the weekly Standard

MAY 14, 2001

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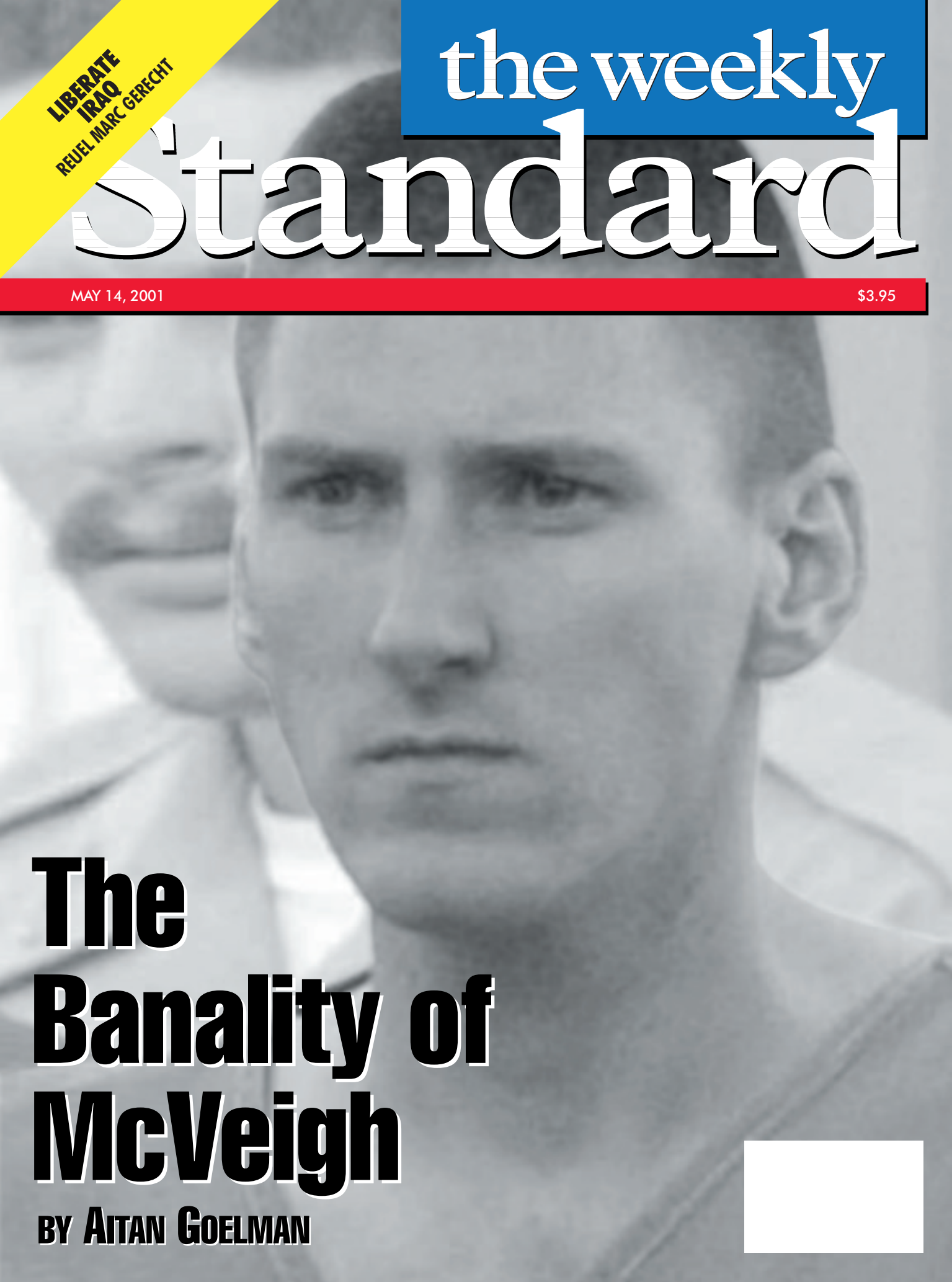

The Banality of McVeigh

BY AITAN GOELMAN

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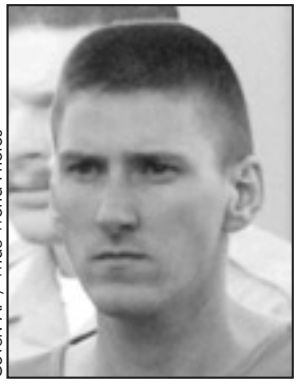

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Books & Arts

the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Ballad of the Black Berets

When Army chief of staff Eric Shinseki announced last October that he'd be appropriating the black berets of the elite Army Rangers in order to give them away as feel-good hats to the rest of the Army, he said it was symbolic. Not of the Peter Principle, as one might suspect, but of the transformation of the Army into a lighter, more deployable fighting force, one that could more readily respond to crises (a skill at which Shinseki himself has subsequently proved deficient).

Two months after it was revealed that Shinseki's beret-conversion deadline had forced the Defense Logistics Agency to help fill the 4.7 million beret order by contracting with companies who manufactured them in China (in violation of a buy-America amendment), and a full month after the Chinese bumped our surveillance plane and took 24 Americans hostage, Shinseki has finally called off the made-in-China portion of his order. A Pentagon spokesman admitted at a news conference that the black berets are "a very symbolic measure of the new Army . . . and to [Shinseki], the symbolism of such a beret was inconsistent with the berets' being . . . manufactured in China." To which THE SCRAPBOOK can only add: "Duhhh."

Shinseki's decision would have been more welcome before 2.2 million berets had already been manufactured by Chinese manufacturers (new ones will have to be made). Meanwhile, the "rites of passage test"—the Army-history pop quiz that the brass told soldiers they would have to take in order to wear the Rangers' beret, which the Rangers typically earned through a grueling year-long training regimen—has been scrapped.

But if all you Old Army soldiers are dispirited, take heart. Things could be worse. You could be British. In the land of marmite, it was recently revealed, members of the British Army and Royal Air Force are being given free sex-change operations. Likewise, the Ministry of Defence, as a morale-boosting mechanism, has been providing female soldiers with free breast implants, leading to our favorite headline of the year, from the *Nelson Mail*: "Falling Into a Big Booby Trap." After suffering embarrassment in communal showers, which is surely akin to the fear one must face under fire, one lance corporal traded up from 32A to 32C. And after even more dramatic surgery, Sergeant-Major Joe Rushton, formerly of the men's room, has become Joanne Rushton, proudly parading in a woman's uniform.

With all these soldiers shot full of self-esteem from black berets and big breasts, now might be the time to launch a new, elite NATO regiment: The Fighting Monicas. ♦

Sudan In, America Out

Until last Thursday, the United States had held a seat on the U.N. Human Rights Commission every year since the group was originally constituted in 1947. Much too long, concluded the U.N.'s European member nations, irritated as always with America for being bigger, richer, freer, and otherwise better. So our "allies" unceremoniously voted us off the "Western" slate of candidates for next year's Human Rights Commission—in favor of delegates from Sweden (a decades-long government program of racial sterilization), Austria (Jörg Haider), and France (take your pick).

Last week's big winner in the human rights bazaar? Sudan, which despite being generally acknowledged as the world's worst current human rights violator (see Elliott Abrams's account in our May 7 issue), won itself a seat on the same commission from which the United States has now been unceremoniously booted.

One more piece of evidence, were any necessary, that the United Nations is pretty worthless. And that the United States should never have felt guilty about withholding our "dues." ♦

Washed Out

Apparently not content with having ruined the American toilets that were once the envy of the world (the abundant 3.5 gallons per flush became a paltry, federally mandated 1.6 gallons), the Department of Energy is now taking aim at our washing machines. As Competitive Enterprise Institute analyst Ben Lieberman warned in these pages last fall, one of the last acts of the outgoing administration was to promulgate a new set of minimum efficiency standards for clothes washers to take effect in 2004 and 2007, raising efficiency by 22 percent and 35 percent respectively.

This may sound nice, but as Lieberman pointed out, the only way the consumer comes out ahead financially with the new machines is if he does 392 loads a year and owns the machine for 14 years. Alas, rather than invite yet another "environmental" controversy, the Bush White House has acquiesced in these Clinton-era regulations.

A few high-end clothes washers (usually front-loading ones) already meet the new energy standards, but fewer than 9 percent of consumers have chosen them—perhaps because they run anywhere from $700 to $1,100, according to *Consumer Reports*. That would seem to be a problem, no? Well, as one manufacturer has commented, "Selling it in the marketplace is easy if there is a standard in place. It's not a matter, necessarily, of consumer acceptance."

Don't expect the appliance makers to complain about intrusive federal regulation. Indeed, the deal may get even sweeter for them. Bills have been introduced in the House and Senate to set up tax credits for manufacturers whose washing machines meet the new standards before the 2004 and 2007 deadlines. This way, even if consumers balk at buying the new models, the companies still get paid.

Please, no jokes about spin. That will only get us more agitated. ♦

Indiana vs. Beijing

Apparently not realizing that they were supposed to call the State Department for permission, both houses of the Indiana General Assembly have now unanimously approved a bill prohibiting state agencies from procuring products manufactured by slave labor. House Bill 1395, according to its author, state representative Jim Atterholt, Republican of Indianapolis, will have general application but is designed with the People's Republic of China in mind.

According to exiled dissident Harry Wu's Laogai Research Foundation, China maintains a population of between four and six million prisoners in roughly 1,000 slave labor camps. Factories based at those camps produce everything from heavy trucks to children's toys—while depriving their "employees" of food and sleep; confining them in leg irons; beating them with clubs; torturing them with electric cattle prods; and harvesting their organs for the international medical black market.

In the United States, importation of products from China's *laogai* camps is forbidden under a memorandum of understanding both countries ostensibly observe. But China doesn't observe this agreement, and the U.S. Customs Service has neither the latitude nor the resources to ensure that such unusually horrible contraband doesn't slip through our ports.

The state of Indiana, at least, seems determined to keep its hands clean of Chinese barbarism. Three cheers for Rep. Atterholt and his Hoosier colleagues. ♦

Help Wanted

Contributing editor Charles Krauthammer seeks a research assistant. Send résumé to Matthew Mooney at 1225 19th St., NW, Suite 620, Washington, D.C. 20036, or e-mail *krauthammerra@hotmail.com*. ♦

Casual

718

The city. That's what my neighbors and friends in Brooklyn call the borough of Manhattan. As in, "Are you going into the city tonight?" Or, "I had dinner with her in the city." Or, "My dentist is in the city, on 54th Street." Whenever I hear this, I cringe. I know they know full well that Brooklyn is the city too. In population terms, it's the largest of the boroughs, with a million more inhabitants than Manhattan—and the most famous, possessing one of the world's best-known place names. And it's not as though Brooklyn is some distant Connecticut suburb. My own apartment is about half a mile as the crow flies from Wall Street, separated only by the far-from-mighty body of water called the East River.

It's no use complaining. For Brooklynites as for everybody else in the world, New York City and Manhattan are synonymous. And I have come to understand that the urge to complain is a mark of my newcomer status here.

I moved to Brooklyn almost a year ago, a straggler in the yuppie cross-migration that began 25 years ago when some shaggy survivors of the 1960s discovered that they could house themselves cheaply in the 19th-century mansions lying fallow near Prospect Park in the neighborhood of Park Slope. They set up food co-ops, progressive nursery schools, and vegetarian restaurants. They stripped 80 years of paint from walls and doors, revealing oak panels and elaborate moldings. They tore down plasterboard and restored their homes to their original Victorian and Edwardian dimensions.

This collective act of urban homesteading inaugurated a nationwide trend that came to be called "gentrification," though another couple of decades would pass before THE WEEKLY STANDARD's own David Brooks (himself once briefly resident in Brooklyn) would find the term juste for the homesteaders and their descendants: "Bobos."

In time, as the cost of living in Manhattan with a family became prohibitive for anyone earning less than $300,000 a year, upper-middle-class New Yorkers who would rather die than move to the suburbs began following the original Bobos across the river. The move was made grudgingly, often provoking an existential crisis.

"I feel like I'm dying," a friend of mine with a senior position at a newsmagazine and a baby on the way said in the early 1990s when he signed his Park Slope lease. Could one really be a New Yorker and a Brooklynite at the same time, with all that the term "New Yorker" implies? Even though most Manhattanites do not partake of the legendary glories of the city—they rarely attend the theater and have never been invited to swank soirees on Park Avenue—they feel weirdly graced just to be in close proximity to them.

The East River may be narrow, but it is wide enough to vitiate that sense of proximity. Manhattanites who moved to Brooklyn for their children felt they were going into exile. That feeling only deepened in the early 1980s when the city outgrew the 212 area code, and the boroughs outside Manhattan were assigned the new "718." Now it was official. Bobos had to dial 10 numbers to reach their city friends, but only seven to speak to the Brooklynites of old who lived in neighborhoods like Ralph Kramden's Bensonhurst and Canarsie, where the notorious "dese, dem, and dose" accent they dreaded their children might inhale with the Kings County air remains the lingua franca.

Existential crises are no fun, and soon enough the angst-ridden new Brooklynites were talking enthusiastically about their new home. Maybe a little too enthusiastically. Everything about Brooklyn was suddenly wonderful—the parks, the neighborhood shops, the slower pace, even the long subway ride into the city that allowed you to get through the newspapers before starting the work day. In 1994, the crime rate went into its glorious plunge, and neighborhoods that no middle-class New Yorker would even drive through instantly became Bobo destinations, the new versions of once-raffish Manhattan areas now overrun by investment bankers.

Williamsburg, which had always been a slum, was now the "new SoHo," with artists and galleries inhabiting formerly industrial space. A no-man's-land called Boerum Hill was the "new East Village," home to tiny, funky restaurants and chic boutiques. Browse in the fiction section of a Barnes & Noble and you will find an endless number of first novels by glamorous young writers whose dust-jacket bios invariably declare the author's home to be "Brooklyn, New York." These days, the six "friends" in the TV series of the same name would doubtless be living in Cobble Hill or Carroll Gardens.

My friend who once feared a living death in Brooklyn recently bought me a T-shirt at a Boerum Hill boutique. It's basic black, natch, with the numbers "718" embossed on the front. I wear it with defiant pride on the Brooklyn Bridge as I walk above the East River—and into the city.

JOHN PODHORETZ

In The Army Now

Matt Labash has touched upon the single most important national security issue today ("The New Army," April 30). Our military, and especially my beloved Army, has been over-tweaked and under-appreciated for over a decade. Just as a racing stock car only resembles a roadworthy automobile, our armed forces have become specialized, technologically advanced façades of their former selves.

The Army I joined 12 years ago was utilitarian and rough. It had its flaws, of course, but above all else, it valued bold go-getters. Irreverence and cockiness were never in short supply. The soldiers that I command talk about the disappointment of their training experience and listen jealously to the stories my senior NCOs tell of how it was "back in the day."

We have forgotten our own history. As we did no less than three times in the 20th century, we have again allowed complacency to incapacitate our military to a degree that no foe has ever attained.

I understand how easily some might dismiss my comments as one of those "I-walked-10-miles-to-school-in-the-snow" stories. That's just generational discord. I have failed in my attempts to coin a magic phrase or pen a bullet comment that conveys the urgency of this very real problem. Labash should be congratulated for so accurately hitting the mark in one report.

The article will no doubt serve as a reference for future historians asking why Americans once again paid "for non-readiness with the blood of their children."

