

If the Indian diaspora is the first to bring no appreciable benefits to the nation that gave rise to it, that will be largely the legacy of Nehru. Reacting against colonial rule, the heirs to Gandhi worked to wipe out all vestiges of British commercial practice, including the ways—particularly entrepreneurship—in which Indians modeled British rule to their own needs. State monopolies and a labyrinth of licensing restrictions reach down to the humblest vendor, making currying favor with government the only way to go into business at all—not to mention creating a new arena for the forcible imposition of caste and ethnic prerogatives.

At independence, India was providing 2 percent of the world's goods and services; it now accounts for less than half a percent. By the year 2000, India may be the poorest country in the world, yet it keeps churning out geniuses that its state-crippled economy cannot use. With 400,000 of the best-trained engineers in the world unemployed, graduates of the Indian Institutes of Technology, according to the director of its Madras campus, "have become like Indian art, raved [about] and appreciated abroad, but seldom here."

India is the classic example of how not to take advantage of a tribal world—a socialism that amounts to intolerance. And tolerance is crucial if productive tribes are not to be trapped in a subculture of "pariah capitalism." In Britain, Asians are fifty times more likely to be assaulted than whites. The Chinese have faced discrimination in virtually every place they have settled. And Berkeley's affirmative-action law school admission policies have brought officially sponsored anti-Asian racism in the United States into public view. The Zoë Baird fiasco—particularly its most heartbreaking result, the expulsion of an aspiring American citizen—is a perfect example of what happens when Americans become too lazy to do the kind of jobs that immigrants will do: they make excuses, and like lazy people everywhere are tempted to use force, cheating, and racism to protect their prerogatives.

Yet America seems better-positioned than most countries to avoid India-style pitfalls. Mormons, the fastest growing of America's religious "tribes," have entered the mainstream, with two advisers in the Bush White House—Brent

Scowcroft and Roger Porter—and a host of high-tech companies including WordPerfect. Blacks have once again picked up the self-help strain of racial consciousness implicit in the lives of Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X.

Tribes, then, is essentially a book about the entrepreneurial impulse. It will not replace George Gilder's magisterial *The Spirit of Enterprise*, but it is the best book yet about the overlap of entrepreneurialism, ethnicity, and mass migration. A common thread running through all of Kotkin's vignettes, though, is that prosperity erodes values like ethnic identity, self-help, hard work, thrift, education, family. The battle between those values and complacency is part of the post-industrial equivalent of Marxian class struggle—the battle between entrepreneurial interests and the aristocratic

or feudal ones exercising monopoly government power.

At times it's hard to know how many of the phenomena Kotkin describes are due to centuries of culture, and how many to the point at which the given cultures find themselves. Will the Chinese, for example, become just as lazy as Westerners once they reach their earning potential? If they are like the Japanese, the answer is probably yes. Kotkin admits in a footnote that it's difficult to say whether a century from now his subjects will be seen as diasporas or as immigrants. Even if the latter is the case, it's only all the more reason to agree with New York economist George Sternlieb that "there's nothing wrong with New York that a million Chinese wouldn't cure." □

AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS: THE INSIDE STORY OF THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott

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reviewed by ARCH PUDDINGTON

There were many low points in the Bush administration's dealings with the Soviet Union: the infamous "Chicken Kiev" speech, in which the President lectured the leaders of soon-to-be-independent Ukraine about the dangers of "suicidal nationalism"; the administration's reluctance to support freedom for the Baltic states; National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft's dozing off during a meeting with Boris Yeltsin, one of a string of petty humiliations inflicted by officials who regarded the future president of Russia as a boor and demagogue whose antics were making life difficult for their main man, Mikhail Gorbachev.

But the lowest point came on December 24, 1989, when Secretary of

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State James Baker declared on "Meet the Press" that the United States would not be at all opposed if the Warsaw Pact were to intervene in Romania, then in the final convulsive days of the Ceausescu dictatorship. Not only was Baker proposing that the Soviets become the guarantor of East European democracy; he subsequently suggested that the two superpowers adopt a new doctrine to allow intervention in the other's sphere of influence for "just cause."

Fortunately, the Soviets rejected the idea out of hand (some in the Kremlin thought it a provocation), and the "Baker Doctrine" was laid to rest. Still, it's a sharp reminder of the administration's shortcomings: however capable it proved in prosecuting traditional campaigns like the Gulf War, the Bush team was ill-equipped to deal with the collapse of Soviet power.

Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott have given their study of the Bush-Gorbachev years an altogether appropriate title. George Bush took great pride in his reputation as an experienced and prudent foreign policy hand, and while properly suspicious of congressional intrusion in international affairs, he was overly prone to base his policies on deal-making with other elites and, for an American, unusually cool toward the prospect of democratic change. In the very first days of his term, the authors report, Bush treated with some seriousness a plan advanced by Henry Kissinger and Gorbachev adviser Alexander Yakovlev for a joint U.S.-Soviet venture to maintain the European status quo, a concept especially unsettling at a time when freedom for Eastern Europe seemed a real possibility. Although subsequent events put an end to any talk of a Washington-Moscow global condominium, it is clear that the idea of Americans and Soviets stage-managing the pace of events held a profound appeal for Bush.

Bush's lack of enthusiasm for the anti-Communist revolution that swept across Eastern Europe in 1989 is truly dismaying. Clearly Bush was apprehensive that the pell-mell rush to freedom might endanger Gorbachev's political future; after all, the Gorbachev era had brought steady American gain and steady Soviet retreat on all fronts. But Bush's personal unease with the new democratic forces found him siding with the Communists being swept aside. Bush preferred dealing with General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the man whose imposition of martial law had elicited nearly a decade of American economic sanctions against Poland, to dealing with Lech Walesa and other representatives of Solidarity. According to the authors, Jaruzelski changed his mind about not running for the Polish presidency when he sensed that his candidacy had the blessing of the American president.

Ultimately, Bush's discomfort with radical change must be weighed against his overall shrewdness in managing relations with Moscow during the years of Soviet decline. He ensured that the various arms and troop level agreements did not weaken NATO, insisted that reunified Germany remain within the Atlantic Alliance, and pressed the Soviets to withdraw support from their clients in the Third World. And he was unwilling to fork over the kind of massive aid package

that Gorbachev and many in the U.S. urged. In this decision, the president's personal relationship with Gorbachev no doubt played an unintended role; Gorbachev's repeated displays of ignorance of the basic workings of a market economy must have reinforced Bush's instinctive caution in advancing aid to the ex-Communist world.

If *At the Highest Levels* lacks the gripping pace of *The Crisis Years*, Beschloss's history of U.S.-Soviet relations during the Kennedy years, it is far more engaging than Talbott's several books on the politics of arms control (though it, too, contains many tedious pages on that overrated subject). And although Talbott is on record as hostile to the basic Cold War view of the Soviet Union as totalitarian and expansionist, the book is on the whole positive about the achievements of George Bush, the last of the Cold War presidents.

Yet present throughout is the assumption



tion that despite obvious differences between democracy and state socialism, at the crucial "highest" levels the two systems functioned remarkably alike. Bush the centrist had his hard-line critics in the form of advisers like John Sununu and the Republican right wing; Gorbachev, too, had his problems with hard-line party traditionalists and radical democrats like Yeltsin.

It was, of course, a fundamentalist argument of the Cold War's critics that Western democracies and the Communist states were developing along increasingly symmetrical lines. Yet the evidence, as exhibited in *At the Highest Levels*, reveals two radically different societies growing ever more different. The United States was a confident, successful world power, whose people backed their president in his foreign policy and accepted their country's economic system. The Soviet Union, by contrast, was a decrepit colonial power on its

last legs, its president reviled by a society on the brink of collapse and resentful of an economic system that defied common sense. Bush's administration shared the president's worldview, sought the same goals, and was generally loyal to the chief. Gorbachev's regime, by contrast, was deeply divided; its officials openly bad-mouthed Gorbachev to their American counterparts, and consistently sought to undermine their man's foreign policy.

Though let's not get carried away. The book reinforces the impression that Bush was determined to distinguish himself from the style and policies of Reagan, however incoherently he did so. Bush and Baker ridiculed Reagan officials as primitive anti-Communists (Bush is quoted as having told Gorbachev that Ronald Reagan had been surrounded by "marginal intellectual thugs") yet overly willing to forge sweeping and ill-advised deals with Gorbachev. Bush officials made Reagan's secretary of state George Shultz the object of a whispering campaign, labeling him the worst secretary of state since Edward Stettinius, the last man to hold the post under Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Both Robert Gates and the Central Intelligence Agency emerge with their reputations enhanced. Gates, who served as a deputy to Brent Scowcroft before being named CIA director, was widely maligned as a retrograde hard-liner given to doom-and-gloom predictions that America faced a "long competitive struggle" with the Soviets despite Gorbachev's reforms. Indeed, at one point Baker spiked a speech Gates was to deliver questioning Gorbachev's prospects. Yet in the end Gates was vindicated, as were the CIA's Soviet specialists, who early on predicted that Gorbachev would fail to overcome his country's mushrooming domestic crisis and urged the administration to establish friendly relations with political figures like Yeltsin. A team of CIA analysts warned that Gorbachev's half-way reforms would bring about a coup by hard-liners or the breakup of the union. They were right on both counts.

