

**GEORGE H. RYAN**, Illinois' Republican governor and *bona fide* "compassionate conservative," has borrowed one from the Clinton playbook: He seems to think that a vast right-wing conspiracy has been out to get him since he took office, forcing him to decline to run for a second term. The real reason, of course, is that—due to mounting charges of corruption and Ryan's consistently left-wing policies—he wouldn't have a snowball's chance in Texas of winning again, having alienated most of his base.

Setting aside the "license-for-bribes" scandal (in which illegal, non-English-speaking Mexicans were given semi-truck licenses in exchange for payola during George Ryan's stint as secretary of state), the most interesting aspect of his besmirched tenure as governor is that Illinois Republicans championed him in the first place, only to throw up their hands in despair each time he connected with one of his telegraphed passes.

"George Ryan," according to his campaign website, "does not believe a state income tax increase is needed. Illinois' revenue growth is up substantially. The state ended the fiscal year with \$800 million in the bank. State spending has been brought under control. Government needs to live within its means." Of course, what he *meant* was that he would raise revenue to finance his massive Illinois FIRST program by doubling or tripling "user fees"—vehicle-registration fees, title-transfer fees, and liquor taxes. It was quite a thrill for many Illinois taxpayers to discover they were really *users* (though here in Winnebago County, our Republican county-board chairperson refers to us as "customers"). Conversely, since taking office, Ryan started talking about the possibility of limiting and, in some cases, eliminating tollbooths on Illinois highways. Highway tolls, though annoying, are the closest thing we have to genuine "user fees," since out-of-state commuters get socked alongside Illinois taxpayers.

Candidate Ryan outlined what would become his Illinois FIRST program during his campaign, promising the moon when it came to repairing Illinois highways. Where did he plan to find the money for "building a transportation infrastructure that relieves highway congestion, promotes economic development

and supports mass transit"? Where else? Yet Republican voters just kept chanting the mantra, "Republicans are for tax cuts" and punched Ryan's chad.

What should have been even more obvious to voters was George Ryan's planned assault on gun owners. In campaign literature, Ryan reminded the soccer moms of suburban Chicago that he supported the Brady Bill, even when it was unfashionable among Republicans; that he was in favor of mandatory trigger locks for guns inside homes where children are present, and that parents who resist should be charged with felonies. Surprise, surprise: When elected governor, George Ryan pushed for gun-control laws even beyond what he had promised, insisting that anyone transporting a gun—even one contained in a case—in a vehicle in which ammunition is "readily accessible" should be charged with a felony. This was part of his version of the Safe Neighborhoods Act—a piece of legislation designed to reinstate Draconian gun-control measures found unconstitutional by the Illinois State Supreme Court. Governor Ryan tried to ram his Safe Neighborhoods Act through the Illinois House last Christmas, by calling a special legislative session that forced many of the state reps to stay in Springfield during the holiday break. The bill passed the following spring, but only after the charge for a first-time criminal offense (say, for some hunter who travels with his box of bird-shot shells in the floorboard of his pickup) was reduced to a misdemeanor—and that's only for the first offense. All bets are off, though, if your pistol is loaded and under the seat (say, in the case of some honest, taxpaying citizen who has to drive through a gangland every day on his way to work).

Like Clinton and Bush, Ryan campaigned on his commitment to uphold the rights of "hunters and collectors" (always code for latent anti-gun tendencies), while supporting the ban on assault weapons and opposing a concealed-carry law "out of a firm conviction that allowing more people to carry guns will only increase the bloodshed on our streets." That's right—everyone who carries a loaded gun for self-defense is really a latent criminal, just waiting to "increase the bloodshed." Candidate Ryan painted his Democratic opponent, Glenn Po-

shard, a former school teacher, as a gun nut, simply because Poshard supported a concealed-carry law that applied only to former policemen and military personnel.

For the record, Glenn Poshard was also more conservative than Ryan on abortion, stating in his campaign that he was pro-life across the board. The Ryan campaign refrained from discussing the issue, allowing pro-life Christians to circulate voters guides indicating that George Ryan was very pro-life, while casting doubt upon the evil Democrat Poshard. The official position of the Ryan campaign was as follows: "George Ryan is pro-life with exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the mother. He is aware that the U.S. Supreme Court has clearly stated that a woman has a Constitutional right to choose to have an abortion [always code for latent anti-life leanings]. As Governor, he would carefully weigh any abortion-related legislation to ensure that it does not run counter to existing Constitutional law, and would likely withstand court challenges. George Ryan does not and never has used one's position on this issue as a litmus test for inclusion in the Republican Party." This past June, Ryan vetoed Illinois House Bill 709, which would have stopped all state funding of abortion in Illinois, for which he was praised by Republican Lt. Gov. Corinne Wood: "[F]irst, it was the right thing to do because protecting the health of poor women is good public policy; second, the Governor's veto was consistent not only with the law and the courts, but also with Republican philosophy." Wood is now considering running to replace Ryan.

