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## COVER STORY

### **EASTERN EUROPE**

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1989—not since 1789 has there been a year of such upheaval. Without a single border changing, the map of Europe was redrawn. The Soviet bloc vanished, and Central Europe was reborn. Our contributors, **Ivan Sanders, John Lukacs, Stephen E. Deane, and Stanislaw Baranczak**, remind us of legacies that must be overcome—and of others that should be revitalized. They anticipate the challenges, cultural as well as political, that lie ahead.



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America's struggle with poverty has reached a stalemate. Perhaps it's time to consider how an earlier generation tackled the problem. **Howard Husock** argues that the settlement-house movement, long scorned as idealistic and inadequate, offers solutions of surprising relevance.



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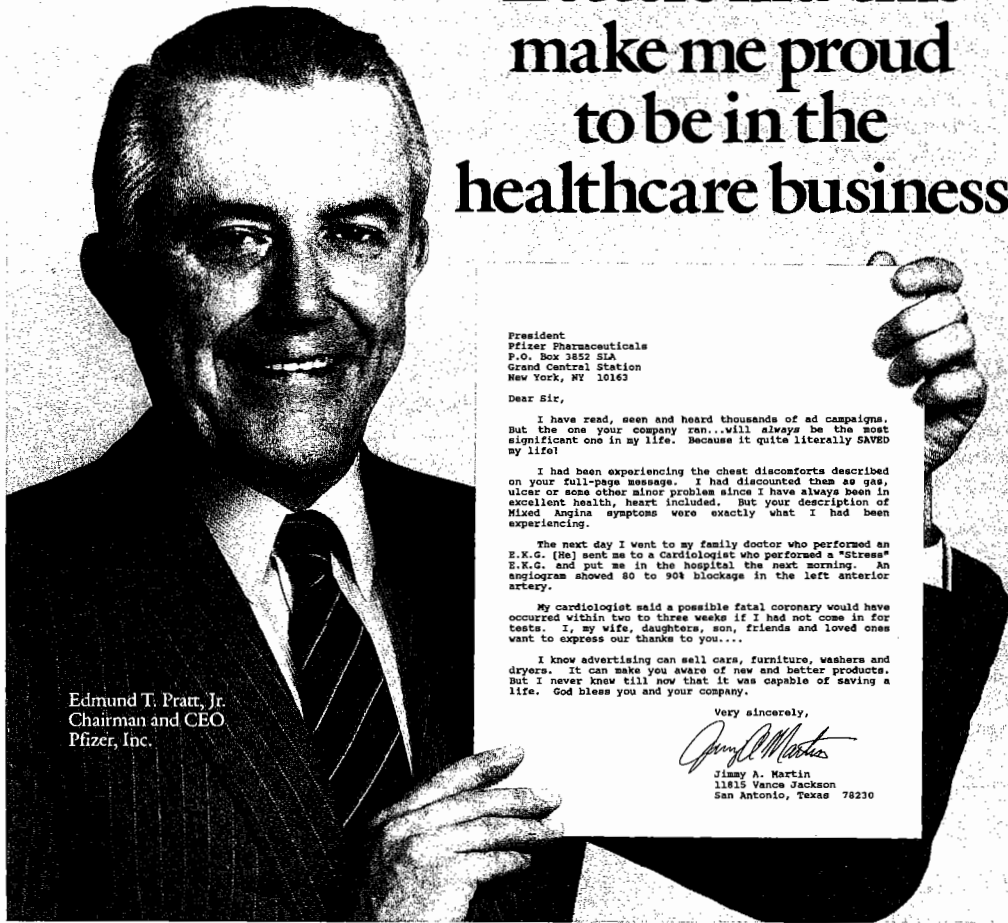
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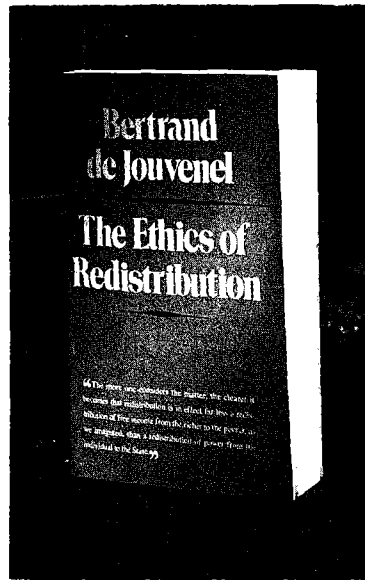
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## Editor's Comment

Ever since the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, Western thinkers and statesmen have been vulnerable to the belief that, with the right adjustments here and there, a New Man and a New Society can reasonably be made. Utopians deserve some credit. Their ideals have spurred real accomplishments in all areas of life. The fate of the West, for better or worse, is tied to a logic of progress, and the idea of utopia sweetens this logic. But behind such sweetness lurks a danger. Despite what have often been the best of intentions, schemers after a better world have helped bring on some of the worst nightmares of the 20th century—gods that not only failed but turned into monsters. This issue looks at many faces of utopianism, from the god that failed in Eastern Europe to an exotic 19th-century American reformer, Orson Squire Fowler. Elsewhere, Howard Husock argues that the enduring reality of poverty may be more effectively battled by individual involvement than by all the “best-laid plans” of social policy. And Alan Brinkley discusses the fluctuating reputation of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a politician whose notion of government’s proper role included a strong distrust of utopian yearnings.

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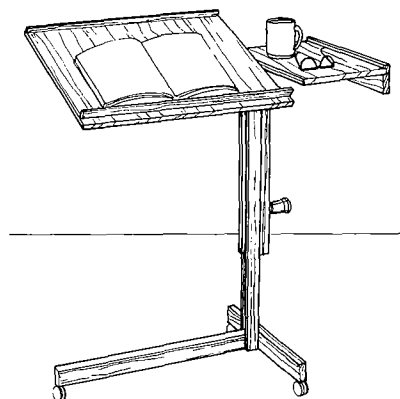
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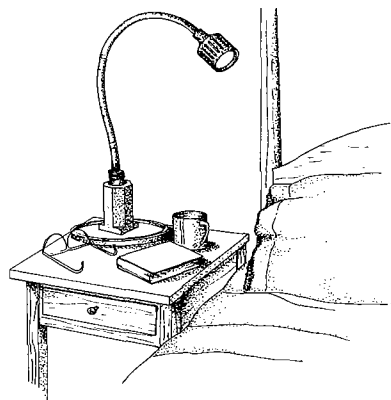
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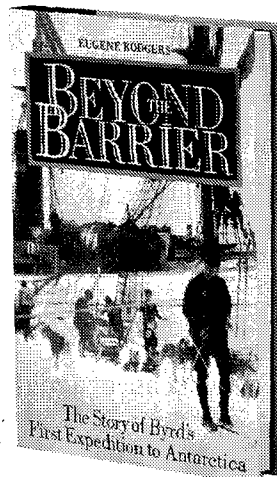
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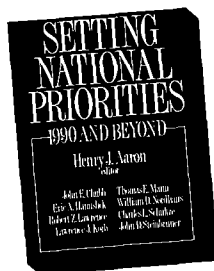
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## POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

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### *War of the Underdogs*

"The Liberal Opportunity" by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and "Race-Neutral Programs and the Democratic Coalition" by William Julius Wilson, in *The American Prospect* (Spring 1990), P.O. Box 7645, Princeton, N.J. 08543-7645, and "The Life of the Party" by Rep. Newt Gingrich, in *Policy Review* (Winter 1990), 214 Mass. Ave. N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002.

Has the United States become a one-party state? Judging by these essays, written by leading lights on opposites sides of the U.S. political spectrum, you might think so. Each bleakly lets on that the "other side" is running the show, and suggests how his team can get back in the game.

Least alarmed is Schlesinger, the eminent historian, writing the lead essay in a new journal devoted to the revival of liberal thought. History, he says, "shows a fairly regular [30-year] alternation in American politics between private gain and public good as the dominating motives of national policy." By his reckoning, the liberal hour is near again. Moreover, the end of the Cold War will dissolve the anti-communist glue that holds together the conservative coalition, which he seems to regard as a collection of kooks: "establishmentarians, entrepreneurial hustlers, evangelical zealots, libertarians, global crusaders, isolationists, anti-abortionists, the gun lobby, and so on."

Wilson, the noted black sociologist from the University of Chicago, takes the Democratic dilemma more seriously. A large part of the party's problem is that whites are deserting it, at least in national elections. Wilson argues that these voters have not turned against blacks but "against a strategy that emphasizes programs perceived to benefit only racial minorities" such as affirmative action and court-ordered busing. In addition, he believes

that these policies have aided only the most advantaged blacks. What the Democrats need now is "an emphasis on coalition politics that features progressive, race-neutral policies": full employment, job training, comprehensive health care, child care, school reform, and drug and crime prevention efforts for all.

It must warm the heart of Rep. Gingrich (R.-Ga.), the Minority Whip in the U.S. House of Representatives, to hear Democrats speaking of more "big government." But here he saves his spleen for his own party: The GOP "is about to begin its 10th consecutive year in the White House, yet it has failed to gain working control of America's governments." Why?

First, Republicans have yet to make the transition from being carping critics of government to being its proprietors. Says Gingrich: "We have not had a serious Republican effort to think through the definition of conservative government since Theodore Roosevelt." Second, "Republicans really don't know enough about America. We've never thought much about how to improve life for people who have never been our constituents." Finally, says Gingrich, after controlling the White House (but not much else) for 17 of the last 21 years, Republicans have yet to learn the limits of presidential leadership. His Democratic counterparts, who control virtually everything but the White House, seem not to have learned the lesson either.



### One Man's Opinion

It is news when the head of a major polling firm declares that Congressmen are "excessively influenced by dozens of polls which they could ignore at little or no risk to their political future." That is what the British-born president of Louis Harris and Associates, Humphrey Taylor, writes in *The Public Perspective* (Jan.-Feb. 1990).

*While they might not be rash enough to say so, virtually all British MPs would agree with Edmund Burke that "your representative owes you not his industry only but his judgment; and he betrays you, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion." In other words, "we the leaders are right to do what we think best, regardless of public opinion—provided, of course, that we'll be re-elected at the next election."*

*No American politician can afford to be so cavalier. Things are very different here. I was stunned when I arrived here in 1976 to hear Jimmy Carter win great applause when he said that this country deserved a president "as good and as wise as the American people." In Europe we hope we can find leaders who are much better and wiser than the people—much better at governing, if not better in their personal morality (which seems more important here). Why is the United States so different? Part of the explanation is historical and cultural. One can argue about how "democratic" different countries are, but there is no argument that the US is a much more populist country. There is more respect here for public opinion. Americans believe government should not just be of the people and for the people. It should be by the people.*

### Snake Eyes for State Lotteries

"Redefining 'Success' in the State Lottery Business" by Charles T. Clotfelter and Philip J. Cook, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Winter 1990), 605 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10158, and "State Lotteries and Crime" by John Mikesell and Maureen A. Pirog-Good, in *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* (Jan. 1990), 41 E. 72nd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Since New Hampshire inaugurated the first modern state lottery in 1964, 31 other states have followed suit. By 1988, ticket sales reached \$17 billion annually—about \$250 per household in the lottery states—and supplied about four percent of state revenues.

Clotfelter and Cook, both economists at Duke, believe that lotteries are here to stay—much as they hint that they wouldn't mind turning back the clock. But, they say, there are lotteries and then there are lotteries. Until the mid-1970s, most state op-

erations were old-fashioned raffles, "conducted in much the same fashion as in Colonial times." But revenues were disappointing. In an effort to boost sales, the states invented exciting new contests—"instant winner" games, computerized numbers games, and lotto contests with huge jackpots. Now under development are games that "bear an uncanny resemblance to slot machines." At the same time, the states began using razzle-dazzle print and television advertising to promote gambling as a way of getting rich quick.

The director of New Jersey's lottery put it plainly in 1985: "We're taking an infrequent user and trying to convert him into a more frequent user."

Is that what government ought to be doing? The authors think not. They favor a return to the days of lotteries in plain brown wrappers. In fact, Virginia and Wisconsin have taken this approach in their recently launched lotteries.

But suppose that lotteries encourage behavior that is not just undesirable but criminal. That is what Mikesell and Pirog-Good, both of Indiana University, found in

their statistical study of lottery states between 1970 and 1984. Their conclusion: "It appears that adoption of a state lottery is associated with a three percent increase in the state [property] crime rate." That increase is comparable to what is produced by a two percentage point increase in the unemployment rate. Why do lotteries increase crime? Mikesell and Pirog-Good speculate that they may stimulate a taste for risk-taking or feelings of envy. They don't really know. But they do believe that when it comes to legalized gambling, the only sure bet is increased crime.

## *Presidents and Parliaments*

"The Perils of Presidentialism" by Juan J. Linz, in *Journal of Democracy* (Jan. 1990), 1101 15th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

The democratic revolution of the past decade has confronted many countries with an enviable dilemma: What works best, parliamentary democracy or presidential democracy?

Increasingly, notes Linz, a Yale political scientist, parliamentary government is turning up as the favorite. Even in Latin America, where presidentialism remains the norm, academics and politicians are gaining a new appreciation of parliamentarism—in no small measure because of the crucial role it played in easing Spain's transition to democracy during the 1970s. None of this should come as a surprise, says Linz. Presidentialism's historical track record is poor. Only the United States and Chile have enjoyed long spells of stability under presidential rule—and Chile's century and a half of relative tranquility ended in 1973. (Democracy was restored earlier this year when Augusto Pinochet surrendered the presidency to Patricio Aylwin.)

Paradoxically, the great advantage of parliamentarism is the apparent instability and uncertainty inherent in the system. A prime minister is seldom tempted to overreach, since he "knows himself to be but the spokesman for a temporary governing coalition rather than the voice of the nation or the tribune of the people." His opponents can bide their time, knowing that

he may fall from power at any time.

By contrast, presidential systems create many winner-take-all situations that promote conflict. For example, coalition governments are common in parliamentary systems, but only one candidate can win the presidency. And the president's fixed term aggravates matters. For four, five, or six frustrating years, the opposition is shut out of power. Furthermore, the ticking of the clock (most presidents are limited to one or two terms) incites many presidents to rash action. "A president who is desperate to build his Brasilia or implement his program of nationalization or land reform before he becomes ineligible for reelection is likely to spend money unwisely or risk polarizing the country for the sake of seeing his agenda become reality."

The fact that both the executive and the legislature can claim to represent "the people" sets the stage for political deadlock. The military may be tempted to step in, especially if the country faces a political or economic crisis.

As the American case makes clear, presidentialism can work well in countries that practice the politics of the Center almost exclusively. The problem is that the United States has a virtual monopoly on that style of politics, but not on the presidential style of government.

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**FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE**


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*Asian Rebirth*

"The Emergence of Central Asia" by Graham E. Fuller, in *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1990), 2400 N St. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20037.

The rebirth of Central Europe has distracted attention from another rebirth of great importance: that of Central Asia.

Fuller, a political scientist at the RAND Corporation, believes that the 50 million Muslims of Soviet Central Asia "will soon be reentering the broader Muslim world, creating an entire new calculus of Muslim power and regional blocs." Genuine autonomy for the Soviet Central Asian Republics—Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenia, and Uzbekistan—is a distinct possibility in the near future. Even complete independence is possible.

The struggle to shape this new Central Asia is already under way. For Mikhail Gorbachev, the key concern is to keep Islamic fundamentalism under wraps, and failing that, "to avoid the creation of a hostile Muslim belt south of the Slavic world." To do so, he must gain the cooperation of the three other historic powers in the re-

gion: Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey.

Fuller credits Gorbachev with "extraordinary skill" so far. By pulling Soviet troops out of Afghanistan, he has changed all the equations. His ally, Afghan President Najibullah, has survived in power longer than expected; his enemy, the United States, no longer has a strong incentive to back fundamentalist *mujahdeen* guerrillas. Ultimately, Gorbachev needs only a political settlement that excludes the radical fundamentalists in Afghanistan, and Washington now has every reason to go along.

Meanwhile, Gorbachev has improved relations with Iran. And, Fuller writes, "Tehran has come to believe that a military victory in Afghanistan, especially now that Soviet troops have left, would really amount to an American- and Saudi-backed victory." (Especially since Shiite groups have been largely excluded from the rebel

*After Gorbachev*

Does 1789 provide the best analogy for understanding the events of 1989? Or does 1848? In *Foreign Affairs* (No. 1, 1990), Yale historian Michael Howard suggests an analogy of more recent vintage.

*In 1919 President Woodrow Wilson visited Europe and was hailed by ecstatic crowds in London, Rome, and Paris as a peacemaker, a statesman whose vision and wisdom had ended a terrible war and now promised perpetual peace. No less well-deserved enthusiasm has greeted Mikhail Gorbachev on his visits to the West; but as with Wilson, support for him at home is muted and his domestic problems accumulate. The question insistently presents itself: Whatever his own transcendent abilities and undeniable goodwill, can Gorbachev bring his own country with him? Or will the new European order he is trying to build collapse as did Woodrow Wil-*

*son's, for lack of the essential support that his own country alone can provide?*

*To this question 1990 will no doubt provide the answer. There may indeed be a backlash, bringing to power a tough, authoritarian regime that will put an end to both glasnost and perestroika. But authoritarian regimes, as Jeane Kirkpatrick has so frequently reminded us, are not totalitarian regimes. However brutal, a new regime could not restore the exploded ideology of Marxist-Leninism . . . . A post-Gorbachev Soviet Union, like the post-Wilsonian United States, might relapse for a time into self-absorbed isolation . . . . The West could live with that outcome. Our relations with the Soviet Union would be no worse (if no better) than those with the People's Republic of China. But that is the worst outcome that can plausibly be visualized: not agreeable, certainly, but considerably more tolerable than anything that has gone on before.*

coalition.) Furthermore, says Fuller, disquiet in the region has been a major reason for U.S. involvement; Tehran thus has strong incentives not to inflame the situation. For his part, Gorbachev says many things the Iranians like—for example, calling for the withdrawal of all foreign (that is, U.S.) forces from the Persian Gulf.

The wild card in Central Asia is Turkey.

It shares no borders with the Soviet Union and could choose to remain detached from developments there. About the only thing the United States can do, Fuller concludes, is to encourage the Turks to “think positively.” Their “democratic government, increasingly free economy, and close ties with the West present an attractive model for Soviet Muslims to emulate.”

## Two Lies About Spies

“The H-Bomb: Who Really Gave Away the Secret?” by Daniel Hirsch and William G. Mathews, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (Jan.–Feb. 1990), 6042 S. Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60637, and “The Limits of Manipulation: How the United States Didn’t Topple Sukarno” by H.W. Brands, in *The Journal of American History* (Dec. 1989), 112 N. Bryan St., Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

Time for some spy revisionism. One of the most dramatic espionage capers of the century never happened—and one of its most famous spies probably did more harm to his sponsor than to his victim.

First, open the file of the German-born physicist Klaus Fuchs. His confession in 1950 that he had disclosed nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union while working at Los Alamos between 1944 and '46 was one of the most traumatic events of the early Cold War. Fuchs did indeed help the Soviet Union’s atomic bomb effort, write Hirsch and Mathews, head of the Committee to Bridge the Gap and a University of California astrophysicist, respectively. But recently declassified government documents reveal that the hydrogen bomb information that Fuchs passed along to the Soviets was wrong.

Ironically, the shock of the Fuchs revelation in 1950 influenced President Harry S. Truman’s decision that year to order an all-out effort to build a hydrogen bomb. Within months, scientists at Los Alamos had discarded the old H-bomb design that Fuchs knew about and came up with an entirely new concept. That is not the end of the story. The authors contend that analysis of fallout from the first U.S. hydrogen-bomb test on October 31, 1952, probably did for the Soviet nuclear effort what Fuchs had not. (Moscow exploded its first H-bomb on November 22, 1955.)

Fifteen years after Fuchs confessed, Indonesia’s leftist President Achmed Sukarno was overthrown by General Suharto, and hundreds of thousands of Indonesian Communists and fellow-travelers were killed in the ensuing purges. It has long been whispered that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was behind the coup, and Brands, a historian at Texas A&M, concedes that precedent and much circumstantial evidence point toward Langley, Virginia. Indeed, the CIA had backed an abortive coup in 1958 and had been badgering the Indonesian Army to move against Sukarno.

But, Brands says, “by the summer of



Released in 1959 after nine years in prison, Fuchs was welcomed to East Germany by his nephew. He died a much-honored man in 1988.

1965 the Johnson administration, at a loss as to what else it might do, had basically given up." When Suharto's takeover began on September 30, 1965—itsself a reaction to an attempt by left-wing junior officers to eliminate conservative generals—"American officials remained in doubt as to who Suharto was," writes Brands. He argues that Washington could not have engineered the coup: Declassified cables and memos show that the Americans never really knew what was going on in Jakarta. As late as October 13, for example, Secretary of State Dean Rusk noted: "We are not

at all clear as to who is calling the shots within the military." He instructed the U.S. ambassador, Marshall Green, to be cautious about promising aid to the generals (despite their obvious anti-communism), since "we do not have a clear picture of the military's aims and plans." And in 1966, when CIA director Richard Helms was ordered to look for evidence that the tough U.S. stand in Vietnam had encouraged Suharto, he reluctantly concluded that the coup had "evolved purely from a complex and long-standing domestic political situation."

## Law Games

"The Limits of 'International Law'" by Robert H. Bork, in *The National Interest* (Winter 1989-90), 1112 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

International law has become the last refuge of scoundrels.

That, at least, seems to be the opinion of Robert Bork, the one-time nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court now at the American Enterprise Institute. He is, in fact, doubtful that any such thing as "international law" exists. Of course, there are international rules governing the treatment of diplomats, disputes over fishing rights, and similar matters, but what people mean when they speak of international law are the grand principles enunciated in such documents as the Charter of the United Nations. But Bork says that these noble sentiments are so contradictory and so often violated with impunity that legal scholars commonly begin treatises on international law by "addressing the question whether the subject contains much that can properly be called 'law.'"

Too often, says Bork, they argue that "since people called international lawyers are doing something, what they are doing must be international law."

What these people seem to be doing much of the time, he adds, is denouncing the United States as an international outlaw—for invading Grenada, aiding the Nicaraguan contras, bombing Libya, or hijacking the airliner bearing the *Achille Lauro* hijackers. But international law is so ephemeral that others can and do argue

that such actions are perfectly legal. And consider, says Bork, the spectacle of the 1984 verdict by the International Court of Justice declaring the United States to be in violation of international law for aiding the contras. At the time, only 47 of the world's 162 nations accepted the jurisdiction of the U.N.-sponsored Court—and nine of the Court's 15 judges came from nations that did not.

In Bork's view, all of this merely underscores the futility of international law. Disputes among nations are political matters, not fit for judicial resolution—which is the reason that we do not refer them to *American* courts. The only way international law can even attempt to deal with such issues is to drain them of morality. Bork writes: "In order to be international, rules about the use of force between nations must be acceptable to regimes that operate on different—often contradictory—moral premises. The rules themselves must not express a preference for freedom over tyranny or for elections over domestic violence as the means of coming to power. This moral equivalence is embodied in international charters. The charters must be neutral, and the easiest neutral principle is: No force. The fact that the principle will not be observed by those who simply see international law as another foreign policy instrument does not affect the matter."



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**ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS**


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*Identity Crisis*

"Who Is Us?" by Robert B. Reich, in *The Harvard Business Review* (Jan.-Feb. 1990), Boston, Mass. 02163.

"Across the United States, you can hear calls for us to revitalize our national competitiveness," writes Robert Reich, of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. "But wait—who is 'us'?" Is it the American-owned and -managed firm that does most of its manufacturing overseas? Or is it, say, the Dutch-owned firm that does much of its research and development (R&D) and manufacturing in New Jersey?

Reich comes down squarely on the side of the second company. "The competitiveness of American-owned corporations," he contends, "is no longer the same as American competitiveness." Forty percent of IBM's employees, for example, are foreigners; the company is one of *Japan's* biggest computer exporters. The globalization of the economy is not just a cliché. According to the National Science Foundation, U.S. corporations increased their domestic R&D spending by only six percent between 1986 and 1988; their overseas R&D outlays jumped by 33 percent.

Meanwhile, as everybody knows, foreign companies have been rapidly increasing their investments in the United States. (What everybody does not know is that most of these investors are British and Dutch.) They now employ three million Americans. Dutch-owned Philips Corporation makes televisions in Tennessee and exports them to Japan; Honda expects to ship 50,000 cars annually from its Ohio plant to Japan.

In this new environment, says Reich, "a nation's most important competitive asset becomes the skills and cumulative learning of its work force . . . . The company is a good 'American' corporation if it equips its American work force to compete in the global economy." Thus, he argues, it is folly for Washington to discourage foreign investment and to exclude foreign firms from participation in government-sponsored programs. Why allow only Zenith,

the last American-owned television manufacturer, to benefit from government efforts to speed development of high definition television? Zenith employs 2,500 Americans; its competitors employ more than 15,000.

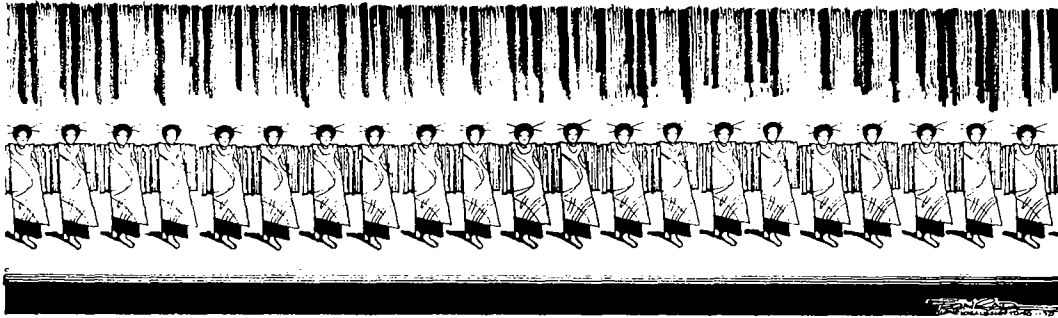
Is American control of corporate profits important? Increasingly, Reich says, American investors are putting their money into foreign equities. What about control of corporate assets? He doubts that U.S.-controlled firms do—or can—put national in-

### *The Price of Progress*

The catch-up and convergence of the world's major economies will yield large benefits for the United States, Stanford's Moses Abramovitz predicts in *Economic Inquiry* (Jan. 1990). But one unfortunate result is that haute cuisine and fine French wines at bargain-basement prices have become things of the past.

*So now we have a pretty paradox—which is my closing thought. The rise in foreigners' efficiency gives us the benefits of cheap goods produced in those sectors where their productivity has advanced rapidly. The accompanying rise in wages, however, snatches from us those wonderful cheap services produced in the sectors where European and Japanese productivity is advancing slowly or not at all. But do we—I mean our politicians and the public press—do we bemoan the fact that foreign wages have risen? No! Just the opposite. We complain that foreign wages are too low, that they have not risen enough, that we have to compete against those unfair low-wage foreigners who insist on selling us their goods—their embodied labor—too cheaply.*

*O, my fellow economists, all of us descendants of Adam Smith, is this what we have to show for two centuries of public education in economics?*



THE MITSUBISHI ROCKETTES

*The sale of Radio City Music Hall to a Japanese firm last fall seemed to symbolize a “Japanese invasion.” But of the \$61 billion foreigners invested in the United States in 1989, only \$13 billion came from Japan. Meanwhile, Americans invested \$32 billion abroad.*

terests ahead of corporate interests. (One caveat: Foreign firms that exist to serve national interests, such as Airbus Industrie, should not enjoy equal treatment in the United States.) In fact, he notes, “Most

U.S.-owned companies are quite happy to receive special advantages from the U.S. government—and then spread the technological benefits to their affiliates all over the world.”

### *The Next Japanese Import?*

“Employee Work Attitudes and Management Practice in the U.S. and Japan: Evidence from a Large Comparative Survey” by James R. Lincoln, in *California Management Review* (Fall 1989), 350 Barrows, Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, Calif. 94720.

Pep talks, morning jumping jacks, and awards ceremonies are some of the things that make Japanese industry work so well. They are also things that make Americans snort in contempt. We rugged individualists would never fall for such obvious corporate efforts to build team spirit.

Or would we? Comparing 8,302 employees at 106 factories in the United States and Japan, Lincoln, a Berkeley management specialist, found that the company loyalty of Americans who participated in such activities increased just as much as that of Japanese. Overall, his study confirms what some anecdotal accounts have said: Workers need not be steeped in Japanese culture to respond to Japanese management methods.

Consider quality circles. Although they are much touted in the United States, only 62 percent of the U.S. firms studied have them (versus 81 percent of the Japanese factories) and only 44 percent of their employees belong to one. Yet Lincoln found

that participation actually gives a bigger boost to morale in the United States than it does in Japan—apparently because the novelty has worn off in Japan.

One of Lincoln’s more interesting findings is that even the American management practice of delegating large amounts of authority hurts employee morale. In Japanese firms, ultimate authority is highly centralized. This leaves lower-level managers and supervisors with much less weight to throw around and forces them to forge more cooperative relationships with their subordinates. Paradoxically, Japanese centralization thus encourages “diffuse, participatory” decision-making; the American style produces “individualistic, compartmentalized” authority. The effects show up in a striking way on the shop floor. In Japan, workers who have frequent contact with their supervisors have high morale. American workers tend to regard such contact as annoying and meddling.

Obviously, Lincoln concludes, some

Japanese methods will not work in the United States. (Jumping jacks and push-ups have not been a big hit.) But most will,

and it is these methods, not Japanese culture, that account for Japan's enviable industrial success.

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## SOCIETY

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### *How We Won The War on Drugs*

"Against the Legalization of Drugs" by James Q. Wilson, in *Commentary* (Feb. 1990), 165 E. 65th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Most Americans probably don't remember the nation's last war on drugs. We won it.

Wilson remembers it well. In 1972, he was appointed chairman of President Richard M. Nixon's National Advisory Council for Drug Abuse Prevention, charged with drawing up a strategy to combat what was at that time the nation's leading drug scourge: heroin. (Today, he is a political scientist at UCLA.) Then, as now, some prominent authorities—notably, Milton Friedman, a conservative Nobel prize-winning economist—argued that a war against drugs was futile, unjust, or too costly. They favored legalization.

But they were ignored, and the war against heroin was a reasonable success. Today, says Wilson, we have half a million heroin addicts, the same number that we had in 1972. What happened? Heroin lost its appeal to young people as they saw more and more users suffer overdoses, hepatitis from dirty needles, and other mishaps. In surveys of Harlem youths who had sampled the drug, two thirds pointed to health risks as a reason for steering clear of it, and nearly all cited a bad experience with the drug.

While such street-level "drug education" was important, Wilson says, government efforts to restrict the supply of heroin—by reducing Turkish opium

cultivation and shutting down heroin-processing plants in and around Marseilles—were crucial. As Friedman and other critics had predicted, new sources soon developed (chiefly in Mexico). But Wilson believes that the scarcity and high price of heroin during 1973–75 broke the momentum of the heroin epidemic.

Back in the 1970s, important evidence that the price and availability of a drug strongly influences use came from a study of Vietnam veterans by Lee Robins of Washington University. She found that most of the veterans who had been regular heroin users overseas gave up the habit once they returned home. Why? Because the drug was much harder to get and laws against its use were more strictly enforced.

At least one country *did* try legalization. In 1960, there were 68 known British heroin addicts, and all of them received legal, prescribed doses of the narcotic. By 1968, the number had grown 30-fold, to 2,000—and there were probably many more unregistered addicts, since most clinics by then were offering methadone, not heroin.

If the United States had legalized heroin, Wilson believes, it would now have several million addicts rather than several hundred thousand. If it legalizes cocaine, which he considers a more destructive drug, the results could only be worse.

### *Searching for The Leisure Class*

"The Work Ethic—Then and Now" by Seymour Martin Lipset, in *The Public Interest* (Winter 1990), 1112 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, and "Time Squeeze" by John P. Robinson, in *American Demographics* (Feb. 1990), 108 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

Two of the great complaints of our era are that Americans don't work as hard as they used to and, paradoxically, that life has

grown unbearably hectic. Obviously both complaints can't be justified; according to these articles, neither is.

Alarms about the decline of the work ethic are old hat, notes Lipset, a Stanford political scientist. In 1495, the English Parliament passed a law regulating working hours, worrying that workers were "late coming unto their work, early departing therefrom." Today's complaints sound much the same, but the fact is that the average work week has remained about 39 hours per week since 1945. Add school and commuting time, however, and it has jumped from 40.6 hours in 1973 to 46.8 hours.

This is not the way prophets of the affluent society expected things to turn out. Americans were supposed to work less and play more. One reason they have not, according to Lipset: "Almost all surveys indicate that the vast majority of Americans—over 80 percent—are satisfied with their jobs." Indeed, 85 percent say they would continue to work even if they had enough money to retire. And the proportion of people who say they work primarily for the paycheck is declining; one's job is now an outlet for self-expression.

That brings us to the fabled workaholic. According to Robinson, a University of Maryland sociologist, the proportion of Americans who say they "always feel

rushed" rose from 25 percent in 1965 to 32 percent in 1985. Diaries kept by his 5,000 subjects show that those who complain about feeling harassed do in fact spend more hours at work than the average person does. But they also spend more time caring for their children and bathing and grooming themselves. They devote more time to watching and participating in sports, and they spend more time on organizational activities (except church-going). They spend much *less* time in front of the television, and somewhat less time sleeping, eating, or visiting friends.

Demographics may explain part of the modest increase in the number of people who feel harried. Those most likely to feel that way are aged 35 to 54, a group whose numbers are increasing and whose members are especially busy. Another explanation Robinson offers is that Americans now have a much bigger menu of leisure activities available to them, and thus much less time just to sit around and do nothing.

Although Robinson does not say so, feeling busy is also a sign of the times. The group whose complaints about being pressed for time rose most sharply—from five percent in 1965 to 21 percent in 1985—was "nonemployed" men.

## Petticoat Jeff

"Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis: Northern Views of the Defeated South" by Nina Silber, in *American Quarterly* (Dec. 1989), 701 W. 40th St., Balt., Md. 21211.

One month after General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, the *New York Times* reported that Jefferson Davis, the former president of the Confederacy, had donned one of his wife's dresses and fled into the woods of southern Georgia to elude federal troops. After he was captured (soldiers spotted his boots beneath his skirt, according to the *Times*), he was said to have complained indignantly about his pursuers' efforts to "hunt down women and children."

That legend—along with the willingness of northerners to believe it—exemplified northern attitudes towards southern men after the Civil War, writes Silber, a historian at the University of Delaware. North-

erners depicted southern men as an emasculated, cowardly lot in order to assert the superiority of their own way of life and to establish "ideas of northern control over a weakened and submissive South."

The assault on southern manliness actually had roots in the antebellum era. The industrialization of the North, Silber argues, fostered new attitudes toward masculinity. The measure of a man in Yankeeedom was his ability to get ahead, and that called for an emphasis on restraint and self-control. Southern men, and southern aristocrats in particular, seemed, as one northerner wrote, full of "pride, indolence, luxury, and licentiousness." The old masculine virtue of honor now seemed

mere "sensitive vanity," and chivalry nothing more than "cowardly swagger."

The South's defeat on the battlefield only reinforced northerners' contempt. "If there be any manhood among the ex-slaveholders," the *New York Tribune* editorialized, "we shall soon find it out. We mean the manhood which cheerfully attacks the difficulties of peace and wins victories not less renowned than those of war." But nothing did more to fuel northern insults than the legend of Davis's ignominious arrest. Mocking songs abounded, including "Jeff in Petticoats," which had the Confederate president saying, "To dodge the bullets, I will wear my tin-clad crinoline." P. T. Barnum welcomed visitors to his New York museum with a tableaux showing a hoopskirted Davis surrounded by Union soldiers. (In fact, Davis most likely was wearing his wife's cloak or shawl.)

Later, Silber observes, the "gender imagery" would change as the "remarriage" of North and South proceeded. But for a brief period northerners chuckled over what *Harper's Weekly* called a "new interpretation of the initials C.S.A.—Crinolinum Skirtum Absquatulatum."



Jeff in Petticoats was a popular song in 1865. The *New York Herald* claimed that Mrs. Davis was "more of a man than her husband."

### Plug In, Turn On, Tune Out

Yuppies, asserts Laura Bergheim in *Dissent* (Winter 1990), are giving way to "pluggies"—people who huddle beside electronic hearths and shut out "the troubled world on the other side of the 'Welcome' mat."

*More insidiously than any other decade in our history, the 1980s have delivered unto us (and into our homes) the promises of past futurists: sit back, relax, and let your fingers do the walking across the universe of simulated experience. Quietly, almost magically, the middle-class "home sweet home" has been transformed into an environment that now doubles as office, schoolhouse, shopping mall, health club, printshop, restaurant, even electronic bordello. Television has been born again through television preachers, teachers, endless cable channels, and do-it-yourself satellite dishes. The lowly telephone has been redefined as the conduit for dial-a-porn,*

*Domino's Pizza, call-waiting, and conference calls. Fax machines, PCs, VCRs, and CD players cast their spells on the most reluctant of technological inductees . . .*

*Pluggies—those who are plugged in but tuned out—are fast developing as the heirs to the yuppie. This new asocial animal is a creature of comfort and convenience, overstimulated by artificial intelligence and instant gratification, but underexposed to genuine experience and the virtues of patience . . .*

*Once upon a time most Americans lived in relatively rural isolation. Self-sufficiency was a necessity, not a choice as it is today. Contact beyond the family and a few neighbors was minimal because of distance and smaller population centers . . . Now we are on the verge of coming full circle: with even the simplest of errands and tasks being performed by home computers, the fabric of daily social contact will grow thin again.*

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**PRESS & TELEVISION**


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*A Class Act*

"A Friend Writes" by Louis Menand, in *The New Republic* (Feb. 26, 1990), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Ask any long-time reader of the *New Yorker* which articles he likes best and there is a good chance that he will delightfully confess (whether it is true or not) that he does not *read* the thing, he just looks at the cartoons.

That, says Menand, a professor of English at Queens College, is typical of the *New Yorker* style itself: self-effacing and unpretentious on the surface, sometimes a bit snobbish underneath. For 40 years, that conjunction of reader and editorial sensibility was unique in American journalism.

Not that the *New Yorker* is about to perish. But the magazine has clearly lost its unique niche. It was decades ahead of its time when Harold Ross founded it in 1925 as a magazine "targeted"—although he did not use the word—at educated upper-middle-class professionals. Before long, the *New Yorker* developed its patented style, a style that reflected and shaped the tastes of two generations of readers.

Menand observes that the magazine's "punctilio about correct punctuation and usage" was both democratic and elitist: "The rules apply to everybody. On the other hand, knowing what's correct is one of the signs of a superior education."

The *New Yorker* short story, with its characteristic pathos and moral befuddlement, "expressed with great precision the inner life of a certain kind of midcentury American: well-off but insecure, well-educated but without culture, enlightened enough to know how morally dark the world is in which he moves, but without a clue about how to live beyond it."

Above all, the magazine was (and is) understated. Its covers, alone in the magazine world, told readers nothing of what

was within; the contents were free of blurbs, "pull-quotes," and fancy illustrations. For much of its history, the magazine lacked even a table of contents.

All of this appealed greatly to the affluent professionals of an earlier age who had been taught to disdain crass commercialism (even though many of them owed their very livelihood to this commercial culture's need for attorneys, advertising executives, and the like). And this audience appealed enormously to a certain class of advertiser. So the *New Yorker* was a phenomenal success: In 1965, it sold 6,092 pages of advertising, beating its nearest competitor (*Business Week*) by nearly 1,300 pages. But that was one of its last good years. Today, the magazine is reported to be marginally profitable.

What happened? By the late 1960s, competitors had caught on to the *New Yorker's* commercial formula: targeting. And the magazine lost many upper-crust readers when the passions of the era forced it to assume a definite political identity—a form of liberal "anti-politics," Menand says. More than anything, however, "the *New Yorker* audience, once a homogeneous, rooted social entity, had started to splinter."

Today, Menand says, the upper middle class is much less clubby than it used to be. And, unlike their parents, young stockbrokers and lawyers sense no real separation between commerce and culture—in fact, they frequently "delight in the commercialism of upscale pleasures." Which leads Menand to suggest that there is still an audience for the *New Yorker*, but one whose tastes the magazine will have to try to educate rather than reflect.

*Learning by Doing*

"Vietnam Generation Goes Centrist" by Clifford Krauss, in *Gannet Center Journal* (Fall 1989), 2950 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

Ten years after graduating from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Clifford Krauss returned to tell a new

generation of students about his experiences as a *Wall Street Journal* correspondent in Central America. He was surprised

*Periodicals continues on page 128*

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## Lifting the Curtain

On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill gave name to a new political reality: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." For two generations since, the division between East and West stood as what seemed an immutable fact of European political geography. Cold warriors warned about the "domino theory" and the dangers of advancing communism. But in 1989, the dominoes started falling the wrong—or right—way, as the people of Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania toppled Soviet-style regimes.

In the shadow of these still vivid events, our contributors provide new perspectives on a region in flux. Ivan Sanders explores the idea—and growing reality—of "Central Europe." Reminding us of what is now being dismantled, historian John Lukacs recreates the politics of daily life in his native Budapest in 1945, the Year Zero of East European communism. Stephen Deane, a journalist who lived in Czechoslovakia from 1984 to 1986, summarizes the events of last year and points to the challenges ahead. Finally, poet and essayist Stanislaw Baranczak speculates about the plight of artists and intellectuals who now find themselves working in a world where all the rules are being changed.



# THE QUEST FOR CENTRAL EUROPE

by Ivan Sanders

Once upon a time there was a region of Europe united not so much by language or even history but by something more elusive—by hard-to-define common sensibilities and affinities. What is referred to ever more longingly today as Central Europe has in reality always been a crazy quilt of nationalities inhabiting countries wedged between the vastness of Mother Russia and the paternal rigor of Germany. Yet, because many of these countries were for centuries under Austrian tutelage, their people, sharing a common fate as more or less oppressed subjects of a far-flung empire, did develop mental habits and strategies that were remarkably similar. They also came to share certain values, not the least of which was a yearning for, and identification with, Europe.

Now it is not at all uncommon for people on the fringes of civilization to compensate for their provincial ways by espousing mainstream values more ardently than those at the center. The word *Europe* undoubtedly had a nobler ring in the eastern reaches of the continent than in its western parts. For centuries, Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians were propelled by the desire to live up to European standards and by the equally compelling need to dwell on the peculiarities of their own sorry history. In the process they created cultures that were not quite Western but not peripheral either.

In time, the passion to close gaps, to measure up and press ahead seemed to pay off, and by the end of the 19th century the major cities of these in-between lands were

catapulted into a modernity more daring, more dazzling than that of many a Western European metropolis. Yet the sophistication, even cultural radicalism of turn-of-the-century Vienna, Budapest, and Prague sprang from a spirit of defiance and iconoclasm that had been around for centuries. A penchant for irreverence and irony; a predilection for the odd, the grotesque; the ready espousal of the startlingly new, the startlingly complex—these are qualities that inform some of the greatest achievements of modern Central European culture: the literary art of Franz Kafka and Robert Musil as much as the painting of Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka; the music of Schoenberg and Béla Bartók as well as the theories of Sigmund Freud. To this day, a certain type of morbid humor, unflappability in the face of change, grace under perversity, suggest to many outsiders a quintessentially Central European characteristic. (The troubled hero of Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* expresses this perception: After sardonically reviewing a hard-luck life story filled with absurd deaths and suicides, he quips: "A terribly Middle-European joke, if you ask me.")

The brilliance and dissipation of the waning years of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy were memorably captured by a number of writers throughout the Empire. In retrospect, the turn-of-the-century Viennese playwright Arthur Schnitzler, the Hungarian novelist Gyula Krúdy, the Czech Jaroslav Hašek, the Croatian Miroslav Krleža appear, for all their differences, to be kindred spirits. What they share is a tone, at once satiric and elegiac, suggesting

a very worldly understanding of complex political and psychological realities. Without consciously articulating a common Central European ethos, these writers evoked the rigidity as well the nonchalant slovenliness and strange beauty of the same declining world.

For much of the 20th century, however,



Prague (1848). From Mozart's time to Kafka's, Prague was a major center of European culture.

concern for the integrity of Central Europe was not on anyone's agenda. After the post-World War I collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the so-called successor states, carved out of the former empire, were more interested in nurturing their own national identity than in seeking common ground. Mitteleuropa remained a Ger-

man dream, but its prewar architects had naturally meant unity under German stewardship. The term Central Europe was in fact invented by Tomáš Masaryk, the first president of independent Czechoslovakia (1918–1935), to counter the quasi-imperialist Mitteleuropa concept. After Hitler's ascent to power, most of the small nations of the region did fall under his sway, and Middle Europe became a German sphere of influence. Allied victory at the end of the Second World War transferred domination to the Soviets in the East. In a matter of years Central Europe became the Eastern bloc. "Central" or "Middle" survived only as geographical, climatic designations without any political or cultural content.

**T**he revival of the idea of Central Europe may be a relatively recent phenomenon, prompted by specific political and cultural circumstances, but on a more elemental level we may speak of a much older, semantic struggle. Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, and Romanians have always resented being labeled East Europeans. Naturally enough, people who cherish their ties to Europe and consider the very word "West" an enticement, a challenge, want no part of an Eastern world with its connotations of remoteness and primitivism. How much more preferable it is to be in the *middle* of things, or better still in the *center*! For these nations, almost as painful as the reality of Soviet domination was the knowledge that, for the rest of the world, they were now, culturally too, appendages of the Soviet empire. This view remained unchallenged for decades, as Westerners became accustomed to speaking about these countries as a single unit, a bloc, or as

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Russia's client states, satellites, although ironically enough, their political connection, the fact that they had all become, and remained for 40 years, Soviet-style dictatorships, proved to be the most tenuous, easily dissolved link among them.

It was the Czech novelist Milan Kundera, living in exile in Paris since 1975, who resurrected the term Central Europe during the early 1980s. What seemed at first nothing more than impromptu reflections on the fate of Europe became an eloquent and poignant defense that met with an unexpected response in both the East and West.

In a 1980 interview with the novelist Philip Roth, Kundera was still defining his terms: "As a concept of cultural history," he said, "Eastern Europe is Russia, with its quite specific history anchored in the Byzantine world. Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, just like Austria, have never been part of Eastern Europe. From the very beginning they have taken part in the great adventure of Western civilization, with its Gothic, its Renaissance, its Reformation—a movement which has its cradle precisely in this region. It was here, in Central Europe, that modern culture found its greatest impulses . . ." A few years later, in his most frequently cited essay, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," Kundera went much further, arguing that Central Europe was, until recently, the West's last best hope, a place where ideas could still arouse passions, the written word still mattered, and artists were people to reckon with. What Kundera had in mind, however, was not a precisely defined geographical reality, certainly not a collection of sullen and downtrodden satellites: Central Europe becomes for him more of an imagined realm of shifting borders, a would-be confraternity, a republic of letters stubbornly upholding supreme cultural values. Yet, he maintained wistfully, even the dream is winding down, and So-

viet Russia is not the only one to blame. Europe, too, has changed; even in its Western heartland, culture has "bowed out," yielding its place to the all-pervasive, crassly commercial mass media. And since a distinctive Middle European identity can be defended only in a world that "maintains a cultural dimension," the tragic end of Central Europe seems at hand.

Of course not everyone was this pessimistic. To somebody like George Konrád, the Hungarian novelist and essayist, the dream as well as the reality of Central Europe is very much alive. He discovers the common spirit in small things: in congenial turns of phrase, in shared jokes, in knowing glances. For him, and others, the legacy of the long-defunct monarchy survives. Konrád describes Central Europe as the place where railroad stations are still painted "monarchy yellow," where Viennese operetta continues to be standard fare, where a coffee-house culture in some diminished form still exists. Other respondents to Kundera's essay preferred the more romantic, heroic connotation of the term "Central Europe," turning it into a metaphor for civilization and freedom. And for some, the designation assumed an almost spiritual quality. To the Polish-born poet Czeslaw Milosz, for instance, Central Europe is an "act of faith," a "utopia."

But unlike Kundera, neither Konrád nor Milosz would think of faulting Western commercialism for the historical decline of Central Europe. For both of them the problem lies in the political division of Europe, in the entire postwar order, in imperious decisions made by the Great Powers at Yalta. These decisions may have been inevitable—after all, in global power matches small nations are always losers—yet, these writers insist, it is the very vulnerability of Central Europe's small states that in the

## AN UPSIDE-DOWN UTOPIA

*The old Austro-Hungarian empire, as depicted in Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* (1930), seems all delightful contradiction. In "Kakania"—an abbreviation for the double monarchy but also suggesting "caca"—nothing logically should work but everything does, barely.*

Kakania, that misunderstood State that has since vanished, was in so many things a model, though all unacknowledged. . . . Whenever one thought of that country from some place abroad, the memory that hovered before the eyes was of wide, white, prosperous roads dating from the age of foot-travelers and mail-coaches, roads leading in all directions like rivers of established order, streaking the countryside like ribbons of bright military twill, the paper-white arm of government holding the provinces in firm embrace. And what provinces! There were glaciers and the sea, the Carso and the cornfields of Bohemia, nights by the Adriatic restless with the chirping of cicadas, and Slovakian villages where the smoke rose from the chimneys as from upturned nostrils, the village curled up between two little hills as though the earth had parted its lips to warm its child between them. Of course cars also drove along those roads—but not too many cars! The conquest of the air had begun here too; but not too intensively. Now and then a ship was sent off to South America or the Far East; but not too often. There was no ambition to have world markets and world power. Here one was in the center of Europe, at the focal point of the world's old axes; the words "colony" and "overseas" had the ring of something as yet utterly untried and remote. There was

some display of luxury; but it was not, of course, as over-sophisticated as that of the French. One went in for sport; but not in madly Anglo-Saxon fashion. One spent tremendous sums on the army; but only just enough to assure one of remaining the second weakest among the great powers.

The capital, too, was somewhat smaller than all the rest of the world's largest cities, but nevertheless quite considerably larger than a mere ordinary large city. And the administration of this country was carried out in an enlightened, hardly perceptible manner, with a cautious clipping of all sharp points, by the best bureaucracy in Europe, which could be accused of only one defect: It could not help regarding genius and enterprise of genius in private persons, unless privileged by high birth or State appointment, as ostentation, indeed presumption. But who would want unqualified persons putting their oar in, anyway? And besides, in Kakania it was only that a genius was always regarded as a lout, but never, as sometimes happened elsewhere, that a mere lout was regarded as a genius.

All in all, how many remarkable things might be said about that vanished Kakania! . . . On paper it called itself the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; in speaking, however, one referred to it as Austria, that is to say, it was known by a

past made them hardy, taught them flexibility, tolerance. The problem, according to Konrád and Milosz, is not the decline of culture or the proliferation of kitsch feared by Kundera but intrusive superpowers politicizing, polarizing Europe. The erosion of Central European values can be stopped only by resisting superpower encroachments, by dismantling burdensome political and defensive structures, by being "antipolitical," to use George Konrád's favorite term. In 1984, Konrád not only rejected Kundera's bleak prognosis for the region; he affirmed—prophetically, it would

appear today—his own hopes for a brighter future: "I refuse to identify with either a tragic or sarcastic pessimism about Central Europe because I don't accept the chasm in the middle of Europe as necessary. On the contrary: I regard the present status quo in Europe as the product of force and compulsion, and I believe that it is artificial, temporary, and indeed already disintegrating. It is not a social but a military reality. I believe that the social reality can slowly struggle free of the grip of the military reality."

By the mid-1980s the rehabilitation of

name that it had, as a State, solemnly renounced by oath, while preserving it in all matters of sentiment, as a sign that feelings are just as important as constitutional law and that regulations are not the really serious thing in life. By its constitution it was liberal, but its system of government was clerical. The system of government was clerical, but the general attitude to life was liberal. Before the law all citizens were equal, but not everyone, of course, was a citizen. There was a parliament, which made such vigorous use of its liberty that it was usually kept shut; but there was also an emergency powers act by means of which it was possible to manage without Parliament, and every time when everyone was just beginning to rejoice in absolutism, the Crown decreed that there must now again be a return to parliamentary government. Many such things happened in this State, and among them were those national struggles that justifiably aroused Europe's curiosity and are today completely misrepresented. They were so violent that they several times a year caused the machinery of State to jam and come to a dead stop. But between whiles, in the breathing-spaces between government and government, everyone got on excellently with everyone else and behaved as though nothing had ever been the matter. Nor had anything real ever been the matter. It was nothing more than the fact that every human being's dislike of every other human being's attempts to get on—a dislike in which today we are all agreed—in that country crystallized earlier, assuming the form of a sublimated ceremonial that might have become of great impor-

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tance if its evolution had not been prematurely cut short by a catastrophe.

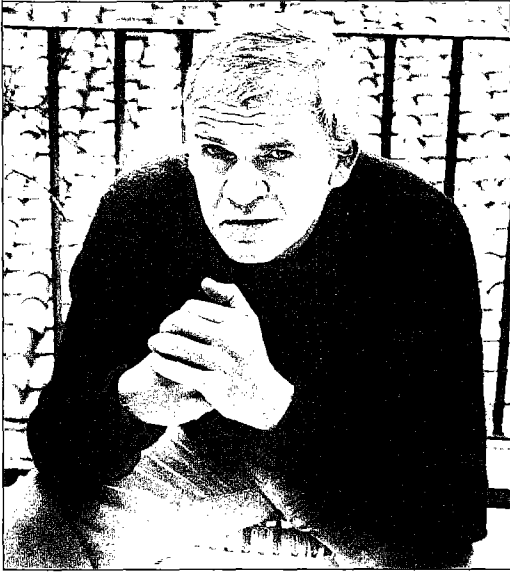
For it was not only dislike of one's fellow-citizens that was intensified into a strong sense of community; even mistrust of oneself and of one's own destiny here assumed the character of profound self-certainty. In this country one acted—sometimes indeed to the extreme limits of passion and its consequences—differently from the way one thought, or one thought differently from the way one acted. Uninformed observers have mistaken this for charm, or even for a weakness in what they thought was the Austrian character. But that was wrong . . .

Kakania was, without the world's knowing it, the most progressive State of all; it was the State that was by now only just, as it were, acquiescing in its own existence. In it one was negatively free, constantly aware of the inadequate grounds for one's own existence and lapped by the great fantasy of all that had not happened, or at least had not yet irrevocably happened, as by the foam of the oceans from which mankind arose.

*Es ist passiert*, "it just sort of happened," people said there when other people in other places thought heaven knows what had occurred. It was a peculiar phrase, not known in this sense to the Germans and with no equivalent in other languages, the very breath of it transforming facts and the bludgeonings of fate into something light as eiderdown, as thought itself. Yet, in spite of much that seems to point the other way, Kakania was perhaps a home for genius after all; and that, probably, was the ruin of it.

Central Europe as a concept was in full swing. After 30 years of disuse and even disgrace, the term was now on the lips not only of politically sensitive writers but of journalists, academics, and, increasingly, politicians and statesmen as well. Scholarly conferences and symposia were organized around the subject; journals devoted to the culture of Central Europe were launched on both sides of the Atlantic; even American critics like Irving Howe and Susan Sontag jumped on the bandwagon, writing admiringly of a new flowering of culture in the heart of Europe. As literary critics dis-

sected Central European works for common characteristics, and as historians and political scientists deliberated on political consequences, the idea of Central Europe was upheld not only as a defense against Soviet imperial designs but also as a counterweight to home-grown provincialism and nationalism. George Konrád put it succinctly: "Being Central European means learning to keep our nationalism, our national egotism, under control." In an area where justified patriotism always had a way of turning into chauvinist swagger or parochial mystification, there is plenty to keep



*Novelist Milan Kundera popularized the idea that Central Europe—far from being an “Eastern bloc”—was in essence West European.*

under control. Frequent mention was made of the special role played by Jews in Central Europe’s cosmopolitan cultures. Historically speaking, Jewish successes in East Central Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries presupposed a relatively tolerant, liberal society. As soon as narrowly defined national interests began to prevail, and an exclusionist, xenophobic kind of nationalism became the order of the day, Jews lost ground. And later in the century, the most extreme forms of nationalism had only to combine with military might and the efficiency of a modern totalitarian state to threaten their very existence. Central European Jewry is largely gone, its one-time influence fast becoming a historical memory. Yet to many, Jews remain the paradigmatic Central Europeans—tenacious individualists surviving the vicissitudes of history.

An awareness of history, a “historical imagination” as Czeslaw Milosz put it, resides at the heart of Central European culture. Where everything is infused with a

sense of history, there are no neutral subjects. Literary treatments of the most innocuous themes resonate with oblique political suggestiveness. The ongoing debate about Central Europe as a cultural entity itself illustrates this phenomenon, for it raises a number of uncomfortable questions about the peculiar relationship between art, history, and geography in this region. It was again Milan Kundera who caused a storm of controversy when in 1985 he published a literary essay in which he gave a negative appraisal of the Russian novelist Dostoyevsky—an appraisal that seemed to attack Russian culture directly, indeed to attack Russia itself. “What irritated me about Dostoyevsky,” Kundera writes in this essay, “was the climate of his novels; a universe where everything turns into feeling; in other words, where feelings are promoted to the rank of value and of truth.” Standing in contrast to this oppressive emotionalism was Kundera’s own rational, skeptical world view, which he considered far more invigorating.

Responding to Kundera, the Russian émigré poet Joseph Brodsky charged that the Czech novelist, was guilty of “sentimental distortions” of his own; Brodsky also found Kundera’s concept of civilization limited. Brodsky reminded the reader that Kundera is after all “a Continental, a European man,” and “these people are seldom capable of seeing themselves from the outside. If they do, it’s invariably within the context of Europe, for Europe offers them a scale against which their importance is detectable.”

The controversy between Central Europeans and Russians flared up again at the well-publicized 1988 Wheatland International Writers Conference, held in Lisbon. The Russian participants, many of them attending a Western-sponsored conference for the first time,

were uneasy about the concept of Central Europe, preferring to see individual countries in Eastern Europe, each with its own distinct culture, rather than an ill-defined whole. To them, Central Europe seemed both a myth and an affront; they sensed in all the talk of newfound European unity an attempt to detach Russia from Europe, to question the European character of the bulk of Russian culture. The same Soviet delegates were even more stunned when called to task for not doing enough as writers to force their government to remove its troops and tanks from East Central Europe. They bristled at the suggestion that they instinctively identified with their country's ambitions and interests. ("When am *I* going to take *my* tanks out of Eastern Europe?" asked an incredulous Tatyana Tolstaya, a descendant of the 19th-century master novelist, Leo Tolstoy.) Yet here too, the émigré Joseph Brodsky rallied to his compatriots' defense and stated that "the problems of Eastern Europe will be solved once the internal Russian problems will be solved."

But it wasn't only defensive Russians who refused to believe in the existence of Central Europe. There were enough skeptics in the countries concerned who felt that this fanciful redrawing of Europe's cultural map—restoring a unity that never was—amounted to little more than an intellectual game, indulged by East European émigrés out of touch with the world they left behind. It is true that the most vocal proponents of the Central European idea have been writers living in exile—Milan Kundera and the late Yugoslav novelist Danilo Kiš in Paris, Milosz in Berkeley, the Czech Josef Škvorecký in Toronto, or the Polish poet Stanislaw Baranczak in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And even some of the others, dissident writers who didn't leave their homes permanently, became infatuated with the notion of Central Europe while on visits abroad.

Those who never left were less sanguine about the prospects of Central European harmony. Knowing the ethnic strife and the historic rivalries of Eastern Europe, they kept reminding the idealists that there was enough to divide these countries even if the Soviet Union were to relax its grip on them. Besides, they added somewhat cynically, monolithic rule probably helped keep a lid on some of these potentially explosive conflicts. One need only think of the traditional hostility between Czechs and Slovaks, Poles and Germans, Hungarians and Romanians, Turks and Bulgarians.

In the West, too, the mystique of Central Europe has had its detractors. At yet another conference, this time at Ulm, West Germany, a German historian, Thomas Rotschild, offered a devastating analysis of the "intoxication" with Central Europe. First of all he called into question the alleged kinship between various East European art forms. (Czech filmmaking is radically different from Hungarian and Polish cinema, he claimed; a Hungarian Jewish novelist like George Konrád has more in common with the American Philip Roth than with Austrians like Peter Handke or Thomas Bernhard, etc.) Rotschild feared the leveling, standardizing effects of Central European integration even as he noted the conflicting motives behind the advocacy of regional unity:

When Milan Kundera, the Moravian writer living in Paris, or the Hungarian George Konrád rave about Central Europe, they mean something very different than when [the Trieste-based literary historian] Claudio Magris or his Austrian friends do the same; and all of them harbor very different notions from the Germans who with dubious justification have recently also been attracted to Central Europe. And while this turning toward the actual historical entity or to a future and still indistinct Central Europe may hold a number of attractive possibilities for Germans eager to curb powerful American influences, the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, and

Hungarians favoring Central Europe are anxious to break away from the Soviet Union. And finally Austria, in the face of an oppressive German presence, is reviving its own Habsburg dreams of economic and cultural supremacy.

The conference at which these words were spoken was held in the summer of 1989, at a time when the winds of change could be felt in only two East European countries: Poland and Hungary. But in the months that followed, a most extraordinary series of events seemed to render the entire debate over Central Europe irrelevant. As one hard-line communist regime after another fell into the dust, as 40-year-old political structures came tumbling down along with the Berlin Wall, the division of Europe seemed at an end. In the ensuing euphoria, the unity of Central Europe was just too small a prize. The "European house," a phrase first promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev, became a metaphor for the oneness of Europe. East European historians who a few months earlier had excitedly formed "Central Clubs" were now setting up all-inclusive European forums.

**B**ut although the communist order in Eastern Europe may indeed have crumbled, and the Soviet Union may be in retreat, such developments alone would not make the Eastern countries more Western. Just a few years ago George Konrád said that if it was impossible to go over to Vienna from Budapest for an evening at the opera, then it was impossible to talk about a normal state of affairs in Central Europe. By the end of 1989 the borders were wide open, and any Hungarian able to afford high-priced Viennese theater tickets could certainly make the trip. But have the new freedoms really changed the quality of life for most Hungarians? As Konrád's fellow countryman, the novelist Péter Esterházy, put it: "Our culture may be Western, but our life is still Eastern."

Suppose a massive infusion of Western capital does help the economically ravaged, post-communist societies struggle to their feet. The question still remains whether a wholesale merger with Europe is what those calling for East-West unity really had in mind. Obviously, for millions of East Europeans used to privations and hungry for Western comforts, the prospect of this type of wealth-sharing is a tantalizing one. But even if all-European integration on a grand scale were feasible in the near future (which of course it isn't), the submersion of individual identities it may produce should give one pause. Understandably, it was again intellectuals with an affinity for Central European ideals who, at the height of last fall's jubilations, cautioned about overhasty, and possibly irreversible, political decisions. German writers, such as, Günter Grass (born in Danzig, now Gdańsk, Poland) and Christa Wolf (born in East Prussia), in opposing the push for German reunification, were clearly not interested in perpetuating old-style communism in East Germany but in preserving a Central European alternative to the Federal Republic. To them, a non-communist German Democratic Republic would not be a redundant entity but a country more actively involved than its slicker, more jaded Western counterpart in maintaining the humane socialist values of an older Europe.

Elsewhere in Europe, the revolutionary changes have focused attention on uniquely Central European problems and solutions. Last November, a little-noted though quite remarkable meeting took place in Budapest involving the foreign ministers of Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Italy, with the purpose of discussing regional economic and cultural cooperation. The unusually cordial and hopeful meeting was bent on renewing old ties and locating points of common interest. However, more important than the conference's specific



agenda was its symbolism. The meeting of neutral, NATO, and Warsaw-pact countries not only affirmed "antipolitical" Central European principles, it also pleased those with longer memories, to whom the Budapest meeting seemed like a reunion of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Of course, nostalgia for the monarchy is nothing new in Central Europe, but lately sentimental affection has given way to programmatic admiration. Never have historians and politicians had so many kind words for the liberalism, the civilized *Gemütlichkeit* of the former multinational empire; never have they viewed its less-than-perfect unity with greater understanding. In Hungary, one political party even nominated the heir to the Austrian throne, Otto Habsburg, for president of the Hungarian Republic. Otto, a West German citizen, graciously declined, though his supporters in Budapest have not given up. As Habsburg historian Péter Hanák noted recently, "The growing mutual attraction between the former ruling dynasty and Hungarians waiting for a miracle is a fact of life in our day." Indeed, some Hungarians and Austrians feel they have already reestablished their Central Europe. The joint Vienna-Budapest World's Fair, planned for 1995, is perhaps the most grandiose expression of the rekindled Danubian consciousness.

Is this the real thing then, an Austrian-inspired new Central Europe? At least one local hero, Claudio Magris, Central Europe's leading literary historian, would welcome the idea. His influential book, *Danube* (1986), celebrates the diversity, the glorious eccentricities of Danubian civilization, in which the protean river becomes the paramount symbol of this civilization, standing in direct contrast to the Rhine with its mythic association of exclusivity and racial purity. "The Danube," writes

#### POLITICS: A DELICATE BALANCE

*Claudio Magris in Danube depicts the art of governing in Central Europe:*

The Habsburg art of government does not stifle dissidence or overcome contradictions, but covers and composes them in an ever-provisional equilibrium, allowing them substantially to go on as they are and, if anything, playing them off against one another. The ruler of the Empire is, by definition, a Proteus himself, changing his mask and his policy with supple mobility, and he therefore has no wish to transform his Protean subjects into a set of identical citizens. On the contrary, he allows them to pass from love to rebellion and vice versa, from depression to euphoria, in a game without end and without progress. He has no wish to impose some rigid unity on the various peoples, but to let them be themselves and live together in all their heterogeneity.

Magris, "is German-Magyar-Slavic-Romanic-Jewish Central Europe, polemically opposed to the German Reich." In *Europe, Europe* (1987), Hans Magnus Enzensberger's portraits of Budapest and Warsaw also stress the stunning irregularity and multiformity of this Central European world, in which an essence, if there is one, is to be sought in a clamor of competing voices, contradictory desires, clashing styles. A third Western observer, the British journalist Timothy Garton Ash, in *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (1989), tries more persistently to define essential characteristics, though, after subjecting the writings of prominent Central European intellectuals to rational analysis, he too comes up against glaring inconsistencies and self-contradictions.

None of this should surprise us. There is no immutable Central European "essence," just as there is no immutable Central Europe. In Central Europe, adjusting to history's whims has and still takes daring

and cunning, plain-speaking and dissemblance. Thus can that most Western, most cerebral of Central Europeans, Milan Kundera, turn a blind eye to reason when his nation's fate is at stake. And thus can the equally European George Konrád claim that in his part of the world people have always been "artful dodgers, longshot players, sneaky idlers, rascals [who] paid a price for being honest more than once."

The classic literary example of Central European wisdom could well be Jaroslav Hašek's *Good Soldier Švejk*, with its crafty realism and live-and-let-live attitudes. Švejk and the peculiar anti-heroic heroes of the contemporary Czechoslovakian writer Bohumil Hrabal have been important for people groping for models and for those reaching across arbitrary borders to find soulmates in other countries.

To outsiders it is often the protean flux and disparities of the Central European experience that are the most striking. Exasperated by the region's contradictions, Timothy Garton Ash concludes that "if the term Central Europe is to acquire some positive substance, then the discussion will have to move forward from the declamatory, the sentimental, and the incantational to a dispassionate and rigorous examina-

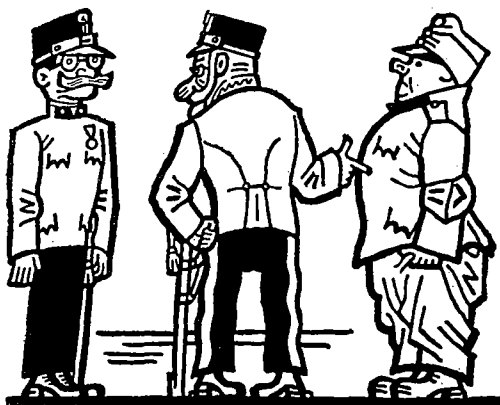
tion both of the real legacy of historic Central Europe . . . and of the true condition of present-day East Central Europe."

There is no question that, after the recent upheavals, there are new challenges—the need to democratize societies as well as governments, to better understand neighbors, to strike a balance between independence and integration are just a few. And they all require new approaches—less passion perhaps and more sobriety, more trust.

But the subjective element, the wariness, the skepticism will most likely remain, as well they should. "Skepticism," wrote an eminent Central European not long ago, "is inescapably a part of the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual phenomenon that is Central Europe . . . . That skepticism . . . is generally rather strange, a bit mysterious, a bit

nostalgic, often tragic, and at times even heroic, occasionally somewhat incomprehensible in its heavy-handed way, in its caressing cruelty and its ability to turn a provincial phenomenon into a global anticipation of things to come."

It may bode well for the future that the man who offered this appreciation of the Central European sensibility, the former Czech dissident playwright Václav Havel, is now the president of his country.



The Good Soldier Švejk features a Central European hero: The "fool" Švejk, pliant and realistic, who outwits the rigid authorities.

# BUDAPEST 1945: THE YEAR ZERO

*by John Lukacs*

**I**n my stepfather's cellar I was waiting for the Russians. I was 20 years old, a deserter, with false military identity papers; if I were to be found out by the National Socialists or by the field gendarmerie, I could be shot or hanged on the spot. I had left my unit, an anti-aircraft battery in the Hungarian army, in November of 1944. The bedraggled remnants of the army were about to be shipped westward, eventually to Germany, together with the retreating collaborationist Arrow Cross government. To the east of Budapest the Russians were less than 40 miles away. We thought that they would march into the city in a few days. Together with my mother and a dozen relatives and friends, we moved into that cellar, a subterranean office and warehouse owned by my stepfather. But the Russians progressed very slowly. They did not enter the city until they had surrounded it completely.

On the night before Christmas the first Russians moved into the western hills of the city, on the Buda side. All day we had heard the dull thudding of guns from that unaccustomed direction. The city was dark, the Danube carried the corpses of Jews who had been shot on the quays the night before; but people were still carrying small Christmas trees and packages home.

Snow fell on Christmas Day again. We now knew (and not merely heard) that the Russians had encircled Buda. We knew this not from Radio Budapest but from the BBC, to which we could still tune in on our small battery-powered radio.

The Russians were cautious. Each day

they advanced through 50, perhaps 100 blocks. Each day the Germans moved back their remaining tanks and trucks, trying to stable them in the narrow streets of the inner city. They had no anti-aircraft artillery left. When daylight came, the Russian planes began circling over the broken rooftops of the city, dropping bundles of small bombs on anything that moved, and on every kind of vehicle, including burnt-out wrecks. Gradually the scenery of the inner city became a last encampment of the Third Reich, an Augean stable of what was left of military metal. In the cellar we huddled, hungry and cold. After a week or so we began to hear the Russian loudspeakers at night: songs, proclamations, inviting the Hungarian soldiery to surrender. I was more than game to surrender: I had wanted to be liberated from the Germans for a long time, preferably by the British or the Americans, or now by the Russians, it mattered not which.

And finally they arrived in the city. As we stood in the doorway, peering out, Russian soldiers came by, one by one. They came in single file, close to the peeling, bulging, crumbling, shot-pitted walls of the dark apartment buildings. The first of them was the first Russian I had ever met; and the nicest Russian I was to meet for a long time. He was an officer, wearing a tightly padded uniform, a fur cap, with large binoculars hung around his neck. He had horn-rimmed glasses and a large mouth. He looked like a Weimar-Berlin film image of a Red Army officer, the kind of Russian who speaks German, likes chess and children and Beethoven. As matters turned

out, a rare kind.

It was 9:45 on the morning of January 18, 1945. Zero Minute, Zero Year.

**A**fter the Russians arrived, all kinds of interesting affiliations formed. The oddest kinds of people joined the Communist Party. They included a rich stockbroker friend of ours, a tough-minded capitalist if ever there was one. He was a hardheaded (rather than hardfaced) man who made out well not only after the war but during it, including during the siege. One could always be sure that F. had a car when no one else did, that he had a black-market supply of gasoline, food, fuel, clothes, *napoléons d'or*, etc. In short, a merchant adventurer, a master opportunist.

I had a certain liking for him, for he was not ungenerous; he had an appreciation of good books and a fine sense of humor. I told him that he was wrong to join the Communist Party, and I tried to explain why. That it was morally wrong, and bad form, I did not say, partly because he was an older man, and also because I knew that it would cut no ice with him. I explained my theory of the antiquated nature of communism and of its evident failure in the long run. He listened patiently, but I saw that he was a bit bored with it; it was too theoretical for him, too idealistic perhaps.

Yet he was not as hardheaded as he thought he was. The few advantages of his Party membership were not worth the game. He thought that his quick and shameless adjustment to the powers at hand would provide for his independent comforts in years ahead; he convinced himself not only that communism came to

Hungary to stay but also that his kind could stay in Hungary under communism. He was wrong. He mistook the wave of the present for the wave of the future—the occupational hazard of opportunists, including the most talented ones. And so eventually he retreated from communism: In 1949—after two years of unnecessarily protracted expectations and anxieties—he bought himself a legal exit passport for a large sum (obtainable for much less money to non-communists two years before) and emigrated to Australia, where he would die on a ski slope at the age of 60.

In the dark December of 1944 I brushed against one of the self-conscious secret resistance conventicles that—alas, too late—were finally sprouting in Budapest and that, for once, were mostly composed of what could be called professional intellectuals: university people, journalists, cultural officials of the former government, men and women on the fringes of cultural diplomacy. The leading figure of this group, J., was in his thirties, the son of respectable Calvinist gentry, dark, saturnine, and handsome except for his buck teeth, with the then relatively rare accomplishment of speaking English, having visited the United States on a government study grant before Pearl Harbor. An older friend had brought me to his wife's apartment. J. announced that he was a communist. This was before the Russians arrived. I was impressed. His announcement suddenly suggested a new kind of Hungary in which *this* kind of man might be an important personage as a communist. I thought that J. was a very knowledgeable Machiavellian, a younger statesman of sorts, who would soon reach some

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kind of high position in a new Hungarian regime.

After the Russians had arrived, I met J. sporting a proletarian cloth cap, in Lenin's style, day in and day out, in the streets as well as inside their unheated apartment. Perhaps because he had studied the 1917 strategy of the great Lenin, J. struck out for a career not so much within the Party itself (his membership in which he did not cease to flaunt) as within the organization of the Trade Unions—the Soviet track. The time

was ripe, J. and his associates considered, to apply the union principle to all kinds of professions, especially to government and municipal offices—or, more accurately, the time was ripe to secure new and important positions for themselves through the impeccable instrument of Trade Unionism.

Besides providing leadership for my suddenly diminished family—my stepfather was hit by a shell on the street during the last days of the siege and died after three days of agony—I had not much to do. The university had not yet reopened; at any rate I had few courses to complete. Every day I trudged through the ruins of the desolate city to the headquarters of the Association of Trade Unions, where one of the attractions was the free bean soup distributed to the staff every noon. Very soon I suspected that not much would come out of this unionism. The older unions of printers and of metalworkers were already controlled by the communists. The order of the day was to let people like J. exist as long as they had no real power, which, indeed, was the case, except that J. and his friends did not know it. They were wholly preoccupied with their activities, having convinced themselves that



*The Battle for Budapest. In late 1944, the Russian troops arrived, driving out the German and collaborationist armies.*

playing at power was the same thing as the exercise of power—the occupational disease of bureaucrats and, even more, of intellectuals.

Very soon after arriving at the Association of Trade Unions I found that I had really nothing to do. Nor did the others. They, however, concealed this condition with a feverish activity of meetings, conferences, associations, and “workshops” (I have yet to encounter a “workshop” that has anything to do with work), often behind closed doors. It was my first experience of the kind of intellectual bureaucracy that followed the phase of intellectual bohemianism as surely as other phenomena of the 20th century followed those of the 19th. My colleagues were making paperwork for themselves; and they were taking their functions, paper functions, very seriously. After the siege there was in Budapest a shortage of everything, from flour to matches, even a shortage of water. Of paper, miraculously—or perhaps not so miraculously—there seemed to have been no shortage at all.

Already on the second day of my ap-

pearance at the Association of Trade Unions I found that the most febrile kinds of intrigues were forming: confidential meetings behind closed doors from which certain people were excluded, others suddenly admitted. All these bureaucratic war games were criss-crossed by plots and paths that may have come from somewhere but that surely led to nowhere. Indeed, within a year the Association of Trade Unions was gone; within five years J., the Early Communist, found himself in prison; another five years later he was acquitted, whereafter he was appointed to an important position within the government's export-import organization, having finally acquired the official limousine and the diplomatic passport—a communist pilgrim's progress, a not untypical Hungarian career in the middle of the 20th century.

Late in March the Americans arrived—an event that I must describe in some detail. According to the arrangements made at Yalta, there was to be an Allied Control Commission in each of the former Axis countries, composed of Soviet, British and American representatives, a political and a military mission. The Russians, of course, ruled the roost in Budapest, and everywhere else in Eastern Europe (just as the Americans ruled similar commissions, say, in Rome). In retrospect, this American and British presence in Hungary was so ephemeral (the mission left in 1947, after the peace treaty between the Allies and Hungary was signed) that in the long and tragic history of my native country it is hardly worth mentioning at all. This remains a fact; and yet, oddly enough, it was not quite that way. Something of that air of American omnipotence in 1945, the impression that the United States, in an unprecedented way, was the greatest power in the world, transpired throughout the globe, lighting even the gloomy and depressing

skies over Budapest. There were perhaps not more than 200 Americans, fewer than 100 of them in uniform; yet somehow their presence in the capital seemed to be as evident, and almost as ubiquitous, as that of the Russians.

This condition was inseparable from the sudden and passionate Americanophilia of my countrymen, many of whom translated all of their expectations accordingly. Months before the war ended, hundreds, maybe thousands of people who knew some English daydreamed about getting a job with the British or the American missions. On the morning when the first Americans arrived, a nervous, teeming crowd of people besieged the entrances of the building they were to occupy; I heard that some people had arrived in the freezing dawn hours to get a first glimpse of the promised Americans in order to rush at them from favorable starting posts.

Presently, just about every American, whether high officer or private, became the acquisition of a Hungarian wife or mistress. The head of the military mission was a major general, a former governor of Oklahoma, who had his son posted to Budapest, where the latter was promptly annexed by a young bourgeoisie, his father's ambitious secretary who had fought for her desk on the first day and won it by gleaming tooth and red-lacquered nail. They were subsequently married and left for the United States on a special military plane. What happened to her in Oklahoma I now wonder; at the time, her story was a miracle tale, one of the *fabliaux* of 1945, Year Zero.

I would have liked very much to be annexed to the Americans or to the British, but I did not participate in the crush and rush of the first days, not so much because it would have been demeaning but because I had suffered from intellectual ochlophobia, the fear of crowds, since an early age. I thought I'd write my own ticket—a

## HUNGARY'S FATE: 1945–1956

In February 1945, the Allied leaders—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin—met in the Crimean city of Yalta to make plans for the postwar occupation of Nazi-dominated territories. But the fate of Hungary, like that of other East European countries, had already been largely decided. As early as December 31, 1944, the Soviet Union had established a provisional government in Hungary, which included parties from the non-communist left. Initially moderate, the Hungarian communists worked hard to rebuild the country, while pledging to guarantee democracy, private property, and small private industries. But poor showings in the first four elections prompted the Soviet-backed party to blackmail, intimidate, and even imprison popular opposition leaders.

In May 1949, after winning a carefully orchestrated election, the communists drafted a new constitution establishing Hungary as a "People's Republic." Mátyás Rákosi, the first secretary of the Worker's Party, launched ambitious nationalization and collectivization drives, all of which foundered. Facing widespread discontent, the regime adopted a "New Course" in 1953, and a new prime minister, Imre Nagy, discontinued collectivization and permitted the production of more consumer goods. A bitter power struggle between Nagy and Rákosi continued until 1955, when the reformer was expelled from the party and Rákosi and his successor, Ernő Gerő, put the nation back on a proper "Stalinist" course.



*The Yalta Conference, February 4–11, 1945.*

In October 1956, inspired by Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, Hungarian students took to the streets demanding reforms. But the peaceful protest was met by police violence, and the demonstration escalated into an armed uprising. Calling in Soviet troops, Gerő created rifts within his own party, and Nagy was reinstated to head a coalition government. Moscow withdrew its troops and agreed to negotiate. But Nagy pressed his hand too far, demanding Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and neutral status. The Soviet tanks rolled back into Hungary, reaching Budapest on November 4, and after several weeks of bloody fighting, the "National Communist" János Kádár stood at the helm of an obedient Soviet satellite.

resolution that, again, involved me in an enterprise in which nobler and baser purposes were mixed. Having recognized the futility of my association with the Association of Trade Unions, I spent a night at home, literally burning the candle at both ends (candles were rare and electricity still nonexistent), composing a political memorandum in English that I intended to hand over to an American diplomat of the first rank. The memorandum consisted of information that I thought was not available elsewhere, items involving misdeeds by the

Russians or the communists. My idea was very simple. I would inform the Americans about such matters, not only for my country's benefit but also for my own.

Somehow I had secured a list of all American personnel in Budapest, wherefrom I deduced that the person I ought to contact was the first secretary of the legation. I presented myself at the legation about a week or so after it had established itself in Budapest. The line of supplicants and applicants had not much thinned, but the very fact that I asked for Mr. Squires by



A 1947 poster for Hungary's Three-Year Plan. The first socialist state plans in Eastern Europe were devoted to repairing the ravages of the war.

his name seemed to have made an impression on the Hungarian receptionist, who, after a moment of hesitation, took the small envelope containing my visiting card on which I had written, in impeccable English, something like this: "The bearer of this card would like to have the honor and the pleasure to discuss certain matters of interest with Mr. Squires."

I was admitted to Squires's office. He was, I vaguely recall, a large, affable man, not quite as diffident as his British counterpart would have been, but reflecting, rather, the peculiarly American compound of being both perplexed and incurious at the same time. I babbled something in English about how important it was that the American mission be properly informed about certain important matters. I do not remember his saying anything. I put the

memorandum upon the table. He said, "What can I do for you?" or words to that effect. On a coffee table I saw copies of *Time* and *Life* magazines. I hadn't seen their likes for many years. I said something to the effect that I would be only too glad to furnish him with the most confidential, and accurate, kind of political information about developments in Hungary if he would let me have a small supply of these superb American journals. He told me to help myself. I felt that I had just achieved a great, an unimaginable coup. I clutched several issues of *Life* and *Time* to my chest. I floated homeward in a cloud of triumph. In our unheated dwelling, grimy and redolent of the saddening odor of poverty, I faced the ruined beauty of my Anglomaniac mother. "Guess what I have!" I said. My mother turned radiant. She could not believe my luck.

Squires was one of those rich Americans from a good family who had entered the foreign service in the '30s because it was a more interesting career than banking: a type that, I am sorry to say, has disappeared from the ranks of the American foreign service by now. This I recognized later, having also learned that his main interests included liquor and polo, a kind of period mix that makes me almost nostalgic. He seemed not very much interested in Hungarian politics, perhaps because he was smart enough to know that there was not much that the United States could or even should do. He was also enough of a man of the world to know how to disembarass himself, in a smooth and professional way, of this young freak who, for all he knew, might be a Soviet or communist agent.

Eventually—and I cannot now remember exactly how—I found a less unwilling recipient of the kind of information that I had to offer. He was Rear Admiral William F. Dietrich, the third



in command of the American military mission: an honest navy officer of the old school, a practicing Catholic who abhorred communism without at first saying so, who would not only welcome my confidences in a fatherly manner but who, a year later, would be the person most responsible for getting me out of political trouble. Arranging for the transportation of my only suitcase in his personal car across the border to Austria (whereto I escaped), he then furnished me with the kind of character reference that ensured my receiving a priority visa to the United States once I presented myself to an American consulate in the West. In short, he may have saved my life.

By the time Admiral Dietrich and I had become friends, that is, by the summer of 1945, I knew many Americans in Budapest, at least by sight. There was not, as far as I can remember or ascertain, a mean one among them. To most of us, the Americans seemed the brightest, the smartest, and the best among all the human types who were to be found in Hungary in those crucial and tragic times; and, indeed, in many ways they were.

I can, however, recall two types of Americans who left unpleasant memories. They were not members of the American missions. Sometime in the late summer of 1945 the news that a visit to ruined Budapest promised certain paradisiacal prospects for certain American visitors must have begun to circulate in certain circles in New York. *Cognoscenti* (Am.: wise guys) such as the publisher of *Esquire* magazine would arrive on a visit, hugely enjoying the pleasures of the flesh that were easily available to them in this downtrodden and beggar-poor country. There was something obscene in this, especially when they later described their visits in the style that was typical of *Esquire* at the time and that, alas, has become typical of most American magazines since then: the kind of prose whose

principal purpose is to tell what kind of shoes, what kind of cheese, what kind of people, and what kind of sexual compositions are "in"—a concept of connoisseurship that is public, not private. For what is the use of the discovery of a superb little wine from an unknown vineyard, or of a superb ruined city where formerly aristocratic privileges and pleasures can be secured for peanuts, unless the fact, even more than the subject, of one's discovery can be displayed in public?

The other kind of unpleasant visitor was the sort of émigré who, having left Hungary before the war and being well on the way to a lucrative or spectacular career in the United States, usually in the capacity of either a scientist or a moviemaker, would arrive in Budapest from a Paramount Studio or from a Rockefeller University, full of arrogance, unease, and contempt for the miserable and despondent people of the country. I particularly remember one of these tatty birds of passage, already beyond the prime of his life, decked out in the regalia of an American colonel or brigadier, shuffling his flat feet across the lobby of the American mission building. I read about him a few days later: He was professing the right kind of leftward opinions of the time. His sour countenance seemed to reflect his opinions: Hungary got what she had coming to her, that is, the Soviet occupation, the best thing for a people who had been stupid enough to be allied to the Germans. Years later in the United States he became a scientific adviser to the Eisenhower administration, one of the scientist-spokesmen for the production of bigger and better hydrogen bombs. In an interview he gave in the '50s I read: "I know what communism means: I know what the Soviets did to my unhappy country."

The British were a slightly different

story. There were fewer of them; they were diffident and also more aloof. Because of geography and tradition and because they were the standard-bearers of the struggle against the Third Reich from the outset, we thought, before Year Zero, that the British, rather than the Americans, would be the chief Western power in our part of Europe after the war—which, of course, did not turn out to be the case. They were far less impressed with the charms of Hungary and of Hungarians than were the Americans; they acted as if they knew that Hungary now belonged to the Soviet sphere of interest, and that there was not much left to do.

My first meeting with them was sad. I was plodding home on a late March evening when the suddenly warm and liquid air and the brightness of the twilight promise the pleasantness of summer for people in more or less normal conditions, while for others this development of implacable warmth and of light serves only to illuminate one's wretchedness and misery—March, and not April, being the cruelest month, at least in my native city. I knew that the arrival of the British and American missions was imminent. Suddenly, rounding a bend on the empty boulevard, I came upon two British officers, with red tabs, one of them carrying his cane, taking a brisk after-dinner walk, no doubt. I stopped. "Are you British?" I asked. "Oh, it is so good to see you"—or words to that effect. We exchanged a few words, and they went on. I was only 21 years old, but even then I felt that this encounter had the sad tinge of a long unrequited love. So they had come, after all—even if it was too late, after so many years of disappointments, after so many years of waiting, of hope, of tragedy. I sensed a kind of embarrassment as they went on. We, who loved the British in 1940—memories that even now give me a *frisson*—imagined their future victory: the triumph of a British-led Europe where free-

dom, decency, and a kind of easy elegance would exist anew. But it was not to be such a world.

At any rate (certainly at any rate of exchange) the British were poorer than the Americans. They were poorer than they had ever been, but as snobbish as ever. For the British, unlike for other peoples, snobbery is the outcome of diffidence as much as of arrogance, perhaps even more. They were unwilling to get involved with men and women whom they could not place and on whom, on occasion, they might have to depend. It was all restrained, modest, and cold with a slight touch of being almost shabby. It was all contrary to Hungarian expectations, though not to my own, having attended school in England for two years as a teenager.

Still Anglomania lived on. One of my pathetic memories of Year Zero includes a wedding reception in the fall. A Hungarian girl, the only daughter of an impoverished, gray-faced doctor, had fallen in love with a British sergeant, a North Englishman, with the long, knobby face of his class, which, as I instantly recognized even before he spoke, was that of the lower-middle variety. But this his bride, and her family, did not (or perhaps did not want to) know. I can still see her nervously smiling in the living room of that apartment (the reception was held at home), furnished with the remnants—German china, Bohemian glass, faded runners, grayed lace, a worn rug—of a destroyed bourgeois past that once had belonged to a world that was civic, fussy, stuffy, but, after all was said, reasonably honorable. Her luck, the fortune, to be married to an English soldier at this time, to be carried off as a bride to England! I, and perhaps some others, knew that there was something very wrong: that her progress from this broken-down boulevard apartment with its low-bourgeois bibelots to a gas firegrate somewhere in the Mid-

lands was not necessarily up. After all, for someone born in Hungary even the ubiquitous cooking smell of paprika and onions frying in cheap lard—especially ubiquitous now when it could no longer be confined to kitchens—was preferable to the coal-smoke and sultana-cake and weak-cocoa odor of mid-England; and even the broken remnants of a past, that grand piano whose chords had long lost their twang and whose polish had long lost its shine, and the doctor-father's *Collected Works of Goethe* in the glass bookcase, were symbols of

matters that would not exist where this girl was about to go. This decent and good Englishman stood there uneasily and self-consciously cracking jokes with two of his pals; he was getting roped into something that was embarrassing and difficult. I doubted whether the marriage would last a year. Perhaps he did, too. The bride, well-tutored, articulate, Hungarian, did not know it. In a very Hungarian way, the wish *was* the thought, again and again.

I have now described the few hundred Americans and Englishmen who were temporary residents of my native city at the time. But how about the Russians, of whom there were hundreds of thousands around, who ruled my country and all of the surrounding countries then, and indeed, until just the day before yesterday?

The Russians? Well, there is not much to say about the Russians. They were everywhere and they were nowhere. All kinds of funny, and some not so funny, books have been written about them, about their childishness, their primitiveness, their brutal-



*In 1948, large factories were nationalized throughout Eastern Europe. Industrial production shot up, but, with the production of consumer goods throttled, the standard of living failed to rise.*

ity—about the Russian soldiers who tried to shave out of flush toilets, mistaking them for washbasins, or who gulped down entire bottles of eau de cologne, mistaking them for perfumed vodka.

During the 18 months that I spent under Russian occupation I did not meet a single Russian who spoke an intelligible French or English or even German. They all seemed to have been stamped out of a mold: their minds even more than their bodies. Under Soviet rule the eternally passive masses of the Russias had been activated—up to a certain level, in certain ways. They were taught to read and write; they were taught to think in public categories, for the first time in their history. They had acquired a new skill: They had learned words and phrases that were public answers to public questions. They were more than satisfied with this achievement: a verbal achievement that rendered them civic and “cultured.”

What impressed me even at that time was the Russians' deep-seated sense of inferiority. They, the conquerors, seemed

quite stiff and uneasy at the receptions of the American mission. In spite of their elephantine and hideous power they would react to the slightest kind of criticism; they insisted that respect be paid to them on any and every occasion; all in all, they were very unsure of themselves, perhaps especially in the presence of Americans, for whom, I am sure, they had an emotional kind of admiration that they tried their best (and also their worst) to suppress. I was not at all surprised when, a few years later, Stalin began the ridiculous campaign proclaiming to the Soviet peoples and to the world that the inventors of the telephone, the airplane, etc., etc., had not been Americans or Europeans but Russians.

It was mainly because of the Russians that the distaste for communism in Hungary was so extraordinarily widespread. I thought then, and also much later in the United States—arguing with Americans about this in vain, until I was blue in the face—that communism was not much of a danger, that once the Russians removed themselves from a European country they occupied, communism and communists would vanish there. The very fact that something was propagated by the Russians made it repugnant. Other European peoples who had lived under Russian rule decades before, the Finns, Baltics, Poles, had had this experience. In this respect German rule, precisely because it was more civilized on the surface, probably would have harmed Hungary more in the long run, for then the culture of the nation would have become more than considerably Germanized. As matters turned out, after more than 45 years of Russian occupation, the Russian influence on the culture and civilization of my native country has been zero.

This brings me to the deficient appeal of communism and of communists. During

Year Zero I could see who were the kinds of people who joined their Party. The brightest among them were the opportunists such as the earlier-mentioned J., or the capitalist friend of my family who chose to join the winning side because it was the winning side, *pur et simple*. (Among opportunists no less than among revolutionaries there is such a type as *un pur*: the person who will allow no compromise to sully his dedication to the supreme cause of opportunism.) Oddly—or perhaps not so oddly—the Russians, forever eager to be appreciated, especially by people who were smart, had a respect for such opportunists, much more than they had for the motley variety of convinced communists. What struck me at the time was how many of the latter were—how should I put it?—people with a deeply embedded sense of personal, rather than cultural, inferiority. To be sure, all of us suffer from the wounds of some kind of humiliation, all of us nurture at least one complex of relative inferiority in our hearts; but there are some people who allow these sentiments to grow to an extent that they became a dominant factor in their personalities and aspirations, and this seemed to be the case with most of the communists I met in 1945. They were unsure, suspicious, narrow, and bitter: in sum, preternaturally *aged*—as was indeed the philosophy of Marxism, that cast-iron piece left over from the junk heap of 19th-century ideas.

Sometime during the summer of Year Zero I met Georg Lukács,\* one of the few famous communist intellectuals, who had just arrived from Moscow. He, too, had the appearance of a tired survivor from another age: a leftover from the Weimar period. Everything about him was drooping and sliding down: his glasses, his eyelids be-

\*I am no relative of this man, with whose name mine has been sometimes confused. His international fame was resurrected—or rather, artificially inflated—by Anglo-American intellectuals circa 1960. Few people have bothered to read him in his native Hungary.

hind his glasses, his ears, his nose, his large cynical mouth, his coat, his cravat, his tobacco-stained hands. His countenance, curiously like that of many other Weimar intellectuals whom I would later encounter in America, reminded me of a dirty ashtray. He knew German better than he knew his native language, which he spoke with a weary coffee-house accent. His conversation, or what I remember of it, consisted mostly of tired *Kaffeehaus* witticisms with which he tried not only to lighten the customary Marxist platitudes but also to cover up the fact that he knew remarkably ("remarkably" being the *mot juste*) little of what Hungary had lived through and what Hungarians were thinking. His last contact with his native country had occurred more than a quarter of a century before, during Béla Kún's regime, which, for him, were halcyon days. In sum, an intellectual fossil.

Most of these still-believing communist intellectuals moved by inclinations that were Trotskyist rather than Stalinist. Of course they would go to any lengths to deny this. This is, too, why I was not at all surprised when, on Stalin's orders, a few years later the police government of Hungary began to get rid of some of them in the most cruel and brutal manner imaginable: No matter how cowardly and conformist, they were, after all, international communists, not dumb Muscovite minions; they were not particularly good at being both brutal and vulgar, unlike their Russian masters. This was also why I was not surprised that most of these surviving communist intellectuals were in the vanguard of the 1956 uprising, when they had finally realized that the rule imposed on them was so stupid and senseless as to

be intolerable. They also realized that "intolerable" is what people no longer want to tolerate.

