

of Camp David in August of 1971. More important, Stein uses this incident to point out that the public's acceptance of wage and price controls exemplifies how shallow the support for a free market economy can be.

After a cursory discussion of the Ford and Carter years, Stein focuses upon the "Reagan revolution." Here, after discounting the excesses of Reagan's campaign promises and debunking supply-side myths, the author observes that the Reagan revolution is no revolution at all. The Reagan economic changes, unlike those of FDR, are changes in budget numbers, not institutions; changes in degree, not in design. Reagan's heightened military expenditures in the face of a tax cut have, Stein notes, left the country with high interest rates and huge deficits, while the Federal Reserve's monetary restraint during this period has reduced inflation and increased unemployment.

Unsatisfied with the Reagan policy response, Stein concludes his book with a call for a "new consensus" of moderate conservatives and mainstream liberals who reject both the conservative extremism of supply-side economics and the neo-liberal plea for government-directed industrial policies. Instead, Stein identifies what he believes is the true, and truly workable, conservative reaction to liberalism: a shift in national priorities toward a greater emphasis on price stability, growth, and individual freedom and away from an emphasis on higher employment, redistribution of income, and regulation.

As an alternative to Stein's conservative consensus, Felix Rohatyn offers a plan for rebuilding the infrastructure of the American economy through industrial policies modeled on the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The book's title and its unifying theme are derived from Rohatyn's belief that the century of unrivaled American hegemony forecast by Henry Luce actually lasted only twenty years, from 1945 to 1965. Since that time the American economy has oscillated between growth-with-inflation and recession-with-unemployment.

To anticipate and forestall these alternating crises, Rohatyn suggests the creation of policies and institutions that will negotiate a balanced response to the problem of the decline of basic manufacturing industries and the widening regional disparity between the decaying urban Frostbelt and the relatively prosperous Sunbelt. An industrial board, he suggests, should aid failing industries and regions directly through credits, taxes, and trade protection and indirectly through assistance in transportation, education, and research.

Although Rohatyn's recommendations for finding cooperative institutional solutions in the face of looming crises is very persuasive in his chapters on the international monetary system and Third World debt, his appeal for a similar solution for the domestic economy is unconvincing. He fails to rebut the contention of Stein and others that the productive use of their resources by workers and investors is more likely to derive from their wish to maximize their own income than from their response

to a quasi-governmental board. And, although Rohatyn notes some of the risks that attend an industrial policy, he does not demonstrate that the dangers—the opportunity for undue political influence, the tendency toward narrow regional and industrial protectionism, corruption and inefficiency—are worth the risks.

If the two authors have not lived up to their ambitious titles, they *have* raised two sides of an economic debate that could dominate the coming presidential campaign and the years ahead. **WV**

### THE SPELLBINDERS: CHARISMATIC POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

by Ann Ruth Willner

(Yale University Press; 212 pp.; \$17.95)

### THE LOG CABIN MYTH: SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE PRESIDENTS

by Edward Pessen

(Yale University Press; 224 pp.; \$16.95)

