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Book Review: Nation of Devils, by Stein Ringen

Michael A. Genovese

Loyola Marymount University, mgenovese@lmu.edu

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Editorial Offices: 575 Main Street, Suite 300, Middletown, CT 06457-3445

Phone: (860) 347-6933

Fax: (860) 704-0465

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The following review appeared in the June 2014 issue of CHOICE:

Political Theory

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Ringen, Stein. **Nation of devils: democratic leadership and the problem of obedience.** Yale, 2013. 250p bibl index afp
ISBN 9780300193190, \$35.00.

The provocative title comes from Immanuel Kant, who was concerned with how to "maintain order in a nation of devils," and is used as a launching point for Ringen's absorbing new book on democratic governance. Ringen (emer., sociology, Univ. of Oxford, UK) asks how democracies can govern and gain compliance from citizens who have their own sources of power and resistance. The problem is obedience. And how does a government earn obedience? The author both debunks and builds. He debunks the simplistic notions about governing that lead to misconceptions about leadership, and he builds a new vision of democratic leadership based on power, authority, and legitimacy. Ringen is especially critical of the leadership displayed in modern Great Britain and the US. As he writes, "Democratic leadership is built on the respect that comes from democratic quality. Your systems [UK and US] are dysfunctional. You must reform. You owe it to your people and to the world. I beseech you; you *must* improve your democracies" (*italics in original*). Irreverent and thought provoking, this work challenges readers to think anew about democratic governance.

—M. A. Genovese, *Loyola Marymount University*

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduate.