

political book notes

The American Police State: The Government Against the People. David Wise. Random House, \$12.95. A skillful, professionally done compilation of the many and varied civil liberties abuses of the American government, chiefly during the Nixon era. Wise is a first-rate researcher and has an instinct for finding the story line in Watergate-related incidents that when reported in the daily papers were crushingly complex, boring, and devoid of human drama.

About a third of the material here is familiar to anyone who's read the papers for the last five years; about a third is elaboration and embellishment of things barely remembered, because they were first revealed amid such a flood of material; and about a third is new. This kind of mix grates on one's sensibilities a bit—one is alternatively interested in the new and bored by the familiar—but on the whole the book is consistently interesting and informative. The best material is on various buggings, and on the frame-up of an innocent girl accused of bombing the Capitol.

The picture of America (and of human motivation) the book presents is not overwhelming for its subtlety, and is reminiscent of the SDS's good-guys-and-bad-guys "Amerika," made respectable. Which is not to say that all the things Wise describes aren't genuinely horrifying and bad, because they are, and the book is very convincing on that score.

America-Watching. Gerald W. Johnson, intro. Henry Steele Commager. Stemmer House, \$8.95.

Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South, 1944-1969. Steven F. Lawson. Columbia, \$20/\$6.95.

The Bureaucratic Zoo: The Search For the Ultimate Mumble. James Boren. EPM, \$6.95. From the man who created such magnificent bureaucratic phrases as "dynamic inaction" and "the creative status quo" and the great bureaucratic motto "When in charge ponder, when in trouble delegate, when in doubt mumble," comes two new verbs. One is "to residuate," which is defined "to burrow into a fixed position while maintaining a low profile. Residuation is a survival practice often used during changes of administration." The other is "to profundify," which means "the use of thesauric and other enrichment techniques to make a simple idea to appear to be profound." Boren also comes up with a new description of bureaucrats—as people who "make tentative approaches to preliminary plans for initiating feasibility studies on the possibilities of planning future study conferences on the subject of decision-making."

Champions of Peace. Tony Gray. Two Continents, \$10.95.

Conversations with Eric Sevareid: Interviews with Notable Americans. Eric Sevareid. Public Affairs Press, \$6.50/\$4.50.

The End of Exurbia: Who Are All Those People and Why Do They Want to Ruin Our Town? John J. Tarrant. Stein and Day, \$10. Exurbia—like suburbia, only richer—is dying, and Tarrant spends this book ruminating disconnectedly about that. He's concerned

Public affairs books to be published in December

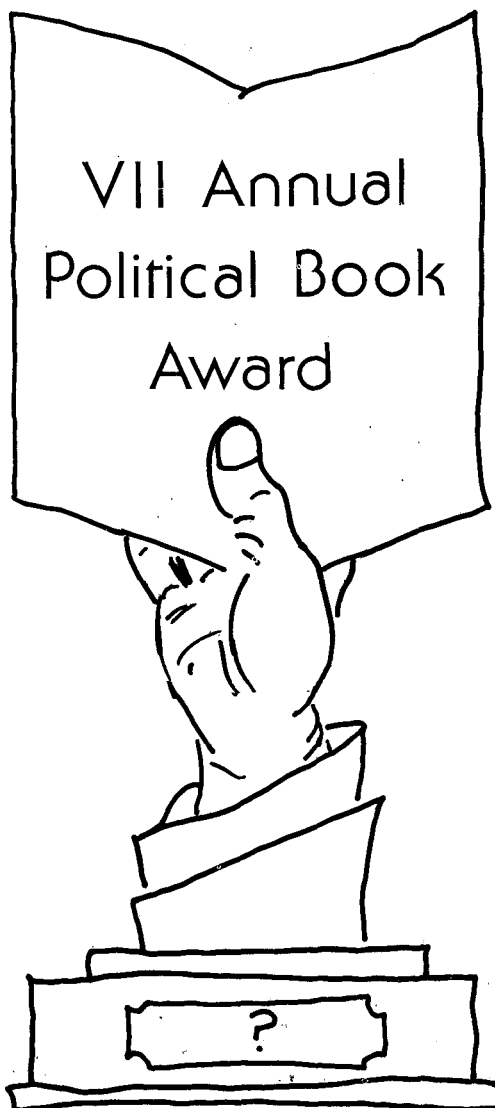
mostly with Westport, Connecticut, where he lives, and its blindness and decay; alcoholism, racism, executive unemployment, restrictive zoning, and kids gone awry are the problems that have driven the town into its dark age. There's a fascination to any story like this—a golden, hopeful dream falling into ruin in 30 years—but Tarrant's indictment of suburbia is pretty familiar, and it's hard to get as worked up about Westport in particular as he does.