Michael A. Hajdak Jr.
Captain, U.S. Army Reserve
via e-mail

Matt Labash was absolutely on target. After graduating from West Point in 1994, I reported to Fort Benning for the Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC). After IOBC, I completed Ranger School and then reported to my unit at the 101st Airborne Division. I relied on the training I received at IOBC and Ranger School to lead effectively a 36-soldier infantry platoon.

By watering down IOBC, the Army's leadership is building an inferior infantry lieutenant who will not have the skills needed to lead a combat platoon into battle. Further, I imagine that the Army will now need to soften Ranger School to ensure these "New Army" officers can complete that training.

I am disgusted by the generals in the Pentagon who consistently spit in the faces of combat soldiers to appease those who demand that the military conform to societal norms. The infantry's core mission is to close with and destroy the enemy. That mission will become more difficult to accomplish as politically correct soldiers obsess about the feelings of others and ignore the enemy soldiers

charging forward with bayonets fixed. These generals are knowingly building a hollow Army that will not be prepared to meet a well-trained foe on the battlefield. Perhaps these so-called leaders have convinced themselves that the enemy troops will merely run away when they see our "elite" soldiers all sporting their black berets. God help us.

Matthew J. Andersen
New York, NY

The article by Matt Labash was excellent—sad, but excellent nonetheless. I'm a master sergeant in the Army Reserves having just passed my 20 years in service mark. And guess what (I say with a deep exhalation): I'm getting the hell out for precisely the numerous reasons detailed in the article.

I spent four years on active duty in the late '70s and early '80s, mostly with the 2nd Ranger Battalion at Fort Lewis in Washington. I know and understand the pride associated with the black beret worn by the Rangers, as so eloquently transcribed in Labash's story. To this day, I try and abide by the words written in the Ranger Creed. They're filled with meaning and pride.

Over the past several years I, too, have watched the Army deteriorate into the touchy-feely ensemble it is today. As a drill sergeant in basic training posts, I've witnessed firsthand the power-robbing effect of today's policies. Some posts issue "yellow" cards that the trainee (or soldier—a term they used to "earn" at the successful completion of basic training) can invoke if they're feeling too much "stress." What will they do in combat? I guess that's what they make white flags for.

Out of respect for Gen. Shinseki's rank and position, I do not feel comfortable saying too much to degrade the current advertising campaign or his decision to give everyone a black beret. I can say this: I favor neither and understand neither. Reading the article only served to reinforce my decision to get out. No longer are soldiers taught to "take care of their subordinates." It's now become a "look out for yourself" Army.

I can summarize with this example: In the Reserves, soldiers are taught to submit their own promotion packets whenever they feel ready. Each soldier "must" look out for himself and take the ultimate responsibility. While I agree with part of this, a promotion is something that is earned, not simply given. That's part of the reason the Army is in the shape it's in today. Too many soldiers have reached or surpassed the Peter Principle—and risen to their level through incompetence.

Steven Bryar
Master Sergeant, U.S. Army Reserve
Redmond, WA

Stay Tough on China

I want to thank Robert Kagan, William Kristol ("Will China Pay A

Price?" April 30), and David Tell ("An Engagement with Tyranny," April 30) for the superb coverage on China. Not to get maudlin about it, but I think our country owes you all a debt of gratitude. You choose to be undeceived, and you decline to join in the Bush "Team Spirit" (as David Brooks puts it in "The China Lineup," April 30) by calling a humiliation a triumph. That takes real courage.

At the same time, I hope you will give the president some credit for telling the truth this week when he slipped and said he'd defend Taiwan with whatever it takes. The Chinese will test the president again, and soon, and next time they may find him made of sterner stuff.

HAROLD L. RIEDL
Baltimore, MD

ALL ABOUT STEM CELLS

I READ WITH DISMAY Wesley J. Smith's article "The Politics of Stem Cells" (March 26), which in my opinion reflected a surprising lack of understanding both of the subject matter and of how the matter has been treated in the media.

First, in contrast to Smith's statements, recent broadcast and print media have carried many reports of current work with adult stem cells. In fact, I would not be surprised if there have been more popular media accounts than published scientific papers in this area.

Second, the published scientific literature about embryonic stem cells offers far more well-documented information about these cells than it does about adult stem cells. Granted, there is much recent and exciting work on adult stem cells, which is broadening our understanding of their possible capabilities. But the published data on adult stem cells hasn't yet caught up to the research on embryonic stem cells.

Thus, we do not yet have comparable breadth and depth of information about the capacity of adult stem cells to grow, to form every organ of the human body as embryonic cells appear capable of, to be controlled, and perhaps to be made useful for medical treatment. The development of therapeutic methods relying on stem cells will take a great deal more research on both adult and embryonic stem cells—both disappointments and successes lie ahead for research with both types of cells.

Third, the debate about embryonic stem cell research is not simply pro-life versus pro-choice. Many pro-life citizens and members of Congress support embryonic stem cell research. They do so because they know that 100 million Americans suffer from diseases that could be helped by embryonic and adult stem cell research. A national public opinion poll conducted in January 2001 revealed more than twice as many Americans support federal funding of embryonic stem cell research than oppose it.

Fourth, suggesting that supporters of embryonic stem cell research do so because they support eugenics is irresponsible. I don't support eugenics and I doubt that any of my colleagues—including scientists, non-scientists, and legislators—do.

It seems to me that appropriate public policy is for federal funding to be available for all stem cell research. Federal funding will bring responsible federal oversight of the field, including regulations to prevent ethical abuses. Without public funding, the private sector will pursue this research alone, which will slow the pace of discovery and limit information shared amongst scientists.

LAWRENCE S. B. GOLDSTEIN
University of California
San Diego School of Medicine
La Jolla, CA

WESLEY J. SMITH RESPONDS: The primary point of my article was to raise the consciousness of readers, pointing out that adult and alternative stem cell research offers tremendous hope for the future—stories that are too often ignored or given low prominence by many media outlets, which, in contrast, generally report on embryonic stem cell experiments with much higher levels of energy and enthusiasm.

A recent case in point: The *Washington Post* ("New Potential for Stem Cells Suggested," April 27, 2001), which recently reported on successful embryonic stem cell experiments, discussed alternative cell research in one short sentence, dismissing it as having far less "range of potential" than embryonic/fetal cells. Yet *Time* magazine had reported only the week before that human patients have been treated successfully with stem cells found in umbilical cord blood ("Stem cells used to rebuild immune systems in human patients").

Another glaring example: An advance in using embryonic mouse stem cells to cure diabetes reported recently in the media was apparently not as successful as a similar experiment concluded over a year ago using mouse *adult* stem cells. Despite the important news that the adult stem cells apparently provided greater potential to create insulin than did the embryonic stem cells (the mice in the embryonic experiment died, the mice using adult stem cells lived, and their bodies produced full levels of insulin), for some reason, most of the press reports about the embryonic experiments didn't deem the previous breakthrough using adult stem cells worthy of mention.

The contrast in coverage is so stark and the examples of unbalanced emphasis in reporting so ubiquitous that in my more paranoid moments I believe it is intentional. I did not state or imply that all supporters of embryonic stem cell research support eugenics. I do believe that *some* who support embryonic stem cell research use the issue to promote other agendas, including human cloning, which could well become a vehicle for eugenic manipulation of the human genome. I also did not claim that the struggle was simply a matter of pro-choice versus pro-life. Instead, I suggested that the issue often gets confused with abortion, leading some in the pro-choice camp to cynically portray pro-life opponents of embryonic stem cell research as being indifferent to human suffering post birth.

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The "Adults" Make a Mess

During last year's presidential campaign, we were assured that George W. Bush's foreign policy team would be far superior in skill and experience to the much derided Clintonites. When Bush came to power, the "adults" would be in charge. Four months into the Bush presidency, the "adults" may want to consider drafting a letter of apology to Madeleine Albright, Sandy Berger, and William Cohen.

Last week's flip-flop on the question of military-to-military exchanges with China was an especially striking example of the new team's fumbling, and also of its willingness to hang loyal subordinates out to dry. On Monday, secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld's adviser and righthand man Chris Williams sent a memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordering the suspension of all contacts between the U.S. and Chinese militaries. The decision was hardly a bolt from the blue. Rumsfeld's unhappiness with the military exchange program—in which we share a great deal of information with them while they share nothing with us—was well-known. Earlier this year Rumsfeld had ordered a review to determine whether the program should be suspended, and after the appalling behavior of the Chinese military during the EP-3 hostage crisis, he decided to take the final step as a clear and appropriate expression of American displeasure.

On the chief strategic question before us—how to deal with the rising power of China—our policy grows more incoherent every week.

But when word of the decision became public on Wednesday, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice went ballistic. Rumsfeld's entirely unsurprising decision, we are told, caught her entirely by surprise. The White House immediately repudiated Rumsfeld, insisting that contacts with the Chinese would continue, though on a case-by-case basis.

It was bad enough that the White House thus inflicted upon Rumsfeld a second public humiliation in less than three months. (The first was when the White House announced in early February that there would be no immediate effort to increase defense spending, a decision that contradicted what Rumsfeld had just told Congress.) Even more inexcusable was the White House's decision, with Rumsfeld's evident approval, to make Chris Williams the fall guy. Administration officials put out word that Williams had blown it. He had "misinterpreted" and "misunderstood" Rumsfeld's order.

This is ludicrous. There is not the smallest chance that Chris Williams could have so badly misunderstood his boss. Everyone who has ever worked with Williams knows that he is careful, disciplined, and loyal. What's more, Williams has been working the China issue for more than a decade, most recently as Trent Lott's foreign policy adviser and before that as deputy staff director on the Senate Intelligence Committee. As much as any policymaker in Washington, Williams would understand the vast difference between an order to *suspend* contacts with the Chinese military and an order to *review* contacts "on a case-by-case basis," which administration spokesmen now claim was Rumsfeld's intention.

The appalling implication that Williams is an idiot flies in the face of other known facts. Early last week, Pentagon officials were talking to reporters about the suspension order, not only verifying its existence but also providing the rationale behind it. On Tuesday, the new assistant secretary of state for East Asia, James Kelly, testified to Congress, "We're not going to conduct business as usual after our servicemen and women were detained for 11 days in China." On Wednesday, senator John Warner told reporters he had discussed the suspension with Rumsfeld personally and had heartily endorsed the defense secretary's decision. After that statement, the White House pounced on Warner, who then obediently explained that he had misspoken. "If there is an error," Warner told reporters on Thursday, "it is mine, and I accept it." Now that's loyalty—accepting blame for a mistake one did not in fact make.

We wonder if Donald Rumsfeld or anyone else in the Bush administration will accept responsibility for the mistake they did make. One brave and "well-placed" Defense Department official—"speaking on condition of anonymity

because of the delicacy of the issue"—did confirm to the *Los Angeles Times* on Friday that "Rumsfeld had intended to break off all contacts between the two militaries." Still, as this magazine goes to press, Rumsfeld remains silent—while his loyal aide is left twisting slowly in the wind.

Last week's embarrassment is, of course, but the latest in a series of administration screw-ups with regard to China. The Taiwan arms sale announced two weeks ago with so much ballyhoo now appears to have been either a fraud or a singular case of bureaucratic ineptitude. The centerpiece of that deal was the decision by the Bush administration to sell Taiwan eight diesel-powered submarines. The subs, it was correctly argued, were essential to provide the Taiwanese navy the minimum capability to begin addressing the prodigious buildup of Chinese naval forces in the Taiwan Strait. Along with P-3 anti-sub surveillance planes, also approved by the administration, the submarines would give Taiwan a fighting chance against a Chinese naval blockade or amphibious attack. The Bush administration, which had refused to approve the Aegis battle management radar system for sale to Taiwan for fear of offending Beijing, trumpeted the submarine sale as proof positive that it was not going soft on China.

It turns out there is only one problem: The Taiwanese will most likely never get the submarines. And what's worse, some Bush officials may have suspected as much when they approved the deal. Since the U.S. Navy doesn't have diesel-powered submarines and doesn't want to build any, Bush officials had vaguely hoped to get the Netherlands or Germany or some other foreign country to build them. But they never bothered to consult with the Dutch or the Germans, or anyone else for that matter, before announcing the sale. Within days, the angry Dutch and German governments declared categorically that they would not build the subs for Taiwan. And no other government has volunteered its services.

Bush officials now admit, privately, that they are up a creek. Without the submarines, the P-3s are next to useless. And if you subtract the subs and the P-3s from the sale, all that's left that really matters are the four Kidd-class destroyers which the Taiwanese didn't even request and which by themselves are inadequate to meet the growing Chinese threat. It is unclear whether this monumental lapse was due to administration cynicism or high-level carelessness. Or maybe the submarine fiasco was Chris Williams's fault, too.

Finally, there is the matter of President Bush's promise two weeks ago to employ U.S. forces to defend Taiwan against a Chinese attack. This was probably the most important statement made by a president of the United States with regard to Taiwan and China in the last two decades. Never mind that Bush made it in an interview with a TV journalist rather than in a speech. Bush's declaration was serious and entirely appropriate given recent Chinese behavior. It signaled a long-overdue shift away from the absurd and dangerous American policy of "strategic ambiguity," a relic of the Cold War that no longer makes strategic sense and is now more likely to invite a war with China than prevent one.

No sooner had Bush uttered his historic words, however, than senior foreign policy officials in the White House and the State Department began backing away from them. Off the record, they told reporters that the president had erred. Publicly, they insisted that the president meant what he said. But they also insisted there had been no change in U.S. policy. This was preposterous. It was also insulting to the president. We understand that Karen Hughes, Bush's longtime protector, was furious at the foreign policy team for backing away from their president. And she was right to be furious. Bush's foreign policy advisers managed with one deft blow to make him look both ill-informed and, worse still, irrelevant to the actual making of American foreign policy.

Only one member of the Bush administration had the gumption, the strategic clarity, and, dare we say it, the adult understanding to back up his president at this critical moment. On the Sunday after Bush's comments, on *Fox News Sunday*, Vice President Cheney not only supported Bush's statements but provided the logic and reasoning behind them. Whatever the virtues of strategic ambiguity in the past, Cheney argued, China's "increasingly aggressive posture" toward Taiwan now required the United States to declare unambiguously that it was committed to Taiwan's defense. "We don't want to see a misjudgment on the part of the Chinese." Far from insisting that Bush's declaration had not changed American policy, Cheney rightly called it "an important step." Unfortunately, Cheney was alone. Rice, Secretary of State Powell, and Rumsfeld offered no similar help.

So the adults are in charge, and yet our policy on the most important strategic question of the coming decades—how to deal with the rising power of China—grows more incoherent with each passing week. Every apparent move in the direction of a tougher and more realistic policy toward Beijing is followed almost instantaneously by a hedge or a retreat back toward the policies of the Clinton administration. This endless vacillation is no doubt the product of battles between hawks and doves within the administration, battles in which no one ever scores a complete and lasting victory. Such bureaucratic warfare is hardly new, and it is not necessarily bad—*if* the president makes up his mind and imposes his views on his subordinates.

