

Clinton's would-be rivals: a squalid scene

by Webster G. Tarpley and Carl Osgood

For months, Anglophile pundit circles in Washington have been chanting their mantra that President Clinton has virtually no hope of getting re-elected, and that he could be safely relegated to the status of an irrelevant lame duck in the meantime. But subsequent events provide a reminder that Presidential elections involve choices, not absolutes, and that the visible choices depict Clinton in a far more favorable light.

Because of the front-loaded structure of the 1996 primary elections, the quadrennial campaign is now in full swing, and with it, the *danse macabre* of the numerous contenders. Among these rivals, only Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole's agitation to lift the illegal U.N. arms embargo on Bosnia, represents an actual credential for leadership. Otherwise, the level of GOP and potentially "independent" hopefuls ranges from appalling incompetence to downright fascism.

The new season began in mid-August, when the mercurial billionaire Ross Perot sponsored a gathering in Dallas that looked much like an early rehearsal for next summer's GOP national convention in San Diego. Perot's operatives had touted an attendance of 8,000 activists of United We Stand America, each paying \$130 each to hear a forum on issues; but these figures proved hyperinflated, and the crass appeal for votes and money, not illumination on issues, proved the order of the day. The whole Republican field—Dole (R-Kan.), Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), Patrick Buchanan, Lamar Alexander, Pete Wilson, Allen Keyes, Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), Robert Dornan (R-Calif.), and Morry Taylor (a man of the people from Grosse Pointe, Michigan)—was there to worship at the altar of the diminutive deficit demagogue, leading some observers to bill the event as a "panderama." Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), Marcy Kaptur (D-Oh.), and Jesse Jackson were among a sprinkling of Democrats present.

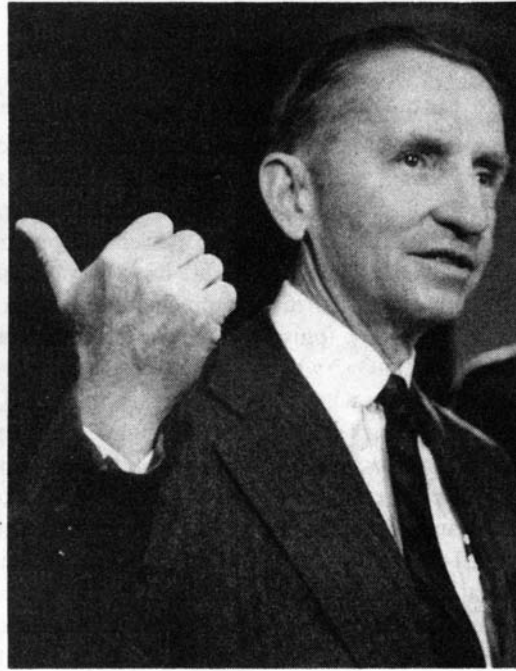
Perot, whose early campaign speeches in 1992 sounded

like a parody of the younger Benito Mussolini, has now dwindled to the status of a mere appanage of the Republicans. Since a renewed Perot candidacy would help Clinton by splitting the GOP vote, it is clear he will not directly enter the fray. Instead, Perot is touting a second "Contract with America," just at the time when disgusted voters are finally beginning to see through the flim-flam of the first one. His speeches and latest book support the GOP effort to double the Medicare premium this year. Perot, as they say, is out of touch, and his anemic Dallas turnout reveals him as a creature of Larry King and C-SPAN whose ability to fool some of the people some of the time has expired.

Iowa's carpetbag straw poll

The Iowa Republican straw poll held the following week-end showed the venality of Republican politics at their worst. Ringmaster Dan Quayle presided over a rigged, carpetbag competition in which the franchise was on sale for \$25 a head to any and all comers. Dole organized caravans of buses from Kansas, and Alexander brought in two chartered 727s full of handraisers from Tennessee.