The year 1945 was already into autumn. In September Baron U., a great banker and capitalist, and a very genial man to boot, gave a party in his relatively untouched mansion, where he invited leading members of the government and of the political parties, including Rákosi, the potato-headed, unscrupulous boss of the Communist Party, back from Moscow. (I was not among the guests.) I asked F, the Baron's relative—an older man, another former great industrialist and an officer of the Hungarian-British Society—why U. would do such a thing. "You are too young to understand, my boy," F said. "We were brought up by the principle"—he said it in English—"right or wrong, my country." I was impressed by his response; I could not answer him and thought about it for a long time, feeling, however, that there was something wrong with this. Many years later I read G. K. Chesterton with delight: "My country right or wrong is like saying, 'My mother, drunk or sober.'" Still, Chesterton's aphorism related to an England, swollen with pride, in the aftermath of the mafficking and the jingoism of the Boer War. We, in Hungary, another generation later, were stiff and swollen not with pride and possessions but with hunger and hatred, including self-hatred. I was struggling against the communist subjugation of my country, yet if someone had offered me American or Swiss or Portuguese citizenship I would have accepted it in an instant. "Right or wrong," I thought, "*my* country?" From this time on not much remains to be said: Year Zero was about to run out—and I was about to run away from my country.

# AFTER THE BLOC PARTY

*by Stephen E. Deane*

**I**t is easy to wax euphoric over the events that swept Eastern Europe in 1989. The images—flashed across television screens or played upon the pages of newspapers and magazines—still remain fresh in memory: In Hungary, the funeral and reburial of Imre Nagy, leader of the 1956 Revolution; in East Germany, the joyous flood of people streaming through the Berlin Wall, that symbol of division and Cold War; in Poland, the beaming face of Lech Walesa, his Solidarity trade union relegalized; in Bulgaria, unprecedented throngs demanding democracy; in Czechoslovakia, vast crowds shaking their keys for the final curtain of communist rule; in Romania, the bloody end to the hated Ceausescu dictatorship.

As people power toppled the old guard in one country after another, it all seemed deceptively easy. “What were we afraid of all these years?” asked former dissident Rita Klimová, as she scurried about her small Prague apartment in preparation for her new job: Czechoslovakia’s ambassador to Washington.

To be sure, popular upheavals had shaken individual East European states at other times during the postwar era—in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. But an uncompromising Soviet Union saw to it that each one of these was crushed. In 1989, however, the Soviet leader himself inspired reform, and this time he made it clear that Soviet troops would not intervene. One by one, the East European satellites broke out of the Soviet orbit.

Poland was the first to go. On April 7, the government and Solidarity reached a round-table agreement, relegalizing Solidarity and providing for partially free elections. Despite election laws designed, with Solidarity’s assent, to assure a majority of communists and their allies, the communists were roundly humiliated at the polls on June 4. The opposition had received a clear mandate to govern, and on August 24 Solidarity’s Tadeusz Mazowiecki became prime minister, thus sealing the first successful transition from communist rule to democracy.

In Hungary, on February 11, the Communist Party Central Committee approved the creation of independent political parties. Three months later, on May 2, Hungary became the first country to dismantle its part of the Iron Curtain, tearing down the barbed wire on the border with Austria. On the seventh of October, the communists—officially the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party—reformed and renamed themselves the Hungarian Socialist Party. Ten days later, the parliament changed the constitution to allow for a multiparty system, and in a November referendum, the people voted to postpone the presidential election until after free parliamentary elections had taken place on March 25.

A certain ripple effect was clearly disturbing the once-solid Soviet bloc. On September 10, Budapest decided to allow visiting East Germans passage from Hungary into Austria. Once the floodgate was opened, thousands of East Germans fled to the West, while thousands more sought refuge—and a first step toward freedom—in

the West German embassies in Prague and Warsaw. The mass exodus, to say the least, put a damper on the German Democratic Republic's 40th anniversary celebration, and nine days later, on October 16, 100,000 East Germans demonstrated for change in Leipzig. On October 18, an ailing Erich Honecker was toppled and replaced by Egon Krenz, who was himself replaced in December by Gregor Gysi, a lawyer who had defended dissidents. Amid all these reshufflings, however, came the event of greatest symbolic resonance: the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9. The politics of 1989 now had its equivalent of the storming of the Bastille.

But other East Europeans had little time to marvel at the momentousness of the moment. Just one day after the fall of the Wall, Bulgaria's dour leader of 35 years, Todor Zhivkov, was ousted. The foreign minister, Petar Mladenov, took the helm, promising Gorbachev-style reforms.

Czechoslovakia's hard-line leadership—installed by the Soviet tanks that had crushed the Prague Spring—suddenly found itself isolated. Most of the Czech and Slovak citizens, who pride themselves on a rich European cultural heritage, were embarrassed to find themselves lagging behind Bulgaria. Just as humiliating was being lumped together with the Soviet bloc's most Stalinist state—Romania.

But the government made a fatal mistake. On Friday, November 17, the police beat nonviolent student demonstrators with a fury unseen in Prague for two decades. "The massacre," as this event quickly became known, galvanized the opposition. That weekend, Czech students, actors, dissidents, and workers joined in creating the Civic Forum; Slovaks formed a sister organization, the Public Against Violence (PAV). Events accelerated at a breathtaking pace. On November 27, millions of workers staged a two-hour general strike,



*Lech Walesa leading the 1988 strike in the Gdańsk shipyard. Solidarity's popularity forced the government to agree to free elections.*

and less than a month later, on December 10 (International Human Rights Day), Civic Forum leader Václav Havel announced a new coalition government. The opposition gained the key posts, and Havel himself became president on December 29. Parliamentary elections are set for June.

Meanwhile, the Christmas season was proving to be less than kind to Romania's Stalinist dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu. A mid-December protest on behalf of a pastor in Timișoara sparked the uprising. It took the army, however, to put down Ceaușescu's own private force, the fanatical Securitate. Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, were executed—in what most observers deemed a grim but necessary spectacle—on Christmas Day.

The National Salvation Front, a loose coalition dominated by anti-Ceausescu communists in cooperation with the army, took over the government. While parliamentary elections are set for May, the political situation continues to be volatile.

Not that stability reigns in the other newly liberated nations. An old East European saw defines communism as "the longest and most arduous path from capitalism to capitalism," but now the witticism sounds less like a joke than a challenge. East European nations, fresh from the victories of 1989, are beginning to see just how difficult it is to move from single-party states and command economies to multi-party political systems and efficient free markets.

Poland, in most respects, is still leading the way. Throughout the 1980s, Solidarity—steered by Lech Walesa, backed by some of Poland's ablest intellects, and supported by the Catholic Church and a Polish pope—pioneered what Timothy Garton Ash has justly described "as a new kind of politics in Eastern Europe . . . a politics of social self-organization aimed at negotiating the transition from communism." But "refolution," to use Garton Ash's neologism, has its costs. Today, Poland's new institutions are encumbered by compromises that opposition leaders were forced to accept in their dealings with the communists.

So, for instance, while Poland was the first state to hold free elections, the opposition was allowed to contest only 35 percent of the seats in the lower house. Similarly, though Poland became the first East European state with a non-communist prime minister, Wojciech Jaruzelski, the general who imposed martial law from December 13, 1981, to July 22, 1983, remains the pres-

ident. And while the Communist Party split up in late January, entrenched functionaries at the local level have so far refused to budge. "The real battle for the future of Poland will happen on the local level," says Jerzy Regulski, the minister for local government reform.

Solidarity faces a difficult dilemma. It must hold together at least as long as the communist apparatus remains. Yet as Poland proceeds toward democracy, the various forces within Solidarity will inevitably split into separate interest groups, even into separate parties. By early 1990, such divisions had already emerged. Most of the government team, led by finance minister Leszek Balcerowicz, favors a big-bang shift to a market economy. The Solidarity delegation in Parliament, headed by Bronislaw Geremek, prefers a gentler social-democratic approach, with guarantees of basic welfare. And then there is the trade-union core of Solidarity—whose strength resides in the very factories, huge and obsolete, that the Solidarity-led government wants to break up for the sake of economic reform.

District elections scheduled for this June (or earlier) are expected to break the communists' stranglehold on local power. But the unifying force of Solidarity may still be needed to carry the nation through wrenching economic changes.

Czechoslovakia may have things a little easier. "In Poland there is exhaustion after eight years of struggle for democracy," observed Miroslaw Jasinski, a Pole who co-founded the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity group, "but here [in Czechoslovakia] there was a blitzkrieg that has enabled people to conserve their strength." That blitzkrieg resulted in fewer

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compromises with the communists, and as a result, Jasinski believes, "People here have the opportunity to achieve full democracy far more quickly."

The Civic Forum has already placed the people it favors in key posts, beginning with the presidency. Economist Valtr Komarek, one of two first deputy prime ministers, will chart the transition to a market economy. Dissident lawyer Jan Carnogursky, the other first deputy prime minister, will shepherd in legal changes guaranteeing human rights and multiparty democracy. Richard Sacher, Eastern Europe's first non-communist interior minister, ordered the abolition of the STB, or secret police, on February 1. And Jiri Dienstbier, a veteran human-rights activist, left his job as a stoker to become the new foreign minister.

The opposition also has succeeded in balancing the government leadership between Czechs and Slovaks, who form the two nations in this federal state. Marian Calfa (the new prime minister) and Carnogursky are Slovak, as is the new head of the parliament, Alexander Dubček. A recurrence of the tensions that have marred Czech-Slovak relations in the past cannot be ruled out, though I found no evidence of such hostilities during a month-long stay in Czechoslovakia this past winter.

Political fragmentation, not the nationality question, represents Czechoslovakia's most serious challenge. More than 30 political parties have sprung up to compete with the five pre-existing parties. There are several Social Democratic parties or factions, several Christian Democratic parties, at least two rival Green parties, and a left wing that includes the old Communist Party and two reformist parties. Czechoslovakia could find itself adrift without leader-



The Old and the New. *Alexander Dubček, leader of Czechoslovakia's ill-fated Prague Spring (1968), and Václav Havel toast the fall of the communist leadership.*

ship, its freely elected parliament immobilized by fractious quarrels.

The alternative is for the Civic Forum to stay together and for Havel to remain president, uniting both parliament and country after the June elections. Sasha Vondra, a spokesperson for the group, told me that the Forum could not become a political party because it comprises so many different political views, from neo-Trotskyism to neo-conservatism. Yet both the Forum and PAV will endorse a list of candidates—both independents and those running under party banners. This could be the first step in the evolution of the Civic Forum into a "non-party" party, one above politics, similar to Charles de Gaulle's *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* after World War II. The Forum could eschew partisan politics—the left, right, and center—and instead lay claim to a politics of morality. Havel

## THE SPRINGTIME OF NATIONS

*In an essay from his forthcoming book, The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague (Random House), Timothy Garton Ash explores the significance of last year's events in Eastern Europe.*

Eighteen-forty-eight was called the Springtime of Nations or the Springtime of Peoples: the *Völkerfrühling*, *wiosna ludów*. The revolutionaries, in all the lands, spoke in the name of "the people." But the international solidarity of "the people" was broken by conflict between nations, old and new, while the domestic solidarity of "the people" was broken by conflict between social groups—what came to be known as "classes." "Socialism and nationalism, as mass forces, were both the product of 1848," writes A. J. P. Taylor. And for a century after 1848, until the communist deepfreeze, Central Europe was a battlefield of nations and social classes.

Of what, or of whom, was 1989 the springtime? Of "the people?" But in what sense? "*Wir sind das Volk*," shouted the first great crowds in East Germany: The people against the self-styled people's state. But within a few weeks many of them had changed the definite article. "*Wir sind EIN Volk*," they now chanted: that is, we are one nation. In Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, the crowds were a sea of national flags, while the people raised their voice to sing old national hymns. In Hungary and Romania they cut the communist symbols out of the centers of their flags. In East Germany there were, at first, no flags, no hymns. But gradually the flags came out, plain stripes of red, black and gold without the GDR hammer and dividers in the middle: the flag of Western and before that of united Germany. And the chant taken up by a very large part of the crowds was "*Deutschland, Einig Vaterland!*"—the line on whose account the so-called "national" anthem of the GDR had not been sung officially since the early 1970s.

In every Western newspaper commentary on Eastern Europe one now invariably reads that there is a grave danger of something called "nationalism" reviving in this region. But what on earth does this mean? Does it mean that people are again proud to be Czech, Polish, Hungarian, or, for that matter, German? That hearts lift at sight of the flag and throats tighten when they sing the national anthem? In that case I must warn the world against one of the most rabidly "nationalist" countries I know. It

is called the United States of America.

Patriotism is not nationalism. Rediscovered pride in your own nation does not necessarily imply hostility to other nations. These movements were all, without exception, patriotic. They were not all nationalist. Indeed, in their first steps most of the successor regimes were markedly less nationalist than their Communist predecessors. The Mazowiecki government in Poland took a decisively more liberal and enlightened approach to both the Jewish and the German questions than any previous government, indeed drawing criticism, on the German issue, from the communist-nationalists. In his first public statement as president, Václav Havel emphasized that he would be the president of "all Czechs, Slovaks, and members of other nationalities." His earlier remark on television that Czechoslovakia owes the Sudeten Germans an apology for the way they were expelled after World War II was fiercely criticized by—the Communists. In Romania, the revolution began with the ethnic Romanian inhabitants of Timișoara making common cause with their ethnic Hungarian fellow citizens. It would require very notable exertions for the treatment of the German and Hungarian minorities in post-revolutionary Romania to be worse than it was under Nicolae Ceaușescu.

National and ethnic conflicts may grow again among and within these states, as they did in Eastern Europe before the last war, especially if their economic situation deteriorates. Or those national and ethnic conflicts may progressively be alleviated, as were those of Western Europe after the last war, especially if these countries' economic situation improves in a process of integration into a larger European common market and community. We shall see. But the historical record must show that 1989 was not a year of acute national and ethnic conflict in Eastern Europe west of the Soviet frontier. Quite the reverse: It was a year of solidarity both within and among nations. At the end of the year, symbolic and humanitarian support for the people(s) of Romania came from all the self-liberated states of East Central Europe. A springtime of nations is not necessarily a springtime of "nationalism."

seemed to take this approach in his New Year's Day address to the nation: "Now the issue really is not which party, club, or group wins the elections. The issue now is that the elections are won by those who are best in the moral, civic, political, and specialist sense, regardless of which party cards they hold."

At the same time, Havel is competent, even masterful, at behind-the-scenes hard-ball politics, as he demonstrated when he turned Alexander Dubček, a potential rival for the presidency, into an ally by seeing to it that he was made the head of parliament. The question is whether Havel and Civic Forum can continue to find a balance between the politics of morality and the realities of partisan conflict.

In Hungary, unlike Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Communist Party itself led the march away from Marxism-Leninism—first, in the evolutionary changes that characterized János Kádár's 32-year rule (1956–88), and second, in the accelerated reforms that swept away (or at least transformed) the Communist Party during the last couple of years. Imre Pozsgay and his fellow reformers-from-within, now calling themselves radical socialists, have steered both the new Socialist Party and (at least until the March elections) the government itself.

The ruling party having led the way, no Solidarity or Civic Forum emerged in Hungary. But with the opening of the political system, at least 47 parties have rushed in. In the partisan jostle, symbolic differences often seem to outweigh substantial ones. Many in the various opposition groups go without neckties to distinguish themselves from the communists and their heirs. But how do they distinguish their political and economic programs? David Shipler, writing recently in the *New Yorker*, described a "vague opposition whose programs and personalities remain sketchy." But Balint Magyar, a leader of the Alliance of Free

Democrats, disagrees, citing the 160-page program that his party had put out as early as March 1989.

Some observers are troubled less by vagueness than by rumors of virulent nationalism and of anti-Jewish and anti-Gypsy sentiments among some parties. Although its spokesmen deny it, critics allege that the Democratic Forum harbors anti-Semitism. As Shipler noted, there was increasing talk "... about 'real Hungarians,' as opposed to Jewish Hungarians, who are stereotyped negatively as being prominent at each end of the political spectrum—in the Communist hierarchy at one end, or in one of the most radical opposition parties, the Alliance of Free Democrats, at the other."



The dangerous mix of democracy and nationalism is nowhere more evident in Eastern Europe than in Bulgaria. In Hungary, suppressed tensions threaten to rise to the surface; in Bulgaria, the new leadership is seeking to quell hostilities that its hard-line predecessors provoked and encouraged. Last summer 320,000 Bulgarian Turks fled to Turkey—the culmination of a violent campaign that the Zhivkov regime had waged since 1984 to force the Turkish minority to abandon its religion and language and to accept Slavic names. The new communist leadership has moved to restore cultural, religious, and political rights to the country's one million ethnic Turks and other Muslims—only to

face strikes and protests from the Bulgarian majority. At one demonstration in Sofia, the crowd demanded a referendum vote on a constitutional provision that would make Bulgaria one nation with one official language and religion.

Opposition leaders, however, blame hard-line Zhivkov supporters for continuing to whip up antagonisms. "The anti-reformists are trying to fight their last battle over the ethnic issue," Zhelio Zhelev, president of the opposition's rainbow coalition, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), asserted in January. The UDF, which comprises 15 groups of intellectuals, ecology activists, trade unionists, and others, has been conducting fitful round-table talks with the communist leadership. In late February, the Communist Party agreed in principle to an opposition demand to withdraw Party cells from the workplace. The communists also agreed to postpone elections from May to June. The opposition has demanded that elections be put off until November to give it more time to organize.

Mladenov seems to want reforms aimed at improving communism, not at doing away with it. "It is only socialism that can grant social and economic development in our society," he declared in December. On February 2, Mladenov was removed as head of the Party, but he remained head of the state.

Romania's revolution—the only violent one in Eastern Europe—consisted neither of an organized opposition, as in Poland and Czechoslovakia, nor of reform-minded communist authorities, as in Hungary and Bulgaria. Hatred of Ceaușescu united Romanians during the uprising, but what will bind the nation together now? Some Romanians fear that the Ceaușescu dictatorship will be replaced by a dictatorship of the ruling National Salvation Front (NSF). The organization that originally described itself as a transitional government now says it will

run in the spring elections. In becoming a political party, the NSF could shed elements of its coalition of technocrats, students, and dissidents and be left with two core groups: anti-Ceaușescu communists, led by President Ion Iliescu, and the army. The NSF, backed by the army, could then seek to consolidate its power over an increasingly splintered populace.

There is hope, however, that Romanians, filled with revulsion at the violence they have already suffered, will make democracy work. On February 1, the National Salvation Front agreed to give up its monopoly of power and to enter into a coalition with 29 other parties. And even if the NSF wins the election, it is committed to a formal separation of party and state. This will give the opposition parties in parliament the opportunity to hone their political skills and to build coalitions.

It is worth recalling, too, that Romania's revolution was sparked when the ethnically diverse townspeople of Timișoara united behind a Protestant minister who had spoken out in defense of his fellow ethnic Hungarians. "History does not suggest that the Romanians have a particular gift for democracy," noted Romanian sociologist Pavel Campeanu in the *The New York Review of Books*, "but the price they have just paid offers the hope that they will be particularly protective of any democratic institutions they may create."

**P**oles, Czechs and Slovaks, Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Romanians all carried out revolutions without calling their national identities into question. But the East Germans could not. Erich Honecker used to say that Marxism-Leninism provided the state with its reason for being. Without that enforced ideology, the lure of reunification with economically prosperous and politically stable West Germany proved irresistible.

The communists certainly tried to gain popularity. They disgraced Honecker, opened the Berlin Wall, expelled Krenz, changed the party's name, and brought in a new team—Prime Minister Hans Modrow, a reform communist from Dresden, and Party leader Gregor Gysi, a lawyer who had defended dissidents. But they aroused new suspicions when they clumsily attempted to resurrect the secret police under a new name. And the exaggeration, if not invention, of a serious threat of neo-Nazi activity failed to provide the Party with legitimacy.

The opposition proved just as inept at asserting leadership. As the *Wall Street Journal* observed back in November, "The opposition is fragmenting into a noisy clash of competing factions—none of which seems prepared yet to articulate a clear vision of life after communism." Such chaos should not have been too surprising. The Honecker regime had for years been expelling potential opposition leaders to West Germany. The dissidents who had remained to form such groups as New Forum were mainly artists and non-conformists steeped in idealism, not political realism. Though they created some networks through the Lutheran Church, they developed no ties with workers, unlike the leaders of Solidarity and the Civic Forum.

To make matters worse for themselves, the opposition groups resisted the West German political and economic model. Advocating a fuzzy "third way" between communism and capitalism, these groups became irrelevant to the population. Though they were among the first to press for radical change, they found themselves shoved aside by new political parties that were in turn completely overshadowed by their West German partners.

Even before the elections on March 18, East Germans had been voting with their feet. More than 340,000 emigrated to West Germany last year, and in January 1990

they were leaving at a rate of 2,000 a day. As Pierre Hassner, research director of the National Political Science Foundation in Paris, accurately predicted last fall, "Pretty soon, their 'new form of socialism' will go down the drain, and since they're exposed to West German society, the second phase will be pressure for reunification."

In the new political landscape of Eastern Europe, communist parties and ideology have lost the power to prevent a return to market economies. When they take place, free elections will confer on new governments the legitimacy that they will need to push through painful economic measures. Fledgling democracies have little chance of surviving if they fail to solve the economic problems of shoddy products and consumer shortages, inefficient industries, spiraling inflation, and international debt. If the hopes of 1989 are to be realized, the economic system must be overhauled as thoroughly as the political system.

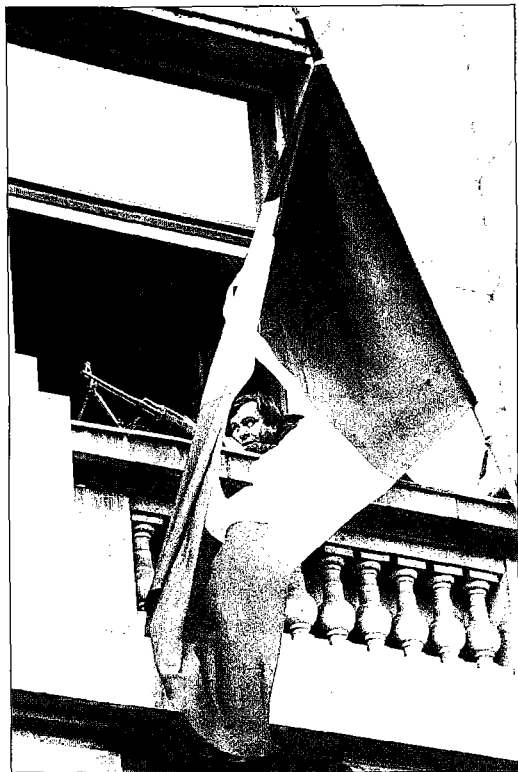
The new governments must also work quickly to clean up one of the world's most polluted regions. The signs of Eastern Europe's disastrous environmental degradation can be seen everywhere from Poland's filthy Vistula River to East Germany's Elbe River, from the dying Bohemian forests to Cracow's corroding medieval statues. The new political freedom will lift the shroud of state secrecy from environmental and related health problems and, for the first time, allow for uncensored discussion.

While political changes should benefit the environment, the effect of the economic changes is harder to predict. On the positive side, services and light industries are scheduled to replace a goodly number of the offending smokestack industries, and those that remain are to be modernized to consume less energy. But market mechanisms alone—with their emphasis on profits, cost-cutting, and reduction of state controls—give enterprises no incentives to

stop polluting. Therefore, the new governments will need to address environmental concerns even while they usher in market forces.

Such ushering will not be easy—not even for Hungary, which during the last two decades of Kádár's rule went farthest on the road to economic reform. Replacing mandatory plan targets with indirect planning and expanding the non-socialist "second economy" were half-measures that led to a dead end: Even before austerity measures were introduced this year, one in five Hungarians was living below the poverty line, inflation was running at about 20 percent a year, and the \$18 billion foreign debt was the highest—on a per capita basis—in Europe.

Paradoxically, the *Economist* noted,



During the popular uprising in Bucharest, citizens cut out the Communist Party symbol from Romanian flags, leaving a hole in the center.

"countries that have attempted the most market-oriented reforms—Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia—are the very ones now suffering the greatest economic instability." Reforms failed to create real markets. The limited private sector was crushed by high taxes and bureaucracy, and it was forbidden to compete head-on with state enterprises. The latter operated under the luxury of soft budget constraints, knowing the government would always bail them out. "Much of Eastern Europe's \$100 billion or so of Western debt," the *Economist* observed, "started out as loans for enterprise investments, and ended up in the hands of central governments."

The cure, according to Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, is to replace halfway reforms with a big-bang return to capitalism. Poland has swallowed the medicine. Its unprecedented experiment, launched January 1, has two simultaneous goals: to break the back of inflation—estimated at 900 percent last year—and to make the institutional changes needed for a true market economy. "Today, when at last we have [political] freedom of choice, we are reaching for models that have been empirically and historically tried, tested, and proven—that is, to the West European model of a market economy," declared Balcerowicz, the Polish finance minister who designed the economic package. The plan includes these elements: slashing subsidies in half to cut the budget deficit and thus reduce inflation; letting enterprises either make it on their own or go bankrupt; freeing most prices; privatizing state enterprises and laying the legal groundwork for a private sector; encouraging foreign trade and making the currency convertible.

The first half of 1990 should provide answers to a host of questions spelling success or failure. Will prices stabilize after the steep initial rise? Will the government stick to its policy of hard budget constraints,

forcing bankruptcies and unemployment and preventing inflationary wage indexing? If so, will bottlenecks develop, production plummet, and shortages of goods grow even more endemic? Or will inefficient enterprises be weeded from the efficient ones, allowing production to pick up? How massive will unemployment be, and how fast can workers retrain and find new jobs? How soon will the private sector, services in particular, create new jobs? How tolerant will the people be when confronted with price increases and unemployment—and for how long?

Sachs argues for clearing the chasm in a single great leap, not in small jumps. The risk is great, but for Poland the alternative—doing nothing, accepting the disastrous status quo and an even more calamitous future—is scarier still. Ironically, then, Poland's economic crisis could prove to be an advantage.

It is an advantage that the other East European nations happily lack, despite their own economic woes. "The time pressure means that we have to go much farther and faster, albeit under more difficult conditions," remarked Jasinski, of Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity. "In Czechoslovakia there is a danger that the seemingly good condition of the economy will make the new authorities afraid to move decisively toward a free market." A successful transition in Poland will greatly encourage the other East European nations, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in particular, to introduce radical and painful economic measures.

Hungary has already laid the groundwork for a return to a market economy. It has a stock exchange and a two-tiered banking system, with commercial banking separate from the central bank, and it treats private, foreign, cooperative, and state ownership as equal under the law. But the Hungarian economy has been crippled by hard-currency debt. Debt servicing eats up



*In 1989, Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Solidarity's parliamentary leader Bronislaw Geremek became the first non-communists to head an Eastern-bloc government.*

more than half of its dollar export earnings. Hungary has launched an austerity drive approved by the International Monetary Fund, and further reforms can be expected.

Economic transformation in Czechoslovakia, although coming much later and more suddenly than in Poland and Hungary, offers the best hope of success. The country enjoys low inflation and low debt and can draw on its interwar tradition of democracy and advanced industry. While the leaders of the 1968 Prague Spring sought to create socialism with a human face, Prague's leaders today seek to fashion capitalism with a human face. They seek no "third way" between Western capitalism and the old Soviet-style communism, no Gorbachevian hybrid of socialist ownership and market forces. Prime Minister Calfa, in a speech to parliament, made his position clear: "We must accept the market economy with all of its advantages and all of its disadvantages . . . [I]t grants to each individual an opportunity to be most beneficial for others by pursuing his own interests."

**W**ill the new leadership remain steadfast when economic changes bring unemployment, higher prices, and, quite possibly, strikes?

Will the people accept the sacrifices—or insist on a social safety net so wide that it will strangle economic efficiency? Success or failure in Poland will exert enormous influence on Czechoslovakia.

The East German economy is, of course, a special case. West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl engineered the victory of his East German allies by proposing monetary union and suggesting that his Christian Democratic Party was uniquely capable of renovating the East German economy. On election day, Kohl's economic minister promised a one-to-one exchange rate between East and West German currencies—an enormous boost to East Germans worried about their pensions and savings. Bonn, by offering capital, know-how, and a trading bridge to the European Community, provides East Germany with the prospect of a swift and smooth transition to a market economy—at least compared to the transitions awaiting the rest of Eastern Europe. When the transition is completed, however, East Germans could find virtually all of their plants owned by West Germans. In economics as well as politics, reunification may lead not to merger but to take-

over. It remains to be seen whether this will breed tensions both among West Germans, who will foot the bill, and among East Germans, who could come to perceive themselves as second-class citizens.

Economic reforms also are needed in Bulgaria, which has worrisome inflation and a high per capita debt (\$7.1 billion in a nation of 8.9 million), as well as in Romania, which paid off most of its foreign debt but at the price of drastic shortages of food, electricity, and heat. Just how far and how fast the economic changes come will depend on the political changes. One can expect that economic changes elsewhere in Eastern Europe will bear as strong an influence on Bulgarians and Romanians as did the political upheavals last year.

Thus, in one decade, we have come full circle. In 1980, Poland broke new ground with an opposition movement that united the nation, eventually toppled the ruling Communist Party, and presaged the collapse of Soviet control over Eastern Europe; in 1990, Poland again leads the way, pioneering an economic transformation that, if successful, will provide a model for all of Eastern Europe.





# GOODBYE, SAMIZDAT

by Stanislaw Baranczak



In mid-December 1989, poetry buffs in Poland received a Christmas present they had long been waiting for: the first “official” (that is, neither underground nor émigré) publication in Polish of the selected poems of Russian-American Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky. The fact that the book was just a reprint of an earlier émigré edition could not detract from the readers’ satisfaction: Another taboo had been broken, another long-vilified author had made his way into aboveground circulation. But the book contained one glaring omission. Three bracketed periods indicated that a poem had been struck out by the Polish state censors.

A friend employed at the publishing house told me that the cuts could have been more extensive. The censors had originally planned to delete other poems or fragments that sounded politically offensive. A tug-of-war ensued between the censors and the publisher, the latter arguing that, in these turbulent times, what sounds offensive today may not tomorrow. Meanwhile, the world around was changing at breathtaking speed. One after another, the reasons for deleting Brodsky’s poems lost their validity. A 1982 poem expressing solidarity with Polish writers imprisoned under martial law was restored, for example. Why suppress it after Solidarity won the elections and particularly after General Jaruzelski expressed his remorse about the “state of war” he had once proclaimed?

About one poem, however, the censors remained firm. “Sorry,” they told my friend, “but here we must be absolutely ad-

amant. This poem will never pass.” “But what if the situation changes and this poem doesn’t sound offensive anymore either?” the editor wanted to know. “This poem? With such a theme and attitude? You must be kidding. It will be considered offensive and unfit to print as long as the Soviet Union exists.”

The poem’s title was “The Berlin Wall Tune.”

When the book finally arrived in the bookstores in the middle of December, the Soviet Union still existed. But the Berlin Wall no longer did. The impossible had come to pass once again—perhaps the most spectacular “impossibility” of that miraculous “Autumn of Nations” of late 1989. Once again history had worked faster than the brains of socialist censors and the printing presses of Polish publishers.

This single anecdote characterizes, I think, the situation of culture amid the momentous changes that have swept the former Soviet bloc. The fundamental paradox is this: While, on the whole, culture in those nations played a major role in precipitating the recent political upheaval, the scope of this upheaval has gone far beyond culture’s grasp.

Anything that an observer may say must be qualified with an exact date and safeguarded by the absolute refusal to predict—after all, each passing day surprises us with another unexpected turn of events. And truly, an inhabitant of that part of Europe, tested by so many historic disappointments, is understandably reluctant to hope too much or to assume “this is it”: that the transformation taking place is, this time, for

real and not merely another cyclic “thaw” or “renewal” of the politically oppressive system. That said, the rejection of the Stalinist system and the return to democracy, if they endure, will have a fundamental significance for culture. They will change everything—from how culture supports itself to the ways in which artists deal with “reality” in their work.

Over the past few decades, Western observers have made the common mistake of assuming that culture in countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, East Germany, or Romania was a noble victim, squirming helplessly under the totalitarian oppressor’s heel. Differences in oppression notwithstanding (obviously, the situation in Poland or Hungary hardly compared with Ceaușescu’s ruthless erasure of any trace of free speech), the perfidy of totalitarianism in its modified, late 20th-century form was that it was by no means bent on completely silencing arts and letters. Rather, it actually sponsored culture that served the regime’s ideological principles while also satisfying at least part of the masses’ need for bread and circus. Writers or artists in whom the motives of ambition or greed were stronger than the pangs of conscience could always count on selling their goods to the state at a fairly high price. If such a writer had been, spiritually speaking, a prisoner, he was kept, as one dissident put it, in a “velvet prison.” The important difference between the last decades and the earlier years was that the pure-and-simple Stalinist principle of “who is not with us, is against us” had been quietly replaced with the dictum “who is not against us, is with us.”

In short, the more lenient regimes tolerated and even encouraged literature and art that were ideologically neutral. The artists’ basic task was simply to stay out of the regime’s way and to provide either mass entertainment (as in countless socialist thrillers praising the virtues of the secret police and in pop songs extolling the charms of military service) or semblances of authentic culture for the benefit of the West (as in just as numerous examples of avant-garde art). The artist was to be nothing more than another employee at that enormous monopolistic enterprise, the post-Stalinist socialist state.

**T**he relative stability of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1960s and ’70s can be explained only by the fact that both the rulers and the ruled derived certain advantages from the existing system. On the strength of an unsigned agreement—the Czech émigré economist Anton Liehm called it the “New Social Contract”—the regimes guaranteed their citizens a basic degree of well-being and safety, while the citizens, in exchange, agreed not to rebel against the system’s injustice. This unwritten Social Contract made sure that artists were published and paid and that consumers were supplied with cultural products—as long as nobody demanded creative freedom or genuine artistic works.

What has now happened (over startlingly different lengths of time: “ten years for Poland, ten months for Hungary, ten weeks for East Germany, ten days for Czechoslovakia,” in Timothy Garton Ash’s celebrated dictum) is that one of the par-

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ties—society—has cancelled the New Social Contract. It did so because, in each of these countries, the other party—the regime—proved incapable of fulfilling even the basic provisions of the Contract.

In culture something similar happened. Beginning in 1976 in Poland, an independent, uncensored publishing network undermined the Contract: At the cost of forfeiting protection, producers of cultural goods freed themselves from state control. The present dismantling of communist rule in Central Europe consists, culturally, of nothing more than removing the last vestiges of such control.

But the ultimate removal of state control will also mean the disappearance of state protection for artists and writers. I am not talking here about those writers and artists who, as outright dissidents, have long been trained in the school of independence and its twin, adversity. Rather, I have in mind the average producer of cultural goods. His changed situation is comparable to that of a clerk in some state office who one morning discovers that his building has been razed and his employment terminated. The building was ugly, the office inefficient, the employment a sham, and the work a crucifying bore; still, it meant a steady income plus fringe benefits. Now the clerk is told all that is gone but he is free to do anything he wants, even to go out and set up his own business. This permission would please him enormously, if not for one minor problem: He has no capital with which to start a business. Even if he did, he doesn't know the first thing about business management. And even if he did, the years spent toiling in the office have effectively killed in him any spirit of free enterprise that might make his future seem enticing rather than threatening.

Since no two Soviet bloc countries have had exactly the same experience, the sacked clerk of our metaphor will vary



*Mirror of Memory (1987) by Lukasz Korolkiewicz. The artist won the Solidarity Cultural Award in 1983.*

from country to country. Some artists and thinkers are surprised and thrown off balance by the abrupt change, while others, better prepared, are now more or less ready to take their chances in the private sector.

In some cases, notably in Poland, a cultural private sector had already been created. Despite recurring waves of oppression, Poles have since 1976 enjoyed an important alternative to state-controlled culture. Even earlier, the products of émigré publishing houses, smuggled into the country, formed a part of any young intellectual's informal education. Printed by an émigré publisher abroad, Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind* (1953), for example, was smuggled into Poland beginning in the mid-1950s; its dissection of the argument for the communist regime made it less likely that intellectuals would henceforth accept that regime.

With the emergence of the under-

## THE ÉMIGRÉ POET

1980 Nobel Prize winner Czesław Miłosz, in Berkeley, California. Miłosz chose themes impossible to depict openly in Poland—but at the sacrifice of living among his countrymen and hearing his mother tongue.



### *My Faithful Mother Tongue*

Faithful mother tongue  
I have been serving you.  
Every night, I used to set before you little bowls of colors  
so you could have your birch, your cricket, your finch  
as preserved in my memory.

This lasted many years.  
You were my native land; I lacked any other.  
I believed that you would also be a messenger  
between me and some good people  
even if they were few, twenty, ten  
or not born, as yet.

Now, I confess my doubt.  
There are moments when it seems to me I have squandered my life.  
For you are a tongue of the debased,  
of the unreasonable, hating themselves  
even more than they hate other nations,  
a tongue of informers,  
a tongue of the confused,  
ill with their own innocence.

But without you, who am I?  
Only a scholar in a distant country,  
a success, without fears and humiliations.  
Yes, who am I without you?  
Just a philosopher, like everyone else.

I understand, this is meant as my education:  
the glory of individuality is taken away,  
Fortune spreads a red carpet  
before the sinner in a morality play  
while on the linen backdrop a magic lantern throws  
images of human and divine torture.

Faithful mother tongue,  
perhaps after all it's I who must try to save you.  
So I will continue to set before you little bowls of colors  
bright and pure if possible,  
for what is needed in misfortune is a little order and beauty.

*from Poetry: 1981-1987*

ground presses inside Poland in 1976, the ungainly edifice of the official culture truly began to crumble. Thousands of uncensored books and periodicals—from factory newsletters to literary quarterlies, from the forbidden novels of George Orwell to manuals on how to strike—helped Polish society to educate itself. Authors and underground publishers joined scholars and artists, conducted courses in private apartments, and organized exhibits and performances in churches. A largely de-Sovietized consciousness began to emerge—one marked by an increased sense of individual responsibility for the nation's future, respect for human rights, rejection of violence, willingness to “live in truth” regardless of consequences, disillusion with the reformability of communism, and belief in the ultimate triumph of what Václav Havel called “the power of the powerless.” Without this consciousness, the unprecedented events of the 1980s—the birth of a ten-million-strong independent union that substituted for an opposition party and its underground survival throughout the grim experience of martial law—would never have taken place.

Thanks to this underground independence, Poland was prepared culturally

for the situation that it now faces. Writers, artists, and groups such as the critically acclaimed Theater of the Eighth Day have already experienced the unsettling combination of being relieved of state control while also being deprived of state protection.

**T**he case of the Theater of the Eighth Day is particularly revealing. Founded in 1964 as a university acting troupe, the group at first enjoyed protection and support from the official Association of Polish Students. During the early 1970s, however, the theater produced several performances based on contemporary political poetry which challenged sanctioned versions of Poland's recent history. As a result, the authorities attempted to destroy the group by disrupting performances and arresting actors on false charges. Most troupe members began earning their living by taking odd jobs; the theater's performances were staged—strictly speaking, illegally—in private apartments or even in the streets. After the harassment became unbearable, the troupe left Poland for Italy, where it somehow managed to conquer local audiences despite language differences. The theater has now returned to Poland and resumed its activity—its actors all the stronger for their experience. Indeed, to them and to other artists with similar experiences, the future in Poland may be difficult but at least not completely surprising. To a lesser extent, the same can be said about artists and thinkers in Hungary, where dissidents have been preparing the ground for many years.

In Czechoslovakia or East Germany, however, the quantitative difference becomes a qualitative one. In East Germany practically since its inception, and in Czechoslovakia since the suppression of Prague Spring in 1968, cultural dissent came down to a handful of heroic individuals who both withstood the totalitarian ap-

paratus of persecution and resisted the temptation to emigrate. Against the bleak background of cowardice and opportunism, individuals such as Václav Havel shone all the more brightly. Still, neither in Czechoslovakia nor in East Germany did such isolated individuals set the tone for culture as a whole: The overwhelming majority of writers and artists in these countries fit the definition of "state artist," an employee who now faces both the collapse of the ideology he served and the demolition of the professional structures he has been part of for his entire life.

Bulgaria and, in particular, Romania present even more depressing pictures. As the West only now begins to realize, the dictatorship of Ceaușescu, marked as much by hypocrisy as by cruelty, created a culture whose primary task was to sing unending

### THE AESOPIAN POET

*Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert, a master of Aesopian expression, uses metaphors or allegorical situations to portray dangerous subjects—for example, politically compromised behavior.*



#### *Objects*

Inanimate objects are always correct and cannot, unfortunately, be reproached with anything. I have never observed a chair shift from one foot to another, or a bed rear on its hind legs. And tables, even when they are tired, will not dare to bend their knees. I suspect that objects do this from pedagogical considerations, to reprove us constantly for our instability.

—from *Selected Poems* (1968)



*In the Theater of the Eighth Day's performance, Auto da Fé (1985), self-immolation symbolizes life in communist Poland.*

praise to the tyrant whom all the nation hated. This sycophantic chorus drowned out the voices of authentic writers and artists. Even the most timid expression of dissent was a terrible risk in a country where every typewriter had to be registered and every third citizen was a police informer.

The Romanian experience under Ceaușescu demonstrates that while some political oppression can bring out the best in a nation's culture, there is a threshold beyond which resistance breaks down. From then on, fear and apathy prevail. This has nothing to do with national characteristics or local traditions. It is, quite simply, the inevitable result when persecution is sufficiently ruthless. Unbridled terror reigned in Poland and Hungary during the Stalinist period (1945–1956), and their cultures fared little better than Romania's under Ceaușescu. Today it is not enough to allow Romanian writers to own unregistered typewriters and to write what they wish. Entire areas of human thought and expression, strictly forbidden under the dictatorship, must now reenter the Romanian culture. The most basic works of Western literatures must be translated and made available. It will take years to absorb this enormous influx of information.

To be sure, Romania is an extreme case. Poland or Hungary face an easier task. But precisely because Poland possesses a relatively liberated culture, it shows just how much farther most Central European cultures must travel to reach complete freedom. Several major obstacles must be cleared, each more formidable than the other. Let us begin with Poland's most basic ones:

*Economic woes.* Before 1989, culture (at least "official" culture) was still subsidized by the state. Since the regime owned it and needed it for its purposes, the regime had to keep culture alive. Now that the state has practically ceased to own culture, it may stop subsidizing the arts in order to be able to feed the populace.

The new minister of culture, a well-known theater director, Izabella Cywińska, has so far taken no drastic measures. But many formerly state-owned enterprises, including publishing houses and periodicals, now depend on their own income rather than on state subsidies. On the one hand, a supporter of democratic changes can only rejoice: There is no other way for culture to start functioning in a normal, "Western" way. But with no transition, this policy may have dangerous consequences. Fewer and fewer people can afford the increasingly high price of a book. (A volume of Samuel Beckett's collected plays in Polish translation a year ago cost 1,500 zloty, then about one-thirtieth of the average retired person's monthly income; after the recent price hikes, the comparable book will cost several times as much, while pensions and salaries remain basically the same.) Even Solidarity's newspaper, *Gazeta*—the first and most prominent independent newspaper in Eastern Europe—is running into trouble. Forced by rising paper costs to double its price, the newspaper's circulation has dropped by almost half, and copies which used to sell out in early morning languish

on the newsstands throughout the day.

Some publishing houses, to avoid bankruptcy, have started producing shallow entertainment rather than serious literature. The venerated *Wydawnictwo Literackie* (Literary Press) in Cracow, for instance, has almost eliminated books of contemporary poetry while doing huge printings of some of the most kitschy romances written in pre-1939 Poland. What Polish culture at this moment faces is the short-term danger of dependence on a market economy before certain mechanisms (such as tax-exempt donations) mollifying the laws of supply and demand have been developed.

*Institutional difficulties.* After the government imposed martial law in 1981, the opposition to official culture acquired an additional moral dimension. When several actors agreed to appear on TV, they were booed the next evening by audiences in theaters. Similarly, after praising the military regime in the official media, the popular writer Wojciech Zukrowski found a huge pile of his own books dumped on his doorstep by angry readers. From that point on, participation in certain official forms of cultural life was considered—not merely by fellow artists but even more so by the public—as morally reprehensible collaboration. An honest actor was not supposed to perform on television (a state-owned institution which, during martial law, was so militarized that its news anchors wore uniforms). The actors' boycott of television from 1981 to 1983 was one of the most widely applauded acts of protest against martial law.

Now that Poland is no longer ruled by a communist-military clique, black-and-white ethics no longer applies. To preserve the pluralism won during the long struggle against state censorship, while at the same time doing away with the distinctions between "official" and

"unofficial," is the task now facing Polish culture.

But as the underground culture surfaces, its situation changes. First, books published in an unhindered fashion by the erstwhile underground presses have lost the taste of a forbidden fruit; they are no longer so sought after. Second, underground publishers, accustomed to operating within the framework of black-market economy and primitive (but cheap) technology, are now subject to new financial difficulties, paper shortages, production delays, and so forth. The editors of the monthly *Res Publica*, the first underground periodical to come above ground (in 1987), have seen their journal, formerly a sensation, turn into just one of many interesting periodicals.

*Philosophical dilemmas.* After 45 years of communist rule, Polish artists and writers will soon find themselves in a position similar to that of their counterparts in the West: Free to express any view they wish, they may find that such freedom makes words lose their weight. They may discover that amid the multitude of voices an important message will go unheard. Subject to market laws, serious thought and innovative experiment may be elbowed out by cheap entertainment and easy convention. Under the old order, creative writers stepped into the gap left by the suppression of independent historiography, social analysis, and ethical evaluation; now they will have to accept the attenuation of their moral authority and spiritual leadership. All of this is a price that culture has to pay for its return to normality—and, after the initial euphoria fades, there may be quite a few writers or artists who will doubt whether it was really worth the price. And these writers or artists may include not only those who prospered under the old regime but also those whose previous resistance earned them, along with harassment,

a distinct voice and moral authority.

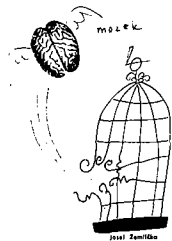
*Aesthetic quandaries.* What happens, aesthetically, when the stifling restrictions and prohibitions are finally gotten rid of: If you had been gagged for several decades, how is your voice going to sound after the gag is removed? It may well happen that someone allowed at last to speak at the top of his voice is unable to do so; he can only produce a hoarse whisper.

This is the problem of those Central European cultures where writers have been trained for too long in the school of "Aesopian language": Aesopian language relies on hints and allegories rather than on unequivocal names and precise depictions; it employs special techniques and genres to deceive the censor. (Using the historical genre, to take a famous example, the Polish writer Jerzy Andrzejewski published in the late 1950s a popular novel about the Spanish Inquisition, which every moderately intelligent reader interpreted as a critique of Stalinism.) Writers and artists may have to struggle before they retrieve, after so many years of racking their brains for ways to fool the censor, the simple ability to name things by their real names.

The harder task, particularly in countries such as Poland where the restraints of Aesopian language have already been overcome, is to overcome the one-sidedness of theme and tone that dominated even the best works of thought and art during the years of oppression. The human condition—as presented in such otherwise bold novels as Tadeusz Konwicki's depiction of

disillusioned intellectuals (*The Polish Complex* and *A Minor Apocalypse*) or Andrzej Wajda's films of rebellious workers (*Man of Marble* and *Man of Iron*)—was seen primarily in political, social, and moral categories. Konwicki's and Wajda's successors must recover the fullness of experience. The focus on the evils of the totalitarian system must be broadened to encompass the much more difficult issue of evil as such, evil that is not a passing and corrigible fault of a system but an ineradicable component of our existence on earth. The cramped style of doloristic complaints and scornful sarcasms must now evolve into a much more flexible and diversified way of speaking of reality.

All of these necessities, from financial to stylistic, are harsh ones. Central European cultures, differently shaped as they are, all face an extremely difficult transition. They may temporarily forfeit some of the characteristic qualities we came to admire in them—their complex use of irony or their union of ethics and aesthetics in a work of art; they may become too Western and not sufficiently Central European. Yet, although nobody can predict, one has every right to believe that the colossal wealth of experience gained by Central European writers and artists in our century cannot possibly be in vain. This is the capital with which they will start, under the new conditions of freedom, their business of portraying the human world and examining the human soul.





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## THE BIRTHPLACE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

It is commonly accepted—and Freud insisted—that psychoanalysis was created out of pure scientific investigation, untainted by historical circumstances. Bruno Bettelheim makes clear, however, why psychoanalysis was born exactly when and where it was, in turn-of-the-century Vienna. From its court society to its literary and artistic circles, the city was abuzz with the preoccupations out of which Freud fashioned psychoanalysis. Here Bettelheim recreates Vienna at the time of its greatest ferment.

