

A triumph of politics ... loss of faith

**The Triumph of Politics
Why the Reagan Revolution Failed**
David A. Stockman
Harper and Row

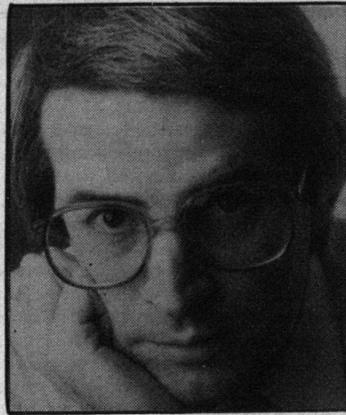
review by Ken Bosman

The Library of Congress lists *The Triumph of Politics* as a work on the economic, spending, and budget policies of the Reagan administration. The reality is, however, quite different. This book is actually David Stockman's modern day Greek Tragedy, in which he, the fatally flawed hero, is doomed to be the maker of his own demise, the Judas to his own dreams.

David Stockman assumes the mantle of hero easily. A Harvard Divinity student, aid to Nixon Chief Domestic Advisor (and now Senator) Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then himself a Michigan Congressman, Stockman was the brilliant whiz kid who looked like he could make it all add up.

In 1980, the call came from Ronald Reagan: Stockman was to be Director of the Office on Management and Budget — the most powerful, fiscal bureaucrat in the nation. His obvious intellect, mastery of economics, and encyclopedic understanding of the scope and detail of Government made him the natural point man to defend what he envisioned to be the Reagan Revolution. That 'revolution', however, was very swiftly to turn; and soon Stockman would become betrayed by the very process he had set in place.

The fundamental premise of *Triumph* is that Reaganomics was doomed from the start. Not out of any faults Stockman perceived in the actual program, but by the overwhelming political realities of America. Reaganomics saw social good as being down the road of dramatically lower taxes, combined with similarly lower expenditures. The first wave of the revolution was easy, cutting



Author, David Stockman... disillusioned man.

taxes is really just spending in reverse. The second pillar of the revolution — cutting the bewildering array of social and corporate welfare — was crushed by the prevailing political consensus of buying the next election.

But Lord knows he did try. Stockman writes with riveting clarity and the religious fervor with which he fought, and lost, most of his battles to trim his perceived excesses of US governmental porkbarrelling. He writes with the fire and brimstone rhetoric of a true believer: Democratic House Majority Leader Jim Wright is described as a 'snake oil vendor par excellence, a demagogue of frightening rhetorical powers ...' House Speaker Tip O'Neill: 'with his massive corpulence and scarlet, varicose nose, was a Hogarthian embodiment of the superstate he had laboured so long to create.' ...

Triumph is also most notable for the clarity and ease with which it presents fairly abstract economic concepts. 'Supply side' economics and Laffer curves are not the stuff of cocktail conversation, but Stockman does an excellent job of presenting the economic arguments for his proposals.

More than anything, *Triumph* is a tragic book, not for what it tells us about election year politics and porkbarrel assaults on the public treasury, but because of the loss of Faith. It is sad to see a dream, anybody's dream, die.

Stockman makes an intellectually over-

whelming case for the scrapping of everything from subsidized school lunches for children of the rich, to the abolishing the US system of corporate welfare which pays farmers billions of dollars to let their crops rot in the fields. And yet, in the end, even Stockman views his work as meaningless. Despite the economic calamity he forecasts, Stockman admits to being beaten, and sadder still not having the energy to fight again. He laments that his small cadre of true believers who launched the "Reagan Revolution" have become nothing more than an "insignificant set of anti-status conservatives who inhabit niches ... in the world of Government."

David Stockman entered the world of politics under the illusion that he could make a difference, and that his Herculean efforts could somehow imprint his view of greater wealth, fairness, and justice upon the world. *Triumph* is his recanting of the tale of how his own intoxication with perceived power would destroy his dreams. Under Ronald Reagan, America had settled into a comfortable dream; and what do you do if the Emperor has no clothes, and nobody really cares?

Triumph is also the tale of how Stockman's own efforts turn against him. Ironically it was his own presence and intelligence that contributed to the economic illusions he battled. His own competent presence served only to buttress the comfortable mirage he sought to destroy. For Stockman, the "Reagan Revolution" was not one of economics, but one of illusion. The Democrats and the Republicans have now become co-conspirators dedicated to fulfilling the continuing illusion of democracy: that government can provide something for nothing.

The tragic flaw of David Stockman was that he believed his reality mattered. Perhaps in another era he would have prospered, but under the teflon Presidency, the fact that he makes powerful and logical arguments as a prophet of economic doom banishes him to intellectual oblivion in the comfortable political dreamscape of America.

The Triumph of Politics is a must read for anybody who considers themselves a true conservative, and wishes to read the thoughts of a high priest who fell from grace.

"Huh? Oingo What?..."

**Dead Man's Party
Oingo Boingo**

review by Dragous Riui

Shuffling through the compact disks a university student can't afford, a curious sight assaults me. OINGO BOINGO on CD. 'Dead Man's Party'???

Hmmm ... I've never even seen an Oingo Boingo record for sale and now they have CD's. What could be going on here?

Oingo Boingo started in the early seventies as a multi-media show in Los Angeles. They did not have a lot of success until they switched their act to predominantly music. For a while they were L.A.'s hottest club act.

Success has been slow in coming to this band, but they have been receiving much media attention lately. People no longer say "Huh? Oingo What? ..."

Perhaps the best song on the album is the theme song of the same title as the album. It's raunchy raw guitar, and it's smooth horns when combined with a steady beat just grabs you and makes you want to listen to the rest of the album. One word describes it,

'Fun'. And somehow it shows that the band had fun recording this album.

You might remember them from Rodney Dangerfield's movie, "Back To School", or from the theme song of the movie, "Weird Science". This last theme song received a limited amount of airplay on Top 40 radio stations (success in the monetary sense anyway).

Their unique, Big Band, Punk, Rhythm sound is slowly becoming widely known. Their latest album 'Dead Man's Party' is very strong and energetic. It includes the theme from "Weird Science" along with "Fool's Paradise", another song that got brief commercial airplay.

The album, which has perhaps the gaudiest cover ever to grace a CD, makes you want to jump up and dance. Sure, the cover illustration with it's skeletons partying in tacky mexican hats, won't look at home next to that 'Deutsche Grammophon' recording of Brahms. But, it'll sure get your adrenalin pumping.

This album is definitely not for those whose tastes run to ZZ Top and Tina Turner, but if you like different music that you can dance to ... Keep your eyes open for it. AND it comes on CD!! Check it out.

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for all pre-dent students

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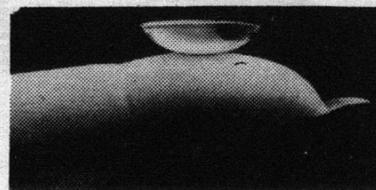
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