

Book Reviews

The Naked Communist: Exposing Communism and Restoring Freedom, by W. Cleon Skousen, 341 pp, hardback, \$32.95, ISBN 13:978-1630729233, Lake City, Utah, Izzard Ink, 2017.

This book sold two million copies when it was first published in 1958 and found its way into the libraries of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the White House. Cleon Skousen (1913-2006) distilled his FBI experience and decades of research, including more than 100 communist books and treatises, in one comprehensive volume.

The frontispiece contains a quotation from George Meany, former president of the AFL-CIO: "The conflict between communism and freedom is the problem of our time. It overshadows all other problems. This conflict mirrors our age, its toils, its tensions, its troubles, and its tasks. On the outcome of this conflict depends the future of all mankind."

In 1961, Skousen added a chapter on the 45 communist goals aimed at ruining the culture of America. As of 2017, all but one of these goals had been reached. Current Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Dr. Ben Carson said on the Sean Hannity Show in 2014: "*The Naked Communist* lays out the whole progressive plan. It is unbelievable how fast it has been achieved."

The 2017 edition adds a chapter at the beginning by Paul B. Skousen on "the making of *The Naked Communist*." Especially interesting chapters are "What do the defenders of communism say?"; "What is free enterprise capitalism?"; and "Did the early Christians practice communism?"

Those who believe in peaceful coexistence ought to read the imaginary dialogue between a student and Lenin. The student asks: "Do you mean it is impossible for an American to be a true Communist without betraying his own country?" Lenin: "Hatred for one's own government and one's own bourgeoisie—the sentiment of all class-conscious workers... is a banal phrase if it does not mean revolution against their own governments."

The purpose of the book, contained in its eventual title, was perhaps best

explained by the counselor of the Chinese ambassador to the U.S. in 1959: "In stripping communism of its aura of 'rationalism' and 'inevitability' and exposing it in all its naked ugliness, you have charted a course of action for the free world in this crucial period of human history."

The book is worth reading cover to cover not only for its insights into history, but into communism's goals and tactics, and sources of its appeal. The Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire did not by any means end communism. It simply has a different cloak of progressivism or "democratic socialism." It is just as relevant today as it was 60 years ago.

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Compromised: How Money and Politics Drive FBI Corruption, by Seamus Bruner, 310 pp, paperback, \$16.99, ISBN-13: 978-1642930757, Brentville, Tenn., Bombardier Books, 2018.

The FBI and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have gone to the Dark Side. It seems amazing, considering their longstanding self-promotion for decades as the defenders of freedom and the American way—but times change, and the administrative state has no special affection for the America conceived of and promoted by the Founders.

I have a friend and colleague who is retired from the FBI, who insists that FBI hard-working field agents are concerned and distressed about the misconduct of the many miscreants in the leadership of both organizations. For example, he tells me of the perceived problems that were created by FBI decisions to make headquarters instead of field agents drive cases, as had been previous protocol. However, I see no effort by FBI agents to fix the corruption at the top. Such an effort would require risking their pensions.

Now Seamus Bruner, prolific and reliable writer and official with the Government Accountability Institute, exposes that corruption. He focuses on FBI and DOJ projects that create security risks for the country, attempt to reverse the election of 2016, and vastly expand surveillance of Americans.

Bruner highlights profiteering involving private-sector contracts as in the Uranium

One scandal. The government "revolving door" was very profitable for FBI officials James Comey and Robert Mueller, making them millionaires—Comey with Lockheed Martin, and Mueller with Booz Allen.

Details of the misuse of USA PATRIOT Act powers, and formation of the rubber-stamp Foreign Intelligence Services Act courts are among the book's most sobering sections. FISA Court approvals invariably resulted in surveillance of American citizens without probable cause, and that is illegal and unconstitutional.

Bruner makes a good case for current corruption, but I do not accept the argument that the FBI had integrity in the beginning and avoided political manipulation and partisanship. J. Edgar Hoover was a political manipulator from the beginning and set the tone. We are seeing the exaggerated corruption that can develop when justice and law enforcement officials consider themselves above the law that applies to ordinary Americans.

For those with limited time, *Compromised* runs through the scandals at breathtaking speed. For those who demand verification, Bruner has 90-plus pages of references and sources for his claims. This is the pattern for any book with oversight by Peter Schweizer and the Government Accountability Institute, which values reliable references and verifiable financial records.

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Profiles in Corruption: Abuse of Power by America's Progressive Elite, by Peter Schweizer, 368 pp, hardcover, \$23.99, ISBN-13: 9780062897923, New York, N.Y., HarperCollins, 2020.

Peter Schweizer has been a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, worked at the White House and NBC news, authored more than 15 books on political issues, and written essays for many mainstream publications. He is the president of the Government Accountability Institute (GAI) and senior editor-at-large at *Breitbart News*.

In *Profiles in Corruption*, each chapter focuses on an individual politician's conduct designed to trade political power, position, and influence for the benefit of self or family. All the figures that Schweizer discusses are

prominent Democrats, candidates or ex-candidates for the Democratic nomination for president, including Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, Kamala Harris, Corey Booker, and lesser knowns Sherrod Brown (Senator from Ohio) and Eric Garcetti (Mayor of Los Angeles). All insist they are “for the little guy” and for a “fair shake” for citizens, and against favors for moneyed corporate and business interests. Schweizer exposes them as political prostitutes who trade their influence for financial advantages.

