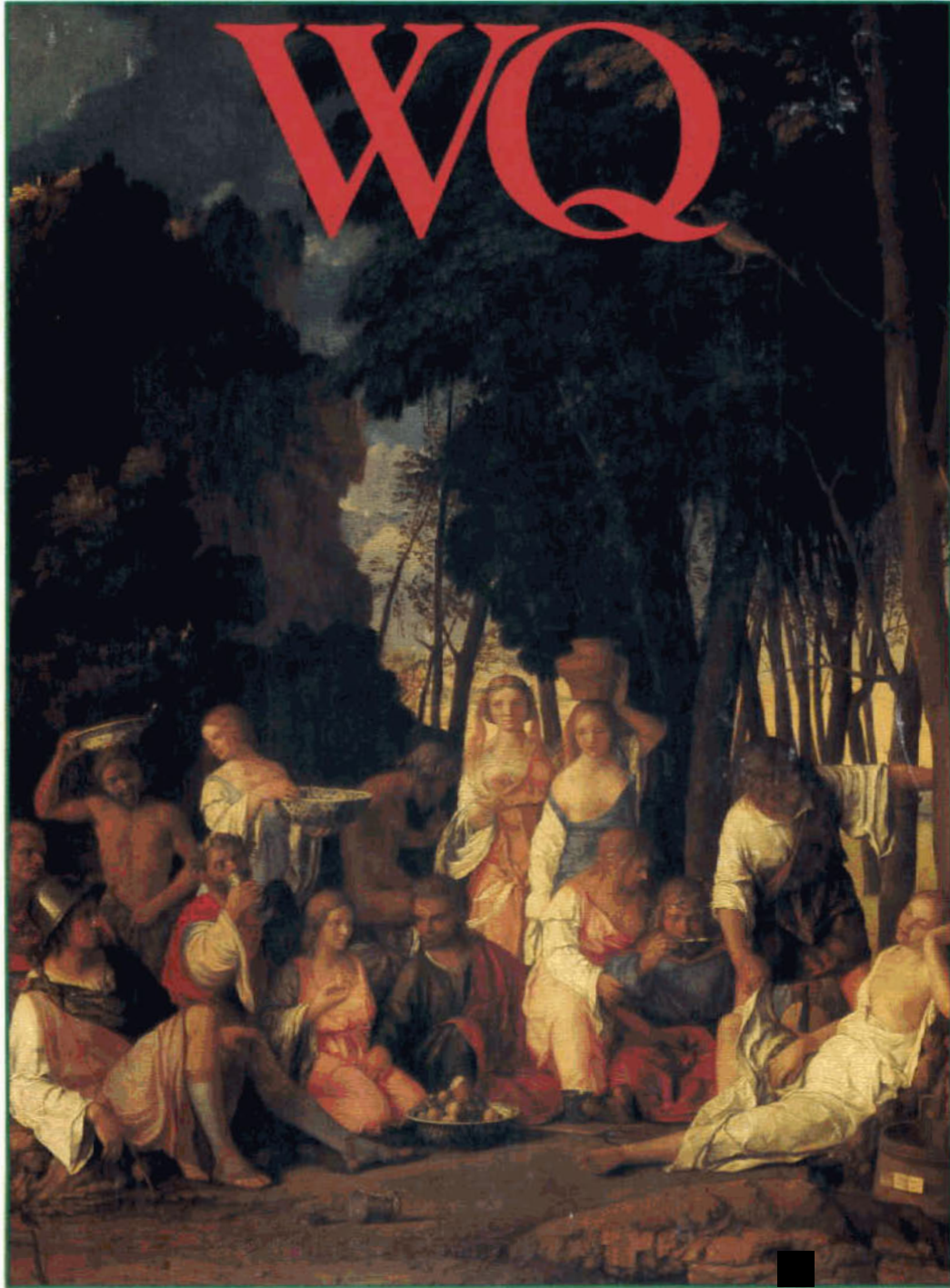


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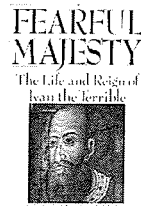
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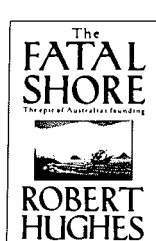
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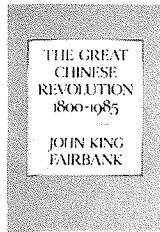
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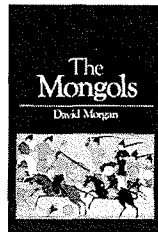
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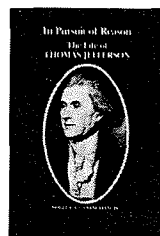
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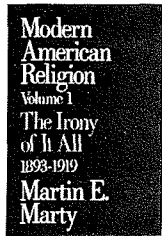
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Congress established the Center in 1968 as an international institute for advanced study, "symbolizing and strengthening the fruitful relation between the world of learning and the world of public affairs." The Center opened in 1970 under its own presidentially appointed board of trustees, headed by former vice president

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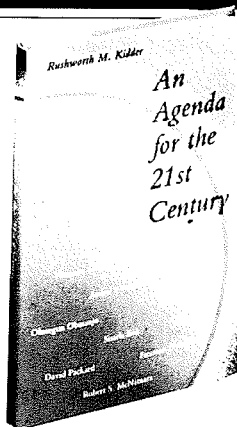
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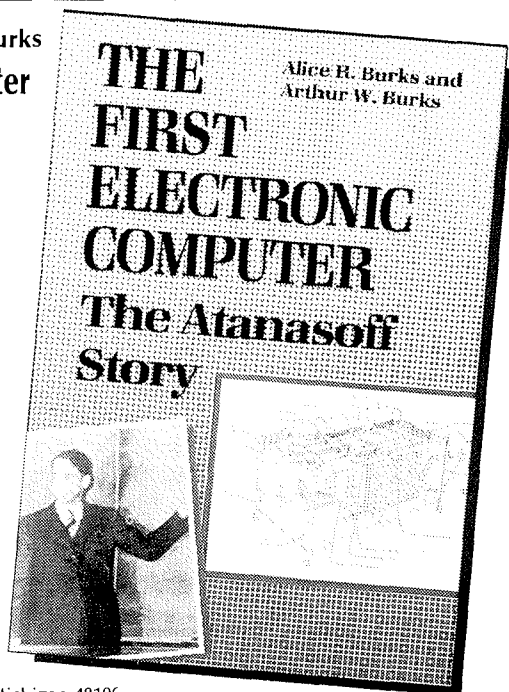
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- 9 Editor's Comment
- 11 **PERIODICALS**
- 43 Research Reports
- 48 **TRUMAN vs. DEWEY: THE 1948 ELECTION**
- 49 The Accidental Presidency  
*by Alonzo L. Hamby*
- 66 The Last Hurrah  
*by Robert H. Ferrell*
- 83 Background Books
- 86 **IDEAS**
- A Long Line of Cells  
*by Lewis Thomas*
- 98 **ITALY**
- 99 *Partitocrazia*  
*by Joseph LaPalombara*
- 118 Remembering Mussolini  
*by Charles F. Delzell*
- 136 Background Books
- 138 **CURRENT BOOKS**
- 152 **REFLECTIONS**
- Meeting Mr. Eliot  
*by Frank D. McConnell*
- 164 The Joys and Sorrows of Being a Word Snob  
*by Joseph Epstein*
- 172 Commentary



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## Editor's Comment

The Wilson Center's 50 Fellows work in eight specialized programs, each with its own intensive schedule of seminars and scholarly conferences. Such meetings—and the new research discussed therein—often supply raw material for Wilson Center Press books and ideas for *Wilson Quarterly* essays.

Such is the case with our articles on Italian society and politics, past and present (p. 98). They grew out of the planning for the West European Program's three-day session on Italy in February, attended by public figures and scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. The scholars suggested that Italy's postwar record adds up to a success story that neither Italians nor their Western allies would have expected in the gray aftermath of Fascism 40-odd years ago.

Linked to a series of Wilson Center conference papers on all major aspects of Harry S. Truman's presidency (1945–53), due for book publication soon, are our contributors' essays on the 1948 election (p. 48). What now interests historians is less the oft-told chronicle of Truman's upset victory over Thomas E. Dewey than (1) why the president was so widely disdained in early 1948 by his fellow Democrats and (2) what happened during and after 1948 to the Solid South, the Democratic Party's left wing, and other elements of the New Deal coalition that Truman inherited from Franklin D. Roosevelt. In retrospect, it is surprising how many recent American political trends surfaced first in the last U.S. presidential election "before television."

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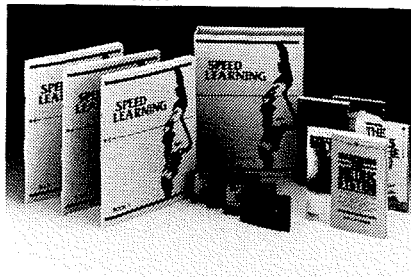
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FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE 14	SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 29
ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS 18	RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT 32
SOCIETY 21	ARTS & LETTERS 34
PRESS & TELEVISION 24	OTHER NATIONS 37

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## POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

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### *Toward the White House*

"From the Statehouse to the White House: A Hop, Skip, or Impossible Jump?" by Paul West, in *Governing* (Jan. 1988), 1414 22nd St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Many U.S. presidential candidates—and presidents—have been state governors. West, a *Baltimore Sun* correspondent, notes that many sitting governors, including Thomas E. Dewey, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Nelson Rockefeller, "attempted to use their states as laboratories in gearing up to run for national office, with obviously mixed results." Our last two presidents have been former governors; Democrat Jimmy Carter served in Georgia from 1971 to 1975, while Republican Ronald Reagan occupied the California statehouse from 1967 to 1975.

Will the next president also be a former governor? West says this depends on whether any of the three presidential candidates who are or have been governors—Pierre du Pont IV, Bruce Babbitt, and Michael Dukakis—is seen as a leader "who can make government work."

Historically, governors campaigning for the presidency have presented themselves as men who, unlike U.S. senators, "had learned how to battle balky legislatures and manage executive departments." They have also claimed to be politicians capable of transferring innovative ideas from the state to the federal level. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, made "New York the first state to provide relief for the unemployed." Gov. Michael Dukakis (D.-Mass.) argues that the employment and training program implemented in his state can be used as a national model for welfare reform.

While legislators are burdened with lengthy voting records on most major issues—Senator Robert Dole (R.-Kans.) says that he has voted over 10,500 times since his career in Congress began in 1960—governors can "fashion positions at the start of a presidential campaign." Members of Congress like to claim superior expertise on foreign affairs and defense policy, but West contends this claim is often exaggerated. Modern governors, he says, are likely to have more "firsthand experience in matters such as international trade."

Who will make the better president, the governor or the senator? That question, West concludes, can never be decisively answered. As Carl Brauer, a Harvard political scientist, argues, "there are no perfect credentials that anybody brings to the task" of being president.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

*The ERA's Failure*

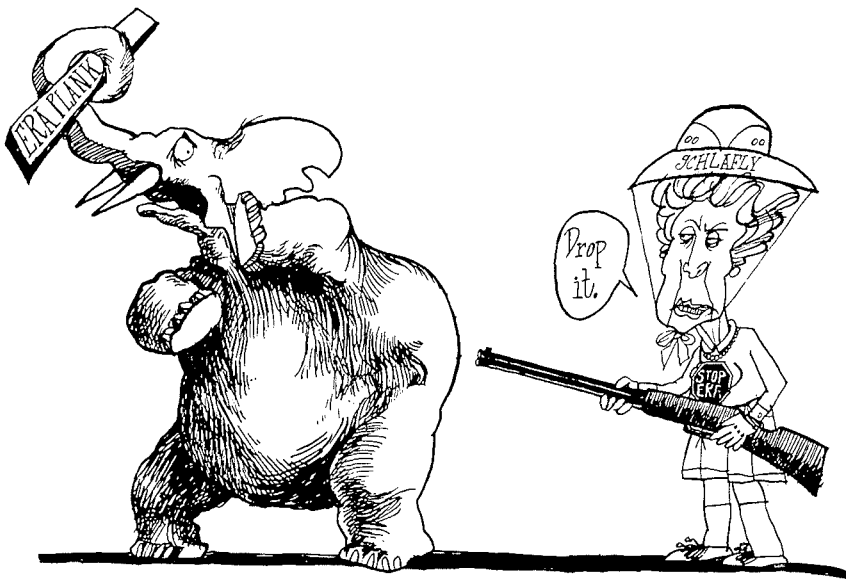
"The Equal Rights Amendment, Public Opinion, & American Constitutionalism" by Louis Bolce, Gerald De Maio, and Douglas Muzzio, in *Polity* (Summer 1987), Northeastern Political Science Association, Whitmore Hall, Amherst, Mass. 01003.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) has had a stormy history. Submitted by Congress to the states in 1972, the amendment had been approved by 33 state legislatures by 1974. Progress was slow thereafter. The ERA finally died on June 30, 1982, three states short of the 38 needed for ratification.

Bolce, De Maio, and Muzzio, all political scientists at Baruch College, find that public support for the ERA fell steadily during the decade that it was considered for ratification by the states.

Surveys by the Center for Political Studies show that 73 percent of the public supported the ERA in 1976, but that in states whose legislatures *rejected* the amendment, this support fell 27 percentage points from 1976 to 1980. Although black support for the ERA remained essentially constant (never falling below 60 percent in rejecting states), whites were "less supportive and considerably more volatile." In 1976 almost 60 percent of whites in states that rejected the ERA supported the amendment, but two years later their support had fallen below 40 percent.

In 1976 female supporters outnumbered female opponents by two and a half to one in nonratifying states. Yet after 1978, ERA support among women in these hostile states had dropped below 40 percent.



*Conservative Phyllis Schlafly was a formidable foe of the Equal Rights Amendment during the 1970s, linking ERA to abortion, divorce.*

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 POLITICS & GOVERNMENT
 

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Further, ERA foes in nonratifying states were more knowledgeable, more passionate, and more interested in the amendment than proponents were. The dissenting voices were louder, since more opponents were registered to vote, and had voted in a previous election. While 38 percent of ERA opponents in 1976 knew whether their state legislatures had acted on the amendment, only 21 percent of supporters knew this.

The ERA failed, the authors contend, because "the largest shifts in public opinion, which often precede policy innovations, went *against* ERA," and by 1980, the majority supporting ERA had "vanished entirely." After the federal amendment died, many states that ratified the ERA in the early 1970s—such as New York and Wisconsin—later reflected this collapse of popular support by rejecting state ERA's of their own. Public opinion in the states that rejected ERA, the authors conclude, "seems unlikely to shift in favor of the amendment in the near future."

### *Ike the Diplomat*

"Ike and Hiroshima: Did He Oppose It?" by Barton J. Bernstein, in *The Journal of Strategic Studies* (Sept. 1987), Gainsborough House, Gainsborough Road, London E11 1RS, United Kingdom.

In his 1963 memoir *Mandate for Change*, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969), recalling his "grave misgivings" about atomic weapons, contended that he had warned Secretary of War Henry Stimson in 1945 against using the bomb. "It was my belief," Eisenhower asserted, "that Japan was, at the very moment, seeking to surrender."

But did Eisenhower really warn Stimson? Bernstein, a historian at Stanford University, thinks not. "Strong circumstantial evidence" suggests that Eisenhower did not, in 1945, question the atomic bomb's use.

Consider Henry Stimson's diary. Stimson mentions discussing the A-bomb on many occasions; but the bomb is not mentioned in the two discussions he records having had with Eisenhower in July of 1945. (Far from a warning, Stimson writes in his entry for July 20, 1945, that he had a "pleasant chat" with Eisenhower.) Both Manhattan Project director Gen. Leslie Groves and Stimson aide Col. William Kyle say that it would have been "out of character" for Eisenhower to dissent from the opinions of his superiors in Washington. Eisenhower, Bernstein contends, "was not likely to tell the Secretary of War what Stimson did not want to hear."

Moreover, memoirs by contemporaries supporting Eisenhower's claim fail to stand up to rigorous scrutiny. Eisenhower's son John, in his memoir *Strictly Personal* (1974), wrote that his father was depressed by his meetings with Stimson, but he did not suggest that his father felt the atomic bomb's use was wrong. A statement from Eisenhower in Gen. Omar Bradley's 1983 memoir *A General's Life*, which supports "Eisenhower's own post-war recollections," was inserted after Bradley's death by ghostwriter Clay Blair. Blair admits that he did not solicit Bradley's opinions before writing the passage.

The "only supporting evidence" that Eisenhower opposed the bomb in

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**POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**


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1945 consists of statements Eisenhower made 15-20 years afterward. Were these later statements true? Barring a new primary source (such as an Eisenhower diary), Bernstein believes that they cannot *definitely* be proven false. But Eisenhower, like others, was known to tailor "important remembrances to suit his needs." For example, Eisenhower in 1945 was "quite optimistic" about postwar relations with the Soviet Union—but years later he said he had tried "to warn Roosevelt about the Soviets."

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**FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE**


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### *Saving South Africa*

"A Capitalist's Conundrum" by Anthony Sampson, in *Regardie's* (Dec. 1987), 1010 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Ste. 600, Washington, D.C. 20007.

Many American politicians argue that U.S. corporations should sell off their South African subsidiaries. "Our country is implicated in the terrible system that blights South Africa," says Senator Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.). "Our corporations have benefited from the apartheid economy."

Sampson, British author of *The Seven Sisters* and *The Changing Anatomy of Britain*, argues that "disinvestment" from South Africa is neither a wise nor a moral policy. Foreign corporations, he contends, "must not just pull out of an evil system but work toward producing a more equitable one."

Foes of apartheid, Sampson believes, have taken "an overly dogmatic view of corporate involvement." By insisting both on sanctions by the United States government against South Africa *and* on disinvestment by U.S. business, the anti-apartheid movement "made a mistake."

Economic sanctions against South Africa, in Sampson's opinion, are useful as a tool to convince whites "that continuing apartheid won't pay off for them." But disinvestment leaves former U.S. subsidiaries in the hands of South African corporations that feel no pressure to make reforms. General Motors (GM), for example, instructed its South African subsidiary not to sell equipment to the South African Army or police and to abide by the "Sullivan Principles" calling for integration of offices and equal opportunity for blacks. After GM sold a subsidiary in South Africa in October 1986, the new owners made clear they "had little regard for unions and had no inhibitions about selling to the military."

The "most damaging" corporate pullout from South Africa has been that of foreign banks, such as Chase Manhattan and Barclays. These international banks have denied credit needed for the South African economy to expand. Without foreign loans, says one Barclays official, South Africa will find it "increasingly difficult" to "promote economic growth to employ the ever-growing non-white population."

U.S. corporations, Sampson contends, should stay in South Africa and work toward ending apartheid. "The greatest danger," he warns, is that disinvestment will allow Americans to "gratefully wash their hands of South Africa and leave its blacks to their fate."



## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

*Base Maneuvers*

"Base Maneuvers" by Dick Arney, in *Policy Review* (Winter 1988), Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Located in an inhospitable corner of northern Maine, Loring Air Force Base averages 105 inches of snow a year. It was built during the late 1940s to ensure that limited-range B-47 bombers could reach the Soviet Union from a base in the continental United States. As B-47s were replaced with longer range B-52 and B-1 bombers, Loring's far-northern site was no longer a strategic factor. For the past 10 years, the Air Force has considered the base obsolete.

Yet Loring remains the home of the Strategic Air Command's 42nd Bomber Wing, even though it costs twice as much to operate as comparable bases in warmer parts of the United States. Why does Loring remain open? Because the clout of Maine's congressional delegation has blocked its closure.

Loring Air Force Base, says Arney, a Republican U.S. representative from Texas, is not an isolated example. Fort Douglas, Utah, was built to protect stagecoach routes. Fort Monroe, Virginia, was originally meant to protect Virginia during the War of 1812. Although these and other bases have long lost their rationale for existence, they survive because pork-barrel politics keeps them in operation.

Between 1961 and 1978, the Pentagon closed or consolidated 3,600 installations, saving taxpayers \$5.6 billion annually. But a law passed by Congress in 1977, sponsored by Representative (now Senator) William Cohen (R.-Maine) and Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill (D.-Mass.), mandated that the Defense Department must prepare an environmental impact statement before a base can be closed. Because environmental impact statements are complex and can be challenged in the courts by any congressman or citizens' group, no military base has been closed since the Cohen-O'Neill bill became law.

Yet closing a military base and removing troops, an airfield, and weapons generally *helps*, not *hurts*, the environment. Moreover, abandoned bases provide "ready-made" sites for schools, airports, and industrial parks. The Pentagon's Office of Economic Adjustment surveyed 100 former bases and found that 42 had become airports, 12 had become four-year colleges, and the 93,424 military jobs on the former bases had been replaced by 138,138 civilian jobs.

"Which is better for the economy," Arney asks, "a dead-end investment in an obsolete military base or schools and new industry?"

*Lessons from Korea*

"Korea, the Never-Again Club, and Indochina" by Maj. David H. Petraeus, in *Parameters* (Dec. 1987), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. 17013.

Since the Vietnam debacle, much of the American military has developed what political scientist Samuel Huntington calls a "pacifist attitude" toward war. Today's senior military officers are not eager to send American

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

forces overseas into combat. They have argued that U.S. troops should not be committed to a conflict unless Congress and the public support their mission and the president gives commanders the authority and manpower needed to gain a decisive victory.

Petraeus, an assistant to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, argues that this conservative approach is not new. Many military officers held similar views after the 1950-1953 Korean War.

Like their Vietnam counterparts, Korean War generals were ordered by their civilian superiors to keep the conflict within strict limits. For example, American aircraft could only bomb the southern half of bridges on the Yalu River (the border between North Korea and China), and were forbidden to pursue enemy aircraft across the Chinese frontier. Public support for the war fell steadily over time; President Harry Truman's approval rating dropped to 23 percent by 1951, and a major reason for Dwight D. Eisenhower's victory in the 1952 presidential election was the popular belief that he could bring the Korean stalemate to a swift end.

After Korea, U.S. senior officers formed what journalists called the "Never-Again Club," named after Gen. Mark Clark's warning that the U.S. should "never again . . . be mousetrapped into fighting another defensive war." Thus many military leaders (notably Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway) vigorously opposed *limited* intervention to rescue the French garrison at Dienbienphu in North Vietnam during the spring of 1954. When Adm. Arthur Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, proposed a massive American airstrike to relieve Dienbienphu, Ridgway



*South Korea, February 1951: Lt. General Matthew B. Ridgway (fourth from left), new commander of U.S. Eighth Army, visits G.I.'s near Anyang-Ni.*

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 FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE
 

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called Radford's proposal an "old delusive idea" because success could not be won through air and naval action alone.

Petraeus sees the generation of commanders trained in Vietnam as harboring old frustrations similar to those of their Korean War predecessors. Their "circumspect approach to the use of force," he contends, may play a key role in the shaping of future American foreign policy. As columnist Joseph Kraft once noted, "The skepticism of the military about applying force weighs far more on the president than does the sniping of the political opposition."

### *Tocqueville Today*

"Tocqueville's Challenge" by David Clinton, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 1988), 55  
Hayward St., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

In *Democracy in America* (1835-40), French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) argued that U.S. democracy could not pursue long-term foreign policy interests. "A democracy," Tocqueville wrote, "finds it difficult to . . . fix on some plan and carry it through with determination." Any president, trying to distinguish himself from his predecessor, lacks political incentives to continue existing diplomatic strategies.

Tocqueville's challenge—how to preserve stability in foreign policy *and* be flexible enough to satisfy democratic demands—is one each American president must resolve anew, writes Clinton, a Union College political scientist. For the "trade-off between democracy and effective diplomacy" is one of the perennially unresolved questions of American governance.

Tocqueville believed that American isolation meant that the United States could remain democratic *and* free to pursue limited foreign interests without being enmeshed in international politics. Until the Second World War, American foreign policy analysts continued to stress the importance of U.S. isolation. British politician James Bryce (1838-1922), Tocqueville's successor as a sympathetic foreign critic of America, argued in *The American Commonwealth* (1888) that senatorial checks on presidential power kept the U.S. from "being entangled" with "responsibilities of all sorts beyond its own frontiers." American historian Charles Beard (1874-1948) recommended that the U.S. pursue "continentalism," withdrawing from international power politics in favor of "domestic prosperity within its own broad territory."

Today, some foreign policy analysts continue to insist that isolation is the best solution to the dilemma Tocqueville posed. George Kennan, for example, believes that the U.S. cannot pursue complex or secretive foreign policies, and should not act like a "Czar of Russia" in imposing its will on the world. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., suggests that pursuit of a "messianic foreign policy" might spell the return of "the imperial presidency."

But Clinton concludes that U.S. isolation is not possible because "there is no alternative candidate" to replace America on the world stage. To solve Tocqueville's dilemma, the president and Congress should work out "a public consensus" on such long-term foreign policy questions as arms control. Without such a consensus, he warns, America might well have to "abridge political freedoms" when decisive action is needed in a crisis.

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**ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS**


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*Doubting Self-Interest*

"Making Up Our Minds" by Richard J. Herrnstein and James E. Mazur, in *The Sciences* (Nov.-Dec. 1987), New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

"The natural effort of every individual to better his own condition . . . is so powerful a principle," wrote Adam Smith in 1776, "that it is alone . . . capable of carrying on the society to wealth and prosperity." Economists still hew to this theory of "utility maximization," which is applied not only to financial decisions but even to animal behavior. According to the theory, a butcher may cut his prices at Christmas because he thinks he will do more business or because he feels generous. Either way, he seeks "the greatest possible value from the sum" of his actions.

Harvard psychologists Herrnstein and Mazur demur. They maintain that people often "behave in ways directly at odds with self-interest." Consider the college student who chooses an 8:00 A.M. class at which attendance is required. When the alarm clock rings, he often turns it off and misses the class, taking the ultimately less profitable action. Economist Robert H. Strotz in 1956 called this phenomenon temporal "myopia," since favoring immediate gratification can decrease long-term rewards.

The authors argue that utility maximization theory describes how individuals *ought* to act, not how they *tend* to act. To deal with actual human behavior, they propose "melioration," a theory that takes into account both "our occasional rationality" and "our frequent irrationality." People, the authors say, tend to pursue not maximum but *average* utility, which is simpler to calculate and requires less perceived risk. Within an overall situation, some individual decisions are rational, others are not.

Once economists recognize their "mistaken assumptions about economic motivation," the authors believe, they can apply melioration theory to public-policy questions. In hostage incidents, for example, leaders could make laws in advance against negotiating with terrorists, recognizing that they will be tempted to seek an immediate solution—despite their conviction that dealing with terrorists now may encourage hostage-taking in the future. "Because it anticipates and accounts for our departures from rationality," the authors contend, their theory of melioration "provides the foundation for a real understanding of human decision making—and, in so doing, may help make us more rational."

*The End of the Line?*

"The Great Train Robbery" by Phillip Longman, in *The Washington Monthly* (Dec. 1987), 1711 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

America's railroads may soon become bankrupt—not because of competition from airlines or other forms of transportation, but due to the rising cost of government-mandated pension plans.

Longman, author of *Born to Pay: The New Politics of Aging in Amer-*

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**ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS**


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*ica*, maintains that the “crippling payments” both employers and employees must give to retirement plans “are surely hastening the decline” of the railway. The story of railroad pensions, he argues, is one that “shows how a worthy cause can be perverted by the politics of selfishness.”

Congress passed the Railroad Retirement Act in 1934, over the protests of the Roosevelt administration. The act nationalized existing pension plans into a Railroad Retirement Fund (RRF) that taxes both workers and employers in a manner similar to (but separate from) Social Security. Lobbying by retiree groups has kept pensions generous. Railroad pensions range up to 125 percent of a worker’s final salary.

Railroads pay for these generous pensions through high taxes. Since 1937, payroll taxes paid by employers and employees have risen from a combined six percent rate to 33.3 percent today. (The combined employer-employee Social Security tax rate is currently 14.3 percent.) Twenty-three percent of Amtrak’s payroll costs go to retirement, far above the 3.1 percent average of other corporations. To pay for the rising tax burden, railroads have cut costs by slashing payrolls; employment in the railroad industry has fallen by 44 percent since 1979.

Because retirees outnumber currently employed workers by three to one, even high taxes cannot pay the entire cost of railroad pensions. Since 1957, Social Security has partially subsidized the RRF. The cost to the taxpayer in Fiscal Year 1987: \$2.8 billion.

The Office of Management and Budget has proposed the privatization of railroad pensions. But such a move, Longman warns, would be “prohibitively expensive” for railroads because the system is already obligated to pay \$44 billion in pensions even if the industry “never hires another worker.” Unless Congress decisively cuts benefits, Longman warns, the bankruptcy of America’s railroads is “just a recession away.”

### *Trimming Business Fat*

“The Pedagogy of Competition” by Murray L. Weidenbaum, Richard Burr, and Richard Cook, in *Society* (Nov.-Dec. 1987), Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

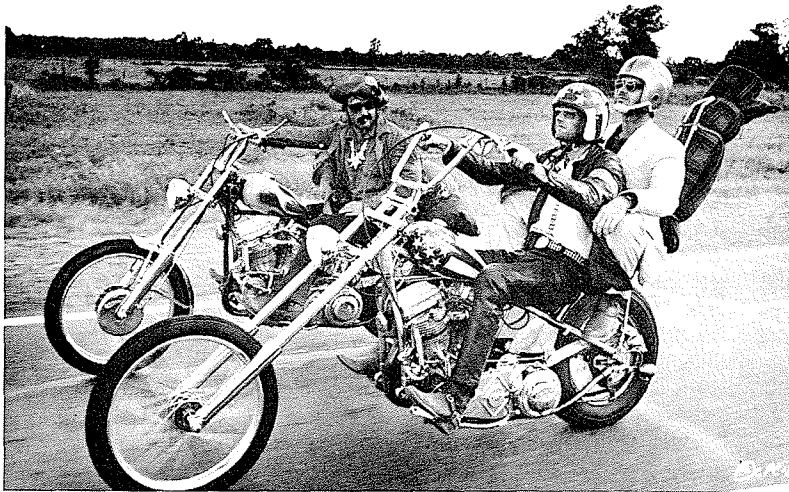
To many economists, America’s current struggle to compete in world markets indicates only harder times ahead.

However, Weidenbaum, Burr, and Cook—at the Center for the Study of American Business at Washington University in St. Louis—believe that greater competition has spurred U.S. firms to reduce costs, improve product quality, and increase investment in research and development.

The long-term, cumulative effects of these actions, the authors believe, should lead to “sustained prosperity” in the 1990s.

Cost-cutting strategies have ranged from reducing labor expenses (which account for two-thirds of production costs in the United States) by slowing wage increases and by improving union relations, to adopting the Japanese “just-in-time” inventory system, in which parts are supplied as needed, instead of being made in advance and stored. By using the just-in-time approach, a Missouri Chrysler plant cut its parts inventory to \$20 million from \$29 million, thus saving \$1 million each year in interest costs

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS



*Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda, and Jack Nicholson aboard American-made Harley-Davidson motorcycles in the film Easy Rider (1969).*

while reducing damage to parts in storage. A more ambitious cost-cutting project is General Motors' Flint Assembly Complex, which integrates component manufacturing and auto assembly in a single 500-acre facility. "In effect, steel blanks . . . enter at one end of the plant," say the authors, "and finished cars leave at the other."

American manufacturers, who "have rested too long on their laurels," have increasingly stressed quality throughout the production cycle. At Harley-Davidson, for example, all employees receive training in statistics, and are encouraged to evaluate and improve their own work. As a result, product quality has improved noticeably. Whereas five years ago 50 percent of the motorcycles produced by Harley-Davidson had defects, today 99 percent are reportedly flawless.

Corporate research has been aided by increases in defense spending. The Reagan administration's arms buildup, the authors maintain, has had potent "spillover effects" in the civilian economy. Subcontractors and suppliers in the electronics and instruments industries, for example, have successfully commercialized their defense-financed technology. Overall, federal expenditures on research and development rose at a rate of 12.2 percent each year from 1980 to 1984, compared to the 14.2 percent average growth rate in the private sector.

The steps taken by U.S. companies in response to increased world-market competition will not yield "quick and dramatic" changes, the authors concede. Nor will they prevent a possible recession during the late 1980s. Coupled with the "feedback effects" of the cyclical American economy, however, these advances make the 1990s "look good."



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**SOCIETY**


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### *The Generations and Welfare*

“The New Age Structure of Poverty in America: Permanent or Transient?” by Richard A. Easterlin, in *Population and Development Review* (June 1987), The Population Council, 1 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

In 1968, fully 25 percent of Americans over the age of 65 lived in poverty, but only 15 percent of children under 16 did so. In 1985, only 13 percent of the aged were poor, but 21 percent of children were in poverty.

Why are the elderly prospering and children not? Easterlin, an economist at the University of Southern California, finds “independent causes.” The aged have benefited from Social Security increases while children have suffered from the stringent labor market their parents face.

The inflation-adjusted incomes of young men have eroded. After 1979 the “real” wages paid to men aged 20-34 fell to a level 10-20 percent below that of the late 1960s. In families where the head of the household is 25-34, incomes have declined by 10 percent since 1973. The ensuing “economic pressures,” Easterlin argues, compel couples to delay marriage; they also increase the likelihood of divorce and separation. The result: more children who will be raised by a financially-pressed single mother.

Why does the current generation of young men earn less than their fathers? The answer is, in part, changing demographics. Because the number of young “baby boom” men looking for work has risen at the same time that the economy has remained stagnant, demand for these workers has slackened.

Barring a cataclysmic war or dramatic cuts in federal aid, Easterlin does not believe that the poverty rate for children will worsen. The number of young workers seeking jobs in the 1990s will fall; the new “baby bust” generation has many fewer members than their “baby boom” parents. As the work force ages, the number of highly productive older workers will increase and the number of less productive younger workers will drop, ensuring that productivity growth will rise. If current federal aid to the elderly remains constant, Easterlin contends, the shrinking pool of younger workers will cause the gap between the poverty rate of the old and the young to “diminish and, perhaps, disappear.”

### *Rx for Disaster*

“The Health Effects of Mandatory Prescriptions” by Sam Peltzman, in *The Journal of Law and Economics* (Oct. 1987), Univ. of Chicago Press, P.O. Box 37005, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

Until 1938 most drugs (except for narcotics) could be obtained in the United States without a doctor’s order. But Food and Drug Administration regulations established at that time have led to a steady rise in government-mandated prescriptions. In 1939, 27.3 percent of all drugs sold were obtained with an Rx from a physician; by 1981, 72.7 percent of all drugs

## SOCIETY

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were prescribed.

But do prescriptions improve health? Peltzman, an economist at the University of Chicago, thinks not: "Enforcement of prescription-only regulation does not significantly improve the health of drug consumers."

To test how prescriptions have affected health, Peltzman examined U.S. death rates from accidental poisonings attributed to swallowing solids and liquids other than food. These rates fell from 29 per million in 1900 to 10 per million in 1940, but *rose* to 15 per million in 1980. Peltzman suggests that this "long cycle" rise in accidental-poisoning fatalities (during a period of strict drug regulation) shows that prescriptions did not reduce drug fatalities. Indeed, the regulations might have increased such deaths, because of a trend toward prescribing more potent drugs.

Peltzman then compared death rates from disease in countries that mandate extensive prescription use (such as Sweden, Canada, and Japan) with countries that allow most drugs to be bought without prescriptions (Greece, Brazil, India). He found that while countries with a greater number of doctors, higher per capita income, and less disparity between rich and poor had lower death rates, there was no direct correlation between a country's prescription policies and its mortality rate.

Prescriptions, Peltzman contends, may, by forcing more recourse to doctors, have an *indirect* effect in reducing illness, but patients with complex ailments will see a physician regardless of whether a prescription is required. "Consumers," he notes, "are able to understand the value of a doctor's advice even if they are not required to seek it."

### *Schools and Work*

"Business-Led School Reform: The Second Wave" by Denis P. Doyle, in *Across the Board* (Nov. 1987), The Conference Board, 845 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Even before educator Horace Mann sold the idea of tax-supported public schools to Massachusetts businessmen in the 1830s, corporate America was interested in how and what students were taught. And teachers have always been quick to take cues from industry. But have schools learned the wrong lessons from business? Doyle, a senior research fellow at the Hudson Institute, suggests that they have.

With the Industrial Revolution came the assembly line, from which schools learned to "dumb down" students' roles, "socializing" pupils to the demands of an industrial economy rather than educating them. Modeling itself on the assembly-line factory, the expanding school system adopted such trends as vocational education and "scientific management." The latter phenomenon, which featured self-guiding curriculums and textbook selection by central authorities, left nothing to teachers' imaginations or discretion. Thus, schools were essentially "teacher-proofed." Doyle contends that under these policies, teachers, once considered "artisans and masters," in many respects became "no more than blue-collar workers."

After World War II, public school enrollment rapidly increased and school districts were consolidated to spawn vast bureaucracies. Compared with well over 100,000 school districts serving more than 20 million stu-

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**SOCIETY**


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dents before 1940, 15,500 districts serve 40 million students today. Schools, says Doyle, “began to look more and more like protected monopolies from which most consumers could not escape.”

Today’s graduates of these education factories are ill-equipped to succeed in industry, which “requires knowledge and sophistication greater than the unskilled jobs of yesteryear.” Doyle advocates abandoning the schools’ outmoded factory model in favor of a new “partnership” with modern business.

From successful “people-oriented” firms such as L.L. Bean, IBM, and the 3M Company, writes Doyle, public school authorities can learn to be competitive in the educational marketplace, to set and achieve goals, and to maintain high morale. Heeding these lessons will help public schools reduce “white flight” and “bright flight” to private schools. Ignoring “business’s most important lesson—that markets and competition work—is a fool’s paradise” that is bound to result in continued failure.

### *Roman Banquets*

“De Gustibus” by Lowell Edmunds, in *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (Dec. 1987), 203 Whitehead Hall, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, Md. 21218.

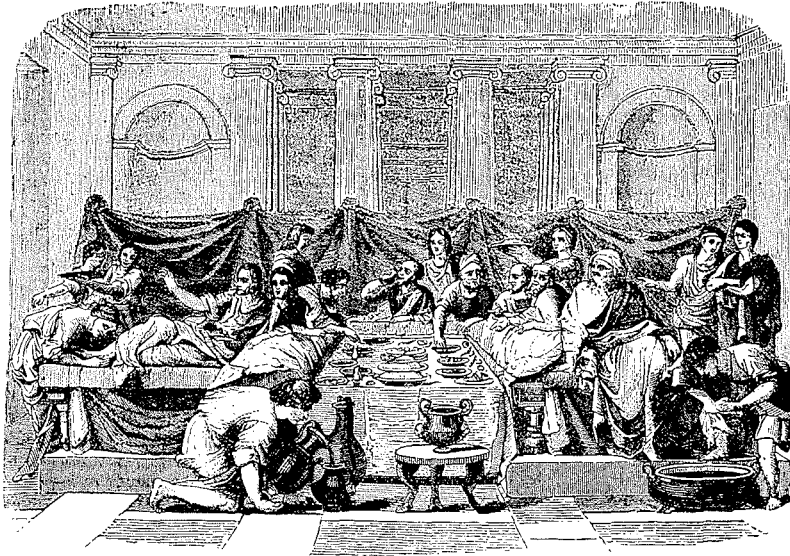
The dinner party, says Edmunds, a classics professor at Johns Hopkins University, “was a prime form of self-expression” for the Roman aristocracy. But what did hosts want their banquets to say about themselves? The answer, Edmunds believes, is that meals were a means to transmit and preserve traditional virtues.

Hosts usually invited nine men to dinner; guests reclined on three couches around a table. Dinner was served in three courses. The first course (*gustatio* or *gustus*) consisted of such hors d’oeuvres as leeks, olives, or eggs, accompanied by *mulsum*—wine sweetened with honey. This was followed by a main course of various meat dishes ranging from ham to hare to the occasional whole boar. Dessert was commonly “a selection of chickpeas, chestnuts, raisins, and various fruits—apples, pears, figs.” Meals were eaten with a spoon and the fingers; bones and other detritus were thrown on the floor. After dinner, a host would provide entertainment: poetry readings, recitations, and, for the licentious, “a troupe of the notorious dancing girls from Cadiz.”

Roman banquets were designed to show the host’s moderation and refinement. The offerings were meant to duplicate “the old-time . . . simplicity” of meals of an earlier, more heroic age. Hosts were obliged to practice “smart poverty,” serving such simple staples as greens and ham instead of more luxuriant fare. From 181 B.C. onward, “sumptuary laws” imposed restrictions on extravagance, limiting the amount that could be spent on a banquet, the number of guests invited, and the consumption of dormice and other delicacies.

The second goal of a banquet—to express refinement—frequently conflicted with the first. How could a host show sophistication and moderation at the same time? Some altered the meal for different classes of guests; author Pliny the Younger (circa A.D. 61–113) once attended a din-

SOCIETY



The most prestigious seat at a Roman banquet was at the host's left, known as the "consular" or "praetorian" place.

ner where the host served choice dishes to his close friends and *vilia et minuta* ("cheap dishes and scraps") to everyone else. Other hosts resolved the conflict between moderation and refinement by serving exquisite food brought from their simple country houses.

The Romans loved disguising food to express the distinction between appearance and reality. The poet Martial (circa A.D. 40–103), for example, once "knew of a chef who could make a whole banquet out of gourds." Edmunds concludes that culinary deception derives from the belief that a person's outward appearance masked his inner nature. "The Roman banqueter," he notes, dined "upon his world view."

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PRESS & TELEVISION

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*Reporting Sports*

"The Rise of the Sports Page" by John Stevens, in *Gannett Center Journal* (Fall 1987), 2950 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

For over a century, newspaper readers have grown accustomed to a section of their papers devoted to coverage of sports. But where did the sports section originate? Stevens, professor of communications at the University of Michigan, attributes "the economic and editorial origins" of the sports pages to the changing demographics of 19th-century America.

Until the 1830s, most American newspapers were only bought by the

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 PRESS & TELEVISION
 

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few people rich enough to have leisure to read. But rising mechanization in the workplace meant that working hours declined, giving more Americans leisure time. The first sports publications (such as *The American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, launched in 1829, or *The Spirit of the Times*, begun in 1831) catered to horse owners and gamblers craving news of harness racing.

By the Civil War, many newspapers covered sports, yet some papers did so reluctantly. *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, for example, once gave six columns to a prize fight, but added an editorial denouncing the brutality of the boxing match. As sports news drew more readers, sportswriters gained influence. Baseball writer Henry Chadwick (1824–1908) helped create the National League (which in 1876 became the first organization of professional sports clubs in the United States), and also founded the first sportswriters' association.

Technological advances (such as the Linotype) and cheaper newsprint allowed newspapers to become larger. The newspaper barons of the 1890s, constantly looking for new customers, placed sports in a separate section and allowed sportswriters free rein to create columns of purple prose. Yet sports reporters rarely wrote articles that would tarnish an athlete's reputation; when Babe Ruth was sidelined for the first six weeks of the 1925 baseball season after a "herculean" bout of "boozing, gorging, and wenching," journalists attributed his absence to "indigestion" after eating too many hot dogs.

Sports coverage remains popular today, filling 20 percent of most U.S. newspapers. Yet coverage is largely confined to the "middle-class" sports of baseball, football, and basketball; "lower-class" sports (stock car racing, bowling) or sports lacking "a visible and stable professional league" (soccer) are rarely mentioned. "Readers like what they get in the newspaper sports section and want more of it," says Stevens. And that is why there is unlikely to be any dramatic change in sports journalism soon.

### *Risky Business*

"Reporting Hazards: Their Benefits and Costs" by Eleanor Singer and Phyllis Endreny, in *Journal of Communication* (Summer 1987), Oxford Univ. Press, 16-00 Pollitt Dr., Fair Lawn, N. J. 07410.

Reporting on risky activities or hazardous phenomena, from the spread of virulent diseases such as AIDS to the increase in potentially dangerous experimentation such as recombinant DNA research and organ transplantation, is very common in the media, both print and broadcast.

But do the media do an equally thorough job in reporting on activities or products that *could* be harmful? Singer, at the Center for the Social Sciences, Columbia University, and Endreny, an assistant professor of communications at the University of Illinois, think not.

The media's problems with reporting hazards, the authors contend, result from the priorities editors use to determine what is news. New and dramatic hazards are more newsworthy than more commonly recurring risks, even if the latter are more dangerous. Rather than cover life-threat-

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**PRESS & TELEVISION**


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ening activities that occur routinely, newspaper editors devote more space to "hazards that are relatively serious and relatively rare." For example, toxic shock syndrome was extensively reported in the media, although the number of cases (nine per 100,000 menstruating women per year at the peak) was "about equal in frequency to tuberculosis."

Journalists usually offer little statistical information either about the relative risk of a hazard or how dangerous an activity might be compared to other alternatives—for example, the risks of injury while skiing and while jogging. Of 624 stories from magazines, New York newspapers, and evening network-news broadcasts that the authors surveyed during four months in 1984, only five percent told how many deaths each year were traceable to a particular hazardous activity or product. Twenty-four percent *did* point out the size of the population at risk from the hazard.

When the media offer statistical information about risks, they frequently use misleading data. For example, journalists often report the *potential* number of people who could be killed by a nuclear power accident, but fail to report the *actual* number of people killed so far by nuclear power, a miniscule total. Moreover, only 16 percent of the stories surveyed compared the possible costs and benefits of a risky activity. In most stories, journalists imply that the costs of an activity outweigh its benefits, while failing to give the reader the information needed to reach an independent assessment. "*None* of the media," say the authors, "is very informative in providing information about risk."

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**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**


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*Islamic Ideals*

"Islam: Resistance and Reassertion" by Amin Saikal in *The World Today* (Nov. 1987), The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 10 St. James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE, United Kingdom.

What is the nature of the current Islamic resurgence? Saikal, a political scientist at the Australian National University, finds that the movement rejects both capitalism and communism. As Muslim theologian Muhammed Iqbal says, "both fail to recognise the Lord, deceive mankind . . . they are two millstones, that pulverise the human kind."

According to Saikal, the leaders of the world's various Muslim movements, such as Iqbal in India and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, all agree that the essence of Islam is *tawhid*—the idea that every aspect of life is unified under God. *Tawhid*, they stress, should guide the Muslim state as much as Muslim spiritual life.

These beliefs do not make the resurgence movement fundamentalist. The new leaders argue that Islamic principles should not be applied as if "frozen in time." Rather they must be interpreted by theologians (*mujtahiddin*) to fit changing historical circumstances.

