

An Honorable Defeat

by Clyde Wilson

The Confederate War

by Gary W. Gallagher

Cambridge: Harvard University Press;
218 pp., \$24.95



Imagine America invaded by a foreign power, one that has quadruple the population and industrial base. Imagine that this enemy has free access to the world's goods as well as an inexhaustible supply of cannon fodder from the proletariat of other countries, while America itself is tightly blockaded from the outside world. New York and Cincinnati have been taken. For months, Boston and Chicago have been under constant siege, the civilian population driven from their homes. Enemy forces roam over large parts of the country burning the homes, tools, and food of the non-combatants in a campaign of deliberate terrorism. Nearly 85 percent of the nation's able-bodied men (up to 50 years of age) have been called to arms. Battlefield casualties have run to 39 percent and deaths amount to nearly half of that, far exceeding those from any other war. On the other hand, the enemy, though its acts and domestic propaganda indicate otherwise, is telling the American population that it wants only peace and the restoration of the status quo antebellum. Lay down your arms and all will be as before.

What would be our state of morale in such conditions? Americans have never suffered such misfortune, have they? Alas, they have. This was the experience of the Southern people from 1861-1865 in their lost War for Independence.

Gary Gallagher has established himself of late as one of the leading historians of the period, a somewhat surprising and consoling occurrence since he is an old-fashioned historian who relies on evidence and is not afraid to challenge fashionable interpretation by following where the evidence leads. *The Confederate War* examines with skill and careful

research the forgotten Southern experience, which was marked by greater suffering and sacrifice than that ever made or endured by any other large group of Americans. Gallagher presents an important and ignored perspective for those who wish to grasp the sweep of American history in the cold light of reality rather than through the rose-colored glasses of democratic globalism.

War, in the experience of the American people, has typically brought suffering and death to only a small part of the inarticulate youthful population, mostly from the poorer classes; dislocation and discomfort to a larger segment; high wages and profits in general; and a great glow of patriotism and righteousness to the many. This was war as the North knew it (except that dissent was a great deal more widespread than has been admitted), setting the pattern for subsequent American conflicts. (We only have to think of the delight with which so many celebrated, from the comfort of their recliners, the incineration of Iraqi women and children.) It was not so, however, for the Southern people in that period. (Our author says nothing, of course, about Reconstruction.)

How hard the Southerners struggled for independence from the American Empire has been, and continues to be, suppressed by a nationalist culture that can only wonder: How could any group possibly have dissented from the greatest government on earth? But a very large number of Americans did *not* consent to that government (the regime, after all, was supposedly founded on the consent of the governed). They were willing to put their dissent on the line in a greater sacrifice than any large group of Americans has ever been called upon to make. Until finally, as a disappointed Union officer quoted by Gallagher remarked: "the rebellion [was] worn out rather than suppressed."

The burden of *The Confederate War* is that military defeat—not lack of faith in the cause, internal class struggle, want of sufficient nationalist theory, or any other such thing offered by recent historians as explanations—ended the War for Independence. Historiographically, Gallagher's work is juxtaposed, with evidence and close reasoning, with a raft of

literature speculating upon the weaknesses of the South. One learns very early in academic historical training that a sure road to success lies in finding a new twist on South-hating, supported by quotations selected out of context and references to currently fashionable abstractions that pass for reasoning, such as that the South was not only evil but weak and stupid, its War for Independence having been waged ineffectively, inadequately, and incompetently. I can cite several cases where books along these lines have catapulted their authors into professional celebrity and endowed chairs. Writing history is easy if you only need theory and not evidence.

Gallagher, by contrast, has documented the obvious: the South was militarily defeated only after an extraordinary effort unmatched before or since by Americans. Given the sad state of American scholarship, to accomplish that much is cause for celebration.

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Waugh After Waugh

by Andrei Navrozov

Will This Do? The First Fifty Years of Auberon Waugh: An Autobiography

by Auberon Waugh

New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers;
288 pp., \$24.00



When, after a stint in the British Army which left him crippled for life, Auberon Waugh went up to Oxford in 1959, by his own admission he knew nothing of the place apart from what he had read in his father's novel, *Brideshead Revisited*, describing the Oxford of 35 years earlier—and in *Sinister Street*, portraying Oxford 25 years before that, and *Zuleika Dobson*, ten years earlier still. He was appalled, he recalls, "by how few

public schoolboys there were, appalled by the number of earnest, working-class youths whose humorless faces betokened young men on the make.” It was equally sobering to learn that few of his contemporaries at university “had ever heard of Evelyn Waugh, let alone read *Brideshead*.” But of course. The ambitious working-class youths had not yet taken to television in those days, and it was not until John Mortimer’s adaptation of the Oxford novel for the screen that Evelyn Waugh became as famous as he is now.

I start on this note because both in real life—that is to say, the cultural life of London during the last 30 years—and in his own autobiography—the off-the-cuff squib under review here—Bron Waugh is shadowed, if not always overshadowed, by his electronically enlarged father. This is absurd, but it often happens. During much of his life, Boris Pasternak had to smile pleasantly and endure comparisons with his father, an academic painter, laid on by family well-wishers. I do not want to argue that there is not much in Waugh *père* that is as funny as anything in Jerome K. Jerome, or as precisely observed as anything in Somerset Maugham. I merely wish to point out that without Waugh *fils* and his band of merry men at *Private Eye* and elsewhere, London as I have known it would not have existed. It may not exist much longer anyway, but at least an honest review may repay an aesthetic debt for one writer’s attempts at keeping alive what is truly worthy of preservation.

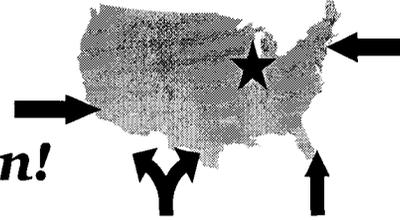
Better than any novel by anybody’s father, Waugh’s journalism prepares us for life in the continuous present of a civilization on its last legs. This treasure is collected in the two volumes of his magazine or newspaper diaries, *Four Crowded Years* (1976) and *A Turbulent Decade* (1985), and two additional volumes of newspaper column-type essays, *In the Lion’s Den* (1978) and *Another Voice* (1986). The last time I looked, “Another Voice” was still running in the *Spectator*, while the *Telegraph* was continuing to pay Waugh to vent his emerald spleen alongside my friend Michael Wharton in “Way of the World.” The diary genre, as adapted to journalism, is long lost in the United States, and it is now next to impossible to describe to an American audience the hideous excitement of opening a mainstream broadsheet to check whom or what Bron Waugh is skewering this morning. “My own small

gift,” he notes here, is “for making the comment, at any given time, which people least wish to hear.”

When Conrad Black bought the *Telegraph*, where Waugh’s column had been appearing since 1981, he appointed Peregrine Worsthorpe as the editor. At one point in this memoir we learn, ap-

parently apropos of nothing whatsoever, that “Claudie Worsthorpe, wife of the great Conservative thinker” once told Waugh that “her husband wore a hairnet to bed.” But when we later read that, on Worsthorpe’s elevation, “things did not go quite so smoothly” with the *Sunday Telegraph* column, the frivolous intelli-

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