

collection to mail delivery to weather forecasting. The authors' major proposal is to reform bureaucratic rewards and punishments, for "the present system is perverse: There are no benefits for excellence nor are there penalties for failure." Indeed, the present system can be said to reward failure, for the continuation of the "crisis" in question can be used as an excuse to seek more funding.

Professors Bennett and Johnson are scholars, not politicians, and they offer no political strategy for persuading voters to try out the proposals they recommend. Yet their contribution is no less significant for that: they provide the understanding which must underlie any political effort. There is, quite obviously, at large among the voters a spontaneous backlash to costly and intrusive government. Efforts such as Senator Proxmire's add to this backlash, but cannot convert it to a political program: they offer no diagnosis and thus no cure. Professors Bennett and Johnson, who acknowledge their debt to economists Gordon Tullock and (especially) Paul Craig Roberts, offer both.

It is a pity that the book is not better written to appeal to a wider audience. A shortened version would make a fine magazine article, might get wider circulation and attention, and is highly recommended. But for those truly interested in the subject, Professors Bennett and Johnson have written an important book. They ought, first thing, to send a copy to Senator Proxmire, whose heart is after all in the right place. And perhaps a copy might go to every one of those 50 Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Education, just to warn them that the game, while not up, has not so very long to run. Slowly but surely, the public is catching on.

Elliott Abrams

Machiavelli Redux

GO QUIETLY . . . OR ELSE. *By Spiro T. Agnew.* (Wm. Morrow, New York, 1980)

THE TERRORS OF JUSTICE. *By Maurice Stans.* (New York, Everest House, 1978)

WILL: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF G. GORDON LIDDY. *By G. Gordon Liddy.* (St. Martins Press, New York, 1980)

Machiavelli concluded *The Prince* by quoting Petrarch in an attempt to inspire the rulers of Italy:

For th' old Romane valour is not dead
Nor in th' Italians breasts extinguished.

Reading these three books by survivors of the Nixon disaster brings home how totally that Administration, which more than any other in recent history would have welcomed comparisons with Machiavelli, departed from his prescription. The reason was not exactly lack of patriotism, but rather a failure to understand the humane, even idealistic spark that animated Machiavelli's ironic realism. Indeed, the books raise the broader question of whether American society itself is going through the kind of

degeneration Machiavelli decried in Italy, so that it no longer supports what might loosely be called the "Roman" or "military" virtues: courage, loyalty, and personal integrity.

These reflections may seem odd, given that all three authors fought losing bouts with the law. Spiro Agnew resigned the Vice-Presidency and entered a plea of *nolo contendere* to a charge that he received payments in 1967 which were not expended for political purposes and which were therefore subject to income tax. The prosecution's statement included forty pages about Mr. Agnew's alleged bribe-taking while he was Governor of Maryland; Mr. Agnew issued a one-page denial. The judge said, accurately, that both were irrelevant to the case before him, and fined Mr. Agnew \$10,000. Maurice Stans, Nixon's 1972 Finance Chairman, pleaded guilty to two charges of unknowingly accepting illegal contributions and three charges of reporting contributions tardily. He was fined \$5,000. Previously Mr. Stans had been found innocent, along with John Mitchell, on ten counts of conspiracy, obstruction of justice, and perjury relating to an alleged attempt by financier Robert Vesco to buy protection from the Securities and Exchange Commission. Gordon Liddy was sentenced to twenty years in prison and fined \$40,000 for the Watergate burglary, a year and a half for refusing to talk to the Watergate grand jury, and a (suspended) year for contempt of Congress.

With the exception of Mr. Liddy, who merits separate examination, it will immediately be seen that the infractions that were *actually proved* were basically technical. The connection between them as a hysterical illusion, and the punishments unusually harsh. This is particularly true for Maurice Stans, who was dealing with a complex law which changed in the course of the campaign, and who was also the victim of a quantum jump in public standards. Mr. Stans makes a convincing case that his CRÉEP stewardship was at least as respectable as the work of his contemporaries in other campaigns. They too had (less publicized) legal difficulties; Edmund Muskie's fundraiser even volunteered to testify for Mr. Stans at the Vesco trail.