Meanwhile, Gorbachev was no longer comporting himself like a Nobel laureate or *Time* magazine's "Man of the Decade" (an honor that Talbott, a *Time* editor until his recent appointment to President Clinton's foreign policy team and a devoted Gorbophile, must have helped engineer).

Buoyed by the continued high esteem of the outside world, Gorbachev at home was petulant, ungracious, and bewildered by the succession of domestic troubles that emerged in the last years of his rule. He betrayed a typically Russian attitude towards the restive non-Russian republics, unable to grasp the depth of their national aspirations. He failed to move more expeditiously on economic change, not out of fear of moving too fast, but because he believed to the end that socialism could be made to work. He groused at the slightest hint of triumphalist rhetoric from American officials, despite Bush's solicitude toward bruised Soviet egos. He threw his weight around during the Gulf War, constantly threatening to withdraw from the anti-Saddam coalition if the U.S. proved uncooperative in its policies towards Baltic independence.

When, after much delay and considerable domestic criticism, George Bush gave formal recognition to the Baltic states, he commented that "when history is written, nobody will remember that we took forty-eight hours more than Iceland or whoever else it is." The syntax is pure Bush, and so, unfortunately, is the politics. As it turned out, the U.S. wound up being the thirty-seventh country to recognize the Baltic countries' new independence, which candidate Bill Clinton cited as evidence of Bush's preference for "a foreign policy that embraces stability at the expense of freedom." In effect, Clinton neutralized the incumbent's natural advantage in international affairs by arguing that Bush's policies ignored America's historic commitment to democracy.

But it's not entirely fair to accuse Bush of having lacked a moral compass in his approach to the world. Clinton himself, however much he accentuates the vocabulary of human rights, compassion, and high purpose, cannot disguise the fact that his foreign policy differs little in essentials from his predecessor's. If there was a fatal flaw in the Bush approach, it was in his fear not so much of instability as of change itself. The end of the Cold War brought uncertainty and opportunity; Bush at times gave the impression of fearing the former and ignoring the latter. Bush once said that he hoped he would be remembered as having left the world a little better than when he took office. Clearly he achieved that modest goal; just as clearly he could have done much more. □

INSIDE AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE DECLINE, THE DECEPTION, THE DOGMAS

Thomas Sowell

The Free Press / 368 pages / \$24.95

reviewed by RITA KRAMER

In February 1993 a local school board in New York City rose up in revolt against the city's chancellor of education, refusing to use curricular materials that would introduce first-graders to "non-traditional families," gay and lesbian parents, and the various forms of sexual activity possible when literally no holds are barred. Depicted as outer-borough bigots by the Manhattan media and the special interest groups who wield such influence over the city's politicians, the angry parents won anyway. The chancellor was sacked, leaving the children in some of the city's public schools a little more classroom time to spend on the academic learning that has been steadily eroded by the attention given to social propagandizing.

It was a small victory in an enormous battle, a battle in which power is unevenly distributed. Parents who resist having their children brainwashed will need all the ammunition they can find. They will find no more useful weapon than this latest book by Thomas Sowell. It is a model of reason and logic, common sense and clarity, and is therefore sure to be ignored and/or reviled by those who most need to hear its message.

Sowell has managed to add something to the debate that has raged through scores of books since *A Nation at Risk* informed us that "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." In the ten years since, there have been innumerable attempts to diagnose and pre-

scribe for the condition of our schools and colleges, increasingly enfeebled to the point where American students score among the lowest in international measures of everything but self-esteem.

Sowell has surveyed the whole sorry mess that has been made of American education and laid out for us just what has happened and how, done by whom and what for, and even suggested where to begin to get things right. Like Gibbon dealing with the demise of empire or Tocqueville with the paradoxes of democracy, Sowell connects ideas with their consequences, theory with reality. The result is a document that may transcend its moment. Future generations of scholars (if any still exist) may well find in it the explanation of how a thriving educational system could, in half a century, be reduced to bankruptcy.

The most basic cause of the decline of academic performance that has occurred throughout the system is, of course, the substitution of social for academic goals, with indoctrination taking the place of intellectual development and the corollary lowering of standards from the earliest grades up. We are producing a student body of what Sowell calls confident incompetents. And this in a time when spending on education has reached mind-boggling levels. More money, Sowell demonstrates clearly, does not mean better education, especially when most of it never reaches the classroom but pays for bloated bureaucracies and a variety of other non-instructional costs.

Perhaps the most damning circumstance Sowell points to is the increasing displacement of basic skills—indeed, of any pursuit involving familiarity with the works that have shaped our culture, and

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