Gramm was the worst: He colluded with IBP, a sleazy union-busting, wage-gouging meat packing operation linked to the Mob, to ship in dragooned workers from eight plants. (IBP was attacked during the proceedings by Buchanan for its hiring of immigrants.) Gramm's wife Wendy—the lady who opened the gates to the contagion of derivatives speculation when she headed the Commodity Futures Trading Commission—is a member of the IBP board. The unholy rollers of the Christian Coalition were also out in force, mainly for Gramm. As for Gramm's speech, it would have more fitting for the commandant of the Andersonville Confederate concentration camp, than for a candidate for modern public office. Perhaps to divert attention from his own nasty personali-



Contenders and potential contenders in the 1996 Presidential election campaign (left to right): Gen. Colin Powell, opponent of military measures to stop Serbian genocide; H. Ross Perot, reduced to a mere appanage of the GOP; California Gov. Pete Wilson, another worshipper at the shrine of deficit reduction.

ty, Gramm brought along movie actor Charlton Heston and football coach Mike Ditka as foils.

The final vote was chaotic, with a long pause between the end of the count and the official announcement of the tally. Had there been a bidding war behind the scenes? It was finally announced that Gramm had exceeded expectations by finishing in a dead heat with Dole, with Buchanan third.

Buchanan has been a free trade fanatic in Republican White Houses for most of his public life, but his Iowa tirade was full of his standard attacks on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the Mexico bailout, with a few jabs at Wall Street and Goldman Sachs thrown in. But he mainly sought to demonize recent immigrants, and repeated his monstrous plan of building a new "Berlin Wall" along the Mexican border.

The pro-Confederate Buchanan is a 1990s version of the xenophobic Knownothings of the 1850s. Buchanan's scurrilous, racist performance recalled recent allegations from Jack Anderson (published Aug. 10) that Buchanan had started off as a creature of the perverted J. Edgar Hoover "in the early 1960s, when the FBI director often fed Buchanan, then an editorial writer with the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 'smear' stories about the Rev. Martin Luther King." Buchanan denies this, but he is still true to his 1992 GOP convention form, when he heralded a "new war of religion" for our country.

The background for these events is furnished by the sinking fortunes of the GOP, which involve above all Newt Gingrich and his House right-wing extremist cadres. Newt's

personal negatives in the polls, as one commentator noted, are now about as high as those of many serial killers, and the new Robespierre is as far as ever from taking a vow of silence. Newt's British spokesman Tony Blankley left no doubt that the Speaker's office still adheres to the George III school of political acumen, with his mid-summer praise of England's fanatical 17th-century dictator Oliver Cromwell, who slaughtered more than 25% of the entire population of Ireland in a campaign of atrocities. For Blankley, Cromwell was "a visionary." The fully justified outrage of the Irish community forced Blankley to retract. But Newt's cult of the grotesque-baroque will not play well with voters next time.

Remember Dewey

Newt's *squadristi* in the 104th Congress are not likely to get much of their Contract with America passed, and their defining moment is likely to remain their vote to rob poor little children of their school lunches in the name of protecting the hopes of the next generation. In 1948, Republican candidate Thomas E. Dewey, because of his arrogance, complacency, and long-winded speeches, gave many voters the impression long before November that he had in fact already taken power. By election day, voters were tired of this Dewey "Presidency," and decided to give the underdog a chance, and chose Truman. Today a similar psychology is working. The GOP proclaims that power now resides not in the White House, but on Capitol Hill. In the likely event that the bottom falls out of the financial derivatives bubble during the campaign, then Newt, and not Clinton, may be left holding the

bag for so much unsoundness.

Another blip on the screen was the mid-August announcement by Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.) that "politics is broken," and that he would not seek re-election. Bradley's hints that he would consider a third-party bid for national office led some Connecticut Avenue delphics to prognosticate the imminent doom of the Democratic Party. It is true that the retirements from the Senate of James Exon (D-Neb.), Howell Heflin (D-Ala.), Harry Johnston (D-Fla.), David Pryor (D-Ark.), Paul Simon (D-Ill.), and Bradley (plus Clairborne Pell (D-R.I.) and perhaps Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) will make a new majority in the upper house harder to get. On the other hand, who can regret the departure of the likes of Simon? Bradley's pontificating reflects nothing so much as his conclusion that he personally cannot get re-elected in New Jersey in 1996. Bradley was one of the architects of the disastrous 1986 tax reform, which removed the last vestiges of pro-production dirigism from the Internal Revenue Service code. In 1990, Bradley was perceived as more interested in International Monetary Fund shock therapy for Russia, than in the plight of Trenton and Newark, New Jersey: He refused to comment on the Democratic governor's tax increases. That year, Bradley narrowly escaped defeat at the hands of blueblood horsewoman Christine Todd Whitman, then unknown and now the governor.

