
Book Review

Reinventing John

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Citizen McCain

by Elizabeth Drew

New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002

181 pages, hardbound, \$23.

The well-respected political historian Elizabeth Drew made an appearance on June 5, at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. to lecture on her latest book, *Citizen McCain*, an unabashed embrace of Arizona's senior Republican Senator, John McCain. Both in her lecture, and in her 181-page account of how McCain successfully orchestrated the campaign finance reform bill through the Congress and through a threatened Presidential veto, Drew made no bones about the fact that she considered John McCain to be *the* anti-establishment version of the "Great White Hope," who could shape, if not win, the 2004 Presidential election as America's first successful modern third-party insurgent.

In a guest appearance on National Public Radio several weeks before her National Archives lecture, Drew responded to one caller, by insisting that McCain must retain the option of an independent Presidential run, and beat back any attempts to lure him into the Democratic Party, where he might share a ticket with his "dearest friend" in the Senate, Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.). She scoffed at the idea of McCain joining a Democratic Party that still retained even a scrap of the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal economic policies, and the civil rights tradition of Lyndon Johnson.

Leaving Out the Notorious

An incident that occurred during her National Archives appearance let the cat out of the bag, revealing that her "travels with John" account of the 2001-2002 campaign finance reform legislative battle, is part of a larger effort to "reinvent" John McCain, for use in the 2004 Presidential elections, by air-brushing out of the picture some most disturbing and revealing facts about the former Vietnam prisoner of war-turned Arizona Senator.

During her lecture, Drew lamented that, during the "dirty" South Carolina Republican primary campaign in 2000, "rumors were spread about [McCain's] wife, children and fam-

ily." During the discussion period that followed her formal remarks, Drew was asked a question by *EIR* History Editor Anton Chaitkin: "John McCain and his wife and children are the majority owners of the Hensley beer distributorship, which Mrs. McCain inherited, and which was created by organized-crime figure Kemper Marley, notorious in the murder of investigator Don Bolles—"

Drew cut off the question, demanding, "What are you driving at?"

Chaitkin continued, but was soon cut off again: "My estimate is that their stock in Hensley is worth at least \$120 million in value—"

"It's irrelevant," Drew interjected. Later, in a private discussion, Chaitkin continued, detailing the Arizona organized-crime links to the McCain household, contending that, since the essence of Drew's embrace of McCain was that he was a reformer, in the tradition of Teddy Roosevelt and the mugwumps, "Isn't it relevant where his own money comes from?"

To which Drew responded, "If this is true, why didn't we see it in 2000? It didn't come up at all."

Chaitkin then asked her: "Did you bother to look up his family money?" She replied, again, "It's irrelevant."

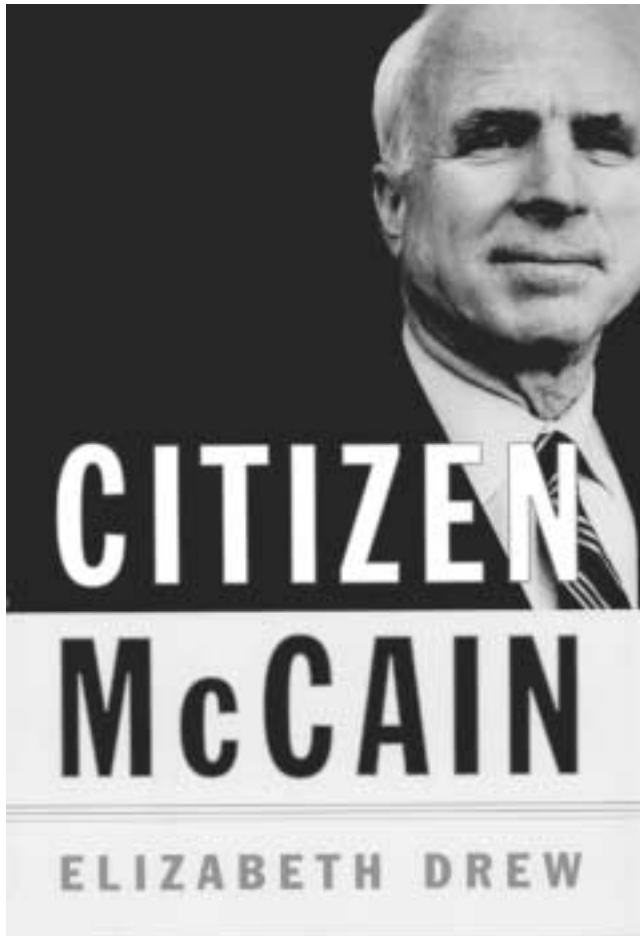
This strange encounter served to reinforce certain very disturbing things that this reviewer ran up against in reading Elizabeth Drew's short, gripping, and wholly laudatory account of McCain's fight to push through the campaign finance reform bill. Let us assume—and that is a very generous assumption—that Drew's account of the behind-the-scenes maneuverings of McCain and a handful of predominantly Democratic Party allies, that led to both Houses of Congress passing, and President George W. Bush signing, the campaign reform bill, is true. Nonetheless, the book smacks of such personal partisanship toward McCain, that it almost read like a love poem, rather than the kind of probative and searing political analysis that one has come to expect from Drew.

