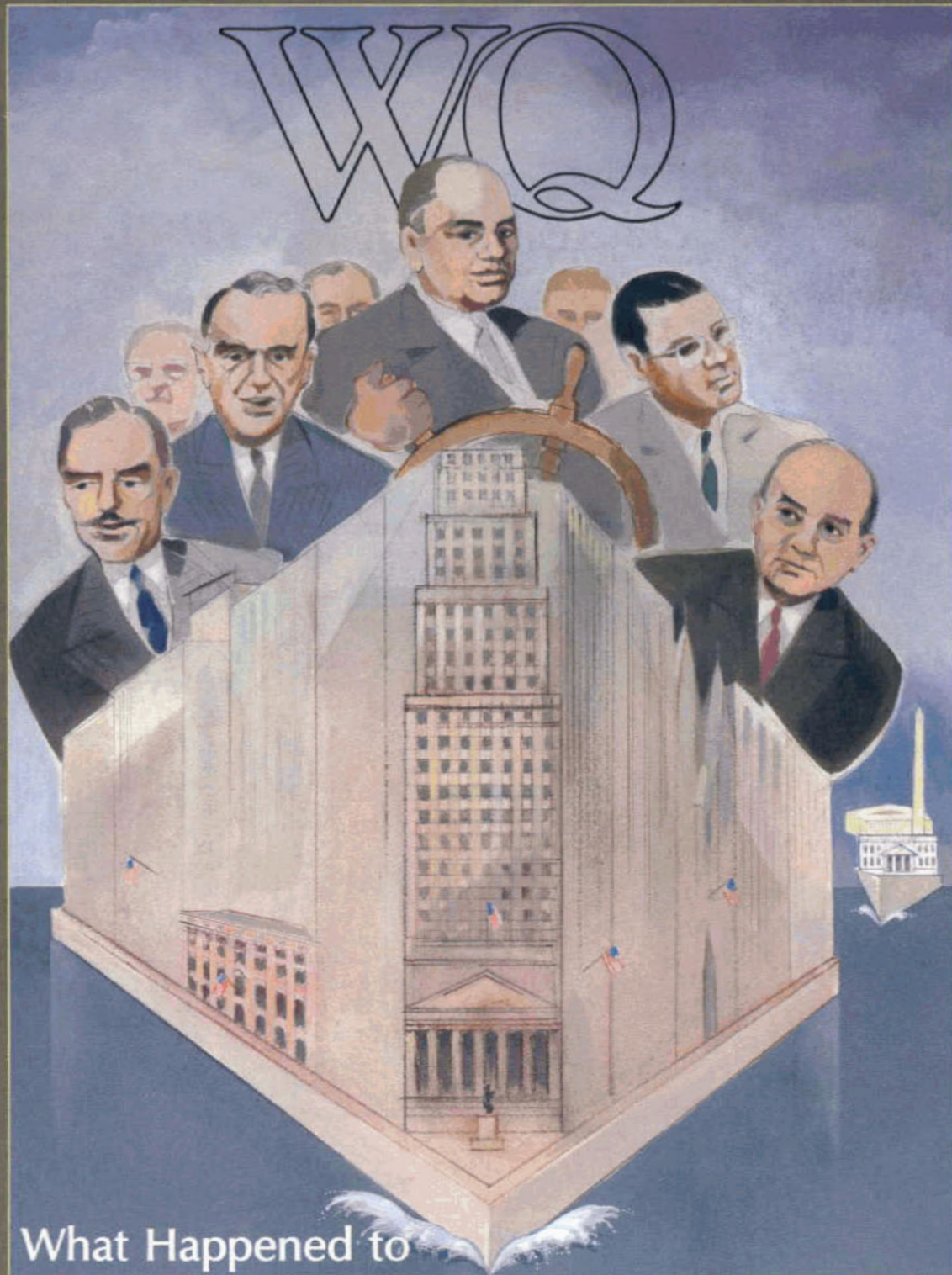


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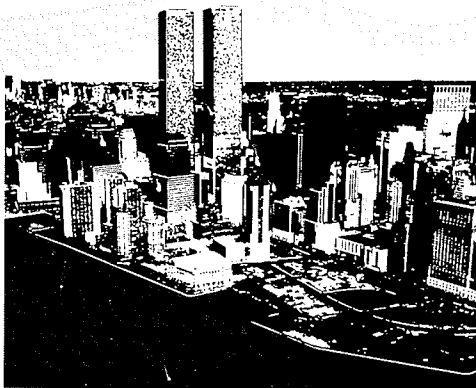
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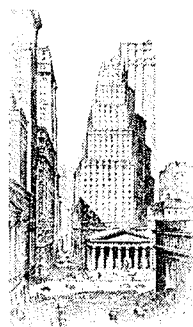
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### COVER STORY

#### THE RISE AND FALL OF THE AMERICAN ESTABLISHMENT

21

Although the American myth insists upon absolute equality, the United States, like every other nation, has always had a governing class. Between World War II and the late 1960s, America's elite formed an influential, if largely invisible, Establishment that helped make the United States the leader of the Free World. Painting that group at the height of its power, **Max Holland** profiles the "chairman" of the American Establishment, John J. McCloy. **John B. Judis** describes the demise of the Establishment and its replacement by a congeries of narrowly self-interested lobbies and factions.



#### COLUMBUS AND THE LABYRINTH OF HISTORY

66

The approaching Quincentenary of the "discovery" of the New World has already set off heated ideological debates. Science writer **John Noble Wilford** sifts through the many versions of Columbus's life and weighs the competing interpretations of his accomplishment.



### IDEAS

#### RUSSIA'S FEVER BREAK

58

The bungled August coup in the Soviet Union was part of a painful process of change that **James H. Billington** describes as a fever break. The patient's prospects? Billington finds hope in Russia's cultural traditions.



### REFLECTIONS

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Cover: John J. McCloy at the helm, flanked, on the left, by Clark Clifford and Dean Acheson, and, on the right, by Robert McNamara and Dean Rusk. The artist is Salvador Bru.

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VOL. XV NO. 4

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## Editor's Comment

On the occasion of our 15th anniversary, I would like to thank you, the *WQ*'s many loyal readers, for your steady support and interest. Because of you, the *WQ* today enjoys one of the wider circulations (80,000) of any quarterly in the English-speaking world. This figure suggests not only that the *WQ* fills a niche in the literary marketplace but that there are still plenty of readers who take ideas seriously. We don't kid ourselves, of course. We realize that readers like you may belong to an endangered species. But as long as you're there, you keep us going. And, in fact, you make the whole business worth the candle.

Appropriately perhaps, this issue adds up to a kind of "New World Symphony." As well as John Noble Wilford's meditation on the enigmatic figure of Christopher Columbus and the many meanings of his "discovery," we look at the futures of Russia and of Eastern Europe, two great new worlds of our day. In our cover story, Max Holland and John Judis remind us of how the American Establishment tried to shape a new world order in the aftermath of World War II—and of the surprising extent to which it succeeded. Finally, among the many points made by historian Robert Dallek in his portrait of Woodrow Wilson, one is that U.S. leaders might profitably direct some of their new-world ambitions away from the glamor of the world stage toward the more urgent kitchenry of domestic affairs.

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## From the Center

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For the past nine months I have used this space to write, briefly, about some topics that I perceive as important and interesting. It seems to me both fitting and potentially useful to mark the 15th anniversary of the *WQ*'s founding by asking its readers to tell us what is on their minds during these truly extraordinary times.

It is not unreasonable that our readers, faced by this invitation, should ask what we intend to do with the responses we receive. At the very least, I can promise that they will all be read by my colleagues and me, that some will be printed in the *Commentary* section, and that the more thoughtful and provocative ones will play a role in charting the course of the Woodrow Wilson Center in the years ahead.

While there is much to be said for leaving this invitation completely open-ended, I cannot resist the temptation of adding a few observations about the situation in which we all find ourselves these days, a situation that will surely shape the responses we receive. Beneath the understandably repetitious—and, to be honest, frequently tedious—rhetoric about the end of the Cold War, the new world order, and our seemingly endless agenda of domestic problems, a few larger themes can be discerned.

Among the more interesting of these to me is the fact that a large and growing number of specialists in foreign affairs is now urging that we give more thought to putting our own house in order. Perhaps the single most striking instance is the case of William G. Hyland. If, as many maintain, the Council on Foreign Relations is still the home of this country's foreign-policy establishment (see cover story, p. 21), then the editor of its journal *Foreign Affairs* may not unreasonably be described as its spokesman. In an article last May, Hyland stated our need "to start selectively disengaging abroad to save resources" desperately needed for domestic purposes. More recently, the *Washington Post* reported Hyland as saying, "We built up all these institutions where I worked—the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Council, State Department. Every president has become captured by this. But it's all over." The same *Washington Post* article quoted the foreign-policy sec-

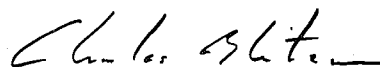
tion of the platform of the first declared Democratic presidential candidate, Paul Tsongas: "We need our resources here at home. We have a Herculean task to steady our economic ship of state and get out from our crushing national debt. This is the first priority and all other priorities come after it."

Similar views have led to urgent and perhaps agonizing reappraisals of their programs by universities, foundations, and think-tanks. Nor is the Woodrow Wilson Center immune to this reappraisal-virus. Having always prided itself on taking long historical views rather than reacting to each day's headlines, the Center now faces the challenge of distinguishing between transitory, local, or random phenomena and evidences of systemic, long-term change. Although we hear little these days of the end of history, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the possibility that we may be entering a new historical era. Although we tend to think of the secular state and its claim of absolute sovereignty as virtually a

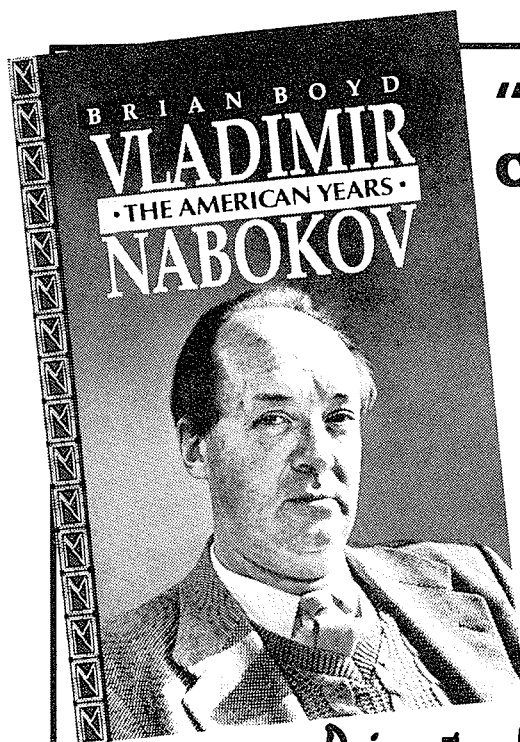
given in human affairs, the fact is that it came into being only some three centuries ago. The new arrangements awaited in Europe after 1992, and the similar arrangements discussed for

places as different as the West Bank and the Soviet Union suggest that the future may belong to a quite different political form—a loose association with divided sovereignty. Similarly, the gridlock that paralyzes our own central government in the face of mounting deficits and unaddressed social needs may reflect not just the temporary inability of Republicans to elect a Congress and of Democrats to elect a president, but rather a systemic weakness in our polity. Again, Desert Storm notwithstanding, have we entered an era in which economics, ecology, and even culture may have replaced military might as the dominant factors in international relations?

Surely these are the sorts of questions we must be asking, but to end where I began, it is now your turn to enlighten us.



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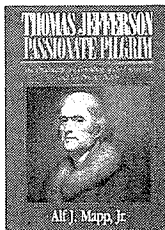
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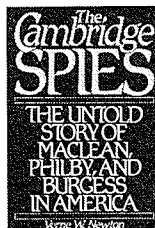
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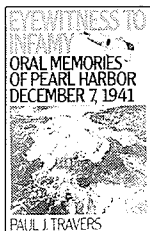
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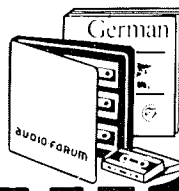
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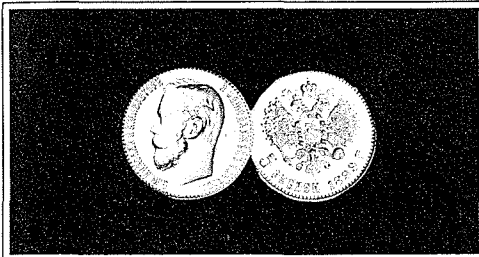
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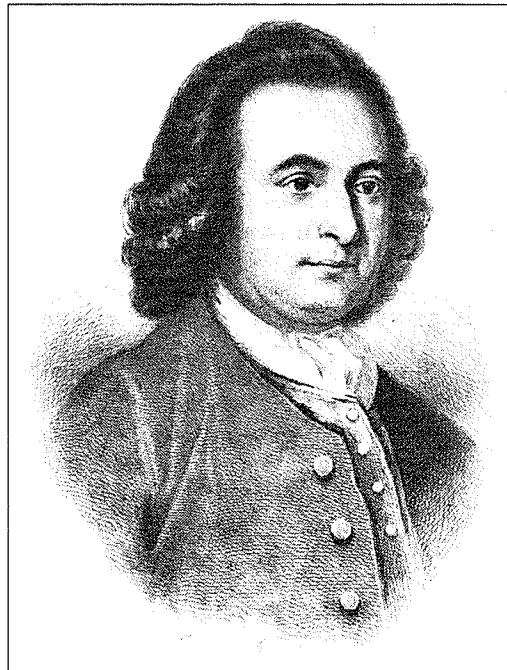
"George Mason and the Conservation of Liberty" by Brent Tarter, in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (July 1991), Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 7311, Richmond, Va. 23221-0311.

Two centuries ago, on Dec. 15, 1791, Virginia became the 11th and final state to ratify the Bill of Rights. Today, Virginia's George Mason (1725-92), the principal author of the state's famous Declaration of Rights and its Constitution of 1776, is hailed as one of the fathers of the Bill of Rights. As a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, he objected to the absence of such a guarantee, and refused to sign the Constitution. Virginia and other states ratified the Constitution only on the understanding that the new Congress would soon correct the defect. In fact, says Tarter, an editor of the Virginia State Library and Archives' *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, that flaw was not the only, or even the main, objection this leading Anti-federalist had to the Constitution.

On August 31, 1787, almost two full weeks before Mason made his only recorded suggestion that the federal convention add a bill of rights to the document, he declared (as fellow Virginian James Madison reported) that "he would sooner chop off his right hand than put it to the constitution as it now stands."

Mason, like others of his generation, cherished balance in government as a bulwark against tyranny. The federal Constitution broadly resembled the one he had helped write for Virginia; it had separate executive, legislative, and judicial departments, and built-in checks and balances.

But it still fell short of his standards. "The Senate was made more powerful than he wished," Tarter says. "The executive department was made more powerful, too. The judiciary was imprecisely defined with a potentially large (and therefore potentially dangerous) jurisdiction. The treaty-making and appointive provisions also up-



*Virginia's George Mason was a critic of slavery as well as of the Constitution.*

set the separation of powers and reduced the potency of the House of Representatives." This all undermined, in Mason's eyes, the rationale of the Virginia Plan that had been presented to the convention. That plan had called for a strengthened government, but the popularly elected lower house of the legislature was to be dominant.

Mason was "well read, intelligent, [and] discerning," Tarter says, but he also was "very much a loner [and] temperamentally unsuited to the hurly-burly and compromises of the political arena." After he did not get his way in Philadelphia, "he took his quill and went home, angrily kick-

ing up dust as he went . . . . Mason's disappointment was bitter, and because of the rigidity of his views and the belligerence of his personality, it had staying power."

Even after Madison introduced the Bill of Rights in the new U.S. House of Representatives in July 1789, Mason was not appeased. He called Madison's action a "Farce," and said, "Perhaps some Milk & Water Propositions may be made by Congress to the State Legislatures . . . but of important & substantial Amendments, I have not the least Hope." This father of the Bill of Rights went to his grave three years later without ever having given the Constitution his blessing.

## Voting Booth Blues

"Voter Turnout" by Raymond E. Wolfinger and "Electoral Participation: Summing Up a Decade" by Carole Jean Uhlaner, in *Society* (July-Aug. 1991), Rutgers—The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

When Americans go to the polls in 1992, the nation's political pulse-takers are sure to search voter-turnout data for clues to the health of the body politic. And chances are they will again warn that Americans have alarming cases of political apathy and cynicism. Turnout in presidential contests has been falling for decades, dropping from 62.8 percent in 1960 to 50.15 percent in 1988.

But Wolfinger, a political scientist at Berkeley, dismisses such diagnoses as quackery. Opinion polls show that American voters, though supposedly alienated, are among the most optimistic in the world about their own "political efficacy." Eighty-five percent express pride in their political system. In Italy, meanwhile, voter turnout is an impressive 94 percent, yet only three percent of Italians profess enthusiasm for government Italian-style.

Part of the confusion about the meaning of voter turnout, Wolfinger explains, is caused by the fact that the U.S. statistic is computed differently—as the proportion of the total adult population that casts ballots. Calculated instead as a proportion of only those registered to vote, as it is in Europe, the percentage improves to a respectable 84 to 87 percent.

This country's real problem, Wolfinger says, is that only two-thirds of Americans are registered. This disappointing figure results largely from the fact that the burden of registration is left on the individual voter—a burden compounded by the fact that Americans are frequent movers. (In 1980, one-third of all American voters had not lived at the same address for two years.) In Europe, by contrast, registration is usually automatic. In England, canvassers even go door-to-door to compile the electoral register. Make registration automatic here, Wolfinger suggests, and all the chatter about apathy and a voter turnout "crisis" will cease.

Uhlaner, who teaches at the University of California at Irvine, is not so optimistic. She points out that the decline in political participation during the 1980s was uneven. Among the poorest 16 percent of Americans, for example, turnout fell from 46 to 40 percent between 1980 and '88, but among the wealthiest five percent it rose from 69 to 77 percent. Among blacks, turnout fell from 50 to 39 percent. Why? Uhlaner believes that the poor and disadvantaged were excluded from the nation's political dialogue during the 1980s. They had nothing (and nobody) to vote for.

But this argument is partly contradicted by Uhlaner's own report of a dramatic increase in registration (from 39 to 59 percent) and voter turnout (from 28 to 59 percent) among Mexican-Americans. Uhlaner

credits aggressive registration drives. By these measures, Mexican-Americans now participate in politics more actively than blacks do. More than ever, blacks seem a constituency in search of a party.

## Keeping Secrets

"The Fight to Know" by Peter Montgomery and Peter Overby, in *Common Cause Magazine* (July-Aug. 1991), 2030 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson and strengthened after the Watergate scandal, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) turned 25 this summer. In recent years, however, contend Montgomery, associate editor of *Common Cause Magazine*, and Overby, a staff writer, the executive branch and federal courts have expanded the law's exemptions and given "the bureaucratic impulse for secrecy... freer rein."

In 1987, for example, the Reagan administration asked Congress to exempt the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) from the law, claiming that Japanese scientists were using it to obtain valuable information about U.S. space shuttle technology. That simply was not true, the authors say, and a NASA official later admitted as much. The administration "concocted the story," they assert, to keep the public from learning about decisions that led to the 1986 *Challenger* explosion. Requests made under FOIA later helped "demolish NASA's deceptions."

The FOIA exempts certain kinds of information from public scrutiny, including national-security and law-enforcement secrets, sensitive financial and business data, information protected by individuals' pri-

vacy rights, and some internal government documents. The Reagan administration extended the cloak of "national security" to cover information on trade and virtually all aspects of international activity, Montgomery and Overby say. A 1982 executive order told officials to classify documents whenever in doubt. The courts have not been much help. A federal court, for example, ruled FBI criminal history records "categorically" exempt.

Surprisingly, most FOIA requests do not come from journalists. They accounted for only six percent of the 40,500 requests at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last year. Most of the rest, the authors note, came from FDA-regulated firms seeking "to untangle the sometimes Byzantine regulatory process—and to dig up information... on their competitors."

In an effort to find out how well the law is working, *Common Cause Magazine* last spring filed FOIA requests with 21 federal agencies, asking for recent logs of FOIA requests and the agency responses. The full answer is still a mystery: Only four of the agencies met the statutory 10-day deadline for replying, and two months after the requests were filed, seven agencies still had not responded.

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## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

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### America First?

"What is the National Interest?" by Alan Tonelson, in *The Atlantic* (July 1991), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

America's victories in the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War—and its internationalist foreign policy in general—are largely

irrelevant to the lives of most Americans, asserts Tonelson, research director of the Economic Strategy Institute. Far from go-

ing off now in search of President George Bush's New World Order, he argues, the United States should abandon internationalism and start thinking in terms of "purely national interests."

U.S. foreign policy since World War II, in Tonelson's view, has had the utopian purpose of transforming the world "into a place where the forces that drive nations to clash in the first place no longer exist." Internationalism, he says, has encouraged Americans "to think more about the possible world of tomorrow than about the real world of today." All questions of the risks and costs of foreign entanglements have been avoided, he claims, and the nation's economic and social problems have been badly neglected.

Under the policy that he champions, the United States would seek to secure and protect its "truly vital" interests, such as physical survival and the maintenance of its democratic institutions. But all other major foreign-policy objectives would be subjected to the test of whether the benefits outweighed the costs and risks. Thus, "the lack of democracy, development, and social justice in Central America—however unfortunate for people who have to live there—has never appreciably affected U.S. fortunes." The United States should no longer try to reform these countries, Tonelson argues. Its sole interest is to keep hostile foreign powers out, and it should do this with force, if necessary.

U.S. foreign policy, Tonelson says,

should *not* be "a vehicle for spreading American values, for building national character, for expressing any individual's or group's emotional, philosophical, or political preferences, or for carrying out any . . . overseas missions that, however appealing, bear only marginally on protecting and enriching the nation." Such marginal missions include: "promoting peace, stability, democracy, and development around the world; protecting human rights; establishing international law; building collective security; exercising something called leadership; creating a new world order; [and] competing globally with the Soviets (or whomever) for power and influence."

America's security, he says, should be "decoupled" from that of its allies, and "the automatic nuclear risks built into the alliances" should be eliminated. All U.S. nuclear forces in Europe, and most conventional forces, should be unilaterally withdrawn. "Strategic and economic disengagement from the Third World, which has already begun, should be allowed to continue unimpeded."

All this does not add up to isolationism, Tonelson insists. Foreign intervention would not be ruled out on principle. "[The] only rule of thumb would be 'whatever works' to preserve or enhance America's security and prosperity and—provided that Americans are willing to pay the bills—what the country collectively wishes to define as its psychological well-being."

## JFK's Missiles

"Nuisance of Decision: Jupiter Missiles and the Cuban Missile Crisis" by Philip Nash, in *The Journal of Strategic Studies* (Mar. 1991), Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., Gainsborough House, Gainsborough Road, London E11 1RS, England.

When President John F. Kennedy in October 1962 made the stunning announcement that the Soviet Union was placing nuclear missiles in Cuba, he left out one uncomfortable fact: The United States had nuclear missiles in Turkey, close to the Soviet Union. Others soon pointed out the parallel, and it complicated U.S. efforts to resolve the crisis. Standard histories have it that a blameless Kennedy had ordered

the obsolete Jupiter missiles removed from Turkey months before, only to discover during the crisis that the federal bureaucracy had not carried out his order. But Nash, an Ohio University historian, says that there is no hard evidence that Kennedy had explicitly ordered the Jupiters removed.

Kennedy indeed had been concerned about the missiles in Turkey, and with



good reason, the historian notes: "They were . . . provocative, vulnerable, and practically useless." The original decision to deploy the missiles had been made in 1957, after the launching of the Soviet *Sputnik* aroused Europe's fears about the depth of U.S. commitment to its defense. But the Jupiters were not actually deployed until after Kennedy took office in 1961. While he was inclined to cancel deployment, his advisers feared that after the tense June summit meeting with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna such a move might be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Also, Ankara strongly opposed cancellation. "[T]here is no reason to doubt that deployment went ahead with Kennedy's approval," Nash says.

On Aug. 23, 1962, after the Soviet military build-up in Cuba had begun, but before the Soviet missiles were discovered

there, Kennedy's national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, asked the Defense Department what could be done about getting the Jupiters out. Contrary to some claims, this was not an "order" to remove the missiles, Nash says. Kennedy's subordinates all along seem to have understood "that they were being instructed *to consult* the Turks regarding removal, and *not* being ordered *to remove* the missiles."

During the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy and his advisers "consistently strained" in public to dismiss the analogy between the Jupiters and the Soviet missiles in Cuba. In the end, the Soviets withdrew their missiles after receiving secret assurances that the Jupiters would be removed within five months. The last Jupiter in Turkey was dismantled in April 1963; the official story, that there had been no trade, lasted much longer.

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## ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

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### *The Global Job Market*

"Global Work Force 2000: The New World Labor Market" by William B. Johnston, in *Harvard Business Review* (Mar.-Apr. 1991), Boston, Mass. 02163.

Labor has long been considered the least mobile factor in production. But thanks to a global mismatch between labor supply and demand, the movement of workers across national borders is going to accelerate dramatically in the future. So predicts Johnston, a Senior Research Fellow at the Hudson Institute and author of the widely cited 1987 report, *Workforce 2000*.

While the focus of attention in the United States and other industrialized nations has been on looming labor shortages, the world's work force has been growing rapidly. Between 1985 and the year 2000, Johnston says, an increase of 600 million workers is projected, with 95 percent of them in the developing countries. In Pakistan and Mexico, for example, the work force is expected to grow by about three percent a year, while in the United States and Canada the rate will be closer to one percent. In Japan, growth will be only 0.5

percent, and in Germany the work force will actually shrink.

Although the industrialized nations still educate higher proportions of their youths, the developing countries have been producing a fast-increasing share of the world's high-school and college graduates. Their share of college students, for example, jumped from 23 percent in 1970 to 49 percent in 1985 and is expected to reach 60 percent by the year 2000.

During the 1990s, Johnston says, "workers who have acquired skills in school will be extremely valuable in the world labor markets. And if job opportunities are lacking in their native lands, better jobs will probably be only a plane ride away."

"Although most governments in industrial nations will resist these movements of people for social and political reasons," Johnston says, "employers in the developed world are likely to find ways around

government barriers." Even unskilled jobs "may become more internationalized in the 1990s," he says. During the 1970s and '80s, large numbers of relatively low-skilled workers immigrated—Turks to West Germany, Algerians to France, Mexi-

cans to the United States—to take jobs natives did not want. Among the industrialized nations, only Japan, with "its commitment to preserving its racial homogeneity," is likely to reject increased immigration.

## Spreading The Wealth

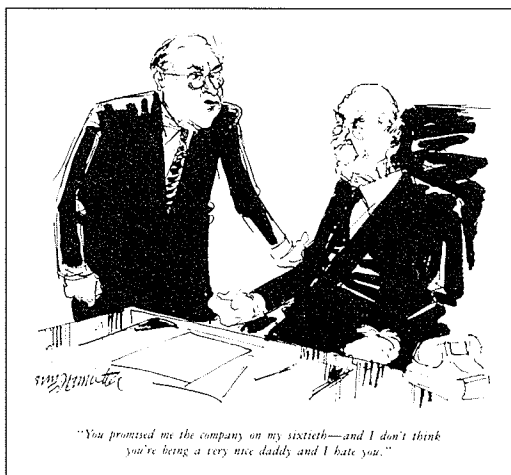
"American Family Fortunes as Economic Deadweight" by Sidney L. Carroll, in *Challenge* (May-June 1991), 80 Business Park Dr., Armonk, N.Y. 10504.

A mere one percent of all Americans own nearly one-third of the nation's wealth—\$3.7 trillion in 1986. Roughly one-half of their considerable fortunes were inherited. And much of that inherited wealth is not put to imaginative use. On the contrary, asserts Carroll, an economist at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, massive inherited fortunes are typically locked away in estate trusts, which are cautiously managed in accordance with the wishes of the dead by banks, attorneys, financial ad-

visers, and accountants.

That, Carroll believes, is good neither for the U.S. economy nor even for many of the heirs, who remain dependent. A change in the tax system, he says, could fix the problem.

Under existing laws, enacted in 1912, wealth is subject to an estate tax. When an individual dies, the estate's worth in excess of \$600,000 is subject to taxation and the wealth is then transferred. This allows the rich to pass on large fortunes relatively intact. Carroll proposes substituting a new tax on individual inheritors. The first \$1 million received would be tax-free. But bequests above that would be taxed on a sliding scale, with everything over \$4 million completely taxed away. The rich therefore would tend to spread their assets around—in fact, an estate of any size could be distributed entirely tax-free, so long as no single bequest was too large. Wealth could be spread among many heirs. And control of the assets would pass "not to a trust, not to a bank, but to a person." Many of the heirs would be young and more inclined than their elders to be "creative risk-takers." Not all the funds would be put to good use, of course, but the overall effect, Carroll maintains, would greatly benefit the economy—and the inheritors themselves.



Some heirs to great wealth are unable to free themselves from their "welfare" dependency.

## Taps For Bureaucracy?

"Can Business Beat Bureaucracy?" by Charles Heckscher, in *The American Prospect* (Spring 1991), P.O. Box 7645, Princeton, N.J. 08543-7645.

Pop social critics love to decry the soul-deadening effects of working for large, bureaucratic organizations. Now, notes

Heckscher, a Harvard Business School professor, even some buttoned-down corporate CEOs have joined in.

Large firms have been encouraging "involvement" of blue-collar workers that goes beyond the popular Quality of Work Life programs of the 1980s, which brought workers together in quality circles to talk about their work and recommend improvements. Now, a few companies are setting up "autonomous teams" of workers that control scheduling, discipline, and other managerial functions. Equally significant changes have been taking place in the work of middle managers, Heckscher says. In "the golden age of bureaucracy," when groups were deemed ill-suited to the making of decisions, committees and task forces were relatively rare; now, such team-oriented groups are common.

The shift away from hierarchy is not just a fad, Heckscher believes. "Bureaucracy is ill-suited to the demands of advanced markets for innovation and quality," he asserts. But its demise is hardly assured. He outlines four alternative models for the future corporation:

- *Purified Bureaucracy.* "In the old-line companies—the General Motors, the AT&Ts, the Dow Chemicals—leaders frequently talk of 'empowerment' and 'autonomy.' . . . [They want to return] to individuals the 'power' to perform the roles that have been established for them, allowing them to use their knowledge to carry out the tasks defined by their superiors. This [is] a return to true bureaucracy."

- *Community with Shared Values.* Xerox tried to create "a culture of quality" during the 1980s with a massive education campaign. (A 92-page book on developing corporate quality was put out and discussed throughout the firm.) Other cor-

porations, such as IBM, have long emphasized the importance of shared values. These firms show concern for their employees' welfare, and employees respond with a voluntary commitment to the good of the whole corporate community. But this kind of paternalism—in which hierarchy remains important—has its drawbacks, Heckscher says. An "excessive inwardness" may develop, with the result that qualified outsiders are kept out and insiders become too cautious and rigid.

- *Free-Market Corporation.* "Pay for individual performance, the promotion of internal competition, [and] the conversion of departments into profit centers . . . are all examples of this movement" to make the corporation itself a market. General Electric's Jack Welch, a fervent apostle, declared loyalty no virtue in his company. But, as many investment-banking and high-tech firms have found out, a company's rejection of loyalty encourages talented employees to jump not only to other posts within the firm but to other firms.

- *Cooperative Association.* The corporation stresses "teamwork" and the use of task forces and committees, with decisions at all levels made by consensus. One medium-sized manufacturing firm Heckscher studied uses teams for virtually all decisions. The "human benefits of such an approach are obvious," but Heckscher concedes, it still "does not work very well on a large scale."

"In the modern economy," he concludes, "bureaucracy no longer enjoys a massive advantage . . . over more open and participatory alternatives." Nevertheless, he admits, "bureaucracy is not yet dead."

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## SOCIETY

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### *How To Get More Justice*

"Improving Our Criminal Justice System" by Charles Maechling, Jr., in *The Brookings Review* (Summer 1991), 1775 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

"The American criminal justice system is breaking down," claims Charles Maechling, Jr., an international lawyer. He points

to clogged prisons and court calendars, and to the fact that it can take years to put a rapist behind bars or to execute a mur-

derer. Much of what's wrong, he says, is rooted in the courts' adversarial nature, which necessitates "a bristling array of constitutional safeguards and procedural rules" to protect the accused. Maechling argues for radical reform: taking a leaf from the so-called inquisitorial criminal-justice process used everywhere in Europe except Great Britain and Ireland.

The European approach relies on "objective methods of inquiry rather than . . . pit-bull confrontations," says Maechling, who, as a visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge University, in 1985-87, led a study of the subject. After police make an initial investigation of a fel-

ony case, an examining magistrate conducts a detailed inquiry, questioning witnesses, scrutinizing physical evidence, and weighing information from other sources. All relevant information about the case and people involved goes into the record. Only after the magistrate has built up a coherent case, and resolved any ambiguities or uncertainties, does he decide whether to bring a suspect to trial.

If the case reaches a courtroom, the *prima facie* case against the accused is strong. But the defendant has the opportunity to prove his innocence or, more likely, show extenuating circumstances. He has the right to counsel and can refuse

### *The Transformation of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Acknowledging the seriousness of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s recently revealed plagiarism in his doctoral dissertation at Boston University, King biographer David J. Garrow offers in the *Journal of American History* (June 1991) this interpretation:

*[It] forces us to address a central question: Was the [Martin Luther King, Jr.] of Crozer [Theological Seminary] and [Boston University] actually a rather immature and insecure young man? Was he a talented young preacher with no particular aptitude for scholarly creativity, a man who was somewhat out of his element as a student yet who quickly began to mature and grow into himself once he put graduate school . . . firmly behind him after returning south to pastor*

*those early months of the Montgomery struggle was, in some very significant ways, a distinctively different young man from the one who had pieced together "A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman" in the winter of 1954-1955 . . .*

*Perhaps even more than has previously been appreciated, King's acquisition of that fundamental sense of mission, calling, and obligation that came to him in Montgomery transformed him into someone whose newly enriched self-understanding gave to his future life an integrity, a dedication, and a sense of purpose reaching well beyond himself that simply had not been present in his life, and in his academic studies, up until that time. We need to ponder whether acquiring*

*such a sense of mission can fundamentally transform a person's life and whether the tough-minded integrity, and the courage, that [King] demonstrated so repeatedly and so often in the years after 1956 was not something he brought to the black freedom struggle, but rather something he gained from . . . it.*



*King speaks during Montgomery bus boycott.*

to answer questions, although the jury, unlike a U.S. panel, may draw a negative inference. The defense counsel may cross-examine witnesses and make legal arguments, but "cannot disrupt the proceedings with delaying tactics and frivolous objections on points of procedure."

Drawing on the European approach, Maechling recommends reversing the Supreme Court rulings that make evidence obtained in violation of the Fourth Amendment's prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures inadmissible in court. He would also eliminate the rule against admission of hearsay evidence, which is just "the kind of information governments and ordinary people use daily to make decisions." Furthermore, he says, all witnesses in a criminal trial should be wit-

nesses for the court, rather than for the defense or prosecution, and "chosen and screened for competence and objectivity." And most of the questioning should be done by the judge, with the lawyers only afterward allowed to make a limited cross-examination.

Finally, Maechling says, appeals in criminal cases on minor procedural or technical grounds should not be allowed. Appeals instead should be limited, as in England, to a review of the whole record of the case, except where there is "some gross irregularity at the trial" or new evidence. Nothing in the Constitution forbids doing this, he says, and the U.S. Supreme Court, in a decision last April, "has already gone part of the way," by limiting capital-punishment appeals.

## Blacks Who Made It

"The Great Sharecropper Success Story" by David Whitman, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1991), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

In his best-selling book, *The Promised Land* (1991), Nicholas Lemann contends that today's urban black underclass and many of its well-known ills have some decades-old roots in black sharecropper society in the rural South. That society, Lemann writes, was "the national center" of illegitimate births and female-headed families; it had a very high rate of violent crime; and it had special problems with sexually transmitted diseases and substance abuse. Five million southern blacks migrated to the urban North between 1940 and '70, he says, and they brought this dismal heritage with them.

Lemann's sharecropper thesis is not really new, says Whitman, a senior editor at *U.S. News & World Report*. It was in vogue during the 1950s and latter half of the '60s. *Fortune*, for instance, published a lengthy story then on the "Southern Roots of Urban Crisis." By the early 1970s, however, the thesis had been discredited by Census Bureau and other studies indicating that the migrants were relatively successful in the urban North. About a dozen major studies completed between 1965

and '75 found that after a short period of adjustment, the black men from the South typically flourished in their new environment. The blacks who ended up poor, on welfare, or in broken families in northern cities, the studies repeatedly showed, "tend[ed] to be natives of the region, not southern migrants."

Given their background, what accounts for the sharecroppers' success? Whitman says that they had some important virtues, particularly "a strong work ethic" and "little familiarity with welfare." And contrary to Lemann's claim about sharecropper society being the national center of illegitimacy, Whitman says, "black women in the rural South were *more* likely to be married than were urban black women living in the South or North from at least 1910 to 1960." In 1940, for example, 73 percent of black women in the rural South lived in intact families, compared with only 58 percent in the North.

"[By] concentrating so heavily on the urban woes of displaced tenant farmers," Whitman writes, "Lemann diminishes the migrant success story that lies at the core

## Health Care Conundrums

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

All the attending doctors agree that the patient is in serious condition and badly in need of treatment. As of yet, however, they have been unable to agree on just what it should be; certainly, past therapies have not worked. And so the patient—the U.S. health-care system itself—just keeps getting sicker. The cost of health care, which more than doubled between 1980 and '90—from \$1,016 per capita to \$2,425—continues to soar. The number of Americans under 65 without any medical insurance at all stands at 37 million. The two problems, notes the Brookings Institution's Henry J. Aaron in the *Brookings Review* (Summer 1991), are related, and any effort to solve just one is likely to aggravate the other. "Extending insurance and assuring adequate coverage would push up already onerous costs. Controlling costs would lead to measures that curtailed insurance and thereby added to the ranks of the uninsured."

The best solution, according to many liberals, is national health insurance on the Canadian model. While this would mean hundreds of billions of dollars of new government spending, Senator Robert Kerrey (D.-Neb.) argues in the *American Prospect* (Summer 1991), that expense "would simply replace what most businesses and individuals already spend for health care." Eventually, he says, universal health insurance would be cheaper. "The current system's hidden costs of massive administrative waste, uncompensated care, and cost-shifting would shrink or disappear."

On close scrutiny, however, such claims—and national health insurance—lose their appeal, writes Harvard Business School Professor Regina E. Herzlinger in the *Atlantic* (Aug. 1991). "The absurdity of casting the federal government as an efficiency expert—or 50 state governments, as many proponents advocate, in an analogy to the Canadian system of administration by province—is illustrated by this question: If the cost of health care can be controlled through centralized purchasing of a standard product, why not lower the costs of other necessities, such as food and housing, in the same way?" Canada's system is not without problems: High-tech medical equipment, such as CAT scanners and radiation-therapy units, is in short supply, and there is some grumbling about long waits for certain services, including potentially life-saving heart surgery. In one notorious case, reported by the Canadian newsweekly *Maclean's* (Feb. 13, 1989), a 63-year-old man's vitally needed coronary-bypass operation was postponed 11 times before it was finally performed in a Toronto hospital; the man died eight days later. "I don't believe there's any miracle up there," Tufts Medical School Professor William B. Schwartz told Patrick G. Marshall of *Congressional Quarterly's Editorial Research Reports* (Nov. 23, 1990). The Canadian system is popular north of the border, but might be less so here. Whereas Canadians generally "don't mind queuing up," Dr. James S. Todd, chief executive officer of the American Medical Associ-

of the black odyssey." The upward climb of black migrants since 1940, Whitman says, is actually "one of the nation's great

success stories.... Not all the migrants ended up in the promised land, but most did leave Hades behind."

## Learning From The Army

"How Do They Do It?" by Charles Moskos, in *The New Republic* (Aug. 5, 1991), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The U.S. Army is not a racial utopia, but it has made great progress in race relations since the 1970s. In Operation Desert Storm, not a single racial incident occurred that was severe enough to come to

the attention of the military police. Moskos, a Northwestern University sociologist, contends that the Army has much to teach civilian society.

First of all, he says, the Army simply



ation, told Marshall, Americans "get mad [just] waiting in line at the grocery store, let alone for health care."

Even many liberals who would prefer a Canada-style system do not think it is politically practical in America today because of the whopping tax increase it would entail and the strong opposition to it from the insurance industry, the medical profession, and business. But Ronald Pollack and Phyllis Torda, of Families USA, a Washington-based advocacy group, say in the *American Prospect* (Summer 1991) that a growing number of business leaders are ready to support a so-called pay-or-play approach, if it is accompanied by genuine cost controls. Under this approach, employers would be required to provide health coverage or else pay into a public fund that would finance health benefits for all of the uninsured. Legislation along this line was enacted (but has yet to be implemented) in Massachusetts, and also has been proposed by a national commission. But neither plan does enough to limit costs, Pollack and Torda say.

The lack of a mechanism for controlling costs is the "most crucial shortcoming" of mandatory employer-based insurance, according to Brookings analyst Aaron. He proposes overcoming it by setting up regional agencies under state governments that would negotiate prices and costs with hospitals and physicians, and enforce budget limits. But Aaron's proposal, *New Republic* (Aug. 19-26, 1991) contributing editor John B. Judis points out, would turn insurance companies into "useless, expensive appendages," and hence would "arouse [their] wrath" just as much as national health insur-

ance would.

What, then, is to be done? Michael Kinsley of the liberal *New Republic* (July 29, 1991) dusts off a two-year-old report from the conservative Heritage Foundation. Surprisingly, he praises it as "the simplest, most promising, and, in important ways, most progressive idea for health care reform."

Heritage's proposal: Eliminate American workers' \$48 billion tax exemption for employer-provided health insurance, but offset it by offering a tax credit for insurance purchased directly by workers. The credit would be "refundable" for lower-income families (i.e. if a family's income tax liability was less than the credit, the family would get a check from the government), and Medicaid would continue to be available for the jobless poor. All workers would be required by law to buy adequate insurance to cover major ("catastrophic") family medical bills. Obligated to purchase their own insurance, Heritage argued, Americans would become more sensitive to its cost—and more inclined to avoid unnecessary or overpriced medical services. Ideally, the Heritage report said, consumers should buy routine medical care out-of-pocket and use health insurance only to cover "very expensive and unpredictable illnesses." This would make health insurance more like auto insurance, and, according to Heritage, considerably cut the cost of health-insurance policies.

"If you're looking for universal health care protection and at least a shot at cost control, the Heritage plan looks pretty good," writes Kinsley. "If you're looking for an excuse to expand the government, look elsewhere."

does not tolerate any display of racial prejudice. Officers or noncommissioned officers (NCOs) whose supervisors do not rate them as supportive of equal opportunity advance no further in their military careers. Some officers and NCOs may harbor racist sentiments, but they almost never express them openly. The Army sent "a strong signal" in the late 1970s, by devoting 12-14 hours of basic training to courses in race relations, Moskos says. Although many white soldiers resented the courses, regarding them as exercises in "white guilt," studies showed that the

courses "did make whites more attuned to black feelings."

The Army also gives black soldiers who need it "an academic boost not often available in civilian employment." Under a program begun in 1976, students, mainly black, go to school four hours every morning, for two to six weeks of remedial education in reading, writing, or mathematics. Potential sergeants among them particularly benefit. Doing well in the program, Moskos says, "is definitely not seen as 'acting white.' It is considered a realistic investment in one's future career."

In promotions, the Army uses "goals" but not "quotas." The stated aim is "to achieve a percentage of minority...selection not less than the selection rate for all officers being considered." Usually the goals are met. But if they cannot be without violations of standards, "the chips fall where they may," Moskos writes. For example, the number of blacks promoted from captain to major is usually below the goal. This probably is due, he says, to the fact "that about half of all black officers are products of historically black colleges, where [many] do not acquire the

writing and communication skills necessary for promotion to staff jobs." Promotions to colonel and above, however, show little racial disparity.

Unlike black civilian leaders, says Moskos, black officers and NCOs refuse to rely on racial politics and reject "the ideology of victimhood." They instead embrace a sort of "bootstrap conservatism." Younger black officers are advised by their seniors that while they will encounter "plenty of bumps on the road," as a black general put it, they must surmount them, for the benefit of those who follow.

## PRESS & TELEVISION

### *Naming the Victim*

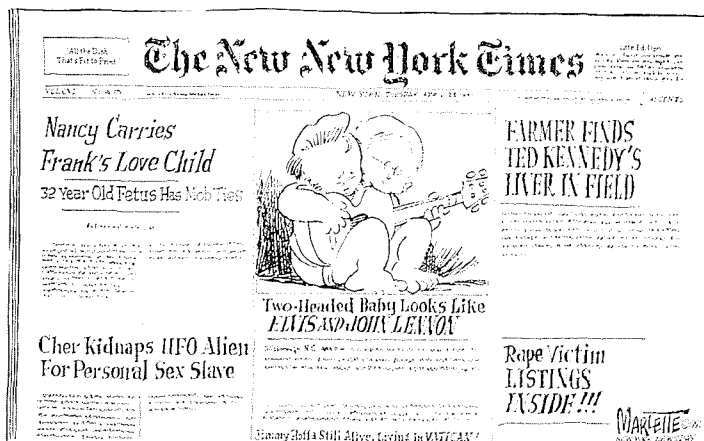
"Media Goes Wilding in Palm Beach" by Katha Pollitt, in *The Nation* (June 24, 1991), 72 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

After Senator Edward M. Kennedy's nephew, William Kennedy Smith, was accused of raping a Palm Beach woman last March, the news media's longstanding practice of preserving the anonymity of rape victims was broken by two major institutions—first, NBC News, then the *New York Times*. "Who she is is material in this . . .," claimed NBC News chief Michael Gartner. "You try to give viewers as many facts as you can and let them make up their minds."

Pollitt, a contributing editor of the *Nation*, dismisses such journalistic rationales as self-serving and invalid. "There is no good reason to publish the names of rape complainants without their consent, and many compelling reasons not to."

It is not as if the Palm Beach woman's charge is being made anonymously, Pollitt points out. Her name is (or will be) known to all who need to know: Smith and his attorney, the judge, and the jury. If the case goes to trial, "she will have to appear publicly in court, confront the defendant, give testimony and be cross-examined." But there is no need for her to be identified and "tried" in the news media too, Pollitt maintains.

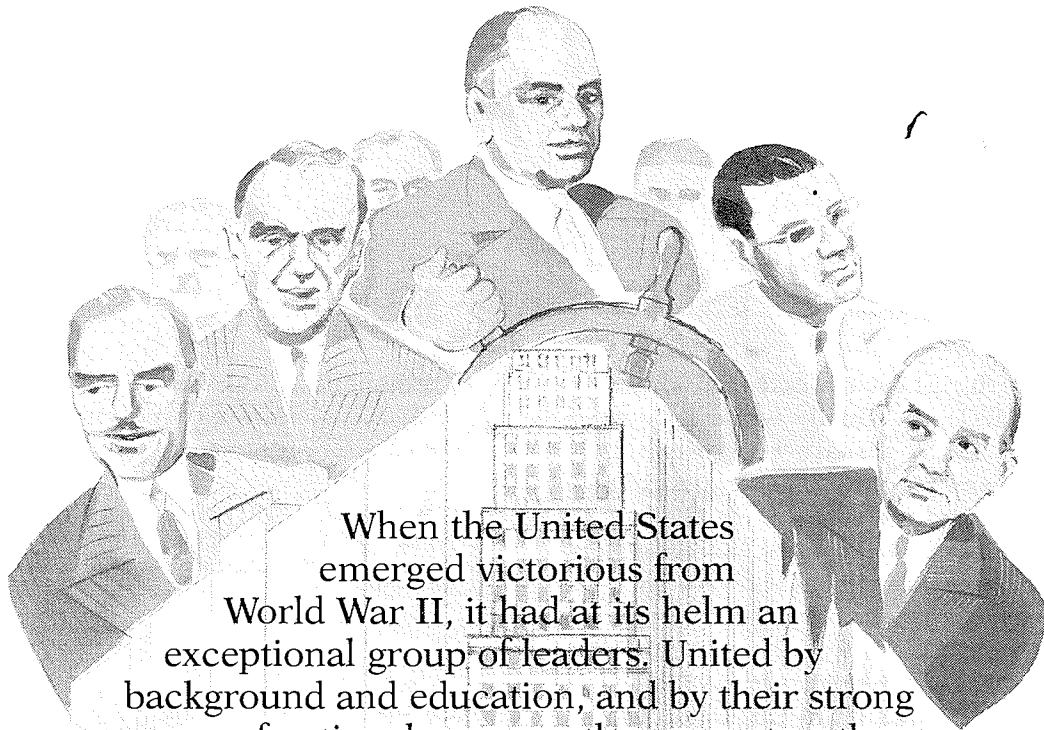
Nor do the media have any duty to "tell all" they know. The media frequently hold back information, Pollitt notes, on grounds of "taste" or the "national interest." In fact, says Pollitt, when it serves their own purposes, the news media favor anonymity, not only for their cherished sources but for some rape victims.



The decision of New York Times editors to name the woman in the Palm Beach rape case drew criticism from other journalists.

Periodicals continues on page 123

# The Rise and Fall of the American Establishment



When the United States emerged victorious from World War II, it had at its helm an exceptional group of leaders. United by background and education, and by their strong sense of national purpose, they came together to form something more than an elite. Commanding many of the major institutions of American political and economic life (but seldom occupying the most visible posts), the lawyers, bankers, diplomats, and other members of the American Establishment helped to guide the nation through the Cold War to the height of its global power—and into the tragedy of Vietnam. Here, in his portrait of the Establishment's "chairman," John J. McCloy, Max Holland illuminates the virtues and defects of the postwar governing class; John Judis chronicles the Establishment's demise and its replacement by a group of more self-interested "movers and shakers."

