

in 1956 was "to see a continent at the moment of its awakening."

Very few writers can say of work specific to one time and place that it holds its currency thirty years or more after its genesis. Any of these essays would be worth reading just for assurance that one genial master of the form still exists. But it's also comforting to be persuaded that the human brain can make sense of the entropic multitude of im-

pressions that form the world; Pritchett characterizes and orders that world without turning it into so many specimens to feel quaint about, as eighties travel writers so often do so annoyingly. Pritchett is as much at home abroad as he is comfortable in England, and complacent and dull in neither place; that is why his venerability belongs to a timeless order of things, and why he and it have endured so long. □

HAROLD MACMILLAN: VOLUME ONE: 1894-1956
Alistair Horne/Viking/537 pp. \$24.96

Aram Bakshian, Jr.

Toward the end of his six-and-a-half-year tenure as prime minister, Harold Macmillan did something very out of character: he lost his head. It happened at Madame Tussaud's. The strains of office had graven themselves so deeply into Macmillan's sensitive, finely furrowed face, with its distant, drooping eyes and eternally shrugging brows, that a new, but far older-looking wax head was brought in to replace the one that had topped the prime ministerial effigy since 1957. Macmillan himself had long since shed more than one layer of personal and political skin, to the puzzlement of both critics and supporters.

Three years after his death at 92, he remains something of an enigma, even to as skilled a biographer as Alistair Horne. Again and again, Horne has difficulty in judging the deeper motivations for many of his subject's most important decisions and actions, despite his close collaboration, as official biographer, with Macmillan during the last decade of Macmillan's life.

And what a life it was. Cowed mama's boy of an overbearing Puritan heiress from Spencer, Indiana (father was head of the respectable British publishing house that still bears the family name); bookish religious devotee; courageous, repeatedly wounded World War I hero; canny executive in the family firm; tormented cuckold; Edwardian traditionalist and social reformer; domestic "wet" and external hawk: Harold Macmillan was a bundle of contradictions to most of his contemporaries. His private life was largely a succession of torments stoically endured, his public life a series of unexpected and usually triumphant

metamorphoses, culminating in the image of "Super Mac," the unflappable P.M. and sage elder statesman whose imperturbable facade covered a lifelong tendency toward melancholy.

Only occasionally did an observer come close to cracking Macmillan's psychic code, and then the key was usually artistic and intuitive, rather than political. Thus, Evelyn Waugh, in a letter to Ann (Mrs. Ian) Fleming in July 1963, shrewdly, if crankily, suggested that Macmillan,

like Sir Winston & Lord Hailsham, is ½ American & cannot be judged by English standards. . . . All his friends were killed in the [First World] war. . . . Worst of all he saw the light and rejected it. If he had made his submission to the [Roman Catholic] Church in 1910 when he momentarily decided to, he would not be prime minister nor married to a Cavendish but he would have been a happy and virtuous publisher. . . . I think he has grown a carapace of cynicism to protect a tender conscience.

Unfortunately, the same wounds that strengthened Macmillan personally seem to have left him with a jaded, fatalistic view of his country and the world. By the time he became prime minister, he had ceased to believe in many of the very qualities of his fellow countrymen that have led to a national revival under a less subtle but more resolute Margaret Thatcher. The single-minded bumblebee, oblivious to scientific doubts about her ability to fly, has soared to political heights the blasé old eagle never even attempted.

Experience can deceive as well as inform. The futile slaughter of World War I, the paralysis of the interwar years, and the drab new egalitarian social order of Britain's welfare state robbed this personally resilient and decent man of the confidence it takes to

turn, rather than flow with, the tide.