Elizabeth Drew has been pounding the Washington pavement for more than 25 years, covering Presidential and Congressional politics in scores of articles for *New Yorker* magazine and other publications, and 11 previous books. In recent years, with *Whatever It Takes* and *The Corruption of American Politics*, she has focussed her pen on the massive corruption of the American political process, through the power of money and lobbying.

This is why I felt so dirty, having read her hour-by-hour account of a year in the life of a wanna-be President of the United States, knowing some things myself about the corruption behind McCain's Arizona empire, and the very dangerous role he has carved out for himself as a one-man Sword of Damocles hanging over the head of a very vulnerable President George W. Bush.

Some Basic Facts

The accompanying investigative report by Anton Chaitkin provides the reader with a road map of John Mc-



The usually competent author refuses to deal with certain critical matters of McCain's Arizona backing, turning out a book of unremitting praise.

Cain's Arizona, a nest of organized crime, real estate boondoggles and ripoffs, and right-wing Zionist political power games. What need sto be highlighted, in order for the reader to appreciate the significance of the attempt to "reinvent" John McCain, is the role that McCain and his "Bull Moose" backers are playing in the ongoing perversion of American foreign and national security policy.

As Drew's former nesting ground, *New Yorker* magazine, reported at the beginning of this year, McCain is promoting the idea of a third party candidacy, to draw sufficient votes from President Bush in the 2004 general elections, to defeat the incumbent, in a near-perfect replay of what happened to George H.W. Bush in 1992, at the hands of H. Ross Perot.

McCain has made it clear—on numerous public occasions—that he will make his spoiler decision on the basis of how well or how poorly President George W. Bush performs on a number of litmus-test foreign and national security policy issues. During the February 2002 annual "Wehrkunde" International Conference on Security Policy in Munich, McCain declared that the President had already nearly lost the "war

on terrorism" by his failure to overthrow Saddam Hussein, his continuing partnership with the Saudi royal family, and his refusal to join Ariel Sharon in repudiating Yasser Arafat as a stone-cold unrepentant terrorist.

McCain's Wehrkunde performance was actually part of a quartet act, with his "best friend" Joe Lieberman, Sharonist Richard Perle, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz completing the "Get Saddam" ensemble.

In effect, McCain is part of the larger orchestration of the Bush Administration's foreign policy, to force the President to wreck decades of American Middle East policy, to break U.S. ties with the Saudis and other key Middle Eastern and Persian Gulf allies, and give Sharon the "green light" to implement his "final solution to the Palestinian problem"—or face a humiliating 2004 defeat. Such a father-son defeat will forever stain the Bush family legacy—or so the story goes.

McCain knows this. Elizabeth Drew, one would imagine, certainly knows this. This is publicly flaunted political treachery, which involves the current leadership of the Democratic Party—particularly the Democratic Leadership Council of so-called centrists, led by Lieberman—along with an even more dangerous coterie of "Christian Zionist" Republicans, who count (soon to depart) House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.) and House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) as their Congressional champions. The outright Sharon lobbyists in America—the extreme Jabotinskyites of the Zionist Organization of America and Americans for a Safe Israel—who are openly allied with the Christian Zionists like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Ralph Reed, are such an obvious part of the "Get Bush" blackmail game that it hardly needs further mention.

Since the book *Citizen McCain* is clearly part of the effort to foster the highly dubious idea that the electrically charged Arizona Senator is a viable political leader—Presidential timber—one cannot help but wonder: Who put Drew up to this exercise in fallacy of composition, an exercise that has dire potential consequences for the survival of the United States? John McCain's 2000 Presidential run against George W. Bush enjoyed the backing of Zbigniew Brzezinski, and the implicit backing of the ever-sneaky Henry A. Kissinger. These are the Bobbsey Twins of the Clash of Civilizations. That is clearly the larger political picture in which Elizabeth Drew's fictional rendition of John McCain is to be situated, and it stinks!

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