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*by Bruno Bettelheim*

**I**t is not by chance that psychoanalysis was born in Vienna and came of age there. In Sigmund Freud's time—that is, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—the cultural atmosphere in Vienna encouraged a fascination with both mental illness and sexual problems which was unique in the Western world—a fascination that extended throughout society, even into the imperial court which dominated Viennese social life. The origins of this preoccupation can be traced to the history of the city itself, especially to the concerns and attitudes foremost in the minds of Vienna's cultural elites just before and during the period in which Freud formed his revolutionary theories about our emotional life.

Freud was by no means the only innovator in Vienna who brought about a change in our view of sexuality in general and sexual perversions in particular, as well as in our treatment of insanity. For instance, Baron Richard von Krafft-Ebing, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Vi-

enna, was the first to name paranoia, thus bringing it into common discourse. His clinical accounts of sexual pathology showed the many forms the sexual drive could take, years before Freud undertook his studies of sex. Krafft-Ebing's most important work, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), revolutionized the world's ideas about sexual perversions, a subject completely ignored by scientists up to that moment. This book led to the decriminalization of sexual perversions in Austria, long before such a sensible view spread to other countries. Krafft-Ebing led the way to an era of changed attitudes toward sexuality in Vienna and Austria, and in a sense he prepared the environment that made Freud's work possible.

In addition to psychoanalysis, other methods of treating mental disturbances were created and developed by doctors in Vienna. Wagner von Jauregg, who followed Krafft-Ebing as head of psychiatry at the University of Vienna, and who as such was Freud's chief while he taught there, discov-

ered the malaria treatment of general paresis and the fever treatment of the same disease; for this he won in 1927 the first Nobel Prize in medicine to be awarded for a psychiatric discovery. His work can justly be seen as the beginning of chemical treatment for mental illnesses. In the same direction, Manfred Sakel, another Viennese physician, discovered in 1933 the insulin-shock treatment for schizophrenia. Remarkably, all modern methods of treatment for mental disturbances—psychoanalysis, chemical treatment, and shock treatment—were brought into the world within a few decades in the same city.

To understand the unique form that Vienna's culture attained during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one must recognize that Vienna had long been, as it was called with some affection, *die alte Kaiserstadt*—the old Imperial City. The Habsburg name does not now carry the aura and glamour it once did, but for many centuries the Habsburg Empire, of which Vienna was the capital, was the greatest the world had ever known, surpassing in extent the ancient Roman Empire, of which it saw itself the rightful heir: The Habsburgs were rulers of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation."

In the 16th century, a Habsburg emperor, Charles V (also Charles I, as King of Spain), could make the claim (later borrowed by the British) that since his empire circled the globe, the sun never set upon it. After Charles V, however, the empire entered a gradual but steady decline. The empire almost perished during the Napoleonic Wars. But at their conclusion, Vienna hosted the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), which determined the geography and future of Europe. After this, the Viennese looked upon their city as the preeminent city of Europe, for the Habsburg emperor once again dominated the continent, thanks largely to the skill of Austria's chan-



The Washmaids' Ball (1893) by Wilhelm Gause. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna appeared always to be dancing, as though lost wars, ethnic discontent, and growing poverty were matters of scant importance.*

cellor, Prince Metternich.

However, such dominion ended once and for all with the revolutions of 1848, when the aged Metternich was forced to resign and Franz Joseph began his long reign (1848–1916). Even in its reduced form, the realm remained Europe's foremost imperial presence, dominating an assortment of German principalities before modern Germany was formed; it also held sway over all of Central Europe and much of Italy and Eastern Europe. After 1848, the various peoples within the empire began to demand self-determination and independence—a demand which was held in check only by the force of the imperial army (a multinational institution) and by the reverence accorded the emperor himself.

In addition, the capital city of Vienna continued to extend its cultural dominion over the intelligentsia of the entire empire, as well as over much of the rest of Europe. It could be said in 19th-century Central and Eastern Europe that all roads led to Vienna. Not only was it the seat of empire and of the most important cultural institutions within its sphere of influence, it was by far the largest city in this vast geographical area. In fact, it was the second-largest city on the continent of Europe (after Paris). Not surprisingly, it attracted all those adventurous spirits who wished to leave the provinces for life at the center of things.

Many had been brought to Vienna in childhood by their parents. Sigmund Freud was one, as was Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism. Others came to Vienna as adults, including the musicians Gustav Mahler and Johannes Brahms, the painter Oskar Koschka, and the architect Josef Hoffmann.

Throughout the 19th century, Vienna continued to grow in size, in cultural opportunities, in scientific renown, and in economic importance. But what gave Vienna its uniqueness was the luck of history: the fact that its greatest cultural flowering came about simultaneously with the disintegration of the empire which had made Vienna important in the first place. Emperor Franz Joseph was not only the ultimate symbol of the empire but also the person who held it all together. Things had never been better, but at the same time they had never been worse: This strange simultaneity explains why psychoanalysis, based on the understanding of ambivalence, hysteria, and neurosis, originated in Vienna and probably could have originated nowhere else. And psychoanalysis was but one of the major intellectual developments of a time in which a pervasive awareness of political decline led Vienna's cultural elites to abandon politics as a serious subject and to turn their attention from the wider world to their own private concerns.

The decline was noticeable to all concerned after the events of 1859 (only three years after Freud's birth), when the empire suffered the first of a series of blows to its eminence (and image) as a world power. In that year, it lost its most prosperous and advanced provinces: most of northern Italy, including Lombardy and Tuscany. Only Venice and the Veneto still remained Austrian—and only for a few more years. Seven years later, in 1866, as a result of war with the upstart Prussia, the last Italian territories were lost, and Prussia became the dominant power over the other German states. This deprived Austria of the hegemony it had held over Germany for some 600 years. Four years later, when Prussia

defeated France in 1870, Germany became united under the leadership of Prussia. With this, Berlin began to replace Vienna as the center of the German-speaking world.

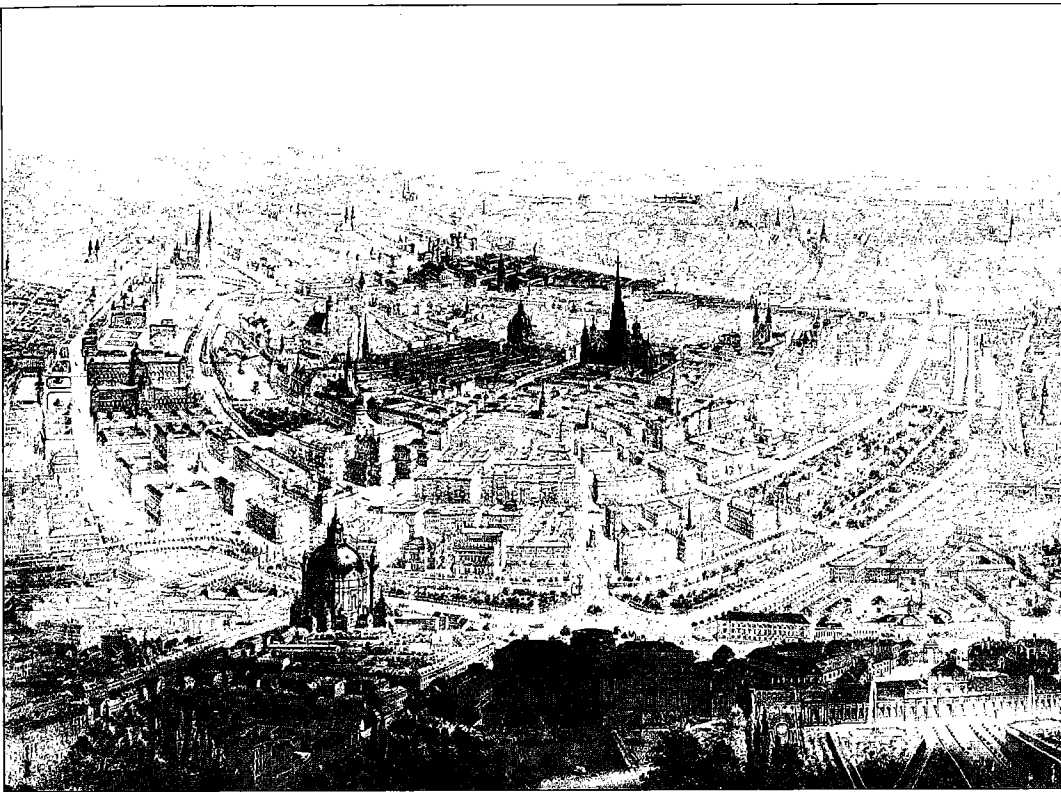
One way to cope with these losses was to deny their significance. The Viennese intelligentsia began to say that, while the situation was desperate, it was not all that serious. They also began to discount the importance of external reality—politics, economy, society—and focus their considerable mental energy on the inner life. While the new unified Germany (with its capital, Berlin) was turning its enormous energies toward empire-building, Vienna's cultural elites concentrated upon discovering and conquering the inner world of man. This withdrawal was made easier and more certain by new disappointments which followed upon the heels of the old.

For instance, to compensate for the military defeat of 1866, the government went to great lengths to reassert Vienna's cultural and economic importance. Specifically, it made plans to host a world's fair in 1873. The expectations of prosperity that the fair would bring led to a building boom; many grandiose structures, both public and private, rose up on both sides of the newly created Ringstrasse. This avenue circled the inner city and was intended to outshine the world-famous boulevards of Paris designed by Baron Haussmann. The buildings on the Ringstrasse would be even more splendid than those gracing the Paris avenues.

Historically, Vienna had been a city of the baroque; the grand baroque churches and palaces had given the city its character. Now the modern buildings of the Ringstrasse gave Vienna a double and somewhat contradictory character: that of both an old imperial capital and a center of modern culture. It was as if the city could not decide which way to turn: toward the glorious (though receding) past, or toward a promising new future.

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*Vienna's Ringstrasse (1873). The grand new boulevard mingled buildings in Greek, Renaissance, Baroque, and modern styles. By 1890, critics were calling it "pretentious" and "vulgar."*

Great expectations for the World's Fair also led to wild speculation on the stock market. Nine days after the fair opened, the market crashed. On Vienna's "black Friday," 125 banks went bankrupt, and many other enterprises failed. The financial crisis in Vienna spread all over Europe and even affected the United States.

Vienna's cultural elites responded by focussing even more intensely on the inner life, on the previously hidden and unrecognized aspects of man. To be sure, this was a solution that could work only for a few. The vast majority of Vienna's population had to find other ways to escape the unease that they felt at a time when the secure, traditional world they and their ancestors had known was falling apart. The answer was lighthearted entertainment. True, the World's Fair of 1873 had failed, but with the premiere of *Die Fledermaus* in 1874, Vienna began once more to rule the world—the world of the operetta. Once the

center of the old high culture—grand opera and serious theater, the greatest in the German language—Vienna now rose to preeminence in light opera and most of all in dance music. The Viennese waltz in a few short years had conquered the globe; besides the waltzes, there were the many operettas of Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár, Franz von Suppé, and others. As we look back, it seems as if the Viennese of that time never stopped dancing: masked balls, the antics of the carnival (the *Fasching*, in which nearly all of Vienna participated), and splendid dancing halls in all parts of the city. Through continual celebrations, the decline of the empire was denied any seriousness.

In the realm of politics and world events, catastrophes periodically shook the empire to its roots, hastening its disintegration. But this was not all: Equally disastrous were the catastrophes which took place in the heart of the city's personal world—

## READING VIENNA

When American scholars and popular authors rediscovered Austria during the 1960s, they were particularly attracted to the paradoxes and ambivalences of the late Habsburg Empire (1848–1918). Archaism and modernism, security and danger, and the blurring of reality and illusion characterized a reeling, multicultural empire that perhaps no longer seemed foreign to American intellectuals. Late Habsburg Austria came to life in scholarly works, in popular accounts, and in ambitious museum shows. All eyes were on Vienna, at once the imperial and modernist city par excellence—the urban embodiment of Austrian paradoxes. Sigmund Freud was rediscovered as a Viennese thinker; Gustav Mahler became fundamental to American concert programs; the work of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele became priceless; Robert Musil became quotable. Here was a modernism that seemed to coexist with the hoopla of empire and a culture that seemed more innocent than that of the Weimar Republic, which so clearly bottomed out in the brutality of National Socialism.

The Vienna phenomenon has endured. But the celebration of the ambiguous culture that made up the Austrian “gay apocalypse”—in Hermann Broch’s term—took an intellectual toll. It has proven too easy to be carried away by waltzlike sentimentality. Vienna was often allowed to retain its mythic gloss as the city of dreams rather than the city of dream analysis. Freud himself was too often assimilated into American imaginations as the prophet of the pleasure principle rather than as the thinker who defined mental health as the ability to negotiate reality. This is not to say that Vienna’s strife, violence, and even its apocalypses have gone unrecognized, but that they have often been displaced into the realm of the imaginary, as if history really worked according to the rules of grand opera and baroque architecture.

In fact, the kind of illusionism perfected by baroque style and grand opera had developed into a systematic political ideology that proved crucial to the survival of the empire. The office

of the emperor, with its rituals, its theatricality, and its cross-class and cross-cultural loyalties, did much more than reflect imperial cohesiveness; it produced it. Not even the most aggressive modernists were able to resist this imperial spell. All the same, to celebrate the politics of illusion has been to draw the wrong lesson from the collapse of an empire.

On the popular front as well as the scholarly, the great interpreters of Austrian culture have sought to explore the culture of illusion without celebrating or duplicating it. For these qualities, Hermann Broch’s **Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time: The European Imagination, 1860–1920** (Univ. of Chicago, 1984) remains a classic. As a Catholic aristocrat of Jewish extraction, a literary modernist with increasingly conservative cultural and political views, Hofmannsthal embodied the kinds of ambivalences that made him the ultimate Austrian in Broch’s eyes. Broch’s analysis is incisive, synoptic, and unsentimental in its study of the dissolution of critical modernism and the return of illusionism—personified by the career of Hofmannsthal between 1890 and 1929.

Broch’s work was one catalyst for Carl E. Schorske’s classic **Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture** (Knopf, 1980), which remains unmatched in its ability to chart the connections between political crisis and the creative imagination. The book is a series of essays on politicians (the anti-Semitic Karl Lueger and Georg von Schoenerer and the Zionist Theodor Herzl), writers (Arthur Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal), architects (Camillo Sitte and Otto Wagner), painters (Klimt and Oskar Koschka), and on the politics of psychoanalysis (Freud) and musical modernism (Arnold Schoenberg). As they came of age in the 1890s, Schorske argues, these thinkers entered a collective Oedipal crisis spurred by their perception of the failed liberalism of their fathers’ generation. Although there is constant dialogue across chapters and across cultural spheres, the book’s essay format maintains integrity precisely because of its refusal to blend everything

within the imperial family at the court, which was the city’s true center, its *raison d’être*.

Emperor Franz Joseph’s marriage to Elizabeth, a very young and very beautiful Bavarian princess, was one of great love

and devotion on his part, and this love continued all through his life. But despite the emperor’s best efforts to please Elizabeth, she soon distanced herself from him and from the court. Eventually she was spending almost no time with him or in Vienna.

together into an illusory synthesis. No baroque architecture here.

The period's politics have been analyzed both from the imperial perspective and from the vantage of localized, Viennese politics. These perspectives combine to show an empire increasingly unable to manage its ethnic and cultural diversity. Oszkár Jászi's **The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy** (Univ. of Chicago, 1929) remains indispensable for its depiction of the centrifugal forces of Hungarian and Slavic nationalist politics. John W. Boyer's **Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna** (Univ. of Chicago, 1981) charts the emergence of Christian Social politics from the 1848 revolution to the mayoralty of Karl Lueger.

In the mid-1980s, popular international interest in modernist Austria intensified as exhibitions on Viennese culture and politics were mounted in Venice, Vienna, and Paris. Only the Paris curators had the courage to emphasize politics and take their story to 1938, concluding in a darkened room with slides of Hitler's arrival in Vienna displayed with pictures of Viennese intellectuals forced into exile. The version that appeared at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1986 was greatly reduced. Like the show, Kirk Varnedoe's elegant catalogue, **Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture, and Design** (MOMA, 1986) chooses its artistic examples with superb discrimination but wrongly implies that such objects reveal the dynamics of the culture as a whole.

Perhaps the most difficult question for the interpreter of Austrian cultural diversity is that of the social and cultural identities of the Jews. By the end of the empire, Vienna's Jews, numbering over 175,000, made up nine percent of the population. George Clare's memoir, **Last Waltz in Vienna: The Rise and Destruction of a Family, 1842-1942** (Holt, 1982), offers a moving account of several generations of a Viennese Jewish family. Among the many recent scholarly treatments, Robert Wistrich's **The Jews of Austria in the Age of Franz Joseph** (Oxford, 1989) focuses on the famous figures (Kraus, Freud, Schnitzler) as well as the less well known (for example, the rabbis Isaac

Mannheimer and Adolf Jellinek) to provide, without sentimentality or conceptual confusion, a masterful account of achievement and destruction.

Of course, Austria did not cease to exist with the demise of the Habsburgs in 1918, even though it was reduced to an impoverished country of seven million and to what Austrians commonly called the "republic that no one wanted." The post-Habsburg emergence of Central and East European nation-states has not obscured the historical richness of the confrontations between nationalities and empire. John Lukacs's **Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture** (Weidenfeld, 1988) reminds us that "Vienna 1900" did not exist in a vacuum. There is also an important role for impressionistic and travel writing, which, at their best, transcend conceptual as well as geographical boundaries. Patrick Leigh Fermor began a memoir of his 1933-34 journey from Amsterdam to Constantinople in **A Time of Gifts** (Harper, 1977). That volume took him through Prague and Vienna; its sequel, **Between the Woods and the Water** (Viking, 1986) picks up in April 1934 outside Budapest and takes him, on horseback, across the Great Hungarian Plain into Transylvania and toward "the end of middle Europe." His account reminds us with elegance how the mutations of the old empire's frontiers have distorted perceptions of geographical constants.

But does such an appreciation of regional coherence amount to Habsburg nostalgia? Paradoxically, the idea of "Middle Europe" has found present-day adherents not only in Vienna and Austria but also among Hungarian and Czech intellectuals who resist the rubric "East European." Perhaps the current European upheavals will nurture a reinvigorated and culturally diverse Central Europe, where Vienna's critical modernism will be valued but where empire will have no place.

—Michael P. Steinberg is assistant professor of history at Cornell and author of *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890-1938*.

Today, it is easy to view Elizabeth as hysterical, narcissistic, and anorexic. In her time, however, she was acclaimed, with much justification, as the most beautiful woman in Europe. To retain her distinctive beauty, the attribute responsible for her as-

cent in the world, she starved herself on various extreme diets. (One regime, which would last for days on end, consisted of nothing but six glasses of milk a day.) On frequent walking tours, she marched at such a brisk pace that her companions fell



Eros and Thanatos. *The self-centered Empress Elizabeth (left) neglected her son. In 1889, Crown Prince Rudolph shot himself and Baroness Marie Vetsera, his 17-year-old mistress.*

behind her in exhaustion, as she continued on for seven, eight, even ten hours.

Like some hysterics, the empress—who always traveled with enough trunks to fill many railway cars, so that she had always at her disposal a vast array of the costliest and most beautiful clothes—at last took to going out for her walks wearing only a dress, a single garment to cover her body. She wore no underclothes and, to the horror of her companions, no stockings. Nevertheless, she often wore as many as three pairs of gloves to protect her hands.

In 1871, when the emperor wrote to Elizabeth, who as usual was away from Vienna, asking what gift she would like best to receive on her name day, she wrote back, probably in the spirit of self-mockery, “What I would really like best would be a completely equipped insane asylum.”

Madness held a particular fascination for Elizabeth, possibly because it was not uncommon in her family, the Wittelsbach rulers of Bavaria. She frequently visited in-

stitutions for the insane in Vienna, Munich, London, and elsewhere. She extolled both death and madness in various cryptic remarks: “The idea of death purifies” and “Madness is truer than life.” In 1898, on one of her trips to Geneva, she was assassinated by an anarchist—a murder that made as little sense as her life.

The devastating impact of neurosis and the destructive results of hysteria thus played themselves out upon the stage of the imperial court long before Freud decided to devote his life to understanding such psychological disturbances. And mental disorder was by no means restricted to only one member of the imperial family. Nine years before Elizabeth’s assassination, Franz Joseph’s only son and heir, Prince Rudolf, staged his own tragic psychodrama. Rudolf led a lonely existence; his mother, Elizabeth, was distant and mostly unavailable to him. He and his father had little mutual sympathy, and no love existed between him and his wife, a Belgian princess. By the age



of 30, he had had many affairs, all of which were meaningless to him. In January of 1889, feeling depressed, lonely, and useless, Rudolf formed and carried out a suicide pact with one of his lovers, a Baroness Vetsera: He killed her and then committed suicide at his hunting lodge at Mayerling, in the heart of the Vienna Woods, 15 miles from the city itself.

Oedipal conflicts between rulers and their sons were nothing new in history—or in the house of Habsburg. The conflict between Philip II and Don Carlos in the 16th century not only made history but became the subject of one of the world's greatest dramas and then a great opera. But Rudolf's act seems unique: the heir of a great empire committing homicide and suicide, immediately after having sex with a woman who had clearly chosen both sex and death. It was a shockingly vivid demonstration of the self-destructive tendencies that Freud would later investigate. It also reflected the intimate relationship between the sex drive and the death drive—a connection Freud sought to clarify in his explorations of the darkest aspects of man's psyche.

The emperor himself sought to cope with these personal and familial tragedies by throwing himself—compulsively, one might say—into his work. He immersed himself in his paperwork tirelessly for as many as 16 hours a day, as if he were a mere subaltern of the empire rather than its supreme ruler. With equal compulsiveness, he insisted on court etiquette and adopted the infamous Spanish Court Ceremony, which permitted no spontaneous personal contact or outward displays of emotion. Interestingly, however, after Elizabeth's estrangement became permanent, and even more so after her death, he sought solace in the company of a young and beautiful actress who had been her reader. Because of Rudolf's suicide, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand—a man with whom the emperor was in deep conflict—became heir to the throne. It is reported that when Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914—the event which led to the First World War—Franz Joseph remarked that he was relieved, because this murder had rectified a situation which was much in need of fixing.

Sex and destruction coexisted strangely

in Viennese culture during the empire's slow decline. Even leading politicians were openly preoccupied with ideas of death. "We have to kill ourselves before the others do it," declared the Hungarian foreign minister around 1912. The connection between sex and death formed a main underlying topic of Viennese art, literature, and psychoanalysis. It permeated the work of artists and thinkers, including the brilliant philosopher Otto Weininger, who in 1903, at the age of 23, committed suicide at the place where Beethoven had died. His *Sex and Character* (1903), with its deeply pessimistic view of sex, had a tremendous influence on the intelligentsia of Vienna.

Early in his own life, Sigmund Freud made a choice that seemed to presage his later recognition of the importance of the death drive in his mature system. In December of 1881, Vienna's Ring Theater had burned down, resulting in a great loss of life. It was yet another of the city's tragic catastrophes. The emperor, always putting the best face on disaster, decreed that on the site of the destroyed theater there should rise a new residential and commercial building to be called the Sühnhaus ("House of Atonement"). Because of the excellent location on the Ringstrasse, the new building would be able to charge high rents; part of the income thus derived would go to support the children who had been orphaned by the fire.

At first, it was difficult to find tenants for the Sühnhaus's splendid apartments: People were reluctant to move into a place where so many others had lost their lives. But it was in this "House of Atonement" that Freud—although the rent was far beyond his means—took an apartment when he married in 1886, and it was there that he established his practice. He did not consider that his patients, suffering from debilitating nervous disorders, might be hesitant to enter a building so strongly associated with death. For reasons we do not know, Freud not only tolerated this association but relished it. Perhaps even at that time ideas about the morbidity of neuroses were in his unconscious, bringing him to choose this ominous building as the place for his life and work. In addition to being among the first tenants of the Sühnhaus, the

Freuds were also the first couple to have a baby there. On the occasion, Freud received a letter from the emperor, congratulating him for being the first to bring a new life into a place where so many lives had been lost.

This letter is the only known direct contact between the emperor and Freud. But the emperor, and what he stood for, was never far from Freud's awareness. He often said that an emperor was a symbol for the father and the superego, and therefore that the figure of the emperor played an important role in the conscious and unconscious of everyone in the empire.

Events, however, had made clear that even Vienna's emperor was not master in his own house; and this fact may have inspired Freud to develop the idea that the ego was not master in its own house—a realization that Freud calls a severe blow to our narcissism (and similar to the blow the emperor's narcissism must have suffered when he was rejected by son and wife). The emperor's compulsive reliance on work as a defense against the many attacks on his self-esteem probably was not lost on Freud. His study of neuroses led him to believe that they were defenses against sexual fears and attacks on one's self-love.

One of the great themes of Freud's work was the subtle yet powerful interplay of thanatos and eros, death and sex. But Freud was not the only person in Vienna to explore this theme. The writer Arthur Schnitzler, whom Freud claimed as his alter ego, won literary renown in Vienna for his treatment of the subject in his novels and plays. In one of the latter, *Liebelei* (*Playing with Love*, 1914), a young man of the upper class has an affair with a lower-class girl who loves him deeply. But their relation is of little importance to him, compared with his interest in seducing the wife of a prominent citizen. He is not truly in love with her either, but the challenge of seducing her appeals greatly to his vanity. The lady's husband feels obliged to challenge the seducer to a duel, in the course of which the husband kills the young man. The hapless girl who has loved him so much is not even permitted to attend the funeral, and this fact impresses her with how little she had meant to him; in des-



Hostile Powers (1902) by Gustave Klimt.

peration, she commits suicide.

In much of Schnitzler's other writings, sexual involvement leads to destruction. This is the theme of one of his best-known novels, *Fräulein Else* (1925), in which a neurotic, and probably hysteric, young girl, to save her father from being disgraced, accedes to the desire of an older man: She comes to him naked, only to kill herself as she does so.

That eros and thanatos are the deepest and strongest drives in man was an insight achieved by others besides Freud and Schnitzler. One of Brahms's greatest works, his *German Requiem* (1868), has as its central theme the idea that "in the middle of life we are surrounded by death." Mahler wrote songs on a child's death, a resurrection symphony, and, as his crowning achievement, the Eighth Symphony, in which he combines a medieval mass with



Death and Maiden (1915) by Egon Schiele.

the last part of Faust—his apotheosis, where in death he is saved by the love of woman, suggesting that only in death is true fulfillment possible.

The preoccupation with sex and death is also found in the work of Vienna's greatest painters, most notably Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) and Egon Schiele (1890–1918). Klimt's early work had been quite conventional, but upon reaching maturity around the turn of the century he began to paint and draw nude hysterics. Some of his studies for the large paintings that were to decorate the University of Vienna depict nude women in the typical hysterical *arc de cercle* posture, a motif he repeated many times. As early as 1902, an inimical critic referred to Klimt, not without reason, as the "painter of the unconscious."

Klimt's most gifted student, Egon Schiele, went even further than his master in exploring man's neurotic aspects. In his self-portraits, he analyzed his own personality as penetratingly as Freud analyzed his. In the double portrait *Heinrich and Otto Benesch* (1913), he not only illuminated the dark sides of his subjects' psyches but also evoked the Oedipal tension between them.

Freud began his own investigation of the psyche with his study of hysteria, which he was still working on when the Mayerling tragedy occurred in 1889. Through his study he discovered how powerful and all-encompassing a force the sexual drive is, and what strange forms of behavior it could produce when inhibited or repressed. How deep an impression this and other early studies made on Vienna's literary world may be illustrated by the playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal's remark that, while he was writing the libretto for Richard Strauss's opera *Elektra*, he consulted them again and again. *Elektra* is indeed portrayed as a hysterical woman.

With the appearance of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, psychoanalysis became established. This greatest of Freud's works is one of introspection; in it all interest is devoted to the inner life of man, to the neglect of the external world.

Freud took as the epigraph for his turn-of-the-century masterpiece a line from Virgil: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* ("If I cannot move heaven, I will stir up the underworld"). This motto was a suggestion that turning inward was the result of a tragic inability to alter the external world or to stop its dissolution. The best one could do, therefore, was to deny importance to the world at large by concentrating all interest on the dark corners of the psyche.

The motto could have been Vienna's as well, but the city chose its own—an architectural motto that seemed to be the first step toward fulfilling Empress Elizabeth's desire for "a completely equipped insane asylum." In the decade after her death, one of Vienna's most distinguished architects, Otto Wagner, was commissioned by the city to design the Church of St. Leopold on the Steinhof, a church devoted to serving the spiritual needs of the mentally ill. Wagner conceived of the church as a total work of art, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and he invited many of the best young artists of Vienna—Kolo Moser, Richard Luksch, Othmar Schimkovitz, and others—to participate in decorating it. One of the most splendid features of the church, begun in 1905 and completed in 1907, is its golden cupola, a cupola covered with gilded bronze which glows when the sun's rays reflect off of it.

Thus during the last years of the disintegration of the great Habsburg Empire, its capital paid tribute to the importance of madness with an impressive monument. It was fitting for a city whose greatest writers and painters explored the nature of madness in their work and whose best thinkers devoted their energies to discovering and understanding the previously unknown workings of the human mind.

Because of what took place in Vienna at that extraordinary time, we now have the means of mastering, or at least understanding, some of the darker forces at work in our minds, and so of finding it possible—even when surrounded by disintegration—to extract meaning from life and, as Freud taught, to be master in our own house.



*In the tenements, all the influences make for evil; because they are the hotbeds of the epidemics that carry death to rich and poor alike; the nurseries of pauperism and crime that fill our jails and police courts; . . . because, above all, they touch the family life with deadly moral contagion . . . What are you going to do about it? is the question of today.*

—**Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)**

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Not until the mid-19th century, writes the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb in *The Idea of Poverty* (1983), did the existence of want and destitution come to be viewed as “a matter for social action rather than the exercise of private virtue.” But what kind of social action? Americans today are running out of answers. The poverty rate has bobbed stubbornly around the 13 percent mark since the late 1960s. The underclass—the incorrigible poor, who have abandoned all thought of advancement—seems to be growing. Perhaps, Howard Husock suggests in this essay, it is time to remember an answer that was given a century ago, one that insisted on personal involvement of rich and poor alike as a component of successful social action.

# Fighting Poverty the Old-Fashioned Way

by Howard Husock

**I**t is difficult to exaggerate the dread and sense of crisis that the urban poor inspired in most citizens of the United States a century ago. The phenomenally rapid industrialization that had been underway since the Civil War was attracting millions of eastern and southern Europeans to America's sweatshops, steel mills, and railyards. The influx of these "more foreign foreigners," more alien in language, customs, and religion than the Irish and German immigrants who preceded them, was climbing inexorably toward a one-year peak of 1,285,000 in 1907. Middle-class Protestant America recoiled in fear as entire districts of Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, and Philadelphia were taken over by what one writer in New York called "the dangerous classes." An early history of this new immigration noted that "districts passed in a few years from the Irish, who were typical of the early influx, to the Russian Jews, who, as they landed represented the extreme of all that was in contrast with the American way of life."

The new masses were not only different but wretchedly poor, and poverty soon began to emerge as a political issue. As early as 1888, President Grover Cleveland warned that "oppressed poverty and toil, exasperated by injustice and discontent, attacks with wild disorder the citadel of rule." Jacob Riis, drawing on his years as a police reporter and photographer on New

York's Lower East Side, lent popular urgency to the problem of urban poverty with the publication in 1890 of *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis attracted national attention with his descriptions of "unventilated and fever-breeding structures," of gangs meeting in "dens" to plan "raids," willing to saw a peddler's head off "just for fun." Nor were such accounts isolated. In Philadelphia, another account, sounding much like a late 20th-century description of the ghetto drug culture, described "boys and girls idling away their time on the street, their characters weakened so that they are liable to the contagion of all kinds of vice."

In his classic 1904 treatise, *Poverty*, reformer Robert Hunter estimated that 10 million of America's 82 million people lived in poverty. In an era without unemployment insurance or workers' compensation, even those with jobs were often but a missed paycheck or an industrial accident away from destitution. "Upon the unskilled masses," wrote Hunter, "want is constantly pressing." He warned, furthermore, of an emerging "pauper" class—an underclass of dangerous and demoralized poor people. On Armour Avenue in Chicago, in Cincinnati's Rat Hollow, in Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen, and in dozens of similar neighborhoods around the country, wrote Hunter, there "lives a class of people who have lost all self-respect and ambition, who rarely if ever work, who are aimless and drifting, who like drink, who have no thought for

their children and who live on rubbish and alms.”

Today, the astounding upward mobility of this generation of immigrants (or at least of their children) and their assimilation into the American middle class is seen as somehow inevitable—the by-product of an expanding economy, strong demand for unskilled labor, and an immigrant work ethic. By implication, middle-class America today is limited in its ability to deal with the poor and underclass because both labor conditions and the character of the poor have changed. Yet the upward mobility of the poor hardly appeared inevitable to the contemporary observers of a century ago. Bringing the urban poor into the cultural and economic mainstream was viewed as a challenge requiring extraordinary steps.

Out of the reform maelstrom of the turn-of-the-century Progressive era emerged a movement that undertook to bring the poor both hope and the tools of advancement. The settlement-house movement unabashedly promoted bourgeois values and habits—instructing the poor in everything from art appreciation and home economics to the importance of establishing savings accounts. To children in poverty, it offered recreation, books, clubs, as well as a sense of the history of American democratic institutions. It approached thousands of the urban poor, particularly children and teenagers, with a message of inclusion in the larger world beyond the slum. It *expected* them to make it. To make good on that promise, relatively well-to-do Americans, inspired both by religious conscience and fear for the American social fabric, “settled” in poor neighborhoods, there to experience the lives of the poor firsthand, to offer guidance to their

neighbors and, in time, to be inspired to suggest policy prescriptions to the nation: child labor laws, industrial safety laws, and old age and unemployment insurance.

Settlements developed in the aftermath of a decades-long debate—in many ways reminiscent of that which has engaged the United States since the early 1960s—over how best to provide financial support to the needy without destroying their incentive to work. Not content with any relief system alone, Jane Addams and other settlement-house founders saw a need for a communitarian movement to bring rich and poor together. Their goal was both to broaden the horizons of the poor and to humanize the classes in each other’s eyes. The movement, wrote Addams in 1892, rested on three legs. “First, the desire to interpret democracy in social terms; secondly, the impulsive beating at the very source of our lives, urging us to aid in the race progress; and thirdly, the Christian movement toward humanitarianism.”

By attending settlement clubs and classes, the poor would be exposed to middle-class values and be given, it was hoped, the tools of self-betterment. The volunteer residents themselves were thought likely to profit as well. Still, the movement indulged neither the personal nor the political whims of youth. Nor did it veer toward wholesale rejection of the American economic system. It sought redistribution not of wealth per se but of “social and educational advantages.” Moreover, although it helped put on the public agenda the social insurance programs that were finally passed during the New Deal, it never believed that these could substitute for individual efforts by rich and poor alike.

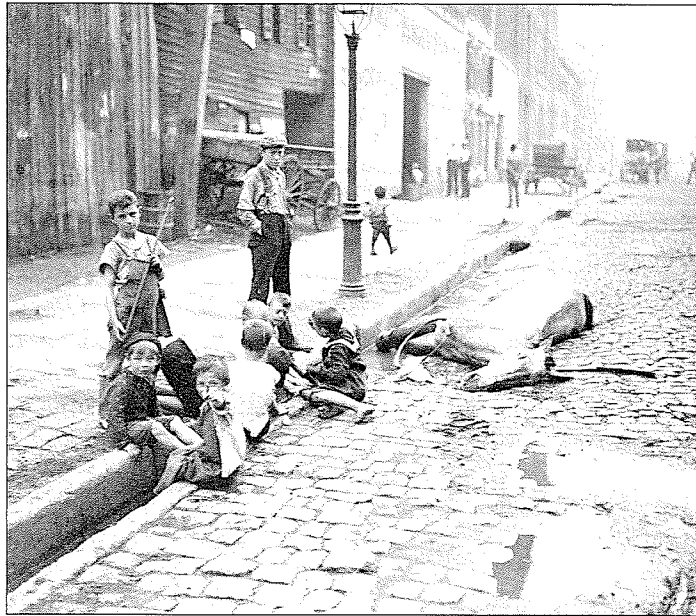
The American roots of the settlement-house movement date to the practice of

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“friendly visiting” of the poor, which arose in response to the breakdown of the traditional social-welfare system during the early 19th century. The traditional system, dating to the Elizabethan “poor laws,” had provided financial support for community residents (strangers were pointedly excluded) who were sick, widowed, or temporarily down on their luck. By the 1820s, this community-oriented system was growing increasingly unworkable. Cities were becoming too big, workers too transient, and the poor too concentrated in certain urban neighborhoods. Many towns and cities resorted to poorhouses as an economy measure, requiring the poor to live in them in exchange for support.

These changed conditions also inspired new efforts by men such as the Unitarian minister Joseph Tuckerman of Boston. In 1819 he began his ministry to the poor in their own neighborhoods, where, he believed, they were “living as a caste, cut off from those in more favored circumstances.” In New York during the 1840s, Robert Hartley, the English-born son of a woolen-mill owner, founded the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. He fought for temperance (alcohol was the drug menace of the day) and began a system of friendly visiting in which male volunteers took responsibility for the poor in a given political precinct, bringing such offerings as copies of Benjamin Franklin’s *The Way to Wealth*. (“It depends chiefly on two words: industry and frugality,” Franklin declared.)



*Boys at play on a New York street, 1890.*

Among Hartley’s successors was Charles Loring Brace, a seminarian first drawn to social action through visits to New York City prisons. Convinced that inmates were often beyond help, he founded the Children’s Aid Society in 1853 and concentrated his efforts on the 10,000 orphaned or abandoned children then thought to be living on New York’s streets. Like the settlement-house workers who came after him, he was persuaded that “formative” efforts were far more effective than “reformatory” ones. In language foreshadowing Jane Addams, he wrote: “These boys and girls will soon form the great lower class of our city. They will influence elections . . . they will assuredly, if unreclaimed, poison society all around them. They will help to form the great multitude of robbers, thieves, vagrants and prostitutes who are now such a burden upon the respecting community.” Brace offered reading rooms, vocational training, and “news-boy lodging houses.” He also “placed out” thousands of children with farm families in

the Midwest and West.\*

It was with the settlement-house movement, however, that the uplift impulse peaked. Notwithstanding the example of Hartley and Brace, settlements were most immediately inspired by ideas and events in Britain. With its head start on industrialization, England had been forced during the mid-18th century to confront the need to create a new social welfare system suited to a capitalist economy. In his history of the settlement-house movement, *Spearheads of Reform* (1967), Allen Davis traces the genealogy of settlements to London. There, in 1854, a Utopian clergyman and academic named Frederick Denison Maurice founded the Working Men's College, aiming to use education to erase class distinctions and mitigate the Dickensian social inequities of the era. His faculty included charismatic fine arts professor John Ruskin, England's leading art critic, and a critic as well of 19th-century industrialization. Like the settlement residents he would inspire, Ruskin was reform-minded, calling for a social-security system, minimum wage, and higher housing standards.

His disciples included Arnold Toynbee, an economist (and uncle of the famed historian) who moved to London's East End slums to teach and to learn. He died there at age 32 in what a history of the settlement movement would call an atmosphere of "bad whisky, bad tobacco, bad drainage." In 1884, Toynbee Hall was created in the same neighborhood to honor the memory of the reformer. Its founder, a minister named Samuel Barnett, took some of his inspiration from an 1883 church publication entitled *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*. It described a "gulf daily widening

\*This effort was violently opposed by the Catholic Church, which suspected Brace's motives in placing Catholic children with Protestant families in the Midwest. But Miriam Langsam concludes in her history of the effort, *Children West: A History of the Placing-Out System of the New York Children's Aid Society, 1853-90* (1962), that most of the children benefited.

which separates the lowest classes of the community... from all decency and civilization." To bridge that gap, Barnett brought college students to his Toynbee Hall, where they mounted art exhibitions, gave lectures, and lobbied local officials for a public library and for park and playground improvements.

Many of the leaders of the American settlement-house movement were directly inspired by visits to Toynbee Hall: Stanton Coit, an Amherst graduate with a doctorate from the University of Berlin, went on to found the nation's first settlement, New York's Neighborhood Guild, in 1886; Jane Addams, the daughter of a small-town Illinois Quaker banker, became co-founder of Chicago's Hull House in 1889; and Robert Woods, a graduate of the Andover Theological Seminary, served as "head resident" at Boston's South End house, founded in 1891. Smith College graduate Vida Scudder studied with John Ruskin in Britain, and along with a group which included Katherine Lee Bates, a Wellesley College professor (and the author of "America the Beautiful"), founded the College Settlement Association in 1889, with houses in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.

**T**he beliefs of the people who started the settlement movement cut across many of the divides which have since developed in American social-welfare philosophy. They were religious women and men inspired to a secular mission. They were political crusaders who never forgot the importance of maintaining direct contact with the poor and providing them with personal attention ("mentoring," to use today's term). They were youthful (under 30) cultural radicals who rejected middle-class comforts but saw themselves as mediators between the classes rather than simply as critics of the established order. They were social experi-



## WHAT THE SOCIAL CLASSES OWE EACH OTHER

*In 1889, Hull House was "soberly opened on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal," Jane Addams later recalled. Yet she was anything but confident that Hull House could encourage the spirit of reciprocity. The dire commentary below, which she reprinted in her memoir, was written when Hull House opened its doors.*

The social organism has broken down through large districts of our great cities. Many of the people living here are very poor, the majority of them without leisure or energy for anything but the gain of subsistence.

They live for the moment side by side, many of them without knowledge of each other, without fellowship, without local tradition or public spirit, without social organization of any kind. Practically nothing is done to remedy this. The people who might do it, who have the social tact and training, the large houses, and the traditions and customs of hospitality, live in other parts of the city. The clubhouses, libraries, galleries, and semi-public conveniences for social life are also blocks away. We find workingmen organized into armies of producers because men of executive ability and business sagacity have found it to their interests thus to organize them. But these workingmen are not organized socially; although lodging in crowded tenement

houses, they are living without a corresponding social contact. The chaos is as great as it would be were they working in huge factories without foreman or superintendent. Their ideas and resources are cramped, and the desire for higher social pleasure becomes extinct. They have no share in the traditions and social energy which make for progress. Too often their only place for meeting is a saloon, their only host a bartender; a local demagogue forms their public opinion. Men of ability and refinement, of social power and university cultivation, stay away from them. Personally, I believe the men who

lose most are those who thus stay away from them. But the paradox is here; when cultivated people do stay away from a certain portion of the population, when all social advantages are persistently withheld, it may be for years, the result itself is pointed to as a reason and is used as an argument, for the continued withholding.

It is constantly said that because the masses

have never had social advantages, they do not want them, that they are heavy and dull, and that it will take political or philanthropic machinery to change them. This divides a city into rich and poor; into the favored, who express their sense of the social obligation by gifts of money, and into the unfavored, who express it by clamoring for a "share"—both of them actuated by a vague sense of justice. This division of the city would be more justifiable, however, if the people who thus isolate themselves on certain streets and use their social ability for each other, gained enough thereby and added sufficiently to the sum total

of social progress to justify the withholding of the pleasures and results of that progress, from so many people who ought to have them. But they cannot accomplish this for the social spirit discharges itself in many forms, and no one form is adequate to its total expression.

—from *Twenty Years At Hull-House* (1910).



*Jane Addams in 1930.*

menters who nonetheless championed bourgeois values. They were reformers, not revolutionaries. (This earned them the scorn of writers who were further to the left. Socialist Jack London wrote that settlements “do everything for the poor except get off their backs.” Upton Sinclair derisively summed up settlement programs as “lectures delivered gratis by earnest advocates of the single tax, troutfishing, exploring Tibet, pacifism, sea shell collecting, the eating of bran and the geography of Charlemagne’s empire.”)

The settlement houses followed in the wake of the so-called “scientific charity” movement. Scientific charity was designed to achieve some of the same ends as the state and federal welfare initiatives of the past two decades. Its advocates, such as Josephine Shaw Lowell (author of *Public Relief and Private Charity*, 1884), sought to centralize both private and public assistance to guard against fraud and to limit support for the able-bodied, lest the incentive to work be diminished. It is important to note that the settlement movement was not a reaction to scientific charity’s callous-sounding agenda. It emerged as an organized supplement to the relief system, designed chiefly for the children of poor families, whether they were receiving relief payments or not. Wrote Jacob Riis: “We have substituted for the old charity coal chute that bred resentment . . . the passenger bridge we call settlements, upon which men go over not down to their duty.”

Doing their duty was high on the list of these reformers. They used a vocabulary that seems distant from mainstream social-welfare discussion today. “The impulse to share the lives of the poor, the desire to make social service,” wrote Jane Addams in 1892, “to express the spirit of Christ, is as old as Christianity itself . . . . Certain it is

that spiritual force is found in the Settlement movement, and it is also true that this force must be evoked and must be called into play before the success of any Settlement is assured.” The settlement workers were not missionaries in the literal sense. If anything, they encouraged the kind of non-denominational religion which has come to typify American life. Theirs was the religion of the social gospel, the belief that social conditions, as well as individual beliefs and practices, come properly under the purview of religion.

The movement believed, too, that there was what Jane Addams called a “subjective necessity” for settlements. “We have in America a fast-growing number of cultivated young people,” she wrote, “who . . . hear constantly of the great social maladjustment, but no way is provided for them to change it, and their uselessness hangs about them heavily.”\*

Movement advocates believed that personal contact between the classes was, as Robert Woods wrote, “not merely a means to some worthy end but, with its implications, as the end above all others . . . . This fresh exchange, continuously growing and deepening, stimulated by the surmounting of barriers of race and religion, was more than anything else to give form and body to the human democracy of the settlement.”

The nature of relations between the classes varied. Jane Addams was exhilarated by experiences as mundane as informing a neighborhood woman of the existence of a park several blocks away in a

\*Most volunteers were children of privilege. Annual reports of the College Settlement Association during the early 1890s, for instance, show that most volunteers were students or graduates of the elite women’s colleges: Smith, Wellesley, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, and Mount Holyoke. The 1891–92 report of the College Settlement Association’s house on New York’s Lower East Side notes that “eighty applications have been received during the year. Many of these it has been necessary to refuse, as the house cannot be crowded beyond a certain point.” The length of commitment varied. The New York house had 20 residents between September 1, 1891, and September 1, 1892, each staying an average of four months. Other “visitors” stayed less than one month.

direction the woman had never thought to venture. But Cleveland reformer Frederick Howe found his time in a settlement “anything but fruitful.” He felt awkward trying to dance with immigrant women, uncomfortable as a friendly visitor to tenements.

In their early years, the settlements’ reach was relatively short, their offerings not that extensive. What activities there were, however, were clearly in the uplift tradition. In the 1892 College Settlement Association’s New York house, activities included clubs for boys and girls, establishment of children’s savings accounts, a choir for neighborhood men, and home economics classes for neighborhood women. On weekdays, activities did not begin until 3:30 in the afternoon and were over by 9:30 or 10 p.m. A day in the life of the house included a surprising array of activities:

College Settlement Association  
New York House, 1892

3 to 5 p.m. Library: Two hundred boys and girls, from ten to 14 years old. Exchange of books and games.

3:30 to 5 p.m. Rainbow Club: Two residents. Twenty girls from ten to fourteen years old. Sewing, singing, gymnastics, and games.

7 to 8 p.m. Penny Provident Bank (Savings account deposits): Two residents. From fifty to one hundred children.

7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Hero Club: One resident, one outside worker. Sixteen boys, fourteen to eighteen years old. Business meeting, talks, music and games. (Discussion of life stories of successful people.)

8 to 9 p.m. The Young Keystones: Ten boys, ten to fourteen years old. Talks on history, music.

