



MITTERRAND'S DIRTY TRICKS

by John Train

What did Paris think of the *Kulter-fest* that Mitterrand's minister of culture, Jack Lang, staged before the municipal elections, I asked my friend the President-Directeur Général.

"Camouflage, pure camouflage. He must have known disaster was coming—the devaluation as well as the election results. So to distract the public he stages this piece of mummery. *C'était tellement bête*. And incidentally, your American contingent scarcely appeared to advantage. They may have been politically sympathetic, but why invite to a congress on the influence of culture upon politics a delegation that knows almost nothing about either? Mr. Styron, for example, not knowing our poetry, tells us instead that the

John Train is author of *The Money Masters*, *Remarkable Names*, and other books, and is a columnist in *Le Matin* (Paris), *Harvard Magazine*, and *Investors Chronicle* (London).

Concorde is a poem. Dada! It wouldn't get him a passing grade in a literature course, nor did it impress the public here."

And the economic outlook?

"I suppose the only thing worse than being a Cassandra—having steadily predicted the mess into which Mitterrand would get my country," said my friend the PDG, "is being a Cassandra who then can't say, 'I told you so.'"

"Why can't you?" I asked.

We were having a marvelous lunch in a little restaurant just a short walk from his office, and in spite of his griefs the PDG seemed cheerful enough. "Well," he replied, "consider my situation. I have a fine company, as you know. We work hard, we do well. But it's a 'wholesale' enterprise: all my customers are businesses, most of them are big businesses and banks. All the banks and most of my big industrial customers are now nationalized. So if you quote me by name and some competitor passes on to the government your article containing my criticisms, three or four phone calls from the ministry to my biggest customers and I'm *fichu*. No, no, the prudent course is to follow the advice of Epicurus and live secretly,

at least until all this blows over.

"Actually, an even sadder situation is that of the newspaper proprietors. I had lunch in this very restaurant three months ago with a friend of mine who runs the financial side of one of the top dailies. He told me that previously he had received a call from a government *souffrant* . . . do you know what that is?" Seeing my hesitation, he groped for the word. "Not a spokesman, not an ambassador . . ."

An unofficial emissary?

"Voilà," said the PDG. "Anyway this *souffrant* had called on my friend, to propose a government buy-out of his paper. Not to the government itself, of course, but to a government-sponsored buyer, a reliable socialist. The offer was rejected indignantly. He will maintain his independence to the death, says the proprietor. But do you know what happened? Within a week there were 25 tax inspectors in the place, looking over his books: his expenses, his depreciation account, every last thing. *Twenty-five!* You can imagine how much time it takes just to cope with their thousands of questions, quite aside from how it looks to the people in the office."

Horrible, I agreed.

"And even that's not the worst of it. Like most businesses these days, this paper owes a lot of money to the banks, and particularly since the latest bank nationalizations, that again means the government. The proprietor knows that at any time the government can simply turn off his credit and put him out of business. It already makes credit available on especially favorable terms to his pro-government competitors. And his advertising from state-controlled industries has been cut back. No, no, his situation is grim, very grim indeed. He has the glories, but also the miseries, of being in the public opinion business. His duty is to broadcast the truth far and wide. I, for better or worse, am a technician. So I don't feel quite such an obligation to speak out publicly. But it's not fun these days, I can tell you."

What did he think of the Mitterrand government's new measures to defend the franc?

"Cosmetics, just cosmetics, intended for shock effect and to give the public the impression that something is being done."

Will the measures work, considering that the same ministerial team is still in place, having shuffled a few chairs?

"There is no reason why they should. For instance, take the crack-down on foreign travel. Principally, that means that instead of having our Riviera full of Germans, while our tourists go to Spain, the Germans will go to Spain and the French will stay put. It may help a little, but not much. *Bien sûr*, it will do wonders for Club Méditerranée!

"Then, take the idea of raising taxes to slow down demand. It may happen that way or it may not. Often the employee regards taxes as part of the cost of living. If they go up, he wants more money. In a socialist country, what he wants he usually gets. Mitterrand certainly doesn't have any friends on the Right, so he's got to reward the ones he has on the Left.