Muslims, Saikal emphasizes, "cannot fulfill Islam in its entirety without creating Islamic governments in their societies." Such a government, he



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 RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY
 

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says, would be a "theo-democracy." God's word is law and therefore the only legitimate basis for state action. But the correct interpretation of God's law is determined through consultation (*shura*) and consensus (*ijma*) among Islamic scholars. Knowledge of the Koran is the only requirement for a believer to participate in an Islamic government. *Shura* does not bar direct and indirect elections for the head of state and legislative assembly. The authority of the state, however, lies in the community of Muslim faithful; the Islamic faith thereby rejects the establishment of an elite ruling class or a dictatorship.

Because Muslims are combating the erosion of their faith, the *jihād* (holy war) is considered defensive in nature. Thus the *mujahideen* (warriors in the way of God) in Afghanistan, while they may take the offensive against Soviet forces, have been "involved in a wholly defensive war."

The primary goal of today's Muslim leaders is to cleanse their society of foreign influence and help Muslims "rediscover and re-embrace their Islamic faith." Far from being reactionary, says Saikal, this resurgence offers a God-centered alternative to both Western liberal democracy and Marxism-Leninism.

### *An End to 'Progress'?*

"The Columbus Argument" by David Stove, in *Commentary* (Dec. 1987), 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

In his book *On Liberty* (1859), English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) defended innovation with the following argument. Pioneers, Mill taught, have always been denounced for their new ideas. But what progress humanity has made has come from individuals who have created new principles of belief or behavior. Therefore innovators should not only be tolerated, they should be welcomed.

Since Mill's day, says Stove, a philosopher at the University of Sydney, Australia, this anticonservative thesis (which he calls the "They All Laughed at Christopher Columbus Argument") has become one of the commonplaces of our time, routinely cited by revolutionaries seeking to overturn the existing social or political order. Stove contends that the natural consequence of "the Columbus argument" is to believe that *all* new ideas *must* be tolerated, which "has brought us to the uncontrollable violence and irrationality of life" in contemporary Western societies.

The Columbus argument fails, the author maintains, because it rests on what Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) called "a one-sided diet of examples." Not every advance is good; evil dictators and butchers (Lenin, Pol Pot, Robespierre) have been as innovative in their crimes as Copernicus or Galileo were beneficial in their science.

Moreover, Stove argues, "innovators-for-the-worse" *must* always outnumber those who better society. Consider a television set, with thousands of intricate parts. Most people, lacking the knowledge needed to make repairs, would worsen rather than strengthen the quality of the set if they attempted to change it. Human societies "are incomparably more complex" than television sets—so intricate that "no one understands them

**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**

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well enough to repair or improve them.” Because a culture is so fragile, Stove believes, the odds against would-be “society repairmen” improving life are “billions-to-one.”

Mill’s pro-innovation argument is so bad that “it could hardly have deceived a child of ten.” Yet Mill’s flawed idea swept the world, and has done more “than anything else to bring about the present internal dissolution” of the West. The history of the Columbus argument, the author concludes, refutes the notion that “philosophers, and cheap tricks of argument, do not matter.”

*The Blame Game*

“The Flight From Blame” by Mary Midgley, in *Philosophy* (July 1987), Cambridge Univ. Press, 32 East 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

English philosopher G. E. Moore (1873–1958) was acclaimed by most British intellectuals when his major work, *Principia Ethica*, was published in 1903. But the Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb was an exception. The book, she wrote in a letter, was “a metaphysical justification for doing what you like and what other people disapprove of.” Its effect on young men was “to disintegrate their intellects and characters.”

Midgley, a philosopher formerly with the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in England, believes Moore’s legacy to be darker than even Webb predicted. Moore’s influence, she contends, led to the notion that people



*Psychologist B. F. Skinner, shown here in a 1933 photograph. In such works as Beyond Freedom and Dignity (1971) and the novel Walden Two (1948), Skinner tried to uncover scientific laws that could predict human behavior and conduct.*

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**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**


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should be neither blamed nor punished for their actions.

Philosophers, Moore argued, should not try to determine what constitutes the good life, because "the good" was a construct that could not be defined. Right and wrong, in Moore's opinion, were not moral absolutes, but simply tools that one could use to predict future behavior. An action was bad not because it was morally wrong, but because it would have unpleasant consequences.

Moore's beliefs, Midgley asserts, provided potent "anti-intellectual weapons" to succeeding generations. Twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophers largely abandoned discussing moral questions, considering them either irrelevant or logically unsolvable. For example, C. L. Stevenson, in *Ethics and Language* (1944), claimed that determining what was right or wrong would "distort a relatively neutral study into a plea for some special code of morals."

But Moore's influence was not limited to intellectuals. Midgley claims that Moore's writings ultimately led to the belief (taught by such psychologists as B. F. Skinner) that "making moral judgments" is a distasteful practice that should be avoided at all costs. Yet proponents of this "self-righteous preoccupation with putting down self-righteousness" have not found a suitable substitute for the moral judgments they condemn.

Philosophers, Midgley concludes, should once again discuss "how we need to think and live." But in resuming philosophy's traditional task, they should reject attitudes that "do not fit our real needs." The formalistic moral relativism of G. E. Moore and his successors, she observes, deflects philosophers from thinking about "large questions."

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**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**


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### *Short Circuits*

"Collective Computation in Neuronlike Circuits"  
by David W. Tank and John J. Hopfield, in *Scientific American* (Dec. 1987), 415 Madison Ave.,  
New York, N.Y. 10017.

Digital computers have existed for only half a century. *Biological* computers—the brain and nervous systems of humans and animals—have evolved over millions of years. For a digital computer, such tasks as reaching for a sandwich and recognizing a face are too complex; for a human brain, they are relatively easy.

How could a digital computer duplicate the capabilities of its organic counterparts? Tank, a physicist at Bell Laboratories, and Hopfield, a chemist and biologist at the California Institute of Technology (C.I.T.), explore the ways that "neuronlike" or "collective-decision" electronic circuits may change the nature and potential of computers.

Computer operations are performed in a chain-like sequence. Each link of the chain passes information on to only one other link. A neuron in the brain, while receiving a signal from one neuron, can simultaneously transmit that signal to as many as a thousand other neurons. To consider how collective-decision circuits work, the authors suggest thinking of a com-

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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puter as a committee prepared to vote. In most computers, the "committee votes individually"; each operation or "vote" (yes or no, 0 or +1) is performed without affecting any other operation. Collective-decision circuits, using "flip-flop" amplifiers capable of various responses to a question, can work with other circuits to create a *consensus*. This is an answer produced by many circuits operating together rather than as linked chains.

Scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Bell Laboratories, and C.I.T. have fabricated collective-decision circuits, the largest being 54 amplifiers. However, it will take a network of hundreds or thousands of "neurons," with thousands or millions of connections, for a circuit "to be useful" as a research tool.

Collective-decision circuits could be used in many ways. A C.I.T. team led by Carver Mead, for example, has created a prototype "artificial retina," which a computer could use efficiently to process images. "Neuron-like" circuits may also be used to create "associative memories," allowing a computer to retrieve memories from a fragment of information by processes analogous to the ways we reconstruct the memory of a friend from a name or a hair color. The authors believe that the study of collective-decision systems is just beginning.

### *Science and the Courts*

"Accuracy v. Advocacy: Expert Testimony Before the Bench" by Michael J. Saks, in *Technology Review* (Aug.-Sept. 1987), Mass. Institute of Technology, Building W59, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

"The theory of the adversary system," George Bernard Shaw once said, "is that if you set two liars to exposing each other, eventually the truth will come out." But not always, according to Saks, a law professor at the University of Iowa. Justice could be better served if the expert witnesses testifying in court about scientific issues "better understood their role and learned to withstand the pressures" of the legal arena.

"The picture of a case," writes Saks, "can be skewed by what is permitted as expert testimony." Judges should prevent the court from hearing information that is unreliable, but this can be difficult.

Most U.S. courts apply the "Frye Test," named for a 1923 decision, which allows scientific evidence to be admitted if based on a principle that has gained "general acceptance" among specialists in a given field. Yet, the Frye Test itself neither defines the limits of a scientific "field" nor sets standards for "expert" judgment. Judges often view testimony from experimental psychologists as suspect because specialists in that field "argue interminably" about the quality of data. But testimony from clinical psychologists, based on intuitive assumptions rather than rigorous experimentation, is rarely ruled out. The "less controversial though weaker information is," notes Saks, "the more readily [it is] accepted."

Furthermore, the most routine scientific evidence presented in court—that of forensic laboratories—is frequently unreliable. When the National Institute of Justice sent samples to more than 200 police labs in the U.S. and Canada for identification, 71 percent misidentified a blood

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 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
 

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sample, 68 percent reported a sample of cow's hair as human hair, and 51 percent failed to match paint chips.

To improve the use of scientific evidence in court, professional associations could help build expertise by providing continuing education and adding special programs on legal issues at their annual conventions. Saks concludes that "expert witnesses" need to learn the details of a case and their role in it. They should "learn to give accurate, two-sided presentations in court, recognizing that they are witnesses, not advocates."

### *Making Memories*

"Learning at the Sub-Neural Level" by Robert Kanigel, in *Mosaic* (Fall 1987), National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C. 20550.

Brain biologists are vigorously investigating the workings of memory—how it is stored, preserved, transmitted. Kanigel, a free-lance science writer, shows how scientists trace the chemical and molecular events within nerve cells that stimulate—and may enhance—memory.

The key to understanding learning is in discovering how neurons, or nerve cells, communicate with each other. Brain researchers scrutinize the chemical and electrical activity in the synapses, minute gaps between neighboring neurons. An electrical charge shooting down a neuron triggers the release of chemicals called neurotransmitters; they in turn cross the synapse to receptors on the other side, charging the next nerve cell.

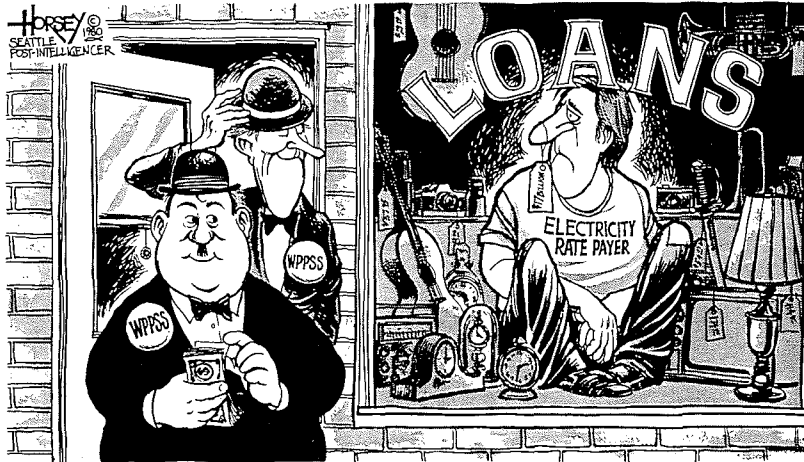
During the past two decades, much understanding of subneural events has come from experiments with *Aplysia californica*—a lowly snail. When it receives a blow to its head or tail, the snail tucks in its gill; soon it learns to retract at any stimuli—even light. The first stimulation releases a surge of chemicals, eventually freeing the neurotransmitters and kicking off the tucking response. Researchers wondered why the snail's ability to react—or to remember—greatly outlasts the momentarily heightened level of chemicals. After unraveling the subneural reactions, they found that certain chemical transformations (absorbing calcium, emitting potassium) allow softer stimuli to set off the same release of neurotransmitters.

This is fine for simple creatures, but do similar processes occur in more complex animals? What happens when a rat sniffs a piece of cheese that reminds him later, when he is hungry, to come back for more? Mammalian studies show that a strong stimulation of the hippocampus, a brain organ important to memory, sensitizes the synapse, strengthening its response to future, less intense stimulation.

This synaptic memory sheds light on higher forms of learning, such as the ability to associate an object with a specific event, or the triggering of one thought by another. Scientists at the City of Hope's Beckman Research Institute in Duarte, California, and the University of California, Irvine, have showed that if either of two synapses—one weak and one strong—are stimulated, the other will be strengthened, possibly increasing the brain's ability to store complex information.

Do synapses "boogie"? one scientist asks. It appears that a brief, intense shock to the synapse may actually change the shape of its neuron and cause the cell's spiny branches to grow—potentially enhancing memory.

**RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**



*The Washington Pacific Power Supply System's construction of five nuclear power plants was criticized both by local politicians and the press.*

**Dam Waste**

"Blackout at Bonneville Power" by Andrew N. Kleit and Richard L. Stroup, in *Regulation* (No. 2, 1987), American Enterprise Institute, 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), which supplies low-cost electric power to the Pacific Northwest, is theoretically a self-supporting government agency that requires no federal funding.

In fact, argue Kleit, a research associate, and Stroup, a senior associate, both at the Political Economy Research Center in Bozeman, Montana, complex accounting schemes and off-budget loan programs ensure that BPA's deficits (paid for by U.S. taxpayers) are hidden—and rising.

Created in 1937, BPA sells electricity from dams in the Columbia River basin (such as the Bonneville and Grand Coulee) to other utilities and industrial plants. But a scheme called "residential exchange" allows investor-owned utilities (and a few public-utility districts) to sell electricity to BPA at the utility's average cost, and then buy the *same* power back at the agency's lower average cost. During Fiscal Year 1986, for example, Portland Gas and Electric sold 6.4 million megawatts of residential exchange power to BPA for \$211 million, and then "bought" the same power from BPA for \$143 million. BPA's total losses in residential-exchange programs for 1985 and 1986: \$200 million.

Until 1974, Congress permitted special low-interest loans to BPA from the U.S. Treasury. As of 1986, BPA had \$6.5 billion of these loans outstanding, for which it is being charged an average of 3.5 percent interest. In addition, BPA owes the Treasury \$790 million in loans made for irriga-

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**RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**


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tion projects. The cost to taxpayers of subsidizing these low-interest loans: \$4 billion from 1973 to 1983, and over \$600 million in 1983 alone.

Because the authority is banned by law from building new plants, BPA bureaucrats persuaded the Washington Pacific Power Supply System (WPPSS, or "Whoops") in 1970 to build three nuclear plants and allow BPA to keep most of the power generated. BPA then forced its customers to pay for the WPPSS plants by "net-billing" contracts, which required participating utilities to pass costs on to the consumer. Cost overruns and incompetence caused WPPSS to default on \$2.25 billion worth of bonds in 1983. BPA customers are now paying the interest (\$751 million in 1986—over one-third of BPA's total revenues) on \$6 billion in bonds for net-billed facilities that supply only 3.4 percent of BPA's power.

The authors call for the sale of BPA to the private sector, in hopes that a nonbureaucratic management may be encouraged to build more cost-efficient power plants. Otherwise, they warn, "another Whoops-like debacle" is "just a matter of time."

### *Preserving Wildlife*

"Foundations of Wildlife Protection Attitudes" by Eugene C. Hargrove, in *Inquiry* (March 1987), P.O. Box 2959 Tøyen, 0608 Oslo 6, Norway.

Where did the notion that wild animals should be left unharmed by humans originate? "Animal liberationists," such as Australian philosopher Peter Singer, argue that animals have an inherent right to live, and that hunting or harming animals is a fundamental violation of their rights.

Hargrove, a philosopher at the University of Georgia, disagrees with Singer. He believes that endangered species should be protected for aesthetic rather than moral reasons. Rather than thinking of wild animals as individuals endowed with rights, he says, people should consider the question of their protection as inseparable from the preservation of the landscape of which they are a part.

Nineteenth-century Western naturalists, reports Hargrove, while calling for the protection of animals as a class, did not object to killing them for food or experiments. Artist George Catlin (1796-1872), for example, called for creation of a "*Nation's Park*, containing man and beast," as a way to curb the "profligate waste of the lives of these noble and useful animals." Yet Catlin once wounded a buffalo and watched it slowly die, in order to see sublime expressions that he could use as material in sketches.

During the 20th century, naturalists discovered ecological reasons why wild animals could and even should be hunted. Although Aldo Leopold, a wildlife biologist, had deep reservations about hunting, they were not because it was wrong to see animals suffer or because he thought that hunting was immoral. Rather he believed that animal predators were both more efficient and better able to maintain the ecological balance than their human counterparts.

Hargrove argues that Leopold was right. A wilderness or national park is good because it provides an ecosystem that allows humans an "aesthetic experience." Like other art objects, landscapes deteriorate over time, and

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**RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**


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parts of the landscape (such as endangered species) may need to be preserved in zoos, just as fragile paintings are sometimes removed from public view. But to insist that individual wild animals have rights and that all share an equal need for protection is "improper sentimentalism," a falsification of the sometimes bloody and constantly evolving ecological web. Admiration of wild animals as "worthy opponents and/or trophies," Hargrove maintains, may also be a morally justified, aesthetic experience.

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**ARTS & LETTERS**


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*Chicago's Architecture*

"The Rise of the Skyscraper from the Ashes of Chicago" by Tom F. Peters, in *American Heritage of Invention and Technology* (Fall 1987), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

Why was the skyscraper developed in Chicago during the late 19th century? Peters, associate professor of architecture at Cornell, argues that the birth of the tall building in the Windy City just then resulted from several technological advances that "emerged at once and coalesced."

The Great Fire of 1871, while destroying most of the buildings in downtown Chicago, left the city's economic structure intact. Because most modern forms of communication and transportation (telephones, cars, fast commuter trains) did not exist, businesses had no choice but to rebuild Chicago's concentrated downtown core.

The builders who flocked to Chicago (most of them demobilized military engineers) replaced burned-out wood structures with those of fire-proof cast iron. Although iron had been used by architects since 1847, Chicago's were the first to routinely construct *entire* buildings (instead of just their facades) from the metal.

Builders found cast iron stiff and unwieldy. In 1881, Charles Louis Stobel, an engineer working for Andrew Carnegie, perfected *wrought* iron sections that could be mass-produced in quantities suitable for large buildings. Stobel later developed steel "Z-bar columns," which could withstand heavy loads. At the same time, the slow steam elevator was replaced with the more efficient hydraulic elevator, capable of reaching 36 stories.

These technological advances, together with improved designs for the "skeletons" of buildings, gave architects the freedom to experiment with different "skins" or facades. Chicago's builders used that freedom to produce bold structures. William Le Baron Jenney (1832-1907) not only built the first modern skyscraper (the Home Insurance Building of 1885) but also proved a formidable teacher. His pupils included Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), the foremost American architect of his time, and Daniel Burnham (1846-1912), whose works include Union Station in Washington, D.C. and Filene's department store in Boston.

No one man was responsible for the skyscraper, Peters observes. It was the collective achievements of Chicago's architects, engineers, and inventors that ensured that the city will "always be central to a history of the building type that defines our age."



## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

*The Cap of Freedom*

"The Liberty Cap as a Revolutionary Symbol in America and France" by Yvonne Korshak, in *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* (Fall 1987), 16-00 Pollitt Dr., Fair Lawn, N.J. 07410.

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a committee composed of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson to design a seal for the new United States. The three men differed in their ideas. Franklin suggested a depiction of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, Adams proposed Hercules poised between Vice and Virtue, and Jefferson argued for the Israelites in the wilderness. But one element was common to all their designs—a Liberty Goddess bearing a liberty cap.

On the seal finally adopted by Congress in 1782, however, the liberty cap had vanished, replaced by a "newer iconography of power," the eagle and rays. Thus the liberty cap, a potent symbol during the American Revolution, began to fade from the national consciousness.

Korshak, an art historian at Adelphi University, traces the roots of the liberty cap to ancient Rome, where the freeing of a slave was symbolized by the emancipated man's donning of a *pileus*, the round, brimless skullcap worn by citizens. Brutus used the liberty cap on a coin struck after the assassination of Julius Caesar, in an attempt to identify himself with the republican liberties restored following Caesar's death.

In 1552, France's Henry II used the cap on a medal to promote himself as a liberator after his victory over Charles V of Germany. During the American Revolution, the cap appeared everywhere, from Paul Revere's



*English politician and journalist John Wilkes (1725-1797) fervently believed in freedom of speech and the press. His efforts prompted satirist William Hogarth (1697-1764) to bestow the "liberty cap" on Wilkes in this 1763 etching.*

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

Sons of Liberty bowl (1768) to the masthead of the *Boston Gazette*.

Korshak attributes the symbol's eventual demise in America to "sensitivity" to the slavery issue, which threatened the union as early as the 1787 Constitutional Convention. The federal mint, established in 1792, for example, "may have preferred for its first coinage a generalized and inspirational goddess . . . over any depictions of the cap, [with its specific reference] to the freeing of slaves, even ancient Roman slaves."

French artists, however, who had used the liberty cap symbol to refer to the American Revolution, adopted it to serve the anti-Royalist cause during the French Revolution in 1789. The floppy-tipped Phrygian cap, which alluded to the kind worn by French workingmen, writes Korshak, became the "quintessential French liberty cap." During the Revolution the symbol proliferated—on plaques, furniture, tea sets, and atop the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

Unlike the first American coins, which eliminated the cap, the French versions maintained it. Today it remains a powerful symbol for the state on French coins and postage stamps. In the United States, says Korshak, the cap's "radical meaning" faded simply by being forgotten. In France, by 1800, the goddess and the cap "shed their connotations of liberty and became instead symbolic of the republic."

### *Hugo the Politician*

"Victor Hugo: On the Legacy of Myth" by Renee Winegarten, in *Encounter* (Sept.-Oct. 1987), 44 Great Windmill St., London W1V 7PA, United Kingdom.

Victor Hugo (1802–1885), the French novelist and dramatist, relished battling in the political arena. As early as 1829, Hugo began a lifelong campaign against the death penalty, which led him to condemn the executions of both American abolitionist John Brown and Emperor Maximilian, the French-installed ruler of Mexico (1864–1867). At various stages, Hugo supported Russian Jews, homeless children, and Irish Fenians.

Yet Hugo's "love for the People," argues Winegarten, a biographer and critic, was ambiguous. Even the title of his most famous novel, *Les Misérables* (1862), could refer either to persons living in poverty *or* people who were "vile and despicable." In an autobiographical work, Hugo wrote that his philosophy was to see "right on both sides, wrong on both sides."

Hugo began his career as an ultra-Royalist. But the banning and stringent censorship of his early plays—such as *Marion de Lorme* (1829) and *Hernani* (1830)—led Hugo to question his monarchist convictions. It took the Revolution of 1848 to complete the transformation of Hugo from a "vaguely liberal conservative" to a man who routinely "voted with the Left" as a *député* in the French Parliament.

After President Louis-Napoléon declared himself emperor in 1852, Hugo fled France for Brussels, where he stayed until Napoléon was deposed in 1870. *Les Misérables*, the major work of this period, both praised and denigrated the poor. Those underprivileged people who, by their own achievements, transcended their fate (such as hero Jean Valjean) were admirable; characters who stayed trapped in the mire of poverty were *la*

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 ARTS & LETTERS
 

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*canaille*—the underworld, the condemned.

Hugo returned from exile as “the incarnation of the Republic”; his birthday became a day of national celebration, and the Parisian street on which he lived was named for him. In 1985, on the centennial of his death, French politicians of both the Right and Left claimed Hugo as their champion. The National Assembly president, a socialist, declared that Hugo “is and will remain part of the Left.” Conservative politician Jacques Chirac, now France’s premier, countered that Hugo “could have been a Gaullist” because of his belief in “the greatness of France.” Indeed, Winegarten observes, Hugo’s shifting political positions allow him to “be claimed by almost all as a genuine part of their mythic patrimony.”

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### *Kiwi Success*

“New Zealand’s Economy: Learning to Fly” in  
*The Economist* (Nov. 21, 1987), 25 St. James  
 St., London SW1A 1HG, United Kingdom.

New Zealand’s economy has been failing ever since 1950, when the British Empire began to recede. But the market-oriented policies of Labour Prime Minister David Lange, argues a staff-written *Economist* report, may be halting New Zealand’s long economic decline.

During the early 1980s, New Zealand was “one of the most regulated and distorted economies outside the communist block.” National Party Prime Minister Robert Muldoon attempted to bolster domestic industries through massive subsidies to farmers, energy producers, and steel manufacturers. As inflation rose, Muldoon imposed wage and price controls, dampening the economy further. When Muldoon’s regime fell in July 1984, New Zealand’s foreign debt exceeded Brazil’s on a per capita basis.

The Labour Party took drastic steps to bring the New Zealand economy back to health. Finance Minister Roger Douglas combined tight-money policies with deregulation. Wage, price, and credit controls, interest-rate ceilings, and foreign-exchange restrictions were abolished. The maximum rate of income tax was reduced from 66 percent to 48 percent.

In April 1987, nine state-owned agencies (whose earnings represent 12.5 percent of New Zealand’s gross domestic product) were “corporatized”—transformed into firms designed to be run like businesses instead of bureaucracies. The new corporations (including the post office, the electricity monopoly, and Air New Zealand) have made dramatic changes. Both the Forestry Corp. and the Coal Corp. have reduced their staffs by two-thirds, yet coal production has increased by 10-20 percent and the Forestry Corp. expects to turn a loss of \$45.5 million in 1986 into a profit of \$19.5 million in 1987.

Many regulatory burdens still exist. While some tariffs have been reduced, they remain extremely high, averaging between 30 and 40 percent on manufactured goods. Union membership is still mandatory, and centralized bargaining means wages cannot respond to changes in the demand for

**OTHER NATIONS**

different skills and products. Economic difficulties persist: Prices have risen by 54 percent since 1984, compared to nine percent in the U.S. during the same period. Even so, three years of "Rogernomics" have restored "a sense of national pride" to New Zealand. Thanks to deregulation, businessmen "raised to side-step and dummy their way around government controls . . . now believe they can take on the world."

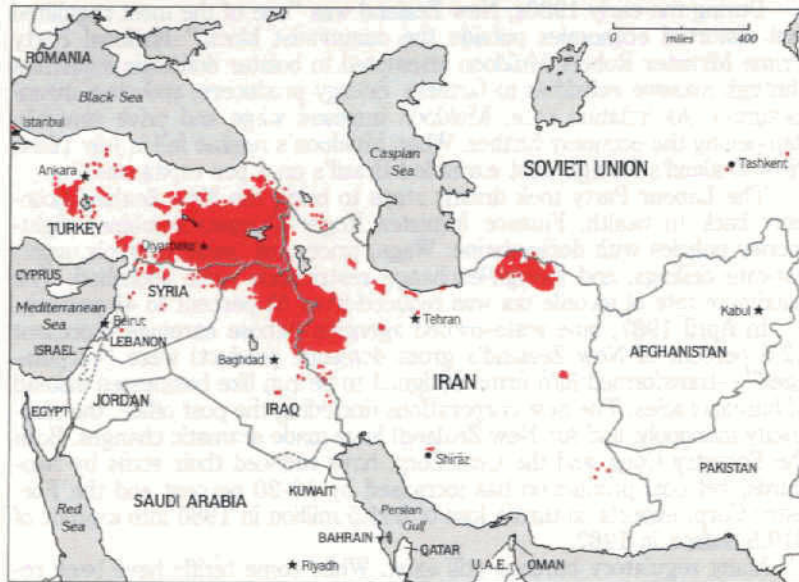
***The Kurdish Way***

"Sons of Devils" by Robert D. Kaplan, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Nov. 1987), 8 Arlington St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

For 4000 years the Kurds, highland warriors with a deeply ingrained taste for the spoils of conflict, have inhabited the Taurus Mountains of the Middle East between the Tigris River and Lake Van. Today some 16 million Kurds are loyal to "Kurdistan," a territory larger than California, spread over parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Soviet Union.

"Lacking a state of their own," writes Kaplan, a foreign correspondent, "the Kurds thrive when all the existing states are in turmoil."

Since World War II, Kurdish guerrillas, called *pesh mergas* ("those who are prepared to die"), have contributed to the Middle East's turmoil by waging war against Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. The Kurds have become allies of convenience, acquiring arms from other countries in return for advancing their interests. In 1974, for example, the United States, Israel,



*The Kurdish population (shown in red) is highest in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, but Kurds also inhabit areas of the Soviet Union and Syria.*

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 OTHER NATIONS
 

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and Iran (under the Shah), aiming to destabilize the Iraqi government, backed a Kurdish revolt led by Mustafa Barzani. Barzani's son continues to battle Iraq, but now with support from Iran and Libya.

Since the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980, the Kurds have continued their violent campaigns in three nations.

Home to five Kurdish partisan armies, northern Iraq is "a cauldron of Kurdish separatism." Two groups of 10,000 guerrillas oppose the Iraqis, taking advantage of the army's preoccupation with the war to the south, and threatening the highway and oil pipeline to Turkey. Three armies of anti-Khomeini guerrillas based in Iraq routinely conduct raids into Iran.

Turkey does not recognize the existence of its eight million Kurds, calling them "eastern compatriots" or "mountain Turks." But Syrian-trained, Marxist *pesh mergas* have launched more than 400 attacks on Turkish border villages since 1984. To secure its southeastern provinces, Turkey is fencing the Syrian border and bombing the hideouts of *pesh mergas* in Iraq.

While some opportunistic Kurdish factions lean toward Marxist ideology, they have also welcomed support from the West. If Iran triumphs over Iraq, Kaplan contends, either superpower may use the Kurds for "an insurgency option" in Iran. "Draw up any scenario you please," he suggests, "the Kurds are available."

### *Deregulating Japan*

"Micro Economics" by Robert Chapman Wood, in *Policy Review* (Fall 1987), Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Japan's trade barriers against foreign imports are well known. Yet Japan has an equally formidable network of *domestic* trade barriers—internal regulatory restrictions that discourage investment and growth and encourage trade surpluses. These restrictions, says Wood, an economic consultant, "prevent Japanese citizens from buying what they most want to buy."

Japanese curbs on development, Wood argues, derive from government policies designed to "preserve the country's traditions and culture." Having been taught in school that Japan is a small nation lacking in resources (without being told about comparable areas of the world, such as southern New England or the Netherlands), few Japanese believe that they can live as well as Europeans or Americans. There is little public pressure, therefore, for the removal of existing economic barriers.

Consider Japan's housing policies. Although the nation's population density is high (846 people per square mile), Japan is actually *less* congested than such states as New Jersey (986 people per square mile). But Japanese agricultural policies, with high subsidies for farm products and low taxes on farmland, discourage farmers from selling acreage to developers, reducing the space available for new housing. (Fifteen percent of the Tokyo metropolitan area, for example, is farmland.) Meanwhile, strict national rent controls "often make redevelopment practically impossible."

New businesses are hobbled by government policies designed to preserve family-run stores. Only one "large" store is allowed in a neighbor-

## OTHER NATIONS

hood, "large" being defined as about the size of "the pre-World War II A&P." Because chains do not compete against one another, Japanese consumers are offered fewer goods than their Western counterparts.

To reduce trade surpluses, Wood concludes, the Japanese government needs to slash farm subsidies and eliminate restrictions on business. Housing deregulation, for example, would allow export-oriented Japanese manufacturers to concentrate on domestic markets, as well as provide new customers for Western construction firms. "Reducing Japan's congestion," Wood asserts, "is as important as reducing America's budget deficit."

*Neocolonial Triumph*

"Gabon: A Neocolonial Enclave of Enduring French Interest" by Michael C. Reed, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (June 1987), 32 East 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

The overthrow of governments is common in much of Africa. Yet in the small West African country of Gabon, French neocolonialism has helped ensure that only two men have ruled this nation of perhaps one million since its independence in 1960. Gabon's very identity, notes Reed, a doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, Seattle, "is inseparable from France."

Gabon's first president was Léon M'Ba, leader of a Gabon political party backed by French forestry interests. M'Ba was ousted in February 1964, but was restored to power with the assistance of 600 French paratroopers. After M'Ba's death (in a Parisian hospital) in November 1967, he was succeeded by his vice president, Albert-Bernard (later Omar) Bongo, who has remained in charge ever since.

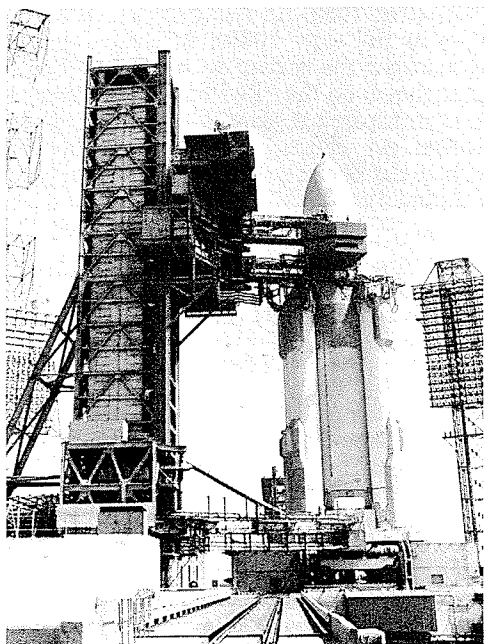
Bongo maintains strong ties with France. The *Service d'action civique* (SAC), a neo-Gaullist paramilitary organization, is quite influential in Gabon; SAC members (who are led by retired general "Loulou" Martin, a Dienbienphu veteran) control both the Presidential Guard and Gabon's secret service.

But Bongo has also ingratiated himself with African governments of widely varying political philosophies. During the 1970s, for example, Gabon helped break the sanctions imposed by the UN on Rhodesian exports. But Bongo has also made six state visits to China, and has offered to negotiate peace between Libya and Chad. Gabon's foreign policy, Bongo has said, is "neither to the right nor to the left, but straight ahead."

Oil revenues have brought prosperity to Gabon. In 1984, for example, sources of petroleum totaling \$691 million accounted for 83 percent of the country's exports. But oil production and revenues have been declining since 1976, and life *après pétrole* looks bleak. Budget revenues fell from \$2.28 billion in 1985 to \$1 billion in 1987. Big development projects, such as the trans-Gabon railway completed in December 1986 at a cost of \$4 billion, may not become profitable for years, if ever.

Bongo's hold on power appears secure. Opposition parties are weak and divided, and Bongo won the November 1986 presidential election with a 99.97 percent majority. "According to African tradition," Bongo declared after his victory, "the *chef* (leader) is chosen one time and forever."

## OTHER NATIONS



*The Soviet rocket carrier Energia, shown here in a May 1987 test at the Baikonur Cosmodrome. The Energia will launch the Soviet space shuttle, which, unlike its U.S. counterpart, can change course during its final descent to Earth.*

### *Soviets in Space*

"Sputnik's Heirs: What the Soviets Are Doing in Space" by Peter Pesavento, in *Technology Review* (Oct. 1987), Mass. Institute of Technology, Building W59, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

For most Americans, the "space race" between the United States and the Soviet Union ended with the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. But during the past two decades, Soviet efforts in space have far surpassed those of the United States. Soviet cosmonauts, for example, have logged 13 years in orbit, eight years more than their American counterparts.

Pesavento, a free-lance writer, details the "ambitious and accelerating program of space activity" on which the Soviets have embarked. Some of their achievements:

- Eight space stations (holding up to 12 people) have been launched since 1971. Over 3,000 experiments, lasting up to 100 hours, have been conducted on these stations. In June 1987, the Soviets began renting laboratories on their *Mir* station, capable of manufacturing crystals, pharmaceuticals, and biological products, to Western corporations.

- The *Energia*, now undergoing final tests, is the world's "heaviest, and most powerful launcher," capable of putting payloads exceeding 41 metric tons into orbit. Because Saturn V rockets have been abandoned, the U.S. will not have a comparable launcher available until at least 1993.

- The Soviet space shuttle program, Pesavento predicts, will become operational within a year, and will employ many shuttle craft.

Among other future Soviet space undertakings is a joint French-Soviet

## OTHER NATIONS

*Mir* exercise, scheduled for November 1988. An Austrian astronaut will be aboard a Soviet space station by the early 1990s. And an extensive exploration of Mars is planned, including the landing of an unmanned roving vehicle (with a 500-kilometer range) on the "Red Planet" in 1994 or 1996; a possible manned flight is anticipated at about the same time.

"We do not intend to slacken our efforts," Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev said in a 1986 speech at the Baikonur Cosmodrome, "and lose leading positions in space exploration."

*An End to Militance?*

"The New Industrial Relations: British Electricians' New-Style Agreements" by Leonard Rico, in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (Oct. 1987), 207 ILR Research Building, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, N.Y. 14851.

British unions have been well known for their militant resistance to change. But high unemployment and new restrictions on union activities imposed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government have resulted in declines in union membership of between 17 and 20 percent over the past eight years.

Can the 90 labor unions constituting the Trades Union Congress (TUC) adapt to hard times? One solution may be found in the controversial organizing strategy adopted by the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications, and Plumbing Union (EETPU). Rico, associate professor of management at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, shows how EETPU actions may provide a way to ensure union survival.

The EETPU has negotiated a series of "new-style" agreements with high-technology firms. These are open-shop agreements under which employees are free to join any union or no union, but the EETPU is recognized as the sole bargaining representative. In return, its leaders pledge not to strike, and to resolve all disputes by binding arbitration.

"New-style" agreements have proved popular, particularly with British-based Japanese employers traditionally wary of unions. From 1981 to 1985, the EETPU made agreements with 14 employers, including the British affiliates of Toshiba, Sanyo, and Hitachi. In 1986, publisher Rupert Murdoch replaced striking printers with EETPU members.

Other unions have reacted harshly to EETPU's "no-strike" collaborative deals. The print unions, for example, called for the suspension of the EETPU from the TUC for cooperating with Murdoch. In September 1987, the Transport and General Workers' Union proposed that the TUC ban "no-strike" agreements. But most EETPU members support the new order. "Our people," argued Joan Griffiths, senior union representative at EETPU's Toshiba chapter, "are far more concerned with the right to work than with the right to strike."

The EETPU has become a model; the United Auto Workers' deal with General Motors' planned new Saturn plant in Tennessee "strongly resembles" EETPU agreements. Rico predicts that the new arrangements made by Britain's electricians will continue to have wide influence. The "innovative pacts," he argues, "demonstrate that fundamental changes in collective bargaining relationships are taking place."



## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions*

### **“Reagan and the Economy: The Successes, Failures, and Unfinished Agenda.”**

Institute for Contemporary Studies, 243 Kearny St., San Francisco, Calif., 94108. 301 pp. \$22.95.

Author: Michael J. Boskin

How have Ronald Reagan's economic strategies affected American life?

Boskin, a Stanford University economist, contends that the administration's policies, continuing budget deficits aside, have made the United States more productive and prosperous than it was during the 1970s.

Consider America's economy in 1980, prior to Reagan's presidency. Inflation, spurred mostly by excessive expansion of the money supply, grew by 11.3 percent in 1979, up 3.6 percent from 1978. Keynesian economists, such as George Perry of the Brookings Institution, contended that inflation could only be stopped at a punitive cost. Perry argued that each percentage point fall in inflation would result in a reduction of \$200 billion in U.S. output.

To reduce inflation, the Reagan administration continued the tight-money policies begun in 1979 by Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul Volcker. It also added tax-cutting and budget-control strategies that, far from radical, Boskin argues, were “an exaggerated expression of mainstream economic thinking at the time.” These strategies, while not *causing* the 1981–82 recession (which was not limited to the U.S.), ameliorated the recession's harmful effects and helped the economic recovery of 1983–84. For, unlike the 1970s, when inflation fell from 12.2 percent in 1974 to 4.8 percent in 1976, but rose to nine percent in 1978, the Reagan years have been a period when inflation has been held to around three percent “for a full six years.”

Moreover, the incentives provided by tax cuts and deregulation spurred job creation and reduced unemployment. From 1979–1986, while industry lost two million jobs, the service sector *created* 12 million jobs, pushing the employment rate to over 60 percent—“an all-time high.” The 12.7 percent increase in the United States' gross national product (GNP) between 1982 and 1985 was over four times

greater than France's.

The Reagan administration's great economic failure, Boskin believes, is that it failed to match tax cuts with corresponding slashes in spending. The massive deficits that resulted are largely due to expanding Social Security budgets.

The federal government's share of the GNP rose from 22.7 percent in Fiscal Year 1981 (the last Carter administration budget) to 23.6 percent in Fiscal Year 1986. While the defense share of the budget rose from 23.2 percent (\$157.5 billion) in Fiscal Year 1981 to 27.1 percent (\$265.8 billion) in Fiscal Year 1986, Social Security spending (including Medicare) rose even faster, becoming “the most rapidly-growing item” in the budget, expanding from 26.3 percent (\$178.7 billion) in 1981 to 27.4 percent (\$268.8 billion) in 1986.

State and local government *surpluses* have been rising as steadily as the federal budget deficit. In 1986, for example, the federal budget deficit was \$202.8 billion, 4.8 percent of the GNP. State and local governments, however, produced a surplus in 1986 of \$59.3 billion—1.4 percent of GNP. These surpluses, combined with foreign investment, will allow time for national budget deficits to be brought “under control without re-igniting inflation.”

How should the deficit be reduced? Boskin argues that the best method is to reduce spending, particularly on such “entitlements” as agricultural subsidies and Social Security payments that benefit the well-off instead of the poor. Selling government-owned transportation, energy, and utility firms to the private sector would be a “highly desirable” way to reduce deficits. Rather than raising taxes (“a last resort”), spending reductions and privatization would “send a better signal to financial markets” as to how the government intends to handle future fiscal problems, such as predicted deficits in Medicare funds.

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### **“The Fiscal Impact of Educational Reform.”**

Center for Education Finance, New York Univ., 300 East Building, New York, N.Y. 10003.  
164 pp. \$15.00.

Author: Deborah Inman

Upgrading America's public schools through such innovations as "merit pay" for teachers and revamping curricula has been a subject of extensive debate in recent years. But how effective has this movement been in fomenting change? Inman, director of New York University's Center for Education Finance, contends that new outlays for school reform have only been a small fraction of total state education budgets.

Inman asked 44 states to report how much money they spent on school-reform efforts. From Fiscal Year 1983 through Fiscal Year 1987, cumulative state education reform spending was \$5.97 billion, less than one percent of the \$647 billion the states spent on education. In 1987 alone, states reported spending \$2.5 billion on reform, 1.6 percent of the \$160 billion in

state education expenditures.

The most costly innovation was to increase teacher salaries. The \$506 million spent by the states to raise teacher pay in 1987 constituted 20 percent of state education reform spending in that year. Changes both in revising curricula and improving teacher-training standards were less well financed: In 1987, only 4.6 percent (\$115 million) of reform spending was used for teacher training and certification requirements, while just 6.7 percent (\$170 million) was used to upgrade curricula.

What role did the U.S. Department of Education play in the school-reform movement? In 1987, only nine states used federal money (totaling \$14 million) for reform programs. "Federal funds had virtually no impact," Inman reports, on state education reform efforts.

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### **“The Peasant Betrayed: Agriculture and Land Reform in the Third World.”**

Oelgeschlager, Gunn, and Hain, 131 Clarendon St., Boston, Mass. 02116. 302pp. \$40.00.

Authors: John P. Powelson and Richard Stock

Land reform has been one of the "sacred cows" of economic development specialists. But the chief beneficiaries of land reform, the authors charge, are not the rural poor. Third World officials, encouraged by "well-intentioned elites of the industrialized world," use land reform to transfer resources from agriculture to more wasteful projects and/or to their own pockets.

Land reform usually fails because "bureaucrats are not farmers." Instead of peasants (who are intimately familiar with the ecology and climate of the land they work) making decisions about what crops to plant, bureaucrats arrogate these deci-

sions to themselves. They do so either by forcing peasants into state-owned collectives or by controlling credit, fertilizer, or crop marketing.

The ill effects of land reform are felt around the world, argue Powelson, an economist at the University of Colorado, and Stock, assistant professor of economics at the University of Dayton. Consider these countries:

- PERU. On June 23, 1969, Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado began nationalization of the cultivated crop land in Peru, including foreign-owned sugar plantations. Initially these were worker-controlled, but the

state gradually began to dominate credit, water, and sugar marketing, and then directly controlled several cooperatives from 1973 onward. After world market prices for sugar dropped sharply in 1974, the government steadily tightened control of cooperatives' investment and financing. In 1974, Peru *exported* 462 million metric tons of sugar; by 1981, Peru *imported* 158 million metric tons of sugar.

• EGYPT. Land nationalizations began in 1952 and ended in 1969. Peasants given land by the state were required to buy what they needed from a government-controlled co-op and sell what they produced back to the co-op. Later, *all* producers of certain crops (e.g., cotton) were forced to sell their output to the state.

While rich farmers were able to control local marketing boards and diversify their holdings into unregulated crops (e.g., orchards), poor people were only allowed to grow one state-mandated crop, which provided low returns. While poor farmers' in-

comes rose by two percent from 1960 to 1975, rich farmers increased their incomes by 27 percent. The result of land reform in Egypt: Over a 20-year period, agricultural production *fell*, on average, by 0.4 percent a year, and "city dwellers have rioted in recent years because of food shortages."

• MEXICO. Land reform programs, such as those undertaken by President Lázaro Cárdenas (ruled 1934-40), nationalized farmland, creating large cooperatives in the arid northwestern provinces, while leaving lands in the south and southeast in private hands. Result: Farm income grew faster in the southern part of the country. In some areas, government requirements restricted peasant incomes: Economist Hugh Stringer studied farmers in Morelos, Mexico, who were required to grow sugar and rice, and found that they had a monthly income of \$7-11 per hectare for sugar and \$26 per hectare for rice—but could earn \$40 per hectare if they were allowed to grow tomatoes or hay.

### Average Annual Rates of Agricultural Growth Per Capita, Sixties and Seventies, for Selected Countries.

Country	Sixties	Seventies	Overall
Less developed, controlled			
Algeria	- 2.31	- 1.87	- 2.09
Botswana	- 0.03	- 3.92	- 1.96
Egypt	0.21	- 1.30	- 0.55
India	- 0.16	0.78	0.31
Indonesia	0.24	2.39	1.31
Iran	0.69	0.12	0.41
Mexico	- 0.24	- 0.08	- 0.16
Peru	- 0.79	- 2.39	- 1.59
Philippines	- 0.37	0.45	0.04
Somalia	- 0.23	- 4.68	- 2.48
Tanzania	2.38	- 0.87	0.75
Turkey	0.24	0.56	0.40
Venezuela	0.89	- 1.88	- 0.50
Zambia	- 0.60	- 2.31	- 1.46

*Countries with market-oriented farm policies tend to expand crop production faster than nations where agriculture is dominated by the state.*

• **SOMALIA.** During the 1960s, U.S. agricultural advisers urged Somalian nomads (constituting 66 percent of the population) to settle on fixed plots. In the 1970s, the Somalian government further restricted the acreage that nomads could use to let their cattle and camels graze.

These restrictions ruined the environment, as herdsmen and farmers rapidly exhausted the land assigned to them instead of flexibly moving from range to range. Moreover, wage and price controls, combined with requirements that crop farmers had to sell to state marketing boards, caused overall agricultural output to plummet, and forced thousands of farmers to

enter refugee camps during the 1974-75 drought. Despite "massive international aid," Somalian crop exports fell by 63 percent during the 1970s. The result of land reform and ending time-honored agricultural practices: Somalia will not be able to feed itself "in the near future."