Descriptions of even simple programs—carpentry for boys, cooking classes for girls—make it clear that the settlement vision was laden with aspiration for the children of the poor. “The goal of a social programme based on personal interest is to help individuals to the highest level of which each is capable,” wrote Lillian Wald

of New York’s Henry Street Settlement, who was second only to Jane Addams as a voice of the movement. The 1892 report of the College Settlement Association’s Philadelphia house stressed what we might now call “empowerment”: “Here and there a boy has felt the pleasure, unlike all other pleasures, of creating with the mind and hand that which was not before, and that which was goodly to look upon, even though that something was but a loaf of well-baked bread, a well proportioned step-ladder, or a little clay-modeled apple. When once the boy or girl has felt this pleasure, something of that which inspires our great mechanics or poets has become theirs, and the character transformation begins.”

By the turn of the century, the number of settlements had increased (from six in 1891 to 74 in 1897), and their activities had expanded. The activities of houses changed as residents took stock of their environs. Driven by powerful idealism, many settlement workers became political advocates for the poor. Hull House, which had introduced itself to Chicago’s Halstead Street in 1889 with an art exhibit, soon opened a kindergarten to make up for the shortage of places in the public schools.\* Then the settlement residents took demands for a new school to the Chicago school board. Dismayed by the garbage overflowing in the stables and crowded frame buildings of the 19th ward—with its 50,000 residents of 20 nationalities—Jane Addams and Hull House itself bid on the ward’s garbage collection contract. A Hull House resident was eventually appointed garbage inspector.

The settlement impulse also led to ef-

\*Settlement leaders were strong believers in public education, but the public school systems of the day were limited both in size and what they taught. When the philosopher John Dewey created his famous “laboratory school” in 1896 to test his theories of progressive education, he did so in association with Hull House. In her devastating critique of the progressive education movement, *The Troubled Crusade* (1983), Diane Ravitch nevertheless praises Dewey (and Jane Addams) for seeking to end student “passivity” and “teachers’ excessive reliance on rote memorization and drill.”



*The Comets, one of dozens of neighborhood clubs at Hull House, sat for this portrait in the '20s. The clubs sponsored games and dances; they were meant to forge lifelong bonds among members.*

forts beyond the ward. Hull House resident Julia Lathrop organized a campaign to clean up the Cook County poorhouse; Addams and others signed on with a wide variety of reform causes. Hull House resident Florence Kelley was hired by a state commission to investigate child labor conditions. The inquiry (inspired by a Hull House encounter with a 13-year-old Jewish girl who committed suicide rather than admit she had borrowed \$3 she could not repay from a coworker at a laundry) led to state legislation banning the employment of children under 14. Settlements even took up the drug abuse issue. Hull House pushed for a 1907 state law banning the sale of cocaine after one of its former kindergarteners fell victim to the drug. "When I last saw him," Addams wrote of the boy, in a line that sounds like countless others being written today, "it was impossible to connect that haggard, shriveled body with what I had known before."

The scope of settlement concerns broadened to the point that by 1904, Robert Hunter, the head resident at New York's University Settlement, wrote his book, *Pov-*

*erty*, to lay out an ambitious national social welfare program: "Make all tenements and factories sanitary; prohibit entirely child labor; compensate labor for enforced seasons of idleness, old age or lack of work beyond the control of the workman." Such demands were not the mere conceits of a political fringe. By the first decade of the 20th century, leading settlement residents had gained the ear of President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1903, Lillian Wald called for the establishment of a federal children's bu-

reau to monitor and investigate such matters as infant mortality, child labor, and education. Invited to Washington to see the president, her efforts led, though slowly, to the 1909 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children. That gathering led to a spread of state-supported mothers' pensions—intended to allow widows and the wives of the disabled to stay at home to raise their children—and to the establishment in April 1912 of the federal Children's Bureau. Its first director, appointed by President William Howard Taft, was Julia Lathrop of Hull House.

**H**istorians have portrayed this as the movement's zenith. At last, they say, the settlement residents emerged as advocates for reform during the Progressive era and as harbingers of better things to come. But even as settlement leaders became national figures—Jane Addams regularly appeared on lists of the most admired Americans—they remained committed to helping individual poor people get ahead. Settlement leaders did not become directors of interest advo-

cacy groups with offices in Washington, far from the poor. They were representatives of neighborhood organizations who also happened to have an important voice in the national debate over poverty.

Between 1900 and 1920, even after reaching their supposed peak, settlements continued to grow and diversify. No longer did volunteers come strictly from upper-middle-class backgrounds; some settlements even added paid staff in certain specialized areas, such as nursing. In their 1913 *Handbook of Settlements*, Robert Woods and Albert Kennedy of Boston's South End House listed 413 settlement houses, concentrated in New York, Boston, and Chicago, but present in some form in 32 states and the District of Columbia. It was a network of bourgeois outposts in the American Calcuttas, boasting tenements refurbished as community centers, programs of education and recreation, and resident volunteers from the nation's best schools, all directed toward poor children and their parents.

Hull House itself grew to encompass eight buildings, including a music school, theater, and gymnasium. It operated a large day nursery for the children of the neighborhood's many working mothers. Major settlements such as Pittsburgh's Kingsley House developed elaborate programs of "manual training," kindergartens for children of slum families, and a summer "country home" where children and their families could gain a brief respite from the tenements. In a single week in January 1904, the house was attended by 1,680 children and teenagers. The 13 Kingsley House residents were assisted by 80 "non-resident volunteers" who came to the house for one month or more. Typical days ran from nine in the morning to 10:30 at night.

The annual reports of the house paint a picture of an institution thoroughly integrated into its neighborhood. "To many

boys," said the 1905 annual report, "Kingsley is a place where they may spend their evenings—their club house. They know the people who live here are always glad to see them—that the books, the magazines, the games, the warmth of the fire place is for them as for us." There can be no doubt that settlements such as this were predicated on the belief that the development of ambition and a work ethic in the children of the poor could not be left to chance. Wrote head resident William Mathews: "We cannot begin too early. Life changes quickly from one of instincts to one of habits. The child should be given fair opportunities to master the difficulties that have in many cases already crushed the parents.

"What means the work to the boy hammering, chiseling, planing away on the bookshelf, the table, the sled? It means the calling into eager and enjoyable activity the whole power of his being, and the consequent crowding out of the lower passions that ever find their root in idleness and inactivity."

After the turn of the century, settlements became a high-profile cause, attracting generous donations from the well-to-do. In 1906, Kingsley House boasted not only more than 900 individual financial supporters but its own endowment. Unlike the super-rich of today, who often flatter themselves with glittering gifts to museums, fashionable environmental causes, and the like, many of the wealthy during this earlier era felt a duty to provide the poor with means of advancement: libraries, schools, and settlement houses. One of Kingsley's supporters was Andrew Carnegie, who also endowed, among many other institutions, more than 2,800 libraries to help poor people improve themselves.

At its height, the settlement movement was a center not only of uplift efforts but a range of social services, including "milk

stations" and vocational education, many of which have been assumed (with varying degrees of effectiveness) by government and those under contract to it. Jane Addams, for one, anticipated and approved this prospect. She thought of settlements as places where experiments could be tried and then adopted by government.

How deeply did settlement efforts penetrate? What were the results? Can settlements truly be credited with having an effect on the poor?

The numbers of those touched by settlement houses sometimes seem impressive. In 1906, Pittsburgh's Kingsley House claimed weekly contact with some 2,000 children from the neighborhood around its 14-room building at Bedford and Fulton Streets. But it is undoubtedly true that, in general, settlements reached a minority of their neighbors. New York's East Side House, in the city's Yorkville section, described itself in 1914 as "a radiant center of spiritual, moral and intellectual light in a thickly settled neighborhood of 150,000." Its clubs enrolled 1,346 children.

Almost inevitably, the settlement workers found themselves focusing on those with the best chance to get ahead. In New York, Vida Scudder found reaching the Italian "peasant" so difficult—despite her own knowledge of Italian—that she frankly admitted that she would concentrate her work on those she identified as intellectuals. "The primary function of the settlement house," observed sociologist William Whyte in *Street Corner Society* (1943), "is to stimulate social mobility, to hold out middle-class standards and middle-class rewards to lower-class people. Since upward mobility almost always involves movement out of the slum district, the settlement is constantly dealing with people on their way out . . . . The social workers want to deal with 'the better element.'"

One can speculate as to whether reach-

ing the right people can change the tone and social fabric of an entire neighborhood. Settlement workers believed it possible. Wrote Robert Woods: "Interaction of residents, volunteers, and supporters with neighbors has its sure effect on local opinion. As working people come to know men and women of culture and organizing power, they understand the responsible and humanizing use of the resources of life and are less moved by irresponsible and railing criticism." Settlement workers were convinced they had succeeded in changing at least the course of lives they touched directly. Reflecting on more than 30 years at the Henry Street Settlement, Lillian Wald wrote: "Frequent on musical and dramatic programs are the names of girls and boys whom we have known in our clubs and classes. Not a few are listed in the ranks of the literary. Some have been elected to public office, others drafted into the public service." Among those who passed through the houses were Frances Perkins, secretary of labor under President Franklin Roosevelt, union leader Sidney Hillman, and comedian George Burns. Benny Goodman received his first clarinet lesson at Hull House. A gymnastics lesson at New York's Union Settlement House inspired Burt Lancaster to seek a career in show business—as an acrobat. Even today, decades after the heyday of the settlement-house movement, it is possible to make a long list of prominent people whose lives were touched by a settlement house: Nate Archibald, a former professional basketball player, novelist Mario Puzo, actress Whoopi Goldberg, and Robert P. Rittereiser, who was president and chief executive officer of the old E. F. Hutton brokerage firm (and one of a trio of extremely successful brothers who acknowledge a large debt to Manhattan's East Side House).

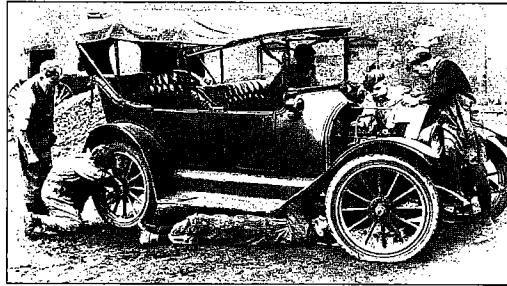
By the early 1920s, settlement houses seemed likely to become a permanent fix-

ture of American life. Although their pacifism cost Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, and some other settlement-house leaders public favor during World War I, Robert Woods and Albert Kennedy could still confidently assert in their 1922 survey, *The Settlement Horizon*, that “the strong claims of so thoroughly an established tradition of leadership, and the breadth and momentum of the cause, furnish ample guarantees for the future.”

It was not to be. In part, settlement houses fell victim to their own success. During the boom years of the 1920s, many of the poor headed up and out of the old neighborhoods. “There are many ‘empties’ [vacant apartments] in our neighborhood,” wrote Lillian Wald, “because, as standards of living have been lifted, the uncrushable desire for a bathroom has increased, and the people have moved away.” Meanwhile, restrictive federal legislation in 1924 ended mass immigration, thus limiting the number of newcomers in settlement neighborhoods.

Some settlement houses closed down; many merged and became part of the group of charities served by local United Way and Community Chest drives, losing their financial independence and public profile. By 1963, in *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan described the settlements’ role in elegiac terms: “The Puerto Rican has entered the city in the age of the welfare state. Here and there are to be found the settlement houses of an earlier period, in which a fuller and richer concern for the individual was manifested by devoted people from the prosperous classes.”

There are remnants of the movement today in the major settlement cities—Boston, New York, and Chicago, where Hull House celebrated its centennial last year. Although aspects of the



*Teaching what public schools could not: Boys at Cleveland's Hiram House learn auto mechanics.*

original impulse are still to be found—New York’s Henry Street Settlement operates youth clubs, Boston’s United South End settlement runs a fresh-air camp—settlements today are run mostly by paid professionals, social workers whose training has its roots in psychiatric casework. Many settlements are really little more than health and counseling centers, which, like all manner of other institutions today, simply deliver impersonal social services to the poor. Government reimbursement provides the bulk of funding. It turned out, contrary to the expectations of Jane Addams and others, that government was simply incapable of doing what the settlements did—and was not really interested in trying, either.

The settlement idea also suffered as a result of the Depression, which, more than any other event in American life, made clear the limits of private charity. The incontrovertible importance of the 1935 Social Security Act, which established the form of the national social insurance system, has overshadowed a dubious assumption that accompanied it: that as pension programs grew to cover the elderly, the blind, and the families of maimed or disabled workers, poverty, over time, would “wither away.” Nobody anticipated the massive influx of unskilled workers from outside the industrial system after World War II, workers who had not been covered by the new social insurance. Poverty did

not disappear. Yet the persistence of the withering away fallacy discouraged volunteer activities. Poverty, it had been decided, would and should be taken care of by government.

The affluence of the postwar era and the expansion of government responsibility for management of the economy made government solutions to the poverty problem seem all the more appropriate. The need for federal intervention to break down the legal barriers to the entry of blacks into the mainstream of society reinforced the focus on Washington. The settlement-house philosophy—which embraced the need both for a social insurance safety net below *and* a helping hand from above—was largely forgotten.

Inaugurating the War on Poverty in 1965, President Lyndon Johnson spoke of a “hand, not a handout,” but the new federal antipoverty programs were captured by people who sought to mobilize the poor to effect a redistribution of wealth and power through political activism. Although VISTA workers and New Left activists followed the settlement example of taking up residence among the poor, few were driven by the idea of assisting the poor in self-improvement. Indeed, many of them rejected the very notion that the poor needed improvement; “the system” was the problem. To these latter-day settlement workers, the “hero club” and the summer camp seemed pathetically inadequate next to the class action suit and the sit-in at City Hall.

By far the most important response to the new urban poverty was the growth of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program—a descendant, ironically, of the “widows’ pensions” for which settlement residents had lobbied Teddy Roosevelt in 1909. Never meant as a large-scale welfare program when it was created under the Social Security Act, AFDC was pushed along by the growth of single-par-

ent families until it became the nation’s most important relief program. From \$194 million in 1963, annual outlays for AFDC grew to \$2.5 billion in 1972. As welfare payments grew, so did the unease of a society historically loathe simply to provide alms for the poor. As early as 1962 and as recently as 1988, Congress attempted to build uplift into the AFDC system. Some of these efforts, such as job training programs for welfare recipients in the 1988 Family Support Act, have shown promise. All of these efforts, however, owe more to such antecedents as the scientific charity movement than to the settlement impulse. They are more “reformatory” than “formative.” They target the “welfare-eligible,” those who have a demonstrated difficulty joining the economic mainstream, not those on the margin who might have a better chance of getting ahead with a little help.

It is difficult to suggest that there may be ways to go back to a better future for American social-welfare initiatives. Because the United States delayed providing basic social insurance for so long, historians have cast the pre-New Deal era as a Dark Age of Social Darwinism. Surveying this era in his acclaimed book, *In The Shadow of the Poorhouse* (1986), Michael Katz asserted that the 19th-century social-welfare system “reflected the brittle hostility and anger of the respectable classes and their horror at the prospect of a united, militant working class.”

Although the American welfare state has never been as generous as such critics might like, times have changed. Having survived the political assault of Ronald Reagan and the intellectual critique of Charles Murray in *Losing Ground* (1984), the American welfare state is in no immediate danger of being rolled back. At the same time, it is clear that there is no political consensus for its expansion. Left and Right seem



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to agree only that the current social-welfare system is unsatisfactory. A renewed emphasis on the active promotion of upward mobility offers a way out of this paralysis.

The day of the settlement house itself as the major link between the social classes has passed. Too many of its functions have been taken up, however imperfectly, by other institutions, ranging from the public schools to public television. But the need for a such a bridge has not been adequately met. Large numbers of Americans cannot find their way into the economic mainstream and are not spurred on to reach "the highest level of which each is capable." Without knowledge of how the world beyond the neighborhood works—that one can become an engineer, that good colleges are eager to accept black students with potential—the poor will not reach the highest level of their ability. Hard questions must be asked before such bridge building can begin. First, which values are to be taught to the poor? Second, who will teach them? Educators such as Joseph Clark, the controversial black high school principal from Paterson, New Jersey, have come to symbolize a return to an emphasis on bedrock values as part of schooling. People from beyond the neighborhood can help. Potential middle-class volunteers may not feel the tug of religious commitment as strongly as the Jane Addams generation did, but there are still affluent youths whose "uselessness hangs about them heavily."

In poor neighborhoods throughout the nation, thousands of voluntary wars on poverty are already underway. But overall, too

few are being won, and most are being waged without much help from middle-class whites. Perhaps the biggest impediment to the growth and success of such efforts is the lingering belief among liberals and others with the means to provide help that they are somehow beside the point, or even dangerous. Today's reformers pay tribute to impulses like those of the settlement workers—as when New York's Governor Mario Cuomo invokes the image of society as family—but only as prelude to calls for expanded social-welfare programs. They dismiss every pre-New Deal response to poverty—and every new proposal reminiscent of such measures—as paltry and mean-spirited. Thus President George Bush's talk of "a thousand points of light" inspires nothing but liberal satire, apparently out of the belief that any private effort to ameliorate poverty is meaningless, intended only to undermine government social-welfare programs. To that, too, the settlement tradition offers an answer.

"The conditions of life forced by our civilization upon the poor in our great cities are undemocratic, unchristian, unrighteous," wrote Vida Scudder of the College Settlement Association in 1900. But efforts to improve them, she said, must be "wholly free from the spirit of social dogmatism and doctrinaire assertion . . . . As we become more practical, we also become better idealists . . . . As we become more useful here and now, we strengthen and deepen all those phases of our common life that vibrate with the demand for a better society to be."

# CURRENT BOOKS

## SCHOLARS' CHOICE

Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows and staff of the Wilson Center

### *A Worldly Philosopher*

**THE EXAMINED LIFE:** Philosophical Meditations. By Robert Nozick. Simon and Schuster. 308 pp. \$21.95

Given the technical bent of most philosophy written today, it is cause for celebration when a philosopher deigns to address the common reader, particularly if that philosopher is no less than Harvard's Robert Nozick.

In *The Examined Life*, Nozick intends to philosophize as Socrates did. That is, he sets out to find an understanding that one can live by. Nozick may not entirely agree with Socrates that the unexamined life is not worth living. "Unnecessarily harsh," he says. However,

... when we guide our lives by our own pondered thoughts, it then is *our* life that we are living, not someone else's. In this sense, the unexamined life is not lived as fully.

The italicized *our* is an assertion nearly as extreme as Socrates', and it depends upon a system of values which the book takes largely for granted. The character of "our own pondered thoughts" is not clear. *My* thoughts may not be mine, but merely the residue of other thoughts. I may think them mine, but I may be deluded: In that case, the italicized *my* may be a chimera.

*The Examined Life* doesn't establish any of its terms. Its discourse is like a series of adjectives applied to nouns or values deemed to be self-evident. Nozick says, in effect: If you accept my terminology and the values that I would establish in another kind of book, or those I have established in my *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1975) and *Philosophical Explanations* (1982), I will show you how far toward your happiness an examination of this terminology and these values will bring you. Trust me. Stay close while I talk to you about dying, be-

queathing, parents and children, creating, the question of faith, the holiness of ordinary activities, the joyous rhetoric of sex, the bond of love, the nature of emotion, happiness, the meaning of selfhood, the conviction of being real, the question of meaning and value, the symbolism of darkness and light, the appalling fact of evil, the Holocaust, the status of wisdom, and the zigzag of politics. Nozick conducts these discourses in the spirit of the White Queen in *Through the Looking-Glass*. To stop Alice from crying, the Queen says:

Consider what a great girl you are. Consider what a long way you've come today. Consider what o'clock it is. Consider anything, only don't cry!

When Alice asks if one can keep from crying by "considering things," the Queen declares: "That's the way it's done: Nobody can do two things at once, you know." In 27 short chapters, Nozick keeps considering dozens of things. Only when he comes to the Holocaust does the considering yield to the tears.

If Nozick had put the chapter on the Holocaust at the beginning rather than near the end of the book, he would have had to write a different book. It is his prejudice that people (whom he too often calls "we") are fundamentally good-natured, decent folk who can be trusted to persist in that character. *The Examined Life* is, in that sense, a book of edification: It encourages "us" to have our lives and have them more abundantly by thinking about their quality, their procedures, their ends. The edification is not religious in any sense I can see, but it doesn't exclude anyone who chooses to live by a religious faith. The reader Nozick appears to have in view is a serious person who doesn't know what form her seriousness should take or how to choose one road over another.

God comes into *The Examined Life* only because someone has to be blamed for the Holocaust in particular and, in general, for letting evil men thrive. As a Christian, I believe in God, whose purposes I haven't the effrontery of identifying with mine. I also believe in Original Sin and Actual Sin, and regard Augustine's *Confessions* as the most convincing sequence of meditations on those matters. I accept the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the relation between man, the world, and God; and on the redemptive mission of Christ. I have not discovered from *The Examined Life* what Nozick believes in, unless it is the natural goodness of men and women, an article of faith I do not find persuasive.

But if Nozick doesn't believe in God, I can't see how he can reasonably haul him into some Nuremberg Trial on a charge of having let the Nazis go ahead with the Final Solution. In a bizarre chapter called "Theological Explanations"—a chapter that might as well have been called "A Chapter of Explanations that Explain Nothing"—Nozick calls upon Jewish theologians to "drive issues about evil deep within the divine realm or nature in some way, leaving it deeply affected yet not itself evil." I don't see why Nozick has added that last half-saving phrase. If he can't bear to blame mere people for anything, it doesn't make sense to invent a God so that he can blame him or deal with the scandal of evil by foisting the guilt of it upon the nature God supposedly created.

Let me say at once, lest a doubt persist, that *The Examined Life* is an honorable book, eloquent, deeply felt. One rejoices to find a philosopher addressing at least some of the problems ordinary literate people care about. But I am troubled by the credence Nozick asks me to give to his terminology. Take the word "we," for instance. I never know who Nozick's "we" are, or whether or not I am included. Sometimes he writes as if "we" were a man and a woman in love with each other. Delicacy suggests, in such a case, that I should absent myself from these intima-

cies. Sometimes I seem to be included, on the doubtful consideration that people will invariably be nice. But in several chapters the sentiments which Nozick ascribes to "us" are so lovable that they can be found, I assume, only in Nozick himself and a few of his friends at Harvard.

Then there is the word "self." In one place Nozick speaks of the self as "an entity with a particular partitioned and appropriative structure." That seems compatible with the notion of the self as agent, and indeed Nozick refers to the self elsewhere as "the nonstatic agent of its own change." Compatible, too, with the idea of the self as sole owner of its experiences: "The self is born, then, in an act of appropriation and acquisition." In another place, the self is constituted in the capacity

of knowing itself *as itself*, not just when it thinks about what happens to be itself. All of these references imply that the self is an agent. But there are other passages in which the agent is demoted: It becomes "a locus of processes of transformation," indeed "a funnel through which information can pass and be examined . . ." These changes cause Nozick's terminology to wobble at points where wobbling is the last thing I want to deal with. Besides, hasn't Kenneth Burke shown, in *A Grammar of Motives*, the difference a move from "agent" to "agency" makes: all the difference in a world of values?

The last word that troubles me in *The Examined Life* is "reality." Much depends upon this word and upon the adjective "real" that accompanies it. Nozick claims that the reality of this world "is reality enough," and would still be enough even if "earthly life is followed by a next realm." In either realm, we are to "encounter reality and become more real ourselves through a spiral of activities, and together



enhance our relating-to-reality." With an air of decisiveness, Nozick adds:

Love of this world is coordinate with love of life. Life is our being in this world . . . . We want nothing other than to live in a spiral of activities and enhance others' doing so, deepening our own reality as we come into contact and relation with the rest, exploring the dimensions of reality, embodying them in ourselves, creating, responding to the full range of the reality we can discern with the fullest reality we possess, becoming a vehicle for truth, beauty, goodness, and holiness, adding our own characteristic bit to reality's eternal processes.

## *How British are We?*

**ALBION'S SEED:** Four British Folkways in America. By David Hackett Fischer. Oxford. 946 pp. \$39.95

At first glance, one may be tempted to call David Fischer's *Albion's Seed* an oddly reactionary interpretation of American history. Most historians today live by the dogma that change alone, not change and continuity, defines their discipline. Fischer, a professor of history at Brandeis, goes against the grain by taking seriously an idea long thought dead and buried: namely, that our culture is British through and through.

Fischer thus appears the unlikely heir of the 19th-century American historian, Herbert Baxter Adams, who dignified his genteel conservatism by celebrating the English motherland's noble past. Resurrecting Adams's "germ theory" of history while rejecting its racist implications, Fischer revives the premise that our British origins continue to shape American culture today.

Those origins consist of four different cultural strains, established here, as Fischer shows, in four discrete migrations: East Anglicans to New England, 1629-40; south and western English Royalists to Virginia, 1629-1642 (he sets aside James-

Faced with sentences as noble as these, it would be churlish of me to dissent from them or in any way to impede their flow. But I have to dissent in one particular: What Nozick takes as ultimacy, I take as mediation. Besides, I am not sure that my best endeavors—or what I deem such—will make me more real, in any sense of the word that I understand. One probably has a better chance of being real, or of becoming real, by not specifying it too insistently as one's aim.

—Denis Donoghue, '89, holds the Henry James Chair of Letters at New York University.

town's frail founding); North Midlanders, largely Quakers, to the Delaware Valley, 1675-1715; and British "Borderers" from Scotland, northern England, and Ireland to the Appalachian backlands, 1715-1775.

Each subculture, he argues, had its own distinctive character on both sides of the Atlantic. The Quakers, for example, fostered democracy through both their laws guaranteeing "liberty of conscience" and their plainness of dress and manners; by comparison, the Puritans looked autocratic and rank-conscious. For their part, the borderland "Celts" retained in America their fierce clannish spirit, while their notions of warrior heroism and individual freedom underlay their understanding of the term "liberty."

Indeed, each of the four groups carried over from their particular region of England quite distinct ideals of freedom. By contrast with the Celts of Appalachia, the Puritans of New England perceived liberty in terms of community life—"ordered liberty": The Puritans could thus ruthlessly suppress Quakers and other heretics even while claiming religious freedom for themselves. The Virginians maintained a quite different combination of freedom and intolerance. The slaveholders made liberty almost synonymous with honor—

the right of freemen to rule without being overruled, to take pride in their condition, so unlike the slaves'. How different this was from the Quakers' concept of equitable, "reciprocal liberty," which included their antislavery predilections. Incidentally, none of these four distinct regional notions of freedom meets the modern, secular conception of freedom; in fact, colonial white Americans would have found the modern conception grossly permissive, anarchical, and profane.

Fischer's approach touches on all areas of cultural life. Take games and pastimes, for example. New Englanders, favoring associational activities, created team sports that were to evolve into football and baseball. Virginians, conservative in taste and hierarchy, preferred horse racing and the hunt. True to their faith, Quakers, whose religion was hostile to blood sports and needless gaming, enjoyed the "gentle recreation" of gardening. The Celtic backcountrymen reveled in contact sports—wrestling, boxing, eye-gouging—and the warrior's exigencies, the foot race and tests of firearms. In matters relating to time, Puritans sought to "improve" it in home and community activity; Quakers, to "redeem" it in contemplation and private prayer; Virginians, to "kill" it in wenching, drinking, and gambling; Borderers, to "pass" it in music, yarn-spinning, and cracker-barrel gossip. These and other entertaining aspects of daily life seem trivial only when separated from the larger context that Fischer so carefully constructs.

Fischer's insistence on the non-materialistic character of cultural adaptations constitutes his second historical heresy. He disputes both the Marxists, who explain everything in terms of class, and the conservative positivists, who see capitalism as the prime motivator. By uniting economic and political factors with such ineffable concerns as "learning ways," "gender ways," and "magic ways," Fischer makes folkways rest not on biological instinct—as the 19th-century originator of the term, William Graham Sumner, did—but on habit, conscious thought, and sometimes the "deliberate contrivance of a cultural

elite." (Fischer's "ways" terminology can become tedious: A reader wonders why "food ways" could not simply be called "food.")

Fischer's third heresy is an eclecticism that defies the artificial barriers among historians. He adopts all forms of legitimate investigation to argue his case—from cliometrics, the favorite muse of the hard-headed, to the humanistic devices of the mushy-minded; he is particularly indebted to cultural and economic anthropology, *La longue durée* and the *histoire totale*—practically the mottoes of the French *Annales* school of historians—have had few intellectual adherents in a nation that has prided itself on its dynamic capacity for change—that is, until David Fischer made himself the American equivalent of an *Annaliste*. In America, the "total history" envisioned by Fernand Braudel has been fragmented into disparate forms of social history. The study of women, blacks, labor, environment, and even forms of sexual preference has lately dominated the academy—with a consequent loss of coherence and any sense of overarching national identity. Fischer seeks a return to the original goal of the French school, an interpretive synthesis.

Finally, as if all this were not heresy enough, Fischer informs us that all those popular regional stereotypes which historians have struggled to discredit bear serious reexamination. In Fischer's hands, Thomas Jefferson's famous and unflattering portrait of the Yankee brethren receives fresh validation. The Yankees' nasal twang (derived from the "Norfolk whine"), their "sadd," muddy-colored apparel, their overboiled cuisine, their joyless, witch-haunted religion as well as their ungracious bluntness and unbridled acquisitiveness all had a historical basis, Fischer persuades us, deriving from Dutch-influenced East Anglia with its small market towns, artisans, and Calvinist merchants.

By reverting to old stereotypes, Fischer disposes of much scholarly misrepresentation. For example, he provocatively insists

that slavery did *not* create the rigidified foundations of southern society. That foundation had been brought over from Wessex, where extreme inequality and scattered rural living had been the rule. American black slavery, Fischer says, "did not create the culture of the tidewater Virginia; that culture created slavery." The first form of coerced labor was indentured servitude, not African slavery, which was a late 17th-century development.

Perhaps the most debatable of all arguments in *Albion's Seed* is its closing section on the persistence of the four regional cultures. Fischer feels compelled to show the impact of the past upon our more recent history, and his examples can be striking. For instance, he finds cultural persistence in the qualities of leadership: Franklin Roosevelt he identifies as a scion of New England rather than of Dutch New York; Virginian George C. Marshall, a reincarnation of Lee; George C. Patton, heir to Andrew Jackson's backcountry culture; and Dwight Eisenhower, "a soldier who hated fighting" as a result of his Moravian-Quaker upbringing. Indeed, in this final section Fischer sheds light on the way in which old regional political divisions endure in such matters as gun control, women's rights, and military spending.

Yet to make British origins primary in America where only 20 percent of us now

acknowledge British descent, where immigrants pour in from Latin America and the Orient, where each ethnic group clamors for its rightful place in the national sun, and where materialist historians dominate the profession, is to beg for instant rebuttal. *Albion's Seed* is one of those rarities in historiography, a book that will raise a salutary firestorm.

However, so comprehensive is Fischer's thesis and so illuminating its evidence that critics will find them no easy matter to refute. *Albion's Seed* transforms our understanding of the nation's cultural heritage, both its good and bad aspects, its liberalism and its conservatism, its tolerance and its intolerance. What others have seen as paradoxes or, more invidiously, as hypocrisies of American life, Fischer sees in terms of social patterns, customs, and traditions. Americans were never innocent, as once was thought, he implies, but share with their European forebears persistent vices as well as virtues. When Fischer completes his projected five volumes of the full range of the American past, he will have altered the historical landscape in a way no previous scholar ever has.

—Bertram Wyatt-Brown, '74, holds the Richard J. Milbauer Chair of History at the University of Florida.

## *Art for Life's Sake*

**MOVING PICTURES.** By Anne Hollander. Knopf. 512 pp. \$29.95

**THE POWER OF IMAGES:** Studies in the History and Theory of Response. By David Freedberg. Univ. of Chicago. 534 pp. \$39.95

This is not a pipe," announces the caption in René Magritte's famous 1928–29 painting of what most certainly *looks* like a pipe. An exercise in painterly wit? To be sure. But the painting is something else: an embodiment and validation of one of the main aesthetic principles of modern-

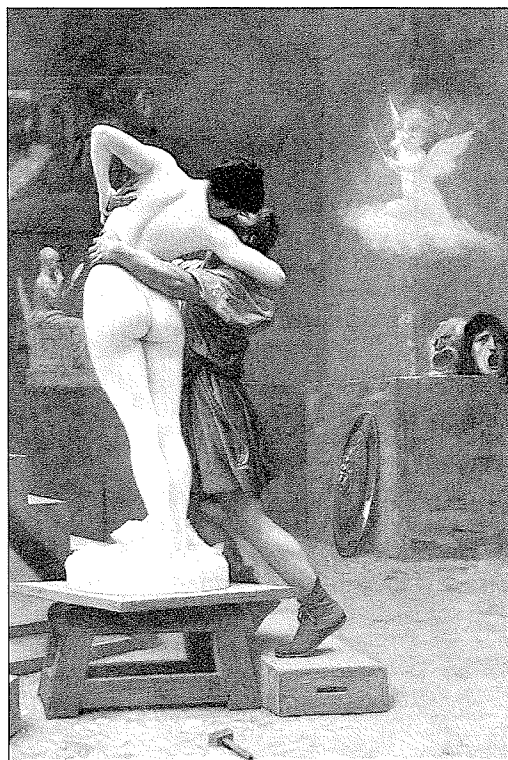
ism. Indeed, for over a century, both in and out of the academy, artists and critics have taught the educated public to look at pictures not as representations of reality but as compositions of form, line, and color. This "formalist" perspective has served to distance the viewer from the work of art, to discourage moralizing about subject matter, and to promote an attitude of analytical detachment.

The impulse to distinguish "art" from non-art first became particularly strong in the overheated atmosphere of the *fin-de-siècle*. Aesthetic legislators like Bernard

Berenson began elevating some images to the status of art and sanctioning their storage in museums; others they consigned to the dim regions of illustration or entertainment. By the 1940s, the formalist criteria for certifying art had become even more stringent: Clement Greenberg, speaking from the pulpit of the influential postwar *Partisan Review*, declared that the only subject matter contemporary painting could have was the act of painting itself. Since then, literal-minded realism has been increasingly dismissed, both in theory and practice.

Yet of late there are signs that realism is coming back in fashion. The postmodern celebration of polished surfaces and clever illusions (not to mention the determination of art dealers to promote new investment opportunities) has led to a reevaluation of painters like William Adolphe Bouguereau, Jean Léon Gérôme, and Lawrence Alma-Tadema—the targets of modernist scorn. The tendency to question all accepted categories of taste has promoted new appreciation for work formerly denied admission to the Temple of Art, including magazine illustrations, advertisements, and movies.

On the surface, Anne Hollander's *Moving Pictures* is another shot across the bow of modernist curatorial orthodoxy. Hollander, an art historian and the author of *Seeing Through Clothes* (1980), is, like so many other contemporary writers, concerned with bursting the boundaries between high and low art. By linking Stanley Kubrick and Jan Vermeer, she aims to locate a legitimate artistic genealogy for cinema. That genealogy she finds in the romantic tradition of Northern Europe, which is "devoted to the casual fall of light on phenomena and the apparently artless dip into the flow of passing experience, rather than to the visibly composed, controlled rendering of groups in significant poses, harmonized by unifying style." Hollander traces this tradition through five centuries, mixing familiar textbook masterpieces with sentimental genre works, ranging from Rembrandt to the American



Art literally becomes life in Jean Léon Gérôme's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1927).

illustrator Howard Chandler Christy. Throughout, as her punning title suggests, she wants to explore the ways that pictures actually move a viewer, not through their formal qualities but by engaging the emotions in a story.

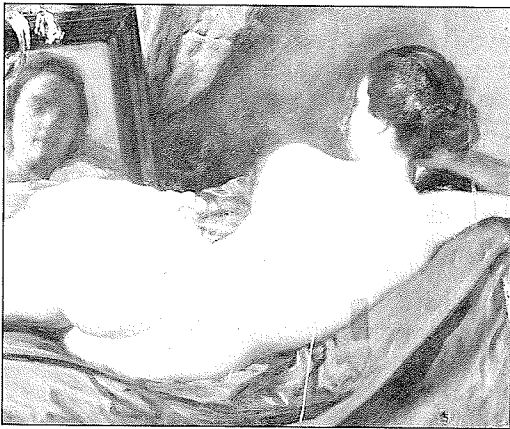
It is all good fun (one of Hollander's favorite words), but one wonders what the argument finally adds up to. She tries to recover verisimilitude as a value, but since she only acknowledges cinematic verisimilitude, she cuts a narrow path through the thickets of art history. Her argument depends heavily on oracular pronouncements and strained analogies. Of the 17th-century Dutch painter Jan Steen's "Hollywoodish style of realism," for example, she says: "Action in these works is comic and a bit pointed, as in old Technicolor comedies with Doris Day. Like them, it takes place among prosperous people whose enterprises are made to seem a little ridiculous while they are nevertheless faithfully

rendered in visual terms.”

A more fundamental flaw is the ahistorical framework on which the whole exercise is based. Constantly searching for “anticipations” of cinema, Hollander makes little attempt to understand art works on their own historical terms. “More than anticipating photography,” she writes of 18th-century realist painters, “they seemed to have been searching for a cinematography that at that time could only occur in still art.” Some “proto-cinematic” demiurge was evidently at work in artists’ minds for centuries, until art could issue forth at last in, say, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. This march-of-progress approach to art history prevents our understanding the past as anything but a prefiguration of the present. The pastness of the past, its otherness and strangeness, is lost in Hollander’s version of art history.

The same cannot be said of David Freedberg’s *The Power of Images*. A professor of art history at Columbia, Freedberg finds formalism a heavier burden than Hollander does. For him the battle is by no means over; indeed, he has scarcely begun to fight. His polemic, proclaiming “the uselessness of the category of art,” is sharper than hers; his view of how pictures move people, more original, more historical, and more persuasive.

According to Freedberg, what is behind



*The eroticism of Velázquez's Rokeby Venus provoked a slasher's attack in 1914.*

the whole formalist exercise is, quite simply, fear. By making the image’s appeal so exclusively ethereal, the aesthete exorcises his fear of its tremendous power to evoke terror or awe or sexual longing. The aesthete, like the formalist critic, avoids looking at pictures in a way which fuses signifier and signified, enlivens the image, and animates its full capacity to move us.

Freedberg’s argument would be less shocking, and less original, if he were discussing “primitives” and art. We are familiar with the animistic overtones and undertones of primitive art, where images have magical, fetishistic, or talismanic power to affect the viewer. But are we moderns likewise affected by the images we see? This is precisely Freedberg’s contention: “Instead of beginning with the Ice Age, let us begin with ourselves.” And one need only recall Anne Hollander’s title—the “moving pictures” of cinema and television—to realize that modern viewers can be as much at the mercy of images as were our ancestors.

To establish his “theory of response” to images, Freedberg calls in witnesses other than art critics and museum-goers trained in unemotional discrimination. Iconoclasts—destroyers of icons and other images—have recognized far more fully than aesthetes the true power of images, Freedberg argues. And while iconoclasts have been driven by a wide range of religious and political ideologies, from Islam to extreme forms of Protestantism to Nazism, they have all been alike in seeing icons not merely as symbols of a repressive old order but as living reconstitutions of an “Other” they wish to destroy.

Defenders of images, by contrast, have fallen back on softer ground. Catholic apologists, embarrassed by popular enthusiasms, have denied what Freedberg claims is the true power of images and icons: the bodying forth of divine power in familiar human forms; the capacity to intervene in everyday life, to give maternal or even sometimes sexual succor to the panting aspirant who craves it. The official church defense of images throughout and after the Middle Ages overlooked the myr-



iad accounts of statues coming to life and performing miracles. Instead, the church defended images by arguing that paintings and statues caught the imagination of the pious multitude in a way that sermons never could. But in the end this argument denied the icon's true function by reducing it to a mere instrument of edification; the Catholic apologists assumed, falsely, that belief in the real life of images was confined to the ignorant masses.

The modern aesthete's response to iconoclasts has been, in Freedberg's view, equally weak. After a knife attack on Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* in 1975, the director of public relations at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is reported to have said: "The assailant and his motives are wholly uninteresting to us; for one cannot apply normal criteria to the motivations of someone who is mentally deranged." This is the standard modern response to the slashing of pictures and the smashing of statues: It is always "the work of a madman." Yet as Freedberg shows, even these isolated (and unquestionably deranged) iconoclasts show behavior similar to that of more organized iconoclasts in the past—the same messianic zeal, the same distrust of art's capacity to arouse sensual passion. ("Slasher Mary," who attacked Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* in London's National Gallery in 1914, later explained: "I didn't like the way the men visitors gaped at it all day long.") Both the "madman" and the ideological iconoclast suspect and fear the image's fetishistic power to provoke a response mobilizing intellect, emotion, and perception all at once—a far profounder fetishism than the sort induced by commodities.

Museums deny this fetishism, elevating images to the status of ideal beauty that

arouses only refined and rational sentiments. As a result, the modern iconoclast's rage brings simple bewilderment to the curatorial mind. Museums, in Freedberg's polemic, have become places where beauty is rendered safe, inoffensive, and sterile. The only places where one can feel the *frisson* of an art still living and charged, Freedberg argues, are religious shrines and waxworks parlors—and in the "Primitive" sections of museums.

I have made Freedberg's argument sound schematic, but in actuality it is encyclopedic. His ethnographic and historical range is simply stunning. He offers innumerable examples of images that have "come to life"—at least in the eye, mind, and heart of the beholder: Virgins offering their breast milk to monks, crucified Christs descending from the cross to embrace devout nuns. He piles up mountains of verisimilitude: sculptures decorated with hair, veins that bleed, eyes that move. Though Freedberg often returns to classical antiquity for illustrations, and occasionally to contemporary anthropological fieldwork in Africa, the overwhelming bulk of his evidence is from the Catholic cultures of Europe from 1400 to 1700. It is possible to complain about the absence of a broader ethnography, but that would be churlish.

*The Power of Images* is an extraordinary critical achievement, exhilarating in its polemic against aesthetic orthodoxy, endlessly fascinating in its details. And it would be altogether consistent with Freedberg's thesis to describe at least some of that fascination as prurient and morbid. This is a powerful, disturbing book.

—T. J. Jackson Lears, '83, is professor of history at Rutgers University.

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 NEW TITLES
 

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## History

**RICHARD MILHOUSE NIXON: The Rise of an American Politician.** By Roger Morris. Holt. 1005 pp. \$29.95

**RICHARD NIXON AND HIS AMERICA.** By Herbert S. Parmet. Little, Brown. 755 pp. \$24.95

**NIXON: Vol. II, The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972.** By Steven E. Ambrose. Simon & Schuster. 736 pp. \$24.95

Of American presidents, Richard Milhouse Nixon is among the most private and least known—or *was*. The bookshelf devoted to works about him has now lengthened by almost 2,500 pages. Taken together, these three books help explain the rise and fall—and rise and fall—of the politician Adlai Stevenson called the “man of many masks.”

Morris, a journalist and historian, has chosen the most unusual approach, tracing the ascent of *Politico californienses* in American politics. Nixon usually avoided discussing his California childhood—rather as, when a child, he would lower the kitchen shades so no one could see him washing dishes. Morris begins his story with the turn-of-the-century battles for water and electric power that transformed southern California from a barren desert into the blooming metaphor of the American dream—a dream the Nixons of Whittier remained on the outskirts of. Describing “the politics of resentment in a place where resentments came quickly and ran deep,” Morris makes more understandable those shady

episodes in Nixon’s early career which earned him the nickname that still rankles him most, “Tricky Dick.” His slur campaign against the wealthy, glamorous Helen Douglas and his relentless pursuit of the Harvard-educated suspected spy Alger Hiss were labeled dirty politics, but they could be viewed (at least by Nixon) as examples of David slaying the privileged Goliaths.

Like Morris, Parmet sees Nixon as a Representative Man: Only here Nixon represents not the American-as-Californian but the postwar middle class in general. Parmet, the author of books on Eisenhower and Kennedy, is the most sympathetic to Nixon. While not overlooking

Nixon’s flaws (which he sees as exaggerated by a hostile press), he explores the symbiotic relationship between Nixon and his so-called “silent majority.” Using popular rhetoric about anti-communism and hard-working, God-fearing patriotism, Nixon became, Parmet argues, the first effective post-New Deal powerbroker, shifting influence from the old conservatives like Robert Taft to what would become the new business elites and right-

wing populism of the Reagan era.

Unlike Parmet and Morris, Ambrose offers no overarching thesis—no *Homo californienses*, no Nixon-as-quintessential-American. Instead, Ambrose, author of a two-volume study of Eisenhower, provides here a straightforward, month-by-month chronicle of a decade in the life of Nixon. It is in some ways the most satisfying of the three books. Although sharply critical of the 37th president, Ambrose pays tribute to



his foreign policy, calling Nixon "the ultimate cynic" in domestic affairs but "the ultimate realist" in foreign affairs. Thus, at the very time Nixon was advancing world order through détente with Moscow and opening relations with China, he was sinking deeper into the mire of Watergate—like a Greek tragic figure, doomed by his own flaws. Read Ambrose's chronicle and weep—for what almost happened to democracy during those years.

**HEALTH AND THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION.** *By Mark Nathan Cohen. Yale. 285 pp. \$29.95*

**POISONS OF THE PAST.** *By Mary Kilbourne Matossian. Yale. 190 pp. \$22.50*

Is civilization good for your health? What about rye bread? Two new books study the ways food, disease, and history all interrelate.

One of the triumphs of civilization, of course, has been its steady improvement of human health. Don't bet on it, says Cohen, an anthropologist at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh. Cohen evaluates the subsistence strategies of hunters, nomads, farmers, and urban-dwellers over the long centuries. Employing both ethnography and archaeological evidence—the diet of modern hunter-gatherers as well as diseases in ancient skeletons—he discovers a primitive life that refutes Hobbes's "poor, nasty, brutish, and short" characterization. Primitive people suffered low rates of degenerative disease, and they usually enjoyed healthier, protein-rich diets. For their menus, Cohen would barely award advanced—or, worse, semi-industrial—societies a one-star rating: "At best, we see what might be called a partitioning of stress . . . in which the well-to-do are progressively freed from nutritional stress . . . but under which the poor and urban populations . . . are subjected to levels of biological stress that are rarely matched in the most primitive of human societies." Today, in the Third World, the majority of people have less caloric intake than hunter-gatherers had at any time in history.

Matossian's focus is more restricted than Cohen's, though certainly as controversial. A historian at the University of Maryland, she argues that food poisoning resulted in the religious

Great Awakening in New England in 1741, the Great Fear of 1789 in France, and witch persecution on both sides of the Atlantic. The culprits in these (and other) outbreaks were poisonous fungi, particularly ergot, which infect food crops. Ergot—with its fondness for rye, for centuries a staple grain of northern Europe's lower classes—can cause tremors, delusions, and hallucinations, which then were interpreted as demonic possession, religious fervor, or divine inspiration.

While the "rye factor" is fairly well known, Matossian makes original use of "plant health, and climatic indicators of plant health" to account for population and fertility trends which have previously defied explanation. Between 1750 and 1850, the population of Western Europe roughly doubled. During those years, Matossian shows, large numbers in England, France, the Netherlands, and Germany switched from rye bread to a diet of wheat bread and potatoes—foodstuffs which better resist poisonous infections and provide better nutrition. Counting calories and checking what's cooking lack the sweep of magisterial theory; yet Matossian establishes a factual correlation to explain Europe's earlier population boom. Indeed, it is only recently that scholars like Matossian and Cohen have stooped to consider the popular saying, "You are what you eat."

**AWASH IN A SEA OF FAITH: Christianizing the American People.** *By Jon Butler. Harvard. 360 pp. \$29.50*

America is thought of as a country founded in religious covenants—the creation of New England Calvinists, Quakers, and other Christian sects. But then how explain the fact that, in 1680, four Connecticut towns—New Haven, New London, Stonington, and Woodbury—reported adult male church membership at 15 percent? Or that, between 1630 and 1670, church construction in Virginia was virtually ignored? Such statistics support the surprising hypothesis contained in Butler's subtitle: that, by and large, the American populace did not start off Christian but had to be made so.

