

chamber and read them out one after another—including one to gag *him*.

Was the Yankee congressman who once dreamed of being a literary gentleman of leisure on a Georgia plantation really so passionately opposed to slavery, or was the cultivated *dévo*té of European cities subconsciously doing battle with the rural parochialism that the South represented?

We'll never know, but at least he was consistent. He called the annexation of Texas as a slave state "apoplexy of the Constitution," said the Mexican War was nothing but an excuse to spread bondage, and literally used his last breath to vote against

commending its veterans. Half-rising from his seat, he whispered a hoarse "No," then collapsed of a stroke. They carried him to a couch in the Speaker's chamber where he died two days later on February 23, 1848.

Several reviewers of *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, A Private Life* have faulted the author for emphasizing the private over the public, but that is exactly what Adams needed someone to do for him. By showing us the puritan who yearned to be a boulevardier and the lawyer who ached to be a writer, Paul C. Nagel succeeds in making John Quincy Adams, of all people, sympathetic and even lovable. ❁

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard's Eye on America

The Secret Life of Bill Clinton: The Unreported Stories

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard
Regnery / 460 pages / \$24.95

REVIEWED BY
Robert D. Novak

British journalist Ambrose Evans-Pritchard is a Fleet Street wordsmith who can make the unseen stories of Washington read like Ian Fleming. But *The Secret Life of Bill Clinton* (a largely unscriptive and probably unfortunate title) is a deeply disturbing book for Americans.

The reader is left with two choices. Choice No. 1: Evans-Pritchard is a charlatan, who in quest of commercial gain has cobbled together rumors and lies that destroy reputations; or, at best, he is a fool. Choice No. 2: This country is in deeper trouble than anyone in mainstream politics or journalism dare imagine. "To put it with brutal honesty," Evans-Pritchard writes, "you can sniff the pungent odors of decay in the American body politic." There is no middle ground: the reality is one or the other.

Robert D. Novak is a nationally syndicated columnist and co-host of CNN's "Evans & Novak."

That's what makes this book so troubling for me. I know what kind of journalist Evans-Pritchard is. Wherever he is and whatever he is doing, he is a dogged, tireless, shoe-leather reporter. In Nicaragua, when the journalistic pack in Managua assumed a Sandinista victory in 1990, Evans-Pritchard roamed the rural areas and concluded, quite accurately, that the people would turn out the Ortegas. Assigned by the *Sunday Telegraph* of London to Washington, he dug into stories that the vast capital press corps would not touch. The allegations in those "untold stories" comprise part of this extraordinary book:

- The Oklahoma City bombing, America's worst terrorist tragedy, was not limited to Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. At least two other men were involved in the plot, but the government did not investigate their activities because they were undercover informers in a neo-Nazi paramilitary organization. A warning by a covert agent of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) of the impending disaster was disregarded, and instead the agent was prosecuted by the government, unsuccessfully. Federal authorities have resisted efforts to find the truth.

- Authorities rearranged the "crime scene" at Fort Marcy Park to move White House aide Vincent Foster's body and place a gun in his hand. Evidence was

hidden and destroyed, and testimony by witnesses was altered by the FBI to fit the suicide theory. Witnesses, in fact, were harassed. Foster's "suicide" note appears to be a planted forgery. The career Justice Department prosecutor assigned to Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr found himself blocked as he probed for the truth, and he returned to his former duties with his mouth shut tight.

- The murder of Jerry Parks, who had performed security functions for Gov. Clinton in Little Rock, is linked to Foster's death. "I'm a dead man," Parks ("pale with shock") is quoted as saying when he heard of the alleged suicide. "I believe that Bill Clinton had my father killed to protect his political career," says Parks's son. According to his widow, Parks "had carried out sensitive assignments for the Clinton circle for almost a decade"—on instructions from Foster.

