright (ooh, now isn't she the saucy Miss) has seen fit to cite the President for so-called "contempt of court," I feel I would be remiss if I did not step forward to remind the President's strongest and best supporters (you all) just how important their contributions have been to his amazing tale of survival. Remember, I had a front row seat back in the heady days of the Lewinsky investigation, when the President was a-dodgin' and a-weavin' and hanging tough. I know he could not have done that alone; you and your cash were essential ingredients. All those months, when the President was successfully turning the tables on ol' slow movin' Judge Starr and trying to make him out to be the bad guy, he did that on your dime. Launching all those legally pointless but deliciously dilatory maneuvers at the cost of about 900 bucks an hour, plus expenses, was only possible with your help! Folks, let me assure you that presidential obstruction of justice is a big old gas-guzzler that burns only the highest octane fuel! For almost a year your President needed that fuel to run the obstruction engine that allowed him to evade "early retirement" and a twilight existence as Tyson Foods' official greeter. You provided it, and you ought to be proud.

But now, my friends, it is a new day. And just like obstruction of justice and suborning perjury, just like witness tampering—contempt of court does not come cheap. It's time to dig deep once again. And don't let's forget that certain big-footed contributers like the People's Liberation Army, Johnny Chung, the Lippo Group, and Nate Landow are all "otherwise engaged" this time around. So be sure to pony up a little extra for Bubba this time. And as Bruce says, "Don't forget you can put the Mrs. down for a second 10 grand, that is 20 grand per couple."

It's a lot, I know, but, hey, do it for the "big fella," will ya? And if not for me, then do it for the President and Mrs. Clinton.

Sincerely,

Janet Reno
United States Attorney General