If Mr. Agnew did accept rake-offs, as the prosecutors claimed, it should be asked in all fairness whether his conduct varied substantially from accepted Maryland standards — particularly since there is no evidence that the money influenced his decisions. As always where Watergate is concerned, the real question becomes: Why did such practices excite such abnormal attention under Nixon, when Congress and press have shrugged off similar standards before and since? The many disparate Nixonian problems combined to produce a mixture that makes free-base cocaine look safe as chewing gum in comparison, under the influence of mysterious forces similar to those that produced the *Grande Peur*, or Salem's witch trials. An instructive parallel might well be Britain's 1962-63 Pro-fumo crisis, which likewise enabled hostile opinion to link wildly unrelated charges, and incinerated an unpopular government.

As Mr. Agnew has repeatedly pointed out, of course, allegation is not conviction, although it has been treated as such by the media and the IRS, whose demands for back taxes on bribes Mr. Agnew denied taking caused him a cash-flow crisis from which he was rescued by the remarkable generosity of Frank Sinatra. But the irreducible fact of his resignation

overshadows any attempted defense. Mr. Agnew ascribes his surrender to the impossibility of receiving a fair trial because of prejudicial publicity, overheated politics, implacably ambitious prosecutors, and impossible costs; and to his own exhaustion and bitterness at his abandonment by Nixon.

Mr. Agnew also says that Alexander Haig implied he might be killed if he did not "go quietly." However, this may be the token sensational revelation all Watergate memoirs require, like H.R. Haldeman's claim of a mooted partition of China, Gordon Liddy's contemplated assassinations of Jack Anderson and Howard Hunt, and John Dean's insinuation that Nixon faked Alger Hiss' typewriter. Other regular features of this new literary form are dramatic opening scenes, followed by flashbacks; and copious direct speech. On the whole, the results have compared very favorably with other native American genres like Westerns and Perry Mason.

Mr. Agnew's story rings sincere when he writes of "the emotional reaction that made me physically ill" on reviewing the prosecutors' files on his case (obtained years later), or of his wife's dead faint when he told her he was capitulating. But even after that, he assured conservatives he would fight to the end, although his lawyers were already negotiating terms. This unedifying betrayal of his loyal supporters renders consideration of his guilt or innocence ultimately irrelevant.

On the other hand, Mr. Agnew had hardly been given a good example by the Nixon White House. Incredibly, President Nixon apparently hoped to induce Mr. Agnew to resign without even discussing the subject face to face. The picture of Mr. Agnew and his staff waiting in his office until 9 p.m. after Attorney General Richardson had revealed the charges to them — hoping desperately for a call from the President or a summons to Camp David (whence, it emerged, he had fled) — is infinitely pathetic. What they got was a meeting with General Haig and Bryce Harlow, who announced that they *thought* that the President *felt* that he should resign. Loyalty to Nixon was a one-way proposition. The White House staff was quick to pounce on any of their number who suffered political injury.

This cult of toughness was naive to the point of stupidity. Even elementary precautions like funding the Watergate burglars' families were reneged on. It is hardly surprising that the front-line troops mutinied, whereupon the whole structure disintegrated. Machiavelli in a famous passage urged rulers to ensure that the interests of their lieutenants were advanced along with their own; this promoted mutual confidence. This seemingly obvious advice was never more needed. In fact, one of the Administration's subsequent rationales for its detente policies — that Americans were too engrossed in current gratifications to finance any alternative — can probably best be explained as merely a projection of the leaders' own short-sighted selfishness.

All three books make the point that the guarantees of equal justice, due process, and presumption of innocence — generally thought to be intrinsic to our system of justice — are simply not operative in a modern bureaucratic state. Mr. Stans spent \$400,000 to defend himself against the Vesco charges. The prosecution probably spent over \$1 million, but that was taxpayers' money. That both Mr. Stans and Mr. Agnew could afford no

more defense at that price is quite plausible. The IRS even threatened to have Mr. Agnew's passport revoked if he attempted to resist their demands — an unbreakable hold on a man forced to earn his living in international business because of his Untouchable status at home. The three books also establish that there are few real checks on the legal bureaucracy once it is determined to bring home a conviction. Judge Sirica's excesses in Mr. Liddy's trial featured his seating of a juror who could not understand English — a mistake arising because Judge Sirica truncated the *voir dire* to prevent defense questions about pretrial publicity. (Judge Sirica used his power to seal the record about that incident, which remained a secret.) Mr. Liddy was amused: "I really had to hand it to the old goat; neither of us ever hesitated to use power."

Less amusing were the lengths to which the prosecutors went in the Stans and Agnew cases to induce potential witnesses to co-operate. It should be a matter of some concern that Mr. Agnew was brought down by the testimony of men who themselves were guilty of serious crimes, the consequences of which seem to have been palliated by their cooperation. One witness actually had his conviction overthrown because he was able to show that his guilty plea was induced by illegal promises of leniency, which the trial judges chose to ignore. Having indicted Mr. Stans on the basis of two grand jury appearances — which he made after being assured he was not under investigation — the prosecutors launched an incredible nationwide search for evidence. They hauled President Nixon's brother in from the West Coast ten times, for example, to "review" his testimony on the single point of whether Mr. Stans had asked for Vesco's contribution in cash. (Answer: No.)

Worst of all were the constant leaks to the press, from Justice Department and grand jury alike. Maurice Stans found that newspapers routinely printed as fact allegations against him that had been disproved, and that major media outlets like *Time* refused to carry retractions even when caught in indisputable error. Mr. Stans, whose book is a model of reason and comprehensiveness, suggests thoughtfully that maybe the U.S. media should follow the British system of restricting publicity after indictment, and also that the Supreme Court's *Sullivan* ruling went too far in depriving public figures of the means to protect their reputation. He even permits himself to wonder why the media should not (voluntarily) retract untruths in the same way that the Federal Trade Commission compels corporations to correct unsupported advertising claims.

This is the problem in a nutshell. All three books make it depressingly clear that, yes, there is a New Class. And that class makes its own rules in the struggle with rival powers like corporations and elected officials — of either party; previous attorney generals would not have been defeated in attempts to suppress Billygate.

Gordon Liddy's beautifully written book adds a cultural dimension to this struggle within America, although his factual contribution to the Watergate saga appears limited. Mr. Liddy confines himself narrowly to what he personally saw. He says that he waited until the statute of limitations had expired before speaking, to protect his colleagues. (Actually, he is probably still protecting them.) Although he does reveal that the Nixon administration had CIA technical assistance in some operations, he

generally supports the thesis that Watergate was after all a second-rate burglary, not a set-up, as some have speculated. The order came from above, he says, and he believes that the purpose was to find out what derogatory material the Democrats had on their opponents. This version is not likely to satisfy everyone. On closer examination, moreover, Mr. Liddy's account does leave some questions carefully open. Some of these relate to the details of the burglary; others to the extraordinary circumstances that led to the creation of the White House "Plumbers" unit in the first place: the withdrawal (by J. Edgar Hoover) of the FBI cooperation upon which all previous administrations had relied. Mr. Liddy had been proud to be an FBI agent, and stresses his admiration for Mr. Hoover. But he also prints a memo he wrote in late 1971 urging that Mr. Hoover be removed as Director by the end of the year. Mr. Liddy notes laconically that the President praised the memo, but Mr. Hoover survived. As usual, one is left with an eerie feeling that the Watergate affair has a secret history, untold despite the millions of words.

Mr. Liddy is obviously a cultured man, but his preoccupation with matters of honor, strength, and courage — matters that have been traditional male concerns in almost every society except our own — has rendered him about as comprehensible to the average book reviewer as a Martian. Hence he is ridiculed (by Larry King in the *New York Times*) or ignored (by the *Wall Street Journal*, the leading conservative newspaper, which has not reviewed his book — or Mr. Stans's either, for that matter). The situation is complicated because Mr. Liddy is a cultist, one of the tiny minority of conservatives (and others) who are fascinated by the Third Reich. It is hard to know how serious he is about this. Some of his hints are so blatant (he named the Plumbers group ODESSA, after "a World War II German veterans organization belonged to by some acquaintances of mine" — i.e., the Waffen SS) as to recall his celebrated hand-in-the-flame exhibitions of willpower. Professor Alan Dershowitz of Harvard picked up all these hints, and wrote an angry review in *The New Republic* asking how a card-carrying Nazi went so far in anyone's White House. But in fact cultism often has about as much relevance to contemporary politics as transvestism, which it rather resembles. Mr. Liddy supported the liberal Republican who beat him in the New York 25th district primary in 1968, to the chagrin of the Conservative Party, which had nominated him on its own line. His White House career showed a similar pragmatism, except perhaps when his G-man instincts were engaged. And Mr. Liddy obviously liked the blacks he met in prison, finding their harsh society a satisfying substitute for the Korean War he missed through illness, and possibly a rest after the Nixon White House. He quietly but systematically supplies much other evidence of lack of prejudice.

However repellant Mr. Liddy's code may be, it has some strengths, notably his evident pride in his handsome family. Men like Mr. Liddy are the falcons of society, to be kept hooded until needed. James E. Mahon, who became Eli Hazeev and died training his gun on the Palestinians ambushing Meir Kehane's followers in Hebron, was reportedly another example. Both found no place in modern America. We need look no further to explain the fiasco at Desert One.

Peter Brimelow

East of Suez

ARABIA, THE GULF, AND THE WEST. *By J. B. Kelly.* (Basic Books, New York, 1980)

Students of old maps know the keen pleasure to be derived from the antique toponyms that ingenious or bored cartographers in Venice and Amsterdam and Lyons used to assign to distant bits of *terra incognita*. We rightly permit ourselves to savor those names – Estotiland and Quivira, Norumbega and the Straits of Anian – just as we can relish Elizabethan stories of fabulous beasts beyond the seas and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders. The poetry of these archaic placenames is heightened, rather than diminished, when viewed through the mist of misinformation.

But dreamy misinformation is *not* permissible when it serves as the basis for foreign policy in matters affecting the very survival of the industrialized West. There are few things that matter as much as what happens to the oil that lies in and around the Persian Gulf. Yet the men who have been making our policy for the Gulf – here and in the chancelleries of Western Europe – do so in virtually impenetrable atmosphere of myth, cliché, and received idea, of “impressions” brought back from a quick trip to one of the Gulf states (usually Saudi Arabia) by gullible journalists, congressmen, and military men, of groundless epithets repeated incessantly by an army of publicists working on behalf of the Saudis and their friends. That is why *The New York Times*, for example, can unembarrassedly inform its readers that “we need Saudi goodwill” (actually we need nothing of the kind – we need Saudi cooperation, which is a different thing), or why the American ambassador to Saudi Arabia can suavely refer on national television to U.S.-Saudi relations as being characterized by “good faith, good friendship, and what I call that special relationship” (all three being figments of the American imagination, if the evidence is examined), or why the Carter Administration believed it had to beg the Saudis to allow us to maintain our Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Nor should we forget the insistence that Islam and Marxism are incompatible, or that the Arab oil states feel a natural benevolence toward the Christian West, marred only – so we are endlessly told – by that little affair in Western Palestine. Having exhaustively studied the relevant testimony before Congress on the Gulf (a feat requiring enormous stamina), J.B. Kelly provides a harsh taxonomy of American authorities. There are the employees of the State and Defense Departments, loyally pushing the latest party line. There are representatives “of the oil industry and other commercial undertakings,” and finally, there are “instant experts, bright young men on the make, programmed with the fashionable ideas and jargon of the day.” In the spirit of those venerable mapmakers, these assorted “experts” confidently wield distant place names in the full assurance that no one will call their collective bluff:

To read these transcripts (of congressional testimony) is to enter a