Butler, a professor of American studies at Yale, reconstructs "a more complex religious past . . . far removed from a traditional 'Puritan'



interpretation of America's religious origins." He begins by portraying the fragile adherence of the laity to Christian beliefs in early modern Europe. The English "astrological physician" William Lilly, for example, saw 4,000 clients a year during the 1640s and cast horoscopes to plan battle strategies for the leaders of Parliament during the Civil War. Anglican clergy used magical amulets. The infamous "village atheist" was still alive and well in 16th- and 17th-century England. All these figures—atheists, heretics, Rosicrucians, alchemists—migrated to this side of the Atlantic, diluting orthodox Christian doctrine with beliefs in supernatural possession, prophetic dreams, and apparitions.

The Puritan zealot Cotton Mather (1663–1728) warned that Christianity was in danger of declining amid the American experiment. Modern historians like Perry Miller and Martin Marty have tended to validate Mather's prophecy, finding in the early Republic both a decline of state religion and the subsequent rise of a romantic, individualistic ethic. Butler, however, claims that in 18th-century America religion turned "establishmentarian rather than dissenting, coercive rather than voluntary, and institutional rather than individualistic."

As the states lost their power to dictate or "coerce" religion, Butler argues, the loss was more than compensated for by the rise of denominational authority: Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists—all proved more effective proselytizers for Christianity than state religion ever had been. And as slavery eradicated the African religions, new Christian sects like the African-Methodist Church sprang up. While in 1780 there had been only 2,500 Christian congregations in America, by 1860 there were 52,000! And these congregations continued to exist side by side with, and be influenced by, Spiritual-

ism, Mormonism, Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, and Freemasonry. Ours was what Butler calls a "unique spiritual hothouse."

During the 1980s, American religious life could seem at times a little odd: a conservative president planning his daily schedule by horoscope; TV evangelists declaring God had spoken to them (and recommended funding); "New Age" religions touting channeling and rebirthing. Butler makes such phenomena seem not faddish but as American as apple pie. Furthermore, Butler shows, this popular religious ferment has proved particularly vital: While less than 10 percent of all West Europeans are church-goers, about 60 percent of all Americans attend public worship regularly.

### *Contemporary Affairs*

**THE IRON LADY:** A Biography of Margaret Thatcher. By Hugo Young. Farrar. 570 pp. \$25

In 1975 Margaret Thatcher seized the leadership of the Conservative Party before anyone noticed there was anything special about her. Now at least four books and countless newspaper columns have tried to explain the "Iron Lady," "La Passionaria of privilege," and the architect of the "Thatcher Revolution." Yet only Manchester *Guardian* columnist Hugo Young's new biography—fair, superbly written, and analytical—rises above transitory journalism.

Born in 1925, the daughter of a successful greengrocer in Grantham, Margaret Roberts studied chemistry at Oxford. She subsequently held two positions in the world of business she so strongly admires—research chemist for a plastics firm and quality tester for an ice cream and cake-filling manufacturer. Her marriage in 1951 to a wealthy businessman, Dennis Thatcher, allowed her the leisure to read for the Bar and then, in 1959, to stand as a successful Conservative candidate for Parliament.

In the era of "pink Toryism" during the 1960s and early '70s, she blended in rather well. Her "shopkeeper's prejudices" against workers, the Oxbridge elite, and the old fossils in her party went unnoticed as she acquiesced in supporting the welfare state and trade unions. Her parliamentary career, including her years as minister of education (1970–74),

Young characterizes as “politics without policies.” Yet her latent detestation of the welfare state was recognized by the powerful Tory politician Sir Keith Joseph, who backed her and then helped her wrench party leadership away from the ineffectual Edward Heath in 1975.

In 1979, the Labour Government was undermined by strikes and inflationary demands from the trade unions it represented, and Thatcher appealed to a middle class threatened by social upheaval, immigration, and economic decline. She was elected prime minister that year, even though few knew what to expect or think of her, except that she was obviously an anomaly: a woman in a man’s world (though unsympathetic herself to other women’s aspirations); a *petite bourgeoisie* dominating a party known for its aristocratic associations.

Thatcher’s personal style soon became unmistakable—hard-working, strong, and (according to her supporters) straightforward and honest or (in her opponents’ view) bullying and unwilling to compromise. Far from winning the hearts of her countrymen, though, her popularity has often remained remarkably low: Her almost certain electoral defeats were avoided only at the last moment—as a result of the Falklands War in 1982 and of the wars within the Labour opposition in 1987.

But has there been a “Thatcherite revolution”? Young makes clear that on key matters her legacy, if not exactly lady-like, may well be set in iron: Her curbing of trade-union power (her greatest accomplishment, Young judges) and her denationalization of much of industry are policies almost impossible to reverse.

Yet Thatcher has hardly dismantled the big-spending state: Government spending as a percentage of GNP has actually risen during her decade in office. And the rate of economic growth has fared no better than it did during 1968–73, the worst years of what she considers the welfare-state nightmare. Her critics argue that her overly simplistic remedies of free enterprise and a supposedly minimalist state have worked about as well as two as-



pirins. Now it is time to call for a real doctor. Thatcher, however, is not ready to step aside; having outlasted two U.S. presidents, three Russian leaders, and four French prime ministers, she plans, she says, to keep “going on and on and on and on.”

**HOW OLD ARE YOU?** *Age Consciousness in American Culture.* By Howard P. Chudacoff. Princeton. 232 pp. \$19.95

Either we try to hide it, or we celebrate it. Ah, age. Sometimes it signals wondrous gains: old enough to go to school (or to get into day care); old enough to wear make-up; old enough to drive, to drink, to vote, to marry. It also signals loss: mid-life crisis, too old to have children, too old to keep working, too old to live alone. Is this preoccupation with age a modern American creation, or has it been in our genes all along?

Chudacoff, a professor of history at Brown University, observes that before 1850, “age distinctions in the United States were blurred . . . Americans had certain concepts about stages of life—youth, adulthood, old age . . . but demarcations between stages were neither distinct nor universally recognized.” People in their 30s were often considered youths, and folks worked until they were physically unable to continue. During the 1820s and 1830s, the American family was an individual’s primary economic, social, and educational reality. People rarely lived alone, and “intergenerational association prevailed over peer-group socialization,” notes Chudacoff in his dry social-science prose. Birthdays were rarely celebrated, and some people had no idea when they were born or how old they were.

Starting in the mid-1800s, however, Americans began to see age as an increasingly indispensable measure of their fellow kind. Chudacoff relates the origins of this preoccupation to the impersonal norms and objective classifications which modern societies implement as they industrialize. American theorists such as Samuel Harrison and Henry Barnard shaped a growing consciousness that the needs of children, adults, and the elderly are not the same. And studies such as psychologist Granville Stanley Hall’s *Adolescence: Its Psychology*

and *Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (1904) led ultimately to assigning expectations to all life stages and prescriptions about what individuals "could and should be doing at specific ages."

By the start of the 20th century, young people were attending age-graded schools with highly specialized curricula, and pediatrics had become a vital new field of medicine. As the importance of youth development and education grew, says the author, so too did the belief that growing old meant degeneration: The aging lost status, needed attention, and "no longer command[ed] respect as repositories of wisdom and experience."

Peer groupings have now expanded from schools to the workplace and to free-time activities. When Americans retire, they often move to retirement communities. While many believe that age grading has been bad, Chudacoff thinks that "tinkering with or removing these standards" would be difficult. After all, age, along with sex, "has considerable practical advantages as an administrative and normative gauge. It is easily measured . . . cannot be readily manipulated" and meets America's craving for organization. Age grading is here to stay, he concludes. But improved health care and decreasing birth rates may force a re-thinking of age stereotypes in the 21st century.

**ROCK AROUND THE BLOC:** A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. By Timothy W. Ryback. Oxford. 272 pp. \$21.95

The scale of recent change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has caused scholars to search for hidden cracks within the Soviet system—for elements that did not fit into the Marxist-Leninist framework. Ryback, a Harvard lecturer in history and literature, focuses on popular music. Following Frederick Starr's *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union 1917–1980* (1983), Ryback argues that, despite government attempts to dominate every aspect of social life, popular culture in postwar Eastern Europe has been largely shaped by foreign (and mostly American) models.

From Russia to Hungary, from Poland to Bul-



garia, in all the countries Ryback discusses, the story is roughly the same: An alienated younger generation embraces Western music—first rock, then heavy metal, and finally

punk—while the cultural apparatchiks reject it as "decadent," "immoral," and a "poisonous" export of Western imperialists. The struggle of Lenin versus Lennon for the hearts and minds of the younger generation has many turns. Outright bans on nightclubs, concerts, and musicians only forced the rock scene underground; communist regimes then tried more subtly to co-opt the least objectionable rock bands and make rock serve socialism. In return for cutting their hair, lowering the decibels, and submitting their lyrics to the censor, state-sponsored bands such as the Happy Guys (Russia) and the Free Sailing Band (Bulgaria) were provided with state-of-the-art musical equipment and all the "perks" of Western rock stars. But the public was not easily gulled: It eventually rejected most state bands, preferring the more radical groups such as Plastic People of the Universe (Czechoslovakia), Coitus Punk Group (Hungary), and Lady Pank (Poland)—all untainted by collaboration with the hated establishment.

Ryback describes the triumph of rock and roll in the Soviet bloc as "the realization of a democratic process." He considers his young heroes—less interested in heroic dreams of world revolution than in sex, rock and roll, and occasionally drugs—to be in fact the real revolutionaries. Yet Ryback never shows his rock revolutionaries involved in actual political events. (Plastic People's support for, and from, Václav Havel's Charter 77, for example, is never mentioned.) One can only infer the conclusion that Ryback never explicitly reaches: The rock revolution, and the notion that an individual's private life can be created independently of the state, have played a crucial, if incalculable, role in the breakup of the Stalinist system. Despite its flaws, *Rock Around the Bloc* helps dispel the assumption, made by cold warriors as well as orthodox Marxists, that a communist society can totally and effectively control its population.

## Arts &amp; Letters

**FIGURES OF SPEECH:** American Writers and the Literary Marketplace, from Benjamin Franklin to Emily Dickinson. By R. Jackson Wilson. Knopf. 295 pp. \$24.95

Were there ever authors less interested in, or more aloof from, sordid material considerations than Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman? One can only hope so. According to this iconoclastic study, Emerson & Co. appear to be the direct ancestors of the most ambitious contemporary writers on the make.

Wilson, a professor of history at Smith College, challenges the cherished myths about an innocent golden age in American writing. The period from the late 18th to mid-19th century, from Benjamin Franklin to Walt Whitman, coincided, Wilson argues, with the establishment of a literary marketplace which allowed writers to make money—"sometimes lots of money." Wilson's argument is that writing, like any other work, is molded by its social and economic setting and that, in this period, the principal setting for writing became, precisely, the marketplace.

Wilson's indictment of the new capitalist ethos appears, in some ways, to be nostalgia for the more intimate connections between audiences and writers that had existed under patrons and patron-like institutions. Starting during the late 1700s, writers contemplated an audience unknown and anonymous—a "mass" as it began to be called. This "mass audience" induced in writers fantasies of alienation and artistic solitude, even as it drew them toward the new marketplace's offerings of profit and celebrity. To add a final paradoxical twist, when it first became possible to earn considerable wealth as a writer, the members of most literary circles considered the making of money "a low motive indeed."

To resolve this paradox, Franklin and Whitman, Washington Irving and William Lloyd Garrison all fashioned "figures" or images of themselves as transcendent writers, truthseekers unmotivated by trade. Emerson clothed the writer in the borrowed spiritual authority of the minister—even as he was writing advertisements for his work and arranging lectures for

which he personally hawked tickets. Worse than any hypocrisy, Wilson finds, is that the writers' arrogant claim of autonomy led them to just that: As literary writing improved through the 18th century, Wilson judges that its value to society decreased. While Franklin still wanted to motivate readers to action, Whitman was a mere observer, a voyeur "caught in an esthetic isolation for which auto-eroticism" would be the best symbol.

Wilson hopes to take writers out of a nebulous and timeless realm of "creativity" and return them to their historical setting. Yet there is something curiously ahistorical about Wilson's enterprise: He no sooner issues than forgets his caveat that "no writer is *only* a creature of the market." He never relates writers' involvement with the market to their other involvements—with their class, family, personal relations, or politics. Even Dickinson's poetry, which she never published, is taken, with little evidence, as her admission of the foreboding strength of the marketplace upon her. Wilson's accomplishment is to have cleared up one simplification about American writers—only to replace it with another.

**COLLECTED POEMS:** 1937–1971. By John Berryman. Edited by Charles Thornbury. Farrar. 348 pp. \$25

**DREAM SONG:** The Life of John Berryman. By Paul Mariani. Morrow. 519 pp. \$29.95

**SELECTED POEMS.** By Randall Jarrell. Edited by William H. Pritchard. Farrar. 112 pp. \$17.95

**RANDALL JARRELL:** A Literary Life. By William H. Pritchard. Farrar. 352 pp. \$25

Randall Jarrell (1914–1965) and John Berryman (1914–1972) were poets of the "middle generation." They followed the great modernists—W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound—who had, in Pound's phrase, "made it new." But where the modernists had shaped great impersonal myths, this middle gen-



John Berryman

eration forged painfully personal ones. Berryman was a confessional poet, and Jarrell wrote searingly about his experiences during the Second World War.

Because they were their own subjects, says Pritchard, a professor of English at Amherst, "we care more about the life when we begin to care about the writing." These two sympathetic biographies—Jarrell's by Pritchard and Berryman's by Mariani—reveal the haunting similarities between the two poets' lives. Both men belonged to the first generation of poets as academics: Their home was neither the occult world of Yeats nor the rural life of Frost but the classroom, the critical journal, and the poetry seminar.

Of Berryman, Mariani observes that "except for the intense industry, the lifelong obsession . . . of getting words down on the page and getting them absolutely right, there is nothing out of the ordinary about what Berryman did." Successful as a poet, Berryman seemed inept at anything else: He could barely cook a meal or make sense of his bank statement. Berryman's suicide may have an air of inevitability about it, considering his alcoholism and depression. But what about Jarrell? Neither an alcoholic nor a manic-depressive, he also apparently took his own life. Both were typical of the middle-generation poets—one thinks of Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, Delmore Schwartz—who came to sad ends.

Yet, in his poetry, Berryman's life could become witty and even comic. Take his "Dream Song # 14," which begins, "Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so," and concludes with a conceit worthy of a midwestern John Donne:

and somehow a dog  
has taken itself & its tail considerably  
away  
into mountains or sea or sky, leaving  
behind: me, wag.

Berryman's *Collected Poems* omits his masterpiece, *The Dream Songs* (too bulky to include). But the *Collected Poems* effectively traces Berryman's growth, from his early (unsuccessful) imitation of Yeats and W. H. Auden through the finding of his own style in *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*.

That it's not his *Collected* but only his *Selected Poems* (a mere 50 in all) being reissued



Randall Jarrell

indicates Jarrell's fallen reputation as a poet. Although a few poems—"The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," "The Woman at the Washington Zoo"—continue to be anthologized, Jarrell is now known as the critic who helped shape his generation's taste in poetry. Jarrell

wrote to Elizabeth Bishop that "one expects most of a good poet's work to be quite bad." Jarrell's critical method was, with an unflinching eye, to delineate what was good—the best poems and best lines. In this way, he revived Whitman's reputation and solidified Frost's, Stevens's, and Marianne Moore's.

Why, upon this middle generation, did the practice of poetry take such a toll? These two biographies suggest an answer: Unlike their predecessors, Jarrell and Berryman did away with larger myths and had only themselves to fall back upon in their poetry; at various universities, they were free to be full-time poets. But such freedom may have been a burden in disguise. Berryman and Jarrell, having erased the modernist boundary between the poet and his work, saw no gap between "art" and "life" where they might have found respite from the ravages of each.

**ÌSARÀ: A Voyage Around "Essay."** By Wole Soyinka. Random. 262 pp. \$18.95

**HOPES AND IMPEDIMENTS.** By Chinua Achebe. Doubleday. 186 pp. \$17.95

*Ìsarà* is a "prequel" to Noble Prize winner Wole Soyinka's childhood memoir, *Aké* (1982). It is as if the Nigerian playwright, having examined the opposing forces of tradition and modernity that shaped his own experience, came to realize that the only way to fully understand himself was to know his father's world.

*Ìsarà*, an inland Nigerian village, is the birthplace of Soyinka's father, Essay, a place to which Essay keeps returning despite his repeated attempts to leave it for good. What emerges from this chronicle are portraits from a not-too-distant past—the years before the Sec-



ond World War when Nigerians yearned for more contact with the West but were constrained by the "benign colonialism" of their British masters. The cautious, studious Essay and his friends called themselves "The Circle." One friend, a wily schemer named Sipe, views every calamity in the outside world as an occasion for making a "killing" in some business scheme. But Sipe, the would-be modern entrepreneur, still consults ancestral spirits before closing a deal. The tug between past and present, between knowledge of the larger world and an antiquated provincialism, circumscribes "The Circle" in all their dealings and speculations. They follow Edward VIII's abdication in 1936 with avid interest, yet worry that it will cause civil war in England, indeed a revival of the War of the Roses.

The detachment of Essay's generation from the larger outside world is oddly mirrored in the author's own detachment from Essay's world. One seldom feels in *Ìsarà* the personal connection that characterized *Aké*. And though by the end of the book Essay has come to realize that his roots tie him inextricably to *Ìsarà*, Soyinka seems to have far less certainty about his own life.

Fellow Nigerian Chinua Achebe is also concerned about his place in the modern world. In a series of essays, he examines the way African writers are viewed in the West. "The latter-day colonialist critic," says Achebe, "sees the African writer as a somewhat unfinished European who with patient guidance will grow up one day and write like every other European." Achebe objects to the requirement that African novels be "universal," since, he claims, Western works are not held to the same standard. Critics never try "changing names of characters and places in an American novel, say, a Philip Roth or an Updike . . . It would never occur to them to doubt the universality of their own literature." (Achebe ignores the fact that Roth's writings have been criticized, particularly in Europe, for being too Jewish-American provincial.) Throughout these essays, aesthetic questions have a way of



turning into moral predicaments: Achebe recognizes that Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, set in the Congo, is great literature, but he is pained that its author is a white European, partially blinded by "racism" and "xenophobia."

Achebe's essays, for all their lucidity, appear trapped in a conundrum: He objects when Western literary standards are applied to the African novel, but he has no alternate "African aesthetic" to propose. Achebe, like Soyinka, seems burdened by the weight of his success in the West. Both writers' works have received praise and awards from Western audiences. They understand the West far better than their fathers did. They write in its language. And having played so skillfully with the major forms of Western literature, they may have left themselves no choice but to be judged by the standards of that tradition.

#### *Science & Technology*

#### **THE FORMATION OF SCIENCE IN**

**JAPAN:** Building a Research Tradition. *By James R. Bartholomew. Yale. 369 pp. \$30*

Why has Japan never produced scientific accomplishments on a par with the West's? Stereotypes about the militant conformism of the Japanese provide the popular explanation. Another answer comes from sociologists who, from Max Weber to Talcott Parsons, have insisted that only in societies without vestiges of feudalism can science truly develop.

Bartholomew, an historian at Ohio State University, sets out to challenge such views. Japan's Confucian tradition, Bartholomew points out, tolerated new ideas: Scientific theories that had provoked storms in the West—heliocentrism or the origins of species—were accepted by Japanese intellectuals matter-of-factly. Nor was Japanese culture ever dominated by a revealed religion with an elaborate theological interpretation of nature. Consequently, the physicist Yuasa Mitsutomo wrote, "It was as though Japanese science had had the teeth of . . . [adverse] criticism removed." So the critics of Japanese science were wrong?

Not according to the impressive documentation that Bartholomew has collected. After the Meiji Restoration (1868), the Japanese govern-

ment did in fact begin to promote science. But the government viewed science less as a method or a theory than as a *commodity*: It encouraged learning scientific facts, not scientific research. The Western scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries had established physics as the basis for other sciences; but the Japanese government favored biology over physics because the former had more practical applications (e.g., in medicine and agriculture). Today, science in Japan may be changing as research continues to grow; much of it is sponsored by the private sector instead of the government. Yet even Bartholomew suggests that research remains a means to attain practical goals, rarely a pursuit unto itself.

**THE MEDICAL TRIANGLE:** Physicians, Politicians, and the Public. By *Eli Ginzberg*. Harvard. 301 pp. \$27.50

**WHAT KIND OF LIFE:** The Limits of Medical Progress. By *Daniel Callahan*. Simon & Schuster. 318 pp. \$19.95

The United States spends more of its gross national product (GNP) on health care than any other nation. Canada, despite providing universal health insurance, spent 8.5 percent of its GNP in 1986 on health care—while America was spending 11.1 percent. And this year's half-trillion dollars in medical bills threatens to triple over the next decade. Ginzberg explains how health-care costs became so high; Callahan, why ethically they should not be.

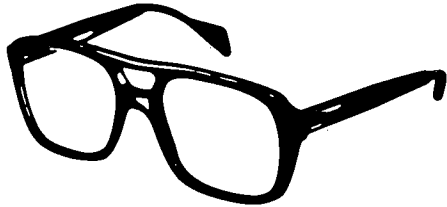
Ginzberg, director of the Conservation of Human Resources Project at Columbia University, draws a medical triangle whose various "sides"—patients, medical professionals, and government—have such different expectations that they keep the health-care system permanently destabilized. Since World War II, the introduction of ever more health benefits (through job insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare) has whetted the public's desire for medi-

cal treatment. This created a greater demand for doctors, who in turn grew accustomed to providing as much care as possible for as much money as possible. Scores of for-profit hospitals sprang up to capitalize on the trend. The ever-rising costs could only be paid because the government—which this year will foot 40 percent of all medical expenses—pumped in funds in response to public demand. There is a broad consensus, especially in government, that runaway medical costs must be controlled. But with the sides of the triangle so politicized, Ginzberg worries that no solution can be agreed upon. One out of every 13 Americans works in health care; such workers constitute a powerful interest group that most politicians would be reluctant to offend.

Callahan argues that the solution to the accelerating health-care costs is not a matter of economics but of values. Callahan, a specialist in medical ethics, develops the ideas advanced in his controversial *Setting Limits* (1987): that a longer life is not necessarily a better life, and that everything medicine can do at whatever cost to prolong life should not necessarily be done. Americans, he says, must realize that health is a communal, not simply an individual, good. While health-care costs have multiplied, he reminds us, the portion of the GNP devoted to education has dropped; and the percentage of children living in families below the poverty line rose in the 1980s from 13 to over 20 percent. Today, only 10 percent of patients—often "hopeless cases" such as octogenarians requiring organ transplants and babies weighing less than 18 ounces—account for 75 percent of all health-care costs. Callahan's prescription for providing care for the most people at the lowest cost involves, he recognizes, centralized planning and rationing. Yet he fails to address Ginzberg's question about the politics involved in any solution. Until political institutions are confronted, Callahan's call for a more equitable, humane health-care system remains a provocative ideal left floating in air.

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## A President for Certain Seasons

Few U.S. presidents have been more universally liked than Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969). Yet even before Ike was out of the White House, political scientists and historians began to quarrel about his presidency. A generation of harsh critics was succeeded by a far more admiring group of scholars, and the revisionism and counter-revisionism continues. The business of judging the 34th president will no doubt pick up during this centenary year, but as Alan Brinkley shows, it usually has less to do with the man himself than with other considerations.

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*by Alan Brinkley*

Americans remember the 1950s for many things, but high among them is the image of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the genial, smiling national hero whose reassuring presence seemed to symbolize the halcyon days of the “American Century.” With the possible exception of Ronald Reagan, to whom Eisenhower has at times been compared, no postwar president has enjoyed such broad and continuing popularity; none has so clearly stamped his personality upon his time. It should come as little surprise, then, that the debate over Eisenhower’s reputation has served as a metaphor for a larger contest over America’s retrospective image of the 1950s.

To those who remember the fifties as an era of abundance, confidence, and tranquility, Eisenhower was indeed, as his biographer Stephen Ambrose has described him, “a great and good man” who successfully avoided the disastrous activism that so disrupted American life in the 1960s. To

those who recall the 1950s as a time of social stagnation, Cold War belligerence, and hidden turbulence, Eisenhower has seemed (like the decade itself) bland, ineffectual, mediocre—a man, Arthur Schlesinger has written, “who did not always understand and control what was going on, who was buffeted by events and was capable of misjudgment and error.”

The man whose presidency would inspire such strongly clashing interpretations was born on October 14, 1890, into a strict, puritanical family, which named him for the evangelist Dwight L. Moody but always called him “Ike.” He spent his unremarkable youth in Abilene, Kansas, where his father, having failed at more ambitious ventures, earned a modest living in a dairy run by a stern religious sect, the River Brethren, to which the entire Eisenhower family belonged.

Despite the general severity of his home, Ike was an outgoing, self-confident, popular boy; a good but not extraordinary athlete; a capable but not exceptional stu-

dent. He seemed to have no clear ambitions except an undefined desire to rise in the world. When he entered the United States Military Academy at the age of 20, it was only after an earlier plan to attend the University of Michigan had fallen through and after he had been denied an appointment to his first choice, Annapolis.

Eisenhower served most of his four years at West Point as a competent but undistinguished cadet, finishing 61st out of 164 in the class of 1915. Despite persistent efforts to secure an overseas assignment, he spent his first years after graduation as a training officer at army posts in Texas (where he met and married

Mamie Doud), Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, molding new recruits for the combat duty in World War I that Eisenhower himself never saw. He was promoted to major in 1920, somewhat earlier than many of his contemporaries, but he remained at that rank for 16 years.

The great break in Eisenhower's career came almost by chance in 1924, when he barely won appointment to the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth—where he worked hard, took up golf, and ultimately graduated first in his class. His rise after that was steady, although not meteoric: aide to General Pershing, student at the Army War College, assistant to Douglas MacArthur (who was so impressed with the young major that he once called him "the best officer in the Army"), service in Europe and the Philippines. In 1939, after having broken painfully (but prudently) with the increasingly egomaniacal MacArthur, Eisenhower returned to the United States warning of Japanese ambitions and German militarism. He was much in demand as a staff officer now and rose into increasingly important administrative jobs as well as to the rank of brigadier general in the fall of 1941. Five days after Pearl Harbor, he was sum-



*President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his wife Mamie depart from the Capitol after swearing-in ceremonies on January 20, 1953. Ike took 442 electoral votes in the fall election; Adlai Stevenson, 89.*

moned to Washington by Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall to serve in the War Plans Division.

In the War Department, as throughout his military career, Eisenhower won attention and respect not because he was particularly brilliant or charismatic but because he had great political gifts. He was adept at flattering without fawning, skilled at persuading without antagonizing. He was unfailingly discreet. He got along with everyone. Virtually no one disliked him.

In June 1942, Eisenhower was named commander of the European Theater of Operations and moved to London to command the growing American military presence that, two years later, would participate in the great Allied invasion at Normandy. There have been many critics of Eisenhower's talents as a military tactician and strategist in these years, but no one has questioned his success in handling the delicate problem of conciliating the fractious allies. Eisenhower had to handle personalities as difficult as Churchill, de Gaulle, Montgomery, Mountbatten, and Patton. He had to smooth over the national sensitivities and inevitable frictions among three distinct military cultures. He

had to handle the inevitable resentment of British officers, whose own troops formed the bulk of the Allied forces on D-Day, when Eisenhower was named supreme commander of the invasion. Even Field Marshal Montgomery, whose towering ego was legendary and who frequently clashed with Eisenhower during the war, said of him when it was over, "No one else could have done it."

The success of the invasion and the defeat of Germany made Eisenhower a major world figure and one of the most popular living Americans. There were immediate calls for him to run for the presidency—calls he consistently resisted for seven years. After the war, he served for a time as Army Chief of Staff, as president of Columbia University, and as commander of NATO, although not long enough in any of them to achieve great distinction.

Nothing, however, diminished his political star, not even his own continued denials of interest in it. In 1948, he rebuffed overtures from both major parties. But he did, it seems clear, have great political ambitions and was waiting for a way to seize the spotlight without appearing to want it. Finally, in the spring of 1952, he agreed to run, explaining his decision by charging that the leading Republican candidates (chief among them Senator Robert Taft of Ohio) were dangerously isolationist and that he was entering the race to protect America's global commitments, including NATO and the Marshall Plan. Six months later, he roundly defeated Adlai Stevenson in a contest that drew more voters—63.3



*General Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, talks with U.S. paratroopers before they board planes for the D-Day invasion.*

percent—than any presidential election since 1908.

The era we know as the "fifties" really began in 1953, the first year of the Eisenhower presidency. That year saw the end of the Korean War, the death of Joseph Stalin, and the beginning of the decline of Joseph McCarthy. To many Americans, particularly those who were white, male, and securely middle-class, it was the beginning of an era that seemed then (and remains

now) bathed in a warm glow of triumph and contentment. It was a time of remarkable growth and abundance, when the American gross national product nearly doubled, when poverty declined by almost half, and when public schools seemed not only adequate but (despite the Sputnik scare in 1957) good. It was a period of relative peace, when few challenged the basic premises of the Cold War and American troops engaged in no significant combat. It was a time of nearly unprecedented national self-satisfaction. Relatively few middle-class Americans would likely have disputed the 1960 report by the Commission on National Goals, created by the Eisenhower administration, which proclaimed the nation's most important mission to be persuading the rest of the world of its own political and economic superiority. "The United States," it recommended, "should, at all times, exert its influence and power on behalf of a world order congenial to American ideals, interests and security. It can do this without egotism because of its deep conviction that such a world will best fulfill the hope of mankind."

But if the Eisenhower presidency mir-

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rored the success and complacency that characterized much of American life during the 1950s, it also obscured problems that were mounting behind the decade's placid façade. The administration seemed oblivious to the growing impatience of American blacks, frustrated by their own exclusion from most of the abundance they saw around them, angry at the slow response to the 1954 Supreme Court decision requiring school desegregation, mobilizing in Montgomery (and elsewhere) for an assault on racial injustice that would soon convulse the nation. It took little notice of the frustrations of American women, moving into the workplace in unprecedented numbers, encountering obstacles to advancement, and accumulating grievances and demands that would shortly revolutionize gender relations.

Eisenhower's America was epitomized by the music of Guy Lombardo (a frequent performer at the White House), by the heroic films of John Ford, by the upbeat television fare of "Ozzie and Harriet" and "I Love Lucy," and by the president's own love of golf and bridge. But from other corners of American culture came suggestions of troubles to come. Social scientists issued warnings about the stifling effects of modern bureaucracies, while novelists and playwrights lamented the suffocating conformity of suburban and corporate life. There was the jarring new music of Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly. And there was the rasping voice of disillusionment from small but growing communities of dissenters, among them the Beats, whose outrageous attacks on the nation's most cherished values—progress, order, even rationality itself—augured the far more widespread cultural revolt of the 1960s.

Even though Eisenhower left the White House in 1961 at least as popular among the general electorate as he had been when he entered it, his reputation among historians and other students of the presidency had already begun to sink. Throughout the 1960s and much of the 1970s, scholars dismissed Eisenhower as a bland mediocrity, a model of what a 20th-century president should not be. A 1962 poll of historians asking them to rank American presidents placed Eisenhower

22nd out of 33, between Andrew Johnson and Chester A. Arthur. The criticisms tended to fall into three general categories.

First, scholars pointed to what they considered Eisenhower's inadequate leadership. He was, they claimed, a passive, ineffectual, even vaguely stupid leader, an image perfectly captured by Herblock cartoons showing a perpetually dazed Ike with a dumb, distracted smile. Critics also charged that a few powerful advisers dominated the administration: Sherman Adams, his chief of staff until a 1958 scandal drove him from office; John Foster Dulles, the moralistic secretary of state who would sit next to the president at summit meetings and hand him notes telling him what to say. Eisenhower himself was out of touch, a man who would rather play golf than work, indeed a man who seemed always to be on the golf course. (Eisenhower's golfing was such a national joke, such a symbol of the president's supposed laziness and uninvolvedness with government, that when John Kennedy became president, he refused to play it—even though he liked golf and was reportedly better at it than Eisenhower.)

If Eisenhower failed to govern, he also failed to inspire. His critics complained about the president's ineffective public speaking style, his muddled, even incomprehensible syntax. Dwight Macdonald once presented a version of the Gettysburg Address in what he called "Eisenhowerese": "I haven't checked these figures, but 87 years ago, I think it was, a number of individuals organized a governmental set-up here in this country, I believe it covered certain Eastern areas, with the idea they were following up based on a sort of national independence arrangement." He seemed incapable of arousing public enthusiasm about anything, uninterested even in trying.

A second criticism involved Eisenhower's social and economic programs, or lack of them. He was, his critics charged, responsible for virtually no important initiatives in domestic affairs. He seldom displayed political courage, and he took stands on controversial issues—McCarthyism, civil rights—only when events forced him to do so, and then halfheartedly. One political reporter wrote toward the end of

Eisenhower's presidency that he would leave office with the country's domestic policies "about where he found them in 1953." The Eisenhower years, he predicted, would be seen as the time of the "great postponement."

A third complaint concerned Eisenhower's foreign policy, which his critics attacked as inflexible, ineffective, and unimaginative. Eisenhower's inability to produce a more dynamic approach to foreign policy, the critics insisted, resulted in consistent American failure to make any progress toward accommodation with the Soviet Union or any significant gains in international influence. He offered no real leadership in world affairs; he intervened in small matters (usually clumsily) and allowed big ones to fester.

The general verdict on the Eisenhower presidency was that it stopped short of being disastrous but that it lacked anything approaching greatness. It was characterized above all by what was widely described as "drift," aimlessness. As the columnist Walter Lippmann put it, Eisenhower had never been willing "to break the eggs that are needed for the omelette." All this was, of course, in implicit contrast to the great presidential hero of the 1960s, John F. Kennedy.

By the late 1970s, this initial, dismissive evaluation began to face challenges from scholars who have become known as Eisenhower revisionists. (Many of them were among the first to do serious research in the Eisenhower papers.) According to them, Eisenhower was not an aimless, ineffective stumblebum. He was, rather, a wise and prudent statesman whose quiet leadership and restrained policies were more worthy of emulation than those of the more active (and reckless) presidents who followed him. By the early 1980s, the revisionist interpretation had become something close to a new orthodoxy. A poll of historians conducted in 1982 ranked Eisenhower ninth; another, a year later, placed him eleventh, two notches above John Kennedy.

The revisionists responded to each of the major critical indictments. First, they claim, Eisenhower was not the detached, uninformed leader that scholars once be-

lieved him to be. He was, instead, an intelligent, decisive, and exceptionally skillful politician. He permitted the public, and even much of his own government, to believe that he was a passive president, above the fray; but in private he was articulate, informed, and commanding. He ran the government quietly, but firmly and effectively. Even Eisenhower's bumbling rhetoric, some scholars insist, was all part of a carefully orchestrated political strategy. Almost every revisionist cites the president's reply to a warning from his press secretary, James Hagerty, about an anticipated question on a difficult matter: "Don't worry Jim," Eisenhower replied as he prepared to walk into a press conference, "I'll just confuse them."

Stephen Ambrose, author of the first major Eisenhower biography based on extensive work in presidential documents, summarized the new view:

What the documents show, in my opinion, is how completely Eisenhower dominated events. Eisenhower, not Charlie Wilson, made defense policy; Eisenhower, not Foster Dulles, made foreign policy; Eisenhower, not Ezra Benson, made farm policy. Whether the policies were right or wrong . . . they were Eisenhower's policies. He ran the show.

The political scientist Fred Greenstein, who developed a similar argument, made his evaluation of Eisenhower's leadership the title of his influential book: *The Hidden-Hand Presidency* (1982).

The revisionists have also defended Eisenhower's domestic policies, which they insist marked not an abdication of social responsibilities but a restrained and prudent effort to consolidate and refine the social commitments the nation had made under the New Deal. During the 1950s, they argue, there was neither sufficient popular support nor adequate financial resources for a major new domestic agenda; instead, Eisenhower ensured that there would be no retreat from earlier gains. By promoting stable economic growth, he laid the groundwork for the ambitious social efforts of the 1960s. And while he may not have moved boldly to fight McCarthyism or to support civil rights, he worked behind the scenes to undermine McCarthy



and to moderate racial conflicts, probably doing more than any other likely Republican president would have done during the 1950s.

The most dramatic reversal came in the assessment of Eisenhower's international leadership. Scholars began to argue that his foreign policy, unlike the policies of presidents who came before and after him, maintained the peace, avoided excessive and disastrous foreign commitments, and displayed a shrewd awareness of the limits of American power. He ended one war, declined to begin another, and placed wise restraints on the growth of the American military. At the same time, he maintained and strengthened the nation's commitments to its international goals, ensuring the survival of a stable, bipartisan foreign policy.

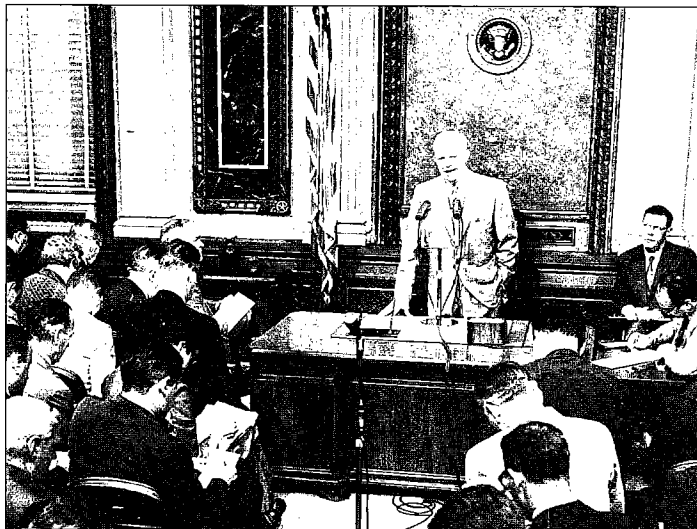
It takes little imagination to recognize the origins of this new view of Eisenhower. It has emerged not only from new archival revelations but also from a new sense of what government in general (and presidents in particular) can and should do. Its sources are the profound disillusionment with social activism that began during the late 1960s; the association of liberalism with Vietnam, with economic instability, with racial conflict, and with the disappointing results of social-policy initiatives. When liberals tried to do the things they criticized Eisenhower for not doing, they often did them badly, even disastrously. Eisenhower's caution has come to seem admirable by contrast.

Yet a careful look at these contrasting interpretations reveals that they may not be as incompatible as they at first appear. Both are pictures of a cautious leader who preferred restraint to bold action. What is different is not the account of what Eisenhower did (with the exception of the now widely accepted picture of his greater involvement in the affairs of his administration). What is

different is how we have come to judge what he did, how we view the philosophy of leadership and government that lay at the heart of the Eisenhower presidency.

Eisenhower's approach to the presidency rested on two fairly simple assumptions. First, he leaned instinctively toward consensus and conciliation and tried to avoid doing anything that might disrupt the basic harmony that he liked to believe prevailed in American society. He was, in that respect at least, the very opposite of his vice president, who thrived on conflict and later wrote that he "believed in the battle." Eisenhower, unlike Nixon, had a real aversion to conflict and confrontation. Second, Eisenhower had an equally deep aversion to the expansion of the state. His mission, he believed, was to restrain and limit the government, not force it to fulfill any great missions or obligations.

These two impulses complemented and reinforced one another. Consider Eisenhower's approach to one of the principal responsibilities of the postwar presidency: managing the economy. He claimed to accept the idea that government had a responsibility to promote economic stability and prosperity. But it should do so, he believed, by persuasion



*Press conferences brought out the worst in Eisenhower's syntax. But what his critics pointed to as proof of cloudy thinking may in fact have been, as his defenders claimed, artful obfuscation.*

and example: by encouraging business, labor, agriculture, and others to cooperate with one another. In practice, the administration paid lip service to the needs of labor and farmers and consumers, and remained primarily concerned with its most powerful constituency: business. Above all, Eisenhower rejected anything that might smack of coercion. He was not a "tool of the business community," as some critics have argued, despite the predominance of wealthy businessmen in his cabinet (once described as "six millionaires and a plumber") and his own social circle. He tried to persuade businessmen to weigh their self-interest against the national interest; he occasionally grew angry with them when he felt they had failed to do so. But he rejected any active, forceful role in pressuring or compelling the business community to act.

If Eisenhower was unwilling to commit the government to a direct role in managing or regulating the institutions of the economy, he also declined to commit it to the more indirect techniques of managing the economy through Keynesian tools. An example of that reluctance was the administration's approach to the biggest domestic program of the 1950s: the Interstate Highway Program. When it was launched in 1956, it received the largest appropriation of any domestic program in American history to that point, \$25 billion—a figure more than twice as large as the entire federal budget for any peacetime year before World War II. Keynesian economists and other policymakers argued that if the administration retained control of this enormous public-works spending program, it could raise and lower public expenditures in response to the condition of the economy: increase highway spending when a recession loomed, decrease it when inflation threatened. But the Keynesians lost the battle, and the highway funds were consigned to an inviolable trust fund, untouchable by federal economic managers, controlled largely by state governments. Any impact the highway program had on the performance of the economy was largely inadvertent.

A similar pattern is visible in Eisenhower's approach to federal social programs. The challenge facing the government, he

believed, was not one of finding new methods and resources for dealing with domestic social problems (as Truman had believed before him and as Kennedy and Johnson would believe after him); it was the challenge of halting what he called the "dangerous drift toward statism," which must "be stopped in its tracks." He once explained his decision to run for president by saying that "the country is going socialistic so rapidly that, unless Republicans can get in immediately and defeat this trend, our country is gone. Four more years of New Dealism and there will be no turning back." Once in office, Eisenhower proposed virtually no new social programs. At times, he worked actively to reverse the "drift toward statism" that earlier programs had begun. He pulled the government largely out of public power development, resisting efforts to expand the Tennessee Valley Authority and once even proposing to sell it. He surrendered the government's monopoly over atomic energy, allowing private companies to build nuclear power plants. He turned control of offshore oil leases over to the states. He resisted a forceful federal commitment to civil rights. Despite the 1954 Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation, Eisenhower never openly endorsed the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and at times privately decried it. He enforced it (as in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957) only when events compelled him to do so, and even then belatedly and grudgingly.

Eisenhower was not an ideologue, and he made no effort to dismantle the core of the social programs that already existed. "Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs," he once said, "you would not hear of that party again in our political history." In fact, he supported several measures to expand the coverage offered by existing programs, including one that brought seven million new people under Social Security. But these were concessions to political reality. At the core of his domestic policies lay a clear and unwavering commitment to avoiding social conflict and limiting the growth of the

state, even if that meant allowing social problems to remain unattended.

In many respects, the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration was much like that of other postwar presidents. Eisenhower was no less anti-communist than other chief executives; his definition of America's global interests was no less expansive. Like Harry Truman, like the architects of the containment policy in its most expansive form, he insisted that the United States should be unwilling to concede any additional territory to communism anywhere in the world. In his inaugural address, for example, he said:

Conceiving the defense of freedom, like freedom itself, to be one and indivisible, we hold all continents and peoples in equal regard and honor. We reject any insinuation that one race or another, one people or another, is in any sense inferior or expendable.

Like his predecessor and like his successors, Eisenhower believed firmly in the importance of American "credibility." He wrote Winston Churchill in 1955, "Every . . . retreat creates in the minds of neutrals the fear that we do not mean what we say when we pledge our support to people who want to remain free."

But despite the orthodox Cold War rhetoric, the Eisenhower administration departed in practice from both earlier and later approaches to foreign policy in important ways. And in that departure is visible another example of Eisenhower's consensual, anti-statist vision of statecraft. To him, the great challenge of the postwar era was to find a way for America to play its appointed role in the world without engaging in open confrontations and without a drastic and (he believed) dangerous expansion of the state.

Eisenhower's solution to this dilemma was a strategy of foreign policy that has become known as the "New Look." He had inherited a foreign-policy strategy that, in effect, committed the United States to fighting anywhere, and at any time, whenever free peoples faced a communist threat. Among other things, this strategy required the nation to maintain a large, permanent defense establishment, an

establishment Eisenhower believed would be just as threatening, just as "statist," as the construction of an excessively large welfare establishment. That was what he meant in his celebrated Farewell Address when he warned of the:

conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry . . . The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government . . . [W]e must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

These are not the words of someone concerned about an excessive use of American power in the world; they are the words of someone concerned about the possibility of an excessive concentration of power (and an excessive commitment of resources) at home.

The "New Look," then, was a strategy not for reducing America's definition of its interests in the world but for cutting the costs and decreasing the risks of that involvement. The United States would oppose communism whenever it attempted to expand, but not necessarily *wherever* it attempted to expand. As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles put it, "The way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at *places and with means of its own choosing*." Specifically, that meant making greater use of the threat of "massive retaliatory power"—nuclear weapons—as a deterrent to aggression. It was under Eisenhower that the United States established as the cornerstone of NATO's defense strategy the idea that any Soviet attack on Western Europe would be met with a nuclear, not a conventional, counter-attack. The principal reason: It was too expensive to keep up an adequate conventional force in Western Europe.

Many people have linked this idea of "massive retaliation" with what Dulles liked to call "brinkmanship"—the willingness to go to the verge of war, to the "brink," in order to force an opponent to do what America wanted. The United

States would not get bogged down in slowly escalating conventional confrontations, as in Korea; it would set up a stark nuclear confrontation to intimidate its adversaries at the start. But "brinkmanship" was Dulles's idea; it was never much a part of Eisenhower's own thinking. Eisenhower was, in fact, generally averse to taking risks and provoking confrontations; he never did truly go "to the brink." In 1953, he helped settle the Korean War by threatening China and Korea with a nuclear attack; but he never made similar threats against the Soviet Union, which was capable of retaliating. Instead, he preferred to take action to foil what he believed to be communist expansion when the risks and the costs were low, and to avoid action when they were not.

On the one hand, Eisenhower was quite willing to support a series of covert operations organized and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency: the 1953 coup in Iran, which drove the popularly elected leader (a nationalist who was trying to expropriate some American property and was thus assumed to be a communist) from office and installed the young Shah (previously a figurehead) as absolute ruler; the 1954 CIA-engineered coup in Guatemala, which toppled a leftist regime that the administration suspected of communist leanings. And Eisenhower on occasion used American troops overtly to prevent the possibility of communist gains, as, for example, when he ordered marines to land in Lebanon to quell a leftist revolution (a revolution that was quelled without U.S. assistance or casualties).

There was, in short, a pattern of interventionism in Eisenhower's foreign policy that reflected his belief that communism was indivisible, that a gain for the left anywhere was a loss for the United States. But it was also a pattern that reflected Eisenhower's cautious approach to conflict and power. He sanctioned intervention when it seemed safe and cheap, and he avoided or terminated it when it was not. In Korea, for example, Eisenhower agreed to a settlement that won nothing for the United States beyond a restoration of the status quo ante-bellum, a settlement that many critics denounced as tantamount to surrender but that extricated America from a

costly, stalemated war. In 1954, when the French appealed for American intervention in Vietnam to help save them from defeat at the hands of Ho Chi Minh's communist forces, Eisenhower refused to commit American troops (or, as some in his administration urged, use nuclear weapons) and opted instead for a negotiated settlement that in effect conceded half of Vietnam to the communists. Many liberals in the 1950s derided the Eisenhower foreign policy as weak, inflexible, and unimaginative. But those who experienced the consequences of the more expansive and aggressive foreign policy strategies of the 1960s tend now to find virtue in Eisenhower's relative restraint.

Eisenhower's approach to power rested on a cautious view of the state and of presidential power, and the modesty of his goals does much to explain the hostile, dismissive evaluations of his presidency that prevailed among scholars and others 20 years ago. Eisenhower's was so widely condemned for permitting the nation to "drift," for establishing no "national purpose," because his years in office (particularly his last ones) coincided with rising expectations of the state in general and the presidency in particular. The very successes that ensured Eisenhower's popularity in the 1950s—the remarkable abundance, the growing national confidence, the moderating of Cold War tensions—set in motion forces that would discredit him in the 1960s: a quest for great missions at home and in the world, an impatient yearning for greatness that the cautious Republicanism of the Eisenhower years did nothing to satisfy.