By the early 1940s, as Macmillan confided to diarist Harold Nicolson, he viewed "extreme Socialism as inevitable, with the Conservatives standing not so much for property, as for private lives." Inevitability perceived fast becomes inevitability achieved; by the time he grasped the tiller in 1957, Macmillan was more of a socialist than a conservative on most domestic issues. Sensible management and a certain standard of deportment became the end-all of his policy agenda, and he succeeded in delivering some short-term gains in living standards without correcting the basic flaws in Britain's over-taxed, under-productive welfare economy. Macmillan's doctrinal errors, compounded by the mismanagement of Labour's Harold Wilson and the personal ineptitude of the Conservatives' Edward Heath (the brief, caretaker terms of Alec Douglas-Home and James Callaghan were mere interludes), left Britain at its lowest ebb in modern history.

On the other hand, all this may have been the necessary prerequisite to radical reform, the nightmare before the awakening. If so, Macmillan's fatalism was justified, though hardly in the way he thought. In his last years, while supporting, like the good non-appeaser he was, Mrs. Thatcher's response to Argentine aggression in the Falklands, he persisted in sniping at the crude but vital side of renascent Tory capitalism at home. Perhaps it irked him to see so much life restored to a body he had given up for dead generations ago.

There is also the question of Macmillan's political—as opposed to his personal—ethics. A man of private piety, probity, and charm, he could be ruthless with those who stood in the way of his career. Since he took the precaution of destroying his diary entries during the Suez crisis, we will never know what was running through Macmillan's mind when he first egged on the unstable Anthony Eden to join with France and Israel in attacking Nasser, only to jump ship when the

tacit American support for the venture (which he incorrectly told Eden was a sure thing) turned out to be active opposition. Eden fell, Macmillan became prime minister, and, on this note of slightly tawdry triumph, the first volume of Alistair Horne's absorbing and thorough biography ends.

Horne is at his best when writing about his subject's best points: his physical courage and deep feeling for literature (gravely wounded in no man's land during the Great War, Macmillan browsed through a copy of Aeschylus's *Prometheus*—in the original Greek, naturally—while waiting for the stretcher-bearers); his outstanding diplomatic work during World War II (Macmillan deserves credit for appreciating the importance of de Gaulle and laboring heroically to soothe Le Grand Charles's ego without letting it get out of control); and his genuine piety (he was probably one of the few Anglicans in the twentieth century who prayed daily and meant it).

Subject and biographer are both weaker in those hazy political regions where, in the absence of an overriding philosophy, actions are driven by motives—and open to explanations—that are sometimes less than edifying. Two perceptive journalists who viewed Macmillan at turning points in his career have left us vignettes that may tell us more about his strengths and limits as a politician than Horne does. Writing in 1946, Bruce Lockart saw the strengths of the self-made public man:

[Macmillan] may yet succeed Winston. He has grown in stature during the war more than anyone. . . . He was always clever, but was shy and diffident, had a clammy handshake and was more like a wet fish than a man. Now he is full of confidence and is not only not afraid to speak but jumps in and speaks brilliantly [in the House of Commons]. He has a better mind than Anthony [Eden, whom Macmillan would later gently dismiss as "basically not an interesting man. . . . He never had a chance to read."]

More than eleven years later, when Macmillan finally did succeed to Number 10, a young British journalist, Henry Fairlie, told Malcolm Muggeridge what high hopes he had for the new P.M.'s "qualities and skills." As Fairlie recently recalled in the pages of the *New Republic*, Muggeridge replied, "I agree, my dear boy, but he's got to power too late. They always get it too late."

Almost always. Rare, indeed, is the leader whose best ideals have not predeceased him on the way up what Disraeli called "the greasy pole" of politics. In this respect, though not in many others, Harold Macmillan was a very common man. □



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COMMAND OF THE SEAS

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George Szamuely

In the successful 1987 movie *No Way Out* the villain is the defense secretary and the good guy is the director of central intelligence. This reflects current attitudes. Hollywood producers know very well that the Church Committee and then Stansfield Turner have done their work and that any conspiracy of which the CIA was author would not frighten even them, let alone the generally more sensible consumers of their products. But the Pentagon is a different case altogether. Here there is something for everyone. For the none-too-successful businessman there is "waste," for the congressional busybody there is "fraud" and "scandal"—terms freely bandied about yet whose unambiguously ugly connotations are in strange contrast with the extraordinarily difficult and technical issues involved. For those who seem to have devoted their lives to negotiating the end of the Cold War, yet who are ready at any time to accept any terms at all, there is something called "Gorbachev," the very utterance of whose name is supposed to be enough to put to shame anyone who still wants to talk about rockets, trajectories, and the like.