## CITIZEN McCLOY

*by Max Holland*

**I**n August 1964, presidential adviser McGeorge Bundy wrote Lyndon Johnson a spare but revealing memorandum. The Republicans had just nominated Barry Goldwater in San Francisco, rejecting if not humiliating the Rockefeller-led, internationalist wing of the party. Bundy sensed a golden opportunity for LBJ to court the “very first team of businessmen, bankers, et al.” orphaned politically by Goldwater. And the key to these people, claimed Bundy, was a Wall Street lawyer, banker, and diplomat named John J. McCloy:

He is for us, but he is under very heavy pressure from Eisenhower and others to keep quiet. I have told him that this is no posture for a man trained by Stimson . . . [McCloy] belongs to the class of people who take their orders from Presidents and nobody else.

My suggestion is that you should . . . ask him down for a frankly political discussion next week . . . I think with McCloy on your side, a remarkable bunch of people can be gathered; this is something he does extremely well.

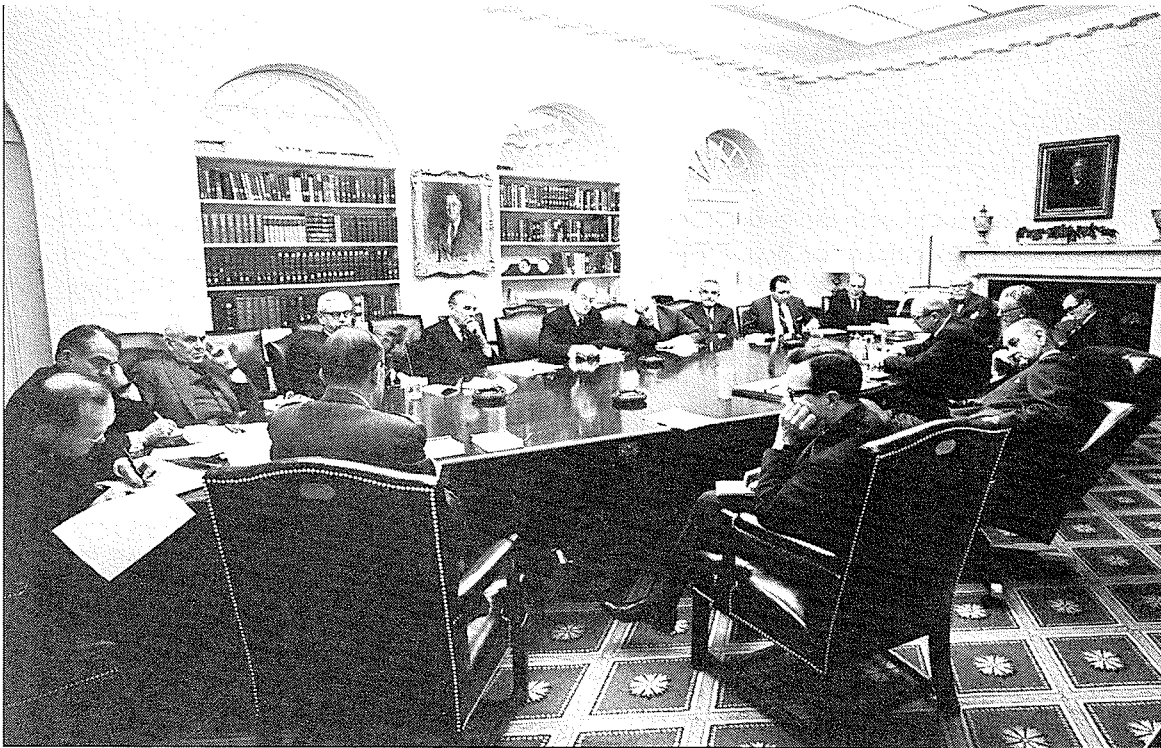
Nine years later, in the middle of the Watergate scandal, McCloy again came to mind when another leading Democrat

sought to communicate with the “very first team.” As W. Averell Harriman recounted in a 1973 memo for his files,

I called Jack McCloy . . . to tell him that I thought the New York Republican establishment should review the seriousness of the White House situation and take some action. They had a responsibility to get the President to clean up and put in some honorable people that would help to re-establish the credibility and confidence in the White House . . .

He asked me who I had in mind as the New York establishment and I said that I was too much removed from the scene to give him names. If Tom Dewey were alive he would be the one to talk to and the responsible heads of the banks that were greatly concerned by the economic instability and the international lack of confidence in the dollar. I said unfortunately Nelson Rockefeller is too competitive with Nixon to take any leadership. He suggested Herbert Brownell, whom I endorsed.

As journalist Richard Rovere observed in a famous 1961 essay, members of the American Establishment routinely deny that it exists, preferring to maintain that they are merely good citizens exercising their individual rights and responsibilities. This unofficial policy of self-denial makes



*In January 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson consults some of the Establishment's "Wise Men." McCloy is third from left; Allen Dulles sits at the far end of the table.*

these candid memos all the more impressive. The authors are impeccable sources; Bundy even indiscreetly entitled his memo "Backing from the Establishment."

The notion of an American Establishment, or, more generally, of a governing elite in America, is accepted by some scholars, primarily sociologists and anthropologists who have studied inequality and stratification in various societies. But the concept has not won full acceptance in other disciplines or by the American public. Inequality is as dear to the status-conscious American heart as liberty itself, William Dean Howells once noted, but America self-consciously celebrates egalitarian man. "Elite" is practically a fighting word. No one seriously asserts that power and authority are evenly distributed in America, but the notion of anything akin to a privileged, self-perpetuating Establishment—an elite that governs, and therefore classes that are governed—sounds profoundly out of key, so counter to American myth that it would seem worthy of an inves-

tigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee were it still in existence.

On those occasions when it is noticed, the American Establishment is usually accorded inordinate power and foresight, most often by polemicists at the extreme ends of the political spectrum, where conspiracy theories abound. Considering the Establishment's significance, though, there is a dearth of serious research and writing about its composition, culture, and contributions. One British historian, borrowing from Sherlock Holmes, has likened the situation to the dog that did not bark in the night: The American Establishment is made all the more conspicuous by the absence of literature about it.

After a belated discovery in the mid-1950s, and some hot pursuit and scathing treatment in the 1960s and '70s, the Establishment and the role of elites are once again being more or less ignored. Following the American debacle in Vietnam, it was widely suggested that the Establishment, then badly fractured, should never

again be entrusted with the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, where since World War II it had been most visible and active. In a famous declaration before Jimmy Carter's inauguration, the Georgian's close adviser, Hamilton Jordan, announced, "If you find a Cy Vance as Secretary of State, and Zbigniew Brzezinski as head of National Security, then I would say we failed . . . . The government is going to be run by people you never heard of." After Carter's defeat in 1980 by yet another self-proclaimed outsider, Brzezinski himself declared the Establishment all but dead, and successive pundits have tended to agree. But these reports, as Mark Twain might put it, have been exaggerated. After all, today's executive branch features blue-bloods George Bush (Phillips Academy, Yale), James Baker (Princeton, corporate law), and Nicholas Brady (Wall Street's Dillon, Read). If the position of these men does not prove the staying power of the Establishment's Republican strain, it at least illustrates the continuing influence of individual White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) elites in America.

A society without a class structure, and therefore a governing elite, has never been constructed and may be a hopelessly utopian ideal, to judge from recent communist regimes. The more interesting question is, Who comprises society's governing elite and what does it do? For if stratification is inescapable, it follows that a society will largely reflect the goals and beliefs of elites from its most powerful class.

**W**hen exploring a complex subject, the philosopher Descartes once advised, divide it into as many parts as possible; when each part is more easily conceived, the whole becomes

more intelligible. To follow this principle with respect to the American Establishment leads inexorably to one of its most significant parts, the same lawyer, banker, and diplomat whom Bundy advised Lyndon Johnson to cultivate in August 1964, and whom Averell Harriman called in 1973 during the Watergate crisis. John McCloy's life is a classic guide to the American Establishment of the 20th century. His origins in Philadelphia, his ethnic background, and even his lifespan all coincide with, and thereby illuminate, the trajectory of the 20th-century Establishment.

The creation of a national Establishment, or what sociologist E. Digby Baltzell called a "primary group of prestige and power," was a social consequence of industrialization, of business and then political activities that were by the 1880s fast growing beyond traditional city boundaries. As a preindustrial ethos based on family ties and on landed and inherited wealth melted away, new social formations arose to bind together the industrial-era upper class on a national scale and to provide a semblance of tradition while absorbing and regulating new money. In the eastern financial centers of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Cleveland rose the citadels—the banks, corporations, law firms, and investment houses—that set the rules. The boarding schools, Ivy League colleges, fraternities, and metropolitan men's clubs became the training grounds of upper-class society. And each of these institutions figured prominently in the life of John McCloy.

The American upper class would not have produced an Establishment by mid-century, however, if it had been content to pursue its interests and defend its privileges from the privacy of its board rooms, law offices, and men's clubs. A governing elite

*Max Holland, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is writing a biography of John J. McCloy, to be published by Charles Scribner's Sons. He is the author of When the Machine Stopped: A Cautionary Tale from Industrial America (1989). Copyright © 1991 by Max Holland.*



issues from an upper class that knows its interests and perpetuates its power in the world of affairs, whether on Wall Street, Main Street, or in Washington. And an outstanding characteristic of the American upper class during the 20th century was its active participation in civic life, its willingness to wield public power, and its seemingly disinterested ethic of public service. National leadership, particularly in the domain of foreign policy as the United States grew into a world power after 1941, came disproportionately from elites, or upper-class individuals who stood at the top of their occupation or profession. Few other members of the governing elite devoted so large a part of their lives to public service as McCloy, and few other lives included, actually or symbolically, so many of the private institutions through which Establishment power was wielded: the leading banks, corporations, associations, universities, foundations, and think tanks.

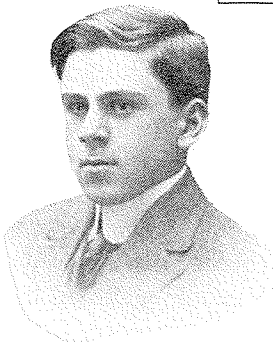
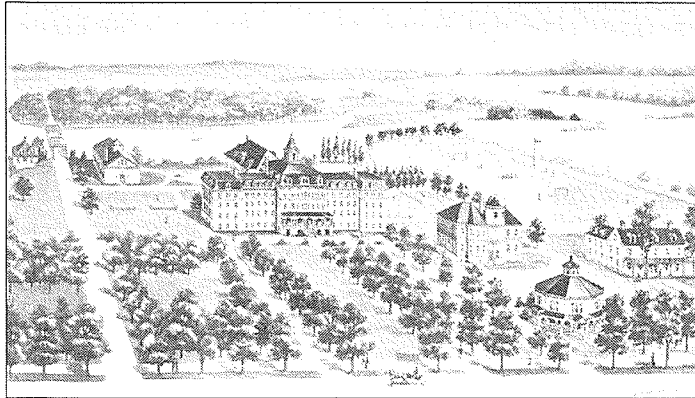
There *were* other men who played similar roles. The names W. Averell Harriman and Robert Lovett come readily to mind. Yet no career rivaled, in longevity and variety, the life's work of John McCloy, nor replicated so nearly the forms and functions of the Establishment, its strengths and weaknesses, and its characteristic values of industry, success, and civic-mindedness. McCloy's was a record of unmatched service to Democratic and Republican presidents alike over four decades, complemented by paid and unpaid labors for the most potent private institutions in America. Whether his role was decisive or advisory, opposed to Establishment wisdom or more often defining it, McCloy's ubiquitous presence stitches together fundamental strands of American history. Most prominently, the length and breadth of his activities very nearly chronicle the key issues during America's rise from prewar provincialism to postwar internationalism.

McCloy's life exemplifies the Establishment down to the characteristic fact that he was generally unknown to the public yet celebrated by his peers. When he died at the age of 93 in 1989, his memorial service in New York attracted a secretary of state representing the president of the United States, a past president, a former West German chancellor, and dozens of nationally prominent citizens, including Cyrus Vance, Henry Kissinger, David Rockefeller, and Paul Volcker.

Notwithstanding these elite tributes, John McCloy would have been the first to assert his modest origins, the fact that he was a "poor Irish boy from Philadelphia," born on the wrong side of the tracks. In 1961, with tongue in cheek, journalist Richard Rovere dubbed McCloy "chairman" of the Establishment. Thereafter McCloy was annoyed to find that people assumed that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Usually noted for his rock-like equanimity, McCloy would object, almost to the point of becoming emotional, whenever he heard loose talk about an Establishment and his role in it.

In truth, though, he was not greatly bothered by the homage to his power and influence. His modest, self-effacing style barely concealed a man who was keenly aware of his own importance, a man whose exceptional career made him a "mix of humility and vanity," as his younger law partner (and fellow Establishmentarian) Elliot Richardson once put it. What genuinely rankled McCloy was the corresponding but false notion that he was to the manner born. His position in life had not been fore-ordained but hard-earned.

To ignore this upward mobility is to misunderstand McCloy's life, and, by extension, the nature of power and the Establishment in America. Far more than its British cousin, on which it was loosely patterned, the American Establishment during Mc-



McCLOY, JOHN SNYDER  
814 N. 20th Street, Philadelphia, Penna.  
("Jack".) Alpha Phi, Musical Clubs  
(3).

*The Peddie Institute was the first rung on McCloy's ladder. At left, his yearbook entry in 1911. For unknown reasons, he later changed his middle name to Jay.*

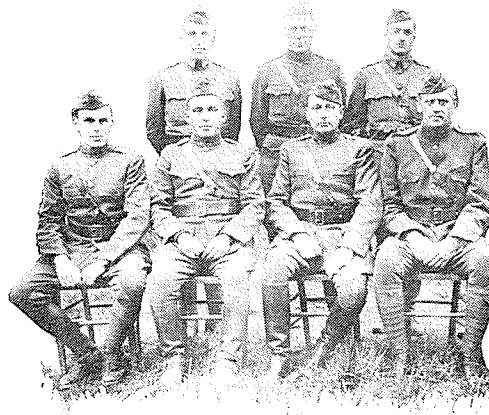
"So young but oh so wise!"

"Jack" has considerable talent, is somewhat of a scholar, is pretty good at athletics, but, sad to relate, he is afflicted with an all too prevalent Peddie infirmity—girl—. To elicit further information with regard to this fair Philadelphian request "Jack" to tell you the story of his lamented Frat. pin.

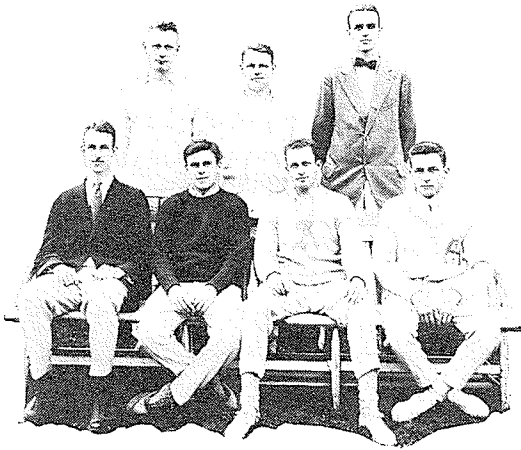
Cloy's lifetime was open to those with the wrong family pedigree, within certain racial and ethnic bounds. Indeed, its singular characteristic was its relative permeability, its willingness to absorb those who were willing to adhere to certain values and unspoken codes, and to protect certain vested interests. To maintain stability, there had to be room for men of talent to move up, and the genius of the American Establishment, if not America itself, lay in its openness to people like John McCloy.

He was born in 1895, the second son of a slender, bookish, Scots-Irish actuarial clerk and a robust and hard-working Pennsylvania Dutch

housewife from Lancaster County. Admiration of the "right people," and the notion that one could endeavor to become one of them, were drummed into McCloy from his earliest years. The McCloys believed firmly in the Victorian virtues of thrift, duty, morality, struggle, and self-improvement, and they viewed the upper class as the foremost upholders of these ideals. To be sure, McCloy's parents, John and Anna, could not have imagined their son's rise to the peak of a national Establishment. Their hopes were considerably more modest, extending only to the urban upper class that existed in Philadelphia during the 1890s. Probably no one admired "proper" Philadelphia more than John and Anna McCloy. Certainly no



*Climbing higher: captain of the tennis team at Amherst about 1915; training for World War I.*



parents predicated their children's lives upon its existence with more calculation.

By the 1890s, Quakers no longer dominated the city founded by William Penn. With just over one million inhabitants, Philadelphia now belonged to the so-called "Old Immigrants," descendants of Protestant, northern Europeans who arrived after 1682. Above all, though, Philadelphia owed its character to the English. Prior to the American Revolution, Philadelphia had been the second largest city in the British empire, and more than a century later it still resembled the England idealized by British Tories, down to its flatness, its grim industrialism, and an upper class that cherished country manor values and itself, not

necessarily in that order. While other great American cities were experiencing municipal growth and strife, Philadelphia maintained a British air of placidity, respectability, and self-satisfaction.

The reverse side of this satisfaction and aplomb, however, was an almost stultifying complacency, snobbery, and enervation. Under the veneer lay distinctions of class and background that were easily the most rigid and self-conscious in America. Just as surely as the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers defined Philadelphia's natural boundaries, so the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad delineated its social and class divisions. To fail to travel daily on the railroad's Main Line, or to live

## THE ESTABLISHMENT'S INVISIBLE HAND

*In mock academic style, journalist Richard Rovere limned the Establishment in an essay reprinted in The American Establishment and Other Reports, Opinions, and Speculations (1962).*

Summing up the situation at the present moment, it can, I think, be said that the Establishment maintains effective control over the Executive and Judicial branches of government; that it dominates most of American education and intellectual life; that it has very nearly unchallenged power in deciding what is and what is not respectable opinion in this country. Its authority is enormous in organized religion (Roman Catholics and fundamentalist Protestants to one side), in science, and, indeed, in all the learned professions except medicine. It is absolutely unrivaled in the great new world created by the philanthropic foundations—a fact which goes most of the way toward explaining why so little is known about the Establishment and its workings. Not one thin dime of Rockefeller, Carnegie, or Ford money has been spent to further Establishment studies....

The Establishment is not monolithic in structure or inflexible in doctrine. There is an Establishment "line," but adherence is compulsory only on certain central issues, such as foreign aid. On economic affairs, for example, several views are tolerated. The accepted range is from about as far left as, say, Walter Reuther to about as far right as, say, Dwight Eisenhower. A man cannot be for *less* welfarism than Eisenhower, and to be farther left than Reuther is considered bad taste.

north of the tracks, immediately revealed one's inferior social and economic standing. The most common denominator of the local Establishment was membership in the Episcopal Church, the American offshoot of the Church of England. Just outside the charmed circle stood the "lower" Protestants, namely Presbyterians, Methodists,

and, somewhat farther beyond, Baptists. While they were not to be confused with those of English-Episcopal stock, these Scots, Scots-Irish, and Welsh emigrants were a decided cut above those other former British subjects, the Irish Catholics.

The McCloy's Presbyterianism was the twin social deficit to their row house well north of the railroad tracks. Yet by the early 20th century, because of the changing character of immigration to Philadelphia, it was becoming easier in some ways to enter Philadelphia's upper class. Northern Europeans were still part of that immigrant mix, but an increasingly smaller ingredient, supplanted by the immigrants who came from southern and eastern Europe. There was talk about "how the Jew and the alien are forcing their way in," and the urban Establishment was growing more inclusive, so long as aspirants were white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant.

**T**he surest way into the upper class, the McCloy's rightly thought, was education. John McCloy senior had dropped out of high school, perhaps because of a heart murmur that plagued him much of his life. Yet despite his lack of formal schooling, he had a passion for Latin and Greek, to the extent that he seemingly believed in the original meaning of the word barbarian: one who does not speak Greek. Knowledge of the classics was also inseparable from the one profession that the McCloy's, along with proper Philadelphia, held in highest regard: the law. Decades later, "Philadelphia lawyer" would be a term of opprobrium, connoting a shrewd, unscrupulous operator skilled in the manipulation of technicalities. But in turn-of-the-century Philadelphia, because of favorable associations stretching back to the American Revolution, the profession and the phrase had only the loftiest connotations. The law was also one of the surest

paths by which a man without capital could attain wealth.

In 1899, the McCloy's' eldest son William died of a fever at age seven, and two years later John McCloy senior died of heart failure. He was only 39. Family lore has it that on his deathbed McCloy extracted a pledge from Anna: She would "make sure Johnny learns Greek." From that simple vow, Anna McCloy would construct a whole new life for herself and her sole remaining child. Anna became the dominant influence in his life, insisting on certain values and inculcating definite beliefs. What might have been an overbearing presence was leavened, though, by her unflagging confidence in her son's capacities. Freud once observed that "A man who has been the indisputable favorite of his mother keeps for life the feeling of a conqueror, that confidence of success that often induces real success." Those words were made to describe John McCloy.

Anna McCloy became a hairdresser, rising each morning at six to travel to Rittenhouse Square or out the Main Line to "do heads" while her two sisters minded young John. Her work gave her access to the upper class and unusually intimate exposure to its mores, prejudices, and customs. Among the last was private schooling. In addition to its avowed purpose of providing a superior education, private schooling served a social and psychological function. The elite school, as much as the family, was an important agency for transmitting the values and manners of the upper class. It also served to regulate the admission of new wealth and talent.

A dramatic rise in private academies in the late 19th century indicates that, just as the American economy was becoming truly national and industrialized, the urban upper classes of Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and other eastern centers were banding together to form a national elite.

Groton opened its doors in 1884, for example, Choate in 1896. The sons of old wealth and the scions of the new industrial rich needed proper rearing, and this in large measure meant association with the right people. Bulwarks against the growing heterogeneity of public schools, private schools groomed their students for success and power. And like their British counterparts, the American schools instilled in young men an admiration for fair play, a healthy desire to win, and a respect for power. If a boy were too sensitive, boarding school could be unforgiving. But it could also instill self-control, discipline, and a

### OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

*Rovere insisted that his essay was a spoof, but William F. Buckley, then editor of National Review and an angry outsider, failed to see the humor. Rovere's joke, he wrote in a review, depended on "a sort of nervous apprehension of the correctness of the essential insight."*

It tends to be true in England that the Establishment prevails. It is less true in the United States: for the Establishment here is not so much of the governing class, as of the class that governs the governors. The English Establishment mediates the popular political will through perdurable English institutions. The American Establishment seeks to set the bounds of permissible opinion. And on this, it speaks *ex cathedra*. It would not hesitate to decertify Mr. Rovere. But he gives no indication of waywardness . . .

[I]n England, the Establishment is conceded to concern itself with what is clearly the national consensus. In America, by contrast, there is a deep division between the views of the putative Establishment and those whose interests it seeks to forward. For in this country there are two consensuses, that of the people (broadly speaking) and that of the intellectuals (narrowly speaking). These differences the Establishment is not eager to stress.

sense of assurance, all deemed essential to a first-class temperament.

In 1907, Anna McCloy enrolled her son in the Peddie Institute, where, parents were assured, "Christian influences prevail and the development of character is placed above all other considerations." The Baptist-founded academy in New Jersey was a poor cousin to the more exclusive New England boarding schools, but like them it emphasized sports as a means of building character. Anna McCloy's parting words to her son as she left him at school for his first term were, "Be a Presbyterian and don't let those Baptists convert you." The injunction was more cultural than ecclesiastical, for the McCloyes were never deeply religious.

Perhaps the cardinal lesson young McCloy learned at Peddie came from his participation in sports. He was not fleet of foot, but his coach would always insist, as McCloy later recalled, that he "get in there and run with the swift. Run with the swift. Every now and then you might come in second." At first he was reluctant to compete against his betters. Then he made an important discovery: What he lacked in speed, he more than made up for in endurance.

Prep school was only the first of a number of institutions that regulated the upward mobility of young men like John McCloy into the national upper class. Peddie was followed by a select private college, Amherst, arguably the one institution that figured longest and largest in McCloy's life. (He would later chair its board of trustees for many years.) McCloy excelled in history, English, and physical education, and struggled with mathematics and public speaking. No one was awed by his brilliance, but he was a dogged student. Ever the thorough pupil, he even staged his own "reading debates" by simultaneously reading three or four books with different slants on the same subject.

Almost as important as the Amherst

education was the status of being an "Amherst man." To become one was to earn a badge of class identity, to go out into the world linked with all other Amherst men, an equal in rank to graduates of other select colleges. McCloy's fraternity, Beta Theta Pi, was not as high-toned as some, but, as was true at the Ivy League schools, fraternities (and clubs) dominated the social and political life at Amherst and promised a network of social and professional contacts that could prove useful years after graduation. If nothing else, they taught their members the bearing and fine manners of gentlemen; for being part of the upper class meant being recognizable in language and dress as well as in religion.

The rare non-WASP who aspired to penetrate the upper class did so only by enduring a "brutal bargain," obliterating all manifestations of his own ethnicity and becoming a facsimile WASP. McCloy, of course, did not have to discard any fundamental identity. His sole handicap was being a "scholarship boy," and even his leisure pursuits during adolescence and into adulthood were aimed at overcoming it. Anna McCloy remained single-minded in that goal, even during summer vacations. At her urging, he would knock on the doors of the great estates along the coast of Maine, seeking a job as a tutor to young boys. Years later he would recall the "day she made me work up the nerve to ring the doorbell at Seal Harbor, where the Rockefeller estate was . . . I got turned down, but I did teach them a little sailing." His mother also encouraged him to cultivate the diversions enjoyed by the upper class, namely hunting, fishing, and a recent import from England, lawn tennis. Tennis was fast becoming the preferred sport of the Anglophile upper class, for in its dress and conventions it epitomized the notion of "gentlemen at play." A good tennis game was yet another way to emulate and thus



meet the right people. Jack developed one.

After graduating from Amherst in 1916, he went to Harvard Law, which, then as now, set a standard for legal education in America (although then virtually anyone with a college degree and the price of tuition could attend). McCloy worked hard but again did not particularly distinguish himself. Years later, he would jokingly chide his former Harvard professor, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, for not assigning him a seat in the front row, where Frankfurter always put his brightest (and favorite) students.

As surely as a Harvard degree created useful associations and opened important doors, a Harvard legal education molded minds. "Law," said Edmund Burke, "sharpens a man's mind by narrowing it," a truth that Burke was not alone in recognizing. Observers have long noted the peculiarly large role lawyers play in the upper reaches of American society. If asked where the American aristocracy was located, wrote Tocqueville, "I have no hesitation in answering that . . . it is to be found at the bar or the bench." Lawyers developed an "instinctive regard for the regular connection of ideas," which tended to make them informed, detached, conservative, and trusted. Or as Jean Monnet, another French observer, later remarked about that characteristically American profession, lawyers submerged ideology and concentrated on process, making them peculiarly able to understand unprecedented situations and to devise practical ways for resolving the ambiguities of human life and human institutions.

**M**cCloy's years at Harvard (1916–1917 and 1919–1921) were interrupted by active duty as an artillery captain in France during World War I. McCloy had acquired a Bull Moose Rooseveltian world-view, probably during

his days at Amherst, when the campus was split between "pacifists" and "militarists." McCloy was instructed in an ideology that saw the Civil War as the crucible of American civilization. Now that Manifest Destiny on the continent was fulfilled, this ideology held, it was America's inexorable and proper duty to break decisively with George Washington's policy of noninvolvement in European quarrels and act like a world power. Gradually it would assume Britain's role, emerging as the world's creditor while preventing the domination of continental Europe by any one power. In the 20th century, that meant America would share British discomfort about rising German power.

At Amherst, McCloy, always eager to test himself, had been one of the school's first "Plattsburghers," spending his summer vacations at the military training camps in Plattsburgh, New York, organized and funded by elite WASP businessmen and lawyers like Grenville Clark. Once America entered the conflict on April 6, 1917, McCloy promptly left Harvard to volunteer. Several weeks into officer training at Fort Ethan Allen, he caught the eye of a general officer, Guy Preston, a cavalryman who had fought at the Battle of Wounded Knee. Preston selected McCloy as a staff aide after he saw him dismount from a horse. "I could see blood all over his pants," Preston later recalled. "I said to myself, any man who could keep riding with that much pain must be a damn good officer."

The Great War was a formative experience for him, as it was for his generation and entire nations. Although he did not participate in combat—or perhaps because—McCloy left the Army free of cynicism or dread, and his convictions about America's international role, and the need to check German ambition, remained intact. The day after Armistice was declared on November 11, 1918, he wrote to his mother:

I did not play the part I worked for in the great act. My, how I was keyed up to it. No officer could have taken his men 'over the top' with any greater dash than I was prepared to do. It is very queer but I feel awfully desolate. The war is a thing that will be talked of and dreamed of for the duration of time and I did not get in it. A great many of my friends were killed, a greater number are wounded, and still a greater number were actively engaged in it. I was a soldier before any of them . . .

My, how bitter the French are to the Germans . . . It is a bitter shame that the people of Germany are not to see their towns sacked and their fields laid waste as the French have. People of Germany . . . don't realize yet what war is, and until they do there will be no peace in Europe.

These attitudes became increasingly unpopular and almost disreputable in the years following the Great War. The awful toll of industrialized warfare, the great powers' failure to pacify Europe at Versailles, and later charges of war-profiteering by American industry (including charges that the war was fought on behalf of Wall Street interests) disillusioned the American public. The nation assumed a churlish isolationism, turning self-indulgent and speculative. It took another generation, and another war, before isolationism could be driven decisively from popular opinion, and indeed from elite opinion.

While serving with the forces occupying Germany, McCloy briefly considered a military career. Finally, though, he decided to return to Harvard Law. Upon graduation in June 1921, he went to see George Wharton Pepper, an acquaintance of his mother through her work as a hairdresser, and the living embodiment of the Philadelphia Lawyer, circa 1921. Presenting his credentials, McCloy asked Pepper to which firms he should apply. The patrician candidly suggested that for all his accomplishments McCloy would never become a partner in a blue-chip Philadelphia firm. He was, after all, still a "scholarship boy" from the wrong

side of the tracks. Pepper advised the 26-year-old McCloy to head north, to an aggressive legal community less concerned about keeping up appearances and more appreciative of hard work. That night McCloy took a train to New York, the national center of talent and money-power.

There he joined Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, a staunchly Republican firm with a long roster of wealthy clients who needed counsel on their trusts and estates. But Cadwalader's nepotism was too redolent of the Philadelphia that McCloy had left behind. Through Donald Swatland, a fellow student at Harvard Law School, McCloy transferred to the Wall Street firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore in 1924. Cravath was also a Republican firm, but there its resemblance to stodgier Cadwalader ended. Cravath was to the practice of corporate law what Amherst and Harvard were to education and what tennis was to sport. The "Cravath system" was the prototype for management of a contemporary law firm, and Cravath's casework put it at the cutting edge of corporation law throughout the 1920s and '30s. Cravath weighed lineage, personality, and ability when hiring new lawyers, but merit counted more than blood ties. A Cravath partner was just as likely to have graduated from the University of Michigan Law School as from Harvard.

Cravath also epitomized the international orientation of the corporate legal elite, a key element in the nascent Establishment that was emerging even as America was becoming an international power. Paul Cravath himself was a founding member of the Council on Foreign Relations, which had its genesis in the early 1920s, just as public opinion over America's first great European foray was souring. The lawyers, bankers, academics, and businessmen who founded the Council admitted to no ideology, but all shared the conviction that

the United States inevitably had to play a major role in world affairs.

Cravath men were noted for their long working hours, and McCloy, unmarried, with only his mother to support, favored by a sturdy constitution, and mature beyond his years owing to his wartime service, labored harder than most. His working life was dominated by complicated railroad reorganization cases. (On one occasion in 1926, he became, for one day, the nation's youngest railroad president, his photograph splashed across newspapers around the country.) Many of McCloy's leisure hours were spent playing tennis at the Heights Casino in Brooklyn, which he joined in the same year as a young investment banker, James Forrestal. As Anna McCloy had hoped, the game eased her son's entry into the right social circles, particularly as he became known as one of the outstanding amateur tennis players in New York. For the sake of

his prowess on the court, McCloy was sought by influential men he otherwise might not have met, leaders of the bar such as George Roberts, a name partner in the prestigious law firm of Winthrop, Stimson, and prominent businessmen such as Julian Myrick, head of the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association and chairman of the Mutual Life Insurance Company. McCloy's social connections multiplied as he joined a lengthening

list of metropolitan men's clubs in the 1920s and '30s: Anglers' (forever the Rooseveltian outdoorsman, he was a lifelong fly-fisherman), Bond, Grolier, Recess, University, and Wall Street. His social reputation was rivaled only by the esteem in which he was held at work, for, as Robert Swaine wrote, "no Cravath partner... had greater personal popularity than McCloy."

In 1930, a year after he became a full

partner at Cravath, he married Ellen Zinsser, the daughter of a socially prominent German-American industrialist in New York City. Their union merited the couple's immediate entry in New York's *Social Register*. Ellen McCloy was a socially adept wife who bore for her husband a son and a daughter. Nearly two decades after the marriage, when McCloy became the American representative in occupied Germany, Ellen's social skills and fluent German were instrumental to McCloy's effort to forge a new alliance



*The young New York corporate lawyer with his new wife Ellen in Paris, around 1930.*

between victor and vanquished.

The same year he was married McCloy was sent to Paris to run Cravath's European office, promptly becoming involved in a case that would vault him beyond the *Social Register* and into the pages of *Who's Who*, the register of elite, individual accomplishment. The case involved Bethlehem Steel's claim that in 1916, before America entered World War I, German agents had

sabotaged its munitions factory on Black Tom Island in New York Harbor. McCloy, on behalf of the American claimants, would pursue the case for nine years, long after the Nazis took power and everyone in the legal community, including some of his partners, thought he was flogging a dead horse. In the summer of 1938 he worked virtually day and night preparing briefs for the case. And in the unlikely year of 1939 he won a \$20 million judgment by default. On the eve of another European war, he had fortuitously established himself as an expert on German sabotage.

**T**he Black Tom case made McCloy's reputation at a time when opinion on the most important question of the day was deeply divided. Internationalism, which meant intervention in Europe, was not the consensus view; nor were its advocates close to being the driving force behind American foreign policy. A substantial portion of the upper class scorned "that man" in the White House as a virtual traitor to his class. (McCloy's own law firm fought the New Deal tooth-and-nail in the courts throughout the 1930s.) Not only did FDR accuse the WASP-dominated upper class of grossly selfish mismanagement of the economy but he had also forged a political coalition critically dependent upon religious and ethnic minorities. He then opened up government to people without the right names and right origins, including Catholics, Jews, and others who were routinely excluded from the best universities, law firms, and corporations despite their talent. In league with reform-minded Protestants, these newcomers were challenging the maldistribution of wealth in America. Upper-class and elite anxiety was heightened by developments abroad. Many feared the international Left more than fascism, most prominently, the Wall Street lawyer John Foster Dulles. Grandson of one secre-

tary of state and nephew of another, Dulles advocated the cause of the "have-not" nations of Germany and Japan.

McCloy personified the tendency that would prevail within elite ranks. Brimming with confidence in America, these internationalists held that the "Fortress America" advocated by isolationists was naive. North America might seem impregnable to attack, but the aggressive fascist powers still threatened U.S. interests. Fascism not only contradicted the American aim of an open world economy but also threatened political and economic freedom at home, since America would likely become a garrison state if the dictatorships went undefeated.

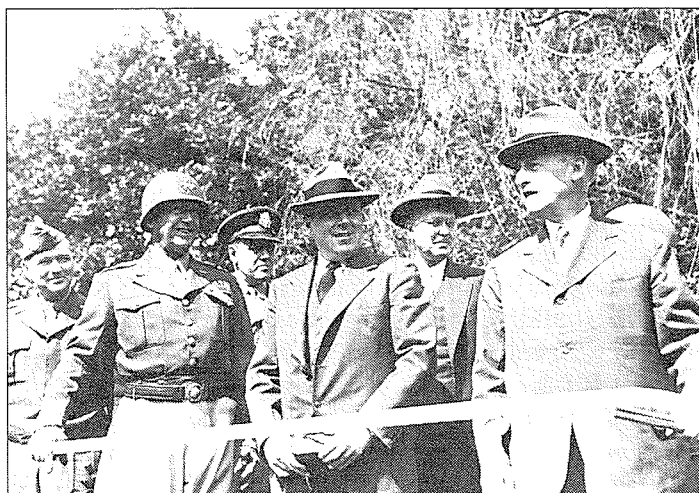
Two months after Hitler's 1939 invasion of Poland, McCloy was elected to membership in the Council on Foreign Relations, the incubator of internationalist views on U.S. foreign policy. Soon he was just as active in William Allen White's Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, and he was working with Grenville Clark to spread military training in the schools, 20 years after Plattsburgh. Hamilton Fish Armstrong, editor of *Foreign Affairs*, pegged him as one of the more talented, up-and-coming men of his generation. His reputation soared. Gregarious but not insincere, McCloy had acquired the upper-class air of authority. He had the ease with himself that often comes with athletic success, and his self-confidence communicated itself effortlessly. His remarkable energy gave him presence, even though he was short and compact. A later law partner remarked, "I never met a man who was as comfortable in his own skin as McCloy." He could be simultaneously unyielding and disarming, a rare quality that won over many old lions of the Establishment.

In late 1940, a new, hawkish secretary of war named Henry Stimson asked McCloy to come down to Washington as a consultant on German sabotage. The response of

elites to the call to public life at the time may have exceeded even those during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The war, and America's emergence as a global power, marked a watershed in the relationship between national elites and Washington. It crystallized the emergence of a national Establishment united in its devotion to managing the United States' global power. The most prominent symbol of this union, of course, was Henry Stimson himself, born two years after the end of the Civil War, a Wall

Street lawyer, and a former secretary of state and secretary of war under two different Republican presidents, including FDR's unpopular predecessor, Herbert Hoover. An army of younger men with credentials similar to McCloy's came to Washington. A Cravath man (Al McCormack) directed Army intelligence, another Cravath man (Benjamin Shute) was responsible for distribution of the Magic and Ultra intercepts, and a third Cravath man (Donald Swatland) procured all the airplanes for the Army Air Forces. The entire civilian leadership of the War Department would consist of WASP men trained as corporate lawyers, namely Stimson, Robert Patterson, Harvey Bundy, Robert Lovett, and John McCloy. When personal contacts did not yield the right man for a job, there was always the Council on Foreign Relations. McCloy, who in the early days served as a personnel chief for Stimson, later recalled that "Whenever we needed a man we thumbed through the roll of Council members and put through a call to New York."

McCloy, bearing the official title of assistant secretary of war, became almost a sur-



*At Potsdam in the summer of 1945, Assistant Secretary of War McCloy (center) reviewed American troops with his mentor, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, and General George S. Patton.*

rogate son to the aging Stimson. As Stimson's chief troubleshooter, he drew on the skills he had honed as a corporate lawyer. With his prodigious energy he helped to secure passage of the Lend-Lease Act, organize the "arsenal of democracy," choose America's field commanders, and build the Pentagon. McCloy also was at the forefront of major domestic issues, including the internment of Japanese-Americans and the early stages of the integration of U.S. armed forces. By late 1943, once Allied victory had become mostly a matter of time, his attention shifted to high strategy and to politico-military decisions that would have ramifications for decades. He was intimately involved in the response (or lack thereof) of the Allies to reports of Nazi concentration camps, helped draft postwar occupation plans for countries from Italy to Korea, torpedoed the Morgenthau Plan to limit German industry, framed the Potsdam declaration, organized the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, and finally, participated in the decision to drop the atomic bomb. Probably no civilian other than Roosevelt took so direct a role in the war's mili-

tary decisions. "So varied were his labors and so catholic his interests that they defy summary . . .," Stimson wrote in his third-person postwar memoir. "He became so knowing in the ways of Washington that Stimson sometimes wondered whether anyone in the administration ever acted without 'having a word with McCloy'; when occasionally he was the first to give McCloy news he would remark that his assistant must be weakening."

By war's end, the role played by Stimson for nearly a half-century was ready to be assumed, perhaps not immediately but inevitably, by McCloy and his cohort. Shortly before resigning from the War Department, McCloy in his diary made a conscious reference to the mantle he felt he had inherited: "Later in the day, in what was a most emotional affair for me, [Stimson] . . . bestowed on Patterson, Lovett, Bundy and myself the Distinguished Service Medal . . . The presentation was done in the Secretary's office and I stood under the steady gaze of Elihu Root. I felt a direct current running from Root through Stimson to me . . ."

In 1946, McCloy went back to the practice of Wall Street law, leaving Cravath to join Milbank, Tweed, a firm distinguished by its ties to the Rockefeller family. But the satisfactions of power, and McCloy's convictions about the proper role of the United States in world affairs, hastened his return to Washington. In 1946, he agreed to serve on the Acheson-Lilienthal committee, charged with developing a proposal to control the development of atomic energy. Then, in 1947, despite McCloy's lack of financial experience, President Harry S. Truman suddenly made him a banker. One of the pillars of the liberal, dollar-denominated postwar order was to be the International Bank for Reconstruction & Development, or World Bank. With U.S. leadership and money, the Bank was supposed to help

prevent a repetition of the economic instability that many American policymakers believed led to World War II. But two years after its inception the Bank was foundering, unable to balance the respective needs of Wall Street purchasers of its bonds, American policymakers, and a Europe with a bottomless demand for dollars.

From 1947 to 1949, as McCloy labored to put the World Bank on its feet, he also participated in presidential commissions that established the unprecedented institutions deemed necessary to carry out the new American policy of containment, the National Security Council (NSC) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These, especially the CIA, were quickly staffed with Ivy League men and others cut from reliable Establishment cloth. McCloy, in his seamlessly connected official and quasi-official roles, personified the deepening postwar links between Washington and a coalescing American Establishment. Continuing a relationship that began during the war, members of the Council on Foreign Relations served as a sounding board for Washington policymakers, many of whom were drawn from the Council's ranks, and Council members in return had private access to foreign-policy officials. Establishment consensus on the need to confront communism and foster conditions conducive to U.S. interests around the world produced not only the governmental machinery to prosecute the Cold War but the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Little wonder that McCloy would recall the late 1940s as a "Periclean Age" in foreign policymaking.

Shared premises and conclusions largely explain why presidents from Truman to Reagan would seek McCloy's services during the next four decades, along with those of a handful of other men who had prosecuted World War II or were "present at the creation" of containment,

to borrow Dean Acheson's phrase. These were men, as one observer wrote, "whose stature [was] based on prior performance under fire . . . men of ability and judgment [and] action who knew what it meant to get and to give realistic and meaningful policy advice." That McCloy was called upon so often was doubtless also due to his inexhaustible energy, unwavering enthusiasm for the task at hand, and desire to remain close to power. He was known as a man more interested in getting things done than in winning credit for them. He considered himself a doer, not a conceptualist like Acheson. Nor was he prone to the introspection of a George Kennan. One of his law partners, Elliot Richardson, liked to compare him to a naturally gifted shortstop. In the same way that a shortstop instinctively reaches for a ball, stops, pivots, and throws to first, McCloy was a "natural at what he did. There was no space, no gap between understanding what needed to be done and doing it." A lifelong Republican, like Stimson, McCloy would serve more often, and for longer periods, under Democratic presidents, thus embodying, along with so many other things, postwar bipartisanship in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

**L**ike all great edifices, however, the Establishment's foreign policy had faults, mistaken constructions that were masked by consensus. The greatest error was undifferentiated anticommunism. Establishment members understood Europe and the nature of the struggle there. In Europe, sophisticated societies had been disrupted and needed to be rebuilt, and European elites believed in (or could be persuaded to adhere to) democratic principles. The world outside Europe was altogether different. Many countries had not yet won national sovereignty, and while Washington generally opposed reimposition of colonial empires after 1945, the Establishment's

conservatism bound it to ruling elites that were reactionary and undemocratic. Yet the Establishment's anticommunist impulse was so strong that containment in Europe, which corresponded to American interests and ideals, was universally applied to Third World regions, where the genuine, uncorrupted nationalists were often left of center. Ideology supplanted dispassionate and pragmatic analysis, overwhelming even expert American opinion. This reflex was evident as soon as Japanese guns fell silent, when the first postwar social revolution began in China. Following a visit to Peking in November 1945, McCloy wrote to Henry Luce, cofounder and proprietor of *Time* and herald of the American Century. "We ought to give Chiang Kai-Shek a fair chance to show what he can do in the way of reform . . .," said McCloy. "Now that he's on the 10-yard line of victory is a hell of a time for us to be thinking about abandoning the long 'investment' we have in him."

America did not intervene in the Chinese civil war, of course. But the overselling of the communist threat, which was deemed necessary to persuade the American public to foot the bill for containment in Europe, set into motion a destructive dynamic that one day would shake the Establishment. Inevitable reverses abroad helped hold U.S. foreign policy hostage to what historian Richard Hofstadter called the "paranoid style" in American politics, eventually igniting McCarthyism and stifling dissent and full debate, even within the Establishment. An unlikely sign of McCarthyism-in-waiting involving McCloy himself appeared as early as 1946. In a May memo, FBI head J. Edgar Hoover warned the Truman Administration of an "enormous Soviet espionage ring in Washington . . . with reference to atomic energy," and identified McCloy, along with Dean Acheson and Alger Hiss, as worrisome for "their pro-Soviet leanings."

McCloy in fact proved to be one of

America's ablest Cold War diplomats. In 1949, he left the World Bank to become American High Commissioner to Occupied Germany, entering the cockpit of the struggle over Europe. Aided by a staff comprised almost exclusively of men who had interested themselves in German affairs at the Council, McCloy virtually godfathered the acceptance of the Federal Republic into the Western alliance. The acceptance of West Germany—and West Germany's acceptance of the West—alongside a stable if rigid European order were rightly regarded as McCloy's great accomplishments and as perhaps the greatest accomplishments of his generation. Germany had brought America into two European wars. It was where the brief against communism was confirmed, when the Berlin Wall went up in 1961. And it was also where the Cold War in Europe ended.

From 1953 to 1960, and despite the first two-term Republican presidency in 20 years, McCloy was primarily a private citizen, albeit an extraordinarily influential one. Part of the reason for his retreat was the dominance over foreign policy exercised by John Foster Dulles. Being secretary of state, and following in Stimson's footsteps, was arguably the one job McCloy wanted. When the office went to Dulles, McCloy returned to banking, becoming chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank, which he brought into being in 1955 by negotiating the merger of the Chase National Bank with the Bank of Manhattan.

Much of his influence on foreign policy devolved from his post at the Ford Foundation, where he served as chairman from 1953 to 1965. Based on his service in Germany, McCloy had a keen appreciation for what has been called the "revolution in statecraft," that is, the untraditional modes of influence available to states in an age of interdependence, many of them developed

during World War II. Using the resources of the Ford Foundation, and collaborating with U.S. government agencies, McCloy channeled funds into cultural activities, educational exchanges, and information programs all designed to roll back or retard the advance of communist ideology in Europe, and later the Third World. Some programs existed to criticize the reality of communism; others, like the funds earmarked for Jean Monnet's Action Committee for a United Europe, supported a positive alternative. The political unification of Western Europe became a favorite Establishment cause during the 1950s.

With American power at its peak in the 1950s, and the Establishment more visible at the levers of American authority, this governing elite began to attract deserved attention. Henry Fairlie, an expatriate British journalist, was the first to appropriate the term Establishment from his native soil and apply it to the American scene. Writing in 1954, Fairlie identified several psychological and social attributes common to members-in-good-standing of the Establishment. Of similar origin and education, they knew each other or everyone "worth knowing"; they shared deep assumptions that did not need to be articulated; their power to promote a course of action was exceeded only by their power to stop things, and their power to promote sound, reliable men. Usually neither elected officials nor career civil servants, Establishmentarians, when outside government, could be found at the command posts of the major institutions in the country. Inside government, they were invariably found at the commanding heights of a presidential administration, in the departments of State, Defense, or Treasury. They could be identified in any case by their allegiance to the Atlantic Alliance and foreign aid.

All these attributes applied to McCloy, who besides leading the Chase and the Ford



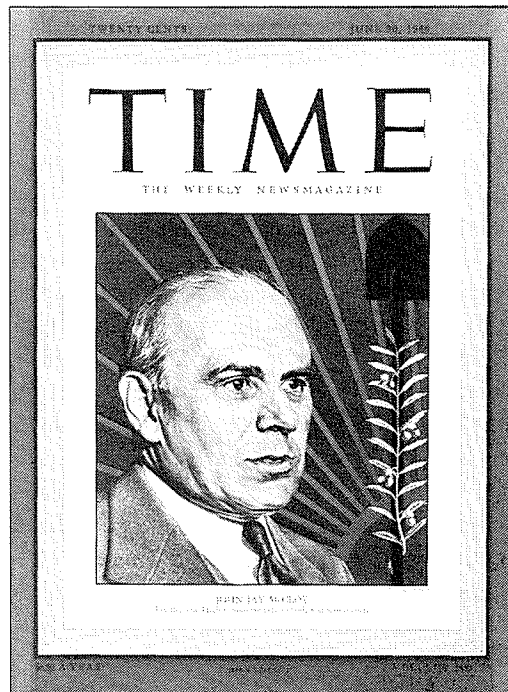
Foundation was chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations. Not surprisingly, when Richard Rovere wrote his tongue-in-cheek article on the Eastern Establishment in 1961, he anointed McCloy chairman. The only detail Rovere got wrong was identifying McCloy as an Episcopalian.

