

unfavorably for the continued existence of these institutions. Authority is society's only defense against chaos, and without it we are doomed to a war of all against all, a Hobbesian nightmare of lawlessness and despair. Who but the anarchist and the fool could disagree? Molnar's point is true almost by definition, since, as social scientists have long argued, societal boundaries are defined in terms of authority, and indeed it is impossible to talk about society without simultaneously invoking its authoritative institutions. The crucial issue is not the necessity of authority per se but the role that authority is allowed to play in each of society's institutions and the degree to which its exercise is circumscribed. This is the key feature that enables one to distinguish among societies.

If Molnar recognizes the varying roles and degrees of influence to which authority can lay claim, his vision is remarkably narrow. Given the decline

in the legitimate exercise of authority, he argues, there are two, and only two, political alternatives to society's degeneration into chaos. The first avenue, the despotic regime, is undesirable because it entails the wholesale subordination of freedom and traditional values to brute power. The other recourse, however, the authoritarian avenue, is more palatable. This is the "Augustan" state, the embodiment of both traditional mores and a healthy dose of authority. To be sure, Molnar notes, we may have to sacrifice some of our freedoms in this state, we may have to put up with a strengthened executive of an increasingly "military character," but anything would be better than the recourse to sheer despotism or, conversely, sheer anarchy.

Clearly, Molnar would like to be bold and shocking in suggesting such a state, and he warns us against quixotically dreaming that our "decrepit institu-

tions" might be restored to good order. The fact is that Molnar never conclusively demonstrates that American institutions are so thoroughly bankrupt, so ineluctably destined to failure, that we should busy ourselves now with the erection of the Augustan edifice. Indeed, far from being shocking, his conclusions seem merely nonsensical, and the reader discovers little reason for taking him seriously.

What makes this account regrettable is not just that the book is so inadequate, but that Thomas Molnar is such an excellent scholar. Anyone who has read his *God and the Knowledge of Reality* or his *The Decline of the Intellectual* must recognize the acuity of a truly serious and accomplished thinker. *Authority and Its Enemies* is a book that should never have been written. In the future Molnar will, one hopes, direct himself to studies more worthy of his skill and his intelligence.

The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister Vol. I. 1964-1966 by Richard Crossman

(Holt, Rinehart & Winston; 688 pp.; \$16.95)

Lady Suzanne Haire

When Richard Crossman was first elected to Parliament as a Labor M.P. in the landslide of 1945 that ousted Churchill and the Conservatives, he was already prominent as an Oxford don, a political journalist, and propagandist. In the radio war against Nazi Germany he was one of the brains at the British Broadcasting Corporation who revamped the German grammar to make broadcasts from London more easily audible through enemy jamming. When Prime Minister Attlee formed his government, however, Crossman was passed over—no doubt because of his reputation for irresponsibility. He was "too clever by half," too brilliant. Exiled to the back-benches for the next twenty years, Crossman became a thorn in the side of the party leadership. With Aneurin Bevan, the fiery Welshman whose oratory in the House surpassed even Churchill's, Crossman became the leader of a group of assorted left-wing

M.P.s and found numerous issues on which to stage "revolts." (Crossman at one time described the group as the "57 Varieties.")

But while there is death in British politics, there is hope. When Harold Wilson became Prime Minister in 1964—thanks partly to Crossman's efforts—the reward came in his appointment as Minister of Housing. Crossman anticipated the portfolio of Education, for which he was eminently qualified. But as is so often the case, he was given a job about which, he admits, he knew virtually nothing.

This massive first volume of his diaries, published posthumously, begins with Crossman's first day as Minister of Housing and ends two years later upon his appointment as Lord President. Two more volumes are to follow covering his ministerial career up to 1970, when the Conservatives were elected and Crossman became editor of the *New*

Statesman. He died in 1974.

Crossman had long believed there was too much unnecessary secrecy in British government; in the *Diaries* he wanted to disclose "the secret operations of government which are concealed by the thick masses of foliage which we call democracy." He admits the picture will be neither objective nor fair, as it is a personal record seen by one participant of a government at work.

The transformation of the author from an "innocent" outsider to a departmental minister is the book's major emphasis. A novice in matters concerning housing and inexperienced in the ways of government, Crossman could have been delivered into the hands of his civil servants. But he was determined to hold his own ground and devotes many chapters to the ups and downs, the tussles, arguments, and maneuverings—real and imaginary—within his department.

The chief target of his salvos is his permanent secretary, Dame Evelyn Sharp, a most influential mandarin in the corridors of Whitehall. To vent his spleen Crossman keeps referring to this formidable woman in the *Diaries* as "the Dame" (quite incorrect as a title), thus recalling the comical Christmas pantomime character played on stage by a man in drag. But, in all fairness, Crossman acknowledges that on several occasions she "saved face" for him.

