

ately misled Dallas's parents about the life the boy was leading. So far from providing supervision, the university authorities had no way of knowing from one day to the next if the kid was even in East Lansing (often he wasn't). They took five days to notify the parents of his disappearance, and Dear was in East Lansing for a week before they allowed him to explore the tunnels. Meantime, "somebody" complained to the Michigan State Police that Dear was not properly licensed in the state—anything, it seems, rather than help uncover a potentially damaging scandal.

It is difficult to say what Dallas Egbert might have made of his 180 + IQ if he had been allowed to lead a more normal life, or if he had been sent to a responsible liberal arts college instead of to the nightmare campus of what Russell Kirk has taught us to call Behemoth U. □

Ugly Little Facts

Anthony T. Bouscaren: *Soviet Offense: U.S. Defense*; The Foundations Press; Notre Dame, IN.

Adam M. Garfinkle: *The Politics of the Nuclear Freeze*; Foreign Policy Research Institute; Philadelphia.

The history of science, Albert Einstein once observed, is that of beautiful theories slaughtered by ugly little facts. The history of the nuclear freeze movement is that of a beautiful theory impervious to facts of every sort. The gossamer theory, of course, is that if the U.S. stops producing nuclear arms, the Soviets will do likewise, and global peace will be the eventual result. The unpleasant facts will not support this fantasy. In his short study *Soviet Offense: U.S. Defense*, Anthony Bouscaren carefully documents the unremitting Soviet quest for nuclear

and conventional superiority during a 15-year period in which the U.S. *did* freeze its nuclear arsenal and dramatically reduced its conventional forces. The sinister implications of the continuing Soviet buildup that Bouscaren traces should be evident to all but leftist ideologues and the "invincibly ignorant." Professor Bouscaren briefly discusses the combination of Western irrationalism and Soviet manipulation which has created the freeze movement, but Adam Garfinkle offers a much more comprehensive treatment of the movement in his *Politics of the Nuclear Freeze*. Intelligent and carefully nuanced, Garfinkle's analysis explodes "the illusions of certainty of freeze advocates." Of the nuclear dilemma, Garfinkle writes, "Ambiguous solutions to problems shrouded in uncertainty are much to be preferred to those that are clearcut and wrong." Lovers of beautiful theories will not care for Garfinkle's book; respecters of ugly facts will find it invaluable. □

The Sunset King

Olivier Bernier: *Louis the Beloved: The Life of Louis XV*; Doubleday; Garden City, New York.

Louis XV became King of France at the age of five. For the rest of his life he was to be courted, tickled, and used by a series of tutors, mistresses (declared and undeclared), and ministers. His long reign (1715-74) is commonly credited with bringing on the Revolution. The list of charges ordinarily leveled against the amiable monarch include: court extravagance, unsuccessful foreign policy, the indulgence of his mistresses' whims, the isolation of the court from the exigencies of the real world. Bernier makes a reasonable case for the King: his worst

problems were inherited and he did the best with what he had. By the end of his life, he could congratulate himself on the peace and prosperity which France enjoyed. No foreign army had invaded French soil (Canada was lost, but no one seemed to care about "a few acres of snow"); the pernicious power of the *Parlement de Paris* had been broken (a revived *parlement* helped bring on the crisis which led to the unfortunate events of 1789); above all, France was looked up to as the intellectual and artistic center of the world. When men like Talleyrand sighed for the lost glories of the *ancien régime*, they were paying a justified (if implicit) tribute to *Louis le bien-aimé*.

It is hard not to sympathize with Louis XV. It is equally hard

to forget that only 15 years after his death Europe witnessed the implosion of Old France and the unleashing of a revolutionary fury which was to infect the entire world. Even Bernier concedes that the King was too complacent in allowing his power to be misused by aristocratic flunkies. On rare occasions he did manage to assert himself, but his exertions had no enduring effects. Bernier's extravagant praise of Louis is something like the conservative rediscovery of the Eisenhower years. Both regimes showed a bright face to the world: peace abroad, tranquility at home; Louis was well beloved; we all liked Ike. Less noticeable but more significant in the long run were the forces of social and intellectual discontent which overflowed into rebellion. □

WASTE OF MONEY

Lucrative Lying

John Barth: *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Nonfiction*; G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

"For the writer intent on truth," Solzhenitsyn observes, "life never was, never is (and never will be!) easy: his like have suffered every imaginable harassment—defamation, duels, a shattered family life, financial ruin or lifelong unrelieved poverty, the madhouse, jail." Things are quite different for John Barth, the prominent "post-modernist" writer who calls himself a "professional liar." Over the past two and a half decades, Barth's lying has brought him honorary degrees, invitations to symposia, a cushy creative-writing professorship at Johns Hopkins.

All meaning for Barth is simply an imaginative construct with no

absolute ontological grounding. Since the real world of fact is "devoid of ultimate meaning," the fictionist must repudiate any sense of mimesis in his art, as he creates, *ex nihilo*, "not a view of the cosmos, but a cosmos itself." At bottom, Barth concedes, his cosmos is a lie, but "my lies, at least, will be of professional caliber." For most of Barth's rewarding career this has meant creating lies that are "technically up-to-date," with all the gee-gaws, anagrams, surrealism, leftist rant, cute punctuation, and pornography demanded by the fashionable avant-garde. However, not long ago Barth allowed as how, now that the "rigidities" of "bourgeois realism" had been broken up, perhaps post-modernism could reclaim some of its conventions. That is to say, now that modernism has corroded away all of the cognitive signifi-

cance of traditional narration and made storytelling utterly hollow, *now* its tropes are fit vehicles for liars like himself.

In this collection of essays and speeches, Barth offers us some of his nonfictional lies, though what the distinction between fiction and nonfiction is for a professional liar is difficult to say. Certainly, Barth's calls for nationalizing major industries, his paeans to the campus madness of the 60's, and all of his other "stock-liberal sentiments" (as he calls them) would fit nicely in some fantasy novel. Barth did not have to tell us that he dropped out of graduate school because he had little "ability for abstract thinking and rigorous critical analysis" and was therefore "out of [his] intellectual depth." Yet he has never let his intellectual limitations restrain his ambitions. His aim as a novelist is to create a fictional world "more orderly, meaningful, beautiful, and interesting than the one God turned out," and he announces that if he were God he would startle and befuddle "my theologians" with a "Boo!"

If Barth can turn himself into god on *Friday*, we hope he takes the weekend off. ☐

That Old Magic

Nicholas Von Hoffman: *Organized Crimes*; Harper & Row; New York.

A boring book on a worn-out theme (which has been exploited to exhaustion by countless books and movies) ineptly written by a singularly untalented writer. Ooops, the writer is one Von Hoffman, the chic radical with a German pseudoaristocratic prefix, a fixture in "progressive" journalism—in a phrase: the leftist Mr. Right. ☐

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