We think the president has an instinctive sense that U.S. policy toward China should be a good deal tougher than it has been the last 12 years. Surely it's time for him to shape a coherent policy, bring his advisers into line, and not allow staffers to be hung out to dry. This would be the adult thing to do.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol

An Execution and Its Witnesses

The McVeigh case and the triumph of victims' rights. BY TOD LINDBERG

OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBER Timothy McVeigh is scheduled to die by lethal injection May 16 in a federal prison in Indiana, the first person to be executed under the federal death penalty law. Another first: Families of McVeigh's victims and survivors of the attack received an invitation from federal authorities led by Attorney General John Ashcroft to watch a live closed-circuit broadcast of the execution. As of the May 1 deadline, some 285 (of about 3,000 eligible) had indicated they would turn out.

Everything about the Oklahoma City bombing resists efforts to put matters into context: the spectacular quality of the crime, its unique devastation as an exercise in mass murder, its utterly unrepentant perpetrator, and his grotesque ideological motivation. For an illustration of the exceptionalism, note that 22 percent of Americans in a CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll both believe that McVeigh should be executed and oppose the death penalty. Some death penalty opponents have insisted that McVeigh's is exactly the sort of hard case that requires opponents to stiffen their resolve against capital punishment. On the other hand, there is nothing obviously irrational about opposing capital punishment in general while allowing for an exception in the case of someone who murdered 168 of your countrymen.

All the things that make the episode singular also make it risky to mine it for general social significance. Yet the decision to offer a closed-circuit viewing of the execution to families of McVeigh's victims does open a window on the extent to which victims have taken a place front and center in the concerns of the criminal justice system. This is hard to argue against. Certainly official insensitivity to crime victims is unconscionable. But solicitude, too, comes at a cost. When crime is viewed through the victim's eyes, to the exclusion of other points of view, we risk losing our grip on what crime really is and why we punish it the way we do.

"Victims' rights" advocates have been making steady and sometimes dramatic progress for the better part of two decades. From feminists blaming the dehumanization of rape victims on patriarchal society, to law-and-order organizations worrying about restrictions on police powers, to politicians looking for ways to sell themselves as tough on crime, the utility of focusing on the agony of the victim has been undeniable. Congress has even tried to pass a victims' rights amendment to the Constitution. It would entitle victims of violent crimes to notice of and admission to all public proceedings concerning their cases; guarantee them an opportunity to weigh in on plea bargains, sentencing, and parole; entitle them to notice of the perpetrator's release; and guarantee a "final disposition free from unreasonable delay."

The issue is thoroughly bipartisan. Senate co-sponsors of the amendment are Jon Kyl, Arizona Republican, and Dianne Feinstein, California Democrat. Here is Republican representative Steve Chabot of Ohio, a House sponsor of the measure, with the most often heard argument on its behalf: "The U.S. Constitution is completely silent on *victims'* rights, while it speaks volumes as to the rights of the accused." Al Gore made a victims' rights amendment the centerpiece of his message on crime in the 2000 campaign: "Defendants have constitutional rights to protect them, and when those rights are enshrined in the Constitution and the rights of victims are not, victims are put in the back seat and sometimes completely ignored. We need to change that by having balance in the system."

If there is a counterargument here, it is seldom heard. Every now and again, a criminal defense lawyer will rise to testify that an excessive focus on victims' rights can lead to erosion of the constitutional and statutory protections of the accused, who after all remain innocent until proved guilty. *Nation* magazine contributing editor Bruce Shapiro, writing in 1997, also worried that the push for victims' rights is a distraction from more pressing social needs: "How many tens of millions of dollars in federal assistance now going to pay for medical care for uninsured victims would be unnecessary under a single-payer system?"

But concerns such as these have made little headway against the raw emotional force of the case for victims. Ashcroft couldn't have been clearer about how he made his decision to allow McVeigh's execution to be televised. Earlier this year, he met with 100 of McVeigh's victims after the dedication of a memorial in Oklahoma City. "My time with these brave survivors changed me," he said upon returning to Washington. "What was taken from them can never be fully replaced nor fully restored." He said that the experience had "galvanized" him to see that their wishes were accommodated. And how much of a departure, really, was this one-time expansion of the number of witnesses to the execution? "If there were three victims, no one would raise a question about the fact that they have a right to actually go on site and be present," he said. "Why should the mag-

Contributing editor Tod Lindberg is editor of Policy Review *and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

AP / Wide World Photos

McVeigh's destination: the federal prison in Terre Haute

nitude of the crime somehow disenfranchise victims who feel the need?" He was seeking to "help to meet their need to close this chapter in their lives."

His boss, President Bush, had meanwhile received an appeal from no less a personage than John Paul II for clemency for McVeigh, part of the Catholic Church's new campaign against the death penalty. Rebuffing the pope is no casual matter. In doing so, presumably, one searches out the best argument one has. A Bush spokesperson turned straight to the victims: "The president has great respect for the pope and this is a tragic situation. The president also has deep compassion and sympathy for the 168 victims of the Oklahoma City bombing and their families."

And what, in this case, do the victims (whom the attorney general now speaks of in terms of rights and disenfranchisement) actually want? Well, in the case of Peggy Broxterman of Las Vegas, who lost a son, "I literally want to see that boy [McVeigh] on his way to hell. There may be no closure as such, but it will close that one door." Others spoke about a felt need to see McVeigh "breathe his last" in order to truly believe he is dead. Not that this was necessarily the majority sentiment among victims. Most, after all, will not be watching, and some have said they see no need for the closed-circuit screening. In news accounts, their comments, too, have been accorded special weight—dueling victim's perspectives. And surely the attorney general would agree that the right to watch the perpetrator go to hell implies the right not to watch the perpetrator go to hell; likewise, the fact that some might feel disenfranchised by missing a chance to personally see the perpetrator breathe his last should in no way reflect negatively on those willing to take the government's word for it that he did, in fact, breathe his last.

Again, it's impossible to deny the unique perspective of the victim in relation to a crime, just as it is impossible to deny the unique perspective of the combat soldier in relation to war. But it is a mistake to think that the victim's perspective is the sole authentic perspective on crime, just as it is to take the experience of combat as the last word on war. We have not yet gone so far, even with the spread of victims' rights advocacy, but to give the victim the last word is to lose sight of the interest the state and society have in punishing criminals, quite independent of the particular views of particular victims. At the limit, criminal justice reverts to a premodern form, in which adjudication is entirely a matter of satisfying the private claims of an injured party.

That's not why we have criminal courts and laws. Society has reached a decision about how to punish mass murderers because society has a view of the harm mass murderers do not just to their victims, but to society as such. In no case of murder is the death penalty meted out on the say-so of the family of the victim. The state makes that determination.

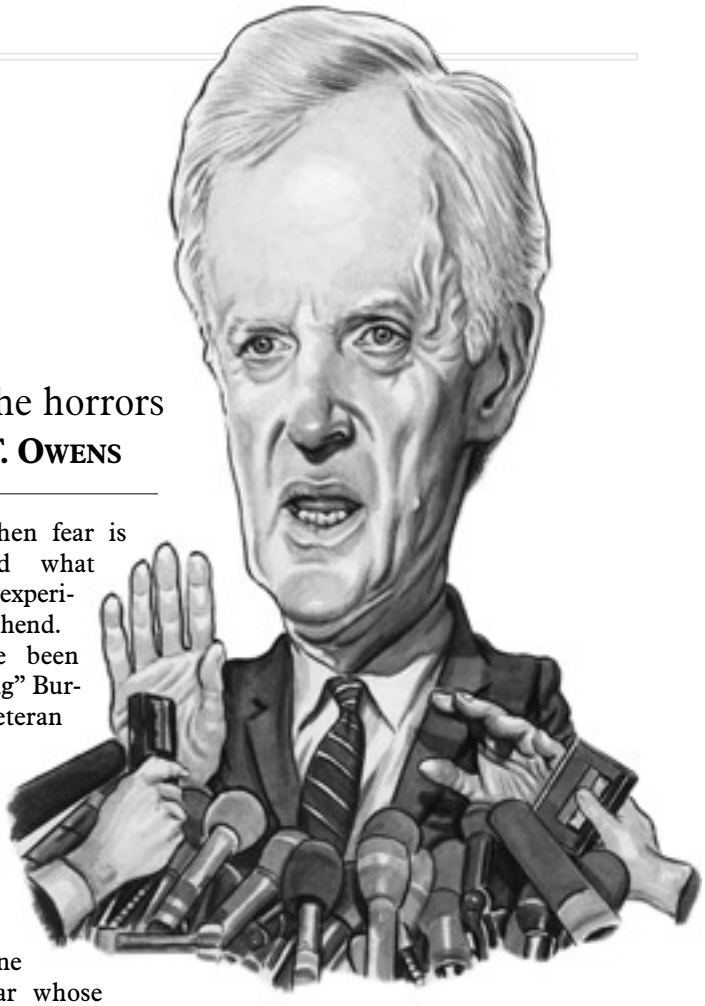
Oddly enough, the contrary, radically private view is none other than McVeigh's. He blew up that building for a reason, after all: to kill people working for a government whose legitimacy he does not accept. It worked out pretty much as planned; he got 168 of them (counting also the visitors, toddlers, passers-by, etc.). And if that same government now takes his life, well, as he has said he sees matters, that still leaves the balance 168-1 in his favor.

But McVeigh is not going to die because the United States subscribes to the ancient doctrine of *lex talionis*, an eye for an eye, according to which the wrong he did must be done to him in return in order to restore the equality between perpetrator and victim. His execution is instead a product of a legal system that looks past the victim to ask whether certain conduct is, in principle, harmful or offensive to society itself, and to what degree. The focus on victims—"I literally want to see that boy on his way to hell"—unfortunately suggests that by executing McVeigh, we are just settling a score.

In punishing McVeigh, we are doing something much richer and more subtle than settling a score: We are enforcing our law. ♦

Bob Kerrey's Vietnam War

Sometimes there's a fine line between the horrors of combat and atrocities. **BY MACKUBIN T. OWENS**



VIETNAM IS THE WAR that just won't go away. The latest flare-up of that decades-old conflict is the admission by Bob Kerrey, the former senator from Nebraska and Medal of Honor recipient, that the Navy SEAL team he led in Vietnam killed women and children during a nighttime foray 32 years ago.

Kerrey's admission was prompted by a lengthy *New York Times Magazine* story by Gregory Vistica that went further. It made the explosive claim that then-Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerrey had ordered the civilians to be rounded up and then shot point blank to facilitate the SEALs' escape. *60 Minutes II* followed up with a program based on Vistica's investigation, including interviews with both Kerrey and Gerhard Klann, a member of Kerrey's team and the source of the allegation that the civilians were killed at Kerrey's direction. If this is true, what happened that night in the Mekong Delta village of Thanh Phong was more than a terrible tragedy of war. It was a war crime.

As might be expected, many commentators who served in Vietnam, especially those who took part in ground combat, have tended to accept Kerrey's version of events—that his men, deep in Viet Cong-controlled territory on a mission to "snatch" a VC official, took fire and responded in kind, not realizing they were firing into a group of unarmed civilians. These commentators emphasize the chaos and confusion of combat, especially at night, when fear is magnified beyond what those who have not experienced it can comprehend.

But there have been exceptions. B.G. "Jug" Burkett, a Vietnam veteran and author of the incomparable *Stolen Valor*, argues that Kerrey's account of the action is riddled with discrepancies. And a Marine veteran of the war whose opinion I greatly respect e-mailed a number of correspondents with his impression of the *60 Minutes II* program: "Gerhard Klann: a Vietnam warrior attempting to clear his conscience. Senator Bob Kerrey: a Clintonesque politician covering his ass."

These objections notwithstanding, the available evidence seems to contradict Klann's claim that the civilians were killed on purpose. Every other member of the SEAL team denies this. Meanwhile, the main Vietnamese witness, the wife of a Viet Cong soldier, has backed away from her assertion that she actually observed the events of February 25, 1969, in Thanh Phong. And we should not forget that Vietnam is a totalitarian state in which alleged American atrocities are a staple of Communist propaganda.

Another piece of evidence that lends credibility to Kerrey's account and may answer some of the questions raised by the skeptical combat veterans was underscored by James Webb in his *Wall Street Journal* op-ed of May 1. Vistica quotes archived records of U.S. Army radio transmissions, according to which, on February 28,

> an old man from Thanh Phong presented himself to the district chief's headquarters with claims for retribution for alleged atrocities committed the night of 25 and 26 February 69. Thus far it appears 24 people were killed. 13 were women and children and one old man. 11 were unidentified and assumed to be VC.

This seems to corroborate the claim of Kerrey and the other members of his SEAL team that they came under attack before returning fire, that the Viet Cong were using the civilians as a shield as they attempted to escape, and that the civilian deaths were a tragic but unintended result of the fire fight.

But whatever happened that night in Thanh Phong, the recent revelations have revived the old left-wing anti-war claim that atrocities were widespread in Vietnam. Comparisons between Thanh Phong and My Lai have abounded. Ellis Henican, for

Illustration by Drew Friedman

Mackubin Thomas Owens is professor of strategy and force planning at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He led a Marine rifle platoon in Vietnam in 1968-69.

example, in *Newsday*, quotes the late Ron Ridenhour, the soldier who publicized the My Lai massacre (though he was not present): "My Lai was a whole lot more than one crazy lieutenant. And there were plenty of My Lais."

This is nonsense. Atrocities did occur in Vietnam, but they were far from widespread. Between 1965 and 1973, 201 soldiers and 77 Marines were convicted of serious crimes against the Vietnamese. Even allowing for the fact that many crimes go unreported (in war or peace), and for the particular difficulties encountered by Americans fighting in Vietnam, such acts were never commonplace. No less a critic of U.S. policy in Vietnam than Daniel Ellsberg rejected the argument that My Lai was in any way a normal event. "My Lai was beyond the bounds of permissible behavior," Ellsberg wrote, "and that is recognizable by virtually every soldier in Vietnam. They know it was wrong. . . . The men who were at My Lai knew there were aspects out of the ordinary. That is why they tried to hide the event, talked about it to no one, discussed it very little even among themselves."

My Lai was an extreme case. Nevertheless, anyone who has been in combat understands how thin is the line between permissible act and atrocity. The first and potentially most powerful emotion in combat is fear arising from the instinct of self-preservation. Soldiers overcome fear by means of what the Greeks called *thumos*—spiritedness or righteous anger. Unchecked, *thumos* can engender rage and frenzy. It is the role of leadership, which provides strategic context for killing and enforces discipline, to prevent this outcome. Such leadership was absent at My Lai.

But My Lai also must be placed within a larger context. As the testimony of James Webb and many others illustrates, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong frequently committed atrocities, not as a result of *thumos* run amok, but as a matter of policy. While left-wing anti-war critics of U.S. policy in Vietnam were quick to invoke Auschwitz and the Nazis in discussing alleged American atrocities, they were silent about Hue City, where a month and a half before My Lai, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong systematically murdered 3,000 people. They were also willing to excuse Pol Pot's mass murder of upwards of a million Cambodians.

My Lai, while inexcusable, was at least understandable as a consequence of the psychological stress of combat. Hue and Pol Pot, on the other hand, were instances of a defining phenomenon of the twentieth century: mass murder generated by the attempt of social engineers to remake human nature according to an abstract ideology, whether Communist or National Socialist. Those who have been quick to judge Kerrey and others caught up in the chaos and confusion of the Vietnam War need to keep this in mind. ♦

James Jeffords (R-Sort of)

Revenge is a dish best served with milk.