"Let me give you a particularly nasty example. What do you think

VOICES OF BASEBALL
Quotations on
the Summer Game
By Bob Chieger
245 pages Athenium Publishers
"A TREAT FOR FANS" BOOKLIST
Send \$9.95 to: Voices, Box 2950, San Jose, CA 95160

First there was the noble snail darter.
Then came the whales. Now, the battle cry is

Trees Have Rights, Too!

Environmental hysteria is spreading—from your neighbor the college prof sniffing in his backyard for PCBs to the Friends of the Earth whose passionate tracts depict Secretary James Watt as the anti-Christ. In this reprint of his May 1983 *Spectator* article, Robert Nisbet argues that environmentalism has lost all perspective and taken on the aura and enthusiasm of a religion. With all the recent furor over the Environmental Protection Agency, this report is an essential tool in understanding the anti-capitalist mentality behind this the Age of Environmentalism. Order your copies today—for friends, students, businessmen, teachers, and even the local Sierra Club.

THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR
Reprint Department
P.O. Box 1969
Bloomington, Indiana 47402

Please rush me reprints of
"Modern Man and the Obsession."

My check for \$..... is enclosed.

\$.75 for one
\$ 6.00 for ten
\$ 12.00 for twenty-five
\$ 45.00 for one hundred
\$200.00 for five hundred

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

the RATP [the railway system that serves Paris] makes or loses on each fare?"

I thought a while. I presumed it lost on each ticket.

"Yes," said my friend the PDG, nodding grimly, "but how much?"

Half the fare price?

The PDG nodded approvingly. "Pas mal du tout. But in fact it's much worse than that. The RATP loses 120 percent of the cost of each ticket. That's before the government subsidy. They don't report it that way, but those are the facts. The whole national railway system, the SNCF, does in fact lose 50 percent on each ticket before the state subsidy."

I observed that the U.S. has had the same problem, thanks to unreasonable manning schedules—featherbedding—which, however, we're beginning to get control of.

"Ah," said my friend the PDG, "but that's in America, not France. Here the transport-workers union is the biggest single component of the Communist Party, which is an indispensable part of the ruling coalition. And incidentally, the transport workers have to contribute part of their gross wages to the Communist Party, right off the top, as you say. Is the government going to squeeze them? *Jamais!* It's more the other way around: the transport workers could probably overthrow the government if they felt like it. Our system has gotten out of balance. The minister of transport, one of the most powerful men in the country, is a Communist, as you know. Transportation is a key part of our country's war plans, but as a Communist, the minister can't receive clearance to see France's own mobilization orders."

And the devaluation?

"Not enough. Let me give you a simple example. I recently bought a 16-horsepower tractor for my farm. There are two comparable machines on the market, French and German. Imagine my amazement on discovering that the French model costs a third more than the German one! A third! And here's why that figure is so significant. Our trade deficit is 100 billion francs, of which almost 40 percent is with Germany. To restore equilibrium there we will need to devalue against the mark far more than the 8 percent we did. Until then, the hemorrhage will continue. All these measures that the government has announced can't change that basic fact.

"When this government came in, France had comfortable foreign reserves, and a good economic situation. So how does the new government cope with the recession? Instead of encouraging industry to

become competitive and increasing workers' incentives for higher output, we push up wages, shorten the working year, pad the public payroll, institute all sorts of measures that we can't afford—unearned social benefits, early retirement, and the like—and in general, instead of belt-tightening, go on a spending spree. Obviously, that means lower profits, inflation, and pressure on the franc.

So we spend our foreign reserves defending the franc, while blaming, instead of our own mistakes, the supposed overpricing of the dollar and the mark. Rather than cure the affliction, we packed the thermometer in ice. Now we have spent our reserves, and far from attacking the fundamentals of our illness, we've made them worse.

"We need a profound restructur-

ing of our economy along the lines that Mrs. Thatcher is attempting in England. That simply cannot happen under the present government. Instead, we're going to get sicker and sicker. And with things as they are, I don't even dare talk about it officially, unlike some of my more courageous friends. So, quote me if you like, but not by name. Just call me Cassandra."

Now you can get your own copy of the first book of essays published by one of America's finest and most quotable young writers (NR's own Joseph Sobran)

You won't find it in your local bookstore, but you can order a first-edition copy by using the coupon below.

