

drugs and saw no meaning to life until God grabbed him twelve years ago." Not to mention the saved and brave souls battling against poverty and anti-poverty governmental bureaucracies: "Payne was wearing a red tie with drawings of happy children on it, but most of the children he is responsible for are not smiling."

How does this mélange connect with compassionate conservatism? Well, the Big Idea is that if you gave lots of government anti-poverty money to religiously motivated community organizations and allowed them to

continue to push salvation, you would theoretically begin to win the war on poverty. This approach should be contrasted with Al Gore's watered-down, have-it-both-ways notion of giving funds to faith-based institutions, but simultaneously making sure they don't proselytize.

As any admirer of the Salvation Army knows, there is a germ of truth to this notion that, while religion may be the opiate of the masses, faith works wonders in individual cases. It is a provocative issue—especially for liberals sensitive about the religious issues involved, but who should be impressed that there are some conservatives who genuinely care about eradicating poverty and are hard-headed about only funding programs that work.

Too bad, then, that *Compassionate Conservatism* is such a slapdash book. But then, come to think of it, Dubya is a pretty slapdash messenger
WALTER SHAPIRO, a contributing editor for *The Washington Monthly*, is a political columnist for *USA Today*.

Missile Millionaires

By Andrew Cockburn

"HE'S GOING TO DO IT," said the navy captain, clutching his companion excitedly. "He's going to do it!" It was the evening of March 23, 1983. In the officers' club at Fort Myer, just across

Key Bridge from the District of Columbia, the usual motley assortment of active and retired military and attendant defense contractors and lobbyists were watching President Reagan deliver an address to the nation. His initial remarks in support of his 1984 defense budget request had provoked a scattering of derisive cat-calls from around

the room. But now he was moving on to the theme that would make this speech famous: a proposal to develop a missile defense system in space.

Finally, the old actor on the TV screen called "on the scientific community

of this country, who gave us nuclear weapons... to give us the means of rendering these weapons impotent and obsolete." Ronald Reagan had just fired the official starting gun for that amalgam of fraud and inanity known to history as Star Wars.

"He's done it. He's done it. I'm rich, I'm rich, I'm rich," bellowed the captain in a state of near hysterical exultation, running from the bar in search of a phone.

I have never been able to think about Star Wars without recalling this scene at the launch of the great boondoggle. I don't know what happened to the navy captain, but a lot of people made a lot of money out of the enterprise, and in fact are still doing so. Sixty billion dollars didn't get spent just on *New York Times* op-ed articles and snappy one-liners from John Pike. It is a pity therefore that Frances FitzGerald eschews the question of money, who wanted it and who got it, in her weighty history of missile defense.

Instead, we get a mixture of Reagan psycho-history, familiar to readers of Garry Wills' brilliant *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home*, as well as some useful history, subsumed in many pages on Star Wars as it affected arms control policy in the Reagan years. Her account relies heavily on the memoirs of major officeholders at the Reagan court, which may explain why we learn a lot about policy and very little about pork, a subject that statesmen and liberal intellectuals tend to find too undignified for serious discussion. The Lockheed Corporation

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gets a paltry two mentions in the index, while TRW, briefly described as a company "with a substantial financial stake in space-based lasers," gets just one. Boeing, Raytheon, and other attendees at the trough pass without notice. It is not considered polite to mention the "military industrial complex" these days, however loudly it advertises its presence and influence.

Ironically, FitzGerald herself supplies crucial evidence that confirms the decisive role of the uniformed branch of the complex in bringing us Star Wars. Many people have been cited as the midwives of Reagan's vision—the physicists Edward Teller and Lowell Wood; the rascally former defense intelligence agency chief Danny Graham; but FitzGerald convincingly suggests that the idea came from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, particularly Admiral David Watkins, chief of naval operations. The Chiefs no more believed in an umbrella of lasers in outer space zapping Red nukes as they came over the North Pole than any other rational person, but they knew a threat to the defense budget when they saw one.

Ever since the later years of Jimmy Carter's presidency, the military and their industrial partners had been enjoying an unparalleled era of prosperity by promoting the specter of Soviet military and especially nuclear superiority. Among other surrenders, Carter had

cravenly accepted the proposition that U.S. land-based missiles were under threat from an enemy first strike, agreeing to concrete over half of Nevada so that the MX missile could have a mobile home. But this had not been enough to buy the allegiance of the military, who had correctly foreseen that Reagan promised still richer rewards.

By the spring of 1983, however, the public was beginning to get the idea that all this talk from their masters about nuclear war might be serious. The nuclear freeze movement had spread like wildfire across the country. Half a million people marched through New York in protest. The Mormon Church and the Nevada Cattlemen's Association had emphatically vetoed the mobile MX. The Chiefs were worried by the freeze movement, and, more specifically, having sold the mobile MX as vital to our nation's survival, they needed a way to explain that maybe the MX could be stationary and still keep the republic secure. A defensive system to protect U.S. missile fields was advertised as a way to render nuclear weapons "obsolete" and thus lull the citizenry back to sleep.

Later on, when it appeared that Defense Secretary Weinberger and the functionaries actually running the Strategic Defense Initiative program might be getting ideas above their station and grabbing too large a chunk of the budget they were sharply reined in

by the military high command. The program had served its purpose and could be relegated to a position of lower priority in the chow-line for tax dollars.

In the meantime of course the arms controllers and defense intellectuals had a wonderful time debating the issue, and FitzGerald dutifully takes us through the arcane battles over START and INF that so preoccupied people in those days. The Russians naturally played their part in the game. For years, Gorbachev dutifully echoed the line of his own military lobby by treating SDI seriously. By the time he woke up and told Reagan to go ahead and waste his money if he felt like it, it didn't matter; the Soviet leader was well on the way to reforming the Soviet Union out of existence, and the Cold War was practically over.

If proof was needed that missile defense had more-deep-rooted foundations than simply the addled imagination of Ronald Reagan or the technical fantasies of Edward Teller, current newspaper headlines supply it. Ronald Reagan is long gone, but the SDI lobby lives on, potent enough to extract a possible further \$60 billion from our pockets on the grounds that we might some day be menaced by (starving) North Koreans, or (starving) Iraqis, or Iranians, or anyone. It doesn't really matter. Someone will get rich.

ANDREW COCKBURN's most recent book is *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*.

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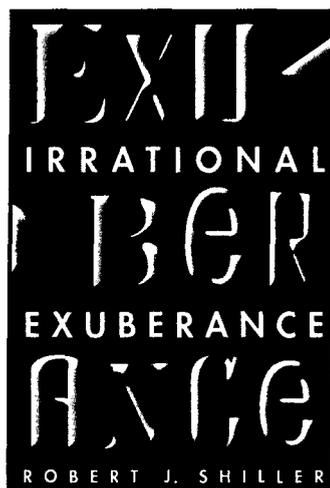
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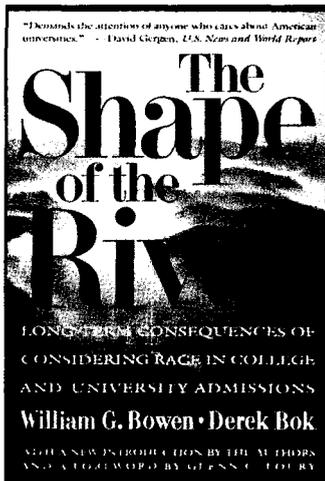
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