

fused with high-minded idealism to the ruin of every Democratic presidential candidate since 1964, save one. LaRouche must have recognized that were he to enter the staid primaries of the Republicans his zanies would attract unwanted attention. Instead, full of hope and enthusiasm, he sent them into that party where fantasticos vie with standard pols, where the Rev. Jim Jones of the erstwhile People's Temple could fetch the admiration of the eminent, where something as curious as the Rainbow Coalition regularly resounds with hubbubs about *The Rich! The Bankers! The Arms Contractors!*

So why after performing well at the

polls is poor Lyndon the subject of such wide suspicion? I confess it beats me. Is it that too many of his conspiracies embrace ethnic and religious slurs? All this is behind LaRouche, he insists. He wants forgiveness and forgetfulness. Forgiveness and forgetfulness were extended to the Rev. Jackson after his essays into anti-Semitism and related kookery during the 1984 presidential primaries. Gore Vidal is forgiven his excesses, both on the campaign trail when he seeks a Democratic nomination and in left-wing journals when he spins his yarns of conspiracy about the Rockefellers, the American Empire, the "Heterosexual Dictator-

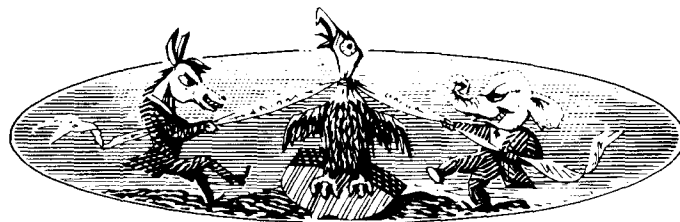
ship" that governs us, and the "Israeli fifth columnists" who are everywhere, particularly in the media.

The case of Vidal is particularly timely, for he has just blurted out his anti-Semitic hallucinations in a recent issue of the *Nation*, and in it he has actually come up with a bugaboo that I had not heard of before. Vidal believes there is an Oriental conspiracy shaping up that menaces "white people" both here and in the Soviet Union. "An alliance with the Soviet Union is a necessity," the goony bird declares, and he squawks on about those American

Jews whose "first loyalty would always be to Israel."

Now in their confused present as in their recent past, the liberals—once such vigilant defenders of reason and tolerance—simply avert their gaze when bigotry and kookery are blurted out by compatriots. Unlike Jackson and Vidal, LaRouche has never been a legitimate Democrat or liberal, and so his zaniness, I suppose, will not receive the liberals' dispensation. Moreover he does not have the troops that Jackson musters or the goofball charm of Vidal. But wait until he gets wind of Vidal's thesis on the exotic Orient. Sony will be in trouble. □

C A P I T O L I D E A S



DAS KAPITAL IDEAS II

by Tom Bethell

In Leningrad Airport there were soldiers and airmen everywhere. The country seemed to be semi-mobilized. We were kept waiting for our flight to Tbilisi, and in the Soviet Union you soon learn to wait patiently. Nearby was a group of Syrians with a caged bird.

The Aeroflot jet itself seemed to have seen recent military use. We were packed in uncomfortably tight: knee to kidney. In pitiful mimicry of Western ways, an attendant once during our three-hour flight brought around a tray with plastic cups of metallic-tasting water.

I sat next to Larry Moffitt, who told me a little about the Unification Church. Members apparently believe that Communism fulfills the biblical prediction of the Antichrist. This brought to mind Whittaker Chambers's apocalyptic foreword to *Witness* (1952): "I see in Communism the focus of the concentrated evil of our time. . . . Within the next decades is to be decided for generations whether all mankind is to become Communist." And Comrade Gorbachev said at the Party Congress in February: "This is perhaps the most alarming period in history."

I could see little other than haze from the window. How our satellites know where to look for their mobile missiles is a mystery to me and I

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suspect to the Pentagon. Presently the icy terrain of the Caucasus came into view and we seemed to fly quite close to one tremendous peak. One had heard horror stories about Aeroflot. Lev Navrozov said that when a plane crashes they simply bulldoze earth over the wreckage and nothing is reported in the newspapers. So it was a relief to touch down in Tbilisi, brightly lit in a valley between the mountain passes.

