

Solitary Scribbler

By Charles W. Bailey

THE SCRIBBLERS, THE SCHOLARS, and the scribes may at last be able to come to closure with Richard Nixon. They have been on his case for a half-century without ever getting in a knockout punch; indeed, the only U.S. president ever forced to resign came oh-so-close to salvaging his shattered reputation before he died. The shelves already groan under the weight of books, articles, tapes, and transcripts.

So why bother with another? Why take one more shot at the Old Lion?

The answer is simple. *President Nixon: Alone in the White House*, by veteran national political reporter Richard Reeves, is the best account, from Nixon's own perspective, of the critical years between 1968 and 1972, when the seeds of Watergate and that whole noxious period were planted. Reeves offers a carefully researched and well-crafted history of Nixon's attempt to bend the people's government to his personal biases, which requires revisiting the plot to cover up Watergate.

Reeves, who previously published a first-rate biography of President Kennedy, revisits the key aspects of Nixon's disastrous Vietnam policy and also his one true diplomatic triumph, the restoration of U.S. relations with China. His fascinating account of Nixon's meeting with Mao Zedong appears to draw heavily on the memory and note-taking skills of Winston Lord, a young Kissinger aide who later served as U.S. ambassador to China.

But the most personal and revealing part of this book is a series of memos Reeves has unearthed, through which he attempts to show how Nixon lived his day-to-day life during that critical period of history, to "reconstruct the Nixon presidency as it looked from the center." As the

book's title suggests, it frequently looked very, very lonely.

Nixon waited until late at night to pen these memos to himself. He did so when he was alone in his office, alone in the Lincoln bedroom, alone at Camp David, or alone across the street in his monastic hideaway in the Old Executive Office building—always alone, almost always in the dark, and sometimes, even in August, with a fire blazing. In such solitary precincts, Nixon's mind raced as he pondered the future:

I must get away from the thought of considering the office at any time a burden. I actually do not consider it a burden, an agony, etc. ... it is God's great gift to me to have the opportunity to exert leadership, not only for America, but on the world scene. From this day forward I am going to look upon it that way and rise to the challenge with as much excitement, energy, enthusiasm, and, wherever possible, real joy I can muster.

As such passages indicate, self-appraisal was the dominant theme in these very private memos. Nixon had few close friends, and only limited interaction with his aides. While these memos do little to counter the public image of the president as paranoid and grave, they do often reveal stunning personal assessments in which Nixon strove to change himself. He was not, of course, a joyful man. But he resolved to try to be one:

*Goals: Personal: 1. Make people have a memorable experience each day—
2. Be worthy of 1st man in nation and in world ... Spiritual: Add element of lift to each experience ...
Hard work - Imagination - Compassion - Understanding of young - Intellectual expansion - Cool - Strong - Organized - Temperate - Exciting.*

His longing for personal improvement had a darker side—his frequent feelings of mortality, which were a subject of his memos. In one such self-addressed memo,

this one on his birthday in January 1973, Nixon grapples with his advancing age, and seems tortured by what he perceives to be his lack of accomplishment:

*Age- Not as much time.
Don't spin your wheels.
Blessed with good health
... Older Men—De Gaulle, Ike, Yoshida, Akenau, Churchill, Chou En Lai, Hoove No one is finished—until he quits.*

Though Reeves does deliver a blow-by-blow account of this pre-Watergate period, unlike most earlier Nixon books, *Alone in the White House* doesn't focus so much on action

(or on Nixon's aides) as it does on the president's personal writing. But in doing so, it paints a picture of the president that one can't help feeling is very similar to the way Nixon must have felt himself.

This book may not answer all the questions about Nixon, but you won't find another that tells as much about this enigmatic man.

CHARLES W. BAILEY was White House correspondent during the Johnson and Nixon administrations for The Minneapolis Tribune.