In addition to these feats of conservatism, George Ryan has sparked a national debate over the death penalty by issuing a moratorium on all executions in the state of Illinois because he believes there are too many blacks on death row. In mid-August, he vetoed legislation sponsored by Rep. Susanna Mendoza (D-Chicago, and a Latino representative of a Latino community riddled with gang violence), which would have made those convicted of gang-related homicide automatically eligible for the death penalty (if Ryan ever reinstates it). Governor Ryan claimed that this legislation "introduces arbitrariness and discretion" by singling

out minorities, because gangs are mostly made up of blacks and Latinos. That doesn't quite jibe with his campaign statement that he would "put the priorities of law-abiding people ahead of hoodlums." Of course, by "hoodlums," he meant white suburbanites.

The absurdity of George Ryan's career as a one-term governor in the Land of Lincoln is undeniable. The real question that remains is: Have conservatives learned their lesson? Why voters who are pro-life, pro-gun, and anti-tax always default to the Stupid Party is beyond reason. But if George Ryan's ridiculously left-wing term has been a wake-up call for them, then perhaps he has served a purpose.

—Aaron D. Wolf

## NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS?

You may think that as an American citizen, you do not own such a thing, and under no circumstances would you contemplate accepting one. That's just something for Europeans, Latin Americans, people from countries with a Roman Law tradition, and other such lesser breeds without the law. Any American legislator would think it suicidal to introduce an identity-card law.

Now, all of this is quite true, but nevertheless, we do carry official identity papers, and not just our social-security cards, which we do not have to show to police on demand—not yet. But we certainly carry identity cards if we ever hope to travel by air. If you check in for any commercial flight of any distance, you have to show an official photo ID, and only a government-issued document will suffice. No card, no travel, and no chance to participate in all the personal and professional opportunities opened by the democratization of air travel. That makes your identification document—usually, your driver's license—a virtual national identity card, or what the old Soviet Union called an "internal passport." Identity cards have come to the United States, and nobody protests.

How did they ever sneak this one by us? The official justification was that such identification made terrorism less likely—a proposition that, on slight examination, proves to be utter nonsense. Rarely do terrorists give themselves away by revealing their occupation on their personal papers ("Purpose of visit: mayhem, murder, and carnage"). Moreover, as every counterinsurgency expert knows,

if there is anyone whose papers are always in impeccable order, it is the terrorist. The idea that demanding personal identification might control crime is ludicrous, but the whole story does reveal an alarming truth about the ordinary citizens of what they imagine to be a law-abiding democratic state. People are prepared to let police and government get away with pretty much anything, so long as it is justified in terms of some convenient outside menace—the more thoroughly demonized the better. And once this ultimate demon's name has been invoked, the public seems to lose any critical sense about official claims. Oh, you're doing this to fight *terrorists*. I see—that's different.

The tendency to cave in to police bluster was in the news repeatedly this past summer. A fascinating discussion occurred when the American Bar Association organized a group to role-play the social and legal effects of a biological warfare attack on an American city. Not surprisingly, the conclusion was that such an attack—or even a rumor of such an outbreak—would basically be grounds for eliminating all civil liberties overnight and permitting the military to supersede all city and state jurisdictions. In the words of Suzanne Spaulding, a former lawyer for the CIA and the Senate Intelligence Committee: "To an extent, people are going to do what needs to be done and worry about the legal niceties later." Based on extensive precedent in recent years, she is evidently right. We'll take pretty much anything thrust upon us.

Illustrating the same grim fact was a recent report from the RAND Corporation entitled *Super Bowl Surveillance: Facing Up to Biometrics*, by John D. Woodward, Jr. This document explored the implications of scanning large crowds in order to analyze facial features and to use this "biometric facial recognition" technique to pick out anyone previously identified as a potential terrorist. Woodward acknowledges all the difficulties of such dragnet scanning, which offers police forces a technique of surveillance far superior to anything Orwell imagined. "As I board the subway on my way to work, make purchases in stores, visit my doctor, or attend a political rally, my faceprint will be matched with information in the database, allowing the surveiller to track my movements. Similarly, the authorities can enter on their watch list the biometric information—the faceprints—

of all those who attended the political rally with me." However nightmarish, such tactics are increasingly being used, whether we like it or not, because they are a means to defeating an unpopular and indefensible outside menace: terrorism.

