

**THE CIVILIZING  
PROCESS: The History  
of Manners (Vol. I)**  
by Norbert Elias  
Urizen, 1978  
328 pp. \$15  
L of C 78-104651  
ISBN 0-916354-32-6

If a man accidentally intrudes upon a woman in the bathroom, his *polite* apology might be "Excuse me, ma'am," his *tactful* one, "Excuse me, sir." To Norbert Elias, the difference speaks volumes (a second is due in December). In this 1936 classic, newly translated from the German original, Elias traces the growth of the ideal of manners from *courtoisie* (court behavior) through *civilité* (bourgeois urbanity) to *civilization* (democratized *civilité*, ready for export), each more socially inclusive—and self-conscious—than the one before. Elias sees manners as the prism of the polity: Medieval nobles who thought it good form to eat meat with their hands from a common vessel "stood in a different relationship to one another than we do." The book is a trifle scholarly but deft and lucid as it shows changing mores. "If you cannot swallow a piece of food," counseled the Dutch humanist Erasmus in 1530, "turn round discreetly and throw it someplace."

**IMPERIALISM AT BAY:  
The United States and the  
Decolonization of the British  
Empire 1941-1945**  
by William Roger Louis  
Oxford, 1978  
594 pp. \$19.95  
L of C 78-1068  
ISBN 0-19-821125-2

How did it happen that the world gained 75 new sovereign states in 1940-70? Diplomatic historian Louis conveys the mix of imperial, strategic, and idealistic motives that guided Allied policymakers in shaping the future of extraordinarily diverse colonial societies in Africa and Asia during and immediately after World War II. The Americans were alternately liberal and annexationist. Determined to retain former Japanese islands in the South Pacific for strategic purposes, they endorsed some form of international trusteeship for everyone else's colonies, whether ex-German or British. (One key U.S. adviser called the American commitment to decolonization "like setting a bird free, but only in the garden.") Churchill, insisting that he would not "preside over the disintegration of the Empire," echoed British Tory and Labor views, while Lord Cranborne, Colonial Secretary, maintained that "our Colonies . . . at present are children and must be treated as such." The staunchest anticolonialists were the Australians and New Zealanders, especially cantankerous Australian Foreign Min-

ister H. V. Evatt. Many of his ideas were embodied in the U.N. Charter in 1945. The compromise solutions of that year carved up former Italian and Japanese colonies. But the victorious British, Louis contends, quoting elder historian A. J. P. Taylor, in the end did not relinquish their empire by accident (as has been widely written). Rather, they ceased to believe in it.

**THE MILITARY IN GREEK POLITICS: The 1909 Coup d'Etat**  
by S. Victor Papacosma  
Kent State Univ., 1978  
254 pp. \$12.50  
L of C 77-22391  
ISBN 0-87338-208-0

The "1909 Revolution" was the first major intervention by the Army in Greece's parliamentary politics. Universally praised by Greeks as the catalyst to reform, it strengthened the nation just prior to the Balkan Wars. Kent State University historian Papacosma now offers a revisionist analysis, terming the "Revolution" a coup d'état, and finding the officers' attempts at reform as conservative and ineffectual as those of the squabbling politicians the Army replaced. But the coup did launch the brilliant career of Eleftherios Venizelos, prime minister and founder of the reformist Liberal Party, and gave an ideological cast to Greece's patronage-hungry political parties, until then indistinguishable from one another.

**FIGHTER: The True Story of the Battle of Britain**  
by Len Deighton  
Knopf, 1978  
285 pp. \$12.50  
L of C 77-20356  
ISBN 0-394-42757-2

Infinitely more complicated than the legend that grew up around it was the actual struggle for control of the skies over Britain in the wartime summer of 1940. The welter of detail made so absorbing in *Bomber* (the author's earlier account of an RAF bombing raid) almost overwhelms this sequel. Drawing on official records and countless interviews with veterans from both sides of the epic "Battle of Britain," Deighton describes the flight paths of innumerable German bombing raids and the often futile British efforts to stop them. We gain a comprehensive picture of the aircraft, the tactics, the strategies, and the blunders. What comes through less clearly was what it was really like to be an ill-trained, inexperienced RAF Spitfire pilot facing the Luftwaffe for the first time high over the English Channel.