### GENIUS, CREATIVITY AND LEADERSHIP

by Dean Keith Simonton

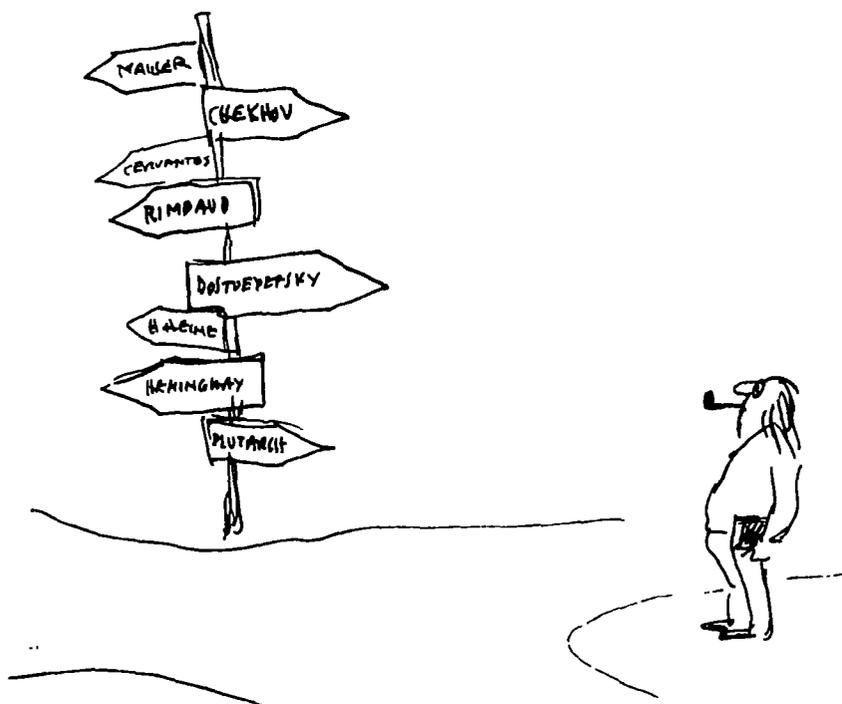
(Harvard University Press; 231 pp.; \$20.00)

Ralph Buultjens

The establishment of universal propositions about the workings of nature has underwritten the advancement of modern science. To develop or discover similar theories about human behavior has long been the goal of ambitious social scientists. Despite consistently unrewarding results, the allure of this impossible dream persists.

Among vigorously explored areas of this nomothetic pursuit is politics, especially the quest for normative statements about political leadership and political powerholders. Three recent books by academic specialists seek to advance this search for a theory of political movers, shakers, and processes.

Using the pioneering work of the great German sociologist Max Weber as her starting point, Professor Ann Ruth Willner of the University of Kansas begins by identifying and defining four elements that constitute charismatic political leadership: a link between the leader and an important myth of his or her society, a deed that is publicly perceived as heroic or extraordinary, special qualities that inspire awe within the local culture, and outstanding rhetorical powers. According to Willner, any three of



these attributes (she devotes a chapter to each) is sufficient to generate a charismatic effect—having all four makes the superstars of the charismatic universe. Finally, in assessing the impact and legacy of political charisma, she argues that positive results often flow from the activities of charismatic leaders, particularly in new nations.

Willner examines the twentieth-century leaders who fit her definition: Hitler, Mussolini, Gandhi, Sukarno, Castro, Khom-eini, and Franklin Roosevelt. Her exclusions are ill-merited: Jawarharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Mao Zedong, Sirimavo Bandaranaike. There is insufficient discussion of charismatics, like Trotsky, who fail, and also of why and how charisma surges and ebbs. Charisma wanes; is there a boredom factor retarding its longevity?

The book makes two central points, both apparently solid but ultimately porous. First, while charisma can be inherent, it can also be developed effectively. It often flows from strategy and not from nature. In a media-dominated environment this appears to be correct, yet there is enough evidence to make it questionable. Manufactured charisma works in limited ways and rapidly dissolves before the real thing. This the shah discovered when the ayatollah gained access to the Iranian masses. And all the media men and money could not infuse Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson with charisma.

Second, charismatic leadership differs according to the type of political system. In entrenched democracies, for instance, the capacity of the charismatic politician to create dramatic change is modest; in more authoritarian traditions he or she can have a sweeping impact. But very few nations can be so clearly categorized in either the Western or the Third World states.

Surprisingly, Willner misses significant points about charismatic leaders. While charisma may be personal, it invariably requires a party, a movement, a vehicle of some kind to amplify, extend, and sustain the leader's magnetism. Almost all charismatics, moreover, come from outside the existing political establishment and have generally adopted a combative style. Willner reduces to a footnote the charisma inherent in such offices as the papacy. And the only genuine and autonomous charismatic woman leader she recognizes is Dolores Ibaruri, La Passionaria of the Spanish Civil War.

