
Book Review

A Regime That Threatens The U.S. Republic Itself

by Anton Chaitkin

American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush

by Kevin Phillips

New York: Viking/Penguin Books, 2004
397 pp., hardbound, \$25.95

“This book has changed a lot . . . since I began writing it in December 2002,” says Kevin Phillips in the preface to *American Dynasty*. A former strategist for Republican President Richard Nixon, turned political independent, Phillips had always considered the Bushes “Elitists”; and he had started work on what was to be a more-or-less critical Bush family biography. At that time, the Administration’s extreme pro-war grouping—Cheney and the neoconservatives—was pouring out lies to overcome the timid moderates’ resistance to the planned Iraq invasion. Phillips writes that in the course of his research, “I found a greater basis for dismay and disillusionment than I had imagined.” He reportedly told a friend privately, “The more I learned, the more I got horrified.” Meanwhile the Iraq invasion went ahead. As the world gasped, the war planners prepared apparently unlimited further adventures, proposing use of “mini”-nuclear weapons as a battle tactic. Thus his research coincided with the unfolding reality, that madmen were in power.

Published in January 2004, the resulting book presents a powerful case that the present regime is bringing on a catastrophe, threatening to end the American republic in a Dark Age dictatorship. The evidence for this argument is built around the core story: that the Bush family took part in a Wall Street-London financier apparatus which backed the German Hitler regime; and that these financiers later came into power in Washington, and into the two Bush Presidencies, bringing the same covert operations, arms smuggling, money laundering, and essentially pro-feudal attitudes as in their earlier support of the Nazis’ rise.

The author’s conception deepened. From a family biography, treated as the restoration of a Bush dynasty—as with the Stuart and Bourbon kings returning to the throne—it became

an historical x-ray of a regime in which policy may not originate with President George W. Bush himself. Therefore certain paradoxes and contradictions appear in *American Dynasty*, which will be addressed below.

The book is dedicated with an excerpt from President Dwight Eisenhower’s 1961 farewell address, warning against “the acquisition of unwarranted influence . . . by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.” Eisenhower’s words, at the outset, identify the book as within patriotic tradition, and indeed in the Republican Party’s mainstream—which has now become alert to the present danger.

The Elements of the Danger

Phillips shows that the “military-industrial complex” running today’s “American national security state” formed around “the men who managed most of the high-level financial and corporate relations between the United States and Nazi Germany in the period from 1933 to 1941”—prominently including Prescott Bush and George Herbert Walker, grandfather and great-grandfather of the current President.

He ends with a stirring evocation of the fate of Florence, the Italian Renaissance city-state that was overwhelmed by the warring empires overrunning Europe, and “surrendered its republican status in the 1530s.” Phillips writes that in Florence’s collapse into tyranny, cynical *lying* (which he attributes to strategist Niccolò Machiavelli) became the norm of leadership, with an included interval of *religious despotism* under Friar Girolamo Savonarola. Phillips writes, “The possibility that the United States could edge toward its own Machiavellian moment in an early-twenty-first-century milieu of terrorism, neo-imperialism, and dynastization is not far-fetched.”

The campaign season for the 2004 Presidential elections, Phillips concludes, must be the occasion for dealing with this existential threat.

Some of the critical story elements, which, taken together, would foreshadow an overthrow of the Constitutional republic, may be summarized as follows.

1. The entire extended Bush family is shown as Wall Street and London-affiliated *financiers*, for four generations, rather than productive or creative workers. Thus they have spent “a century . . . working to increase the wealth of a small slice of Upper America.”

In recent decades, “deregulation” and “privatization” have diverted an increasing stream of revenues from productive industry and necessary public services into financiers’ loot, changing the mission of the government from the protection, to the fleecing, of the general population. The Bushes have played their nasty part. For example, when he was Vice President under President Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush got himself put in charge of the Administration’s deregulation policy. Later, in the last week of his own Presidency, that

Bush's chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Wendy Gramm, arranged to exempt mega-swindler Enron Corporation from the agency's oversight. A month later she went on Enron's board of directors and got a million dollars. The Bushes and Dick Cheney shared in the incubation of Enron and other energy companies in the Texas rattle-snake nest.

2. Huge private entities such as Cheney's own Halliburton have taken over aspects of the military's role in a global imperial war machine. Phillips writes, "By 2003, through an initiative launched by Defense Secretary Richard Cheney in 1992, many government-run military support activities were being replaced by privatization and national security entrepreneurs—the private military corporations (PMCs) that did everything from train police in Croatia to handle Alabama air-base logistics or restore captured oil fields. Northern industrial labor unions and military draftees circa 1950 had long since given way to Sun Belt bases, nonunionized . . . workforces, de facto private armies, and every kind of subcontractor imaginable."