One nice feature of the RAND report was the perceptive discussion of "function creep," or how police tactics developed to fight serious dangers expand to far lesser crimes. Woodward speculates how biometric technology, once it becomes familiar and acceptable (just as we have come to accept our identity cards), it will be used against other unpopular behaviors. Even then, we still won't fight back. When the police announce that they are surveilling streets to seek out lesser criminals, I can hear the public response now. Oh, it's something to catch *deadbeat dads*. I see—that's different.

—Philip Jenkins

## NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE

proponents and supporters of American abrogation of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty claim that Moscow is now grudgingly reconciled to both. When Russian President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov irritably countered such suggestions, the Bush administration sent Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on a one-day trip to Moscow on August 13. Mr. Rumsfeld's was not a diplomatic mission, however, but an exercise in public relations. Two days before the trip, the *New York Times* conveyed Washington's view that "the outcome is preordained," since, on missile defense, "the United States is unyielding." After the meeting, Ivanov complained that Rumsfeld had failed to explain why he thought the treaty should be scrapped and did not say how many offensive nuclear weapons the United States was prepared to destroy in return for Russian concessions on missile defense.

Why did Mr. Rumsfeld clock 20,000 frequent-flyer miles merely to talk to his Russian counterpart about "a new relationship" between the two countries that would supposedly require them to "move beyond the Cold War institutions such as the ABM treaty"? The reason is simple: The administration wanted to cite his trip as proof of its good-faith effort to appease the Russians and make them into "strategic partners" before President Bush announces America's unilateral withdrawal

from the ABM treaty. This is likely to happen soon, paving the way for an aggressive antiballistic test schedule in the spring of 2002. In short, as one Washington source put it, “we are on automatic pilot, and there’s nothing, nothing, the Russians can do about it.”

Such neoconservative triumphalism—said to be particularly rampant in Rumsfeld’s own department, where Paul Wolfowitz serves as his right-hand man—is no substitute for coherence, and the apparent ability of the Bush administration to go ahead with “son of Star Wars” is not proof that the policy is desirable or justified. It carries hidden political and security costs that may become fully apparent only when it is too late to reverse the decision. One key consequence of the missile defense project is the continuing improvement in Russo-Chinese relations. Their current *rapprochement* may provide the groundwork for the emergence of a formal alliance, if Moscow and Beijing continue to feel threatened by what they perceive as American unilateralism. Foreign-affairs commentators have taken but scant notice of the fact that President Putin came to the Genoa summit with President Bush in July only two days after signing a landmark friendship treaty with China that was obviously designed to challenge American influence. He and his Chinese counterpart, Jiang Zemin, were careful to emphasize that they were not creating a military alliance, but in the same breath they issued a joint statement supporting the ABM Treaty. After the signing ceremony in the Kremlin, President Jiang said that the friendship treaty “will bring Russian-Chinese friendship from generation to generation. This is a milestone in the development of Russian-Chinese relations.”

Putin and Jiang said the treaty was not aimed at other countries and had no secret military clauses, but their statement in support of the ABM Treaty shows the depth of concern in Moscow and Beijing over missile defense: “Russia and China stress the basic importance of the ABM treaty, which is a cornerstone of strategic stability and the basis for reducing offensive weapons, and speak out for maintaining the treaty in its current form.”

The two nations were not reacting only to the missile-defense program, which they fear will compel them to engage in a costly arms race they can ill afford, nor simply to the zeal with which Washington is pushing this particular plan. Their underlying concern is that the United

States is seeking to strengthen and indefinitely perpetuate its global preeminence, regardless of their fundamental national interests.

The particular concern of the Chinese is President Bush’s declaration that the United States would do “whatever it took to help Taiwan defend itself”—which amounted to the revival of the defense treaty defunct since 1979. In the aftermath of the spy-plane affair last April, the Bush administration also announced that it would sell submarines, destroyers, missiles, and electronic equipment to Taiwan, although this decision is in violation of the Taiwan Relations Act. To Beijing, all this confirmed that China was faced with a strategic challenge that demands a long-term response. China, the oldest nation-state in the world, takes a long view of foreign affairs, and the treaty signed by Putin and Jiang illustrates the point. It seeks to settle permanently the centuries-old border disputes between Russia and China that nearly led to war in 1969, since the absence of territorial disputes is a key precondition for effective alliances. Germany’s solemn recognition of the Brenner frontier in 1934 paved the way for the Axis in 1936, and—less ominously—the Saarland referendum helped Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle launch their own historic reconciliation just over two decades later.