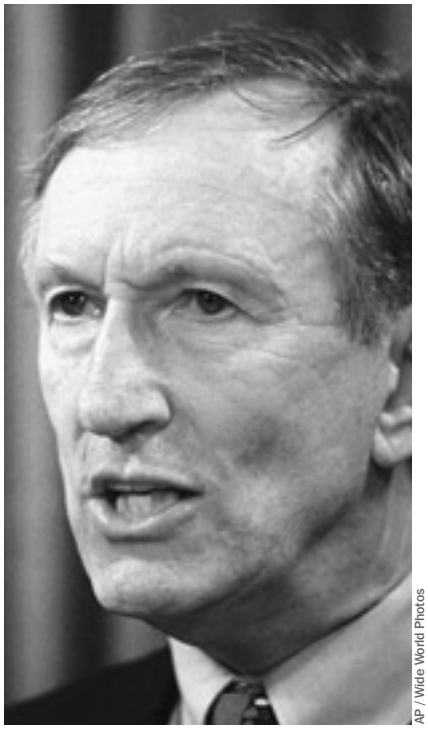
BY SAM DEALEY

As his Republican colleagues were polishing off lunch at their weekly policy meeting last Tuesday, Vermont senator James Jeffords spoke about the importance of passing the education bill. According to a witness, Jeffords, the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee chairman, delivered one last exhortation as senators got up to leave. "Everybody needs to stick together on this bill," he said.

That Jeffords would urge party loyalty was surprising. In early April, along with fellow moderate Republicans Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island, Jeffords broke with his party to vote with Democrats to reduce the president's tax cut package from $1.6 to $1.2 trillion.

To say that Republican tax cutters were irked with the defectors would be putting it mildly. The vote was more than just a measure to boost the economy; it was the first major vote on a pillar issue of the Bush presidency. Nor did it endear Jeffords et al to their own party leadership. Majority leader Trent Lott had managed to line up 48 other Republicans, only to be thwarted by these two. (Specter signaled early on that he would support any compromise.) Adding insult to injury, Jeffords and Chafee refused to negotiate personally with their own party. They allowed Democrat John Breaux to broker a compromise on their behalf.

Republicans weren't shocked that Chafee would act like this. The first-term senator from Rhode Island is more popular than respected or feared. Jeffords, on the other hand, is a 13-year veteran of the Senate. "If we weren't all so furious, it would have been funny," groused a GOP budget negotiator. The result of these defections was a tactical and public relations headache: protracted negotiations with Democrats that substantially reduced the tax cut package and increased spending.



AP / Wide World Photos

Last month, the White House exacted an ounce of retribution. On the same day that the president was dining with Democrat John Breaux in an effort to woo him into a compromise, the White House neglected to invite Jeffords to an event honoring a Vermonter as Teacher of the Year. A Bush spokeswoman denied it was intended as a snub. Still, it was the kind of photo-op politicians leap at—and presidents are happy to dispense—and Jeffords was conspicuously absent.

Granted, it wasn't a big thing. But White House and Senate sources say it was a taste of things to come for Jeffords. "The White House is not giving specifics," says a senior GOP source. "But there's a one- or two-year plan to punish him for his behavior. And it's stuff that may hurt him, but stuff that's not going to draw a significant amount of attention. So they're going to get him."

The most likely retribution, GOPers say, would be for Republicans not to reauthorize the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact, a Depression-era price-fixing scheme for New England dairy farmers that gives them an unfair advantage over Midwestern dairy producers. The compact was saved from the chopping block last time around during another Jeffords buy-off and was excused as a necessary evil to shore up the senator's 2000 reelection bid. What better way to punish Jeffords than by denying him his pet project *and* doing away with a prime example of pork?

Indeed, an indication that this might be the preferred punishment came last week in a meeting between Candida Wolff, Vice President Cheney's top liaison to the Senate, and Senator Herb Kohl's office. According to the Wisconsin Democrat's spokeswoman, Wolff was "receptive" to the free-market argument against the dairy compact. Wolff didn't indicate whether the White House would urge Congress not to renew the dairy compact. But, Kohl's office says, Wolff was well aware of the tradeoff that had saved the dairy compact the last time it was up for renewal. The key difference this time around is that Jeffords isn't up for reelection, so letting the compact die won't cost Republicans a seat.

Jeffords's office would only say that the dairy compact is important to many states and not just Vermont. But in early April, Jeffords described how the dairy compact might scrape by during the usual end-of-year spending mayhem. "Hopefully . . .

Sam Dealey is a writer in Washington, D.C.

everybody will be concentrating on something else other than the compact," he told the Associated Press. "Thus, we can sneak it in through the stealth of night, get it through when people aren't looking." But, given the hard feelings caused by Jeffords's tax-bill antics, Republicans will at least try to make him pay. ♦

Out of Control?

The surprising Senate fight over high-tech sales to China. BY ELLEN BORK

President Bush seems to be settling into a comfortable relationship with his party over China. His handling of the surveillance plane episode met with widespread support, and his pledge to do "whatever it took" to defend Taiwan bucked up even conservatives. In late April, however, a fight broke out among senior Senate Republicans over deregulating technology exports to China. What looked like a consensus between the White House and Capitol Hill to loosen controls on the export of "dual-use" items (civilian technologies that also have military applications) ran into surprising opposition on the Senate floor.

In part, the opposition was provoked because majority leader Trent Lott jumped the gun with his sudden introduction of the bill championed by Banking Committee chairman Phil Gramm and Wyoming's Mike Enzi, his committee colleague. Their measure reauthorizing the Export Administration Act would limit the influence of security-minded officials at the Pentagon and the State Department in controlling dual-use exports. Lott's maneuver annoyed a group of senators who chair committees overseeing national security issues and who thought they had Lott's agreement to consult them before acting on the bill. The senators—Richard Shelby, Fred Thompson, Jesse Helms, John McCain, John Warner, and Jon Kyl—felt blindsided. "I reflected, as I approached the chamber," said Warner, chairman of the Armed Services committee, "that in my 23 years in the Senate, I don't know if I have ever opposed my leader on a motion to proceed."

The concerns, though, were more than procedural. Passage of the export bill would reflect a decision by Congress and the Bush administration, which supports the bill, to make commercial considerations paramount in regulating the export of advanced technologies, including supercomputers, encryption programs, stealth technology, and machine tools. Lott, said Kyl later, "utterly failed to appreciate the depth of concern" about the bill. After five hours of scrimmaging, the bill was pulled from the floor and action postponed until later this year.

While proponents insist they only want to free America's high technology industries from anachronistic restrictions, the bill is actually, as Thompson said on the floor of the Senate, another China trade bill. Businesses, as he put it, want to export high-tech goods to China "without having to apply for a license. . . . That is what this is all about." But should we really be selling China the technologies it seeks for its military, the same military that has just plundered our downed reconnaissance plane for its secrets and which U.S. forces may confront one day in a conflict in the Taiwan strait?

Strange to say, but the United States has been doing just that for three decades. China has been acquiring sophisticated technologies from the United States since the earliest days of the U.S.-China relationship. Building up China's military as a counterweight to the Soviet Union was U.S. policy from Nixon forward. The flow of dual-use items even accelerated under the anti-Communist hero Ronald Reagan.

However, even as the Soviet Union disintegrated, export of dual-use equipment and technology continued. Under the Clinton administration, the National Security Council became so associated with loosening export con-

Ellen Bork is a writer and consultant on Asian affairs.

trols that bureaucrats who monitor technology transfer nicknamed it "Commerce West."

The Clinton administration cited the end of the Cold War as a rationale for loosening America's export controls. But in fact, the disappearance of the Soviet threat ended the need for a U.S.-China strategic alliance and any ostensible reason for selling Beijing advanced dual-use technologies. It also enabled China to reorient its military toward regional goals such as retaking Taiwan and countering U.S. influence in Asia. In recent years, China has increased dramatically its defense budget and explicitly taken aim at the U.S. presence in the region.

Of course, there was always another rationale: campaign contributions, one of the biggest scandals of the Clinton years. Oddly enough, it ended up acting as a brake on technology sales. As one industry lobbyist told the *National Journal*, "The problem under Clinton was that he was of one party and Congress was of another, so whatever Clinton did was subject to close scrutiny by the Republicans who did not trust Clinton because of the [alleged] campaign contributions from China." Now, with a Republican in the White House, there may be less willingness among Republicans on Capitol Hill to carp about exports to China.

During the campaign, Bush promised to get rid of "export controls that do not serve any clear national-security purpose." At a White House meeting with high-tech business leaders on March 28, the president called the measure "a good bill." A top lobbyist for the computer industry allowed that he was "pleasantly surprised" by the administration's willingness to see the bill go forward so quickly. He said they had "acted professionally."

Old hands at technology transfer disagree with this definition of professional. The bill, they complain, lacks the "checks and balances" that ensure departments with the relevant expertise have standing in the interagency process to affect decisions. A former senior defense department official says the Bush administration "missed a great opportunity. They should have asked for a delay to give the intelligence agencies" the task of assessing the threat posed by China's acquisition of dual-use items and then devised a bill to address that threat. Instead, "the people who advised this were from the Clinton administration. Not one outside expert from any other administration" was consulted.

Publicly, the bill's opponents on Capitol Hill have been careful not to criticize administration officials over their handling of the bill. Privately they express astonishment. "For reasons that I frankly don't understand, they chose to conduct this review in an extraordinarily quick fashion," complains one senator. "They couldn't possibly have examined all the ramifications, and they had to have relied on people left over" from the Clinton administration.

Thus, the bill reported out of the Senate Banking Committee allows the Commerce Department to decide whether an item needs a license that requires referral to the Pentagon and other departments for review. When there is an interagency dispute, the resolution process established by the bill is weaker than the current process, and is dominated by Commerce. Appeal to higher levels must be made by a presidential appointee. The ultimate authority is the president. Under such a process, the secretaries of state and defense will have to weigh an objection to a particular export license against all of the other priorities they want to take up with the president. This will deter agencies besides Commerce from making objections. Gramm insists it's a workable system of controls. But a Senate staffer experienced in export-controls legislation says Gramm has "established a dispute resolution mechanism like Potemkin established a village."

Other provisions of the bill allow for products to avoid review at the discretion of the Commerce Department if they can be described either as "mass market" or "foreign availability" products. The "mass market" designation would exempt from control items produced in "volume" in the United States. "Foreign availability" would allow the export of items available from "sources outside" the United States.

These exclusions could allow Commerce on its own, or at the request of a company seeking to export, to obviate licensing restrictions on a whole range of items, from laptop computers to components of nuclear triggers. While there may be cases in which these sorts of items would find their way around controls to China or other controlled destinations, these new categories would make it impossible for the United States to restrict America's often superior technology, or simply to make a moral judgment that it doesn't want to be the source of commodities used in weapons of mass destruction, or conventional weapons used against our allies, or even against ourselves. Once again, only the president can act to set aside such a finding.

Can the bill still be fixed? The

national security official says the Pentagon's support "has always been conditioned on an executive order" that addresses its concerns. But the administration has not made final such an executive order or even shared a draft with senators. Indeed, a National Security Council spokesman says that an executive order does not exist.

Not surprisingly, the computer industry is pleased with the bill, which removes current licensing standards and congressional notification requirements for high performance computers. These requirements have been the only way that congressional committees with national security oversight can demand a justification for a decision to decontrol ever more powerful computers.

Indeed, some suggest the clout of the high-tech sector explains much about the quick progress of the bill. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, during the 2000 election cycle, the computer industry ranked as the seventh largest political contributor, up from 55th in 1990. The perception that too much of this money was going to the Clinton White House caused concern to at least one of the export act's prime movers, Phil Gramm. At a meeting to try to persuade his Republican colleagues to support last year's version of the legislation, the senator said it was necessary to deprive the Democrats of an "intolerable advantage" in fund-raising. "We all walked out of there thinking, 'I feel dirty,'" says one participant. Gramm rejects the suggestion that he is motivated by campaign contributions. "Not only has that never come out of my lips, it has never crossed my mind."

Gramm insists that his record on national security is rock solid, and cites, for example, his father's Army service and his role in the defense budget increase of 1981. He objects, however, to doing "feel good" things that hamper business and says he prefers to "build a higher wall around fewer things."

That makes it sound as if lots of exports are being controlled now, when in fact only slightly more than 4 percent of applications for exports of dual-use goods to China are denied. As for the value to American industry of the new bill, even the Commerce Department says it's not going to be that much. According to the most recent report of the Bureau of Export Administration, "the dollar value of trade with controlled destinations has [historically] been low," less than 3 percent of U.S. exports in 1998.

When the export act comes up for debate again, the six Republicans who have made national security rather than trade their top priority will face an uphill fight. Given how far Fred Thompson and his colleagues went in objecting to their leader's motion, says one Senate staffer, "if this comes up without having their concerns met, there will be a Republican bloodbath on the floor of the Senate." Is that what the Bush administration wants? ♦

Liberate Iraq

Is the Bush administration serious about toppling Saddam Hussein?

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, President Bush often compared Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler. In sophisticated American and European foreign policy circles, the allusion seemed overwrought—a historical malapropism from a president trying hard to rally his people.

After all, U.S. diplomats and spooks, not to mention businessmen and farmers, had established a certain rapport with Saddam's regime. His eight-year, half-a-trillion-dollar *guerre à outrance* with Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini had ended in 1988. Victorious but chastened, the ruler of Baghdad obviously wanted stable times to rebuild his country, or so these Americans asserted. He wanted to work with, not against, the United States, which had provided inestimable aid in satellite intelligence during the most critical war years. American oilmen were clogging every first-class Baghdad hotel, eager to show how they'd tap Iraq's immense, undeveloped energy resources. American "realists" were thus certain they'd found an Arab strongman with whom they could deal.

A decade after Desert Storm, those Republican "realists" have gone to ground, pretending, as did so many Clintonites about the Cold War, that they'd known all along the evil before them. President Bush's Hitlerian allusions—which, given Bush *père*'s World War II past, were no doubt uttered sincerely—now seem apposite. America's one-hundred-hour Middle East war no longer appears so grand precisely because its end—conditional Iraqi surrender—betrayed the president's words, leaving in place an aggressive, vengeful, totalitarian ruler.

In the wake of two Gulf Wars, Saddam has devoured his country. The machine-gunning, bombing, and gassing of Kurds in the north; the obliteration of the Marsh Arabs in the south; the slaughter of other Shi'ites in the countrywide rebellion of March 1991; the intentionally random arrest, interrogation, torture, and murder of countless apolitical citizens; the routine, systematic rape of thousands of women of all classes, creeds, and tribes (turning shame into the ultimate political weapon against independence of body and mind)—all of these sins and more, against his own people and his neighbors, define Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath political party that formed him as accomplished, modern totalitarians.

Twice since 1980, Saddam has tried to dominate the Middle East by waging wars against neighbors that could have given him control of the region's oil wealth and the identity of the Arab world. He has unceasingly sought weapons of mass destruction, and will in all likelihood have a nuclear bomb within a few years. Who would like to bet that Saddam Hussein has spent hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars on biological and chemical weapons *since* the Iran-Iraq War only to slaughter Kurds?