It was the presidency, moreover, that now stood at the center of hopes for a bolder and more dynamic American future. The presidency, Eisenhower's detractors believed, was the one institution capable of defining a coherent "purpose" for the nation, the one element of government that could marshal the country's resources and lead a forceful assault on its domestic and international problems. Evidence of this new view was visible in, among other places, the studies of presidential power that began to appear in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Almost all of them empha-

sized the need for presidential activism. Almost all of them portrayed Eisenhower as an example of what a president should not be like.

In 1956, Clinton Rossiter argued in *The American Presidency* that the president's powers were nearly unlimited, curbed only by his ultimate accountability to the people. "The President is not a Gulliver," he wrote,

immobilized by ten thousand tiny cords . . . He is, rather, a kind of magnificent lion, who can roam freely and do great deeds so long as he does not try to break loose from his broad reservation . . . There is virtually no limit to what the president can do if he does it for democratic ends and through democratic means.

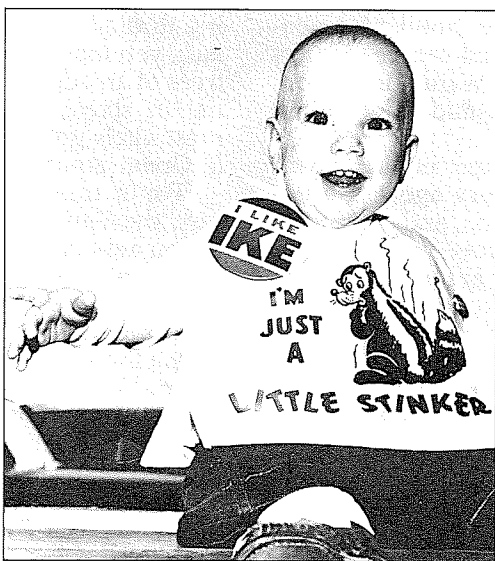
Four years later, Richard Neustadt published *Presidential Power*. It was a less rapacious book than Rossiter's, more aware of the many limits on a president's ability to act. Neustadt cited Harry Truman's 1952 prediction of what Eisenhower would encounter once in office: "He'll sit here and he'll say: 'Do this, Do that!' And nothing will happen. Poor Ike." But to Neustadt, as to Rossiter, the difficulties were not an excuse for inaction, but a reason for the president to seek ways to exert power that *would* work. The president must act, Neustadt and others believed; if there were obstacles to action, he must find ways to circumvent them.

That is the crucial point at which prevailing liberal opinion in the early 1960s diverged from Eisenhower's view. If American government was going to *perform*, if it was go-

ing to accomplish great things, it would have to rely on leadership from the one area of government that could provide it: the efficient, modern, effective element of government. Not the clumsy and inefficient Congress; not conservative and corrupt state and local governments; but the presidency—the seat of action.

What doomed Eisenhower to dismissal and condescension from historians and others for more than a decade after he left office was his refusal to accept the idea that government had a great and compelling mission, his belief that the ambitions of the state should remain modest and limited. But those same inclinations explain the resurgence of Eisenhower's popularity during the 1980s, a time when many Americans came to question the desirability of a powerful president and the feasibility of a large and active government. Tired of conflict, disillusioned with the state, Americans have discovered a new appreciation for Eisenhower, whose genial decency and modest ambitions were such a comforting contrast to the superheated public atmosphere of the years after 1960.

But what of the future? Nothing in Dwight D. Eisenhower's uneventful presidency ensures him an important place in political history. He was not a Lincoln or Wilson or Roosevelt, who led the nation through great crises. He was not a Kennedy or Johnson or Nixon, who, for better or worse, charted new paths and left the nation's public life forever altered. His reputation, it seems safe to predict, will remain what it has been now for 30 years: a hostage to Americans' fluctuating expectations of their leaders and their state.



ORSON SQUIRE FOWLER

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## To Form a More Perfect Human

The American pursuit of perfection—of body, mind, and society—is as old as the Republic itself. At certain times in our history, most recently during the 1960s, that search has reached a fever pitch. But never has there been a more fervent searcher than Orson Squire Fowler (1809–87). A child of the Jacksonian era, his enthusiasms ranged from phrenology and the reform of sex to vegetarianism and the construction of the ideal house—which could only be octagonal, in Fowler’s humble opinion. As Dwight L. Young suggests, this forgotten reformer is a reminder of something eternal in the American character.

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*by Dwight L. Young*

**H**is name was Orson Squire Fowler. In his day, it was a name to be reckoned with, a name that garnered notice—and in some cases tributes—from many of his triple-monikered contemporaries: Julia Ward Howe, Henry Ward Beecher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Edgar Allan Poe, to name a few.

He is largely forgotten now. He was buried just over a century ago in an unmarked grave in the Bronx, and there is no monument to his memory or his varied achievements. But there are many reminders of him from coast to coast, some of them in fairly surprising places.

Browse through a second-hand store, for instance, and you may come across a white plaster bust, one with the skull marked off in little numbered spaces. It’s just a curiosity now, quaint and mildly amusing, but more than a century ago it was one of the most important tools of Orson Squire Fowler’s trade. Or if you

happen to be in a rare book store and chance upon that slim first edition of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* from 1855, notice the publisher’s name: Fowlers & Wells. One of those Fowlers was our man Orson. And that is not all he left us. Driving through the countryside on a Sunday lark, you may catch a glimpse through the trees of an odd-looking farmhouse, octagonal in shape. Whoever built that house most likely got the idea from, you guessed it, Orson Squire Fowler.

For a time during the mid-19th century, the Fowler “Cabinet” in lower Manhattan was an attraction rivaled in popularity only by P. T. Barnum’s American Museum. Fowler himself was a renowned lecturer, and his books and journals sold by the thousands. He made a significant, if somewhat quirky, contribution to the field of domestic architecture. He championed any number of reform causes with admirable and selfless zeal.

In this cynical age it would be easy to dismiss Fowler as a harmless eccentric or, at the other extreme, a forerunner of to-

day's miracle-diet charlatans and prime-time evangelists. But he was neither of those. As the historian James C. Whorton writes, Fowler was one of a host of 19th-century "crusaders for fitness" who believed, with characteristic American optimism, that the "ideal society will arise from the physical renovation of all individual citizens." Among other crusaders were vegetarians such as Russell Trall, "Christian physiologists" such as Sylvester Graham (best remembered as the inventor of the Graham cracker), and "muscular Christians" such as George Windship, the Charles Atlas of the 19th century. Individual reform, they were convinced, would lead to social progress. And unlike their descendants, today's holistic health enthusiasts and others, Fowler and his contemporaries did not seek a return to Eden. The "kingdom of health" that they envisioned was in Whorton's apt phrase, "a city, not a garden."

What makes Fowler most interesting, however, is the fact that he crusaded for much more than fitness. The years from 1820 to the outbreak of the Civil War saw the introduction of almost all of the staple subjects of humanitarian reform that were to preoccupy crusaders for the next century—labor, housing, temperance, women's rights, education—and Fowler threw himself into many of them. Like Benjamin Franklin and the other great American "Renaissance men" of the previous century, Fowler believed that better ways of doing almost everything could be found. Like his contemporaries, he was secure in the faith that the best way to lead people to a morally superior plane was by teaching them a practically superior way of living.

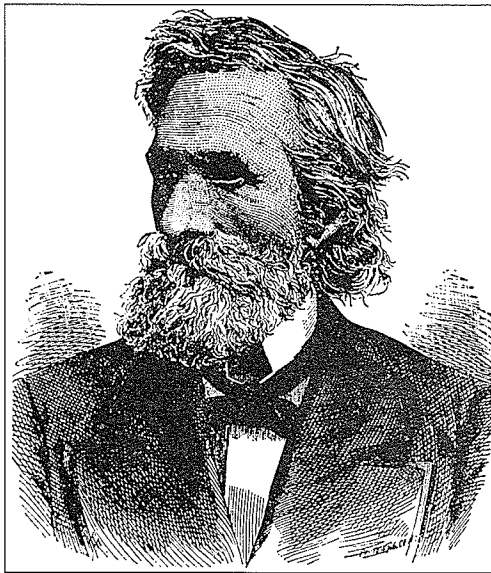
It should not be surprising that this son

of staunch Congregationalists from upstate New York—his father was a farmer and church deacon—at first set out to be a preacher. But while a student at Amherst College during the early 1830s, Fowler was introduced to the field which was to be his life's work: phrenology. This new science took its name from two Greek words meaning "discourse on the mind." It was born in Vienna (not its only similarity to Freudian psychoanalysis) in the late 18th century. Its founder, Dr. Franz Joseph Gall, postulated that the shape of a human skull could reveal the shape of the mind and, ultimately, the character. Moreover,

Gall developed the notion that the brain was made up of a great many separate organs (the supposed number varied over the years from 35 to 43), each serving as the seat of a particular character trait. Most attractive of all to Americans, with their perpetual interest in self-improvement, these organs were capable of being strengthened through proper mental exercise.

When Johann Spurzheim, one of Gall's most ardent disciples, brought the doctrine of phrenology to the United

States in 1832, his American audiences at once took him and his phrenological charts to their bosom. Harriet Martineau, the noted English writer who was visiting the United States at the time, reported that "the great mass of Americans became phrenologists in a day, wherever he appeared." And why not? Phrenology held out the promise of human self-redemption, a notion that was bound to appeal to a people so deeply convinced of the perfectibility of man. As one writer put it, "There need be merely a universal examining of heads to arrive at a universal omniscience."



*"Allowed to choose my own name," Fowler wrote, "it would be, Nature's Apostle."*

This was the crusade upon which the 25-year-old Orson Squire Fowler embarked in 1834, and by all accounts he was practically an overnight success. With his younger brother Lorenzo, himself a skilled phrenological proselytizer, Fowler hit the lecture trail. In rented halls all over the eastern United States, the Fowlers perfected their spiel, explaining the basic tenets of phrenology and offering hands-on analyses of volunteers' heads.

The lectures (which were free) and examinations (which were not) drew large crowds and more than a few celebrities. Sculptor Hiram Powers and actor Edwin Forrest had their heads examined, as did John Tyler, Brigham Young, John Greenleaf Whittier, and the famous Siamese twins, Chang and Eng. A painfully shy 15-year-old Clara Barton was examined by Lorenzo, who urged her anxious mother to "throw responsibility upon her." Some time later, according to biographer Madeleine B. Stern, Orson analyzed the skull of a bearded, strong-faced man from Massachusetts, telling him, "You are too blunt and free-spoken—you often find that your motives are not understood." The subject was John Brown.

Feeling the need for a permanent base from which to spread his gospel, Orson set up an office in Philadelphia in 1838. It closed a few years later, but the Phrenological Cabinet which Orson and Lorenzo established in New York became one of the city's premier showplaces. A visitor to the Fowlers & Wells emporium on Nassau Street—so named when the brothers' sister Charlotte and her husband, Samuel Wells, joined them—could easily spend a full day there. He could attend lectures on any of a number of topics or receive private instruction in phrenology. (Orson himself is said to have offered his services free to lady visitors.) The visitor might well spend an instructive hour or two studying the enormous collection of busts, casts, skulls, and paintings representing racial types and "persons of eminence in talent and virtue, and . . . those

who were notorious for crime." He could also, of course, submit himself to an actual phrenological examination for a fee ranging from \$1 to \$3. Finally, as a souvenir of the visit, what could be more fitting than a life-size plaster bust "showing the exact location of all the Organs of the Brain," available for a mere \$1.25?

Fowlers & Wells quickly became a center of agitation for reform in a bewildering variety of fields. In the pages of Orson's *American Phrenological Journal* and in dozens of books and pamphlets, the Fowlers reiterated their ultimate aim: "Society must be reformed, and this science, under God, is destined to become the pioneer in this great and good work." They were determined that no wrong should go unrighted, no panacea unproclaimed.

As early as the 1840s, the Fowlers assailed the inadequacies of the American educational system. "A Child is more valuable than any other human being," they declared. Elsewhere they trumpeted, "The training of children is at the very foundation of society" and, "We hear much of 'Human Rights,' 'Man's Rights' and 'Women's Rights,' but Children's Rights are almost entirely unrecognized." Among the rights to which every child was entitled, of course, was the right to have phrenology form the basis of his or her education. The Fowlers therefore must have derived tremendous satisfaction from the pronouncement by Horace Mann, the noted school reformer, that he was "more indebted to Phrenology than to all the metaphysical works I ever read."

Education was only one of Orson's many causes. He was an early and lifelong advocate of equality for women. His words have the staccato clarity of a suffragette's placard: "Women's sphere of industry should . . . be enlarged till it equals that of men . . . . What but 'female suffrage' can save our republic? Women's wages should equal men's for the same work." In addition to casting off their social and political chains, women were exhorted to free themselves from the tyranny of fashion, particularly the tight-laced corset. In publi-

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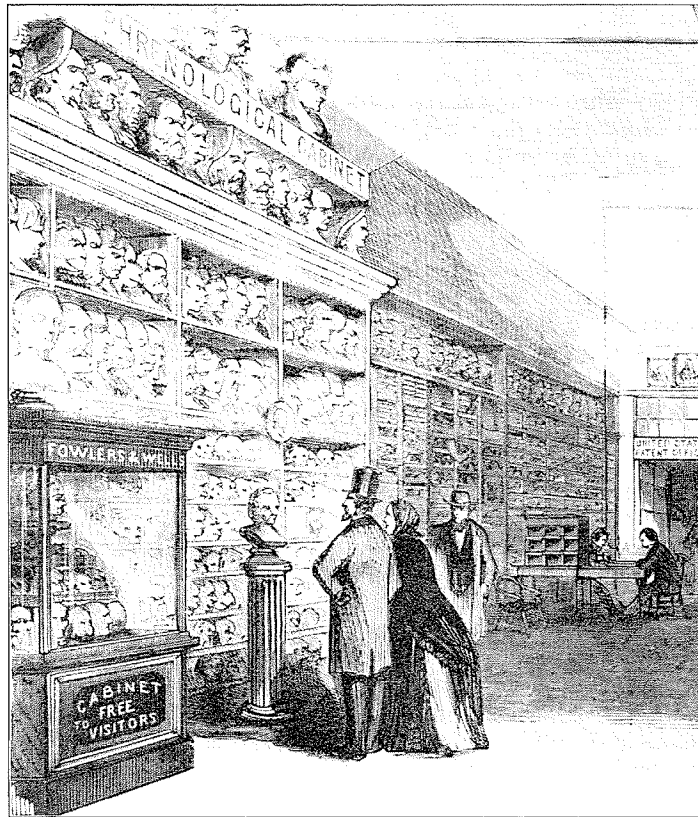
*Dwight L. Young is director of planned giving at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Born in Clovis, New Mexico, he received a B.A. from Texas Tech University (1966) and an M.A. from the University of Virginia (1976).*



cation after publication, Orson and Lorenzo condemned tight lacing as "gradual suicide," adopted the slogan "Natural Waists, or No Wives," and urged their female readers to exchange "the shackles... of fashionable libertines" for "the garb of natural beauty."

Both men and women were warned of the evils of tobacco, alcohol, and improper diet. "The noxious weed," as Orson called it, was responsible for a range of diseases from amnesia to cancer, as well as general depravity and licentiousness. As for alcohol, the brothers asserted that "two-thirds of the idiots and insane in the land" could blame their unfortunate condition on "the free use of this liquid fire." Vegetarianism likewise found zealous advocates in the Fowlers. Orson declared his own "dietetic doctrine that man should live mainly on unbolted wheat bread and fruit, or its juice," adding smugly, "Give me this diet, and you are quite welcome to all the flesh-pots of modern cookery." In due course, the American Anti-Tobacco Society and the American Vegetarian Society were organized and headquartered in the offices of Fowlers & Wells.

The brothers championed hydropathy, expressing the hope that its regimen of baths and liberal consumption of water would "soon surpass all other systems of the healing art" and free mankind from its unnatural dependence on the "drugopathic system." They extolled the benefits of mesmerism, Orson avowing that he had "cured and been cured of headache, toothache, neuralgia and other aches and pains... by this means." Their office was among the first to make use of phonography, an early system of shorthand which their publications hailed as a "most prom-



*Attractions at the Phrenological Cabinet (shown here in 1860) included busts of Michelangelo, a Bengal tiger, and a woman whose abnormal organ of Veneration caused her to pray incessantly.*

ising field of human progression." They published a monthly magazine, *The Prisoners' Friend*, on the subject of penal reform. They pioneered marriage counseling and a simple form of eugenics ("Those very fleshy should not marry those equally so, but those too spare and slim"). The *American Phrenological Journal* was happy to report that "husbands and wives are beginning to regulate their connubial habits, and settle their disputes... by the aid of phrenology."

For every new cause that Fowlers & Wells embraced, a new book had to be written. An impressive number came from the pen of Orson Fowler himself. It was said that "almost half a million of his various productions" were in circulation at the height of his fame, and at one time "a bookstore in which his books only were

sold" did a thriving business in New Haven, Connecticut.

Many of his books, of course, were purely phrenological in nature—*Phrenology Applied to the Cultivation of Memory*, for example, or *Phrenology versus Intemperance*, or *Life, Health, and Self-Culture, as Taught by Phrenology*—but it seemed that every subject was grist for his mill. Early on he proclaimed his commitment to "publish no work which I do not think eminently calculated to do good," and he soon became convinced that he could do the most good by writing about marriage and sex. His *Matrimony: or Phrenology and Physiology applied to the selection of Suitable Companions for Life* sold in the thousands and was soon followed by *Love and Parentage, applied to the Improvement of Offspring*. Warming to his subject, he turned out *Maternity, Manhood, and Amativeness: or Evils and Remedies of Excessive and Perverted Sexuality*.

In all, his tone was avuncular and conciliatory. "We offer pity for folly, and ointment for your self-inflicted wounds," he wrote in *Amativeness*. "So far from casting reproaches, we would put you again on the feet of self-respect, and the road of restoration." He knew that he was treading on dangerous ground in daring to write about sex, but having "seen nothing which did full justice to this subject," he could not shirk his duty. "Phrenology mounts the breach," he wrote proudly. "It points out the remedy, and the Author claims to be its expositor." At a later stage of his life he was to mount the breach more frequently, with unfortunate results.

By the end of the 1840s it seemed that the Fowlers just might reach their goal of phrenologizing America. The nationally renowned preacher Henry Ward Beecher was telling his Brooklyn flock that "the views of the human mind . . . revealed by Phrenology, are those views which have underlayed my whole ministry." Some business firms asked job applicants to undergo a phrenological examination as a prerequisite to employment, perhaps taking their cue from Horace Greeley's opinion that selecting trainmen "by the aid of phrenology, and not otherwise" was a sure way to reduce railroad accidents. Horace Mann stated that "the principles of Phre-

nology lie at the bottom of all sound mental philosophy." There were even reports of ladies dressing their hair so as to show off their best phrenological organs.

Right in the middle of all this success, Orson Squire Fowler decided to take a break. He had exercised his organ of Amativeness, which he had found to be "only moderate" in an early self-examination, by taking a wife in 1835. Two children followed in due course. Eager to provide a home for his family and doubtless wearied by the long hours spent at the writing desk and on the lecture circuit, Orson decided to build a house on some land he had bought near Fishkill, New York, in the Hudson River Valley. He had some rather startling ideas he wanted to try out. His experiment in homebuilding was to trigger one of the most interesting fads of the 19th century and exert a significant influence on subsequent architectural thought.

It was no ordinary house that Fowler proposed to build. It was to be the perfect house. It was to be the answer to many questions which plagued this confirmed believer in progress and reform: "Why so little progress in architecture, when there is so much in other matters? Why continue to build in the same SQUARE form of all past ages? Is no radical improvement . . . possible?"

As usually happened when he had a new idea, Fowler immediately wrote a book about it. Published in 1848 by Fowlers & Wells, *A Home for All or a New, Cheap, Convenient and Superior Mode of Building* is a fascinating book, a good-natured, neighborly, pull-up-a-chair-and-let's-chat sort of book. Over the years (perhaps from having run his fingers over so many more-or-less-globular skulls?), Fowler had come to the conclusion that nature loves a sphere. "Nature's forms are mostly SPHERICAL," he announced. "She makes ten thousand curvilinear to one square figure. Then why not apply her form to houses?" But since building a spherical house would be next to impossible, he settled on the octagon as the next best thing.

An octagonal house, Fowler reasoned, was eminently practical. He reeled off columns of figures to prove his point that

“since a given length of octagon wall will inclose one-fifth more space than the same length of wall in a square shape, of course you can have the same sized wall for one-fifth less money, or the wall of a house one-fifth larger for the same sum.”

Besides that, an octagonal house would be good to look at. “A square house is more beautiful than a triangular one, and an octagon or duodecadon than either,” he said, because “the more the angle approaches the circle, the more beautiful.” After all, “Why is it that a poor animal, or a lean person, is more homely than the same animal or person when fleshy? Because the latter are less angular and more spherical than the former.”

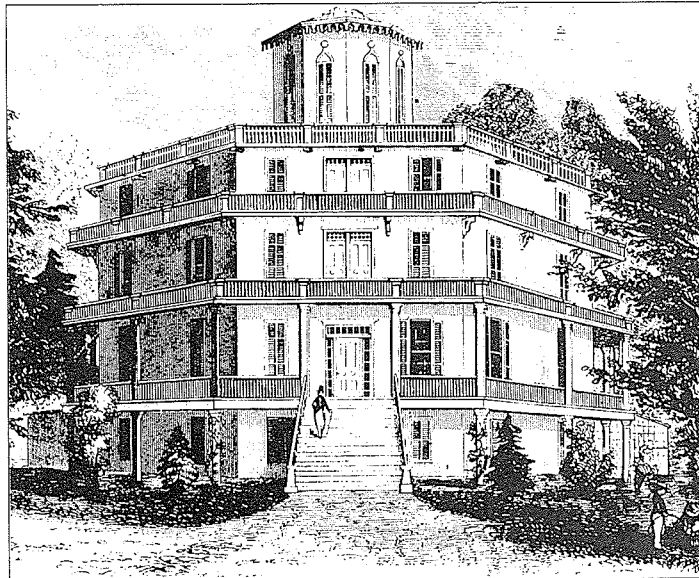
*A Home for All* was written while Fowler’s house was still in the planning stage. The book was already in print and actual construction on the house barely underway when Fowler made a second great discovery. On a trip to Wisconsin in 1850, he saw several buildings in the town of Milton “built wholly of lime, mixed with that coarse gravel and sand found in banks on the western prairies.” The buildings were the work of one Joseph Goodrich, who generously allowed Fowler to bash his walls with a sledgehammer. Fowler found them to be “hard as stone itself, and harder than brick walls,” and a lightbulb went on in his head.

The ideal building material, Fowler reasoned, would be “simple, durable, easily applied, everywhere abundant, easily rendered beautiful, comfortable, and every way complete.” Joseph Goodrich’s hammer-proof walls filled the bill perfectly. This was “Nature’s material,” Fowler decided. And it was ideally suited for a house designed in “Nature’s form.” When a revised edition of Fowler’s book appeared in 1853, it featured a significant change in subtitle: *A Home for All or the Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Build-*

*ing New, Cheap, Convenient, Superior and Adapted to Rich and Poor.*

Obviously, Orson Fowler did not “invent” the octagonal building. The Dutch built an octagonal trading post in New Jersey in 1630, for example, and Poplar Forest, Thomas Jefferson’s octagonal retreat in western Virginia, predated Fowler’s book by almost half a century. Likewise, Fowler could not—and did not—claim to have originated the “gravel wall” method of construction, which bore considerable resemblance to the *pise* (rammed earth) and “tabby” modes used by early American settlers. The idea that this form and this material could be used by the masses as a means of providing cheap, attractive, and convenient housing for themselves, however, was Fowler’s alone.

He seems to have worried not a bit about his lack of previous experience as a homebuilder, believing that every man could—indeed, should—be his own carpenter through the proper exercise of his organs of Constructiveness and Inhabitativeness. So, with the help of only a few laborers, Fowler dug out his basement, mixed the excavated soil and rock with



“A superior man, a superb villa,” was Orson Fowler’s dictum when he built his octagonal house near Fishkill. He held that a man’s home, no less than his skull, revealed his true character.

lime to build his walls, and erected the shell of his house in a week. He calculated the cost at \$79.

And what kind of house did he build? Well, for starters, it was big. It loomed three full floors above a raised basement and was topped with a large, many-windowed cupola. Every floor enjoyed access to a wide veranda which encircled the building. The exterior walls were finished with stucco "colored with indigo, lamp-black, and some other articles . . . adding some iron filings and salt, for the purpose of bringing out a rust on the surface, to make it resemble granite." There was little exterior ornament, as might have been expected on the house of a man who had said of the fashionable gimcracks and gee-gaws of his day, "For a child whose tastes are yet immature to be tickled by them, would not be surprising, but for the ELITE to be enamored with them only shows how GREEN they are."

Inside, the house had, in Fowler's words, "sixty rooms, but not one too many." The basement was given over to a warren of chambers for work and storage. Most of the main floor consisted of four large octagonal rooms which could be thrown together to create a space of more than 300 square yards, about which Fowler waxed rhapsodic: "Reader . . . did you ever see the equal of this suite of rooms for entertaining large parties?" The two upper floors featured a separate bedroom and dressing room for each member of the family, an arrangement which Fowler felt was absolutely essential for the health and satisfaction of all. Closets were everywhere, utilizing the awkward corners created by the fitting of square rooms inside an octagonal shell. Rising through the center of the house was a winding stair, lighted from above by the windows and glass roof of the cupola.

The centralized circulation pattern of the house recommended it particularly to a group whose needs were of special concern to Fowler: housewives. He made it clear that he was talking about "women and PRACTICAL HOUSEKEEPERS," not "parlor toys" or "double-exquisite LADIES who are as cordially disgusted with household duties as with common sense."

Although it was quickly labeled "Fowler's Folly" by detractors, the house gave its builder tremendous satisfaction. "No labor of my life has given me more lively delight than the planning and building of my own house," he said, and he urged others to follow his example at all costs. When a neighbor heeded his admonition, Fowler was happy to report that the finished product "so far exceeded what he anticipated . . . as to become as enchanting as a novel, and so delighted him as to interfere with his sleep at night."

While they may not have lost sleep over it, a great many other people built octagons. A definitive tally is impossible, but most historians agree that well over 1,000 octagonal houses were erected during the 1850s, mostly in the Northeast and upper Midwest. Most of them were probably the result, directly or indirectly, of the wide distribution of *A Home for All*, which went through at least nine printings.

Changing tastes and the financial panic of 1857 put an end to the octagon fad, but a surprising number of the houses remain. A modest octagon of 1857 stands cheek-by-jowl with the trendy boutiques of Union Street in San Francisco. Another graces a knoll along busy Route 1 in northeastern Maryland. Geneva, New York, has a particularly charming example with columns and railings of lacy cast iron, and a lovingly restored double octagon with Gothic Revival details stands on a side street in Columbus, Georgia. Ironically, the best-known octagon in the United States is one which Fowler probably would have derided for its lavish Moorish ornamentation: It is Longwood in Natchez, Mississippi, designed by Samuel Sloan and left unfinished when its workmen went off to fight in the Civil War.

By that time, Orson Fowler's own octagon overlooking the Hudson had fallen on hard times. Battered by the economic recession of 1857, Fowler rented the building to a New Yorker who turned it into a boarding house. The following year a number of the boarders were struck down by an outbreak of typhoid, probably caused in part by cesspool seepage through the gravel walls of which Orson had been so proud. He sold the house in 1859. Over the next four decades it passed through many

hands, gradually falling into ruin. In the summer of 1897 it was finally demolished.

Even before the panic of 1857, Fowler had severed his relationship with the firm of Fowlers & Wells. Among the reasons for his departure was an apparent falling-out over the editorial policies of the firm, specifically the opposition of one member of the firm to the publication of a work on the subject of masturbation. Orson resumed his career as a freelance phrenologist, lecturing throughout the country. Eventually he settled in Manchester, Massachusetts, where he built a house with an octagonal dining room. He continued to perform phrenological examinations at his new office in Boston, but his work took on a new focus as phrenology passed out of fashion. For the rest of his life, Orson Fowler lectured and wrote almost exclusively on the subject of sex. Apparently he also practiced what he preached. He married twice more and fathered three children in his seventies, no mean feat for a man with "only moderate" Amativeness.

His magnum opus in the field of sex education was the 1052-page *Creative and Sexual Science* of 1870, which aimed to teach married couples "how to love scientifically." Having discovered that women "thirst for this particular kind of knowledge," Fowler aimed much of the book at them. Raging against the injustice done to women by contemporary social mores, he thundered, "Sexual knowledge is sexual salvation." The "womb was made for Love, just as the stomach . . . for appetite," he wrote, urging women to find "summum bonum enjoyment" in sexual intercourse. The book was, to say the least, ahead of its time; Sigmund Freud was a teenager when it appeared.

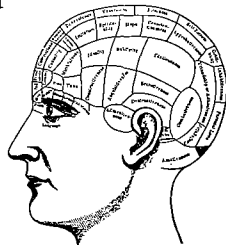
In 1878, Fowler found himself embroiled in scandal. His business manager turned against him, charging him with a variety of sexual offenses ranging from delivering "private lec-

tures to ladies . . . of an immoral character, and often grossly obscene in action and speech" to "sustaining the most disreputable relationship with certain female quacks, and . . . writing to them grossly immoral letters, which actually undertook to systematize sexual vice." The attacks spread. The *Chicago Tribune* described him as a "bird of prey" beneath a headline that read "Under the Cloak of Science He Disseminates the Seeds of Vice." Eventually a pamphlet appeared which asked, *Is Prof. O. S. Fowler The Foulest Man On Earth?* Unable to silence his critics or rebuild his reputation, Orson Squire Fowler died quietly in 1887.

He left an enduring legacy, this skull-reader/architect/sexologist. Through his dissemination and popularization of phrenology, he exerted a profound influence on many of the most prominent people of his day. His championship of a range of noble causes, from female suffrage to sex education, prefigured the work of the great reformers of subsequent decades. The firm which he founded, Fowlers & Wells, was remarkable for its bold promotion of controversial themes and unknown writers such as Walt Whitman.

Likewise, Fowler's excursion into architecture was much more than an endearingly wacky eccentricity. His advocacy of the octagon can be seen as a forerunner of Louis Sullivan's "form follows function" dictum, and his insistence on thoughtful planning and labor-saving conveniences predates Le Corbusier's concept of the house as a "machine to live in." While the octagon did not prove to be the panacea Fowler had hoped, it did leave its mark. The most famous architect of the 20th century frequently used octagonal forms in his buildings; his own studio, in fact, is in that shape. As it happens, he grew up in a part of Wisconsin in which a number of octagons were built in the wake of *A Home for All*.

Surely he must have noticed them, perhaps even studied them. His name was Frank Lloyd Wright.



*Continued from page 24*

to find himself treated like a right-wing "troglodyte." One student at the nation's leading school of journalism even wanted to know why he thought it was so bad that Nicaragua's Sandinista government had shut down the nation's leading newspaper, *La Prensa!*

It is only somewhat reassuring that Krauss admits that "10 years ago I might have been one of them myself." Yet how a self-described "left-liberal" journalist went to Central America "to help stop the next Vietnam" and came home a skeptical centrist is an interesting tale. Actually, says Krauss, his is the story of a whole "Vietnam generation" of foreign correspondents in Central America.

During the first few years of Sandinista rule in Nicaragua, when he worked for United Press International, Krauss concedes, "I reported what I wanted to see and discounted the repression." He says that he was right to stress that Nicaragua was not becoming a Stalinist state, but he missed "the most fundamental event of the

1979-81 period: the consolidation of a Leninist political and military machine."

Krauss says that his ideological blinders began to come off during three weeks he spent with leftist guerrillas in El Salvador in 1982. His hosts refused to dispute the Communist Party line that the Solidarity movement in Poland was merely a tool of American imperialists; in an otherwise pleasant Salvadoran village run according to the principles of agrarian socialism, he was disturbed to see a "personality cult" organized around a guerrilla leader. But the real turning point for his generation, Krauss says, was the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983. He was surprised to find himself unwilling to condemn it automatically, and was "happy to see the downfall of the Stalinists around Bernard Coard."

Now that his generation has left Central America, Krauss says, it will be "interesting" to see what the next crop of "idealistic" youngsters has to say—and, one might add, how many years it takes them to complete their own on-the-job education.

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## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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### *Philosophy for Consenting Adults*

"Private Irony and Public Decency: Richard Rorty's New Pragmatism" by Thomas McCarthy, in *Critical Inquiry* (Winter 1990), Univ. of Chicago, 202 Wieboldt Hall, 1050 E. 59th St., Chicago, Ill. 60637.

"Philosophy should be kept as separate from politics as should religion," the philosopher Richard Rorty declared in 1985. That would have been an unremarkable statement had it been made by one of the analytic thinkers who have dominated Anglo-American philosophy since World War II. But Rorty, who teaches at the University of Virginia, is perhaps the foremost critic of that highly esoteric school of thought, a self-proclaimed "neo-pragmatist," and the pre-eminent heir to the politically engaged pragmatic philosophers William James and John Dewey. And like them, he writes with enough panache to make his case in popular magazines. In short, says McCarthy, a philosopher at Northwestern, Rorty has "all the makings

of a new American philosopher-hero." Why he has not become one is McCarthy's subject.

Until the late 1970s, Rorty was a highly respected member of the philosophy establishment. But then he published *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), attacking analytic philosophy's pursuit of rarefied "logical analysis of language" and its excessive reliance on models of knowledge borrowed from the sciences. Rorty favors, in McCarthy's words, "a turn to social practice to bring us . . . back to earth—that is back to the concrete forms of life in which our working notions of 'reason,' 'truth,' 'objectivity,' 'knowledge,' and the like are embodied." Rorty also joins with Jacques Derrida, Michel Fou-

cault, and other Continental thinkers who reject the Enlightenment belief that it is possible to make universal statements about these things. Truth and knowledge are not timeless; they are determined by culture.

But Rorty rejects the radical social and political conclusions—a wholesale rejection of the liberal, bourgeois order—that the Continental thinkers draw from these views. Instead, he argues that just as the creation of democracy required that religion be treated as “irrelevant to social order, but relevant to, and possibly essential for individual perfection,” so the survival of democracy requires the “privatization” of philosophy. In other words, McCarthy caustically explains, “Philosopher-poets are permitted to indulge in a radical and total critique of the Enlightenment concept of reason and of the humanistic ideals rooted in it, but only in private.”

There are, McCarthy observes, more than a few ironies in all of this. Rorty’s revolt against the analytic school’s aloofness from the “real world” has led him to insist, paradoxically, on an absolute division be-

### *The Beginning of the End*

In a tribute to the French sociologist Raymond Aron in *The New York Times Book Review* (Feb. 18, 1990), Harvard’s Daniel Bell traces the scandalous genealogy of an idea that is much in fashion today.

*The men Aron most admired in the 1930s were Alexandre Kojève, Alexandre Koyré, and Eric Weil, three superior intellects “against whom I did not dare measure myself.” Kojève, the most brilliant and most mysterious, gave a famous seminar on Hegel’s Phenomenology with a group of auditors that included Raymond Queneau, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and occasionally Aron. His esoteric interpretation of the “end of history”—history had ended, he thought, with the universalism proclaimed by the French Revolution, but having failed to be realized in practice by Napoleon, it would now be realized by Stalin!—has repeated itself twice: once in the tragedy of French intellectuals such as Merleau-Ponty who supported the terror of Stalin as “historical necessity,” the second time as farce, in the recent essay by the former State Department official Francis Fukuyama.*

tween philosophy and politics. And his whole argument—because it is based on claims of universal truth—constitutes just the kind of philosophy he rejects. McCarthy shares Rorty’s desire for a philosophy more solidly rooted in experience. But he believes that it must begin with the recognition that while universal truths cannot be asserted with the boldness of old, they are still indispensable “pragmatic presuppositions.”

### *A Jewish Revival?*

“What Future for American Jews?” by Arthur Hertzberg, in *The New York Review of Books* (Nov. 23, 1989), 250 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

When the first Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654, Baruch de Spinoza was at home in Amsterdam, insisting that the Jews had only two choices: assimilate or re-establish their own national state.

That prophecy seemed to be forgotten by the 1970s and ’80s. Jews were one of the most affluent groups in America; anti-Semitism had virtually disappeared, at least among whites; and the loyalty Jews felt toward Israel came to be accepted as no more unusual than what the Italians

felt for the “old country.” But today, contends Hertzberg, a professor of religion at Dartmouth, “after nearly four centuries, the momentum of Jewish experience in America is essentially spent.”

America’s 5.8 million Jews have not been unaware of their predicament. During the 1970s, interest in the Holocaust was revived, and the threat of anti-Semitism in America invoked; Jews were urged to rally behind Israel and behind Jewish groups and rituals. Jewishness, says

Hertzberg, "was thus to grow stronger not as a religion but as the binding force of an ethnic community." But ethnicity alone will not suffice, Hertzberg insists.

Rates of intermarriage are rising. In Rhode Island, for example, the rate was 14 percent during the 1960s, 27 percent during the 1970s, and 38 percent during the 1980s. The commitment of American Jews to Israel, meanwhile, has weakened, especially since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. They still send money to Israel, but they

are less likely to visit, just as they observe Yom Kippur without any real commitment to its ritual fasting.

There is still a sense that Jews are more than an ethnic group, that they remain God's "chosen people." But the fact is that Jewish spirituality does not have very deep roots in the New World, says Hertzberg. Most Jews came here to get ahead, not to propagate a rebirth of Judaism. Unless American Jews begin to "hear voices," he warns, their history "will soon end."

## *The Poet and The Philosopher*

"Wordsworth and the Culture of Science" by Fred Wilson, in *The Centennial Review* (Fall 1989), 110 Morrill Hall, Michigan State Univ., East Lansing, Mich. 48824-1036.

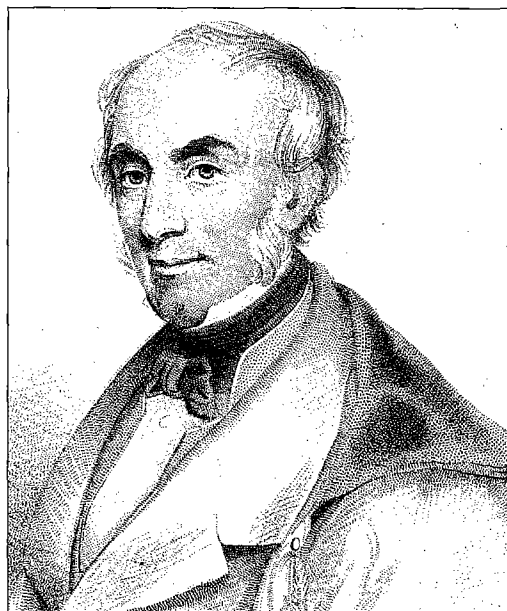
In 1826, John Stuart Mill was gripped by what can only be called one of the most famous bouts of depression in the intellectual history of the West. At 20, he later wrote, his "love of mankind . . . had worn itself out." His despair was deepened by the oppressive influence both of his philosopher-father, James, and of Jeremy Bentham. They advocated a view of psychology, "associationism," which seemed to leave no room for pure emotion.

To revive his spirits, the young Mill read romantic poetry: Goethe, Coleridge, Shelley. But it was in the poetry of William Wordsworth (1770-1850) that he finally found comfort, and ultimately an answer to the philosophical challenge posed by his father and Bentham. And thus indirectly, writes Wilson, who teaches philosophy at the University of Toronto, "Wordsworth effected the assimilation of romanticism into the culture of science."

The dominion of science and of the scientific method was something that English thinkers had been forced to grapple with since Isaac Newton (1642-1727). The "associationists," including Bentham and the elder Mill, followed Newtonian logic in arguing that all higher cognitive processes—indeed human nature itself—could be analyzed as the product of associations between various sensory and bodily pleasures.

Wordsworth himself had once fallen under the influence of this impoverished psy-

chology as it was expounded by William Godwin. It left him "... now believing/ Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed." Much like Mill, he experienced a spiritual crisis (which he described in *The Prelude*). Rejecting "associationism" without—unlike many of his fellow romantics—throwing out all of Newtonian science as well, Wordsworth came to believe in the "irreducibility" of the moral and religious senses. It was a line of argument that had



*William Wordsworth wrote: "it is shaken off/ That burden of my own unnatural self."*



been laid out earlier by two 18th-century thinkers, the Earl of Shaftesbury and Lord Kames: Moral and religious sentiments are not the product of associations that need to be analyzed; they come directly from experience.

That perspective, says Wilson, is one of the things that gave Wordsworth's poetry its beauty. But it was beauty and philosophy both that revived the young John Stu-

art Mill and inspired him to reconcile "associationism" with Wordsworth's "irreducibility." In the theory of psychology he developed, moral and religious sentiments were irreducible, but gained value and character by "association" with more basic sensations of pleasure. The romantics would have been pleased by this chain of events: The poet taught the philosopher, who instructed the scientist.

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## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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### *Primate Politics*

"Political Animal" by Meredith F. Small, in *The Sciences* (March-April 1990), 2 E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Scientific opinion about human evolution is undergoing, well, evolution.

The basic facts are not in doubt, notes Small, a Cornell anthropologist. The first human species, *Homo habilis* (literally, handy man) appeared about two million years ago in Africa. He was succeeded 1.5 million years ago by *Homo erectus*, who retained many simian features but boasted a relatively well developed brain. Then, a mere 100,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* debuted, with a brain nearly twice as large.

The obvious question for scientists: What accounts for this phenomenal brain growth? They thought they had an answer during the early 1960s, when Louis and Mary Leakey unearthed tools made by *Homo habilis*. Creatures with the mental capacity to make tools (i.e. big brains) would be highly favored by evolution. But Jane Goodall's discovery that chimpanzees also use tools, albeit primitive ones, shot that theory down. A consensus later emerged, at least among anthropologists, that a combination of tool-use, the rise of group hunting, and the development of language spurred rapid human "encephalization."

But now some anthropologists are beginning to wonder whether they have been asking the right question. Without challenging the new consensus about humans, they suggest that the real puzzle is how to account for the impressive brain development of the entire primate order over the

past 60 million years. And they think they have an answer. "In contrast with the vast mammalian majority," Small observes, "most primates live in some kind of group. In contrast with schools of fishes or herds of ungulates, the primate groups are not mere aggregations but true social organizations."

Primatologist Alison Jolly first made the case for the importance of "social intelligence" in 1966. Since then, scientists have discerned many ways in which primates recognize and catalogue social relationships. For example, when Dorothy Cheney and Robert Seyfarth of the University of Pennsylvania played recordings of an imperiled young vervet's cries, the mother immediately turned toward the loudspeaker. But her two female companions turned toward her. Apparently, they recognized the young vervet's shrieks and associated them with the mother—a relatively complex act of social cognition. Lately, many researchers have begun to focus on the importance of what might be called primate politics: the ability to manipulate others for individual gain.

Small cautions that it is too soon to draw any conclusions. While the social intelligence of primates is now well documented, nobody has yet been able to prove that a mastery of primate politics and social graces leads to "reproductive success," and thus to an evolutionary advantage—or even to larger brains.

## Genes and The Law

"The Dark Side of DNA Profiling: Unreliable Scientific Evidence Meets the Criminal Defendant" by Janet C. Hoeffel, in *Stanford Law Review* (Jan. 1990), Stanford, Calif. 94305.

Police and prosecutors rejoiced in 1987 when DNA "fingerprinting" was introduced in the nation's courts. "If you're a criminal," one DNA analyst boasted, "it's like leaving your name, address, and social security number at the scene of the crime. It's that precise."

Far from it, retorts Hoeffel, a Stanford law student. DNA fingerprinting is dangerously inexact.

Unfortunately, nothing so straightforward as simply matching fingerprints is involved. Rather, in the complex eight-stage technique usually employed, the DNA is chemically chopped up, certain fragments are isolated for analysis, and images are made on x-ray film. The analyst looks at the pattern of bands (alleles) in the images; if he sees a match, he calculates the odds that it could occur at random. Then he goes to court.

The technique's shortcomings were dramatized during the 1989 trial of Joseph Castro, a Bronx, New York, building su-

perintendent who was accused of murdering his tenant, Vilma Ponce, and her two-year-old daughter. Police found some dried blood on Castro's watch, and a DNA analysis firm called Lifecodes declared that it matched Ponce's. In most cases, Hoeffel says, Castro would have pleaded guilty. But his attorneys fought on, revealing many flaws in the new technique.

For example, part of the eight-stage analysis involves the use of radioactive DNA (called "probes") to isolate bits of the sample DNA. But the sample can easily be contaminated by the probes—or by another sample, or by bacteria. In the Castro case, two extra bands showed up in the blood taken from the watch; Lifecodes scientists simply assumed they were the result of bacterial contamination.

That highlights some other problems. For example, test reliability decreases the smaller and older the samples are. And the scientific community does not even agree on the criteria for declaring a match be-

### A Computer Crime Wave?

Computer crime already costs the nation an estimated \$3-\$5 billion annually. Writing in *Technology Review* (Feb.-March 1990), Kenneth Rosenblatt, an assistant district attorney in Santa Clara County, California, predicts that the worst is yet to come.

*Our society is about to feel the impact of the first generation of children who have grown up using computers. The increasing sophistication of hackers suggests that computer crime will soar, as members of this new generation are tempted to commit more serious offenses. Besides raising prices, computer crime endangers our country's telecommunications systems, since phone-company switching computers are vulnerable to sabotage. The spread of scientific knowledge is also at risk; to prevent "viral" infections, research institutions may have to tighten access to their computer networks . . .*

*New [deterrent] strategies are urgently*

*needed. The first step is to abandon the idea that local police departments can fight computer crime effectively. Instead, high-technology regions need special task forces whose sole purpose is to apprehend computer criminals. The second step is to fit the punishment to the crime . . .*

*Many offenders depend psychologically and economically upon computers. They spend all their time with computers, and they work, or expect to work, in the computer industry. Thus, punishments that impinge upon this obsession will do more to curb abuses than fines or community service ever could. I suggest three such sanctions: confiscating equipment used to commit a computer crime, limiting the offender's use of computers, and restricting the offender's freedom to accept jobs involving computers. These penalties would be supplemented by a few days or weeks in a county jail—longer in serious cases.*

tween two samples—just how much alike do the various bands have to be? And what does it mean if they do seem to match? When Lifecodes (incorrectly) concluded that the blood on Castro's watch matched Vilma Ponce's, it declared that there was only one chance in 100 million that it could also match somebody else's. But two defense experts put the odds at one in 78 and one in 24, respectively.

How do the courts deal with such complex issues? Many state courts rely on the so-called *Frye* rule. It dates from a 1923 case in which the U.S. Supreme Court, asked to rule on the validity of an early form of lie-detector test, said that prevailing opinion among scientists was the best

guide. But which scientists? DNA fingerprinting cuts across disciplines. All too often, the scientists who work for private fingerprinting companies are the ones whose expert opinion is solicited. And many courts are switching to a newer standard—based on a 1978 U.S. Court of Appeals decision allowing the use of spectrographic voice analysis—which allows juries to decide what is admissible.

Hoeffel doubts that the courts are competent to judge such new technologies. DNA fingerprinting, she concludes, ought to be judged by a panel of experts vested with the authority to establish uniform testing standards—if they find the technique to be valid.

### *Morphine's Merits*

"The Tragedy of Needless Pain" by Ronald Melzack, in *Scientific American* (Feb. 1990), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

The young soldier who becomes addicted to drugs because he received morphine for war wounds is a stock character in popular mythology. But his like is seldom found in real life, says Melzack, a psychologist at McGill University.

For reasons that are not very well understood, people who are given morphine solely to control pain rarely become addicts—even if they take the drug for months at a time. Two researchers at Boston University studied 11,882 patients who were given narcotics to relieve pain and found that only four of them later became drug abusers. Another study found that of more than 10,000 burn victims treated with narcotics, only 22 subsequently had drug problems, and all of them had prior histories of drug abuse.

Unfortunately, says Melzack, most physicians are as ignorant of these facts as the general public is. In the United States and Britain, physicians who are fearful of turning their patients into addicts either avoid morphine altogether or mete it out too sparingly. (In much of Europe, even medical uses of morphine are outlawed.) As a result, he says, cancer, burn, and other patients are forced to suffer needless agony.

