

# MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Newsweek \_\_\_\_\_  
Time \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. News & World Report \_\_\_\_\_

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**D**r. Samuel Johnson, that gruesome old Tory, never said "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." At least not in the sense attributed to him. Johnson was staunch for Church and King and wrote a stupid and sulfurous defense of Royal policy in the thirteen colonies (adding for good measure that the colonists should be "grateful for everything we give them short of hanging"). The opponents of Good King George, the Hanoverian tyrant, mustered under the banner of "John Wilkes and Liberty" and called themselves Patriots. Johnson refused to dine where any member of the Patriotic faction might be found, and had to be tricked into a social meeting with Wilkes by James Boswell. Hence the birth of the famous observation, one of the few that is known to almost all editorial writers and, inevitably, misconstrued by them.

Apart from its having been said by Johnson, and thus hallowed by a sort of tradition, the remark owes its survival and resonance to the fact that it elicits a genuine emotional recognition. There is something scoundrelly about the chauvinist and the jingoist. As a general rule, besides trying to evoke base and tribal feelings, the flag waver is also trying to change the subject. Look at the false and shifty features of G. Bush as, almost vomiting with insincerity, he reaches for the flag and for the uninspiring jingle that goes with it. That he is trying to touch the nerve of atavism is sure. But what subject is he trying to change?

I think that if I were G. Bush, I, too, would weave myself a flag and try to vanish within its folds. In the latest phase of his career he has been the chief patron, financial and political, of the infiltration of foreign dictators into the American political process. While Marcos still flourished, Bush was the Philippine candidate. He was and is the Panamanian candidate. He is the candidate of the Sultan of Brunei. He was, while the murdering, torturing junta still thrived and lent a hand in the training of the *contras*, the Argentine candidate. He is the South African candidate. Through his backdoor lobbying for an Awacs-brokered hike in the oil price, he became the Saudi Arabian candidate. For eight years he has been the vacuously grinning doormat across which despots of every stripe have been ushered into those rooms in Washington from which the trusting electorate are excluded. So *of course* he goes to the trusting electorate with hand on heart and pledge on lips. Wouldn't you?

If the trusting electorate ever suspected that George Bush became the candidate of all those other dictators by being the Iranian candidate, it might take more than a swiftly woven Old Glory to save the Bush tush. So far, the national

media have resolutely refused to ask Bush a single question about the 1980 "October surprise" hypothesis: the argument that the Reagan-Bush campaign made a backstairs deal with Khomeini, promising Iran arms in return for the continued humiliation of Carter on the hostage issue.

Talking of the humiliation of Carter, do you remember that he once said he lusted after other women in his heart? If you do, it is because the entirety of the media leapt upon

an interview that he incautiously gave to *Playboy*. But pick up the current edition of *Playboy* and you will find a far more revealing piece of journalism. "An Election Held Hostage," by Abbie Hoffman and Jonathan Silvers, is the longest summary of the prima facie case for the "October surprise" hypothesis that has yet appeared in print.

There is some especially intriguing material about Bush's role in the murky operations directed by Meese and Casey during the 1980 campaign. As the House committee investigating the matter concluded, back in the days when all we knew was that Carter's briefing book for a presidential debate had been stolen:

As the documents and witness statements show, Reagan-Bush campaign officials both sought and acquired non-public Government and Carter-Mondale information and materials.

Among those were "Top Secret—Eyes Only" papers from the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, found in Meese's files and passed to then-candidate Reagan, who countersigned for their receipt. Both Reagan and Meese said they had no memory of, or explanation for, these acquisitions. Ruling on this in a motion for a prosecutor in the case (a motion defeated after near-hysterical exertions on the part of Meese's Justice Department). Judge Harold Greene of the U.S. District Court sternly criticized "an information gathering apparatus employed by a Presidential campaign which uses former agents of the F.B.I. and the C.I.A."

The only thing wrong with the judge's statement was the word "former." Active-duty C.I.A. men also participated in what campaign manager William Casey called "an intelligence operation." But among the former ones was ex-C.I.A. director of security Robert Gambino, a Bush colleague who gave Casey a helping hand. Prescott Bush, George's brother, was also found using his informal contacts to pass confidential government information on the hostages to the Reagan-Bush campaign.

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We know that the Republicans sought to undermine Carter by denying him a hostage release. We know they put together a plan, using unauthorized men and means, to try to achieve this. We know that they met with Iranian envoys in October 1980. And we know that from then on both the Reaganites and the Khomeini forces behaved more like allies than they let on. Doesn't this warrant a few questions, as soon as we can get this pledge business settled?

No doubt it will be said that Abbie Hoffman is not mainstream enough to be "noticed." But Carter's interviewer on the last issue was the admirable Robert Scheer. And Scheer (whose fine collection of pieces, *Thinking Tuna Fish, Talking Death*, is imminent) used to be editor of *Ramparts*. Come to that, we wouldn't know about the Iranian connection at all if it wasn't for "that rag in Beirut." If the Iranian candidate gets to November without being asked about his most breathtaking coup, then the fabled American press will have allowed him the real last refuge of the scoundrel, which is silence.