

selves, in the process of which they will develop human-like affinities. They will mine raw materials for use on Earth, or for the purpose of creating habitable environments on moons and other planets . . .

These are rich lodes; but the ever-recurring theme that provokes the imagination most is predictions of a race of descendents who will inevitably become alienated: who will be changed in physical appearance and radically in their mindset. A new language appropriate to spaceflight is already developing, whose connotations are incomprehensible to earthlings. Thought patterns are bound to diverge, the Oergs argue. The longer people stay up in space the more likely are they to respond to different rhythms, which has a psychologically distancing effect. U.S. astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts will have increasingly much in common. Provincial allegiances tend to erode as month after month spacefarers gaze down upon Mother Earth; at such time when generations have succeeded each other on the edges of the universe itself, planetary allegiance will have dissolved.

We will find each other strange. The authors cover almost every aspect of existence in space yet never once mention religion; we may suspect they hypothesize its demise. Ethics are almost certain to undergo drastic revision respecting matters as fundamental as the sanctity of life. The very old, the chronically ill, the permanently disabled, and infants born sickly or deformed may not be tolerated. "Before long," declare the Oergs, "populations who live off Earth will have to develop their own codes of justice, their own laws, their own courts, and their own punishments." These populations will not only grow more and more different. Some "spacers" may come to abhor Earth, where gravity inhibits the least movement. "The air will be humid and foul-smelling to the Moon native. . . . Imagine a world free of mosquitoes, gnats and cockroaches, and then imagine coming back to Earth where those intrepid little vectors of filth and disease thrive."

Man must do what man was created to do: explore, conquer, and populate the cosmos. The future, however, may be as sorrowful to contemplate as it is exhilarating and exciting. "In . . . political and economic disputes, huge populations on Mars, the asteroids, the moons of Saturn and Jupiter, and all the stopping stations in between will not take their marching orders from the beautiful but by then politically insignificant third planet of the Solar System." □

## BEYOND REAGAN: THE POLITICS OF UPHEAVAL

Edited by Paul Duke, and including essays and discussion by the panelists of "Washington Week in Review"

Warner Books/\$9.95 paper

Tim W. Ferguson

One redeeming aspect of MacNeil/Lehrer's expansion to one hour a night on PBS is that it's knocked "Washington Week in Review" off the Friday prime-time schedule in New York. Lest you conclude that unoriginal thinking is on the run, however, here comes the book version of television's bad dinner party, available in paperback at all hours.

For nearly twenty years, this show has put a moderator and four Washington correspondents in a room and experimented with some independent variables, the week's Big Stories in Town. The dependent variable has invariably been a dose of conventional wisdom. The viewer is advised to provide his own stimuli.

The first thirty pages of *Washington Week: The Book* consist mainly of present and former hosts of the show patting all concerned with the production on the back. Even there, you get more than a taste of that all-too-familiar Beltway outlook. Paul Duke, moderator since 1974, retraces the ebb and flow of Washington political tides, from "the bright dreams evoked by John Kennedy's Camelot" to Gerald Ford's inability to "dispel the crisis in confidence" that gripped the republic after the awful Nixon. Jimmy Carter "foundered on economic shoals" (poor fella), but even then, "hardly anyone figured that the disillusionment was so deep that it would catapult Ronald Wilson Reagan into such a surprisingly easy conquest . . ." Well, not anyone on "Washington Week in Review," anyway: Four days before the 1980 election, staring into some of the same poll data that were turning Pat Caddell's beard half gray, half of the show's panelists even picked Carter to win. (You won't find mention of that in the book, by the way.)

But once Mr. Reagan was in, look out! "He would go for broke," Paul Duke writes. "Whether for good or ill, the President succeeded in unleashing a stunning tide of social, economic, and governmental change un-

Tim W. Ferguson is editorial features editor of the Wall Street Journal.

paralleled since New Deal days."