But, in truth, the nearly pure WASP character of the Establishment, properly called the Eastern (or even Northeastern) Establishment until the 1950s, was changing. The regulating institutions remained more or less intact, yet new sources of wealth were springing up in Texas and California. Then too, the great Roosevelt "inclusion" was still bringing down barriers. American soldiers could hardly fight against racist doctrines abroad only to return to a land of racial prejudice and ethnic exclusion, and such attitudes became socially unacceptable, or at least not expressible. Equally significant, the GI bill enabled millions of Americans to gain admittance to colleges previously dominated by the WASP upper class, and merit increasingly became as important a factor as background. Other class precincts—law firms, corporations, and men's clubs—were also opening up to non-WASP men of ambition, energy, and talent, and such newcomers no longer had to endure the "brutal bargain." It ceased to be news when a Jewish lawyer was elevated to partner status at Cravath, and America's high culture ceased to be WASP culture. Of all the nation's large ethnic groups, only black Americans were still excluded.

In 1961, the first non-WASP president, John F. Kennedy, asked McCloy to become secretary of the treasury. But McCloy was inclined to pass the baton onto a new generation, to the Robert McNamaras and Dean Rusk, men who generally fought in World War II rather than managed it. After helping Kennedy secure congressional approval of a new bureaucracy, the Arms

Control and Disarmament Agency, McCloy made himself available for special "elder-statesman" assignments. These ranged from adviser during the Cuban Missile Crisis to service on the Warren Commission, from public performances to secret missions. Whenever relations with West Germany were involved, McCloy was almost certain to be called upon.

As the State Department later described this extraordinary role, McCloy has "over the years been privy to confidential information from U.S. cabinet members and other senior officials. In turn he has regularly conveyed information from high foreign officials who conveyed information to Mr. McCloy in the full knowledge it would be passed to us and the expectation that the information would be protected. His visits are frequently facilitated by the Department and our official representatives abroad." State Department officials turned to Mc-



*In 1949, the new High Commissioner made the cover of Time, then a signal honor.*

Cloy for "outside views assimilable to inside needs," as one scholar put it. And in a real sense, "public opinion" as late as the 1960s really meant the opinion of men like McCloy, who had been in and out of government and were respected for their know-how, intelligence, and experience.

During this period, McCloy was practicing corporate law at Milbank, Tweed. He had the name and reputation that translated into extra billings, and he played a role reserved for Establishment lawyers with only the most impressive credentials, reputations, and contacts. For some 25 years, McCloy provided legal counsel to large U.S. corporations enmeshed in difficulties abroad. He represented Hanna Mining, Westinghouse, Alcoa, and all of the major oil companies in disputes everywhere from Latin America to the Middle East. Clients turned to him for his personal qualities and skills, but it was also McCloy's proximity to political power and understanding of Washington that made him a liaison between the political and business worlds. Years later George Shultz, Ronald Reagan's secretary of state, would say to McCloy, "More than anyone I know you have led a career that erased the artificial distinction between public and private service."

Until the mid-1960s, the postwar Establishment had ample reason to be satisfied with its conduct of foreign policy. True, China had been lost, Korea had been a stalemate, and Cuba had become a thorn in the American side, but American power was intact and though the peace was hard and dangerous, it was still a peace. Then came Vietnam. That debacle is rightly seen as the petard on which Establishment conceits, and the conceits of postwar American policy in general, were finally hoisted. The detached reasonableness and objectivity so typical of the Establishment seemed to vanish, and now the eminence and respect automatically accorded its members

worked against them, blinding them to the fact that their views were no longer informed or right.

It is a matter of some dispute as to which generation of the Establishment was chiefly responsible. Some critics reserve blame for the "best and the brightest" of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the Bundy and Rostow brothers, Dean Rusk, and Robert S. McNamara. But if the successor generation was incapable of imagining that a backward, peasant nation could defy American power, the seeds of their ill-considered crusade were planted earlier. The template of the postwar struggle over Europe had been forced onto the Third World ever since the debate over "who lost China." Writing in 1960, McCloy said, "The less-developed lands . . . promise to be the principal battleground on which the forces of freedom and communism compete—a battleground in which the future shape of society may finally be tested and determined." Vietnam only revealed the poverty of American perceptions and policy.

McCloy, along with other "Wise Men" called in by Johnson for advice, had qualms about a land war in Asia. But he finally told LBJ in mid-1965, "You've got to do it, you've got to go in." America's credibility was at stake, he warned. McCloy eventually turned against the war in 1968, but he did so more out of concern about what Vietnam was doing to the United States than what America was doing in Vietnam. When he extended, as Amherst's chairman of the board of trustees, an invitation to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to address the class of 1967, McCloy was angered and stunned by the hostile (though remarkably polite by later standards) reception given to an architect of the war. Vietnam, he concluded, was tearing apart the next generation of leaders and un-

dermining faith in American principles and institutions.

During the late 1960s and '70s, McCloy played a role in making adjustments to U.S. foreign policy while maintaining containment. He helped reconstruct NATO after the French withdrawal in 1966, monitored West Germany's *Ostpolitik*, and figured prominently in U.S. relations with oil producers in the Middle East. Taken together with the opening to China and arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union, these changes represented a foreign-policy agenda as Establishment in nature as that of the Truman administration. The enduring irony was that all this was done during the presidency of Richard Nixon, an insecure Californian always resentful of the East Coast brahmins, and one of the politicians who poisoned the domestic debate over foreign policy. But now he led the Establishment's policy of accommodation and adjustment to communist power.

Extricating America from Vietnam was such a long and bitter process, however, that it further discredited U.S. foreign policy and the Establishment that oversaw it. The hostile interpretation of *The Power Elite* (1956) by C. Wright Mills suddenly gained popular currency. The Establishment, it was said, shaped events for self-serving reasons from invulnerable positions behind the scenes. How could it lay claim to America's foreign policy when the United States, in the name of indiscriminate anticommunism, had as its allies some of the most repressive, brutal, and corrupt governments in the world?

McCloy, after he turned 80 years old in 1975, often commented on the fact that he had lived almost half the life of the American Republic. Depending on his mood, he would cite the fact to impress a listener with how young the country was, or with how old he was getting to be. In either case, he lamented what he saw as the end of the

consensus on America's world role. In fact, a whole view of the world and of history, as well as the culture, standards, and manners that produced men like McCloy, seemed to be receding. Respect for government plummeted, and along with it, the moral authority of institutions and elites. The stench of failure in Vietnam was sharpened by the disappointments of the Great Society, the scandal of Watergate, and the uncontrollable stagflation of the 1970s.

Jimmy Carter, and then Ronald Reagan, ran against Washington, campaigning on the principle that the federal government was an unworthy and destructive force in the life of the nation. Reagan then delegitimized taxes as the price to be paid for a civilized society, while devoting extraordinary resources to the military in peacetime. For the first time in decades, the "best and the brightest" of a new generation of Americans retreated behind their privileges and contented themselves with selfish pursuits. It was no coincidence that the 1980s marked a decade of speculative abuse in the American economy unparalleled since the 1920s. Seldom has the maldistribution of wealth increased so dramatically within a single decade. Greed was not only rewarded but celebrated, as a laissez-faire attitude permeated Washington and Wall Street. Those with the best education and resources acted selfishly, looted corporate coffers, and broke the social compact.

In one of his last public interviews, McCloy observed that "These big salaries lawyers are getting make it much harder for them to consider government as part of their careers. When I was young, the idea of serving in Washington was the most exciting prospect I could imagine." When public service was not disdained in the 1980s, it was simply viewed as a stepping-stone to a lucrative reentry into the corpo-

rate world. To judge from the makeup of the Bush administration, the idea of public service is not completely extinct, but the Establishment remains debilitated and elite status something to be thoroughly ashamed of. Before embarking on his 1980 campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, George Bush ostentatiously resigned from the Council on Foreign Relations and subsequently declared his fondness for pork rinds.

The governing elite seems to have lost sight of the sources of American power. Rather than engagement being the natural consequence of a robust polity and economy, the satisfaction of exercising power appears to be a preoccupation in and of itself. "I love coping with the problems in foreign affairs," Bush recently told a student who asked him what he likes most about his job. It is a sentiment that might have been appropriate in the 1950s, but not in the 1990s, when students are drilled in how to attend school without getting shot by gangs. The Establishment remnant, reluctant to admit the heavy toll exacted by the Cold War, has failed to face up to the fact that America's economic house is in considerable disorder. Can a sustainable foreign policy be fashioned by any elite that ignores domestic realities?

Along with this problem is the chronic American dilemma of re-creating a representative governing elite while eliminating exclusion of minority groups which already make up 25 percent of the population. There are now more Asian-Americans in New York than in Hawaii, and the population of European-descended whites in California is shrinking so dramatically that they could be a minority by the year 2000. If "persons of great ability, and second to none in their merits, are treated dishonor-

ably by those who enjoy the highest honors," as Aristotle wrote, then the traditional standards which carry authority and to which the rest of society aspires are threatened. As the demographic cast of America changes irrevocably, from one largely defined by European and African roots to one that can also trace its lineage to Asia and Latin America, will the upper class act, as E. Digby Baltzell asked in *The Protestant Establishment* (1964), like Henry Adams or Charles Eliot? Both prominent WASPs, they reacted quite differently to the massive southern and eastern European immigration of their day. Adams took refuge in ancestry and race, while Eliot, the president of Harvard, assumed that old-stock Americans should share their institutions and valuable traditions with the newcomers.

**T**he decline of WASP dominance of elite culture has been proclaimed at least since H. L. Mencken declared its demise in 1924. At its strongest, WASP culture was imitated and aspired to by all, because it was relatively open to all. A new American culture and a new American view of history, more representative of today's racially diverse America, may yet be synthesized, but a single culture must serve as an axis of attraction to balance diversity. Without any major foreign threat, America may not need the kind of cohesive Establishment forged by hot and cold wars after 1940. But it cannot prosper without leadership exerted by a meritocracy.

The essence of elite responsibility, as John McCloy knew, is to create the standards by which the nation lives and to which the nation aspires. Or to borrow from the 1st-century Jewish sage Hillel, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I?"

# TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

by John B. Judis

**I**n September 1939, just over a week after Hitler's invasion of Poland and Britain's declaration of war, Walter Mallory, the executive director of the Council on Foreign Relations, and Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of its journal, *Foreign Affairs*, went to Washington to see how the Council could help prepare America for what they expected would be another world war. Meeting with high State Department officials, they worked out an unprecedented arrangement under which the Council would serve as the department's unofficial policy planning agency. For the next six years, Council members, organized into War and Peace Studies, sketched the outlines of the new American-led world order that would emerge from the war.

The Council's close relationship to the Roosevelt administration during World War II marked the coming-to-power of what sociologists and journalists later called the American Establishment. For the next three decades, a like-minded group of corporate lawyers, investment bankers, and policy experts, passing in and out of government and operating through organizations like the Council, shaped the contours of American foreign policy. Today, the government's higher circles are still drawn from a relatively narrow social group, but the members of this group no longer represent a cohesive body united in its fundamental outlook. Instead, the individuals who exercise influence over foreign policy today represent the same conflicting set of private interests that effect domestic policy.

This is not the outcome envisaged by

the Establishment's critics in the 1960s. They saw popular democracy as the natural alternative to Establishment rule, but the Establishment's decline has diffused responsibility for American foreign policy without making the process any more democratic. The public is as removed as ever from most foreign policy decisions, but in place of an informally linked Establishment we now have partisan think tanks and self-interested lobbies.

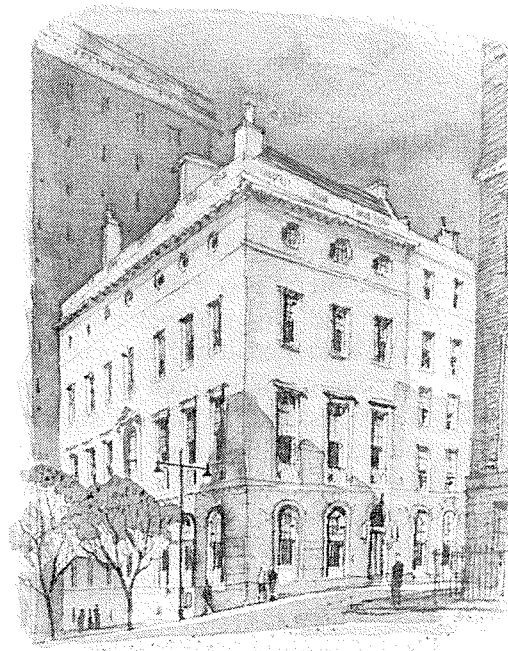
**C**ontroversy has long obscured the true character of the Establishment. It was never simply what Marx called a "ruling class" or what sociologist C. Wright Mills later called a "power elite." Instead, it was a group of powerful citizens who shared a unique view of where the country should go. Most members of the Establishment belonged to the upper class, but some were labor leaders and heads of broad-based organizations whose participation made the Establishment far more representative than its critics granted.

The foreign-policy Establishment dates from the end of World War I. In 1921, the Council on Foreign Relations was founded by men who had accompanied Woodrow Wilson to Versailles in 1919. Returning home disillusioned, they were nevertheless more determined than ever to create what Wilson had called a new world order. The Establishment was defined by this vision. The founders of the Council, who included Thomas Lamont, a J. P. Morgan and Company partner, and businessman Whitney Shepardson, have often been described as liberal internationalists, but the term has to

be carefully defined. They did not see free trade and international cooperation through organizations such as the League of Nations as ends in themselves but as the means by which American economic power, hitherto held in check by war and imperial rivalry among European powers, could come to the fore. They were willing to sacrifice some degree of diplomatic and military sovereignty to gain national economic ends. But when they saw that international organization could not stem the threat of fascism or communism to an open market system, they were among the first to favor taking up arms.

In the 1920s and early '30s, the Council's hundred-odd members, who met regularly for dinner at New York City's Harvard Club before a permanent headquarters was established in a brownstone on East 65th Street, constituted a center of dissent against the prevailing Republican isolationism. They were prestigious outsiders rather than powerful insiders. During the Roosevelt administration, however, Council members began to play a leading role in foreign policy. A Council group helped draft legislation for an Export-Import Bank and for reciprocal trade agreements, and in the late 1930s, as Roosevelt prepared the country for war, he called on Council members to fill the highest positions in the State and War departments and to help plan the postwar order. After the war, the Council and its members in the Truman administration, drawing upon lessons learned at Versailles, helped frame the objectives of the postwar era: to create an American-dominated international order, based on the dollar and free trade, and to contain the spread of Soviet communism.

The Council was by no means the only



*The Council on Foreign Relations*

elite organization that contributed to this new consensus—other groups such as the Twentieth Century Fund, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Committee for Economic Development, and the Brookings Institution also played significant roles. After the war, Ivy League universities also established foreign-policy institutes that contributed. But these organizations and institutes, whose members regularly corresponded with one another and sat together in Council study groups, supplemented rather than countered the Council's work. Collectively, they demonstrated the Establishment's expanding reach and power.

The Establishment's influence reached a peak in the early 1960s. In a process memorialized in David Halberstam's *The Best*

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and the *Brightest* (1972), President-elect John F. Kennedy gave banker and Council of Foreign Relations director Robert Lovett virtual veto power over his key cabinet appointments. JFK chose men like investment banker Douglas Dillon of Dillon, Read, and Company, McGeorge Bundy of Harvard, and Dean Rusk of the Rockefeller Foundation, all of whom had spent decades in Council study groups and discussions. Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, paid just as close attention to Establishment opinion. During the war in Vietnam, Johnson summoned the Establishment's "Wise Men," including Chase Manhattan chairman John McCloy, former secretary of state Dean Acheson, and Dillon, to the White House to advise him, and it was their counsel against further escalation in March 1968 that precipitated Johnson's decision to seek a negotiated settlement. But by then not only the country but the Establishment itself had been torn apart by the war.

During the 1950s and early '60s, the Council held study groups on Southeast Asia that recommended containing Vietnamese communism. One report in 1956, for instance, warned that "the independent existence of the nations of Asia is at stake." But as early as 1965, Establishment stalwarts began voicing reservations about the war. They included Walter Lippmann, who was perhaps the nation's most eminent columnist, University of Chicago political scientist and foreign-policy theorist Hans Morgenthau, and former State Department official George F. Kennan, Jr., the author of the famous "X" article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947, which laid the foundation for containment. These dissenters initially argued that the United States was committing itself to a disastrous land war over a militarily unimportant country, but as the war dragged on, they and other Council members began to voice

disagreement with the larger Cold War strategy that had guided American foreign policy since the end of World War II. Was communism, they asked, a monolithic movement that the United States had to contain at all costs and in all regions? Could communism in a small Third World country like Vietnam be merely an expression of anticolonial nationalism?

The war in Vietnam also struck at the democratic pretensions of the Establishment's liberal internationalism. Most members of the Establishment continued to adhere to the Wilsonian faith that by encouraging national self-determination, the United States was making the world safe for democracy. In Vietnam, however, it appeared that the United States was fighting on behalf of a regime no more committed to democracy than its communist adversaries were. Moreover, the United States was not simply repelling an invasion, as it had in South Korea, but was intervening in a civil war that it had helped to precipitate.

The debate over the war within the Establishment paralyzed the Council on Foreign Relations. From 1964, when the escalation began, until 1968, the Council failed to hold any study groups on Vietnam, because, the *New York Times* reported, two board members felt the issue was "too divisive." Then in the fall of 1970, matters unexpectedly came to a head.

Because of retirements, the Council had to find both a new president and a new editor of *Foreign Affairs*. A search committee, chaired by David Rockefeller, of the Chase Manhattan Bank, was created to seek replacements. The committee decided to ask William Bundy to be president, and at that year's Harvard-Yale game, Harvard graduate Rockefeller asked Yale graduate Bundy if he was interested in the job. Bundy, who had developed ulcers serving in the Defense and State departments under Kennedy and Johnson, was not interested in be-

coming the Council's chief administrator, but he told Rockefeller that he would like to edit *Foreign Affairs*. Over drinks after the game, Rockefeller and Bundy settled it: Bundy would replace the venerable Hamilton Fish Armstrong as editor of *Foreign Affairs*. The appointment would be announced the following summer.

To Rockefeller, Bundy seemed the perfect choice. A graduate of Groton and Yale, he was the son-in-law of former secretary of state Dean Acheson. He had been a member of the Council since 1960 and a director since 1964. But as the *Pentagon Papers* would reveal that June, Bundy was also the man most responsible in the Johnson administration for planning the secret escalation of the war in Vietnam.

The search committee was in no position to withdraw Rockefeller's offer, but when the appointment was finally announced, a number of younger members, including political scientists Richard Falk and Richard Ullman, organized a protest that split the Council ranks and for the first time opened its deliberations to public scrutiny. Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. declared his support for the protesters, and Walter Lippmann, one of the Council's original members, chose that moment to resign.

The Council's old guard closed ranks

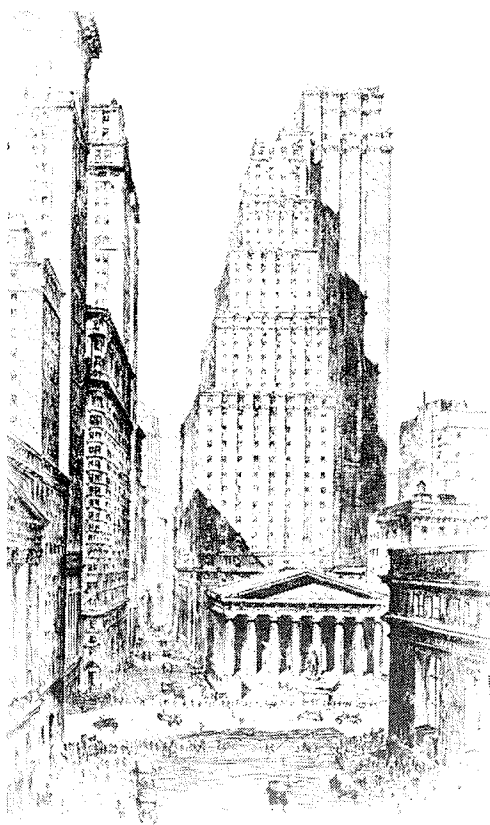
around Bundy. Rockefeller refused to acknowledge that what Bundy had done in the State Department was relevant. "Why I know all the Bundys. They're a fine upright family," he declared at a meeting with the dissidents. Former Council chairman McCloy was indignant. "The real intolerance these days is found among the professors who sit up on every goddam hilltop in their

institutes for international affairs," McCloy told the *New York Times*. "They're positively monastic up there. They need the Council the way the Greek philosophers needed the Agora—a place where they can walk among practical men and keep in touch with reality."

The old guard prevailed, and Bundy became editor, but the Council never completely recovered from the imbroglio. Through the next decade, it kept trying, unsuccessfully, to restore the powerful consensus that had made possible the Establishment's hold over foreign

policy. In 1973, it started an ambitious "1980s Project" to chart the "structure, key relationships, rules, processes, and institutions" of the international system, but by the decade's end, it abandoned the effort.

The other factor threatening the consensus within the Establishment was the decline of the American economy. The Wilsonian internationalism that underlay the



*The Chase Manhattan Bank*



Establishment had been based on the recognition that the United States was displacing Great Britain as the world's most powerful economy. The United States thus stood to benefit from free trade and open markets just as Britain had in the 19th century.

The heyday of liberal internationalism had occurred after the United States emerged from World War II in a position of unchallenged economic superiority. In 1950, the United States accounted for an astonishing 50 percent of the world's gross national product. But Western Europe and Japan began to rebuild their economies, opening new factories that were often more productive than older American plants and protecting their fledgling industries with trade barriers. Like Great Britain a century before, the United States chose to ignore and sometimes even to encourage foreign protectionism, recognizing that American prosperity depended on recovery in Western Europe and Japan.

By the end of the 1960s, spurred by growing U.S. demand, Japan and Western Europe caught up. While American exports grew by 67 percent during the 1960s, West German exports jumped 109 percent and those of Japan 333 percent. As the United States entered the 1970s, it faced its first trade deficit since 1893 and a mounting dollar crisis as foreigners, inundated by dollars, threatened to empty the nation's reserves by exchanging dollars for gold at the fixed rate set at Bretton Woods. The American economy was still the most powerful in the world, but it was now first among equals. And as the more prescient Americans peered into the future, they could see the signs of further decline.

In August 1971, the Nixon administration took action. Nixon slapped a tariff on imports, abandoned the gold standard, and imposed wage and price controls to stem inflation. While many businessmen ap-

plauded Nixon's moves, the Wall Street bankers, lawyers, and policymakers of the Establishment were alarmed. They saw the aggressive nationalism of what they called the "Nixon shocks" as a threat to the international order they had created after World War II.

The next month brought more differences over the trade issue. After World War II, the Council and other Establishment organizations had welcomed national labor leaders into their ranks. In the 1920s, organized labor had been highly protectionist, but a new generation of trade union leaders, notably the United Auto Workers' Walter Reuther, had come to see free trade as being in labor's overall interest. In 1947 the Twentieth Century Fund had brought business and labor leaders together in an influential report, *Rebuilding the World Economy—America's Role in Foreign Trade and Investment*, that strongly endorsed a liberalized international trading regime. With over a third of America's workers unionized, labor's support was critical to the Establishment's hegemony in foreign affairs. It provided the crucial link between the higher circles and the average voter and was the most valuable defense against the recurrence of popular isolationism.

But the growth of imports and the exodus of American companies to low-wage countries, which accelerated during the 1960s, cooled the liberal internationalist enthusiasm of both labor leaders and domestic manufacturers. In September 1971, the unions introduced a precedent-breaking bill in Congress to limit imports and to remove the tax exemption on U.S. multinational corporations, which stood accused of shifting American jobs overseas. The bill, sponsored by Senator Vance Hartke (D.-Ind.) and Representative James Burke (D.-Mass.), did not pass, but its very existence alarmed the proponents of liberal internationalism. In Washington, several multina-

tional corporations and banks organized through the Emergency Committee for American Trade (ECAT) to fight it.

These looming disputes over the Nixon shocks and the Burke-Hartke bill seemed far less important than the sharp clash over Vietnam, but in the years to come they would prove to be more serious and lasting. While the debate over Vietnam threw into question the Establishment's post-World War II containment strategy, the debate over trade shook the very foundations of Wilsonian internationalism.

In 1971 and '72 Establishment circles reverberated with concern over Nixon's policies and Burke-Hartke. In September 1971, Fred Bergsten, an economist with longstanding ties to the Council who had just resigned as National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger's economics analyst, along with former Johnson administration officials Richard Gardner and Richard Cooper, warned at a congressional hearing that Nixon's policies could lead to an international trade war. In *Foreign Affairs*, Bergsten attacked Nixon for promoting a "protectionist" and "disastrous isolationist" trend. Another Nixon official, Philip Trezise, resigned partly out of dissatisfaction with Nixon's policies and began to battle the administration's trade measures from inside the Brookings Institution and the Council.

Chase Manhattan Bank Chairman David Rockefeller shared the policy experts' concern. But after the bruising battle over Bundy's appointment, he had lost confidence that high-level policy discussions could be carried on at the Council on Foreign Relations. Even though he remained the chairman of the Council's board of directors, Rockefeller had begun to cast about for a new organization. He got his inspiration for the form it might take from Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Columbia University

professor and Council member who, like Rockefeller, vacationed in Seal Harbor, Maine.

Brzezinski, a longtime competitor of Kissinger, was also critical of Nixon's economic initiatives. The Polish émigré made his mark as a hardline Sovietologist, but by the late 1960s he had become interested in relations among the developed countries. Indeed, he had written a book, *Between Two Ages* (1970), in which he called for the United States, Canada, Japan, and Western Europe to form a "community of developed nations." Now in reaction to the Nixon shocks, Brzezinski convinced Brookings Foreign Policy Director Henry Owen to sponsor a series of tripartite studies along with the Japanese Economic Research Center and the European Community Institute of University Studies. He also talked to Rockefeller and Owen, another Seal Harbor vacationer, about the idea of an organization that would draw together leaders from North America, Japan, and Western Europe.

In the spring of 1972, Brzezinski, Rockefeller, and Bergsten attended the annual meeting of the Bilderberg Society, held at the Hotel de Bilderberg in Oosterbeek, The Netherlands. The society had been set up in 1954 as a private forum where American and European political leaders, businessmen, and policy experts could air their concerns. According to one participant at the meeting, Rockefeller proposed a tripartite or trilateral organization, and then Brzezinski, acting as if he were hearing the idea for the first time, enthusiastically seconded his suggestion. That July, 17 men, including Brzezinski, Bergsten, Owen, and McGeorge Bundy, met at Rockefeller's Pocantico Hills estate in the New York suburbs to plan what came to be called the Trilateral Commission.

The new group, which was officially established the next year, held its first execu-

tive committee meeting in Tokyo in October. Brzezinski was director and Rockefeller chairman of the executive committee. The 60-member American contingent included Bergsten, Gardner, Trezise, and most of the key Establishment figures who had protested the Nixon shocks. American funding came from the same corporations and banks, such as Caterpillar Tractor and Exxon, that had contributed to ECAT. With 180 members overall (later rising to 300), the Commission had offices in Manhattan, Paris, and Tokyo.

Like the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission did not have an official ideology. Yet, as economist Jeffrey Frieden has explained, the Commission's leaders had a common vision of a "transnational world economy." The Commission's first report stressed the economic interdependence of nations and opposed any attempt to restrict trade or investment. The Commission's "overriding goal is to make the world safe for interdependence," the report declared. This "will call for checking the intrusion of national governments into the international exchange of both economic and noneconomic goods."

Commission members also backed a version of the Nixon administration's strategy of détente with the Soviet Union, calling for the trilateral nations to draw the Soviet Union and its East European satellites into growing trade relations. In 1977, it issued an optimistic report on *Collaboration with Communist Countries on Managing Global Problems*. In the wake of Vietnam and the rise of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), it re-



*The Brookings Institution*

jected the Cold War practice of viewing North-South relations with less developed nations through the prism of East-West relations. Speaking at the Commission's 1977 meeting, Brzezinski, who had just become President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, called on the trilateral nations to "assimilate East-West relations into a broader framework of cooperation, rather than to concentrate on East-West relations as the decisive and dominant concern of our time."

From the beginning, the Commission had the support of the American, Japanese, and West European governments, and its reports and conferences served to lay the groundwork for several important initiatives. The idea of economic summits, for instance, came out of a Trilateral Commission recommendation, as did the World Bank's adoption of a special "petrodollar" window to handle burgeoning OPEC surpluses and Third World deficits. But the most visible sign of Commission influence came when an obscure Georgia governor was elected president. Rockefeller had first met Jimmy Carter when the Georgia governor came to New York in 1971 to meet

with bankers about underwriting his state's loans. Impressed by the southerner, Rockefeller had decided to make him one of two governors invited to join the Trilateral Commission. Brzezinski became Carter's foreign-policy mentor, tutoring him and writing his major speeches during his presidential campaign. When Carter won, he appointed 26 Commission members—about a fourth of the American contingent—to high administration posts. The appointees included Brzezinski, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, and Secretary of the Treasury W. Michael Blumenthal.

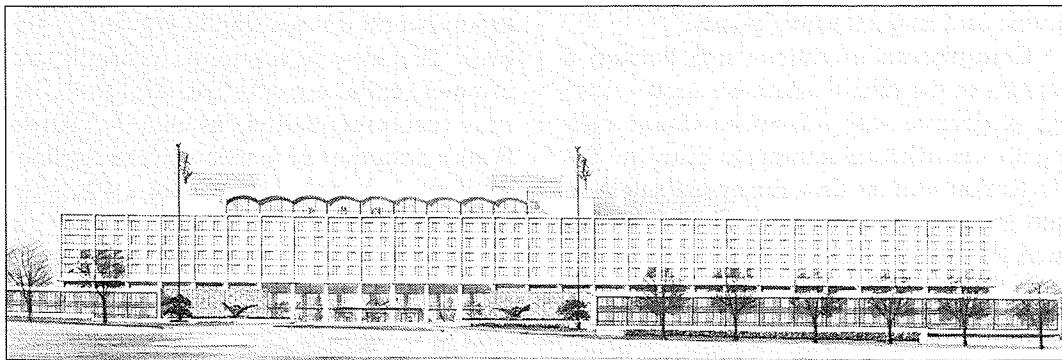
Like the Council on Foreign Relations of the 1920s, the Trilateral Commission reflected a new consensus among Establishment figures. And the large number of Commission members in the Carter administration, united by a common ideology, seemed to suggest that the foreign-policy Establishment—given up for dead after the clash over Bundy's appointment—had been revived. But by 1980, when Ronald Reagan won a landslide victory over Carter, the Trilateral Commission had itself become a casualty of American politics.

What eventually doomed the Commission was its identification with the Carter administration. As Carter's reputation sank under the weight of stagflation and the Iranian hostage crisis, membership in the Tri-

lateral Commission became a badge of dishonor that could be hung around the neck of political opponents. In 1980, candidate Ronald Reagan was able to use the Commission memberships of George Bush and then Carter to discredit them with voters. But even before 1980, the Commission had been undermined by policy disagreements within it and within the broader foreign-policy Establishment.

From the beginning, some members of the Establishment rejected the Commission's optimistic assumptions about U.S.-Soviet relations. In the summer of 1974, Paul Nitze, a former investment banker at Dillon, Read, and Company, who had been in and out of high government positions since World War II, resigned as a Nixon administration arms negotiator, denouncing Nixon and Kissinger for encouraging the "myth of détente." In 1976, after Carter's election, Nitze and other Establishment figures, including former Pentagon officials James Schlesinger and David Packard, formed the Committee on the Present Danger to reassert the Cold War view of U.S.-Soviet relations, calling for an arms buildup and opposing new arms-control agreements.

Nitze's initiative divided the Establishment, even as it split the Carter administration. As the Committee took the offensive, lobbying against the confirmation of Trilat-



*The State Department*

eral Commission member Paul Warnke as chief arms negotiator, it succeeded in dividing Brzezinski from Vance. Under attack from the conservatives, Brzezinski rediscovered the hardline views he had abandoned in the early 1970s, and this led to ongoing strife with Vance and the State Department. The turmoil also penetrated the Trilateral Commission, which followed its optimistic 1977 report on East-West relations with a bleaker Cold War assessment in 1978. By the late 1970s, the Establishment and the American members of the Trilateral Commission had become as bitterly divided over Cold War strategy as they had been over Vietnam.

The American members of the Trilateral Commission also encountered some opposition to their economic stands. Rockefeller and Brzezinski's concept of a trilateral alliance looked like a continuation of the Establishment's Wilsonian internationalism, but in fact it represented a subtle departure from it. Wilson's internationalism had been based on an assumption of American economic, but not military, superiority. Its goal was to eliminate military competition among nations so that the United States could flourish in free economic competition. But the Trilateral conception assumed that America, having lost its absolute superiority, would profit most by ceding its economic sovereignty to a seamless international capitalism. While Wall Street bankers and lawyers would continue to press this idea for the next decade, it would attract growing opposition not only from labor unions but from American manufacturing firms threatened by foreign competition.

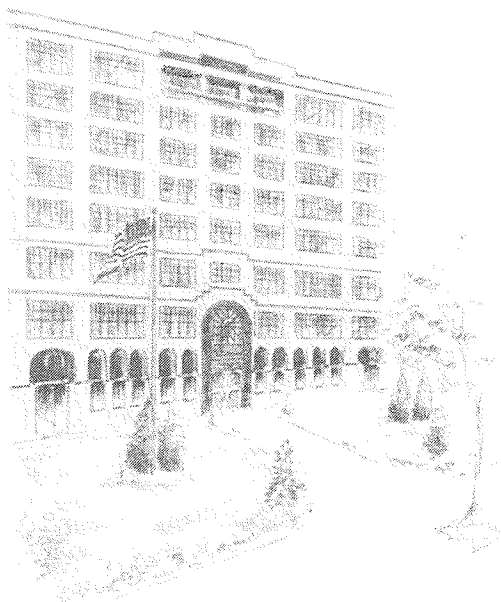
As Rockefeller and McCloy's Establishment fell to blows over U.S.-Soviet relations and international economics, other institutions became more important in determining the course of

American foreign policy. Beginning in the mid-1970s, conservatives tried to build what journalist Sidney Blumenthal has called a "counter-Establishment," creating a variety of new think tanks and journals of their own. These institutions were highly effective in influencing policy, but they failed to play the dominant role that the Council on Foreign Relations or the Brookings Institution had played from the late 1930s to the late '60s.

One such institution was the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, founded in 1973 by activists Ed Feulner and Paul Weyrich with financial backing from brewer Adolph Coors and textile magnate Roger Milliken. In contrast to the Council on Foreign Relations and other Establishment institutions, Heritage never pretended to be nonpartisan or to represent a consensus of elite opinion. Heritage and other conservative think tanks were much closer to being lobbies for conservative causes and, later, for the Reagan administration. They were too embroiled in the present to plan the future.

Indeed, once Reagan assumed office, Heritage became an annex of the government, providing junior employees through its job banks, and issuing policy briefings to influence day-by-day debate on Capitol Hill. Its own junior staff adhered to a broad line set down by Heritage's management. On U.S.-Soviet relations, Heritage stood for the "rollback" of the Soviet empire—the conservative alternative to the older Establishment's strategy of Cold War containment—and on trade and foreign investment, Heritage shared the Wall Street bankers and multinational executives' support for free trade and unfettered investment.

By the mid-1980s, Heritage and its funders were as divided and confused as the liberal Establishment they had hoped to supplant. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev rendered conservative Cold War doc-



*The Heritage Foundation*

trine moot, and the flood of imports, encouraged by Reagan economic policies, battered many of the American manufacturers that had sustained Heritage and the Right. Abandoning their unequivocal support for free trade, both Milliken and Coors began to balk at supporting a think tank that opposed trade relief for domestic manufacturers, and they complained bitterly about Heritage's growing reliance on contributions from South Korea and Taiwan.

The one conservative group that consciously tried to mimic the older Establishment institutions was the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Under William Baroody and then his son William, Jr., who took over from his father in 1978, AEI sought to create scholarship rather than propaganda. It recruited Democrats and liberal researchers as well as conservatives and Republicans. In the late 1970s, it played an important role in winning support for deregulation of business. But by the mid-1980s, AEI faced a financial crisis, brought about partly by a revolt from conservative funders who were not interested

in financing a nonpartisan institution that did not mirror their views. William Baroody, Jr. departed in 1986, and AEI, once the flagship of the conservative think tanks, became a lesser version of Heritage. Far from representing the creation of a new consensus, the conservative organizations simply reflected the breakup of the old.

Even more important than the birth of the new conservative think tanks was the growth of "K Street," the law offices and public-relations firms situated on or around one of downtown Washington's main thoroughfares. These firms—tied into the foreign-policy Establishment by prominent former officials such as Clark Clifford or Elliot Richardson—came to have considerable influence over foreign policy, but increasingly on behalf of overseas clients. Instead of contributing to a new consensus, they provoked charges of corruption and conflict of interest within the Establishment.

Prior to the New Deal, a few law firms had Washington offices specializing in patent law, but the New Deal created a demand for lawyers who could help clients deal with government. Covington and Burling, which Dean Acheson joined in 1921, grew into one of the nation's most powerful firms during the 1930s. Then came the boom during the 1970s and '80s, brought about first by the growth of regulatory agencies during the Nixon years and then by a surge of trade cases and legislation, which stimulated a flood of foreign money into K Street. In 1989, Japanese firms alone paid \$150 million for the services of Washington lawyers and lobbyists. These included 125 former officials, many of them prominent members of the foreign-policy Establishment like Richardson, a former Nixon administration official and a member of Rockefeller's Trilateral Commission.

Typical of the new K-Street firms was

Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer and Feld. Texas lawyer, banker, and real-estate tycoon Robert Strauss established a Washington branch of the Dallas firm in 1971 when he came to Washington as treasurer of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Strauss then served as chairman of the DNC from 1972 to 1976, U.S. special trade representative from 1977 to 1979, Mideast negotiator in 1979, and then in 1980 as Carter's campaign manager. By the time he returned to the firm in 1981 it was one of Washington's most powerful, and this was no coincidence. Clients flocked to Akin, Gump because of Strauss's association with the firm. Moreover, when he returned, Strauss brought top officials from the U.S. trade representative's office with him, attracting important foreign clients, including the Japanese electronics giant Fujitsu. By 1991, Akin, Gump had 206 lawyers in Washington alone and had become one of the nation's top 35 law firms. And Strauss, before being appointed ambassador to the Soviet Union in June 1991, was able to move in the gray area between private wealth and public power, advising presidents and serving on prestigious commissions, while working as a lawyer to promote the interests of his firm and its clients.

In the 1980s, the K-Street firms proved extremely successful in shaping the government's agenda on trade and foreign investment. Law firms hired by Japanese electronics companies delayed the implementation of trade penalties against Japanese consumer electronics and semiconductor firms until after American industries had been decimated by below-cost imports; they lobbied against more restrictive trade laws; they helped block any congressional attempts to restrict or even gather information on foreign investors; they threw their weight against proposals to subsidize research and development by American firms. When challenged, these lawyers

and public-relations experts responded that they were furthering the principles of liberal internationalism.

Indeed, there was nothing new in what these firms and their lawyers were doing. Since the turn of the century, prominent lawyers had represented foreign firms and governments. In the 1950s, former New York Governor Thomas Dewey was hired by Japan to enhance its reputation in the United States, and Acheson's firm was employed by South Africa. But the decline of the American economy put this kind of representation in a different light. Instead of being seen as part of a larger effort to draw foreign countries and their firms into a U.S.-dominated world economy, prominent lawyers such as Richardson and Strauss were increasingly accused of betraying American interests—of using liberal internationalism to justify predatory trade practices by America's competitors.

Beginning in the late 1980s, a spate of books and articles appeared warning that K-Street lawyers and lobbyists were doing just that. Many of the authors represented wings of the Establishment, and their views were given currency in prestigious publications. Former TRW Vice President Pat Choate saw part of his book, *Agents of Influence* (1990), excerpted in the *Harvard Business Review*, and former Reagan administration official Clyde Prestowitz parlayed the success of his book *Trading Places* (1988) into a think tank, the Economic Strategy Institute, funded by major U.S. corporations and unions and dedicated to countering foreign influence on K Street.

These books and articles also raised questions about the independence from foreign influence of think tanks like Bergsten's Institute for International Economics, founded in 1981 with a grant from the German Marshall Fund. In 1989, the Committee for Economic Development (CED) became embroiled in controversy

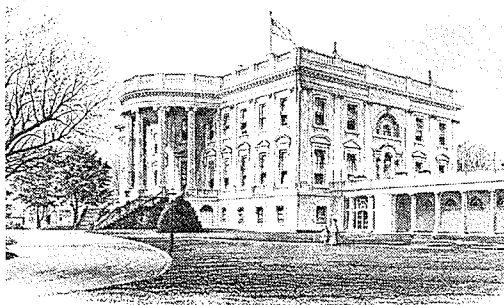
when it sponsored a U.S.-Japan joint economic study in which the Japanese group was chaired by Nissan's chief executive officer and the American group by a former U.S. trade representative whose public-relations firm was representing Nissan.

As was the case with K-Street lawyers, the think tanks and policy groups' acceptance of foreign contributions and advice represented nothing new in itself. But with American firms fighting for survival against foreign competitors, these contributions took on a different meaning, placing the organizations on one side of a new ideological and commercial divide. With their integrity and independence in doubt, the organizations in turn became even more cautious about what they said and did, making it even less likely that they would be able to forge a new consensus.

In Washington, some expected that the end of the Cold War and the accession of George Bush would revive the Establishment. Indeed, in the mid-1980s, Nitze, who became Reagan's arms negotiator, found himself allied with Warnke and other former adversaries against Reagan conservatives who rejected any arms agreement with the Soviet Union. By the end of the decade, Nitze, Warnke, Kissinger, Vance, and Brzezinski, while disagreeing on some particulars, shared roughly similar positions on U.S.-Soviet relations. Kissinger and Vance were even joint authors of an article for *Foreign Affairs*. But such newfound unity on U.S.-Soviet relations did not carry over into other areas of foreign policy, such as the Mideast, or into the most contentious questions of international economics.

The divisions over economic policy that surfaced in 1971 continued to widen, preventing any new consensus from emerging. In 1971, labor was the main dissenter from the postwar consensus on free trade and unfettered foreign investment, but by the

late 1980s, major corporations, including TRW, Corning Glass, Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, and USX, had declared their support for "managed trade" with Japan and Western Europe. On any major issue, coalitions of corporations and banks were likely to be arrayed against each other. During the recent Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks, the Emergency Committee for American Trade joined Japanese and South Korean companies in pressing for the elimination of penalties against companies that "dump" their goods below cost in foreign markets. On the other side of the issue was



*The White House*

the Labor-Industry Coalition for International Trade, including B. F. Goodrich, Motorola, Corning, Inland Steel, TRW, and W. R. Grace and Company.

The Establishment institutions dealt with the lack of unity on these issues by staging debates and publishing pro and con reports. The Council on Foreign Relations held a debate in 1989 between financiers Felix Rohatyn and Peter Peterson, the new chairman of the Council, on whether foreign investment was helping or hurting America. Bergsten's Institute for International Economics, after being criticized for putting out a report downplaying the importance of Japanese trade barriers to the



American trade deficit, turned around and published a study documenting these barriers. But the clearest indication of irreconcilable differences occurred in 1989 when the New York-based Twentieth Century Fund set up a Task Force on the Future of American Trade Policy. Four decades before, a Twentieth Century Fund task force had played a critical role in establishing a consensus in favor of free trade, but this time the 12 participants, including two bankers, two corporate vice-presidents, one AFL-CIO official, and policy analysts from MIT, Brookings, Georgetown, and the Carnegie Endowment, failed to agree. Finally, the Fund published a report entitled *The Free Trade Debate* with opposing positions on trade and foreign investment.

As influence over foreign economic policy became more widely diffused, responsibility for American military-diplomatic strategy narrowed. During the months before the U.S. war against Iraq, Establishment policy experts—lacking a common framework—were hopelessly divided over what the administration should do; and President Bush kept decisionmaking focused in a small circle cut off even from his own National Security Council. As the Cold War continues to ebb and as consensus further erodes, the major Establishment institutions serve largely as debating societies. They will perform an important function—but no more so than any university or publication that is willing to air both sides of a controversy. Whether the Establishment itself still exists is a matter of semantics, not history. If one means by the Establishment merely a collection of upper-class individuals and elite institutions, then the Establishment is alive and well. Even the

Trilateral Commission survives, its North American office run by a former Brzezinski graduate student out of a warren of offices on Manhattan's East Side. But if one means by the Establishment the people and institutions whose liberal international outlook dominated American foreign policy from 1939 to 1969, then the Establishment is in severe disarray.

The decline of this Establishment has not benefited the country. Contrary to what its critics might have supposed, its fall did not lead to the rise of popular democracy, nor even to representative government. In a nation of 250 million, direct democracy is not possible; and in foreign policy—where the questions are often obscure—it is inconceivable. Ideally, government should function transparently, providing citizens with the ability to set policy by influencing the decisions of their elected representatives. Governments have invariably relied on informal networks of private citizens, organized through pressure groups, lobbies, political organizations, and elite groupings like the Council on Foreign Relations to fill the interstices between individual will and public power.

For three decades, the old Establishment occupied this area, holding study groups, publishing papers, and providing the officials that filled the upper echelons of government. But as it has disintegrated, narrow lobbies and pressure groups rather than an enlightened citizenry have filled the vacuum. Worse still, these lobbies and pressure groups represent no underlying consensus but only their own separate interests. American foreign policy, once the realm of the gods, has become the domain of mere influence peddlers.

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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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# THE RISE AND FALL OF THE AMERICAN ESTABLISHMENT

Only a couple of decades ago, scholars could still speak with some plausibility of **The Power Elite** (C. Wright Mills, 1956), **The Protestant Establishment** (E. Digby Baltzell, 1964), or **The Higher Circles** (G. William Domhoff, 1970). Today, the authors' precise inventories of the social institutions that were thought to sustain the ruling elite seem antique, almost comical. "A person is considered to be a member of the upper class," Domhoff wrote in introducing one such inventory, "if his sister, wife, mother, or mother-in-law attended one of the following schools or belongs to one of the following groups . . ."

In retrospect, Baltzell emerges as the foremost seer of the group. He understood more clearly than his counterparts did that America's elite—and all three had very different definitions and opinions of the elite—was on the verge of dissolution. Rather than welcoming talented newcomers into the national "aristocracy," the nation's White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant (WASP) governing class was engaging in a suicidal attempt to bar the doors, especially against Jews. "The traditional standards upon which this country was built and governed down through the years are in danger of losing authority," he wrote, "largely because the American upper class, whose [WASP] members may still be deferred to and envied because of their privileged status, is no longer honored in the land. For its standards of admission have gradually come to demand the dishonorable treatment of far too many distinguished Americans for it to continue, as a class, to fill its traditional function of moral leadership."

Baltzell said there was still time for the WASPs to save themselves—and thus the Establishment over which they presided—but his warning went largely unheeded. Today, it is the Protestant remnant that goes unheeded. There are still WASPs with power and WASPs with money, but they no longer constitute an Establishment with moral authority. This decline has been amply documented and celebrated in a number of books, from Peter Schrag's **The De-**

**cline of the WASP** (Simon & Schuster, 1971) to Robert C. Christopher's **Crashing the Gates: The De-WASPing of America's Power Elite** (Simon & Schuster, 1989). They represent two of the main schools of thought about the WASP's demise. Christopher believes that the tide of political and demographic change in 20th-century America was so powerful that no adaptations could have saved them. Schrag, somewhat like Baltzell, suggests that the WASPs were brought down by their own shortcomings: "They grew great as initiators and entrepreneurs. They invented the country and its values, shaped the institutions and organizations, and tried to teach the newcomers—lest they become uncouth boors—how to join and behave. But when technology, depression and the uncertainties of the postwar world frightened and confused them, they drew the institutions around themselves, moved to the suburbs, and talked prudence."

Today there is great nostalgia for the old days of the Establishment, as evidenced by the popular appeal of books such as **The Wise Men: Architects of the American Century** (Simon & Schuster, 1986), by Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, and by a lengthening procession of Establishment biographies (though not all of these are flattering) and memoirs. Edmund Morris's **The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt** (Putnam, 1979), for example, is only the best of several studies of this founding father of the national Establishment. Godfrey Hodgson's portrait of TR's protégé, **The Colonel: The Life and Wars of Henry Stimson, 1867–1950** (Knopf, 1990) casts its subject, who served as Herbert Hoover's secretary of state and Franklin Roosevelt's secretary of war, as a giant who set the mold of the Establishment man. Other books include Ronald Steel's **Walter Lippmann and the American Century** (Little, Brown, 1980); Thomas Powers' **The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA** (Knopf, 1979); Clark Clifford's **Counsel to the President: A Memoir** (with Richard Holbrooke, Random House, 1991). Joseph

Alsop's memoirs are soon to appear and biographers are now at work on lives of John J. McCloy, Dean Acheson, and Robert S. McNamara, among others.

In part, the nostalgia for the Establishment reflects a longing for consensus and stability in the governance of national affairs. It seems also to reflect a feeling that some of these leaders were in important ways superior to their successors. Henry Stimson, for example, is cast in noble terms by his biographer: "The ideas that did touch and move him were for the most part old ideas: traditional religious loyalty and practice; the patriotic traditions of the Founding Fathers; old and stirring ideals like 'justice, duty, honor, trust.'"

