

Conversely, the peaceful English came to colonize. Even today in history books used throughout our country, the Spanish attitude toward the Indians is contrasted pejoratively with the supposed benign behavior of Englishmen who came to these shores as peaceful "home-builders" and "seekers after liberty."

The venom spewed out against Spain at the time of the Spanish-American War by yellow journalists and politicians, in Powell's words, "conned our grandparents not only to accept but actually to demand a totally unnecessary war with Spain—what we would today call a war of aggression." Our subsequent policy toward both Spain and Hispanic America has been clouded by the Black Legend and has been buttressed by an overweening sense of Nordic superiority. Powell considers the Allied blockade of Spain after World War II as, principally, a petulant backlash by the victors, both liberal and communist, who could not accept the fact that Catholic Spain had whipped communism, and done it while on friendly terms with Nazi Germany. In this instance, the Black Legend joined forces with the "no enemies on the left" mystique that plagues the liberal mind in our day.

Philip Wayne Powell does not disguise his admiration for Spain's contributions to Western civilization, but his book is not an apologia for Spain. It is an exposé of Hispanophobia. If hitherto there were some excuse for ignorance of the Black Legend before *Tree of Hate*, none exists today.

—Reviewed by Frederick D. Wilhelmsen
and Alexandra Wilhelmsen

The Not-So-Vital Center

The Politics of the Center: The Juste Milieu in Theory and Practice, France and England, 1815-1848, by

Vincent E. Starzinger, *New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991. xxi + 160 pp. \$19.95.*

PROFESSOR VINCENT E. STARZINGER'S delightful little book is a comparative study of middle-of-the-road politicians on either side of the English Channel during the first half of the nineteenth century. In France, Starzinger examines two of the so-called "Doctrinaires," François Guizot and Pierre Royer-Collard. In England, his two representative "middlemen" are Henry Brougham and T.B. Macaulay, both Reform Whigs. Starzinger compares these Doctrinaires and Whigs and advances a persuasive theory to explain why both groups eventually failed, and why, generally speaking, middling regimes often fail.

The main body of Starzinger's book consists of a meticulous examination of the many positional and theoretical similarities between the Whigs and the Doctrinaires. Both groups attempted to cultivate a *juste milieu* between the conservative and liberal parties on their flanks. Both departed from absolute conceptions of sovereignty, touting instead the virtues of the mixed state. Both were enamored of compromise solutions such as constitutional monarchy and limited enfranchisement. Both saw the middle class as an embodiment of "sweet reasonableness" and believed that the future belonged to this same middle class. (In an insightful aside, Starzinger points out that this unqualified faith in the ascendancy of the middle class is analogous to Marx's faith in the inevitable rise of the proletariat.) Both the Doctrinaires and the Whigs were optimistic that the ongoing march of history would eventually solve such enduring problems as the need to strike a balance between order and freedom. In Guizot's histories, for example, one finds a faith in the inevitability of progress which is strongly reminiscent of Macaulay. On all of these

points, the similarity between the Whigs and the Doctrinaires is striking.

Although the political ideas of the Whigs and Doctrinaires were quite similar, the situations prevailing in England and France at the time were radically different. The differences between the two countries, Starzinger argues, explain why the Whigs and Doctrinaires died different sorts of deaths. England was more industrialized, possessed a more substantial and cohesive middle class, and enjoyed an historical continuity unknown in revolution-scarred France. For all of these reasons, Starzinger concludes, England was a much more realistic locale for a middling regime than was France. It was profoundly unrealistic to expect the polarized factions in France to compromise on a moderate center. On the other hand, in England, a moderate center seemed realistic enough, for there existed in Britain a measure of consensus which was lacking in France. The right and left were not as far "apart" as they were in France. Yet this moderate atmosphere gives rise to a different problem: What is the point of creating a moderate party between two parties which are relatively moderate to begin with? Is not such a party irrelevant? This, then, was the Whigs' dilemma. In short, Starzinger concludes that the Doctinaire *via media* proved to be profoundly unrealistic, and the Whig middle path turned out to be rather irrelevant.

