

hearings on the Republican Medicare prescription drug law, and reopen it to hold down costs,” adding that “an ethical cloud has hung over” the law since it was “passed in the dark of night.” Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) greeted the news by saying, “If the numbers don’t add up for Medicare, how can we be sure they will add up for Social Security?” House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) said, “The President’s credibility is in tatters when it comes to cost estimates.”

Democratic Senator Mark Dayton (Minn.) has introduced a bill, “Meeting Our Responsibility to Medicare Beneficiaries,” (S.18.IS), which would phase out the nearly \$4,000 out-of-pocket “gap” put into Bush’s bill, which is to be paid by the senior beneficiaries who are covered. Senator Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), along with 11 other Democrats, introduced a bill to rescind the \$10 billion fund which the MMA created to “entice” private insurers, i.e., HMOs, into offering coverage to Medicare seniors.

As for Republicans’ reaction to the ballooned costs “news”—many of them did not initially support the bill, but succumbed to DeLay’s heavy-handed tactics—they too are rethinking the bill. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) demanded that Congress revisit the MMA prescription drug plan, to limit its decade-long costs to the \$400 billion price tag Bush put on it to get it passed. Senator Trent Lott (R-Miss.) spoke of revising the bill so as to cut “middle- and upper-income” seniors from getting the drug benefits. One must take caution with the “cut costs” initiatives as they will translate into benefit caps and/or cuts, to the detriment of the very senior citizens Bush declaims he’s out to protect.

In the House, Rep. Gil Gutknecht (R-Minn.) said he will seek the repeal of the drug benefit provision. He, like many Democrats, objects to the provision that forbids Medicare officials’ negotiating with drug companies for bulk discounts on drugs. “We have got to deal with the cost of drugs. We have got to force the drug companies to play by some set of rules that is fair to everybody,” Gutknecht said.

The President, in turn, reacted to all this: “I signed Medicare reform proudly, and any attempt to limit choices of our seniors and to take away their prescription drug coverage under Medicare will meet my veto.” But Bush’s bluster met reality in a Feb. 11 statement issued by Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid of Nevada. “Make no mistake, the President’s blanket veto threat is designed to protect only special interests—the big drug companies and HMOs his flawed bill gave billions to in the new law.”

It seems the strong-arming used to get the MMA passed is now coming back to bite Bush.

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Book Review

Gold and Treason

by Anton Chaitkin

Rebel Gold: One Man’s Quest to Crack the Code Behind the Secret Treasure of the Confederacy

(Previously published as *Shadow of the Sentinel*)

by Warren Getler and Bob Brewer

New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004

304 pages, paperback, \$12.00

Today’s reading public is understandably receptive to a highly entertaining book about elite-managed terrorism and giant looting schemes. Getler and Brewer’s *Rebel Gold*, a treasure-hunting non-fiction mystery tale, carries a haunting historical metaphor for the current deadly struggle over mankind’s fate. The book shows the American Republic as the target of an imperial assassination initiative called the Knights of the Golden Circle, the core of the Southern slaveowners’ Confederacy, before, during, and after the American Civil War.

Brewer, a technically-sharp Navy veteran returning home to Arkansas’s Ouachita Mountains, investigates childhood suggestions from elderly family members about buried treasure. There are puzzling signs inscribed on rocks and trees in the area. He does find some valuable stashes, worth thousands of dollars. It begins to appear that his own family were guardians of the buried loot of the Knights of the Golden Circle (KGC), passing this role of secret sentinels through the generations into the 20th Century.

Brewer and journalist Getler relate Brewer’s search across the U.S.A. for the identity of the buriers, and for the ultimate big stashes. Readers meanwhile go on a well-researched tour of criminal intrigue and treason.

The Knights of the Golden Circle

The Knights of the Golden Circle are generally known as a paramilitary movement beginning about 1853, which aimed at breaking up the Union and creating a feudalist, slave empire extending across Central America and the Caribbean. President Lincoln countered the KGC as saboteurs within the Union, and as terrorists based in the then-British colony of Canada.