In 1990, the United States very nearly did not go to war because of Washington's fear of American casualties, which led many on the left and the right to find no irreconcilable conflict between U.S. national interests and Saddam's hunger for *Lebensraum*. Contrary to the common depiction of him as a mad hatter, Saddam acted in a perfectly rational manner when he ridiculed the resolve of Uncle Sam in 1990. Anyone who thinks this besmirches the old man should read the *Congressional Record* of that year. George Bush senior's greatest accomplishment as president was his success at pushing Congress and the equally queasy bureaucrats and soldiers of Washington, D.C., to back his fight in Mesopotamia. Once Saddam has his nuke—as he inevitably will if he stays in power—will Washington gird its loins again, even if Saddam has not lately invaded any neighbors?

Think smaller: If Baghdad's ruler finally downs one of our pilots who constantly fly over Iraq to enforce the no-fly zones, will the United States appease Baghdad to secure the pilot's release? American and British pilots have experienced a fivefold increase in the intensity of Iraqi antiaircraft fire in the last four months. Saddam Hussein obviously thinks a captured pilot will redound to his advantage. Should he get one, a media circus would likely unfold, with CNN mixing features on the pilot's

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Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former case officer in the CIA's clandestine service, is the director of the Middle East Initiative at the Project for The New American Century. He is the author, under the pseudonym Edward Shirley, of Know thine Enemy: A Spy's Journey into Revolutionary Iran.

life with gripping stories about ordinary Iraqis' suffering under U.S. sanctions. Weeks of this coverage could easily distort policy planning deliberations in Washington, as hostage crises have done before. An excellent question inevitably comes to the fore: To what end are allied pilots risking their lives?

More broadly: Is the United States to hinge its Iraq policy on hope and luck—Saddam somehow dies an early death, and his regime, which has shredded the terms of its 1991 conditional surrender, is succeeded by a "realistic" one? Is active intervention—even preemptive military action—unthinkable for the United States, given the political establishment's fear and firm belief that the American people, not to mention the political elites themselves, no longer believe in a Pax Americana? In other words, were the Clintonites right?

In recent years, Republicans often attacked the Clinton administration's foreign policy for its ineptitude, weakness, and lack of vision. Saddam Hussein tried to assassinate former President Bush in Kuwait in 1993; President Clinton in reprisal fired cruise missiles at an empty Iraqi building. Yet such superpower frivolousness was the product of a purposeful, consistent, and quite serious intellectual choice by President Clinton and his closest advisers: Above all, the United States would not again risk going to war in the Persian Gulf.

Once that decision had been made, everything else—the slow-motion evisceration of United Nations weapons inspections; the abandonment of the U.S.-supported opposition group the Iraqi National Congress; Washington's embrace of the lame coup attempt by the opposition group Iraqi National Accord; the collapse of the sanctions regime; the revival of anti-Americanism in the "Arab street"; the resurrection of Saddam Hussein as the great defender of the Muslim Middle East; the mantra, repeated ever more emphatically by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, that Saddam was trapped "in a box" (which, of course, any oil analyst or Jordanian taxi driver could have told her was nonsense); and the increasingly pro-Iraqi attitudes of Paris, Moscow, and Beijing—all this became inevitable.

Totalitarians have a sixth sense for democratic weakness. A carnivore, Saddam Hussein probably knew early on (a good guess would be June 1993, when President Clinton cruise-missiled the empty intelligence headquarters) that Washington had no will to fight. By August 1996, when the United States failed to use its airpower to defend the Iraqi National Congress's lightly armed forces against Baghdad's mechanized brigades, there was no doubt.

America's *hayba*—its ability to inspire awe, the critical factor in the Middle East's ruthless power politics—had vanished. And once *hayba* is lost, only a demonstration of indomitable force restores it. A U.S. election, followed by President George W. Bush's slightly bigger bombing run over Iraq on February 16, doesn't cut it after years of pointless raids accompanied by American braggadocio.

President Bush's choice for secretary of state, Colin Powell, further complicates the situation. The Iraqis know well that General Powell fought hard against President Bush's decision to go to war in 1990. Once engaged, he famously promised to "kill" the Iraqi Republican Guards—Saddam's praetorians—and then didn't. As secretary of state, he quickly voyaged to the Middle East to solicit very publicly the opinion of former Arab "partners" in the Gulf War coalition, telling all that Washington was after "smarter" (read fewer) sanctions. He made appeals for renewed U.N. weapons inspections without making ironclad military threats to reinforce America's determination to search Iraqi installations.

In other words, the general sent a signal that the Bush administration was retreating. With one trip, Powell unintentionally dissipated the tougher-than-Clinton aura of George Bush II in the dynastically minded Middle East. He provoked memories of Warren Christopher.

Intellectually honest, Secretary Powell knows that the principal reason he was in favor of sanctions in 1990 was that he feared war more than he feared Saddam Hussein. But does anyone today doubt that the war needed to be fought? Does anyone seriously believe that sanctions would have rolled Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait a decade ago? Does anyone really believe that sanctions today, no matter how much you increase their IQ, will prevent Saddam from acting for a third time on his dreams of a new Babylonian empire? Can anyone seriously contend, in an age of rapid proliferation, that Saddam Hussein's megalomania and quest for vengeance will not send shock waves well beyond Tel Aviv?

Nonetheless, one can easily appreciate the State Department's distaste for the sanctions regime. Sanctions don't weaken the merciless hold Saddam Hussein has over his people. They make daily diplomacy—delivering démarches, which are increasingly derided and ignored—unpleasant and embarrassing. But lightening and (in theory) tightening sanctions doesn't, of course, reverse their effects. Saddam Hussein isn't strong because his people are poor. He was strong when they were rich. As Adolf Hitler knew well, totalitarians need not fear affluence.

And Saddam can, if he wants, alleviate the suffering of his people. He has more than enough oil money to do so. The sanctions are debilitating to the common man primarily because Saddam wishes it so. Arab leaders have

moved away from the United States not because their hearts and souls bleed for the Iraqi people, nor because they truly fear "popular opinion" or riots in sympathy with the "America-oppressed" Iraqis. The denizens of Cairo may riot over the price of bread; if they riot over Iraq, it is because their leaders have told them to do so.

The "Arab street" has turned against the United States because Saddam Hussein once again has the look of a winner. Always popular with influential writers and intellectuals in the Arab world for his fire-breathing rhetoric against the age-old Western enemy, Saddam has restored his *hayba* by surviving and increasing his strength. By contrast, he casts Muslim Arab rulers who too closely associate with America as quislings, not statesmen wisely dealing with an indomitable, foreign power.

Saddam, like other Arab dictators, has benefited enormously from the Muslim world's unhappy collision with the modern West. Triumphant for a thousand years, Muslims have now witnessed three-hundred years of unrelenting defeat. Unfortunately, the Arab Middle East easily takes solace in a ruthless despot who can intimidate America. The hundreds of thousands who have died because of Saddam's unceasing aggression vanish silently in the collective indignation of an embittered civilization. "There has been an implosion, a moral collapse in the Arab world," writes Kanan Makiya, the most eloquent of Iraqi dissidents. "The consequences of this collapse are going to remain with us for generations to come, no matter what happens in Iraq . . . and irrespective of whether or not the holy grail of an Arab-Israeli settlement is finally grasped."

The State Department's Near East Bureau and the Office of Policy Planning under the energetic "realist" Richard Haass do Secretary Powell a disservice when they generate analyses of the Middle East depicting the United States forever on the seesaw of the Arab street. The "moral collapse" of which Makiya speaks can only be made worse by U.S. officials so solicitous of "Arab opinion." The United States must not try to win a popularity contest in the Arab world—the very act of doing so will make us appear weak. We will not grow stronger merely by reinvigorating sanctions; nor will Saddam grow weaker. If we are to protect ourselves and our friends in the Middle East, who are many, we have to rebuild the awe which we have lost through nearly a decade of retreat.

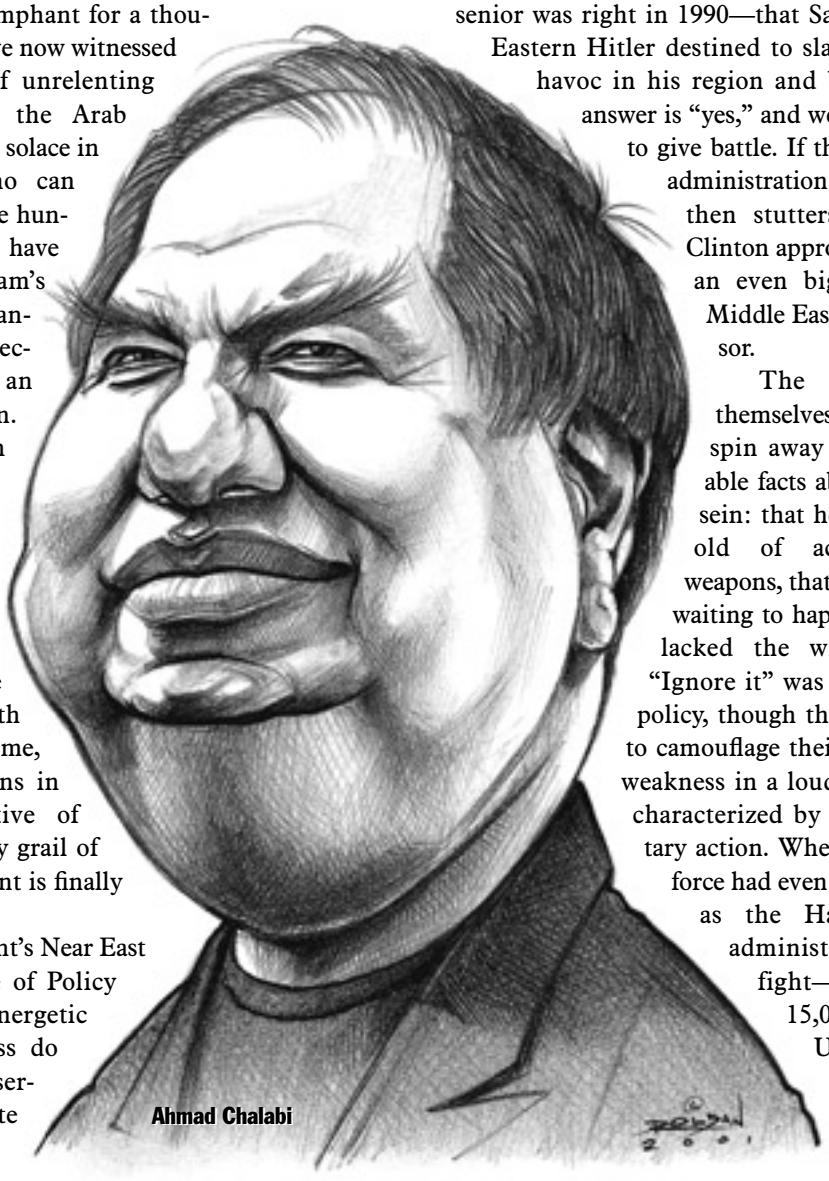


Illustration by Ismael Roldan

Ahmad Chalabi

Sooner rather than later, we have to answer one question: Is Saddam Hussein a serious enough threat to the United States that he must be countered, if necessary with force of arms? If we believe that George Bush senior was right in 1990—that Saddam is a Middle Eastern Hitler destined to slaughter and wreak havoc in his region and beyond—then the answer is "yes," and we must be prepared to give battle. If the new Republican administration answers "yes," but then stutters—essentially the Clinton approach—it may make an even bigger mess in the Middle East than its predecessor.

The Clintonites tied themselves in knots trying to spin away from the undeniable facts about Saddam Hussein: that he is on the threshold of acquiring nuclear weapons, that he is a catastrophe waiting to happen, and that they lacked the will to stop him. "Ignore it" was their small-power policy, though the Clintonites tried to camouflage their indifference and weakness in a loud internationalism characterized by half-hearted military action. Whenever an opposing force had even so much firepower as the Haitian army, the administration dodged the fight—or bombed from 15,000 feet. Former Undersecretary of State Strobe Talbott, the most intellectually

serious Clintonite, felicitously described his administration's ever-cautious reflex as learning to live "with reality."

Now, if President Bush tries to find a middle ground between Clintonism and a fight, "reality" will quickly get the better of him. If he is tempted by what might be called "the French approach"—ease sanctions while publicly averring readiness to massively whack Saddam the first moment the brute misbehaves—then the administration will truly put itself on a slippery slope. The Butcher of Baghdad will endlessly test our resolve, as he energetically advances his nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs. Such a policy will be read (correctly) throughout the Middle East as another American retreat.

But it is also possible that President Bush will make up his mind to fight. If he does, the tactical questions will become clearer. We will see first and foremost the indispensable and primary role of a U.S.-supported Iraqi opposition. We will also be thankful that Ahmad Chalabi, the chief voice of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), hasn't given up and retired to a life of ease in London.

We need to be frank, however, about one thing right from the beginning: A U.S.-armed Iraqi opposition cannot relieve the United States of the cost and responsibility once again of fielding its own troops in Iraq. Critics of the INC like to point out that supporting the Iraqi opposition is no free lunch. They are right to do so. Chalabi may be forgiven for suggesting that Iraq can be liberated at little cost to the American taxpayer, but it is unwise for his Western supporters to gloss over the unavoidable costs of deposing Saddam. Republicans who think that America can be tough, cheap, and out of harm's way delude themselves.

One of those costs would be the deployment of U.S. soldiers. To refuse to send large numbers of them would clearly signal that the United States still wasn't serious. For the opposition to have legitimacy and *hayba* in Iraqi eyes, U.S. ground forces would have to be deployed in the south to seize and protect zones under U.S.-opposition control. That alone would quickly transform Iraq's political landscape. We must shatter the bonds of fear that are the primary glue holding Saddam's totalitarian society together. U.S. ground troops are the key to instigating insurrection against the Ba'ath party.

And ground troops would also be a military necessity. Combined U.S.-opposition military operations would be inevitable. American helicopter gunships—essential for neutralizing Baghdad's armor—don't go anywhere without mechanized foot soldiers to back them up. American foot-soldiers don't go anywhere in significant numbers without tanks in front of them. At minimum, two divisions—roughly 50,000 troops—would probably be needed in the beginning. Given the U.S. military's doctrine of overwhelming force—more Field Marshal Montgomery than General Patton—the Army would likely press for far more, even though Saddam would be wary of concentrating an equivalent force given U.S. tactical airpower and the desert terrain.

Saddam Hussein would, however, go after any INC-U.S. forces in the south of the country immediately and tenaciously. Southern Iraq, unlike Kurdistan in the north, is the heartland, which is where the United States and the INC would have to strike. Saddam could not allow his enemies to shear off this part of the country, which is rich in oil. And we would want Saddam to throw heavily armed troops into the battle as quickly as possible. American soldiers would have to be there in sufficient numbers to ensure that the first and most important confrontation sent a shock wave through Baghdad. And when U.S. and INC forces found weakness, or strength, in the Iraqi lines, U.S. ground forces would have to move forward with the opposition. To do otherwise would immediately signal that American support was tentative and reversible. As Saddam brilliantly demonstrated in his squashing of the nationwide rebellion in 1991, he knows the psychology of his country. He would assiduously exploit any ebbing of our effort.

Yet unlike Ayatollah Khomeini and other great chiliastic leaders in Islamic history, Saddam Hussein doesn't inspire death-wish believers. Fear is the principal undergirding of his tyranny. When it vanishes, as it did so explosively throughout the country when Saddam retreated from Kuwait, the Ba'ath police-state overnight becomes a house of cards. Far fewer Iraqis and Americans would die in a U.S.-opposition campaign if the United States engaged as forcefully and as quickly as possible. We wouldn't want to allow Saddam a chance to regain his balance once his regime started to totter. Unlike in 1991, Washington would need to aid vigorously Iraqis who chose to rebel, anywhere in the country.

Contrary to many critics' claims, the opposition's forces would likely have significant military and intelligence value; indeed, they would probably demonstrate quite quickly that they could rout superior forces when backed up by U.S. airpower and an evident American determination to annihilate Saddam. Thousands of Iraqi soldiers would likely answer the opposition's call to change sides and fight. Yet it is impossible now to design realistic battle plans for opposition forces since Washington hasn't decided on the nature of its own involvement. After the debacle of August 1996, when the Clinton administration failed to provide air support to the INC,

Iraqis will be loath to put the cart before the horse. For the opposition, manpower and tactics are inextricably tied to America's willingness to commit.

Whatever the military role of the opposition, however, its most critical function would be spiritually to gut Iraq's totalitarian system by creating a pool of men, an organization, and a cooperative ethic to fill the void as the regime fell. Like the forces of the Free French and the *Résistance* in World War II, the Iraqi opposition would carry the burden of the country's honor. The people of Iraq have been woefully compromised by decades of totalitarian rule. The blood of the Iraqi opposition could give the whole country a much-needed moral reference point.

Even so, Iraq's fissiparous inclinations might well come to the fore. Apart from Israel, and maybe Egypt and Iran, the Middle East has no real nation-state. Once freed of Saddam, Iraq will need an institution, untouched by the Ba'ath, through which its diverse people can begin to restore communal ties and reconstruct a national identity. Given the savage police-state they have endured, reestablishing even minimal trust among communities will be extraordinarily difficult. Yet Saddam's and the Ba'ath's indescribable brutality has given all Iraqis a common denominator. We may hope that their experience with barbarism has sharpened their desire to find compromises short of killing.

In January 1999, *Foreign Affairs* published a high-profile attack on the INC, "Can Saddam Be Toppled?" by Daniel Byman, Kenneth Pollack, and Gideon Rose. It left the impression that Ahmad Chalabi is definitely not the man to lead the opposition, let alone the nation, out of the totalitarian abyss, portraying him as an ineffectual leader, devoid of the eminence necessary to draw disparate Iraqis together. Yet Chalabi may be ideal for the task, for the very reasons that often cause critics to trash him. He is rich, upper class (in the old-world sense), well educated, highly Westernized, an expatriate, and, last but not least, a Shi'ite Arab.

Sunni Arabs are very much an Iraqi minority. They represent no more than 30 percent of the population, probably closer to 20 percent. Shi'ite Arabs are at least 60 percent of the people, perhaps even 70 percent. (Sunni Kurds are the majority of what is left.) The Iraqi army, too, is majority Shi'ite. The officer corps probably isn't; the elite units certainly are not.

Yet this perspective is relevant only if one is trying to instigate a coup within Saddam's inner circle. But a coup against Saddam is an addle-headed idea, as the men involved in the CIA-engineered Iraqi National Accord coup attempt could testify, if they were still alive. Coups against totalitarian regimes can't work. Even if Saddam were to fall to an assassin's bullet or a praetorian insurrection, he would only be succeeded by a Ba'athi Himmler or Göring.

If Iraq is ever to escape its vicious past, its politics must start to reflect the mosaic of its people. Continued Sunni Arab dominance of government is a recipe for Lebanese-style disaster. The Sunni Arab community needs to know that the Shi'ites are not going to massacre them for their privileges within the Ba'athi system—this is an article of faith with Chalabi, who has a profound understanding of Iraq's messy history—but they must also know that the Sunni Arab power structure, as it exists under Saddam Hussein, will end.

This might not be as convulsive as it sounds. Sunni Arabs have suffered horribly under Saddam's reign of terror. For years, their women too have been raped. Chalabi, because he is an outsider and a member of an old, prominent family that reaches back before Iraq descended into its Ba'athi nightmare, can appeal to the nostalgia one senses throughout the Arab world for a time when civilized men did not slaughter each other.

Sunni-Shi'ite problems are no doubt in Iraq's future, but the possibility of Iraqi democracy must not be jettisoned for the illusion that there is any cheap, quick, Sunni-officer-delivered escape from the need to extirpate the Ba'ath. We must not deny the democratic chance for fear of an Iraqi-Iranian Shi'ite collusion upsetting the balance of power in the Middle East. This kind of fraternity between Iraqi and Iranian Shi'ites simply does not exist—except in the minds of Republican "realists" who tragically used this argument a decade ago.

We don't know for sure how good a national leader Chalabi would be. An observant Muslim, he has the old patrician Arab ability to speak across perhaps the most important socio-religious dividing line—between traditionalists and moderns. But we can't finally assess Chalabi's gravitas until the White House backs him on the battlefield, in Congress, and before Washington's foreign-affairs, defense, and intelligence bureaucracies.

Anyone who has met him knows that Chalabi has presence, but the critical factor for his leadership would be America's support. Once Chalabi was chosen by us, everyone else—the Kurds, the Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs, the Turks, Iranians, Kuwaitis, and Saudis—would view him in an entirely new light. It is astonishing that Byman, Pollack, and Rose, and those who echo their views in the U.S. government, favor trolling for new leadership among the many factions of the Iraqi opposition—in effect, turning the principle of divide and conquer against us. Their assertion that Chalabi has been a feckless leader of the opposition is bizarre given the Clinton

administration's unflagging efforts to undermine him. Ever since August 1996, when national security adviser Anthony Lake surreally declared Saddam Hussein's rout of the U.S.-supported INC to be irrelevant to America's position in the Middle East, besmirching Chalabi, who refused to go quietly, has been a logical necessity.

Chalabi's perseverance in the face of so much executive-branch flak ought to incline us strongly in his favor. And he has already shown that he can be an adequate leader. Under very adverse circumstances, and with considerable resistance from Washington, Chalabi organized successful military operations in northern Iraq in 1995 and 1996. These weren't major battles against Republican Guard shock troops, but that Chalabi was able to move the INC into combat at all, with only haphazard assistance from the Central Intelligence Agency, is impressive.

Chalabi also established his own intelligence service, which dwarfed the reach and understanding of the CIA's clandestine service. One of the principal reasons the clandestine service's Near East Division loathes Chalabi is that he tried to warn Langley that its coup d'état plans with the Iraqi National Accord—an opposition group that supposedly had cells within elite units of the Iraqi Army—had been thoroughly penetrated by Saddam. The INC, which wasn't supposed to be privy to the existence of the coup attempt, detailed quite accurately the trap Saddam was springing. The notorious "Bob," an intrepid, talented CIA case officer stationed in northern Iraq, believed the INC's information and tried to warn headquarters to begin immediately testing its INA assets for doubles. Langley refused. When Saddam tore the INA scheme apart, Chalabi became one of Langley's least favorite people.

Chalabi is pro-American in a deep, philosophical sense, which is rare among Middle Easterners, particularly expatriates.

Chalabi's acute grasp of the American scene—he went to MIT and the University of Chicago and has many influential friends in the worlds of finance, politics, and the press—also has not endeared him to bureaucratic Washington, which naturally prefers dependent foreigners ignorant of the real corridors of power. When the going gets tough in Iraq, as it surely will if there is war, we will be thankful that Chalabi can discuss in nuanced English the complexities of the situation on the ground. If we had to depend on the CIA's intelligence resources, our understanding would be thinner, our approach much more likely to be wrong.

And Chalabi is unquestionably pro-American, in a deep, philosophical sense, which is rare among Middle Easterners, particularly expatriates. There appears to be little rancor in the man, which there certainly could be given the number of his people who died in the summer of 1996 owing to American tergiversation.

Anonymous U.S. diplomats and intelligence officers have repeatedly labeled Chalabi via the press as corrupt, suggesting that he cares more about personal profit than anything else. A banker in Jordan in the 1970s, Chalabi is rumored to have stolen millions from his Petra bank. The rumors are probably unfounded, the product of Chalabi's being on the losing side in Hashemite-Jordanian-Palestinian financial squabbles. He made enemies among influential Jordanians closely tied to Palestinian banking circles, which have a near monopoly over Jordan's commerce.

But even if the rumors are true, so what? Chalabi hasn't been trying for the last eight years to become the CEO of KPMG. He hasn't watched friends die because money is the center of his life. If Chalabi weren't rich, he couldn't devote so much time and money to the fight against Saddam Hussein. One would think that George Tenet's CIA, which has probably been at the root of most of the attacks on Chalabi, would know well that good, even noble, men can take money. In the Middle East, there are much deadlier sins than greed.

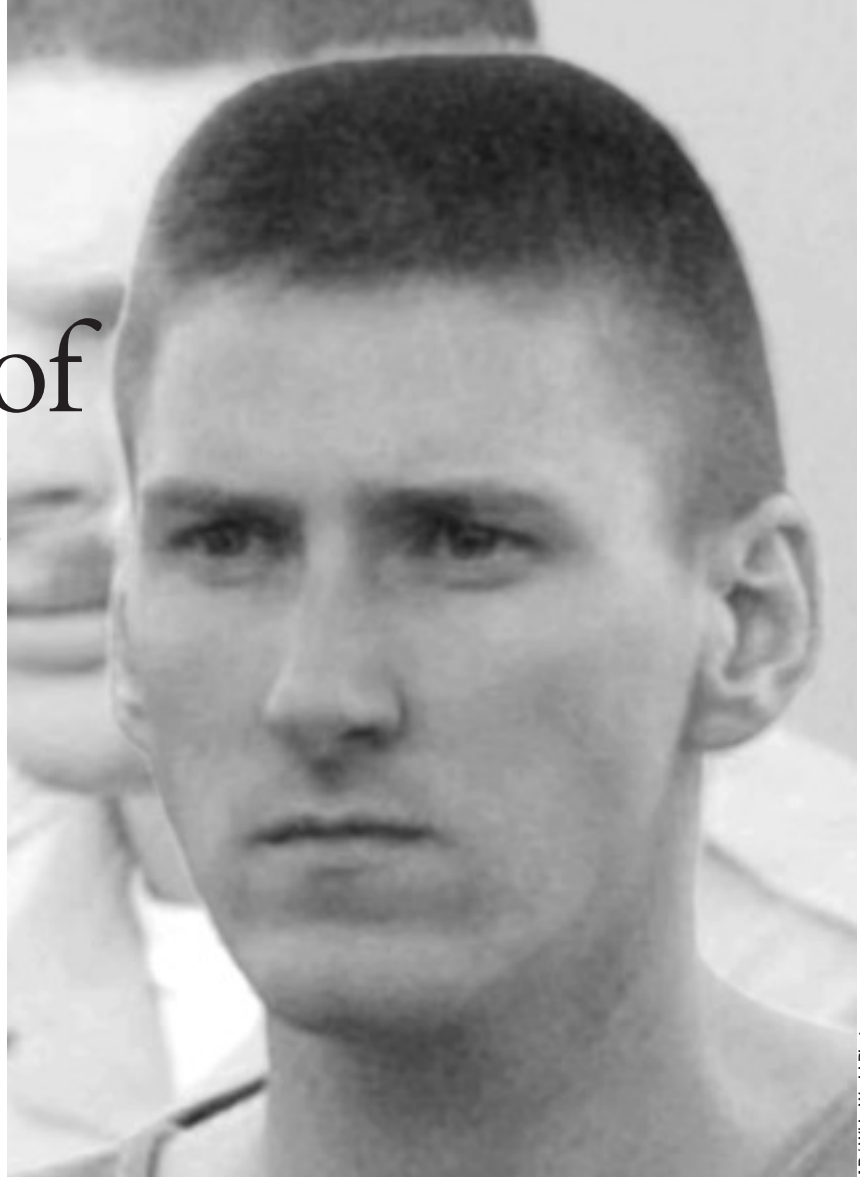
The pettiness of so much of the Washington discussion about the INC is not really a reflection of the personal dynamics between Chalabi and this State Department aide or that intelligence official; it's just the trickle-down effect of the Clinton administration's decision not to fight in Iraq. The constancy of bureaucracy has now produced careless bad-mouthing from the Bush administration.

President Bush will soon have to answer for himself the primary question about Saddam Hussein. If he answers that Saddam must go, a firestorm of criticism surely awaits him. The pummeling that Ronald Reagan took for fielding the contras may well seem like a walk through a spring rain compared with the barrage that will come at Bush from the timid Left and the "realist" Right. The State Department, CIA, and Pentagon will likely resist, as they resisted in 1990, doing anything that might upset the status quo, which is to say they will favor doing nothing. Most of our allies overseas will surely scream that the *hyper-puissance* has run amok.

And if President Bush doesn't answer with an unqualified "Saddam must go," then it would be a good time for the Republicans to apologize to the Clintonites. They won't, of course. ♦

The Banality of McVeigh

By Aitan Goelman



AP / Wide World Photos

From his prison cell, Timothy McVeigh has made a final attempt to convince America to share his vision of himself. He granted Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, reporters for the *Buffalo News*, over seventy-five hours of exclusive interviews, and the result—*American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & the Oklahoma City Bombing*—is a sympathetic account of McVeigh as intelligent, charismatic, and even sexy.

It's an astonishingly gentle treatment for the man who committed the bloodiest act of terrorism in American history, and it raises the question of whether the book actually reveals anything that might help us understand him. The answer, as it turns out, is no—save for the fact that McVeigh is even more appallingly self-satisfied than anyone imagined. In his interviews with Michel and Herbeck, McVeigh does admit, for the first time, that he bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Office Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. But he also poses as a committed, idealistic martyr who sacrificed himself for a greater good.

It should be needless to say that this bears little resemblance to the actual Tim McVeigh—McVeigh as I came to know him during the thirty months I served as a federal prosecutor on the Oklahoma City bombing task force. That McVeigh, the real one, is a coward and a narcissist, a man willing to sacrifice both strangers and friends, but never himself, in his thirst for notoriety.

One of the first things I read when I joined the task force in 1995 was *The Turner Diaries*, a violent, racist novel by a leader of the American Nazi movement. *The Turner Diaries* contains a detailed description of a fertilizer-based truck bomb used to destroy the FBI's headquarters in Washington, and it is this description that investigators concluded—correctly—McVeigh had used as a blueprint for his bombing.

American Terrorist
Timothy McVeigh & the Oklahoma City Bombing
by Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck
ReganBooks, 426 pp., $26

McVeigh had been an avid proselytizer for *The Turner Diaries*, selling the book at gun shows, sending it to friends and family, and encouraging associates to read it. He was also a devoted believer in one of the book's central messages—that a small, committed group of freedom-loving Americans could and should instigate a revolution against an oppressive federal government that threatened their right to carry guns. He intended his Oklahoma City bombing to be the first shot in a second American revolution, of which he would be remembered as the founding father.

Not surprisingly, McVeigh's plan failed miserably. His bomb killed 168 people and injured many more. But, far from precipitating a war between the government and citizens, it generated widespread abhorrence for McVeigh's act and sympathy for his victims. Worse, from McVeigh's point of view, the federal government managed

An attorney in New York, Aitan Goelman was a federal prosecutor in the Oklahoma City bombing case.

to capture and put on trial those responsible—without abrogating the Constitution, declaring martial law, or sending "stormtroopers" to confiscate firearms from law-abiding Americans. Six years later, McVeigh's crime stands not as the spark that lit a powder keg of anti-government resentment, but as an isolated and senseless act.