When is land reform successful? Only when it leaves the peasants free to make their own decisions about growing and selling their crops. But neither U.S.-backed land reforms (e.g., in Taiwan and El Salvador) nor those sponsored by the Soviet Union or its client states (e.g., Nicaragua) result in "peasant control over farming decisions, except perhaps rhetorically."

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### **"Claiming the Heavens: *The New York Times* Complete Guide to The Star Wars Debate."**

Times Books, 201 East 50th St., New York, N.Y. 10022. 320 pp. \$17.95.

Authors: Philip M. Boffey, William J. Broad, Leslie H. Gelb, Charles Mohr, and Holcomb Noble

### **"Star Wars: The Economic Fallout."**

Council on Economic Priorities/Ballinger, 54 Church St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. 234 pp. \$19.95.

Senior Project Director: Rosy Nimroody

Since 1984, the United States has spent more than \$9 billion on research and development of a space-based antimissile shield, with a final cost expected to reach the trillion-dollar mark. Supporters say an end to the threat of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) is well worth the money. Critics say that Star Wars (a nickname for the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI) is technologically impossible and funding should be stopped.

A team of reporters from the *New York Times* says that development of SDI is both "impossible and inevitable"—impossible because antimissile technology cannot create a perfect shield against full-scale nuclear attack, inevitable because of the vast momentum generated by an army of defense contractors, lobbyists, technologists, and congressmen.

The Council on Economic Priorities (CEP) agrees, saying Star Wars will be funded, not because of national defense concerns or as a result of successful experiments, but because SDI has become a self-propelled bureaucratic entity, largely fueled by pork-barrel politics.

In 1983-84, SDI contractors contributed over \$3.2 million to political action committees (PACs), according to CEP research. Thirty-five percent of those contributions were received by only 13 percent of the total House membership—the 57 representatives who make up the Armed Services Committee and the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. In 1985, leading recipients of PAC money in the House voted more than 83 percent of the time against restraining SDI funds.

Regional imbalances are also inherent in

generating Star Wars research contracts. Only seven states and the District of Columbia received more in SDI contracts than they paid in taxes to support the program. And while most "winners" are coastal urban areas, "losers" are manufacturing and agricultural regions already hard-hit by low exports and high interest rates. Eight metropolitan areas with 14 percent of the U.S. population paid 19.2 percent of the taxes for SDI and received 62.8 percent of SDI contract obligations.

The SDI's Innovative Science and Technology Program will spend \$600 million over the next five years to "get the most brilliant minds" to work on Star Wars. By diverting highly talented engineers and scientists to SDI, the CEP contends, the U.S. may lose its competitive edge because its

best and brightest are devoting their careers to exotic weapons technology.

Aside from the threat that any SDI research may be classified secret if determined to be "vital to national interests," critics say direct costs to industry may also skyrocket as SDI pulls technicians from the labor pool. This would duplicate previous experience; during the Apollo space program, research and development labor costs rose 80 percent in the ferrous metals industry and 78 percent in chemicals.

While supporters argue that civilian spinoffs from Star Wars technology will outweigh costs, both sides agree that careful consideration should be given to technical difficulties and the economic and social impact of SDI before a decision about production and deployment is made.

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### **"The Soviet Brigade in Cuba: A Study in Political Diplomacy."**

Ind. Univ. Press, 10th and Morton Sts., Bloomington, Ind. 47405. 117 pp. \$25.00.

Author: David D. Newsom

On August 31, 1979, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Frank Church (D.-Idaho) alleged in a press conference that the Soviet Union had placed a "combat brigade" in Cuba. The allegation, and its subsequent mishandling by the Carter administration, may have been the major reason why the Senate failed to ratify the SALT II arms-limitation treaty.

Did this Soviet "combat brigade" exist? Newsom, U.S. under secretary of state at the time of the incident, reports that, far from being a novelty, a Soviet brigade-sized unit had been at the same site in Cuba since 1963. The "combat brigade" incident, he contends, provides a case study of "the serious dangers to a democracy of the casual use of intelligence."

A report mentioning the "brigade" appeared in the highly-classified *National Intelligence Daily*. This report, based on ambiguous intelligence collected by the National Security Agency, was swiftly leaked both to the press and to Senator Church.

But the report extrapolated from faulty information; in fact, no one knew what the *function* of the 2,600-man unit was.

Both Sen. Church and Senator Richard Stone (D.-Fla.) began to use the "combat brigade" issue in fund-raising appeals to conservative constituents. Church even predicted that the brigade's presence would "sink" the proposed SALT II treaty.

Instead of correcting the report, President Carter, in a September 7 television address, said that U.S.-Soviet relations would be "adversely affected" if the brigade stayed in Cuba. The controversy then faded, despite congressional skepticism over Soviet assurances that the brigade was employed at a training center for Cuban forces.

The "combat brigade" affair, Newsom concludes, renewed doubts about the U.S. ability to verify SALT treaty compliance. It also intensified public mistrust of the Soviet Union at a critical moment in U.S.-Soviet relations.



*One week before the 1948 election, Life published this picture of the G.O.P.'s Thomas E. Dewey with the caption: "The Next President Travels By Ferry Boat Over The Broad Waters Of San Francisco Bay." After Dewey lost, a reader asked Life's editor, "How does it feel out on that limb?" The reply: "Crowded."*

# Truman vs. Dewey: The 1948 Election

Chartered jetliners, 30-second TV “spots,” exit polls, and image consultants—all these characterize the contemporary U.S. presidential election campaign. America has come a long way since the last “old-style” contest four decades ago. The year 1948 saw Harry Truman’s surprise victory, now the stuff of legend, over Thomas Dewey. It also marked the first splintering of the Democratic Party over issues of race, the Cold War, and social policy. Since 1948, old regional and class loyalties to each political party have eroded; voters have become less predictable; and the quest for the White House has come to entail a marathon of state caucuses and primaries, staged, it sometimes seems, only for the television cameras. Here, Alonzo Hamby recalls Truman’s early troubles, and Robert Ferrell tells how the 33rd president engineered the last rally of the New Deal coalition.

## THE ACCIDENTAL PRESIDENCY

*by Alonzo L. Hamby*

“He looked to me like a very little man as he sat . . . in the huge leather chair.” Thus, Jonathan Daniels remembered Harry S. Truman waiting to be sworn in as the 33rd president of the United States on the evening of April 12, 1945. Daniels’ general impression was shared by other Americans then and long afterward.

Harry Truman was not, in fact, an unusually small man. When he took the oath of office, he stood about 5’ 9” and weighed 170 pounds. Yet, somehow, to contemporary critics, he always seemed rather less than presidential in stature. His thick eyeglasses and unprepossessing demeanor had much to do with that. So did the fact that he took over the Oval Office that had been occupied for 12 years by Franklin D. Roosevelt, the towering national leader who had just died of a stroke in Warm Springs, Georgia.

At first, however, Americans reflexively supported their new World War II Commander in Chief. In June 1945, soon after the Allies' victory over the Germans (if not yet over the Japanese), a Gallup poll showed that Truman enjoyed an astonishing 87 percent "approval" rating—higher than FDR had ever received. Truman could not have expected such popularity to last forever. How much support would he retain from a fickle public?

A superficial survey of the American experience during the next three years, a time of transition from war to peace, suggests that Truman should have fared rather well. When he took office, it appeared that the bloody conflict in the Pacific would drag on at least until late 1946, costing hundreds of thousands of additional American lives. Instead, Japanese tenacity collapsed during the summer of 1945 under the impact of two enormous mushroom clouds at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On a Tuesday evening, August 14, Truman jubilantly announced the unconditional surrender of the last Axis power.

### No Bugles

A second trauma was also averted. Many, if not most, older Americans had feared that peace and the end of wartime government spending would mean a return to the Great Depression. A *New York Times* headline warned: "5,000,000 EXPECTED TO LOSE ARMS JOBS." Nevertheless, despite a wave of strikes, defense plant layoffs, and the demobilization of up to a million veterans each month, unemployment never approached painful levels. Industries in Detroit, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere rapidly retooled for civilian production and hired ex-G.I.'s.

Truman, in the nature of things, should have received some credit for the nation's postwar economic success. Strange as it may seem, few Americans saw matters that way at the time.

Why?

What is now largely forgotten, even by those who lived through the period, is that most Americans had very rosy postwar expectations—of instant material abundance, of domestic tranquility, of world peace. Yet, at home, it quickly became obvious to millions of citizens that reconversion from war to peace was bringing not a new dawn but a period of surprisingly difficult personal adjustments: temporary unemployment, relocation, shrunken weekly paychecks (due to reduced overtime pay), and chronic shortages that, after V-J Day, suddenly seemed intolerable.

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*A cheerful Big Three—Churchill, Truman, and Stalin—in Potsdam, July 1945. The Cold War soon began; Truman never saw Stalin again.*

Frustrated Americans, noted John Gunther in *Inside U.S.A.*, saw themselves in a kind of “backwash” from the war years, finding little in the new administration in Washington, or anywhere else, but “greed, fear, ineptitude, fumbling of the morning hopes, shoddy dispersal of the evening dreams.”

In Washington, despite high hopes among liberals, there was stalemate. Peace did not bring a New Deal revival. This should have surprised no one. For all his vast personal popularity, FDR had not been able to win legislative approval of any major New Deal advances after 1938, when an informal alliance of Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats gained de facto control of the nominally Democratic Congress. Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition—big-city Catholics and Jews, organized labor, blacks, poor Southern whites, liberal intellectuals—did not break up, but it was badly eroded.

During the war, the impasse between the White House and Congress had been largely papered over. But in September 1945, when Truman proposed a 21-point program (including guaranteed full employment, increased unemployment insurance, and a boost in the 40-cent minimum hourly wage), a chill greeted him on Capitol Hill. In November, the president’s call for a national health insurance plan fell on deaf ears.

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(Not until 1949 would the president name his reform package the Fair Deal.) Still unsure of himself as FDR's heir, Truman backed off. And he did not strenuously object when Congress eviscerated his full employment bill. It became simply the Employment Act of 1946, shorn of Truman's proposed federal *guarantee* of work for all. What remained was a more flexible commitment to maintain "maximum employment."

Liberals were dismayed. "Alas for Truman," said *The New Republic*, there was "no bugle note in his voice" to rally the public.

### Fixing Up the Ice Box

Dissatisfaction with the president also ran high among the 12 million men and women still in uniform, and among their kinfolk back home. When Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson announced in January 1946 that, partly to maintain adequate defenses overseas, the Army would have to slow its pell-mell demobilization, G.I.'s on Guam burned him in effigy and thousands more rioted at other U.S. bases. Angry letters poured into the White House.

The homecoming, when it finally did come, was blissful for some, disillusioning for others. Many marriages, hastily undertaken in wartime, could not survive the humdrum world of peace. During 1945, the nation registered one divorce for every three weddings—the highest ratio then recorded in America.\* Alarm over this "national scandal" was somewhat tempered by the knowledge that a similar upsurge after World War I had quickly come and gone.

Most new marriages survived, and many did so in the face of considerable material adversity. Young couples discovered as often as not that they could not find a decent place to live or afford a reliable automobile or a chewable beefsteak. All in all, during those hectic postwar months, the American people found far fewer of the tangible rewards of victory than they had expected.

The shortage of housing, a legacy of both war and Depression, was the hardest to remedy. Many young couples doubled up with in-laws or paid unprecedented rents for substandard apartments—or even converted chicken coops. The city of Chicago sold 250 old streetcars for conversion into homes. An Omaha newspaper carried a classified ad that read: "Big Ice Box, 7 by 17 feet. Could be fixed up to live in."

Developer William J. Levitt, future creator of several mass-marketed "Levittowns," was already building the first of his \$10,000 houses in a Long Island potato field (the price later dropped to \$6,900), and the G.I. Bill entitled veterans to low-cost federally-guaranteed mortgages. But the housing shortage would not ease before the end of the decade.

Fearing a burst of runaway inflation, Truman sought to retain wartime price controls, but, in doing so, he disrupted the peacetime market

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\*In 1945, there were 30 divorces for every 100 new marriages, a ratio not to be equalled until 1969. Today there are 47 divorces per 100 marriages.

economy. Radios, cars, clothing, good whiskey, choice cuts of meat—all were in short supply. As black (free) markets developed, government-dictated prices became meaningless. Nylon stockings were better currency than dollars. A Los Angeles radio station sent two people on a trip to New York with no money but a big supply of nylons; they arrived in four days without missing a meal or going without a place to sleep.

Ironically, one opinion survey after another seemed to show that price controls, administered by the Office of Price Administration (OPA), enjoyed broad public support. Americans preferred to blame the economy's ills on another, more obvious phenomenon—a wave of strikes unlike any the nation had witnessed since the Great Depression.

In late 1945, unionized workers who had routinely earned eight or more hours of weekly overtime pay during the war boom suddenly faced a return to “straight time,” often at wage levels that, by federal fiat, had not increased since 1942. A labor-management clash was inevitable and, once again, quixotic government policy made it worse.

Truman's advisers (notably the OPA's Chester Bowles) persuaded him to ease controls on wages while attempting to retain most constraints on prices. Corporate America, they reasoned, was fat enough to grant higher wages without raising prices. The unions got a green light.

### Digging Coal with Bayonets

A people hungry for new automobiles watched in dismay in December 1945 as Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers (UAW) led what became a 113-day strike against General Motors, demanding a 30 percent wage increase (to \$1.45 an hour). An old-time social democrat, Reuther was fighting for nothing less, he said, than “a more realistic distribution of America's wealth.” Philip J. Murray's steelworkers' union walked out demanding similar pay raises; so did almost every major national union and thousands of locals in lesser disputes. “Is anybody interested in getting the work done?” asked an editorial writer in the *New York Daily News*.

As these strikes were settled, a pattern of post-World War II labor-management relations emerged that would prevail in major unionized industries until the late 1970s: The big corporations yielded on higher wages, and Washington (usually) did not object when management charged higher prices, thereby passing the wage bill along to consumers.\* (The Consumer Price Index surged by 23 percent from early 1946 through the election year of 1948.) Reuther won his battle for better pay, but lost the war for redistribution.

Nothing, it seemed, could quell the United Mine Workers of America, led by John L. Lewis, the bushy-browed Welshman beloved by the coal-smudged men in the pits and hated by most of the rest of his

\*Other precedent-setting agreements soon followed. The UAW won labor's first automatic cost-of-living adjustment in 1948; the steelworkers secured a pension plan and health insurance in 1949.

countrymen—not least because he had dared to order two walkouts while the nation was still at war. Throughout 1945 and '46, Lewis pulled his men out on one exasperating strike after another, at one point causing factory layoffs in Detroit and Pittsburgh, reduced rail service, and government-mandated “dimouts” in 22 Eastern states.

In May 1946, when both the coal miners and the nation’s railway brotherhoods were on strike, Truman invoked his wartime powers (the nation was still technically at war); he ordered the U.S. Army to seize the mines and railroads. Lewis thumbed his nose at the president. “Let Truman dig coal with his bayonets,” he jeered.

His temper flaring, Truman drafted a speech that he never delivered and probably never intended to, suggesting that it was time to “hang a few traitors.” Appearing before an unusual joint session of Congress, he instead requested authority “to draft into the Armed Forces of the United States all workers who are on strike against their government.” As he spoke, he was handed a scribbled message: The railway brotherhoods, chief targets of his proposal, had ended their strike.

An agitated House of Representatives nevertheless promptly approved Truman’s request by a vote of 306-13. The Senate refused to go along. A few days later, Lewis, signing another fat wage contract, ended the miners’ strike. Having overreacted, Truman wound up with nothing except the doubts of ordinary folk, who questioned his judgment, and the stunned outrage of Big Labor and its liberal allies. Walter Reuther warned that Truman’s antistrike proposal would “make slavery legal”; *The Nation* denounced it as the work of a “weak, baffled, angry man.”

### FDR’s Shadow

Beyond domestic discontent loomed the unsettling vista of a world still beset by struggles for power and influence. Americans, wrote historian William L. O’Neill, “were tired of international crises and wished only to get on with their private lives.” Yet, by 1946, popular expectations that peace and the newly created United Nations would bring a more benign international order were fading.

Once America’s wartime ally, Josef Stalin was now slowly tightening his control over the Soviet-occupied nations of Eastern Europe. By early 1946, Albania and Yugoslavia were already under Communist rule, and it was becoming apparent even to American liberals that the Kremlin would never allow the free elections Stalin had promised in Bulgaria, Rumania, and Poland. The fates of Finland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were in doubt. The Soviets were aiding Mao Zedong’s Communist revolution in China, appeared to be backing the Communists’ National Liberation Front of Greece, and were holding military maneuvers near the Turkish border, demanding control of the Dardanelles. Only reluctantly would they end their occupation of northern Iran. In March 1946, during a speech in Fulton, Missouri, with Truman by his side, Winston Churchill



*October 1946: New Yorkers line up in downtown Manhattan to buy meat, then a scarce item. As shoppers' patience wore thin, scuffles often broke out. Truman soon lifted postwar price controls on meat, ending the shortages.*

warned that an "iron curtain" was descending across Europe.

Harry Truman stood at the center of all this unwelcome turmoil, domestic and foreign. He usually dealt competently with its manifestations, and at times won some clear successes. Yet, like Jimmy Carter later on, Truman failed in one crucial respect—he was unable to impart a sense of order or a coherent vision to the nation. Often he suffered by comparison with FDR. "What one misses," wrote columnist Max Lerner, "is the confident sense of direction that Roosevelt gave, despite all the contradictions of his policy." Not only did people wonder what FDR would have done if he were alive. Now the joke in Washington was: "What would Truman do if he were alive?"

Some of this discontent was simply a reaction to the new Chief Executive's personal style. An ex-farmer, World War I artilleryman, and failed haberdasher from Independence, Missouri, a graduate of "Boss" Tom Pendergast's Kansas City Democratic machine who spoke, nay, barked in a flat midwestern accent, Truman was a startling contrast to his urbane predecessor in the White House. "Can you imagine a Groton President saying that?" asked one FDR holdover after hearing an earthy Truman wisecrack.

FDR had assembled a White House entourage of bright, often controversial chaps—Harry Hopkins, Robert Sherwood, Thomas Corcoran—many of whom would have shone anywhere. Truman surrounded himself with fellow Missourians, many of them lackluster old National Guard cronies—John W. Snyder, secretary of the treasury, White House aides Eddie McKim, Harry Vaughan, and James K. Vardaman, Jr. (later a governor of the Federal Reserve Board). Only Press Secretary Charles

G. Ross, a former Washington correspondent for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, had any obvious qualifications for his post. The others could have stepped directly from the pages of *Babbitt*.

Liberals in Washington and New York despaired as New Deal veterans quit the new administration, seemingly taking with them the old 1930s idealism. "One has the feeling," wrote an editor of the liberal *New York Post*, "that a poorer and poorer cast is dealing desperately with a bigger and bigger story."

As the 1946 congressional elections approached, Truman managed to confront nearly every major issue in ways that alienated all sides. First, he again called on Congress to pass a New Deal-style domestic program—increased public housing, federal aid to education, national health insurance—thereby antagonizing Republicans and Southern conservatives, who were eager, as Representative Joseph W. Martin, Jr., (R.-Mass.) put it, to remove "the meddling hands of political despots" from national public life. But again Truman failed to persuade Congress to accept his proposals, thereby disappointing the liberals. They felt, as the *Progressive* noted, "that there is no hand at the wheel." Many liberals were convinced, surely in error, that the conservative coalition in Congress would have cracked under the impact of one or two nationally broadcast Rooseveltian radio speeches.

All sides were distressed by Truman's handling of foreign policy. "If Roosevelt were alive," said Senator Claude Pepper, a liberal Florida Democrat, "we'd be getting on better with Russia." For their part, even as they helped slash the defense budget, conservatives assailed the White House's failure to mount an effective challenge to the Soviet advances across Eastern Europe—ancestral homeland to many urban voters in Northern states. Taking the lead, Senator Robert A. Taft, Ohio's "Mr. Republican," accused Truman of "appeasing Russia, a policy which has sacrificed throughout Eastern Europe and Asia the freedom of many nations and millions of people."

### Henry Wallace Defects

No member of Truman's Cabinet had been more dedicated to post-war Soviet-American amity than his secretary of commerce, Henry A. Wallace. An Iowa-born plant geneticist, editor of his family's Des Moines-based magazine, *Wallace's Farmer*, he had been named FDR's first secretary of agriculture in 1933. Ascending to the vice presidency in 1941, he became the leading spokesman of full-throated liberal idealism. He spoke of the war against the Axis powers as a "millennial and revolutionary march" toward a world without fascism, poverty, or hunger—a "Peoples' Century."

A vegetarian and something of a religious mystic, Wallace was at best an object of amiable ridicule on Capitol Hill, dismissed, as one Democrat later put it, as a man who "always had his thingamajigs mixed up

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with his whatchamacallits." At the 1944 convention, Roosevelt had allowed conservative Southerners and the Northern big-city bosses to dump the Iowan from the ticket in favor of Truman, then a second-term U.S. senator and a noncontroversial party loyalist. As a consolation prize, FDR named Wallace to head the Commerce Department.

After FDR's death, many liberals believed that the New Deal torch should have been passed to Wallace. "How I wish you were at the helm," Hubert H. Humphrey, the young mayor of Minneapolis, wrote to the secretary of commerce upon hearing of FDR's death.

Wallace had become increasingly anxious about the new president's foreign policy. He finally unveiled his objections in a September 1946 speech before a mass rally of "progressives" (New Deal liberals, Communists, and assorted radicals) in Manhattan's Madison Square Garden. Some of his ideas presaged those of the McGovern wing of the Democratic Party in 1972. Wallace argued that Truman's "get tough" stance toward the Soviets would only provoke Stalin. "The danger of war," he declared, "is much less from communism than it is from [Western] imperialism." Even worse, Wallace directly contradicted administration policy; he suggested that the United States concede political control of Eastern Europe to the Soviets.

### **No Meat, No Votes**

Wallace's break with Truman made headlines around the world just as Secretary of State James Byrnes was in Europe, reassuring the West Germans that the United States would not abandon them to the Soviets. And, inexplicably, Truman told a reporter off-the-cuff that he had read and approved "the whole speech." A few days later, the embarrassed president was forced to sack Wallace.

It was hard to tell what did more to damage the White House: the ejection of the last New Dealer from the Cabinet on the eve of the 1946 congressional elections, or the revelation that the president apparently did not understand his own foreign policy!

It seemed as if everything that could go wrong for Harry Truman had gone wrong. But more trouble was to come, closer to home.

That summer, Truman had agreed to a compromise with the conservatives in Congress, which effectively ended price controls on most consumer items. The big exception was meat. By October, the great stockyards of the Midwest were deserted, and not a pound of beef or pork was to be found in many stores. As the newspapers noted, indignant cattlemen and feedlot operators had virtually gone out on strike.

The voters were fed up. Four alarmed Connecticut Democrats in the House reported to Truman: "Party workers canvassing the voters are being told by Democrats 'No meat—no votes.'"

On October 14, Truman went on the radio to announce his response. After harshly denouncing the livestock interests, he came to the



*In a rare light moment, Dewey joins a Cavemen Club while campaigning for the G.O.P. presidential nomination in Grants Pass, Oregon.*

bottom line. "There is only one remedy left—that is to lift controls." Delivered in a weary tone, the speech sounded like a notice of surrender.

"If Truman wanted to elect a Republican Congress, he could not be doing a better job," Senator Taft observed happily in a letter to Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. Soon, the two Republicans would be bitter rivals for the 1948 G.O.P. presidential nomination. But, during the autumn of 1946, the Republicans gleefully united for the congressional campaign behind a two-word slogan: "Had Enough?"

The Gallup poll reported that Truman's "approval" rating had plummeted to 32 percent. To the extent that the Democrats conducted any sort of national campaign that autumn, it was led by the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose recorded speeches far outnumbered Truman's broadcasts in the party's radio commercials.

But even FDR could not rally the faithful. On election day, to nobody's surprise, the Republicans won control of Congress for the first time since 1928. The "beefsteak election" gave them margins of 51-45 in the Senate (a gain of 12 seats) and 246-188 in the House of Representatives (a gain of 54 seats).\* "The New Deal is kaput," crowed the conservative *New York Daily News*. However, defeated Democratic

\*Among the many G.O.P. newcomers were Representative Richard M. Nixon of California and Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin. Democrats needed a strong microscope (and a crystal ball) to find an occasional bright spot, such as John F. Kennedy's election to the House by the voters of Cambridge, Massachusetts.



candidates surveyed by the *United States News* generally agreed with a West Virginia candidate who attributed his defeat to local issues, as well as to "dissatisfaction with shortages and also opposition to continuance of [the] present Administration."

Indeed, few other U.S. presidents have been so resoundingly discredited by a single midterm election. Although Dwight D. Eisenhower and all the Republicans who followed him in the White House would have to face a Congress at least partially controlled by the opposition party (except during 1953–55), such divided government was relatively rare before Truman's time. Even President Herbert Hoover's fellow Republicans had managed to hold on to the Senate (but not the House) in the Depression-era election of 1930. Now, Senator J. William Fulbright, an Arkansas Democrat, publicly suggested that Truman appoint Senate G.O.P. leader Arthur H. Vandenberg as secretary of state, next in the line of succession to the presidency at the time,\* then resign. As far as is known, Truman did not even ponder the suggestion. Thereafter, he often privately referred to the Arkansan, a former college president, as "Senator Halfbright."

In part, Truman's refusal to be demoralized was a matter of temperament. If he had failed to impress political Washington and the public during 1945–46, he was not a quitter. He and some of his staff were sufficiently perceptive, moreover, to realize that the 1946 debacle signified, in many ways, a liberation. No longer would the 62-year-old Chief Executive have to try to accommodate a nominally Democratic but conservative Congress. "Nobody here in the White House is down-hearted," Press Secretary Ross told his sister. "President Truman is now a free man and can write a fine record in the coming two years."

### The Truman Doctrine

For the remainder of his term, the man from Missouri functioned as an "opposition president" on most domestic issues—with the 1948 election in mind. He would flail away at the "do nothing" Republican 80th Congress for its attacks on labor unions, for "tax cuts for the rich," for inaction on inflation, for "indifference" to the country's housing needs, for rejection of national health insurance, and for sticking a "pitchfork in the back" of farmers. To put it politely, Truman was not above a little demagoguery (in 1948, he would propose a revival of price controls), but most of his attacks pointed up genuine differences between the two national political parties; and, as often as not, the resurgent Republicans in Congress were content to let Truman sharpen the contrasts.

His first major move, however, received strong bipartisan support

\*Until the adoption of the 25th Amendment in 1967, there was no constitutional provision for the replacement of a vice president who succeeded to the presidency. At Truman's urging, the 80th Congress would alter the presidential succession statute, placing the Speaker of the House and the president pro tem of the Senate ahead of the secretary of state.

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on Capitol Hill. In March 1947, having abandoned any hope of achieving a general settlement with Stalin, Truman committed the United States, despite its postwar military feebleness, to an ambitious policy of containing Soviet expansionism. In announcing what came to be called the Truman Doctrine, he told Congress: "I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." Then he requested \$400 million in aid for Greece and Turkey, the former facing a Communist insurgency, the latter a direct threat from the neighboring Soviets.

In June, after a Communist coup toppled a Hungarian government already subservient to Moscow, Truman's new secretary of state, General George C. Marshall, announced, during a commencement speech at Harvard, his now-famous proposal to shore up the beleaguered economies of Europe. In December, Truman formally requested a four-year, \$17 billion Marshall Plan (officially, the European Recovery Program). The Soviets were invited to participate, but refused, and pressured their satellites (Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia) into following suit. American aid came with so many strings attached, proclaimed Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, that the recipients "would lose their former economic and national independence" to "certain strong powers."

At home, Truman's new Cold War policy—which set a pattern for two decades—raised the specter of costly obligations abroad for an insular society that had long abhorred foreign "entanglements" in peacetime. It drew fire from the Left, led by Henry Wallace (who attacked the "martial plan" as a scheme to prop up "reactionary" regimes), and from the neo-isolationist, economy-minded Right, represented by Senator Taft. Stoutly anti-Communist, but leery of European "adventures," the Senate majority leader sought to scale back the Marshall Plan.

### Reviving the Draft

Overall, however, "containment" and aid for Western Europe won general assent from the broad center of American politics. Truman gained support from liberal internationalists in both parties, as well as from the Eastern press. Governor Dewey endorsed the Marshall Plan, without neglecting the opportunity to ritually chastise Truman and FDR for earlier "surrendering 200 million people in Middle Europe into the clutches of Soviet Russia." Senator Vandenberg spoke out, warning his Republican peers that without the Marshall Plan, "aggressive communism will be spurred throughout the world." Many liberal critics fell silent after a Soviet-backed coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 eliminated the last non-Communist government in Eastern Europe and stirred American fears of further Soviet advances. In March 1948, the Senate approved the unprecedented U.S. aid measure by a vote of 69 to

17, the House by 329 to 74. Not long afterward, Congress reluctantly revived the draft.

On the domestic front, Truman began the painstaking reassembly of FDR's New Deal coalition. His first decision was to mend relations with the then-powerful chieftains of U.S. organized labor.\* Repairs were needed. Shortly after the 1946 elections, he had further angered them (but delighted other Americans) when he hauled John L. Lewis into court during another coal strike. The government won a stunning \$3.5 million judgment (later reduced) against the union.

In June 1947, the G.O.P.-controlled Congress presented the president with an opportunity to regain the favor of labor leaders when it passed the Taft-Hartley Act. Taft-Hartley banned the closed shop and imposed other restrictions on unions; the unions rather hysterically called it a "slave labor bill." Truman promptly vetoed it. It was, he said, an attack on the workingman. Even as Congress overrode his veto (with Southern Democrats joining Republicans), liberals cheered the president for his stand. "Mr. Truman has reached the crucial fork in the road and turned unmistakably to the left," wrote journalist James Wechsler.

### Zigs and Zags

Another, more far-reaching decision was to take up the cause of Negro civil rights. Never an advocate of inter-racial social mixing, a son of the upper South, Truman was nonetheless a sincere believer in equal opportunity and equality before the law. And he knew that while the New Deal had won blacks over to the Democratic Party (without actually promising or delivering much in the way of civil rights), there was no guarantee that they would not return to the party of Lincoln.

After the 1946 election, Truman had appointed a presidential commission on civil rights. In October 1947, with Truman's endorsement, it published its report, *To Secure These Rights*, which called for, among other things, an antilynching law, abolition of the poll tax, a voting rights act, an end to segregation in the armed forces, and a ban on Jim Crow segregation in interstate public transportation.

Issued during what was still an era of monolithic white supremacy in the South, of casual bigotry and social segregation in the rest of the country, *To Secure These Rights* seemed a revolutionary document. It was to serve "for a generation as the basic statement of most of the goals of civil rights advocates," historians Donald McCoy and Richard Reutten later wrote. However, in 1947, it did not seem to help Truman. It was nearly the last straw for many Dixie Democrats. "The present leadership of the Democratic Party will soon realize that the South is no

\*In 1947, labor unions were near the peak of their power, representing one-third of all U.S. nonfarm workers. Organized labor's fears of the Taft-Hartley Act proved to be exaggerated; it maintained its enrollment strength through the 1950s. Membership has since dropped to 17.5 percent of the nonfarm work force.

### THE REPUBLICANS IN 1948

“Only a political miracle or extraordinary stupidity on the part of the Republicans can save the Democratic party, after 16 years in power, from a debacle in November.” So said *Time* early in 1948, reflecting the persistent conventional wisdom of that election year.

Scenting the first G.O.P. presidential victory in two decades, seven Republicans were vying for the nomination. Then as now, the party was divided, though not as badly as the Democrats. Representing the moderate, internationalist Eastern Establishment was New York’s Governor Thomas E. Dewey, who had been the G.O.P.’s forlorn hope against FDR in wartime 1944. The party’s conservative Old Guard backed Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio.

There were several dark horses: California’s liberal governor, Earl Warren; General Douglas MacArthur, hero of the war in the Pacific; Michigan’s Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, backer of the Marshall Plan; Speaker of the House Joseph W. Martin, Jr., of Massachusetts; and Harold E. Stassen, former governor of Minnesota.

Most newsmen and politicians regarded Dewey, nationally known, as the front-runner, even though he failed to stir the party faithful. “You can’t make a soufflé rise twice,” observed one Washington wag. The nomination would not be decided until the Republican convention in Philadelphia that June. So unimportant were primaries in 1948 that only Dewey and Stassen entered the opening contest, in New Hampshire on March 9, and Dewey never set foot in the state. Nevertheless, Stassen lost.

But then a political bombshell exploded. In the April 6 Wisconsin primary, General MacArthur (who attended a Milwaukee high school in his boyhood) had been the five-to-one favorite. But Stassen, wrote journalist Irwin Ross, worked the state like “a Fuller Brush man canvassing a high-rise apartment house,” traveling in a specially-equipped Greyhound bus. Only Dewey campaigned (briefly) against him. The result: Stassen won 19 delegates, MacArthur eight, Dewey zero. Suddenly, the New Yorker looked vulnerable.

Stassen, anathema to most party leaders, had adopted what was, at the time, a novel strategy. For more than a year, the tall, charismatic, 41-year-old Minnesotan, a self-described “liberal,” had been campaigning full time for the nomination, hoping that a few surprise primary victories would touch off a Stassen stampede in Philadelphia.

Before the Nebraska primary, on April 13, Stassen surprised reporters and

longer “in the bag,” declared Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina. Soon, he would try to lead the “Dixiecrats” out of the party of Jefferson, Jackson, and FDR.

Dewey, Taft, and other leading contenders for the 1948 Republican presidential nomination largely kept silent on racial issues. Although Dewey had supported civil rights in New York, he and other national Republican politicians were reluctant to alienate Southern whites, especially whites already upset by Truman’s stand on Taft-Hartley.

enraptured Corn Belt Republicans by proposing to outlaw the American Communist Party. He captured 43 percent of the Nebraska vote, embarrassing Dewey and the absentees—Taft, Warren, and Vandenberg. *Business Week* described “Your Next President: Harold Stassen.” Then came Pennsylvania (April 27), where, virtually unopposed, he triumphed again. Stassen stumbled only when he boldly challenged Senator Taft in his home state of Ohio—thus violating a taboo that had kept rivals out of primaries in Dewey’s New York and Warren’s California. Taft won all but nine of the 23 contested delegates.

The do-or-die test for Dewey was the Oregon primary on May 21. Following Stassen’s example, he traveled the state by bus, stopping to shake hands at every crossroads where a crowd could be gathered. In a national radio debate, held in Portland, Dewey pooh-poohed Stassen’s proposal to outlaw the Communist Party: “I will never seek votes that way from free Americans,” the *New Yorker* declared.



*Stassen, Martin, Dewey, Taft, and Warren.*

Stassen lost. When the Republicans gathered in Philadelphia one month later, it was pretty much a Dewey-Taft race. The governor had proved his mettle in Oregon, capturing 52 percent of the vote. On the eighth floor of Philadelphia’s Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, Dewey’s well-organized team skillfully corralled delegates. Representative Charles A. Halleck of Indiana, thinking that he had been promised the vice-presidential slot, swung his state’s delegation behind Dewey. Others followed.

When the first ballot was taken on the afternoon of June 24, Dewey fell only 114 votes short of the 548 he needed. Taft had 224 votes, Stassen 157, Vandenberg 62, and Warren 59. A second ballot brought Dewey closer to victory. During an afternoon recess, Taft desperately telephoned Stassen from the Benjamin Franklin Hotel to ask for his delegates. The Minnesotan refused. It was all over. That evening, on the third ballot, Dewey won by acclamation. Surprising Charles Halleck, Dewey picked Earl Warren as his running mate.

In Washington, Harry Truman remarked in private that Taft or Warren would have been stronger candidates. Dewey did not worry him. “Before this campaign is over,” he vowed, “I will take the mustache off that fellow.”

Despite all his troubles, Truman’s “approval” rating in the polls had risen well above 50 percent, propelled by his foreign policy decisions and the fading of the irritations of postwar reconversion. The economy was healthy; most shortages had ended; labor unrest had quieted.

But then the president began to stumble again. Another batch of mediocre appointees, mounting discontent among whites in the South, and Henry Wallace’s announcement in December 1947 that he would launch a “peace” candidacy for the White House—all of these hurt.

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Overshadowing all else was the president's old handicap—he did not behave like a leader, like FDR. All too often, he suffered anew from self-inflicted wounds. Surveying Truman's prospects in March 1948, *Time* concluded that "Mr. Truman had often faced his responsibilities with a cheerful, dogged courage. But his performance was almost invariably awkward, uninspired and above all, mediocre." The man on the street, *Time* said, had decided that Truman "means well, but he don't do well."

Especially damaging now were the administration's zigs and zags on the festering problem of Palestine. Truman was committed to the UN's 1947 plan to divide the British protectorate into independent Jewish and Arab states. But, by early 1948, the State Department under George Marshall was fighting Truman's pro-Zionist approach at every opportunity. At one point, a U.S. delegate to the UN even announced that Washington no longer favored partition. Walter Lippmann, the leading columnist of the day, pronounced the disarray "a grave problem for the nation. The problem is [how] the affairs of the country are to be conducted by a president who has not only lost the support of his party but is not in control of his own administration."

### The Campaign Begins

Surprisingly, it did not help Truman when the U.S. government became the first in the world to tender de facto recognition to Israel after the Jewish state proclaimed its existence on May 14, 1948. Diplomatic recognition without U.S. emergency aid, at a time when Israel was hard beset by Arab armies, drew scorn from most dedicated Zionists. Jewish votes in New York, Illinois, and California might swing an election, and Wallace, as well as Republicans Dewey and Taft, had solid pro-Zionist records. Meanwhile, to many Americans less emotionally tied to Israel's fate, Truman looked once again like an opportunistic small-time politician who was playing to special interests.

For all of these reasons—his lackluster performance, the gathering Southern revolt, the Wallace candidacy—the conviction that Truman would be a sure loser in November was sweeping through the disheartened cadres of the Democratic Party by the spring of 1948.

The various elements of the party—Southern conservatives, mainstream liberals, organized labor, Catholic big-city bosses—were now united in only one endeavor: a desperate search for an alternative to Truman. Even FDR's sons, notably Representative James Roosevelt of California, joined in. They begged the new president of Columbia University, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, to announce his availability. Never mind that Ike had staked out no public positions on the issues of the day. He was the hero of D-Day, with an aura of command. And the polls showed that he could beat anybody the Republicans might nominate. Eisenhower's admirers, like Governor Mario Cuomo's in recent times, would not take "no" for an answer. They persisted right up until the

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Democratic convention in Philadelphia.

We do not know exactly what Truman thought of his prospects during that difficult spring of 1948. Historians do know that he was determined to run and seek vindication. He would stand or fall on his strategy of rebuilding the Democratic coalition, hoping that defections on the Left and Right would not prove fatal. By now, he and his advisers had also decided on a campaign tactic—to present to the public not the Harry Truman who stumbled over prepared speeches on grand occasions, but the natural Harry Truman who was at his best speaking off-the-cuff to relatively small crowds.

On June 4, the president set off on a “nonpolitical” cross-country train trip, ostensibly to accept an honorary degree and deliver the commencement address at the University of California at Berkeley. On the train, he was accompanied by some 60 print reporters and photographers and 66 aides and support personnel—a far cry from the massive airborne White House entourage, burdened by TV equipment, of later presidents on tour.

The trip was not always smooth; in Omaha, local arrangements were so badly botched that Truman wound up making a speech to a nearly empty auditorium. In Eugene, Oregon, he blundered into an expression of sympathy for Josef Stalin: “I like old Joe! He is a decent fellow. But Joe is a prisoner of the Politburo.”

His missteps, however, turned out to be less important than his message. In one talk after another, he focused on domestic bread-and-butter issues. In the West, he contrasted his own support of water and power projects with alleged neglect by the Republican 80th Congress. In the cities, he attacked the Taft-Hartley Act and excoriated the Congress for failing to pass a strong housing bill. A remark at Albuquerque, New Mexico, summed up all the New Deal echoes: “The issue in this country is between special privilege and the people.”

His new style was on the whole a decided asset in the West. As only a few Washington reporters noted, Truman’s folksiness and informality struck a responsive chord with the surprisingly large and friendly “whistlestop” crowds. He showed off his wife Bess and daughter Margaret. He got out of bed and, in bathrobe and pajamas, spoke to a late night crowd at Barstow, California.

A spectator in Bremerton, Washington, caught the tone of the trip. “Pour it on, Harry!” he shouted. The president’s response was quick: “I’m going to—I’m going to!” When Truman returned to the nation’s capital on June 18, he was elated. His blood was up. The Democratic convention lay ahead, but the campaign of 1948 had already begun.

## THE LAST HURRAH

*by Robert H. Ferrell*

Gloom hung like a great invisible fog over the Democratic delegates who gathered in Philadelphia during the dog days of July for the party's 1948 national convention. They saw nothing ahead but certain defeat in November. They behaved, reported the Associated Press, "as though they [had] accepted an invitation to a funeral."

Three weeks earlier, during an exuberant session in the same city, the Republicans had triumphantly nominated "the next president of the United States," Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. California's genial governor, Earl Warren, the vice-presidential nominee, gave the ticket perfect East-West balance. Victory seemed assured.

Former representative Clare Boothe Luce of Connecticut had epitomized the G.O.P.'s confident mood. She had declared from the podium that Harry S. Truman, whom the Democrats seemed condemned to nominate, was a "gone goose."

To the cheers of the assembled Republicans, Mrs. Luce had explained why. The party of Franklin D. Roosevelt, she gleefully observed, was now split into three factions: "a Jim Crow wing, led by lynch-loving Bourbons . . . a Moscow wing, masterminded by Stalin's Mortimer Snerd, Henry Wallace . . . and a Pendergast wing run by the wampum and boodle boys . . . who gave us Harry Truman."

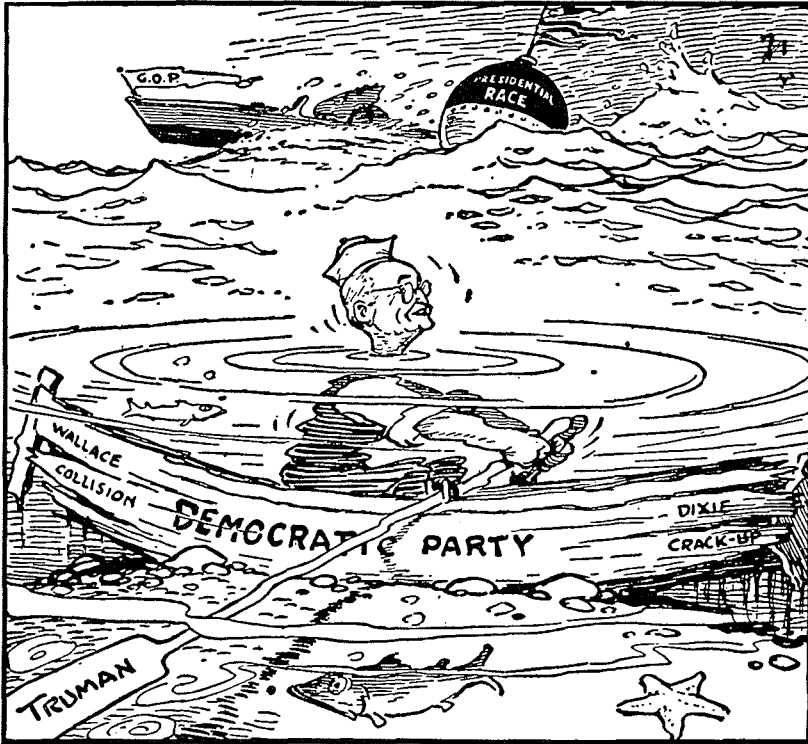
Even as Mrs. Luce spoke in Philadelphia, Representative James Roosevelt of California, FDR's son, had been engaged in a final effort to persuade General Dwight D. Eisenhower, then president of Columbia University, to accept the Democratic nomination. A heterogeneous array of disenchanted labor leaders, Northern liberals, big-city bosses, and Southern conservatives backed his "dump Truman" drive.\* Forty years ago, most delegates were not committed to candidates in advance by primary election votes as they are today. Party leaders might still have been able to deliver the nomination—if Ike wanted it. More than once, Eisenhower had declared that he was not interested; finally he said it with an exclamation point.

On July 9, as the anti-Truman Democrats were preparing to stage a pre-convention caucus in Philadelphia, the hero of D-Day telegraphed the dissidents: "I ask you to accept my refusal as final and complete, which it most emphatically is."

As a final gesture, Senator Claude Pepper, a quixotic Florida liberal,

\*Among the disenchanted were South Carolina's Governor J. Strom Thurmond; Leon Henderson, chairman of the liberal organization, Americans for Democratic Action; Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers of America; and Chicago party boss Jack Arvey.





*Truman's plight, as depicted by a Chicago Tribune cartoonist in 1948. Later, the Tribune would print its famous "Dewey Defeats Truman" headline.*

tossed his own hat into the ring. A deep silence greeted—and ended—his candidacy.

All drama, all suspense, indeed all hope, seemed to have been drained from the Democratic conclave even before it began. As the delegates assembled on Monday afternoon, July 12, wrote journalist Irwin Ross in *The Loneliest Campaign* (1968), "the liveliest member of the Democratic party seemed to be the papier mâché donkey, with its flashing electric eyes and wagging tail, which stood on the marquee of the Bellevue-Stratford," headquarters of the Truman forces. No band played in the lobby of the Bellevue-Stratford (or in the other hotel lobbies), the crowds were subdued, and bartenders complained that business was not half as brisk as it had been when the Republicans were in town. Many of the delegates gamely carried placards—ALL 48 in '48, KEEP AMERICA HUMAN WITH TRUMAN—but the messages seemed to mock reality.

Adding to the Democrats' gloom was the sticky summer weather,

unrelieved by air conditioning, which was still a relatively rare amenity. Philadelphia's Convention Hall in mid-July was like the inside of a hot air balloon. New, but much in evidence, were the bulky TV cameras. (The G.O.P. gathering three weeks earlier had been the first U.S. political convention ever televised.) TV was still in its infancy; stations in only a few Eastern cities, serving 400,000 households, broadcast the conventions. The TV lights further raised the temperatures inside Convention Hall; in other respects, the cameras would have little impact in 1948.

On Monday, the only question seemed to be: Who would Truman be able to persuade to join him as running mate in a lost cause? Truman's aides had sounded out Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a darling of the liberals. But, on Monday morning, Douglas declined. Word got back to Truman that the former New Dealer (he had headed the Securities and Exchange Commission before FDR named him to the Court) said that he could not be a "No. 2 man to a No. 2 man."