The WASP ideal that Stimson represented lingers in the popular mind, but hollowed of its moral content and reduced to style—Madras shorts, Ralph Lauren sweaters, horn-rimmed glasses. Americans no longer aim to emulate WASP virtues but, as the preppie fad of the 1980s and the sumptuous *faux* austerity of the Ralph Lauren ads suggest, to live a fantasy version of the WASP *lifestyle*. It is the rugged, TR-style outdoorsmanship of George Bush that we see constantly on display—the Maine retreat, the cigarette boat on choppy seas, the dogged golf games. It was Bush's genteel WASP *values*, his corny geniality and his platitudes about public service that earned him scorn as a wimp early in the 1988 presidential campaign.

Where have all the Stimsons gone? In an essay in **Culture As History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century** (Pantheon, 1985), historian Warren I. Susman suggests that American culture bred a new type of individual after the turn of the century. The 19th-century "culture of character" was based on the principle that "the highest development of self ended in a version of self-control or self-mastery, which often meant fulfillment through sacrifice in the name of a higher law, ideals of duty, honor, integrity." This sustained "the human needs of a producer-oriented society." But the new consumer society of the 20th century required a different sort of person, Susman speculates, and early on "interest grew in personality, individual idiosyncrasies, personal needs and interests. The vision of

self-sacrifice began to yield to that of self-realization." This sort of culture produces Bart Simpsons, not Henry Stimsons.

Another explanation, not considered by many writers, concerns the neglected P in WASP: the possibility that the decay of religious faith among the elite helps explain the decline of the public-service ethos that sustained the Establishment. The thought is entertained by Richard Brookhiser, an editor of the conservative *National Review*, in **The Way of the WASP: How It Made America and How It Can Save It . . . So to Speak** (Free Press, 1991), but even he discounts it. WASP culture, he believes, still nourishes a form of civic-mindedness, but it is misdirected towards a progressivism in politics and religion that is badly out of step with mainstream America.

The new Establishment that many observers seem to pine for may not be possible. The country is much more populous and prosperous (and more politically divided) than it was during the Establishment's heyday. The makings of a new Establishment seem to be available in the new "inside-the-Beltway" institutions described, for example, by Hedrick Smith in **The Power Game: How Washington Really Works** (Random, 1987). If the other books make anything clear, however, it is that it takes more than motive and opportunity to make an Establishment. A certain conviction, spirit, and sense of common moral purpose are needed. And because they made their money on Wall Street (much as the founding fathers made theirs on the farm), the old Establishmentarians could more plausibly claim to play a disinterested role in public affairs than today's "players" from K Street can.

The old Establishment was built on the industrial fortunes of the 19th century. The new rich of the Information Age, like the Trumps and Milkens, have so far only flaunted their wealth or flattered themselves by purchasing glamor. A century ago a rich man's first thought might have been to found a prep school or college; today he puts his name on an art museum. Yet though we may resent today's rich and powerful for lacking the fiber of their predecessors, it is not so clear that, lacking it ourselves, we would know enough to honor it.

## RUSSIA'S FEVER BREAK

Sometimes events overtake us. When we at the *WQ* first learned about this article last spring, we were eager to bring it to our readers. It seemed to us that James Billington's argument that the Soviet Union was in the midst not of a revolution but of what he calls a "fever break" was vitally important. We were not alone. In late May, Billington, the Librarian of Congress and a leading historian of Russian culture, was invited to present his paper at the residence of the U.S. ambassador in Moscow, before an audience of several hundred select Soviet citizens. Believing Billington's perception of the historic moment would provide encouragement and needed perspective for reformers who had begun to doubt their own cause, a prominent Soviet democrat arranged for its publication in Moscow's *Independent Gazette*. It appeared in June, just as Russians were going to the polls to elect a president for the first time in their history. It hit close enough to home to provoke an unprecedented official protest by the Soviet embassy in Washington, apparently prompted by some of the same forces that launched the putsch. In August, a week before Boris Yeltsin and his allies stared down the leaders of the coup, Billington was back in the Soviet Union repeating his argument. We present his essay here not only as a prophetic historical document but, with minor modifications that reflect recent events, as a continuing guide to possible turns in Russia's future.

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*by James H. Billington*

**W**e are living in the midst of a great historical drama that we did not expect, do not understand, and cannot even name. It has been called a revolution, but modern revolutions have generally been violent, secular, and

led by intellectual elites with political blueprints. The upheavals in Eastern Europe were almost exactly the opposite: nonviolent, filled with religious idealism, and thrown up from below without clear leaders, let alone programs. It has been called reform from above with Mikhail Gorbachev as a Peter the Great; but Gorbachev never

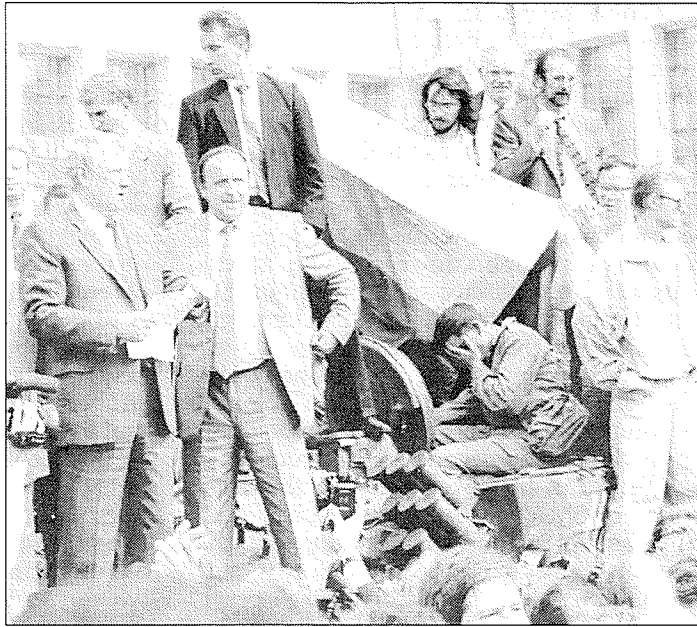
had a clear program, and events rapidly moved far beyond anything he intended, expected, or could control. The attempted August coup against Gorbachev, the counter-reaction of the Russian people, the rise of Yeltsin, and debates over the future of the Soviet Union all perpetuate the turmoil.

A more appropriate term for what is happening might be the Russian word *perelom*, meaning a break in an entire organism, a "fever break" that determines whether a person will live or die. Stalin used the word *perelom* to describe his plunge into the holocaust of totalitarianism, calling the first year of his first five-year plan, 1929, "the year of the great fever break." Sixty years later came another such break, this one ending totalitarianism in Eastern Europe. Then in August 1991 a related *perelom* convulsed the Soviet Union itself.

The dialogue has been cacophonous, the set surrealistic, and the cast of characters unlikely and almost anti-political: absurdist playwrights as chiefs of state in Czechoslovakia and Hungary; archival historians leading the factions that broke with communism completely in the Polish and Soviet parliaments; purveyors of the most immaterial of the arts, music, as heads of state in a fading East Germany and a rising Lithuania; a curator of ancient manuscripts as head of state in Armenia.

The West has viewed this all largely as an Eastern melodrama dominated by Gorbachev—first as a St. George liberating the satellites, then seemingly joining the dragons inside the Soviet Union, then clambering back on the democratic white horse lest Boris Yeltsin ride off alone.

We have seen ourselves only as spectators—uncertain as to how much money should be thrown on the stage, vaguely hoping that Westernized minorities can break away, somehow assuming that the Russians will eventually produce a new



*Defying the old guard from atop a tank, Boris Yeltsin in effect declared communism dead, ending an era that began when Lenin announced its coming from atop an armored vehicle in 1917.*

wave of repression in a culture where the music is melancholy, endings are sad, and democracy is all but unknown.

Such images are not altogether wrong, but they are inadequate for suggesting either the dangers or the creative possibilities in the current tumult. My own alternative analysis is based on seven propositions.

The first is that Americans are not merely spectators but more deeply involved than we realize in what happens inside the Soviet Union. American political and military strength helped force the change within the Soviet Union during the 1980s, and America is now the main model by which reformers in the Soviet Union define and measure themselves as they struggle to open up and restructure their continent-wide, multicultural nation.

Russian culture, never as securely self-contained as, say, the Chinese or French cultures, has always tended to borrow from its principal external adversary. The Russians took their religion and art from Byzantium in the 10th and 11th centuries, their modern governmental institutions from Sweden in the early 18th century, the language of their ruling class from the

French in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and their first industrial models from Germany in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—all either while or just after fighting furiously with each of these Western adversaries. Now, as the Cold War ends, the Soviet Union seems singularly bent on learning from the American “scorpion” it so long faced in the bottle.

The most important reason why Americans cannot be passive spectators at the Soviet spectacle is that the strategic strength of the Soviet Union directed at the United States remains unabated, despite the diminished targeting of Europe. The world, for all its multipolar aspects, remains bipolar in terms of deliverable nuclear destruction.

We are at the fever break in the body politic of Soviet totalitarianism, but I contend, as my second proposition, that the current scene in the Soviet Union is part not of the Eastern melodrama that I previously described but instead of a broader global drama of a high moral order.

Act I in this drama of the 20th century was that of *total war*: the two world wars which threw the masses violently on stage and ended European world dominance. Act II was that of *totalitarian peace*, the attempt to impose a totalistic order on the world first by Germany and then by the Soviet Union in the Cold War that followed the hot wars. Act III was the *victory of freedom*, which climaxed in the late 1980s when a liberal political and economic order emerged as the preferred norm over both the totalitarianism of Act II and the surviving authoritarianism of the Third World. Act IV is the *search for authority*, a quest that seems to be on the rise in this decade. As newly freed peoples search for unique identities in a world of creeping technological uniformity and for a source of responsibility amid the fluidity of freedom, they are rediscovering their own deeper cultural traditions.

Act V—the classical last act—lies ahead in the New Millennium: that of a genuinely multipolar world in which other currently dormant peoples in the Third World will simultaneously claim both freedom’s gen-

eral entitlements and their own distinctive identities. Only Act V will tell us whether humanity will be able finally to live at peace in a culturally divided, ecologically overtaxed planet—or whether we will simply use new weapons and empowerment to renew old patterns of tribal and national conflict. Only then will we know if the ending will be happy or sad, peaceful pluralism or renewed warfare that could lead to total destruction.

The Soviet Union today is traumatically enduring both the end of Act III and the beginning of Act IV. Its peoples are at once struggling both for common legal rights and for particular national identities.

The central tension in the Soviet Union today is neither a political one between personalities nor an economic one between programs. The key conflict is rather an elemental struggle for legitimacy between two very different, rival forces—primeval, moral forces that compete within, as well as among, people—forces that can be best understood by reading the long novels rather than the short histories of Russia.

From this follows my third proposition. The central struggle in the Soviet break with its totalitarian past has been between physical power and moral authority, between a dictatorial machine trying to control things at the top and a movement towards democracy from below.

In recent months, we have paid so much attention to the failures of the Soviet system that we have overlooked its one conspicuous success: the creation of the largest, most powerful, and long-lived political machine of the modern era. The Leninist machine in the Soviet Union (essentially the three million people in the inner *nomenklatura* of the Communist Party) has proven to be perhaps the most successful political oligarchy of this century. While maintaining its hold on power, it skillfully distributed patronage, atomized dissenters at home, and anesthetized opposition abroad. Considering the colossal economic failure and human cruelty of the Soviet sys-

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tem, the *nomenklatura's* ability to retain power must be recognized as one of the great, sinister political accomplishments of the 20th century.

Gorbachev is a pure child of this *nomenklatura* elite. Having once presided over the resort area of Stavropol, where the overweight, geriatric leadership came to take the waters at the spa, he was brought back to the capital to supervise the oligarchy's transition to a postwar, post-Stalinist generation of party leadership. Gorbachev in power proved to be one of the most dexterous of all Leninist politicians, playing off against each other the requisite left and right oppositions while continuously consolidating his own control over policy by invoking a vague slogan devoid of objective content (*perestroika*), which he alone could define. After creating new parliamentary institutions, which brought younger and professional people into the political process as a liberal counterweight to the conservative party bureaucracy, Gorbachev immediately built himself a super-presidency beyond the control of either. From this post he continued to persuade the outside world that he was a sensible centrist maneuvering between right and left excesses. But he was extraordinarily unpopular at home and had little ability to move anything with all his levers of power. He had more formal power than any Soviet leader since Stalin, but very little authority.

Authority, however, was being reconstituted by a democratic opposition welling up from below and seeping in from the periphery. In almost every election in which there was a genuine contest in the Russian as well as other republics, democratic forces have prevailed over reactionary ones—dramatically so in the centers of the Russian republic's military, industrial, and political power: Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Sverdlovsk.

The basic struggle, then, in the Soviet Union was between the Leninist political machine (fortified by a resurgent KGB that had power but almost no legitimacy) and a broad, diffuse democratic movement that had legitimacy and authority but almost no power or experience in economic and political governance. The Leninist machine was itself divided; and, as last August showed, it was finally unable to reverse the

popular move toward democracy.

My fourth proposition is that the decisive element in resolving the deepening union-wide crisis produced by nationality tensions and economic failures is the search for identity by the dominant Russian nationality itself. The decisive actor in determining the outcome of the conflict between dictatorship and democracy and of the multiple search for identities within the Soviet Union in Act IV of our global drama will be—as in a Greek tragedy or a Russian opera—the chorus: the awakening Russian people, who control most of the natural resources and almost all of the weapons of the Soviet Union.

The dominant Russian nationality has the most acutely difficult identity crisis of all the nationalities in the Soviet Union. Whereas the minorities can define their post-totalitarian identity in opposition not just to communism but to Russian imperial occupation, the dominant Russians must confront a double indignity. They are blamed for a system under which they have suffered as much as anyone else. Yet they realize that their communism was to some extent self-imposed rather than imported by an invading army. The inner trauma is considerable for a people that was indoctrinated for half a century into Stalin's highly Russocentric version of communism, a version that portrayed Russians as being the center of human progress and the vanguard of history. The televised tumult among the minority nationalities simply heightens the tension among Russians, who no longer know who they really are or what they are connected to either historically or geographically.

Defining a post-totalitarian identity for the Russian people has been the single most crucial element in reconstituting political legitimacy within the Soviet domain. Each of the two contesting forces in the Soviet Union came up with an answer; and the result was a struggle for the Russian soul between the Leninists and the democratic movement.

The Leninists, unable to base their legitimacy on a failed communist ideology, fell back on a kind of Russian nationalism that glorifies the state and army as the heart of the Russian experience. This degraded na-

tionism plays one minority nationality off against another and everyone off against Jews in accordance with well-established techniques of imperial crisis management. It also defends alleged rural values against Western corruption and rehabilitates much of the tsarist past, forgiving a kind of nationalism that Russians call "governmentalism" (*gosudar'stvennost'*).

An example of the more sophisticated forms of *nomenklatura*-sponsored nationalism could be found in the output of a new think tank, the Experimental Creative Center, which flourished in the months leading up to the aborted coup. Headed by a former actor and richly subsidized with a budget of 100 million rubles and a host of transfer appointments from government agencies including the KGB, this center extolled the virtues of unitary, authoritarian societies based on agrarian values—Japan, China, Korea, and Cuba—and called for a program of "national salvation" from the alleged chaos of democratic pluralism.

The rival reformist camp had a strikingly different vision of Russian identity, well depicted in the rich and varied independent press. This openly democratic press represented new independent organizations initially activated by the early Gorbachev reforms. Disillusioned by *perestroika*, the leaders of these groups turned next to Yeltsin and then even beyond him to a younger generation of local activists who seek a total break with communism. This broad movement attaches renewed historical importance to autonomous regional traditions and to local organizations of the kind that permitted Russia to survive in two world wars despite bad leadership in both. Russians are beginning to celebrate the forgotten variety and improvisational skills in their past history, just as they are relying increasingly on the so-called second economy to provide basic goods and services needed to survive the breakdown of the state economy.

A new, better-educated Russian generation, assisted by electronic communication, energized by the genuine opening of glasnost, is forging a shared determination to build from below political and economic structures that are more participatory and accountable as part of the definition and entitlement of modern civilized life. They

have created not so much parties (the very word has been delegitimized) as fronts, platforms, and unions.

At the same time many of these same people are also beginning to recover a Russian tradition that is defined more in terms of spiritual and cultural accomplishment than in those of military and strategic power. This return to a different cultural identity is evident in the extraordinary popularity of the environmental and historic restoration movements (perhaps the two most popular causes in the new civil society) and in a striking revival of religion, particularly among the educated younger generation in the Russian and Slavic parts of the Soviet Union.

The recovery of religion among the Russians as they move from Act III to Act IV of our global drama (from problems of freedom to those of identity) is a complex phenomenon. It emerged in reaction to moral and aesthetic impoverishment and the sheer boredom of the "stagnation" era under Brezhnev. It began as a classical revolt of sons against fathers—in this case, conformist atheist fathers—and has created, particularly in the generation under Gorbachev, an attitude that has led to more than curiosity if often less than conversion.

Religion spread through a kind of outmigration from the center to the periphery; it evolved spiritually from the formalistic, often politically subservient Orthodox Church to the still growing Baptist Church and on to the even faster growing Pentecostals.

But there was also an attempt by the political establishment to exploit the religious reawakening; the *nomenklatura*, for instance, seemed to use the millennial celebrations of Russian Christianity in 1988 as a relegitimizing device. Gorbachev (whose mother is a devout Orthodox believer) and his wife have both cultivated links with the greatest and most deeply Christian scholar of Old Russian culture, Dmitry Likhachev, a survivor of the original *gulag* at Solovki. Yeltsin chose an avowed Christian general as his running mate in the recent presidential campaign in the Russian republic and announced that his grandchildren had been baptized. Publications of the proliferating religio-philosophical circles and orga-



nizations are second in quantity only to democratic political publications in the almost unbelievable flood of new independent journals and bulletins.

The heart of the religious revival is, however, the recovery of the Orthodox tradition within the dominant Russian nationality. The Orthodoxy of the new generation draws inspiration from the so-called new martyrs of the Soviet era, who have yet to be theologically recognized by the still-timid official hierarchy. The most recent martyr was the greatest preacher of the new generation, Father Alexander Men, who was murdered with an axe last autumn just before he was about to become the first theological lecturer at a major state-run pedagogical center in Moscow since the revolution. Though often liturgically conservative, the young church tends also to be far more socially inclusive and intellectually alive, drawing strength from a prophetic emphasis on social justice provided by a strong Jewish element typified by Men and by the legendary long-term political prisoner, Mikhail Kazachkov, founder of the remarkable St. Petersburg society for Open Christianity. There is also a strong and cerebral philo-Catholic element, since many of the Russian Orthodox priests come from the western Ukraine.

But the real action—the intellectual revival, the interaction with the democratic movement and with the working masses—is occurring in the deep interior of Russia: the growth in a few years of the urban diocese of Nizhni-Novgorod from two to ten churches (plus a mosque and a synagogue) and of Sverdlovsk from one to five.

The Leninist political machine has continued to try diverting this recovery of religious tradition into reactionary, nationalistic channels—and to try splitting the democratic opposition by playing off against each other the religious and secular, the Slavophile and Westernizing elements within the Russian democratic movement.

The future of the Soviet Union will essentially be determined by which of the two identities—the imperial or the democratic—the predominant Russian population eventually chooses.

My fifth and darkest proposition is that the key diversion in the end game of the Leninist machine against the rising power

of the movement may well be not the predictable provocations of reactionary minority enclaves against restive larger minorities (such as inciting Ossetians against Georgians or Baltic Russian minorities against native Baltic rule). The major coming provocation may well arise from the dying ideology of class warfare, a final spasm of the Leninist stratagem which Stalin perfected during his descent into terror: the incitement of workers against intellectuals.

For a time, this demagogic tactic was successfully used by reactionaries who reviled Gorbachev as a talker rather than a doer. Yeltsin has played with it in his stump attacks on privilege. And the rhetoric of the rising working class denounces the soft, postwar generation of better-educated party bureaucrats as the undeserving beneficiaries of their work and the contemptible source of their woes. Either frustration or provocation could produce a paroxysm of class warfare that pits the frustrated masses against the reformist intellectuals. One would almost have to predict that there will be some forms of major social violence in the Soviet Union during the next year.

**Y**et beyond—or even instead of—such bloodshed, a more happy, peaceful evolution may occur if my last two propositions are correct.

The first of these (sixth overall) is that the Soviet drama is not fundamentally distinct from the earlier one in Eastern Europe—and indeed may be more influenced by it than is generally realized. To oversimplify a bit, I would say that Gorbachev's reactionary turn of this last year partly resulted from fear induced by what happened in Romania and Bulgaria, where deposed communist leaders were either killed or brought to trial. The Leninist political machine feared a much greater retribution in the Soviet Union. Such fear seems to me the only explanation for why Gorbachev did not follow the Chinese pattern of largely decollectivizing agriculture in order to put food on the table and to secure initial popular support during a difficult period of reform.

If the Romanian experience inspired fear in the machine at the top, the Polish experience provides hope for the movement from below. The Polish reformers, by

building a link between workers and intellectuals in the Solidarity movement and by going cold turkey into a market economy, have provided the democratic movement with a model for overthrowing a Leninist machine and creating the conditions for fundamental change. Gorbachev thus now seems to the movement rather like a Soviet Jaruzelski, claiming to retain order and prevent worse violence from happening, but in fact serving as a tragic, transitional figure who merely delays the victory of the democratic movement from below.

If the Romanian example stirred the fear of the machine, and the Polish example inspired hope in the movement, the Hungarian and Czech examples may provide more realistic models. In Hungary, economic change preceded and facilitated eventual political change. The Soviets will almost certainly have to undertake radical economic reform. Some are currently intrigued with the South Korean model—particularly in Kazakhstan, where the chief economic planner is a Korean.

But could there also possibly be a Czech outcome, a sudden transformation from below brought on by a populace long thought to be cynically somnolent but which eventually, unexpectedly rose up to disarm the Leninist machine with an essentially moral force?

Consider how nonviolent, controlled, and yet expressly political were the mass demonstrations in Moscow and the strikes in the provinces during the first half of 1991. Consider how the way had already been prepared for a Soviet Havel who could bring new moral authority from outside the corrupting system by an apostolic succession of anti-political prophets of change. Russia's premier laser and nuclear physicists, Rem Khokhlov and Andrei Sakharov, who first stirred up the stagnant waters, have died. But they were succeeded by Russia's greatest weight lifter, greatest chess player, greatest linguist, and a galaxy of other activists in their early thirties.

Of course, what was needed to create new political leadership was a willingness to compromise—a quality not abundantly manifest in Russian history but seemingly demonstrated in the Gorbachev-Yeltsin rapprochement. If, however, the crisis involves basic legitimacy rather than mere pro-

grams and institutions, there probably also has to be a catharsis. The totalitarian fever must break so the patient can stop dying and start sweating, stop lying down and start getting up.

This leads to my seventh and last proposition: that the final *perelom*, the big break that will enable creative people finally to focus their chaotically dispersed talents, may have more the quality of a nonviolent, spiritual movement than of the violent civil war everyone seems to expect.

There is almost no good Russian literature these days; all of its accumulated moral passion and spiritual questing seem poured into the reform movement from below. And it may be that the only definitive break with the unparalleled institutionalization of violence and atheism in the Soviet system will be precisely a movement of nonviolent spirituality.

If there is, as I am suggesting, a shared need in the Soviet Union to relegitimize the social contract rather than just rearrange social relationships, the choice then will seem to be between two different types of catharsis—one compatible with a nationalistic identity, the other with a democratic.

A nationalistic catharsis has already been market tested by organizations such as the Pamyat Society. It promises a cleansing of Russia from foreign impurities, seeks scapegoats, and would lead to purges. An opposite form of catharsis is as compatible with democratization as the scapegoat-purge pattern is with authoritarianism. This benign alternative might be called the repentance-redemption pattern, which looks within and above for a positive identity rather than without and below for a common enemy. Paradoxically, it may be that only in finding a basic spiritual identity *within* can one feel free to adopt wholesale political and economic forms from *without*. Perhaps only with a secure inner identity can one change outer behavior patterns.

A remarkable feature of the East European decompression from totalitarianism has been the absence, for the most part, of retroactive vindictiveness. Havel's analysis that all (even those like himself who resisted and went to prison) were implicated in the totalitarian nightmare has prepared the way for a sense of common blame and shared relief rather than selective scape-

goating as the means of putting the past to rest. In the Soviet Union, where both the guilt and the suffering have been greater and more long-lived, repentance has provided a rediscovered theological dimension for freeing people to consider an altogether different future. *Repentance* is the title and theme of the most important single artistic work of the Gorbachev era: Tengiz Abuladze's great movie. It is also the title of several new independent journals, the theme of the most innovative new museum of Soviet history (the Museum of the Young Communist League in Sverdlovsk), and a concept central to the unofficial part of the celebrations of the millennium of Russian Christianity in 1988.

In the attempt to come fully to grips with the *gulag* experience, Russians have been thrown back on biblical analogies and on the reassertion of the Judeo-Christian theme of the redemptive value of suffering. Out of the shared suffering that resulted from the atomization of society and degradation of morality under totalitarianism has grown a sense of common opportunity in the reassertion of small human communities gathered around shared spiritual ideals.

Even after the failed coup, the possibility remains that prolonged chaos or social violence could produce a reactionary takeover. Thus the break in the Soviet Union could still be violent: broken bones or even the paroxysm before death, rather than a fever break leading back to life. So we must

keep up our guard even as we raise our sights. But my sights suggest a Russian people in movement both forward to democracy and back to religion. This dual movement unites Russia with other peoples; it is what has already happened in Poland. Is it not, in essence, what the United States produced in a very different way many years ago, when democracy arose out of our own religious base, which underpinned it ethically and preceded it historically? The new interest among Russians in both American liberal democracy and their own conservative spiritual heritage could prove to be two sides of the same coin rather than conflicting sides of an irreconcilable Slavophile-Westernizer polarity as we have usually been inclined to think.

This movement towards democracy is probably the best long-term guarantee of peace in the potentially dangerous multipolar world that lies ahead in our global drama. For out of the large and generally depressing literature on how wars actually start in the modern world, there is one encouraging fact: democracies in history do not fight one another.

If we can better understand and build more human links with the extraordinary process of ferment that is going on in the Soviet Union (its cultural as well as its economic and political strivings), we may be able to help influence a new agenda reflecting the wisdom of Reinhold Niebuhr's words: Man's capacity for good makes democracy possible; his capacity for evil makes it indispensable.

# Columbus and the Labyrinth of History

Every generation creates the Columbus it needs. As the Quincentenary of his 1492 voyage approaches, observers are torn between celebrating a brave visionary and condemning the first representative of an age of imperial exploitation. Here Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist John Noble Wilford explores the various Columbus legends and discovers, beneath them, a very human figure and an adventure unprecedented in boldness.

*by John Noble Wilford*

**H**istory has not been the same since Christopher Columbus. Neither has he been the same throughout history.

During the five centuries since his epochal voyage of 1492, Columbus has been many things to many people: the protean symbol of the adventuring human spirit, the lone hero defying both the odds and entrenched thinking to change the world; the first modern man or a lucky adventurer blinded by medieval mysticism; an icon of Western faith in progress or an object of scorn for his failings of leadership and intellect; a man virtually deified at one time and roundly vilified today for his part in the initiation of an international slave trade and European imperialism. We hardly know the real Co-

lumbus. Such, it seems, is the fate of historical figures whose deeds reverberate through time.

The Columbus story surely confirms the axiom that all works of history are interim reports. What people did in the past is not preserved in amber, a moment captured and immutable through the ages. Each generation looks back and, drawing from its own experiences, presumes to find patterns that illuminate both past and present. This is natural and proper. A succeeding generation can ask questions of the past that those in the past never asked themselves. Columbus could not know that he had ushered in what we call the Age of Discovery, with all its implications, any more than we can know what two world wars, nuclear weapons, the collapse of colonial empires, the end of the Cold War, and the beginning of



space travel will mean for people centuries from now. Perceptions change, and so does our understanding of the past.

Accordingly, the image of Columbus has changed through the years, sometimes as a result of new information, more often because of changes in the lenses through which we view him. Once a beneficiary of this phenomenon, Columbus in times of reigning optimism has been exalted as a mythic hero. Now, with the approach of the

Quincentennial, he has fallen victim to a more self-critical society, one prone to hero-bashing and historical pessimism.

As recently as 1974, Samuel Eliot Morison, the biographer of Columbus, concluded one of his books with a paean to European influence on America: "To the people of the New World, pagans expecting short and brutish lives, void of hope for any future, had come the Christian vision of a merciful God and a glorious heaven." It is

hard to conceive of those words being written today. In a forward to the 1983 edition of Morison's *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus*, British historian David Beers Quinn criticizes Morison for ignoring or dismissing Columbus's failings. Columbus, Quinn writes, "cannot be detached from the imperialist exploitation of his discoveries and must be made to take some share of responsibility for the brutal exploitation of the islands and mainlands he found."

By and large, this new perspective has produced a more realistic, demythologized version of the Columbus story. The temptation, though, is to swing too far in the other direction, rewriting history as we wish it would have been or judging people wholly by anachronistic political standards. This has happened all too often regarding Columbus, producing myth and propaganda in the guise of history.

All the more reason for us to sift through the romantic inventions and enduring misconceptions that have clouded the real Columbus and to recognize that so much of the man we celebrate or condemn is our own creation. He is the embodiment of our running dialogue about the human potential for good and evil.

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Some of the facts about Columbus—who he was and what he did—are beyond serious dispute. This mariner of humble and obscure origins was possessed of an idea that became an obsession. He proposed to sail west across the uncharted ocean to the fabled shores of the Indies, the lands of gold and spices celebrated in the tales of Marco Polo and the goal of an in-

creasingly expansionist Europe in the 15th century. The Portuguese had sought a route around the tip of Africa. Some Florentine cosmographers had pondered the prospect of a westward sea route. But Columbus was apparently the first with the stubborn courage to stake his life on the execution of such a daring scheme.

After years pleading his case before the courts of Portugal and Spain, dismissed as a hopeless visionary or a tiresomely boastful nuisance, Columbus finally won the reluctant support of Ferdinand and Isabella. At the little Andalusian port of Palos de la Frontera, he raised a fleet of three ships and enlisted some 90 seamen. Whatever the sailors' trepidations or their opinion of Columbus when he arrived at Palos, their destiny was to share with him a voyage "by which route," Columbus wrote in the prologue to his journal, "we do not know for certain anyone previously has passed."

Columbus was never more in command of himself and his destiny than on that day, August 3, 1492, when he weighed anchor at Palos. He was a consummate mariner, as all his contemporaries agreed and historians have not contradicted, and here he was doing what he did best and so sure of his success. Of course, he never made it to the Indies, as head-shaking savants had predicted, then or on any of his three subsequent voyages. His landfall came half a world short of them, on an unprepossessing island inhabited by naked people with no knowledge whatsoever of Marco Polo's Great Khan.

On the morning of October 12, Columbus and his captains, together with their most trusted functionaries, clambered into armed launches and headed for the sandy beach and green trees. They carried the

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flags of the Christian monarchs of Spain. A solemn Columbus, without so much as a thought that it was anything but his to take, proclaimed possession of the island for the king and for the queen. Columbus and his officers then dropped to their knees in prayer.

It did not escape Columbus that these islanders "go around as naked as their mothers bore them; and the women also." This was not prurience but culture shock. Columbus was generally admiring in his initial descriptions of the people. They were "guileless and generous." Bringing cotton, parrots, and javelins to trade, they paddled out to Columbus's ships in their dugouts, each made from a single tree and so long that they held 40 men; the West Indian term for these dugouts was *canoa*—and thus a New-World word entered European speech. Columbus was pleased to note that they had no firearms. When he had shown them some swords, "they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves." "They should be good and intelligent servants," he concluded, "for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believed they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion." Columbus the anthropologist had his priorities.

Unfortunately, we have no record of the first impressions that the people Columbus called Indians had of the Europeans. What did they think of these white men with beards? Their sailing ships and their weapons that belched smoke? Their Christian God and their inordinate interest in gold and a place beyond the horizon called the Indies? We will never know. They could not put their feelings into writing; they had no writing. And the encounter itself doomed them. Within a generation or two, they became extinct, mainly through exposure to European diseases, and so could not pass on by word of mouth stories about the mo-

ment white men entered their lives.

Columbus made certain by his words and actions that his discovery would not be lost to history. On the homeward voyage, after visiting a string of other islands and more people, he composed a letter to the court of Ferdinand and Isabella in which he announced his discovery. He had made good his boast to one and all. He may have harbored some disappointment in not reaching the Asian mainland, but he had sailed across the Ocean Sea and found lands and peoples unknown to Europeans. And he wanted the court to read about it in his own words, especially since this justified his own claim to the titles and wealth due him pursuant to the deal he had struck with the court.

The letter Columbus wrote was also his bid for a place in history. He understood that the achievement would go for naught unless the news got back to others. To explore (the word, in one version of its etymology, comes from the Latin "to cry out") is to search out and exclaim discovery. Simply reaching a new land does not in itself constitute a discovery. It must be announced and then recorded in history so that the discovery can be acted upon.

Others besides the indigenous people preceded Columbus in finding parts of America. This is no longer an issue of consuming dispute in Columbian studies. Almost certainly the Norse under Leif Ericson landed at some northern islands and established a short-lived settlement at Newfoundland. Ericson and others may have reached America, but they failed to discover it. For nothing came of their deeds. Columbus, in writing the letter, was making sure his deeds would have consequences and his achievement would enter history.

The letter eventually reached the court in Barcelona and had the desired effect. The king and queen received Columbus with pomp and listened to his story with

## 'GARDENS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL I EVER SAW'

*The following account of October 10–13, 1492, is taken from Columbus's Diario, as abstracted by Bartolomé de las Casas and adapted by William Carlos Williams.*

Wednesday, 59 leagues, W.S.W., but counted no more than 44. Here the people could endure no longer. All now complained about the length of the voyage. But I cheered them as best I could, giving them good hopes of the advantages they might gain by it. Roused to madness by their fear, the captains declared they were going back but I told them then, that however much they might complain, I had to go to the Indies and they along with me, and that I would go until I found them, with the help of our Lord. And so for a time it passed but now all was in great danger from the men.

Thursday, 11th of October. The course was W.S.W. More sea [spilling over the deck] than there had been during the whole of the voyage. Sandpipers and a green reed near the ship. And for this I gave thanks to God as it was a sure sign of land. Those of the *Pinta* saw a cane and a pole, and they took up another small pole which appeared to be worked with iron; also another bit of cane, a land plant, and a small board. The crew of the caravel *Niña* also saw signs of land, and a small plant covered with berries.

... I admonished the men to keep a good lookout on the forecastle and to watch well for land and to him who should first cry out that he had seen land I would give a silk doublet besides the other rewards promised by the Sovereigns which were 10,000 *maravedis* to him who should first see it. Two

hours past midnight, the moon having risen at eleven o'clock and then shining brightly in the sky, being in its third quarter, a sailor named Rodrigo de Triana sighted the land at a distance of about two leagues. At once I ordered them to shorten sail and we lay under the mainsail without the bonnets, hove to waiting for daylight.

On Friday, the 12th of October, we anchored before the land and made ready to go on shore. Presently we saw naked people on the beach. I went ashore in the armed boat and took the royal standard, and Martin Alonzo and Vincent Yañez, his brother, who was captain of the *Niña*. And we saw the trees very green, and much water and fruits of diverse kinds. Presently many of the inhabitants assembled. I gave to some red caps and glass beads to put round their necks, and many other things of little value. They came to the ship's boats afterward, where we were, swimming and bringing us parrots, cotton threads in skeins, darts—what they had, with good will. As naked as their mothers bore them, and so the women, though I did not see more than one young girl. All I saw were youths, well made with very handsome bodies and very good countenances. Their hair short and coarse, almost like the hairs of a horse's tail. They paint themselves some black, some white, others red and others of what color they can find. Some paint the faces and others paint

genuine interest and pleasure. They instructed him to return to the new-found lands with a larger fleet including soldiers and settlers. America had entered world history, though Columbus insisted to his dying day that he had reached the Indies.

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**T**his familiar story of Columbus has been embellished to create an enduring popular legend. Some of the tales (though not all of them) have been

laid to rest through historical research.

Columbus did not, for example, have to prove that the world was round: All educated people in Europe at the time accepted this as a given. Isabella did not have to pawn her jewels to raise money for the expedition; though the Crown, following its wars against the Moors, was strapped for cash, the financial adviser Luis de Santangel arranged a loan from the ample coffers of the state police and from some Italian merchant bankers. And Columbus did not set sail with a crew of hardened criminals.



the whole body, some only round the eyes and others only on the nose. They are themselves neither black nor white.

On Saturday, as dawn broke, many of these people came to the beach, all youths. Their legs are very straight, all in one line, and no belly. They came to the ship in canoes, made out of the trunk of a tree, all in one piece, and wonderfully worked, propelled with a paddle like a baker's shovel, and go at marvelous speed.

Bright green trees, the whole land so green that it is a pleasure to look on it. Gardens of the most beautiful trees I ever saw. Later I came upon one man in a canoe going from one island to another. He had a little of their bread, about the size of a fist, a calabash of water, a piece of brown earth, powdered then kneaded, and some dried leaves which must be a thing highly valued by them for they bartered with it at San Salvador. He also had with him a native basket. The women wore in front of

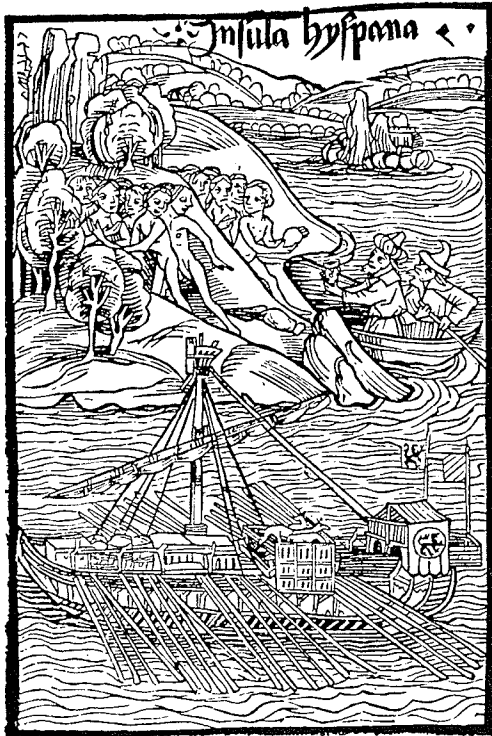
their bodies a small piece of cotton cloth. I saw many trees very unlike those of our country. Branches growing in different ways and all from one trunk; one twig is one form

and another is a different shape and so unlike that it is the greatest wonder of the world to see the diversity; thus one branch has leaves like those of a cane, and others like those of a mastic tree; and on a single tree there are five different kinds. The fish so unlike ours that it is wonderful. Some are the shape of dorries and of the finest colors, so bright that there is not a man who would not be astounded, and would not take great delight in seeing them. There are also whales. I saw no beasts on land save parrots and lizards.

On shore I sent the people for water, some with arms, and

others with casks; and as it was some little distance I waited two hours for them.

During that time I walked among the trees, which was the most beautiful thing which I had ever seen . . .



Only four men, accused of murdering a town crier, took advantage of a promised amnesty, and even they were seasoned mariners and acquitted themselves well on the voyage.

More troublesome for historians have been certain other mysteries and controversies.

Where, for example, did the first landfall occur? We know it was a small island the inhabitants called Guanahani and Columbus christened San Salvador. It was in the Bahamas or thereabouts, far from the Asian

mainland he was seeking, but which island? No fewer than nine different possible islands have been identified from the few ambiguous clues in Columbus's journal. The site favored by most experts is the Bahamian island once called Watling's but renamed San Salvador in 1924 to help solidify its claim.

Did Columbus really come from Genoa? Nearly every European nation has at one time or another laid some claim to him. Was he Jewish? Such conjecture originated in the 19th century and was promoted in

1940 in Salvadore de Madriaga's vivid biography, *Christopher Columbus*. But the evidence is circumstantial. Records in Genoa indicate that, whatever his more remote ancestry, Columbus's family had been Christian for several generations.

When and how in the mists of his rootless life did Columbus conceive of his audacious plan? Was it sheer inspiration bolstered by rational research? Or did he come into some secret knowledge? Was he really seeking the Indies? How was he finally able to win royal backing? What were his ships like?—no caravel wreck from that period has ever been recovered. Scholars and amateur sleuths have spent lifetimes trying to resolve these questions, usually without notable success.

Part of the problem lies with the passage of time. Although the record of Columbus by contemporaries is more substantial than that of any other 15th-century explorer, surviving accounts are often difficult to assess from this distance. Whose version is to be trusted? The letters of Peter Martyr, the courtier in Spain who never ventured to the New World? The biography by Hernando Columbus, the devoted son protective of his father's fame? The history of the New World by Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566), the Dominican friar and champion of the Indians who never missed a chance to condemn the brutality of the early explorers and colonists? Even the few extant writings of Columbus himself, who could be vague, contradictory and self-serving?

Hero worship has further distorted history. We want—or used to want—our heroes to be larger than life. The result can be a caricature, a plaster saint inviting iconoclasts to step forward with their own images, which can also ignore the complexity of human reality.

We are left, therefore, with enough material to mold the Columbus we choose to extol or excoriate, but not enough ever to

feel sure we truly know the man.

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Nothing better illustrates history's changing images of Columbus than the succession of portraits of him that have appeared over the centuries. They show a man of many faces—handsome and stalwart, heavy and stolid, shadowed and vaguely sinister. Artistic interpretation, like history, changes with the times.

Yet, there should be little confusion over the man's physical appearance. His son Hernando, who should have known, said he was "a well-built man of more than average stature, the face long, the cheeks somewhat high, his body neither fat nor lean. He had an aquiline nose and light colored eyes; his complexion too was light and tending to be red. In youth his hair was blond, but when he reached the age of 30 it all turned white."

The son went on to describe his father's character: "In eating and drinking, and in the adornment of his person, he was very moderate and modest," Hernando wrote. "He was affable in conversation with strangers and very pleasant to the members of his household, though with a certain gravity. He was so strict in matters of religion that for fasting and saying prayers he might have been taken for a member of a religious order."

Hernando may be guilty of some exaggeration. Columbus could not be too gentle and modest if he were to promote his vision before skeptical courts and if he could control a crew of rough seamen who suspected they might be headed to their deaths. He could be harsh in meting out punishment to seamen and in ordering punitive raids against Indian villages. Like others of that time, and to this day, he presumably saw no contradiction between his behavior and his religious beliefs. By all ac-

counts Columbus was a demonstrably pious man. Late in life, his writings portrayed a mind filled with mysticism and a belief in his divine mission to carry Christianity to all people and prepare them for the impending end of the world.

Of this mysticism, Hernando has nothing to say. He is also frustratingly reticent or misleading about the genesis of his father's consuming dream and even about his origins. Columbus himself chose to reveal very little about his early life.

Every verifiable historical document, however, indicates that Columbus was born in Genoa, which was an independent city-state (the lesser rival to Venice) whose ships traded throughout the entire Mediterranean world. He was probably born in 1451, and both his father Domenico and his father's father were wool weavers; his mother, Susanna Fontanarossa, was a weaver's daughter. Christopher was probably their eldest child. Bartholomew, the chart-maker who would share many of Columbus's adventures, was a year or two younger. The other children who grew to adulthood were a sister named Bianchetta and a brother Giacomo, better known by the Spanish equivalent, Diego, who joined Christopher on the second voyage. All in all, the Columbus of Genoa were fruitful and humble tradespeople—and nothing for a young man to be ashamed of.

At a "tender age," as Columbus once wrote, he cast his lot with those who go to sea. At first, he probably made short voyages as a crewman, and then longer ones on trading ships to the Genoese colony of Chios in the Aegean Sea. But even more crucial to Columbus's development than his ancestry or his birthplace was the timing of his birth. He was born two years before the fall of Constantinople, Christendom's eastern capital, to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Young Columbus was to grow up hearing about the scourge of Islam, the

blockage of regular trade routes to the spices of the East, and the parlous times for Christianity. Priests and popes were calling for a new crusade to recapture Constantinople and Jerusalem. All of this could have nourished the dreams of a great adventure in an ambitious young man with nautical experience.

The most significant mystery about Columbus concerns how he came up with his idea for sailing west to the Indies. As in everything else, Columbus's own words on the subject obfuscate more than elucidate. It was his practice, writes the Italian historian Paolo Emilio Taviani, "never to tell everything to everyone, to say one thing to one man, something else to another, to reveal only portions of his arguments, clues, and evidence accumulated over the years in his mind." Perhaps Columbus told so many partial stories in so many different versions that, as Morison suspects, he himself could no longer remember the origins of his idea.

In all probability he formulated the idea in Portugal sometime between 1476 and 1481. Columbus had come to Portugal quite literally by accident. When the Genoese fleet he had shipped with was attacked and destroyed in the summer of 1476, Columbus was washed ashore at the Portuguese town of Lagos. He made his way to Lisbon, where the talk of seagoing exploration was everywhere. He heard stories of westering seamen who found islands far out in the ocean and saw maps sprinkled with mythical islands. On voyages north perhaps as far as Iceland and south along the coast of Africa, he gained a taste for Atlantic sailing. There may even be something to the story of the unknown pilot from whom Columbus supposedly obtained secret knowledge of lands across the ocean. But as far as anyone can be sure—and volumes have been written on the subject—there was no sudden revelation, no

blinding flash of inspiration.

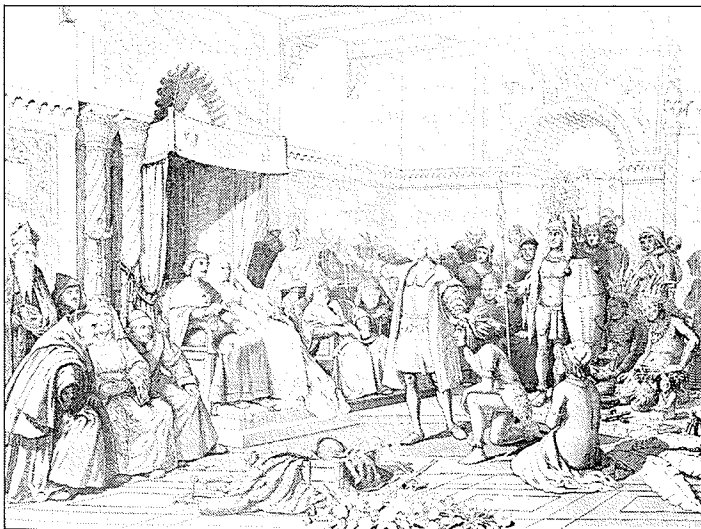
Nor did Columbus derive his plan from a careful reading of scholars. He was not then, and never became, a man who read to learn; he read to gather support for what he already thought to be true. His familiarity with the travel accounts of Marco Polo and the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, a 14th-century collection of travelers' tales from around the world, did not so much inform his concept as inflame a mind already stoked with the dry tinder of desire. From other sources—from a recent Latin translation of Claudius Ptolemy's second-century *Geography*, which described many Southeast Asian spice islands, to Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, a compendium of contemporary knowledge about the world which argued that the Western Sea was not very wide—Columbus made some calculations of global distances. Like d'Ailly, he conveniently managed to constrict the unknown he proposed to challenge, grossly underestimating the distance from Europe to Japan. Had he unwittingly deceived himself? Or had he deliberately contrived cal-

culations to deceive those he looked to for support? All that can be said with assurance is that Columbus was by then a man consumed by an enthusiasm that willed away obstacles and brooked no doubt.

His marriage in Portugal may have indirectly contributed to his growing conviction. In 1479, he wed Felipa Perestrelo de Moniz, a daughter of lesser nobility. Her widowed mother showed Columbus the journals and maps left by her husband, who had sailed for Prince Henry the Navigator. From the papers of Bartolomeo Perestrelo and other Portuguese seamen, Columbus concluded, his son Hernando wrote, "for certain that there were many lands West of the Canary Islands and Cape Verde, and that it was possible to sail to, and discover them." The social position of his wife's family also smoothed the way for Columbus's introduction to the court of Portugal's King John II.

When Columbus finally laid out his plan before John II, probably in 1483 or 1484, the court cosmographers, a Portuguese historian wrote, "considered the words of Christovae Colom as vain, simply founded on imagination, or things like that Isle Cypango of Marco Polo."

Columbus refused to accept rejection. By this time, his wife had died, and in 1485 he took their son, Diego, and left Portugal for Palos, across the border in Spain. Tradition has it that Columbus and little Diego, penniless and hungry, got off the ship and trudged along a dusty road to the Franciscan monastery of La Rabida. He knocked at the portal to beg for water and bread. If the legend is true, the father may have been taking the



*Columbus triumphant, 1493. To Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus presented not only trophies and treasures from his voyage but a bold scheme for colonizing the new-found lands.*

son there to be a boarding student, freeing himself to pursue his dream.

Though a secretive man and often portrayed as a loner, Columbus must not have been without charm, even charisma. He had insinuated himself into the influential society of Lisbon and would do so again in Spain. "Columbus's ability to thrust himself into the circles of the great was one of the most remarkable things about him," writes Harvard historian John H. Parry. It was also in his character that he seldom acknowledged the help of others.

At La Rabida, Columbus won the friendship and confidence of a Franciscan official knowledgeable in cosmography and through him gained introductions to wealthy patrons and eventually his first audience with Ferdinand and Isabella. They referred his proposal to a commission of learned men at the University of Salamanca. Washington Irving, in his fanciful biography, has the commissioners saying that the "rotundity of the earth was as yet a matter of mere speculation." Many of them no doubt deserved Irving's condemnation as a "mass of inert bigotry," but they were right (and Columbus wrong) in their judgment that Asia could not be reached by ships sailing west. They recommended that the monarchs reject the venture.

