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## Commendables

### A Tyrant of Mind and Failed Healer

Leo Raditsa: *Some Sense About Wilhelm Reich;*

Philosophical Library; New York.

by Christopher Manion

“One does individuals and their theories the greatest compliment when one sees their limitation,” observes Leo Raditsa in this short but captivating essay. And indeed Raditsa means to bestow a compliment on Reich, whose impact on the ideas of our age has been pervasive, as well as to discuss his limitations. One must admit, though, that this latter contribution is the more welcome of the two.

Raditsa displays a thorough knowledge of Reich’s teaching without recapitulating it; instead, he concentrates on the factors which tell us not only about Reich, but about man, power, the intellect, and our own cultural drift as well. He is well-equipped to do so—thoughtful and charitable in his criticisms, but honest enough to submit for examination the paradoxes of Wilhelm Reich which often evade discussion because they are so difficult to discuss; instead, Raditsa explains, Reich is either acclaimed as a hero or dismissed as a villain. But his ideas live on, and will bear some measure of unarticulated power until they receive the discussion they deserve. Hence, some “sense” about Wilhelm Reich from a classical scholar who has absorbed himself in Reichian teaching for twenty years.

Reich finds man completely at odds with nature and his own “true” self. So profound is this loss of reality that man has a built-in “armor” to protect him from discovering himself. But Reich’s image of the problem of man is far from that depicted in the Platonic myth of the cave: Reich sees man as hopelessly bound

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*Mr. Manion is an officer of the Rockford College Institute.*

up in a rationality which keeps him *from* his nature; hence, we can conclude, the intellect must be suppressed, and philosophy destroyed (not pursued), for man to be free.

Reichian therapy aims at the destruction of rationality and the armor that protects it through a process by which the patient’s vulnerability is enhanced even as his dependence on Reich (through his doctrine and his therapist) becomes complete. Reich found man’s problem complicated by a tendency to meekly accept tyranny without protest; hence, Reich merely substitutes his own tyranny, insisting that the patient accept an iron-clad rule over his life by means of a treatment involving the liberation of sexuality (which is closer to “freedom” than is rationality), self-debasement (which encourages a healthy disgust with one’s self, a good sign of progress), and an eventual emergence into a new existence where, one might surmise, the patient sees the world as Reich sees it, and all is well.

To Reich, the whole world was a patient: he could not distinguish between the world at large and a patient undergoing therapy. He insisted on the universal validity of his teachings, and that provides a key to an understanding of his shortcomings, as Raditsa explains in his own case:

“As a young man when I first grew interested in Reich’s work I was fascinated (and thought I was impressed) by such absolute claims, claims that would admit of no doubt. I took them for assurance. I wanted the answers and I wanted them in a hurry. Now . . . well, now the difference between facts, and something one wishes, one wants, one knows has to be true impresses me.”

Reich’s shortcomings might also shed light on the chronic ailment of an age which could welcome such a tyrant of the mind. For, while Reich’s therapy might do nothing more than transfer a patient from one dream world into another, an age clamoring for authority and fleeing rationality would welcome such a blatant assertion of power in the

name of a “freedom” and “nature” not subject to discussion. And, while Reich eventually abandoned his earlier Marxism, he never came to terms with it, and yet his teachings—not because of Reich but in spite of him—contribute to an understanding of the frame of mind which adheres to a “scientific” ideology so constantly in conflict with reality. Reich insisted that his teaching should have priority over the ultimate good of the patient, and by sheer force of will and ignorance (for he insisted on it: no *discussion*, just *subjection*) he managed to garner a questionable claim to “heroism” (in an age without heroes) without agreeing to subject himself to the risk which all heroes must run: that they might be wrong.

Mindless idolatry which excludes criticism tends to destroy the ability to think independently, says Raditsa, and this probing critique should be welcomed as a contribution to thoughtful discourse in an unthoughtful age. □

### Crane’s Resolve and Ryan’s Expertise

Philip M. Crane: *Surrender in Panama;*

Green Hill Publishers, Inc; Ottawa, Illinois.

Paul B. Ryan: *The Panama Canal Controversy;*

Hoover Institution Press; Stanford, Calif.

Whether or not this book had an effect on the Panama Canal treaties vote, it did succeed in articulating the conservative polemics used to spearhead the anti-ratification drive. For Congressman Philip Crane, the Panama Canal is of pivotal economic, strategic and moral importance to the United States. He thinks that the canal will be a crucial energy thoroughway in the near future; by 1980, 45% of all Alaskan oil will pass through the canal. With the military and commercial trend pointing toward smaller, more specialized vessels, the canal will be needed *more* in years to come than it

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is now.