Georgia, USSR, is about the same size and has about the same population as Georgia, USA. One was tempted to think of Tbilisi (pop. 1.2 million) as their Atlanta. Georgia has its own language and alphabet, which the Russians tried to suppress a few years back. This could be seen as the reverse of our own dotty anti-melting pot efforts—funding bilingual education, preserving Cajun French, and so on. But the Russians found themselves with a Georgian rebellion on their hands and so they abandoned their exercise in cultural imperialism.

The main street, named after a Georgian poet called Rustaveli (why are poets so worshiped in our socialist age?), was brightly lit. There were sidewalk flowerbeds and roadside trees. The city had a dusty, Moorish, Mediterranean air—most agreeable after Leningrad's muddy battleship gray. We all felt much more cheerful. The next day Rick Brookhiser said, I believe accurately: "We have come to a place that is culturally and economical-

ly on the level of Turkey, and we are overjoyed."

Our hotel, the Iveria, was built in the early seventies, a somewhat ramshackle but quite pleasant 20-story tower with Hiltonish aspirations. The doorman gave us a non-Communist bow as we came in. Civility was still alive south of the Caucasus, apparently. Interior hotel signs were in English only: Service Bureau. Night Bar. Currency Exchange. At the Service Bureau the next day a radio was playing "Chattanooga Choo Choo." Strolling Yanks wore pastel pants.

Imagine you went to the main hotel in Atlanta and all the signs were in Russian. And only in Russian. What would you think? And imagine that illegal entrepreneurs on the streets were trying to spot Russian tourists so they could change dollars for more desirable roubles. Teenagers sought out Russian clothes and danced to Russian music. On the radio: Hits from Moscow.

I could see why the Communists think capitalism is imperialistic. It really is—at the level of commerce. Of course it leaves intact the machinery of government, but it does bring pressure to bear at the more fundamental level of social organization itself. At the Party Congress Gorbachev noted with alarm that capitalism's "productive forces" have "grown to gigantic proportions." The result is that non-

democratic countries trying to preserve a regime of privilege against the forces of property are under increasing strain. Gorbachev was in a way correct to speak of the "crisis of capitalism as anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism." International capitalism subjects Communism to intolerable competitive pressure, as long as it does not simultaneously pay tribute in the form of subsidies (which it does).

Describing her recent stay in the Soviet Union (Tbilisi in fact) Stalin's daughter Svetlana told the *New York Times*: "You could meet a taxi driver, or a man selling vegetables at the bazaar, suddenly bursting forth into talk about how much 'private property is needed,' or 'nothing can be done without private initiative.' I was surprised how people began to talk about that, without even being asked. It must have been on everyone's mind." It was certainly on mine.

In intelligence jargon, one hears much talk of organizations being "penetrated" by the enemy. In fact capitalism really has penetrated Communist societies—and at the dangerous level of practical reality and human nature as it is. By contrast Western societies are not so much penetrated (in the intelligence sense) as infested by people who dream of human nature as-it-might-be. They would be harmless, but for the fact that they wield considerable power at home, and act as the guardian-pro-

tectors of Communist power abroad.

Larry Moffitt, on his third tour of the Soviet Union, said the more you move away from the center, that is from Moscow, the more attenuated Communist power becomes. Tbilisi seemed to be a good deal freer, more productive, more relaxed than Leningrad. There were more cars on the streets and more goods in the shops. Obviously, there was a fair amount of *de facto*

capitalism. And a Party crackdown would only undermine the productivity upon which Moscow depends. Wherein lies the dilemma of the Communists: Let them produce, or keep them under control, one or the other, because both cannot be achieved. Central planning is only ostensibly a method of economic production. In fact it is a technique of political control.

