
Book Reviews

Al D'Amato and the true evil of the Conservative Revolution

by Doug Mallouk

Senator Pothole: The Unauthorized Biography of Al D'Amato

by Leonard Lurie

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To get at the essence of the so-called Conservative Revolution manifest in the landslide mid-term election of 1994, it is not necessary to read the turgid theoretical tracts of the oligarchy's Mont Pelerin Society or similar "right-wing" outfits. Just take a heady whiff of the aroma surrounding U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), now set to be anointed as the new Senate Banking Committee chairman when Congress reconvenes.

The prospect of born-again anti-corruption crusader Chairman Al leading the effort to exhume the great non-scandal of Whitewater to further weaken President Clinton is akin to having Oliver North, Mr. Cocaine Contra, deliver a pious lecture on the evils of drug abuse. The fact is, that D'Amato, like most of his conservative co-revolutionaries, is as corrupt as they come, and not quite in the way that author Lurie thinks.

Journalist Leonard Lurie spent eight years compiling *Senator Pothole*. The book is an unrelenting, non-stop assault on D'Amato, for whose career Lurie has the most profound contempt. Nonetheless, the piece manages to almost entirely miss the true menace that D'Amato represents. This is certainly not for any lack of effort by the author, but because the liberal Lurie, ironically enough, shares the same underlying misconception of what constitutes political corruption and evil as do many of those enraged little people who voted for the Conservative Revolution on Nov. 8.

The crimes of Al D'Amato: a short list

The most damning bill of indictment against D'Amato can be summarized in two words: Roy Cohn. As Rogelio Maduro and Gretchen Small developed in *EIR* (July 29, 1988, "Alfonse D'Amato: Dope, Inc. mob behind New York

Senator"), D'Amato was picked up by Cohn's New York City political machine right after his 1980 election as senator. The degenerate lawyer and fixer for the Gambino and Salerno crime families, Cohn had his law partner Tom Bolan installed as freshman Senator D'Amato's go-between to the Reagan administration, even though the two men had barely met.

D'Amato's two new patrons were no workaday practitioners of defending organized crime: They had advanced the art to a political theory, embodied in the Conservative Party of New York, of which they, along with William Buckley, were founders. This was not at all the kind of "conservatism" many well-meaning but small-minded American patriots adhere to, that is, a traditionalist revulsion to the outrages of the rock-drugs-sex counterculture, radical environmentalism, etc. On the contrary, the homosexual Cohn, at least, had no qualms about "alternative life-styles," which became public when he died of AIDS; and Buckley openly bragged of his own pot smoking, while championing drug legalization.

Their outlook was rather that of British-Venetian agents Thomas Hobbes and John Locke—the bestial "each against all, everything is permitted" view of the Conservative Revolution that spawned Nazism, Communism, and today, the murderous approach of eco-pagan Prince Philip to "global population reduction." D'Amato's decision to make a Faustian bargain (mediated by the devil's advocate Roy Cohn) with that *politically* criminal machine is the key to all his subsequent, despicable behavior in office.

Perhaps the lowest level of his crimes are those which have made D'Amato the most spectacularly infamous: his repeated political-judicial interventions on behalf of a whole slew of outright Mafiosi. In 1989, former U.S. Attorney in New York Rudolph Giuliani revealed that D'Amato, blatantly violating the Senate rule prohibiting members from interfering in ongoing litigation, had begged him to reconsider prosecuting Gambino family godfather Paul Castellano for murder in 1985, just before the gangland slaying of Castellano supplied a morbid closure to the case; and that one year earlier, the senator had pleaded with him for a sentence reduction for loan-shark Mario Gigante, brother of Genovese godfather Vincent "The Chin" Gigante. When that reduction was



"Mr. Ethics" Alfonse D'Amato cozies up to the late mob-lawyer Roy Cohn, who is receiving a B'nai B'rith award in this 1983 photo.

granted, despite Giuliani's vociferous objection, "The Chin" had three cash payments totalling \$175,000 delivered directly to Cohn's law office.