National Review readers have long enjoyed Joseph Sobran's sharp and witty essays, reviews, and editorials—just as so many Americans enjoy his syndicated newspaper columns and radio/TV commentaries. But Mr. Sobran has also been writing regular essays for *The Human Life Review*, an unusual quarterly journal (edited by J. P. McFadden) that explores in depth many of the most crucial issues of our time: abortion, the "right to die," the crisis of the traditional family, pornography, homosexuality, and much more.

The best of these important essays (15 in all) have now been published in a handsome hardcover edition by The Human Life Press. From the first essay ("Crucial Issue Politics," which explains why "single issue" voters are anything but narrow-minded) to the final marvelous tribute to the great C. S. Lewis (a literary treat), you will enjoy Sobran's refreshing writing so much that you'll find yourself quoting him over and over again, and recommending this marvelous book to your friends (you won't want to lend anybody *your* own copy of *Single Issues*!).

You'll definitely want a copy of this handsome and memorable book for your personal library. You *can't* get it in a bookstore (the Human Life Press is a private publisher of special editions) but you can obtain your copy simply by using the handy coupon below. Don't miss this opportunity to get your first-edition copy of a unique collector's item. Fill out and return the coupon today.

The Human Life Press • 150 East 35th Street • New York, New York 10016

Gentlemen:

I do want to get Joseph Sobran's first book of essays, *Single Issues*. Please send me _____ copies at the regular price of \$12.95 per copy. I enclose herewith \$_____. (Please enclose \$12.95 per copy desired. We will pay all postage and handling involved. Thank you.)

Name _____ (please print)

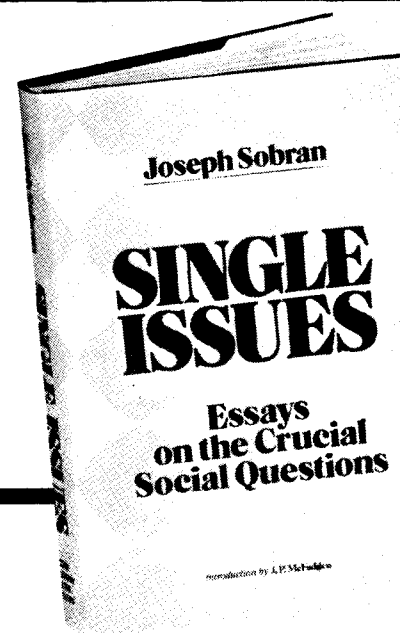
Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

AS-1

Please make all checks payable to: The Human Life Press.

JUST PUBLISHED



This first-edition book is big (over 200 pages) and beautifully printed by one of the nation's finest printers. You can get a copy for yourself direct from the publisher for just \$12.95 **postpaid** by using the coupon below.

Read what these well-known writers say about Joseph Sobran:

"Mr. Sobran knows what he's talking about, which is a rare compliment these days."

—Clare Boothe Luce

"Joe Sobran is unquestionably the wittiest, most trenchant—and yet, finally, lyrical—moralist to have appeared in my time. He has a world of knowledge to communicate, and there is great joy in the experience."

—Wm. F. Buckley, Jr.

"In mounting an attack on legalized abortion, Joseph Sobran is the perfect marksman; each sentence finds its target with deadly accuracy, and helps bring down the whole edifice of ostensible compassion (a beautiful word now so abused as to be unusable) whereby the systematic slaughter of millions of unborn children, as well as of an ever increasing number of the aged and incapacitated, is justified. For those who are doubtful and confused about the rights and wrongs of this sinister controversy, he is the perfect clarifier."

—Malcolm Muggeridge

"Sobran writes with verve and imagination, and never fails to shed new light on anything he touches."

—Michael Novak

The possibility becomes ever stronger that Rousseau will replace, indeed is already replacing, Marx as the premier eminence among intellectuals in the nontotalitarian parts of the world. Marx presents increasing difficulties to those in whom a concern for freedom and for the legitimacy of authority ranks high. Even if there were not the iron relationship between Marxism-Leninism and such totalitarian behemoths as the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Albania, among others, not to forget insurrectionary forces fighting to establish Marxist despotism, the name of Marx would suffer from other and almost equally profound faults. The determinism, mechanism, and calculated indifference to the individual and to individual will in history which once thrilled Western intellectuals in quest of a secular god have less and less appeal in this final quarter of the twentieth century. Non-Marxian preoccupation with such matters as the self, volition, consciousness, participatory power, and instant utopia in the form of monastic commune is hardly compatible with doctrines of a philosopher who flatly declared in *Capital* that "individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class interests." Marx, in one burst of admiration for Darwin's theory of natural selection, likened his own *Capital* to Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, declaring that the latter provided him "with a basis in natural science for class struggle in history." Such a combination of naturalism and mechanistic determinism is unlikely to captivate many Western intellectuals in our age of overriding subjectivism.