Our Intourist guide, Lali, a cultivated Georgian, told us on the bus that 20 percent of the houses in Tbilisi are privately owned (presumably inherited, not sold). She was obviously proud of Georgia, often carefully distinguishing it from Russia.

“I could live here,” said an expansive Arnold Beichman one day.

“They’re nice people and they’re obviously not Communists!” He foresaw a great increase in U.S. tourism to the Eastern bloc. (This was about three weeks before the Chernobyl disaster.) “You can have a drink here without worrying about someone dropping some plastique.”

We went to Gori, the birthplace of Stalin, thirty-five miles away. On the way we stopped at an ancient monastery perched on a hilltop, and at an eleventh-century Orthodox cathedral. Inside an old man was kneeling, holding a candle, and crossing himself whenever some East European Party members who had arrived in a Chaika limousine came too close.

Our Gori goal was the Stalin museum. First we saw the log-cabin affair where Stalin grew up. Sometimes it seems there must be a Humble Origins Indentikit for World Famous People: bare floorboards (please ignore the velvet rope), simple pitcher on functional table, chair for Papa Stalin: everything scrubbed, righteous, and minimal, somehow fit for the Museum of Modern Art.

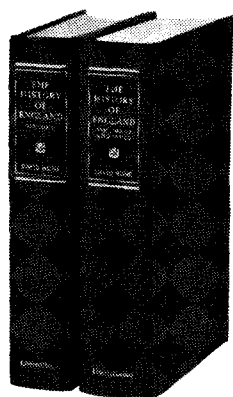
A lady with yellowish hair showed us the museum. She greatly admired Stalin and was not aware that we had (mostly) come to gawk in a spirit of ironic amusement. This may well have been a mistaken attitude on our part. Was Stalin different in kind from other Soviet rulers, or only in degree?

Stalin (born 1879) had a beautiful velvet voice, the lady told us. He was a poetic child, a dreamer; his first poems patriotic, people should struggle for a better life. Here were his favorite books from the library. These were members of a Marxist group in Tbilisi; they studied in the seminary with Stalin. Seminary today is an art museum. Stalin became a professional revolutionary at age fifteen; expelled from seminary because of his revolutionary activities there. (In West today, I thought, seminary revolution is at level of doctrine, liberation theology.)

Later Beichman asked the guide: Premier Khrushchev’s speech denouncing Stalin was in 1956. The Stalin museum opened in 1957. How come?

“We are the people of contradictions,” she replied.

The Georgian Museum of Art, Lenin Square, Tbilisi. “Stalin lived here: 1894-99.” Here was a fresco of the Archangel Gabriel. There was an icon of the Transfiguration from a nearby monastery. Here the famous Khakhuli triptych—notice the cloisonné enamel technique—incorporating a tenth-century icon of the Virgin. “Georgia was committed to be the country of Our Lady,” Lali told us. Now look at



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this, a sixth-century icon, not painted by human hand according to legend—one of those miraculous icons... Could she tell us what particular room Stalin lived in, someone asked. No, it was a kind of boarding school, you see.

Dutifully, she took us upstairs to see the modern works. "And this is the period of the so-called socialist realism in art," she said. "I don't think you need an explanation." It was the icons she had wanted us to see.

Back at the hotel the word was that Senator Kennedy had been on Moscow TV, urging the U.S. to stop nuclear tests. On a tour bus we saw a bumper sticker: San Franciscans for a Nuclear Freeze. And in the dining room we met some homebodies from the American-Soviet Friendship Society. They were on an enraptured three-week, *Nation*-advertised tour of the Soviet Union. Everything was wonderful: no unemployment, no crime, no profiteering, and don't forget: twenty million killed in World War II. A lady from New York who refused to give her name loudly said: "Tell them that unless we live in peace with the socialist countries we shall all die."

Six of them sat at a table right behind ours. Disarmament was imperative, one said. "If you're not going to war what do you need that junk for?"

By how much should we disarm? "Fifty percent," one said, only to be overruled by another: "A hundred percent."