Every revolution needs its Robespierists, and as Mr. Duke informs us, "new, more ideologically committed players are running the old town." Even "Mr. Republican" Bob Taft, who fought the good fight and lost like he was supposed to, would look askance at "the zealous brand of partisanship practiced by these latter-day conservative apostles." Thank goodness the fair-minded Tip O'Neill has been around to keep things honest.

No old capital hand's account of the Reagan era would be complete without the chestnut about the 1980 victory reflecting a nostalgic longing for a simpler past when America reigned supreme, and Mr. Duke comes through with pretty much those words exactly. And, of course, he also comments on Reagan the performer. In case anyone a traffic light away from 3rd and Independence has forgotten or never bothered to notice, there is a page and a half of transcript from the press session at which Margaret Heckler was ushered out as head of the health and welfare bureaucracy and sent to Dublin to deal with yet another basket case. "The spectacle had all the trappings of a public hanging," it is said. The old showman Ron really knows how to draw a crowd!

Finally, there remain throw-weighty matters for future panelists to mull: "Will Star Wars, as Reagan says, change the course of human history by

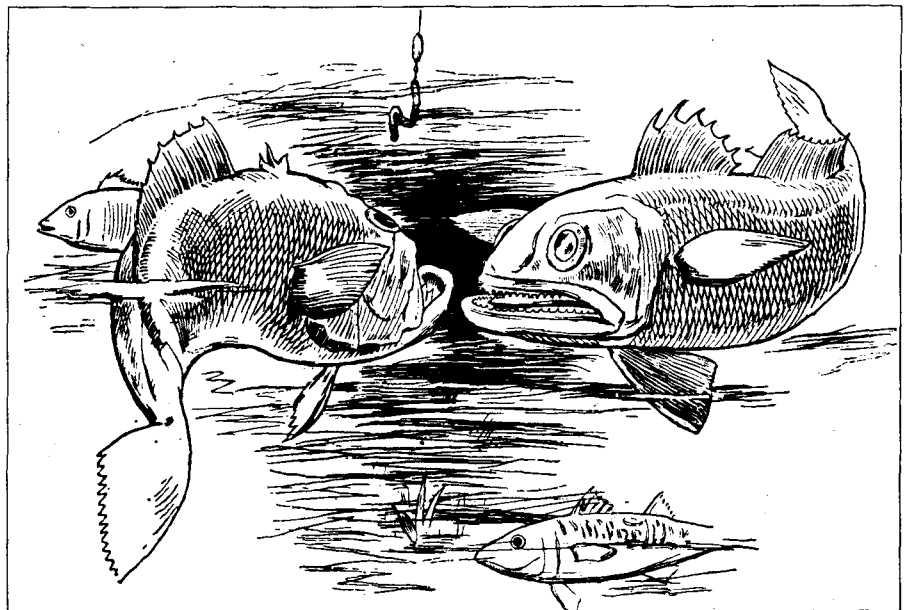
rendering nuclear weapons obsolete? Or will it [you can almost hear Mr. Duke's voice drop a few octaves] mark the final stepping stone to an ever-closer Armageddon?"

After these preliminaries, the book is broken down into topical sections. In each, an essay by a regular panelist precedes a discussion that simulates the weekly gab. So this is not a collection of excerpts from the show. You're reading fresh material (in one sense).

I will admit to some surprise about the contribution from *Washington Post* correspondent Haynes Johnson. His columns for that newspaper give fuller vent to left-liberalism than most reporters are permitted in their workaday roles. Yet his overview here of the shift in political attitudes during the last generation is sufficiently cheery that Paul Duke opens the discussion section with "Haynes, you seem to come down on the side of optimism in the country." (Call the *Post* ombudsman!) After Jack Nelson of the *Los Angeles Times* sounds his usual sour note, Haynes retreats, acknowledging that "the poor and the dispossessed feel out of American society all the more." Ah, now we're back on track.

