

POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

America the Poisoned. *Lewis Regenstein. Acropolis, \$16.95.* Regenstein, vice president of the Fund for Animals, has a healthy contempt for at least two species: the corporate crooks and the torpid bureaucrats. Not many shades of grey here. The book is a litany of environmental disasters from water pollution to solid waste, pesticides, and herbicides.

His suggestions, while sensible, are not terribly useful. They're mostly for small, quiet choices (avoid consumer pesticides, eat low on the food chain), or for nebulously defined political change ("pressure the bureaucratic and political establishment, and persuade our leaders to do what is in their power to safeguard the public"). Okay, but how? Regenstein doesn't tell us: he isn't very interested in the arcane bureaucratic processes that lead to the continuing use of all those pesticides, or in what he rightly calls the "byzantine world of federal regulations." If he were, his book would be much more helpful.

—Forest Reinhardt

American Assassins: The Darker Side of Politics. *James W. Clarke. Princeton, \$18.50.*

Big Business and Presidential Power: From FDR to Reagan. *Kim McQuaid. Morrow, \$17.*

The Day is Short. *Morris B. Abram. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$14.95.*

Abram's autobiography is what so many others in this genre aren't: unstintingly candid, thoughtful, and at times inspiring. A Jew who grew up in rural Georgia, Abram was a prominent civil rights advocate who argued the reapportionment case before the Supreme Court that resulted in the "one man, one vote" decision. Particularly worthwhile are his descriptions of John Kennedy's "Southern Strat-

egy"—Abram helped free Martin Luther King from jail on the eve of the 1960 election—and his rocky relationship with Carter, whom Abram had never even heard of during the reapportionment and civil rights battles that rocked their state in the sixties. On one level this is a story of a man's political education; on another it's a highly personal and introspective tale, as Abram recounts his extraordinary recovery from acute leukemia.

—Phil Keisling

Earl Warren: A Public Life. *G. Edward White. Oxford, \$25.* White's study struggles mightily with the paradoxes of Warren's career. The former chief justice of the Supreme Court was a hard-nosed district attorney who later championed rights for criminal defendants; a fervent anticommunist who fought to preserve communists' rights; and a central figure in the detention of Japanese-Americans during World War II, whose opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education* was the century's biggest victory over racism. What's missing are anecdotes that might have lent a more human element to Warren's evolution.

—David Jonathan Cohen

Elephants in the Cottonfields: Ronald Reagan and the New Republican South. *Wayne Greenhaw. Macmillan, \$12.75.*

Forced Options: Social Decisions for the 21st Century. *Roger Lincoln Shinn. Harper and Row, \$16.95.*

Haig: The General's Progress. *Roger Morris. Playboy Press.* Morris wisely focuses on Al Haig, bureaucrat, in this thoughtful biography, which should prove indispensable for those interested in why Washington's highest ranks are riddled with second-rate talents. The author, who worked with Haig

for a couple of years on the National Security Council, traces Haig's rise from junior officer under General Douglas MacArthur to secretary of state, carefully detailing the various dissemblings, panderings, and outright lies that helped Haig reach the pinnacle of power, leaving little doubt that he is interested in returning there. If anyone knows Haig's heart, it's his alter ego, Richard Nixon, who recommended him as secretary of state to several Republican leaders and Reagan by telling them the general was "the meanest, toughest, most ambitious s.o.b. I ever knew."

—P.K.

Jerry Wurf: Labor's Last Angry Man. *Joseph C. Goulden. Atheneum, \$14.95.* This biography of the former president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees is a disap-

Prescriptions for Death

The Drugging of the Third World by Milton Silverman, Philip R. Lee, and Mia Lydecker

In what one drug industry leader has called "devastating detail" the authors examine practices of multinational drug companies in the Third World. "(They) take the first, vital step of bringing the problem to public attention—where soundly and roundly substantiated, it cannot be ignored."—*Kirkus Reviews*

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pointment. To his credit, Goulden doesn't ignore the unpleasant sides of Wurf's character. Unfortunately, he fails to bring anything resembling a critical eye to the activities of Wurf's union. An explanation for this lies in the back of the book, where one learns that AFSCME underwrote Goulden's expenses and promised "to purchase enough copies from the publisher to make the book commercially feasible."

There's nothing necessarily bad about authorized biographies, though readers do deserve to be forewarned. But such books often are characterized by a tendency to indulge in petty criticism for criticism's sake, by overly long treatments of unimportant events that are meaningful to only a few people, and by a general superficiality. All these are evident here. A thorough and openminded assessment of Wurf and the controversial rise of municipal unionism still remains to be done.

—P.K.

Marshall: A Hero for Our Times. Leonard Mosley. Hearst, \$18.50.

Media Unbound: The Impact of Television Journalism on the Public. Stephan Leshner. Houghton Mifflin, \$13.95.

The Murder of Chile. Samuel Chavkin. Everest, \$13.95. From Nixon's 1970 directive to organize a military coup d'etat to Jeane Kirkpatrick's recent praise of General August

Pinochet's policies, Chavkin carefully traces the U.S. government's lack of concern for human rights in Chile. By using narratives, including those of Swedish Ambassador Harold Edlestam and victims of junta torture camps. Chavkin paints a gruesome portrait of the state of Chile under the junta. Chavkin's one excess is his portrayal of Salvatore Allende as a martyred messiah for the poor. But his main point still comes through clearly: that the quick and devastating American intervention killed any chance Allende might have had to make his socialist policies work and that his ouster should be viewed as one of the fiascos of American foreign policy.

—Lyle Crowley

My Harvard, My Yale. Diana DuBois, ed. Random House, \$15.

The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto. Mortimer J. Adler. Macmillan, \$6.95. This short, impassioned plea to improve public schools zeroes in on the two main culprits of their declining quality: poorly trained, incompetent teachers and a gradual whittling away of academic standards. His solution consists largely of an abolition of the tracking system and the institu-

tion of a basic education approach for all students regardless of their abilities. Adler is a bit naive; for example, while the belief in every child's ability is admirable, the failure to give up on a few incorrigible students and remove them from the classroom can ruin the educational experience for everyone else. But Adler's passion is refreshing, and his belief that the decline of our public schools undermines democracy is a warning that can't be sounded often enough.

—P.K.

The Palestinians in Perspective. George Gruen, et al. Institute of Human Relations Press, \$3.50. This anthology of six essays on the historical background and political significance of the Palestinian Nationalist Movement offers some useful background to a complicated subject. Unfortunately, much of it is outdated in the wake of the Israeli occupation of Lebanon.

—Jacob Weisberg

The Passive Judiciary: Prosecutorial Discretion and the Guilty Plea. Abraham Goldstein. Louisiana State Univ., \$12.95. Goldstein makes a good case for his argument that judges have given prosecutors too much discretion in reducing

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