Any repression in the USSR?
"No sir!"
Religious persecution?
"No sir!"
Anti-Semitism?
"No sir!"

"Oh, this is delicious ginger ale," one of their party said. "Boy, do I like to take a drink of ginger ale."

Everything they had seen was wonderful and everything would continue to be wonderful. Upcoming on their itinerary was Kiev. That too would be wonderful. They had already been on Soviet television and no doubt would be again.

Lali, a couple of tables away, had noticed our altercation. I went over to explain: In the Soviet Union Communism is compulsory, at least for the ambitious. In America it is voluntary. And quite a few people really do have faith in it. That is, they believe that a Communist society can be achieved without force. "They don't call themselves Communists," I said. "They don't even think of themselves as Communists, but their state of mind is Communist."

Lali discreetly said nothing. But she listened attentively.

I suspect that on any given day the Soviet Union is honeycombed with American true believers, whose faith I think is constantly needed to lift Soviet spirits weighed down by the leaden weight of Communist reality. Chernobyl will reduce their numbers, but not their outlook. Such people are radically hostile to a free society which fails to insist that all believe in the same thing and work collectively to attain it.

In Leningrad we had met an American woman who was attempting to set up an Alcoholics Anonymous chapter—with the approval of the Soviet authorities. Still, she was subjected to a humiliating body search for bringing in a Radio Shack computer. Was not AA based on a belief in a Supreme Being, Moffitt asked her. She said they were modifying it for Soviet consumption.

"You may be removing the active ingredient that makes it work."
"It's either that or no AA." She asked Moffitt how he had found the Soviet Union.
"Well, repressive."
"You're just saying the same old thing."
"That's because it's been true for a long time." Had she been inside Soviet
(continued on page 48)

"If there is a better book on the 1984 presidential campaign, I haven't heard about it...."

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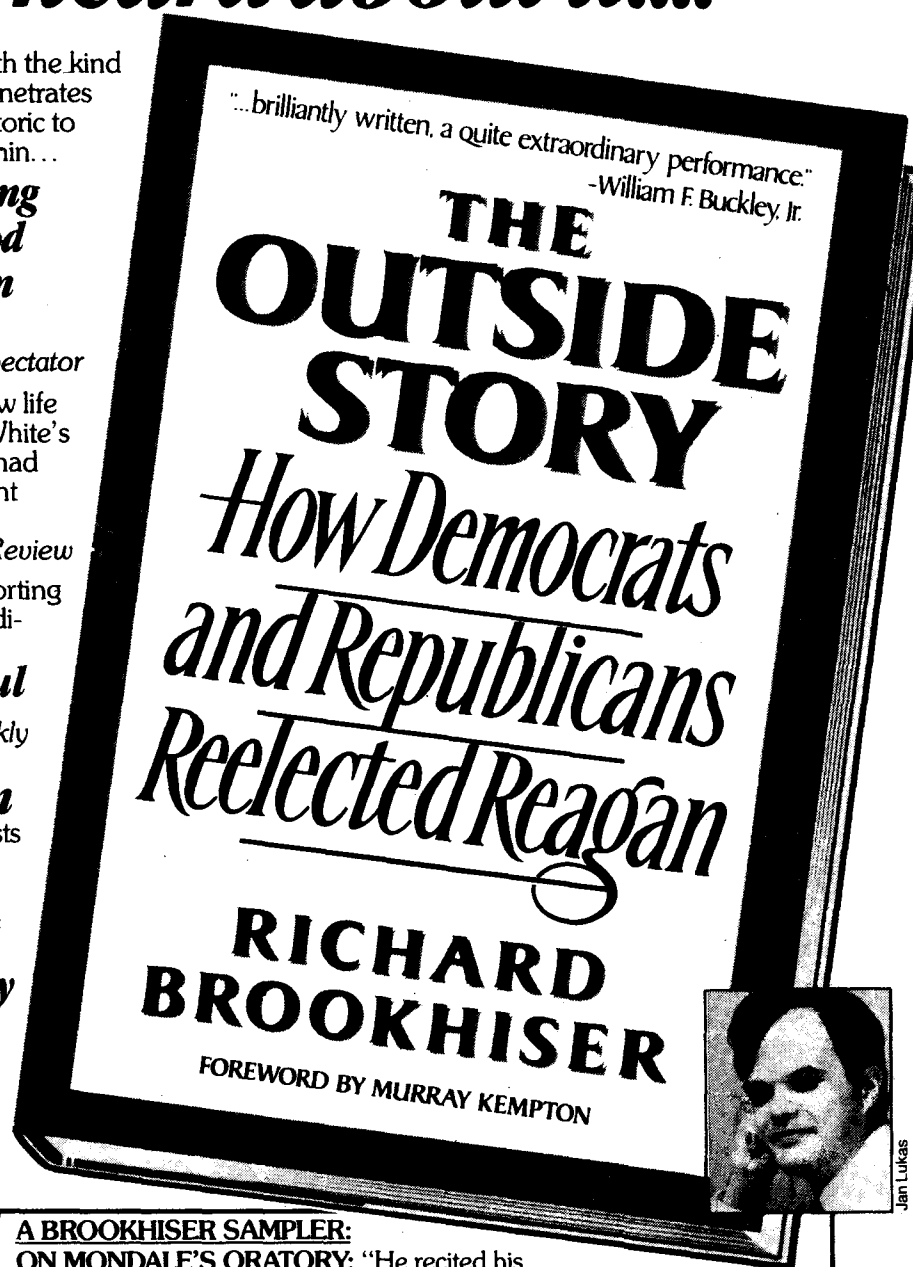
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A BROOKHISER SAMPLER:

ON MONDALE'S ORATORY: "He recited his speech solemnly, like someone explaining the facts of life."
ON FERRARO'S SOPHISTICATION: "She pegged her discussion of Lebanon and Central America to trips she had taken there as a Congresswoman.... She referred to them for the same reason Baudelaire wrote about sin, or Thomas Wolfe about Asheville: it was all they knew."
ON CUOMO'S ABORTION STAND: "He had found, in consensus and prudence, a way of having religion when he wanted it and not having it when he didn't."
ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: "Americans believe in the brotherhood of man or in the war of the worlds, not in balance of power."

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Fred Barnes

THE BOOK ON STOCKMAN

The Administration asked for it.

Here's the way I figure it. Ronald Reagan has done mighty well in this life. He's the most popular President at this stage—second year, second term—ever. And political writer after political writer, upon scanning David Stockman's book,¹ has rushed to attack Stockman and defend Reagan. Hugh Sidey of *Time* declared that "long years of leadership that hone instincts and crystallize common sense," Reagan's long suit, in other words, are more important than anything an arrogant young policy entrepreneur like Stockman might offer. George Will noted in his syndicated column that the nation used to worry about Reagan's age, but now "Stockman's book demonstrates how youth can be a menace to good governance." And in the *Washington Post*, William Schneider said Reagan was doing fine as President, while Stockman's book left him with "an inescapable conclusion: David Stockman is a stinker."

The Reagan presidency should survive without a rousing defense from me. So I pass. But Stockman is clearly in a heap of trouble. As George Bush would say, Stockman has stepped in "deep doo-doo." Okay, so he made a cool \$2.5 million on the book deal. And he's got a fancy job with a New York investment firm, doing who knows what. But given the pummeling his book has taken, Stockman is on the verge of not being taken seriously at all in Washington. And that would be a mistake. His book is crudely written, he is overwrought on the matter of the federal budget deficit, and his overarching policy advice (raise taxes, you dopes!) is wrongheaded in the extreme. Yet he has something to say, especially to a smug administration that nowadays spends most of the daylight

hours celebrating itself. His message is this: you haven't done half as good a job as you think you have.

