

## EIR Reviews

# Will 25th Amendment be invoked against Bush?

by Kathleen Klenetsky

---

### **Maximum Vigilance**

by Steve Pieczenik

Warner Books, New York, 1992

431 pages, hardbound, \$19.95

---

The state of George Bush's emotional and physical health has been the subject of much concern and speculation over the past year, particularly after the President's ignominious (and internationally televised) vomiting on Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa last January. In the last few months, the media have been chock full of stories raising the issue of whether Bush would withdraw from his reelection campaign for health reasons.

Steve Pieczenik's new novel uses the realm of fiction to suggest that some underlying physical condition has brought Bush to the verge of a mental breakdown so serious, that he should be removed from office under the terms of the 25th Amendment. Ratified by Congress in 1967, the amendment provides in part for the procedure necessary to replace a sitting President, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in cases where he is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office." Published just in time for the Republican convention, the book's convoluted, but politically pointed, plot revolves around a Bush-lookalike President, Donald Westview, who tries to boost his political popularity by organizing a coup attempt against himself, and by colluding with the Russian Federation's President, Igor Zotov, to stage a limited war between U.S. and Russian forces on German soil.

Lest anyone mistake this for pure fiction, the politically well-connected Pieczenik has embarked on a publicity cam-

paign in which he speaks bluntly about Bush's emotional problems. In an interview with the Aug. 4 issue of *New York Newsday*, Pieczenik describes Bush as being "clinically depressed and obviously in the midst of a serious identity crisis." Asserting that he is "very worried," Pieczenik predicts that Bush "will snap. He'll lose his composure in public in a most unseemly way. There's an air of desperation about the man. My fear is that he's so afraid of losing office that he's planning a military action—probably in the Persian Gulf, Yugoslavia or North Korea—merely to win the election. . . . You can see the mood swings, the strange, inappropriate gestures in his public appearances, the way his voice cracks. You can hear him dismissing his critics as 'crazy.' He's become highly defensive, incredibly thin-skinned."

Westview's lunatic plan, dubbed Project Baltimore, goes awry when his close friend and secretary of state, the ambitious, murderous Chet Manning, seizes the opportunity to mount a coup within a coup. Manning's scheme calls for using the 25th Amendment's clause regarding presidential disability to remove Westview from office, on the undeniable grounds that he is insane, and from there, climbing over the assassinated bodies of those preceding him in the line of presidential succession to install himself in the Oval Office.

The book's hero is Desaix Clark, a psychiatrist and State Department crisis manager with a taste for kinky sex, who works his way through layers of deceit, betrayal, torture, and assassination, to uncover the multiple conspiracies afoot.

Clark discovers that President Westview is a victim of Marfan's disease, which afflicts the body's connective tissues, eventually affecting the brain. Pieczenik writes: "Desaix was impressed by Westview's ability to deny his illness. It was clearly a fact of life, and he had learned to live with it for so long that he didn't really understand how impaired he

could become. Typically, patients with Marfan's syndrome went into pulmonary failure as a result of cardiac insufficiency. Or they suffered from emotional outbursts, mood swings, and organic psychosis as a result of the decreased oxygen entering the brain. The most treacherous of all outcomes could be sudden death from a dissecting aortic aneurysm. . . ."

Just at the point when the U.S.-Russian war in Germany is about to escalate to a nuclear exchange, Clark manages to force Westview into signing a statement of resignation for reasons of health. Westview only acquiesces when Clark tells him that if he doesn't, "you will be known in history as the American President who allowed a limited regional war started for purely selfish reasons to escalate into a nuclear holocaust because of mental incompetency." Pieczenik continues the scenario: "Desaix could see that Westview could no longer be expected to make any rational decisions. His head rolled from side to side on his shoulders. His mouth opened to speak, but no words came out. He was totally disoriented. . . . In his condition, Desaix could involuntarily commit the President to St. Elizabeth's with the psychiatric diagnosis of Organic Brain Syndrome secondary to Postoperative Cardiovascular Surgery. Westview was technically insane. In his position as President, he was becoming psychotic as well as becoming a danger to himself and others.

"This was the first time in history that a President of the United States could be officially declared mentally incompetent."

Under the deal with Clark, and eventually with the other principals, Westview is succeeded by Vice President Dan Quayle—oops, Allison Bonner; while Manning, despite having ordered the murder of several cabinet officials, becomes vice president, just one murder away from the Oval Office.

### **Any resemblance is purely intentional**

Pieczenik does not employ subtlety in bringing out the comparisons between his novel and reality. Westview bears a striking resemblance to Bush, while Manning is clearly modeled on James Baker. Westview's vice president, the bumbling, incompetent Allison Bonner, whom one character in the book describes as Westview's best insurance against assassination, can hardly be distinguished from Dan Quayle. The book is liberally sprinkled with unflattering references to the Bush administration, including numerous implications that George Bush precipitated the war with Iraq for domestic political purposes. At one point, for example, Desaix Clark and a CIA employee who specializes in psychological profiles of leading political figures, are discussing what could have motivated Zotov and Westview to collude in starting a war against each other:

"If you have two world leaders with several political problems in their respective countries, as Westview and Zotov do, what would you expect them to do that might be a quick fix?" Desaix was being rhetorical. "They could sit down and agree to do something that would benefit both of them.

Tell me, Damon, from your knowledge of history, what one thing have world leaders consistently done in order to deflect attention away from complicated domestic problems?" Desaix was becoming increasingly excited as he realized that as he spoke he was unraveling the mystery of the sudden, seemingly unprovoked outbreak of war.

"Traditionally, world leaders have always precipitated a war outside their borders to solidify domestic public opinion behind them," Damon replied.

"Right! Whenever a world leader is in domestic trouble, the least costly, most expeditious thing he can do is start a war. It allows him to mobilize to a wartime economy. Soon factory output increases, unemployment decreases, and formerly discontented citizens support their leader."

In another location, the discussion turns to Operation Desert Shield. State Department official Paul Twitty (who closely resembles Lawrence Eagleburger) tells Clark: "First, President Bush gave Saddam Hussein the signal, through his Secretary of State, James Baker, to invade Kuwait. Once Hussein invaded that small, helpless country, Bush set about building a military coalition that defeated Hussein's army in less than two months. . . . The point is, that every President has his own hidden agenda, in which he may have a perfectly reasoned scenario for starting a war. . . . In the case of President Bush, he needed a major yet highly contained war that would distract the American public's attention away from the \$500 billion savings and loan crisis, a recalcitrant recession, and two sons who were receiving front-page news exposure on their alleged involvement in the S&L fraud. . . . And then we had the added bonus of becoming the only superpower to have a permanent military presence in the Middle East for close to 10 years, effectively controlling over 80% of the oil production capacity in the world."

What makes the book far more interesting than the run-of-the-mill political thriller is the author's pedigree. Holding degrees in psychiatry and international relations, Pieczenik has served as a deputy assistant secretary of state under Henry Kissinger, Cyrus Vance, George Shultz, and James Baker, largely functioning as an international crisis manager.

That makes him extremely well-connected, a fact further underscored by the blurbs featured on the book's jacket. Some politically significant individuals singing the book's praise include: Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon, who calls *Maximum Impact* "a masterpiece of political prediction"; and Morton Abramowitz, former assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research, and now head of the Carnegie Endowment, who compliments Pieczenik for combining the "sophisticated savvy of the Washington bureaucratic scene and insights of a psychiatrist with the extraordinary talents of a storyteller to produce a complex, endlessly innovative, exciting, and realistic political thriller." Comments such as these can only suggest that somewhere in the establishment, some consideration is being given to invoking the 25th Amendment to unseat George Bush.