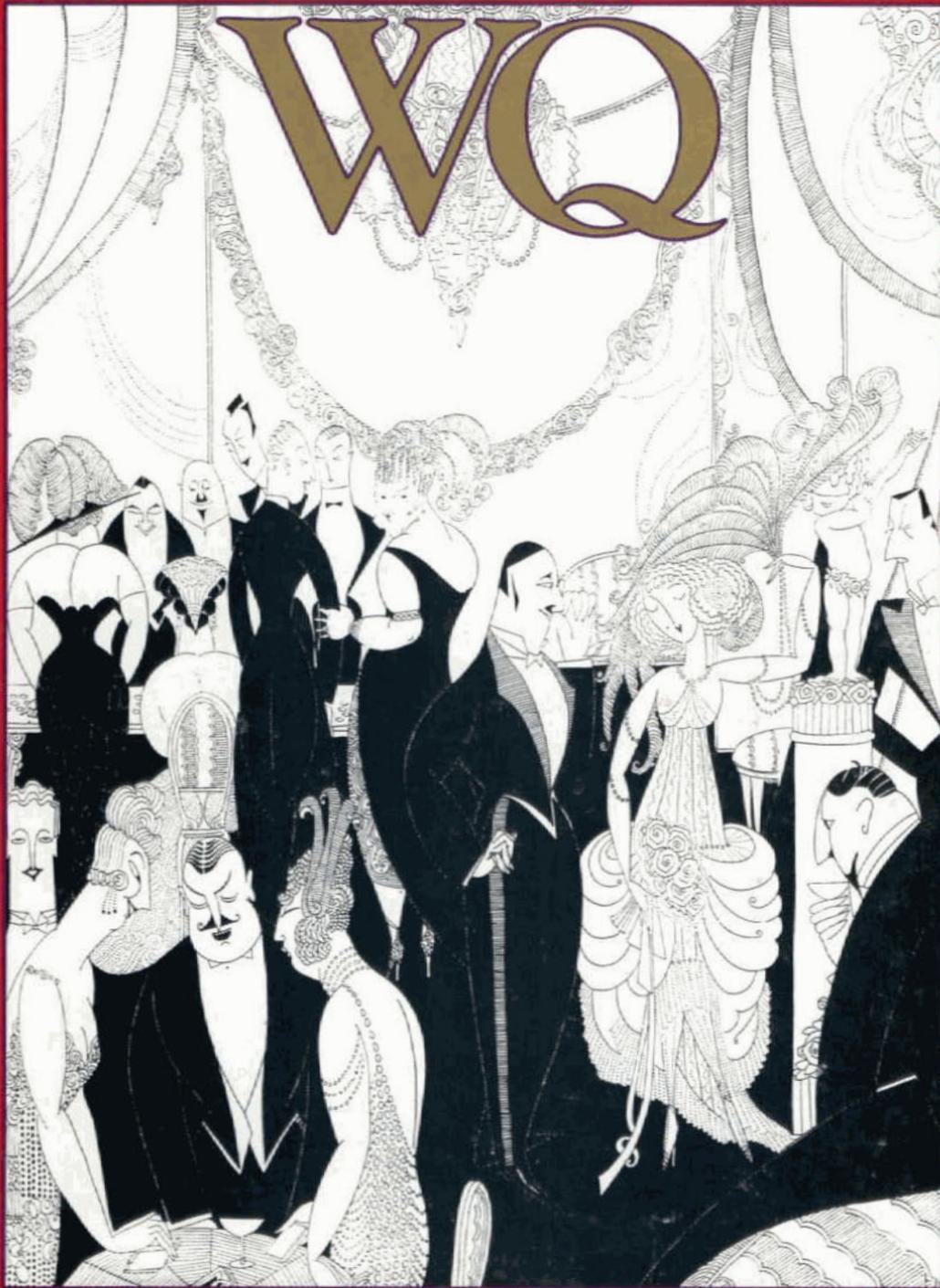


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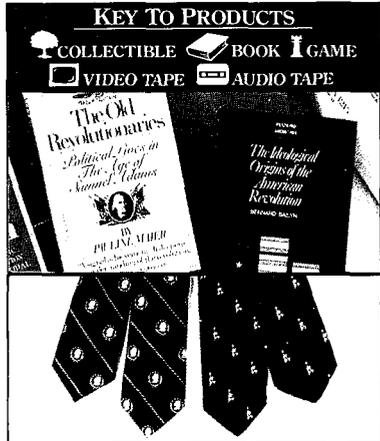
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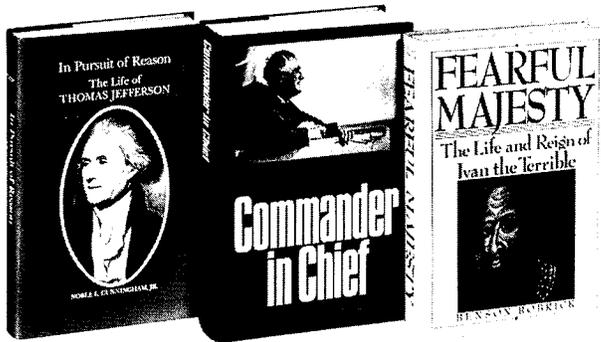
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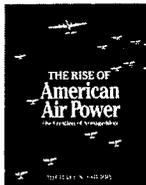
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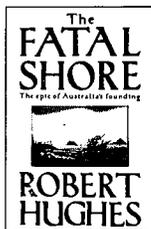
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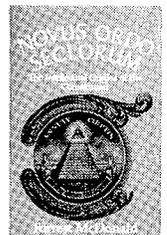
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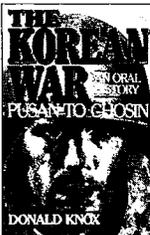
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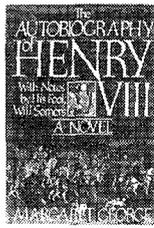
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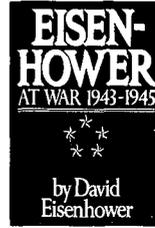
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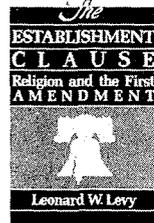
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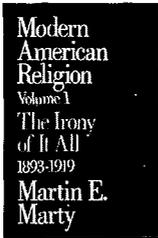
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## Editor's Comment

Ten years ago, the *Wilson Quarterly* published its first essays on American earning and spending, and the impact of the rising U.S. standard of living. What was true in 1977 is true now: The U.S. income pie, while growing larger, is divided unevenly. The most affluent fifth of the nation's households (starting at \$50,371 per annum) get 44 percent of total U.S. personal income; the bottom fifth gets 4.6 percent. Thus, income inequality in the United States is more pronounced than it is in, say, Scandinavia. The "income distribution" issue intrudes into debates about taxes, inflation, health insurance, welfare reform, even environmental policy.

However, since World War II, as economist Robert Lampmann observed, "while many deplore inequality of *opportunity*, no American president has ever made it his declared intention to reduce inequality of *income* in the United States."

Why this is so is one of the questions explored by our contributors to "Social Mobility in America" (p. 92). They summarize new research showing how much upward mobility has existed in America—as an offset to inequality—and what factors now seem to help or hinder individuals in Getting Ahead. And one of them, Howard M. Bahr, journeys to "Middletown, U.S.A." (Muncie, Indiana) to describe how three local families have fared since the Great Depression. Behind all the statistics, one reality emerges: To a degree that startles foreigners, Americans are still forever on the move, up and down the socioeconomic ladder.

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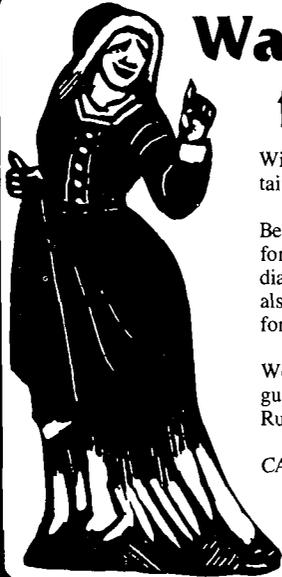
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# Laughable trade measures

We have argued long and loudly in this space that protectionism, in the long run, is economic folly. But two amendments in the Senate trade bill—itsself a largely protectionist document—are so illogical as to go beyond folly into an area that can only be defined as absurdity.

One amendment would add a new dimension to the argument over what constitutes an unfair trade practice—the issue of worldwide supply and demand. Under that amendment, if there is surplus worldwide capacity to produce a commodity—or if somebody's crystal ball says there will be a future surplus—governments that encourage the production of those commodities could trigger retaliation by the U.S. The other amendment zeros in on agricultural products, minerals and chemicals, and seeks to apply a similar supply-demand test as a criterion for loans by multilateral lending agencies.

Taken together, the potential impact of these amendments is sublimely ridiculous. For example:

- There's currently excess worldwide capacity to produce oil and natural gas, and the surplus is expected to remain a fact of life well into the future. Most of the surplus capacity happens to be in the OPEC countries. Even so, these amendments would seek to bar countries like Great Britain, Canada, West Germany, and Brazil from encouraging the search for any more oil and gas. If the U.S. were the target of such legislation elsewhere, America could be barred from producing new domestic reserves. Now that, we submit, is patently an absurd position for any oil-importing country, including the U.S.

- Since when does the capacity to produce an item—even excess capacity—assure that the item is readily available to consumers all over the world? Certainly price is a factor, and transportation costs, as just one example, help determine price. If

capacity were the proper yardstick, there would be no hunger in Africa, because there's plenty of worldwide grain capacity these days. It's absurd to use capacity as a determining element.