The State Department was quick to dismiss the treaty, stressing its lack of specific mutual guarantees and obligations, but this is an example of that historical shortsightedness that has prevailed at Foggy Bottom for far too long. The Russo-Chinese treaty is comparable to *l’entente cordiale* between Great Britain and France a century ago. That arrangement was not a formal alliance to start with. Nevertheless, it did have a similar underlying logic, creating a pattern of relations that was to become fully apparent in August 1914.

In the end, perhaps, the best hope of stopping “Star Wars” is not Moscow, but the dwindling budgetary surplus and the mood of policymakers in Washington. A fight is on the horizon between Rumsfeld’s “Vulcans” and the Joint Chiefs of Staff over how deeply U.S. forces have to be slashed to foot the bill for the antiballistic-missile shield—which will easily exceed \$100 billion, even for a thin system. Most experts agree that military reform, including streamlining and lightening an insufficiently mobile force, is long over-

due. What should come in place of carrier groups and oversized divisions of yore is a smaller, more flexible, ultra-high-tech force equipped to deal with every conceivable challenge to America’s security—not an unproved and unnecessary antiballistic-missile system that is irrational and dangerous.

—Srdja Trifkovic

**AMNESTY** for undocumented (as we nowadays politely say) workers from Mexico? It’s just another trial balloon, and the nice thing about trial balloons is that you can shoot them down. Ready, aim, fire.

I do think this one, suitably ventilated, will flutter down to earth. I fancy the Bush administration, however kindly disposed toward Vicente Fox and the PAN, isn’t ready for another blind leap on immigration. The administration is indeed exploring the matter, at Fox’s request. I have the sense that this is just what you do for a friend like Fox: You listen attentively to his ideas without committing yourself to notions that simply aren’t workable. This one falls into that category. Likewise, George W. Bush is being advised (by such as the *Wall Street Journal*’s Paul Gigot) that, if Republicans consider the growing Hispanic vote important, some massaging of Hispanic sensibilities makes sense.

Mexico—blessed, in Fox, with a decent leader, after years of corruption and political empire-building—needs our help and encouragement. But in offering that help, we need not leap into stygian darkness. We can do this thing in the dazzling light of day, as my senior U.S. senator, Phil Gramm (R-Texas), has proposed.

During Phil Gramm’s long political career, no one has ever called him a wimp on free enterprise. He loves the marketplace and its workings. To love the marketplace is to resist obstructions to those workings—but not always. In a fallen world, some obstructions, such as the legal requirements of citizenship, have their vital uses. The ultimate free enterprise state would be Hobbes’ state of nature.

Gramm hopes to regularize what already is going on without asking us to cave into lawlessness (viz., the cresting and crashing tides of Mexican and Central Americans entering the United States without a by-your-leave). “Our economy needs them,” he says, “but the system of



illegal employment demeans them as human beings and makes a mockery of the rule of law."

Accordingly, Gramm wants Congress to set up a guest-worker program, under which illegals would receive I.D. cards, a one-year work permit, and coverage under U.S. wage-and-hour laws, with 15.3 percent of their wages set aside for each worker in an interest-bearing account. Fox approves—a good start.

A program like this, assuming it worked as planned (always, in the political world, a problematical assumption), would bring order and regularity to a chaotic situation. It certainly makes more sense than a new amnesty, which would stimulate more illegal border crossings than ever, which would build pressure for another amnesty, which would . . .

Friends and defenders of the marketplace economy—I stand in their front rank, sleeves rolled up—are fond of noting how, in the real world, particular incentives call forth particular responses. The incentive of something (legal status) for next-to-nothing (identifying oneself) is the wrong kind of incentive.

Having said all this, I confess to uncertainty regarding just how well the Gramm plan, if adopted, would work. We seem to be at a great historical crossroads. Throughout the West, by reason of our prosperity and peace, more people want to come live among us than the Western nations have power to regulate—or even accommodate.

I read of economic and political "refugees" trying to force their way into the United Kingdom by any means available, including rubber rafts for crossing the Channel. Sixteen recently stowed away under a Eurostar train. "We want a better life," said a frustrated Kurd protesting at a Calais detention center for illegals.