So now, in his interviews with Michel and Herbeck, McVeigh claims his goal was merely to teach the federal government a lesson. Indeed, in a truly stunning bit of hypocrisy, he takes credit for the *lack* of violent anti-government incidents since 1995, arguing, for instance, that he is responsible for the peaceful ending to the 1996 standoff between federal agents and the Freemen in Montana. The lens through which he would like his life and crime viewed is, he assures Michel and Herbeck, his lifelong hatred of bullies. When he saw that the United States government was increasingly acting as a fearless bully, attacking weaker nations and its own people with impunity, he nobly stepped forward, thereby sacrificing his own life. The book ends with McVeigh's boast that, by bombing the Murrah Building, he gave the government a "bloody nose"—and "once you bloody the bully's nose, and he knows he's going to be punched again, he's not coming around."

This attempt to package defeat as victory is both pathetic and dangerous, and Michel and Herbeck are far too accepting of McVeigh's self-indulgent rationalizations. *American Terrorist* has been advertised as the product of tough, "no-holds-barred" interviews, and the authors stress that they refused McVeigh's demand to review the book's content. But McVeigh must be thrilled with the result. Far from being an impartial exploration of his wasted life and appalling crime, the book reads like the "as told to" biography of a controversial and misunderstood celebrity. Even while describing the tremendous suffering he caused, Michel and Herbeck can't help but marvel at the industriousness and resourcefulness

Top two photos: HarperCollins

AP / Wide World Photos

Top: Timothy McVeigh, with sister Patty
Middle: With his sister Jennifer
Bottom: Terry Nichols

McVeigh used in planning and executing the crime.

The authors paint their flattering portrait by explaining away or minimizing their subject's unrepentant racism, grandiose self-image, and dishonesty. The McVeigh of *American Terrorist* is smart (we're informed his IQ has been tested at 126), kind, and good looking. Women find him irresistible. The FBI interviewed more than thirty thousand people during the investigation and found no credible information that McVeigh had ever been with a woman. But *American Terrorist* is replete with stories of McVeigh's sexual conquests, including a particularly incredible episode in which, as a seventeen-year-old high school student "who had grown into a handsome young man with wavy brown hair," McVeigh used his after-school job at Burger King to meet and seduce an older, married woman.

The book waters down evidence of McVeigh's racism by repeated assertions of his respect for other cultures and by the implication that he is somehow not responsible for his bigotry. McVeigh's affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan is explained as a combination of happenstance and youthful exploration: As the result of a forgivable enthusiasm for *The Turner Diaries*, he "wound up" on a Ku Klux Klan mailing list. Then, impressed with the group's concern for the erosion of our civil liberties, he sent twenty dollars for a "trial membership," though he "had virtually no idea what the KKK was all about." Instead of emphasizing that McVeigh, whose favorite book was a fantasy novel that ends with white Christian men killing virtually everyone else on the planet, paid money to join the KKK, Michel and Herbeck stress that McVeigh did not renew his membership—because, they seem to suggest, he had confused the KKK with the ACLU.

The version of his life that McVeigh gives in *American Terrorist* proves that he remains, even while facing his own execution, the fundamentally dishonest man he has always been. He refused to pay back money he owed the Army Reserves because, we are told, he felt he had earned it. He admits he told anti-government farmers in Decker, Michigan, that the Army had injected a microchip into his buttocks. But, he says, he was merely amusing himself with his audi-

UPI / Corbis-Bettmann

Murrah Federal Building, Oklahoma City, April 21, 1995.

ence's gullibility (and the farmers, Michel and Herbeck write, "failed to pick up on McVeigh's dry sense of humor").

The reality is that McVeigh's lies were mostly efforts to enhance his image as an anti-government warrior among the gun-show aficionados and militia enthusiasts. "Most of the people sent my way these days are of the direct-action type," he wrote in a 1995 letter to Gwenda Strider, a woman sympathetic to the "patriot" movement. Signing the letter "Desert Rat," he warned Strider that the "one-world government" had compiled a list of "over 300,000 names on a Cray supercomputer in Brussels, Belgium, of 'possible and suspected subversives and terrorists' in the U.S."

In *American Terrorist*, McVeigh implicitly acknowledges the Brussels list was a fantasy, but he explains that it was warranted "to keep Strider on her toes and stir her curiosity." A more plausible explanation for the lie—and for McVeigh's false claim of being "sent" people, and even for his self-nominated title "Desert Rat"—is that he wanted to impress Strider by portraying himself as a dangerous outlaw. In fact, McVeigh himself didn't believe in the one-world government conspiracy about which he warned Strider and others.

McVeigh's self-promotion was contemptible enough when he spread anti-government lies and rumors to like-minded adults. But his use of similar tactics to poison his young sister's mind was particularly despicable. Jennifer McVeigh, who is six years younger than her brother, was an impressionable high school student who idolized Tim when he began educating her about the evils of the government. *American Terrorist* reprints a portion of a 1993 letter to Jennifer in which McVeigh claimed the real reason he washed out of the Army's elite Special Forces was that he refused to become an "ultimate warrior" in a secret government squad of drug-runners and domestic assassins.

Michel and Herbeck ascribe all this to a distraught, disillusioned young man forced to "conjure up a fantastic scenario to justify his outrage." That's far too generous. His letters to Jennifer were not the delusions of a zealot. They were part of the web of lies McVeigh used to impress others, including his little sister—who would suffer for it by having to serve as a very powerful, and extremely reluctant, witness at her brother's trial. According to *American Terrorist*, it pained McVeigh to watch Jennifer's tearful testimony against him, and he resented what he regarded as the unfair pressure used on her by the FBI immediately after the bombing. But, in a particularly contemptible display of callousness, McVeigh describes the bombing's effect on his sister in the same carefree terms he uses for the children he killed: the inevitable and acceptable "collateral damage" of a successful "military action."

It is especially unfortunate that *American Terrorist* repeats McVeigh's claim he didn't realize there was a daycare center in the Murrah Building. McVeigh knew his target well enough to determine that the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Secret Service maintained offices there, while the FBI did not. He had scouted it at least four different times, and he admitted to John R. Smith, the psychiatrist hired by his defense team, that

on at least one of his visits he had seen the shadow of a baby's crib through the glass front of the building. Although Michel and Herbeck, with McVeigh's permission, spoke to the psychiatrist at length (and found room to include his conclusion that McVeigh was "very intelligent"), they neglect to mention McVeigh's admission to Smith that he knew about the daycare center before he bombed the building.

Oklahoma City National Memorial, built on the site of the bombed building, April 19, 2000.

Even with all its sycophancy toward its subject, *American Terrorist* is not entirely without value. It conclusively demonstrates that McVeigh alone destroyed the Murrah Building with the bomb Terry Nichols helped him prepare. McVeigh admits what the federal investigation concluded: There is no wider group of culprits who remain unapprehended.

This will greatly disappoint the conspiracy theorists who have spent the last six years tirelessly seeking others to blame. Some theories point at residents of the racist enclave of Elohim City, Oklahoma, while others speculate the bombing was a government sting operation gone awry. Proponents of such theories have included adherents of the militia movement and Oklahoma state legislators, as well as Stephen Jones, McVeigh's trial attorney. *American Terrorist* documents Jones's efforts to fan the flames of these theories, both before the trial and in Jones's post-conviction attempt to drum up interest in his own book, *Others Unknown*, which asserts that the bombing was the work of a large, multinational conspiracy that used McVeigh as either a dupe or a foot soldier.

Michel and Herbeck themselves understand the importance of clarifying the historical record, expressing the hope that their book will prevent the Oklahoma City bombing from spawning decades of conspiracy-mongering and mistrust of the government. One of the most powerful segments of *American Terrorist* is McVeigh's response to the conspiracy theorists who insist that McVeigh and Nichols, two Army veterans without extensive training in explosives, could not have managed the bombing on their own. Characteristically borrowing words (this time from the film *A Few Good Men*), McVeigh tells doubters, "You can't handle the truth—because the truth is, it was just me."

McVeigh's claim of complete responsibility is exaggerated; Nichols's help was essential. But he is basically right: Much of the skepticism about the pair's ability to carry out the bombing comes from our desire for proportionality between crime and perpetrator. Because of the enormity of the crime, we want an evil of equal magnitude to be responsible. And Tim McVeigh and Terry Nichols are small. They are not master criminals. They are two relatively nondescript men whose anger, resentment, and determination enabled them to commit a disproportionately evil crime.

That, of course, is one of the things that make McVeigh deeply unsettling. But it doesn't change his smallness or make him the virtually omnipotent figure he paints himself as in *American Terrorist*. According to McVeigh, events went according to plan even after the bombing, because, he asserts, he wanted to get caught, wanted to be convicted, wanted to be sentenced to death. And now he wants to be executed.

The entire episode, McVeigh says, was an elaborate version of "suicide by cop," where a person ends his life by provoking a police officer to shoot him. The claim is pure bombast, and it is belied by the version of events the book itself presents. Why, if he wanted to be caught, did he carefully wipe his fingerprints off the Ryder truck "lest any identifiable shred of the cab survive the blast"? His frantic efforts in the weeks before the bombing to prepare a post-bombing refuge are not the actions of a martyr preparing for his final mission.

Even the acts that led to his arrest by Oklahoma state trooper Charles Hanger little more than an hour after the bombing were calculated to help McVeigh escape—and not, as he suggests, to aid in his capture. McVeigh was arrested for driving without a license plate, which the authors describe as "a simple gesture" that "would make it easier for cops to apprehend him."

This is nothing but more bravado. McVeigh left off the license plate so his

getaway car would be more difficult to identify if a witness had noticed it, either during the three days it was parked in a lot across from the Murrah Building or while McVeigh was fleeing Oklahoma City after detonating the bomb.

American Terrorist similarly describes McVeigh as refusing to shoot Hanger because "he had a grudging respect" for members of local and state law enforcement. The truth is that McVeigh was hoping to escape. He knew Trooper Hanger had pulled him over to give him, at worst, a ticket. McVeigh probably calculated that his safest course would be to try to talk his way through the encounter and be on his way. He could not have predicted Hanger's sharp eyes would detect the bulge of McVeigh's gun, allowing the alert trooper to pull his own weapon before McVeigh could draw. And then, too, there is the fact that McVeigh is, at his core, a coward. As prosecutor Larry Mackey said in the government's summation at the trial, it is one thing to detonate a bomb against unsuspecting civilians, and another to "draw down on a veteran Oklahoma state trooper."

McVeigh's contention that he wanted to be convicted is no more persuasive. He pled not guilty, defied a court order to provide handwriting exemplars, and played an active role in his defense—which employed the conventional strategies of attacking the government's evidence and blaming other perpetrators. McVeigh now claims he wanted to use his trial to take responsibility for the bombing and argue to the jury that his action was necessitated by the government's aggression at Waco and elsewhere. Whether it led to his acquittal or not, publicizing the government's misconduct was "central to what he saw as the ultimate success or failure of his mission."

Strangely, however, he let his attorneys persuade him not to claim responsibility for the bombing. In fact, he passed up his right to testify at both the guilt phase and the punishment phase of the trial, when the spotlight would have been brightest. McVeigh's silence can be explained only as an effort not to be convicted, and, after conviction, to avoid the death penalty.

These are understandable preferences, but they deprive him of the mantle of martyrdom he now claims. Nothing is changed by his decision years later—after both the conviction and death sentence were upheld on appeal, and after he lost his subsequent habeas corpus motion—to abandon further appeals and begin defending the necessity for the bombing. McVeigh consciously squandered a bigger, earlier platform to articulate his views in exchange for the chance to avoid conviction and the death penalty.

Some of the victims of McVeigh's terrorism have called for a boycott of *American Terrorist*, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial Center has rejected the authors' offer to contribute a portion of their royalties. These sentiments are understandable, but Michel and Herbeck have performed a service by interviewing McVeigh and making his admissions part of the historical record. Still, that does not justify their treatment of McVeigh. They have furthered the effort of a narcissistic murderer to define himself as an idealistic martyr—which increases the risk that another notoriety-seeker will try to emulate McVeigh.

Perhaps the most disturbing feature of *American Terrorist* appears only when you finish the book and realize that McVeigh never once expressed any real remorse for his 168 murders. Soon he will be unable to grant interviews or continue his correspondence with journalists. Until then, however, he will continue to gloat, as he did to Michel and Herbeck, that his execution will mean only that the final tally is 168 to 1 in his favor.

McVeigh's last words will be wasted on an empty boast, an attempt to persuade us that he wants to die, and that by executing him, we are handing him his final triumph. We should decline to participate in this bizarre game of one-upmanship. We can deny McVeigh a posthumous victory by remembering him as he really was, instead of as he claimed to be. ♦

BCA

To Live and Die in Dixie

Strom Thurmond and the transformation of southern politics. BY RICK VALELLY

In *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South 1932-1968*, Kari Frederickson, a University of Alabama historian, offers a lively and perceptive account of the last important case when a dissident party faction played a desperate card once it had failed at the nominating convention—bolting and running on its own ticket: the 1948 revolt of the Dixiecrats, led by South Carolina's governor, Strom Thurmond.

The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South 1932-1968
by Kari Frederickson
Univ. of North Carolina Press, 336 pp., $18.95

Rick Valelly is a professor of political science at Swarthmore College.

In 1944, southern Democrats had supported, for Franklin Roosevelt's running mate, Missouri senator Harry Truman, grandson of a slaveholder, because they saw him as the Deep South's insurance policy: Roosevelt would almost certainly die in office during his fourth term; his choice of a running mate was no small matter, and getting rid of Henry Wallace, his left-wing vice president, seemed vital.

By then, the Supreme Court had held that the Texas Democratic party's all-white primaries were "in violation

of the Fifteenth Amendment." This was very bad news for southern Democrats. The Democratic primary, after all, was the general election in nearly all of the ex-Confederate states. From 1940 to 1943, the total vote registered in five southern states in gubernatorial elections was only 24 percent, on average, of the total vote registered in the Democratic gubernatorial primary or runoff.

So southern Democrats had high hopes for Truman. When Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, they took satisfaction in Truman's appointment of a South Carolinian to be secretary of state, the first major cabinet appointment for the South in decades. And a Texas Democrat became attorney general.

But, in December 1946, responding to a wave of violent white-on-black murders and assaults that seemed targeted against returning black servicemen in the South, President Truman established the president's Committee on Civil Rights. After that, Truman went on to take the strongest civil rights stances a president had taken since Ulysses S. Grant.

The Democratic party cracked from the pressure of its reorientation. Meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, in July 1948, just days after the Democratic party nominated Truman at its Philadelphia convention and sent him out to campaign on a strong civil rights plank, the southern wing gathered to plot strategy. Led by Strom Thurmond and Mississippi governor Fielding Wright, the Birmingham convention set a goal of winning the South's 127 votes in the Electoral College. The bolters anticipated doing this either by assuring (through state conventions or legal action) that Democratic electors were legally unpledged to Truman, or by electing separate electors under a different label than the Democratic label. Given the anticipated strength of the Republican presidential candidate, Thomas Dewey, they had reasonable hopes for creating a powerful phalanx of unpledged or third party electors. Such an outcome would prevent either major party candidate from gaining

UPI / Corbis-Bettmann

Strom Thurmond, 1948.

the necessary 266 votes to win the Electoral College. In the House of Representatives, where the vote would be by state delegation, the ex-Confederacy would then vote as a bloc controlling 11 of the 48 votes deciding the outcome. The conservative white South could cut a grand bargain to protect itself.