Columbus was nothing if not persistent. With a modest retainer from the court, he continued to solicit support from influential courtiers. While in Cordoba, waiting for some sign of royal encouragement, he met Beatriz Enriquez de Arana, a peasant woman, and they became lovers. In August 1488 she gave birth to an illegitimate son, Hernando. (They never married, and sometime after his first voyage, they drifted apart. He likely felt a peasant woman was beneath his station.)

Through another friar at La Rabida, Columbus gained other audiences with the monarchs in 1491 and again in early 1492,

just after the Moorish capital of Granada fell to the Christian forces. He had been led to believe that, after the burden of the prolonged war was lifted, the queen especially might be disposed to give her approval. Some writers have let themselves imagine that Isabella saw more in Columbus than an insistent supplicant. Such speculation of a sexual relationship between the two, Taviani says, is "a sheer fairy-tale, rejected by all historians."

Nothing seemed to change with the fall of Granada. Columbus was turned away, this time with an air of finality. Behind the scenes, however, Luis de Santangel, the chief financial adviser, interceded with assurances to the queen that financing the expedition need not be an insurmountable obstacle. No one knows why the king and queen finally relented. They might have been persuaded by the argument that they had little to lose and much to gain if this importunate foreigner just happened to be on to something.

\* \* \*

After his first voyage, when he was the toast of Barcelona, Columbus supposedly faced down his first critics. At a banquet, some noblemen insisted that if Columbus had not undertaken the enterprise, someone else, a Spaniard and not a foreigner, would have made the same discovery. At this, Columbus called for an egg and had it placed on the table. "Gentlemen," he was reported to have said, pointing to the egg, "you make it stand here, not with crumbs, salt, etc. (for anyone knows how to do it with meal or sand), but naked and without anything at all, as I will, who was the first to discover the Indies." When it was Columbus's turn, he crushed one end of the egg and had no trouble making it stand up on the table.

The anecdote has proved irresistible to

historians and storytellers to illustrate the singular role of Columbus in history. But it never happened—one more Columbian myth. The story was not only apocryphal, Morison points out, but it “had already done duty in several Italian biographies of other characters.”

In reality, Columbus would not so easily put down the critics who dogged him the rest of his life—and through history. If only he had stopped with the first voyage, the echo of those fanfares in Barcelona might not have faded so fast.

A fleet of 17 ships, carrying some 1,200 people, left Cadiz in the autumn of 1493 with instructions to establish a permanent settlement on the island of Hispaniola. There, near the present city of Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic, Columbus built a fort, church, and houses for what would be his colonial capital, La Isabela. The experiment was disastrous. The site had no real

harbor, insufficient rainfall, and little vegetation. Sickness and dissension brought work to a standstill and the colony to the point of starvation. Expeditions into the mountains failed to find any rich lodes of gold. As Las Casas wrote, they “spread terror among the Indians in order to show them how strong and powerful the Christians were.” Bloody warfare ensued.

With little gold to show for his efforts, Columbus ordered a shipment of Taino In-

dians to be sold as slaves in Spain. The best that can be said in defense of Columbus is that he was now a desperate man. His power to rule La Isabela was waning. His visions of wealth were fading. He feared that his influence back in Spain would be irreparably diminished by critical reports from recalcitrant officers who had returned to Spain. And he had failed again to find a mainland. His desperation was such that he forced all his crew to sign a declaration

that, at Cuba, they had indeed reached the mainland of Cathay. Sick and discouraged, he sailed home in 1496.

The third voyage did nothing to restore his reputation. Departing from Seville in May 1498, he steered a southerly course and reached an island off the northeastern coast of South America, which he named Trinidad, for the Holy Trinity. A few days later, he saw a coastline to the south. Columbus recognized that the tremendous

volume of fresh water flowing from the Orinoco River was evidence of a large land, but he failed to appreciate that this might be a continent or to pursue his investigations. Instead, his mind drifted into speculation that the river must originate in the Earthly Paradise. Bound to medieval thinking, the man who showed the way across the ocean lost his chance to have the New World bear his name. The honor would soon go to a man with a more open-minded



*Columbus disgraced, 1500. Charged with malfeasance as governor of Hispaniola, Columbus returned to Spain a prisoner in chains.*

perspective, Amerigo Vespucci, who on his second voyage of exploration (1501–2) concluded that the South American landmass was not Asia but a new continent.

Columbus turned his back on South America and sailed to Santo Domingo to attend to the colony there. He found that his brothers, Bartholomew and Diego, had lost control. Some of the colonists had mutinied, and the crown had dispatched a new governor empowered to do anything necessary to restore order. It was then that Columbus was arrested, stripped of his titles, and sent back in irons to Spain in October 1500.

It was an ignominious end to Columbus's authority and to his fame in his lifetime. The crown eventually restored his titles, but never again was he allowed to serve as viceroy. The monarchs now were under no illusions about Columbus. He had failed as a colonial administrator, and they had strong doubts about the validity of his claims to have reached the Indies.

Columbus was given permission for one final voyage, which lasted from 1502 to 1504. He was specifically barred from returning to Santo Domingo. Instead, he explored the coast of Central America and attempted without success to establish a settlement in Panama.

Historians cite the last voyage as one of his many "missed opportunities." With luck and more persistence, Columbus might have stumbled upon the Maya civilization or the Pacific Ocean. As it was, he barely made it back to Spain. He was marooned a year on Jamaica, where he wrote a pathetic letter to the monarchs. "I implore Your Highnesses' pardon," he wrote. "I am ruined as I have said. Hitherto I have wept for others; now have pity upon me, Heaven, and weep for me, earth! I came to Your Highnesses with honest purpose and sincere zeal, and I do not lie. I humbly beg Your Highnesses that, if it please God to re-

move me hence, you will aid me to go to Rome and on other pilgrimages."

\* \* \*

Columbus in his last years was a dispirited man who felt himself to be misunderstood and unappreciated. He sought to define himself in a remarkable manuscript now known as *Libro de las profecías*, or *The Book of Prophecies*. Between the third and fourth voyages, Columbus collected passages of biblical scriptures and the words of a wide range of classical and medieval authors. According to his own description, this was a notebook "of sources, statements, opinions and prophecies on the subject of the recovery of God's Holy City and Mount Zion, and on the discovery and evangelization of the islands of the Indies and of all other peoples and nations."

The document reveals the depth and passion of Columbus's belief that he had a special relationship with God and was acting as the agent of God's scheme for history. He marshaled evidence from the prophecies of the Bible to show that his recent discoveries were only the prelude to the realization of a greater destiny. It was as if he saw his role as being not unlike John the Baptist's in relation to Christ. The wealth from his voyages and discoveries had given the king and queen of Spain the means to recover the Holy Land for Christendom, and thereby he had set the stage for the grandiose climax of Christian history, the salvation of all the world's peoples and their gathering at Zion on the eve of the end of time.

Most historians who studied the document have tended to dismiss it as the product of his troubled and possibly senile mind. His other writings at the time sometimes betrayed a mind verging on paranoia. Delno C. West, a historian who has recently

## COLUMBUS'S MYSTERIOUS SIGNATURE

In 1498, Columbus instructed all of his heirs to continue to "sign with my signature which I now employ which is an X with an S over it and an M with a Roman A over it and over them an S and then a Greek Y with an S over it, preserving the relation of the lines and the points." At the top, thus, is the letter S between two dots. On the palindromic second row are the letter S A S, also preceded, separated, and ended with dots. The third row has the letters X M and a Greek Y, without dots. Below that is the final signature, Xpo Ferens, a Greco-Latin form of his given name.

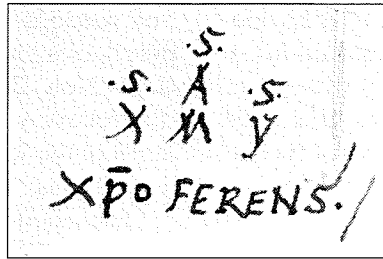
To this day no one can decipher the meaning Columbus had in mind, but it almost certainly bears on his religious outlook. The simplest explanations hold that the letters stand for seven words. It has been suggested that the four letters stand for "Servus Sum Altissimi Salvatoris," for "Servant I Am of the Most High Savior." The three letters of the third line could be an invocation to Christ Jesus and Mary, or to Christ, Mary, and Joseph. Another proposed solution is that the seven letters are the initials for "Spiritus Sanctus Altissimi Salvator Xristus Maria Yesus."

John Fleming, a medievalist at Princeton University, believes he has cracked the code, finding it to be an "acrostic of considerable complexity committed to a more or less learned and hermetic mystical theology." Columbus, he concludes, was borrowing from two medieval traditions in formal signatures, that of the church worthies, like St. Francis, who devised intricate crucigrams, and that of the church mariners who often included in their craft marks anchors, masts, fishhooks, and so forth. For his signature, Fleming says, Columbus seems to have com-

bined religious and nautical symbolism. The unifying idea is the medieval association of the Virgin Mary with Stella Maris, the indispensable navigational star also known as Polaris, or the North Star. The first cross bar stands for Stella MariS. The vertical "mast" stands for "Stella Ave Maris," after the vesper hymn "*Ave, stella maris.*" By design, the structure represents both a Christian cross and a ship's mast. The line X M Y may have one meaning, "*Jesus cum Maris sit nobis in via*" (an invocation with which Columbus opened much of his writing), with the Y representing the fork in the road and the symbolism for his having chosen the hard way to destiny's fulfillment. Fleming suggests a double meaning. The X and Y at either end of the bottom line could also stand for

"Christophorus," his name and destiny, and "Jacobus," for "St. James," whose feast day and Christopher's are the same and who is, not incidentally, the patron saint of Spain, Santiago—Sant Yago.

Fleming's cryptographic skills have uncovered other clues in the signature to Columbus's "religious imagination." But, for understanding Columbus the mystical discoverer, Fleming draws insight from his associations with Mary, Christopher, and Santiago. He writes: "In Columbus's heavenly city, the Virgin Mary stands ever firm between her two Christ-bearing guards, Christophorus on the one hand, San Yago the Moorslayer on the other. And in the larger meaning of these two saints, both celebrated by the Roman church on a single day, which was of course Columbus's name-day, we may see adumbrated much of the glory, and much of the tragedy, of the European encounter with the New World."



*From The Mysterious History of Columbus, copyright © 1991 by Alfred A. Knopf. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.*

translated the *Book of Prophecies*, suspects that historians were "reluctant to admit that the first American hero was influenced by prophetic ideas." If the book indeed reflects Columbus's thinking even before

1492, it undermines the popular image of Columbus as a man of the modern age who applied reason in conceiving his venture. It exposes him as a person thoroughly mired in the medieval world, obsessed with escha-



tology, and driven by a supposed call from God to carry out a mission of apocalyptic dimensions.

West contends that this spirituality, which fed Columbus's apocalyptic view of history, lay at the heart of the man and shaped his actions. Rather than some map or unknown pilot's tale, this may have been the "secret knowledge" that inspired Columbus. Certainly, without his unwavering belief in himself and his destiny, Columbus might not have sustained the single-minded persistence it took to win support for the enterprise and to see it through. "The Lord purposed that there should be something clearly miraculous in this matter of the voyage to the Indies," Columbus wrote in the *Prophecies*, "so as to encourage me and others in the . . . Household of God." Beginning in 1493, he began signing nearly all of his letters and documents *Christoferens*, a Latinization of his given name that means "Christ-bearer."

New attention to the spiritual side of Columbus does not, however, necessarily bring this complex man into focus. Images of a superstitious spiritualist and the modern explorer must be superimposed to produce a stereoscopic picture of Columbus, revealing the depth and heights of the mental terrain through which he traveled as he found America and then lost his way in failure, self-pity, and a fog of mysticism.

\* \* \*

Columbus was probably no more than 55 years old when he died on May 20, 1506, in Valladolid, Spain. But he was much older in body and in tormented mind. His last voyages had left him crippled with arthritis and weak from fever. He was reduced to a sad figure, spending his last years in disgrace while stubbornly pressing his claims for the restoration of titles and the wealth due him.

Contrary to legend, he was neither destitute nor alone at the end. His two sons were with him, in a comfortable home. We cannot be sure of the traditional story, that he died believing he had reached the Indies. He never gave explicit expression to any recognition that he had found something other than Asia. All the evidence, though, suggests that he died unsatisfied.

His death went unheralded. There was no public ceremony of mourning and no recorded expressions of grief at the royal court. The man who rose from obscurity died in obscurity. His remains have been moved so many times over the centuries, from Spain to the New World and presumably back again, that no one is sure of his final resting place.

In the first century after his voyages, Columbus languished in the backwaters of history. His reputation suffered from his many failures as a colonial governor. The 1519–1522 Magellan circumnavigation left no doubt about the magnitude of Columbus's error in thinking he had reached the Indies. Conquering explorers such as Cortes and Pizarro won greater immediate fame by their dazzling exploits against the Aztecs and Incas. Cartographers saw fit to name the New World after Vespucci, not Columbus. Books of general history scarcely mentioned Columbus or ignored him altogether.

Within 50 years of Columbus's death, Bartolomé de las Casas, the Dominican bishop who extolled and defended the Indians, produced the first revisionist history. In his *History of the Indies*, Las Casas wrote eloquently of the atrocities committed against the Indians. To sail to the islands Columbus had discovered, Las Casas wrote, one needed only to follow the floating corpses of Indians that marked the way. His accounts of torture and killings documented the so-called Black Legend of Spanish cruelty that was seized upon by the

English, Dutch, and French to fan the fires of national rivalries and religious hatreds.

As the Age of Discovery flourished during the late 16th century, Columbus began to be rescued from oblivion. He was celebrated in poetry and plays, especially in Italy and later in Spain. A glimmer of history's future hero could be seen in a popular play by Lope de Vega in 1614. In *The New World Discovered by Christopher Columbus*, he portrayed Columbus as a dreamer up against the establishment, a man of singular purpose who triumphed, the embodiment of that spirit driving humans to explore and discover.

It was in the New World, though, that Columbus would be transformed almost beyond human recognition into an icon.

By the late 17th century, people in the British colonies of North America were beginning to think of themselves as Americans and sought to define themselves in their own terms and symbols. Samuel Sewell, a Boston judge, suggested that the new lands should rightfully be named for Columbus, "the magnanimous hero . . . who was manifestly appointed by God to be the Finder out of these lands." The idea took root. In time, writers and orators used the name "Columbia" as a poetic name for America. Joel Barlow's poem *The Vision of Columbus*, appearing in 1787, has an aged Columbus lamenting his fate until he is visited by an angel who transports him to the New World to see what his discovery had brought to pass. There he could glimpse the "fruits of his cares and children of his toil."

Indeed, the young republic was busy planning the 300th anniversary of the landfall, in October 1792, when it named its new national capital the District of Columbia—perhaps to appease those who demanded that the entire country be designated Columbia. Next to George Washington, Columbus was the nation's

most exalted hero. In him the new nation without its own history and mythology found a hero from the distant past, one seemingly free of association with the European colonial powers and Old-World tyranny. Americans invoked Columbus, the solitary individual who had challenged the unknown, as they contemplated the dangers and promise of their own wilderness frontier. "Instead of ravaging the newly found countries," Washington Irving wrote in his 1828 biography, Columbus "sought to colonize and cultivate them, to civilize the natives."

This would be the Columbus Americans knew and honored throughout the 19th and into the present century. With the influx of millions of immigrants after the Civil War, he was even made to assume the role of ethnic hero. In response to adverse Protestant attitudes and to affirm their own Americanism, Irish Catholic immigrants organized the Knights of Columbus in 1882. The fraternity's literature described Columbus as "a prophet and a seer" and an inspiration to each knight to become "a better Catholic and a better citizen." Catholics in both America and Europe launched a campaign to canonize Columbus on the grounds that he had brought the "Christian faith to half the world." The movement failed not because of Columbus's brutal treatment of Indians but mainly because of the son he had sired out of wedlock.

Columbus's reputation was never higher than on the 400th anniversary of his first voyage. There were parades and fireworks, the naming of streets and dedicating of monuments. The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, with its lavish displays of modern technology, was less a commemoration of the past than the self-confident celebration of a future that Americans were eager to shape and enjoy. Americans ascribed to Columbus all the human virtues that were most prized in that time of geo-

graphic and industrial expansion, heady optimism, and unquestioning belief in progress. A century before, Columbus had been the symbol of American promise; now he was the symbol of American success.

The 20th century has dispelled much of that. We have a new Columbus for a new age. He is the creation of generations that have known devastating world wars, the struggle against imperialism, and economic expansion that ravages nature without necessarily satisfying basic human needs. In this view, the Age of Discovery initiated by Columbus was not the bright dawning of a glorious epoch but an invasion, a conquest, and Columbus himself less a symbol of progress than of oppression.

Columbus scholarship has changed. More historians are writing books from the standpoint of the Indians. They are examining the consequences—the exchange of plants and animals between continents, the spread of deadly diseases, the swift decline of the indigenous Americans in the face of European inroads. The Quincentennial happens to come at a time of bitter debate among Americans over racism, sexism, imperialism, Eurocentrism, and other “isms.” Kirkpatrick Sale’s 1990 book about Columbus said it all in its title, *The Conquest of Paradise*.

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Was Columbus a great man, or merely an agent of a great accomplishment, or perhaps not a very admirable man at all? His standing in history has varied whenever posterity re-evaluated the consequences of Europe’s discovery of America. Ultimately, Columbus’s reputation in history is judged in relation to the place that is accorded America in history.

Europeans took a long time appreciating their discovery. Columbus and succeed-

ing explorers looked upon the islands and mainland as an inconvenience, the barrier standing in their way to Asia that must be breached or circumnavigated.

As early as Peter Martyr, Europeans tried to assimilate the new lands into what they already knew or thought, rejecting the utter newness of the discovery. This was, after all, during the Renaissance, a period of rediscovering the past while reaching out to new horizons. And so the peoples of the New World were described in terms of the Renaissance-ancient image of the “noble savage,” living in what classical writers had described as the innocent “Golden Age.” The inhabitants of the New World, Martyr wrote, “seem to live in that golden world of which old writers speak so much, wherein men lived simply and innocently without enforcement of laws, without quarreling, judges and libels, content only to satisfy nature, without further vexation for knowledge of things to come.”

The innocence of the indigenous Americans was more imagined than real. To one degree or another, they knew warfare, brutality, slavery, human sacrifice, and cannibalism. Columbus did not, as charged, “introduce” slavery to the New World; the practice existed there before his arrival, though his shipments of Tainos to Spain presaged a transoceanic traffic in slaves unprecedented in history.

This idealized image of people living in nature persisted until it was too late to learn who the Americans really were and, accepting them for what they were, to find a way to live and let live. Disease and conquest wiped out the people and their cultures. In their place Europeans had begun to “invent” America, as the Mexican historian Edmundo O’Gorman contends, in their own image and for their own purposes. They had set upon a course, writes historian Alfred W. Crosby, of creating “Neo-Europes.” This was the America that

## 1992: CEREBRATION, NOT CELEBRATION

It was in 1982 that I first became aware that the 500th anniversary of Columbus's 1492 Voyage of Discovery was a minefield, where the prudent celebrant stepped lightly and guardedly.

To my long-time friend Ramon, in an institute attached to the foreign ministry in Madrid, I said on the telephone one day that year, "Ramon, here at Florida we're beginning to get interested in the Columbus Discovery Quincentenary."

"Why do you say Columbus?" he responded. "He was an Italian mercenary. It was Spain that discovered America, not Columbus."

"But, Ramon," I protested, "we can't celebrate 1492 in the United States without mentioning Columbus."

"In your country," he lectured me, "Columbus Day is an Italian holiday. But the ships, the crews, the money were all Spanish. Columbus was a hired hand."

"But—"

"So when Cape Canaveral space center holds its 100th anniversary, are you going to call it the Werner von Braun celebration?"

I was grateful to Ramon for alerting me, in his way, to the sensitive character of this anniversary. Soon afterwards I learned that "Discovery," too, is a term freighted with ethnic and cultural contentions, as many descendants of the native peoples in the Americas argue against its Eurocentric and paternalistic coloring. "We were already here," they remind me. And they were here so long ago, 10 to 25,000 years the anthropologists say. I was left to wonder, which was the Old World and which was the New?

As the past ten years have shown, the Spanish-Italian tension has softened, but the European-Native American disjunction has hardened, as historians, epidemiologists, moralists, romanticists, and native spokespersons have clashed over the benefits, if any, that European entrance onto the American stage brought the societies of both worlds, particularly this one.

Certainly huge numbers of indigenous people died as the result of the collision: some, it is true, from the sword, but by far the majority from the Europeans' unwitting introduction of pathogens—smallpox, mea-

sles, tuberculosis, the plague—to which the native peoples had no immunities. Recognizing the dimensions of that calamity, many Westerners acknowledge that there is little to celebrate. In Spain, where a 500th Year World's Fair will open in Seville, many of that country's intellectuals are decrying what they call a 15th- and 16th-century *genocidio*.

In the margins of the debate, native descendants and their advocates are publicizing a long list of grievances against the Caucasians who abused their liberties, expropriated their lands, and despoiled an environmental paradise. On July 17–21, 1990, some 400 Indian people, including a delegation from the United States, met in Quito, Ecuador, to plan public protests against 500 years of European "invasion" and "oppression." Even before that, the first sign of reaction in the United States had already come when, in December 1989, representatives of the American Indian Movement, supported by a group of university students, began picketing the "First Encounters" archaeology exhibition mounted by the Florida Museum of Natural History as it travelled from Gainesville to Tampa, Atlanta, and Dallas. (In Tampa, their presence was welcomed because it boosted paid attendance.) In 1992, a loose confederation of North American Indian groups will picket in all U.S. cities where the Columbus replica ships will dock. They seek, one of their leaders told me, "not confrontation but media attention to present-day Native American problems."

African Americans also remind their fellow citizens that the events of 1492 and afterwards gave rise to the slave trade. And Jews appropriately notice that 1492 was the year when they were forcibly expelled from their Spanish homeland. In a counter-counteraction in all this Quincentenary skirmishing, however, the National Endowment for the Humanities decided not to fund a proposed television documentary about the early contact period because, reportedly, it was too biased against the Europeans. (Spain, by contrast, is acting uncommonly large-minded: It has agreed to fund the Smithsonian-Carlos Fuentes television production, "The Buried Mirror," a show that is

highly critical of Spain's colonial practices.)

It is this "politically correct" dynamic that, most likely, will keep 1992 from being quite the exuberant and careless celebration that the Bicentennial was in 1976.

Anglo-Saxon and Celtic Americans felt comfortable with the Bicentennial because it reinforced their ethnic and cultural givens (Plymouth Rock, Virginia, Washington, Jefferson, the English language, Northern European immigration, etc.). Today, nervous about what is happening to "their" country and learning that citizens of Hispanic origins are projected soon to be the largest U.S. minority, the old-line white majority may not be enthusiastic about celebrating the 500th coming of the Hispanics—especially since they sense no continuing need for Columbus as a unifying principle or symbol.

What is likely to happen in 1992? Occasional public celebrations and observances will be produced by civic, ethnic, and cultural bodies. Reproductions of Columbus's ships will arrive in various ports from Spain. Tall ships may parade in New York harbor. Fireworks will explode here and there. People will view two television mini-series and read countless ambivalent newspaper stories.

The Federal Quincentenary Jubilee Commission that was appointed to superintend our exultations is in disarray, its chairman forced out on a charge of mishandling funds, its coffers empty of federal dollars, its principal private donor, Texaco, pulling the plug. Some states, and numerous individual cities (especially those named after Columbus, 63 at last count), have plans for observances, large or small. Florida which has the best reasons, geographically and temporally, to do something, has no state-wide plans, two commissions having collapsed and a

third now being stripped of its funds.

But now the good news: In anticipation of the 500th anniversary an enormous amount of intellectual activity has occurred, in the form of archival discoveries, archaeological excavations, museum and library exhibitions, conferences, and publications. Some 30 new and upcoming adult titles have been enumerated by *Publishers Weekly*. Over 100 exhibitions and conferences have been counted by the National Endowment for the Humanities. This remarkable efflorescence of original research and scholarship will leave a lasting legacy of understanding and good. On the twin princi-



*Father of a country he never knew. This 1893 painting establishes Columbus with Lincoln and Washington as America's "holy trinity."*

ples that celebration is more valuable than celebration and that correcting one paragraph in our children's schoolbooks is worth more than a half-million dollars worth of fireworks exploded over Biscayne Bay, 1992 should be the best 1492 anniversary ever.

—Michael Gannon

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took its place in world history.

In the 18th century, however, European intellectuals did engage in a searching re-appraisal. A scientific movement, encouraged by the French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707–1788), spread the idea that America was somehow inferior to the Old World. As evidence, Buffon offered denigrating comparisons between the “ridiculous” tapir and the elephant, the llama and the camel, and the “cowardly” puma and the noble lion. Moreover, Old-World animals introduced there fared poorly, declining in health and size, with the sole exception of the pig. It was Buffon’s thesis that America suffered an arrested development because of a humid climate, which he attributed to its relatively late emergence from the waters of the Biblical flood.

Buffon’s ideas enjoyed a vogue throughout the 18th century and inspired more extreme arguments about “America’s weakness.” Not only were the animals inferior, so were the Americans, and even Europeans who settled there soon degenerated.

Unlike the proud patriots in colonial and post-Revolutionary North America, European intellectuals began expressing strong reservations about the benefits of the American discovery. There was no gainsaying its importance. Few disputed the opinion of Adam Smith: “The discovery of America, and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind.”

But there were negative assessments, not unlike today’s. The anti-imperialist Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) wrote: “The Europeans have scarcely visited any coast but to gratify avarice, and extend corruption; to arrogate dominion without rights, and practice cruelty without incentive.” He was also one of the first to make an unflattering connection between the conquest of

America and its original conqueror. Columbus, Johnson said, had to travel “from court to court, scorned and repulsed as a wild projector, an idle promiser of kingdoms in the clouds: nor has any part of the world had reason to rejoice that he found at last reception and employment.”

The French philosopher Abbé Guillaume-Thomas Raynal (1713–1796) challenged others to consider the following questions: Has the discovery of America been useful or harmful to mankind? If useful, how can its usefulness be magnified? If harmful, how can the harm be ameliorated? He offered a prize for the essay that would best answer those questions.

The respondents whose essays have survived were evenly divided between optimists and pessimists. Although “Europe is indebted to the New World for a few conveniences, and a few luxuries,” Raynal himself observed, these were “so cruelly obtained, so unequally distributed, and so obstinately disputed” that they may not justify the costs. In conclusion, the abbé asked, if we had it to do over again, would we still want to discover the way to America and India? “Is it to be imagined,” Raynal speculated, “that there exists a being infernal enough to answer this question in the affirmative?”

Pangs of guilt and expressions of moral outrage were futile, however; nothing stayed the momentum of European expansion in America. Most of the immigrants had never heard of the “American weakness” or read the intellectuals who idealized or despised the Indians or deplored Europe’s bloodstained seizure of the lands. By the millions—particularly after the introduction of the steamship and on through World War I—immigrants flocked to a promised land where people could make something of themselves and prepare a better life for their children. There had been nothing quite like this in history. This was

reflected in the image of Columbia. Little wonder that Columbus's standing in history was never higher than it was when the achievements and promise of America seemed so bright and were extravagantly proclaimed at home and abroad.

The "primary factor behind our [current] reassessment of the encounter," Crosby writes, "is a general reassessment of the role of rapid change, even catastrophe, in human history, and even the history of the earth and of the universe." The earlier faith in progress was founded on a Western belief that change came gradually and almost invariably for the better. In 19th-century science, the uniformitarian geology of Charles Lyell and the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin were widely accepted because they seemed to confirm the idea of progress: The present world and its inhabitants were the products not of global disasters and multiple creations but of slow and steady change.

By contrast, Crosby observes, the 20th century has experienced the two worst wars in history, genocide, the invention of more ominous means of destruction, revolutions and the collapse of empires, rampant population growth, and the threat of ecological disaster. Catastrophism, not steady progress, is the modern paradigm. Even the universe was born, many scientists now believe, in one explosive moment—the Big Bang.

"The rapidity and magnitude of change in our century," Crosby concludes, "has prepared us to ask different questions about the encounter than the older schools of scientists and scholars asked."

\* \* \*

If Abbé Raynal held his essay contest today, the pessimists might outnumber the optimists. Indeed, almost everything about Columbus and the discovery of

America has become controversial.

And perhaps the greatest controversy of all is whether or not to celebrate the Quincentennial. The critics who advocate not celebrating it are correct, if to celebrate perpetuates a view of the encounter that ignores the terrible toll. This must be acknowledged and memorialized in the hope that nothing like it is ever repeated. Even so, it would be unhistorical to ignore the more salutary consequences. The New World, for example, changed Europe through new ideas, new resources, and new models of political and social life that would spread through the world. William H. McNeill is one of many historians who believe this led to the Enlightenment of the 18th century and thus to the philosophical, political, and scientific foundations of modern Western civilization. It should not be overlooked that this is the kind of society that encourages and tolerates the revisionists who condemn its many unforgivable transgressions in the New World.

Of course, attributing so much to any one historical development makes some historians uneasy. In cautioning against the "presentism" in much historical interpretation, Herbert Butterfield recalled "the schoolboy who, writing on the results of Columbus's discovery of America, enumerated amongst other things the execution of Charles I, the war of the Spanish Succession and the French Revolution." No one will ever know what the world and subsequent events would have been like if the discovery had not been made, or if it had not occurred until much later. But the impact of that discovery can hardly be underestimated. And it did start with Christopher Columbus.

That brings up another issue central to the Quincentenary debates: Columbus's responsibility for all that followed. It must be remembered who he was—not who we wish he had been. He was a European

Christian of the 15th century sailing for the crown of Spain. There can be no expiation, only understanding. His single-mindedness and boldness, as well as the magnitude of his achievement, give him heroic standing. Others did not have Columbus's bold idea to sail across the unknown ocean, or if they did, they never acted upon it. Columbus did. In so many other respects, he failed to rise above his milieu and set a more worthy example, and so ended up a tragic figure. But he does not deserve to bear alone the blame for the consequences of his audacious act.

We must resist the temptation to shift blame for our behavior to someone dead and gone. Mario Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian novelist, finds little to admire in the early Spanish conquerors but recognizes the dangers inherent in transferring to them an inordinate share of the blame for modern America.

"Why have the post-colonial republics of the Americas—republics that might have been expected to have deeper and broader notions of liberty, equality, and fraternity—failed so miserably to improve the lives of their Indian citizens?" Vargas Llosa asks. "Immense opportunities brought by the civilization that discovered and conquered America have been beneficial only to a minority, sometimes a very small one;

whereas the great majority managed to have only a negative share of the conquest.... One of our worst defects, our best fictions, is to believe that our miseries have been imposed on us from abroad, that others, for example, the conquistadores, have always been responsible for our problems.... Did they really do it? We did it; we are the conquistadores."

\* \* \*

People have choices, but they do not always choose well. One wishes Columbus had acquitted himself more nobly, in the full knowledge that, even if he had, others who came after would have almost surely squandered the opportunity presented to them to make a truly fresh start in human history—a new world in more than the geographic sense. But wishes, yesterday's self-congratulation or today's self-flagellation, are not history.

Columbus's failings, as well as his ambitions and courage, are beyond historical doubt—and are all too human. The mythic Columbus of our creation is something else. His destiny, it seems, is to serve as a barometer of our self-confidence, our hopes and aspirations, our faith in progress, and the capacity of humans to create a more just society.



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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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# COLUMBUS AND THE LABYRINTH OF HISTORY

Historians treat it as axiomatic that each new generation, by building on past scholarship, knows more than those that went before. By this logic, we *must* know more about Columbus than scholars did in 1892 during the fourth Centenary. Unfortunately, that is not the case (or at least it was not 10 years ago).

Popularly, much lore that was common currency about Columbus a century ago has been lost, and, in scholarship, few American historians now specialize in the sorts of topics—navigation, shipbuilding, exploration, mariners and merchants, etc.—that once constituted our knowledge of the “Age of Discovery.” Instead there is an increasingly acrimonious debate about Columbus—and, by extension, about European world dominance. The current vilification of Columbus, however, is not necessarily more accurate than the uncritical praise of a century ago.

Washington Irving’s three-volume **Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus** (1828) set the tone for the 19th century. Irving aimed to spin a good yarn and also to promote Columbus as a role model for the nation. His Columbus displayed the virtues which citizens of the new nation should have: piety, high morals, a scientific spirit, perseverance, rugged individualism, and so on. The immense popularity of Irving’s biography influenced, well into the 20th century, virtually every American history textbook. Indeed, as recently as 50 years ago, the Harvard historian Samuel Eliot Morison, in effect, rewrote Irving’s Columbus for the 20th century. In his magisterial **Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus** (Little, Brown, 1942), Morison, an admiral himself, literally went “to sea in quest of light and truth.” He retraced Columbus’s voyages and, by focusing on his maritime achievements, skirted Columbus’s more controversial career on land. “We are right in so honoring him,” Morison wrote, “because no other sailor had the persistence, the knowledge and the sheer guts to sail thousands of miles into the unknown ocean until he found land.”

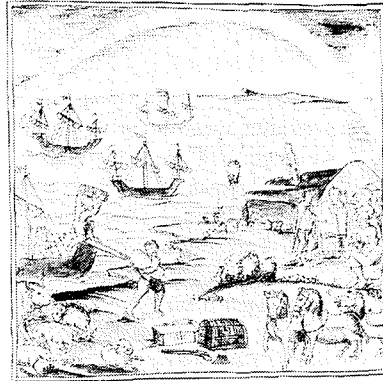
From European scholars, however, a different, more plausible Columbus has emerged. From Jacques Heers’s **Christophe Colomb** (Hachette, 1981), which showed a typical merchant mariner of his time looking for profitable opportunities wherever fortune took him, to Alain Milhou’s **Colon y su mentalidad mesianic en el ambiente franciscanista español** (Casa-Museo de Colon, 1983), which depicted a mystic who believed he was helping spread the Christian message to all the world, a more complex Columbus has taken shape. Two current biographies in English embody this new understanding. Oxford historian Felipe Fernandez-Armesto reveals a **Columbus** (Oxford, 1991) who was “the socially ambitious, socially awkward parvenu; the autodidact, intellectually aggressive but easily cowed; the embittered escapee from distressing realities; the adventurer inhibited by fear.” And John Noble Wilford’s **The Mysterious History of Columbus** (Knopf, 1991) is, arguably, the most thorough and up-to-date narrative about Columbus available in English today.

A second new direction in Columbus studies came from those earlier works that placed him within the larger history of global conquest and empire-building. Yale historian J. H. Elliott’s **The Old World and the New** (Cambridge, 1970) focused on the Europeans who had to assimilate the unexpected reality of another world suddenly looming into existence. “The discovery of America,” Elliott wrote, “had important *intellectual* consequences, in that it brought Europeans into contact with new lands and peoples, and in so doing challenged . . . traditional European assumptions about geography, theology, history, and the nature of man.”

University of Texas historian Alfred W. Crosby’s **Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492** (Greenwood, 1972) traced the migrations of plants, animals, and, most disastrously, microbes and diseases across the ocean. In **Plagues and Peoples** (Doubleday, 1976), William H. McNeill of the

## THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE

There is an old American folk song which tells of a "Sweet Betsy from Pike" (Pike County, Missouri) who traveled out westward "with her lover Ike, with two yoke of oxen, a large yellow dog, a tall Shanghai rooster and one spotted hog." Not only Betsy but practically her whole caravan of animals were in a sense "immigrants," descendants of Columbus and other two- and four-legged adventurers who had crossed the Atlantic from Europe. They were part of what historian Alfred Crosby describes as "a grunting, lowing, neighing, crowing, chirping, snarling, buzzing, self-replicating and world-altering avalanche." Today, writes Crosby, a "botanist can easily find whole meadows [in America] in which he is hard put to find a species that grew in American pre-Columbian times." In his *The Columbian Exchange* (1972) and *Ecological Imperialism* (1986), Crosby describes the plants and animals and diseases that crossed the Atlantic in both directions in the wake of Columbus's voyages, thus recreating ecologically the Old World in the New and the New World in the Old. Here are listed some of the immigrants and transplants.



### Plants

#### *From the Old World to the Americas:*

Bananas  
Barley  
Cabbage  
Cauliflower  
Daisies  
European Melons  
Figs  
Kentucky Bluegrass  
Lemons  
Lettuce  
Mangoes  
Olives  
Oranges  
Peaches

Pomegranates  
Radishes  
Rice  
Sugar Cane  
Tumbleweed  
Wheat  
Wild Oats  
Wine Grapes

#### *From the Americas to the Old World:*

Avocados  
Beans  
Chile Peppers  
Cocoa  
Coffee  
Maize  
Papaya  
Peanuts  
Pineapples  
Potatoes  
Pumpkins  
Squash  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tobacco  
Tomatoes



### Diseases

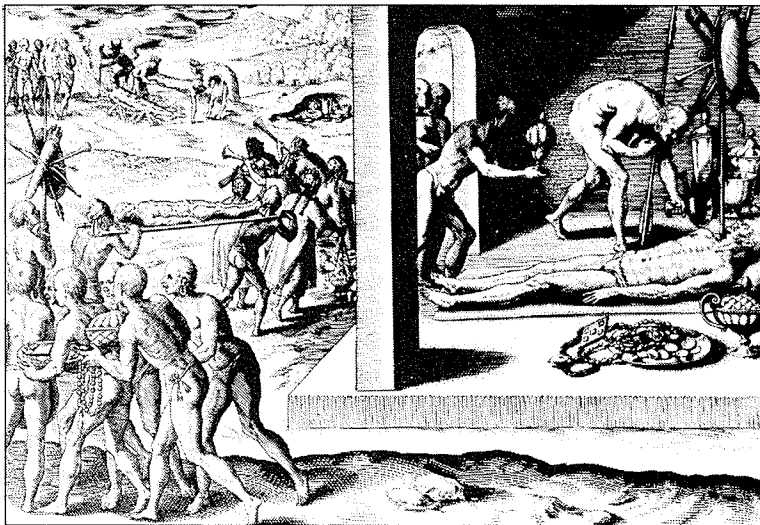
#### From the Old World to the Americas:

Amoebic Dysentery  
 Bubonic Plague  
 Chicken Pox  
 Cholera  
 Diphtheria  
 German Measles  
 Influenza  
 Jaundice  
 Whooping Cough

Malaria  
 Measles  
 Meningitis  
 Mumps  
 Smallpox  
 Tonsillitis  
 Trachoma  
 Typhus

#### From the Americas to the Old World:

While European diseases ravaged indigenous American populations, only one disease, *Trapaonema pallidum* (syphilis), is believed to have been brought back from the Old World. No Old-World human fossils from pre-1490 show signs of syphilitic damage.



### Animals

#### From the Old World to the Americas:

Anopheles Mosquitoes  
 Cattle  
 Chickens  
 Domestic Cats  
 Donkeys  
 Goats  
 Hessian Flies  
 Honeybees  
 Horses  
 Larger, fiercer European dogs  
 Pigs  
 Rats  
 Sheep  
 Sheep  
 Sparrows  
 Starlings

#### From the Americas to the Old World:

American Gray Squirrels  
 American Vine Aphids  
 Chiggers  
 Guinea Pigs  
 Muscovy Ducks  
 Muskrats  
 Turkeys

University of Chicago described "the world's biosphere . . . as still reverberating to the series of shocks inaugurated by the new permeability of ocean barriers . . . after 1492." McNeill estimated there were 25 to 30 million Native American Indians in Mexico in 1492; by 1620, after exposure to European disease, there were 1.6 million. In his **Conquest of Paradise** (Knopf, 1990), writer and ecological activist Kirkpatrick Sale penned the most extreme indictment of all: Columbus's legacy of unbroken environmental despoliation has left us no choice but to start over again. "There is only one way to live in America," Sale writes, "and that is as Americans—the original Americans—for that is what the earth of America demands. We resist it further only at risk of the imperilment—worse, the likely destruction—of the earth."

It might be thought, at this late date, that there is nothing left to learn about Columbus or his voyages. All the original documents by Columbus are now in print: **The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492–1493** (Univ. of Okla., 1989), translated by Oliver Dunn and James Kelly; **Cristóbal Colón: textos y documentos completos** (Alianza, 1982), edited by Consuelo Varela; and the mystical **Libro de las Profecías of Christopher Columbus** (Univ. of Fla., 1991), translated and edited by Delno C. West.

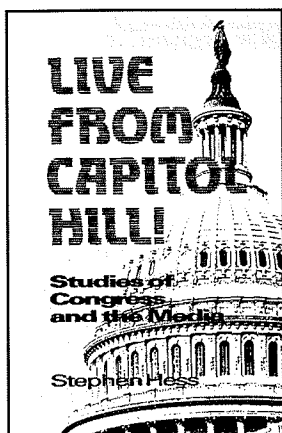
The most exciting scholarship inspired by the Quincentenary, however, refutes the assumption that everything about Columbus is either known or unknowable. Florida archaeolo-

gist Kathleen Deagan has established, by excavating Columbus's first colony La Isabela, the astonishing alacrity with which the Spaniards adapted their diet, clothing, and dwellings to the New World environment. Eugene Lyon, at the Center for Historical Research in St. Augustine, has uncovered the first manifest for any of Columbus's ships—for the *Niña's* third voyage—which describes its rigging, cargo, crew, and even the medicine aboard ship. The mining equipment on the 1495 Spanish ships bound for La Isabela shows us, Lyon reports, how early the Spaniards planned a permanent mining industry in the Americas. Deagan's discoveries about La Isabela and Lyon's about Columbus will be presented in an upcoming issue of *National Geographic* (January 1992). **First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492–1570** (Univ. of Fla., 1989), edited by Jerald Milanich and Susan Milbrath, describes the past decade's most significant archaeological and historical breakthroughs in understanding the Hispanic penetration of the Caribbean and the Southeast. And it would be almost impossible to compile a more complete reference work than **The Columbus Encyclopedia**, edited by Silvio A. Bedini, to be published by Simon and Schuster next year. Such publications, and the scholarship they represent, recapture—and, indeed, substantially advance—the knowledge about Columbus and his voyages that was current a century ago. After 500 years, we are still discovering Columbus.

—Carla Rahn Phillips

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*Carla Rahn Phillips is professor of history at the University of Minnesota. She is coauthor, with William Phillips, of 'The Worlds of Christopher Columbus, which will be published by Cambridge next year.*



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# CURRENT BOOKS

## *Where Feminism Went Wrong*

**FEMINISM WITHOUT ILLUSIONS: A Critique of Individualism.** By Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Univ. of N.C. 347 pp. \$24.95

But what do women want?" Sigmund Freud once exclaimed, thereby proving that even men of genius can ask the most foolish questions. For what women want is, after all, fairly simple. They want a fair deal, just as men do. The real problem lies in trying to establish exactly what constitutes a fair deal as far as women are concerned, and how on earth it is to be accomplished.

To the first generation of angry and committed feminists emerging after 1850, the answer seemed reasonably straightforward. Women would achieve liberation only after they acquired the right to vote and won equal access to higher education and to the professions. With the lifting of all artificial barriers to advancement, it was argued, women would blossom into freedom. Women would become like men. Not until the 1960s did this certainty begin seriously to crumble. By then, it was clear that admission to the franchise had led to no sizable female invasion of Congress and state legislatures, just as admission to the universities and the job market had failed to secure women a decent proportion of the top jobs or equal wages. Quite clearly, changing the rules of the game had not been enough. Ideas had to change as well. Consciousness had to be raised. And then there was the matter of sex.

With the '60s came a new feminist demand—for equal rights in bed, free access to sexual pleasure without having to pay the penalty of unwanted pregnancies. The 1970s gave American women what they wanted. Contraceptives became widely available to those who could afford and understand them, and the Supreme Court declared (in *Roe v. Wade*, 1973) a woman's decision to have an abortion to be a constitutionally protected right. Yet, as we

now know, this was not the coming of the feminist dawn but the beginning of a backlash. During the late 1970s and through the 1980s not only did conservative attacks on feminism as an ideology increase but feminists themselves proposed different agendas and quarreled among themselves. Meanwhile, among the uncommitted majority of women, the cause began to seem tedious, misdirected, and of dubious relevance. Hence the value of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's book, which, as well as exploring what has gone wrong, suggests a more realistic program for achieving equality between the sexes.

Some of the iconoclasm that Fox-Genovese, a professor of history and women's studies at Emory University, brings to her subject stems from her Marxist orientation: She is acutely sensitive to the importance of class as well as gender. Her previous book, the prize-winning *Within the Plantation Household* (1988), was a counterblast to more roseate notions of female solidarity, pointing out that the nicest, most intelligent white gentlewomen of the Old South reconciled themselves to keeping black women in slavery. Sisterhood, in other words, was simply not enough. When it suited their economic and social interests, white, upper-class women chose to see their world in white, upper-class terms, not in terms of a common female bond with those who served them. By the same token, Fox-Genovese is scornful of those contemporary feminists who fail to understand that many of their nostrums are likely to interest only the well-educated middle class. Agonizing over how to balance a high-fashion briefcase on one hip and a toddler on the other is not going to mean very much to the pregnant black teenager forced to drop out of school. Nor does the author have much time for high-powered feminist scholars who believe that language is power or that liberation can come through the deconstruction of

texts. What use can such stylized, academic game-playing be for the majority of women who lack the training or the desire to understand it?

But Fox-Genovese's critique of elitism is only part of a broader, more controversial argument. Feminism, she claims, has been too much influenced by the West's often unthinking cult of individualism. Women have justified their claims to equality by exclusive reference to the innate rights of the individual. They would have been on much firmer ground, she argues, had they legitimized what they were trying to do in terms of the larger community. Thus she suggests that women who support free access to abortion by invoking the individual's right to choose risk sounding egotistical to the point of inhumanity. A far more valid argument would bypass the question of rights and point out, practically, that most women having abortions are unmarried, very young, and very poor—in other words, those who are least able to bring up their children adequately. This argument switches the burden of the decision to society at large, which will have to determine in the future whether to make abortion available—to avoid the calamity of unwanted, poorly looked-after or impoverished children—or to disallow abortion but supply free day-care.

Similarly, on the issue of pornography, Fox-Genovese finds it hard to sympathize with the "tortured perspective" of such feminists as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, who condemn pornography as an invasion of their individual rights as women. Such shrill claims, she writes, "extend the concept of civil rights beyond all meaning." Pornography, which degrades men and children too, can plausibly be censored only on behalf of the community as a whole. Morality is a public matter, she argues, not just an exercise of

individual taste: "A society unwilling or unable to trust to its own instincts in laying down a standard of decency does not deserve to survive." We must, Fox-Genovese says, return to thinking in terms of the civil liberties of the group, as our medieval forbearers did, and not allow ourselves to be imprisoned by the assumption that the only freedom that matters is individualistic. Otherwise, she argues, we will be unable to justify policies such as affirmative action, which restricts the rights of individual white males so that representatives from all groups in a society will be able to gain some share in its largesse.

Here, then, is a provocative and



thoughtful work that should stimulate and enrage both opponents and supporters of feminism. No one can deny the importance of the central issue it addresses: namely, that being a housewife is unlikely ever again to be a sufficient career for the majority of women in the United States or anywhere else in the West. Divorce is now too common, and many households can get by only on two incomes. More than half of all American women with young children now work. The huge number of women in the workplace involves an unprecedented and irreversible shift in how our society organizes itself, one of the major changes in world history. Those in

search of an acute and unfanatical guide to its social and political implications will surely find it in this book. Yet to my mind, *Feminism without Illusions* lacks a crucial element that would enable it to become the kind of well-thumbed classic that, say, Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1949) or Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970) have deservedly become. It is no less intelligent—far from it. But it lacks laughter and people and hard politics. It is too much of an abstract and immaculately annotated academic tract.

This failing reflects, in part, the very success of women's studies, which is no longer merely the preserve of brilliant and eccentric writers working on the margins of respectability. Women's studies has become respectability itself, entrenched in every American university, with its own faculty, its own learned journals (hundreds of them), and its own much-debated methodologies. The gain in scholarly rigor has been enormous. But what has been lost along the way is some of the anecdote, wit, and wickedness which made Greer or Gloria Steinem fun to read and accessible to all. Those worried by the declining support for feminism would do well to give some thought to the question of how its proponents can recover a popular voice. For as it is now, we have an astute women's studies specialist who understands the need to attack elitism but still feels obliged

to write in a manner which only the well-educated and the deeply serious are likely to find congenial.

Moreover, the same restraints that keep Fox-Genovese's analysis so detached and impersonal make her shrink from offering a political program. Yet the nature of her argument should have persuaded her to take the risk. Fox-Genovese protests against individualism in the name of "society," "the community," and the "collectivity," but nowhere does she spell out what she means by these abstract terms. The logical outcome of her reasoning, however, as she must surely recognize, is a reassessment of the role of the state. For good historical reasons, Americans are far more suspicious of state intervention than are most Europeans. Yet the state is nothing more than a human contrivance. It can oppress and interfere, certainly, but it can also protect, enable, and create. Sooner or later Americans, and particularly women and others who feel disadvantaged in some way, are going to rediscover how to use the state to help themselves. As is always the case, the changing status and demands of women are symptoms, not causes, of much wider and still more unsettling transformations.

—Linda Colley, professor of history at Yale University, is the author of *Lewis Namier* (1989).

## *The Last Southerner*

**SIGNPOSTS IN A STRANGE LAND.** By Walker Percy. Edited with an Introduction by Patrick Samway. Farrar, Straus. 428 pp. \$25

Born in 1916 into a distinguished family of the southern patriciate, Walker Percy had many advantages. Yet he had also known disorder, sorrow, and displacement even before he found himself in 1942 in an Adirondacks sanatorium, the victim of pulmonary tuberculosis contracted when he was a medical intern at Bellevue

Hospital. Some 13 years earlier, when Percy was 13, his father killed himself, and three years later his mother died in an automobile accident. These traumatic experiences were made somewhat bearable when a remarkable bachelor cousin whom they loved and revered as Uncle Will adopted Walker and his two brothers. Uncle Will was William Alexander Percy, the author of *Lanterns on the Levee*, decorated hero of the Great War, disciple of Marcus Aurelius, and gentleman-poet,



who made his home in Greenville, Mississippi, the fabled center of the "high culture" of the Mississippi Delta. But the comparatively early death of W. A. Percy in the year after Walker Percy graduated from medical school meant the grievous loss of a second father and a second home.