The Female Factor: A Study of Women in Five Western European Societies. Shari Steiner. Putnam, \$8.95.

Footholds: Understanding the Shifting Family and Sexual Tensions in Our Culture. Philip Slater. Dutton. Seven years ago the author wrote a reasonably perceptive book called *The Pursuit of Loneliness*. Since then, he has gone downhill, a trend continued by this collection of excerpts from his articles and research papers.

Founding Principles of American Government: Two Hundred Years of Democracy on Trial. George J. Graham, Jr., Scarlet G. Graham; eds. Indiana, \$17.50.

From Mary Noble to Mary Hartman: The Complete Soap Opera Book. Madeleine Edmondson, David Rounds. Stein and Day, \$9.95. The authors' aim is to recount the history and mores of the soap opera in a light and generally benevolent way, which is altogether applaudable; we certainly don't need any more pompous, scholarly denunciations of the genre. The strange world of the soaps is presented knowledgeably and in



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detail, but the book is flaky more often than funny, and not as sharp in its discussion as it could be. The allure of soppy cuteness was just too much for the authors to resist, alas, so the book has to go down as a noble failure. Its most interesting point is that the soaps aren't trivial and superficial because they don't deal with political issues and so forth; on the contrary, they are more profound than politics because they traffic in the eternal human themes of love, passion, rejection, jealousy, joy, and pain.

Inside the National Enquirer: Confessions of An Undercover Reporter. George Bernard Ashley, \$7.95.

The Natural Superiority of Southern Politicians. David Leon Chandler. Doubleday, \$10.

The Politics of Attraction: Four Middle Powers and the United States. Annette Baker Fox. Columbia, \$15.

A Scientist at the White House. George B. Kistiakowsky. Harvard, \$15. Nowadays not many people know who the President's advisor on science is, but in the late fifties technology was developing fast (for both weapons and satellites) and the government was fascinated, almost obsessively con-

cerned, by it, so George Kistiakowsky, a Harvard professor, occupied a significant post. His diary is meticulously detailed, engrossing really only to someone already very interested in the Eisenhower Administration. Kistiakowsky comes across as a man of considerable integrity, slightly removed from the political fray but by no means lacking interest in it. It's interesting how few of the burning issues in the diary are matters of any concern or debate whatever today.

Secrets, Spies, and Scholars. Ray S. Cline, Acropolis, \$10.

Sure Fail: The Art of Mismanagement. Raymond Dreyfack, Morrow, \$6.95.

Through the Walls: Prison Correspondence. Ethel Shapiro-Bertolini, Andrew Richter, eds. Peace Press, \$12.95/\$5.25.

The Vanishing Congress: Where Has All the Power Gone? David J. Muchow. North American International (Washington, D.C.), \$10.

The Troubled Detente. Albert L. Weeks. New York Univ., \$10.

When Your Parents Grow Old. Jane Otten, Florence Shelley. Funk and Wagnalls, \$8.95.

An "inside" reassessment of the powerful Russian leader—and a disturbing new look at the super-patriotic "China Lobby"

KHRUSHCHEV

The Years in Power
Roy A. Medvedev and
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Two prominent Soviet dissidents have written the first account "from within" of the shrewd and complex leader showing him to be a decisive, even impetuous innovator—a side little before discussed in the West. They recount how Khrushchev, carried away by the initial success of his agricultural innovations, demanded too many changes too soon and precipitated his own removal from power. "A useful appraisal which will receive broad attention because of its authorship!"—*The Kirkus Reviews*. Translated by Andrew R. Durkin. \$10.95

THE COMMITTEE OF ONE MILLION

"China Lobby"
Politics, 1953-1971
Stanley D. Bachrack

This hard-hitting, carefully documented analysis of the powerful watchdog committee which lobbied against admission of China to the U.N. raises important, often disturbing questions about the exercise of congressional influence on the foreign policy decisions of the President and Department of State. \$14.95

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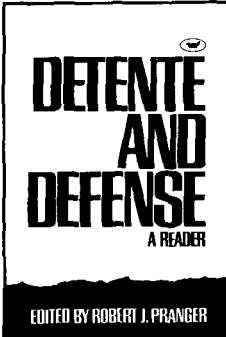
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