### The Civil Rights Plank

The matter was settled on Tuesday morning. A Truman spokesman told reporters that the president would accept the Senate minority leader, Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky, "if the Democratic convention sees fit" to nominate him. Surprisingly, Truman's old Senate crony had actively lobbied behind the scenes for the nomination.

The white-haired Barkley was 70 years old, and Truman said it took him five minutes to sign his name, but he was a colorful speechifier of the old school. He could stir audiences, especially Southern white audiences. Truman could use Barkley's talents.

Indeed, when Barkley got the presidential nod, Truman still hoped that the angry Dixie Democrats—Mrs. Luce's "lynch-loving Bourbons"—might be persuaded not to bolt the party. Just before the convention, Truman's lieutenants had tried to minimize the damage done by the president's own prior civil rights proposals (e.g., an antilynching law, abolition of the poll tax, a law barring segregation on interstate trains, airliners, and buses). They successfully lobbied for a mild civil rights statement in the proposed party platform. The statement called upon Congress to advance legal equality for blacks "to the limit of its constitutional powers"—an escape clause for the Southerners, who argued that most proposed federal antisegregation initiatives would violate constitutional guarantees of states' rights.

But as the convention got underway, the compromise plank sud-

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denly seemed to please neither Southerners nor liberals. The Southerners planned to introduce at least one substitute. And, on the second night of the convention, the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA),\* a year-old organization of anti-Communist liberal activists, held its own fevered all-night strategy session. The members resolved to present a stronger plank to the convention. In effect, the plank would endorse Truman's own proposals. The ADA'ers, few of them professional politicians, begged Hubert H. Humphrey, the 37-year-old mayor of Minneapolis who was running for the Senate in 1948, to be their spokesman. Party elders warned Humphrey that he would split the party and sacrifice a promising career in national politics for a "crackpot" cause. But Humphrey rejected the warning.

On the convention floor that Wednesday afternoon, the Northern big-city bosses, led by Ed Flynn of the Bronx, breezily announced their approval of the Humphrey-ADA proposal. They felt that a strong civil rights plank would not help Truman, who seemed to be beyond help, but it might bring out the black vote in their own local elections. Their general attitude, expressed succinctly in private, was "To hell with it all." That was the way the convention was going.

As the steamy afternoon wore on, contending speakers took the podium to try to rally support for one of four new civil rights planks—three Southern, one liberal. The Southerners tried conciliation: Former governor Daniel Moody of Texas said that he sought only "the restoration of harmony in the Democratic party." But Hubert Humphrey, in a speech that won him national attention, chose confrontation. "The time has arrived," he declared, "for the Democratic party to get out of the shadow of states' rights."

### Pigeons of Peace

The roll was called. The first Southern proposal went down to defeat, 925 to 309. Two more "states' rights" substitutes were shouted down in voice votes. Then, the roll was called for the Humphrey plank, and it squeezed through, 651½ to 582½. As a cacophony of huzzahs and boos filled the great hall, Handy Ellis, chairman of the Alabama delegation, signaled frantically for recognition from the convention chairman, Representative Sam Rayburn of Texas; he wanted to announce Alabama's walkout. Rayburn refused to give Ellis the floor. The convention was suddenly in recess.

When the convention resumed work that evening, Ellis got his wish. Half the Alabama delegates, and all of those from Mississippi, followed as the Alabaman cried, "We bid you goodbye!" and stalked out. The Solid South had fractured for the first time since Reconstruction.

\*Among the ADA's founders were scholars Reinhold Niebuhr, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.; Washington lawyers James H. Rowe, Jr., and Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.; and labor leaders David Dubinsky (of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union) and Walter Reuther.

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Then, around 7:00 P.M. the delegates got down to the anticlimactic business of formally nominating Truman and Barkley. "We're Just Mild About Harry," read several delegates' signs. The remaining Southerners chose to contest the inevitable by nominating Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, who obtained 263 votes to Truman's 947½. (The other ½ vote went to Paul McNutt, former governor of Indiana.) No one offered the traditional motion to make the vote unanimous. The Southerners were in no mood for such routine courtesies.

By the time the convention was ready for Truman to make his appearance, the delegates were cross, wet with perspiration, and bone-tired. The radio networks were still ready to broadcast Truman's acceptance speech, but the hour was late: 1:45 A.M., Thursday morning. Across the country, most radio listeners, earlier perhaps as exasperated as the delegates, were now far more comfortable—they were sound asleep. In the Midwest and the East, most morning newspapers were already printing their main editions.

Then came the convention's crowning indignity. Mrs. Emma Guffey Miller, sister of former senator Joseph Guffey of Pennsylvania, had arranged matters so that when the president appeared on the rostrum, 50 "doves of peace" would swoop out from under a floral Liberty Bell.

The president entered the hall to the strains of "Hail To The Chief," nattily attired in a white linen suit and two-tone shoes. The wilted delegates roused themselves to give him a standing ovation. As Truman consulted the notes for his address, the bird cage was opened, and instantly there were doves (i.e. pigeons) everywhere. Long cooped up, thirsty, the birds were as tired as the delegates; some were beyond fatigue—they were dead, and tumbled lifeless to the floor.

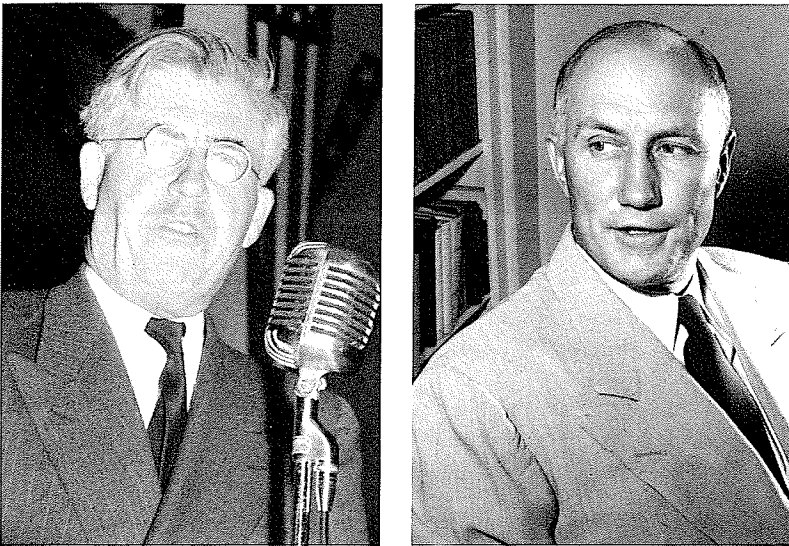
The rest flapped wildly about. A couple of squadrons homed in on the shining bald head of Sam Rayburn, prominent on the rostrum. He flailed his arms and the doves of peace started flying in all directions. Finally the coast-to-coast radio audience heard the Texan growl in despair, "Get those goddamned pigeons out of here."

### The Dixiecrat Challenge

Then Truman began. And, to the surprise of newsmen, the man from Missouri brought the Convention Hall to life at two o'clock in the morning. "Senator Barkley and I will win this election and make those Republicans like it—don't you forget that!" he shouted. The delegates roared their approval. "It was the first time they had heard anybody say 'win' as if he meant it," commented *Time* later.

"Never in the world were the farmers... as prosperous [as today]," Truman thundered, "and if they don't do their duty by the Democratic party, they are the most ungrateful people in the world! And I'll say to labor just what I've said to farmers."

He tore into the "worst" 80th Congress and issued a challenge to



*Presidential candidates Henry A. Wallace and J. Strom Thurmond.*

its Republican majority: "On the 26th day of July, which out in Missouri we call 'Turnip Day,'\* I am going to call Congress back and ask them to pass laws to halt rising prices, to meet the housing crisis—which they are saying they are for in their platform." Truman said he would propose some of his old favorites: federal aid to education, national health insurance, and a boost in the minimum wage, among other items. "They are going to try to dodge this responsibility," Truman predicted, "but what that 'worst' 80th Congress does in its special session will be the test of whether they mean what they say."

Truman's evocation of the party's old-time religion cheered the Democrats enormously. "You can't stay cold about a man who sticks his chin out and fights," explained one delegate. The president's decision to put the Republican Congress on the spot was widely applauded. As they packed their bags late on Thursday, however, few delegates harbored any illusions that a single give-'em-hell speech would make much difference on November 2.

As if to hammer the point home, some 6,000 disaffected Southerners gathered that Saturday at a red brick municipal auditorium in Birmingham, Alabama, and cobbled together the States' Rights Democratic Party—Dixiecrats, for short. Waving Confederate flags and singing "Dixie," the assembled dissidents nominated Governor J. Strom Thurmond, 46, of South Carolina for president, and Governor Fielding L.

\*Actually, the president fudged a bit. According to Missouri folklore: "On the 25th of July/Sow your turnips, wet or dry." In 1948, however, the 25th fell, inconveniently, on a Sunday.

Wright, 53, of Mississippi for vice president.

The Dixiecrat platform denounced Truman's "infamous and iniquitous program [of] equal access to all places of public accommodation for persons of all races, colors, creeds and national origin," and extolled the doctrine of states' rights. This was not simply racist balderdash; Thurmond, who was no yahoo, truly believed in the federalism of 1787. Unvoiced was the Southerners' lingering resentment of FDR's New Deal, which, they felt, had infringed upon state prerogatives and encouraged Southern blacks to be "uppity."

Most of the South's prominent elected Democrats—e.g., Senators Harry Byrd of Virginia and Richard Russell of Georgia—shunned the Dixiecrat convention. They were unenthusiastic about Truman, but they were not prepared to desert the national party. Still, the Dixiecrats seemed sure to attract many disaffected white Democratic voters in the South on Election Day—just as another Southerner, George C. Wallace, would attract them in another tumultuous year, 1968.

Then, as expected, former vice president and Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, 59, officially became the fourth important candidate in the race.\* On July 23, Wallace's party (it was nameless until the convention claimed the legacy of the turn-of-the-century Progressives) met in Philadelphia's Convention Hall. But Wallace drew a different crowd. The delegates, some 3,200 of them, were mostly earnest youths in blue jeans and open-necked sports shirts. Absent were all of the prominent liberal Democrats and labor leaders (e.g., Hubert Humphrey, Walter Reuther) who had looked to him for leadership as recently as 1946.

### Reds and Pinks

While these liberal Democrats had become anti-Communist as the Cold War worsened, Wallace had moved left, refusing, for example, to condemn the Soviet-backed coup in Czechoslovakia in early 1948. Surveying the world's ills, he chose to blame America first. And Wallace's campaign was clearly controlled by his best-organized supporters—the American Communist Party and its fellow travelers. When a delegate in Philadelphia naively proposed a resolution criticizing U.S. foreign policy, but stating that "it is not our intention to give blanket endorsement to the foreign policy of *any* nation [i.e. the Soviet Union]," Wallace's operatives quickly smothered it.

Wallace tried to dampen the controversy over Communist influence in his campaign. But he was not helped by his running mate, Senator Glen Taylor, 44, a well-meaning but eccentric Idaho Democrat. (The former country singer serenaded the Progressives with "When You Were Sweet Sixteen.") Taylor explained that the Progressives welcomed the votes of "pink" Communists who were advocates of nonvi-

\*The other minor party candidates were Norman M. Thomas (Socialist), Claude A. Watson (Prohibition), Edward A. Teichert (Socialist Labor), and Farrell Dobbs (Socialist Workers).

olent change, but spurned the votes of “red” Communists. Overall, the convention, with its accompanying Old Left slogans, was a public relations debacle.

Yet journalists were impressed by Wallace’s ability, despite a wooden speaking style, to draw large crowds. He had been stumping the country for two years, and audiences had *paid* to hear him. In Philadelphia, some 30,000 spectators, many of them brought down on special trains from New York, paid up to \$2.60 apiece for seats in Shibe Park, where Wallace gave his acceptance speech. Wallace had no hope of winning on November 2 but, according to a Gallup poll taken in June, he might attract six percent of the vote—enough to sink Truman.

### Dewey’s Calls for Unity

As Wallace retreated to his farm (“Farvue”) in South Salem, New York, not far from the Dewey farm in Pawling, to brood over the Philadelphia disaster, the journalists shifted their attention to Washington.

Summoned by the president, an unhappy Republican-controlled Senate and House assembled in the stifling heat of late July in the nation’s capital. Truman greeted them with a New Deal speech, calling for standby price and wage controls, federal help for housing, and other measures. He also issued two landmark executive orders—one ending segregation in the armed forces, another protecting the rights of blacks in the civil service.

As Truman had hoped, the special session quickly turned into a donnybrook among its G.O.P. members. Representative Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Republican Party’s national chairman, urged action of some sort on Truman’s proposals. So did Arthur H. Vandenberg, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who spoke to Senator Robert A. Taft, leader of the Republican conservatives. Taft would have none of it. “No,” he replied, “we’re not going to give that fellow [Truman] anything.”

To Truman’s delight, the intramural G.O.P. fracas spilled over onto the floors of the Senate and House. In the Senate, for example, Wisconsin’s Joseph McCarthy clashed with fellow Republican Charles Tobey of New Hampshire over the latter’s attempt to win passage of a generous public housing bill. McCarthy won. The two-week Turnip Session produced little legislation of note.

Dewey saw at once that he would have to be careful to hold together his party’s conservatives and moderates. During the campaign, the 46-year-old governor would avoid almost all domestic issues, choosing instead to issue statesmanlike calls for “unity” of party and nation.

In a true act of statesmanship, Dewey also declared, in effect, that foreign policy would be off-limits as a campaign issue. On June 24, the very day that Dewey won the Republican nomination, the Soviet Union had suddenly closed off all land routes to West Berlin, isolated inside

Soviet-held territory. In late July, as U.S. Air Force transports were ferrying food and supplies to the beleaguered city, Dewey announced that "the present duty of Americans is not to be divided by past lapses, but to unite to surmount present dangers."

The campaign began in earnest in mid-September. During the autumn, Dewey and Truman would each make three major trips, traveling exclusively by rail—the last U.S. presidential campaign so conducted. En route, each gave several hundred speeches, speaking from the rear platforms of his train to crowds gathered at small-town "whistle stops" along the way, and leaving the train for mass rallies organized by local party leaders in larger cities and towns. Some of the speeches were broadcast nationally on radio; very few were even locally televised. (In 1948, only CBS offered TV news, a 15-minute evening broadcast.)

Truman got started first, departing Washington's Union Station aboard his armored Pullman car, the *Ferdinand Magellan*, early on the morning of Friday, September 17. He headed through the Midwest and over the Rockies to San Francisco, with numerous stops along the way, then looped back through Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri (his home state), Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, and returned to the capital, covering 18 states in 15 days. Sticking to his preconvention strategy, he came out swinging, and the crowds loved it. He lambasted the "do-nothing" 80th Congress. He said that G.O.P. stood for Grand Old Platitudes. Also Gluttons of Privilege. The Republicans wanted "company-union unity." They wanted "two families in every garage."

Truman dealt chiefly with four issues, all ignored, he announced, by the "good-for-nothing" 80th Congress: the high cost of living, the right of workingmen to join labor unions, the plight of the farmer, and, to a lesser extent, civil rights. As reporters noted, his goal was no mystery. He was trying to reassemble the New Deal coalition that had won four elections for FDR.

Indeed, the president sometimes campaigned not against Dewey but against Herbert Hoover, reminding voters of the Great Depression: "You remember the Hoover cart . . . They said it is the only automobile in the world that eats oats."

### Wowing the Farmers

With the notable exception of the miners' John L. Lewis, virtually all of the nation's union leaders (including Ronald Reagan of the Screen Actors' Guild) had finally endorsed the president after Philadelphia. Now, Truman sought to stir up the rank and file. In Akron, Ohio, the Rubber City, he said that the Republicans had merely gained their first anti-union objective when they passed the Taft-Hartley Act over his veto. In Hartford, Connecticut, he warned that the G.O.P. favored "labor-baiting, union-hurting, yellow-dog open-shop contracts."

And then there were the farmers. A case can be made that a minor



decision by the 80th Congress that spring, its refusal to allow the U.S. Commodity Credit Corporation to acquire more (costly) grain storage bins, threw the election to Truman. The grain harvest in 1948 was huge. Prices were tumbling; corn dropped from \$2.46 a bushel in January 1948 to \$1.21 in November. The parity support level was \$1.53, but with no bins available, farmers could not deposit their corn and collect parity payments.

In his first major Corn Belt speech, at the National Plowing Contest in Dexter, Iowa, Truman excoriated the "reactionary" Republicans for "attacking the whole structure of price supports for farm products." After the president finished his prepared address, he told the throng how he could sow 160 acres of wheat "without leaving a skip." The farmers loved it. (In November he took Ohio, hitherto solidly Republican, probably on the farm issue.)

Truman was not a high-road campaigner. In retrospect some of his speeches in 1948 amounted to sheer demagoguery; in any case, they vastly exaggerated the sins of his Republican foes. One example: "If you let the Republican reactionaries get complete control of the Government," the president told a cheering crowd of 100,000 souls in Detroit's Cadillac Square, "I would fear . . . for our democratic institutions of free labor and free enterprise."

### No Anti-Communist Fevers, Yet

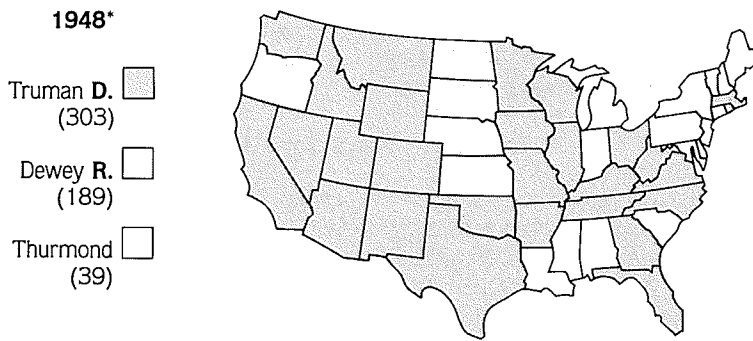
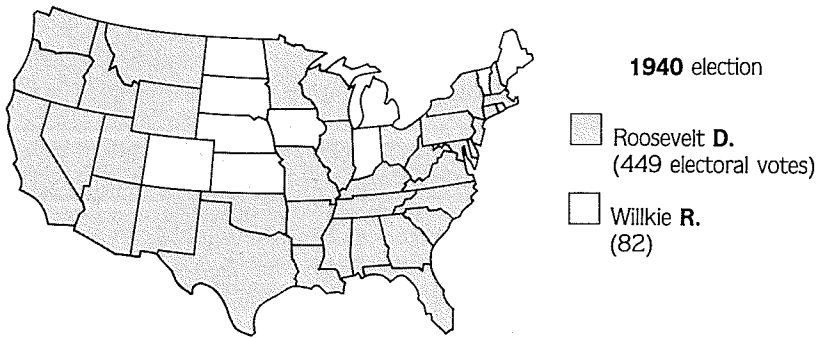
Dewey, boarding his "Victory Special" in Albany, New York, to begin a cross-country tour on September 19, was unruffled by Truman's rhetorical excesses. To him, they seemed like shouts of angry desperation. Buoyed by the conventional wisdom of the day, the candidate surrounded himself with an aura of invincibility. "The governor of New York," observed Sidney Shallett in the *Saturday Evening Post*, "talks not like a man who wants to be President, but like a man who already is." The major opinion polls, which had accurately predicted every presidential winner since 1936 (notwithstanding the *Literary Digest* fiasco that year), gave Dewey a commanding lead. Newsmen covering the campaign generally agreed that it was all over but the inauguration.

Even so, the governor did not seem to galvanize the crowds. Polished, sonorous, he produced few sparks. His ambition was too obvious; he calculated everything. He was stiff with people—he was an "acquired taste," as Robert Donovan of the Republican *New York Herald Tribune* put it—and the imminence of the presidency seemed to increase his hauteur. During the G.O.P. primaries, Dewey had consented to a certain amount of campaign shenanigans; now, he refused to stoop so low as to don a 10-gallon hat or an Indian headdress.

The governor's campaign strategy, such as it was, was to avoid splitting his party or raising issues that could cost him votes. His speechwriters eschewed any initiatives that might make trouble. They

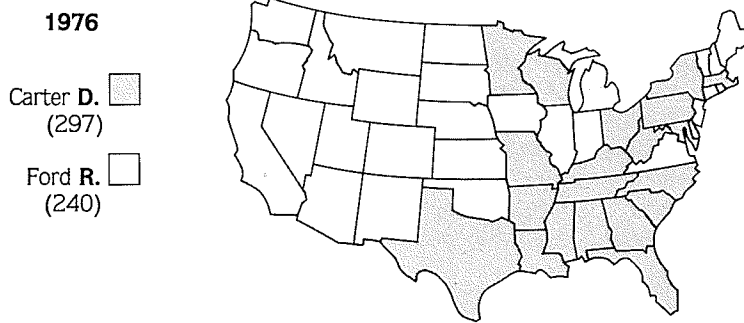
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**FROM THE NEW DEAL TO REAGAN, 1940-80**



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\*Not shown: In 1948, a "faithless" Tennessee elector who was pledged to Truman cast his Electoral College vote for Thurmond. "Faithless" electors cast single votes for Wallace in 1968, Reagan in 1976.



NOTE: In 1968, '76, and '80, Alaska voted Republican, Hawaii Democratic.

*The story since 1940: An electoral potpourri, as old regional loyalties have eroded. The Democratic "Solid South" first broke up in 1948; the West began leaning Republican in 1952. Today, every candidate for the presidency, Democratic or Republican, must assemble a new coalition of voters.*

wrote endlessly of "unity," and sometimes wrote of nothing at all.

To a farm audience, Dewey said: "I pledge to you that your next administration will cooperate with the farmers of the country to protect all people from the tragedy of another Dust Bowl."

On conservation: "I propose that we develop a national policy that will really save our forests through federal, state, and local cooperation."

At a political dinner: "The highest purpose to which we could dedicate ourselves is to rediscover the everlasting variety among us."

Truman was fortunate in that Dewey chose not to exploit the first startling revelations about Soviet spies in high places that had already made headlines that summer. Testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee, Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers, two former Communists, had implicated Alger Hiss, a onetime Roosevelt appointee in the U.S. State Department, and other former Washington officials. Truman, off the cuff, dismissed it all as a "red herring." But Dewey, reporters noted, stirred the loudest applause when he happened to raise the issue, even though his rhetorical sallies were restrained. "I suggest you elect an administration that simply won't appoint any [Communists] in the first place," the governor said in Los Angeles.

In 1949, China would fall to Mao Zedong, and the United States would soon be swept by anti-Communist fevers. Republicans would ask, "Who lost China?" and point to softies or worse in the Truman administration. In 1950, Senator McCarthy would charge that the U.S. State Department employed 205 "card-carrying Communists."

### Dewey Loses His Cool

However, in the fall of 1948, Dewey seemed to feel that he did not need to invoke the Red Menace or any other menace in order to win.

In mid-October, each candidate, making the last foray of the campaign, boarded a train for a whistle-stop tour of the Midwest.\* Dewey's advisers urged him to take the gloves off. Like many newsmen, they had noted that Dewey's crowds were smaller and less enthusiastic than the president's. But Dewey held to the high road. Few reporters or editors questioned his strategy; they simply refused to believe that Truman could win. *Newsweek* had the most ingenious explanation: "In every [prior] campaign Governor Dewey had entered he had lost when the crowds were big and won when the crowds were small."

On October 12, losing his cool, Dewey hurt himself mightily. At Beaucoup, Illinois, his campaign train suddenly started to back up into the crowd. No one was hurt. Dewey, however, blurted out, "That's the first lunatic I've had for an engineer. He probably ought to be shot at sunrise, but I guess we can let him off." Television was not needed to make the incident a gaffe of national proportions. Newspapers relayed

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\*Dewey and Truman largely avoided the Deep South, conceding it to Thurmond. But Wallace bravely campaigned there and, for his pains, was pelted with eggs on several occasions.

Dewey's words quickly enough. It did not help the governor with the labor vote. To the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, on October 21, Truman remarked, "He objects to having engineers back up. He doesn't mention, however, that under the 'Great Engineer' [Hoover] we backed up into the worst depression in our history."

The polls did not reflect these difficulties. Elmo Roper, of the Roper poll, had *quit* taking samples as early as September 9, with the comment that only a "political convulsion" could prevent Dewey from winning. The Crossley poll showed 49.9 percent for Dewey, 44.8 for Truman. Gallup on October 30 produced about the same results.

The polls were, in effect, endorsed by 50 top political writers queried by *Newsweek*—David Lawrence, Arthur Krock, Walter Lippmann, James Reston—and they all picked Dewey to win. Moreover, Dewey had 65 percent of the daily newspapers' editorial endorsements, including those of the *New York Times* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; Truman had 15 percent. To journalists and politicians alike, it still looked like a cakewalk for Dewey.

### Voting 'For' and 'Against'

On election night, November 2, *New York Times* reporter Cabell Phillips, later a Truman biographer, was as sanguine as most of his colleagues in the home office about what the morning headlines would say. After work, he decided to take in a Broadway show. At the second intermission he strolled to a bar for refreshment. There he heard a radio newscast—a jumble of vote totals, precinct numbers, names of states. Then, "with a swallow of Scotch just on its way past the windpipe," he heard a report that caused him to gasp. "Truman's lead now looks almost unassailable. If he can hold his edge in Ohio . . ." Coughing and choking, Phillips slapped a dollar on the bar and sprinted for the *Times* newsroom three blocks away. He was not alone in his surprise.

The outcome was not clear until the following morning at 9:30, when the final Ohio tally came in. Nationally, it was 24.2 million for Truman versus 22 million for Dewey. Wallace and Thurmond each polled some 1.2 million votes, and Thurmond siphoned off Alabama, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana. (Truman carried the rest of the traditionally Democratic South.) Henry Wallace won no states but, thanks to his appeal to the Left, apparently deprived Truman of victories in New York, Michigan, and Maryland, and almost cost him California.

Despite his two million vote margin, the president had just squeaked through. A cumulative shift of only 30,000 votes apportioned among Ohio, Illinois, and California would have given Dewey a majority in the Electoral College. (The final count gave Truman 303 electoral votes, Dewey 189, and Thurmond 39.) The Democrats also handily reclaimed both houses of Congress: gaining majorities of 54 to 42 in the Senate, 263 to 171 in the House.

The journalistic post-mortems, of course, featured the eating of crow. The Alsop brothers, columnists Stewart and Joseph, asked that theirs be fricasseed. The pollsters were red-faced. One of their big errors: ignoring the “undecided” voters.

What group of voters had proved decisive?

“Labor did it,” were Truman’s first words when he walked into the Hotel Muehlebach in Kansas City, Missouri, on the morning after the election. Taft-Hartley, whatever its worth as legislation, was noxious political medicine for the Republicans. Labor union cadres worked hard to get Democratic voters to the polls, accomplishing what the weakened big-city political machines were increasingly unable to do. But labor’s power, too, was limited. Truman lost four of the biggest industrial states to Dewey—New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New Jersey. Thereafter, as union militancy (and, later, membership) declined, the “labor vote” would become increasingly fragmented.

One of the great surprises of the election was Truman’s victory in such Republican Corn Belt states as Iowa and Ohio. The storage bin issue helped him, as did his seemingly anachronistic whistle-stop campaigning in Ottawa, Fostoria, and other small towns in Ohio and elsewhere. The 1948 election may have signaled the last decisive vote by farmers, then 17 percent of the population (but only two percent today).

Journalist Samuel Lubell, writing four years after the election, ar-



*Twenty years after Truman’s 1945 plea for national health insurance, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicare (for the elderly) into law in Independence, Mo. Truman and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey help out.*

gued persuasively that, contrary to most predictions, the Thurmond and Wallace campaigns actually helped elect Truman. Reaction to the Dixiecrat specter stirred black (and Jewish) voters to turn out and pull the Democratic lever. "Negroes felt if they didn't support Truman, no other politician would ever defy the Southerners again," one Harlem editor told Lubell. Truman's appeal among big-city Catholics, meanwhile, burgeoned in reaction to Wallace's acceptance of Communist support. According to Lubell, Catholics voted in great numbers in 1948 (a year of generally low turnout), and those in many Boston wards and several other locales gave even more votes to Truman than they had given to FDR or to Al Smith, one of their own, 20 years earlier.

### The Checkered Future

The truth may be that no single group of voters put Truman over the top. The election was too close, there were too many "what ifs." This much is clear. Truman did manage to accomplish his goal: He rallied a sufficient remnant of FDR's New Deal coalition of farmers, union workers, blacks, poor Southern whites, and Northern liberals.

But the narrow margin of victory showed how difficult that task had now become.

Indeed, in 1952, beset by a Red Scare and an unpopular war in Korea, Truman would choose not to run for a second full term, in part because he saw that he would need to repeat the 1948 miracle. The Democratic candidate that year, Illinois' liberal governor, Adlai Stevenson, was swamped by the G.O.P.'s Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Republicans' assault on Truman's record—"Korea, Communism, and Corruption," or  $K_1 C_2$ . The Illinois Democrat, who soft-pedaled civil rights, carried nine Southern and border states (and none elsewhere in the country), but Ike took Florida, Texas, Virginia, and Oklahoma. When Stevenson tried again in 1956, Eisenhower's margin of victory grew.

The Republicans, it should be noted, were not able to translate the frailties of the national Democratic Party into sweeping gains in state and local elections. Only briefly, during 1953–55, did the G.O.P. control both houses of Congress. And the retirement of Eisenhower, who enjoyed vast *personal* popularity, helped the Democrats. Stirring his fellow Catholics, John F. Kennedy would narrowly win one for the Democrats in 1960, and President Lyndon B. Johnson would overwhelm Senator Barry Goldwater, a conservative Republican, in 1964.

But these Democratic victories did not permanently heal the divisions that first split the national party in 1948.

In 1968, amid turmoil over race relations and Vietnam, the Solid South finally fell apart. Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, the liberal hero of 1948, carried only Texas in the Old Confederacy in his ill-starred race against the Republicans' Richard M. Nixon, and against George C. Wallace of Alabama, candidate of the American Independent Party.

Thereafter, no Democratic nominee could *count* on Southern votes.

The left-center ideological gap that Henry Wallace opened among Democrats over issues of "peace" and coping with Communist advances overseas closed up under the Korean War's impact, only to reappear in more painful form during the Vietnam conflict. In 1972, Wallace's spiritual heir, George McGovern, captured the Democratic nomination on a "peace" platform; he lost every state but Massachusetts (and the District of Columbia) to Richard Nixon. Ever since, the national party has been at war with itself, as liberal Northerners have vied with moderate Southerners for control of the party.

Even as the Democrats' party organization (and, to a lesser extent, the Republicans') began to weaken four decades ago, voters' partisan loyalties began to fade. "Independent" voters, who constituted perhaps 20 percent of the electorate in 1948, now account for 30 percent of the total. Every presidential candidate, especially every Democrat, today must assemble an entire national electoral coalition anew. Black Americans still vote Democratic; but virtually every other voter seems to be up for grabs: In 1980, Ronald Reagan, a conservative California Republican running against Jimmy Carter of Georgia, managed to capture all of the South except Carter's home state, as well as nearly half the votes of all union members.

Higher levels of education and affluence, especially in the South, explain some of the erosion of party loyalty. In the growing white suburbs of Atlanta, Dallas, and Orlando, sons and daughters of lifelong Democrats now sometimes do the unthinkable and vote Republican; in the North, middle-class Protestants are no longer moored to the G.O.P.

Equally important has been the transformation of the business of politics. In 1948, as during the previous 75 years, Americans could expect to find a dutiful party worker on the doorstep, asking for votes; but during the *next* presidential campaign, the candidates themselves were coming right into voters' living rooms via television.

When a newsman asked Truman, in a post-election news conference, whether TV coverage had influenced the outcome, the other print journalists present laughed out loud. Truman said that he wished that it had. However, just four years later, an estimated 60 million TV viewers watched Richard M. Nixon's famed "Checkers" speech; the California representative's emotional response to charges that he maintained a campaign slush fund sparked an outpouring of public support that persuaded Dwight Eisenhower to keep him on the G.O.P. ticket as his running mate. Not always in such obvious ways, television after 1948 would alter forever the course of American politics and shape the destinies of individual politicians seeking higher office.

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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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### THE 1948 ELECTION

"Already the Truman mythmakers are at work, glorifying here, touching up there, and busily digging up signs of 'early promise.'"

So complained journalists Robert S. Allen and William V. Shannon in **The Truman Merry-Go-Round** (Vanguard, 1950), published soon after the president's triumph at the polls in 1948.

Emboldened by his victory, the authors said, Truman had broken through his "outer shell of submissiveness and timidity." Yet, they insisted, the "new" Truman was still a mediocrity—an inept politician and an uninspiring leader.

As surprising as it may seem to Americans who now remember Truman as the jaunty, straight-talking man from Missouri, this harsh post-1948 assessment was widely shared at the time. Truman's "approval" rating in the polls never exceeded 32 percent between 1950 and 1953, when he left office after deciding not to seek another term. (Truman later said that he had privately ruled out a reelection bid after his 1948 victory.)

It would be more than a decade later, as the nation endured the travails of Vietnam and the Watergate scandal, before journalists and academics began to see Truman as he had always hoped they would. Yet, the Truman literature remains uneven in quality and coverage.

**Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman** (Putnam's, 1973), a best seller by journalist Merle Miller that appeared one year after the ex-president's death, did much to revive Truman's popular reputation.

When he was in the White House, Truman told Miller, "I just never got to thinking that I was anything *special*. It's very easy to do that in Washington, and I've seen it happen to a lot of fellas." Moreover, he assured the author, he had never abused his official privileges—even buying his own three-cent postage

stamps to mail his personal letters.

Truman's dignified two-volume memoir, **Year of Decisions and Years of Trial and Hope** (Doubleday, 1955, 1956), reflects little of his personality and suffers (as does *Plain Speaking*) from his idiosyncratic memory. Truman claims credit, for example, for the strong civil rights plank that liberal Democrats forced into the 1948 party platform.

Why did Truman fail to win over the Congress and the American people after his electrifying victory in 1948?

He returned to the capital from Missouri by train on November 4, 1948, greeted by a cheering crowd numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Liberals were elated: The voters had also restored the Democrats to power in both houses of Congress.

"Convinced that their cause was right," observes Alonzo L. Hamby in **Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism** (Columbia, 1973), "the progressives never perceived that the public might be indifferent to their program." In fact, many voters favored the status quo; they had cast their ballots *against* the radical Washington "housecleaning" promised by Dewey's Republicans.

One by one, during 1949 and afterward, Truman's "Fair Deal" initiatives met stalemate or defeat on Capitol Hill. Attempts to repeal the "anti-union" Taft-Hartley Act failed; civil rights proposals were sidetracked; Truman's national health insurance scheme never got off the ground.

In **The Truman Presidency** (forthcoming), a useful collection of papers presented at a Wilson Center conference and edited by Michael J. Lacey, historian Robert Griffith argues that the Fair Deal was snuffed out by a concerted lobbying effort mounted by Big Business, determined to shape a "new postwar order"

after nearly two decades of New Deal intervention in the economy.

As Earl Latham shows in **The Communist Controversy in Washington: From the New Deal to McCarthy** (Harvard, 1966), the capital was also increasingly distracted by a Red Scare. In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb, and China fell. In 1950, accused spy Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury; Senator Joseph McCarthy charged that the State Department was riddled with Communists; and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested for passing atomic secrets to Moscow.

Whatever prospects remained for the Fair Deal vanished on the afternoon of June 24, 1950, when 90,000 Soviet-backed North Koreans began a surprise invasion of South Korea.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson had implied only months earlier that the United States would *not* defend South Korea if the Communists attacked, notes Robert J. Donovan in his detailed chronicles of the Truman era, **Conflict and Crisis and Tumultuous Years** (Norton, 1977, 1982).

As demoralized South Korean troops fell back toward Pusan on the south coast, the president authorized the use of U.S. sea and air power to aid them. After the United Nations called for international help on June 27, Truman sent U.S. troops from Japan. By early August, some 47,000 G.I.'s were desperately defending the Pusan Perimeter.

Despite several years of Cold War tensions, the United States was ill-prepared. During the summer of 1950, reserve and National Guard units were hastily mobilized for active duty. Unlike Lyndon B. Johnson, who sent troops to Vietnam some 15 years later, Truman told his countrymen that they could not have both guns *and* butter. As Donald R. McCoy observes in **The Presidency of Harry S. Truman** (Univ. Press of

Kansas, 1984), he put the Fair Deal on hold and raised taxes.

Like LBJ, however, Truman never asked Congress to approve his U.S. troop commitment—the beginning; argues historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., of the post-World War II **Imperial Presidency** (Houghton, 1973).

In South Korea that September, even as Pusan remained under siege, General Douglas MacArthur ordered his famous “end run” amphibious assault on Inchon, landing 70,000 Marines and soldiers deep behind enemy lines, near the 38th Parallel that divided North and South Korea. The UN forces then recaptured Seoul and virtually destroyed Kim Il Sung’s People’s Army.

It was an “astonishing achievement,” observes David Rees in his classic account of **Korea: The Limited War** (St. Martin’s, 1964), but, in retrospect, an ambiguous one. The rout of the North Koreans encouraged Washington and the UN to allow an optimistic MacArthur to cross the 38th Parallel.

In late November, as the UN columns swept toward the Yalu River (Korea’s border with China), Beijing entered the war, throwing some 300,000 “volunteers” against the overextended UN forces. The battered U.S. Eighth Army fell back 275 miles, “the longest [retreat] in American military history,” according to Rees, while the surrounded First Marine Division desperately fought its way south to the sea in the heroic Chosin Reservoir campaign. Seoul was lost. Eventually, the UN forces regrouped and pushed the Communists back to the 38th Parallel, but the bloody war of attrition would devastate Korea and cost 32,629 American lives in battle before it ended in July 1953.

In the United States, the stunning setback, along with MacArthur’s increasingly public demands that Truman carry the war to China itself, shook Washington and touched off what historians call “the Great Debate.”

As Richard Rovere and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrote in **The General and the President** (Farrar, 1951), the Republicans, who had backed Truman's original intervention in Korea, now attacked him. Senator Robert A. Taft and other neo-isolationists clamored for war with China, yet opposed a permanent U.S. military presence in Western Europe under the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Public discontent over Truman and his costly "limited war" became widespread. In April 1951, after Truman finally fired MacArthur for insubordination, the general enjoyed a hero's welcome when he addressed a joint session of Congress.

Frustrated by Korea and alarmed by the Red Menace at home, the country was in a sour mood during the 1952 presidential campaign. The G.O.P.'s Dwight D. Eisenhower ran as the "peace" candidate. At the same time, however, Ike promised to abandon Truman's "negative, futile and immoral" policy of containment, and to pursue the *liberation* of Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe—a notion that faded after Election Day.

As journalist Samuel Lubell reported in **The Revolt of The Moderates** (Harper, 1956), the Democratic campaign theme in 1952—"You Never Had It So Good"—backfired. Many Americans felt guilty about "blood money" reaped from the war boom.

On Election Day, the voters chose Ike by a landslide over Adlai E. Stevenson, and sent G.O.P. majorities to both houses of Congress. Twenty years of Democratic rule had ended.

"I suppose," Truman said in his farewell address in January 1953, "that history will remember my term in office as the years when the 'cold war' began to

overshadow our lives."

In fact, only six years later, historian William Appleman Williams fired the first shot in what was to become a periodic battle between "revisionist" and "post-revisionist" scholars: Who was to blame for the Cold War?

In **The Tragedy of American Diplomacy** (World, 1959), Williams blamed Truman's pursuit of a century-old U.S. policy of "imperial expansion." Stalin, he said, sought only postwar reconstruction of his country and security against foreign attack. In **The Limits of Power** (Harper, 1972), Joyce and Gabriel Kolko led the revival of such arguments, which enjoyed a vogue in academe during the Vietnam War.

But in **The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947** (Columbia, 1972), John Lewis Gaddis replied that while American officials exaggerated the Soviet threat, they did so only after efforts to placate Stalin had failed. And he pointed out that Americans could "bring themselves to accept a large peacetime military establishment" only after several shocks culminating in North Korea's surprise attack on its southern neighbor.

Truman's foreign policy legacy included military aid to U.S. allies (including the French in Indochina) and economic assistance to the Third World. He helped create the United Nations (1945), the World Bank (1945), the International Monetary Fund (1946), and NATO (1949). In so doing, writes Robert A. Pollard in **Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945–1950** (Columbia, 1985), the man from Missouri ensured Western security and fostered an open world economy that, for all its flaws, has "yielded unprecedented prosperity."

## A LONG LINE OF CELLS

Lewis Thomas has a theory that mankind is “going through the early stages of a species’ adolescence. If we can . . . shake off the memory of this century . . . we may find ourselves off and running again.” His optimism stems from the “high probability that we derived, originally, from some single cell.” From “that first micro-organism, parent of us all,” man’s development has mirrored the process that creates each of our bodies, with myriad cells replicating and splitting, sharing chromosomes “by random chance.” Here, the noted writer-scientist assesses man’s progress on the evolutionary path, pinning his hopes for the future on “better breeding, in both senses of the term.”

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*by Lewis Thomas*

An autobiography, I take it, is a linear account of one thing after another, leading—progressively, one hopes—to one’s personal state of affairs at the moment of writing. In my case this would run to over 70 years, one after the other, discounting maybe 25 of the 70 spent sleeping, leaving around 45 to be dealt with. Even so, a lot of time to be covered if all the events were to be recalled and laid out.

But discount again the portion of those 16,500 days, 264,000 waking hours, spent doing not much of anything—reading the papers, staring at blank sheets of paper, walking from one room to the next, speaking a great deal of small talk and listening to still more, waiting around for the next thing to happen, whatever. Delete all this as irrelevant, then line up what’s left in the proper linear order without fudging. There you are with an autobiography, now relieved of an easy three-fourths of the time lived, leaving only 11 years, or 4,000 days, or 64,000 hours. Not much to remember, but still too much to write down.

But now take out all the blurred memories, all the recollections you suspect may have been dressed up by your mind in your favor, leaving only the events you can’t get out of your head, the notions



*Lewis Thomas, in a 1986 photograph.*

that keep leaping to the top of your mind, the ideas you're stuck with, the images that won't come unstuck, including the ones you'd just as soon do without. Edit these down sharply enough to reduce 64,000 hours to around 30 minutes, and there's your memoir.

In my case, going down this shortened list of items, I find that most of what I've got left are not real memories of my own experience, but mainly the remembrances of other people's thoughts, things I've read or been told, metamemories. A surprising number turn out to be wishes rather than recollections, hopes that something really did work the way everyone said it was supposed to work, hankerings that the one thing leading to another has a direction of some kind, and a hope for a pattern from the jumble—an epiphany out of entropy.

To begin on a confessional note, I was at one time, at my outset, a single cell. I have no memory of this stage of my life, but I know it to be true because everyone says so. There was of course a sort of half-life before that, literally half, when the two half-endowed, haploid gametes, each carrying half my chromosomes, were off on their own looking to bump into each other and did so, by random chance, sheer luck, for better or worse, richer or poorer, et cetera, et cetera, and I got under way.

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I do not remember this, but I know that I began dividing. I have probably never worked so hard, and never again with such skill and certainty. At a certain stage, very young, a matter of hours of youth, I sorted myself out and became a system of cells, each labeled for what it was to become—brain cells, limbs, liver, the lot—all of them signaling to each other, calculating their territories, laying me out. At one stage I possessed an excellent kidney, good enough for any higher fish; then I thought better and destroyed it all at once, installing in its place a neater pair for living on land. I didn't plan on this when it was going on, but my cells, with a better memory, did.



Thinking back, I count myself lucky that I was not in charge at the time. If it had been left to me to do the mapping of my cells I would have got it wrong, dropped something, forgotten where to assemble my neural crest, confused it. Or I might have been stopped in my tracks, panicked by the massive deaths, billions of my embryonic cells being killed off systematically to make room for their more senior successors, death on a scale so vast that I can't think of it without wincing. By the time I was born, more of me had died than survived. It is no wonder I can't remember; during that time I went through brain after brain for nine months, finally contriving the one model that could be human, equipped for language.

It is because of language that I am able now to think farther back into my lineage. By myself, I can only remember two parents, one grandmother and the family stories of Welshmen, back into the shadows when all the Welsh were kings, but no farther. From there on I must rely on reading the texts.

They instruct me that I go back to the first of my immediate line, the beginner, the earliest *Homo sapiens*, human all the way through, or not quite human if you measure humanness as I do by the property of language and its property, the consciousness of an indisputably singular, unique self. I'm not sure how far back that takes me, and no one has yet told me about this convincingly. When did my relations begin speaking?

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Writing is easier to trace, having started not more than a few years back, maybe 10,000 years, not much more. Tracking speech requires guesswork. If we were slow learners, as slow as we seem to be in solving today's hard problems, my guess is that we didn't begin talking until sometime within the last 100,000 years, give or take 50,000. That is what's called a rough scientific guess. But no matter, it is an exceedingly short time ago, and I am embarrassed at the thought that so many of my ancestors, generations of them—all the way back to the very first ones a million-odd years ago—may have been speechless. I am modestly proud to have come from a family of tool makers, bone scratchers, grave diggers, cave painters. Humans all. But it hurts to think of them as so literally dumb, living out their lives without metaphors, deprived of conversation, even small talk. I would prefer to have had them arrive fully endowed, talking their heads off, the moment evolution provided them with braincases large enough to contain words, so to speak. But it was not so, I must guess, and language came late. I will come back to this matter.

What sticks in the top of my mind is another, unavoidable aspect of my genealogy, far beyond my memory, but remembered still, I suspect, by all my cells. It is a difficult and delicate fact to mention. To face it squarely, I come from a line that can be traced straight back, with some accuracy, into a near-infinity of years before my first humanoid ancestors turned up. I go back, and so do you, like it or not, to a single Ur-ancestor whose remains are on display in rocks dated approximately 3–5 thousand million years ago, born a billion or so years after the Earth itself took shape and began cooling down. That first of the line, our n-grand-uncle, was unmistakably a bacterial cell.



I cannot get this out of my head. It has become, for the moment, the most important thing I know, the obligatory beginning of any memoir, the long-buried source of language. We derive from a lineage of bacteria, and a very long line at that. Never mind our embarrassed indignation when we were first told, last century, that we came from a family of apes and had chimps as near-cousins. That was relatively easy to accommodate, having at least the distant look of a set of relatives. But this new connection, already fixed by recent science beyond any hope of disowning the percentage, is something else again. At first encounter the news must come as a kind of humiliation. Humble origins indeed.