Strategically, as 96% of the U.S.'s "one ocean" naval fleet can still pass through the canal, any limitations on its mobility could paralyze our naval capabilities. Furthermore, the inhibition of U.S. presence in the Caribbean would diminish efforts to check the growing Marxist threat in the Caribbean and Central America. And in the end the surrender of the canal would further weaken America's image to the rest of the world.

Crane bases these and other arguments largely on what will happen when the worse fears of Panamanian control of the canal become a reality. He makes no secret of his distrust of the Panamanian government and its intentions. Not only has the Republic of Panama had 60 governments in its 71 years of existence, but the "tinhorn dictator" General Omar Torrijos has increased the Panamanian debt by nearly 1000% since seizing power. The vagueness of the treaties' key provisions have already led to significant disparities of interpretations between U.S. and Panamanian spokesmen. Finally, why give away property that the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty of 1903 (and confirmed by Supreme Court decisions) clearly established as U.S. territory—territory bought and paid for by the U.S. with Panama's consent and blessings? Should America surrender a canal that it built (and paid for), efficiently operated and defended (while helping Panama to achieve independence and attain one of the highest per capita income levels in Latin America) to the dictator of a "politically and morally questionable regime?"

The irony of Representative Crane's push to mobilize forces against the treaties is that he has little to say in the actual political decision-making: only the Senate is constitutionally entitled to ratify treaties. But Philip Crane, who earned his Ph.D. in American history with a minor in Latin American studies, plainly relishes using his expertise as he delineates his opposition. And by elevating the conservative challenge to the treaties above simple party rhetoric, Crane hopes that educating and persuading the

American public against the treaties will be one and the same job.

Crane's fighting spirit is amply supported by the impressive collection of arguments and data in Captain Paul B. Ryan's, U.S.N., book *The Panama Canal Controversy*. He speaks on the subject with authority and acumen acquired during his naval and diplomatic career in the Caribbean. A chapter entitled "Sea Control and Maritime Choke Points" seems particularly elucidating to a layman and is fully convincing in its inferences. □

## Wooten's Challenge

**James Wooten:** *Dasher: The Roots and the Rising of Jimmy Carter;* Summit Books; New York.

Mr. Wooten obviously belongs to that vanishing breed of newspapermen who are fascinated by the trivia of truth. It's an unfashionable proclivity in times when reporters have discovered the new profitability and new methods of marketing "truth": rather than submitting to the demands of dishonorable power brokers, they cater to the even more dishonorable fad-and-myth producers. Journalist Wooten, however, is less awed by presidents than he is by their cunning, tricks, masks and disguises. *Cunning in politics* can be seen as either an honorable or dishonorable feature: it is up to the man in the White House to personally perform in such a way that the difference distinctly comes across—and he can then be judged on the merits of his performance.

Up to now, there have been plenty of indications that Mr. Carter's cunning, and his performance, are somewhat less than honorable. That he has managed to hoodwink both the public and the media about himself is disturbing. And we are going to have to pay for our naivete in taking him for both a shrewder and more sincere man than he really is. Time and time again, our political conscience, or our soft political underbelly, has proven vulnerable to electoral show biz, and

Carter hit us with an exceptional force of artifice. He succeeded in assembling an image of intelligence, sensitivity, reliability and decency, while of late we have begun to wonder whether he isn't merely smart, calculating, conforming and effectively self-serving. During the last two years, his abundantly trumpeted spirituality has distilled to ambitiousness. Wooten registers all this with a clear eye and well-oiled typewriter. Too little emphasis, in our opinion, is put on the ominous vulgarity of the first family, whose meretricious comportment departs so markedly from even the folksiest ways of presidential kin in the past. □

## Wilson's Kipling

**Angus Wilson:** *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works;* Viking Press; New York.

By now, there's little doubt that Britain's hasty relinquishment of colonialism (what an ugly word to describe such a complex phenomenon) in the aftermath of World War II was a perplexing process that somehow brought more confusion than purification to history and the world. It contributed to the collapse of the United Kingdom and Englishness rather than elevating them to new moral heights. Whether or not it advanced the socio-civilizational maturity of the liberated people, one can't help feeling that some of them, chiefly those in Africa, could have used a few more decades of benign tutelage and well-paced progress before moving on to statehood. Rudyard Kipling had an accurate view of this situation and was, perhaps, the only one who could articulate his beliefs with such awesome literary and intellectual force. He thus had to bear the wrath of England's noblest and most short-sighted consciences. Despite his views he won a Nobel Prize, which in 1907 was still dispensed solely on the basis of artistic merit. The furor of the do-gooders was no less vicious than that of the chauvinistic oppressors and Kipling, over a period of years, had to endure the accusa-