Now there is no doubt that inside a \$300-billion-a-year government department we are more than likely to find all kinds of shocking examples of the misuse of public funds. But compared with the performance of other departments the record of the military has not been too bad. The development and deployment of the Stinger missiles led to the greatest reverse the Soviets have suffered in their history. Compare that with a State Department that was happy to sign a treaty agreeing to stop its supply to the mujahedeen in return for no comparable Soviet commitment vis-a-vis its Kabul clients. Compare triumphs like Grenada and the Libyan raid with setbacks like the spies in the Moscow embassy and the massacre of U.S. Marines in Beirut, and ask who bears how much responsibility for each. Was it not the State Department that allowed Soviet personnel

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to work in the embassy in Moscow? Was it not the State Department that decided that the marines were really in Lebanon to act as a neutral, peace-keeping force and who, as a consequence, should not take any of the usual security precautions of combatants such as having sentries guarding sleeping soldiers with guns chambered and ready? As for the Vietnam war, that was pretty well won by 1968 only to have the fruits of victory thrown away by an alternately complacent and hysterical Washington.

Unlike the makers of *No Way Out*, the antidefense establishment, oddly enough, has picked someone other than the boss of the Pentagon to nourish its new-found fears that the taxpayer is being shortchanged. Just as the Reagan Administration's Central American policy had to have a villain, so the defense buildup also had to have its Elliott Abrams. Not Caspar Weinberger but John Lehman, the Navy secretary from 1981 to 1987, has played the role of the man Washington loves to hate. There are two charges against him.

First, that though President Reagan early on talked of the need to achieve "maritime superiority" as a "necessity . . . to assure access to all oceans of the world," he never intended his Navy secretary to change U.S. strategy on the seas from the limited role of either bringing American power to bear in various exotic parts of the world like Grenada and Lebanon, or in ensuring the safe passage of men and materiel across the Atlantic to the main theater of conflict—Europe, in other words. Instead, the President found himself presiding over a so-called forward strategy, which would entail American submarines and aircraft carriers moving into the Norwegian fjords in the event of a war with the Soviets, and there attacking ports and airfields within reach of the carriers' attack planes. And this strategy, so Lehman's critics argue, makes no sense since any attack on Soviet territory would almost certainly lead Moscow to take at the very least commensurate action against the United States, possibly going as far as responding with nuclear weapons, not to mention the fact that it would

be highly unlikely for any aircraft carrier to get within the vicinity of a Soviet base before being destroyed by a Soviet submarine or Backfire bomber.

The second charge is that through introducing competitive tendering into Navy procurement instead of sticking with the practice of having "sole" sources like General Dynamics along with Pentagon bureaucrats deciding how much a particular weapons system "should" cost, Lehman brought into being a particular class of felons—industry consultants who supposedly obtain confidential information from purchasing officials and pass the data on to companies bidding on Pentagon projects—now taking up the time, manpower, and resources of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

