

Africa, the struggle continues.

Pham does not draw sufficient attention to a factor I believe to have been crucial in the debacle not only of Liberia but of all post-colonial Africa: the disjunction in the educated classes between abstract, rhetorical universal principles and innermost desires for personal advancement. Thus, old regimes such as the Americo-Liberian are criticized from the standpoint of an ideal by people with limited, or deliberately concealed, self-knowledge—they speak of social justice but dream of Mercedes cars. Nevertheless, Pham's book is the best short guide to the Liberian imbroglio, and serves as a timely warning to those who think weak and disintegrating states can be led by outside intervention to the paths of peace and wisdom.

—THEODORE DALRYMPLE

**THE NUREMBERG INTERVIEWS:
*An American Psychiatrist's
Conversations with the
Defendants and Witnesses.***

By Leon Goldensohn. Edited by Robert Gellately. Knopf. 474 pp. \$35

As every publisher knows—and as we were reminded during Holocaust denier David Irving's audacious but ill-fated libel suit against his fellow historian Deborah Lipstadt—there can probably be no such thing as a surfeit of information about the Third Reich. Like Richard Overly's *Interrogations* (2001), which synthesized the transcripts of interviews of captured German leaders, Leon Goldensohn's fastidious record of his encounters with fallen potentates and functionaries offers a backstage glimpse of the Nuremberg trials.

A psychiatrist who rose to the rank of major in the U.S. Army, Goldensohn (1911-61) spent seven months of 1946 interviewing Nazi officials held as both defendants and witnesses at the Nuremberg trials, for purposes of monitoring their mental health. Although he never fulfilled his plan to write a book about the assignment, his notes and transcripts were collated after his death and subsequently came to the attention of Florida State University professor Robert Gellately, author of *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (2001).

The result is, essentially, a work in

progress, which inevitably lacks the narrative flow and occasional melodramatic flourish of psychologist G. M. Gilbert's *Nuremberg Diary* (1947). But Goldensohn remains an intriguing witness to history nonetheless. There may be a chilling doggedness to some of his techniques: Asking Rudolf Hoess, the former commandant of Auschwitz, if his wife was "a good cook" elicits no useful information. And like many an interlocutor at Nuremberg, Goldensohn is invariably confronted with long-winded evasions and self-justifications, particularly when he attempts to probe the inner workings of the Final Solution.

But his patience and persistence yield valuable insights, especially from the lowlier figures in the Nazi hierarchy. Indeed, the third of the book devoted to the men called as witnesses is the most intriguing. The loftily self-absorbed SS general Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski attempts to depict himself as an "incorruptible," good Nazi. The fanatical *Einsatzgruppe* leader Otto Ohlendorf is so successful at convincing himself that he was a mere pawn that he resembles, in Goldensohn's words, "a burned-out ghoul."

In a curious way, there is an even more repellent quality to the portrait of Walter Schellenberg, the urbane intelligence official who seems capable of infinite adjustments to the moral calculus. If the VIPs in the other cells often seem less than human, Schellenberg is all too recognizable as the ambitious, quick-witted young man who always knows which way the wind is blowing. Though the monsters were hanged, Schellenberg's spiritual descendants will always be with us.

—CLIVE DAVIS

**ATHENS:
*A History, from Ancient
Ideal to Modern City.***

By Robin Waterfield. Basic.
362 pp. \$27.50

Classicist Robin Waterfield takes on a daunting task. He aims to provide a concise but detailed history of Athens from the Mycenaean settlements of the 13th century B.C.E. to the preparations for the 2004 Olympics. Waterfield's love for the land and its history permeates the book. He provides vivid portraits of the major players—Pericles,