But the bolt from the party hardly affected Truman's stance. In an August 17, 1948 memorandum, Clark Clifford, special adviser to Truman, told the president that "Negro votes in the crucial states [would] more than cancel out any votes" lost in the South. On the eve of the election Truman campaigned to cheering throngs in Harlem, the first president to do so. Truman and his campaign advisers recognized what political scientists and other analysts began to describe and analyze in the 1950s—the key role of black voters in northern and western cities. If black voters were mobilized and turned out at high rates, their participation could spell the difference between victory and defeat in states with relatively large numbers of votes in the Electoral College. On Election Day, Truman's bet paid off, of course. The Dixiecrats were poorly organized and funded, and Thurmond carried only those states in which he appeared on the ballot as a Democrat. But the Dixiecrats nonetheless triggered a process of long-run partisan change that led to today's situation in which the South is not wholly owned by either party.

In the short run, however, the Dixiecrats' role was considerably less benign. Although Thurmond distanced himself from the Dixiecrats' formal organization, he and James Byrnes, the former Supreme Court justice and secretary of state, energetically threw themselves into the defense of segregation and white supremacy. In 1950 Thurmond challenged incumbent South Carolina senator Olin Johnston. The contest became a spectacle of rabidly white supremacist posturing.

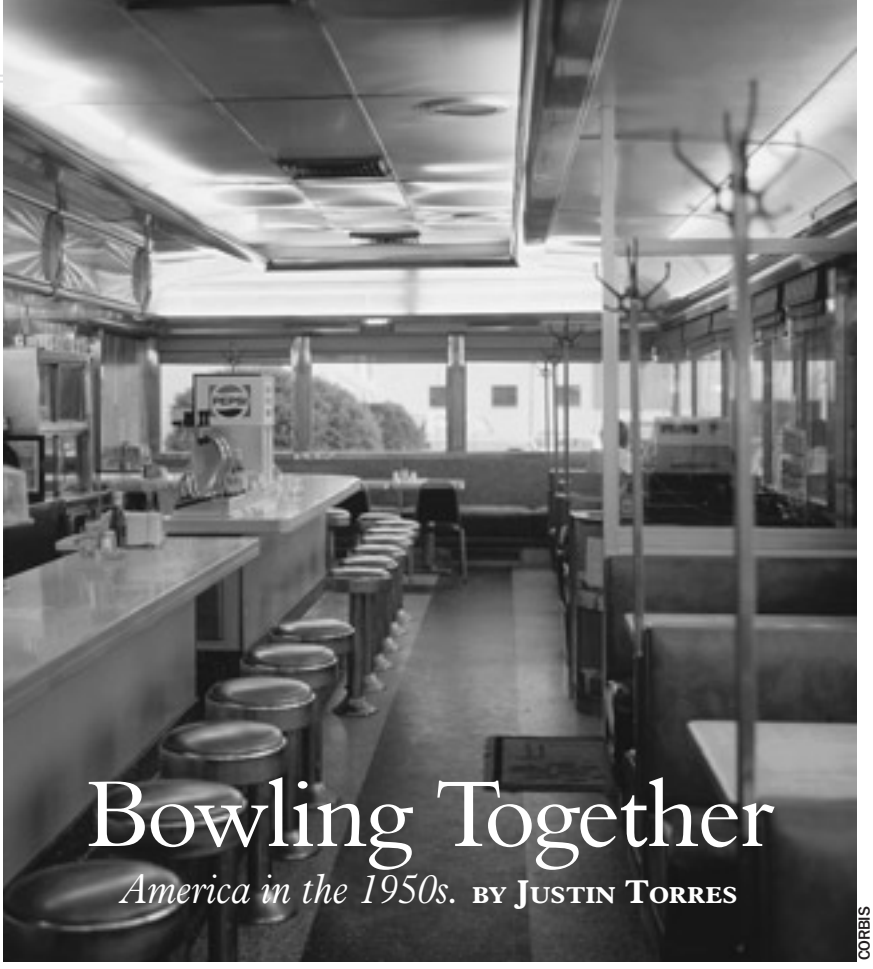
Though Johnston won, Thurmond then had a stroke of luck when South Carolina's other senator died in office in 1954. The South Carolina Democratic executive committee handed Thurmond an ideal issue when it sought to push through a Truman loyalist. Thurmond became the first U.S. senator ever elected on a write-in vote. In 1956, as promised, Thurmond ran again. Energized by the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, he rode a groundswell of white popular opinion, becoming a nationally vocal opponent of civil rights. He co-authored the Southern Manifesto, a statement against civil rights, and filibustered against the 1957 Civil Rights Act for over twenty-

four hours. In 1964, he played a major role in organizing the South for Barry Goldwater and switched to the Republican party.

Thurmond's switch, like many others involving former Dixiecrats, helped to endow the Republican party in the South, and eventually the national Republican party, with an anti-civil rights tinge—a tremendous irony, given the party's historic role in eliminating the enslavement of African Americans and in writing the Civil War amendments to the Constitution. Still, Thurmond proved to be the only prominent segregationist politician to adjust to white supremacy's collapse. Tenaciously perpetuating his Senate career, Thurmond became, instead, a symbol of regional tradition and adaptation. In 1971, he became the first southern senator to hire an African American on his full-time staff.

Born in 1902 in Edgefield, South Carolina, Thurmond is probably the last of the great Edgefield politicians. Preston Brooks, who caned Charles Sumner nearly to death in 1856, was from Edgefield. So was "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, a friend of Thurmond's father. It fell to Thurmond to fight the last fight for white supremacy—and then gracefully to concede the proposition that America is, after all, a place for political and racial equality. Indeed, the longest national political career in American history will soon end. The Senate has been Thurmond's political home since 1954.

But when the curtain comes down it will not be just any old career retirement. History is showing great cunning in how it is scripting Thurmond's exit, for it may deprive the Republican party of unified control of the federal government. There will be a certain symmetry, then. For when Thurmond first strode onto the national stage from his perch as a vigorous, forward-thinking, and reformist governor of South Carolina, he adopted the role of national spoiler. One way or another, Strom Thurmond has always managed to make a difference in American politics. ♦



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Bowling Together

America in the 1950s. BY JUSTIN TORRES

At first glance, Andrew Hurley's *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture* seems too idiosyncratic to tell us anything about the postwar rise of the middle class. After all, many factors contributed to the consumer culture of the 1950s and 1960s. What—besides the pleasure the author takes in examining them—makes diners, bowling alleys, and trailer parks the lenses through which we ought to look?

Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks
Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture
by Andrew Hurley
Basic, 409 pp., $27.50

It turns out, however, that there is something to be learned from Hurley's book about how the larger trends of the era influenced the lives of consumers at the level of where they ate and played and slept. While admittedly modest, the book is rich and varied in details about average, middle class life after the war. Hurley spends some time developing the context for his study. After World War II, marketers recognized that a great mass of Americans had recently jumped above the blue-collar line or found themselves in high-paying industrial jobs. This new demographic group, dubbed the "middle majority," commanded far larger amounts of disposable income than average Americans of the past.

Retailers and manufacturers trained their sights on this new group, which was anxious to enjoy the fruits of capitalism after the sacrifices of the Depression and the war. Hurley is especially good at describing the ways in which marketing created and sustained middle class expectations. Big business began the drumbeat of consumption even before the war ended. Nash-Kelvinator ran an advertisement in the early 1940s that featured a young American soldier adrift on a lifeboat in the Pacific. Undergirding the soldier's will to live is his identification of the American Dream: a good job, a pretty wife, and

Justin Torres is managing editor of Philanthropy *magazine.*

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A 1950s trailer park in Miami

"a chance to move up." At the bottom of the ad, the company showed the refrigerators, cars, and stoves it would produce once the war ended.

Once the veterans came home, marketing geniuses such as housing developer William Levitt threw up hundreds of cookie-cutter neighborhoods in the countryside, taking advantage of government-backed mortgages for GIs, that pushed suburban living as the middle class ideal. Labor-saving devices filled American homes for the first time, freeing up housewives and expanding leisure time. The buying frenzy was remarkable: In the four years after the war, Americans bought 21.4 million cars, 20 million refrigerators, 5.5 million stoves, and 11.6 million television sets. Annual expenditures on big-ticket and luxury items more than doubled from prewar levels, while rates of homeownership tripled. By the late 1950s, consumer spending approached the then-staggering figure of $300 billion per year.

But these Americans, while anxious to participate in consumer abundance, also wanted to maintain their ties to the old institutions their parents and grandparents knew. As they moved out to the suburbs, the diners and bowling alleys they had known in the city followed. But, as Hurley shows, these institutions were forced to evolve to reflect the growing affluence of the middle majority. Diners and bowling alleys had their roots in the industrial past. At the turn of the century, diners sprang up around the factories of the Northeast and Midwest, serving cheap food to late-shift workers. Bowling alleys were first located in the basements of saloons in the German and Polish ghettos of the Northeast, and were thought of as smoky, drunken hangouts for undesirable men and hooligan teenagers. For the respectable middle class person, these were unacceptable places for family fun. And so both institutions were forced to reinvent themselves.

As one example, Hurley discusses at length the impact of automatic pinsetters in the middle class bowling craze of the 1950s and 1960s. Before the AMF pinsetter hit the market in 1951, itinerants and lower class teenagers would work "in the pits" behind alleys, setting pins and returning balls to patrons, who would frequently hurl insults at them and expose them to gambling, smoking, and drinking. Social reformers such as Lewis Hine railed against the use of teenagers to set pins, complaining that boys were being ruined through exposure to "older men of weak habits and bad character." Child-labor activists complained that pin boys as young as ten were kept up late, often missing school, and frequently were cheated out of their meager pay by unscrupulous alley owners.

The pinsetter changed that, making bowling America's most popular sport and bowling alleys "the people's country club." The cleaned-up bowling industry went after the middle class market with a vengeance, forming men's, women's, and mixed leagues, hosting weekend birthday parties for the kids, and pushing bowling as fun for the whole family. A bowling industry promotional brochure from the 1950s described the Taylor family, which took up bowling together on Saturday afternoons as a means of fostering family togetherness. "Ever since," the fictional Mr. Taylor concluded, "we've all been a lot happier."

Selling that sense of family togetherness reached ludicrous heights when it came to the trailer park. After World War II, millions of returning veterans jammed into mobile trailers because houses in the suburbs couldn't be built fast enough. Sensing an opportunity, manufacturers tried to convince Americans that the cramped confines of a

mobile home promoted close-knit families. They even distributed brochures claiming that trailers were more likely than conventional homes to survive an atomic attack. (A trailer was "more apt to roll with" the blast, because they were "built to absorb a great deal of knocking about on poor roads.") Still, the middle class clung to the ideal of suburban living, and people in trailer homes almost unanimously expressed their intention to move into a ranch house as soon as possible. Thus, says Hurley, trailer parks "set the lower boundaries of the new middle majority market." They did, however, mark the beginning of a middle class craze: vacation homes. The first Florida vacation properties for the middle class were in seaside trailer parks.

At times, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks* falls prey to the self-importance common to social criticism, imputing laughably complex motivations to simple propositions. The book has sections with titles such as "A Precarious Balancing Act: Class, Generation, and Racial Segregation in the Diner." At one point, Hurley writes, "Bowling alley proprietors recognized that what compelled participation in the world of consumer abundance was the promise of liberation, not only from the agony and drudgery of hand-to-mouth existence, but from the confining social relationships of the past." In fact, bowling alley owners realized no such thing. They were just trying to make a buck, and like all good businessmen, they gave customers what they wanted. Still, Hurley is generally fair to the middle class consumers he chronicles, and the book is blessedly free of the snooty criticism of consumer culture that is standard when discussing the 1950s. In fact, Hurley clearly takes delight in some of the gaudier excesses of the era, such as the Philadelphia bowling alley whose main entrance featured "a solid parabola that swung skyward 116 feet and hovered over a multicolored water fountain situated in a miniature lake."

In the end, diners and bowling alleys declined, facing competition from outfits such as McDonald's and newer forms of entertainment. More important, a new generation of middle class kids rejected the family-friendly institutions of their parents as hopelessly square, making diners and bowling alleys collateral victims of the culture wars of the 1960s and 1970s.

Strangely, all three institutions are enjoying a comeback, though—not unlike our forebears—we push them to conform to our increasingly high standards of respectability. Chains like the Fog City Diner, where bow-tied waiters serve grilled portabello mushrooms and tuna steak to upper middle class patrons, have sprung up around the country. Bowling alleys in New York now cater to hip teenagers with "Cosmic Bowling" nights that feature laser light shows and fog machines. Even the lowly trailer is coming into its own, with Hollywood stars paying top dollar for vintage 1950s Airstream luxury liners to use on movie sets. Mostly, these new incarnations are the products of careful marketing that plays on our nostalgia. But in returning to the institutions that entertained the consumers of the 1950s and 1960s, it seems we also express our admiration of their world and their faith in a future of ever-increasing abundance. ♦

Walter B. Hewlett donates $400 million to Stanford University.
—News item

Annals of Compassion

For most of his life Walter Hewlett tried to avoid going to downtown Palo Alto. It wasn't the crime he feared so much. He just didn't like being around all the poverty and all the squalor. When business took him into that part of northern California, he'd look out through his tinted car windows and he'd see teeming masses of engineers and MBAs, some of whom didn't even have titanium laptops, some of whom were still using Palm Pilot Vs, or even earlier models. He once ran across a software executive who had to buy his Lexus pre-owned.

Hewlett insulated himself. Sure, around Christmas he might send a few charitable dollars to the Yahoo! retirement fund, as a way of helping out those less fortunate than himself. But he tried to push the whole ugly reality out of his mind.

Then one day it all became too much. He was visiting an old friend in his science lab in the grungiest, dirtiest part of Palo Alto, called "campus"—just behind the Neiman Marcus in the shopping pavilion. He turned a corner and there was a Stanford student downloading some recruiting information from McKinsey. Hewlett saw him waiting for the file transfer to be completed. Hewlett walked over and looked at the computer.

A 56k modem! What kind of future would a child have in this world with a 56k modem? It occurred to Hewlett that all around the globe there must be children living without T1 lines. He had to act.

Hewlett decided on the spot he would give away $400 million for the betterment of humanity. The question was who on earth needed the $400 million most, and the answer was obvious: Stanford University. It was those poor Stanford kids, crammed into townhouses with insufficiently jetted jacuzzis, lacking a decent heliport to help them get to Vail, condemned to lives of grinding poverty at Bank of America and Skadden, Arps.

Stanford had received only $580 million in donations in the year 2000. It had barely edged out Harvard as the top buck-raking school in the world. For the university, Hewlett's gift meant a whole new generation of dataports! All around Palo Alto, mortgage lenders wept with joy. "This is really going to revive the $5 million condo market," one exclaimed. Hewlett himself is not asking for awards (though he hinted that changing the name of the school to Hewlett University would be looked upon favorably).

Mostly he is happy to know that through his generosity, some young spoiled rich kids will get just a little bit richer, and maybe someday they too will donate hundreds of millions of dollars to the university that educates their neighbors' offspring.