- We suggest that there might be a hypocrisy factor at work here. Much capacity to manufacture any product might well be obsolete and inefficient, and require great doses of capital to modernize (just ask domestic steelmakers about that). Yet, other countries might be kept from building modern plants by the amendments, while, presumably, the U.S. could go ahead and build. Won't our trading partners laugh the U.S. delegates right out of the GATT negotiating rooms if these amendments become law?

- Who can tell whether surpluses are temporary or permanent? Are they the result of the overhang from a recent cyclical turn-down in a particular industry? Will new capacity be needed during the next upturn? In our view the best regulator of capacity is the marketplace. Any artificial restraint on the market could only create shortages and price fluctuations—and these are hardly a laughing matter.

- Finally, we see the amendments as clearly discriminatory. Developing countries, by definition, are the last to install production capacity for basic commodities. Does the U.S. Senate have the right to shut them out of the industrialization process because others have installed plant and equipment before them? And how can developing countries handle their debt load if they aren't allowed to enter the economic arena?

World trade and American trade policies are serious matters. But too many aspects of the House and Senate trade bills lend themselves to parody and burlesque. We seriously urge the Senators and Representatives who will soon meet in conference to write a final bill which eliminates blatant protectionist measures. The last thing America needs is economic funny business.

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# PERIODICALS

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## POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

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### *Failed Presidents*

"Is the Presidency Failing?" by Donald L. Horowitz, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1987), 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Since World War II, says Horowitz, a Duke University political scientist, every American president except Dwight Eisenhower has "met with death, disgrace, or grave political disability."

But are failed presidencies the fault of the men who have been president? Or is failure inherent in the office? The answer, Horowitz argues, can be found in the conflicting sentiments of the Founding Fathers.

The Framers of the Constitution did not want a strong president. George Mason, for example, considered a single executive an "imitation monarchy." Roger Sherman of Connecticut thought the executive should be completely subordinate to the legislature. "Executive power," Horowitz argues, "was, for most delegates, not a positive good." Yet the Framers did not want to continue the genteel anarchy that resulted from the Articles of Confederation.

Hence, while the Constitution included a chief executive independent of the legislature, "antimonarchical and antiauthoritarian sentiment" frequently resulted in failed presidencies. Even George Washington and John Adams "occasionally yielded to cabinet majorities." Thomas Jefferson "lost virtually all his support" because of his embargo on trade with Britain and France. Thus, recent popular and congressional rejection of presidents, "rooted in deep resentment of executive power, has early antecedents."

Strong presidents, Horowitz argues, gain their political strength mostly by serving "during popular wars, depressions, and crises, when people feel helpless." In periods of stability, the president normally acts as a national father figure, "the unconscious analogue of parents and other authorities." Of late, the evolution of an "unusually democratic, egalitarian" American family style bodes ill for future popular support of the president, the "authority figure *par excellence*." More obvious and important is the steady ebbing of party loyalty among the public and in Congress—giving the president fewer dependable allies and less leeway. Public opinion has become highly volatile, especially on foreign policy issues.

Hence, Horowitz predicts, failed presidencies will recur as political parties decline, and the mass media persistently seek flaws in presidents. Formidable opposition to presidents is "ready to be activated at any sign of trouble, and the trouble reflex is in excellent condition."

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT



*Patrick Henry arguing passionately for the colonies' rights ("Give me liberty or give me death!") before the Virginia Assembly in Richmond in 1775.*

### *Henry the Dissenter*

"The Democratic Faith of Patrick Henry" by Richard R. Beeman, in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (July 1987), P.O. Box 7311, Richmond, Va. 23221.

The political legacy of Patrick Henry (1736–1799) is difficult to measure. His speeches were never published, and survive only in partial reconstructions made decades after his death. Moreover, his enemies not only outlived Henry but also delighted in making vicious comments about him. For example, Thomas Jefferson, whose feud with Henry lasted at least 20 years, considered him an "avaritious & rotten hearted" man who was all "tongue and without head or heart."

Yet Henry, argues Beeman, a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, did more than shout "Give me liberty or give me death!" Henry's views, he says, helped provide the ideas that determined "America's ultimate destiny as a liberal democracy."

Henry began his career as a rabble-rousing Virginia demagogue. His fiery protests against British oppression, such as his denunciation of King George III during the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765, made him a leading radical opponent to colonial rule.

During the Revolutionary War, Henry began to rise in office, serving as governor of Virginia in 1776–79 and 1784–86, and as a member of the House of Burgesses (the state legislature) in 1780–84. His distaste for national government continued, as he became one of the leading "anti-federalists" opposed to the new Constitution. Henry argued that the Constitution was insufficiently democratic; he attacked James Madison's argu-

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ment that U.S. senators should be elected by state legislatures rather than directly by citizens. Henry also worried whether America would be too large to be governed democratically by a central government.

Henry's opposition to the new Constitution, Beeman argues, was "ineffectual." In *The Federalist*, Madison showed that (in Beeman's words), "the spaciousness of the American republic was in fact a deterrent to tyrannical government." Henry refused to serve in the new U.S. government and retired to his farm near Brookneal, Virginia, until his death.

Beeman concludes that Henry's legacy resides in his strong commitment to democracy. He sees the current American political system as a combination of Madison and Jefferson's democratic structures and Henry's peppery populism. His "faith in the popular voice," says Beeman, ensures that Henry's ideas will continue to be an influence on the future direction of American politics.

### *The Hidden Deficit*

"How the Government Cooks the Books" by Phillip Longman, in *The Washington Monthly* (July-Aug. 1987), 1711 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

The federal budget deficit, which has risen from \$78.9 billion in fiscal year 1981 to \$220.7 billion in fiscal year 1986, is a source of constant political controversy. According to Longman, research consultant at Americans for Generational Equity, budget deficits are much higher than official government statistics indicate. The official budget deficit figure, he argues, "includes only a fraction of our actual debt."

The federal government currently frames its budget according to "cash-flow accounting," subtracting the amount spent each year from the amount of money taken in. Yet such accounting methods do not consider debts to be paid over a long period of time. For example, liabilities due under the federal government's 38 different retirement programs—including at least \$444.3 billion in military pensions and \$537 billion in civil service pensions—are not considered part of the budget deficit.

Federal insurance programs also involve "off-budget" losses, because the federal government "doesn't charge high enough premiums to cover the vast risks it has assumed," resulting in "unfunded liabilities," which will have to be paid with federal funds. These liabilities grow as federal insurance programs increase; for example, Maritime Administration payments to failed businesses have risen from less than \$100 million in 1984 to \$1.4 billion in 1986. The Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, which insures private pension plans, currently has deficits of \$2.4 billion. The Office of Management and Budget estimates that total government liabilities exceed \$3 trillion.

State and local governments also face hidden deficits. Robert Inman of the National Bureau for Economic Research determined that unfunded liabilities of state teachers' pensions amounted to more than \$400 billion in 1980, a 250 percent increase since 1970. Even small states can amass large pension liabilities; West Virginia currently has \$1.5 billion in teachers' pensions, which it cannot pay.

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Longman recommends that the federal government shift to "accrual accounting," which would count insurance programs and pensions as part of the deficit. This change would cause sharp increases in the deficit; for example, according to a study by the accounting firm Arthur Andersen & Co., accrual accounting would have caused the fiscal year 1984 federal deficit to increase from \$185.3 billion to \$333.4 billion.

While accrual accounting has its flaws, Longman says, more realistic deficit figures would provoke a "new budget debate" about the "choices and sacrifices that we, as a society, have to make."

### *Liberty's Story*

"The Idea of Liberty and the Dream of Liberation" by Kenneth Minogue, in *Encounter* (July-Aug. 1987), 44 Great Windmill St., London W1V 7PA, United Kingdom.

In recent years, argues Minogue, a political scientist at the London School of Economics, intellectuals have increasingly used "prison theories" to describe political life in Western democracies. Citizens, they argue, are "imprisoned" (by race, gender, tradition) and must be "liberated" from these burdens. In Minogue's view, "prison theories" range from the belief that scientific objectivity is impossible to the view that "something called 'society' defines and type-casts us for our roles in life."

Such ideas, however, are not new. They have been part of Western thought since classical times.

In *The Republic*, Plato (428-348 B.C.) used a parable to describe political life. Consider a group of prisoners trapped in a cave. Over time, the prisoners mistake the shadows on the walls of the cave for reality. If a prisoner, Plato said, was then "hauled . . . into the sunlight, would he not suffer pain and vexation at such treatment?"

The prisoners can only discover freedom by being forced away from the comforts of the cave. As a result of Plato's teachings, Minogue argues, classical philosophers routinely considered life in the *polis* to be "merely a prison-without-walls."

The thinkers who revived classical learning still used Plato's analogies. For example, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) based his "practical realism" on the principle that the Platonic cave accurately describes political life. Karl Marx (1818-1883) composed dozens of works that treated the "history of the modern world" as a "prison-nightmare."

According to Minogue, prison-theories of politics merely cheapen and flatten life. Moreover, prison theorists ignore the ways by which one's political views can be used as a tool to critique—and understand—the views of others. For the ideal political world is not a bland "sunlight" made up of people without belief, but of creatures who exercise their limitations in a world offering access to "more universal points of view."

True liberty, Minogue concludes, cannot be acquired by Platonic means. Rather than being "liberated" by others, the taste for liberty is acquired over the centuries, as independent people freely abandon servility. "There are no 'birthpangs,'" he states, "no 'struggles,' and no 'revolution' by which liberty can be acquired."