Stockman is flat-out right about that. The deficit is hardly as dangerous as Stockman says, but it is a problem and it might have been avoided. How? Reagan could have used up a little of his popularity by leading the fight for deep spending cuts. He didn't. He could have stood firmly against the costly ornaments that were unnecessarily added to the 1981 tax cut. He didn't. Or if narrowing the deficit seems too prosaic a goal, he could have utilized the 1984 presidential campaign, which he was certain to win, to make the positive case for a sharply pruned government, namely that it is better for everyone, the poor included. He didn't. Stockman argues the reason is simply that Reagan is not a revolutionary, but a conventional politician who isn't interested in sweeping change.

I resisted this conclusion, but I wavered after Stockman unloaded a few vignettes. You'd think Reagan, of all people, would be wary of billions given to Exxon, Union Oil, and some gas pipelines to build synthetic fuel plants. But no. The unfettered marketplace had lost its magic in this case. So when adviser Edwin Meese informed

him that the companies had plunked down a small bit of their own money, the President was fully persuaded. "We can't cause an honest business to lose money," he said. Reagan wouldn't cause the Veterans Administration, a \$27 billion complex of programs, to spend less, either. "Whatever tiny veterans' cuts I managed to stuff into the budget were made instantly non-operative by [VA administrator Harry] Walters's ability to claim with impunity that he spoke for the President," writes Stockman. "No one at the White House ever said he didn't."

Worse still was the lingering fraud of the so-called veto strategy. The President seemed to believe that he had such a strategy. In 1984, his advisers urged him to veto all congressional appropriations bills that exceeded the ceilings in his budget. Reagan was ready. "I can't wait to get my pen out," he said. Reagan was "grinning enthusiastically" as he said this, according to Stockman. Well, not many weeks later, the Interior appropriations bill wound up on the President's desk, a mere 25 percent, or \$2 billion, over budget. Senator James McClure of Idaho pleaded for approval. "In response I pointed out the obvious," writes Stockman, "that a bill 25 percent over the line was a budget buster by any definition. Could we really afford to raise subsidies to private forests by 140 percent? Did we truly need to layer the Bureau of Mines and Geological Survey with more bureaucratic fat? Did we need \$170 million worth of additional spending at the Indian Health Service, the free world's most spectacularly inefficient organization? You want to talk about deficit spending. This bill defines it." Stockman then waited for other advisers to support him. Silence. "On this, yes, I agree," Reagan finally said. "This is not the kind of thing we had in mind to veto."

To defend Reagan, critics like Sidey,

Will, and Schneider rely on the notion that he never had deep and painful spending cuts in mind. That was Stockman's idea, a measly director of the Office of Management and Budget overplaying his hand. Not quite. True, Reagan didn't single out specific cuts during his campaign in 1980. But his entire political career prior to reaching the White House consisted of making one major point, namely that the federal government was spending way too much and doing way too much. Washington, to hear Reagan's spiel, was nothing but wretched excess. Was it too much for Stockman to have expected that Reagan would want to back up his rhetoric with actual cuts? I don't think so. If there was ever a President who might be expected to rebel against handouts to interest groups, it was Reagan. But it turned out to be a mighty fainthearted and short-lived rebellion.

Republican politicians in Washington are like that, Stockman says. It's remarkable how quickly they wind up as "patrons of pork," coopted by "the congressional culture and welfare state apparatus. . . . By a gradual but certain process, they became the legislative chambermaids of the welfare state. All that really stood between them and the Democrats was their content-free rhetoric about 'private initiative' and 'fiscal responsibility.'" Above all, they don't share Stockman's vision of "minimalist government—a spare and stingy creature, which offered evenhanded public justice, but no more. Its vision of the good society rested on the strength and productive potential of free men in free markets." And so on. Reagan could have written the passage himself. The trouble is, he has no intention of following through and trying, at some political risk, to make it a reality.

Anyway, the best part of Stockman's book is where he spins out his vision

¹ *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed*. Harper & Row, \$21.95.

Fred Barnes is a senior editor of the *New Republic*.