PRESIDENT NIXON:
Alone in the White House
by Richard Reeves
Simon & Schuster, \$35.00

Pagan Morality

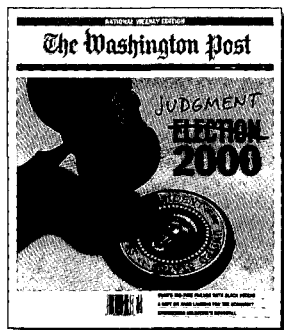
By Laura Rozen

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY has never forgiven journalist Robert Kaplan for his award-winning 1993 book *Balkan Ghosts*, whose depiction of ferocious ethnic hatred in the former Yugoslavia is said to have spooked Bill Clinton into withholding U.S. troops from Bosnia until late 1995, until more than 200,000 people had been slaughtered.

Though Kaplan in fact advocated U.S. intervention in Bosnia as vital to our strategic interest, he is *persona non grata* to humanitarians horrified by his dark view of the world. In *Warrior Politics*, Kaplan summons the great classical writers on foreign policy and conflict to make his case for a "realist" American poli-

If You Don't Get It, You Don't Get It.
Subscribe to the *Washington Post National Weekly Edition* so you're sure to get it. Every week, be privy to astute analysis of the policies, issues, debates and developments that make the world's pulse race.

Get the inside word: Straight talk from the political pundits. In-depth coverage of the powers that be in Congress, the



Regular features include:

THE CAPITAL

David Broder, the Pulitzer Prize-winning dean of American political analysts offers his penetrating assessment of The Hill, The White House and more.

THE WORLD

Our reporters tell the important stories from the diplomatic front. We identify and examine the effects of events from all corners of the world.

THE ECONOMY

Keep your finger on the financial pulse with forecasts and appraisals that probe beneath the surface for deeper insights.

EDITORIALS

Get the trenchant views as well as our thought-provoking op-ed page. And Herblock, the great Pulitzer-winning editorial cartoonist, offers his slant on today's events.

BOOK WORLD

Learn about the most important new books from well-known scholars, authors and opinion leaders.

POLLS

Find out what Americans think. Our pollsters present data on a wide variety of topics. See what concerns us around the block, around the nation and around the world.

SCIENCE

Read about the latest developments and discoveries in the full spectrum of scientific disciplines in today's fast-changing world.

We Make It Easy To Get It.

White House and abroad. Brilliant observations on the day's most significant political events. A roundup of rare, resourceful commentary on the Administration's every move.

This special weekly edition of The Post is read widely with the same high regard as our daily paper. It's full of exclusive reports and expert opinion to help uncover the big-picture implications of today's agenda. It's written by insightful individuals uniquely qualified to interpret the affairs of Washington. Investigative reporters like Bob Woodward. Observers like Jim Hoagland and Robert Samuelson. Plus guest authorities in every field.

Week in and week out, *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition* keeps you abreast of our ever-swirling political scene. Get It?

POLITICS

Read about the significant shifts and surges within the parties and among the voters. Get the best coverage of campaigns, elections, ethical issues, referenda, committees, lobbies and policies of America.

COMMENTARY

Some of today's foremost political thinkers and writers debate timely and provocative issues.

The National Weekly Edition gives you the best of the week from *The Washington Post* in one convenient place. And with 62% off the cover price, there's no reason for you to not get it.



The Washington Post NATIONAL WEEKLY EDITION

Subscription Savings Form

☐ **Yes! Start my one-year subscription (52 issues) to The Washington Post National Weekly Edition for only \$39.00. That's a savings of half off the basic subscription rate and \$62.40 off the newsstand price.**

☐ Payment Enclosed
☐ Bill me later.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

Complete and mail to:
**The Washington Post
National Weekly Edition
P.O. Box 37167
Boone IA 50037-4167**

Allow 4-6 weeks for your first issue to arrive

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR YOUR MONEY BACK ON ALL UNMAILED ISSUES

JWM2001

abroad. Those who favor U.S. intervention may not appreciate Kaplan's prescription for an American foreign policy based on self-interest rather than humanitarianism. But what is valuable about Kaplan's latest book is that it forces even his opponents to consider global developments—from population explosion and environmental degradation to post-colonial breakdown—and their impact on our role in the world from a point of view different than the one found in conventional news and diplomatic coverage.

"This is not an essay about what to think," Kaplan writes in the opening pages of *Warrior Politics*, "but about how to think." Specifically, Kaplan wishes us to think harder about how U.S. values appear to the rest of the world. Developing countries try to emulate America's democratic capitalism which, Kaplan argues, places a premium on putting forth an image of strength. "If we are weak militarily—if we aren't able to meet the rising challenges of warriors—our political values may be eclipsed worldwide," he writes. To bolster this assertion, Kaplan embarks on a survey of great thinkers on war and statesmanship, including Hannibal, Thucydides, and Machiavelli, and, to a lesser degree, Churchill, Kant, and Hobbes, and explains how the lessons they offer apply to U.S. foreign policy.

Kaplan views ancient Athens as the best parallel to the modern U.S., arguing that both societies' affluence softened them to the ever-present barbarism that is the downfall of great societies. Soon after Pericles delivered his famous funeral oration on the virtues of the Athenian citizenry, a plague swept the city and those same citizens turned on each other like beasts. "Thus," Kaplan concludes, "the more socially and economically advanced the time, the more necessary it is for leaders to maintain a sense of their societies' fallibility and vulnerability: That is the ultimate defense

against catastrophe."

He invokes Machiavelli to maintain that good statesmanship and responsible statecraft require political leaders to focus on the morality of results, not intentions: "If it isn't effective, it can't be virtuous." Kaplan points to the United Nations' decision to hold a referendum on independence in East Timor as an example of the sin of disregarding warnings. Knowing that a referendum would likely spur massive violence by anti-independence forces, the U.N. proceeded anyway, setting off massacres which prompt Kaplan to conclude that "in its startling lack of foresight, weak planning, and chaotic implementation, the U.N.'s exercise in democracy lacked Machiavellian virtue."

By contrast, Kaplan praises the decision of Jordan's King Hussein to dissolve his pro-Soviet government and impose martial law in 1957, and to suppress rebellious Palestinians in the 1970s and 1980s. "King Hussein's antidemocratic acts," he writes, "saved his kingdom from forces that would have been crueler than himself—His violence, therefore, was central to his virtue."

What's troubling is that Kaplan offers citizens no way to "institutionalize" the virtue of their rulers. Though he praises the U.S. decision not to insist on democracy and human rights in places like Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey, such expediency seems debatable in the wake of September 11, as we've come to see the costs of supporting "friendly" regimes whose suppressed populations blame the U.S. for their political grievances. Though he doesn't address this argument, Kaplan knows from experience what such societies are like. "I saw firsthand the creation of warriors at Islamic schools in Pakistani slums," he writes in a chapter on Achilles that eerily anticipates the al Qaeda attacks. "The children of those shanty towns had no moral or patri-

otic identity except that which their religious instructors gave them. An age of chemical and biological weapons is perfectly suited for religious martyrdom."

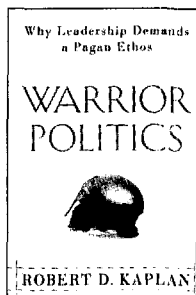
Beyond Islamic militants, Kaplan identifies a burgeoning new warrior class in the criminal underworld of former Communist countries. He believes that these new warriors will also, as a matter of necessity, attack us without regard for the Geneva Convention: "America's military superiority guarantees that such new adversaries will not fight according to our notion of fairness: they will come at us by surprise, asymmetrically, at our weakest points."

Implicit in *Warrior Politics* is the notion that reducing poverty and political grievances in the developing world is profoundly in our national interest. Kaplan puts forth Gen. George Marshall as the ideal of level-headed statesmanship for his focus on necessity and self-interest. "The Marshall Plan was not a gift to Europe," Kaplan writes, "but an effort to contain Soviet expansion; when necessity and self-interest are properly calculated, history calls such thinking 'heroic.'" Today's U.S. leaders, he implies, should heed such advice in the case of poor countries whose extremists represent the equivalent strategic threat to the U.S.

While Kaplan explains the strategic consequences of environmental degradation, population explosion, and the vast poverty of the developing world, he fails to explicitly endorse U.S. investment in reducing poverty, relieving debt, supporting education, and other programs proven to counter these trends. He doesn't say why.

Kaplan seems to be arguing for a bit more realism from humanitarians, while asking realists to recognize the value of the progressive agenda: Humanitarianism serves the national interest. But Kaplan fails to provide so vigorous a dissection of today's realist policies, which will undoubtedly confirm his outlaw status among human rights advocates.