Describing the first days as a minister, Crossman writes: "I continue to have this curious sense of fiction...living in an unreal world." And there is self-pity at not being able to be home with his family as before. His children visit him "in this great room in which Pop lives but they knew that they were in Pop's sad world and they were strangers from another planet." But shortly thereafter the picture changes as he gets on top of his job: "Taking decisions seems something I can do easily....I had always suspected when I was working in Eisenhower's headquarters that the job of a general was relatively easy." He admits that the deference and diligence of his hardworking staff impressed him even though he accuses them of "spying for the Treasury against their own minister because promotion comes to them not from the minister, but from the Treasury."

Despite frequent outbursts in similar vein, he confesses: "I am not being a particularly successful minister...but it is almost incredible how quickly I have got into the ministerial swing, become accustomed to the tempo and style of the work, with motor-cars and cabinet office and private office. It is a routine which moves so smoothly and envelops one so completely that it is difficult to remember I have done anything else." Crossman finds work far less arduous than the writing and rewriting of articles.

As Minister of Housing he had to carry out the Labor Party's pledges laid down in the Party's manifesto and adopted by its conference before the general election. Among these pledges were the building of low-rent public housing, rent control regulations, the planning of new cities, and the preservation of the "green belt" around built-up areas. Crossman describes the prodigious number of meetings with individuals, organizations, and local authorities and his incessant travels up and down

the country. He chronicles in great detail his fights in Cabinet and his speeches in Parliament in an effort to put his measures through. He admits later that he became obsessed with departmental matters, "...so that I was scarcely aware of the great issues which were being decided in Cabinet...."

Although Crossman found the perks of office extremely pleasant, he had no patience with royal ceremonies. "Undoubtedly the most fantastic episode...was the kissing hands and the rehearsal....I don't suppose anything more dull, pretentious, or plain silly has ever been invented." Later, when invited to Buckingham Palace "into a magnificent room and served quite ordinary gin and tonics," he describes his conversation with Queen Elizabeth as being about corgies, cows, and Charles—in that order. As time passed his distaste for royal occasions was respected and he was left off the visiting list. Crossman's reputation as an enfant terrible of British politics was not without justification.

The real value of the *Diaries* for the historian is in the detailed record of Cabinet meetings, the process of decision-making in government. Although this volume gives away no state secrets, Crossman's revelations of dissension and intrigue among cabinet colleagues—when most of the main characters are still in place—is quite novel in British politics. As crisis followed crisis, Crossman describes discussions in Cabinet on the ailing pound, the steadily growing balance of payments deficit, and the decline in productivity, compounded by the problem of Rhodesia. Although a serious document, Crossman's irreverent and racy comments on the establishment make the *Diaries* a gossip columnist's dream.

As a friend remarked, Crossman was never one for a favorable judgment if an adverse one could be had. He is volatile in the extreme; a colleague can be a total failure one day and a brilliant statesman the next. The Chancellor is "bleating amicably" and "caves in" on a financial measure. The Lord Chancellor is "an extraordinarily inept politician." A speech by another senior minister in "that clear...boring voice...so lucid that you could see only too clearly how little he had to say."

The dominant figure throughout the *Diaries* is that of Harold Wilson;

Crossman keeps a wary eye on him all the time. Wilson is described at various times as "unimaginative," "curiously methodical," and "inflexible." The inner Cabinet is "drifting along without a coherent policy: a really deplorable show." And again, "The Cabinet isn't very firm or very stable because the central leadership isn't there." As the sterling crisis gained momentum and the specter of devaluation loomed large (in fact it was averted until 1967), Crossman advocated a floating pound, but he was overruled at the time. He blamed the Prime Minister: "Wilson failed to admit that we had been forced to choose between devaluation and deflation, that we had chosen the second and that we were in for a period of exactly the worst kind of 'stop' against which we had so passionately protested throughout the election."

However, Crossman cheered with the rest when Wilson delivered a rousing speech in the Commons and admired the Prime Minister's deft handling of an often divided Cabinet. Crossman also fully acknowledged that it was Wilson's astuteness in choosing the date of the 1966 general election that resulted in a greatly increased Labor majority.

In the new Cabinet Crossman was named Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House, a senior post without departmental responsibility. His first reaction was ambivalent; he wanted to carry on his old job, especially as he had failed to build all the houses the Party had hoped to build. At the same time, he believed he had become stale at Housing and needed a change. He describes how the civil servants at his old department received the news: "There is no doubt about it, a lot of people heaved a sigh of relief when I went. Perhaps because I bullied them and made a fool of them in front of others."

British Government proceedings at court to stop publication of the *Diaries* and the indignation and rage that greeted its appearance are difficult to understand, especially in America. Crossman put on paper what politicians—particularly those in the Labor Party—revel in, namely, talking shop. He admits that while enjoying congenial company he would talk politics "...far too freely and felt a delicious, racy, scandalized joy in doing so." The fact that two more volumes of the *Diaries* will be published soon must

make many at the top somewhat apprehensive. The victims of Crossman's pen may find themselves asking with Ber-

nard Shaw, "How can we have any self-respect if we don't pretend that we are better than we are?"