Other beneficiaries of D'Amato's "constituency services" included Philip Basile, a rock band manager and Long Island nightclub owner who was convicted of a drug-related conspiracy with the Luchese crime family despite D'Amato's court appearance as the only character witness on his behalf; Carlo Gambino's godson and convicted embezzler Nicky Sands (a.k.a. Nicky Santiago), whom D'Amato proposed to head up a \$3 million project to build, of all things, a new customs clearing house for the Pittsburgh airport; and at least half a dozen smaller thugs and extortionists from the senator's Nassau County political base. Just by coincidence, all were heavy contributors to his campaign war-chest.

D'Amato exerted even greater efforts on behalf of a different, higher set of thieves. After all, the ones wearing pinstripe suits and button-down collars can steal (and pay out) a lot more than the black-shirt-and-carnation set. For example, after accepting more than \$200,000 from the now-bankrupt Drexel Burnham Lambert junk bond pirates (who also raised nearly a million dollars more for him through their financier contacts), D'Amato led the fight in 1985 in the Securities Subcommittee of the Senate Banking Committee, which he chaired, to prevent any restrictions on allowing desperate savings and loan executives to hang themselves with ventures in high-risk junk bonds. And after receiving below-market-rate loans both for campaigns and private business ventures from the Bank of New York, the senator volun-

teered his name in a friend of the court brief supporting BONY's lawsuit to prohibit restrictions on interstate banking, whereby the New York money-center banks hoped to feast on the carcasses of the regional banks and savings institutions. The result of these kinds of depredations on the part of D'Amato and like-minded "deregulation" swindlers was a tidy \$500 billion tab for U.S. taxpayers when the S&Ls collapsed.

By 1986, the D'Amato list of major contributors looked like a Who's Who of Wall Street: E.F. Hutton, Dillon Reed, First Boston Corp., L.F. Rothschild, Salomon Brothers, and Shearson Lehman were among his backers, and even David Rockefeller was a big fundraiser. The senator actually boasted that he deserved the dough, because, like any good elected leader, he had championed "his people's" interests. Indeed!

A particularly odious case in point: In 1981, top E.F. Hutton executive John Shad, who had just become a D'Amato financial angel, made a bid to become chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Oversight responsibility for SEC appointments resides in a Senate Banking subcommittee which was chaired by—Alfonse D'Amato. With D'Amato's timely shift in his favor, Shad got the post, wisely deciding to continue his monetary support for the helpful senator even after assuming the chair. Some five years later, with huge "insider trading" scandals rocking Wall Street, public watchdog Shad was faced with the task of disciplining Ivan Boesky, the notorious corporate raider caught using illegal information from his investment bankers at Drexel Burnham Lambert to boost his looting capabilities.

Incredibly, Shad allowed Boesky one last scam: He agreed not to announce Boesky's crimes or his sentence until *after* Boesky had disposed of over \$400 million in stocks whose value would plummet the minute the word got out! Shortly thereafter, Shad resigned, only to turn up in March 1989 as the newly appointed chairman of the soon-to-be-indicted firm of Drexel Burnham Lambert!

Potshots miss the target

Many of the above particulars are amply documented in *Senator Pothole*. But Lurie thoroughly obfuscates their significance, and omits other major D'Amato crimes altogether, because the thrust of his book is to charge the senator with the same "malfeasance" of which every elected official in the universe is guilty: Doing political favors for constituents and supporters. The key to Al D'Amato's reeking immorality is that he makes no distinction between, say, giving a break to allow your high-school chum's Aunt Sophie an early entry into a government-subsidized nursing home, and conniving to enable the collapsing "Dope, Inc." financial giants of Wall Street to further plunder the U.S. Treasury.

And neither does Lurie, as even his choice of title makes clear. Close to 200 pages of the book are spent raking D'Amato (and his early patron, Nassau County Republican boss Joe Margiotta) over the coals for the "crime" of using a 1% salary kickback to the GOP as a criteria for hiring and advancement of county workers. Lurie is oblivious to the fact that the dirtiest players in the criminal trial and later class-action civil suit were the prosecutors themselves: the Organized Crime Strike Force of the U.S. Justice Department, perpetrators of the "sting" operations known as Abscam and Brilab.