Syndicated columnist Georgie Anne Geyer is the most pleasant breeze to blow through this program, probably because her international travels take her the farthest away from Washington. Just as the group is beginning to brood, she comes through with this:

What Americans have not understood before is that each answer to problems causes new problems, which is what civil rights did. We talk about minorities. Are we talking about the Vietnamese minority? They are doing magnificently well. We've sifted down now to a point where it's cultural values that count in this society. . . . We're beginning to learn that there are relative answers, and I think maybe that what we're seeing under President Reagan is that a lot of Americans are think-



ing, well, the relative answers aren't so bad.

Shortly, however, Mr. Duke is getting antsy. Haynes, he says,

Isn't it also true that there are problems in our society today which are certain to smolder and fester and eventually explode? [Just like those combustible metaphors.] One analogy might be the Coolidge presidency, when the problems began to fester and then overwhelmed the presidency of Herbert Hoover. Even if Ronald Reagan escapes, the next presidency may suffer from today's complacency.

This is a precious Washington phenomenon. The pluckiness of the latter-day Mr. Reagan has reduced his partisan critics to sounding the very sort of foreboding that so long alienated Republicans from a hopeful America. Mr. Johnson's response is therefore all the more classic:

I had lunch today with a Republican senator, and he got to talking about all this and said: "You can't understand how angry many Republicans are and how really bitter they are at the White House because we're going to be left to clean up the mess, and our necks are on the line." He said he doubted they could hold the White House after '88 because of economic problems and other frustrations.

After some more jabber about our being a "less caring society," Miss Geyer starts talking sense again, and Mr. Duke is aroused: "Are you saying that we've turned down a new road, a more conservative road, and you think we will continue going down that road?"

"Well," she replies,

I don't think conservative is the word. I think it's free enterprise, market economy, economic individualism. I think we can use new terms. I don't find the Reagan conservatives very "conservative." I do find them impassioned about economic freedom, if you want to call it that. You can call it a lot of things, but this is the way the world is going. So I can't see people going back to large social welfare.

Miss Geyer is getting rather catholic for this group, and Mr. Johnson is mounting the soapbox to put a stop to it. "I don't buy that," he retorts.

"Conservative" today doesn't mean what "conservative" did yesterday. Reagan people aren't conservatives by any measure of the American past. They're radicals. I mean, they're trying to undo the American government, not only just roll it back but cast it aside. They talk about the free market, but they want the government intruding more and more into the actions that will support their point of view, whether it's on race relations or civil rights or the Supreme Court or even the economy.

A page later, Mr. Johnson, who with Mr. Nelson saw President Carter's re-

election on October 31, 1980, is looking ahead, and again courts disaster by giving a date: "I'll predict right now we're going to see a more active presidency by the end of the 1980s. The President is going to have more powers. It's going to happen because of the economy. We are not competitive and it's going to take a larger government effort, not a smaller one, to change things."

At about this point in the book, a fifth of the way through, I'll admit to tuning out, which is often what occurred when I watched the show on television, waiting for "Wall Street Week." I did like the spacy theme music of "Washington Week"; an unkind critic could suggest it heralded dialogue from another planet. Actually, that's giving the town that bills itself "the most important city in the world" too much credit. It's a smallish place, of narrowing and consuming interests.

### WITH THE CONTRAS: A REPORTER IN THE WILDS OF NICARAGUA

Christopher Dickey/Simon and Schuster/\$18.95

Steven C. Munson

During the spring debate over whether the United States should resume military aid to the anti-Communist guerrillas, called contras, in Nicaragua, White House communications director Patrick Buchanan published a column in the *Washington Post* in which he posed the following question to the Democratic members of Congress: Would they stand with the United States and the democratic resistance in Nicaragua, or with Daniel Ortega and the Communists? The column provoked an immediate outcry in Congress and the press, the theme of the complaints being that Mr. Buchanan, and by implication the administration he spoke for, was engaged in the kind of McCarthyite rhetoric not heard since the 1950s. Mr. Buchanan's critics insisted that they would not allow the Administration to frame the debate over contra aid in terms of patriotism or anti-Americanism. His attempt to

*Steven C. Munson has worked for The American Spectator, the New York Times Magazine, and the Committee for the Free World. He is currently News Specials Chief at the Voice of America. The opinions expressed in this review are his alone.*

A place where the Doles, Domenicis, and Stockmans occupy themselves in such things as a "budget process," which has been of no real relevance to the Reagan presidency and the country since early 1982, and where the press follows their agonizing efforts with excruciating care. Between that subject and "arms control," another pretense, "Washington Week" has amassed enough frets and frowns to fill ten books.

It's not that these people aren't good reporters. Indeed, perhaps because they are do both the show and the book suffer. Mr. Duke makes the point that the program's creators chose to feature news journalists instead of avowed pundits, to toe the center and heap scorn on all sides as deserved. What they got was a bunch who, with an exception or two, are too close to their Washington world and yet too smug about their detachment from its wars. The result is as predictable as it is insufferable. □

do so, they said, was not only morally offensive but unfair as well.

In denouncing Mr. Buchanan, these critics sought to quash any suggestion that their opposition to aiding the anti-Communists in Nicaragua might have anything to do with their attitude toward their own country. This particular suspicion, however, is not easily laid to rest. Over the past five years, a good deal has happened in Nicaragua that was not expected when the Sandinistas marched into Managua in the summer of 1979. Their revolution, like so many before it, was heralded as a new beginning for a long-oppressed people. Yet the Sandinista revolution, like so many before it, turned out to be the beginning of the end of freedom, prosperity, and hope. Today Nicaragua is in the process of becoming a full-fledged totalitarian Communist state on the Soviet-Cuban model. Freedom of the press has been abolished. Religious freedom—preeminently in the form of the Catholic Church—is gradually being snuffed out. The Miskito Indians and other indigenous peoples have been relocated and brutally persecuted. Education has been replaced by propaganda. The economy is being destroyed, the people im-

poverished. Allied to the Soviet Union and thoroughly militarized, the country is now in the hands of foreigners, from Libyans and East Germans to Cubans and the PLO.

All of this is now more or less accepted in the United States by all but the most dedicated proponents of Communist revolution and their fellow-travelers. Today even those who travel under the name liberal recognize that Nicaragua is not a nice place. Yet while the unpleasant facts about the country and its course have for the most part been acknowledged, the implications those facts hold for American policy have been resolutely resisted.

At issue today, as in the early years of the Reagan Administration, is the simple question of whether the United States should do anything to obstruct or weaken the Sandinista government. Five years ago, the question turned primarily on Nicaragua's efforts to export its revolution by arming and otherwise assisting the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador. At the first sign that the United States might actually try to cut off this support, opponents demanded evidence of Nicaragua's subversive activity. Soon the issue was no longer what we should do about Sandinista aggression, but whether our own government was lying when it called attention to that aggression.

Today, few would dispute that the Sandinistas were and are trying to export their revolution, and not only to El Salvador but to other Latin American countries as well. Yet that recognition has not led to a widespread readiness to trust the Reagan Administration. On the contrary, the Administration is now held responsible for the policies of the Sandinistas. The argument is advanced that the Sandinistas have been driven to take extreme measures, both at home and abroad, by the hostility of the United States.

This is the thesis of Christopher Dickey's widely praised book, *With the Contras*. A reporter for the *Washington Post* now stationed in the Middle East, Mr. Dickey spent several years covering Central America. Part of the book details his brief experience traveling in Nicaragua with one unit of anti-Communist guerrillas. The rest is a sketchy recounting of the Sandinista revolution, the fall of Somoza, and the creation of the contra army.

Mr. Dickey depicts the contra forces as the product of a sinister conspiracy among U.S., Argentine, and other Latin American intelligence and military officials. He tells the story of one contra unit led by a former Somoza national guardsman called "Suicida." It is an