- As governor, Clinton was deep into the cocaine culture—both as a user and as an associate of drug peddlers. A former bartender, now in prison, says: "I thought it was the coolest thing in the world that we had a governor who got high." Billionaire food executive Don Tyson is known by law enforcement authorities to be intimately involved with illegal narcotics but is not prosecuted. Clinton intimate Dan Lasater got off with a slap on the wrist for his drug trafficking and has been free from further investigation.

- As governor Clinton was also involved in the clandestine operation of Mena Airport in Arkansas that illegally ran arms to the contras and drugs back from Central America. Arkansas State Trooper and erstwhile Clinton buddy L.D. Brown was encouraged by Clinton to work for the CIA and was sent to Puerto Vallarta to carry out an assassination.

This abbreviated list hardly does justice to Evans-Pritchard's Gothic world. *The Secret Life of Bill Clinton* is packed with accusations of lies, government corruption, murder threatened and murder accomplished, subornation and intimidation of witnesses, and the defeat of ordinary, honest citizens. Clinton is not directly concerned with much of this, and Evans-Pritchard's most startling allegation—about the Oklahoma City coverup—is really not linked to the president at all. What links these "unreported stories" is not an ethi-

cally challenged chief executive but corruption that permeates the FBI, the Department of Justice, the federal judiciary and law enforcement generally. That suggests a malignancy that cannot and will not be excised by Clinton's departure.

But Evans-Pritchard points out one connection between Clinton and the current state of the FBI. On July 19, 1993, the president sacked the agency's controversial and independent director, William Sessions. Clinton personally called Sessions twice to get him to resign and leave his office immediately. The next day, Foster's body was found, and the FBI failed to assume jurisdiction and investigate the death.

Anyone suspicious of the credulity of conspiracy buffs might well suspect this is all too preposterous to be true. But Evans-Pritchard is not passing on rumor; he is basing his reportage on attributed sources and, often, documents. A classified CIA report, he says, is "a major vindication" of the much maligned charge by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. that Trooper L.D. Brown was being actively recruited by the intelligence agency. His assertion that the government had fair warning of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City is credible only because he produces a smoking gun: a suppressed and ignored government document.

The document reports ATF informant Carol Howe saying that one neo-Nazi leader—associated with McVeigh and, unknown to Howe, reporting to another government agency—"frequently talks about direct action against the U.S. government" and that another similar undercover agent actually "has talked about...targeting federal installations [including the Murrah building] for destruction." Is that why federal law enforcement agents who worked there were conspicuously absent from the building the day of the disaster?

Evans-Pritchard does not pretend to know more than he does. Contrary to the book jacket's claim, he does not know whether Oklahoma City was "a government sting operation that flew out of control"—only that the government is covering up the truth. He does not know how or why Vince Foster died, only that it was surely not the way the government

“ His most startling allegation—about Oklahoma City—is not really linked to the president at all. ”

said. He does not know who killed Jerry Parks or why, only that the circumstances surrounding it were very suspicious.

At this writing, *The Secret Life* has been overlooked by establishment reviewers (as previous Regnery best-sellers have also been), and early reports indicate heavy sales of this book. One reviewer who didn't ignore it is Michael Isikoff, a renowned investigative reporter currently with *Newsweek* who first broke the Paula Jones case. Isikoff's review in the *Weekly Stan-*

dard was a screed and a personal assault: "Evans-Pritchard's work, such as it is, consists of little more than wild flights of conspiratorial fancy coupled with outrageous and wholly uncoordinated allegations offered up by his 'sources.'" Indeed, the reviewer takes issue with me (for speaking highly of Evans-Pritchard in my syndicated column) and with *Washington Times* editor Wesley Pruden for a book-jacket endorsement.

Why such animosity? If this lone British reporter operating on his own has uncovered the soft, dark underbelly of American politics, where was the rest of the press corps—including Mr. Isikoff? "I do not hang on lips of official sources," Evans-Pritchard writes, "nor do I fear the loss of access in Washington, or the blackball of my profession." These are not imaginary threats—I well remember the calumny directed at me after I wrote just one column about the death of Vince Foster.