Rousseau, though, is made to order for this age. The collectivism of the general will, the absoluteness of the social compact with its abnegation of all individual rights, and the pervasive concern with government as the shaper of morality are accompanied by a preoccupation with the individual, with individual consciousness, sentiment, self-awareness, and self-exaltation without parallel in his time. The consecration to political

Robert Nisbet is Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities, Emeritus, at Columbia University and Adjunct Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

JEAN-JACQUES: THE EARLY LIFE OF JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, 1712-1754

Maurice Cranston / W.W. Norton / \$22.45

Robert Nisbet

community and its corporate legitimation that we find in *The Social Contract* and the *Discourse on Political Economy* springs from the same mind that gave us *Emile* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, each a monument to subjectivism and egocentricity. And there is finally the essential Rousseau of dedication to equality and to war on all forms of inequality. He is indeed, then, many things, all of them apposite to the prevailing trends of this final part of the twentieth century.

A bold mind is required for any biographical study of Rousseau, given his extreme complexity. Happily, Maurice Cranston is indeed a bold mind; also a learned mind, not only on Rousseau but on Western thought generally. Beyond that Cranston is a spectacularly tenacious and wide-ranging researcher. He has

worked in the archives and collections of Rousseauian material in half a dozen countries, and in order to get a fresh start with the all-important *Confessions*, has gone to not only the draft of this book preserved in Geneva but that contained in the Palais Bourbon, presented by Rousseau's wife after his death. This volume, the first in what will eventually be a two-volume study of Rousseau's entire life, begins with its subject's birth in Geneva in 1712 and takes us down to publication of the celebrated *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* and, in the same year, 1754, Rousseau's return to the Geneva he had so extravagantly praised in the foreword to the *Discourse*. On the clear evidence of this book, Cranston is engaged in writing a biographical study of Rousseau's life and works superior in all respects to any I have seen or know. To his wide-ranging and painstaking

research the author has added the perspicacity and intuitive judgment of the natural biographer.

All Rousseaus in the Western mind are given biographical basis in this volume. To those who are fond of seeking developmental-psychological explanations for major ideas in an individual's life, Cranston's chapters, especially the early ones, will be a gold mine. Is it any wonder, it will be exclaimed, that Rousseau should have spent so much of his life in preoccupation with equality and its necessary political conditions. He was born in patrician elegance in the most fashionable part of Geneva. Such elegance, however, was made possible for the young Rousseau solely by his mother's wealth and high-born status in Genevan society; Rousseau's father was an artisan, sprung from that class, and Rousseau was never allowed to forget it. Rousseau's mother died two days after his birth from puerperal fever, and although Rousseau lived with his father and two aunts for five years in the mansion, standard of living began to decline; the senior Rousseau's earnings as artisan were not up to it. The result was forced move from the great house and its environs down to considerably meaner circumstances in the part of Geneva where the artisan class generally lived. But the worst lay still ahead. In an incident involving an army captain, Isaac Rousseau fell afoul of the law and chose to flee Geneva and settle elsewhere, soon after remarrying and living off an inheritance from his late wife that had been intended for Jean-Jacques and his brother. Now Rousseau was obliged to live with an uncle from his mother's side of the family, and from the beginning the uncle made it clear to Rousseau that while he was permitted to live with his relatives, he must understand that he was of baser birth and lower class. Whatever feelings were generated in Rousseau's mind by this development in life could only have been exacerbated when at age 13 he was put in contractual apprenticeship to an engraver who, from Rousseau's account in the *Confessions*, was of uncommonly loutish and tyrannical disposition. Three years of beatings, deprivations, and constant humiliations were all Rousseau could take, and just three months before his sixteenth birthday he fled Geneva, to commence the journeys and sojourns and visits which would culminate in