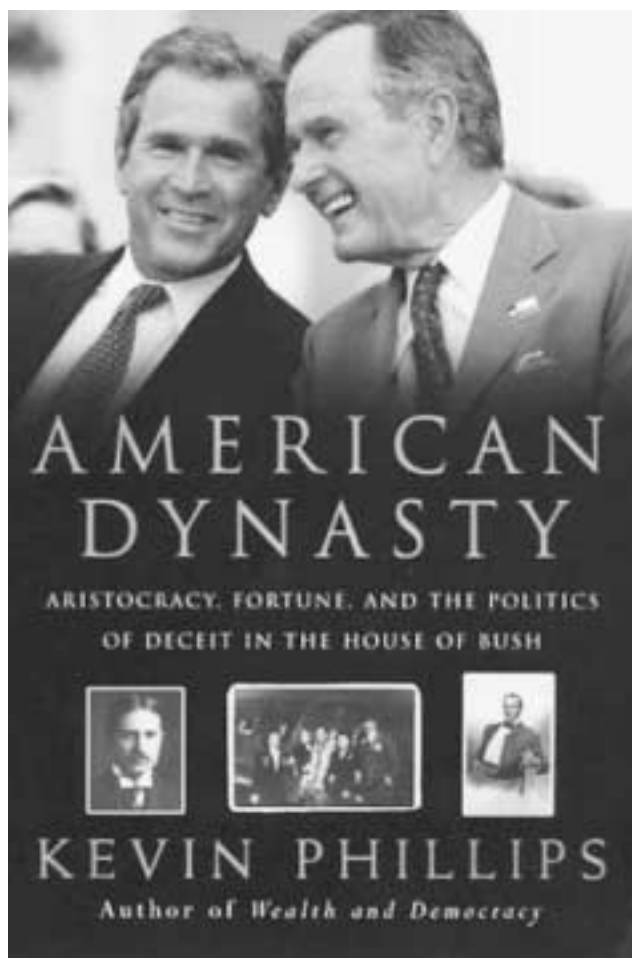
The obvious historical comparison would be to the British East India Company, which conquered India with a private army of 300,000 men; or to Fritz Thyssen, Adolf Hitler's main political fundraiser, whom Hitler made the dictator of much of Germany's private industry.

3. Wall Street financiers have sponsored fascism in the past. Phillips assembles the known evidence that Averell Harriman, the Bush family and their partners financed the Nazis and smuggled arms to Nazi terror squads during Hitler's rise, through the Hamburg-Amerika line, Thyssen, and other channels. They invested huge sums into Nazi Germany in the 1930s, more than into any other European country at the time, backing Hitler's military buildup and his preparations to launch war. This history presages the recent emergence in Washington of a Hitler-like aggressive war policy (and prior arms dealing, to the Contras, Iran and Iraq.)

4. Religious fundamentalism, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, now arises against the Western idea of Progress, implicitly contrary to the whole post-Dark Ages secular order. Phillips says this has happened twice before in modern times, "first through the revolutionary, bloody-guillotine contradiction of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, then again through the displacement of pre-1914 internationalism by Left and Right totalitarianism."

Phillips describes the U.S. population's lessening affinity with the Republic; America now has the world's greatest gap between rich and poor, and silly popular aping of aristocracy and things British. Phillips warns that the rulers have forged their electoral base from among religious zealots, and that for the first time, the President himself has become recognized as the head of the Religious Right.

5. The regime has contempt for the Constitution, and a propensity to sabotage elections. Phillips delves deeply into the 1980 "October Surprise," showing that Bush Senior, his CIA crony Ted Shackley and others, most likely conspired to



Kevin Phillips' new book on the "Bush Dynasty" is an important indictment, but fails to make some distinctions crucial to the current battle for the American republic and its Constitution.

prevent the release of Iranian-held U.S. hostages until after the Reagan-Bush ticket was elected. In discussing the Florida shenanigans of the 2000 election, Phillips hits at the regime's belief in "a legitimacy . . . requiring no validation by the electorate. . . . Antonin Scalia, the ultraconservative justice . . . had hinted at related beliefs during two separate stages of the U.S. Supreme Court's December (2000) deliberations. On Dec. 8, in language better suited to a seventeenth-century royal prerogative court, he wrote the opinion granting a stay of the Florida recount because counting votes 'of questionable legality does in my view threaten irreparable harm to petitioner [Bush], and to the country, by casting a cloud upon what he claims to be the legitimacy of his election.' . . .