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*NATO's Problem*

"Europe's Security Dilemmas" by Christoph Bertram, in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1987), 58 East 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's recent arms control overtures have hurt the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) by creating friction among the 16 member nations. The chief issue: Does NATO still face a major Soviet threat in Europe?

Bertram, diplomatic correspondent for West Germany's *Die Zeit*, argues that NATO should by no means ease up, since "it is precisely because of a heavy [NATO] investment in military strength that Europe enjoys considerable stability." Any unilateral lowering of NATO's military guard would "undermine that stability." Even a serious détente initiative by the Kremlin could end up strengthening the USSR's presence in Europe—especially if Moscow's new *glasnost* (openness) breeds trouble in the Eastern bloc, inviting a Soviet military crackdown.

Alliance leaders should not forget Europe's need for a nuclear deterrent, says Bertram. NATO might even consider deploying a force of U.S. sea-launched cruise missiles (e.g., 200 Tomahawks). During the coming decade, he adds, NATO may face "severe manpower reductions" in its conventional forces. With new curbs on the Pentagon budget, U.S. manpower will be the first item to suffer. Moreover, West Germany's *Bundeswehr* may shrink by as much as 10 percent during the next seven years, owing to a "decline in available conscripts."

"There cannot be a non-nuclear NATO doctrine," Bertram concludes. "There can be no notion of limiting the risks of war to Europe, and no alternative, in terms of deterrence, to U.S. nuclear weapons dedicated to the European theater."

Why? Even a more favorable balance in conventional weapons would not rule out a Soviet attack. "As history has repeatedly shown, resourceful attackers can be weaker than defenders and still succeed."

*Backward Dominoes?*

"Losing and Winning: Korea and Vietnam as Success Stories" by Douglas Pike and Benjamin Ward, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 1987), 1800 K St. N.W., Ste. 400, Washington, D.C. 20006.

Many historians regard the Korean and Vietnam wars as U.S. military blunders. Pike, director of the Indochina Studies Project, and Ward, an economist, both at the University of California, Berkeley, disagree. They argue that the two wars were "twin U.S. successes."

The images of the fall of Saigon and of U.S. forces retreating from northwestern Korea, they note, "are not the stuff of which victory is made." Yet consider the circumstances under which the United States intervened in both wars: fighting was already under way, and the U.S. allies were losing. The main objective: to contain a looming communist

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threat. Pike and Ward believe that the level of involvement Washington chose, that of a limited war, was a good one. The alternatives, either to "win" the wars (and occupy both countries) or not to intervene at all (and abandon Asia to the communists), would have been worse.

If the United States had won decisively in Korea, the authors suggest, a noncommunist Korean regime would have faced China and the Soviet Union, no doubt requiring U.S. troops for security. "One could easily envision a U.S. force as large as half the size of the present European forces" to perform that task. China and the Soviet Union might have used the border as an arena for their rivalry.

Winning in Indochina would have meant occupying North Vietnam. Yet "given the terrain and the non-nuclear limitation," Pike and Ward contend, "there is no plausible way U.S. and South Vietnamese forces could have induced the North Vietnamese to halt their efforts to take over the south in the name of unification." Guerrilla warfare "might have continued almost indefinitely." And Washington would have acquired yet another expensive border to defend.

If Washington had not intervened, the authors add, China might have seen "an invitation to tidy things up in Taiwan or even Hong Kong." South Korea would not have enjoyed its economic boom. Japanese industry might not have blossomed. Unchastened, Vietnamese communists would have installed stronger allies in Cambodia and Laos, and aided Thai insurgents,



*Loretta Swit, Gary Burghoff, and Alan Alda in a scene from "M\*A\*S\*H." The durable television series, produced between 1972 and 1983, was an attack on the Vietnam War masquerading as a comedy set during the Korean War.*

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with "grim implications" for Singapore and Malaysia.

Limited U.S. intervention in Asian wars, Pike and Ward conclude, brought stability to noncommunist governments. As Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew once remarked: "The dominoes did fall in Southeast Asia after the end of the Vietnam War; they fell backwards."

### *Missile Defense*

"Why Are The Soviets Against Missile Defense—Or Are They?" by Anthony Carl Holm, in *Naval War College Review* (Summer 1987), The Naval War College, Newport, R.I. 02841.

The rhetoric surrounding President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) suggests that the Soviet Union is opposed to antimissile defenses. In fact, notes Holm, an American Political Science Association graduate fellow, both sides have long pursued some form of ballistic missile defense (BMD). As early as 1945, Washington considered BMD, though nearly 10 years passed before development efforts commenced.

"The Soviet Union," says Holm, "attempted to counter U.S. strategic weapons policy by creating an elaborate air defense system in the early 1950s." The Soviets continued BMD research and development throughout the late 1950s, while the Eisenhower administration, mistakenly perceiving a "missile gap" with the USSR, embarked on a massive arms buildup. In 1961, the U.S. had 13 times as many intercontinental ballistic missiles and 14 times as many deliverable nuclear warheads as the USSR.

Following Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson proposed a U.S.-Soviet nuclear weapons "freeze"; Moscow declined, instead increasing the pace of BMD research. That same month, Soviet Major General Nikolai Talenskii outlined Moscow's BMD policy (the "Talenskii Doctrine"), noting that BMD was strictly "defensive," and, in concert with offensive weapons, would enhance "deterrence."

Washington was "lukewarm" on BMD, says Holm, until Moscow started to deploy an antiballistic missile (ABM) system in 1964—its Galosh missiles, "Hen House" early warning radar, and "Dog House" battle management radar. Soon the U.S. Army moved ahead on a phased-array radar, and, by June 1966, completed a prototype battle management radar system to guide Sprint and Zeus missile interceptors.

In November 1969, the two nations began arms control negotiations. The Soviets "aimed at using the ABM Treaty and the attitudes of the détente era to continue BMD research and development and maintain Galosh," observes Holm, "while the United States restrained its ABM deployments." Washington wanted to trim its missile budget, and ABM was not popular in Congress. Ultimately, a Soviet-American ABM Treaty was ratified in May 1972.

Since then, occasional talk of "limited" nuclear conflicts has increased the appeal of BMD to both sides, says Holm. Even a small BMD system could "prevent or neutralize" a limited nuclear attack. Moreover, such systems could "help protect the United States and the Soviet Union from

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accidental, unauthorized, third country or terrorist attacks." But the primary reason for Washington's pursuit of its Strategic Defense Initiative, says Holm, is "to achieve technological parity [with the Soviets] in BMD weapons." The arms negotiators in Geneva know that SDI threatens an area where "the Soviet advantage was clear-cut."

### *The Case for Public Archives*

"Expanding the Data Base" by John Lewis Gaddis, in *International Security* (Summer 1987), Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Political leaders, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger once said, rarely "gain in profundity while they gain experience." Rather, he added, the convictions formed prior to entering public service are "the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office."

Gaddis, a historian at Ohio University, finds that situation unfortunate. National security matters are too important to have "so little communication taking place between those who devote their careers to studying them and those who temporarily have the constitutional responsibility for actually dealing with them."

Politicians, notes Gaddis, are too busy to read academic journals, especially since political scientists tend to write in "incomprehensible dialects." Straining to make their studies "scientific," they often describe world events in inexact, jargon-laden prose. On the other hand, many historians—"hunters and gatherers" of facts—end up "collecting pebbles on the beach, and arranging them in patterns that may delight the eye but that rarely stimulate the brain."

Political scientists, historians, and policymakers, Gaddis argues, should take greater advantage of the nation's archives. Such records make possible very detailed analyses of recent American history. For instance, owing to archival research, historians now believe that all governments tend to draw back from considering the use of nuclear weapons in limited wars—such as in Korea or Vietnam—fearing that a military failure would undermine the future credibility of the nuclear deterrent. And contrary to popular opinion, no U.S. administration during the early Cold War years actually believed there was an "international communist monolith."

"John Foster Dulles himself," says Gaddis, "not only differentiated between varieties of communism abroad but, as early as 1953, was devising sophisticated strategies for promoting conflicts between them."

Gaddis says Washington should set up a computerized archival data base. Some National Security Council and State Department records, documents pertaining to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War, and declassified papers from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Central Intelligence Agency, are open to the public, but not always easily accessible.

The notion of a computerized archive is not new, Gaddis notes. More than a dozen U.S. allies—including Great Britain, Australia, France, Japan, the Netherlands, and West Germany—already keep open files. He chides historians and political scientists for not making better use of the existing materials to inject "new ideas" into the field of security studies.

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*Phantom Crisis*

"What Oil Crisis?" by Richard J. Myers, in *The American Spectator* (June 1987), P.O. Box 10448, Arlington, Va. 22210.

Many energy analysts have warned in recent months that another oil crisis, along the lines of those which stalled the U.S. economy (among others) in 1973 and 1979, might well occur. In March 1987, the Department of Energy issued a report arguing that America's increasing dependence on oil imports means that a resurgent Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) can force petroleum prices to soar in the future. Energy Secretary John Herrington warns that rising oil imports "have serious implications for national security."

Myers, former editor of *Energy Daily*, says that the "doomsday rhetoric" of Herrington and other authorities is unwarranted. The United States "is not likely to face a 1970s-style energy crisis again."

The nation is much better prepared to face a future oil embargo, Myers says, for the following reasons:

- The Strategic Petroleum Reserve, established in 1977, now contains 530 million barrels of oil, or more than 100 days' worth of imports.