The author's efforts to show conditions under which the charismatic leader bursts onto the political landscape is a useful addition to scholarship in this field. Though charisma is fashionable these days, Willner's narrow, textbookish approach will

erode the interest of the general reader. Charisma may, in the end, be too contemporary for meaningful historical evaluation, too mysterious for precise analysis, and too intangible to lend itself to any broad theory.

In *The Log Cabin Myth*, Professor Edward Pessen of City University of New York examines the social and economic backgrounds and prepresidential careers of all forty American presidents. He concludes that many of the conventional assumptions about the highest political office in the land are false, most of them sponsored by presidents seeking to popularize their pasts for public consumption.

Almost all the presidents were born into families well above the American average and then achieved substantial worldly success before their election. Most of them also made advantageous marriages that enhanced their political prospects. Their advancement had little to do with intellectual achievements, which, Pessen proves, were extremely mediocre. Among this largely conservative, prosperous, and dull group there has not been a single radical executive. The tragic gap between this leadership cohort and the bulk of Americans has produced a presidency essentially insensitive to the hardships and sufferings of people. Government by the well-to-do has well served the well-to-do.

Several insights emerge from this study. First, poor boys just don't get to the White House. Second, American political parties do not select the best men but the safe men of "sound" social views. Third, political powerbrokers are not concerned with talent but carefully pick conservative contenders who are electable rather than able. Fourth, the infrequent president who espouses change is a rare accident. Fifth, the historic ideology of American politics, the unstated national consensus, is a kind of conservatism that fosters economic growth but fiercely resists any but the most carefully ordered change. These observations challenge fundamental assumptions of American public life and suggest an ultimate failure of the American presidential system. But Pessen does not deal fully with the critical questions arising from these deductions: Does America get the presidents it wants or those it deserves? Is this all some subtle tyranny of continuity? How has the nation survived this talentless procession?

Although Pessen's work is tediously repetitious and poorly organized, his theme is deeply disturbing. If those who rule represent only narrow special interests, social and economic democracy may well be subverting political democracy. The upper

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classes and the upwardly mobile can and, Pessen claims, already do manipulate the system to prevent the masses from obtaining the full benefits of an abundant America. Any significant threat to this control would provoke the danger of which Sinclair Lewis warned in his novel *It Can't Happen Here*: a type of conservative authoritarianism.

The power of the United States now makes the American presidency an office of enormous consequences for the world. If its future occupants display the mentality of their predecessors, the global implications will be fearsome and the indictment of history will be terrible. Which is why Pessen closes with an appeal that Americans seek, as they have *not* done in the past, presidential candidates "of commanding intelligence, learning and above all patience, wisdom and humanity." This is a worthy message for an election year. It comes in a book well worth reading more for its content than for its style.

*Genius, Creativity and Leadership* is a highly technical work by Dean Keith Simonon of the University of California at Davis. The author divides outstanding historical figures into two groups: the creators—major contributors to human cul-

ture—and the leaders—whose deeds change the world. With statistical, historical, and psychological data, and a method defined as historiometrics, he looks for laws about history and its most prominent achievers.

Simonton discusses a variety of topics: the impact of ancestry and environment on achievers, the relationship of personality to accomplishment, how education contributes to genius, the influence of the times, and, strangely enough, political violence. A vast amount of statistical data has gone into this effort.

Simonton asserts that historiometrics, when fully developed as a discipline, will enable us to predict greatness, establish criteria for leadership performance, and understand what characteristics make for good or bad leaders. Yet there is little in this book that any informed reader will not already know. The author's love of what he calls the laws of historiometrics obscures his realization of their limitations. His claims would have more validity if we lived in a world of consistencies. Since we do not, there is little nomothetic yield in this work.