The three-year period at the tuberculosis sanatorium—Percy often compared himself to Hans Castrop in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*—proved to be the most crucial experience of displacement he had undergone. During the process of his recovery the budding physician was transformed into the young philosopher.

Reading deeply in Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, Kafka, Mann, and other modern European writers, the young M.D., who had thought he might specialize in pathology or psychiatry, rejected alike the physiological, the sociological, and the psychoanalytical approaches to the meaning of being. He had earlier undergone three years of psychoanalysis, but now he diagnosed himself as a victim of the spiritual malaise Kierkegaard called "the sickness unto death." Becoming more and more convinced that "science can say everything about a man except what he is in himself," he eventually found himself irresistibly attracted to the Christian concept of existence as a pilgrimage of the soul. Giving up the practice of medicine almost before he had begun it, he became a convert to Roman Catholicism and, granted leisure by an independent income, began an obscure career as a philosophical essayist. Having a strong literary bent, however, he read widely in modern literature and discovered that the modern novel was wholly concerned with the theme he was pursuing as a philosopher: "man as dislocated, disoriented, uprooted, homeless." Inspired by Camus's and Sartre's novels of alienation, he turned to the task of becoming a novelist himself. He was in his forties, far past the beginning age for the average novelist, when his do-it-yourself apprenticeship in fiction ended in *The Moviegoer* and a National Book Award in 1962. Before his death on May 10, 1990, at his home on the Bogue Falaya ("river of

mists" or "river of ghosts") in Covington, Louisiana, where he had gone to live with his wife and children in 1948, Percy would publish five more novels—*The Last Gentleman*, *Love in the Ruins: The Adventures of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World*, *Lancelot*, *The Second Coming*, and *The Thanatos Syndrome*. He also would publish a collection of essays, *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other*, and a work that defies categorical description, *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*.

Now we have what may be the final addition to the Percy nonfiction list, Patrick Samway's skillfully and imaginatively organized gathering of 43 miscellaneous writings. Containing everything from a 1935 undergraduate essay on the movie magazine to his major 1989 essay on language and being, "The San Andreas Fault in the Modern Mind," *Signposts in a Strange Land* makes nearly all of Percy's nonfiction conveniently available. But the volume claims an importance well beyond that of convenience. The truth is that, although he seemingly made a choice between being a novelist and a philosophical essayist, Percy was never able simply to assume that he was a novelist. He constantly employed the essay to define his particular identity as a novelist: *Signposts in a Strange Land* contains, for example, essays such as "The State of the Novel: Dying Art or New Science," "Novel Writing in an Apocalyptic Time," "How to be a Southern Novelist in Spite of Being Southern and Catholic."

In his introduction, Samway acknowledges the dramatic relationship between the essayist and the novelist in Percy's career. The very title *Signposts in a Strange Land* is derived from an earlier essay, "Notes for a Novel about the End of the World," in which Percy attempted to define the mission of the novelist: "Instead of constructing a plot and creating a cast of characters from a world familiar to everybody, he [the novelist] is more apt to set forth with a stranger in a strange land

where the signposts are enigmatic but which he sets out to explore nevertheless."

Even more revealing of his sense of vocation as a novelist is Percy's parodic, outrageous interview with himself (originally published in *Esquire* in 1977), "Questions They Never Asked Me, So He Asked Them Himself." Essentially the self-interview is a meditative essay on the "knack" of being a novelist, given Percy's own situation: that is, his awareness of holding a general citizenship in the "here-and-now" of the second half of this century and a particular citizenship in the American South. A novelist in this situation, Percy says, has a relation to the world that is like that of an "ex-suicide." He "realizes that all is lost, the jig is up, that after all nothing is dumber than a grown man sitting down and making up a story to entertain somebody or working in a 'tradition' or 'school' to maintain his reputation as a practitioner of the *nouveau roman* or whatever." When "one sees that this is a dumb way to live, that all is vanity sure enough, there are two possibilities: either commit suicide or not commit suicide." If the choice is not to commit suicide, the "here-and-now" of the present century opens to the novelist and he comes into a sense of creative freedom. Not, to be sure, the freedom of God on the first day of creation, but a freedom like that known to a man who has undergone the disaster of shipwreck and been cast up on a remote beach. If the castaway is a writer, his freedom is the realization that dead writers may be famous but they are also "dead ducks" who can't write anymore. "As for me," the survivor says, "I might try a little something here in the wet sand, a word, a form . . ."

Percy then asks what the novelist's metaphorical identity as an ex-suicide has to do with "being southern." The answer, he says, is both positive and negative. For the southern writer, with all his "special miseries . . . isolation, madness, tics, amnesia, alcoholism, lust and loss of ordinary powers of speech," is also "as marooned as Crusoe." Or was. In today's Sunbelt South, the southern writer is in danger of

losing his greatest asset: his sense of eccentricity. If he is deprived of his psychic distance from nonsouthern writers, what will the southern writer do? Start writing like Saul Bellow? The deprivation entailed in the modification and disappearance of southern eccentricity affects the southern writer's strongest resource, the resource that made the French go "nuts over Poe and Faulkner," the feeling of being "somewhat extraterrestrial . . . different enough from the main body of writers to give the reader a triangulation point for getting a fix on things."

Yet in a little-known essay on Herman Melville reprinted here, Percy suggests the way a southern writer can move beyond his "extraterrestriality," his Robinson Crusoe-like isolation. Melville's situation was hardly enviable, having written his masterpiece *Moby-Dick* and seen it sell a few hundred copies and go out of print, and then spending his last 20 years as a customs inspector on the New York docks. Percy feels for Melville because "there's no occupation in the universe that is lonelier" than the novelist's. Yet his true kinship with Melville, Percy says, comes from the fact that "the post-Christianity and alienation of the New York writer took a hundred years to reach Mississippi." And so Percy was forced, as Melville had been earlier, into "a dialectical relation to a shared body of [Christian moral] belief." Whether the writer is a "scoffer" (as Melville was) or a "believer" (as he himself is), Percy says, hardly matters: If the writer is unafraid to encounter "ultimate questions" with the freedom of the artist, he belongs to an inalienable vocational community." When Melville gave Hawthorne a copy of *Moby-Dick*, he told him he "had written a wicked book, broiled in hellfire, and that he felt fine, as spotless as a lamb, happy, content."

Melville's loneliness had yielded to the sustaining sense of "ineffable sociability" that fills the writer when "the writing works and somebody knows it." It is not incidental that in speaking of Melville, "a lapsed Calvinist from a middle-class family," Percy makes the New Yorker spiri-

tually one of the community of New England writers. Raised in that "South, which has been called a Christ-haunted place... something like New England a hundred years ago," Percy himself, like all serious southern writers, was also a spiritual New Englander. According to all indi-

cations, however, Walker Percy may be the last of this line.

—Lewis P. Simpson is the former editor of the *Southern Review* and the author of, most recently, *Mind and the American Civil War* (1989).

## *The Return of History*

**LEARNING TO CURSE:** Essays in Early Modern Culture. By Stephen J. Greenblatt. Routledge. 188 pp. \$25

Something strange is happening to Shakespeare. Anyone who reads current Shakespeare criticism expecting to find high-minded debates over the nature of irony and ambiguity (let alone cozy discussions about order, degree, and hierarchy or the ethics of revenge) is in for a big surprise. Scholars are now likelier to be found tracking the Bard amid narratives of early encounters with Native Americans, Tudor treatises on gynecology and tranvestism, 16th-century exorcisms and trials for witchcraft, erotic dreams about Queen Elizabeth, the policing of the London suburbs, or the Renaissance vogue for collecting artefacts, fossils, and ostrich eggs. Whatever one's response to this new turn happens to be, boredom will not likely be part of it.

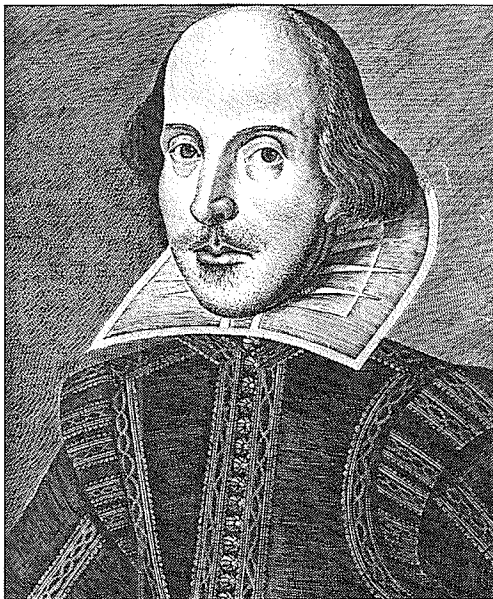
How fashions change. The New Criticism of the last generation held that history was marginal to the study of literature. New Critics like Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt were obsessed with "close

reading," with intricate and detailed explication of the work—with text rather than context. Authors were seen as individual geniuses who used irony and ambiguity to rise above local considerations. They wrote at a safe distance from the frantic activity of their world, producing texts that were unbounded by time.

For the past two decades, however, history has been reentering the study of literature. Indeed, in the 1980s, the "New Historicism" captured the academic highground by all but erasing the once-firm boundary between a literary work and its historical context.

Stephen Greenblatt, a professor of English at Berkeley, can claim paternity for

this school. *Learning to Curse* follows *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) and *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988) in redrawing the Shakespearean map. Influenced by anthropology, linguistics, and social theory, Greenblatt argues that history is no mere background for literature. Shakespeare's plays may seem to rise above their contexts, but in truth they were no less involved than nonliterary documents in the



ceaseless economic, social, and political transactions of their time.

What Greenblatt means by history, however, is not easy to define. He has little use for kings and queens, battles and parliaments. Narratives of high politics he sees mainly as stories that rulers tell to legitimate their own authority. Greenblatt's preferred canvas is history from the margins, the stories that usually get overlooked.

Greenblatt likes to construct his essays around a historical anecdote, preferably one about people who lived and worked on the edges of society, involving actions that seem to us baffling or inexplicable. Greenblatt draws out the underlying power structures that conditioned these people's curious behavior; then he reveals the same structures at work in the period's "high" culture (including plays by Shakespeare). In one essay, "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture," Greenblatt relates the queer story of Martin Guerre—a story already known to American audiences through a historical novel by Janet Lewis, an analytical study by Natalie Zemon Davis, and the film *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1982). Martin Guerre, a French peasant from Artigat, disappeared from his home at the age of 24. His place was taken for several years by an impostor whose claim to be the real Martin was accepted even by his family. With its traumatic substitutions and doublings, and its Freudian scenario of alienated selfhood, the story sounds curiously modern. Yet what strikes Greenblatt is that those involved were less concerned about the impostor's true self than about the purely outward and legalistic testimonies to his identity. To family and friends, Martin's identity was not a matter of personality but of property, claims that could be contractually established. Having swerved so far from Shakespeare's plays, Greenblatt now returns, enriching our understanding of characters such as Viola in *Twelfth Night*, who finds that her own identity has been challenged by a mysterious double. Viola seems real to us because of the psychological trauma she undergoes. But, from the angle of Mar-

tin Guerre, her identity is not her own and can only be authenticated by the will of her community as a whole. Greenblatt shows that a character whose actions seem to be reassuringly individual and self-willed turns out on inspection to be playing to a hidden, socially conditioned script. Greenblatt thus establishes the hidden relationship between a literary work and the workings of social power.

Greenblatt's historicism has spawned a host of imitations, so many indeed that no Shakespeare essay is complete without its quirky anecdote. But there are problems with a method that permits so open a definition of "history." Greenblatt seeks to expose the communal beliefs and practices that determined the shape of Shakespeare's plays. Yet he relies on an "arbitrary connectedness"—analogies and symbolic relationships between the plays and their society—which has to be accepted on trust.

It is clear, too, from the kinds of anecdotes he prefers, that for all his interest in history and anthropology Greenblatt has a quite contemporary agenda. His anecdotes usually relate acts of violence perpetrated in the name of empire, confusions over gender categories, or the vulnerability of the individual before the power of the state. While this makes for exciting Shakespeare, there is something disturbingly ahistorical about it. The past is not so much recovered as made over into an image of the present. As much as Greenblatt insists on the historical embeddedness of the Bard, he recruits him in the service of exclusively modern preoccupations.

Indeed, Greenblatt steers us into an historical dead end. Because he implies that literary works are absolutely saturated with society's practices and beliefs, even texts once considered subversive turn out to be colluding with power. In the *Henry IV* plays, for example, Prince Hal can admit that his sovereignty rests on an act of usurpation. But, despite his ostensible bad faith, spectators identify with him anyway.

Greenblatt is fascinated with works that appear to unsettle systems of authority but,

at a deeper level, only reinforce them. For example, he takes up Rabelais's mocking comedy and the notion that it encourages a subversion of orthodox norms and values. But Greenblatt argues that Rabelaisian laughter, by releasing aggression in a nonviolent form, admits the impotence of its own gestures of rebellion. "The gesture of insult is at the same time an acknowledgement of defeat," he says; it testifies to the enduring power of what is being mocked. Again, in an essay on Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, he brings out the surprising but deceptive modernity of Marlowe's social analysis by juxtaposing it with Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question." Like Karl Marx, Marlowe uses anti-Semitism to expose the underlying materialism of his society. In his play, the Maltese Christians bait the Jew Barabas, but the Jewishness which they revile exemplifies the market mentality of their own world. "Marlowe never discredits anti-Semitism, but he does discredit early in the play a 'Christian' social concern that might otherwise have been used to counter a specifically Jewish antisocial element." To both Marlowe and Marx, society is cursed by the power of money. The difference is that Marlowe had no expectations that it might ever be better. Indeed, his laughter at utopian solutions is no less harsh than his ridicule of sacred cows. Marlowe's politics were radical, Greenblatt writes, but also radically devoid of hope.

Greenblatt's Renaissance is thus powerfully politicized but also profoundly pessimistic. Because literature is locked so firmly into the structures of its historical moment, there is no way off the ferris wheel, nothing it can achieve beyond constantly if unwillingly testifying to the dominance of the powers that be. Yet this unavailing conclusion surely arises from the method itself. In Greenblattian history not much can be done other than endlessly to recycle social energy.

This ruptured radicalism tells us as much about the situation of academics in the 1990s as it does about Shakespeare's situation in the 1590s. It is certainly not surprising at this juncture to find so subtle and searching a critique of power being combined with so gloomy a conviction that nothing can ever be done about it. Toward the end of this volume, Greenblatt analyzes the political language of present-day America and finds it involved in the same dizzying circulations of power which criticize authority yet ultimately reaffirm it. If the America of Reagan and Bush gives way to possibilities for more profound change, Greenblatt's Shakespeare may, conceivably, be the first citizen to change along with it.

—Martin Butler, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is lecturer in English at the University of Leeds and the author of *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642* (1984).

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## OTHER TITLES

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### Arts & Letters

**MYTHOLOGIES.** *Compiled by Yves Bonnefoy. Trans. under the direction of Wendy Doniger. 2 volumes. Univ. of Chicago. 1267 pp. \$250*

Once the surest way to write a bestseller was to write a cookbook. Today it may be to write a

book on mythology—or so the response to Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth* (1988), Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990), and Rollo May's *The Cry for Myth* (1991) seems to suggest. In these works mythology resembles do-it-yourself psychotherapy. The individual is instructed to create his own religion or to "follow his bliss" or to take the hero's voyage through the underworld of his own problems.



This, however, is not the way Bonnefoy, a poet and professor at the Collège de France, presents his subject. *Mythologies* is less about the relations of individuals to myths (sacred narratives) than about the relationship between societies and the mythologies (systems of myths) that sustain them. Nor do any

of the 395 articles collected here retell the familiar legends that once formed part of our cultural literacy. As Wendy Doniger, who supervised the translation, writes, "One has Robert Graves for that."

In essays that range from Africa to Lapland, from the Americas to the Near East, the interest is as much in methodology as in mythology—in, as Doniger says, "*how to understand a mythology*, what questions to ask, what patterns to look for." Indeed, behind the work of the nearly 100 contributors (including anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, linguists, and philosophers) lies the shadow of two figures not present: Georges Dumézil (1898–1986) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–). Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss overturned an earlier understanding of myth, shaped by Sir James Frazer and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. This older view presented mythology as a primitive mode of thinking, left behind as societies evolved and became "modern." Lévi-Strauss argued that so-called primitive and modern beliefs do not differ structurally but represent alternative ways of organizing family kinships, social life, and material production. Dumézil proposed that the almost infinite variety in mythology could be reduced to a small number of myths arranged in different combinations and that these myths reflect the laws of human mental activity in society.

*Mythologies* shows what happens when a younger generation of scholars apply Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss to a dazzling array of topics, ranging from the placenta in West African rituals to the significance of the number seven among the indigenous Indo-Chinese. Yet when the Swiss scholar Jean Molino discusses nationalism and socialism as mythic thinking "in

which it is no longer gods but ideas that guide," then our own supposedly demythologized "modernity" suddenly looks like a mythological creation. As Bonnefoy observes, "Myths are never recognized for what they are, except when they belong to others."

**GOETHE: The Poet and His Age. Volume I: The Poetry of Desire (1749–1790).** By Nicholas Boyle. Oxford. 807 pp. \$37.50

Poet, dramatist, novelist, painter, scientist, administrator—Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832) has long enjoyed the reputation of an Olympian, the calm, lofty embodiment of an age that bears his name: the *Goethezeit*. But, Boyle, a professor of German at Cambridge University, reminds us of the turbulence that Goethe lived through in order to attain such classical composure. A child of the prosperous Frankfurt bourgeoisie, born almost a half-century before the French Revolution, Goethe would live to see every known certainty stood on its head. In a famous essay, "In Search of Goethe from Within" (1932), the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset argued that changing mores and social uncertainties propelled Goethe into ceaseless travel, literary experiments, and various occupations in order to find a sense of identity that always inwardly eluded him.

Goethe studied law at Leipzig and Strasbourg while earning a small reputation as a lyric poet. Then, at age 24, he became nationally famous with the publication of his play *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), which boasts one of the most quoted lines in German literature—Götz's defiant message to the Emperor to "lick his arse." Twelve months later he published the *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), the first modern novel about an alienated youth. Overnight, Goethe became an international sensation. The Werther cult inspired countless Werther-style suicides throughout Europe as well as porcelain services decorated with scenes from the novel.

In 1775, to prove that the poet could influence events, Goethe accepted an appointment at the Duke of Saxe-Weimar's court. He soon became the second most powerful man in Weimar. The historian Herder jealously observed, "So he is now Permanent Privy Councillor,

President of the Chamber, President of the War Office, Inspector of Works... the principal actor, dancer, in short, the factotum of all Weimar." But in 1786, his writing came to a standstill, Goethe decided to slip away to Italy.

The journey proved decisive. Goethe had gone in search of pleasures, expecting that new literary works would ripen under the Italian sun. Instead, amid Italy's ruins and great paintings, he learned that art is more than subjective satisfaction and poetry more than the expression of desire. "He had come looking for culmination, enjoyment, and a revelatory immediacy of experience, and he had found," Boyle writes, "the need for study, informed understanding, and hard work." When he returned to Weimar two years later, he set up house with Christiana Vulpius—whom one of Goethe's earlier mistresses spitefully called "a girl who used to be a common whore"—and eventually married her. He also began to write *Faust*, which would become the most famous work in German literature. With Goethe's arrival at artistic maturity (and his 41st year), Boyle's first volume ends.

Almost a century later Nietzsche was to comment that Goethe was "not just a good and great man, but an entire *culture*." It is exactly this notion, the idea that there was a cultural *Goethezeit*, that Boyle challenges. Boyle's thesis is that it was the mature Goethe's distance from and opposition to his age—an age composed of subjective expression and the poetry of desire—that made Goethe great and makes him a modern: one of us.

**REIMAGINING AMERICAN THEATRE.** By Robert Brustein. Hill and Wang. 336 pp. \$24.95

Is American theater really dead? According to Brustein, the drama critic of the *New Republic*, the answer depends on where you look. Broadway may be suffocating under the weight of imported British musical extravaganzas and exorbitant ticket prices, but a network of regional (or "resident") not-for-profit theatres, from the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis to Washington's Arena Stage, have made the past 25 years "a period of theatrical renewal and change." Reworking the classics, producing new play-

wrights, and supporting innovative collaborations, the American theater today, Brustein argues, is "making history at a time when the theater is no longer thought to have a history."

Instead of pining for the "golden age" of Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams, Brustein maintains that younger playwrights such as David Mamet (*American Buffalo*), Sam Shepard (*Buried Child*) and Marsha Norman (*Night, Mother*) rival the earlier masters. He praises the virtue of a "post-naturalistic" play such as Lanford Wilson's *Balm in Gilead*, which presents realistic events on stage while characters wander through the theater haranguing the audience. "Never permitting the audience to forget it is watching an artificial rather than a real event," Brustein writes, such plays "preserved what is unique about the theater—its immediacy and danger—while fulfilling naturalism's mandate to explore the habits and habitations of an abandoned underclass." In a similar spirit, auteur-directors like Lee Breuer have adapted the classics, combining, for example, Sophocles and gospel singers to create *The Gospel at Colonus*. And even when Gregory Mosher directed that old standard, *Our Town*, he cast avant-garde performance artist Spalding Gray as the Stage Manager, thus infusing Thornton Wilder's twangy philosophy with contemporary irony. Long lines outside the Brooklyn Academy of Music's annual New Wave Festival or Brustein's own Harvard Repertory attest to the popularity of experimental theater.

Brustein concedes that there are "radical problems... confronting the American theater today." The founding generation of artistic directors has almost disappeared, and its successors are increasingly responsible to their boards of trustees rather than to their own artistic visions. The lines between not-for-profit and commercial have blurred, as more resident theaters plan their seasons with an eye toward New York transfers. The National Endowment for the Arts, once a staunch ally, now has to satisfy the political requirements of both the Left (for "politically correct" art) and the Right (for inoffensive, morally sound art). To Brustein, these developments are difficult to discuss: He is reluctant to admit that the American stage—having survived its own death—may now be coming down with a serious virus.

## History

**POVERTY AND COMPASSION:** The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians. By Gertrude Himmelfarb. Knopf. 496 pp. \$30

Most arguments about how to deal with poverty come down, ultimately, to different interpretations of compassion. Himmelfarb, professor emeritus of history at City University of New York, distinguishes between "sentimental" compassion, which consists of moral indignation and *feeling* good, and "unsentimental" compassion, which is practical and seeks above all to *do* good. Himmelfarb profiles the era in which British reformers brought to the fore the practice of this unsentimental compassion. The era begins roughly with, and continues for a generation after, the publication of the first volume of Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889), a book which calculated a morally freighted "arithmetic of woe." The period, much like our own 1960s, rediscovered poverty even as poverty was declining. What united Himmelfarb's late Victorian reformers—from the neoclassical economist Alfred Marshall to the religious reformer Arthur Toynbee to the Fabian socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb—was their blend of realism and morality: They were convinced that the state had to assume a greater role in coping with poverty but, at the same time, that the poor required moral guidance as much as money.

At the end of this period, Beatrice Webb criticized the unconditional social benefits being advocated by the young Winston Churchill. In 1909 Churchill objected to tying social benefits to personal behavior, saying, "I do not like mix-

ing up moralities and mathematics." By then, however, events were passing the Victorians by. They had done much through their writing to foster more compassionate government—the era saw the extension of housing aid, workmen's compensation, schooling, unemployment insurance—but the compassion of the emerging welfare state was increasingly what Himmelfarb calls sentimental, "an exercise in moral indignation." As the welfare state grew, she argues, "it became a moral principle to eschew moral distinctions and judgments." Later reformers, "with a much attenuated commitment to religion, redoubled their social zeal as if to compensate . . . It was then that the passion for religion was transmuted into the compassion for humanity." A century later, as compassion in its unsentimental guise slowly works its way back into social policy, this is an era—and a book—worth studying.

**REVOLUTION AND REBELLION IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD.** By Jack A. Goldstone. Univ. of Calif. 608 pp. \$34.95

A generation ago, the accepted view of revolutions, found in such books as Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* (1963) and Crane Brinton's *Anatomy of Revolution* (1965), was that great political upheavals occurred when conditions were improving and popular expectations were dangerously high. Goldstone, director of the Center for Comparative Research in History, Society, and Culture at the University of California, Davis, stands much of this old thinking on its head.

All of the revolutions Goldstone considers, from the Ottoman Crisis in the early 17th century to the Taiping Rebellion in 1850, were preceded by periods in which population growth was rapid but material production failed to keep pace. With their economies based almost entirely on agriculture, old regimes had little flexibility in dealing with large fluctuations in population. Massive growth made goods less available, causing both soaring inflation and state fiscal crises. At the same time, social turmoil and fluctuation created at least the illusion of social mobility, "a scramble for credentials," as Goldstone calls it, and attendant friction between the haves and have-nots.





This is hardly an interpretation of revolutions to encourage would-be revolutionaries. Gone are the old romantic theories that depicted revolutions as glorious struggles between past and future or good and evil; the revolutions Goldstone studies arise from imbalances between human institutions and environmental factors such as disease, weather, and the productivity of the soil. The fall of an *ancien regime* and its revolutionary replacement could hardly have been expected to bring an end to social difficulties. "In practice," those societies "convulsed by severe problems [were] more likely to find solutions in stern authority." Revolutions, Goldstone concludes, "create great debates about freedom but often shrink from establishing it."

### *Contemporary Affairs*

**EDGE CITY:** Life on the New Frontier. By Joel Garreau. Doubleday. 526 pp. \$22.50

Joel Garreau has seen the urban future, and it's not that bad.

This future will be dominated by what he calls Edge Cities, those massive agglomerations of office parks, shopping malls, and housing developments that already dot the periphery of our metropolitan regions. Garreau, who combines the journalist's eye for detail (he is a *Washington Post* reporter) with the analytic training of a demographic geographer, portrays these one-time suburbs as diverse and healthy places. They put individuals within easy reach (by car) of everything, from high-technology firms to used book stores. Concentrating on a hundred-odd Edge Cities, mostly clustered around nine metropolitan areas, Garreau argues that they all reflect the search for a new balance between the human desire for social contact and for individual freedom. He excuses their various deficiencies, such as New Jersey's Bridgewater Commons mall, as those of "a first generation vision . . . an experimental effort in a national work in progress."

While Garreau sometimes echoes the boosterism of the developers, he is disturbed by the development "growth machine." His book concludes with an account of the 1988 confrontation in northern Virginia between mega-devel-

oper John T. Hazel, who sincerely believed he was bringing the benefits of civilization to an empty landscape, and the local activists who opposed his plan to develop a 542-acre portion of the Civil War battlefield at Manassas (Bull Run). In the end, the federal government was persuaded to preserve the battlefield. That solution will not often be available for the American Edge City of the future. Indeed, Garreau has little faith that government—or architects and planners, who tend to be focused on the restoration of the old central cities—can have much impact on the Edge Cities. Ultimately, developers and citizens will have to work out local "social contracts" to channel growth. Garreau is optimistic that they will. He is talking, after all, about a frontier, where all things seem possible.

### **THE DISUNITING OF AMERICA:**

Reflections on a Multicultural Society. By Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Whittle. 91 pp. \$11.95

The most innovative—some would say the most questionable—development in recent publishing comes from the Tennessee publisher, Whittle Communications. Whittle hires well-known writers to address, in short, punchy books of about 100 pages, some of the thornier issues of the day; it then sells commercial advertising and distributes 150,000 free copies to business and opinion leaders before the book goes to stores. With this new addition to the series, it can now be said that the multicultural "political correctness" controversy has been "Whittled" down to size. Schlesinger, professor of history at the graduate school of the City University of New York and one of the deans of American liberalism, is well qualified for the task.

As one would expect, Schlesinger takes the long, middle-of-the-road view. Recognition of the contributions of non-WASP minorities was much needed in this country, he argues. But what began in the 1960s as a healthy corrective built on sound scholarship has degenerated into propagandistic "compensatory" history that distorts the truth in order to fuel a cult of group- and ethnicity-mindedness. The matter is far from merely academic, says Schlesinger: "The ethnic revolt against the melting pot has



reached the point, in rhetoric at least, though not I think in reality, of a denial of the idea of a common culture and a single society. If large numbers of people really accept this, the republic would be in serious trouble."

Signs are that the excesses of the "ethnic upsurge" will be their own undoing. Already, they have united outstanding scholars of the left, right, and center in a chorus of condemnation. The spectacle of Marxist historian Eugene Genovese embracing conservative Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* is typical of this unusual united front. Still, one must share Schlesinger's concern about those students who have been taught by "Afrocentric" scholars that AIDS is a white-engineered conspiracy directed at the black population, or, even more sweepingly, that Europeans are "ice people," responsible for the world's three D's—"domination, destruction, and death." No one born in this century needs to be told how poisonous such ideas can be.

**DEMOCRACY AND DELIBERATION:** New Directions for Democratic Reform. By James S. Fishkin. Yale. 172 pp. \$17.95

Soundbites, Michael Dukakis in a tank, George Bush munching on pork rinds with Iowa farmers—so ran the presidential campaign of 1988. Even the "issues" were vacuous: Willie Horton, the ACLU, and "read my lips."

Fishkin, a University of Texas political scientist, may not have the cure for the problem, but he has come up with a good idea: a "National Issues Convention," to be held in January of the coming year. Six hundred delegates, demographically representative of the U.S. population, will gather for three days of direct deliberation with the candidates for both parties' presidential nominations. The delegates will be divided into separate party meetings and at the end of the third day will be polled on the issues and their choice of candidate. The Public Broadcasting System will televise the proceedings to a national audience.

Although such a proposal hardly needs intellectual justification, Fishkin provides just that in *Democracy and Deliberation* (to be published shortly before the convention). "True democracy," argues Fishkin, depends on three conditions: political equality, protection against the tyranny of the majority, and real deliberation. Fishkin holds that deliberation is a means to the fulfillment of the first condition, political equality. But despite recent convention reforms, endless primary campaigns still prevent conventions from being effective deliberative bodies. An issue-oriented mini-convention coming before the primaries may be the solution, says Fishkin. Whether it is or not, *Democracy and Deliberation* makes worthwhile reading for anyone concerned with the ills of our political system.

#### Science & Technology

**STRANGERS AT THE BEDSIDE:** A History of How Law and Bioethics Transformed Medical Decision Making. By David J. Rothman. Basic. 303 pp. \$24.95

Once upon a time—it was only a few decades ago, but it now seems something out of an old

tale—the sick received treatment at home, visited by the family doctor, a father figure who had his patients' best interests at heart. He alone made the life-and-death decisions concerning his patients' treatments. But today, writes Rothman, professor of social medicine at Columbia University, "the discretion that the [medical] profession once enjoyed has been increasingly circumscribed, with an almost bewildering number of parties and procedures participating in medical decision making."

This change in the way medical decisions were made for thousands of years occurred in only a single decade, between 1966 and 1976. In 1966 Henry Beecher, Door Professor of Research in Anesthesia at the Harvard Medical School, published an article that caused a sensation: It cited case after case in which physicians and medical researchers had performed clinical experiments "for the good of society" without informing their subjects (usually poor or retarded) of possible negative consequences. Suddenly the sacrosanct world of medicine came under public scrutiny, and soon peer-review groups, hospital boards, and governmental commissions would all determine what an individual physician could or could not do in treating his patients.

A second factor contributing to the doctor's demotion was the advance in medical technology. Breakthroughs in kidney dialysis (1960) and heart transplantation (1968) raised disturbing, unprecedented questions. Who would be selected to receive such highly costly treatments? And when should treatment be withheld? In 1973, Senators Walter Mondale (D.-Minn.) and Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.), to the disdain of the medical community, established a commission to explore medical ethics. Then in 1976, in a much publicized case, the courts forced doctors to remove Karen Ann Quinlan, who lay in a coma without hope of recovery, from a hospital respirator. It was clear, Rothman writes, who had won in this "contest between physicians, on the one hand, and patients and their legal advocates, on the other." It became even clearer. In a 1989 Gallup Poll, 40 percent of the doctor-respondents admitted that if they had known how little control they would one day have of their own profession, they would never have gone to medical school in the first place.

**HISTORY OF AIDS: Emergence and Origin of a Modern Pandemic.** By Mirko D. Grmek. Trans. by Russell C. Maulitz and Jacalyn Duffin. Princeton. 279 pp. \$29.95

Although a definitive history of AIDS cannot yet be written, Grmek, the director of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes at the Sorbonne, offers a modest alternative—"a look back by a physician trained in historical method." A bestseller in France, Grmek's retrospective may strike those suffering from HIV infection or those grappling with the scientific or social ramifications of AIDS as needlessly academic. His central concern is whether AIDS is a new disease or a little recognized entity that has always been with us.

Grmek admits that AIDS, a disease defined by its epidemic spread, is new, but he argues that the HIV virus has been around, possibly for centuries, "scattered and manifest only at a low level, in sporadic cases." Recently, three Belgian physicians proposed that the celebrated Renaissance humanist, Erasmus, died of AIDS. More convincingly, frozen blood and tissue samples from the 1950s and '60s appear to conform to the symptoms of AIDS.

If Grmek is right, why during the 1980s did this virus suddenly mutate into a highly virulent strain and spread to epidemic proportions? He introduces an intriguing concept, "pathocenosis," to describe the state of equilibrium and health that occurs in an ecologically stable population. When this equilibrium is disrupted, disease occurs in epidemic proportions. The pathocenosis of modern society may have been ruptured, he argues, by the coincidence of a number of factors, ranging from an increase in homosexual and heterosexual promiscuity to expanded air travel to widespread blood-product transfusions. Grmek calls AIDS "the first of the postmodern plagues." "With its link to sex [and] drugs," he writes, "and with the sophistication of its evolution and its strategy for spreading itself, AIDS expresses our era." Although one can doubt that a disease "expresses" anything—much less a whole era—this perspective permits Grmek to distinguish between HIV as a virus causing physical suffering and AIDS as a disease for which there may be a wide variety of societal responses quite distinct from the biomedical ones.

## Woodrow Wilson, Politician

The idealistic architect of a postwar world order that never came into being: such is the popular image of President Woodrow Wilson. What it omits is the savvy, sometimes ruthless politician whose achievements in the domestic sphere were equalled by only two other 20th-century presidents, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lyndon Baines Johnson. Robert Dallek here restores the whole man.

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*by Robert Dallek*

**F**ew presidents in American history elicit more mixed feelings than Woodrow Wilson. And why not? His life and career were full of contradictions that have puzzled historians for 70 years. A victim of childhood dyslexia, he became an avid reader, a skilled academic, and a popular writer and lecturer. A deeply religious man, who some described as "a Presbyterian priest" with a dour view of man's imperfectability, he devoted himself to secular designs promising the triumph of reason and harmony in domestic and world affairs. A rigid, self-exacting personality, whose uncompromising adherence to principles barred agreement on some of his most important political goals, he was a brilliant opportunist who won stunning electoral victories and led controversial laws through the New Jersey state legislature and the U.S. Congress. A southern conservative and elitist with a profound distrust of radical ideas and such populists as William Jennings Bryan, he became the Democratic Party's most effective advocate of advanced progressivism. A leading proponent of congressional influence, or what he

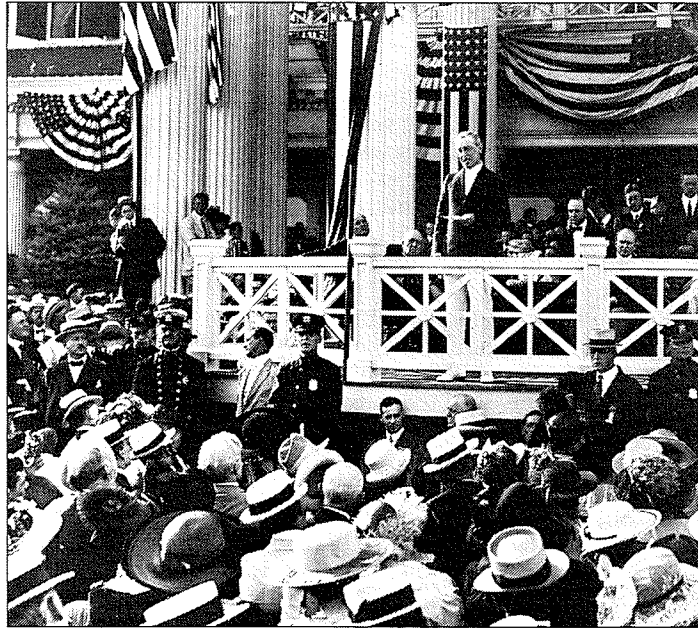
called "Congressional Government," he ranks with Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Lyndon B. Johnson as the century's most aggressive chief executives. An avowed pacifist who declared himself "too proud to fight" and gained reelection in 1916 partly by reminding voters that he had "kept us out of war," he made military interventions in Latin America and Europe hallmarks of his two presidential terms.

There is no greater paradox in Wilson's life and career, however, than the fact that his worst failure has become the principal source of his historical reputation as a great American president. Administrative and legislative triumphs marked Wilson's service as president of Princeton, governor of New Jersey, and president of the United States. But most Americans who would concede Wilson a place in the front ranks of U.S. chief executives would be hard pressed to name many, if any, of these achievements. To them, he is best remembered as the president who preached self-determination and a new world order. (And not only to Americans: An upcoming Wilson biography by Dutch historian J. W.

Schulte Nordholt is subtitled *A Life for World Peace*.) In the 1920s and '30s, when America rejected participation in the League of Nations and a political or military role in a world hellbent on another total war, Wilson's reputation reached a low point. He was a good man whom bankers and munitions makers had duped into entering World War I. He had also led America into the fighting out of the hopelessly naive belief that he could make the world safe for democracy and end all wars.

American involvement in World War II reversed Wilson's historical standing. Now feeling guilty about their isolationism and their rejection of his vision of a world at peace, Americans celebrated him as a spurned prophet whose wisdom and idealism deserved renewed acceptance in the 1940s. A new world league of self-governing nations practicing collective security for the sake of global stability and peace became the great American hope during World War II. When the fighting's outcome proved to be the Soviet-American Cold War, Americans saw it as another setback for Wilson's grand design. Nevertheless, they did not lose faith in his ultimate wisdom, believing that democracy and the international rule of law would eventually have to replace tyranny and lawless aggression if the world were ever to achieve lasting peace.

Now, with America's triumph in the Cold War and the Soviet-American confrontation all but over, the country has renewed faith in a world order akin to what Woodrow Wilson proposed in 1918. The idea took on fresh meaning when President Bush led a coalition of U.N.-backed forces against Iraq's attack upon and absorption of Kuwait. The triumph of coalition arms seemed to vindicate Wilson's belief that collective action through a world body could reduce the likelihood and effectiveness of attacks by strong states against



*Wilson speaks shortly after receiving his party's presidential nomination—a "sort of political miracle," he called it—in 1912.*

weaker ones and thus make international acts of aggression obsolete.

Yet present hopes for a new world order can plummet overnight—and with them Wilson's standing. If Wilson's reputation as a great president rests upon his vision of a new era in world affairs and the fulfillment of some part of that design in our lifetimes, his place in the forefront of U.S. presidents seems less than secure.

Will the ghost of Wilson be plagued forever by the vagaries of world politics? Only if we fail to give scrutiny to his full record. A careful reassessment of Wilson's political career, especially in domestic affairs, would go far to secure his place as a great American president who has much to tell us about the effective workings of democratic political systems everywhere.

For all his idealism and elitism, Wilson's greatest triumphs throughout his career rested on his brilliance as a democratic politician. He was the "great communicator" of his day—a professor who abandoned academic language and spoke in catch phrases that inspired mass support. He was also a master practitioner of the art of the possible, a leader with an impressive

talent for reading the public mood and adjusting to it in order to advance his personal ambition and larger public goals. This is not to suggest that his career was an uninterrupted success. He had his share of spectacular failures. But some of these he converted into opportunities for further advance. And even his unmitigated failures had more to do with circumstances beyond his control than with flaws in his political judgment.

Wilson's early life gave little indication of a master politician in the making. Born in 1856 in Staunton, Virginia, the third of four children, he was the offspring of devout Scotch Presbyterian divines. Thomas Woodrow, his maternal grandfather, came from Scotland to the United States, where he ministered to congregations in small Ohio towns. Jesse Woodrow Wilson, Wilson's mother, was an intensely religious, austere Victorian lady with no sense of humor and a long history of psychosomatic ailments. Joseph Ruggles Wilson, Woodrow's father, was a brilliant theologian and leading light in the southern Presbyterian church, holding pulpits in Staunton, Virginia; Augusta, Georgia; Columbia, South Carolina; and Wilmington, North Carolina. Joseph Wilson enjoyed a reputation as an eloquent and powerful speaker whose "arresting rhetoric and cogent thought" made him one of the leading southern preachers and religious teachers of his time. Woodrow Wilson described his father as the "greatest teacher" he ever knew. Yet theological disputes and clashes with other strong-willed church leaders drove Joseph, who advocated various reforms, from one pulpit to another and left him with a sense of failure that clouded his life. One Wilson biographer notes that "by mid-career, Joseph Wilson was in some ways a broken man, struggling to overcome feelings of inferiority, trying to reconcile a God of love with the frustration of his ambition for success and prominence within the church." To compensate for his sense of defeat, Joseph invested his vaunting ambition in his son Woodrow, whom he

hoped would become the "very great man" Joseph himself had wished to be.

Although Joseph imparted a love of literature and politics to his son, Bible readings, daily prayers, and Sunday worship services were centerpieces of Woodrow's early years. His father also taught him the transient character of human affairs and the superiority of religious to secular concerns. Joseph left little doubt in the boy's mind that he foresaw for him a career in the ministry as "one of the Church's rarest scholars . . . one of her most illustrious reformers . . . or one of her grandest orators." But Joseph's defeats in church politics in Woodrow's formative adolescent years soured father and son on Woodrow's entrance into the ministry.

Instead, Woodrow, with his father's blessing, invested his ambitions in a political career. As Richard Hofstadter wrote, "When young Tommy Wilson sat in the pew and heard his father bring the Word to the people, he was watching the model upon which his career was to be fashioned." Before college, he hung a portrait of British Prime Minister William Gladstone above his desk and declared: "That is Gladstone, the greatest statesman that ever lived. I intend to be a statesman, too." During his years as a Princeton undergraduate (1875-79), he rationalized his determination to enter politics by describing it as a divine vocation. A career as a statesman was an expression of Christian service, he believed, a use of power for the sake of principles or moral goals. Wilson saw the "key to success in politics" as "the pursuit of perfection through hard work and the fulfillment of ideals." Politics would allow him to spread spiritual enlightenment to the yearning masses.

Yet Wilson, as one of his later political associates said, was a man of high ideals and no principles, which was another way of saying that Wilson's ambition for self-serving political ends outran his commitment to any particular philosophy or set of goals. Like every great American politician since the rise of mass democracy in the

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19th century, Wilson allowed the ends to justify the means. But Wilson never thought of himself as an opportunist. Rather, he considered himself a democrat responsive to the national mood and the country's most compelling needs. It is possible to scoff at Wilson's rationalization of his willingness to bend to current demands, but we do well to remember that the country's greatest presidents have all been men of high ideals and no principles, self-serving altruists or selfish pragmatists with a talent for evoking the vision of America as the world's last best hope.

Wilson's path to high political office, like so much else in his life, ran an erratic course. Legal studies at the University of Virginia, self-instruction, and a brief law practice in Atlanta were meant to be a prelude to a political career. But being an attorney had little appeal to Wilson, and he decided to become a professor of politics instead. Consequently, in 1883, at the age of 27, he entered the Johns Hopkins University Graduate School, where he earned a Ph.D. for *Congressional Government* (1885). His book was an argument for a Congress more like the British Parliament, a deliberative body in which debate rather than contending interests shaped legislation. For 17 years, from 1885 to 1902, he taught at Bryn Mawr, Wesleyan, and Princeton, beginning at the last in 1890. By 1898 he had grown weary of what he derisively called his "talking profession," and during the next four years he shrewdly positioned himself to become the unanimous, first-ballot choice of Princeton's trustees as the university's president.

Wilson's eight years as president of Princeton (1902–1910) were a prelude to his later political triumphs and defeats. During the first three years of his Princeton term, Wilson carried off a series of dazzling reforms. Offended by the shallowness of much instruction at Princeton and animated by a desire to make it a special university like Oxford and Cambridge, where undergraduate education emphasized critical thinking rather than "the ideal of making a living," Wilson introduced a preceptorial system. It aimed at transforming Princeton "from a place where there are youngsters doing tasks to a place where

there are men doing thinking, men who are conversing about the things of thought . . ." As a prerequisite to the preceptorial system, Wilson persuaded the faculty to reorganize the University's curriculum and its structure, creating 11 departments corresponding to subjects and requiring upperclassmen to concentrate their studies in one of them. Wilson's reforms, biographer Arthur S. Link asserts, "mark him as an educational statesman of originality and breadth and strength." His achievement was also a demonstration of Wilson's political mastery—a case study in how to lead strong-minded, independent academics to accept a sea change in the life of a conservative university.

The fierce struggles and bitter defeats of Wilson's next five years are a measure of how difficult fundamental changes in higher education can be without the sort of astute political management Wilson initially used. Between 1906 and 1910 Wilson fought unsuccessfully to reorganize the social life of undergraduates and to determine the location and nature of a graduate college. In the first instance, Wilson tried to deemphasize the importance of campus eating clubs, which had become the focus of undergraduate life, and replace them with residential colleges, or quadrangles, where students would live under the supervision of unmarried faculty members residing in the colleges. Wilson viewed the clubs as undemocratic, anti-intellectual, and divisive, and the quadrangle plan as a sensible alternative that would advance the university's educational goals and national standing. Wilson assumed that he could put across his plan without the sort of consultation and preparation he had relied on to win approval for the preceptorial system. But his failure to consult alumni, faculty, and trustees was a major political error that led to his defeat. Likewise, he did not effectively marshal the support he needed to win backing for his graduate-school plan, and again it made his proposal vulnerable to criticism from opponents.

Physical and emotional problems caused by strokes in 1906 and 1907 may partly account for Wilson's defeats in the quadrangle and graduate-school fights. But whatever the explanation for his poor performance in these academic struggles, they

were by no means without political benefit to Wilson. In fact, what seems most striking about these conflicts is the way Wilson converted them to his larger purposes of running first for governor of New Jersey and then for president of the United States.

Colonel George Harvey, a conservative Democrat who owned a publishing empire that included the *New York World* and *Harper's Weekly*, proposed Wilson for the presidency as early as 1906. Although Wilson made appropriate disclaimers of any interest in seeking the White House, the suggestion aroused in him the longing for high political station that he had held for some 30 years. In response to Harvey's efforts, Wilson, who was already known nationally as a speaker on issues of higher education, began speaking out on economic and political questions before non-university audiences. His initial pronouncements were essentially conservative verities calculated to identify him with the anti-Bryan, anti-Populist wing of the Democratic Party. "The nomination of Mr. Wilson," one conservative editor wrote in 1906, "would be a good thing for the country as betokening a return of his party to historic party ideals and first principles, and a sobering up after the radical 'crazes.'" In 1907 Wilson prepared a "Credo" of his views, which, Arthur Link says, could hardly have failed to please reactionaries, "for it was conservative to the core." It justified the necessity of great trusts and combinations as efficient instruments of modern business and celebrated individualism. In 1908 Wilson refused to support Bryan for president and rejected suggestions that he become his vice-presidential running mate.

During the next two years, however, Wilson shifted decidedly to the left. Mindful of the mounting progressive temper in the country—of the growing affinity of middle-class Americans for reforms that would limit the power of corporations and political machines—Wilson identified himself with what he called the "new morality," the need to eliminate fraud and corruption from, and to restore democracy and equality of opportunity to, the nation's economic and political life. His academic fights over the quadrangles and graduate school became struggles between special privilege

and democracy. In a speech to Princeton's Pittsburgh alumni in the spring of 1910, Wilson attacked the nation's universities, churches, and political parties as serving the "classes" and neglecting the "masses." He declared his determination to democratize the colleges of the country and called for moral and spiritual regeneration. Incensed at his conservative Princeton opponents, who seemed the embodiment of the privileged interests, and eager to make himself a gubernatorial and then national candidate, Wilson invested idealism in the progressive crusade, leaving no doubt that he was ready to lead a movement that might redeem America.