- Major oil users are increasingly capable of switching from oil to natural gas on short notice. As a result of the partial decontrol of natural



*Some history that won't repeat? California motorists lining up for gasoline on the first day of the state's "odd-even" fuel rationing plan in 1979.*

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gas prices in 1978, Myers notes, "the gas surplus soared to about 4.5 trillion cubic feet in 1983 . . . and stands at about three trillion cubic feet even today." According to the American Gas Association, between 1.2 and 2.5 trillion cubic feet of additional natural gas (equivalent in energy to 214 million barrels of oil) could be brought into production within a year.

- Thanks to energy conservation, growth in demand for all fuels has declined. Expansion in electricity use has dropped from an average of seven percent a year during the early 1970s to two percent a year today.

- While 150,000 jobs in the oil and gas industry were lost last year (30 percent of the total), this simply reduces oil industry payrolls to levels in effect before the price hikes of 1979. Moreover, Myers argues, at least 2.4 million new nonagricultural jobs were created in fiscal year 1986, due in part to "the salutary effect of low oil prices on the economy."

Myers concludes that proposed measures such as oil import fees are solutions to a problem that does not exist. The nation, he says, "does not face an imminent energy crisis or a threat to its security."

### *High-Tech Steel*

"Can Advanced Technology Save the U.S. Steel Industry?" by Julian Szekely, in *Scientific American* (July 1987), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Steel is one of the strongest materials that man can make. But will the U.S. steel *industry* ever again be as sturdy as the product it turns out?

Szekely, who teaches materials engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has his doubts.

Since 1982, he notes, U.S. steel manufacturers have sustained losses totaling \$6 billion; the number of steel workers has fallen from 500,000 in 1975 to fewer than 200,000 today. "Poor management, self-serving labor unions, outdated technology, competition from overseas and the replacement of steel by materials such as aluminum and fiber-reinforced plastics" have all been cited as causes for U.S. industry's decline—although, Szekely adds, Japanese and Western European producers have experienced many of the same drawbacks and difficulties. In any case, the slide seems fated to continue. Between 1985 and 1990, U.S. steel production is expected to decline by three percent, while that of developing countries where labor costs are low (e.g., Korea and Taiwan) is predicted to increase by 20 percent.

Szekely argues that if the American steel industry is to survive, it must soon start to employ new technologies. Large "integrated" mills, which process iron ore into the metal in great quantity—and account for roughly 70 percent of all U.S. ordinary grade steelmaking—should adopt the less energy- and labor-intensive method of "direct ironmaking," which bypasses conventional blast furnaces and cokemaking facilities. Minimills, which convert scrap into a variety of low-quality products (roughly 25 percent of U.S. steel production), can benefit from such new processes as "direct casting"—turning molten steel straight into thin sheets, say, rather than first making 50- to 100-ton ingots that are later rolled out.

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Szekely calculates that the cost savings from such innovations could run as high as 40 percent.

The author cites other "high-tech" methods for making steel with special properties, methods that could give U.S. producers a needed edge in world markets: "near net shape casting" (spray-coating a solid base with molten steel) and "rheocasting" (shaping semi-molten steel). "Laser glazing," "plasma spraying," and "magnetron sputtering" are also new ways to improve the quality of steel surfaces.

"To insure itself a share of the future world steel market," Szekely concludes, "the U.S. steel industry will have to develop radically new methods for making products that are not yet widely available." Otherwise, the big integrated producers, with their "large, inflexible operations," are not likely to survive beyond the 20th century.

### *Supply-Side Boon*

"All Supply-Siders Now?" by Gordon Jackson, in *Policy Review* (Summer 1987), 214 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Supply-side economics—fiscal policies that aim to stimulate production rather than consumption—has not captured as much attention in recent months as it did during the first half of the Reagan presidency.

Yet, argues Jackson, managing editor of *Policy Review*, Americans should not forget that the fruits of a strong economy, which they enjoy today, were borne of Reagan's early supply-side policies.

When President Jimmy Carter—the last Keynesian (i.e. consumption-oriented) president—left the White House in 1980, notes Jackson, the U.S. economy was a mess. The inflation rate was 12.5 percent; the prime interest rate, 21 percent; the unemployment rate, roughly eight percent; the annual growth rate for industrial production, 1.4 percent.

Today, that picture is much improved. The inflation rate has dropped to about four percent. The prime interest rate stands at a mere 8.25 percent. Not only has the unemployment rate fallen to 6.3 percent, but 61.6 percent of the civilian population is working—an all-time high. And industrial growth proceeds at a rate of 3.8 percent annually.

Although several policy measures—e.g., widespread business deregulation as well as the Federal Reserve Board's stringent monetarism—have aided and abetted "America's economic rejuvenation," Jackson argues that cutting taxes was the key factor. In 1988, the top marginal tax rate for most individuals will be 28 percent, down from 70 percent in 1980. While Keynesian skeptics often argue that tax cuts reduce tax revenues, Jackson observes that the evidence suggests otherwise. In 1978, Congress lowered the capital gains tax rate from 49 percent to 20 percent; between 1978 and 1985, capital gains tax revenues rose by 175 percent.

Much criticism of supply-side theory is no longer valid, Jackson adds. The Reagan tax cuts have not worked to give the rich a break: Of the \$44.6 billion increase in federal tax revenues between 1981 and 1985, 86 percent was paid by those earning more than \$100,000 per year. As to the charge that tax cuts have deepened the annual federal budget deficit

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(which stood at \$141.7 billion as of August 1987), Jackson retorts that the red ink is "a spending problem, not a revenue problem." Between 1981 and 1986, national revenues rose by 11 percent—yet federal spending increased by 24 percent.

Yet, Jackson asks, "has it become the conventional wisdom that low taxes are the key to economic vitality?" His unhappy conclusion: Almost certainly not. "The forces of statism and zero-sum thinking gather daily like dark clouds over Washington, and we may well be in for a downpour of new taxes as soon as Reagan leaves office."

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### *Defining Old Age*

"How Old is 'Old Age?'" by Peter Uhlenberg, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1987), 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

The 65th birthday is, for most Americans, the threshold where middle age ends and old age begins. Medicare and Social Security begin paying full benefits at age 65, and statisticians routinely define "older Americans" as people over that age.

"Why does one's relationship to an employer and to the welfare state tend to change around age 65?" asks Uhlenberg, associate professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The answer is that New Deal social planners "simply selected a chronological age" as a dividing line for determining who received federal old age benefits, including Social Security. The age they selected, 65, gradually became, through force of custom and law, the "semi-official" definition of old age.

But the nation's demography has changed during the 52 years since the Social Security Act first mandated federal benefits for those over 65. The proportion of Americans who are 65 years and older has risen from 6.8 percent in 1940 to 12 percent in 1984. As the ranks of older citizens drawing retirement checks grow, so does the burden on younger Americans whose payroll taxes finance the program. Currently 30 percent (or \$318 billion) of the federal budget goes to programs benefiting the elderly; if Social Security were to remain unchanged, says Uhlenberg, 60 percent of the federal budget would be spent on the elderly by 2030.

The 65th birthday, Uhlenberg argues, is "an obsolete standard" for determining old age. Indeed, Congress in 1983 acted to raise (over the next 40 years) to 67 the age at which full Social Security benefits begin, and to encourage people to work as late as 70, now the earliest mandatory retirement age for federal employees and most private-industry workers. Retirement at 65 deprives many of the opportunity to remain productive. Moreover, while the proportion of old people who are poor fell from 25 percent in 1970 to 12 percent in 1984, that of children who are poor rose from 14 percent to 20 percent. Raising the age when Social Security benefits begin could free scarce funds to aid needy children.

Uhlenberg suggests that old age should "become a variable determined by future demographic trends." Calculated as the last one-fourth of

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an average adult life, beginning at age 20, for example, old age could, by 2030, begin officially between the ages of 72 and 75. Such a change, he argues, would reduce federal spending but still allow Americans many years in the "privileged status" of old age.

### *Forgetting the Past*

"Tot Sociology: Or What Happened to History in the Grade Schools" by Diane Ravitch, in *The American Scholar* (Summer 1987), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

History is not taught in most of America's public elementary schools. Children in first through third grades learn about their schools, families, and communities; they do not study the past.

Why has social studies largely replaced history in the primary grades? The answer, says Ravitch, a historian and educator at Teachers College, Columbia University, lies in debates about elementary education conducted more than 50 years ago.

Before the 1930s, most elementary school students studied the past by reading stories about "the heroes of legend and history," from Moses and Ulysses to Peter the Great and Florence Nightingale. These stories were not only full of "romance and adventure," they also prepared students for more serious studies of history and literature in their later years.

Progressive educational reformers, led by philosopher John Dewey,



*The way it was in American classrooms: Elementary school students in Washington, D.C., circa 1899, being taught about the arrival of the Pilgrims.*

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attacked these traditional methods of introducing history to elementary school pupils, arguing that students should study subjects more "relevant" to their lives. For example, Paul Hanna, assigned by the state of Virginia to prepare a new social studies curriculum, said that even though students were "happy and joyful" when they pretended to be knights or Romans, it was more important to have them study "expanding environments," beginning with home and school in first grade and concluding in fourth grade with world exploration and settlement.

In 1934, the American Historical Association issued a report which endorsed the "expanding environments" curriculum. The endorsement helped ensure its quick acceptance by schools across America. Today, observes Ravitch, this approach to teaching social studies has become "the universal curriculum of the elementary school."

Yet there is little evidence that teaching social studies instead of history from kindergarten through the third grade is beneficial to students. In lieu of evidence, curriculum developers have provided a series of "rationalizations," which have never been tested.

Ravitch calls for restoring history to its place in the primary grades. By studying myths and heroes at an early age, she says, students acquire a "cultural literacy" that is lost to those who are exposed only to social studies from "basal readers." "The teachers who bring 'real books' into the classrooms," she says, "should be typical, not mavericks."

### *Groups Reexamined*

"The Wages of Discrimination" by William R. Beer, in *Public Opinion* (July-Aug. 1987), 1150  
17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

In contemporary America, does discrimination against blacks and women as *groups* still exist? Beer, a Brooklyn College sociologist, thinks not.

While it is true that U.S. blacks and women do, on average, earn less than their white male counterparts, that fact is only part of the story, Beer contends. Black and female workers in the United States tend to be younger and have less education, relative to their white male colleagues. Women still tend to put motherhood ahead of career advancement, while blacks, as a group, suffer from a higher-than-average rate of high school dropout—a significant factor in determining wages. The "collapse" of black families has also hindered their earning potential. "A household headed by an unmarried female is bound to be poorer," Beer argues, "not just because there is only one wage earner, but because the mother often stops her schooling in order to take care of her children."

Yet, when such factors are statistically adjusted, Beer says, "there is little difference between comparable black and white households."

Women already hold a "disproportionately large share of professional jobs," while blacks have made substantial headway, considering the low number of black college graduates in the past, Beer notes. In 1985, women accounted for 44.1 percent of the employed U.S. population, but held 49.1 percent of professional positions. Black Americans, who represent 9.8 percent of those employed, make up 6.3 percent of U.S. professionals. Beer adds that the experiences of black West Indians—mostly from Trinidad,

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Jamaica, and Barbados—in the United States serve as evidence against the theory that systematic racial discrimination has blocked black upward mobility. In 1969, for instance, 15.2 percent of West Indians were in the professions, compared to a 14 percent national average for all Americans. Today, such black families earn almost as much as the average American family—\$34,924 per year—and 37 percent more than does the average U.S. black family (\$22,778).

Furthermore, several opinion surveys show that a majority of U.S. blacks say they have not suffered from racial discrimination in the education, job, or housing markets; nor, according to these surveys, have a majority of women suffered from sex discrimination in the office.

“Any policy that aims at treating [any] Americans as group victims of discrimination, rather than as individuals,” Beer concludes, “is based on sociologically untenable ground.”

### *Reckoning Poverty*

“Mismeasuring Poverty and Progress” by John C. Weicher, in *The Cato Journal* (Winter 1987), 224 Second St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

Measuring the U.S. poverty rate is no easy task.

In 1969, Washington chose to gauge the official poverty line in terms of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rather than the cost of food, as it had been doing since 1965. That decision, argues Weicher, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, was a “mistake” that “has colored and distorted perceptions of the poverty problem.”

For measuring poverty, says Weicher, the CPI places too much emphasis on the cost of buying a home—and not enough on the cost of living in one. In any year, only three percent of U.S. households purchase a dwelling; the costs that they confront have little relation to those faced by Americans who already own homes (80 percent of U.S. households), or who rent. In addition, inflation strongly influences housing prices, further accentuating what Weicher calls “a gross distortion of actual behavior” in the CPI tabulations. Not until 1983 did the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics alter the CPI to more accurately reflect housing costs, using instead a “rental equivalence” index.

As a result of CPI-borne distortions, Weicher contends, the number of poor people and the poverty rate in the United States have been overstated, and continue to be. In 1982, for example, the official poverty rate was 15 percent, while the rate as adjusted by Weicher, using the post-1983 CPI, was 13.2 percent. That same year, poor Americans numbered “officially” 34.4 million; the adjusted number is 30.3 million.

Recalculating the poverty line also alters the pattern of U.S. poverty. For example, the official poverty rate reached its lowest level in 1973. Weicher’s adjusted rate bottomed out in 1978. Such adjustments accentuate the “feminization” of poverty, raising the proportion of female-headed poor households from 48.1 percent to 49.8 percent in 1984. Geographically, the retabulation lessens the increase in the urban poor: officially, the number rose from 6.0 to 6.7 million between 1970 and 1980; with the adjustment, the number climbed only from 5.7 to 5.8 million.

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Weicher believes that reviewing U.S. progress during the 1970s, in terms of adjusted poverty rates, could have a great impact on future policy decisions. For example, use of the adjusted CPI could have saved the federal government \$100 billion in Social Security spending during the past decade, and reduced the national debt by four percent.

If the old poverty figures were recast, says Weicher, "We would feel a little better about our progress, our economy, and our society."

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### *Campaign Spending*

"Campaign Money and the Press: Three Soundings" by Frank J. Sorauf, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Spring 1987), 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-7885.

Is something amiss in media coverage of political campaign financing?

Sorauf, a political scientist at the University of Minnesota, argues that stories about campaign funding reveal a "progressive" slant, owing to "structural biases" of the U.S. media and the liberal "political assumptions" of reporters, editors, and writers. Generally anti-Big Business, anti-political machine, many U.S. journalists act as if they were "the grandchildren of the Progressive muckrakers," finding irksome a campaign finance system that permits political action committees (PACs) to influence elections through dollars.

As examples, Sorauf cites three campaign-finance "events" covered by the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Post*.

Reporting on the Supreme Court's decision in March 1985 to uphold the unconstitutionality of limits on presidential campaign spending, the newspapers gave the story front-page play. "But why?" asks Sorauf. Because the decision signaled "an opportunity lost to curb campaign spending? Or because it vibrated with popular fears about money in politics?" The media played up PAC spending, de-emphasized non-PAC spending, and magnified the decision's scope and "its permissive consequences."

In March 1985, the lobby Common Cause reported the 1984 congressional campaign spending totals. The coverage focused mostly on big dollar figures. But, as Sorauf notes, the media largely ignored the fact that the rates of growth in campaign spending had leveled off; total spending for House seats fell from \$205.4 million in 1982 to \$205.1 million in 1984. Considering the high rates of spending increases between 1976 and 1982—194 percent by congressional candidates—Sorauf finds the downturn very significant. Yet no news organization treated it as such.

A third episode: Between 1974 and 1984, the number of PACs registered with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) grew steadily, from 608 to 4,009. Yet the FEC's announcements, in 1985 and early 1986, that the number of PACs had declined for the first time (to 3,992) attracted little attention. The *New York Times* dismissed the drop as a "seasonal blip." The rapid growth of PACs had been "big news," Sorauf observes.

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“Curiously, the end of that growth was not.”

“Information brokers”—e.g., Common Cause, the FEC—help shape the political news agenda, says Sorauf, as do various “expert” commentators: Thus newsmen tend to think money stories dull, “unless one finds knaves, buccaneering PACs, or lavish campaign spending in them.”

Moreover, says Sorauf, “stories about declining numbers of PACs or stabilizing spending levels . . . conflict with the fundamental understandings of the Progressive vision [and] with the long-term reality of the corrupting capacity of money in the hands of special interests.”

### *Sherman's Other War*

“The New Sherman Letters” by Joseph H. Ewing, in *American Heritage* (July-Aug. 1987), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

The American military's relations with the news media have often been strained. But recent confrontations between brass and press pale beside the battles that Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820–91) fought against journalists. Nowadays, senior commanders may chastise reporters. Sherman actually courtmartialled them.

War correspondents, Sherman complained, were “dirty newspaper scribblers who have the impudence of Satan.” “A cat in hell without claws,” wrote a rueful New York *Tribune* correspondent, “is nothing to a reporter in General Sherman's army.”



*“If my name must go to History,” Sherman wrote in 1864, the year his Union troops burned Atlanta and made their devastating march to the sea, “I prefer it should not [be] as the enemy to the South . . . but against mobs, vigilance committees, and all the other phases of sedition and anarchy which have threatened and still endanger the country which our children must inhabit.”*

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Ewing, a free-lance writer, inherited letters written by Sherman to the author's grandfather (who was Sherman's stepbrother) and great-grandfather. The letters trace Sherman's rising impatience with the press.

In October 1861, the New York *Tribune* printed the Union "order of battle," listing the strength and location of Sherman's forces. A year later, during the first battle of Vicksburg, Sherman's officers intercepted journalists' letters and refused to mail them. New York *Herald* reporter Thomas Knox then rewrote his account, charging that Sherman's actions were due to "insanity and inefficiency." "You are regarded as the enemy of our set," Knox told Sherman after his arrest for espionage. "We must in self-defense write you down."

Knox was tried by a military court, but found not guilty of espionage. This did not alter Sherman's low opinion of the press, however. Journalists, he wrote in February, 1863, "eat our provisions, they swell the crowd of hangers on . . . they publish without stint . . . accurate information which reaches the enemy with as much regularity as it does our People."

For the remainder of the war, Sherman threatened "instant death" to reporters he suspected of espionage. This, he wrote, made journalists "meek and humble."

Sherman continued to chastise the press after the war ended. Yet, in his memoirs, published in 1875, he concluded that "so greedy are the people at large for war news, that it is doubtful whether any army commander can exclude all reporters, without bringing down on himself a clamor that may imperil his own safety."

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### *Santayana's Detachment*

"George Santayana and the Consolations of Philosophy" by Joseph Epstein, in *The New Criterion* (June 1987), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

The 19th-century American philosopher Josiah Royce once remarked that philosophers should live like the rhinoceros, who travels as a herd of one. George Santayana (1863-1952) followed Royce's prescription, living his life as a wanderer. In his autobiography, Santayana called himself a *déraciné*, "a man who has been torn up by the roots, cannot be replanted and should never propagate his kind."

Epstein, a professor of English at Northwestern University, argues that the detachment Santayana felt toward the world is the key to understanding his philosophy. Santayana, Epstein writes, was born with detachment "the way other people are born with, say, large feet."

Santayana's sense of removal from the world certainly began early. Born in Spain and raised in the United States, Santayana "appears to have been a foreigner in every country in which he lived." For example, although Santayana taught in the philosophy department at Harvard for 23 years (where his students included T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, and Felix Frankfurter), he disliked the United States, which he saw as a nation that

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embraced the future while abandoning traditional virtues. Americans, Santayana wrote in a 1911 letter, are "intellectually emptier than the Sahara, where I understand the Arabs have some idea of God or of Fate." He abandoned Harvard and America for Europe soon after.

In his writings, Santayana distanced himself from other philosophers. American philosophy was, he wrote, "Protestant philosophy," too concerned with pragmatic problem-solving to bother with the permanent things. Santayana's book *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1916), Epstein writes, leaves the landscape of German philosophy like "Berlin in early 1946: scarcely any buildings are left standing." Only Lucretius, Spinoza, and the Greek philosophers escaped Santayana's criticism.

Santayana devoted his life to freeing himself from illusions about the world. He concluded that "survival is something impossible, but it is possible to have lived well and died well."

Santayana's stoicism lasted until his death. Two days before he succumbed to cancer, at age 88, his secretary asked Santayana if he was suffering. "Yes, my friend," he said. "But my anguish is entirely physical; there are no moral difficulties whatsoever." "Philosophy had been for him," Epstein concludes, "a consolation, but finally also life itself."

### *Benevolence*

"Benevolence: A Minor Virtue" by John Kekes,  
in *Social Philosophy and Policy* (Spring 1987),  
Bowling Green State Univ., Bowling Green,  
Ohio 43403.

In his first important work, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), the Scottish philosopher David Hume argued that benevolence was, at best, a restricted virtue. "The generosity of men is very limited," Hume wrote. "It seldom extends beyond their friends and family, or, at most, beyond their native country."

But should one ever be benevolent toward people one does not know? Kekes, a professor of philosophy and public policy at the State University of New York, Albany, argues that benevolence is no "moral master-motive." There is no good reason, he argues, "why we, as moral agents, should be benevolent toward the vast majority of mankind."

Kekes defines two types of benevolence. "Limited benevolence" is a drive to aid people whom one knows. "Generalized benevolence" extends benevolence beyond the range of personal contact to all human beings, loving "thy neighbor as thyself," as the Book of Matthew teaches.

In Kekes' view, "generalized benevolence" is mistaken. Benevolence should decrease as its potential objects become "more remote and impersonal," he argues. For one thing, charity may not be helpful when directed toward targets of which the benefactor has little knowledge. It is "less than useless," for example, for people to donate money for suffering people in distant lands when they do not know what caused the suffering or whether their aid will alter the conditions that produced the problem.

Generalized benevolence, Kekes writes, undermines "our primary moral obligations" toward family and friends. Benevolence is most useful when intimately directed toward those who are personally close; the more

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one's benevolence is directed toward humanity as a whole, the less one is able to extend that special form of aid which one friend can give another.

Kekes does not argue for ignoring those in need outside of one's inner circle of friends, but rather that one's aid should not be grounded merely on a vague and general desire to "do good." People may properly be moved to save starving children or innocents under torture, for example, out of their particular sense of justice or decency.

There are many motives for acting charitably toward strangers, Kekes concludes—duty, prudence, avoidance of guilt or shame. But relying purely on benevolence as the grounds for aiding others produces an "unpersuasive and indefensible morality."

*Protestant Ethics*

"Protestantism and Poverty" by Max L. Stackhouse, in *This World* (Spring 1987), 934 North Main St., Rockford, Ill. 61103.

What actions should Protestants take to aid the poor? This question has been intensely debated by clergy and laymen in recent years. Does the "Protestant ethic" mean that people can escape poverty only by their own unassisted efforts? Or should Protestants follow the path of "liberation theology," and strive to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor?

These questions, says Stackhouse, professor of Christian social ethics and stewardship at Andover Newton Theological School, are not new. They have been debated ever since the Reformation began more than four centuries ago.

Martin Luther (1483–1546) divided poor people into two classes. Those who became poor "by force of circumstances" (such as old age or illness) were worthy recipients of church aid. But Luther had little patience for those who freely chose a life of poverty. He barred his priests from begging (a centuries-old practice in the Catholic church) and taught that only hard work could create riches. "It is not fitting that one man should live in idleness on another's labor," Luther wrote.

Thomas Müntzer (1490–1525) argued that the direct experience of the Holy Spirit, felt most acutely by the suffering poor, was the essence of Christianity. Therefore, he wrote, these "fighters and heralds," blessed with the light of the Holy Spirit, should be "an armed community of prophets" and fight the godless. Müntzer was executed after a "Peasants Revolt" that he led against the German nobility was crushed.

Luther's intellectual heirs include John Calvin (1509–1564), who taught that the "blessing of the Lord is on the hands of him who works," and the 17th-century Puritans, who created "limited-liability" associations, the precursors of the modern corporation. Müntzer's spiritual descendants include the Pietists, whose belief in the blessedness of the poor led to the creation of dozens of schools and hospitals, and Georg Hegel (1770–1831), who used Müntzer's theology to create a "scientific" metaphysics which held that historical change began with spiritual awakening.

Stackhouse concludes with a hope that the heirs of Müntzer and Luther will fuse their thought into a new synthesis. Their inability to confront change, he warns, might even signal "the end of the Protestant Era."

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*Psychologists and other researchers have long been interested in the ways that hallucinogens alter mental processes. This drawing, made by a professional artist after an LSD high, illustrates how powerfully such drugs can affect one's sense of space and proportion.*

### **Hallucinations**

"How Hallucinogenic Drugs Work" by Barry L. Jacobs, in *American Scientist* (July-Aug. 1987), 345 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn. 06511.

"Turn on, tune in, drop out." That was the motto of one-time Harvard lecturer (and former hippie) Timothy Leary, who advocated the use of hallucinogenic drugs (e.g., LSD) during the 1960s to "expand" the mind.

Twenty years ago, use of such drugs was an indication of counterculture involvement; Washington still classifies most hallucinogens as Schedule I substances—that is, the most hazardous ones. Yet, as Jacobs, a Princeton neuroscientist, observes, research into the biochemical and behavioral effects of hallucinogens on animals and humans has produced a wealth of information about the most subtle operations of the human brain.

Jacobs reports, among other things, that scientists have located the specific "site of action" in the brain for hallucinogens: a particular group of brain cell "receptors" that respond to the neurotransmitter serotonin, one of many chemicals involved in the transmission of brain cell signals. Most of these "serotonergic" neurons originate in the brain stem—a "primitive" area known to control basic bodily functions, such as breathing—but then spread throughout the brain. When a hallucinogen, such as LSD, DOM, DMT, psilocin, or mescaline, permeates the brain stem, it stimulates the serotonin receptors and triggers a cascade of nerve impulses that produce intense, dreamlike sensations.

What continues to elude researchers, Jacobs adds, is the exact *mecha-*

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*nism* by which a drug user experiences a hallucination. In some brain areas, the hallucinogen appears to inhibit nerve signals; in others, it unleashes a flood of them. The brain itself is an extraordinary tangle of neurons and chemical signals, and a reaction in one locality can set off multiple reactions throughout the brain mass—which is exactly why small amounts of most hallucinogens (often a few micrograms) can induce such powerful experiences. Also puzzling: The serotonin receptor sites seem to play a role in producing anxiety and migraine headaches.

A “critical” experiment remains to be done, says Jacobs, one that will help clarify how hallucinogens act on the brain. That experiment would involve giving human subjects drugs that block serotonin’s actions at the special receptor sites, and then noting whether the subjects are still able to hallucinate when hallucinogens are administered.

But owing to federal restrictions on drug experiments, the author observes, such a test is a long way off.

*America’s Rhinos*

“The Rise and Fall of the American Rhino” by Donald R. Prothero, in *Natural History* (Aug. 1987), Central Park West at 79th St., New York, N.Y. 10024.

Lumbering along on African or Asian plains, rhinoceroses are an impressive sight. With one grand horn (in some cases, two) planted firmly on their snouts, the thick-skinned, hairless mammals stand up to six feet tall and 14 feet long, and weigh as much as five tons.

They are loners, tending toward grasslands, savannas, or marshes. They have bad eyesight, a good sense of smell, and a mean temper. Most noticeably, they have the distinct look of a tropical animal.

But Prothero, a geologist at Occidental College, notes that until five million years ago, the grunting “odd-toed” beasts (which are surprisingly agile; they can run as fast as 30 miles per hour) were not exclusively a tropical oddity. They roamed North America in great numbers and in great generic variety, ranging from “sheep-sized runners to hippo-like grazers.” In fact, the author observes, *Rhinoceros occidentalis* (Western rhinoceros) was “the commonest large herbivore on this continent for most of the last 50 million years.”

“Nearly every continental ecosystem has a large mammalian herbivore that can eat the highest-growing, toughest vegetation and is relatively protected from predation by its size,” says Prothero. Early rhino thrived in Eurasia and North America during the middle Eocene era, some 50 million years ago. The world was warmer then. There were no polar ice caps; the climate of North America was so temperate that alligators and semitropical plants flourished in Alaska. At that time, *hyrachyus*, a primitive, horse-like rhino dominated the landscape. It gave rise to three major generic lines: the amynodont (a stocky river dweller), the hyracodont (the long-limbed “running” rhino), and the primitive rhinocerotid (the ancestor of the modern rhino).

However, a worldwide cooling during the Oligocene era, some 30 million years ago, altered North America’s vegetation. The amynodonts and

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hyracodonts could not adapt, and died off. (In Eurasia, the climate change encouraged evolution, briefly, of a "gigantic" rhino—the largest land mammal ever to live—which, weighing 25 tons, could "browse, giraffelike, in the tops of trees twenty-five feet high.")

