

# POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

**Atlantic City Gamble.** George Sternlieb, James W. Hughes. *Harvard Univ. Press, \$16.50.* Casinos were heralded as the way to generate urban renewal, new jobs, and tax revenue for Atlantic City, the "South Bronx by the Seashore." But instead of bringing urban revitalization, the authors of this thoughtful study tell us, they have shattered the community's formerly diverse economic base. Land speculation has run amok, dislocating businesses and residents who can't afford the sky-rocketing property taxes and 400 percent rent increases. Regulation and nourishment of the casino industry have become the official municipal obsessions, while the original problem of urban blight is ignored. And although 30,000 new jobs have been created, the bulk of casino employees come from the suburbs.

—Ben Holmes

**Bernard Baruch: The Adventures of a Wall Street Legend.** James Grant. *Simon and Schuster, \$19.95.* Bernard Baruch's name first appeared in political circles at the bottom of a check. But Baruch grew to be much more than a source of campaign funds; he was a sponsor of influential journalists like Herbert Bayard Swope and Arthur Krock and a counselor to Woodrow Wilson, Winston Churchill, and Franklin Roosevelt.

Still, Baruch was rarely all he was cracked up to be. Grant reveals that, contrary to myth, the great man did not unload his stock prior to the Crash of 1929. Nor was he ever as wealthy as often reported.

—Ronald Brownstein

**Class Act: America's Last Dirty Secret.** Benita Eisler. *Franklin Watts, \$18.95.* An illuminating contrast to Paul Fussell's *Class*, reviewed last month. The author lacks

Fussell's literary pretensions but also his skill. She comes across as an intelligent person, who has never been forced to be rigorous instead of chatty. She rarely pursues a point for more than a few paragraphs, and she tends to dance through transitions with remarks such as "To the barricades!" (That is how she ends an otherwise thoughtful chapter about TV portrayal of working-class life.)

Still, Benita Eisler has conducted an honorable, informative, and often insightful exploration of the same terrain Fussell recklessly skidded across. The principal difference is that she has done some reporting. She says that while preparing the book she interviewed hundreds of people, "from welfare mothers to self-made millionaires." No, that doesn't constitute a statistically reliable sample; but the interviews apparently steered the author toward some fresh suggestions about the modern implications of class.

Among other things, she emphasizes two circumstances that can dramatically affect life prospects, even though they have little to do with traditional "class" traits of birth or breeding. One is divorce, which can impoverish all parties, especially the former wife, and which, contrary to popular impression, is least common in the professional classes. The other is the choice to remain "child-free," which lifts a financial millstone from a couple's neck. The author, herself a mother, says that the child-free are growing impatient with such burdensome obligations as paying taxes for the public schools. One 33-year-old investment analyst told her: "I don't want to hear the yells of kids on tricycles on Saturday morning and I really don't want to subsidize them either!"

—James Fallows

**The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces.** Paul Bracken. *Yale Univ. Press, \$19.95.* Many defense intellectuals contend that controll-

"One of the most important records of this century."

—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Concluding the provocative personal record of an extraordinary career, this volume of David Lilienthal's journals offers an insider's view of the personalities and events which shaped the '70s. His friendships with world leaders and his continuing involvement with such key issues as nuclear arms, environmental protection, and energy policy bring immediacy and authority to a first-person chronicle that Allan Nevins has called "an unmatched and probably unmatchable record!"

## THE JOURNALS OF DAVID E. LILIENTHAL

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Illustrated with photographs.



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ing and stopping a nuclear war, once one broke out, would be almost impossible, but few have really explained why. Bracken, a Yale professor and a former strategic analyst at Herman Kahn's Hudson Institute think-tank, does just that. He clearly shows how the organizational elements of today's nuclear arsenals will probably contribute to a breakdown of political control from the outset of a serious nuclear alert, in much the same way that the inflexible, tightly wound war machines of 1914 inexorably propelled the European nations into World War I—even against their leaders' intentions—once military mobilization began. Bracken carefully describes this complex apparatus and lays out plausible scenarios, step-by-step, of how international crises could generate nuclear war. He is especially good on the vulnerability of command-control systems and the extremely tight integration of intelligence and warning networks with the triggering of the weapons themselves—a feature that may be necessary in an age when a possible Soviet ICBM attack is only 30 minutes away, but one that could also mean fatal miscalculations.

—Fred Kaplan

**The Culture of Consumption.** Richard Fox, T.J. Jackson Lears, eds. *Pantheon*, \$9.95. The image these days of Americans as rampant consumers easily manipulated by advertising verges on cliché. What saves this collection of essays, written by six left-leaning academics, is its historical approach, which tracks America's transition from a 19th-century "production-oriented society of small entrepreneurs" to our "consumption-oriented society [of] bureaucratic corporations." By 1924 a newspaper in Muncie, Indiana, was stating that "the American citizen's first importance to his country is no longer that of citizen but that of consumer."

The essays—which range in topic from the "consuming vision" of Henry James to the selling of the Apollo space program—contend that consumerism arrived as the

natural result, rather than the planned conspiracy, of corporate capitalism.

—James Gibney

**Deadly Business: Sam Cummings, Interarms and the Arms Trade.** Patrick Borgan, Albert Zarca. *Norton*, \$17.95. The forgiving authors conclude that Cummings, who operates the largest private arms-trading company in the world, is a good businessman in an unsavory business. But his guiding moral principles could have been lifted from an NRA bumpersticker: Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People, and If I Didn't Sell Arms Someone Else Would.

—Anne Depue

**Decadent Societies.** Robert Adams. *Northpoint Press*, \$16. This short, quirky, provocative book surveys five powerful societies that eventually decayed—Rome, Byzantium, pre-Revolutionary France and Russia, and the British Empire—and then attempts to apply the lessons to modern America. Unlike most such historical inquiries, the lessons Adams deduces do not seem doctored to fit any particular political line. He is as insistent about the dangers of a disenfranchised lower class as about those of a society reluctant to bear arms to defend its interests. The writing is sharp, and the reading is fun. But the confident generalizing sweep of the historical section begins to seem over-confident when Adams reaches the 20th century. I began to wonder, Did the statements about the Eastern Empire sound so convincing mainly because I know so little about Constantinople?

—James Fallows

**DES: The Bitter Pill.** Robert Meyers. *Seaview*, \$17.95. Meyers, a former *Washington Post* reporter, brings us up to date on the continuing tragedy of DES, a synthetic estrogen that was given to six to ten million women to prevent miscarriages and has been linked to a previously rare form of vaginal cancer. Though early evidence from animal tests showed that DES caused cancer, the lure of a vast new market for the drug industry

and the belief that preventing miscarriages was almost a national cause led us to ignore all warnings.

—Jonathan King

**Family Politics: Love and Power on an Intimate Frontier.** Letty Cottin Pogrebin. *McGraw-Hill*, \$14.95. Pogrebin overstates her case against the conservative familyism of Phyllis Schlafly and the New Right, but she is persuasive in arguing that the family can continue to be the backbone of our society without having to fit the stereotype of the bread-winning husband and the wife who stays home to take care of her two well-scrubbed kids. The fact is that only 5 percent of U.S. households fit that stereotype.

—Quinith Janssen

**None is Too Many.** Irving Abella, Harold Troper. *Random House*, \$17.95. This study of Canada's immigration policy regarding Jewish refugees from Hitler's Europe is full of harrowing examples of bureaucratic stupidity and anti-semitism. Among the examples: Jews from German-occupied countries were treated as enemy nationals (they might be Nazis), and refugees from Vichy, France were required to provide accurate documentation, even where such identification was the kiss of death.

—John Lieber

**Recapitalizing America.** S.M. Miller, Donald Tomaskovic-Dewey. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, \$16.95. The authors argue that economic policies built on boosting U.S. exports and international free trade have a built-in catch: they subject American workers to constant pressure for givebacks to match their low-wage counterparts abroad. The authors, who think it's possible to maintain our standard of living and still compete in international markets, call for new economic policies based on "job-centered growth," a "participatory social sector," and democratic planning. Unfortunately, when it comes time to translate those ideas into concrete proposals, they do little more than vaguely admonish our policy-makers to go forth and do good.

—Alfred Watkins