But then, it is some comfort to acknowledge that we've had an etymological hunch about such an origin since the start of our language. Our word *human* comes from the Proto-Indo-European root *dbghem*, meaning simply "earth." The most telling cognate word is *humus*, the primary product of microbial industry. Also, for what it's

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worth, *humble*. Also *humane*. It gives a new sort of English, in the sense of a strange spin, to the old cliché for an apology: "Sorry, I'm only human."

Where did that first microorganism, parent of us all, come from? Nobody knows, and in the circumstance it's anyone's guess, and the guesses abound. Francis Crick suggests that the improbability of its forming itself here on Earth is so high that we must suppose it drifted in from outer space, shifting the problem to scientists in some other part of the galaxy. Others assert that it happened here indeed, piecing itself together molecule by molecule, over a billion years of chance events under the influence of sunlight and lightning, finally achieving by pure luck the exactly right sequence of nucleotides, inside the exactly right sort of membrane, and we were on our way.

No doubt the first success occurred in water. And not much doubt that the first event, however it happened, was the only such event, the only success. It was the biological equivalent of the Big Bang of the cosmo-physicists, very likely a singular phenomenon, a piece of unprecedented good luck never to be repeated. If the sheer improbability of the thing taking place more than once, spontaneously and by chance, were not enough, consider the plain fact that all the cells that came later, right up to our modern brain cells, carry the same strings of DNA and work by essentially the same genetic code. It is the plainest evidence of direct inheritance from a single parent. We are all in the same family—grasses, seagulls, fish, fleas, and voting citizens of the republic.



I ought to be able to remember the family tie, since all my cells are alive with reminders. In almost everything they do to carry me along from one day to the next, they use the biochemical devices of their microbial forebears. Jesse Roth and his colleagues at the National Institutes of Health have shown that the kingdom of bacteria had already learned, long before nucleated cells like ours came on the scene, how to signal to each other by chemical messages, inventing for this purpose molecules like insulin and a brilliant array of the same peptides that I make use of today for instructing my brain cells in proper behavior.

More than this, I could not be here, blinking in the light, without the help of an immense population of specialized bacteria that swam into cells like mine around a billion years ago and stayed there, as indispensable lodgers, ever since, replicating on their own, generation after generation. These are my mitochondria, the direct descendants of the first bacteria that learned how to make use of oxygen for energy. They occupy all my cells, swarming from one part to another wherever there is work to do. I could not lift a finger without them,



nor think a thought, nor can they live without me. We are symbionts, my mitochondria and I, bound together for the advance of the biosphere, living together in harmony, maybe even affection. For sure, I am fond of my microbial engines, and I assume they are pleased by the work they do for me.

Or is it necessarily that way, or the other way round? It could be, I suppose, that all of me is a sort of ornamented carapace for colonies of bacteria that decided, long ago, to make a try at real evolutionary novelty. Either way, the accommodation will do.



The plants are in the same situation. They have the same swarms of mitochondria in all their cells, and other foreign populations as well. Their chloroplasts, which do the work of tapping solar energy to make all sugar, are the offspring of ancient pigmented microorganisms called cyanobacteria, once known as blue-green algae. These were the first creatures to learn—at least 2.5 billion years ago—to use carbon dioxide from the air and plain water, and sunlight, to manufacture food for the market.

I am obsessed by bacteria in general, not just my own and those of the horse chestnut tree in my backyard. We would not have nitrogen for the proteins of the biosphere without the nitrogen-fixing bacteria, most of them living like special tissues in the roots of legumes. We would never have decay; dead trees would simply lie there forever, and so would we, and nothing on Earth would be recycled. We couldn't keep cows, for cattle can't absorb their kind of food until their intestinal bacteria have worked it over, and for the same reason there would be no termites to cycle the wood; they are, literally, alive with bacteria. We would not have luminous fish for our aquariums, for the source of that spectacular light around their eyes is their private colonies of luminescent bacteria. And we would never have obtained oxygen to breathe, for all the oxygen in our air is exhaled for our use by the photosynthetic microbes in the upper waters of the seas and lakes and in the leaves of forests.

It was not that we invented a sophisticated new kind of cell with a modern nucleus and then invited in the more primitive and simpler forms of life as migrant workers. More likely, the whole assemblage came together by the joining up of different kinds of bacteria; the larger cell, the original "host," may have been one that had lost its rigid wall and swelled because of this defect. Lynn Margulis has proposed that the spirochetes were part of the original committee, becoming the progenitors of the cilia on modern cells, also the organizers of meiosis and mitosis, the lining up of chromosomes, the allocation of DNA to progeny—in effect, the reading of all wills. If she is right about this, the spirochetes were the inventors of biologi-

cal sex and all that, including conclusive death.

The modern cell is not the single entity we once thought it was. It is an organism in its own right, a condominium, run by trustees.

If all this is true, as I believe it to be, the life of the Earth is more intimately connected than I used to think. This is another thing on my mind, so much in my head these days that it crowds out other thoughts I used to have, making me sit up straight now, bringing me to my feet and then knocking me off them. The world works. The whole Earth is alive, all of a piece, one living thing, a creature.

It breathes for us and for itself, and what's more it regulates the breathing with exquisite precision. The oxygen in the air is not placed there at random, any old way; it is maintained at precisely the optimal concentration for the place to be livable. A few percentage points more than the present level and the forests would burst into flames; a few less and most life would strangle. It is held there, constant, by feedback loops of information from the conjoined life of the planet. Carbon dioxide, inhaled by the plants, is held at precisely the low level that would be wildly improbable on any lifeless planet. And this happens to be the right concentration for keeping the Earth's temperature, including the heat of the oceans, exactly right. Methane, almost all of it the product of bacterial metabolism, contributes also to the greenhouse effect, and methane is held steady.



Statesmen must keep a close eye on the numbers these days—we are already pushing up the level of CO<sub>2</sub> by burning too much fuel and cutting too much forest, and the Earth may be in for a climatic catastrophe within the next century.

But there it is: Except for our meddling, the Earth is the most stable organism we can know about—a complex system, a vast intelligence, turning in the warmth of the sun, running its internal affairs with the near-infallibility of a huge computer. Not entirely infallible, however, on the paleontological record. Natural catastrophes occur, crashes, breakdowns in the system: ice ages, meteor collisions, volcanic eruptions, global clouding, extinctions of great masses of its living tissue. It goes *down*, as we say of computers, but never out, always up again with something new to display to itself.

The newest of all things, the latest novelty among its working parts, seems to be us—language-speaking, song-singing, tool-making, fire-warming, comfortable, warfaring mankind, and I am of that ilk.

I can't remember anything about learning language as a child. I do have a few memories of studying to read and write, age four or five, I think, but I have no earlier recollection at all of learning speech. This surprises me. You'd think that the first word, the first triumphant finished sentence, would have been such a stunning land-

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mark to remain fixed in memory forever, the biggest moment in life. But I have forgotten. Or perhaps it never embedded itself in my mind. Being human, I may have known all along about language, from the time of my first glimpse of human faces, and speech just came, as natural a thing to do as breathing. The reason I can't remember the learning process, the early mistakes, may be that at that time they were not mistakes at all, just the normal speech of childhood, no more memorable than the first drawn breath.



All my adult life I have hoped to speak French one day like a Frenchman, but I am near to giving up, troubled. Why should any small French child, knee high, be able to do so quickly something that I will never learn to do? Or, for that matter, any English or Turkish child living for a few months in Paris? I know the answer, but I don't much like to hear it, implying as it does that there are other knacks that I have lost as well. Childhood is the time for language, no doubt about it. Young children, the younger the better, are good at it, it is child's play; it is a one-time gift to the species, withdrawn sometime in adolescence, switched off, never to be regained. I must have had it once and spent it all on ordinary English.

I possessed a splendid collection of neurons, nested in a center somewhere in my left hemisphere, probably similar to the center in a songbird's brain—also on his left side—used for learning the species' song while he was still a nestling. Like mine, the bird's center is only there for studying in childhood; if he hears the proper song at that stage he will have it in mind for life, ornamenting it later with brief arpeggios so that it becomes his own particular, self-specific song, slightly but perceptibly different from the song of all his relatives. But if he can't hear it as a young child, the center can't compose it on its own, and what comes out later when he is ready for singing and mating is an unmelodious buzzing noise. This is one of the saddest tales in experimental biology.

Children may do more than simply pick up the language, easily as breathing. Perhaps they make it in the first place, and then change it around as time goes by, so that today's speech will, as always, be needing scholars as translators centuries hence. Derek Bickerton, professor of linguistics at the University of Hawaii, has studied the emergence of a brand-new language called Hawaiian Creole, which spread across the islands sometime after 1880, when the plantations were opened up for sugar export and large numbers of polyglot workers came from abroad to work the fields. The languages brought in were Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Korean, all added to the native Hawaiian and the then-dominant English speech. For a while nobody could understand anyone else. Then, as always happens

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in such language crises, a form of pidgin English developed (pidgin is the mispronunciation of “business” English), not really a language, more a crude system for naming objects and pointing at work to be done, lacking structure and syntactical rules.

Within the next generation, between 1880 and the turn of the century, Hawaiian Creole appeared. This was a proper language, flexible and fluent, capable of saying anything that popped into the head, filled with subtle metaphors and governed by its own tight grammatical rules for sentence structure. It was a new language, borrowing its vocabulary from the original words in the various tongues but arranging them in novel strings and sentences. According to Bickerton, the new grammar resembles that of Creoles in other places—the Seychelles, for instance, and places in New Guinea—formed by other multilanguage communities. It also resembles, he asserts, the kind of sentence structure used by all children as they grow up in the acquisition of their native speech.

Hawaiian Creole was entirely new to the islands, in the important sense that it could not be understood or spoken by the adults of the community. Bickerton’s conclusion, logically enough, is that it had to be a language invented *de novo* by the young children of Hawaii. He uses this observation for the deduction that children must possess in their brains what he calls a “bioprogram” for language, a neural mechanism for generating grammar (and a confirmation, on the facts, of Noam Chomsky’s insight three decades ago).



If Bickerton is right, the way is open for a new kind of speculation about one of humanity’s deepest secrets: How did language first develop? Who started all the talking, and under what circumstances? The story, I believe, tells itself.

I imagine a time, thousands of years ago, when there were only a million or so humans on the Earth, mostly scattered and out of touch, traveling in families from place to place in search of food—hunters and gatherers. Nobody spoke, but there were human sounds everywhere: grunts, outcries imitating animals and birds, expletives with explanatory gestures. Very likely, our ancestors were an impatient, frantic lot, always indignant with each other for lacking understanding. Only recently down from the trees, admiring their apposing thumbs, astonished by intelligence, already studying fire, they must have been wondering what was missing and what was coming next. Probably they had learned to make the sounds needed for naming things—trees, plants, animals, fish—but nothing like language.

Then they began settling down in places for longer stays, having invented the beginnings of agriculture. More families gathered together, settled in communities. More children were born, and ways

had to be found to keep the youngest ones safe from predators and out of the way of the adults. Corrals were constructed, fenced in, filled with children at play.

I imagine one special early evening, the elders sitting around the fire, grunting monosyllables, pointing at the direction of the next day's hunt or the next field to be slashed, thinking as hard as human beings can think when they are at a permanent loss for words. Then more noise than usual from the children's quarters, interrupting the thought. A rising surf of voices, excited, high-pitched, then louder and louder, exultant, totally incomprehensible to all the adults. Language.

It must have been resisted at first, regarded as nonsense. Perhaps resented, even feared, seeing it work so beautifully for communication but only among the children. Magic. Then, later on, accepted as useful magic, parts of it learned by some of the adults from their own children, broken Creole. Words became magical, sentences were miraculous, grammar was sacred. (The thought hangs on: The Scottish cognate for grammar is *glamour*, with the under-meaning of magic with words.)



"Kwei," said a Proto-Indo-European child, meaning "make something," and the word became, centuries later, our word *poem*.

But how did the children get it? I imagine they had it all the time, and have it still, latent in their brains, ready to make the words and join them together—to articulate, as we say. What was needed at the outset was a sufficient concentration of young children, a critical mass, at each other day after day, trying words out for sense.

Whatever happened in the human brain to make this talent a possibility remains a mystery. It might have been a mutation, a new set of instructions in our DNA for the construction of a new kind of center, absent in all earlier primates. Or it could have been a more general list of specifications: i.e. don't stop now, keep making more columnar modules of neurons, build a bigger brain. Perhaps any brain with a rich enough cortex can become a speaking brain, with a self-conscious mind.

It is a satisfying notion. I come from ancestors whose brains evolved so far beyond those of all their relatives that speech was the result, and with this in hand they became the masters of the Earth, God's image, self-aware, able to remember generations back and to think generations ahead, able to write things like "In the beginning was the word." Nothing lies any longer beyond reach, not even the local solar system or out into the galaxy and even, given time, beyond that for colonizing the Universe. In charge of everything.

But this kind of talk is embarrassing; it is the way children talk before they've looked around. I must mend the ways of my mind.

This is a very big place, and I don't know how it works, nor how I fit in. I am a member of a fragile species, still new to the Earth, the youngest creatures of any scale, here only a few moments as evolutionary time is measured, a juvenile species, a child of a species. We are only tentatively set in place, error-prone, at risk of fumbling, in real danger at the moment of leaving behind only a thin layer of our fossils, radioactive at that.

With so much more to learn, looking around, we should be more embarrassed than we are. We are different, to be sure, but not so much because of our brains as because of our discomfiture, mostly with each other. All the other parts of the Earth's life seem to get along, to fit in with each other, to accommodate, even to concede when the stakes are high. They live off each other, devour each other, scramble for ecological niches, but always within set limits, with something like restraint. It is a rough world, by some of our standards, but not the winner-take-all game that it seemed to us a while back. If we look over our shoulders as far as we can see, all the way past trillions of other species to those fossil stromatolites built by enormous communities of collaborating microorganisms, we can see no evidences of meanness or vandalism in nature. It is, on balance, an equable, generally amiable place—good-natured, as we say.



We are the anomalies, the self-conscious children at the edge of the crowd, unsure of our place, unwilling to join up, tending to grabbiness. We have much more to learn than language.

But we are not as bad a lot as some of us say. I don't agree with this century's fashion of running down the human species as a failed try, a doomed sport. At our worst, we may be going through the early stages of a species' adolescence, and everyone remembers what that is like. Growing up is hard times for an individual but sustained torment for a whole species, especially one as brainy and nervous as ours. If we can last it out, get through the phase, shake off the memory of this century, wait for a break, we may find ourselves off and running again.

This is an optimistic view, and I'm quick to say that I could be all wrong. Perhaps we have indeed come our full evolutionary distance, stuck forever with our present behavior, as mature as we ever will be for as long as we last. I doubt it. We are not out of options.

I am just enough persuaded by the sociobiologists to believe that our attitudes toward each other are influenced by genes, and by more than just the genes for making grammar. If these alone were our only wired-in guides to behavior, we would be limited to metaphor and ambiguity for our most important messages to each other. I think we do some other things, by nature.

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From earliest infancy on, we can smile and laugh without taking lessons, we recognize faces and facial expressions, and we hanker for friends and company. It goes too far to say that we have genes for liking each other, but we tend in that direction because of being a biologically social species. I am sure of that point: We are more compulsively social, more interdependent, and more inextricably attached to each other than any of the celebrated social insects. We are not, I fear, even marginally so committed to altruism as a way of life as the bees or ants, but at least we are able to sense, instinctively, certain obligations to one another.

One human trait, urging us on by our nature, is the drive to be useful, perhaps the most fundamental of all our biological necessities. We make mistakes with it, get it wrong, confuse it with self-regard, even try to fake it, but it is there in our genes, needing only a better set of definitions for usefulness than we have yet agreed on.

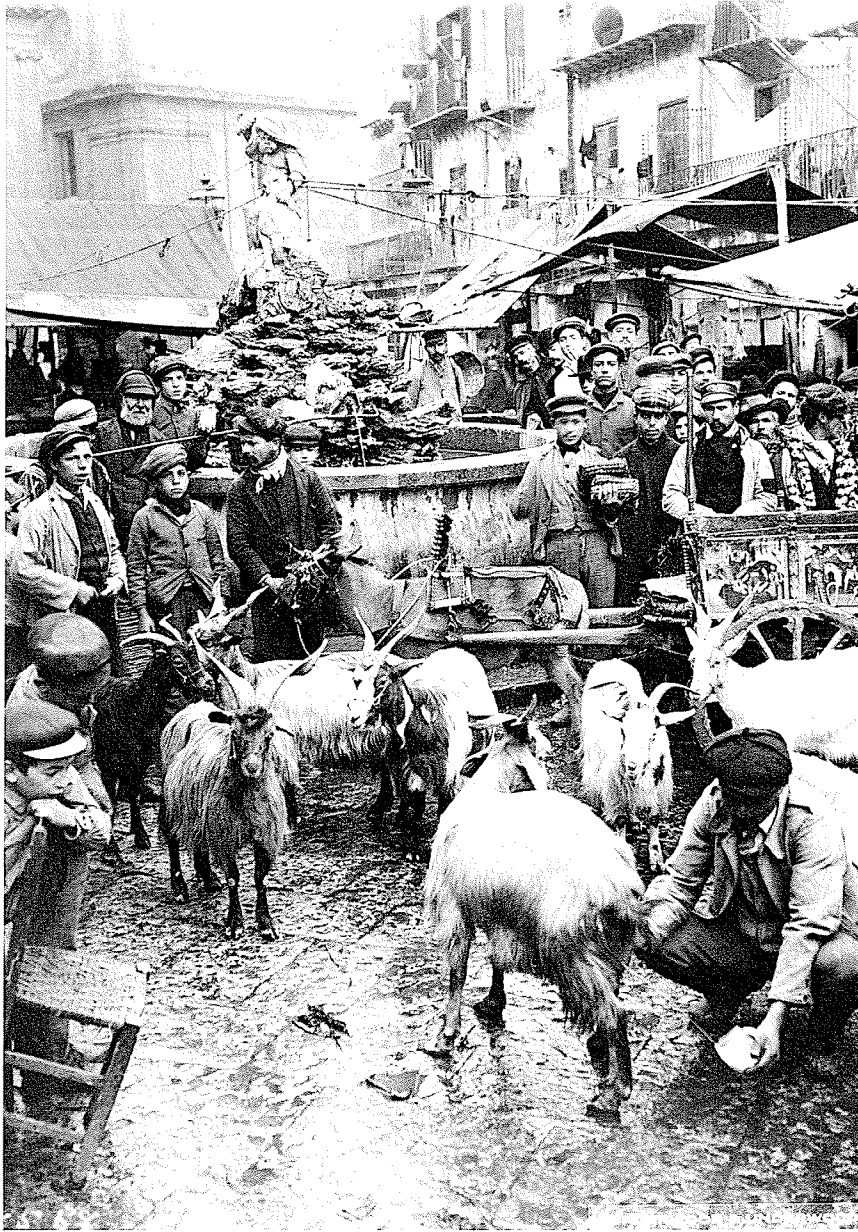
So we are not entirely set in our ways. Some of us may have more dominant genes for getting along than others. I suspect, glancing around my life, that we are also endowed with other, inhibitory alleles, widely spread for the enhancement of anomie. Most of us are a mixture. If we like, we can sit tight, trusting nature for the best of possible worlds to come. Or we can hope for better breeding, in both senses of the term, as our evolution proceeds.

Our microbial ancestors made use of quicker ways for bypassing long stretches of evolutionary time, and I envy them. They have always had an abundance of viruses, darting from one cell to another across species lines, doing no damage most of the time ("temperate" viruses, as they are called), but always picking up odds and ends of DNA from their hosts and then passing these around, as though at a great party. The bits are then used by the recipients for their betterment—new tricks for coping with new contingencies.

I hope our species has a mechanism like this. Come to think of it, maybe we do. After all, we live in a sea of our own viruses, most of which seem to be there for no purpose, not even to make us sick. We can hope that some of them might be taking hold of useful items of genetic news from time to time, then passing these along for the future of the species.

It makes a cheerful footnote, anyway: Next time you feel a cold coming on, reflect on the possibility that you may be giving a small boost to evolution.

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*A Palermo marketplace, around 1900. A vendor of goat's milk serves up a drink. In the south, there were few roads, almost no money, and the vast majority were illiterate. "The saying went," historian Denis Mack Smith has written, "that a donkey cost more to maintain than a man." Italy has come a long way since then.*



# Italy

In the United States, Italy seldom makes headlines—unless, of course, Red Brigades terrorists abduct a U.S. general and hold him for 42 days (James Dozier in 1981), or Italian voters elect a porn queen to Parliament (“Cicciolina” in 1987), or the government falls again. After a Socialist-led coalition collapsed last year, the *New York Times* said that the Christian Democrats, who formed a new coalition, would “resume the old ways of muddle and fuddle, collusion and drift.” Indeed, the new coalition soon broke up. Nonetheless, Italy represents one of Western Europe’s surprising success stories. Here, Joseph LaPalombara tells how the Italians put the Fascist era behind them and created a vigorous economy and a highly stable (if bewildering) democracy; and Charles Delzell ponders the legacy of Benito Mussolini’s 21-year effort to restore the Roman Empire.

## ***PARTITOCRAZIA***

*by Joseph LaPalombara*

In March 1985, Bettino Craxi, then Italy’s prime minister, visited Washington. President Ronald Reagan greeted him with a firm handshake and a (somewhat) facetious question: “How’s your crisis going?” Craxi replied, “Very well, thank you.”

No doubt his other NATO allies had asked Craxi, the Socialist Party leader, the same question. When Americans or Canadians or Germans think of Italy, many imagine a sunny, picturesque Mediterranean landscape whose inhabitants are in chronic disarray. Judged by U.S. headlines, or by the accounts of its own newspapers, this republic of 57 million people seems always to be undergoing *una crisi*.

There are sudden strikes or Cabinet reshuffles. Organized crime—the Mafia in Sicily, the ‘Ndrangheta in Calabria, the Camorra around Naples are only the leading players—has gained ground not just in the south but in Milan, Turin, and other northern cities. In a rash of violence that began in 1969 and continued into the mid-1980s, right- and left-wing terrorist groups murdered more than 400 innocents: train passengers, businessmen, professors, even an ex-prime minister. Aldo Moro, the Christian Democratic Party leader, was kidnapped, held for 55 days,

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then shot to death in Rome in 1978.

Government in Italy seems feckless at best. Large budget deficits loom over the economy. Despite progress by government leaders in curbing tax evasion, the “underground” economy, where goods are traded and services performed out of the taxman’s view, accounts for perhaps a fourth of Italy’s gross domestic product (GDP). And, during the four postwar decades since the Republic was created, its wobbly parliamentary regimes have lasted, on average, a mere 10 months.

### The Family, Inc.

After being asked to form a new government last July (Italy’s 47th in the postwar era) and then having to endure two weeks of parliamentary maneuvering, Christian Democrat Giovanni Goria announced the makeup of his coalition Cabinet on television. At the end of his talk, the prime minister muttered an expression meaning roughly “Oh Lord, wish us luck.”

But Italy, I believe, needs less luck than many tidy-minded outsiders might claim.

The Italian nation-state is relatively young. Little more than a century has passed since the *Risorgimento*—that period of upheaval and cultural nationalism that led to the unification of Italy’s duchies and principalities. It culminated in the creation of the Italian kingdom in 1861 and its acquisition of Rome from the Pope in 1870. Yet the nation-building had only begun. “We have made Italy,” said the nationalist Massimo d’Azeglio. “Now we must make Italians.”

The process was fitful, first under six decades of chaotic parliamentary rule and later, after World War I, under Benito Mussolini’s Fascist dictatorship. Then came World War II and its aftermath.

Italy suffered no Dresdens or Hamburg firestorms, but its industrial centers and railroads were bombed out. The Allies had fought the Germans from Sicily to the Po Valley, and the countryside bore the scars. The surviving Italians were exhausted, morally and psychologically, by war and occupation, as attested by such bleak postwar films as Roberto Rossellini’s *Open City* and Vittorio de Sica’s *The Bicycle Thief*.

But four decades later, Italy has been transformed. Economic growth (2.7 percent in 1987) is close to the United States’ level. Foreign customers welcome such Italian products as Pirelli tires, Olivetti office equipment, and clothing from Benetton, a family firm near Venice that began distributing homemade wool sweaters during the 1950s and now has outlets in 60 countries. Italy produces a fifth of the world’s wine. And although they till Western Europe’s smallest farms (average size: 18.5

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*Italians cheer Communist Party leader Enrico Berlinguer in Rome's St. John's Square in 1976, during the heyday of "Eurocommunism." Critics called the PCI "the other Church"; its "Pope" and "Holy See" were in Moscow.*

acres), Italians harvest more wheat and corn than any other farmers (except the French) in the 12-nation Common Market.

Last year, Italy's National Institute of Statistics calculated that the country had surpassed Britain to become the Free World's fifth largest producer of goods and services. "*Il sorpasso*" was vigorously applauded by Italian pundits and politicians; Prime Minister Craxi even summoned his finance minister home from a conference in Paris after the latter was excluded from a special "Group of Five" meeting of his U.S., West German, Japanese, French, and British counterparts.

The British dispute the Italians' claim ("rubbish"), noting that they included dubious figures on the *underground* economy. Even so, Italy's economic achievements have been notable and under-reported, especially for a country that has few natural resources except sunshine and some large deposits of mercury.

Progress has undermined many of the old clichés about Italy.

As late as 1950, nearly 40 percent of the population lived on the land; now less than 13 percent are employed in agriculture. In the chronically underdeveloped south, where most of Italy's 2,600,000 jobless live, large estates were broken up during the 1950s so that parcels could be given to landless *mezzadri* and *braccianti* (tenant farmers and day

laborers). But the peasants, now used to living in villages and “dormitory” cities and working for wages, were not eager to become agricultural entrepreneurs. Land reform failed. By the early 1980s, some five million Italians were abroad—toiling in West German auto plants, as brick-makers in Britain, and at other factory jobs.

Another eroded cliché is the Italians’ alleged live-for-today mentality. The 19th-century poet Giacomo Leopardi complained that his countrymen’s “vivacity of character” equalled their unconcern for the future. Federico Fellini’s film *La Dolce Vita* (1960) renewed the charge.

Actually, concern about (or confidence in) the future among Italians has never been greater, to judge by Italy’s savings rate. It is higher than those of all other industrial democracies except Japan.

Eighty percent of all savings are accumulated by what Italian social analysts have come to call “The Family, Inc.”—families that include two or more income earners, including children. Partly because women now account for 35 percent of the work force (versus 45 percent in the United States), the numbers of such families are at a peak. A 1986 survey found that the *average* family had \$124,000 tucked away: \$85,000 in real estate, \$18,000 in bank accounts, \$15,000 in fixed-income securities, \$6,000 in stocks traded on the lively Milan exchange or in mutual funds, which in Italy are sold door-to-door.

### Five Men, 29 Governments

Stocks are winning acceptance as an inflation hedge. But the Italians’ favored investment remains real property. They are not quite as apt as Americans (51 percent to 64 percent) to own their residences, but they vie with the French as Europe’s leading second-home owners. For a Family, Inc. in an apartment in bustling Rome or Milan, a retreat in Tuscany or on the Adriatic coast is not *la dolce vita* but a necessity.

One reason that Italians have more to invest may be that they have fewer mouths to feed. Italy’s once-robust birth rate is now only half of Ireland’s, and roughly on a par with the low Danish and West German rates. The Pill and the legalization of abortion (1978) are only two factors. Although 97 percent of all Italian babies are still baptized in the church, only 30 percent of adults are practicing Catholics and fewer observe church dictums against birth control. Moreover, the young find many reasons to postpone marriage—for example, Italy’s fast-expanding university system, which now embraces 47 campuses. It has more than one million students, four times as many as Britain.

Another change involves the old drive to become *sistemato*, “fixed for life.” A “safe” job was the highest ambition of most Italians, especially those in the poor south. There, a public service job, because it carried life tenure as well as high status, was the epitome of *sistemazione*. Such posts required a politician’s favor; as in other Latin countries, the average man’s quest for security helped make patron-



*Roughly the size of Arizona, Italy is the world's 15th most populous nation (57.4 million). About half of its land area is under cultivation. Over 50 percent of Italians live in five of the nation's 20 provinces: Lombardy, Campania, Latium, Sicily, and Piedmont. The three largest cities: Rome (2.8 million), Milan (1.5 million) and Naples (1.2 million).*

client relationships a mainspring of political power.

The “get-fixed” drive survives, but less strongly among Italians who did not see the Depression. Thanks to other opportunities, they are less likely to view a government job as the best possible career—or to look to the state or to political parties for sustenance.

Even so, Italians still prize stability. Divorce was legalized in 1970 and supported by 60 percent of the voters in a 1974 referendum, but Italy’s divorce rate is the lowest of any West European country save Ireland (where divorce is not permitted). The incidence of murder, rape, armed robbery, and other violent crimes, as well as drug addiction and alcoholism, is low, notably in comparison with U.S. levels. The many competent municipal governments, in Bologna, Padua, Verona, Florence, and elsewhere, keep the streets clean and the buses running on time.

Unlike France, Italy has stuck loyally to NATO; unlike Greece and Spain, she has not made a fuss over U.S. bases.

So how to account for Italy’s odd mix of private prudence and apparent governmental chaos? While West German or Anglo-Saxon pundits smugly assert that Italians have the kind of government they deserve, I would argue that they have the kind of government they *prefer*.

True, Italian prime ministers enjoy little job security. Nonetheless, Italy has been, since World War II, one of Western Europe’s most stable democracies. Heeding the 1948 Constitution, which holds voting to be a “civic duty,” nearly 90 percent of the electorate (everyone over 18) casts ballots in national elections. And if governments come and go, their leaders do not. Since the war, five men—Christian Democrats Alcide de Gasperi, Amintore Fanfani, Aldo Moro, Mariano Rumor, and Giulio Andreotti—have served as prime minister five or more times. That they headed, all told, 29 different governments is almost irrelevant.

### Ousting the King

The French may prize Reason, and often strive to exercise it in politics; the Italians value ambiguity. It is useful in a society riven by age-old regional, class, and ideological disparities. Asked how things are going, an Italian may reply, *si tira avanti*—“life goes on.” And how are problems solved? *Ci arrangiamo*—“we improvise.”

The improvising began during the 19th century. After Italy was unified, Giuseppe Garibaldi (whose “Redshirts” conquered Sicily and Naples), Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, Giuseppe Mazzini, and other leaders of the *Risorgimento* struck a deal: Northern liberals would dominate the new Italy’s politics and economy; the *latifondisti* (large landowners) concentrated south of Rome would be allowed to continue their feudal ways (the cause of southern Italy’s chronic underdevelopment).

The northerners undertook to keep government in their hands via *trasformismo*. This was a practice of forming loose, shifting governing coalitions that may or may not have had much relation to election out-

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comes or to distinctions between majorities and minorities in the legislature, but ensured that power would remain held by those used to wielding it. What Italians still call *la classe politica* was born.

The political class was sidelined—or co-opted—when Benito Mussolini took power during the popular turmoil after World War I. But when King Victor Emmanuel III ousted the *Duce* in 1943, the leaders of the renascent parties, united in their hatred of Fascism, agreed to put aside their differences and form a Committee for National Liberation.

To almost everyone's surprise, in their first postwar election (1946) Italians ousted the monarchy. In the voting for the Constituent Assembly, the Christian Democrats, founded in 1942–43 as the party of the Vatican, led with 35 percent of the ballots. That made the party's leader, Alcide de Gasperi, head of a provisional coalition government whose Cabinet also included Socialists, Communists, and Republicans.

### 'Christ or Communism'

The Socialists, who were the first (after World War I) to build a mass party, and the Communists assumed that Italy would soon become a "people's republic," much like those being established under Soviet auspices behind the Iron Curtain. That assumption seemed plausible, given the Italian Left's growing strength, the anti-Fascist sentiment that permeated postwar Europe, and the general expectation that the United States' occupation troops would quickly be brought home.

But de Gasperi proved to be a virtuoso at *trasformismo*. Deftly cutting deals with other party chieftains, he survived to head eight governments, still a record for an Italian prime minister. His anti-Fascist credentials were impeccable. A legislator in pre-Mussolini times representing the Catholic *Popolari* party, de Gasperi, like many *Popolari*, spent time in prison under the *Duce*. Released in 1929, he took refuge in the Vatican, where he worked as a librarian and helped launch the Christian Democratic Party.

Under his shrewd leadership, the Christian Democrats presided over a striking postwar economic recovery\* and successfully championed regional governments, progressive taxation, land reform, and freedom for workers to form unions. The party was fiercely anti-Communist, an attitude that still prevails among many of its leaders and even more of its voters. Although it began as the legislative voice of the Catholic church hierarchy, the party attracted such disparate folk as wealthy industrialists, shopkeepers, farmers, and ordinary laborers. (The intelligentsia, then as later, sided with the Left.)

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\*The recovery's architect was economist Luigi Einaudi, governor of the Bank of Italy after 1944 and the first president elected under the postwar Constitution. While other Europeans (e.g., the British) set about creating a welfare state, Einaudi pressed an austerity program that cut inflation, stabilized the lira, and ended protectionism. Low labor costs helped produce high exports; Italy was fully competitive when Common Market entry came in 1957.



As the Cold War gained momentum elsewhere, power-sharing in Rome's Chamber of Deputies and Senate became difficult. In 1947, de Gasperi resigned and formed a one-party government—excluding the Communists and Socialists. A month later, the Truman administration offered \$1.5 billion in Marshall Plan aid, which was accepted. Echoing Josef Stalin, the Communists condemned the U.S. aid, which revived Italy's economy, as “an imperialist attempt to enslave the country.”

The election of April 1948, occurring just two months after the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, became a referendum on “Christ or Communism.” The Moscow-line Communist Party replaced the Socialists as the most potent force on the Left. They would go on to win one in three ballots cast in Italian elections. But to keep the Left out of power, millions of Italians voted “against their own identity” and for de Gasperi's party. The Christian Democrats won 48 percent of the vote and a small majority in the Chamber of Deputies. But rather than try to govern alone, de Gasperi chose to name Cabinet ministers from smaller parties—Republicans, Liberals, and Social Democrats.

The coalition tradition he thus established would help ensure that Italy's democracy would be unlike any other.

Moreover, de Gasperi's decision to face “the problem of Communism” and the party's pro-Soviet ideology by barring its deputies (and



*A Fiat factory in Turin today. “Turin is a city of workers, employed by the biggest industry in the land,” said Giorgio Fattore, editor of La Stampa, not a place where “old ladies . . . meet to sigh over pastries.”*



the neo-Fascists' too) from Cabinet posts has been continued. All but four postwar regimes have been led by Christian Democrats;\* all since May 1947 have excluded the Communists.

During the 1960s, Italy's first postwar economic *miracolo*, wrought by exports of inexpensive Fiats and refrigerators and other appliances, began to fade. The Communists had gained strength under Palmiro Togliatti, their leader until his death in 1964. The party, which had accepted the Kremlin's crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolt, was careful to condemn the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, as well as the rising political violence at home.

### Craxi's Grit

A still-unexplained December 1969 bomb blast on Milan's Piazza Fontana began a decade and a half of terrorism. Its most notorious actors were the Red Brigades, who had much in common with other "revolutionary" groups that sprouted in the West during the 1960s. The Brigades' founders were middle-class intellectuals—among them faculty members and sociology students at the University of Trento, such as Renato Curcio, a disillusioned Catholic student movement veteran. Far more focused than West Germany's Baader-Meinhoff gang, the Brigades aimed to "strike at the heart of the state" through violence; this would spur harsh repression that would, in turn, lead to a proletarian uprising against capitalism. But they got little encouragement from the Communist leaders, who included big-city mayors and regional officials.

Thus, even outside the Cabinet, the Communists had a strong if indirect influence on government. Then as now, few decisions in Rome were taken without consultation with their leaders. And the Communists could exercise influence through party-affiliated organizations, notably the 4.5 million-member CGIL (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*), the largest of Italy's three trade unions, all of which have political ties. It was the unions (including the CGIL) that in 1969 forced the enactment of the celebrated Workers' Statute, under which employees could be absent from work and still demand pay, and which made job reassignment subject to their approval.

But under Enrico Berlinguer, an appealingly professorial deputy from Rome who became the party's secretary general in 1972, the Communists mounted a strong bid for representation in the Cabinet.

Seeking to broaden the party's appeal, Berlinguer espoused "Eurocommunism": The Marxist parties in Western Europe could be fully independent of Moscow and, if in power, would accept continued membership in the Common Market and in NATO. In 1973, Berlinguer suggested that it was time for a "historic compromise," a power-sharing agreement with the Christian Democrats.

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\*The other four have been led by Giovanni Spadolini (two governments during 1981-2), head of the Republican Party, and by Socialist chief Bettino Craxi (two governments, 1983-7).

## THE ITALIAN-AMERICANS

Boston's North End, New York's Mulberry Street, San Francisco's North Beach. These are, perhaps, the United States' best-known Italian neighborhoods. Ironically, most of the nearly four million people who emigrated from Italy to the United States between 1880 and 1920 did not think of themselves as "Italian." Hailing from Sicily, Calabria, and other southern provinces, they regarded themselves and their new enclaves as Sicilian, Calabrian, etc.

Thus, when sociologist Harvey Zorbaugh visited "Little Hell"—an Italian slum on the Near North side of Chicago—in 1929, he did not find a "Little Italy," but transplanted Sicilian towns and villages. "From the various towns of western Sicily they have come," Zorbaugh wrote. "Larrabee Street is a little Altavilla; the people along Cambridge [street] have come from Alimena and Chiusa Sclafani; the people on Townsend [street] from Bagheria . . ."



Mario Cuomo

Most Italians who migrated to the United States were southerners, forced by poverty and political circumstances to leave their homeland. Once in America, *contadini* (farm workers) provided new muscle for the nation's burgeoning construction, railroad, and mining industries. Italian-American *padroni* (labor agents) recruited many of the first immigrants and shipped them off to Pennsylvania's coalfields or New York's docks, where they sometimes faced hostile workers on strike. On their own, others found work as stevedores in New Orleans, as clerks and bartenders in Chicago, as fishermen in Providence, Rhode Island, and Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Few found the streets paved with gold. Large families wound up crammed into dilapidated walk-up tenements in Little Italies in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Once the immigrants mingled with compatriots from other Italian locales, as historian Humbert S. Nelli has observed, they began "to think of themselves as *Italians* rather than as members of a particular family or emigrants from a particular locality."

Partly because the Irish already dominated the Catholic churches, even in Italian neighborhoods, Italian-Americans founded mutual aid societies, such as the Order of the Sons of Italy, which supported their members when they were sick and arranged funerals when they died. They also published newspa-

The Christian Democrats seemed to ponder the idea seriously, especially after the 1976 election, when the Communists polled a record (for them) 34.4 percent of the vote. But how would Italy's allies view the first inclusion of Communists in a NATO government? Although the prospect of a Red role in the key country on NATO's already soft southern flank alarmed many in the alliance, the new Carter administration in Washington equivocated on the matter for some time.

Finally, in January 1978, when it seemed that the "historic compromise" might actually occur, the White House declared the United States

pers, notably New York's *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* (1880).

Like the Irish and the Jews before them, the Italians quickly moved into skilled trades and professions, working as clerks, mechanics, salesmen, masons, painters, and plasterers. Some started their own hardware stores, restaurants, and trucking companies. Despite lingering prejudices, fostered by headlines and movies about the Mafia, second- and third-generation Italian-Americans made rapid progress after World War II; many attended urban colleges such as St. John's (Jamaica, New York), Loyola (Chicago), Fordham (the Bronx), and the City University of New York.

By 1963, about half of all Italian-American workers were employed in white-collar occupations—as doctors, dentists, and lawyers. They now live in comfortable suburbs such as Oak Park, Illinois, and Manhasset, New York. A 1980 Census Bureau study found that Italian-American families enjoyed a higher median income (\$21,842) than their Irish-American counterparts (\$20,719), and higher than American families overall (\$19,917). Italian-American executives have run Fortune 500 companies (Chrysler's Lee Iacocca) and major universities (Yale's former president A. Bartlett Giamatti).

With the Irish in control of the Democratic parties in New York, Boston, and Chicago, Italian-Americans made slower progress in politics. Some turned to the G.O.P. As historian Arthur Mann wrote about Fiorello H. La Guardia, New York's ebullient reform mayor (1933–45): "A Republican, he emerged as the first Italo-American successfully to challenge the political reign of Irish-Americans . . . [and] gave the lie to bigots who held that Italo-Americans were fit only for ditchdigging and organ grinding."

Thirty-six Italian-Americans, including Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R.-N.Y.) and Representative Peter Rodino (D.-N.J.), now serve in Congress. The nation's most prominent Italian-American politician: New York's Democratic governor, Mario Cuomo.

Thanks to hard-won material success, Italian-Americans, especially since the end of World War II, have been steadily moving out of their old urban enclaves. "When I was a kid, North Beach was 95 percent Italian, mostly from southern Italy, and there were many fisherman," Luigi Marciano, a 57-year-old chef at San Francisco's Green Valley Restaurant recently told the *New York Times*. "The Orientals came in and bought the land from the young ones . . . The Italian way has gone; the old are gone, and mostly the kids have moved and gone to [affluent] Marin County."

opposed to Communist representation in any Italian Cabinet. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, had persuaded his chief that the precedent set by such a power-sharing could become the United States' "greatest political problem" in Europe.

The appeal of a "historic compromise" and of Eurocommunism, possibly exaggerated at the time, faded with Moscow's crackdown on Solidarity in Poland and its invasion of Afghanistan. In last year's election, the Italian Communists wooed environmentalists and women (some 40 percent of their candidates were female). Yet they won less than 27

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percent of the vote\*—a “broad rejection,” as party analyst Stefano Draghi observed, of the Communists’ “image and credibility.”

Despite their best efforts, the Communist leaders’ vague espousal of a “third way,” differing from both capitalism and democratic socialism, has only intensified most Italians’ anxieties. Then there is the name problem. “The best proof that Italy does not want to be entirely modern,” Guido Rossi, a Milan Communist, has said, “is that the biggest party on the left continues to call itself Communist.”

Communists have also suffered from the popularity of Socialist leader Bettino Craxi, whose achievements include the postwar era’s longest-lived government (two years, 10 months). Craxi showed the *grinta* (“true grit”) and *decisionismo* (decisive leadership) that Italians admire. He introduced American-style campaign promotion—not of the party but of the standard-bearer’s personality. In one television ad, a mock interviewer asked Craxi about nuclear energy. Said the staunchly anti-Communist Socialist chief: “Well, after Chernobyl even I was frightened, and I don’t think I am someone who frightens easily.”

Today, a number of academics worry that Italy suffers from what they call either “blocked democracy” or “stable instability.” There is no sweeping change in Italian politics, as Antonio Martino, a University of Rome economist, wrote recently, because in every election, the voters confront the same question: Will the Christian Democrats manage to keep the Communists out of government?

“No matter how inefficient, unstable or corrupt” are the coalitions formed under the Christian Democratic leadership, Martino noted, most Italians prefer them to allowing Communists into government.

### The Sharpshooters

Thus, from election to election, gains or losses by the major non-Communist parties are slight. “Victory” and “defeat” are largely a matter of perception. When the Christian Democrats won only 32.9 percent of the vote in 1983 (down from 38.3 percent in 1979), the Rome newspapers concluded that the party had suffered “an earthquake.”

In any case, to a degree that baffles Americans, election results have little impact on proceedings in the Chamber of Deputies.

The final vote on any legislation before the whole house must be secret, theoretically to make it easier for deputies to follow their consciences. In practice, secrecy weakens party discipline. While governments usually fall when one of the coalition parties withdraws, it may also occur when they lose a vote on a bill in Parliament. Very often, they are done in by “sharpshooters,” defectors from the ruling parties who

\*Numerous parties have voices in the 630-seat Chamber of Deputies and the coequal 315-seat Senate. Currently, the deputies include 234 Christian Democrats, 177 Communists, 94 Socialists, 35 neo-Fascists, 21 Republicans, 17 Democratic Socialists, 13 Radicals, 13 Greens, 11 Liberals, eight Proletarian Democrats, and seven others. In regional elections, voters may find 15 or more parties represented. Communists participate in “Juntas of the Left” that run Milan, Bologna, and Florence.

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quietly vote against their own coalition government. After such a collapse, pundits and politicians spend days trying to identify the “traitors.”

Protracted legislative debates and sharpshooters-in-ambush cannot keep the Cabinet from enacting laws by executive decree (which the Constitution permits, if the laws later win parliamentary approval). Nor can they prevent parliamentary *committees* from enacting laws by a vote of the committee’s members. Thousands of measures are thus approved every legislative session, and some are passed unanimously; that is, members of the government and of the so-called opposition (including the Communists) actually do much collaborating.

### Once a Sicilian . . .

Such off-the-floor horse trading by the parties’ powerful chiefs is the form that *trasformismo* takes today. *Trasformismo* flourishes when parliamentary factions are not clear cut, governmental coalitions are loose and shifting, and the formation of public policies need only be marginally related to election results.\* To an untrained observer, it may appear that Italy’s political system is in a prolonged process of collapse. In fact, underneath the surface pyrotechnics, the business of government, like the economy, carries on.

The fact that Italy changes, in political terms, very slowly, is not surprising. Italians are, after all, conservative by nature. Italy remains a society in which a narrow circle of families control most of the wealth and much of the political power. While universal suffrage and mass-based parties have brought democracy to ordinary Italians, they have not unseated *la classe politica*—the ruling political class. A small number of northern families—e.g., the Agnellis and Olivettis of Turin, the Pirellis of Milan—still dominate industry; for the most part, southerners run the Italian bureaucracy.

The traditional family still anchors Italian society. To be sure, younger women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers. But, generally, conventional familial relationships prevail. The men, the breadwinners, go to work; the women cook and run the household. In the evening, the men stroll through the streets, often arm in arm, and crowd the small bars and *trattorie*, while the women (except in the big cities) stay home or visit friends and relatives. And unlike their restless American or West German counterparts, Italian college students usually live at home—where they often stay until they marry.

Italians, simply put, are not adventurous people. They prize church, community, family. They do not move very often, and when they do, they still cherish their provenance. A resident of Milan, whose *grandparents* migrated from Palermo would consider himself—and be recog-

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\*Any citizen who gets 500,000 signatures on a petition may have an issue turned over to the voters in a direct referendum. It was thus that, during the 1970s, Italians approved the legalization of divorce and of abortion, both of which were ardently opposed by the Christian Democrats.

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nized by the Milanese—as Sicilian. The Italians have a distinctive way of identifying themselves. A Milan resident born in Lucca would first say that he is Luccan, and second that he is Tuscan, the region in which Lucca is located. He would also say, with more than a little vehemence, that he is a northerner, and *not* from the south.