For 25 million years, rhinos in North America struggled to survive. A "wave of immigrations" from Eurasia across the Bering Strait—which included the sheep-sized *menoceras*, the hippo-like *teleoceratines*, and the hornless *aceratherines*—helped keep the rhinos going. But by the end of the Miocene era, about five million years ago, the Ice Age finally did in North America's rhinos.

In Africa and Eurasia, five species of rhino did manage to survive. Yet today, says Prothero, their numbers are dwindling, as poachers push them inexorably toward extinction.

"Perhaps by the end of the century," Prothero concludes, "a few horns ground down as supposed medicines in the Orient or carved up into dagger handles for status-conscious Yemenite men will be all that is left of this amazing [rhino] family."

### Analyzing Chaos

"The Coming of Chaos" by Robert Kanigel, in *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (June 1987), 34th and Charles Sts., Baltimore, Md. 21218.

The ups and downs of the stock market, the turbulence of a waterfall, the sudden changes of weather, the rise and fall of an animal population—all of these phenomena have defied prediction. Seeming to follow no regular pattern, they are deemed "chaotic."

But what is chaos? The dictionary defines it as "a state of things in which chance is supreme." Kanigel, author of *Apprentice to Genius: The Making of a Scientific Dynasty*, argues that there may not be such a thing as chance. As the latest discoveries in the new mathematical field of "chaos theory" demonstrate, "random" patterns are only those that do not fit standard linear models. However, they also have a unique and predictable logic of their own.

"Behind much of what passes in nature for formlessness, anarchy, or mere chance resides order—an order hard to discern," Kanigel says.

To reveal the elusive patterns in erratic systems, chaos theorists collect reams of data (such as light reflections off a waterfall's surface) and then feed it into a computer. The data is manipulated, reorganized, and "plugged" into a computer graphics program, where a pattern ("feathery, swirling") often will emerge. Some patterns arise with such regularity that they bear the name of the scientists who first noted their commonality: the Lorenz "mask," the Birkhoff "bagel," the Rössler "funnel."

Applications of the new mathematics are still in the early stages, Kanigel notes. Researchers are searching for hidden patterns in heartbeats and brain waves, in the tumbling of the planet Saturn's moons, and in rates of military arms buildup among nations. Boeing has used chaos models to streamline the tail section of its 767 jetliner. The U.S. Navy is employing chaos models to reduce drag on its warships.

The limits of chaos theory are still unknown. "Can such seemingly

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intractable social problems as crime, poverty, and war be interpreted as the natural consequence of chaotic systems?" the author asks. "Could an understanding of dreams benefit from insights granted by chaos theory?"

What is clear, though, is that chaos theory has the potential to help clarify the philosophical notions of "free will" and "determinism"—or whether individuals are locked into the chaotic "patterns" of history.

"The future is determined by the present," Kanigel concludes. "But tomorrow hangs on the knife edge of today, needing but the barest breath of free will or circumstance to direct it one way or the other."

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### *Trash To Ash*

"Burning Trash: How It Could Work" by Allen Hershkowitz, in *Technology Review* (July 1987), Mass. Institute of Technology, Building W59, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

The United States is running out of space for its trash. Each day, U.S. towns and cities generate 410,000 tons of solid waste. Each year, several major landfills are closed because they are full. Many dumps leach toxins into the groundwater, and only half of the nation's 9,244 municipal landfills have valid operating permits.

Hershkowitz, chairman of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Advisory Board on Operating Requirements for Municipal Solid Waste Incinerators, sees resource-recovery plants as a solution to the "garbage crisis." Such facilities "create steam that can be used to heat or cool buildings or to generate electricity."

Already in 40 U.S. states, some 70 resource-recovery plants are operating (or are about to start), 20 more are under construction, and 100 are being planned. They are not cheap: A small plant burning 50 tons of trash per day, such as the one in Batesville, Arkansas, can cost \$1.2 million; a 4,500-ton-per-day plant in Broward County, Florida, will cost \$570 million when completed. In New York City, the sanitation department estimates that to build eight waste-to-energy plants capable of incinerating 70 percent of the city's garbage will cost \$3 billion. Of course, in each case, selling the electricity generated (anywhere from 10 to 100 megawatts) offsets much of the capital investment and operating expense.

According to Hershkowitz, trash-burning generators have performed well in Norway, Sweden, West Germany, and Switzerland. The Japanese have combined waste-to-energy conversion with extensive recycling programs. In Machida City, for example, residents recycle roughly two-thirds of the city's waste—more than 95 percent of their newspapers, 50 percent of their glass bottles, and 70 percent of their steel and aluminum cans. In the United States, some 8,000 communities have recycling programs as well, although even the best ones—such as those in Davis, California, and Camden, New Jersey—reduce volumes of waste by less than one-third.

The greatest drawback to high-volume incineration, adds Hershkowitz,

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is the pollution that it produces. The plants tend to spew toxins (e.g., lead, dioxin, hydrogen chloride gas) into the air, especially when burning plastics and metals. Yet equipping incinerator flues with scrubbers, "baghouses" (fabric filter systems), and "electrostatic precipitators" (which capture metal particles from the smoke), as the Japanese have done, can cut the pollution by as much as 95 percent.

Hershkowitz has little doubt that a carefully regulated waste-to-energy effort could be a boon to a majority of U.S. communities. What is lacking today in the United States, he says, is not the necessary technology, but a commitment to a changeover in disposal systems.

### *Calculating Risks*

"Environmental Epidemiology: Separating Politics and Science" by Michael Gough, in *Issues In Science And Technology* (Summer 1987), The National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418.

Proving a "cause-and-effect" relationship between low-level exposure to a hazardous substance and adverse health effects is a difficult task.

Cancer and birth defects are common among human beings. Only 30 chemicals have been shown to cause cancer in humans. In fact, none of the agents classified as carcinogenic to humans by the World Health Organization have been shown to cause cancer at low levels of exposure.

This presents a problem for the courts, says Gough, project manager at Environ Corp., a Washington D.C.-based consulting firm. When individuals who have been exposed to a hazardous substance become ill or produce a child with birth defects, they often sue for damages. But in order to grant compensation, U.S. courts require "proof" that a given substance has directly harmed a person. When no proof exists, the courts turn to epidemiological studies to determine the likelihood that the person was injured by low-level exposure to the substance.

Yet such studies are often unreliable, Gough contends. One cannot always distinguish "exposed" and "nonexposed" individuals, or determine their degree of exposure. While many veterans of the Vietnam War have sought compensation from the Veterans Administration for "health effects" (e.g., cancer, nervous disorders) due to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange, no study so far has linked such exposure to any one disease. Two of Agent Orange's ingredients—dioxin and 2, 4, 5-T—do cause tumors and birth defects in animals. Yet in humans, epidemiological studies have related dioxin only to chloracne, a skin rash, and 2, 4, 5-T to soft tissue sarcomas and lymphomas. A study of the 1,200 Air Force participants in Operation Ranch Hand, who sprayed 90 percent of the Agent Orange used in Vietnam, found no significant evidence of adverse health effects due to Agent Orange exposure.

Although studies by the National Research Council of 46,000 veterans exposed to radiation during two atomic bomb tests in the 1950s turned up evidence of an above-average rate of leukemia, the increase in cancer levels was so small that the Office of Technology Assessment concluded that even a large-scale survey of all 220,000 atomic test veterans would not produce reliable results.

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"If we are to avoid spending increasing time and resources on futile searches for health effects from environmental exposures," Gough concludes, "we must realize when science cannot reveal all of the answers—and when the answer instead lies in the political sphere."

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*Benton's Politics*

"Thomas Hart Benton: A Politician in Art" by Elizabeth Broun, in *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* (Spring 1987), 16-00 Pollitt Dr., Fair Lawn, N.J. 07410.

Missouri-born Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) had a political heritage, being son of a congressman and grandnephew of one of the leading Democratic politicians of the 1850s. Broun, chief curator of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art, argues that Benton's many murals and illustrations were "the painterly equivalent of the country stump speeches that were a Benton family tradition."

Benton's interest in politics began after World War I, when he reacted against his art school training, which held that the only acceptable subjects to paint were "napkins and vegetables." *The American Historical Epic*



Palisades, one of 10 works in Benton's first important series, *The American Historical Epic*. Begun in 1919, it celebrated "people," not "great men."

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(1919–26) was a set of 10 murals, designed to be a “people’s history,” celebrating the deeds of ordinary men conquering nature.

Critics championed Benton’s first efforts, comparing him to Mexican Marxist muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. But Benton was no Marxist, as his next series of murals, *America Today* (1930), showed. These murals, Broun says, “appealed directly to the populace they portray rather than to those who sought to be the people’s saviors.” While Rivera’s murals from this period show heroic, larger-than-life laborers toiling over machinery, Benton’s murals portray a “patchwork of private interests”; burlesque queens, faith healers, and boxers jostle machines and stockbrokers.

In New York, where he taught painting, Benton’s radical friends (such as e. e. cummings and Lewis Mumford) accused him of being a vulgar fascist. Benton contended that Marxism was “a feudal hangover in the realm of thought which has no place” in the modern world. Disgusted by the bickering of New York intellectuals, he moved to Kansas City in 1935.

“I feel I belong all over my state,” Benton wrote in 1937. “There is about the Missouri landscape something intimate and known to me.” Perhaps that is why Benton’s later paintings are more personal and lyrical than his earlier works. Such works as *Persephone* (1938–39) and *Silver Stump* (1943) show an intimacy and faith in the fertility of the land lacking in his epic murals.