"Part of Scalia's objection to democracy was that it got in the way of a return to an eighteenth-century interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. Speaking at the January 2002 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, he opined that as written in 1787 the [C]onstitution reflected that the state was an instrument of God. 'That consensus has been upset,' he said, 'by the emergence of democracy.' Scalia added that 'the reac-

tions of people of faith to this tendency of democracy to obscure the divine authority behind government should not be resignation to it but resolution to combat it as effectively as possible.' Stuart and Bourbon ultra-ists pronounced kindred thoughts after those restorations."

Given the circumstances of an emerging struggle for power, having men with the views of Justice Scalia and his hunting chum, the Vice President, in authority in Washington, must raise serious doubts about whether lawful elections would actually be held in 2004.

Under-rating Cheney's Power

Phillips has made a powerful, comprehensive case for his hypothesis. Yet he has left a basic question unclear: is it President Bush himself who is really running the madman policy of this regime, the drive for war and universal tyranny?

Phillips hints that he knows the answer, showing that the President is susceptible of being a stooge: "None of the Bushes has ever been a serious intellectual in defense or foreign policy matters. For them, physical activity—especially sports such as golf or speedboating—has been more appealing than long evenings devoted to abstract thought. The effect has been to leave George W. Bush, like previous Texan wartime president Lyndon Johnson, at the mercy of second-rate defense intellectuals, this time ones who had changed the gray pin-stripes of neo-conservative think-tanks for Pentagon togas of neo-imperialism."

There is a five-page section on Dick Cheney, entitled "Cheney and Halliburton," within the chapter named "The Enron-Halliburton Administration." And there are a few scattered allusions to the role of neo-conservatives such as Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz.

Late in the book, this paragraph is inserted: "Planning for the second invasion of Iraq seems to have begun well before Election Day in the Washington meeting rooms of the Project for a New American Century ["PNAC"] the neo-conservative think tank for which Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Florida governor Jeb Bush, and Lewis Libby, Cheney's chief of staff, completed a detailed but unreleased Pax Americana blueprint in September 2000. In one section it stated that 'the United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.' "

But the book, overall, gives no particular policymaking weight to Vice President Cheney, or to the neo-conservative professional liars who have been on his team for many years. Yet Cheney's evil central role has now become known worldwide, and his power is under growing attack. It is also relevant that the former President Bush, and senior Bush associates such as Brent Scowcroft and James Baker III, have aligned themselves with efforts to pull Junior Bush back from the Cheney gang's march toward the abyss.

'Protesting Too Much' About LaRouche

This omission may be said to stem in part from the book's original conception as a critique merely of the Bush family, over four generations. The tendency to what the subtitle calls "Aristocracy"—ill-gotten "Fortune" and "Deceit"—inheres in a financier-set which contended for control in America before the "House of Bush" appeared.

More broadly, Phillips makes no attempt to portray the American mission of universal progress, the idea of defense of the people's welfare which underlies the Constitution, or the nation's humane legacy from the Renaissance and beyond. But that very national mission and the Constitution have come under assault from a core faction—identified by Lyndon LaRouche and this magazine as the Synarchist financiers—who are proven historical enemies of the republic. That the Bush family took part in the Synarchists' 20th-Century fascist project does not precisely define the Bush role at present. That is not only a matter of analysis, but of necessary action for change—in which author Phillips and some of the Bush family are to some extent now, ironically, allied.

In sum, Phillips presents no historical *clash of ideas*. The reader sees no 1920s-1930s fascist *political movement*, and no particular philosophy or general political intention moving those PNAC planners whom Phillips cites.

Perhaps more to the point, Phillips is unfortunately at great pains to negate his detractors' imputation that he took his material from the LaRouche-commissioned *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography* (of which this writer was a co-author). He has a disclaimer to this effect in his book's preface. In fact, it would have been unavoidable, for any truth-seeking writer on the topic, to get many crucial initial leads on his research from that book. It broke the story of the Bush family involvement with Hitler, and was eagerly circulated among the entire American political class during the 1992 contest over Bush's re-election.

The same is true of LaRouche's Presidential campaign writings and *EIR*'s many articles. Over the past two years in particular, they have shaped the focus against Cheney and the neo-cons, goading thinking people into combat against them, drawing repeated frantic attacks from the *Wall Street Journal* and other neo-conservative bastions, against LaRouche as the author of the wild idea that these gangsters exist as a faction.

Yet Phillips, while publicly promoting his book, has apparently deliberately downplayed those aspects of the Bush-Cheney regime which might somehow link him to LaRouche's revelations of the inside, factional story. This is a silly throwback to the fearful timidity of authors and public figures in the witch-hunts of the Truman-Dulles-Joe McCarthy years.

It is in any case unnecessary, in that Kevin Phillips has unquestionably put a great deal of work and new thinking into his book, which is now on the national best-seller lists. He has made a significant contribution to the defense of humanity at a time of great peril.