This brief encapsulation, to be sure, does not do full justice to Starzinger's complex argument. Yet, even in this digested form, one can see the insightfulness of the argument. If Starzinger had stopped at this point we would have an impressive piece of comparative political theory. Because he did not stop there, *The Politics of the Center* is much more than this. Based on his analysis of these Whigs and Doctrinaires, Starzinger broadens his conclusions and outlines a trap into which middle parties every-

where are liable to fall. This he calls "the paradox of the center":

The society rent between two massive political extremes is obviously the most relevant context for a theory of middlingness. But that context is also precisely where the center is least realistic—in the sense that the *juste milieu* call of reasonableness will probably go unheard and that the center will very likely be pulverized from both sides and driven to futile negativism. On the other hand, commitment to the center is likely to be a fairly realistic enterprise where the political left and right both stand within the same value consensus. Yet this latter context may well be one in which it is irrelevant to insist on the middle way. After all, the more moderate the left and right are themselves, the less point there is to be preoccupied with avoiding extremes. *One might say, then that the center is least realistic where it is most relevant, and most realistic where it is least relevant.*

This is at once a rather Chestertonian paradox, a valuable tool for understanding the dynamics of the political center, and a strong criticism of the middling mind. Of course, Starzinger is not the first to criticize the middle-of-the-road gang. That has been done by many others before him. I am reminded, for instance, of the following comment in George Saintsbury's *Scrap Book*:

If anyone says, "But you have no business to assume that there is no *via media* between [socialism] and Toryism," history and not I shall answer him. Whiggery, Liberalism, Moderate Radicalism—all have failed more or less: the only reason why . . . they have not failed utterly, or have held out for a long time being . . . that the remnant of the principles of Toryism itself—inequality, Individualism, Heredity, Property, etc.—which they have retained, has kept them alive.¹

I suppose many would view Saintsbury's judgment as just a bit too reductive. Those same sceptics will perhaps find Starzinger's "realism/relevance

trap" just a little too neat. There may be some validity in this criticism. But such critics ought to take care not to oversimplify Starzinger's point. He does not argue that the center is *never* feasible. Rather, he outlines a pattern of serious difficulties associated with taking the center position. Thus, he pulls up just short of Saintsbury's outright dismissal of the middle road. Starzinger's case against the middling mind is, in a way, more damning than Saintsbury's. Whereas Saintsbury merely states that the middling mind fails, Starzinger digs into Whig and Doctrinaire thinking to show us *how* and *why* the middling mind tends to fail.

The only serious problem this reviewer has with *The Politics of the Center* concerns a back-cover blurb which drastically misrepresents the book. The cover boasts: "The author states with candor a bias in favor of 'middling mind' as a form of analysis no less than what is analyzed." As boners go, this is sort of a compound fracture. In addition to being a fine example of anguished English, this "summary" completely reverses Starzinger's thesis. One might as well say that the thesis of Guizot's *History of Civilization in Europe* is that "feudalism represents the most perfect system yet developed by mankind" or that Macaulay's *History of England* is "a tragic story of decadence, decay and regression." In short, this is a real howler by the publisher. Still, it is a tribute to Starzinger that one can find nothing better to complain about than the back cover of his fine little book. One might say—inverting the terms of his paradox of the center—that, although the outside of Starzinger's book is weak, the center is solid.

—Reviewed by Matthew M. Davis

¹George Saintsbury, *A Scrap Book* (London, 1922), pp. 48-49.

The Politics of Time

***Time and Public Policy*, by T.**

Alexander Smith, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990. 310 pp. \$29.95.

"STAND STILL, you ever-moving spheres of Heaven/That time may cease, and midnight never come," cried Marlowe's Dr. Faustus as his 20-year soul-selling contract with the Devil came due. Came due relentlessly. Midnight always comes.

That time's one-way inexorability has powerful political implications is well pointed out by conservative-libertarian political scientist T. Alexander Smith of the University of Tennessee faculty. He reviews the West's past turbulent half-century and finds politically-induced "social impatience" heightening demand for short-run gratification at the expense of long-term goals.

Upshot: Western governments have inadvertently undermined traditional values and destabilized democracy through shortening and politicizing society's time horizons. Frequently in the name of "social justice." And always in the heat of lobbying pressure, of party rivalry, of what Professor Smith calls "promissory politics."

Promises galore. Consider. The U.S. Government disrupts the propensity to save as it dispenses some 40 million checks a month for Social Security alone, with massive political and economic implications.

And counting all of its transfer payments—these are, by definition, payments for which Uncle Sam receives no goods or services in return—more than half of the U.S. \$1.36 trillion budget, or \$663 billion, annual rate, as of the fourth quarter of 1991, is expended on transfers. Obviously the myopic constituencies collecting these goodies are very powerful indeed. And no wonder America's saving rate has sagged in re-