Colin Powell: appeaser of Serbia

Apart from official Republicans and Democrats, press hype has focused on a potential campaign by Gen. Colin Powell, the former military chief of the Pentagon and National Security Council official under Reagan and Bush. Powell received a knighthood from Britain's Queen Elizabeth as a result of his part in Bush's Operation Desert Storm against Iraq. He also has that essential prerequisite for high office, a \$6 million book contract, more lucrative than Newt's. This month, Powell will start his book tour, and will receive much publicity.

Powell will also have to answer questions about the genocide against Iraq in Desert Storm and since. Did Powell help to block a U.S. naval demonstration in the Persian Gulf in the days before Saddam Hussein had crossed the Kuwait border—a move that might have deterred the invasion and avoided the war, thus wrecking London's scheme for a "splendid little war"? There is also the question of the 1989 Panama invasion and deaths of thousands of innocent Panamanian civilians in the El Chorillo neighborhood, as a result of an invasion plan Powell had approved.

Then there is the timely matter of Powell's 1992 and 1993 rejection of military measures to stop Serbian aggression and genocide. Here Powell bought into many false clichés, and abdicated professional military judgment in favor of what Bush, his Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, and British Lords Carrington and Owen wanted to hear. Powell will have to answer the charge that he was an influential appeaser of Serbia. In *Foreign Affairs* of Winter 1992, Powell wrote

of the post-Cold War world: "In the Balkans such hatreds and centuries-old antagonisms have burst forth into a heart-wrenching civil war." It is, of course, not a civil war, but international aggression; and the antagonisms would never have led to war without British connivance.

The verbiage of appeasement went further when Powell told the Senate Appropriations Committee on April 21, 1993: ". . . it is a very complex political and diplomatic and policy problem more so than it is a military problem. The military is the one that is generally pointed to: Why do you guys never want to do anything? Why do you not want to bomb? We saw this terrible thing on CNN; let us bomb somebody. That is not enough." This amounts to mocking the world outcry against Serbian genocide and atrocities.

Later in the same testimony, Powell frightened the senators with vastly overestimated requirements for stopping Serbia: "To secure Bosnia and drive the Serbs back is quite a mission . . . I would say that would be a very, very large air and ground and sea operation. . . . I think most military people would tell you that you are talking about several hundred thousand people." Powell consistently ignored Bosnian capabilities for self-defense.

Powell preached confusion and defeatism at the very time when Clinton was ready to act: "This is a conflict that is perhaps the most complex one I have ever seen, as you try to pull apart the pieces. You have 1,000 years of hatred. . . . It has always been unstable. How can you define a situation where people who were neighbors with each other just two years ago are quite content now to say hello to their neighbor in the morning and at noon go get a gun and start killing their neighbor? . . . So how do you use military means to solve this very, very difficult and tense religious, cultural, human problem?" He went on to conjure up the Vietnam complex, which the Bush administration had ridiculed during the Gulf war: "Are we going to bomb people into an agreement that they otherwise would not wish to be a part of? We did that in December 1972 and three years later they won anyway. Some of you remember it as Vietnam."

At length, Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) said he wanted to stop the killing of Bosnian civilians by Serb heavy weapons, and asked: "Do we have the capability to target those [Serb] artillery complexes right now?" Powell saw such an action as futile or worse: "They are locked into a conflict, and if the killing does not take place by artillery, it will probably take place by some other means, just as the no-fly zone has not stopped the violence. The violence is as bad as ever. In fact, it is worse since the no-fly zone."

Many parts of Powell's testimony were suppressed and deleted at the time, presumably on alleged security grounds. Congressional sources told this writer in the spring of 1993, that in executive sessions on the Hill, Powell had been an adamant foe of any U.S. involvement on the side of Bosnia. Certainly, intelligent voters will want to see those deleted passages before they ever consider voting for Colin Powell.