not only reject discipline, hard work, and that complex of virtues usually known as the “Protestant Ethic,” they simply scorn the acquisitive virtues and any orientation to life that centers on economic aspiration. A system that yields more quantitative wealth is not praiseworthy in this environment, rather the reverse; it is damned by its very success. The inefficiencies of socialism, such is the temper of our times, thus appear to be altruistic and somehow more acceptable and more humane.

Indeed I suspect that very few people will care enough about Kristol’s arguments to work up the energy to refute them. To be right is to be boring. We must then insist on asking what the task of a defender of capitalism ought to be in the late 1970’s. The answer is that the task for such an intellectual is to show the relationship between a life in business and a stable and mature adult personality. Capitalism needs defending as a humane and rational social system of rewards and status in return for productive effort expended. It can produce more sensibly motivated and competently educated children; more creative ferment in the arts; a more enjoyable ecological environment; and so on through those other categories of “a meaningful life.” One reason social democratic policies are so intellectually respectable and politically successful is that they have captured ideas and words like “equality,” “fairness,” and “security” that transcend political activity and seem to give a spurious meaning to life. Capitalist intellectuals have worn out terms like “freedom” and “liberty” and need to develop a new vocabulary and tactics.

Finally, writing as one who has never felt the allure of American liberalism, I cannot resist pointing out that Kristol, as a liberal renegade, still remains obsessed by the political means to happiness and by economic modes of discourse. He seems to sense dimly at times what most conservatives know intuitively, that what is important in life is neither quantitative nor economic and cannot be acquired by political means. He needs first to explore what gives his own individual psychology its most meaningful satisfactions, and then to work this insight into a more general and probing defense of capitalism as a means of attaining these satisfactions for others in society. Refuting John Kenneth Galbraith is not enough, and neither is cheering for the “good guys.”

Reviewed by ROBERT M. CRUNDEN

Vox Populi, Rex Populi


"KING ANDREW I" was described by Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1830's as “the slave of the majority: he yields to its wishes, its propensities, and its demands—say, rather, anticipates and forestalls them.” Despite the respect which must be accorded Tocqueville’s opinion, not all authorities have agreed with him, and the question of whether Andrew Jackson was the slave or the master of the people who elected him has not yet been resolved. But Burke Davis has made a nice effort to provide us with an answer in “Old Hickory.” Jackson’s nickname, “Old Hickory,” is an apt title in that it fits the informal character of this biography in which Davis has sacrificed a little academic respectability in exchange for a little extra readability. In this case the exchange appears to have been worth it. The book is very readable. It is filled with anecdotes and observations of detail which help to reveal Jackson’s character. Numerous quotations and other references from contemporary documents are used as a basis for short dialogues that
are sprinkled throughout the text. Although there are no numbered footnotes in the text, there are notes to each chapter at the end of the book and these are fairly easy to link with the passages they document. The result of this somewhat casual arrangement of material is a very interesting account of the life of Andrew Jackson which is enhanced in effect by Davis’ refusal to venture too far into speculation or romanticism. There is not much hero worship in the book. Thus, while the work may not be definitive, it nonetheless represents a very respectable addition to the scholar’s bookshelf. If the object of a biography is to make its subject “live again,” “Old Hickory” is quite successful. Most of the incidents from Jackson’s life are well told, particularly the accounts of Jackson’s celebrated duel with Charles Dickinson and the vicious presidential election campaign of 1828. The description of the Battle of New Orleans is even more vivid, dramatically recreating the flavor of that spectacular conflict.

But the book is less successful in attempting to attain another object. If the object of a biography is to enable the reader to “get inside” the subject and understand him from his own point of view, the book is not quite a success. In “Old Hickory” the reader becomes acquainted with Jackson not so much by understanding the man himself as by observing his actions. The reader’s knowledge of Jackson is thus similar to that acquired by a constant companion who sees Jackson speak and act, but who does not quite comprehend the reasons and motives which prompted those actions. This lack of depth is partly the result of a conscious choice by Davis to present Jackson as a man of action and will rather than as a man of intellect.

Davis may well be correct in choosing this line of approach. Certainly it is a reasonably safe course to take. Both Jackson’s contemporaries and many later observers have suggested that Jackson’s intellectual powers were not of the highest order. Invariably the term which occurs in describing Jackson’s spirit is “will” rather than “intellect.” If it is possible to distinguish between men of the intellect and men of will, Jackson clearly fits into the latter category. Jackson’s strength of will has never been questioned, and in directing his primary focus on Jackson’s actions rather than his thought, Davis vividly shows why. “Old Hickory” portrays Jackson not so much as the slave of the majority as the popular hero who knows he can count on his following to support his own preferences.

As Bertrand de Jouvenel has observed, kings and would-be kings have often in the past enjoyed a closer bond with the common people than have aristocrats. Indeed in their conflicts with the nobility kings have frequently been obliged to rely on the third estate for support. Julius Caesar was one such autocrat who both sympathized with and received support from the masses, and Andrew Jackson in nineteenth century America may well have been another. It has often been noted that Jackson’s administration marks one of the great moments in America’s constant movement toward unqualified democracy. This may be true, but it may be equally true that the reign of “King Andrew” also marks a simultaneous movement toward an increasing centralization of power that will some day culminate in the overthrow of that same democracy. Democracies prepare the way for kingship more often than monarchies prepare the way for democracy. Thus the slave of the majority may some day manage to make himself master of the people. We in America have thus far seen only the one as the slave of the many; we have yet to see the many as slaves of the one. But at one and the same time men such as Andrew Jackson have prepared the way for both the growth and the death of democracy in America.

Reviewed by J. Michael Bordelon