When in 1984 the Rome and Liverpool soccer teams were to play an important match in the Italian capital, a writer for the city's daily *Il Messaggero* advised visiting British fans that they "shouldn't be surprised" if "you find your team supported by a majority of Italians." Rome, he explained, "is foreign in Italy."

### Bail-out Socialism

Italians, unlike the Scandinavians or West Germans, generally take their vacations at home, in Italy—perhaps in the Dolomite Mountains, or along the Amalfi coast south of Naples. In their habits Italians are conformists. Rome, Milan, Turin, and other major Italian cities, unlike Paris, Frankfurt, or New York, are not teeming with ethnic restaurants. When Italians dine out, they do so not to experiment with foreign foods, but to enjoy better Italian fare.

Such provincialism, which Italians call *campanilismo*, is not unrelated to the postwar strength of Italian democracy. "Italy survives," British journalist Robert Harvey noted, because Italians have "a cohesive set of social values." To them, "it is unacceptable to treat your children badly; it is unacceptable to dump grandma in an old folks home. Violence (except to settle family scores) is unacceptable."

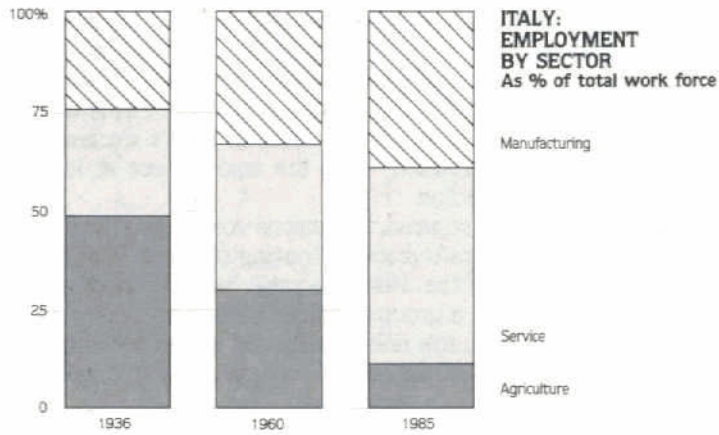
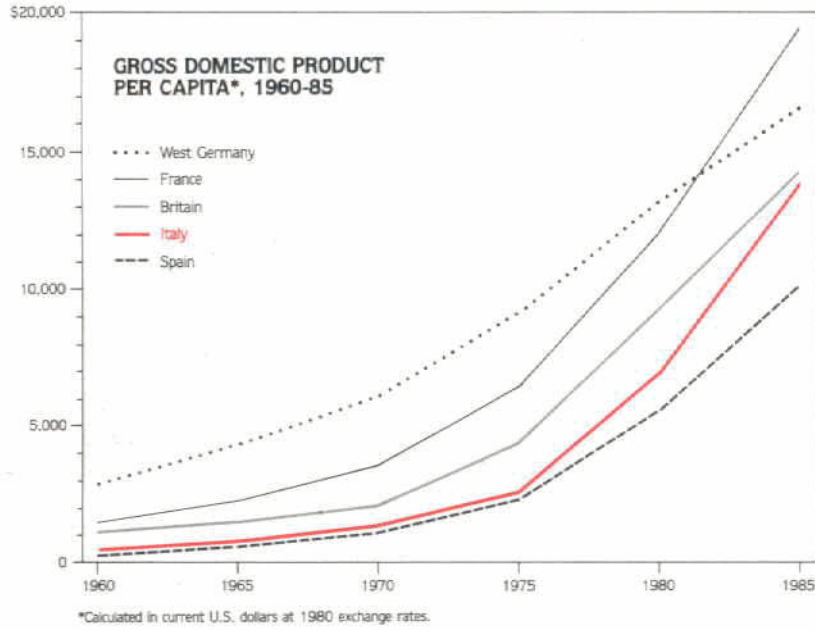
The Italians' essential conservatism is evident in industry too. It was the state, not risk-taking entrepreneurs, that created the nation's steel and textile industries during the 19th century. Today, government-owned firms account for about a fourth of Italy's GDP; prior to a recent spate of nationalizations in France, Italy's economy was the most "socialist" in the West after Austria's.

Rome does not own industries because some leftists thought the state should destroy Italy's capitalists; Rome bailed out the capitalists.

In 1933 Mussolini's Fascist regime set up the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI), initially to rescue three major banks that had invested their customers' money unwisely. Though meant to be a temporary expedient, the IRI established large holdings in other industries. Today it controls shipbuilding, the airlines, and 80 percent of the steel and metal-working sectors. In 1953 Rome set up another company, *Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* (ENI), to command Italy's energy industries. With some 120,000 employees and overseas oil projects in Libya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the Soviet Union, ENI now boasts annual revenues of about \$20 billion.

Managers at IRI and ENI owe their jobs to the *lottizzazione*, a patronage system whereby the major parties in the ruling coalition con-

THE ITALIAN ECONOMY: CATCHING UP



*Italy's economy is now more like Britain's than Spain's. Because many Italians work "underground," said then-Treasury Minister Giovanni Goria in 1987, such "negative indicators" as high joblessness "should be taken with a grain of salt."*

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trol a certain number of jobs in the state-owned industries, in rough proportion to the parties' electoral strength. In banking, for instance, the ratio of Christian Democratic to Socialist managers now stands at roughly eight to one. But other parties have their fiefdoms too. Socialist leaders, for example, have much to say about who gets the top jobs at ENI. Economic efficiency is a secondary consideration.

### 'Propaganda of the Deed'

The parties actually wield more power than the central government itself. Hence many political scientists call Italian democracy a *partito-crazia*, or "partyocracy." The parties decide not only who gets patronage jobs but also such matters as control of broadcasting (the Christian Democrats, Socialists, and Communists each have leading roles at one of the three official RAI TV channels), which artists receive government aid, and even who performs at *La Scala*.

Of Milan's opera, a University of Rome historian once observed, "The members of the board are all representatives of the political parties, to the point that when they enroll the musicians, they ask what political party they belong to—yes, the players."

Neither this cozy system nor Italy's remarkable economic progress has eroded unemployment or helped the unions. Their membership peaked at about 12 million workers—more than half of the labor force—during the mid-1970s. Today, membership in the three major labor confederations is, by official count, under nine million. Some 100,000 manufacturing jobs are disappearing every year, owing largely to the decline of steel-making, shipbuilding, and other basic industries hurt by competition from lower-wage nations in Asia and elsewhere. Most employees now work for local governments, universities, banks, and in other hard-to-unionize, service-oriented organizations. Firms with 100 staffers or fewer now employ some two-thirds of Italy's workers.

As elsewhere in the industrialized West, the unions were at least partly to blame for their own decline.

With the Workers' Statute secured, the unions scored another victory in 1975. This involved the *scala mobile* ("moving staircase"), a pay-escalator system devised during the 1940s to raise wages periodically without disputes or strikes. With a group of business leaders (headed by Fiat chairman Giovanni Agnelli), the unions achieved an agreement to link the *scala mobile* to increases in the cost of living in a way that would bring every worker a *quarterly* increase in pay.

These victories were costly. By one reckoning, wage increases accounted for roughly 40 percent of the rise in the prices of Italy's manufactured goods between 1977 and 1979. And, ironically, with the Workers' Statute and the pay escalator in place, wage earners had less interest in paying union dues. And because the revised *scala mobile* acted to flatten the differences between high- and low-paid employees,





*Italy's most durable postwar Christian Democratic prime ministers (clockwise from upper left): Alcide de Gasperi (led 8 governments), Amintore Fanfani (6), Aldo Moro (5), Mariano Rumor (5), and Giulio Andreotti (5).*

skilled workers began to demand raises via under-the-table deals made at the plant level. The unions began to lose both members and influence.

Of all the paradoxes about Italian democracy, perhaps the most striking is that, while party politics permeates society, society seems to change so little. How can this be? Basic Italian conservatism is only one explanation. Another theory is that Italian politics is largely a *spettacolo*, a continuing drama, more talk than action, which pervades life on the peninsula. In the *spettacolo* of politics, Italians are not only spectators but also participants, not only the severe critics of politics and politicians but also their enthusiastic adherents.

In the theater of the Italian *spettacolo*, the urban *piazza*, or central square, is a stage. Rome, Milan, and even medium-sized cities such as Florence, Bologna, and Catania boast squares where a million or more persons may assemble. The right that Italians enjoy to "go down to the *piazza*," to voice one's views, is one that they exercise often and with relish. The *spettacolo* sometimes takes place via the media. In 1986 the government began a mass prosecution of 452 accused Mafia members in Palermo. The "maxitrial" became a *spettacolo*, as the defendants

watched the proceedings from cages erected in the courtroom, and Italians everywhere followed the trial on nationwide TV broadcasts. (In December 1987, 338 of the *Mafiosi* were convicted.)

Italy's terrorists skillfully exploited the *spettacolo* phenomenon to call attention to themselves. Following the 1969 Milan bombing, terrorist squads kidnapped, "kneecapped," maimed, wounded, or killed 1,775 victims in dozens of cities. The most serious and prolonged *spettacolo* began in Rome in March 1978, when the Red Brigades abducted Aldo Moro, killing five of his bodyguards in the process.

The Brigades probably struck at Moro because he had helped negotiate a "national solidarity" pact under which the Communists agreed to support the Christian Democratic government. In any case, from the carefully timed release of Moro's letters to family members to the announcement of his "trial"—and the cryptic message ("The Mandarin Is Rotten") that announced his death—the terrorists showed that what they most desired was "the propaganda of the deed." Moro's body was left curled up in the back of a car, around the corner from the Christian Democratic and Communist Party headquarters in downtown Rome.

"The more we grew militarily," observed Alberto Franceschini, one of the Red Brigades' founders, "the more we were living" in the headlines. "The society of the *spettacolo*," he claimed, "was using us as elements of the *spettacolo* itself." The enemies of the state, "the 'terrorists,' became the favorite actors of the state."

### Laws, Loopholes, Logic

The Moro tragedy proved a *doccia scozzese* (cold shower) for the ruling elite. Despite Moro's pleas that the Christian Democrats negotiate with his captors, they refused. So did the Communists, the Republicans, and the Liberals. But the Socialists, with Bettino Craxi's approval, rashly tried, via intermediaries, to make contact with the Red Brigades. One Socialist leader, Claudio Signorile, later admitted to an investigating parliamentary committee that by "going against the current [in the Moro case], we also hoped to gain some political space."

As it happens, the record of Italy's intellectuals on terrorism has been even worse than that of the Socialists. Beginning during the late 1960s, reflecting similar "cultural revolutions" elsewhere in the West, leading writers and university professors began engaging in attacks on the state. At Padua University, for instance, Toni Negri, a specialist on Kant and Spinoza who came to be regarded as the intellectual guru of the most extreme terrorists on the Left, openly condoned political violence.\* From such intellectuals, susceptible students absorbed theories

\*Negri became an emblem of Italian tolerance. Awaiting trial for being one of the Red Brigades' "brains," he was freed after winning immunity by being elected a deputy in 1983 under the banner of the Radicals (a small party whose flamboyant leader has espoused free heroin to thwart the Mafia). Later, after fleeing to France, Negri complained of being sent only half his parliamentary pay.

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that, in effect, justified attacks on Italy's institutions.

These theories ranged from Friedrich Nietzsche's argument that the creation of anything worthwhile requires destruction first, to French historian Michel Foucault's distinction between "constructive" and "destructive" violence. Such abstract ideas did not fade in the face of real bombs and victims. During the Moro abduction, Leonardo Sciascia, a leading ex-Communist intellectual, chillingly declared himself "neither with the state nor with the Red Brigades."

Yet in combatting violence, officials in Rome, remembering Mussolini, took care not to turn the nation into a police state. "We respected civil rights," recalled former interior minister Virginio Rognoni of his antiterrorist work after the Moro affair. "There were no special tribunals." A law allowing suspects to be held for long periods without charges was repealed; it was "not proving useful against terrorism."

Indeed, the miracle of Italian democracy is this: Living in a pluralistic, divided society, with a high potential for conflict, Italians, in the end, manage to relieve tension and prevent strife. The ways in which they do so often seem illogical, devious, corrupt, and inefficient. Rules are made to satisfy various groups. Entrepreneurs run their businesses "underground," beneath the reach of Italian officialdom. In government and in state-owned industry, positions are filled first on the strength of the applicant's party membership, then on the formal basis of merit. Evading taxes or onerous regulations, ordinary citizens, at the very least, habitually skirt the letter of the law. "*Fatta la legge, trovato l'inganno*," goes a well-known Neapolitan saying: "Made the law, found the loophole."

The signs of such thinking are often highly visible. Especially in the south, the countryside is stippled with half-completed houses. They are built by poor folk who take years to complete them, one floor at a time, but have erected the basic framework quickly because the law bars the arbitrary demolition of any structure with a roof on it. Indeed, the flouting of building codes is so endemic that at one point the Rome government invited transgressors to confess their code violations, ask (and receive) forgiveness, and pay a fine. The time limit for the violations that could be forgiven *postdated* the law. Thus, citizens who had not yet sinned were given a chance to do so—a quintessentially Italian gesture.

Not all Italians have been content with the sometimes baffling or slipshod aspects of Italian democracy. The Communists, for a time, hoped to remake the society according to Marx and Lenin. Earlier in this century, Benito Mussolini believed he could transform the Italian peninsula into the cornerstone of a second Roman empire. During their 21-year reign, the Fascists were guilty of many sins, against logic and against humanity. In the end, it was their own countrymen whom the *Duce* and his followers, with disastrous results, failed to understand.

## REMEMBERING MUSSOLINI

*by Charles F. Delzell*

After meeting Benito Mussolini in Rome in 1927, Winston Churchill, then a Conservative member of Parliament, said that had he been an Italian, he would have "wholeheartedly" supported the Fascist leader's "triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism." In 1940, however, when he was prime minister of an embattled Britain, Churchill called the *Duce* a "jackal," and blamed this "one man alone" for dragging Italy into World War II and disaster.

There have been few, if any, dictators of the Right or Left in our century whose rise to power owed more to the myopia of democratic statesmen and plain citizens. Mussolini's fall from power was as dramatic as his ascent, and the Fascist era merits our reflections today.

Many younger Americans may think of Mussolini only as actor Jack Oakie portrayed him in Charlie Chaplin's classic 1940 film, *The Great Dictator*: a rotund, strutting clown, who struck pompous poses from his Roman balcony and tried to upstage Adolf Hitler when they first met, in Venice in 1934.

Yet the caricature should not blind us to history. Perhaps the most sobering aspect of Benito Mussolini's career was how much applause he once enjoyed from highly respected intellectuals, journalists, and politicians, abroad and at home. Exasperated by Italy's fragile, fractious parliamentary democracy, worried about increasing popular unrest, and fearful of the Socialists' rising popularity, statesmen such as the Liberal Party leader Giovanni Giolitti and King Victor Emmanuel III welcomed Mussolini's advent to power in 1922. And the King supported him during most of the 21 years that the *Duce* ruled in Rome.

Mussolini's strong-man appeal—and that of the Fascism he espoused—grew out of the postwar disorder and economic hardship which reigned in Italy and much of Europe. It also stemmed in some measure from the fact that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Italy had been governed by squabbling legislators. By 1883, the year Mussolini was born, the various kingdoms and duchies on the Italian peninsula had only recently been unified under Victor Emmanuel II, King of Sardinia-Piedmont. "The patriotism of the Italians," as the 19th-century Neapolitan historian Luigi Blanch has observed, "is the love of a single town, not of a country; it is the feeling of a tribe, not of a nation."

Indeed, Italy was heir to long-embedded regional differences; these were aggravated by poor transportation and great disparities in education, wealth, and class. During the early 20th century, the church was powerful almost everywhere. And every corner of the country had its



*The Duce at work in Palazzo Chigi, c. 1925. Mussolini disliked small talk and expressed a "physical repulsion" to human contact. "A leader can have no equals, no friends," he said, "and must give his confidence to no one."*

own traditions, customs, and dialect. The north-south contrasts were striking: At the turn of the century, for example, there were no primary schools in the south; in fact, nearly 80 percent of all southerners were illiterate. Many peasants lived in a kind of Third World poverty, subject to drought, malaria, and the vagaries of absentee landlords.

The nation was politically fragmented too. In rural Italy, especially in the central "Red" Romagna region where Mussolini was born, anarchist-socialist ideas had spread rapidly. By the 1890s, a Marxist brand of socialism won favor among workers in northern Italy's new "industrial triangle." By 1919 Italy's Socialist Party—"revolutionary" and "revisionist" factions—held more seats than any other single party (though still not a majority) in the Parliament, thanks to the introduction of universal manhood suffrage and proportional representation. The Roman Catholic Church, meanwhile, was at odds not only with the Socialists but also with the kingdom of Italy itself. The kingdom had annexed the papal states of Rome and central Italy between 1861 and 1870, prompting Pope Pius IX to proclaim himself a "prisoner of the Vatican."

In the eyes of his early Fascist supporters, Benito Mussolini was the man who was restoring order and establishing national unity.

His origins were no more auspicious than Hitler's or Stalin's. He

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was born on July 29, 1883, into a poor but politically active household. His father, Alessandro Mussolini, was a blacksmith and an anarchist-socialist who helped organize a local group of the Socialist International, and who read aloud parts of *Das Kapital* to his family. Benito's mother, Rosa, was a pious Catholic schoolteacher who insisted that the family speak high Italian, rather than the Romagna dialect. Benito lived with his parents and a younger brother and sister in two rooms on the second floor of a small, shabby building outside of Predappio, about 50 miles southeast of Bologna. Two pictures hung on a wall in the parents' bedroom: one of the Virgin Mary and one of the Italian nationalist and anticlerical agitator Giuseppe Garibaldi. The parents named their eldest son not after a saint but after Benito Juarez, the Mexican revolutionary who had helped overthrow Santa Anna's dictatorship in 1855.

In his youth, Benito was moody at home and a bully at the Catholic boarding school he attended in nearby Faenza. Indeed, he was expelled after stabbing a fellow student with a knife and assaulting a priest who tried to discipline him. Benito was, nevertheless, an academic achiever; in 1901 he got his diploma from another school, in Forlimpopoli, and later became a part-time school teacher. At age 19, Mussolini left Italy for Switzerland ("that republic of sausages"), partly to avoid compulsory military service. "I was a bohemian in those days," he later wrote. "I made my own rules and I did not keep even them."

### Changing Tunes

At first, Mussolini lived a vagabond's life in Switzerland—moving from town to town, doing odd jobs to survive, sometimes sleeping in public lavatories and parks. But the young man's interest soon turned to politics. In 1903 Mussolini took up residence in Bern; he began contributing articles to socialist journals, organized a strike of masons, and fought a (harmless) pistol duel with a fellow socialist.

After wandering through Switzerland, France, and Germany, Mussolini returned to Italy to do his military service. In 1909 he decided to move to Italian-speaking Trento in Austria-Hungary. There he edited a weekly socialist newspaper, *L'Avvenire del Lavoratore* ("The Workers' Future"). Later, in Forlì, Italy, he edited another socialist weekly, *La Lotta di Classe* ("The Class Struggle"), and translated Pyotr Kropotkin's *Great French Revolution*. By 1910, displaying a natural talent, he was one of Italy's best-known socialist journalist-polemicists. That year he also began to live with Rachele Guidi, the 17-year-old daughter of a widow with whom Benito's father had lived after the death of his wife.

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Their civil marriage would not take place until 1915.

Mussolini's early commitment to socialism, or to any other *ism*, should not be taken too seriously, despite his passionate rhetoric. Mussolini would repeatedly demonstrate his willingness to change his political stance whenever it advanced his prospects. As a young man he read the works of Niccolò Machiavelli, Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel, and others. But he was mostly interested in ideas that he could appropriate for his own use. Like other Italian socialists, Mussolini at first condemned World War I as an "imperialist war." His country's involvement, he said, would constitute an "unpardonable crime." But after France's amazing survival at the Marne in September 1914, he reversed his position. In *Avanti!*, the Socialist Party newspaper that he then edited in Milan, he urged that Italy enter the conflict on the side of Britain and France. The Socialists promptly expelled him as a traitor.

### ***Fasci di Combattimento***

Now a maverick "national" socialist, Mussolini quickly founded his own newspaper in Milan, *Il Popolo d'Italia* ("The People of Italy"). The paper was financed, in part, by local industrialists. Slogans on the paper's masthead read: "Whoever has steel has bread" (from the French revolutionary Auguste Blanqui) and "The Revolution is an idea which has found bayonets!" (from Napoleon). When the government declared war on Austria-Hungary in May 1915, Mussolini hailed the event as "Italy's baptism as a great power" and "a culminating point in world history."

Mussolini's own role in the conflict—he was drafted in August 1915 and served in the Alps—would provide him with a lode of (mostly imaginary) stories about his heroics in combat. Never involved in any major battles, the young sergeant was injured on February 22, 1917, when a mortar accidentally exploded in his trench, spraying his backside with 44 pieces of shrapnel. After recovering, Mussolini returned to *Il Popolo*, where he pounded out fiery editorials in favor of the war effort and against bolshevism. He considered Lenin a "man of straw" and observed that "only a Tartar and Mongolian people could fall for such a program as his."

As time went on, Mussolini became increasingly nationalistic. Insisting upon Italy's "great imperial destiny," he demanded the annexation of the Austro-Hungarian territories where Italian was spoken, such as the port of Trieste, the Italian Tyrol, and most of Dalmatia. With strong business support, Mussolini changed the subtitle of *Il Popolo d'Italia* from "a socialist newspaper" to "the newspaper of combatants and producers." And in a speech in Rome in February 1918, Mussolini declared that Italy needed "a man who is ferocious and energetic enough to make a clean sweep, with the courage to punish without hesitation, particularly when the culprits are in high places."

Although Italy emerged as a victor in World War I, the conflict had

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wreaked havoc on Italian society. Some 650,000 soldiers had perished. Returning veterans swelled the ranks of the unemployed; nearly two million Italians found themselves out of work by the end of 1919. A wave of industrial strikes broke out in the north. Some workers, stirred by the news of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, urged a "dictatorship of the proletariat" for Italy. Meanwhile, in Rome, one feeble Liberal Party coalition government after another tried vainly to restore stability.

With the Great War at an end, and the fear of bolshevism widespread, Mussolini cast about for a new nationalist cause to lead. On March 23, 1919, he founded Italy's Fascist movement in a businessmen's club off Milan's Piazza San Sepolcro. His *Fasci di Combattimento* ("Fighting Fasces") took their name from the bundle of rods with protruding axe-blades that had been the symbol of authority and discipline in ancient Rome. About 120 people were present at the Milan meeting, including veterans of the *arditi*, a group of wartime shock troops. "We, the survivors who have returned," Mussolini wrote, "demand the right of governing Italy." The Fascists chose as their uniform the same black shirt Romagna laborers had favored.

Though Mussolini's Fascist movement was always anti-Marxist, anti-Liberal, and virulently nationalistic, it would endorse (and quickly drop) many causes. At first Mussolini called for a republic and universal suffrage, and criticized the Roman Catholic Church. Later, he would endorse the monarchy, render elections meaningless, and cozy up to the church. The Fascist movement attracted unemployed youths, frightened members of the bourgeoisie, industrialists, landowners, and, especially, war veterans who believed that Italy, at the 1919 Paris peace conference, had not gained all of the territories she was due.

"When I came back from the war," Italo Balbo, a noted Fascist, would later recall, "I, like so many others, hated politics and politicians, who, it seemed to me, had betrayed the hopes of the fighting men and had inflicted on Italy a shameful peace . . . Struggle, fight to return the country to Giolitti who had bartered every ideal? No. Better [to] deny everything, destroy everything in order to build everything up again from the bottom."

### Cudgels and Castor Oil

The Fascist movement's ability to straddle, however awkwardly, Italy's conventional political divisions between Right and Left proved to be one of its greatest initial strengths. During the "Fascism of the First Hour," Mussolini's program did not differ much from that of the Socialists, except that the Fascists had favored Italy's wartime role and still praised it. But when the Fascist movement failed to elect even one of its candidates to Parliament in the November 1919 election, Mussolini decided to shift to the Right.

To win more support from Catholics, he muted his anticlerical rhet-



oric and said that Rome should subsidize churches and religious schools. The Liberal government's decision to withdraw troops from Albania, which they had occupied since 1914, Mussolini said, represented a "disgusting exhibition of national cowardice." Above all, Mussolini intensified his anti-Socialist rhetoric and berated the Liberal government for "doing nothing" when, in September 1920, metal workers in the north forcibly occupied the factories and set up Soviet-style workers' councils. The Fascists, Mussolini promised, would restore "law and order."

Mussolini's message won over many employers, who believed that the Fascists could keep militant labor at bay. Bands of Fascist thugs, known as *squadristi*, launched "punitive expeditions" against Socialist and Catholic leagues of laborers and farmworkers. They beat some members with cudgels and forced castor oil down their throats. By official count, the Fascists destroyed 120 labor union offices and murdered 243 persons between January and May of 1921.

The ruling Liberals were happy to look the other way. Local police officers even supplied the Blackshirt militias with weapons. And when Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti called for new elections, to take place on May 15, 1921, he proposed to the Fascists that, following the election, they should join his constitutional bloc in Parliament. This time,



*Italian troops march through Rome, bound for Ethiopia, in October 1935. The British, Mussolini assured his countrymen, would not go to war to defend "an African country... without a trace of civilization."*

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Mussolini's Fascist Party would win 35 seats.

By 1922, Mussolini was impatient to seize power in what seemed more and more like a political vacuum. In October of that year, the Fascist Party held a congress in Naples, where Mussolini and his colleagues drew up plans for a "March on Rome." Under the plan, Fascist militias would lead the march while Mussolini prudently remained close to the Swiss border in case the attempted coup d'état failed. "Either we are allowed to govern," Mussolini warned in a speech to the Fascist militiamen, "or we will seize power by marching on Rome" to "take by the throat the miserable political class that governs us."

### Taking Power

The weak coalition government led by Luigi Facta knew that Mussolini was planning a coup, but at first the prime minister did not take the Fascists' intentions seriously. "I believe that the prospect of a March on Rome has faded away," Facta told the King. Nor were all of the Socialists eager to confront the Fascist threat. Indeed, some radical Marxists hoped that Mussolini's "reactionary buffoonery" would destroy both the Socialists and the Liberals, thus preparing the way for a genuine Communist revolution. For their part, the Liberals worried most about the Socialists, because of their anticapitalist ideology. Indeed, Liberals and Socialists were "as anxious to scuttle each other," as historian Denis Mack Smith has observed, "as to prevent a Fascist revolution."

The Fascists initiated the "March on Rome" on the night of October 27–28, 1922. The militias began taking over telephone exchanges and government offices. Luigi Facta wanted the King to declare a state of siege, but in the end no showdown occurred. Unconvinced that the army could or would defend Rome from the Fascists, or that the Liberals could provide effective leadership, Victor Emmanuel refused to sign a formal decree declaring a state of emergency. Instead, he telegraphed Mussolini, asking him to come to Rome to form a new government.

Boarding a train in Milan, Mussolini informed the stationmaster that he wanted to depart "exactly on time [because] from now on everything must function perfectly"—thereby giving rise to the myth that he made Italy's trains run on time. Upon his arrival in Rome, the *Duce* proceeded at once to the Palazzo del Quirinale. Still wearing a black shirt, he told the 53-year-old monarch (who had expected him to appear in formal dress): "I have come from the battlefield."

Thus, on October 31, 1922, at age 39, Mussolini became the youngest prime minister in Italy's short parliamentary history. With the Fascists holding only 35 seats in the 510-member Chamber of Deputies, he headed a cabinet of "national concentration" composed mostly of Liberals, socialist Democrats, and Catholic *Popolari*. In his first speech to the deputies, who gave him an overwhelming vote of confidence, he boasted: "I could have transformed this drab hall into a bivouac for my

squads . . . I could have formed a government exclusively of Fascists, but I chose not to, at least not for the present."

Despite the *Duce's* threats, many veteran politicians in Rome thought that, in time, they could co-opt Mussolini. Even Giovanni Giolitti and Antonio Salandra, the two senior members of the Liberal Party establishment, favored Mussolini's ascension to power. Luigi Albertini, the editor of Milan's *Corriere della Sera* voiced his delight that Fascism had, above all, "saved Italy from the danger of Socialism."

Others were pleased that, finally, Italy enjoyed strong leadership, of whatever kind. "The heart of Fascism is the love of Italy," observed the Liberal senator and philosopher Benedetto Croce in January 1924. "Fascism is overcoming the traditional indifference of Italians to politics . . . and I value so highly the cure which Italy is undergoing from it that I rather hope the patient will not get up too soon from his bed and risk some grave relapse."

In Britain, France, and the United States, many conservatives also gave their blessings. The *New York Tribune* remarked that "the Fascisti movement is—in essentials—a reaction against degeneration through socialistic internationalism. It is rough in its methods, but the aims which it professes are tonic." Even the *New York Times* suggested that Mussolini's coup was of a "peculiar and relatively harmless type."

### The Matteotti Crisis

Now at the center of power, Mussolini increasingly became a solitary figure. During his first five years in office, the *Duce* lived alone in a small rented apartment; his wife Rachele remained in Milan, where she cared for their five children. He lived austere, dined on vegetarian meals, and, partly to avoid irritating a gastric ulcer, eschewed alcohol and tobacco. (He once bragged of his "utter contempt for the lure of money.") An inveterate womanizer, Mussolini evinced little genuine affection for the opposite sex, or for people in general. "I have no friends," he once admitted to the German publicist Emil Ludwig, "first of all because of my temperament; secondly because of my views of human beings. That is why I avoid both intimacy and discussion."

Mussolini managed to project a more congenial image to the outside world. He contrived frequent "photo opportunities," posing at the controls of an airplane, grinning behind the wheel of a sports car, or taming a lion cub in its cage at the zoo. Many Americans saw him as an Italian Teddy Roosevelt—a stout-hearted advocate of the strenuous life.

But "image" was not enough. Eager to put more Fascists in Parliament, Mussolini called for an election, to take place on April 6, 1924. During the campaign and voting, the *squadristi* engaged in widespread intimidation. "When it is a matter of the Fatherland or of Fascism," Mussolini said on January 28, 1924, "we are ready to kill and die."

In the election, the Fascists claimed to have won 64.9 percent of

the votes. But on May 30, Giacomo Matteotti, the widely respected leader of the Unitary Socialist Party, courageously stood up in Parliament to read a list of incidents in which Blackshirts had threatened voters and tampered with the ballot boxes. Fascist deputies, now in the majority, taunted him, yelling "Hireling!", "Traitor!", "Demagogue!" Ten days later, Fascist toughs who were closely linked to Mussolini's press office kidnapped Matteotti near his home in Rome, stabbed him, and then half buried his corpse in a grove outside the capital.

The assassination precipitated the most serious crisis of Mussolini's early days in power. Many Italians, after all, believed that Mussolini had at least incited, if not ordered, the murder. The anti-Fascist opposition—Socialists, Catholic *Popolari*, Republicans, and Constitutional Democrats—boycotted the Parliament, forming the "Aventine Secession." It was time for the King, they believed, to dismiss Mussolini and call for new elections.

But the ever-timid King, who was weary of the governments of the past, refused to intervene. Nor did the Vatican support the oppositionists. Pope Pius XI himself warned Italians against "cooperation with evil" (i.e. the Socialists) for "whatever reason of public welfare."

In a fit of wishful thinking, many foreign commentators did not blame Mussolini for the murder. They preferred to cite certain "gang-



*The Duce and the Führer meet for the first time in Venice, June 1934. Afterward, Mussolini described Hitler as "a gramophone with just seven tunes and once he had finished playing them he started all over again."*

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ster elements" among the Fascists. "The Matteotti incident," lamented the *New York Times* "is of a kind that may kill a movement by depriving it at one stroke of its moral content."

In Rome, Mussolini taunted his hapless, divided opponents during a speech to Parliament:

But after all, gentlemen, what butterflies are we looking for under the arch of Titus? Well, I declare here before this assembly, before the Italian people, that I assume, I alone, the political, moral, historical responsibility for everything that has happened . . . .

By failing to oust Mussolini during the Matteotti crisis, his foes effectively entrenched the *Duce* as Italy's all-powerful leader.

On January 3, 1925, Mussolini launched a counter-offensive, announcing in an impassioned half-hour speech to Parliament that "force" was the "only solution" to the threat of disorder. Under a series of "exceptional decrees," Mussolini censored the press and outlawed all opposition parties, including the Socialists and Liberals. He replaced labor unions with Fascist syndicates. His Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State sentenced thousands of opposition activists (especially Communists and anarchists) either to long prison terms or to internal exile in the south. Youngsters were recruited by Fascist youth organizations—a future model for Germany's Hitler Youth—which stressed indoctrination and discipline, and exhorted them to "Believe! Obey! Fight!"

All the while, Mussolini continued to garner praise abroad. "Mussolini's dictatorship," observed the *Washington Post* in August 1926, "evidently appeals to the Italian people. They needed a leader, and having found him they gladly confer power upon him."

### Giving Italy Back to God

Mussolini called his regime the Totalitarian State: "Everything in the State, Nothing outside the State, Nothing Against the State!" But his "totalitarianism," harsh and noisy as it often was, was far less brutal than that of Stalin's Russia or Hitler's Germany—partly because the King retained control of the Italian Army and the right to dismiss the prime minister. Not until 1938 did the regime begin to discriminate against the nation's roughly 40,000 Jews; many would lose their jobs in government and academia. But Mussolini did not seek a "final solution" to Italy's "Jewish problem"—as the Germans did after they occupied northern Italy in September 1943.

On the economic front, Mussolini's "Corporative State" tried to foster "class conciliation." The regime set up parallel Fascist syndicates of employers and workers in various sectors of the economy. Labor courts settled disputes under a system of compulsory arbitration.

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In 1933, the regime established the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI) as a holding company to shore up failing industries. State-subsidized (or "parastate") industrial organizations would soon furnish about 17 percent of all goods and services. To stimulate the economy, Mussolini built roads, sports stadiums, and government buildings. The government launched numerous programs for mothers and children and developed a land reclamation scheme, which was responsible for draining the Pontine Marshes near Rome. Mussolini initiated a much-publicized "battle for grain"; newsreel cameramen filmed him pitching straw, bare from the waist up. Perhaps most significantly, the *Duce* began an ill-fated effort to rebuild the nation's army, navy, and air force.

Despite Mussolini's promise to restore "the Augustan Empire," he generally failed to push Italy's backward economy forward. The regime's cartels sometimes hindered economic advance by discouraging innovation and modernization. The *Duce* demoralized workers by cutting wages, raising taxes, and banning strikes and other forms of protest. Even as the government took over industries and prepared for war, unemployment remained high. Fully half of those who did work were employed in agriculture. Italian families, meanwhile, were spending 50 percent of their incomes on food.

Mussolini, however, sought (and gained) amicable relations with the Catholic church by signing the Lateran Pacts with the Vatican in February 1929. The pacts created the State of Vatican City, within which the Pope would be sovereign. They established Roman Catholicism as Italy's state religion, bestowing on it extensive privileges and immunities. The *Duce's* star soared throughout the Catholic world; devout Italian peasants flocked to church to pray for the man who had "given back God to Italy and Italy to God." Ignoring the suppression of civil liberties, Pope Pius XI referred to Mussolini as "a man whom Providence has caused to meet us" and sprinkled him with holy water.

### Grabbing Ethiopia

By the late 1920s, the *Duce* had solidified support for his regime, both in Rome and abroad. Soon after entering the White House in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote that he was "deeply impressed" by this "admirable Italian gentleman," who seemed intent upon "restoring Italy and seeking to prevent general European trouble."

Indeed, until the mid-1930s, Mussolini stayed (for the most part) out of foreign ventures. But great nations, Mussolini believed, could not be content with achievements at home. "For Fascism," as he wrote in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* in 1932, "the growth of empire . . . is an essential manifestation of vitality, and its opposite a sign of decadence. Peoples which are rising, or rising again after a period of decadence, are always imperialist: any renunciation is a sign of decay and death."

Mussolini would become increasingly obsessed with foreign con-



*U.S. G.I.'s in Rome on June 5, 1944, the day after they liberated the Eternal City. Mussolini had begged Hitler to defend the capital—to no avail.*

quests after January 1933, when Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany and soon won dictatorial powers. Although Mussolini and Hitler, as fellow Fascists, admired each other, their alliance would be marked by periodic fits of jealousy on the *Duce's* part. Hitler, as biographer Joachim C. Fest has written, "aroused in Mussolini an inferiority complex for which he thereafter tried to compensate more and more by posturings, imperial actions, or the invoking of a vanished past."

Mussolini's first major "imperial action" would occur in Africa. The *Duce* had long coveted Emperor Haile Selassie's Ethiopia, which an Italian army had failed to conquer in 1896. On the morning of October 2, 1935, as 100,000 troops began moving across the Eritrea-Ethiopia border, Mussolini announced that "A great hour in the history of our country has struck... forty million Italians, a sworn community, will not let themselves be robbed of their place in the sun!"

Paralyzed by economic depression and public antiwar sentiment, Britain's Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin refused to intervene, despite the inherent threat to British colonies in Africa. The League of Nations denounced the Fascist aggression. However, lacking any coherent leadership or U.S. support, the League stopped short of closing the Suez Canal or imposing an oil embargo on Italy. Either action, Mussolini said later, would have inflicted "an inconceivable disaster."

The barefooted Ethiopian levies were no match for Italy's Savoia

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bombers and mustard gas. The *Duce's* pilot son, Vittorio, told journalists in Africa that the Ethiopian soldiers, when hit from the air, "exploded like red roses." Addis Ababa fell in May 1936. With this victory, Mussolini reached the pinnacle of his popularity at home. Speaking to an enormous crowd from his Palazzo Venezia balcony, the *Duce* declared that his "triumph over 50 nations" meant the "reappearance of the Empire upon the fated hills of Rome." Signs everywhere proclaimed *Il Duce ha sempre ragione* ("The leader is always right").

Emboldened by his Ethiopian success, Mussolini began to intervene elsewhere. He dispatched aircraft and some 70,000 "volunteers" to help Generalissimo Francisco Franco's Falangist insurgents in the Spanish Civil War. He pulled Italy out of the League of Nations and decided to line up with Hitler's Germany, which had already quit the League. Thus, in June 1936, Mussolini's 33-year-old foreign minister and son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano, negotiated the Rome-Berlin Axis, which was expanded into a full-fledged military alliance, the "Pact of Steel," in May 1939. Both countries also established links with Japan through the Anti-Comintern Pact. The *Duce* now belonged to what he called the "most formidable political and military combination that has ever existed."

### Humiliations in the Desert

Mussolini's military forces, however, could not be described as formidable. Lacking coal, iron, oil, and sufficient heavy industry, Italy's economy could not support a major war effort. The *Duce*, who spoke of "eight million bayonets," proved a better propagandist than military planner. On the eve of World War II, the Italian Army owned 1.3 million outdated rifles and even fewer bayonets; its tanks and artillery were obsolete. By June 1940, the Italian Navy boasted fast battleships and Western Europe's largest fleet of submarines. But it sadly lacked radar, echo-sounding equipment, and other new technologies. And Mussolini's admirals and generals were better known for their political loyalty than for professional competence.

When Hitler quickly annexed Austria in March 1938, and Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Mussolini complained to Count Ciano: "The Italians will laugh at me. Every time Hitler occupies a country, he sends me a message." The *Duce*, ignoring Catholic sensibilities, ordered the invasion of Albania on Good Friday, April 7, 1939, bringing that backward Adriatic country into his empire.

When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, thereby launching World War II, Mussolini knew that Italy was not ready to fight. He initially adopted a position of "non-belligerency." The list of needed war supplies that the *Duce* requested from Berlin, noted Count Ciano, "is long enough to kill a bull." But as Hitler's Blitzkrieg brought Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France to their knees in 1940, Mussolini decided he had little to lose, and perhaps some spoils to gain.



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On June 10, 1940, without consulting either his cabinet or the Fascist Grand Council, Mussolini declared war on both France and Britain. In joining the conflict, Mussolini inadvertently let Hitler become the master of Italy's fate.

The Italian people soon felt the pain. The battlefield performance of Mussolini's armed forces reflected the homefront's lack of zeal. One debacle after another ensued. Under Field Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, Italy's much-touted armored brigades in Libya attacked the British in Egypt, hoping to capture the Suez Canal. But in the seesaw battles across the desert, as well as in naval engagements in the Mediterranean, the outnumbered British inflicted repeated humiliations on the Italians, who had to beg the Germans for help. By the end of 1941, the British had also shorn Mussolini of Italian Eritrea and Somalia, as well as Ethiopia, reinstating Haile Selassie as emperor.

### The King Says Good-bye

Italy's invasion of Greece, launched from Albania on October 28, 1940, did not fare much better. Saying he was "tired of acting as Hitler's tail-light," Mussolini launched the attack without notifying Berlin. The war against the Greeks, the *Duce* predicted, would be little more than a "military promenade." But the Italians were bogged down in the mountains for months, until Hitler's spring 1941 invasion of the Balkans rescued Mussolini's lackluster legions. And Italy's participation in Germany's 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union yielded few triumphs. Mussolini dispatched three infantry divisions and one cavalry division. At least half of the 240,000 Italian soldiers sent to the Eastern front never returned.

For Italy, the beginning of the end came on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States into the war against the Axis powers. Although Mussolini seemed delighted to be fighting "a country of Negroes and Jews," he knew that his regime was now in deep trouble.

Across the Mediterranean, in November 1942, General Dwight Eisenhower put Allied forces ashore in Morocco and Algeria. He began a push to meet Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's British Eighth Army, which had already broken through Axis defenses at el-Alamein. The German *Afrika Korps* fought a tough delaying action. But when the North Africa campaign ended in May 1943, some 200,000 Italians had been taken prisoner; few had fought the Allies with much enthusiasm.

New bases in North Africa enabled Allied airmen to step up the bombing of Italian cities and rail centers, which left the nation's already hard-pressed economy in tatters. Tardily, the regime rationed food supplies and restricted the consumption of gas and coal. Despite wage and price controls, inflation soared, and a black market flourished. Ordinary Italians began to demonstrate their disaffection. In early 1943, public employees in Turin and Fiat workers in Milan went on strike. "In Italy,"

Mussolini would later write, “the moral repercussions of the American landing in Algiers were immediate and profound. Every enemy of Fascism promptly reared his ugly head . . . .”

By the time the Allies invaded Sicily on July 10, 1943, even those Italian politicians who had long enjoyed privileges and perquisites were fed up; plots were being hatched in Rome to oust Mussolini and turn over political power to King Victor Emmanuel. All this came to a head on the night of July 24–25, when the Fascist Grand Council met at the Palazzo Venezia to decide Mussolini’s fate. Some Fascist councillors criticized the shaken dictator to his face for being too indecisive; others berated him for not ridding the government of incompetents. Nothing was working, they said, and the Germans in Italy, coping with Anglo-American advances, regarded their sagging ally with contempt.

In a two-hour monologue, the *Duce* tried to defend himself, saying that “this is the moment to tighten the reins and to assume the necessary responsibility. I shall have no difficulty in replacing men, in turning the screw, in bringing forces to bear not yet engaged.” But the Council adopted a resolution, which had been supported by Count Ciano, calling upon the King to take over the leadership of the nation.

The next afternoon, Mussolini went to the King’s villa, hoping to bluff his way through the crisis. But the King had decided, at last, to



*Voting in Italy's first postwar parliamentary elections, in Rome on April 18, 1948: Italian-Americans wrote to their friends and relatives in Italy, urging them to reject the Communists in favor of Christian Democrats.*

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separate himself from the Fascist regime. He quickly informed Mussolini that he had decided to set up a royal military government under the 71-year-old Army Marshal, Pietro Badoglio. "Then everything is finished," the *Duce* murmured. As the ex-dictator left the Villa Savoia, a *Carabiniere* officer motioned him into an ambulance, pretending this was necessary to avoid "a hostile crowd."

Mussolini was taken to a police barracks, unaware that he was under arrest. At 10:45 a government spokesman announced over the radio the formation of the new regime by the King and Badoglio. Jubilant crowds rushed into the streets to celebrate. But they were dismayed by Badoglio's statement that "the war continues"—a statement made to ward off German retaliation.

### Rescuing the Duce

Marshal Badoglio placed the former *Duce* under guard. Later, he was transferred to a ski resort atop Gran Sasso, the tallest peak in central Italy. He remained there for almost a fortnight, while the new regime secretly negotiated an armistice with the Allies. The armistice was announced on September 8—even as American and British troops landed against stiff German resistance at Salerno, near Naples.

Thereafter, events moved swiftly.

Anticipating Italy's about-face, Hitler had dispatched strong *Wehrmacht* reinforcements across the Alps; the Germans were able quickly to disarm and intern the badly confused Italian troops. Fearing capture, the King and Badoglio fled Rome before dawn on September 9 to join the Allied forces in the south. Six weeks later the Badoglio government, now installed in Brindisi, declared war on Germany.

On September 12, 1943, Captain Otto Skorzeny, leading 90 German commandos in eight gliders and a small plane, landed outside the mountaintop hotel on Gran Sasso where the sickly *Duce* was still being kept. Skorzeny's men brushed aside the Italian guards, and took Mussolini to Munich, where Hitler met him. Henceforth, the *Duce* would be one of Hitler's lackeys, a "brutal friendship" as Mussolini put it.

The *Führer* ordered Mussolini to head up the new pro-Nazi Italian Social Republic (RSI) at Salò, in German-occupied northern Italy. The Italian Fascists would help the Nazis deport, and later exterminate, over 8,000 Jews. From Munich, Mussolini appealed by radio to his "faithful Blackshirts" to renew Axis solidarity, and purge the "royalist betrayers" of the regime.

But few Italians willingly backed the "Salò Republic." Instead, most hoped for a swift Allied victory. A determined minority even joined the partisans—the armed anti-German and anti-Fascist resistance—in northern Italy. But Mussolini did manage to punish the "traitors of July 25." In Verona, a special Fascist tribunal put on trial Mussolini's son-in-law, Count Ciano, and others in his party who had voted for "the elimina-

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tion of its *Duce*." Rejecting the pleas of his daughter Edda, Mussolini decreed that Ciano and his co-conspirators be shot to death, and so they were, on January 11, 1944.

At last, in April 1945, the grinding Allied offensive, having reached northern Italy, overwhelmed the Germans, whose homeland was already collapsing under attack from East and West. At this point, Mussolini tried to save himself by negotiating with anti-Fascist resistance leaders in Milan. But when he learned that they insisted on an "unconditional surrender," he fled with several dozen companions to Lake Como, where he was joined by his mistress, Clara Petacci. From there, they planned an escape to Switzerland.