The investigative committees of the Republican Congress are hardly more steadfast than the journalists. Evans-

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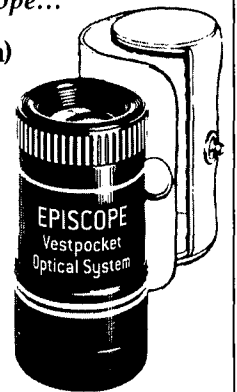
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Pritchard has nothing but contempt for the late, failed hearings chaired by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato. The author suggests that Clinton may escape "retribution" for all but the Paula Jones affair, which he describes as "one of the most picayune" of all the president's "sins." Yet Evans-Pritchard holds out hope for "the ordinary citizens" who will "cleanse the institutions of this country before they become irretrievably corrupt." Patrick Knowlton, a harassed witness in the Vince Foster

case, last year filed a federal tort claim naming FBI agents as defendants. In Oklahoma City, a federal tort claim has been filed by 170 families of victims killed in the bombing—a lawsuit that this book says "may ultimately sweep away much of the political landscape of *fin-de-siècle* America." The conclusions reached by Ambrose Evans-Pritchard may be subject to derision and mockery, but only because it is so hard for all of us to accept what they say about our country. ❖

ing so much as a grisly traffic accident—not a pretty sight, but you can't take your eyes off of it.

The relatively brief period covered is one of the richest in incident in our recent history—from the death of President John F. Kennedy through Johnson's election to a term in his own right in November 1964. During these months Johnson was busy juggling a number of complicated agendas: to appropriate for himself whatever remained of the Kennedy mystique (including the services of Kennedy's staff) without diminishing his own stature; push forward the legislative program that remained uncompleted at the time of Kennedy's death, particularly on civil rights; keep the Southern wing of the Democratic Party on the ranch while establishing a firm political beachhead in its dominant labor-civil rights wing; and keep the growing crisis in Vietnam off the front pages and out of the range of congressional debate until his re-election was assured.

Beschloss has also chosen to include some important ephemera—the controversy over who should investigate the Kennedy assassination; the murder of three civil rights leaders in the South;

Johnson's complicated relationship with Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders; riots in Panama and pressures to conclude a new treaty with that country; Cuban dictator Fidel Castro's decision to shut off fresh water to the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo; the military coup in Brazil; and de Gaulle's decision to recognize Communist China.

Inevitably, a great deal of attention is devoted to Johnson's complicated relations with the Kennedy family, and particularly with Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

As is well known, the Kennedys viewed the Johnson pres-

We'll Be Lucky Never to See His Likes Again

Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964

Edited by Michael R. Beschloss
Simon & Schuster / 592 pages / \$30

REVIEWED BY
Mark Falcoff

Some years ago I was sharing a cab in a major South American capital with one of the region's rising young conservative politicians. To pass the time in a monumental traffic jam, we started discussing recent American presidents. Which one, he asked me, did I think was the worst? Before I could answer, he suggested Jimmy Carter. "Close," I said, "but not quite. The worst—the absolute worst—from the point of view of long-term damage to the republic, was Lyndon Johnson." As I explained to him, at the time we were still digging our way out of the fiscal and moral mess created by Johnson nearly two decades before. Although LBJ will have been dead for a quarter-century this month, nothing I have learned since then has caused me to alter my opinion. Now historian Michael Beschloss has come forth with the perfect holiday gift for people like me—the Johnson-hater who has everything.

MARK FALCOFF is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

This volume consists of selections from nearly a thousand hours of conversations—some 9,500 individual entries—covertly recorded in the Oval Office and elsewhere and preserved at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin. According to a fascinating historical note at the end of the book, in mid-January 1973, sensing that he had

not long to live, Johnson summoned a long-time confidential secretary to his office at the Library and instructed her to ensure that these tapes remained sealed for fifty years after his death. Fortunately, Beschloss was able to convince the current curators of the collection to overrule this, one of Johnson's final wishes. The result is something that resembles noth-