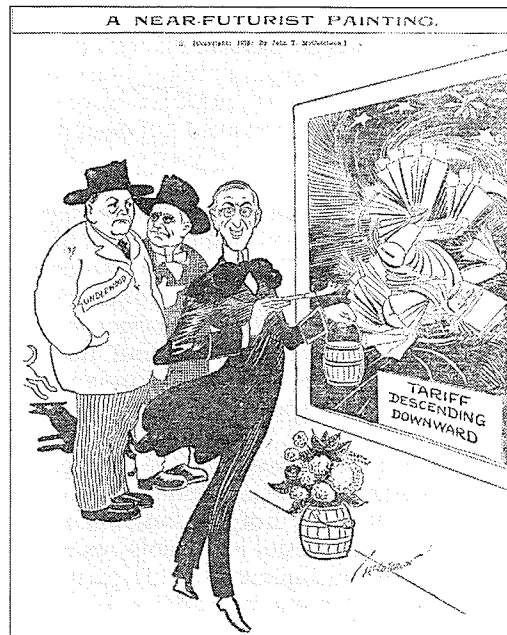
New Jersey Democratic boss James Smith, Jr., seeing Wilson as a conservative opportunist whose rhetoric would appease progressives and whose actions would favor the corporations and the bosses, arranged Wilson's nomination for governor. Wilson seemed to play his part perfectly during the campaign, quietly accepting Smith's help even as he declared his independence from the party machine and espoused the progressive agenda—the direct primary, a corrupt-practices law, workmen's compensation, and a regulatory commission policing the railroads and public utilities. On election day Wilson swept to victory by a 50,000-vote margin, 233,933 to 184,573, and the Democrats gained control of the normally Republican Assembly. Once in the governor's chair, Wilson made clear that he would be his own man. He defeated Smith's bid for election to the U.S. Senate by the state legislature and skillfully assured the enactment of the four principal progressive measures. As he told a friend, "I kept the pressure of opinion constantly on the legislature, and the programme was carried out to its last detail. This with the senatorial business seems, in the minds of the people looking on, little less than a miracle in the light of what has been the history of reform hitherto in the State." As Wilson himself recognized, it was less a miracle than the product of constant pressure on the legislature at a time when "opinion was ripe on all these matters." Wilson's break with the machine and drive for reform reflected a genuine commitment to improving the lot of New Jersey's citizens. Most of all, they were a demonstra-



tion of how an ambitious politician in a democracy bends to the popular will for the sake of personal gain and simultaneously serves legitimate public needs.

Wilson's nomination for president by a deeply divided Democratic convention in the summer of 1912 was an extraordinary event in the history of the party and the nation. Wilson himself called it "a sort of political miracle." Although Wilson was the frontrunner in 1911 after speaking trips to every part of the nation, by May 1912 aggressive campaigns by Missouri's Champ Clark, speaker of the House of Representatives, and Alabama Representative Oscar W. Underwood made Wilson a decided underdog. When Clark won a majority of the delegates on the 10th ballot, it seemed certain that he would eventually get the two-thirds vote needed for the nomination. In every Democratic convention since 1844, a majority vote for a candidate had translated into the required two-thirds. But 1912 was different. Wilson won the nomination on the 46th ballot after his managers struck a bargain, which kept Underwood's 100-plus delegates from going to Clark. William Jennings Bryan gave Wilson essential progressive support, and the party's most powerful political bosses—the men who, in the words of one historian, had been Wilson's "bitterest antagonists and who represented the forces against which he had been struggling"—decided to back him.

Wilson's campaign for the presidency was another milestone in his evolution as a brilliant democratic politician. He entered the election without a clear-cut campaign theme. The tariff, which he initially focused on, inspired little popular response. In late August, however, after conferring with Louis D. Brandeis, Wilson found a constructive and highly popular campaign theme. Persuading Wilson that political democracy could only follow from economic democracy or diminished control by the country's giant business trusts, Brandeis sold him on the New Freedom—the idea that regulated competition would lead to the liberation of economic enterprise in the United States. This in turn would restore grassroots political power and control. Wilson accurately sensed that the country's mood was overwhelmingly favorable to



Among Wilson's progressive measures was the Underwood Tariff of 1914, the first downward revision of the tariff since the Civil War.

progressive reform, especially the reduction of the economic power of the trusts. He also saw correctly that Theodore Roosevelt's plea for a New Nationalism—regulated monopoly and an expanded role for federal authority in the economic and social life of the nation—impressed most voters as too paternalistic and more a threat to than an expansion of freedom. As a result, Wilson won a plurality of the popular vote in the four-way contest of 1912, 42 percent to a combined 58 percent for William Howard Taft, TR, and socialist Eugene V. Debs. Wilson's victory in the electoral column was far more one-sided, 435 to 99 for TR and Taft. His victory was also a demonstration of his talents as a speaker who could satisfy the mass yearning for a new era in national affairs.

Wilson's election represented a triumph of democratic hopes. After nearly five decades of conservative rule by the country's business interests, the nation gave its backing to a reform leader promising an end to special privilege and the economic and political democratization of American life. "Nobody owns me," Wilson declared at the end of his campaign, signaling his readiness

to act in behalf of the country's working and middle classes. Despite his own largely conservative background, his political agility and sensitivity to popular demands made it likely that he would not disappoint progressive goals.

His first presidential term represents one of the three notable periods of domestic reform in 20th-century America. What makes it particularly remarkable, notes historian John Milton Cooper, is that Wilson won his reforms without the national emergencies over the economy and civil rights that respectively confronted the country during the 1930s and the 1960s. Wilson, in other words, lacked "the peculiarly favorable political conditions" aiding Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson.

Wilson's successful leadership rested on his effective management of his party and Congress. Following the advice of Texas Representative Albert S. Burleson, a superb politician who became postmaster general, Wilson filled his cabinet with "deserving" Democrats and allowed Burleson to use patronage "ruthlessly to compel adoption of administration measures." Despite Bryan's ignorance of foreign affairs, for example, his prominence persuaded Wilson to make him secretary of state. Wilson's readiness to set a bold legislative agenda found support from both a 73-member Democratic majority in the House and a decisive majority of Democratic and Republican progressives in the Senate. The 28th president quickly proved himself to be an able manipulator of Congress. Eager to create a sense of urgency about his legislative program and to establish a mood of cooperation between the two branches of government, Wilson called a special congressional session at the start of his term and then spoke to a joint meeting of both houses. Indeed, he was the first president to appear in person before Congress since John Adams. Presenting himself as a colleague rather than "a mere department of the Government hailing Congress from some isolated island of jealous power," Wilson returned repeatedly to Capitol Hill for conferences to advance his reform program.

In the 18 months between the spring of 1913 and the fall of 1914, Wilson pushed four key laws through the Congress. The

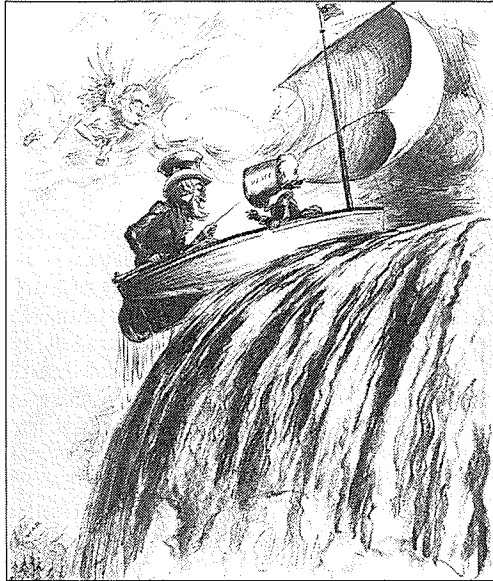
Underwood Tariff of October 1914 was the first downward revision of the tariff since the Civil War; it was inspired more by a desire to reduce the cost of living for lower- and middle-class Americans than by any obligation to serve the interests of industrial giants. Wilson drove the bill through the upper house by exposing the lobbyists representing businesses that sought "to overcome the interests of the public for their private profit." Making the tariff law all the more remarkable was the inclusion of the first graduated income tax in U.S. history. Shortly thereafter, Wilson won passage of the most enduring domestic measure of his presidency, the reform of the country's banking and money system. Insisting on public, centralized control of banks and the money supply rather than a private, decentralized system, Wilson once again came before Congress to influence the outcome of this debate. The Federal Reserve Act of December 1913 combined elements of both plans, providing for a mix of private and public control. Although further reforms would occur later to make the Federal Reserve system a more effective instrument for dealing with national economic problems, the Wilson law of 1913 created the basic elements of the banking system that has existed for almost 80 years. During the next nine months, by keeping Congress in continuous session for an unprecedented year and a half, Wilson won passage of the Clayton Antitrust and Federal Trade Commission acts, contributing to the more effective regulation of big business and greater power for organized labor.

In November 1914, Wilson announced that his New Freedom program had been achieved and that the progressive movement was at an end. A man of fundamentally conservative impulses (which he believed reflected those of the nation at large), Wilson did not wish to overreach himself. His announcement bewildered advanced progressives, who had been unsuccessfully advocating a variety of social-justice measures Wilson considered too radical to support. Herbert Croly, the editor of the *New Republic*, charged that "any man of President Wilson's intellectual equipment who seriously asserts that the fundamental wrongs of a modern society can be easily and quickly righted as a con-

sequence of a few laws... casts suspicion either upon his own sincerity or upon his grasp of the realities of modern social and industrial life." Similarly, Wilson's refusal to establish a National Race Commission and his active commitment to racial segregation in the federal government incensed African-American leaders who had viewed him as a likely supporter of progressive measures for blacks.

Though he did little to reverse course on helping blacks, Wilson stood ready to return to the progressive position for the sake of reelection in 1916. "I am sorry for any President of the United States who does not recognize every great movement in the Nation," Wilson declared in July 1916. "The minute he stops recognizing it, he has become a back number." The results of the congressional elections in 1914 convinced Wilson that the key to success in two years was a campaign attracting TR's Progressive backers to his standard. Consequently, in 1916, he elevated Louis D. Brandeis to the Supreme Court and signed seven additional reform bills into law. Among other things, these laws brought relief to farmers and workers and raised income and inheritance taxes on wealthy Americans. The election results in November vindicated his strategy. Wilson gained almost three million popular votes over his 1912 total and bested Charles Evans Hughes, who headed a reunited Republican party, by 23 electoral votes. On this count alone, Wilson's two consecutive victories as the head of a minority party mark him as one of the century's exceptional American politicians.

Why did Wilson's political astuteness desert him during his second term in his handling of the Versailles Treaty and the



*This 1915 cartoon reflects growing American skepticism that President Wilson would be able to keep the United States out of the Great War.*

League of Nations? The answer is not naiveté about world politics, though Wilson himself believed "it would be the irony of fate if my administration had to deal chiefly with foreign affairs." In fact, the same mastery of Congress he displayed in converting so many significant reform bills into law between 1913 and 1916 was reflected in his creation of a national consensus in 1917 for American participation in the Great War.

At the start of the fighting in 1914, Wilson declared Amer-

ica neutral in thought and deed. And though Wilson himself had a decidedly pro-British bias, he understood that the country then was only mildly pro-Allied and wanted no part in the war. His policies initially reflected these feelings. Only as national sentiment changed in response to events in Europe and on the high seas, where German submarine violations of U.S. neutral rights drove Americans more decisively into the Allied camp, did Wilson see fit to prepare the country for and then lead it into the war. His prewar leadership became something of a model for Franklin Roosevelt in 1939-41 as he maneuvered to maintain a national majority behind his responses to World War II.

Wilson's failure in 1919-20, or, more precisely, the collapse of his political influence in dealing with the peacemaking at the end of the war, consisted of a number of things—most of them beyond his control. His Fourteen Points, his formula for making the world safe for democracy and ending all wars, was beyond the capacity of any political leader to achieve, then and now. Yet there is every reason to believe that Wilson enunciated his peace aims assuming that he would have to accept compromise agreements on many of his goals,

as indeed he did in the Versailles negotiations. A number of these compromises on the Fourteen Points went beyond what he hoped to concede, but he recognized that the conclusion of the fighting had stripped him of much of his hold over America's allies and limited his capacity to bend the strong-minded French, British, and Italian leaders to his will or to influence the radical revolutionary regime in Russia. Events were moving too fast in Europe and all over the globe for him to make the world approximate the postwar peace arrangements he had enunciated in 1918.

Faced by such circumstances, Wilson accepted the proposition that a League of Nations, including the United States, would be the world's best hope for a stable peace. Wilson's prime objective after the Versailles conference was to assure American participation in the new world body. But the political cards were stacked against him. After six years of Democratic rule and a growing conviction in Republican Party circles that the Democrats would be vulnerable in 1920, Senate Republicans made approval of the Versailles Treaty and American participation in the League partisan issues which could redound to their benefit. Moreover, between 1918 and 1920, Wilson's deteriorating health, particularly a major stroke in the fall of 1919, intensified a propensity for self-righteousness and made him uncharacteristically rigid in dealing with a political issue that cried out for flexibility and accommodation. As Edwin A. Weinstein has persuasively argued in his medical and psychological biography of Wilson, "the cerebral dysfunction which resulted from Wilson's devastating strokes prevented the ratification of the Treaty. It is almost certain that had Wilson not been so afflicted, his political skills and facility with language would have bridged the gap between . . . [opposing Senate] resolutions, much as he had reconciled opposing views of the Federal Reserve bill . . . or had accepted the modifications of the Treaty sug-

gested in February, 1919."

Wilson's political failure in 1919–20 was a striking exception in a career marked by a substantial number of political victories. His defeat and its consequences were so stunning that they have eclipsed the record of prior achievements and partly obscured Wilson's contributions to American history.

But it is not only the disaster of 1919–20 that is responsible. Mainstream academia today dismisses political history and particularly the study of powerful leaders as distinctly secondary in importance to impersonal social forces in explaining historical change. What seems lost from view nowadays is just how essential strong and skillful political leadership remains in bringing a democracy to accept major reforms. Wilson is an excellent case in point. For all the public's receptivity to progressivism in the first two decades of the century, it took a leader of exceptional political skill to bring warring reform factions together in a coalition that could enact a liberal agenda. By contrast, Wilson's physical incapacity in 1919 assured the defeat of American participation in a world league for 25 years. This is not to say that an American presence in an international body would have dramatically altered the course of world affairs after 1920, but it might have made a difference, and the collapse of Wilson's leadership was the single most important factor in keeping the United States on the sidelines.

Did social and economic and a host of other factors influence the course of U.S. history during Wilson's time? Without a doubt. But a leader of vision and varied abilities—not all of them purely admirable—was needed to seize the opportunities provided by history and make them realities. To forget the boldness of Wilson's leadership, and the importance of political leaders generally, is to embrace a narrow vision of this nation's past—and of its future.

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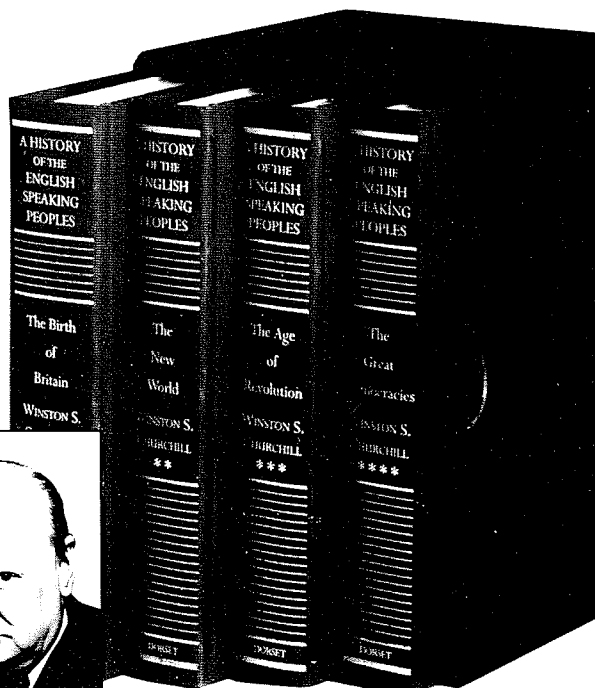
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## The 'Other' Europe At Century's End

When the Soviet Union loosened its grip on Eastern Europe in 1989, observers of the region tempered euphoria with caution. Would the national and ethnic conflicts that have long plagued the region resurface now that the communist lid was off? Would the challenge of rebuilding collapsed economies prove overwhelming? As we approach the second anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, historian John Lukacs uncovers some surprising developments in the "other" Europe.

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*by John Lukacs*

Europe is of one piece only when people look at her from the outside. There were few Europeans in 1939. The national differences were profound. From Albanians and Andorrans to Serbs and Turks: there were more European nations than there are letters of the alphabet.\* I wrote these sentences 20 years ago.\* What I said about Europe then is also true of Europe today, with one important difference.

The nations of Europe have become, in their social composition, Americanized. Some time around 1920 something happened in the United States that has no precedent in the history of mankind. Previously, the structure of every society resembled a pyramid, with the relatively few rich and powerful on the top, the impoverished and, by and large, powerless masses on the bottom, and the middle class, or classes, somewhere in between, within the tapering sides of the pyramid. By the 1920s, how-

ever, the shape of American society resembled not a pyramid but a huge onion or balloon, with a huge bulge in the middle. American society was—superficially—a homogeneous society, with one vast middle class (although the very word "middle" began to lose its original meaning), a small upper class (the point of the onion), and a somewhat larger but no longer fundamental "root end" of the poor (who will always be with us, as Jesus said). I think—and fear—that such balloons will explode sooner or later, and something like the old pyramid will return. But that is not my point here.

My point is that the social shapes (but only the shapes) of the nations of Europe—all "democracies" now—resemble that of the United States, and this may be even more true of the "new democracies" of Eastern Europe than of the democratic nations of the West. All *nomenklaturas* (political upper classes) notwithstanding, 45 years of communist rule contributed to the homogenization of their societies. The old proletariats have been disappearing fast. As

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\*In the introduction of *The Last European War, 1939–1941*.

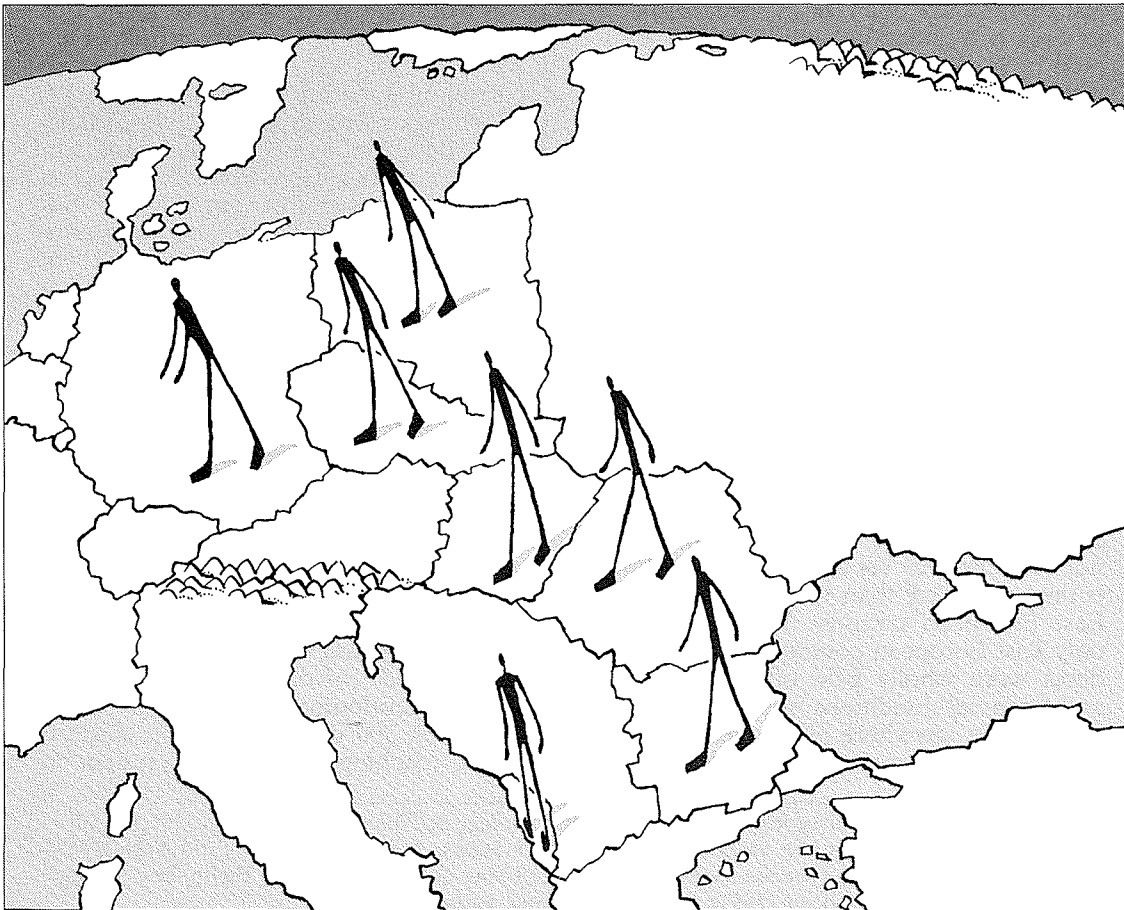
in the United States, there is no longer any meaningful difference between "workers" and "bourgeois," between the working class and what we might call a lower middle class. There is some, but not much, difference between a lower middle and an upper middle class. But, as in the United States, that difference is less financial or material than it is cultural, and—in the television age—this difference is diminishing. There are the few rich on the top, but an upper class, in both the traditional and functional senses, hardly exists at all.

This is one of the reasons why the prevalent view of Eastern Europe in the West is wrong. According to this view, the deep crisis in Eastern Europe is economic, and the uneven progress toward liberal democracy is a consequence of that crisis. By and large, the opposite of that *idée reçue* is true. The great and enduring problems are politi-

cal, not economic. They involve the lust for power, not money. (But then this has been true of mankind ever since Adam and Eve, and misunderstood by Adam Smith as well as by Karl Marx.)

\* \* \*

The material problems (I prefer the word *material* to *economic*) are serious. The universally accepted idea is that they are the results of 45 years of communist mismanagement. While there is much truth to that, it is not the entire truth. The material conditions in the lives of most East European people are less different from those of the peoples of Western Europe than they were 45 years ago. (Romania may be the only partial exception.) In every East European country the great majority were peasants 45 years ago, whereas there is no



country today (with the possible exception of Albania) in which more than a minority are engaged in agricultural work. All over Eastern Europe people to whom such things were beyond the dreams of avarice 45 years ago now possess, in spite of communism, their own automobiles, refrigerators, television sets—not to mention access to electricity, upon which many of these necessities depend.

What remains true is that communist governments delayed—and compromised—these developments considerably. Had there been no communist regimes in the East European countries, their populations would have reached their present material standards 25 or 35 years earlier. Even so, the standard of everyday life in most East European countries would still have lagged behind those of, say, Finland or Austria—the former mutilated and impoverished by the war and then compelled to adjust its national interests in some respects to those of Russia, the latter partially occupied by Soviet troops until 1955. National conditions and, yes, national character remain as important as before, notwithstanding the uniformities declared by “communism.” Yugoslavia pronounced its independence from the Soviet bloc in 1948, it opened its borders soon thereafter, and began moving toward a “mixed” economy more than 30 years ago. Yet even then Budapest was more of a Western city than Belgrade, and of course so it is now.

This brings me to the anomalies and contradictions inherent in all economic “facts”—or, rather, in those categories, defined by economists, which have scant relevance to the realities of everyday life, including its material realities. In Poland—alone in the Soviet bloc—agriculture was not collectivized. Yet agriculture in Poland is now worse off than in almost any other East European country. Romania is the only East European country whose foreign debts were wholly paid off. Yet material and financial conditions are worse in Romania than anywhere else in Eastern Europe. In Hungary material conditions are

visibly improving, and the Hungarian national currency is now very close to Western standards of international convertibility. Yet opinion polls as well as personal conversations show that Hungarians are among the more pessimistic peoples of Eastern Europe—a condition which has nothing to do with the Hungarian Gross National Product but quite a lot with the prosody of Magyar poetic diction, characterized by its ever falling tone.

The 20th century was a short century. It lasted 75 years, from 1914 to 1989. The entire landscape of its history was dominated by two world wars, the consequences of which—very much including the division of Europe—lasted until 1989. This 20th century is now over. As we move into the 21st century, Western and Eastern Europe will become more alike, as far as material conditions go. Foreign investments in Eastern Europe will assist in bringing this about. But—again, contrary to accepted ideas—they will not matter much in the long run, one reason being that all French or German or American investors in Eastern Europe want to gather their profits in the short run. For the moment Eastern Europe attracts foreign investment by the still-low cost of its labor, but labor costs are bound to rise, sooner rather than later. People tend to confuse international finance with economics. The first is—at least in the foreseeable future—truly international, with monies flowing freely across frontiers (those of the Soviet Union remaining an exception). But, then, capital has become increasingly abstract, and the more abstract money becomes the less durable it is. Economics, on the other hand—in its proper, old, original meaning—refers to the husbanding of one's household assets, in the biblical, Greek, and even German (*Wirtschaft*) senses of the word. To believe that Slovaks or Bulgarians have now “entered” or “re-entered” the capitalist phase of their historical development is nonsense. Capitalism took 300 years to ripen in Western Europe, reaching its full development in

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the 19th century. Capitalism resulted from particular conditions—social, religious, political, and intellectual—that barely existed in Eastern Europe in the 19th century and barely exist there today. Capitalism, like parliamentary liberalism, was a 19th-century phenomenon that has little relevance to the 21st, with its current material realities being obscured by the vocabulary of economists, whose definitions mean less and less.

An example of such obfuscation is the current use of the term “privatization.” Bloated industries, bloated bureaucracies, inadequate or even fraudulent accounting practices have been the results of the “socialist” order—or, more correctly, of the party state. At the same time, there has occurred in much of Eastern Europe a remarkable growth of truly private enterprise. In agriculture this involved more than the energy and production within the so-called household plots. It involved the fact that, in many ways, collective farms were collective in name only. On many collective farms, particular families took care of particular fields for planting and harvesting or elevage, and a fair portion of the profits have come to them. To parcel up most of the collective farms, to return to an agriculture in which the average peasant family possessed not more than five or ten acres, is largely useless. (But then is “agribusiness,” as practiced in the United States, “private enterprise”? Hardly: It is ruled by corporations, and its profitability is entirely dependent on government subsidies.) Meanwhile in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, fewer and fewer people work in agriculture. What is growing—in Eastern Europe as well as in the West—is the so-called service sector. There private enterprise came into being decades before the political transformations of 1989–1990. Even the communist state has for many years tolerated the existence of individual suppliers of services, and even where official permits were not issued, people have been paying separate monies to people whose services they need, whether bricklayers or doctors.

Of course there is, and there must be, a considerable selling off of state or municipal businesses, which is, almost without exception, a good thing. The question remains, however: Who will staff them? In

most cases the same people. The services may improve, but not drastically. This is because the very words “employment” and “unemployment” are as inaccurate in Eastern Europe as they are in the West. The question is not whether “work” is available—there is, and plenty of it. But people are less in quest of work than they are of jobs—jobs with an acceptable and secure salary (and pension). Whether these jobs are arranged for them by the state bureaucracy or by a commercial one, by a “public” or a “private” company, is a matter of indifference to most Eastern Europeans. In cultural life—university salaries, theaters, publishing—the issue is not “privatization” but the diminution of government subsidies, and that has become a crisis indeed. It is, however, counterbalanced by the fact that under other titles—research and travel grants, for example—such government subsidies continue to exist. The underpaid professor of an East European university finds himself in the same situation as a somewhat underpaid minor business executive in America whose company pays his trip abroad. That there are two kinds of monies, private money and expense-account money, and that the management and the real value of these may, at best, overlap, while their meaning for their beneficiaries is quite different, is something that has not yet affected the formulas of economists either in the East or West; and I fear that it never will.

Housing is the great problem in Eastern Europe—and there, too, the question is not what is private or public “ownership” but the sense of possession. Most people in Prague, Warsaw, Budapest (but, then, also in Vienna, Berlin, Paris . . .) are renters of apartments, not the owners of houses (or even of condominiums). The difference is that in East European cities the rents are still low. (That difference is disappearing, too, with the governments having to raise all public-utility fees.) But we must consider two things. First, an Eastern European living in the same apartment for many years, often decades, has a far stronger sense of both permanence and possession than a houseowning American who moves every three years and buys and sells “his” house, usually on credit. The second is that the number of people in some East Euro-

pean countries who actually own real estate—mostly summer houses or condominiums—is much larger than it ever has been, and that people acquired most of these private possessions during the last 20 or 25 years of officially “communist” rule.

In Eastern Europe (as everywhere else in the world) the once-clear line between what is “public” and what is “private” is by no means clear. It has been obscured during this century. The irony is that in Eastern Europe (this is possibly true of Russia, too) people who do have some private property have a much stronger sense of the private character of their possessions than do people in the West. But this, too, is involved with the corroded and corrupt meanings of our still-standard economic vocabulary. What is “private”? What is “public”? What is “property”? What is “possession”? Indeed—what is “money”? (Actual money? Credit allowance? Expense-account money?) In sum, while the economic problems of East European countries in the 1990s are serious, they are not entirely different from those in the West, and these differences are bound to diminish. Where the problems are different, they are so because of different political customs and structures and habits. Those are the deeper problems—both apparent and latent.

\* \* \*

I have a friend who returned to Hungary permanently after 40 years in the United States. He was a young lawyer and a member of Parliament until 1949, when he fled from the rapidly advancing shadow of communist terror. He had a decent career in the United States. He passed the New York State Bar Examination and busied himself with lawyering and with emigré affairs. About a year ago he chose to return to Hungary for good, and because of the then existing (and by now waning) prestige of Hungarian emigrés who had made a name for themselves abroad, he is now one of the leading personages of one of the smaller parties that make up the government coalition. In May I read a passage from one of his speeches in the newspapers. “The opposition,” he said, “is the enemy of the Hungarian people.” Forty years of liberal democracy in the United States had melted

away in the heat of Hungarian political rhetoric. Earlier I read another statement by a member—indeed, a government undersecretary of state—of the same political party, not, mind you, an extremist one. “The enemy of the Hungarian people,” this man said, “is no longer communism. It is liberalism; atheistic liberalism.” I am neither an atheist nor a liberal, but I surely did not like what I read.

The main political reality in Eastern Europe—it is a reality and not a specter haunting it—is nationalism. The principal cause of the two world wars of the 20th century was nationalism, and both of these world wars broke out in Eastern Europe—as did the so-called Cold War, which is now over. Yet nationalism in Eastern Europe is as strong as ever.

In Eastern Europe nationalism is the only popular religion, by which I mean the only religion that still possesses a popular rhetoric. When I say to an American nationalist that being a good American will not necessarily get one into heaven, he may be startled but he will understand and presumably even agree. When I say to a Hungarian nationalist that just because someone is a good Hungarian does not necessarily mean he will get into heaven, he is startled and finds it difficult, if not impossible, to agree. Populist nationalism, as distinct from the now almost extinct varieties of the liberal nationalism of the 19th century, is a modern and democratic phenomenon. Old-fashioned patriotism grew from a sense of belonging to a particular country; it was self-confident rather than self-conscious, introverted and essentially defensive. Populist nationalists, by contrast, are self-conscious rather than self-confident, extroverted and aggressive, suspicious of all other people within the same nation who do not seem to agree with all points of the populist-nationalist ideology. Hence they assign them to the status of minorities, suggesting—and at times emphasizing—that such minorities do not and cannot belong within the authentic body of the national people. This is, of course, yet another manifestation of the potential tyranny of the majority, which, as Tocqueville observed, is the great danger of democratic societies in democratic times.

When, in 1931, the king of Spain abdi-

cated and a liberal parliamentary republic was proclaimed in Spain, Mussolini said that "this was going back to oil lamps in the age of electricity." He was right. Liberal parliamentarianism belonged to the 19th century, not the 20th. Indeed, in Spain it soon degenerated into a sorry mess and, after five years, into a civil war. But then came World War II and the demise of Hitler and Mussolini, reviving the prestige of communism (which is now gone) and of American-style democracy, which is not gone yet. For the latter we must be thankful, and its effects must not be underestimated. It is because of the prestige of the "West" that populist nationalism and the tyranny of majorities in Eastern Europe will constrain themselves within certain limits, for a foreseeable time. But this does not mean that parliamentary liberalism—including the habits of dialogue, compromise, and the sense of a certain kind of community shared by the kind of people who make up the parliaments—is, or will be, the dominant political reality in Eastern Europe. Parliamentary liberalism, like capitalism, belonged to the 19th century, when it was supported both by a certain climate of ideas and by a particular structure of society. That society was bourgeois—bourgeois and not merely middle-class. The bourgeoisie had a patrician tinge, and it was from this class that most administrators, governors, and professional and parliamentary representatives were drawn. Such societies, especially in Eastern Europe, do not now exist.

The communists (including Stalin) came to understand the powerful appeal of nationalism long ago. Well before 1989 the communist parties in Eastern Europe had two wings, each cordially hating the other: one internationalist, the other nationalist, with the former weakening steadily. Thus there is more than opportunism latent in the fact that many of the populists among the new democratic parties, and even governments, of Eastern Europe are former communists—of the nationalist wing, of course. For what happened in 1989–1990 was more than the end of communism in Eastern Europe. It was, as I said earlier, the end of a century largely defined by two world wars and their consequences. One important result of the end of World War II

was the anathema pronounced upon Hitler and the Third Reich. Yet national socialism, despite the terrible distortion Hitler gave those words, survived him. Most governments in the world have become welfare states of sorts, and those of Eastern Europe are no exception. We are all, to some degree, nationalist socialists. Only *international* socialism is a mirage. It is finance capitalism that is more international than socialism, which is why Hitler hated it and made it national—that is, answerable to German needs. That was easy, because money succumbs to the pressures of populist nationalism even faster than class-consciousness does.

In Eastern Europe today, there is a growing nostalgia for, and appreciation of, those nationalist regimes that existed in Eastern Europe both before and during World War II. This of course differs from country to country. Also, we must not forget that entire independent states in Eastern Europe—Slovakia or Croatia, for example—were created by Hitler. There are other nations, too, whose anticommunist and nationalist pasts were inseparable from their alliance with Hitler's Reich during World War II. In Romania, for example, streets and boulevards in town after town are now being renamed in honor of Marshal Antonescu, the Romanian "Conducator" (*Führer*) whose personality Hitler esteemed very highly. In Slovakia this hero-worship focuses upon the figure of Father Tiso, the nationalist prelate Hitler installed as the President of Slovakia and who was unusually eager to deliver his country's Jews to the Germans, even before the Germans pressured him to do so. In Hungary (by contrast with Romania, where the murderous Iron Guard now enjoys a resurgent wave of nostalgic prestige), there is no belated appreciation of the Hungarian National Socialist Arrow-Cross. Yet many people have come to regard the era before 1945 as a period of national greatness that Hungary should cherish and to which it might even return.

Then there is the prospect of the return of German power in the region. Not yet: The Germans have their hands full with East Germany, and will for years to come. Also—and this is more important—most

West Germans have come to terms with their history; to them, the idea of a renewed German expansion to the east is both frightening and repugnant. All the same, a great political vacuum exists in Eastern Europe, and it is reasonable to assume that much of it may one day be filled by Germany. As long as a German predominance in Eastern Europe remains economic or cultural, this hegemony will not be particularly worrisome. But it will not be possible, in the long run, to keep it within those limits. The smaller the East European states, the more they will depend on Germany. This applies to the political configurations within each nation, too. There will be certain political parties attracted to and willing to depend on German rather than on other West European or American political support. Keep in mind the prospective fragmentation of Eastern Europe: Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, the Baltic states, and the Ukraine are all natural allies of Germany—not least because of their nationalist memories of World War II. What is already happening in Eastern Europe (including the Yugoslav crisis, which unfolds even as I write) is not only the dismantling of “Yalta,” that is, of the results of World War II; here and there we can see the dismantling of “Versailles,” that is, of the results of World War I. Indeed, the 20th century is over.

These may be worrisome portents. But they are counterbalanced by other, larger realities. As I said at the outset, the societies of Eastern Europe are Americanized, not Germanized. If Tocqueville’s prophetic warnings about the tyranny of the majority are applicable to them, so is that other profound chapter in Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*: “Why Great Revolutions Will Become Rare.” Revolutions are made by desperate men, and not many people in Eastern Europe are desperate enough to risk their painfully acquired and jealously preserved private possessions. Sixty or 70 years ago the present nationalist independence movements in the Baltics or in Yugoslavia would have erupted in great national uprisings. Today they don’t. Al-

though it is still too early to say for certain, it appears that the age of great revolutions and of great wars is over. That great wars between nations are being replaced by protracted, seemingly endless guerrilla warfare, not only between different nationalities but also between different sections of a population, is already a fact, not only in Eastern Europe but in many places in the West, including the United States. In the long run, the power of the state, of centralized government, will weaken everywhere, including in Eastern Europe. The erosion of the authority of governments has already begun, and that erosion almost inevitably results in the piecemeal erosion of power. This means a profound change in the structure of societies; indeed, in the texture of history. Whether that bodes good or ill is, as yet, impossible to tell.

The private aspirations of the East European masses to middle-class possessions and to some kind of a middle-class existence may not be particularly attractive or heroic, but they are an obstacle to the appeals of demagoguery, including those of extreme nationalism. Add to this the desire of Eastern Europeans to belong to “Europe”—something that means, among other matters, the desire for the approval of the “West.” How long this will last I do not know. There will not be anything like a united Europe in the immediate, or even in the foreseeable, future. But the differences between Western and Eastern Europe will decrease year by year. And this is why I am sometimes more optimistic about the prospects of Eastern Europe than I am about those of Western Europe. Precisely because the former is still behind the latter, precisely because it must catch up with some of the realities of the West, Eastern Europeans have not yet become aware of the troubling and often corrupting nature of some of those realities. For the West the time has already come to rethink the entire meaning of “progress,” a difficult and painful task indeed. Yet for the East, the difficult exactions of such a rethinking lie some years ahead. In that respect, the “other” Europe has yet to enter the 21st century.

*Continued from page 20*

The major news media, for instance, "went to extraordinary lengths" to shield from the public the identity of "the Central Park jogger," a young Wellesley graduate and Wall Street investment banker, who was brutally beaten and raped by a gang of youths in 1989.

Gartner and others argued that naming rape victims will help to eventually remove the social stigma against rape victims. The contention, Pollitt observes, rests on a dubious assumption. "Why would society blame rape victims less if it knew who they were?" The issue of naming the victim, she says, cannot be divorced from blaming the victim.

The news media's coverage of the Palm Beach case, Pollitt says, underlines the fact that rape is treated differently from other crimes. "There is no other crime in which

the character, behavior and past of the complainant are seen as central elements in determining whether a crime has occurred." No one, for instance, would tell an elderly lady cheated out of her life savings by a con man that she had been "asking for it."

Why is rape different? "Because lots of people, too often including the ones in the jury box, think women really do want to be forced into sex, or by acting or dressing or drinking in a certain way, give up the right to say no . . ." That being so, Pollitt says, privacy for women who claim to have been raped is justified. Instead of denying it to them, "we should take a good hard look at our national passion for thrusting unwanted publicity on people who are not accused of wrongdoing but find themselves willy-nilly in the news."

## *Vox Populi?*

"The Power of Talk Radio" by James C. Roberts, in *The American Enterprise* (May-June 1991), American Enterprise Inst., 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Overshadowed first by television and then by the rise of stations on the FM band, AM radio once seemed well on the way to obsolescence. Now, however, this stepchild of the airwaves has found a new formula that may be balm not only for its bottom line but for American democracy.

That, at least, is the hope of Roberts, president of a Washington, D.C.-based radio syndicate: "At a time when the public is reading less and is coming to rely on the 30-second sound bite for information, talk radio . . . provides a forum for in-depth discussions of . . . public policy issues."

There are about 10,000 radio stations in the country, reaching 80 percent of Americans at least once a day. Roughly 400-500 of the stations had a news/talk format in 1990, up from 300-400 a year earlier. Today's national talk shows were made possible by two key developments: Satellite technology of the late 1970s allowed programs to be aired nationally; phone deregulation a few years later fostered the cheap "800" number service that let listeners call in from far and wide. (About five percent of the shows' listening audience

phones in.) Today, a big-name syndicated talk show, such as Rush Limbaugh's, which originates at WABC in New York, reaches four million people a day on 250 stations nationwide.

With audiences has come influence. Jim Gearhart's show on WKXW Trenton, reaching half a million New Jerseyites a day, was instrumental in forcing a partial rollback of Governor James Florio's 1990 tax increases. That same year, talk-show hosts across the nation spearheaded a successful grass-roots protest against the proposed congressional pay raise. Joe Klein of *New York* magazine has dubbed the hosts the "political organizers of the '90s." A less sympathetic David Broder, of the *Washington Post*, accuses them of "know-nothing demagoguery."

Attitudes such as that, say Roberts and other defenders of talk radio, show how distant the national news media are from common concerns—and help to explain talk radio's success. Talk-show hosts tend to be conservative or "populist." (Ralph Nader was a frequent talk-show guest during the congressional pay-raise campaign.)

Even Roberts parts company with enthusiasts who believe that talk will eventually crowd music off the airwaves, creating a brave new world of informational radio.

Yet, he maintains, "talk radio will provide an anchor for our rootless and mobile society and an invisible public forum for our far-flung democracy."

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## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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### *In Defense Of Sophistry*

"For and Against the 'New' Education" by Bernard Knox, in *Humanities* (July-Aug. 1991), National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506.

Plato (427–347 B.C.) gave the Sophists a bad name, and it has persisted to this day. The denigration was quite undeserved, observes Knox, a classics professor emeritus at Yale University. In fact, he says, the Sophists, who taught rhetoric in Athens during the fifth century B.C., were "the first professors of the humanities," and they "created an education designed for the first great democracy."

The birth of Athenian democracy in that century had created a need for a new education. Whether to win a majority in the Assembly for a desired policy, or just to win a verdict for oneself in the new courts of law, Athenians now found "the art of persuasion" to be the key to success. And the Sophists—such as Protagoras, Gorgias, and Hippias—were professionals in that art. "Protagoras offered to teach, for a price . . . how to make the weaker case appear the stronger. This, of course, is the essence of the art of persuasion: it is the weaker case that needs the rhetoric." But although rhetoric was its core, the Sophists' educational program also included, in rudimentary form, all the liberal arts, Knox says. For the ancient Greeks, Homer and other poets were the authorities on questions of conduct and belief, and the Sophists all claimed to be interpreters of poetry. Their discussions might begin as literary critiques, but they then moved easily into the moral and political realms.

The Sophists, Knox says, "encouraged their students to question every received idea, to subject age-old concepts of the relationship between man and god, man

and society, to the criterion of reasoned, organized discussion." For the first time in Athenian history, he says, doubts were expressed about the superiority of Greeks to barbarians, and there was debate over the position of women in society, of political equality, and even of slavery.

Plato, who turned the word *Sophist* into a term of abuse, "also, though this aspect of his work is seldom mentioned, tried to suppress the new humanities," Knox points out. "It was perfectly logical that he should do so. They had been created to provide education in citizenship for that democracy which Plato loathed and despised, not only because it had put his master Socrates to death but also because he saw clearly the real flaws of Athenian imperial democracy—its inability to maintain a stable policy, its encouragement of sycophancy and political corruption." But Plato also perceived as flaws of democracy "what in fact were its virtues—its openness to new ideas, its freedom of speech."

In the fifth century B.C. as today, Knox says, the humanities were on the defensive. Now, the "canon" of the great books of Western civilization is being attacked; but then, too, the humanities were under fire. Then as now, "they were vulnerable to the accusation that they posed questions but gave no definitive answers; that their effect was often unsettling, if not subversive; that they made their devotees unfit for real life." But the humanities came into being as an education for democracy—and that, Knox says, is still the strongest argument for them.

## A New Age of Faith?

At the end of a century that has not been kind to religious faith, it is noteworthy that belief has managed to endure. And now two well-known writers—poet and Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz, in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Spring 1991), and neoconservative thinker Irving Kristol, in *Commentary* (Aug. 1991)—dare to predict that religion may enjoy a revival in the 21st century.

### Czeslaw Milosz:

*[The 18th century] has been called The Age of Reason and our scientific-technological civilization has been traced back to the basic premises laid down by thinkers and scientists of that time . . . . What should surprise us about that century is its optimism . . . . Human reason approached then the super-abundance of existing phenomena with a confidence in its own unlimited forces because God assigned to it the task of discovering the marvels of His creation. [It] was The Age of Pious Reason . . . .*

*The next century, the 19th, would exacerbate some tendencies of its predecessor and elaborate what can be called a scientific Weltanschauung [worldview], in fact quite distant from those harmonious visions of the earlier scientists. Destructive of values, it would prompt Friedrich Nietzsche to announce the advent of "European nihilism." . . .*

*I would be wary in joining all those who hail the new physics as the beginning of an era of recovered harmony . . . . Yet I am more cynical when in the biochemist Jacques Monod's *Chance and Necessity* I find his desperate statement about the one-way path we are launched on by science: "a track which 19th-century scientism saw leading infallibly upward to an empyrean noon hour of mankind, whereas what we see opening before us today is an abyss of darkness." I think Jacques Monod was writing a dirge to bygone attitudes, while science now again stands before a breath-taking, miraculous spectacle of unsuspected complexity and it is the new physics which is responsible for this change of orientation . . . . The theory of quanta, independently of conclusions drawn from it . . . restores the mind to its role of a co-creator in the fabric of reality. This favors a shift from belittling man as an insignificant speck in the immensity of galaxies to regarding him again as the main actor in the universal drama . . . . The enthusiasm of the 18th-century scientists who searched for an objective order looks naive today, yet I sense at the end of our century something like a renewal of a hopeful tone.*

### Irving Kristol:

*We have, in recent years, observed two major events that represent turning points in the history of the 20th century. The first is the death of socialism, both as an ideal and a political program . . . . The second is the collapse of secular humanism—the religious basis of socialism—as an ideal, but not yet as an ideological program, a way of life. [However,] as the ideal is withering away, the real will sooner or later follow suit.*

*If one looks back at the intellectual history of this century, one sees the rationalist religion of secular humanism gradually losing its credibility even as it marches triumphantly through the institutions of our society—through the schools, the courts, the churches, the media. This loss of credibility flows from two fundamental flaws in secular humanism.*

*First, the philosophical rationalism of secular humanism can, at best, provide us with a statement of the necessary assumptions of a moral code, but it cannot deliver any such code itself . . . .*

*For a long time now, the Western world has been leading a kind of schizophrenic existence, with a prevailing moral code inherited from the Judeo-Christian tradition and a set of secular-humanist beliefs about the nature and destiny of man to which that code is logically irrelevant. Inevitably, belief in the moral code has become more and more attenuated over time, as we have found ourselves baffled by the Nietzschean challenge: if God is really dead, by what authority do we say any particular practice is prohibited or permitted? . . .*

*A second flaw in secular humanism is even more fundamental . . . . If there is one indisputable fact about the human condition it is that no community can survive if it is persuaded—or even if it suspects—that its members are leading meaningless lives in a meaningless universe . . . .*

*As the spirit of secular humanism loses its momentum, it is reasonable to anticipate that religion will play a more central role in American life.*

## A Latin Protestant Ethic

"Latin America's Reformation" by Timothy Goodman, in *The American Enterprise* (July-Aug. 1991), American Enterprise Inst., 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Protestant evangelicalism has made great inroads in traditionally Catholic Latin America. Evangelicals—most of them Pentecostals, who practice faith healing and speaking in tongues—have grown from 15 million in 1960 to over 40 million. More than half of them live in Brazil, making up nearly one-fifth of its 150 million people. Sociologist Peter Berger and others think that the evangelical upsurge will encourage the growth of capitalism and democracy in Latin America, just as the spread of Calvinism and the Protestant ethic did in Europe beginning in the 16th century. But this may be too optimistic a reading, cautions Goodman, a research associate at the American Enterprise Institute. Evangelicalism, he says, is "more likely to retard than to hasten the onset of 'modernity' in Latin America."

Berger, sociologist David Martin, and other optimists, notes Goodman, contend that evangelicalism "inculcates a 'bourgeois' message of self-improvement, tames *machismo*, fosters peaceability, and encourages hard work as a service to God. It promotes the 'small' capitalist virtues of dependability, thrift, and sobriety." It also encourages self-reliance and skills and practices conducive to self-government.

Yet, Goodman argues, evangelicalism still promotes "values typical of traditional society." It scants such "modern" values

as individualism, rationalism, "the need for achievement, and identification with society at large rather than just the immediate family circle." Latin American evangelicals are inclined "more toward emotionalism and superstition . . . than toward rationalism," he says. Their religion seems to breed disharmony rather than a sense of the common good: "Competition, rancor, and polarization are often rife among, and even within, their churches."

Nor is it likely, in Goodman's view, that evangelicalism "will unleash the acquisitive drive." Evangelicalism "upholds taboos against the accumulation of material things; Pentecostals work hard for many reasons, but making money is rarely prominent among them."

Perhaps most important, even if the new religion should provide "a positive cultural context" for modernization, that would not be enough to lift Latin America out of poverty. The new culture could not by itself overcome "the economic and political factors—especially statist economic policies, weak political institutions, and inept leadership—that historically have left the region underdeveloped and poorly governed." That will require fundamental reforms. Latin America may blaze a path to the promised land of prosperity, but "[a] Protestant Reformation alone will not do it and may not even contribute to it."

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## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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## The Viceroy's Doublecross

"Butterflies and Bad Taste: Rethinking a Classic Tale of Mimicry" by Tim Walker, in *Science News* (June 1, 1991), 1719 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

For decades, biology textbooks have held up the viceroy butterfly as a classic example of Batesian mimicry. The bright orange wings of the viceroy (*Limenitis archippus*) closely resemble those of the toxic monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), and bi-

ologists have long believed that the viceroy was concealing an appetizing body beneath its monarch-like colors. English naturalist Henry Walter Bates, after observing butterflies in the Amazon river basin in the mid-1800s, first advanced the idea that a



## Why Scientists Can't Write

"Science is the great adventure of our age. It's ironic that its reports should be so dull to read," says novelist Michael Crichton, author of *The Andromeda Strain* and other works. In *American Scientist* (Jan.-Feb. 1991), he speculates about the source of this barrier between layman and expert.