The alarming recent decline in quality of those who aspire to public office can only be reversed by giving wider attention to the problems of leadership. Though none of these books succeeds in positing any new laws or imperatives, they do fulfill one of the responsibilities of the academic community: to enlarge the discussion in every possible way. [WV]

**A DIFFERENT KIND OF  
PRESIDENCY:  
A PROPOSAL FOR BREAKING  
THE POLITICAL DEADLOCK**  
by Theodore Sorensen  
(Harper & Row; 134 pp.; \$11.95)

Larry Tool

Twenty-three years ago Theodore Sorensen wrote an audacious inaugural for John Kennedy that pledged America to "pay any price and bear any burden...to assure the survival and success of liberty." How does Mr. Sorensen feel today about America's burdens and prospects? We have at best five years, he now warns, to halt the arms race, master the deficit, restore the economy, restructure Third World debt, restore a favorable balance of trade, and overhaul our relations with Mexico. For America "time is running out."

This slim volume assumes we live on the brink of catastrophe. Sorensen attributes our inability to pull back from this brink to a

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weak and ineffective presidency and sees our only hope as a strong and effective one. But this former chief counsel and celebrator of Camelot is not scanning the political horizon for a new Hotspur—willful, partisan, and confident. Instead, Sorensen wants to revive the ancient dream of a reign of Reason and Expertise. The only way to end our current state of "political gridlock," he contends, is to create "a temporary bipartisan grand coalition of national unity." Sorensen appeals to the winner of the 1984 election to appoint a vice president and half his cabinet from the losing party, renounce a second term, and share decision-making with a Council of Elders (ex-presidents, a well-known former secretary of state, etc.) and a National Council of Economic Cooperation and Coordination composed of business, labor, and consumer leaders. Politics would be formally adjourned until November, 1988.

Surely Mr. Sorensen jests. The rituals of American politics, however cumbersome, are the main source of the authority of American government. A government above politics would be weak, not powerful, unless perhaps it represented a vast new party. And for such a third party to arise, Mr. Sorensen's sense of millennial urgency would have to be more widely shared among the electorate.

Sorensen's proposal is a lawyer's brief for "coalition government" on the British model, addressed to presidential candidates

and their advisors. Why any of them should pause to listen is unclear. Among the current candidates Mr. Reagan is surely the least likely to do so. He was elected in 1980 and is running again on the proposition that, in domestic matters, less government is better government. While Mr. Sorensen's crisis coalition is based on the opposite premise, he marshals no evidence to suggest that a revolt against Reagan's credo is under way. In foreign affairs, where Sorensen's alarm is understandable, his expectations seem even more tenuous. Sorensen himself notes that no foreign policy consensus exists even within the parties. What then—short of war—will bring us all together behind the elders and the experts?

There is a powerful case to be made against the current feudalism of special interests, but Sorensen's solution puts the cart before the horse. A bipartisan cabinet will not make a bipartisan country, nor will a coalition of representatives usher in a love-feast among the represented. Warring factions will simply repudiate their representatives and go on warring. Sorensen's aim is to restore the proverbial "vital center" from the top down. It will have to be rebuilt from the bottom up. Once consensus is restored in the country, its administrative expression will take care of itself.

What is missing from Sorensen's scenario, as from much of the current scene, is democratic leadership—loosely defined, a unifying vision orchestrating a diversity of passions. Contemporary politics are so encumbered with pollsters, beauticians, and sloganeers that politicians of genuine vision find it difficult to prosper or be heard. As unsolved problems accumulate, impatient political technicians are tempted to seek mechanical substitutes for leadership. Alas, there are none that work. Elder Sorensen would do better to aid his own party in its search for new leaders of passion and foresight. [WV]

CORRECTION

In "The Nuclear Trade," by Daniel Poneman (March, 1984), editorial modifications, in the author's judgment, altered the meaning of some passages in the original manuscript. A phrase was added stating that an illegal transshipment of computers was seized in Europe en route from South Africa to Moscow. Also, it was incorrectly stated that a nuclear device detonated by the Indian Government in 1974 "contained heavy water supplied by the U.S." In fact, the heavy water was supplied to a Canadian research reactor, the spent fuel of which provided the plutonium for the device.