### *Per Necessità Familiare*

Unable to cross the border, Mussolini and his band decided to join a German truck convoy that was retreating toward Switzerland through the Italian Alps. But Italian partisans halted the convoy near Dongo. Ever the actor, Mussolini donned a German corporal's overcoat, a swastika-marked helmet, and dark glasses, and climbed into one of the trucks. But the partisans identified Mussolini, arrested him and his companions, and let the Germans proceed unmolested.

The next day, Walter Audisio, a Communist resistance chief from Milan, arrived, claiming he had orders to execute the *Duce* and 15 other Fascist fugitives. He summarily shot Mussolini and his mistress at the village of Giulino di Mezzegra on April 28. Their corpses were taken to Milan and strung up by the heels in Piazzale Loreto, where an infuriated mob repeatedly kicked and spat on the swinging cadavers.

Looking back on Mussolini's career, it might be said that he changed Italy more than he changed the Italians. Indeed, the *Duce* left behind a network of paved roads, reclamation projects, and a vast centralized bureaucracy. The IRI holding company and other para-state corporations that Mussolini founded still exist today; they account for the most inefficient 20 percent of the nation's economy.

But Mussolini convinced few Italians for long that Fascism was the wave of the future. To be sure, many had supported the *Duce* enthusiastically, especially from the time his regime signed the concordat with the Pope (1929) through the easy conquest of Ethiopia (1936). And a small neo-Fascist party, the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), still wins roughly five percent of the popular vote in national elections today.

Most Italians quietly turned their backs on Mussolini once it became clear that he had engaged the nation in costly ventures that could not succeed. (More than 400,000 Italians lost their lives in World War II.) During the *Duce's* foolish expeditions against the Greeks, the British, and the Soviets, many Italians considered themselves to be "half-Fascists," who had taken out their Fascist Party membership cards only *per necessità familiare* (for the good of the family).

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On June 2, 1946, the first time that Italians got a chance to vote in a postwar election, they chose to oust the monarchy. They could not forgive King Victor Emmanuel for inviting Mussolini to take power, and for supporting the *Duce's* imperial ambitions—even if they forgave themselves. The voters elected a constituent assembly, which drafted a new constitution for the republic, providing for a prime minister, a bicameral parliament, and a system of 20 regional governments.

Mussolini and his ideology proved influential beyond Italy's borders. As the world's first and perhaps most popular Fascist leader, he provided the model for other aspiring authoritarian rulers in Europe and Latin America, who, for a time, would make fascism seem an attractive alternative to socialism, communism, or anarchy.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler called Mussolini's 1922 March on Rome "one of the turning points of history." The mere idea that such a march could be attempted, he said, "gave [Germany's National Socialists] an impetus." When Nazis did their outstretched arm salutes, or when Spanish Falangists cried "Franco! Franco! Franco!", they were mimicking their counterparts in Italy. Juan Perón, Argentina's president (1946–1955), echoed the sentiments of many another ambitious Latin strongman when he called Mussolini "the greatest man of our century."

Just before Mussolini came to power, Italians, like citizens of several troubled European societies after World War I, faced a choice—either muddling through disorder and economic disarray under often inept, yet essentially benevolent democratic regimes, or falling in line behind a decisive but brutal dictatorship. Italians chose the latter. They embraced the strong man's notions of a grand New Age. But Mussolini's intoxicating vision of Italy as a great power, they eventually discovered, was a disastrous delusion.

The Fascist era serves to remind Italians and others of something important: that national well-being may not come from charismatic leadership, revolutionary zeal, or military might. Indeed, Italy's peculiar greatness today may lie in its citizens' tolerance of regional and economic differences, in their ability to cope with the inefficiencies of democratic government, in their pragmatic acceptance of human foibles—and, most of all, in their appreciation of the rich texture of everyday life.

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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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### ITALY

"Physical geography has endowed Italy with few advantages. Within natural frontiers formed by the Mediterranean and the awesome barrier of the Alps, four-fifths of the territory consists of mountains and hills. Not only the great Alpine arc, sweeping west to east from the Mediterranean to the Adriatic, but . . . the Apennines, stretching . . . down the length of Italy . . . set permanent barriers to the possibilities of cultivation."

So writes Stuart Woolf in **A History of Italy, 1700–1860** (Methuen, 1979). Indeed, it was the diversity of Italy's physical and climatic characteristics that shaped "the varying forms of human settlements" and made the achievement of nationhood so difficult. But the peninsula's mid-Mediterranean location, Woolf adds, also gave Italians "a virtual monopoly" over East-West trade for centuries: "Spices and silks, saints' remains and heresies, ancient manuscripts and contemporary plagues, all passed through Italian ports—Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, Venice—and inland cities—Milan, Pavia, Bologna, and Florence."

Despite its divisive geography, Italy did, of course, achieve unity. How this happened is told in Denis Mack Smith's excellent surveys, **The Making of Italy, 1796–1870** (Harper, 1968) and **Italy: A Modern History** (Univ. of Mich., 1969). "There was a feeling of *italianità* which thinkers were beginning to rationalize and statesmen to exploit," Mack Smith writes, describing the sentiments that permeated 19th-century Italy. "There was the liberating wind from the French Revolution . . . [and] an expanding commercial and agricultural middle class."

No individual played a more crucial role in the *Risorgimento*, or "Resurgence," than did Count Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810–61), the premier and for-

eign minister of Victor Emmanuel II, King of Sardinia-Piedmont. It was di Cavour who met with the French emperor, Napoleon III, in July 1858 at Plombières, France, to discuss what the emperor "could do for Piedmont and Italy."

Shepard B. Clough and Salvatore Saladino's documentary **History of Modern Italy** (Columbia, 1968) describes what happened at that fateful meeting: After eight hours of talks, Napoleon III agreed that Piedmont would provoke Austria into war. France would join the conflict, force the Austrians out of Italy, and Victor Emmanuel II would head a kingdom of Upper Italy. On January 1, 1859, at a New Year's reception in Paris, Napoleon III told the surprised Austrian ambassador, Baron Hubner: "I regret that our relations with your government are not so good as formerly."

In the ensuing Franco-Austrian War of 1859, the French managed to wrest Lombardy from the Austrians, then handed it over to Victor Emmanuel. Several other pieces of the new Italian nation soon fell into place, thanks to di Cavour's skill: The citizens of Tuscany, Modena, Parma, and Romagna decided, in a series of plebiscites, to join Sardinia-Piedmont. And in 1860, the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi took over Sicily and Naples by defeating the ruling Bourbon regime. A parliament representing all of the provinces met in Turin, and on March 17, 1861, conferred the title "King of Italy" on Victor Emmanuel II. The kingdom annexed Venice in 1866 and Rome in 1870.

The new monarchy was eager to keep up with its European neighbors in acquiring overseas possessions, as Christopher Seton-Watson points out in **Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870–1925** (Methuen, 1967). "Italy must be ready," declared the Italian newspaper *Il Diritto* on January 1, 1885. "The year

1885 will decide her fate as a great power. It is necessary to feel the responsibility of the new era."

Later that year, as Robert L. Hess's **Italian Colonialism in Somalia** (Univ. of Chicago, 1966) explains, Italy's foreign minister, P. S. Mancini, organized an expedition to Ethiopia's Red Sea port of Massawa—a venture he justified before Parliament by declaring that "the keys to the Mediterranean lie in the Red Sea." (Mancini's opponents suggested that he find the keys by asking Moses to drain the Red Sea.) Although the Ethiopians later crushed Italian forces (killing 8,000 men) at the Battle of Adowa in March 1896, Rome maintained small colonies in Eritrea and Somalia.

The Italians would wait 15 years before launching a second imperial adventure. On September 29, 1911, the Liberal Party government of Giovanni Giolitti declared war on Turkey and invaded Turkish-controlled Libya, as Claudio G. Segrè explains in **Fourth Shore** (Univ. of Chicago, 1974). The Italian Navy quickly seized control of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and the formerly Turkish Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean Sea.

The invasion, Martin Clark observes in **Modern Italy, 1871–1982** (Longman, 1984), was "taken for reasons of internal policy, to placate the Nationalists and the 'clerico-moderates.'" And many priests, he says, had preached a crusade "against the heathen Turk."

By 1930, when Benito Mussolini was in power, some 50,000 Italians were living in Rome's African colonies. According to Denis Mack Smith's **Mussolini's Roman Empire** (Viking, 1976), the Africans did not fare too badly under Italy's Fascist regime. Indeed, the Italians,

Mack Smith says, "built a large network of roads; and by the legal abolition of slavery, the control of pestilence and famine, and the administration of justice, they sometimes gave the local population more active help than their neighbours in nearby British colonies."

Seeking revenge for the disaster at Adowa and yearning to expand his "empire," Mussolini would send his troops to Ethiopia in October 1935. A. J. Barker describes the *Duce's* short-lived Ethiopian conquest in **The Civilizing Mission** (Dial, 1968).

World War II, of course, ended Italy's love affair with imperialism and Fascism. But what would the future hold in store? Several studies cover the crucial post-war years, during which the Italians established a republic, chose the Christian Democrats over the Communists, joined NATO, and became closely linked to the West. These books include H. Stuart Hughes's **United States and Italy** (Harvard, 1979); Norman Kogan's **Political History of Postwar Italy** (Praeger, 1983); and F. Roy Willis's **Italy Chooses Europe** (Oxford, 1971).

Finally, John Haycraft's lively **Italian Labyrinth** (Penguin, 1987) and Luigi Barzini's vivid (if stereotypical) **Italians** (Atheneum, 1986) probably provide the best sketches of Italian manners, mores, and everyday life. "In the heart of every man," writes Barzini, "wherever he is born, whatever his education and tastes, there is one small corner which is Italian, that part which finds regimentation irksome, the dangers of war frightening, strict morality stifling, [and] which loves frivolous and entertaining art, admires larger-than-life-size solitary heroes, and dreams of an impossible liberation from the strictures of a tidy existence."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Professor Charles Delzell suggested many of the titles in this essay.*

# CURRENT BOOKS

## SCHOLARS' CHOICE

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

### **CHAOS: Making a New Science**

by James Gleick  
Viking, 1987  
352 pp. \$19.95

A number of hardy souls have imprinted their attempts to imagine absolute disorder, or chaos, on the world's collective cultural record, but most of our intellectual energy, in science and in literature, in religion and the arts, and above all in daily life, has been directed at making sense of things, at finding order in the flux of phenomena and sensation. Indeed, some of the most striking attempts to represent chaos have come with

our effort to imagine how order arose. These have left vivid traces in *Genesis*, in the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma elish*, in Hesiod's *Theogony* (where the word seems to have made its debut), in the Hindu *Rgveda*, in the Norse *Elder Edda*, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in Haydn's *Creation*, and in the "Big Bang" of recent astrophysics.

Most attempts to imagine chaos, however, project a terminal condition of the decay of order, as in *Revelations*, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and *King Lear*, in universalized thermodynamics, Picasso's *Guernica*, and the collected works of Samuel Beckett. Chaos, in the words of one of the most energetic promoters of the territories mapped and chronicled in this splendid book, has generally had bad press.

But in the "new science" that James Gleick shows emerging from the cloud of unknowing, "chaos" means something other than totalized and unqualified disorder. It even evokes classical notions of harmony in confusion, "Where," as Alexander Pope observed, "order in variety we see/And where, though all things differ, all agree." Chaos, Gleick acknowledges, is a shorthand, more evocative and more comprehensive than other descriptions of his subject, such as "nonlinear science." He homes in on "chaos, in the new sense: orderly disorder created by simple processes." At the same time, using a collection of definitions extracted from the scientists themselves, he demonstrates that chaos, in the new sense, resists definition. It is better represented as a set of ideas with family resemblances, more like a grid than a point or, rather, more like the staring shape (owl mask or butterfly wings) of the figure generated by a looping trajectory that never overlays itself—called the Lorenz attractor after its creator, research meteorologist Edward Lorenz.

To chart the emergence of this new science from a scattering of randomness and apparently disconnected events "in odd corners of different disciplines," Gleick invokes the notion of paradigm change, as set forth by historian Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). In Gleick's version, accumulating dissatisfactions and anomalies on the margins of "normal science" create an instability wherein a small extra push by a few mavericks can have major consequences—namely, the cre-



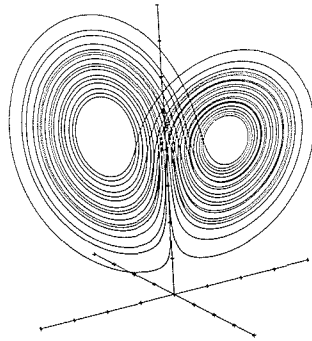
ation of a whole new way of doing science.

Gleick, a *New York Times* reporter, is also interested in personalizing the story. Most chapters of his book have heroes, though in one instance it is a California collective, and in another a complex figure (Benoit Mandelbrot, an IBM scientist who developed the "Fractal Geometry of Nature") who is presented in an enigmatic light. The likeliest hero for the book as a whole is the physicist Mitchell Feigenbaum, not only for his self-forgetful charm and his literate eloquence but also for his mathematics. More than anything else, Feigenbaum's work provides a common grounding for the diversity of disciplinary pursuits within the new science.

In making much of the real-world applications of chaos theory, Gleick exploits the fascination of the real, starting with the weather and ending with snowflakes. But this strategy is tied to one of the profoundest issues threading the history of Western science: the relation of scientific description to the world of our experience. Much modern science—especially those branches most brilliantly successful in their pursuit of fundamentals—leads to an abstract world that is no longer even imaginable. The procedure of reducing a problem and the phenomena to their simplest elements, and of eliminating "accidentals," what cannot be generalized, and complexity itself, leaves out much of the continuum we inhabit.

The new science of chaos begins by claiming as its territory those regions that have seemed too disordered, too complicated, and too unpredictable to be nailed down by reductive analysis and generalization. Its investigators try to give an account of what actually happens when a stream breaks into rapids, or galaxies collide, or a heart beat goes wild, or clouds change shape, or populations or stock prices fluctuate. An account of such things as processes can show a path between simplicity and complexity: through iteration ("when things work on themselves again and again," as Feigenbaum puts it) and scaling (how "big details relate to little details"). The generative equations are, in fact, relatively simple and of wide application. Thus the tension between generalization and particularity is not banished in the new science but asserted in more intimate and inclusive relations with the world of everyday phenomena.

Chaos theory, as Gleick explains, entails a new confidence in visuality. As a working scientific tool, visualization had fallen much out of favor with some physicists and mathematicians precisely because it chains thinking to experience. By contrast, the new science puts to work the eye's gift for discerning patterns: by converting information into images on computer terminals and even making movies of the results; by making maps for differential equations and topological models for dynamical systems; by variously "joining the world of shapes to the world of numbers."



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The generation of natural shapes from a simple set of rules with built-in randomness, repeated as much as one likes—or from randomness focusing itself by means of a few simple rules—has been for the metaphysically inclined the most intriguing aspect of the new science. All depends, of course, on what one sees. If one sees a universe grounded in fundamental chaos—randomness, unpredictability, indeterminacy—then the new science charts the “spontaneous emergence of self-organization.” If one sees a universe grounded in fundamental order—causality, predictability, uniformity—then the new science shows “deterministic systems generating randomness.” But perhaps one does not have to choose; randomness and recurrence give rise to rule, and rule, reflexively, organizes randomness.

Cosmos, in human experience, is what can be carved out of chaos and grasped, by modeling, by sorting and assorting, by explaining origins, by learning what to expect. Characteristically, the new science of chaos addresses transitions and boundary states: between regular flow and turbulence, between periodicity and unpredictability. It opens a whole new world, heretofore “invisible,” of symmetries and homologies in nature. It offers a set of ideas and equations, and even a mathematical constant, that bring into a single conceptual space an extraordinary diversity of phenomena and disciplines.

In other words, the new science of chaos is a science because it makes inroads on real chaos and gives us a handle on the spoils. But as Satan discovered in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Chaos, “a dark/Ilimitable Ocean without bound,” still remains, even after the subtraction of Heaven, Earth, and Hell. It remains illimitable and properly speaking unimaginable, a challenge stretching between the intrepid explorer and absolute Light.

—Martin Meisel

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**THE ELEMENTARY  
STRUCTURES OF  
POLITICAL LIFE:  
Rural Development in  
Pahlavi Iran**

by Grace E. Goodell  
Oxford, 1986  
362 pp. \$45

Beginning in 1972, Grace Goodell, an anthropologist now at Johns Hopkins University, spent some 20 months in the southwestern Iranian province of Khuzestan studying the impact on rural folk of one of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's most ambitious programs. The goal of the Shah's Khuzestan project was nothing less than large-scale, integrated agricultural and industrial development of an entire region.

Goodell carried out her study by living in two places, selected for the contrasts they offered. One, Rahmat Abad, was a village whose ways had been little disturbed. The other, Bizhan (both names were changed), was

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the creation of the Shah's central government. It was one of several model townships established primarily to house peasants whose land had been expropriated in order to create huge agribusinesses and farm corporations.

In a book that is both highly intelligent and flawed, Goodell comes to three main conclusions. She finds, first of all, that a traditional Muslim village like Rahmat Abad functions very much like a corporate group. In Rahmat Abad, the inhabitants reach decisions affecting the community through consultation and consensus; together, they determine the crops they will plant, bargain collectively in the sale of produce, and agree on how much to tax themselves to pay for such needs as local bridge repairs. Kinship ties are strong, but there is sufficient flexibility to allow villagers to enter into quasi-contractual arrangements or partnerships with their own kin or with people of other villages.

Goodell's second point is that such traditional ways enhance, rather than retard, the villagers' capacity for change and innovation. The people of Rahmat Abad inhabit a world in which behavior is predictable, information flows freely, decisions are made publicly, and personal relationships are reliable. Both individuals and groups take responsibility for their actions. Thus, when land reform freed the inhabitants of Rahmat Abad from landlord control and gave them security of tenure, the villagers, individually or in partnerships, experimented with new crops and pesticides and invested in tractors, motorcycles, and a truck.

All this, concludes Goodell, "shows the primacy of social organization—far more important than education or government assistance—as a foundation for spontaneous 'modernization.'"

Goodell's conclusions were re-enforced by what she found in Bizhan. A model town with all the arid features of such, Bizhan had no history, no tradition, no sense of corporate identity. Its citizens were incapable of acting collectively. It was, in essence, a company town, except that the company was the State. And, according to Goodell, it was to the State and the Shah that the inhabitants, robbed of all initiative, looked for the solutions to all their problems.

Dependence on the royal father even affected Bizhan's collective unconscious: "While the villagers in Rahmat Abad had practically never mentioned the Shah," Goodell writes, "the model town's subconscious endlessly circled around this one necessity—to reach the King, to tell the King. I never heard a single dream reported in Rahmat Abad, but in the new workers' town people had the most fantastic ones about Our Father with the Crown, each of which circulated immediately and widely."

These observations lead Goodell to her third point, which is that a regime like the Shah's, with its immense and arbitrary power, its technocrats' penchant for social engineering, and its blueprints derived from foreign models, often destroys the very social structures that promote modernization. The Shah's top-down approach, she argues, killed private initiative in Bizhan and destroyed the sense of community that is crucial to any socioeconomic advance.

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Goodell is highly persuasive, but she mars her case by oversimplification and overgeneralization. Her argument rests on the assumption that Rahmat Abad typified the "traditional" Iranian village and, more importantly, that Bizhan represented the *typical* product of the Shah's controversial attempts to bring Iran's hinterland into the 20th century.

The evidence simply does not sustain this argument. The Khuzestan development project was not the model for all of Iran; no other part of the country provided the same combination of water, arable land, and possibilities for dam construction and large-scale agriculture. Of Iran's 50,000 villages, even as late as 1979 (when the Shah was overthrown), very few—certainly fewer than 50—were "artificial" model towns of the Bizhan type. The more typical meeting place between tradition and government-directed programs was neither the idyllic Rahmat Abad nor the arid Bizhan, but something in between; and therein lies the challenge of analyzing the impact of efforts like those of the Shah.

The agribusinesses and state farm corporations that Goodell criticizes were foolishly conceived. They proved to be unprofitable enterprises. But by 1975 this blunder was widely recognized in Tehran. Moreover, while the Shah's bureaucracy was often officious and insensitive, it was not always so. Goodell's Iranian officials, in Tehran and in the provinces, are invariably blundering bores, ignorant of their country and heedless of the damage they do. She sees no irony in criticizing these officials for seeking to apply in Iran development concepts derived from foreign models even as she applies to Iranian peasants the tools of social analysis derived from the writings of M. G. Smith, Conrad Arensberg, Tocqueville, Burke, Durkheim, and Nisbet.

Underlying Goodell's analysis is a nostalgia for the imagined simplicity and goodness of traditional village life. She assumes that the city makes uprooted, spineless men and women of us all. But Iran's urban centers were not as lacking in corporate structures (in the bazaar, in the village communities transposed and recreated in the city) as Goodell supposes. In the Rahmat Abad that Goodell describes, there are both greater differences of social class and more limits to the villagers' capacity for self-organization than Goodell is prepared to admit.

These flaws do not invalidate Goodell's central and important argument, that traditional forms of community organization can contribute powerfully to the drive for Third World modernization. She makes her case with insight and with considerable passion.

—*Shaul Bakhash*

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## NEW TITLES

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### *History*

#### **THE EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES:**

**An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age**

by Simon Schama  
Knopf, 1987  
698 pp. \$39.95



“To be Dutch,” writes Harvard historian Schama, “still means coming to terms with the moral ambiguities of materialism . . .” At no time, however, did the Dutch wrestle harder with their consciences than during their “Golden Century” (1570–1670). In a splendidly detailed history that ranges from Holland’s tulip mania to the grain trade, from marriage manuals and sermons to paintings by masters, Schama documents this spiritual struggle.

Thanks largely to their mercantile savvy, the Dutch of the 16th century grew fat and rich while most other Europeans scraped by. But as good Calvinists, Holland’s wealthy citizens feared that prosperity compromised their souls. Alongside scenes of comfortable burgher life, painters created allegories of gluttony, cupidity, drunkenness, disorder, and lust to condemn the effects of excess, or *overvloed*.

And not even prosperity was certain. What God gave He could also take away—including the land. The invention of wind-driven pumps enabled the Dutch to reclaim 200,000 acres from the sea between 1590 and 1640, but devastating floods always threatened.

In a corrupting and insecure world, notes Schama, the home remained a bastion of order and decency. The spic-and-span stoops, which foreign visitors invariably noted, stood as literal barriers between the filth of the world and the immaculate purity of the family dwelling. Marriage, too, was a haven, but evil could wend its way even into wedlock. The moralist Johan de Brune warned that excessive carnal appetites might endanger spiritual health: “The marriage bed is no gutter for vile lusts, but those who use it well, may stay a maid.”

#### **THE KEY TO FAILURE:**

**Laos and the Vietnam War**

by Norman B. Hannah  
Madison, 1987  
335 pp. \$19.95

Why did the Communists win in South Vietnam? Hannah, a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer, points to early U.S. ambivalence and self-delusion. His prime example is the ill-fated, oft-forgotten 1962 Geneva Accords on Laos, negotiated by Averell Harriman under the Kennedy administration. The Soviet-American deal provided for a “neutral” Laos, free of all foreign troops. Instead, what U.S. diplomat Roger Hilsman called a “tacit

agreement" quickly evolved: North Vietnam did not overrun remote northern Laos; the Americans did not block the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the south. The trail was vital to the Communists' hidden, unending "slow invasion" of South Vietnam; used for replacements and re-supply, it would enable them to wage war there forever, on their own terms. But Washington always feared a wider conflict. In 1964, before Lyndon Johnson sent U.S. troops to Vietnam, Hannah writes, "there were two [logical] choices—either to block [Hanoi's] invasion through Laos or avoid commitment in South Vietnam. The United States chose neither."

**THE FALL OF THE  
HOUSE OF LABOR:  
The Workplace, the State,  
and American Labor  
Activism, 1865-1925**  
by David Montgomery  
Cambridge, 1987  
494 pp. \$27.95

On the evening of June 27, 1874, Lodge No. 11 of the Rollers, Roughers, Catchers, and Hookers Union of Columbus, Ohio, gathered to discuss the terms of their new agreement with the Columbus Rolling Mill Company. The mill had offered these skilled iron workers \$1.13 per ton to produce iron rails for the nation's railroads; it was up to them to decide how to fix work schedules, divide the labor, and parcel out the pay.

"The very men who appear here," writes Montgomery, a Yale historian, "managing collectively the productive operations of the rolling mill, regulating relations among themselves, and arranging their own social affairs were also pioneers of the late 19th-century labor movement."

For more than a decade, scholars have pondered the fate of such men. Why, they ask, did the "native American radicalism" of the working class fail to win "economic democracy"? Montgomery pulls together these studies in a sweeping, sometimes numbingly encyclopedic account of organized labor's rise and ebb between the end of the Civil War and the onset of the Great Depression. His is a tale, though seldom couched in such explicit terms, of "cruel and invincible" capitalism, government repression, and the workers' betrayal by union bosses, notably Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor.

The dream of economic democracy finally faded during the early 1920s, when an economic depression stripped the unions of up to a third of their members. The labor movement came back to life during the 1930s and '40s, but its energies focused on more limited concerns, namely wages

and work hours. "Slogans like 'workers' control' and 'production for use'... were seldom heard any longer," says Montgomery, "except ironically in the rhetoric of corporate public relations."

### *Contemporary Affairs*

#### **THE LIFE OF THE PARTY: Democratic Prospects in 1988 and Beyond**

by Robert Kuttner  
Viking, 1987  
265 pp. \$18.95

It is time, says Kuttner, economics correspondent for *The New Republic*, to run a "real Democrat" on a "real Democratic platform." The modern party "begins with Roosevelt" and "peaks with Johnson." Since 1964, the party has lost its nerve—and every presidential election but one.

Many Democrats, and most political commentators, concluded as early as 1970 that the party should abandon its commitment to activist government and economic populism and cleave to a cautious, centrist policy. This so-called cure only made matters worse, Kuttner maintains. But ever-more-costly campaigns kept Democratic candidates in thrall to big-money contributors, individual and corporate. All but ignored, the party's progressive-populist wing splintered into mutually destructive special-interest groups, variously clamoring for clean air or women's rights.

Kuttner prescribes a host of remedies for the ailing party. These range from fund-raising strategies (direct-mail campaigns aimed at small donors) to ways of attacking voter apathy. The best cure for such indifference, Kuttner holds, is for the party to champion truly liberal programs, including workfare, national health care, and higher taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals. Not to do so, says Kuttner, will only vindicate Harry S. Truman's words: "When the voters have a choice between a Republican and a Republican, they'll pick the Republican every time."

#### **CHINA'S SECOND REVOLUTION:**

**Reform after Mao**  
by Harry Harding  
Brookings, 1987  
369 pp. \$32.95

After Mao Zedong's death in September 1976, the leadership of the People's Republic of China (PRC) faced not only a succession crisis but many nation-crippling ills: economic stagnation and inefficiency, bureaucratic breakdown, and the alienation of millions of the Cultural Revolution's surviving victims. Harding, a fellow at the Brookings Institution, offers an astute overview of the decade-old "second revolution" that has, after fits

and starts, given new life to a moribund society and drawn China into the world economy.

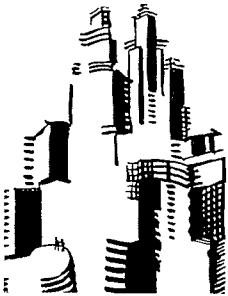
Reform began shakily, as revolutionary Maoists, the Gang of Four, sought to preserve the most radical of the Great Helmsman's policies. They were arrested in October 1976 and replaced by moderate Hua Guofeng. His lackluster interregnum, dedicated to restoring order to the nation, ended in late 1978, and the "reform" faction of Deng Xiaoping took over.

At 78, Deng, himself a survivor of the Cultural Revolution, was a confident, seasoned politician, committed to China's reconstruction and entry into the global community. Moreover, he had a practical program and a vast network of supporters. His wide-reaching reforms—including the development of a mixed economy, the encouragement of broader decision-making, and freer discussions of ideology—have been the grist for much recent China scholarship. Harding, however, provides a valuable perspective by focusing on Deng's political strategy: Limiting liberalization, the PRC leader has controlled the speed and scope of change. Harding believes that "China will move slowly, even haltingly, toward a more open-market-oriented economy and a more relaxed and consultative political system."

### *Arts and Letters*

#### **NEW YORK 1930: Architecture and Urbanism between the Two World Wars**

by Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory  
Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins  
Rizzoli, 1987  
847 pp. \$75



By 1930, New York presented a quintessentially American face to the world. As the country's principal port of entry between the great wars, "The City" had transformed itself from a collection of brownstones and gingerbread public buildings to a "skyscraper Babylon"—vertical, and monumentally practical. Its architects had imbibed the neo-classical style of the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs (or Art Deco) and the modernism of the Bauhaus glass-and-steel box, but their work was peculiarly American: Rockefeller Center, the Empire State Building, and the Chrysler Building are all structures that reflect notions of "commerce and convenience" more than any particular theory of art.

In 1916 a new zoning law introduced urban planning and set the "fixed formula for tower setbacks" that was to become the epitome of the New York style. Growing upward, the city's sky-



scrapers concentrated humanity as never before, with a resulting vitality and congestion of unprecedented dimensions. Even Baltimore's H. L. Mencken, convinced that Americans are driven by "a positive libido for ugliness," had to admit that "the life of the city . . . is as interesting as its physical aspect is dull."

Although richly illustrated, *New York 1930* is no fluffy coffee-table book. Architects Stern and Gilmartin and writer Mellins have considered not only stone and steel but also song, film, painting, and print to argue that New York was American culture distilled.

**BEETHOVEN  
REMEMBERED:  
The Biographical Notes  
of Franz Wegeler and  
Ferdinand Ries**

translated by Frederick Noonan  
Great Ocean, 1987  
200 pp. \$16.95

**THE CHANGING IMAGE  
OF BEETHOVEN:**

**A Study in Mythmaking**  
by Alessandra Comini  
Rizzoli, 1987  
480 pp. \$45

"Yet, why should Beethoven's features look like his scores?" asked Ludwig Rellstab, a Berlin music critic, after meeting the great composer in 1825 and discovering that his features were, if anything, "lacking in significance."

If the temptation to view Beethoven as a romantic hero was great during his lifetime (1770-1827), it grew even greater during the century after his death. Comini, an art historian at Southern Methodist University, shows how the mythologizing of Beethoven mirrored the broader cultural projects of his various mythologizers, including composer Richard Wagner and fin-de-siècle Viennese painter Gustav Klimt. Comini's sprawling commentary on the various paeans to Beethoven—in prose, in paint, or in music—leave the reader convinced that he has served as a genius for all seasons.

But who was the man? An affectionate but believable portrait of Beethoven emerges in the biographical "notes" by his friends Wegeler and Ries, available now in this first full English translation. The man who emerges here is temperamental, even suspicious, yet, withal, kindhearted. Wegeler, a physician and university rector, cites letters in which Beethoven unfairly lashes out at friends, but notes that he "always apologized for much more than he was guilty of." In keeping with a popular image, Beethoven was, as protégé and composer Ries reports, "a stranger to the rules of etiquette," and often "embarrassed the entourage of Archduke Rudolph when he first started to frequent that circle." Ries expands on his bungling awkwardness: "No piece of furniture was safe



from him, least of all anything valuable." With the onset of infirmity, Beethoven began to seclude himself from the company of strangers, adding to his image as an isolated genius. But he did not relish solitude. In a letter dated June 29, 1800, he confided to Wegeler: "for almost two years I have avoided all society, because I cannot say to people: I am deaf."

**THE HAW LANTERN**

by Seamus Heaney  
Farrar, 1987  
52 pp. \$12.95

In "From the Frontier of Writing," Heaney describes the sensation of driving through a British checkpoint in his native Northern Ireland. He goes on to relate this feeling of exposure, where "everything is pure interrogation," to what he experiences when writing poetry: Struggling with words, he senses the presence of his readers, as unrelentingly watchful as the "posted soldiers flowing and receding/like tree shadows into the polished wind-screen." The feeling of release is not complete; the poet is "arraigned yet freed . . ." when he finishes. Throughout this collection, Ireland's leading bard, one of the foremost poets writing in English today, offers what he calls in the title poem, "The Haw Lantern," a "small light for small people." But if these 31 intimate poems do not blind "with illumination," if they resist the stage of public pronouncement, they achieve exactness, the formally precise expression of home truths. Of his own poetic endeavor, Heaney observes: "I come from scraggy farm and moss/Old patchworks that the pitch and toss/Of history have left dishevelled./But here, for your sake, I have levelled/My cart-track voice to garden tones,/ Cobbled the bog with Cotswold stones . . ."

**PRIVATE DOMAIN:**

**An Autobiography**  
by Paul Taylor  
Knopf, 1987  
371 pp. \$22.95

During the 1950s, New York was the center of dance. There, 30 years after Isadora Duncan shocked Paris by appearing ungirt and barefoot, Martha Graham worked out a technique for modern dance. At the same time, choreographer George Balanchine was stretching the vocabulary of traditional ballet while retaining its formal symmetry and rigorous technique.

In 1952 Graham spotted the virtually untrained Taylor at Connecticut College's summer ballet school. Three years later, he joined her company.

Yet Taylor found himself chafing under the restraints imposed by other dancers' styles. In 1961, just nine years after he had started to dance, he formed his own company.

Using ideas picked up from artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, his neighbors in New York's Hell's Kitchen, Taylor sought minimalist solutions. His dance would be "unpsychological (no Greek goddesses)... free from the cobwebs of time (no ballet)." His first works used only "natural postures" set to the music of "heartbeats, wind, rain," and his *Duet-Opportunity*—four motionless minutes—enraged New York. Taylor produces his own quirky choreography. Yet his defined lower body movement, his joyous leaps and bounds, may be his most distinctive contribution to modern dance technique.

### *Science & Technology*

#### **SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOVIET UNION**

by Loren R. Graham  
Columbia, 1987  
565 pp. \$45

Soviet science, to Western scientists and nonscientists, is *terra incognita*. Because Soviets publish only in Russian-language journals and rarely attend Western meetings, Graham's well-documented overview of the Soviet scientific world—from biology to physics to chemistry—is particularly revealing.

How, asks Graham, a historian at M.I.T., do science and Marxist philosophy co-exist? To the Westerner, the mention of Soviet politics and science in the same breath elicits an almost Pavlovian response: "Lysenko." Combining practical skills in agronomy with political cunning, Trofim Lysenko (1898–1976) managed (with Josef Stalin's backing) to impose on Soviet genetics the theory that *acquired* characteristics are inherited, effectively blocking progress in the field and wrecking the careers of his opponents for almost 30 years. It is a grim story, to say the least.

Graham mentions Lysenko, but he gives far more emphasis to the work of other leading Soviet scientists and their attitudes toward Marxist ideology—from enthusiastic adherence (as in psychologist Lev Vygotsky's theories of language acquisition) to a strict separation of science and philosophy. One prominent "separatist," V. S. Ginzburg, has forcefully criticized the dogmatic Marxist view that time and matter are necessarily infinite. The rejection of closed cosmological mod-

els, he observed in a 1980 article, was "without any kind of scientific argumentation."

It is sometimes difficult, Graham acknowledges, to distinguish a scientist's theory skillfully camouflaged to make it less politically risky from a sincere attempt to demonstrate Marxism-Leninism through science. By and large, however, Graham finds contemporary Soviet dialectical materialism a unique and serious attempt to integrate the sciences of man and nature under the tenets of one philosophical system.

**NUCLEAR IMPERATIVES  
AND PUBLIC TRUST**  
**Dealing with  
Radioactive Waste**  
by Luther J. Carter  
Resources for the Future, 1987  
473 pp. \$25

In 1951, James Bryant Conant, architect of the Manhattan Project, warned that nuclear power would not be "worth the candle" unless the problems of safety, proliferation, and waste management were solved. Thirty-six years later, users of the atom have yet to devise a palatable strategy for disposing of the waste—thousands of tons of radioactive material left over from the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the generation of millions of kilowatt hours of electricity.

Although the prospects for nuclear power are on the wane in the United States and elsewhere, science writer Carter argues that it is "not dead and not dying." America's \$150 billion investment will not be abandoned simply "for lack of permanent means of waste disposal." He finds, moreover, that deep underground depositories offer the safest and cheapest solution to the problem. In addition to making suggestions for national programs and international accords to allow the burial of nuclear wastes, Carter rejects the "false promise" of reprocessing. Recycling in either breeder or thermal reactors will not only increase waste inventories but will also be more costly than direct disposal for "many, many years."

**THE GREAT JOURNEY:  
The Peopling of  
Ancient America**  
by Brian M. Fagan  
Thames & Hudson, 1987  
288 pp. \$19.95

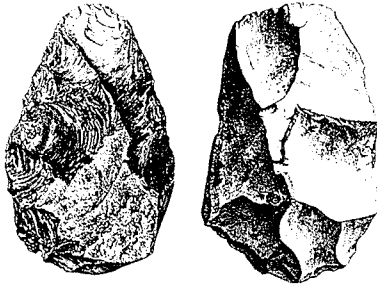
When Balboa crossed Central America and beheld the Pacific Ocean almost 500 years ago, he realized that the land discovered by Columbus was not part of Asia but instead a separate continent. The people inhabiting the New World were not "Indians" from the Indus River valley but a mysterious race of uncertain origin.

For three centuries, quaint myths accounted for

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America's first settlers: They were survivors of Noah's Flood or the lost civilization of Atlantis. But with the rise of anthropology and archeology during the 19th century, a host of scientific theories began to emerge. During the 1890s, for instance, geological illustrator William Henry Holmes advanced the notion that America had been settled for "at most only a few thousand years." His theory was dogma until the 1920s.

Fagan, an anthropologist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, brings the story of the researchers and their quest right up to the most recent explanation of how the continent was peopled. Most likely, Fagan relates, the first Americans were hunters from northern Asia who, during a severe glaciation some 15,000 to 25,000 years ago, crossed the exposed land bridge between Siberia and Alaska. Studies of tooth morphology and comparisons of blood proteins suggest a close connection between ancient Siberians and Americans. To the Stone Age hunter, "the flat, gently undulating landscape" was apparently a "continuation of his homeland." As the glaciers retreated, the hunters pursued the mammoths and giant bison south to the Great Plains. It took only a few centuries, he says, for most large mammals to be wiped out, "leaving only the bison for American Indians to prey on."



## Meeting Mr. Eliot

Few writers have elicited more admiration or more antipathy than Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965). Many critics and fellow poets have assailed him as a stodgy traditionalist who denied any possibility of great modern verse. Just as many have hailed him for defining the modern poetic “sensibility.” Here, on the centennial of his birth, Frank McConnell reintroduces the Missouri-born expatriate who once said of himself, “How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!”

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*by Frank D. McConnell*

*The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*—a book as indispensable to a critic as a pocket calculator is to an engineer—honors only three writers by naming, in its chapter titles, an “Age” after them. There is an Age of Dryden, an Age of Johnson, and there is the last chapter, “The Age of T. S. Eliot: The Mid-Twentieth-Century Literature of the English-Speaking World.”

Chaucer, Milton, Pope, Dickens, and even Shakespeare are denied that eminence.

Samuel Hynes, in *The Auden Generation*, observes—as have other critics—that an extraordinary number of British and American novels and poems of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s contain phrases, images, or references from Eliot's poetry, particularly his most famous poem, *The Waste Land*. For any young writer born before, say, 1965—the year of Eliot's death—to speak of modern poetry is, inevitably, to speak of T. S. Eliot. His critical opinions shaped the taste of his century. His conservative politics were a subject of serious, even anguished, debate among intellectuals. And he himself was a permanently lionized, pontifical figure in all the universities of the Western world.

Yet for all the fame and influence, almost no other major poet is as difficult to *like*. No other major poet (Keats included) wrote so little poetry. And no other “modern” poet loathed almost everything characteristic of the modern world with more finely-honed hatred.

The man's reputation, in other words, is as paradoxical as the man himself was, and nearly as paradoxical as his best poetry. He was never shy about accepting the admiration or adulation of his followers, and would probably have greeted the news of his continuing presence in our imagina-



*Painted in 1938, Wyndham Lewis's portrait of T. S. Eliot created a minor controversy in the British art world. The Royal Academy rejected the painting because of its unorthodox style; Augustus John, a distinguished artist in his own right, resigned from the Academy in protest.*

tion with the prim, faintly ironic smile he displays in the jacket photo of his *Collected Poems*. Eileen Simpson, in her memoir *Poets in Their Youth* (1982), records a visit of Eliot's to a Princeton gathering of younger poets. It was during the late 1940s, and Eliot was well established as the Great Man of modern poetry.

"His manner," writes Simpson, "was as formal as his dress, the conservative dress of an English banker. Shyness had been disciplined into courtesy. On being introduced, he made an effort not to avert his eyes, as one felt he would have done as a young man." At the party, Simpson records, he downed numerous martinis, uttered a few gnomic judgments on other poets of his generation, especially W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, and then left. Was it arrogance or embarrassment? Maybe a great deal of both. After all, the poet, in an early exercise, describes himself this way:

With his features of clerical cut,  
And his brow so grim  
And his mouth so prim  
And his conversation, so nicely  
Restricted to What Precisely  
And If and Perhaps and But.  
How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!

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How unpleasant indeed, and how necessary. During the decade preceding his death, and for many years after it, there were arguments that his criticism, once so influential, was actually a kind of snobbish, antiromantic obscurantism, and that his elegantly allusive formalist poetry was not really modern poetry at all but rather an ossified, academic fossil of Edwardian anxiety. Critics such as Northrop Frye, J. Hillis Miller, and Harold Bloom have expressed this unkind sentiment, as have poets from Allen Ginsberg to Robert Lowell. More recently, there has been a kind of T. S. Eliot rehabilitation movement, with books and articles, such as Eloise Hay's *T. S. Eliot's Negative Way* (1982), arguing strenuously that he was just as important to the formation of the modern poetic consciousness as his earlier admirers, including Ezra Pound, believed.

However much Eliot's stock vacillates in the literary marketplace, one fact remains constant: If we wish to understand this century, we must, sooner or later, meet Mr. Eliot. And of only a few other figures—Stravinsky, Joyce, Picasso—may that be said.

### Life on the Mississippi

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on September 26, 1888, the last of seven children, in St. Louis, Missouri, a city then distinguished, as biographer Lyndall Gordon notes, "for the corruption of its businessmen, its inadequate sewers, and its sulphurous fumes." Eliot's father, Henry Ware Eliot, Sr., was at least an honest businessman, a brick manufacturer, though not a particularly successful one. Indeed, Henry never lived up to the accomplishments of his own father, a native New Englander and financial genius who abandoned the pursuit of wealth for the Unitarian ministry, and moved from Boston to St. Louis to tend to the spiritual needs of people living in what was then known as the frontier West. A founder of Washington University and a community leader, William Greenleaf Eliot gained wide renown in the pulpit; no less than Ralph Waldo Emerson, a fellow Unitarian, praised his sermons for their eloquence and strength. It was unquestionably from his grandfather that Eliot learned the value of subordinating one's personal and emotional life to the greater good of community and God—a demanding ideal for anyone to live by, but particularly demanding for a poet.

Unimposing as St. Louis was, T. S. Eliot harbored fond memories of his years there. Images of the brown, rolling Mississippi River appear even in his last great poem, *Four Quartets*. His family lived in an unfashionable neighborhood, but he was happy. Solitary and bookish, he spent a comfort-

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able childhood closely tended by his nurse, a devout Irish Catholic named Annie Dunne. Later he drew closer to his mother, Charlotte Champe, a morally impassioned woman who wrote didactic religious verse.

Eliot never lost touch with his ancestral New England roots; he summered in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, devoting hours to sailing and, at 16, he entered Milton Academy. One year later, he moved on to Harvard College. There he read the French symbolist poets of the late 19th and early 20th century—Mallarmé, Laforgue, Verlaine, and Rimbaud—whose dedication to the purity and the mystical power of language verged on religion. The later Eliot may have departed from their graceful agnosticism, but he never lost their fanaticism for the word.

### A Disastrous Marriage

After a year of study in France in 1911, Eliot began graduate study at Harvard, focusing on the philosophy of F. H. Bradley. Bradley (1846–1924) was one of the most original and brilliant of the post-Hegelian idealists. He maintained that only immediate, unitary (some would say “religious”) experience carried real truth, and that the fragmentary experience of daily life was at best a hint, at worst a bar, to that experience. The young Eliot who had been entranced by the French obsession with “pure language” would be an easy convert to this large-scale transformation of that myth onto the arena of consciousness itself. His research led him to Germany where, in 1914, his studies were cut off by the war. Instead of returning to Boston he went to England, where he worked at teaching and book reviewing and completed his thesis on Bradley. He also completed a poem. It changed his life.

He had been writing poetry at least since his early Harvard years, but in 1910 he started working on a longish lyric—or satiric—or *something* poem which he finally called “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” It may have been the result of his romance with the French ironists or of his fascination with the idealism of Bradley, or perhaps it was the expression of a profound diffidence he had felt in himself for years; finally, the cause does not matter. The first three lines of Prufrock’s “Love Song,” in their wit, concision, and bitterness, altered the possibilities of English verse in the 20th century:

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table . . . .

No one had written poetry like this in a long time—at least not since Byron, maybe not since Pope. “Prufrock” was published in 1915. It established Eliot as one of the distinctive voices of the new age, in what was for him a fateful year in other ways also. For in 1915 he also lost his dear friend Jean Verdenal to the war. (The 1917 publication of *Prufrock and*



*A photograph of Vivian Eliot, taken by the poet's brother, Henry Ware Eliot, Jr., in 1921. Some of Vivian's neurasthenic complaints seem to have found their way directly into Eliot's verse: "My nerves are bad . . . Yes, bad. Stay with me!" (The Waste Land)*

*Other Observations* would be dedicated to him.) And finally, in June, he married Vivian Haigh-Wood, the sometime governess, sometime painter, sometime ballerina, whom he first met, says biographer Ronald Bush, "at an Oxford punting party."

The marriage was a disaster. Sickly, high-strung, cuttngly sarcastic, Vivian quickly exhausted Eliot's patience and slim financial reserves. They would eventually separate in 1933, but until then he lived in constant confrontation with the demon of his own impotence. Retreating further into his self-consciousness, he wrote a long, therapeutic poem about his doubts of masculinity. He called it, after a line from Dickens's *Great Expectations*, "He Do the Police in Different Voices." He showed it to his friend, the outrageous and dazzling American poet Ezra Pound, who suggested that he cut it before publishing. He did so. The poem appeared as *The Waste Land* in 1922 and cemented his reputation as *the* distinctive poet of his age.