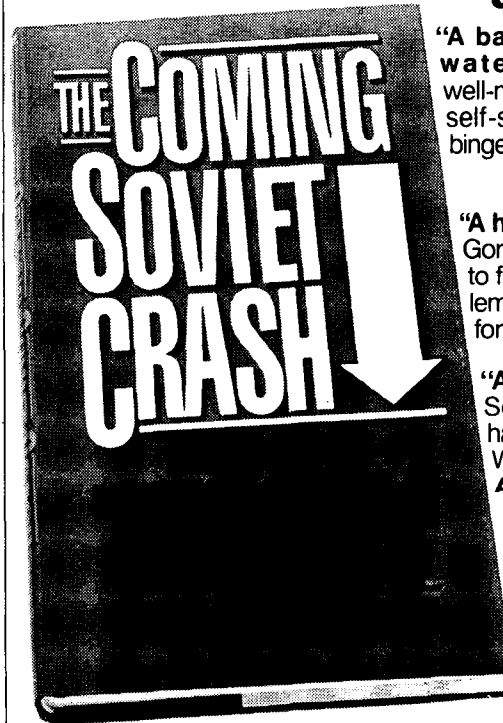
Lehman's *Command of the Seas* is a formidable attempt to answer his critics. To take the first charge first, because the Soviet Union has been since 1945 the United States's chief adversary it was not surprising that the Navy played a much smaller part in American grand strategy than it did during the Second World War. Possessed neither of the vulnerable coasts like Normandy, nor of Japanese- or German-like dependence on outside sources for food and natural resources, the U.S. could balance huge Soviet preponderance in conventional arms only by one thing: strategic ballistic missiles. The Navy's role was bound to seem subsidiary. The submarines would provide a nuclear second-strike force, and the air-

craft carriers and frigates would transport troops and materiel to prolong the fighting and raise the nuclear threshold. In comparison with the Air Force, expected to provide direct tactical support for the forces on the ground, as well as possibly launch a nuclear first-strike, the Navy had become the poor relation of the services.

As the Soviet navy grew during the 1960s and '70s, pundits like Henry Kissinger and his protege John Lehman began to worry that the rundown of American seaborne forces would lead to an inability, in the fashionable parlance of the time, "to project American power overseas," namely in the Third World. The Soviets would intervene in Asia and Africa and direct political developments in their direction while the United States would not be in a position to do anything. Or, alternately, the Soviets would close the Strait of Hormuz or interfere with Western shipping along the Cape route, thereby starving the democracies of important strategic minerals like vanadium, molybdenum, and cobalt. But nothing was done about this under Carter and the rundown of the Navy continued. By 1979 the Soviet fleet had increased to some 1,700 ships while the 950 ships in the U.S. armory in 1969 had now shrunk to a mere 479. Throw in the Soviets' land-based superiority in Europe and it certainly did seem as if the "world correlation of forces" had moved in their direction.

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ship Navy (not surprising considering it was John Lehman who drafted the Republican platform dealing with national security). By 1990, according to most estimates, that plan will have been realized. The surface fleet is built around fifteen aircraft carriers (as against twelve under Jimmy Carter) and four battleships mounted with Tomahawk cruise missiles. The *Ticon-*

deroga-class cruisers, each with a \$300-million Aegis missile system to defend against attack on the carrier fleet, also came on tap during the Lehman years. The number of nuclear attack submarines has grown from sixty-eight to 100, and by 1995 the U.S. should have something like twenty Trident submarines deployed. That is of course barring a START agreement. Re-

enlistments have jumped from approximately 28 percent in 1981 to more than 50 percent today, reflecting the high morale of the Navy. Lehman's critics acknowledge his successes but attribute them largely to his skills as a bureaucratic fighter for a larger share of the Pentagon budget.

Lehman's argument is always most convincing when he talks of the importance of maritime superiority as being essential to U.S. security. "We are not breaking new ground," as he puts it, "only recovering what had been foolishly thrown away." And he is right to ridicule those who argued that naval supremacy was pointless since defeating the Soviets on the seas would have no impact on their war effort either in Europe or in the Persian Gulf—depending as they do on internal lines of communication. It might not have much impact on *their* war effort, Lehman writes, but it would certainly have an enormous impact on *ours*:

The free world is an oceanic coalition. It follows, therefore, that the free world coalition must have unquestioned superiority on the seas if overall strategic parity is to exist—parity at the nuclear level, and inferiority in size of land forces balanced by superiority at sea. . . . Equality applied to the naval balance would mean catastrophe for us because naval parity would bring stalemate. . . . If our convoys could not get through to our European allies, then we would probably lose any conflict with the Soviet Union within weeks. . . .