Senator Gramm nods in vigorous assent. "If I had two little children in Mexico," he says, "and we lived in the conditions endured by many Mexican citizens, no power on earth could prevent me from crossing the Rio Grande for work."

Immigration is the sincerest form of flattery. People come (invited or otherwise) because they see how well things are working here. This summer I spent time in Honduras on a parish adult mission trip. The wonder is why *everyone* in Honduras doesn't come up here.

Of course, not everyone has the energy or ambition to try, which is obviously good. But many do want to improve

their lot. The question isn't—never has been—will we have immigration? The question is, can we control it?

Amnesty isn't control; it's unconditional surrender. Where do you stop? Nowhere, that's where. Built into the Gramm plan are limits on the numbers of guest workers, in accordance with economic need. Would that do the job? It might well, but I doubt it, the border being so vast, so long, and so empty.

Dr. Johnson outlined the plain duty of those (like himself) keen to defend standards in the use of the English language: "We retard what we cannot repel. We palliate what we cannot cure." That just may be where we are on immigration—the English-speaking peoples challenged, pulled in different directions, reaching for succor into still-considerable reservoirs of courage and good sense.

—William Murchison

**OBITER DICTA:** The second of our three new quarterly columns debuts this month on p. 13. In *The Bare Bodkin*, syndicated columnist **Joseph Sobran** will cast a Chestertonian eye on the current cultural scene (and he'll write about it, as well). You will find Mr. Sobran's column in the January, April, July, and October issues.

With this issue, *Chronicles* is finally back up on the newsstands. Please check your local bookstore; if it doesn't carry *Chronicles*, please follow the instructions in the ad on p. 5. You could win a one-year extension to your subscription! Newsstand sales are a major source of new subscribers, and wider circulation helps us keep our subscription rates low.

Watch this space for details on upcoming Rockford Institute events. The Institute's Fifth International Convivium will be held during the second half of April 2002 in Tuscany, where we will explore how civilization was reinvented by Italians living in the free cities of Siena, Pisa, Florence, Lucca, and Arezzo. Tuscany was home to Petrarch and Dante, the great painters of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and to one of the most significant political intellectuals the world has produced, Machiavelli, whose muscular defense of republican liberty helped inspire the men who laid the foundation of our own American republic. Get to the heart of a great civilization and understand how provincial peoples

fought for liberty—town by town and even, sometimes, street by street. Lectures will focus on Machiavelli, Petrarch, Dante, St. Catherine of Siena, the brave Pisans who resisted Florentine domination, and the gangster-banker Medici who devoted themselves to destroying liberty. A special bonus lecture will set the record straight on the Galileo controversy.

The Rockford Institute's Fifth Annual Summer School (summer 2002) will be held, as always, here in Rockford. This time, we'll turn our attention to late antiquity and look for answers to the question: How do we live full lives in a dying age? Faculty will include Dr. **James Patrick**, provost of the College of Saint Thomas More, and Fr. **Hugh Barbour**, O. Praem, prior of St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California. Break out your copies of Saint Augustine's *City of God* and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.

The Rockford Institute's Sixth International Convivium, which will be held in Brittany in early October 2002, will address the French Revolution: liberalism versus Christianity. A special session will discuss the courageous Christian warriors of the Vendée.

There's still time to register for this year's John Randolph Club meeting, which will be held in Rockford, Illinois, the home of *Chronicles*. Please see the ad on the back cover. For more information regarding this or any Institute event, please visit [www.ChroniclesMagazine.org](http://www.ChroniclesMagazine.org) or call the Institute's vice president, Christopher Check, at (815) 964-5811.

Our poet this month is **Bruce Guemsey**, a professor of English at Eastern Illinois University. His poetry and prose have appeared in the *Atlantic*, *Poetry*, *Fiction*, *American Scholar*, and *War, Literature and the Arts*, among others. Dr. Guemsey is the author of ten collections of poems, including *January Thaw* (University of Pittsburgh Press).

Our art this month is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe.



# “It Ain’t Me”

by Thomas Fleming

## America’s Fortunate Sons

George W. Bush comes as close as anyone to representing the current American aristocracy. It is not that the Bushes are old family or even old money. The family fortunes are usually traced back to great-grandfather Samuel Bush, a middleweight railroad magnate in Columbus, Ohio. Samuel’s son Prescott raised the family to national prominence by allying his fortunes with fellow Yale (and fellow Bonesman) Averell Harriman and his family with Harriman’s top banker, Bert Walker. With the Harriman connection, it seemed almost natural for the U.S. government to put old Samuel in charge of munitions manufacturing during World War I, and ever since, the Bush family has faithfully represented the interests of what fellow Republican Dwight Eisenhower called the “military-industrial complex.”