In his own research, Melzack has discov-

ered that morphine has an effect on "two distinct pain-signalling systems in the central nervous system. One of these—which gives rise to the kind of pain typically treated with morphine—does not develop much tolerance to the drug [i.e. need for increasing doses]."

That system is the medial system, which is responsible for persistent pain. Evolution seems to have sculpted it into a network suited to producing unpleasant physical and emotional sensations long after an injury has occurred, feelings which "would help ensure that, having survived an immediate threat, a wounded individual would feel miserable and so remain inactive long enough to heal." The lateral system, on the other hand, is a quick response mechanism for pain. For evolutionary reasons, it is subject to rapid inhibition: In nature, injured animals must be able to run or fight for survival.

Melzack and other researchers believe that this may explain why the lateral system develops a high tolerance for morphine. They have also discovered that morphine's effects vary a great deal from person to person and from group to group, which suggests that drug addiction may have a genetic component.

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**RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**


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## *A False Alarm Over Asbestos?*

"Asbestos: Scientific Developments and Implications for Public Policy" by B. T. Mossman, J. Bignon, M. Corn, A. Seaton, and J. B. L. Gee, in *Science* (Jan. 19, 1990), 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Environmental and health revisionism continues apace. Saccharine won't hurt you, and oat bran won't help you. "Nuclear winter" would actually be more like nuclear autumn, and people who once worried about the next ice age now fret about the greenhouse effect. Now for the latest change: Asbestos in schools and other buildings is not a threat to health.

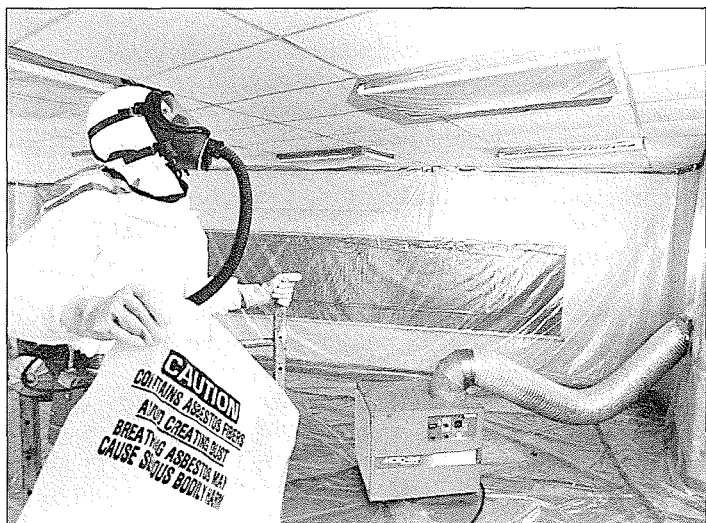
Scientists have known for decades that miners and other workers exposed to airborne asbestos on the job are prone to lung cancer and mesotheliomas (tumors in membranes around the lung, heart, or abdomen). But during the 1980s, fear spread that *any* exposure to asbestos—including asbestos released from damaged roofing, shingles, and pipes in buildings—could cause cancer. Alarmed by the threat to the health of children, Congress in 1986 mandated the inspection of all school buildings in the nation, touching off a frenzied round of inspections and removals.

But according to Mossman, a pathologist at the University of Vermont, and his fellow researchers, the main health threat is to the young workers attracted to the new asbestos removal industry.

Amid all the hysteria, they say, some basic scientific facts have been overlooked. First, asbestos is not one substance but many. These can be grouped into two "families." More than 90 percent of the world's asbestos is a substance called chrysotile, which is in the "serpentine" family. But studies of asbestos miners and other workers show that their illnesses result mostly—perhaps entirely—from exposure to substances in the "amphibole" family of asbestos.

Why can't scientists be sure that chrysotile is not carcinogenic? Because miners who have been definitely exposed *only* to chrysotile are virtually impossible to find. But the latest study shows that chrysotile workers who developed mesothelioma had 400 times as much asbestos in their lungs as cancer-stricken amphibole workers did. (Why are amphiboles so dangerous? Apparently, their shape and composition allows them to survive intact in the body for a much longer period of time.)

Much of the mid-1980s asbestos panic was fueled by the "one fiber" theory, which held that inhaling just a single strand of any kind of asbestos could cause cancer. Always questionable, according to the authors, that theory now looks quite dubious. For example, an ongoing French study of 15,000 people who



*Asbestos clean-ups like this one in a Philadelphia school are costly. The bill if EPA requirements are extended to all public and commercial buildings: \$53 billion to \$150 billion.*

lived for 10 years in buildings where they were exposed to airborne asbestos has so far turned up no increase in diseases.

At one time, the authors say, asbestos workers were routinely exposed to chrysotile at concentrations of 100 fibers per cubic centimeter. Today, at the federal standard of 0.2 fibers, even asbestos mines and mills pose no threat to health. And in

buildings with exposed asbestos, the concentration is only one percent of the workplace level. In the future, the authors argue, federal standards must distinguish between the hazards of the two asbestos families, as European regulations already do. The last thing we need is to fill the air with cries of panic—and the fibers from asbestos hastily stripped from schools.

### *Nature's Medicine Chest*

"Prospecting for Nature's Chemical Riches" by Thomas Eisner, in *Issues in Science and Technology* (Winter 1989-90), 2101 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418.

Even optimists now concede that plant and animal extinctions are going to occur at an alarming pace well into the next century. "We have yet to comprehend what it is we lose when species disappear," warns Eisner, a Cornell biologist. In the area of medicinal chemistry alone, he says, the implications are staggering.

Overall, nearly one quarter of all medical prescriptions in the United States "are for formulations based on plant or microbial products, or on derivatives or synthetic versions thereof."

Nature continues to provide new medicines. Recent examples include "the anti-cancer agent vincristine (isolated from the Madagascar periwinkle, *Catharanthus roseus*); the immunosuppressant cyclosporin (from a Norwegian fungus); and ivermectin (from a Japanese mold), which kills parasitic worms." The need for such drugs is not insignificant: After only five

years, annual sales of cyclosporin are nearing \$100 million.

Scientists can only guess how many useful drugs remain to be discovered. Consider flowering plants, which occupy only a tiny niche of the natural world. They are the sole source of a major group of biological chemicals called alkaloids. Of the 250,000 flowering plant species in existence, only two percent have been examined for alkaloids. But these have yielded hundreds of anesthetics, analgesics, narcotics, vasoconstrictors, and other drugs.

Conservation is obviously a top priority. But, noting that most chemical discoveries are the result of serendipity, Eisner argues for a crash program of "chemical prospecting" focused on the developing nations of the tropics, where the great majority of extinctions are occurring. The opportunities, he says, are boundless—and, perhaps, fleeting.

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## ARTS & LETTERS

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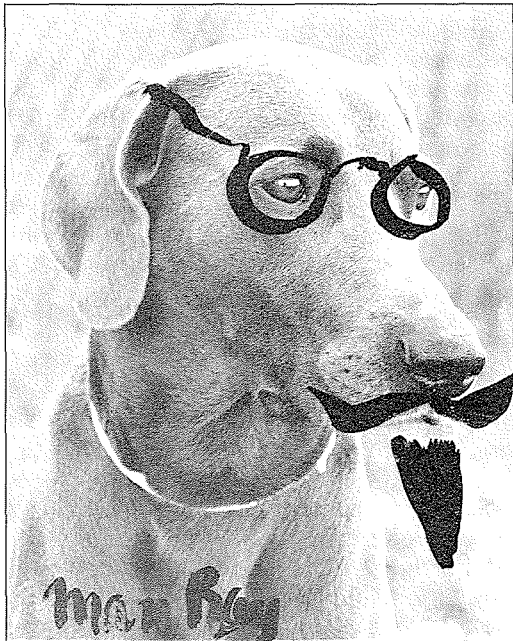
### *The Subversive Art*

"Photography and the Mirror of Art" by Martin Jay, in *Salmagundi* (Fall 1989), Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866.

When the painter Paul Delaroche heard of Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre's first successes in photography in 1839, he wailed that "from this day on, painting is dead." That turned out to be more than a bit premature. A full century and a half after its invention, photography has achieved acceptance as a legitimate art form. And

now, writes Jay, a Berkeley historian, it is beginning to subvert the very notion of "legitimate" art.

Artists and critics did not even begin to take the new medium seriously until its defenders elaborated the arguments put forth by the photographer Alfred Stieglitz in *Camera Work* magazine (1903-17).



Is this the future of art? William Wegman's "Untitled (Man Ray)."

Stieglitz held that photography could do much more than merely document reality, that it had its own formal qualities.

More recently, photography has benefited from what might be called "cachet by association." The critic Svetlana Alpers has argued that 17th-century Dutch artists used "proto-photographic" techniques; Heinrich Schwarz and Aaron Scharf have argued that the camera has "influenced the visual imagination of painters since the days of Delacroix and Ingres." Photogra-

phy's flattening of space and its ability to capture ephemeral movements, for example, are said to have had a profound impact on the impressionists. Finally, photographers overcame the handicap of the "infinite reproducibility" of their work by winning special status for "original" prints. Today, "masters" such as William Wegman and Sherry Levine enjoy celebrity status.

But now photography is challenging traditional notions of art from within. For example, says Jay, since photography requires no special skills or arcane knowledge, it calls into question the whole distinction between "high" and "low" art. As a British critic put it recently: "Photography makes everyone an artist." And the proliferation of photographic images makes it virtually impossible to produce images "that are disturbingly inaccessible in the manner of many high Modernist works." Above all, a photograph cannot be an "autonomous" artwork, a pure creation of the artist's imagination with no necessary connection to the "real" world.

This is precisely the kind of quality that critics such as Roger Scruton point to in continuing to argue that photography is not genuine art. But Jay believes that its hybrid qualities—its mixture of art and life—make photography well suited for "a leading role in a culture that likes to think of itself as post-modern." Just as music set the standard for the arts during the 19th century, he suggests, photography may set the standard for the 21st century.

## Return to Sender

"The Rites of Editing: Letters as Sacred Texts" by Gloria G. Fromm, in *The New Criterion* (Jan. 1990), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.

One of the most interesting trends in the literary world today is the proliferation of monumental "complete" editions of letters. The collected letters of Thomas Hardy fill seven thick volumes. Those of William Butler Yeats are expected to fill 12 volumes, and those of Thomas and Jane Carlyle no less than 40.

These tomes aim to include every mea-

ger scrap of correspondence some great (or not-so-great) personage may have left behind, down to and including thank-you notes and dinner invitations. More than the whimsy of editors and biographers is involved, observes Fromm, the author of *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (1977). They have come to regard their subjects as holy figures, whose every pen stroke is sa-

cred text, and themselves as both humble servants and high priests. "To include every available letter seems to mean that the editor has exercised neither choice nor bias, much less engaged in reprehensible interpretation, and to print each exactly as it was written, or as nearly so as possible, is to confirm the purity, the selflessness, the objectivity of the editorial presence." The editor of the letters of the 19th-century decorative artist and socialist thinker William Morris, for example, went so far as to apologize to readers for inserting periods in the text where the great man had neglected to do so.

All of this is worse than poppycock, in Fromm's view. In the name of the disinterested quest for knowledge, editors and others are asserting undue authority over the lives and legacies of their subjects. Last year, for example, there was a great schol-

arly hue and cry when James Joyce's grandson, Stephen, destroyed the letters of his aunt (and James's daughter) Lucia. Stephen Joyce said that his aunt's letters, including a few written to her by Samuel Beckett, were private and had no literary value. But Joycean scholars, Fromm notes, "maintained that any and all material about great writers like Joyce and Beckett belonged to the world, not the family." In fact, she recalls indignantly, when Stephen Joyce said that Beckett had *told* him to destroy the letters, Beckett's biographer Deirdre Bair "flatly insisted that Beckett had not meant what he said."

"If the sanctity of private life and the individual is rejected as a governing principle for biographers and editors," Fromm asks, "what better way to justify profaning both than to 'sell' letters themselves as sacred relics?"

## Riddle Me This

"The Persistence of Riddles" by Richard Wilbur, in *The Yale Review* (Vol. 78, No. 3), 1902A Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. 06520.

"When one doesn't know what it is, then it is something; but when one knows what it is, then it is nothing."

It? A riddle, of course. But poet Richard Wilbur suggests that riddles may be more significant than we think. At their most elegant and effective, riddles speak to us with "the voice of a common thing or creature somehow empowered to express, in encoded fashion, the mystery of its being." Consider this example, which restores for a moment "the wonder" of an ordinary thing:

In marble walls as white as milk,  
Lined with a skin as soft as silk,  
Within a foundation crystal-clear,  
A golden apple doth appear.  
No doors there are to this stronghold,  
Yet thieves break in and steal the gold.\*

The earliest recorded riddles were "found on the tablets of Babylonian school-children" and may have had "a mnemonic use in the education of the young." Riddles were a major form of oral

poetry among primitive peoples, perhaps because they were useful forms of subversion—reminders in tradition-bound societies of the occasional need for "mental adjustment." Their ability to make people consider objects from a new perspective even won riddles a place in the religious rituals of some cultures. In other societies, a condemned or captive man might save his neck or gain liberty by "posing a riddle which his judge or captor could not guess." One of the most famous "neck" riddles was the Greek enigma posed by the Sphinx to Oedipus:

What goes on four legs in the morning  
light, on two at noontide, and on three at  
night?

(Answer: man.)

Solving this riddle saved Oedipus's life and brought him a kingdom, although, as Wilbur points out, he was unable to solve "the puzzle of his own origin" until too late.

Aristotle's *Poetics* speaks admiringly of

riddles as a kind of poetry using "impossible metaphors," and indeed many great poets, from Jonathan Swift to Robert Frost, have employed riddles in their work. Perhaps, suggests Wilbur, this is because "the riddle exaggerates an essential characteristic of poetry. If metaphor . . . is

central to poetry, then the riddle operates near that center." And, concludes Wilbur, "if poetry may be seen as offering a continuing critique of our sense of order, the riddle has its peculiar aptitude for that."

*\*Solution: An egg.*

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## OTHER NATIONS

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### *African Democracy?*

"The Coming of Africa's Second Independence" by Colin Legum, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 1990), 1800 K St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Africa is on the verge of its second liberation. Three decades after they threw off the shackles of European rule, predicts Legum, a veteran journalist, many African countries are about to overthrow their "unpopular, unsuccessful, and undemocratic" postcolonial governments.

After achieving independence during the 1950s and '60s, most African countries adopted European-style parliamentary systems. But only six have remained democratic: Botswana, The Gambia, Djibouti, Mauritius, Tunisia, and ("arguably," says Legum) Morocco. During the past three years, however, popular discontent has led to the end of single-party rule in Senegal and Algeria. In Nigeria, with 100 million citizens the continent's most populous state, the military regime which has held power since 1983 has promised to hand over power to an elected government in 1992.

Leaders in uniform are common in Africa. Since 1963, when President Sylvanus Olympio of Togo was deposed by a military coup d'état, 28 of Africa's 51 states have been taken over by military officers. Most others are one-party states, generally created within the first few months of independence, when the former independence movements split along political, ethnic, or regional lines. New leaders, such as Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, argued that single party rule arose out of African traditions of rule by consensus. They also argued that it was needed to restore harmony and to promote rapid and bal-

anced economic development. Both arguments have been proved terribly wrong, says Legum.

Africa's six long-time democracies are relatively serene and prosperous. Few of its single-party states can say the same.

What went wrong? Legum says that some of the single-party states were more democratic than others, but virtually all of them were alike in one important way. Whether they officially embraced capitalism (Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon) or socialism (Algeria and Tanzania), the ruling parties created huge new "parastatal corporations" to control the major "wealth-earning crops, minerals, and enterprises, thereby establishing national priorities for both economic and social development." But the proud new institutions were not equal to the task; they quickly became bloated and corrupt. Most African countries are poorer today than they were a decade ago. Throughout Africa, governments are now cutting their losses by dismantling or selling off these government-owned corporations.

But it is not for want of bread alone that Africans are demanding democracy. Legum credits the African human rights movement, sparked during the 1970s by President Jimmy Carter. "It is no longer possible to campaign for human rights without linking them to the abuse of undemocratic governments," he observes. As in Eastern Europe, a related pro-democracy movement has sprung up, headed by courageous academics, journalists, and



writers and artists, such as Nigeria's Wole Soyinka.

As a new generation of political leaders comes to power in Africa, the major challenger to democracy is Islamic funda-

mentalism rather than Marxism. If democracy does not come quickly to Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and other countries with large Muslim populations, Legum warns, a great opportunity may be lost.

## Cocaine Politics

"Cocaine Mafia" by Rensselaer W. Lee, in *Society* (Jan.-Feb. 1990), Rutgers-The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

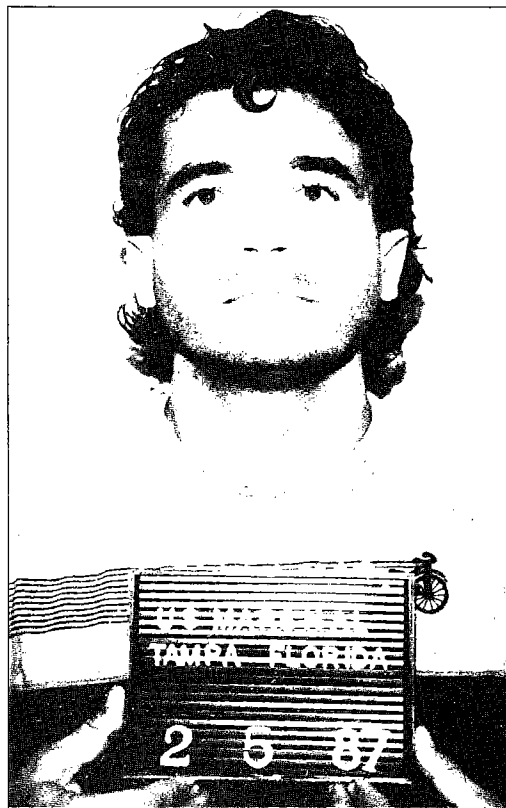
Less than a year after the government of Colombia began its crackdown on the country's cocaine traffickers, many Colombians are growing weary of the turmoil and bloodshed. According to a public-opinion survey conducted last fall, citizens favor a negotiated settlement with the country's cocaine mafia by a two-to-one margin.

What may sound incredible to Americans is all too familiar to Colombians, writes Lee, the president of Global Advisory Services, Inc. In 1984, in the middle of another Colombian anti-drug campaign, representatives of then-president Belisario Betancur held secret talks in Panama with Pablo Escobar, Jorge Ochoa, and other drug kingpins. Alarmed by Betancur's campaign and his threat to begin extraditing criminals to the United States under a 1979 treaty, the drug lords proposed to withdraw from the cocaine trade and to repatriate their capital (possibly billions of dollars) to help ease Colombia's economic problems. In return, Betancur would grant them amnesty.

That deal collapsed when the story leaked and created a national scandal. Today, Lee suggests, public reaction might be different.

Not only is the public intimidated by the bombings and murders, but the drug barons have also become political figures in their own right. One of them, Carlos Lehder, went so far as to create his own fascist political party, and also may have had ties to the leftist M-19 guerrilla movement. But Lehder, who was extradited to the United States on drug charges in 1987, was an exception. Despite allegations that they back M-19 and other guerrilla groups,

Lee says, most of the drug traffickers are, "if not exactly pillars of society," conservative in their politics. "As soon as they become landowners in guerrilla zones," one Colombian official observes, referring to the drug lords' massive rural estates, "they



An extremist even by the standards of Colombia's drug barons, Carlos Lehder formed a fascist political party but backed the Communist candidate for president in 1986. Extradited to the United States in 1987, he is now serving life plus 135 years in jail for smuggling cocaine.

view communism as a threat and an enemy." Lee says that they have refused to pay guerrillas' "revolutionary taxes" and have even ordered their private armies to spearhead local self-defense efforts.

At the same time, they have used their great wealth to play Robin Hood in the rural lands they control. "They argue openly," Lee reports, "that drug dealers are essential to economic stability and to the public welfare." They have been most successful as spokesmen against Yankee

imperialism. A writer in a Medellín newspaper controlled by Pablo Escobar, for example, claims that the "nation's face has been disfigured by the imperialist boot of the [extradition] treaty." Such views have broad appeal in Colombia.

What Colombia and other Latin nations need most to combat the cocaine mafia is not weapons or helicopters and not stepped up extraditions, Lee concludes, but stronger and more effective courts, police, and other civilian institutions.

### *Britain's Underclass*

"Underclass" by Charles Murray, in *The Sunday Times Magazine* (Nov. 26, 1989), 1 Pennington St., London, E19 XW, Great Britain.

Charles Murray arrived in England as "a visitor from a plague area come to see whether the disease is spreading." The disease is underclass poverty, and Murray, the author of *Losing Ground* (1984), found plenty of it.

"Britain does have an underclass," he writes, "still largely out of sight and still smaller than the one in the United States. But it is growing rapidly. Within the next decade, it will probably become as large (proportionately) as the United States's underclass. It could easily become larger."

Murray points to three disturbing trends. Until the late 1970s, Britain had one of the lowest rates of illegitimate births (about 10 percent) in the industrial world. By 1988, however, 25.6 percent of all births were illegitimate. This year, Britain's illegitimacy rate may well pass that of the United States. Moreover, the increase has been concentrated among the lowest social class, especially in depressed cities such as Nottingham and Southwark.

Murray was further shocked to discover that the rate of property crimes is as high in England and Wales as it is in the United States. By some measures it is higher. In 1988, for example, there were 1,623 burglaries per 100,000 population in England, versus 1,309 in the United States. Violent crime is still nowhere near as bad as it is in the United States, but it is growing rapidly.

Finally, Murray found a fairly large con-

tingent of young, lower-class British men who are neither employed nor looking for work—"definitive proof that an underclass has arrived."

Britain lags far behind the United States in only one way, Murray believes: its perception of the problem. Like their American counterparts of a decade ago, British journalists and academics tend to minimize rising rates of illegitimacy, crime, and withdrawal from the work force. They tend to blame Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's penny-pinching approach to social welfare policies, ignoring the fact that these negative trends began accelerating before she took office in 1979—just as they accelerated in the United States during the liberal 1960s and '70s. They refuse to recognize the destructive synergy these problems generate in lower-class neighborhoods. "Just as work is more important than merely making a living, getting married and raising a family are more than a way to pass the time," Murray writes. "Men who do not support families find other ways to prove that they are men." And young fatherless boys who see only shiftless men around them tend not to become prime candidates for responsible citizenship.

Murray offers the British the same prescription he offered Americans in *Losing Ground*: Dismantle the welfare state and decentralize government.

## Cheap Talk In Japan

"Thinking Aloud in Japan" by Masao Miyoshi, in *Raritan* (Fall 1989), Rutgers University, 165 College Ave., New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

The written word is not faring well in Japan. But the problem is not that the mass of Japanese are badly schooled or illiterate, writes Miyoshi, a professor of literature at the University of California, San Diego. In Japan, the written word is suffering because intellectuals and academics are abandoning it for the spoken word.

In the pages of scholarly journals and the few remaining serious journals of opinion, essays are being crowded out by interviews (*intabyū*), dialogues (*taidan*), panel discussions before an audience (*tōron*), and round-table talks (*zadankai*). And more and more of Japan's new books are merely collections of these transcribed "conversations." This "group talk-think," Miyoshi argues, cripples critical thought: "One does not think alone, or rather one does not think so much as circulate suggestions . . . . The art of conversation consists of a sensitivity to the flow of the group's desire, inclination, and mood. Ignorance and error do not matter much; they simply provide a blank for others to fill in as a gesture of grace and cooperation . . . . If there is warmth in the group, it can stand in for intellectual rigor."

Miyoshi has other criticisms of Japanese "conversationalism" [see box]. He sees its rise as part of a larger system of social control meant to ensure social consensus. It is nothing less, he asserts, than "purchased talk" for most Japanese, who, because the quality of life in Tokyo and other cities has been deliberately degraded, no longer have much opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions among themselves.

Lest American intellectu-

als begin congratulating themselves, Miyoshi cautions that they too have succumbed to a form of "conversationalism": the endless chatter of meetings, conferences, and workshops. "What is fascinating," says Miyoshi, "is that in many of these meetings, conversations simply fail to take place. The participants behave almost in contrast to their Japanese counterparts; they adhere to their written texts, hardly ever deviating from prepared lectures." There is no meeting of minds or alteration of views, just the endless (over) refinement of positions. American intellectuals, he observes, "have a defensive isolationist resistance against exchange and intercourse; they need their own brilliance to be left unquestioned."

Obviously, the American-style conference is no antidote to the Japanese *zadankai*, Miyoshi says. Intellectuals in both countries need to change their ways.

### 'Inch-Long' Thoughts

Conversationalism "has come to infect the general style and substance of written discourse" in Japan, Masao Miyoshi writes in *Raritan*.

*The fragmented and paratactic nature of the conversational form has become a feature of current cultural conditions in general. A person who habitually participates in zadankai thinks and writes in a similar fashion when he or she indeed must write. Japanese writing style may be undergoing a radical change lately, and whether the change is a cause or effect, conversationalism is the dominant mode. Writers feel free to make assertions without much attempt to back them up with hard evidence. As in a conversation, they assume a pervasive consent and approval. If faced with disagreement, they can always apologize or forget. Thus the colloquial formulaic disclaimers—"I am not an expert on this, but . . .," or "I don't have enough time now, but . . .," or "I await your guidance and correction, should I prove to be in egregious error"—are unselfconsciously utilized as if the rhetorical alibis were sufficient excuses, or substitutes, for non-arguments. Views and opinions tend to be no more than random thoughts (sunpyō, or "inch-long comments"; dansō, or "fragmentary ideas"), respectable only because they emanate from respectable masters.*

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

### **"American Indians: The First of This Land."**

Russell Sage Foundation, 112 E. 64th St., New York, N.Y. 10021. 408 pp. \$49.95.

Author: *C. Matthew Snipp*

The 1980 census revealed two landmarks in the history of the North American Indians. For the first time in over two centuries, their population exceeded one million. It also revealed that American Indians, who just a decade earlier were the poorest group in the United States, had leaped ahead of America's blacks.

In 1969, reports Snipp, a sociologist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, the Indian median family income was 96 percent of black median family income and only 59 percent of white income. A decade later, Indian family income (\$13,724) had risen to 66 percent of the white median (\$20,835); black income (\$12,598) was only 92 percent of the Indian median.

In 1969, poverty afflicted 33 percent of Indians, 30 percent of blacks, and nine percent of whites. During the next decade, the poverty rate dropped

to 24 percent among Indians, 27 percent among blacks, and seven percent among whites.

These surprising developments are not the main focus of Snipp's study, but he does offer some interesting speculations. He notes, for example, that part of the apparent increase in Indian well-being may be due to the popularity of the Native American movement during the 1970s, which persuaded more (relatively affluent) Americans of part-Indian ancestry to identify themselves as Indians. (The term Native American, he adds, has fallen out of favor because it is too inclusive; the term American Indian includes Aleuts and Eskimos but not Hawaiian Indians or other groups.)

Another source of gains was very likely the various social programs of the 1970s, including some designed specifically for Indians. And Indians rely very heavily on public-sector

employment—about 30 percent were employed by federal, state, and local (or tribal) government in 1980—which grew during the 1970s.

Two other black/Indian differences stand out.

Indians are much more likely to be employed as skilled workers, blacks as semi-skilled or unskilled laborers. Snipp says that this difference may stem from education programs for Indians—which, ironically, critics have accused of being too focused on vocational training.

Finally, 18 percent of all Indian families were headed by women in 1980, while 27 percent of black families were. Female-headed families are known to be quick tickets to poverty.

Indians continue to suffer many hardships, Snipp says, but their future "is in some ways brighter today than it has been for a very long time."

### **"Productivity and American Leadership: The Long View."**

MIT Press, 55 Hayward St., Cambridge, Mass. 02142. 395 pp. \$29.95.

Authors: *William J. Baumol, Sue Anne Batey Blackman, and Edward N. Wolff*

After listening to much contradictory advice from economists over the years, President Harry S. Truman plaintively asked if there were such a thing as a one-handed economist. Until recently, most economists were one-handed on at least one question: America's productivity "crisis." The lagging growth of U.S. productivity, they agreed, threatened to turn this country into an economic mediocrity.

But now there are two hands to the productivity question.

Baumol and Blackman, of Princeton, and New York University's Wolff contend that there is cause for concern but not alarm. Not only are recent productivity growth rates in line with historical trends stretching back over a century, but during that century the United States has never led the world in productivity growth.

Between 1870 and 1929, U.S. productivity grew at a two percent annual rate; it fell below one percent during the Great Depression, surged to four per-

cent during World War II, then fell back to two percent. Between 1979 and '84, it dropped to an anemic 1.3 percent. But that is just a statistical blip. The authors detect "no sign of any long-term decline." In fact, the 104-year trend suggests a slight *improvement*.

Manufacturing productivity is what everybody worries about most, and the news is the same: no long-term change. However, while the overall productivity growth rate fell between 1979 and '84,

the factory rate soared, reaching five percent in 1984.

The U.S. economy remains the world's most productive, but others are catching up. Indeed, note the authors, they have been for most of the 20th century. The authors believe that this is the result of a natural convergence caused by the diffusion of technology and other factors. Still, the United States appears to have held its own. Between 1965 and 1984,

for example, Japan's share of the world's technology-intensive exports spurted from 7 percent to some 20 percent, the combined British, West German, and French share fell from 35 to 29 percent, and the U.S. share declined by only two percentage points, to 25 percent.

Yet, as if to guard against complacency, the authors warn that our historic rate of productivity growth will not be

enough to maintain U.S. economic leadership. Their estimates of trends through the year 2020 indicate that the United States will have to improve its postwar productivity growth rate from 2.3 percent to 3.1 percent. The authors believe that this can be achieved through tax and other policies designed to improve U.S. saving and investment. History, they say, "offers much ground for optimism."

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### "Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy."

Basic Books, 10 E. 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022. 274 pp. \$22.95.

Author: *George J. Borjas*

For more than a decade, the United States has been embroiled in a great debate about how to control illegal immigration. Hardly anybody seems to have given a second thought to *legal* immigration.

Except for Borjas, an economist at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He doubts that illegal immigration is as significant as most people think. (He puts the illegal population at three or four million rather than the commonly cited 10 million.) In any event, he argues, the problem is virtually beyond control. But we can and do regulate legal immigration—four million immigrants entered the country legally between 1981 and '87—and we do a very poor job of it.

"The skills of [legal] immigrants entering the United States have declined during the past few decades," writes Borjas. "More recent immigrant waves have relatively less schooling, lower earnings, lower labor-force participation rates, and higher poverty rates than earlier waves had."

In 1940, for example, the typical male immigrant arrived in the United States with one more year of schooling than the average American male. By 1970, the new immigrant had the same amount of schooling; by 1980, he had nearly one year less. In 1940, the average newly arrived male immigrant earned about \$5 per hour (in 1979 dollars), or 13 percent more than his American-born counterpart; by 1980, new immigrants were earning 17 percent *less* than their native counterparts. Today's immigrants do not deprive native-born Americans of jobs or lower their wages, but their poor performance compared to that of previous immigrants costs the U.S. economy billions of dollars annually.

Poverty is also now more common. Immigrants who arrived between 1965 and '69 had a poverty rate of 18 percent soon after arriving; those who came during the late 1970s had a poverty rate of 29 percent. And while the earnings of employed immigrants

will increase as they are assimilated into American society, so will the number of immigrant families on welfare.

Why has the character of America's immigrants changed so much? One reason, writes Borjas, is the improvement of economic conditions in the European nations that supplied most of the world's skilled immigrants in years past—and the decreasing premium paid for those skills in the U.S. economy. The second reason is the 1965 immigration reform, which made the reunification of the families of U.S. citizens and residents the top priority in allocating visas. As a result, only four percent of the 600,000 legal immigrants who came to the United States in 1987 were admitted on the basis of their skills.

Other countries, notably Canada and Australia, do give preference to such people, and thus have claimed a larger share of this shrinking pool of skilled immigrants. Our policies, Borjas suggests, should be more like theirs.

## 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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### *Megalopolis Politics*

Robert Fishman's analysis ["America's New City," *WQ*, Winter '90] raises two concerns.

The first involves the omission of the work of Jean Gottmann, the eminent French geographer whose *Megalopolis, The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States* (1961) introduced a new concept into our urban etymology: "... a vast area. It encompasses many great cities... more the size of a nation than of a metropolis."

Gottmann's megalopolis stretched over portions of 10 contiguous states, situated on or near the Atlantic seaboard, plus the District of Columbia: It reached from southeastern New Hampshire to northeastern Virginia. The total population was approximately 37 million, and its size was nearly 54,000 square miles. Two of every five Americans resided within this elaborate network. Some of them lived in old, well-established cities (e.g., Hartford, Paterson, Wilmington). Others resided and often worked in what Professor Gottmann labeled as "prestige locations" (e.g., Princeton, New Jersey), a locale that Fishman correctly categorizes—nearly 30 years later—as one of his new cities.

My second concern involves the political economy of metropolitan America within which Fishman's new cities are situated. Gwinnett County, Georgia, some 30 miles northeast of Atlanta offers an example.

The population has increased six-fold from 43,541 in 1960, to 285,000 in 1987, and experts predict there will be 485,000 residents by the year 2000. Since 1982, new jobs have been added at the rate of 6,000 per year, many of them in high technology. Corresponding problems include traffic congestion, crowded schools, inadequate sewage treatment plants, and overburdened local courts. Controversy ensues whenever questions arise about the county's environment or infrastructure. With 13 municipalities, not one—not Lawrenceville or Buford, nor the rapidly growing communities of Duluth, Lilburn, and Snellville—is the focal point of county public life.

Theoretically, the most promising resolution to such problems entails a metropolitan format of regional government. Administered by a multi-county agency, it would require extraordinary regulatory authority granted by the state legislature over land use, planning, development, cultural re-

sources, air quality, drinking water, waste management, human resources, and transportation.

Yet anyone familiar with the political history of cities and their suburbs recognizes the enormous obstacles involved in attaining the consent of the locally governed for visionary propositions. Residents of each community stalwartly guard their municipal autonomy from encroachment by neighboring suburbs or the central city, a legacy rooted in the events which culminated in the American Revolution.

The deeply ingrained opposition to metropolitan government, I believe, consigns residents of Fishman's new cities to encounter shocking consequences as they pursue the routines of their everyday lives.

*Prof. Michael H. Ebner  
Lake Forest College, Ill.*

### *Denizens of the New City*

I have read other articles and books in the same vein as Robert Fishman's. All are characterized by the claim that what Americans are doing to their landscape via the private automobile should be viewed as no disaster but rather as a great opportunity for mega-organization; the creation, that is, of a new order dwarfing any human scale, but just as fulfilling in human terms as previous orders.

I am profoundly unimpressed by all such arguments. It is fantastic to speak of a landscape built by random private acts of greed, and by flight from people of unfashionable races and creeds, even if potentially serving legitimate social ends—an aspect of the "New Cities" which might have won more than a single phrase in the article.

To discover the reality of "Technoburb," I suggest that readers try a simple experiment: Pretend you have sold your cars, vans, motorcycles, and 4 x 4s, and are now sallying forth into your "Non-place Urban Field" on foot. Not just around the block, mind you, but point-to-point toward some worthwhile destination, as, for instance, the nearest source of food. No need for expensive Himalayan treks, friends, nor Amazonian odysseys: The glass-and-trash-strewn, hideous, snarling, lethal terraces of your own "Outtown" will provide world-class adventure and rich memories for a brutal, nasty, and short lifetime.

No, I see denizens of the New City as essentially dissatisfied people subject to dangerous paranoias, who stave off their threatening demons only by driving, playing with adult toys, driving, watching television, and driving. I prefer not to be around when their descendants at last run out of land.

Richard M. Simms  
Emma Willard School  
Troy, N.Y.

### Characterizing Deconstruction

In the course of pinning down with the aid of caricature the proximites of deconstruction ["Will Deconstruction Be the Death of Literature?" *WQ*, Winter '90], the article also pins down many other terms that invite comment. But my "logological" characterization of us humans as "bodies that learn language" has shaped my caricature as a charge against our departments of literature which spontaneously feature words sans the body—being the reverse of the ingenious mime Marcel Marceau, all body and no words—the literature departments being all words and no body.

My caricature turns out to be a kind of post-Arnoldian "touchstone." The way to ask substantial questions about a work is to ask what it reveals as a *constitution*. About the habits of animals, we ask Darwinian questions: How are they so *constituted* that the mature members of a tribe cohabit and raise their young in sufficient numbers to survive? And we see the astounding developments in the Soviet empire when the terms *glasnost* and *perestroika* are applied to *constitutional* matters. The Latin *principium* and the Greek *arche* distinguish first temporally and first in principle. But Derrida does tricks with words by treating a first in principle as *constitutionally* first in time.

The article does well with anecdotes. I wish it had done more. The anecdote of the father and son is beautifully matched by the poem of *Sohrab and Rustum*, warriors who learn of their identity only when the son is dying of his wounds. And the anecdote of Wilde as "flamboyant" and "arrogant" makes me recall "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." A "teacherly" defense of deconstruction is treated in a recent volume, *Reclaiming Pedagogy: The Rhetoric of the Classroom*, (ed., Patricia Donahue and Ellen Quandahl, Southern Illinois Press).

Kenneth Burke  
Andover, N.J.

### Arnold Today

I agree with Frank McConnell's idea that deconstruction is best viewed as part of the unfolding of

our own romantic/Arnoldian tradition and not as some frenchified invasion of the brain snatchers. I have more trouble with his tone, which suggests that this "necessary phase" is something vile that we must swallow while holding our noses.

Arnold envisioned the critic as an interested party, the priest-like purveyor of a humanizing orthodoxy based on "the best that has been thought and said." But the best that has been thought and said is not an infallible guide to the best that is being thought and said, nor are the ideas that suffice for today necessarily adequate tomorrow. So Arnold also argued that the critic ought to be disinterested, standing apart from the needs of the day in order to serve as the repository for (and even creator of) a whole range of possibilities whose very existence might never be suspected if immediate utility was to be a universal standard.

This ambiguity is apparent today in the tension between the professor-critic's roles as teacher and researcher, disseminator of a received monumental culture, and originator of knowledge about and within a present cultural situation constantly in flux. Experimentation is inherently risky: 80 percent of the experimental results in some hard sciences cannot be reproduced, and determining the best that is being thought and said, then adjusting our perceptions of the past accordingly, is an arduous enterprise that carries no guarantees.

Far from precipitating a "crisis," French deconstructionists have given us new tools with which to carry on this less well-developed, experimental aspect of Arnold's project. American deconstruction is an attempt to augment a native tradition that never claimed self-sufficiency, a tradition distinguished, rather, by its eclecticism. This is, after all, what humanists are supposed to do.

Jean-Pierre Mileur  
University of California, Riverside

### The Distant Dialogue

Why is the history of reading ["Toward A History of Reading," *WQ*, Autumn '89] so complex?

Writing creates distance between the originator of discourse and the recipient—a curious distance in which the originator, the writer, disappears. Print creates more distance, and satellite dishes still more. Distance sets a great stage for history: different states of mind and expectations in distanced author and reader, even different physical postures and other physical positions.

The text is an interrupted dialogue for a reader whom the writer must always have distanced and fictionalized to some degree. In the delayed, distanced resumption of dialogue that we style read-

ing, variations are limitless over the ages. Different eras and different cultures choose different things to read and read texts in different ways. Each reader who picks up a text can continue a dialogue in at least a slightly different direction. This is not to say that there cannot be false readings, for there can be, but only that there is no limit to the number of readings that are not false. Nor is it to say that we can make no sense of what reading is. We can and do. But the sense is immeasurably complicated. The history of what goes on in reading has no limit. Darnton has given us a fine initiation into how complex it can be. But the last word will never be said. Distance intervenes. What readers of a future age will make out of this present text of mine (if they should bother to read it) will reveal in it meanings which quite obviously are consciously intended by me but also meanings of which I am aware at best dimly, or meanings I may have hidden from myself but which are there to emerge in a later context.

Walter J. Ong  
*Univ. Prof. of Humanities Emeritus  
St. Louis University*

### *The Meaning of Reading*

Robert Darnton argues for a "juncture between literary theory and the history of books. The theory can reveal the range in potential responses to a text—that is to the rhetorical constraints that direct reading without determining it. The history can show what readings actually took place . . ."

It is my impression that, as far as literary theory is concerned, Darnton's proposal might have come too late: It implies certain general assumptions about the relationship between texts and sense-production through reading which are no longer generally shared. But the shift of interest which has taken place in literary theory over the past couple of years might bring it even closer to the philosophical questions which are behind some of the contemporary research in book history.

For as long as literary theorists were trying "to reveal the range in potential responses" to any given text, they took it for granted that there were no differences between the different readers' reactions to the elements which they encountered on each level of the constitution of a text (semantics, syntax, tropes, etc.), and that therefore the varieties of readings related to any single text (some thought exclusively to literary texts) were the result of an indeterminacy in the all-over construction of the text, which would materialize in textual "voids" and which each reading would transform into individual "concretizations."

Not only has empirical evidence questioned the hypothesis of uniformity in the reader-reactions to textual elements, we are also beginning to speculate that the general attitude of "giving meaning" to phenomena (of "reading the world") might have had—and might in the future have—historical limits. Do TV viewers really "give meanings" to the flow of images to which they are exposed? Are the paintings of Altamira a symptom of a process by which the world was deciphered? Such questions appear to be far from having any convincing answer, as soon as we recognize that we do not have a metahistorically valid notion of "meaning" and of "the production of meaning," notions which are not just descriptions of *historically specific* attitudes of man to his environment. In order to come "closer to understanding how he made sense of Life" (Darnton, p. 102), it might be necessary to see that "making sense" is not the only possible way of human life, or, in other words, that "making sense" can mean very different attitudes toward the world, some of which might not be covered by the metaphor of "reading the world" which we still use as synonymous to "sense-making."

The first—and seemingly very difficult—step toward such a theory, would be to ask how meaning is generated and what we could think of as the "absence of meaning"—instead of always starting out with the assumption of a world in which meanings are already given and in which the human capacity to generate and to manipulate meaning is granted.

*Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht  
Prof. of Comparative Literature  
Stanford University*

### *Constitutionally Speaking*

I want to comment on a statement made by Bernard Lewis ["State and Society Under Islam," *WQ*, Autumn '89]: "Few nations, other than France and the United States, accepted a formal constitutional separation of religion and the state."

There are only two phrases in the Constitution which have any bearing at all on the subject of religion. One, in the last clause of Article VI, which states that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States," simply means that anyone, no matter what his religious beliefs or disbeliefs, can hold public office. It was written to protect religious liberty, not to limit it.

The other religious reference in the Constitution is found in the opening clause of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In other words, Congress shall



not set up any official state Church.

This is absolutely all that is said about religion. Neither the phrase nor the idea of "separation of church and state" (read Lewis's "religion and state") appear in our Constitution.

Also, there is nothing in our national history, customs, or tradition that justifies it. Quite the contrary. The president takes his oath of office with his hand on the Holy Bible. Oaths are sworn in court in the name of God Almighty. Sessions of Congress and state legislatures are opened with prayer. A day in November is annually proclaimed as one of Thanksgiving to God. Our coinage acknowledges God. Our churches and religious institutions are exempt from paying taxes.

The practice of the Muslim states may vary. But the United States makes no constitutional separation of the state from religion or its embodiment in Churches.

*Perry Laukhuff  
Amherst, Va.*

### *Moving Away from Modernity*

If current fundamentalism is to hold sway in the Islamic World, Muslims will not only preserve their backwardness but will also fail to see the link between fundamental epistemology of modern science and the idea of human rights. The basic idea of the European Enlightenment is that man is capable of knowing and that this human capability would enhance his ability to organize his social life autonomously and to dominate nature to satisfy his needs. The fundamental epistemology of science and the idea of human rights are equally and inextricably related to this framework of a man-centered world, which is in continuity with the Greek legacy that also once affected Islam.

The declaration of human rights by the French National Assembly of the first republic created after the French Revolution is the political materialization of this epistemology, which runs counter to the belief that Islamic revelation is the ultimate source of knowledge. If fundamentalist Muslims were to succeed in the "dewesternization of knowledge" aimed at establishing their "epistemology of Islam" then they will not only technoscientifically be left behind, but also will fail to institutionally establish human rights. I share Bernard Lewis's hope for a "civil society" in the contemporary "Muslim World," but I fail to see any indications of a development in this direction.

*Prof. Bassam Tibi  
Center for International Relations  
Georgia Augusta Univ., Göttingen, F.D.R.*

### *Put to the Test*

When I first read your review of "50 Simple Things You Can Do To Save The Earth," ["Research Reports," *WQ*, Winter '90] I didn't think much of it. The article said a household can waste 20,000 gallons of water annually. I said okay. The article also said a person can waste 10 to 15 gallons of water while letting the tap run during toothbrushing. I said okay.

After I had read the rest of the issue a bothersome little twinge started in the back of my head. Fifteen gallons? I had to experiment. So I went to my bathroom (upstairs, standard faucet, no modifications) with my trusty stopwatch and a gallon container and proceeded to make science history.

My faucet at full blast took 40 seconds to spit out a gallon of water. That's 600 seconds for 15 gallons, or 10 minutes. An informal survey at work the next day didn't turn up anyone who brushes their teeth for 10 minutes, let alone while running the faucet full blast. Presumably, letting it run at half speed means a toothbrushing interval of 20 minutes. (Personally, I turn the faucet off between wetting the brush and rinsing. Call me socially responsible.)

So I started on the other figures in the article. I read "a household can save up to 20,000 gallons of water each year by getting a grip on its faucets." Using a four-person-per-household average, that's 13.7 gallons of water per day *per person*. Using my faucet above, that's about nine minutes of full-out, water-down-the-drain kind of waste every day. (36 minutes a day for the whole house.)

The article then goes on to say that "adding one passenger to every commuter car in the nation could daily save 600 million gallons of gasoline . . ." Sorry, but the only way to save gas and reduce emissions is to get cars off the road, not add passengers to all the cars on the road.

Sloppy use of statistics doesn't do anything for anybody. I think Earthworks Press should work on its editing.

*Christopher J. Benyo  
Herndon, Va.*

### *Corrections*

The date of the Roosevelt family photograph that appeared on p. 10 of the Winter '90 *WQ*, was mislabeled as 1874 by the Bettmann Archive. According to our calculations it was probably closer to 1904 or 1905.

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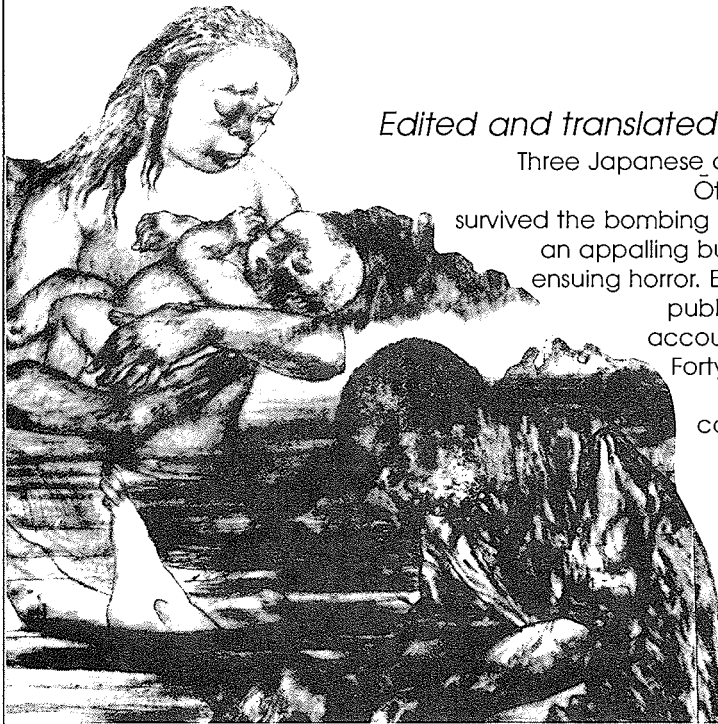
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