Designed by social engineers, Abscam-Brilab sent assorted drug-pushers, con-men, and assassins who had been "turned," as infiltrators into urban political machines and labor unions, not to uncover corruption, but to *solicit* and *create* it, or the appearance thereof. The purpose was to break those constituency-based organizations and their potential resistance to the combined package of deregulation and austerity that was in the pipeline, as *EIR* documented over 1980-81.

Manifesting his disorientation, Lurie heaps praise on Abscam prosecutor Thomas Puccio, while denouncing sting victim Harrison Williams (D-N.J.), who was forced out of his U.S. Senate seat, as the epitome of corruption. In fact, Williams was provably innocent, and was targeted to be removed as Senate Labor Committee chairman, even though not one scintilla of evidence existed beforehand indicating his proclivity for bribery, much less that he had accepted any bribe.

The same is undoubtedly not true of D'Amato mentor Margiotta. Nonetheless, when this supposed big villain of Lurie's narrative asks why he's being prosecuted for doing what every machine boss in America has done from time

immemorial, the reader can only sympathize. And even Lurie admits that the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) law under which Margiotta and the GOP were sued—sold to the public as an anti-Mafia tool—has only been used 10% of the time against organized crime, and has mainly been employed to crush otherwise-legitimate political formations simply for being based on the old-as-the-hills concept of patronage.

If Lurie has any awareness at all of the police-state potential of these methods (regardless of the worthiness of any particular target), he certainly never shows it. And he spends another 100 pages detailing D'Amato's role in controlling the Housing and Urban Development subcommittee, grabbing a disproportionate share of HUD funds for his developer-buddies, boosting his nondescript brother's law firm into a medium-sized influence-peddling machine, etc. It's all very slimy, and the way in which D'Amato managed to dodge censure by the Senate Ethics Committee or outright indictment even after his brother goes down for him is nothing short of amazing. But it is really petty larceny compared to his murderous role as a hitman deployed by the Cohn machine for the Wall Street-London financial axis—which rates about ten pages in the entire book!

Major political crimes

And that is about ten pages more than some of D'Amato's other major political felonies get. Left out of *Senator Pothole* is D'Amato's role in:

- Promoting political assassination and drug-trafficking in Panama. In May 1988, as the Bush-men in the Reagan administration began beating the drums for an invasion of Panama, it was Al D'Amato who stepped forward on national television to propose staging a shootout with Panamanian Defense Forces commander Gen. Manuel Noriega in order to kill him, since, "unfortunately," there was no basis for a criminal charge that could lead to his execution (see *Maduro and Small*.)

This brazen call to rip up all norms of international law was even more remarkable in light of what *EIR* readers knew back then, but what every American should realize by now: The drug kingpin in Panama was not General Noriega, but the Cali Cartel puppet installed by Bush and Company 18 months later as Panama's President—Guillermo "Porky" Endara, who repealed the bank transparency laws put through personally by Noriega to combat money-laundering, and who managed to more than double drug-trafficking in Panama over its pre-invasion level, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Lewis Galindo, a major Noriega opponent and longtime business associate of ex-Colombian President and cocaine cartel defender Alfonso López Michelsen, sat on the board of directors of a cross-isthmus pipeline construction company controlled by top D'Amato fundraiser Harold Bernstein and his Northville Corp. And while "the Bush boys" did not succeed in killing General Noriega—

now a prisoner of war in a Miami federal prison—they did murder untold thousands of innocent civilians in the Stealth fighter firebombing of El Chorillo neighborhood.

● Gang-countergang race riot operations. Lurie does describe how in 1986, D'Amato struck up an ugly deal with the Brooklyn-based poverty pimp, Rev. Al Sharpton. D'Amato finagled a \$500,000 HUD grant to Sharpton's National Youth Movement, and Sharpton, who had previously denounced racist remarks attributed to the senator, suddenly became a big D'Amato supporter. Five years later, an apparently accidental car fatality in the mixed black-Hasidic Jewish neighborhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn touched off several days of rioting, including the revenge killing of a Hasidic bystander.