*I have often been struck by the fact that scientists in conversation are crisp and clear about their work. The same scientists, writing in a journal, produce a nightmare of incomprehensibility. Various explanations have been proposed, but I think the real problem may be structural: Scientific writing now demands a passive, abstract literary form.*

*In conversation, the scientist provides information in the way we ordinarily expect to receive it: as a narrative. "We had an unanswered question in our field. The question was important for these reasons. So we approached it in this way. Here's what happened when we did." . . .*

*Unfortunately, science has chosen to re-*

*place active personalized storytelling with passive abstract discourse. It's the difference between saying "I got up this morning and wrote a letter to American Scientist" and saying "Letter-writing on some mornings may occur."*

*Passive abstraction has many drawbacks. Since nobody in the real world communicates this way, it's an alien mode that we must shift into, like a foreign language. It's a struggle to write. It's agony to read. Particularly in reports of experiments, it doesn't reflect what actually happened. But most important, abstraction actually provides less information than narrative, by removing the flavors, the feelings, the juice, and sometimes even the substance . . .*

*Of course there are historical and intellectual reasons why scientists choose to depersonalize their reports. But the absence of the observer is no longer so fashionable a posture as it once was. It may be time for scientists to return to the more vigorous prose tradition of Galileo.*

species of butterfly tasty to birds could thus protect itself. New research, however, indicates that it is scientists, not birds, whom the viceroy has been deceiving all these years, reports Tim Walker, an intern at *Science News*.

The butterflies' secret was revealed in an avian taste test conducted by David B. Ritland and Lincoln P. Brower of the University of Florida, Gainesville. The wingless abdomens of viceroys, monarchs, and other butterfly species were served up to local red-winged blackbirds. Despite the textbook wisdom, the birds found the viceroy just as unappetizing as the monarch. In

fact, the birds frequently turned up their beaks after just one peck. The results "clearly refute the traditional hypothesis that viceroys are palatable Batesian mimics," Ritland and Brower said.

Why had scientists assumed that the viceroy was a taste treat? In part simply because the viceroy evolved from admiral butterflies, which are known to be tasty. But also because the viceroy, in its caterpillar stage, does not feed on poisonous plants—the only way, many biologists have believed, that a butterfly could acquire toxic chemicals. But the viceroy, it seems, knew better.

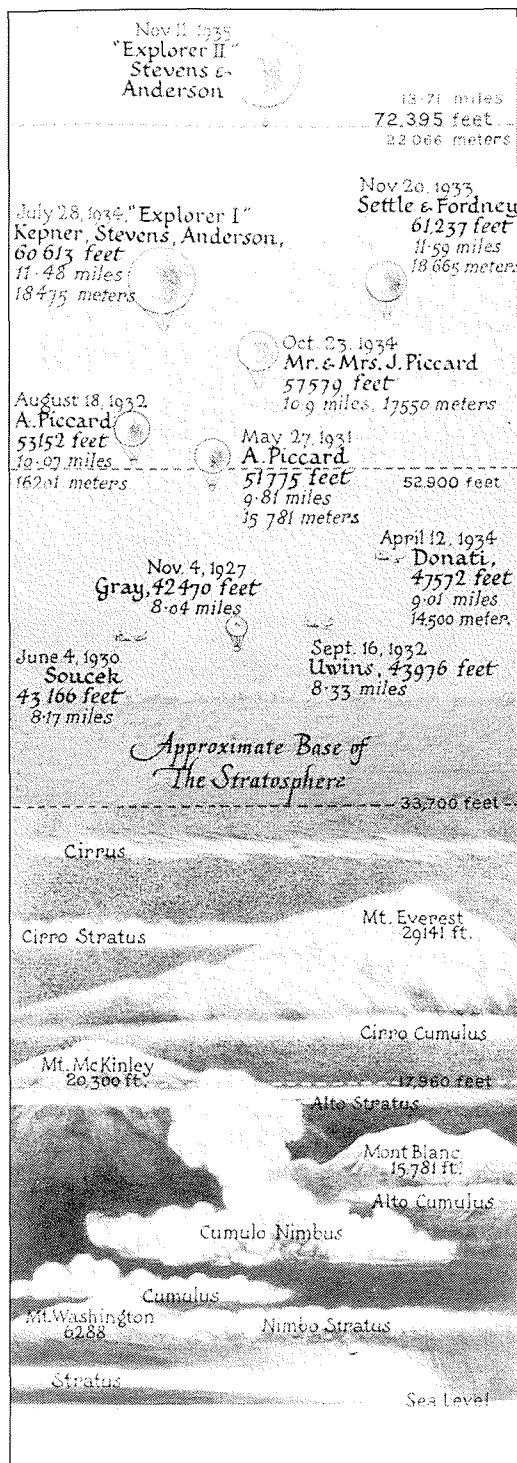
## High Drama

"The Height of Ambition" by David H. DeVorkin, in *Air & Space/Smithsonian* (Apr.-May 1991), 370 L'Enfant Promenade S.W., 10th Fl., Washington, D.C. 20024.

In the 1920s and '30s, the stratosphere beckoned to both adventurers and scientists. But their interests in exploring it were not the same, and a conflict developed that foreshadowed the debate in later decades over manned versus unmanned

exploration of space.

To prewar scientists, explains DeVorkin, curator of astronomy and space sciences at the National Air and Space Museum's department of space history, the stratosphere offered a chance "to solve the rid-



National Geographic offered eager readers this scorecard on the "stratosphere race" in 1936.

dle of the elusive 'cosmic ray,'" a mysterious form of highly penetrating radiation first detected in 1912. But—just as in the space age—finding answers to "arcane questions . . . couldn't fire public imagination and generate financial support."

What did capture the public's imagination was the spectacle of men in hydrogen-filled balloons daring to ascend into the perilously thin air of the stratosphere, which begins some seven miles above the earth's surface and extends for 24. To these bold explorers, ever intent on setting new records, "science was little more than an excuse to make bigger and better flights," DeVorkin says. Scientists who preferred use of unmanned balloons grew to resent the high-flying adventurers.

Swiss physicist Auguste Piccard (1884–1962) was an experienced balloonist who, as DeVorkin writes, "decided to make his mark in physics by combining his passions for flight and science: he would create a sealed, pressurized, manned laboratory that could be flown by balloon into the stratosphere to solve the mystery of the cosmic ray." Ascending from Augsburg, Bavaria, on May 27, 1931, Piccard and an assistant went up nearly 10 miles, a record. "The sky is beautiful up there—almost black," Piccard wrote in an account for *National Geographic*. The aeronauts ran into unanticipated difficulties in their descent but finally landed safely.

Piccard's flight made him a celebrity, but he had had time to make just one cosmic ray observation, and other scientists gave it little credence. By then, however, DeVorkin writes, "scientists using other means had found the origin of the cosmic ray to be indeed cosmic."

Four years later, the final flight of the era took place. Albert W. Stevens and Orvil Anderson of the Army Air Corps went up in *Explorer II* on Nov. 11, 1935, and set a new record of nearly 14 miles. Because an earlier flight in a hydrogen-filled balloon had ended with the balloon's explosion, the *Explorer II* balloon was filled with helium. This increased the margin of safety for the men aboard, DeVorkin says, but it also considerably reduced such

scientific value as the flight might have had. Because helium has less lifting capacity than hydrogen, half the scientific equipment that was supposed to be aboard had to

be dumped. As would become evident three decades later, the debate over manned-versus-unmanned exploration of the high frontier was far from over.

## False Prophets

"Great Expectations: Why Technology Predictions Go Awry" by Herb Brody, in *Technology Review* (July 1991), Building W59, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

It was the bright world of tomorrow. Solar cells and nuclear fusion were to provide pollution-free electricity, automobiles were to run on batteries, factories were to rely extensively on robots, and videotex terminals were to be important fixtures in American homes. But the technological future envisioned just a few years ago has failed to arrive, notes Brody, a senior editor of *Technology Review*. Innovations like nuclear fusion "seem, as always, to be at least a decade from practicality."

That's the way it usually goes with experts' technological forecasts, Brody says. And the result, he adds, is not just red faces but misspent scientific careers and misallocated money for research.

Why are the much-publicized predictions so often wrong? Several factors are involved, according to Brody. One is conflicts of interest. "Interested parties include not only the companies that stand to make money from a technology but also scientists whose funding grows and wanes with the level of public excitement." Researchers working on nuclear fusion, for instance, "have kept up a steady barrage of 'breakthrough' reports since the mid-1970s."

Consulting firms such as Dataquest and Business Communications, which analyze the business potential of emerging technologies, feed the bonfires of optimism. "Over the past decade," Brody writes,

"outfits like these have foretold billion-dollar markets for artificial intelligence, videotex, and virtually every other new technology that laboratories have reported." Part of the problem is that the market researchers survey the wrong people: the new technology's vendors. Surveying potential buyers would make for more realistic projections, but also would be much more expensive.

The news media, of course, are ever willing to give hype a hand. Once published, the forecasts of "the experts" take on a life of their own.

False optimism about new technologies is also encouraged by underestimating the potential of old ones. "Theoretically, it's been possible for the past 25 years for computers to eliminate photographic film," says Du Pont executive Alexander MacLachlan. But thanks to continuing chemical refinements, he notes, silver-halide film has remained in the center of the picture.

"Any truly revolutionary technology defies easy prediction," Brody says. Computer designers in the mid-1970s still aimed to build ever larger behemoths. Few appreciated the value of personal machines. In fact, Brody says, from IBM's study then of what computer users said they wanted, the firm "reportedly concluded... that PCs would appeal only to a small group of hobbyists."

## A Plague Of Scientists?

"Do We Need More Ph.D.'s, or Is Fewer Really Better?" by Constance Holden, in *Science* (Mar. 1, 1991), American Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Some specialists are worried that the United States is producing too few scientists, but not Georgia State University

economist Paula Stephan. She thinks there already are far too many of them, reports Holden, a *Science* writer.

There has indeed been a huge growth in the number of Ph.D. scientists during the past half-century. In 1940, there were 320 doctoral scientists and engineers for every one million Americans over the age of 22; by 1966, the total had reached 778, and now it stands at 2,000. This vast increase in quantity, Stephan maintains, has resulted in a discernible decrease in quality.

"The average quality of people going into science in the '70s and early '80s," Stephan claims, "was not as high as in the '50s and '60s in terms of motivation, ability, and interest in science." In the 1970s, according to studies by Stephan and Sharon G. Levin of the University of Missouri, recent Ph.D.'s in particle physics were producing, over a two-year period, an average of nine fewer articles than their predecessors in the 1950s did.

The quality of an individual scientist's work suffers when he does not have adequate resources, stimulating colleagues, and due recognition, she argues. These are available at top-level research institutions and national laboratories, but most new science positions have been created elsewhere. A physicist's chance of being at one

of those "right places" plummeted from 50 percent in 1963 to 17 percent in 1973.

The large number of scientists, asserts Stephan, also has encouraged intense competition among them, with the result being not only an inordinate amount of time spent chasing research grants but a general avoidance of research that could be important but may well not pan out.

Further contributing to the putative decline in the quality of scientists, Stephan contends, has been the shift by increasing numbers of very bright students, starting in the early 1970s, away from scientific careers and toward the more lucrative fields of business, law, and medicine.

Critics of Stephan's argument are not in short supply, Holden found. "The young assistant professors I've seen are more capable and more brilliant than ever in the past," asserts Richard Atkinson, chancellor of the University of California, San Diego. Critics say that more Ph.D. scientists are required to sustain the U.S. economy's technological edge. Unless "we're just going to change the whole society we're living in," Atkinson says, we need to have more scientists.

## RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

### *Going To Market For Cleaner Air?*

"Incentive-Based Regulation: A New Era from an Old Idea?" by Robert W. Hahn and Robert N. Stavins, in *Ecology Law Quarterly* (Vol. 18, No. 1, 1991), Boalt Hall School of Law, Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, Calif. 94720.

For more than two decades, economists have been pushing the idea of market-based environmental regulation. In recent years, Congress and others involved in making policy have started to listen. When the Clean Air Act was overhauled last year, for example, Congress and the Bush administration included a "tradeable permit" system for controlling acid rain. Under this scheme, companies are permitted to generate certain levels of sulfur dioxide; if they keep their emissions below those levels, they can then sell their surplus permits to other firms. This gives companies

economic incentives to keep their emissions down.

In the past, Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have favored the "command-and-control" approach to environmental protection, compelling firms to use certain pollution-control equipment or to meet certain emission standards.

That sort of regulatory approach may work to control pollution, say Hahn, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, and Stavins, a Harvard professor of public policy, but the method is ineffect-

ficient (because the costs vary greatly among firms) and expensive to society. Since 1984, the cost of compliance with U.S. environmental regulations has increased nearly 40 percent and now stands at about \$90 billion a year. Set against a backdrop of fiscal austerity and concern about improving U.S. firms' productivity and competitiveness, the high cost of command-and-control environmental protection has made political leaders and environmentalists much more receptive to market-oriented ways of pursuing the same goal. The Environmental Defense Fund, for example, has become "an enthusiastic proponent" of such approaches, the authors say, and the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society now back "selective use" of them.

Economic-incentive methods have been employed in the past on a limited basis. In 1982-87, the EPA, in its successful drive to reduce use of lead in gasoline, used a permit system that let fuel refiners "bank"

and "trade" their lead-content savings. Other market-oriented devices have been put into use here and abroad. Nine states, for example, seeking to reduce litter, have mandatory deposit laws in effect for bottles and cans. France, the Netherlands, and Germany curb water pollution by means of fees or taxes.

Hahn and Stavins say they are "bullish" on the use of economic incentives but still think they will remain limited. EPA bureaucrats, environmentalists, and others have a great deal invested in the status quo. Even industry lobbyists in Washington display a "curious resistance" to market-oriented reforms. Like their opponents, their stock-in-trade is manipulation of the existing system; new rules for playing the game are a threat (and might, at least at first, cost some industries more). But despite all the resistance, the authors say, economic-incentive proposals are going to get "a warmer reception" from policymakers in the years ahead.

## Too Hot To Handle

"Risk Perception, Trust, and Nuclear Waste: Lessons from Yucca Mountain" by Paul Slovic, Mark Layman, and James H. Flynn, in *Environment* (Apr. 1991), Heldref Publications, 4000 Albemarle St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

When it comes to the disposal of highly radioactive nuclear waste, expert appraisal and public opinion could not be more opposed. Government and industry scientists say that spent fuel from the nation's 111 commercial nuclear reactors—each one generating about 30 tons of high-level nuclear waste every year—can be safely stored in deep, underground repositories for tens of thousands of years. The risks involved are negligible, most specialists say. Yet the public regards those risks as immense and unacceptable. In Nevada, intense opposition from both state officials and residents has stymied the U.S. Energy Department's efforts to evaluate Yucca Mountain as a potential site for a permanent nuclear waste storage facility.

Surveys that psychologist Slovic, president of Decision Research, and his colleagues conducted in 1988-90 asked people to reveal the thoughts or images that

came to mind in response to the term *underground nuclear waste repository*. More than half the 10,000 responses were negative, and the words most often expressed were *dangerous*, *danger*, *death*, and *pollution*. Positive images were rare.

The public's fears, the authors say, represent "a profound breakdown of public trust in the scientific, governmental, and industrial managers of nuclear technologies." Restoring this trust will not be easy, they observe, especially in light of past Energy Department "mismanagement" of the Yucca Mountain project.

The only feasible course, they conclude, "is to delay the siting of a permanent repository for several decades and to store the wastes wherever they are produced in the interim in dry-cask storage." According to the National Research Council, they note, such storage is "as safe as underground storage" for 120-150 years.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

*Music's Prophet*

"Nearer to God" by Paul Johnson, in *National Review* (June 10, 1991), 150 East 35th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1821 called poets "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." But Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) had already staked out a similar claim on behalf of a genuinely lowly group: musicians. In fact, it was Beethoven, according to journalist-historian Johnson, who "first established and popularized the notion of the artist as universal genius, as a moral figure in his own right—indeed, as a kind of intermediary between God and Man."

Musicians in the late 18th century were minor church functionaries or servants of the aristocracy. Music was seen as an aesthetically inferior art because its appeal, intense but brief, was confined to the senses. Unlike poetry, philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) said, music did not "leave anything over for reflections."

Such attitudes changed after about 1800, Johnson writes, when "music was seen as increasingly significant because it heightened self-awareness, now regarded as desirable.... Emotion... created forms of knowledge as serious as reason, and mu-

sic, as a key to it, became more serious, too." Music was used to enhance the higher arts; poetry was made into songs, operas, and even symphonies.

Beethoven altered the form and content of music. Eighteenth-century opera was, for the most part, about sexual intrigue; Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1805) "shift[ed] the ground fundamentally to the brotherhood of man and the glory of fidelity." His Fifth Symphony in C Minor, composed two years later, "operates at the highest level of human intellect and emotion," Johnson observes. Music, the composer insisted, "is a greater revelation than the whole of wisdom and philosophy."

A Roman Catholic, Beethoven was not consciously trying to turn music into a secular religion. Nevertheless, says Johnson, for increasing numbers of people, "the new kind of transcendent music Beethoven wrote, and the new importance he gave to music in the intellectual and moral cosmos, did constitute a secular substitute for religion; there was a new faith, and Beethoven was its prophet."

*The Performing Teacher*

"The Great-Teacher Myth" by Robert B. Heilman, in *The American Scholar* (Summer 1991), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

The 1989 film *Dead Poets Society*, about the style and influence of a charismatic teacher at a boys' preparatory school, was popular with audiences and praised by many critics. The *New Yorker* deemed the movie "a classic." What is strange, observes Heilman, a professor emeritus of English at the University of Washington at Seattle, is that the character whom audiences are supposed to look upon as the ideal teacher, John Keating (Robin Williams), never does any real *teaching*.

"What we see is moonlight larks and forest frolics—midsummer nights' dream fantasies taken for actualities, instead of that steady book work, aided by sensible

explication, that might lead to some education." Keating, the professor says, "is not a teacher at all but a performer," one who has cast himself in a single, lifetime role—"the gutsy, charismatic, infallible, one-in-a-million guide against the system." Any system needs serious critics, Heilman adds, "but Keating is only a guy with a mike in a midnight show."

*Dead Poets Society*, he says, missed what the 1969 film *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, also about a star teacher, did not. In that movie, based on a Muriel Spark novel, "we see the full character: the self-worship and power-love of the spectacular teacher who manages to seem superior to

## About This Mona Lisa

Fed up with "the red rant of unearned praise," novelist Stanley Elkin fires away in *Art & Antiques* (Summer 1991) at some "overrated masterpieces," from *Hamlet* to *Citizen Kane*. But when he comes to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, the curmudgeonly critic almost succumbs to her famously mysterious smile.

*See her there in her cat-who-ate-the-canaries, her smug repose and babushka of hair like a face on a buck. A study in browns, in muds and all the purplish earthens of her jaundiced, low-level, f-stop light. See her, see her there, this, well, girl of a certain age, with a faint streak of bone structure blowing off her skin like a plume of jet trail all she has for brow. See her, see the leftward glancing of her color-coordinated eyes inside the puffy, horizontal parentheses of her lashless lids. See the long, low-slung nose dropped inches below the painterly rules of thumb. Now see her famous statelies, her upright, comfortable aplomb, her left forearm along the arm of a chair, her fat right hand covering it, as clubby and at ease as one foot crossed over another . . .*

*In and closer in to the central occasion of*

*her odd, asexual face, in where the mystery lives, the secret agenda, in toward her giacondas, her giaconundrums, the hidden mystery of her guarded gingivitis smile! Because I'm changing my mind here, a little I am, and thinking maybe it's Nat King Cole's version I'm not that crazy about, his viscous syrups I'm thinking of, confusing the box-step cliché and sentimentals with the fact of her face. Because what levers our attention is that nose and those lips, and a truth about art is the company it keeps with the slightly askew, the fly in that woodpile of symmetry, mere balance in painting, equilibrium, a stunt of the "beautiful." What commissions the eye is face . . . It's the face that draws the eye in the Mona Lisa, but I was only kidding about the mystery of that smile. There is no mystery. No one ever had to solve a face, and the notion of this face's enigmatics has always been a kind of anthropomorphism, only paint's pathetic fallacy, facial phrenology, a horoscopes by bone structure, an astrology of the eye, the palmistry of character, wrong-headed, literary, the racism of beauty, unreliable finally as any other pseudoscience, as if to say, oh, as if to say, "Read my lips."*

*Next slide . . .*

a whole cadre of routine-bound dull souls . . . In contrast with the myopia of *Dead Poets Society*, it had insight into the singular nexus between certain leadership gifts and the ego that cannot settle for a steady engagement in the common enterprise but must star in public displays of extraordinary powers over the young."

The Keating-Brodie type has its counter-

parts in real life, and these self-loving performers, always playing the malcontent, do serve a function, in Heilman's view. They provide an outlet for students' melodramatic "discontents, suspicions, and negative judgments." In short, while the Keatingesque Great Teacher may seldom, if ever, be a good teacher, he does make a fine institutional safety valve.

## Propagandistic License

"Genius and Glory: John Singleton Copley's *The Death of Major Peirson*" by Richard H. Saunders, in *The American Art Journal* (Vol. XXII, No. 3, 1990), 40 W. 57th St., 5th fl., New York, N.Y. 10019.

John Singleton Copley's *The Death of Major Peirson* (1784) was a masterpiece and possibly the finest British historical painting of the 18th century. Yet, like the engraving of the Boston Massacre that strongly influenced it, Copley's painting played fast and loose with certain historical facts.

Copley (1738–1815), who had been a successful portrait painter in colonial Boston, was by 1781 well established as a painter in London. That January, French forces invaded the Channel island of Jersey and obtained its surrender; British forces, led by Major Francis Peirson, ignored the surrender order of the island's



*Copley gave a military skirmish great national import.*

lieutenant governor, advanced on the main town's central square, and routed the French. In the moment of triumph, however, young Peirson was fatally shot.

Copley sensed the appeal that Peirson's sacrifice and the modest military victory might have to Englishmen, dispirited by years of martial failure in the American colonies. In his rendition, Copley did want historical accuracy—but only up to a point, according to Saunders, director of the Christian A. Johnson Memorial Gallery at Middlebury College. Copley believed “that it was not the artist's duty to depict reality. On the contrary, it was the artist's responsibility to elevate reality to a level beyond that of simple reporting, to communicate values such as nobility and sacrifice to future generations.”

Other artists had taken a less elevated approach to the Jersey battle. In the center of the earliest picture, by Thomas Gram

Colley and E. Hedges, Scottish troops of the 78th Highland Regiment, led by officers in kilts and tam-o'shanter, advance in rows, firing on the retreating French. One Highlander, meanwhile, rushes to assist the wounded Peirson, who braces himself against a building near where his troops entered the square. In placing him at the edge of the scene, Saunders notes, the artists “chose reportage over drama.”

Copley, by contrast (and despite at least one battlefield account), put Peirson at center stage, falling dramatically “into the arms of his military subalterns.” He relegated the Scottish Highlanders to far less prominent positions. It was *English* noble sacrifice that the painting was to display, after all. He also added a splendidly attired black servant, who avenges Peirson's death—but who probably did not exist.

Copley drew inspiration for his masterpiece from the 1770 print of the Boston Massacre, which depicted a similar scene. Paul Revere, who received most of the credit for the print, had taken the idea from an almost identical one by Copley's half-brother, Henry Pelham. Effective as radical propaganda, the Revere-Pelham portrayal of the massacre had little to do with what actually happened: Boston toughs provoked British troops into firing on them. Just over a decade later, Copley transformed the “graphic image of colonial hatred” into a masterful portrayal of “the glory of British military prowess.”

## OTHER NATIONS

### *The 'Perfect Dictatorship'*

Long hidden by a veil of constitutional democracy, Mexico's system of presidential absolutism (*presidencialismo*) is increasingly being seen, by Mexicans and foreign-

“Mexico: The Crumbling of the ‘Perfect Dictatorship’” by Andrew Reding, in *World Policy Journal* (Spring 1991), World Policy Inst., New School for Social Research, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

ers alike, as a de facto form of dictatorship, says Reding, a Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute. Indeed, when Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa declared in



1990 that Mexico was a "perfect dictatorship," having all the characteristics of a dictatorship except the appearance of one, his phrase was widely repeated inside Mexico. Yet this very fact, Reding points out, "is itself a clear sign that the 'perfect dictatorship' is no longer so perfect."

A new political culture, stressing respect for democracy and human rights, has emerged in Mexico. The catalyst for it, Reding says, was the July 1988 presidential elections, in which there were allegations of massive vote fraud. When early returns on election night showed opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the lead, the U.S.-style computerized vote tabulation system that was providing returns over national television suddenly went dead. The votes instead were counted "the old-fashioned way." After a week's delay, the official results were released, showing an old-fashioned result: Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was the winner.

Cárdenas, however, would not follow "the old rules, whereby he might have recognized a Salinas presidency in exchange for more favorable treatment of his coalition in the Senate and at the state and local levels." The next year, he founded a new party, whose very name—the Party of the

Democratic Revolution (PRD)—underscored his challenge. "The PRD's call for a revolutionary change in the way Mexico is governed," Reding observes, "has, in effect, transformed every election in which it participates into a referendum on authoritarian rule."

Today, Reding says, "the culture of *presidencialismo* appears more naked than at any time since the ill-fated reign of Porfirio Díaz [the dictator overthrown in 1911]. The emerging democratic culture rejects the absolutist presidency outright, insisting on a true separation of powers, independent electoral authorities, a genuine multi-party system, and strict enforcement of internationally recognized standards of human rights." While these ideas are not new, Reding points out, their incorporation into a political movement is.

Although the Salinas administration has overhauled the nation's electoral system, Reding says, the vaunted reforms still reflect "a pervasive distrust of democracy, a continuing obsession with the trauma of 1988, and a determination to reconstruct the damaged foundations of *presidencialismo*." Salinas may continue to hold power, Reding concludes, "but nothing short of genuine democracy can now restore respect for the presidency."

## Moxie In Moscow

"Are Russians Lazy?" by S. Frederick Starr, in *World Monitor* (June 1991), 1 Norway St., Boston, Mass. 02115.

Many Western observers, and not a few Russian ones, have expressed skepticism about the prospects for democratic change in the Soviet Union. Democracy and free enterprise, they say, require a capacity for independent initiative that, after centuries of czars and decades of commissars, most Russians don't have. Not so, says historian Starr, president of Oberlin College.

"There is much evidence that the stereotype of passive Russians who lack civic initiative is dead wrong," he declares. "Take the economy, for instance. If Russians are so lacking in initiative, how did a huge private (if illegal) sector arise even during the repressive Brezhnev years?" This "second

economy," according to U.S. researchers, produced half of all personal income. Private entrepreneurs, by Soviet estimates in 1986, accounted for 20 percent of all retail trade, 30 percent of the service sector, and 40 percent of businesses in areas from auto repairs to tailoring.

Although Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev "has stated repeatedly that the public is hostile to private enterprise," the All Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion in Moscow found that a third of Russians would open their own businesses if they could do so legally; a quarter of the rest are put off from doing so only by a lack of access to credit or by fear that the

state would seize whatever they earned.

"If Russians are too passive to assert their will against the entrenched political establishment, one would scarcely expect them to form independent groups to press their demands," Starr notes. Yet that is just what has happened in recent years, as thousands of lobbying clubs and associations of all types have been set up. Labor has established independent unions, many patterned on Poland's Solidarity. Lawyers, journalists, and other professionals also have organized their own groups. Independent political parties have already come to power in most non-Russian republics, and organization is proceeding rapidly in the far-flung territory of the Russian Republic.

Despite "the stereotypical images advanced by those in Russia and the West who are eager to justify the Kremlin's new authoritarianism as a necessary evil," Starr says, there is "ample evidence that Rus-



Unlike these supposed Soviet heroes of production in Natalia Levitina's "The 'Vanguard' of Perestroika," many Russians have ample capacity for independent initiative, says historian Starr.

sians, freed from fear, possess as much initiative and capacity for independent action as do members of other developed societies in Europe, Asia, and the Americas." The West, he says, should accept "at face value" the democratic movement in the Soviet Union, not "belittle it simply because it has not, in a mere five years, triumphed completely over the old system."

## Premature Reunification

"Germany and the Cold War: An Inquest" by Jacob E. Heilbrunn, in *Global Affairs* (Summer 1991), International Security Council, 1155 15th St. N.W., Ste. 502, Washington, D.C. 20005.

German reunification, finally accomplished in 1990, might have come about almost four decades earlier. Heilbrunn, a writer and former assistant editor at the *National Interest*, says that it was probably a good thing that it did not.

On March 10, 1952, Soviet leader Josef Stalin sent a note to the U.S., British, and French governments, in which he proposed creation of a unified, neutral Germany. Could this proposal, asks Heilbrunn, have been an opportunity to unify Germany on minimally acceptable terms, one that, had it been seized, might have spared East Germans nearly four decades of totalitarian rule?

The allies at the time looked upon Stalin's note with great suspicion, seeing in it a tactical move to block formation of the European Defense Community. Yet the U.S. State Department and Britain's Whitehall took the dictator's proposal seriously. When Stalin later in the month advanced a revised version, the State Department Policy Planning Staff commented that "It would be unwise to assume that the note is only a propaganda move."

Kurt Schumacher, leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), enthusiastically agreed. He wanted to see "an independent, unified Germany—and unified precisely *because* it was independent,"

Heilbrunn says. "Schumacher was pro-Western, but . . . he was convinced that by championing social democracy, the SPD could bring the eastern zone into its orbit . . . . A unified, democratic Germany would jockey for advantage between East and West." He therefore was eager to see the allies enter negotiations to create such a Germany.

West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of the Christian Democratic Union viewed Stalin's proposal with alarm, and he persuaded the allies to rebuff it. According to Heilbrunn, Adenauer told the Americans that even to agree to a conference with the Soviets on the subject "would open the door to bringing Germany into the Soviet orbit." The chancellor "had no confidence in the German people," observed Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, head of the British Foreign Office in the 1950s. As a result, he "felt that the integration of Western Germany with the West was more important than the unification of Germany."

In the view of German historian Rolf Steininger, Adenauer thus lost a chance to find out whether it was possible then to have "a Germany united in freedom." But Heilbrunn says that while Adenauer's rejection of Stalin's offer was indeed "a turning point," the reasoning behind it was sound.

"Adenauer spurned negotiations," Heilbrunn writes, "not because he rejected unification *per se*—it remained the official aim of the [Federal Republic of Germany] and was enshrined in the preamble to its *Grundgesetz*, or Basic Law—

### Vargas Llosa's Lament

Although novelist Mario Vargas Llosa was a strong candidate, he was defeated last year in his bid to become president of Peru. His larger purpose, however, had been to get across to Peruvians his ideas about political and economic freedom, and about creating a truly free society. In *Granta* 36 (Summer 1991), Vargas Llosa, a former Wilson Center Fellow, ponders the impact of ideas in politics.

*To what extent did we manage to make ideas put down roots among libertarians? To what extent did the Peruvians who voted for me vote for liberal ideas? I don't know. These are doubts that I would like very much to clear up, since they hold the key to whether the effort of these years was useless or worthwhile.*

*I had already seen that ideas mattered little . . . that real politics, not the kind that one reads and writes and thinks about—the only sort that I had been acquainted with—but the politics that is lived and practiced day by day, has little to do with ideas, values and imagination, with long-range visions, with notions of an ideal society, with generosity, solidarity or idealism. It consists almost exclusively of maneuvers, intrigues, plots, pacts, paranoias, betrayals, a great deal of calculation, no little cynicism and every variety of con game. What really gets professional politicians moving, whether of the center, the left or the right, what excites them and drives them on, is power: attaining it, remaining in it or returning to it as soon as possible. There are exceptions, of course, but they are just that: exceptions. Many politicians begin their careers impelled by altruistic sentiments, by the desire to change society, promote justice, improve the standard of living. But along the way, in the petty, pedestrian practice that politics is, the fine objectives cease to exist, become mere commonplaces of speeches and programs. Anyone who is not capable of feeling the obsessive, almost physical attraction to power finds it nearly impossible to be a successful politician.*

*No, finally, I don't believe that I succeeded in putting across what I wanted to. Peruvians did not vote for ideas in the elections . . . . [The] weekly polls always showed that the candidate who was attracting voters was doing so on the basis of his personality or out of some mysterious impulse: never on account of the program on offer.*

but because, unlike Schumacher, he understood that the German problem could not be solved in isolation from a solution for Eastern Europe and because he foresaw circumstances in which German unification would come about in a manner much more advantageous for Germany and Europe." Nearly four decades later, events seem to have proved that Adenauer was right.

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

### **"Recent Trends in Economic Inequality in the United States: Income vs. Expenditures vs. Material Well-Being."**

Paper delivered at a conference on poverty in America, sponsored by Bard College's Jerome Levy Economics Institute, June 18-19, 1991.

Authors: *Susan E. Mayer and Christopher Jencks*

The late 1970s and '80s are widely seen as hard times for poor families. While the average American family's real income rose by 11 percent between 1979 and '89, for example, the real income of families in the bottom fifth fell by four percent. The poverty rate increased from 10.5 percent to 11.4 percent.

But all these figures are misleading, contend sociologists Mayer, of the University of Chicago, and Jencks, of Northwestern University. While the cash income reported by poor families was stagnant (after adjustment for inflation) during the 1970s and '80s, their reported *expenditures* jumped.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics surveys indicate that between 1973 and '85, average consumer spending by the poorest tenth of American households went from \$2,829 per person (in 1987 dollars) to \$4,545—a whopping 60 percent increase. Meanwhile, similar households were reporting to the Census Bureau an average per-capita income in

1984-85 of only about \$1,400—virtually the same as it had been more than a decade earlier. (According to different, and dubious, Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the income of the poor plummeted by half, down to only \$900.)

The gap of more than \$3,000 is partially explained by the fact that Census Bureau researchers did not ask people to report certain kinds of income (e.g., from savings, loans, payments by boarders, or even illegal drug sales). Even so, the poor clearly did not give a full account of all the money they received from licit or illicit employment, family members, and other sources.

"There may be a few households getting by on such amounts [the reported \$1,400 annually per capita], especially if they live in subsidized housing, get food stamps, and have Medicaid," Mayer and Jencks acknowledge. But they note that researcher Kathryn Edin, who interviewed 50 mothers receiving welfare (as well as food stamps and other aid) in

Chicago in 1989, found that none of the women spent less than \$500 per month in cash. Not one of the mothers was living entirely on her welfare check—and not one was reporting all her outside income to the welfare department. The average mother's unreported cash income amounted to as much as her welfare check.

This hardly means that the poor are rolling in money. Still, Mayer and Jencks note, there are other indications from decennial census data that belie the image of worsening poverty. In 1980, at the end of a decade in which their real per-capita income supposedly did not increase, poor families were less likely than in 1970 to live in crowded housing and more likely to have a car, a telephone, an air conditioner, and a "complete" bathroom.

Available statistics on income, the authors conclude, do not provide an accurate picture of how the poor are faring. That throws into question all assessments of government programs to aid them.

### **"Watching America: What Television Tells Us About Our Lives."**

Prentice Hall Press, 15 Columbus Cir., New York, N.Y. 10023. 322 pp. \$24.95.

Authors: *S. Robert Lichter, Linda S. Lichter, and Stanley Rothman*

Television dramas, movies, and sit-coms, once "the servant of the status quo," in recent decades have become "an agent of social change," contend the Lichters, directors of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and Rothman, a

Smith College political scientist. Their study of 620 prime-time shows broadcast between 1955 and '86 indicates TV "now fosters populist suspicions of traditional mores and institutions."

The way in which business-

men are portrayed is a case in point. Before 1965, there were twice as many "good guys" as "bad guys" in TV's version of corporate America. In the ensuing decade, however, the proportion was reversed. Now, the men in gray flannel suits

are villains, responsible even for much of the violent crime in TV-land. (And it is a violent place: Since 1955 the murder rate has been 1,000 times higher, per 1,000 inhabitants, than in the real world.) Next to professional criminals, in fact, businessmen commit the largest share of TV crimes, including one-third of the homicides. That gives new meaning to the term "hostile takeover."

Sex is another realm in which TV entertainment has challenged traditional views. In TV-land today, "sexual repression [is presented] as a barrier to human fulfillment."

No pre-1970 program the authors studied justified extramarital sex without qualification, but of the subsequent shows, 41 percent presented "recreational" sex as perfectly okay. "On the TV screen," the authors note, "sex is usually without consequences, without worry, and with rarely a bad experience." In part, they acknowledge, television is just following society's changing mores. "But [it] also seeks to accelerate these changes, by championing causes like gay rights, which the mass audience still opposes."

Given the "left populist

themes" of recent TV entertainment, it should come as no surprise that the authors' survey of 104 leading TV producers and other creative types reveals them to be very liberal in their political and social views. "On such issues as abortion, homosexual rights, and extramarital sex, they overwhelmingly reject traditional restrictions." Despite TV's portrayal of businessmen, however, most of the creators favor free enterprise and think people with greater ability should earn more. *They* certainly do: Two-thirds make more than \$200,000 a year.

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### **"Exploring the Moon and Mars: Choices for the Nation."**

Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402-9325. 104 pp. \$5.

President George Bush has proposed sending Americans back to the Moon to establish a permanent lunar base, and then mounting a mission to Mars by the year 2019, the 50th anniversary of the Apollo Moon landing. Congress' Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) is skeptical: "It is far from clear what the United States would gain from demonstrating leadership in human exploration" of Mars.

Bush's idea is reminiscent of President John F. Kennedy's 1961 pledge to land a man on the Moon. But times have changed. The United States then was in the midst of the Cold War. Today, there is no race to send humans to the Moon or to Mars. The European Space Agency has expressed an interest in explor-

ing Mars—but with robots. The Japanese plan to send unmanned craft to the Moon.

The cost of Bush's proposal, according to very tentative estimates, could reach \$300–550 billion. Human exploration of such extremely harsh environments, OTA says, may cost 10 to 100 times as much as unmanned exploration.

In the Apollo era, the state of automation and robotics technology was primitive, and the astronauts went to the Moon with little robotic support. Today, specialists believe it will soon be possible for robots, acting largely on their own, to carry out many space exploration activities. Small "rovers," for example, could move about on Mars, making observations and collecting and analyzing soil samples.

Sticking to Bush's timetable, however, may mean giving short shrift to these new technologies, OTA notes, if resources are channeled into technologies to support the human crews.

Future decisions about space exploration, and about the relative roles of humans and robots in it, may have an important impact on the economy. "The experience gained in applying [automation and robotics] technologies to tasks in space could assist their development in other parts of U.S. industry and help the United States to compete . . . in the world economy," OTA says. Given Washington's budget woes, putting men on Mars may not seem as urgent as putting a man on the Moon did 30 years ago.

## COMMENTARY

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*We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.*

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### *What Schools Cannot Do*

The articles by Chester Finn ["The Ho Hum Revolution", *WQ*, Summer '91] and Patrick Welsh ["A Teacher's View"] are interesting when viewed against the backdrop of the school reform initiative, America 2000: six national goals to be measured by tests and attained by the year 2000.

Welsh focuses on what Finn (and America 2000) ignore: cataclysmic shifts in the moral fiber and supportive infrastructure of the culture surrounding schools. For Welsh, the answer lies in a culture that makes students work harder.

Finn's answer is to hold schools accountable for performance, presumably on the tests envisioned for America 2000. Are such schools to create the work ethic in a culture that will then produce students who work harder in schools? Caution is warranted when a major remedial role in the health of a nation is proposed for schools.

Regarding the role of schools in the economy, Finn mentions Lamar Alexander's argument for reform: "Better schools mean better jobs . . ." I am more persuaded by those specialists who strongly dispute the presence of a direct link between excellent schools and a continuing robust economy. The links with most other elements of a culture are even weaker—especially in a culture such as ours where so many disparate forces teach, as Welsh documents.

The two pieces cancel each other. Together they pose the agenda: simultaneously addressing the curricula and instructional core of schools and the conditions in the surrounding culture needed to sustain them. To believe, however, that the six national goals and a system of tests will put our schools and our nation—in that order—right again is to assume the most mythical and mystical relationship in our long and misguided history of pretending for schools what they cannot do.

*John I. Goodlad, Director  
Ctr. for Educational Renewal  
Univ. of Wash.*

### *Parents Who Care*

Perhaps we are asking too much of our schools and not enough of ourselves, the parents of the students. If my local school board were to call a par-

ents' meeting to discuss the "philosophy of education," or the "theoretical impact of education," there would be no one in attendance. However, if the Taylor School Board were to announce "no football in 1991-92," the board office would be jammed with angry parents.

I believe that we, the parents, educators, principals, and ordinary taxpayers, have not really asked ourselves, "What do we want the schools to do?" Nor have we asked, "What *exactly* is education?"

*Robert D. Hatfield  
Taylor, Mich.*

### *Asking the Wrong Question*

"Why Our Schools Still Don't Work" is the wrong question to ask. Instead, we must ask, What makes our schools work? And, we must understand that our public school system is the engine of our democracy and a vibrant economy.

The National PTA has discovered that parent involvement is the difference between mediocre schools and great ones. More importantly, parent involvement in schools is the link between lessons and learning. It has been proven to increase academic achievement in spite of socioeconomic conditions and across racial/ethnic barriers.

Our schools today must try to educate all who appear at the classroom door. This was not always the case. Our competitive, information-based world requires an educated citizenry. The impediments to obtaining this education are many. Now, students come to school with all the problems that society refuses to address—they are hungry, homeless, abused, neglected and ignored, angry, and scared. These children may live in violent inner-city communities or in rural isolation.

The problems of our schools are, in reality, the problems of society. Now is not the time to replace the educational engine that drives our society simply because it needs a tune-up. Yes, our schools need to improve. Established in the 1800s, our public schools desperately need to adapt to the 21st century. And, they definitely must have more parents involved. These are challenges to be overcome; not reasons for abandonment.

*Pat Henry, President  
The National PTA  
Chicago, Ill.*

## The Naming of Hinduism

It is clear from "Hinduism and the Fate of India" [WQ, Summer '91] that the nominalist controversy still flourishes, at least among Indologists, historians of religions, and other students of "Hinduism." Yet the adversaries in this longstanding debate continue to formulate their differences in ways that are not terribly productive, and it would seem they are talking past each other about two rather different "Hinduisms," or rather, about two very different paradigms of Hinduism.

For all its longevity and original interest, this debate has been fairly sterile for some time, and the current situation in India demands something better. Ideally, I should like to see a rethinking of how nation, state, and religion have interacted throughout Indian history, which could help us to understand how a religion that was constructed for the nation by the colonial state, has now come to serve as the most important instrument through which much of that nation is mobilizing itself, not just for another round of a seemingly interminable conflict with other religious groups, but also in opposition to the workings of a neo-colonial state and the westernized elites that have dominated that state since its inception.

The struggles that wrack India have never been simply and straightforwardly sectarian, and nationalism in the Third World is always complex, with social, political, and economic dimensions to it, however much these may be inflected by religious concerns. Those in the West who feel their interests to be threatened by such movements often dwell on their religious character in alarming and even lurid terms as a way to tilt public opinion against them. In light of such propagandistic excesses, it seems to me all the more important that we exercise the most critical judgment when talk turns to "Hinduism and the Fate of India."

Bruce Lincoln

*Prof. of Comparative Studies in Discourse & Society  
Univ. of Minn.*

## Correction

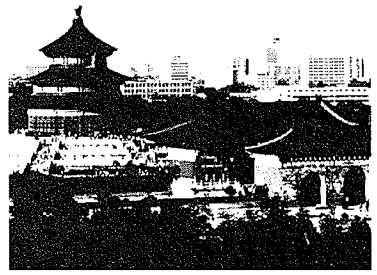
In the article "Who Killed Hollywood" [WQ, Summer '91], the "total national population" is given as approximately 79½ million in 1946. The U.S. population in 1940 was 131.7 million; in 1950 it was 150.7 million.

David S. Croyder  
Bethesda, Md.

*Editors' Note: We should have said that the 1946 population was approximately 141 million.*

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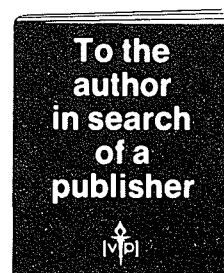
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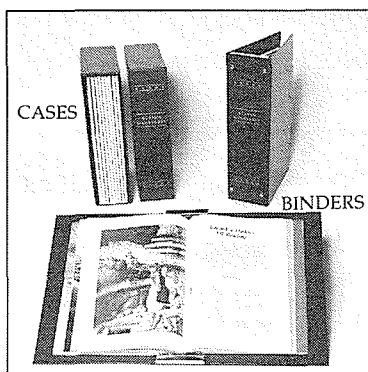


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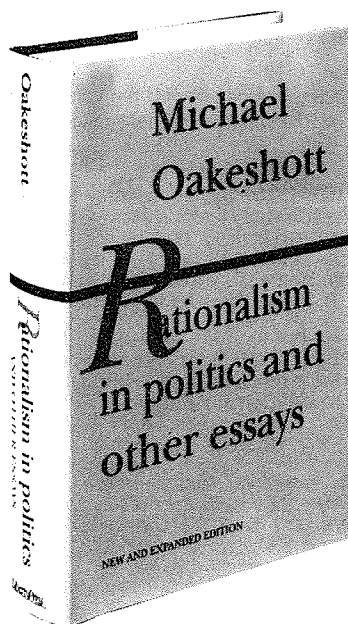
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## ***Mozart and the Riddle of Creativity***

A Symposium to Commemorate the 200th Anniversary  
of the Death of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756–1791)

*December 2–5, 1991*

### ***December 2, Museum of American History***

Keynote by Anthony Burgess, Novelist, Composer,  
and Author of the forthcoming *A Paean for Mozart*  
"Mozart and the Wolf Gang"

### ***December 3, National Gallery of Art***

#### **The Nature of Creativity**

David Feldman, Department of Psychology,  
Tufts University:  
"Mozart and the Transformational Imperative."

Howard Gardner, Graduate School of Education,  
Harvard University:  
"How Unique is Mozart?"

Neal Zaslaw, Department of Music,  
Cornell University:  
"Mozart as a Working Stiff."

Commentator: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi  
Department of Education,  
The University of Chicago

Afternoon Film Showing: *The Magic Flute*,  
Directed by Ingmar Bergman

Introduced by Stanley Kauffmann, Theater and Film  
Critic; Visiting Professor of Drama, City University of  
New York Graduate Center

### ***December 4, National Gallery of Art***

#### **Mozart in History**

William Baumol, Department of Economics,  
Princeton University, and Hilde Baumol:  
"On the Economics of Musical Composition  
in Mozart's Vienna."

Michael P. Steinberg, Department of History,  
Cornell University:  
"Don Giovanni Against the Baroque, or,  
The Culture Punished"

Leon Botstein; President, Bard College and  
Conductor, American Symphony Orchestra:  
"Nineteenth-Century Mozart."

Commentator: Carl Schorske  
Department of History  
Princeton University

Afternoon Film Showing: *Don Giovanni*,  
Directed by Joseph Losey  
Introduced by Stanley Kauffmann

### ***December 5, National Gallery of Art***

#### **Genius Within and Beyond Tradition**

Wye Allanbrook, Department of Music,  
St. John's College:  
"Mozart and the Comedy of Closure."

Maynard Solomon, Department of Music,  
New York University:  
"Mozart: The Family Treasure."

Joseph Kerman, Department of Music,  
University of California, Berkeley:  
"Mozart's Concertos and Their Audiences."

Commentator: Martin Mueller  
Department of English  
Northwestern University

Afternoon Film Showing: *Marriage of Figaro*,  
Directed by Peter Sellars  
Introduced by Stanley Kauffmann

All events are open to the public free of charge,  
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Mozart Symposium  
The Woodrow Wilson Center  
1000 Jefferson Drive S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20560

Please specify which sessions you wish to attend.  
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## A FEW COMPELLING REASONS FOR DOUBLE-HULLED OIL TANKERS.

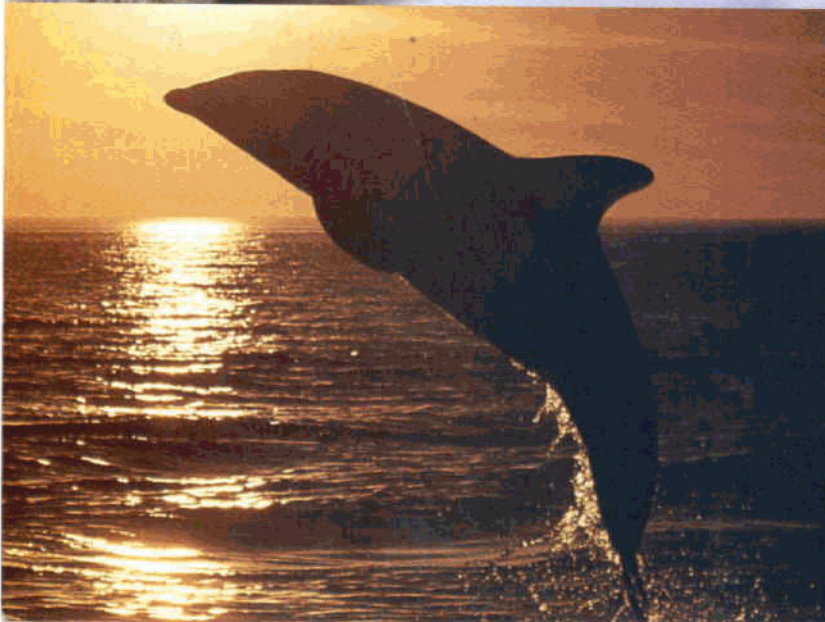


Last year, Du Pont announced that its energy unit, Conoco, would pioneer the use of new double-hulled oil tankers to help safeguard the environment.

Estimates indicate that they'll cost 50 million dollars each—about 15% more than conventional oil tankers. And, they'll carry about 10% less oil.

But estimates also indicate they could eliminate or significantly reduce the damage from oil spills, saving thousands of sea birds, otters, sea lions, dolphins and other sea life.

The reaction has been overwhelmingly positive.



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