Furthermore, Lehman is surely right to point out that the massive Soviet naval buildup of the last couple of decades could not but be offensive in intent. Why is it all right for the Soviets to plan to block the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico choke points for American shipping in the event of war, but reckless and dangerous when we attempt to do the same to them?

On the other hand, neither in his public utterances nor in the book has Lehman made a consistent case on behalf of the strategy of moving into Norwegian waters to destroy Soviet ports and air bases.

First, the necessity for expanding the U.S. naval forces had nothing to do with the supposedly offensive strategy Lehman was espousing. Regaining American naval supremacy was essential to ensure the secure passage of the transatlantic convoys and to be able to thwart the new Soviet interdiction capability in the Gulf of Mexico. Were this no longer possible to achieve, there would be no point in keeping U.S. troops in Western Europe at all—in fact, it would be reckless to do so. Clearly, then, the huge buildup in the nuclear attack submarine forces was absolutely essential.

But the rationale for expanding the aircraft carrier force from twelve to fifteen is less convincing. And this brings us back to the strategy underlying the plan to move into the Norwegian waters in the event of war. Lehman has been equivocal in his justifications. At times he has sounded modest, claiming that failure to do so would be immoral, implying as it does a willingness to abandon the Norwegians to the Russians. In his book, he makes a different point, writing ebulliently that as a result of the change in U.S. strategy, the Soviets now have to spend more time in *their* coastal waters and rather less time in ours: "Major fleet exercises in 1986 departed from previous trends that emphasized far-ranging interdiction operations and instead were staged much closer to home." At other times, however, he has had more ambitious things in mind and has spoken of bottling up the Soviet fleet. "Offense is the only defense available to us," he told *U.S. News & World Report* in 1986. ". . . There is no way to draw a *cordon sanitaire*—a protective shield—against subs and bombers. We've got to see that they have to use their forces to protect vulnerabilities."

But Lehman has not answered critics who say that the expensive carrier battle groups could not survive against the Soviet land-based Backfire bombers, which can fire long-range missiles from well outside the range of the carriers' anti-aircraft guns. Moreover, while each aircraft carrier is equipped with about ninety aircraft, only thirty-four of them can be employed safely to attack targets. If for their own protection the carriers are kept some distance from the shore, the number of sorties flown per day by the aircraft would be limited, even allowing for mid-air refueling. (And that's not taking into account the formidable Soviet air defenses.) Lehman contemptuously dismisses the so-called GIUK gap—a line of sea defense stretching from Greenland to Iceland to the United Kingdom intended to prevent a Soviet breakout into the Atlantic—as "a watery Maginot line." But safeguarding that may involve a sounder defense doctrine than risking the gigantic carriers, their accompanying cruisers, destroyers, supply ships, and submarines all for limited gains.

Still, these are disagreements over military strategy, not issues of personal integrity. Unfortunately, in today's Washington, liberals, too intellectually lazy to take on so-called conservative ideologues, prefer to debate personal ethics. Hence Lehman's name is increasingly associated not with having changed U.S. naval strategy, but with being behind the latest Pentagon procurement scandal.

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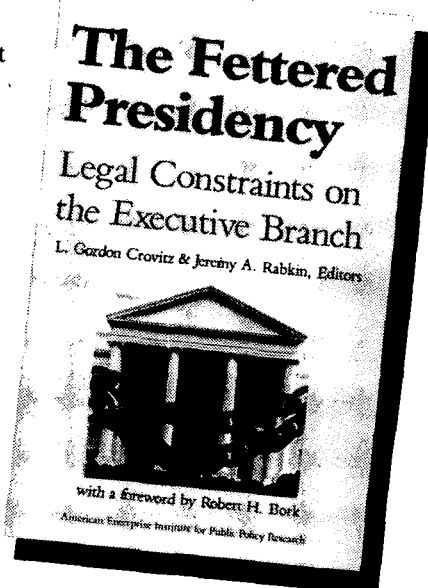
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