All these politicians are enamored of the welfare state and the culture of the progressive movement. Their self-dealing, nepotistic enrichment is excused by their good intentions.

Schweizer is an accomplished investigative journalist who knows how to follow the money trail. He is a nonpartisan muckraker, although Democrats are more often his targets because they are the past-masters at corruption and influence peddling. Evidence from primary sources is presented with a minimum of editorial comment.

The most compelling examples include former Vice-President Joe Biden’s use of access to international interests, from Ukraine to China, to arrange business and financial opportunities for his family; Bernie Sanders’s use of family members as “contractors” for campaign ads and promotions, earning the going commission rates; Elizabeth Warren’s lucrative law practice representing the big corporations she condemns; Kamala Harris’s questionable conduct as District Attorney for San Francisco and Attorney General for California, protecting special interests while aggressively prosecuting others; and Amy Klobuchar’s failure, as District Attorney of the county for Minneapolis, to prosecute a well-known Ponzi scheme that bilked a lot of people of millions, because the perpetrator contributed to her campaigns.

Chattering media denigrate Schweizer’s work, but it helped elect President Trump and alerted the public to the nefarious pursuits of the elected as well as the non-elected “deep state.” Solid investigative reporting and actual law enforcement are essential to draining that swamp on which the nation’s capital was physically built, and which has wrought a mire of self-perpetuating corruption.

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12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos, by Jordan B. Peterson, 371 pp, hardback, \$15.57, ISBN-13: 978-0345816023, Toronto, Canada, Penguin Random House, 2018.

Jordan Peterson is an academic, a ten-

ured clinical psychologist at the University of Toronto, who has a following of millions as a YouTube video lecturer. His voice for traditional Western morality and civilization is clearly upsetting to the army of political correctness elites, the media chattering class, and academic grandees.

Peterson objects eloquently to speech-police tactics; therefore, he is a perceived threat to those academicians whose stock-in-trade is censorship and intellectual tyranny.

Peterson is an expert debater and interviewee, but that’s not all. His great accomplishment is using his teaching, counseling, and coaching to urge people to live good and virtuous lives. He also emphasizes career and life coaching in his successful general and clinical practice.

A classic stoic, he advises on how to grow up, and be adult, with a mature and virtuous approach to life. Honesty is key to civil behavior, he says, and courage is essential. Peterson represents the civilized side of today’s cultural divide. His rules for a good life—10, then 12, then 40, as discussed in his presentations and books, have led his enemies to label him with Richard Spencer’s coinage “alt-right,” and they intolerantly love to call him racist, misogynist, homophobic, transphobic, moralistic, and ironically, intolerant.

Stoics know about these tactics. Marcus Aurelius said:

When you wake up in the morning, tell yourself: the people I deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous, and surly. They are like this because they can’t tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good, and the ugliness of evil, and have recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own—not of the same blood and birth, but the same mind, and possessing a share of the divine. And so none of them can hurt me.

I have read Peterson’s rules for a good life and listened to his commentaries on the rules. It became evident that Peterson, who grew up in a remote, very cold Fairview, Alberta, northwest of Edmonton, exemplifies an old but important story. His life course appears to be the story of the human search for meaning, wisdom, and purpose—the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path, Taoist and Confucian philosophy, Christian concepts of wisdom and virtue, the Roman and Greek Stoic meditations of Marcus Aurelius, and the teachings of the Greek slave Stoic doyen Epictetus. He has studied the classics from many cultures along with modern neuroscience, psychology, and the social sciences.

He has awakened a young, predominately male audience to the value of the virtuous life, the life of a responsible, engaged, and effective adult, who is a credit and an asset, a benefit for friends and family. Unfortunately, the academy and chattering class are opposed to such teachings as promoting values of the “evil and oppressive” Western tradition.

Here are some examples of the 12 rules, which combine high-minded moral philosophy with common-sense mother wit:

Rule 1: Stand up straight with your shoulders back. Bad posture projects weakness, and people size others up based on appearance and posture. Act as though you are Somebody, and you will be on the road to getting better and being better.

Rule 3: Choose your friends carefully. Your life is a social experience—be around good people and you will benefit. Avoid bad companions; bad company is ruinous.

Rule 5: Don’t let children do things that make you dislike them. Limit the rules. Use minimum necessary force. Parents should come in pairs and be serious about parenting.

Rule 6: Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world. Reject deceit, arrogance, and resentment. Do only those things that you would proudly talk about in public.

Rule 8: Tell the truth—or, at least, don’t lie. “It was the great and the small lies of the Nazi and Communist states that produced the deaths of millions of people.”

Rule 9: Assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don’t. Listen to your enemies since mixed in with the lies they may also say things that are true that your friends won’t say.

Rule 10: Be precise in your speech: Words are essential social tools, and communication is the basis for how we live in society—honesty is the foundation of a civil discourse that is essential to civility. Free and honest speech is the foundation for functional society and civilization. Deceit brings on descent to an evil and dark place.

Rule 12: Pet a cat when you encounter one on the street. Choose the positive and the generous and the kind, and look for the things that are positive, uplifting, and redemptive.

Haven’t our parents said all these things? Perhaps not if one’s parenting has been random or missing due to poor choices. Today if we do less than lionize single motherhood, we are called haters.

Jordan Peterson’s critics are the reactionaries, not he. He is a treasure.

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