In October 1992, when the jury verdict in favor of the accused assailant sent the large New York Jewish community into turmoil, Al D'Amato, immediately struck a pose as the great champion of the aggrieved Hasidim, leading a rally of thousands two days before the 1992 general election. He won a narrow, come-from-behind re-election victory, largely based on the Jewish vote.

No one, including Lurie, has bothered to point out that the "black" side of the gang-countergang riot operation was skillfully led by none other than D'Amato-backer Al Sharpton!

● The biggest crime: standard-bearer for the new world order. D'Amato was an early and enthusiastic supporter of George Bush's set-up Persian Gulf war and the genocidal sanctions against Iraq that followed; of the International Monetary Fund generally and the insane "shock therapy" policies in the former Soviet bloc in particular; and, naturally, of Clinton-gate, the British-directed operation to cripple or assassinate the first President since John Kennedy to buck Her Majesty's Empire on important policy issues.

More recently, as a devout, if unschooled, convert to the ideology of the Conservative Revolution, the senator proposed on national TV the very bold step of privatizing the Federal Aviation Administration. As if the black magic of the marketplace hadn't done enough to destroy the deregulation-wracked airline industry, perhaps D'Amato intends to give new meaning to traders' terms like "crash" and "plunge" for the nation's nervous flight passengers, who can only hope they'll be buoyed up by some invisible hand.

The evil of 'littleness'

In the concluding section of *EIR*'s groundbreaking Oct. 28 *Special Report* on "The Coming Fall of the House of Windsor," Lyndon LaRouche succinctly identifies the fundamental problem that prevents a banalized American population from accurately distinguishing good from evil in the great political battle that faces this nation:

"The person who is morally degraded from a person of ideas into a mere 'practical man' of 'my personal experience,' flees from his or her continuing responsibility for the

outcome of human history, for the general welfare of our posterity. He or she flees into the virtual reality worshipped by the fan of 'soap opera.' For him or her, everything is a matter of an empiricist's pairwise interactions among persons in the 'here and now.' The empiricist's preoccupation with his or her personal affairs, rules him. He is too busy with such pairwise interactions in his pitifully tiny here and now to assume moral accountability for his generation's having lived. He flees from the big issues into the microscopic realm of what he calls 'my affairs' and 'my personal morality.' He can tolerate any great crime against humanity with self-assured moral self-satisfaction, as long as he is not caught in such personal offenses in the very small as stealing or adultery. Thus, do such immoral persons smugly and obscenely call themselves 'Christians' while endorsing Adam Smith's thieving, mass-murderous dogma of 'free trade.' "

It is precisely the miserable outlook of these little men and women that the Conservative Revolution appeals to in its anti-republican assault on constitutional government in America. Ignorant of, indifferent to, the 600-year struggle between the evil heirs of oligarchic Venice and the proponents of a new Golden Renaissance, whose outcome will determine the fate of civilization, those small minds are nonetheless passionately worked up over their pet peeves. By offering to meet those "sincerely felt" needs, and fill the right little political potholes, the Al D'Amatos obtain the license to perpetrate their destructive policies in the "macro" realm of international finance and politics. Would-be D'Amato-slayer Leonard Lurie makes the fatal mistake of attacking his foe from the same micro-moral soap-opera vantage point that in fact must be soundly defeated, if America is to escape a trip into hell.

Books Received

Treason in the Blood: St. John Philby, Kim Philby, and the Spy Case of the Century, by Anthony Cave Brown, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1994, 677 pages, hardbound, \$29.95

Hugo Black: A Biography, by Roger K. Newman, Random House, New York, 1994, 741 pages, hardbound, \$30

Civil Wars: From L.A. to Bosnia, by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, The New Press, New York, 1994, 144 pages, hardbound, \$18

A Death in Jerusalem, by Kati Marton, Pantheon Press, New York, 1994, 321 pages, \$25

Secret Operation: Mossad, by Victor Ostrovsky, HarperCollins, New York, 1994, 315 pages, hardbound, \$24