George II has been a blue chip off of George I’s portfolio, both in his loyalty to multinational interests and in his curious inability to speak a coherent sentence that has not been rehearsed a dozen times. As Ann Richards (or her speechwriter) said so memorably of George Herbert Walker Bush, “He was born with a silver foot in his mouth.” Perhaps it is a learning disability; perhaps it is the result of being in so privileged a position that it is impossible to speak directly of anything. Either way, the Georges “come by it honest,” since Sen. Prescott Bush (as Gary Wills pointed out some years ago) was almost as incoherent as both his son and grandson, and some day the inability to speak English will be as convincing a sign of royalty as hemophilia or the Habsburg jaw.

Of course, this is America, where dynasties and aristocracies are forbidden, which is why George I dropped the final “g” from his present participles and cultivated a taste for checked shirts and bad country music. (Lee Greenwood was his campaign singer!) In fact, George I was a dead ringer for the conservative senator whom Andy Griffith tries to turn into a good ol’ boy at the end of Budd Schulberg’s *A Face in the Crowd*. In the movie, an honest network employee reveals both Andy and his senator for the frauds they are. In real life, frauds become TV producers and presidents.

George II has gone one better in abandoning the presidential church (Episcopal) for the decidedly down-market Methodists. This poor-mouth strategy is not a new invention: William Henry Harrison, scion of a Virginia planter family, staged the first log-cabin campaign, and some years before Harrison, a patrician gangster named Publius Claudius Pulcher changed the spelling of his name to the more popular “Clodius” and arranged with a more powerful gangster (one Gaius Julius Caesar) to get himself adopted into a plebeian family.

Although George II apparently shares with Bill Clinton a robust appetite for common pleasures, poor Clinton has had to spend his life proving he is not the cracker that his family has

produced since the beginning of time. (If there had been a Clinton in the Garden of Eden, he would have been running a still and trying to make time with Eve. “Forget that ‘knowledge of good and evil’ stuff, babe, and let me show you how to have a good time.”)

Despite the games they are forced to play, Bill Clinton, Al Gore, both Bushes, and all the Kennedy cousins do, in fact, exemplify the American ruling class of our day as much as the Adamses and the Roosevelts did in theirs. From John I to Brooks and Henry was a “descent from glory” indeed, but nowhere near so precipitous a decline as the road that went from Adams to Roosevelt to Kennedy. The Kennedys and Clintons—and, yes, the Bushes—are a far cry even from the mandarins ridiculed by Joe McCarthy. Dean Acheson may have been a “pompous diplomat in striped pants,” but he was a fair imitation of a gentleman. Neither Madeleine Albright nor the members of the Bush Cabinet would know the meaning of the word.

Here is the dilemma: Every society requires leaders, and (as Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels, among others, have explained) the leadership class stamps its mark upon society; yet our own leaders—since at least the beginning of the last century—have been self-seeking, corrupt, and alienated from the culture of most decent Americans. More recently, our leaders have shown that they are incapable even of *leading*—of properly managing a small war for example, or of subordinating their *libido dominandi* to their *libido*. We need an aristocracy, but we have to settle for Bill Gates and Henry Kissinger, Hillary Clinton and Ted Turner.

Readers of Sir Walter Scott and admirers of Sir Philip Sidney may confuse aristocracy with chivalry or with “the gentleman.” But not all aristocracies are chivalrous. Cincinnatus and Leonidas the Spartan were not especially gentle people; neither were William Wallace, Hereward the Wake, Castruccio Castracane, or (for that matter) Geronimo, all of whom sacrificed their comforts and risked their lives to defend their people and advance their interests. Chivalry is a fine and noble concept, but it does not define the essence of aristocracy, the plain meaning of which is “the rule of the best and bravest.” Even Castiglione, the very model of the Renaissance courtier, concedes that martial courage is the chief virtue: “I judge the principall and true profession of a Courtyer ought to be in feates of armes, the which Armes the Courtyers chiefe profession.”

In Greek, the key words which we translate as “good,” “best,” and “virtue”—*agathos*, *aristos*, *arete*—were all connected with manliness and courage, while bad men are preeminently cowards. Nietzsche made the point a long time ago, but it is no less true for Nietzsche having said it. The simplest aristocratic code is the advice Peleus gave his son Achilles: “Always be the best and fight among the champions in the front ranks.” “Such