

Political Booknotes

America Held Hostage: The Secret Negotiations. *Pierre Salinger.* Doubleday, \$16.95. Late last year, French television ran an abbreviated version of Pierre Salinger's ABC special on the hostage negotiations. The show concluded, in typical French fashion, with a roundtable discussion. Pierre was there, of course, as were some of the people featured prominently in his narrative, including Robert Armao, the Shah's former spokesman, and Christian Bourguet and Hector Villalon, the two men who had spent nearly six months acting as intermediaries in the crisis. The panel also included a former hostage and Jody Powell.

Bagging such guests seemed like a real coup for the French. But soon it became clear that Pierre and the others were not going to let either the ex-hostage or Powell get a word in edgewise. Instead, they spent the whole night debating such crucial questions as whether Waldheim

was scared out of his wits when he went to Iran and why Michael DeBakey couldn't operate on the Shah in Panama. Just before the discussion ended the ex-hostage was given a moment to say something. What he said was that the debate he'd just heard had been pretty silly.

Those comments apply doubly to *America Held Hostage*, which is Salinger's attempt to amortize the research and reporting he put into the television show. Unquestionably the book contains material that has not appeared elsewhere. But to what end? The vast bulk of Salinger's inside skinny has to do with meetings and memos that may have seemed crucial at the time but, in the end, clearly were not. And while he is mining such meetings for every nugget of what seemed like dialogue ("I have a little problem," Jordan said. "The Shah is leaving," Bourguet turned, open-mouthed, to Torrijos. "That's not possible," he said), he gives exactly one para-

graph to the more important, lingering question of whether it made sense for the Carter administration to spend so much of its time and energy on the hostage crisis. Yes, Pierre proclaims, it made sense.

This is a natural conclusion for Salinger to reach, inasmuch as the heroes of his saga (who include Hamilton Jordan and Sadegh Ghotzbadegh as well as Bourguet, Villalon, and Armao) are also his main sources—after all, *they* all thought what they were doing was vital to the western world. But if you can ignore Salinger's bias, you're likely to come to a different conclusion. For the truth is that while all those months when Jordan was meeting with the intermediaries in Paris and London may have done wonderful things for their blossoming friendship, they didn't get the hostages released. Indeed, by the time the *real* secret negotiations took place—the ones between Warren Christopher and the Algerians and the bankers—all of Salinger's key sources had long since been cut out of the picture. This gives the book something of an anticlimactic quality, since he spends only 40 pages on these negotiations after 200 pages of Ham Jordan visits the City of Light.

—Joseph Nocera

America Now: The Anthropology of a Changing Culture. *Marvin Harris.* Simon & Schuster, \$12.95. Harris is a noted anthropologist who likes to turn his sights on the United States. Here he finds that the shift from a goods-producing to a service and information-producing economy since World War II has caused inflation, bad government, shoddy products, women's liberation, and just about anything else you can think of.

The news isn't good. The author argues that those workers who still produce something are strangers to those who design and distribute. Meanwhile, inflexible labor contracts have meant that the few productive workers we have left are much less efficient.

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are more concerned with buying and selling companies than with selling improved products to consumers." The computer, not surprisingly, "has shown itself to be the most efficient instrument for bureaucratizing interpersonal relationships ever invented."

Harris goes on to relate the rise in crime to women's entering the work force in large numbers, and gay liberation to the decline in birth rates. His views may seem eccentric, but his arguments are original and often more convincing than you would expect.

—Michael Hiestand

Douglas MacArthur: The Philippine Years. Carol Morris Petillo. Indiana University Press, \$17.50.

The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis. David J. Garrow. Norton, \$15.95. Garrow has interrupted many years of research on the history of the civil rights movement to produce this indispensable volume on the FBI's campaign against Martin Luther King, Jr. His book shows signs of haste in the writing, probably because Garrow gleaned from his scholarship something more urgent than the usual mountain of documents and personal records—the identities of no less than four highly secret FBI informants. Two of these informants—the "Solo" brothers—were American Communists who told their handlers in the FBI that one of King's closest advisers was not only a Communist but also a conduit for clandestine KGB funds.

Readers should be warned that this account focuses on the FBI and not on King. Anyone hoping to read about the origins of the "I have a dream" speech will find instead only J. Edgar Hoover's constant references to King as a "burrhead," a "tom cat," and a "degenerate." Garrow's detailed, memo-by-memo account tracks every wiretap, bug, film, fake letter, and bit of scurrilous propaganda of the FBI's determined effort to "destroy" King, which was Hoover's avowed purpose. Faithful to the FBI perspective, it conveys a steady tone of gutter remarks, lawlessness, and rank prejudice. The FBI's performance is as inspiring as a parade of

mice up your sleeve.

Garrow tells the story better than anyone ever has. He has knowledge of bureaucratic procedure, and he goes out of his way to point out the occasional shreds of legitimacy in the Bureau's activities. Unfortunately, his academic habits compel him to follow each chapter of fresh narrative with a chapter of tortured analysis, in which he categorizes the events, assigns numbered theories to explain them, and then proceeds to attack each theory except the last one, his own. These exercises would be tedious even if Garrow's own

theories were always convincing, which they are not. He argues, for instance, that Assistant Director William Sullivan, not Hoover, was really behind the campaign to obtain and disseminate evidence of King's sexual adventures, and supports this thesis by inventing a dubious distinction between Sullivan the angry Puritan and Hoover the chuckling voyeur. An entire chapter called "Puritans and Voyeurs" convinced me only that Garrow and his FBI sources dislike Sullivan more than Hoover.

—Taylor Branch

Do New Leaders Make a Difference?

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Valerie Bunce assesses the impact of changes in leadership on priorities in policy within the Soviet bloc and western democratic states during the postwar era, with particular emphasis on the Soviet Union and the United States. Her analysis combines two approaches: a statistical investigation of the relationship between executive turnover and budgetary allocations in both systems, and case studies of the evolution of American welfare policy in the 1960s and of Soviet agricultural policy in the post-Stalinist era. The evidence from both indicates that new leaders, East and West, do make a difference in reordering priorities—but within certain limits.

Cloth, \$22.50. Paper, \$6.95

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