Getler and Brewer present the Knights as a conspiracy,



Reviewer Anton Chaitkin, at the microphone, demonstrates against the Albert Pike Statue in Washington's Judiciary Square, in 1992. Foreground: civil rights leader Hosea Williams.

first, around 1830, centered in the South Carolina nullifiers' secession threats; evolving through the 1840s Young America movement, "allied with European radical movements led by Giuseppe Mazzini"; through the secessionism built up under Presidents Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan; to the murder of Lincoln; to digging and guarding in hundreds of underground depositories, the financial resources for a renewed war against the U.S.A. upon some future opportunity (as in, "The South Will Rise Again").

We see the partnership of two arch-conspirators from Massachusetts, Caleb Cushing and Albert Pike, and the use of Scottish Rite Freemasonry as a vehicle for covert action and for the mumbo-jumbo of the treasure secrets. The authors have taken (and acknowledged) some of their cues, as for Cushing and Pike, from this reviewer's work, including the 1985 book, *Treason in America: From Aaron Burr to Averell Harriman*.

In *Rebel Gold*, Scottish Rite chief Pike is the architect of the Knights, along with their later front group, the Klu Klux Klan. Pike is the Confederate army and KGC master manipulator of Indian tribes who fought against the Union, and likely an instigator of the Indian wars of the 1880s.

Some action revolves around Pike's own Arkansas residence, not far from Brewer's home. Researchers may wish to look further into certain leads which overlap the work of

Stanley Ezrol on the later Nashville Agrarians (*EIR*, Aug. 3, 2001), who prefigured fascism and our present Straussians/Cheneyacs/neo-conservatives.

Rebel Gold stirs the reader's historical imagination by giving many likely sources for the supposed hidden treasure:

- Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin sent gold to England during the Civil War. He later fled to England, concerted there with Chief Baron of the Exchequer Frederick Pollack, and prepared to smuggle finances back to America.
- The Confederate Congress (Feb. 15, 1864) appropriated \$5 million for the use of Confederate terror managers such as George Sanders and Thomas Hines, stationed alongside the British military in Canada.
- This Canada gang raided banks in the Northeastern United States.
- Bandit leader Jesse James, portrayed as a post-Civil War KGC field commander, robbed banks, trains, and stage coaches, with aid from Wall Street accomplices. The James mystery gives the authors many strands to weave together elements of the book, across two centuries.
- The Hapsburg Maximilian, imposed as ruler of Mexico by invading European imperialists during the American Civil War, is reported to have paid a substantial sum to Jesse James.
- The book quotes from an earlier study of Jesse James: "this secret organization [in the U.S. West] was financed mostly by a foreign government to make regular espionage reports on the United States outpost forts, from 1865 to 1892. . . ."

We are gripped by even the most technical passages, on deciphering the messages and maps, right up to the climax in Arizona's Superstition Mountains.

There is an Epilogue, an unsuccessful attempt to link the Knights to Rosicrucianism and complex European mystical legends. Since it lauds these Masonic antecedents as liberal and freethinking, it could be seen as the authors' polite gesture to the anti-human oligarchy—whom they have just smartly slapped in the body of the book.

The story has popular appeal at this historic moment. We are threatened by bankrupt financiers, using their hired, often Southern, politicians to loot pensions and other potential revenue streams. They project unending military adventures, terror and counter-terror, and plunder.

To avert financial collapse, they would tear up the Constitution and the sovereign republic. They rage against the legacy of Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt, who blocked financiers' power, built high-wage industry, and inspired the world with America's advanced living conditions.

These are the European and Anglo-American lordly banditti who have fought against the *project* of the American republic over many centuries, continuing an exercise of power and venom against Promethean ideals from ancient times to the modern era.

Rebel Gold gives the reader a little glimpse of that universal history,