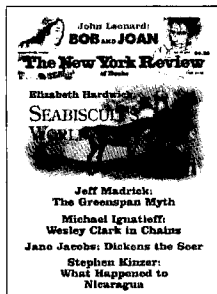
LAURA ROZEN writes frequently about foreign policy for Salon.com.



WARRIOR POLITICS:
Why Leadership Demands
A Pagan Ethos
by Robert Kaplan
Random House, \$22.50

"the premier literary intellectual magazine in the English language"*

Subscribe now and Save over 62%

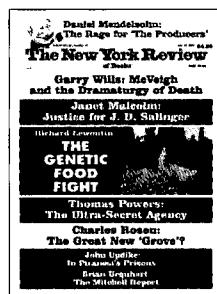


For over thirty-five years contributors to *The New York Review of Books*—including Gore Vidal and James Fenton, Susan Sontag and Garry Wills, Joan Didion and Joyce Carol Oates, plus many more—have stepped outside their roles as authors and artists, poets and scientists, prime ministers and presidents to write essays and critical reviews of works from their peers and others. Encompassing much more than literature, *The New York Review of Books* covers art, politics, science, history, education and music with incomparable wit, clarity, and brilliance.

◆ **20 Issues** You'll enjoy a full year's subscription of 20 issues for just \$32—that's almost 50% off the regular subscription rate of \$62, and a saving of \$53 (over 62%) off the newsstand price.

◆ **A Free Book** You'll receive—absolutely FREE—*After Clinton*, a paperback collection of essays on 2000 presidential campaign and on Bill Clinton's two terms in office. Here you'll find essays by Lars-Erik Nelson on George W. Bush, John McCain and "Clinton & His Enemies." Louis Menand writes on Al Gore and Bill Bradley, and Anthony Lewis describes what he believes was almost a *coup d'état*.

◆ **A No-Risk Guarantee** If you are unhappy with your subscription at any time, you may cancel. We will refund the unused portion of your subscription cost. What's more, *After Clinton* is yours to keep as our gift to you for trying *The New York Review of Books*.



*Esquire

The New York Review of Books

Return to: Subscription Department, PO Box 23166, Jackson, MS 39225-3166

☒ **Yes!** I would like to subscribe to *The New York Review of Books* at the one-year (20 issues) introductory rate of only \$32. I save over 62% off the newsstand price, and with my paid subscription, I will also receive *After Clinton*—FREE. And, I understand that I may cancel at any time and will be refunded for the unused portion of my subscription.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ \$32 enclosed* Charge my: ☐ AmEx ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Bill me. (for US only)

NS01J920A

Credit Card Number _____

Expiration Date/Signature _____

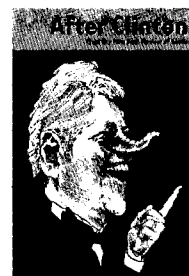
For faster service, fax your credit card orders to: **(601) 353-0176**.

Please include your own phone and fax number in case of questions. *If you fax this order, do not also mail it.*

*Make checks or US money orders payable to The New York Review of Books. We accept US Dollars drawn on a US bank, Canadian Dollars drawn on a Canadian bank, or Pounds Sterling drawn on a UK bank. We cannot accept international money orders.

Rates Outside the US: Canada: \$52/\$73CDN. Rest of World Regular Post (recommended for Europe only): \$62/£40. Rest of World Print Flow Air Post (recommended for the Far East, Australia, Africa, New Zealand, and South America; 2-3 week delivery time): \$89/£58. Credit card orders will be charged in US Dollars rates shown. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

This offer is for new subscribers only. Offer expires September 1, 2002.



**FREE BOOK
with this offer!**



**MOTHER
JONES**

THE REST IS JUST MASS MEDIA

It's always bothered you that the same people selling you the six o'clock news could also be selling you television sets or washing machines. That's why you should try *Mother Jones*—one of the last remaining independent magazines on earth. Order a risk-free copy today. If you like our unique brand of hell-raising, investigative journalism, you can get 5 more issues (a full year in all) for just \$10. Or you can cancel and owe nothing. Either way, the trial issue is yours to keep.

SUBSCRIBE TO A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW. CALL 1-800-GET-MOJO.

Please refer to promotion code A071WM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