Critics are fond of talking about the two phases of Eliot's career. In the first phase, runs the received wisdom, in poems like "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men," he announces or, rather, incarnates the despair of intellectuals about Western civilization during and after the First World War. Gertrude Stein first dubbed these embittered young men "the lost generation," and a good number of them took *The Waste Land* (with such unforgettable lines as "We who were living are

now dying/With a little patience") as the anthem of their disaffection.

Then, having once revolutionized literary sensibility, Eliot re-revolutionized it and redefined himself as defender and arbiter of Christian culture or, as he called himself in his famous 1928 utterance, "royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion." The second phase was consolidated in his great religious poem of 1930, *Ash-Wednesday*—virtually *The Waste Land* turned inside out—and culminated in *Four Quartets* in 1943 and in the verse dramas of the later years, especially *The Cocktail Party* and *The Confidential Clerk*.

That is the official version of his career, and like most official versions of anything, it is vastly less interesting and less complicated than what seems really to have been going on. The royalist Anglo-Catholic from St. Louis lived in London for 12 years before becoming a British subject in 1927. Why he abandoned the United States for England appears to be a mystery. A letter of 1919, addressed to his friend John Quinn, provides perhaps the most succinct answer: "You see, I settled [in England] in the face of strong family opposition, on the claim that I found the environment more favourable to the production of literature." In his heart, Eliot felt that the production of art was not a serious American endeavor, certainly not one that his grandfather would have approved of. To pursue anything so essentially focused on feelings and self, Eliot had to live abroad. So the tortured lyricist of cultural annihilation spent eight of his postwar years as a bank clerk and, from 1925 on, was a director in the influential publishing house of Faber & Gwyer (later Faber & Faber).

He was a complex and not very happy man, extraordinarily out of touch with his own age. Yet his own deep confusion mirrored his century's. Like most great writers, Eliot matters to us because he presents us with images of our pain. But he also discovers *modes* of pain the rest of us would not have been clever enough to find. And modes of redemption. Much of what we assume as "natural" in college literature classes is an indirect derivation from the very important things Eliot said about writing from one to three generations ago.

#### 'All Literature Is Contemporaneous'

Here is Eliot as Grand Old Man, in a 1956 essay on "The Frontiers of Criticism":

"What matters most, let us say, in reading an ode of Sappho, is not that I should imagine myself to be an island Greek of twenty-five hundred years ago; what matters is the experience which is the same for all human beings of different centuries and languages capable of enjoying poetry, the spark which can leap across those 2,500 years."

What matters most for us in reading this passage is that its assumptions do not strike us as being even remotely unusual. After 60 and more years of dissemination in English-speaking high schools and universities, the "Eliotic" view of literature has achieved something like the certitude

of the Ptolemaic system before Galileo.

In fact, it is in its way Ptolemaic. It is "anthropocentric" in its assumption that the individual perceptions, intimations, and nuances of the critic are the ultimate authority for his judgments. And the system as a whole (the universe for Ptolemy, the universe of literature for Eliot) reflects or expresses something like a Grand Unified Theory of all its components. "All literature is contemporaneous," Eliot repeated frequently. And thanks largely to his influence, American and English universities have come to accept that dogma: To read Shakespeare and O'Neill together makes more sense than to read them in isolation.

### A Continual Self-Sacrifice?

Indeed, Eliot can be seen to have nearly single-handedly forged the critical and historical consensus that is the 20th-century canon of major works. His admiration of John Donne and the "metaphysical" poets of the 17th century, for example, and his disapproval of the "immaturity" of Shelley's ideas, radically affected the respective prestige of those figures for at least 50 years.

If this makes Eliot sound like an intellectual bully, that is because he partly was. So were John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, and all the major critics in the Anglo-American critical tradition. But this elevation of "sensibility" is no *more* bullying than the formalist, antihumanist, and pseudo-scientific criticism emanating from Europe, which lately, in its French "deconstructionist" mode, has captured the hearts and minds of American academics.

Eliot's criticism and his poetry are the same act: the act of right perception. In a 1944 lecture on "Johnson as Critic and Poet," he advances this view, so much in the Anglo-American line and yet held with such special passion by him:

"I think that in studying the criticism of poetry, by a critic who is also a poet, we can only appreciate his criticism . . . in the light of the kind of poetry that he wrote himself."

That, again, is the Grand Old Man. Yet here is the desperate young man, 24 years earlier, saying the same thing, but at the top of his voice. He is describing what he thinks happens when a poet truly inserts himself into the literary tradition:

"What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."

That is from "Tradition and the Individual Talent," probably the most famous of all his essays, published two years before *The Waste Land*, in *The Sacred Wood*. It is important to notice that in his criticism, as in his poetry, the "early" Eliot, the Eliot of aridity and spiritual emptiness, is invariably drawn to the language of religious experience. His transformation into the "later" Eliot would actually be a movement from an idea of

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literature as salvation to an idea of literature as a kind of eighth sacrament *leading to* salvation.

Consider the title of the essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The most important word in the title is *and*. It implies a subtle tension between the terms it connects. If the poet's career is a long voyage toward the "extinction of personality," it is because the poet's personality is somehow in conflict with the great tradition of which he seeks to be a part. So the poet takes on the heavy burden of being both creator and critic of his own creation as it relates to the legacy of the holy dead. Yale professor and critic Harold Bloom has referred to this dilemma as "the anxiety of influence," the writer's conviction that he can never equal his major influences. Bloom has elaborated the phrase into a crucial theory of literary inheritance. But Eliot holds the patent on the concept, at least for our century; indeed, he made himself its exemplary victim.

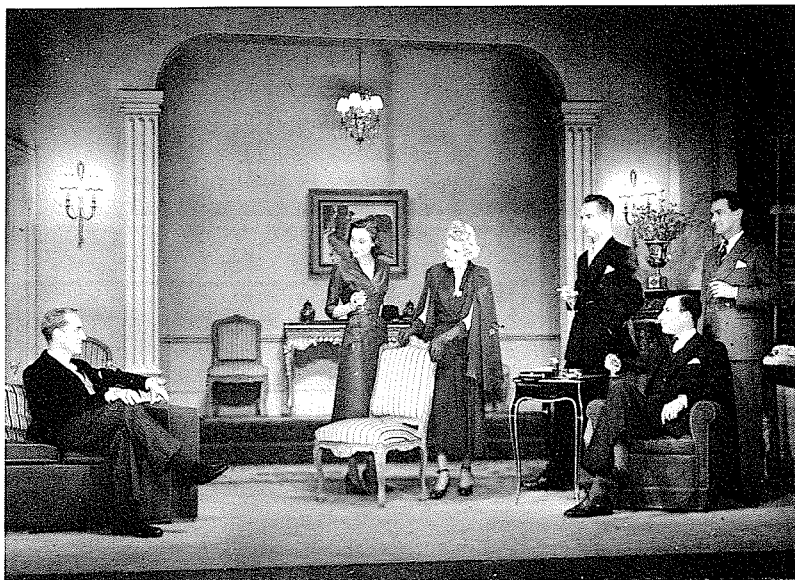
### Not Really So Difficult

"Anxiety," in fact, may be the best word to describe the arc of his career. Like his friend and mentor, Ezra Pound, he was an American obsessed with the culture of Europe to which he was heir, and from which he felt himself excluded by the very fact of his Americanness. This special transatlantic anxiety of influence has afflicted American writers from Washington Irving through Nathaniel Hawthorne to Henry James. But Eliot makes that historical/cultural anxiety his own in a special intimate way. *The Sacred Wood* is the paradise of tradition and order that the poet seeks to enter. *The Waste Land* is where he lives, in the howling emptiness of his alienation, his conviction of inauthenticity.

They are really the same place, and out of their difference-within-identity Eliot weaves his identity as a critic, a poet, and a man.

*The Waste Land*, the poem that inscribed Eliot's name on his age, has been subjected to innumerable explications and has become virtually a paradigm of the "difficulty" of modern poetry. And it is difficult. As with all Eliot's poetry, your reading of it becomes richer the more familiar you are with the languages he uses, the densely-packed allusions to other works he invokes, the historical references that are part of his vision. But the difficulty can be overemphasized, can obscure the fact that the poem *is* a poem whose general feeling is accessible to any reader with ordinary intelligence and common sense. Consider its first lines:

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.  
Winter kept us warm, covering  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
A little life with dried tubers.



*Eliot's plays are often dismissed as bloodless intellectual exercises, but the Broadway production of *The Cocktail Party* (1950), starring Alec Guinness (far left) and Irene Worth (fifth from right), ran 409 performances.*

You need not be a literary critic to know that April is not the cruellest month, that it is in fact the beginning of spring, and that only a deeply disturbed narrator would think it cruel. You—if you trust yourself as a reader—know from the first lines of the poem that you are dealing with an elaborate and sophisticated articulation of a special kind of despair, the despair of imaginative vacuity. If *The Sacred Wood* is a statement of aspiration by a young critic enamored of the literary tradition and its promise, *The Waste Land* is a frantic confession by a young poet that he feels himself, and his age, inadequate to receive the mantle of that great past.

One key to understanding *The Waste Land* is translating its Latin epigraph. It is from the *Satyricon* of Petronius, who wrote under the emperor Nero:

“For I once saw the Cumaean Sibyl with my own eyes, suspended in a jar, and when the little boys asked her, ‘Sibyl, what do you want’ she responded, ‘I want to die.’”

The Cumaean Sibyl, the great prophetess of classical mythology, was cursed with eternal life, but not eternal youth, becoming more shriveled year by year. And it is the image of this shriveled prophet, the impotent prophet, that Eliot wants us to bear in mind throughout the poem. Cultural history and personal biography here coincide: The poetic fire, or the sexual fire, of this dying civilization or this troubled young man are both exhausted to the point where all one can do is contemplate the emptiness of

the present in the shadow of the magnificence of what was. The style is “mock-heroic,” and writers from Petronius through Alexander Pope to Mel Brooks have used it, though none more brilliantly than Eliot.

“These fragments I have shored against my ruins,” says the speaker at the end of the poem. The fragments are not just the hut he builds for himself at the edge of the now-dead ocean; they are the myriad quotations, citations, and allusions—often without quotation marks—out of which *The Waste Land* is constructed. All we can do, in the grim world of this poem, is mumble over the splendid phrases of our fathers, knowing that we will never attain such glory. Tradition overwhelms the individual talent.

Perhaps no poet ever entered the major phase of his career with a more crippling sense of his own inadequacy. Certainly no poet won as many clear victories over that self-doubt as did he.

An important strategy for those victories was his conversion, in 1927, to the Church of England. It has been slyly observed that Eliot turned to faith not out of conviction but out of fear of the emptiness of life without faith. But this, after all, is a legitimate religious impulse. If faith born out of dread is not “real” faith, then we have to question not just Eliot but, among many others, St. Augustine and Martin Luther.

At any rate, *Ash-Wednesday* (1930), three years after his conversion, celebrates that event, if “celebrates” is the right word. The poem begins, not in joy but in resignation:

Because I do not hope to turn again  
 Because I do not hope  
 Because I do not hope to turn  
 Desiring this man’s gift and that man’s scope  
 I no longer strive to strive towards such things  
 (Why should the agèd eagle stretch its wings?)

At 42, the shriveled prophet now imagines himself an agèd eagle, too tired for flight. Yet he makes subtle, important music out of that self-abnegating theme. The special despair of *The Waste Land* is still there, but transformed into a negative mysticism, a vision of what theologian Karl Rahner calls (in *The Practice of Faith*) “the unending desert of God’s silence.”

Eliot had found a Tradition which might, finally, redeem his own Individuality. But he was one of those people for whom “Peace” will always mean a more organized form of struggle. As unofficial spokesman for literary and religious orthodoxy, Eliot could appear pompous. His literary judgments became more arbitrary, more blithely ex cathedra than ever. In a 1936 essay, “Milton I,” he began with an astonishingly condescending observation: “While it must be admitted that Milton is a very great poet indeed, it is something of a puzzle to decide in what his greatness consists.” Even more ominously, in *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (1934) he attacked trends in modern thought in terms that could

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and do seem disturbing, authoritarian, and anti-Semitic.

He cannot be absolved of these charges of short-sightedness or even of meanness. But it is important to remember that these fallings-off do not justify the devaluation of his work that set in after his death. For his gift did survive it all.

In 1943 Eliot published *Four Quartets*, his longest poem, his last major poem, and perhaps his richest and most controversial poem. There is nothing else in English quite like it. None of the fire or the allusive complexity of the early Eliot survives. The language is austere, meditative, even at times prosaic. Here are the opening lines of the first "Quartet," "Burnt Norton":

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.

Compare that to any of the lines I have quoted from "Prufrock," *The Waste Land*, or *Ash-Wednesday* and you will see how strange, even for Eliot, this poetry is. There are four sections, titled enigmatically "Burnt Norton," "East Coker," "The Dry Salvages," and "Little Gidding," each individual section or "quartet" consisting of five sub-sections. The immediately apparent and strenuously maintained theme of the whole work is the relationship between time and memory, the self and the cosmos, the poet and the idea of God. Eliot attempts nothing less here than a fusion of the obsessions with poetry, theology, and metaphysics that defined the shape of his life. And each of the quartets explores the difficult interchange of self and soul under the sign of one of the ancient, pre-Aristotelian elements of the world. "Burnt Norton" is the book of air, of memory as entirely lyrical and disembodied; "East Coker" is the book of earth, of memory as embedded in the ongoing cycle of ordinary human life; "The Dry Salvages" is the book of water, of the eternal flux that is nature at its most threatening; and "Little Gidding" is the book of fire, of the Pentecostal element that Eliot hopes will crown the life of contemplation and imaginative/spiritual striving. Throughout the poem, the rose is a constant symbol of the evanescent beauty of this life, and the fire an image of the cleansing but also terrifying accession of grace. And the famous last lines of "Little Gidding" are perhaps the farthest reach of his visionary power. At the end the poet expects a moment of final union:

Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of things shall be well



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When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.

It is poetry of a ferocious concentration on the *weight* of language, on a strict syntactical and metaphysical rigor. And recently, in the poetry of John Ashbery, Mark Strand, and A. R. Ammons, *Four Quartets* seems to have exerted an influence that its early readers would not have credited. William Carlos Williams heartily disliked this kind of poetry, and Wallace Stevens constructed an elegant rhetorical celebration of *this* life which can be read as one long anti-Eliotic position. The influential critic Donald Davie, in 1956, described *Four Quartets* as the magnificent dead end of a certain kind of self-conscious modernism. "Surely no poet," writes Davie, "can elaborate further this procedure . . ." But Ashbery, Ammons, and Strand, among others, indicate that the abstract ecstasy, the difficult but exhilarating reflexiveness of Eliot's voice, may not have been stilled yet. At any rate, in his hard victory over his freely admitted shortcomings, he remains the distinctive poet of his age. His problems are ours, and his solutions we must at least confront on our way to our own.

Let two voices summarize his presence. The first voice is that of William Empson, who wrote in 1948, "I do not know for certain how much of my own mind he invented, let alone how much of it is a reaction against him or indeed a consequence of misreading him." The second voice is more measured:

"He was one of those few whose history is the history of their own time, who are a part of the consciousness of an age which cannot be understood without them. This is a very high position to assign to him: but I believe that it is one which is secure."

The second voice, of course, is that of Eliot himself, speaking in 1940 about the poet William Butler Yeats. He could just as easily have said the same of himself.

## The Joys and Sorrows of Being a Word Snob

“Ballpark figure” is a nice, fairly new phrase meaning “rough approximation” (such as the estimates of attendance at a ball game). But it seems that America has entered the era of ballpark language where words are used *approximately*; they mean only roughly what we think they mean. So observes Joseph Epstein, singling out for disdain educators, heiresses, bureaucrats, TV anchormen, ecologists, and social scientists—among the many “quasi-semi-demi-ostensibly educated” Americans who now habitually use language that “leaves the ground but does not really fly.” Here Mr. Epstein bares his biases.

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*by Joseph Epstein*

Mention to me that when you were young your parents were very “supportive,” tell me that before “finalizing” your plans you would like my “input,” remark that the job in which you are “presently” employed provides you with a “nurturing environment”—say all or any of these things and you will not see a muscle in my face move.

I shall appear to show a genial interest in all you say, but beneath the geniality, make no mistake, I shall be judging you—and not altogether kindly.

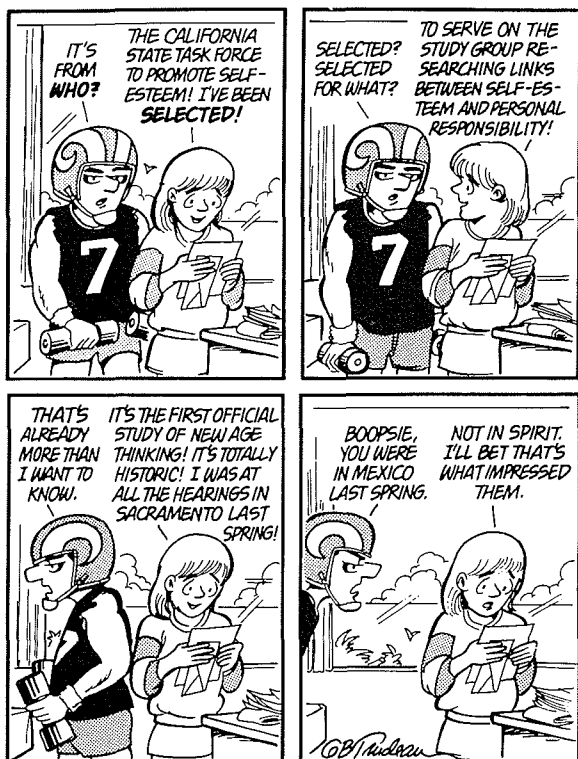
“Hmm,” I shall be thinking as you speak, “I see that I am dealing here with someone who has a taste for psychobabble and trashy corporate and computer talk and misuses the word *presently* into the bargain.”

I shall, of course, say nothing about it to you; I certainly won’t attempt to reform you. In fact, I rather prefer you

stay the way that you are. You allow me to feel that, in the realm of language at least, I am vastly superior to you; and the feeling of superiority—need I say it?—is what puts the lovely curl in the snob’s smile.

I’m not your run-of-the-mill language snob; I prefer, in fact, to think myself a custom-tailored snob. I like what I deem to be good new words. I like to toss in a neologism of my own every now and then, and I like what the linguistically prudish used to call Americanisms.

One of the few things I have ever disagreed with Henry James about is his fear, set forth in *The American Scene*, that immigrant groups in the United States would pollute the pure stream of the English language. I think the current in this stream is stronger than James knew. It can carry a great deal before it and still remain fresh.



A 1987 Doonesbury cartoon, by Garry Trudeau: Boopsie dabbles in psychobabble.

It was, after all, the grandson of an immigrant, H. L. Mencken, who made the English language do one-and-a-half gainers, back flips, and triple somersaults. A. J. Liebling, another scion of the immigrants, as Mencken might have put it, didn't do too shabbily either. But then I have a weakness for people who know how to play language for laughs. When the pro-basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, after dining at the home of a colleague, Julius Erving, was asked by the press if Mrs. Turquoise Erving was a good cook, Mr. Jabbar replied: "Yeah, man, Turquoise can burn." Henry James, I think, was too good-humored not to have enjoyed that.

The people I like to lord it over are the quasi-semi-demi-ostensibly educated, B.A., M.S., Ph.D. and degrees beyond. Few things please me more, for

example, than to see the novelists Norman Mailer and Joan Didion misuse the word *disinterested*. Or to notice the well-known scholar George F. Kennan use the word *transpire* as if it were nothing more than a high-toned synonym for *happen*. Or to hear more degreed people than I care to count use *intriguing* as if it meant nothing other than *fascinating*. (Take the verb *to intrigue* away from spies and you leave these fellows practically unemployed.) And, of course, I am death on people who use the term "bottom line."

I watch television ready to pounce; it is good exercise. One of the local anchormen hereabouts—a \$300,000-a-year man, I would estimate—made my day not long ago when, in connection with the Libyan embassy crisis in London, he asked a visiting expert whether

this might spell the possibility of a *tête-à-tête* for Qaddafi. "Coup d'état, you overpaid moron," I roared, leaping from my couch, "not tête-à-tête."

Or when, during the NCAA basketball tournament, the former coach and current announcer Billy Packer referred to "three or four Achilles' heels" that De Paul University's team had.

"Ah, dear boy," I whispered to myself, "one Achilles' heel was quite enough—even for Achilles."

But I am satisfied when one of the truly high-priced TV lads—Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, or Peter Jennings—misuses *decimate*, which means to kill a tenth, or calls something "rather unique," which is akin to being rather pregnant.

Do you take my point? Do you also think that what I've written thus far makes for "a good read"? If so, please clean out your locker, for you're done—I hate the phrase "a good read."

□

One of the things a language snob learns early in his training is that there is probably no word or phrase that someone of stature doesn't despise.

Edward Shils has kept up a running attack against the phrase "check out," as in "check it out." I know many people who hate *authored* as a verb, but I recently read that E. B. White didn't even like the word *author*. I can never hear or see the word *workshop*, referring to a management seminar or creative writing course, without thinking of Kingsley Amis's line, from his novel *Jake's Thing*, which runs: "If there's one word that sums up everything that's gone wrong since the war, it's Workshop." And

that's not all.

Many are the people who loathe the phrase "pick your brain," and I count myself among their number.

"I'd like to pick your brain," is a phrase my friend Dottie uses quite often. Dottie and I go way back. She is a good soul, large-hearted in so many ways. But Dottie is one of those people who seems to absorb whatever language is in the air, and the language that has been in the air in recent years has, I fear, driven my friend Dottie a bit, well, dotty.

□

Dottie has been going through a rough patch. Among other crises in her life, she has had a painful divorce and two job changes. She explained her divorce to me in something like the following terms: Her husband, she feels, "seemed just to want to do his thing." She no longer knew quite "where he was coming from." He used to be so steady, but, suddenly, he was so "off the wall." She supposed it was in part "a question of life-style," or maybe a "mid-life crisis." When I pressed her for greater clarity, she said: "Whatever."

"Whatever!"

*Whatever* may qualify for the category that H. W. Fowler, blessed be his name, called "meaningless words." Fowler wrote:

"Words and phrases are often used in conversation, especially by the young, not as significant terms but rather, so far as they have any purpose at all, as aids of the same kind as are given in writing by punctuation, inverted commas, and underlining. It is a phenomenon perhaps more suitable for the psychologist than for the philologist.

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*Joseph Epstein, 51, is professor of literature at Northwestern University and editor of The American Scholar. Born in Chicago, he received an A.B. from the University of Chicago (1959). He is the author of Divorced in America (1975), Familiar Territory (1980), Plausible Prejudices (1985), and Once More Around the Block: Familiar Essays (1987), from which this essay is drawn. Copyright © 1987 by Joseph Epstein. Reprinted by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.*

"Words and phrases so employed change frequently, for they are soon worn out by overwork. Between the two world wars the most popular were DEFINITELY and *sort of thing*."

"One may suppose that they originated in a subconscious feeling that there was a need in the one case to emphasize a right word and in the other to apologize for a possibly wrong one. But any meaning they ever had was soon rubbed off them, and they became noises automatically produced."

Fowler also mentions *actually* and *you know* among the crop of meaningless words. (*Incidentally* is another meaningless word Fowler mentions, which, incidentally, reminds me that, a while back, I had a long bout of beginning most of my sentences, at least in conversation, with the phrase "By the way." Everything, in those days, seemed to me "by the way." It takes a big-hearted snob, don't you think, to admit to a small-gauge error.)

□

A few years ago, *basically* was having a good run. "Care for dessert?" "Basically, I don't think I do," is a ridiculous but not unreal example. *You know* has had very long innings, and flourishes today, particularly among athletes. Of Patrick Ewing, the center for the New York Knicks basketball team, it has been said that last year he led the nation in *you knows*. It was said, obviously, by someone like me, a language snob.

The language snob must take his pleasures where he finds them. In bureaucratic prose, for example. Few samples fail to include the verb *implement*, which generally causes me to want to reach for an implement to smash the person who has used it.

*Guidelines*, too, has brought many a twinkle to these crowfooted and pouchy eyes. "*Guidelines* is a bastardization," I cry out to the walls. "It comes from *guy lines*, you idiot."

No question about it, bureaucratic prose writers need to prioritize, dichotomize, and finalize, at least if they are to be responsive and people-oriented. Is what I say here of any ongoing interest? If so, I shall keep on going.

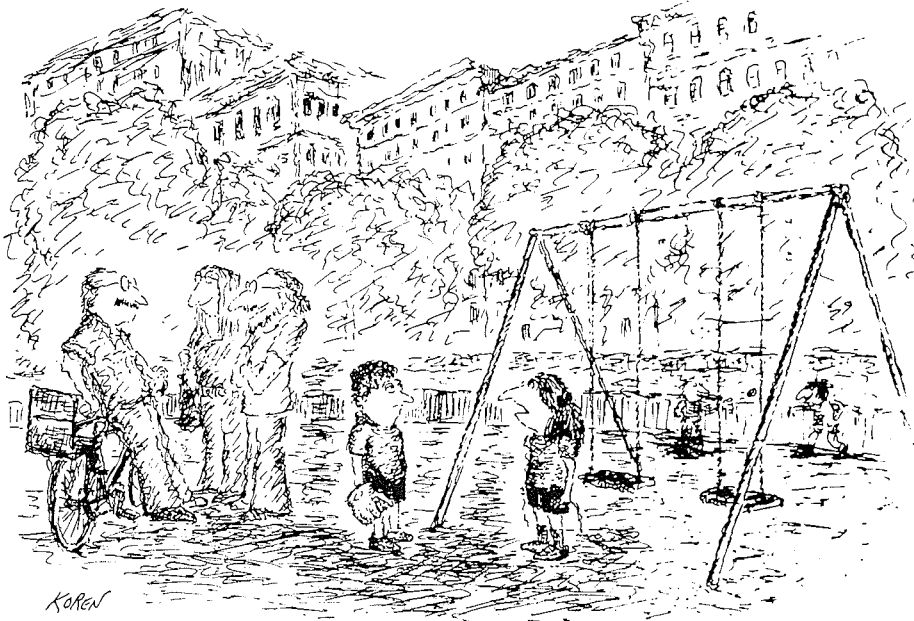
One must not fear descending to pedantry. I have had a good deal of fun, in this regard, watching people misuse the word *whence*, turning it into a tautology by saying or writing "from whence." But I have suffered minor setbacks. Recently I noted "from whence" in both Shakespeare and Edmund Burke. Shock and dismay is the language snob's lot. Believe me, I don't enjoy feeling superior to Shakespeare and Burke, yet what is a man of serious standards to do?

To go on, my very favorite euphemism over the past 20 or so years has been, without doubt, "student unrest." It was used to refer to the activities of radical students in the late 1960s and early 1970s. "Student unrest" implies a mild crankiness, the antidote for which was perhaps a few good afternoon naps!

I like, too, "Due to mature theme viewer discretion advised," which I take to mean "simulated fornication, extreme violence, and filthy language follow—get the kids the hell out of the room." I understand the word *interdisciplinary*, used by academics, to mean "I deserve a grant." I recall reading a grant proposal for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) a few years back in which the author wanted a grant for a course that would not only be "cross-curricular" but "interdisciplinary" and "interuniversity" as well. I suggested that NEH turn it down because it wasn't interplanetary.

□

A language snob must be ready to outlaw words because the wrong people use them. *Charisma* is such a word. It once had meaning, but no longer. "He has charisma," I not long ago heard Bucky Walters, the basketball announcer, say of



A New Yorker drawing by Koren: "Ezra, I'm not inviting you to my birthday party, because our relationship is no longer satisfying to my needs."

a player. "He's got that smile." *Syndrome*, too, must go. "This is a syndrome he had foisted on him," I recently heard one politician say of another. *Structure* is another gone goose. On television the other day I heard another politician, one of the zinc-throated orators of our day, affirm: "I have invested in activities that have gone to enhance this total city's overall structure." Does everyone out there know how to enhance a structure? While we are cleaning the closet, let's toss out *learning experience*, which was never any good to begin with. Besides, I have noticed that people who say "learning experience" tend never to learn from experience.

On the subject of experience, it was Walter Pater who invoked us to live intensely for the moment, to seek "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself." But Pater didn't live to see the word *experience* turned into a verb,

lucky chap. What would he have made of recent advertisements that ask us to "Experience Yoplait Yogurt," "Experience the St. Regis," "Experience Our 9.6 Interest Rate"?

Walter Pater was not notably—how to say it?—a fun person. I am not at all sure he could "wrap his mind around" what has happened to the word *experience*. Nor is he likely to turn up in a restaurant I noted the other day called The Corned Beef Experience.

I judge a person less by the cut of his jib than by his grip on the gab. Where the gab has no grab I see a certain mental—not moral—flab. When a prospective buyer of *The London Observer* remarks that he intends to make that paper's editor "toe the line of viability," I make a judgment that is not charitable to him. When I read the phrase, in a book by Alvin Toffler, "decisional environment," not one but both my eye-

brows fly up. When I read, in *The New Yorker*, about a Harvard Law School professor who refers to "a societal role not perceived as particularly helpful," to myself I exclaim, "Et tu, Harvard!" Can you *identify with* or *relate to* this? If you can, you're fired.

I recall first coming across the word *life-style* (from the German *Lebensstil*) in Max Weber's essays on social class, some of which I read as an undergraduate. I was immensely impressed with it; on Max Weber, an authentic genius, all words looked good.

□

In those days, I used it myself, slipping it into term papers and conversation whenever possible. (Those were also the days of *ambivalence* and *love-hate*.) Soon I saw *life-style* taken up by advertising agencies and low-grade sociologists. College students came next: "Queen Victoria lived a very different life-style than most of her subjects." Today the word carries something of a philosophical freight: implicit in it is the notion, which I, for one, don't believe, that life has an almost infinite plasticity—change your life-style, change your life, it's as easy as that.

There is something about caring for language that does not allow for moderation. How can you tell if you care about language? You care if it grates upon you to hear the word *impact* used as a verb. Next you begin to care if you see *impact* used to describe anything other than ballistics, car crashes, and wisdom teeth. You care if you find yourself wishing to flee the company of anyone who uses such words as *parenting*, *coupling*, *cohabing*. You care if it turns your stomach to see or hear a reference to "the caring professions."

You know for certain that you care if the last thing in the world you care to be called is "a caring person."

Today, it is people who have been to university who make the most gnawing

depredations into the clarity and cleanliness of language.

I cannot, for example, imagine any supposedly uneducated person using the word *supportive*. Who but a university student or graduate would refer to her mother as a "role model," or talk about "the gender gap," or say she wishes "to dialogue" with me? Who but a U person would fall back on so foggy a word as *values*? Wesleyan University, I note, has a course entitled "Touchstones of Western Values," and Jesse Jackson has said, "Values lead to values."

With the possible exception of politicians, bureaucrats, professors with weak ideas, and those in other trades where charlatanry is requisite, few are the people who scheme to use obfuscatory language. It's simply that Nietzsche was correct when he said that "general is the need for new jingling words, which shall make life noisy and festive." Language is still far and away the best tool we have for deceiving ourselves.

When a famous ecologist writes that, if we are to save the Earth, "we must enter into a creative association with our environment," I don't think the man is a knave or even a liar; I do, though, think, perhaps unbeknownst to himself, that he is embarked on the mental equivalent of whistling Dixie.

□

When a young mother takes an active hand in a political campaign because she wants "this country to be a positive experience for my son," I do not impugn her sincerity, only her clarity. Was Russia a positive experience for Tolstoy, Germany for Bismarck, France for Proust? Do countries supply "positive experience"? One wonders whether this young mother isn't searching for something that is not available.

So the language snob persists. Sometimes he looks quite as much at the people who use them as at the words themselves. I have never, for instance, met a

professor in the humanities who called himself or herself a "humanist," without irony, whom I didn't dislike. I am extremely wary of people who go in for botanical metaphors in a big way to describe psychological states. "I feel myself growing" or: "It has been a growthful experience."

To the basic botanical metaphor of growth, further metaphors are often added. Abra Anderson, a Rockefeller granddaughter and a millionairess who lives in Chicago, recently told a journalist: "Right now I don't know where I am, except that I feel everything else is finished. The apartment's finished, I've got a wonderful man, my kids are fine, the bills are paid, the charities are OK. And I'm just *re-potting* myself."

Certain words such as *growth* seem to have a built-in squishiness; they grow soft at the touch. But, as any language snob will be pleased to tell you, good solid words, if sedulously misused, can lose their solidity, too.

The word *honest* applied to art—and for a long stretch it was the key word of praise for works of architecture—always merits suspicion. *Excellence* is nowadays all but drained of meaning, so often has it been applied to things that are scarcely mediocre. The word *complete*, when used to describe a collection of one or another kind of writing, usually turns out to mean merely "quite a bit of." *Literally*, in so many current usages, doesn't mean "literally"; it's literally a scandal,

so to speak. "Ballpark figure" is a nice, fairly new phrase meaning "rough approximation" (such as the estimates of attendance at a ball game), but it sometimes seems as if we are entering the era of ballpark language, where words are used approximately; they mean only roughly what we think they mean.

My biases ought by now to be clear; so, too, my snobbery. But I earlier referred to myself as a principled snob. Wherein lie my principles? All right, here they are: take out after all language that is pretentious and imprecise, under-educated and over-intellectualized. Question all language that says more than it means, that leaves the ground but does not really fly. Question authority only after you have first seriously consulted it; it isn't always as stupid as it looks. Never forget that today's hot new phrase becomes tomorrow's cold dead cliché. (What will we do, a writer in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* asks, "when the Baby Boomers get to Golden Pond?") Know in advance that the fight for careful language is probably a losing one, but at the same time don't allow this knowledge to take the edge off your appetite for battle.

The war may be lost, yet the skirmishes are still worth waging. Recall the words of that grand snob, Proust's Baron de Charlus: "I have always honored the defenders of grammar and logic. We realize fifty years later that they have averted serious dangers."



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## 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 of those printed below were received in response to the editors' requests for comment.*

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### *Electors or Rubber Stamps?*

In "The Parties Take Over," ["Choosing America's Presidents," *WQ*, New Year's '88], James W. Ceaser and Neil Spitzer demonstrate how presidential elections evolved through pragmatic adjustments to the realities of the American electorate.

Having attended the last two electoral ballot-counting ceremonies, I can predict with reasonable certainty one thing about the next presidential election: When the Senate and House meet together for the 50th time to count electoral ballots and officially proclaim the next president of the United States, the nation's newscasters will treat the occasion with ridicule for its restatement of the already obvious.

The exception to this rule will occur only if the vice president who counts the ballots happens to be one of the disappointed candidates (Nixon in 1961, Mondale in 1981, Bush in 1989?), in which case the news coverage will tend toward irony.

That the 1787 Constitutional Convention labored so hard to produce what has become such a hollow function ought to tell us something about the current debate over the Founders' "original intent." The Founders constructed the cumbersome Electoral College in an effort to avoid political parties at all cost, but their best-laid plans went astray. The two-party system came to dominate the presidential election process and turned the electors into rubber stamps.

*Donald A. Ritchie  
U.S. Senate Historical Office*

### *The Party Problem*

"Choosing America's Presidents" provides a briskly informative account of the evolution of the presidential nominating process.

Of particular interest is the development of the national party nominating convention, engineered by the indefatigable senator from

New York, Martin Van Buren. Interestingly enough, in light of the circumstances of 1988, the "Little Magician" was the last vice president (1832-36) to be elected directly from status as "stand-by equipment" to the office of Chief Executive of the Republic.

Jack Walker's essay, "The Primary Game," exhibits some of the lingering regret over the confusion and lack of discipline in our political processes that sometimes pervades the work of serious students of American parties. Disciplined, programmatic (and predictable) national parties would be so much tidier.

The reality, however, is that the two major political parties and their processes are broadly reflective of American society: diverse, multipolar, and sometimes confusing, even to the most experienced observers. They remain (the best efforts of the national party structures notwithstanding) federations of state and local party organizations and national interest groups.

... As to the assertion that unelectable candidates are regularly nominated: Barry Goldwater and George McGovern may well have fallen into this category. But could anyone fairly suggest that Walter Mondale was outside the mainstream of the Democratic Party in 1984? Moreover, in 1980 the G.O.P. nominated, and then proceeded to elect, a candidate clearly to the right of the great American center: Ronald Reagan. He, too, had been deemed unelectable by some observers.

In the final analysis, it is probably in the national interest for the parties to alter the nominating process, particularly with regard to campaign length, expenditures, and the distortions caused by "front loading" the primaries and caucuses. However, barring unforeseen circumstances, and given the enduring characteristics of the American political system, such changes seem unlikely in the near future.

*Thomas H. Neale  
Kevin Coleman  
Congressional Research Service  
The Library of Congress*

## Nicaragua's Future

Consider again the final sentence in "Background Books: Nicaragua" [*WQ*, New Year's '88]: "Perhaps *that* [the Dominican Republic], rather than Cuba, is the model that Nicaraguans may one day try to emulate."

The Nicaraguan people do not do the choosing when it comes to political systems to emulate, and they never will, unless the Sandinistas are overthrown. To leave the matter up in the air as if only time will tell—given the present trends, which your articles document full well—is simply wrong.

Mark Falcoff  
Washington, D.C.

## Downside to "Service Economy"

I read with great interest your articles on "Social Mobility in America" [*WQ*, Winter '87] and found the piece by Robert W. Hodge and Steven Lagerfeld ["The Politics of Opportunity"] especially informative in its portrait of the ambiguous trends in social mobility patterns.

Although the authors attribute a positive effect on social mobility to the shift in the economy toward the service sector, I wish to underscore the fact that such an effect is only true for well-educated workers. Blue-collar workers and their families will experience increasing downward mobility as the high paying, unionized jobs in smokestack industries (such as steel-making) are eliminated. It is extremely unlikely that such workers and their children will move into high technology or managerial service jobs. Indeed, Karl Marx's prediction of the impoverishment of the working class may yet be fulfilled in this unexpected way.

The growing shift toward a service economy has other important implications for American society.

The Winter '87 issue also contains a review of the new book by Stephen S. Cohen and John Zysman, called *Manufacturing Matters: The Myth of Post-Industrial Economy*, in which the authors brilliantly argue that an economy dominated by the so-called service sector is an inherently weak and non-competitive one.

Paul Seabury makes a similar argument in

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Chalmers Johnson's book, *The Industrial Policy Debate*. Seabury notes that U.S. policy-makers can ill afford to adopt a Japanese approach to problems of industrial adjustment because the United States retains global strategic military responsibilities that regional powers can ignore. Thus, the United States must address simultaneously the "claims of prosperity and the requisites of strength," and therefore must maintain its basic industrial capacity.

Ultimately, as General Alton Slay has observed, the United States cannot remain a first-rate military power with a second-rate industrial base—which is what an economy dominated by the service sector implies.

Janeen Klinger  
University of California, Berkeley

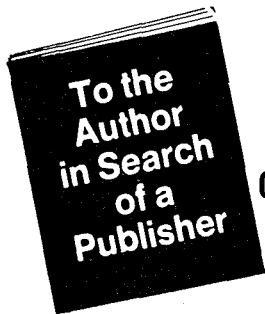
## Malaysia Today

My only addition to the account of Malaysian history and political evolution [*WQ*, Winter '87] would be to further explain the current

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political situation. In the postwar era, Malaysia has developed a political system based on the negotiation among ethnic elites of accommodative solutions to the most contentious issues of ethnicity, culture, and religion. This "elite accommodation" system has worked quite well except for the crisis period in 1969 when democratic institutions were suspended for almost two years. Gradually, the system of inter-elite ethnic bargaining was restored under Prime Minister Abdul Razak and continued under Prime Minister Hussein Onn.

Today, that system is under severe strain, in part because the Malays are gradually constituting a larger majority of the population; thus, they enjoy the luxury of more open political contests within their own community. Furthermore, because of dramatic social and political changes within all communities, there is no longer one set of ethnic elites to bargain for each community. In April 1979, the political divisions within the Malay community were reflected in the challenge to the leadership of Prime Minister Mahathir, who almost lost re-election as president of the United Malays National Organization.

The competitive contest for leadership of the Malay community has made all Malay political factions much more ethnically militant and much more willing to flirt with the idea of "Malay dominance"—the belief that the country can be run by the Malays alone, without the participation of the other non-Malay communities . . . .

All in all, the rapid pace of modernization, which has affected all sectors of Malaysian society, has made the country much more difficult to govern.

*Gordon P. Means  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario*

## *Understanding Nietzsche*

I am most disappointed that you would publish something so inaccurate and incoherent as Allan Bloom's "How Nietzsche Conquered America" [*WQ*, Summer '87].

. . . Again and again, Bloom claims that Nietzsche and Heidegger together are responsible for some never clearly specified American malady, a nihilistic and relativistic "mood of moodiness." Anyone familiar with

the whole of Nietzsche's thought would know, first, that he advocated neither relativism nor nihilism, but in his mature work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, affirmed the unity of the individual will with the eternal cycles of the natural universe. Secondly, Heidegger, far from being a follower of Nietzsche, was his most severe critic, and far from being a moral relativist or nihilist, was the 20th century's foremost advocate of Absolute Being.

... Bloom's incoherencies are also embarrassingly plentiful. He is most incoherent, however, in attempting to state just what it was that Nietzsche believed. He says, in one place, that Nietzsche was opposed to modern nihilism, but then, in almost every other place, he says Nietzsche is "the master lyricist" of American nihilism.

[Bloom] does admit that Nietzsche has been misinterpreted by "American academics," which, given his own contradictory views of Nietzsche, seems to be a confession that he is chief among such misinterpreters. In an apparent attempt to excuse his own distortions of Nietzsche, he says in a final nose-thumbing gesture of contempt for scholarship that "Nietzsche invited misinterpretation."

In other words, Bloom feels no obligation to even try to understand or give an accurate interpretation of Nietzsche because, in his own words, "There is no simple distillation of Nietzsche's thought." So Bloom's message to students of philosophy is that if a philosopher is not simple and easy to read, say anything you want about his ideas and influence and, above all, don't worry about being accurate or consistent.

What would make Nietzsche smile is that the purveyor of this message is considered by those who should know better to be offering significant comment concerning the weaknesses of higher education in America. If he does, it is only by being an outstanding example of the very kind of educator he pretends to condemn.

*Manuel M. Davenport  
Professor of Philosophy  
Texas A&M University*

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I thought your magazine would stimulate contemporary thought. Instead it's the same old thing.

*Evelyn Citak  
Park Forest, Ill.*

### *People for Peace*

In "A Long March" ["Peace," *WQ*, New Year's '87], George Weigel gives George Kistiakowsky sole credit for helping to resurrect [the organization] Physicians for Social Responsibility in 1980-81. Dr. Helen Caldicott, however, is generally credited with performing this feat, not just inspiring it.

Weigel also fails to mention the Council for a Livable World, which Professor Kistiakowsky, a chemist, chaired in 1980. Under his leadership and that of its president, Jerome Grossman, the Council has devoted itself to helping elect sympathetic senators and, more recently, congressmen, and to providing them with more sophisticated technical and scientific information for making intelligent decisions about nuclear arms control and strategic weapons. In the 1986 election, its 100,000 supporters contributed over \$1 million to the campaigns of senators and members of Congress. Since its inception, it has helped elect 75 senators, 39 of whom are now in office.

Jerome D. Frank, M.D., Ph.D.  
Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry  
The Johns Hopkins University  
School of Medicine

### Corrections

On the map of Central America in the New Year's '88 *WQ*, Belize was described as the "last European possession" on the Latin American mainland when it won independence from Britain in 1981. Actually, Belize was the last such *colony*. French Guiana, in South America, remains French—not as a colony, however, but (since 1947) as an integral *département* of France.

A chart listing "Major Presidential Candidates, 1964–1984" [p. 72-73, *WQ*, New Year's '88] mistakenly identifies Representative John Ashbrook (R.-Ohio) as a U.S. senator in 1972. In addition, the columns of text under 1984 were transposed due to a production error, causing the list of Republican candidates to appear under the heading *Democrats* and vice versa.

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# How Americans are wounding ourselves

Since the stock market collapse, Americans have been cautioned that this country's deep and lingering habit of buying more from overseas countries than it sells abroad is dangerous to the country's economic health.

But despite all that has been written and said about America's horrendous trade deficit, we'd like to state, loudly and clearly, that Americans have every right to pick and choose in the marketplace. The decision to buy an import, like any other purchase, is usually made in a rational way, with due consideration to price and quality. In all the hoopla, what hasn't been expressed, to our knowledge, is righteous indignation over the impediments this country itself has created to bedevil American companies trying to meet foreign competition, both at home and abroad. The issue isn't whether Americans buy too many foreign goods; rather, it's whether domestic goods can meet the worldwide competition—and that means the ability to sell in foreign markets, as well as in the U.S.

While protectionists take great glee in citing trade barriers erected by our trading partners, the fact remains that we're no slouches at erecting barriers ourselves—to exports, not imports, and to the ability of America's companies to compete worldwide. Here's what we mean:

- The foreign tax credit has been part of America's tax law since 1918. Most major nations have something similar—basically, a shield against double taxation. It means that taxes paid overseas on overseas earnings are credited against taxes due in the U.S. on those foreign earnings. The credit never applies on money earned domestically. But America has gradually eroded its shield over the years, especially in the tax reform measure passed in 1986. Under the new law, complex "baskets" of different types of income have been created for U.S. firms operating overseas. The net result has been a higher tax burden for American com-

panies than the one carried by their foreign competitors.

- Most major trading countries don't tax income from overseas until the money is brought home—if any taxes are due after the foreign tax credit is applied. The U.S., however, requires reporting of such earnings as they accrue—and sometimes taxes that money even before it's sent home. For example, income from shipping operations is subject to U.S. taxes whether repatriated or not, and the result could be to drive U.S. companies out of that business.

- Tax reform eliminated the investment tax credit and decimated accelerated depreciation. The net result was predictable: Higher taxes on U.S. companies, while the taxes of foreign firms remained the same. We might also add that most foreign countries don't rely as heavily on income taxes as the U.S. They also have some form of broad-based consumption tax which is an incentive to save, and to export.

America's self-erected export barriers extend beyond the tax law. The extraterritorial application of U.S. antitrust laws, for example, could invite retaliation by foreign governments, and dampen American involvement overseas. So could certain limits on the export of nonstrategic materials and products. So, certainly, would provisions of the trade bill currently being debated in Congress—one of which would require U.S. review of investments foreign companies plan to make here, and which would no doubt spark retaliation.

Based on America's record of wounding itself in the area of foreign trade, it seems obvious that the nation's leaders have been paying as little attention to the trade deficit as the man in the street. If, in the wake of the new awareness sparked by the stock market collapse, foreign trade ranks higher on the national agenda, a major plus will have resulted from an awesomely large financial minus.

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