Dean Acheson: The State Department Years by David S. McLellan

(Dodd, Mead; 454 pp.; \$17.50)

Daniel Yergin

For most of his working life Dean Acheson was a successful Washington attorney. He became the very epitome of the postwar "foreign policymaker." He clearly did not mind the latter role, but he certainly might have objected to some of the interpretations placed upon it. In much recent history he has been portrayed as not only a prime instigator but the very embodiment of the cold war, the organizer of containment, and, in his own way, no less its ideologue than George Kennan. Many of his contemporaries saw it altogether differently. A large number regarded him as suspiciously "soft" on communism. The widespread acceptance of that belief in the late 1940's and early 1950's served as a powerful constraint on his actions as Secretary of State.

David McLellan has tried to sort out the portraits in this admirable new biography of Acheson. It is basically sympathetic, more sympathetic than the graceful biography of Acheson by Gaddis Smith published five years ago. A considerable amount of documentary evidence has become available in the last few years and McLellan has availed himself of it. In particular he had early access to Acheson's own papers.

The Acheson that emerges is a man not only of great ability but also of considerable self-confidence and arrogance, even a muted self-righteousness. He lacked patience and possessed a cutting irony. The results sometimes worked to his own disadvantage—as in his troubled relations with Congress. During hearings on the North Atlantic Treaty one Senator asked why it was called the North Atlantic Treaty. "It has to do with the defense of the North Atlantic area," Acheson replied. "Obviously that does not mean that you are defending water. This is not a treaty that has to do with water and not with land."

While McLellan sheds light on many aspects of Acheson's long life, the book is focused on the State Department years. The basic theme is Acheson and communism. McLellan is especially illuminating on three aspects of that theme. The first concerns Acheson's reaction to communism, as it took shape in his pursuit of a genuine Western alliance. Having concluded that the gulf between the U.S. and the USSR was unbridgeable, Acheson threw all his energies into the alliance diplomacy. Indeed, he brought "the alliance" into existence. McLellan delineates this process in a most interesting fashion—including Acheson's failures and blind spots as well as his successes.

The second aspect deals with Acheson's efforts to cope with the fervent domestic anticommunism that reached its peak with McCarthyism. One need not hold the Administration responsible for McCarthyism, as some historians do, to recognize that the hysteria was an inevitable outgrowth of a polarizing postwar world. However, McLellan does point out that Acheson's Congressional enemies were nowhere so numerous as their loud noise led many to believe.

The third aspect involves communism in Asia. The Korean War was very much a watershed for America's Asian policy. Through 1949 Acheson was realistic about what was happening in China. He thought some kind of *modus vivendi* was possible and was already aware of the potential for Sino-Soviet conflict. Yet along with other policymakers he did not realize the degree to which the People's Republic would feel threatened by America's sweep into North Korea. The consequence, of course, was an expanded and protracted Korean War and the postponement for two decades of a seminormalization of

relations with China that, in fact, was to America's own advantage. Later, Acheson seemed to have no regrets about this postponement. In January, 1952, Churchill asked him about the future of Sino-American relations. "The United States no longer felt, as it had in January 1950, that there was any real possibility of inducing Chinese Titoism in the foreseeable future," Acheson replied.

Dean Acheson thought of himself as a person with little use for grand schemes. "He isn't more than wistfully moved by the possibility of applying intelligence to life on a large scale because he knows that there isn't much intelligence to apply," Acheson once wrote of a mentor, Louis Brandeis. "I don't think the Justice puts the slightest faith in mass salvation through universal Plumb Plans." Acheson might as well have been describing his own attitudes in later life. He thought he was responding only to the realities of world politics as they existed. Grand schemes were really only cloaks for emotion, and, as he said in 1945, "emotional reactions cannot change facts." Yet, by the late 1940's, he had acquired a highly schematic interpretation of Soviet behavior—that the USSR was a world revolutionary state with which any kind of diplomatic settlement was impossible. Perhaps that belief derived from other strongly held ideas. Acheson did not believe that harmonious composition was necessarily a "natural" part of international politics. Thus, he did not think he was remiss in not pursuing a settlement with the Soviet Union. Neither did he feel, on the other side, the sense of betrayal that many Americans did in the late 1940's because "peace" had not been fully restored. Perhaps it was necessary for Acheson to believe that diplomacy with the Russians was worth nothing, for otherwise he would not have been able to work, as he so energetically did work, for the "unity of the West." Diplomacy with the Russians inevitably would have created deep suspicions among the Western allies.

But there were gains and losses. McLellan writes that Acheson's "peculiarly mechanistic view of the future of Soviet-American relations left little room for negotiations or for the chance that Soviet policy might change or mellow. Preoccupied as he was by the immediate problems facing the West, Acheson seems not to have considered what