In his last years, Benton was “content to deal with history more often than politics.” Yet in his final paintings, such as *Wheat* (1967), Broun notes, Benton “at last merged his lifelong concern for social progress and his enduring faith in natural regeneration.”

### G. K. C. and The Stage

“Please, Sir, May I Go Mad? G. K. Chesterton, Self-Revelation, and the Stage” by P. J. Kavanagh, in *Grand Street* (Summer 1987), 50 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10024.

G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) used his wit to master the arts of journalism, literary and social criticism, fiction, and poetry. His works, written from the perspective of an Anglican who became a Catholic convert when he was 48, range from the Father Brown series of mysteries to such collections of essays as *All Things Considered* (1908). But Chesterton’s talents never translated well to the theater.

Although Chesterton’s three plays are forgotten today, says Kavanagh, a columnist for *The Spectator*, they yield dividends to the careful reader. “These dramatic works,” he says, throw “an unusually personal light on Chesterton, and on his thought.”

Chesterton began his intermittent efforts as a playwright at the urging of George Bernard Shaw. “I shall repeat my public challenge to you,” Shaw wrote in a 1908 letter, “vaunt my superiority, insult your corpulence . . . steal your wife’s affections with intellectual and athletic displays, until you contribute something to the British drama.”

Five years later, Chesterton completed *Magic*, which embodied his war against “modernity”—a kind of atheistic pessimism which drained life

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of exuberance and adventure. Set in the estate of an endearingly comic duke, the play pits an agnostic and a socialist clergyman against a conjurer who wishes to restore Christian mystery and wonder to the world. According to Kavanagh, the play has "an intriguing vein of darkness" lacking in Chesterton's cheerful essays.

Although *Magic* was a London success, Chesterton abandoned play writing for almost two decades. His next play, *The Judgement of Doctor Johnson* (1930), shows Chesterton's disillusionment with Western society. In the play, Chesterton's mouthpiece is the 18th-century essayist Samuel Johnson, who rails against unrestrained sex, atheism, and moralizing liberalism. The play concludes with a speech, which, Kavanagh argues, expresses "a loss of belief" in any practical means of reforming society. *Doctor Johnson* closed after six performances. Chesterton's last play, *The Surprise* (1932), was a piece in which actors portrayed puppets in a toy theater. The play was never finished.

Kavanagh concludes that Chesterton's three plays deserve reviving because they reveal a dark side missing from his other writings. "For the sake of those 'moderns' who cannot trust a light unless they see it streaked with darkness," he says, "Chesterton should have written more plays."

*The Poet's Task*

"Responsibilities of the Poet" by Robert Pinsky,  
in *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 1987), 5801 Ellis  
Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60637.

Many contemporary poets, says Pinsky, an English professor at the University of California, Berkeley, suffer from a particularly modern disease—"Poetry Gloom." Faced with sparse and diminishing audiences for their work, poets have "mysterious disaffections" and "querulous doubts" about the validity of their art. To whom, Pinsky asks, should poets be responsible? The state? Posterity? The audience?

Prior to the 20th century, such questions would not have been asked. Poetry was clearly accepted as a part of civilized life, as a mirror for society to view itself. But as contemporary poetry became more abstract and austere, the traditional poet's role—as sage or tribune—faded.

But poets should not try to regain lost audiences by cheapening their art. The first task of a poet, Pinsky argues, is to "mediate between the dead and the unborn," preserving poetry as a living art between one generation and the next. That does not mean that poets should only work in forms sanctioned by the dead; their task is to ring changes on their heritage, not mimic the lifeless past. By keeping poetry energetic for the next generation, "others who come after us can have it if they want it, as free to choose it and change it as we have been."

Like journalism, poetry can be a form of social history, for both genres are observations about the way we live. But poetry is a more reflective art than journalism; poets judge as well as record. By reading William Blake's poem *London*, for example, we learn not just how poor people lived two centuries ago, but also the way civilized men viewed those unfortunate enough to have "mind-forg'd manacles."

Poetry must describe the world; pure inward abstraction, Pinsky says,

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results in "debilitating falseness." (Even Emily Dickinson, that most private of poets, still recognized the world she rejected—"The soul selects her own Society/Then—shuts the Door.") But neither should it be "political poetry," which plays a didactic role. Pinsky argues that poetry may *use* politics as material, as it uses family or theology. But the poet, as both advocate and judge, weaves what he sees into grand designs. Lastly, the poet should treat his art in the way first described by 17th-century British dramatist Ben Jonson: "As thou art all, so be thou all to me."

## OTHER NATIONS

*Red Army Resilience*

"The Economic Constraints on Soviet Military Power" by G. Jonathan Greenwald and Walter B. Slocombe, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 1987), 1800 K St. N.W., Ste. 400, Washington, D.C. 20006.

In his 1941 memoir *Mission to Moscow*, Joseph Davies, Franklin D. Roosevelt's ambassador to the USSR (1936–1938), wrote that the Soviet economy was on the verge of collapse. "To maintain its existence," Davies wrote, the Soviet Union "has to apply capitalistic principles. Otherwise it will fail and be overthrown."

Forty-six years later, the Soviet economy remains both socialist and relatively healthy. Although the Kremlin has "ferocious economic problems," say Greenwald, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and Slocombe, a deputy undersecretary of defense for policy during the Carter administration, there is "remarkably little evidence" to suggest either that Soviet performance cannot be improved or that Soviet military spending *must* be slashed.

Soviet economic growth has slowed in recent years. The USSR's gross national product (GNP) grew, on average, 2.2 percent during the past decade, dropping from an average rate of five percent between 1966 and 1970. Consumption rates have also slowed, falling from close to four percent increases between 1965 and 1975 to 1.5 percent increases (on average) since 1976. (Food consumption *fell* by two percent in 1985.)

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has tried to streamline the bureaucracy by reducing the number of officials responsible for overseeing production of consumer goods, and by giving plant managers more control in such matters as investment and wages. Gorbachev's goal, the authors argue, is not to imitate the West but to shore up the system by making the Soviet economy as efficient as that of staunchly communist East Germany.

Annual increases in Soviet defense spending (which, according to the CIA, currently consumes between 15 and 17 percent of GNP) have slowed during the past decade. The authors argue that Gorbachev can achieve some cost savings without diminishing real military strength. For example, air defense and civil defense units now "produce remarkably little benefit against U.S. and allied countermeasures." Many of the 45 army divisions in Siberia now assigned to the long Chinese border could be demobilized if Sino-Soviet tensions recede.

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Yet the Kremlin's defense budget will not be drastically cut, the authors conclude, because the Soviet high command will veto any such attempts. And the economy, however troubled, can sustain Soviet military power at its current "comfortable" level indefinitely.

*Canada's Confusion*

"Canada—the Empty Giant" by Daniel Casse, in *The National Interest* (Summer 1987), 1627 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Canada emerged from World War II with massive surpluses of food and industrial goods and the third largest navy in the world. Forty-two years later, Canada has a sluggish economy, contributes less per capita to NATO than any other member, and defends 44,000 miles of coastline with 20 frigates, four destroyers, and three aging submarines.

Why has Canada's role diminished? The answer, says Casse, managing editor of *The Public Interest*, is that Canada is not a unified nation, but a collection of regions "whose residents give little thought to one another and, hence, share no national purpose." Attempts by the Canadian government to artificially create a national identity have resulted in domestic protectionism and an "ingrained anti-Americanism" in foreign relations.

"It is in our security interest," states a paper from the Canadian Ministry of External Affairs, "to play an active role *between* East and West." But following an "independent course" in foreign policy, says Casse, means



*Canadians complain about U.S. cultural and economic dominance, but America still beckons. Recently, 10,000 visas for permanent U.S. residency were made available; in one week, 80,000-plus Canadians applied.*

## OTHER NATIONS

that "Canada frequently acts in a way that seems altogether contrary to Western interests." For example, the Canadian Armed Forces have been cut from 124,000 troops in 1964 to fewer than 85,000 today. While Canada's ability to defend itself against Soviet aggression continues to ebb, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney recently announced plans to spend nearly \$5 billion (out of the \$9 billion defense budget) on 10 nuclear submarines meant to enforce Canada's claim (disputed by the United States) to sovereignty over the Northwest Passage, a strait in Canada's Arctic north.

Many Canadian government programs are designed to promote a sense of national unity. "Canadian content" laws protect broadcasters and publishers from foreign competition. Uncompetitive government-run industries (such as Petro-Canada, the state-owned oil company) and high tariff barriers have produced a stagnant economy.

The cure for Canada's economic woes, Casse concludes, is free trade with America. But before that occurs, Canadian officials must discontinue policies that distance Canada from the United States. By working more closely with its southern neighbor, Canada can "become a productive, aggressive, and competitive economic force."

### *Brazilian Computers*

"Brazil's Independent Computer Strategy" by Antonio José J. Botelho, in *Technology Review* (May-June 1987), Mass. Institute of Technology, Building W59, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

Protectionism, most economists would argue, hurts consumers by forcing them to pay higher prices for inferior goods, by imposing tariffs on foreign goods in order to nurture uncompetitive domestic industries. In Brazil, import restrictions have allowed the fledgling computer industry to grow in the face of stiff foreign competition.

During the mid-1970s, Brazilian computer firms controlled five percent of a \$700 million domestic market. By 1986, 270 such computer firms controlled 55 percent of a \$2.7 billion home market in minicomputers, microcomputers, and peripheral accessories. Botelho, a doctoral candidate in political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, argues that although the Brazilian computer market is small by American standards, with a continuation of its current 35 percent annual growth rate, it could become "one of the largest markets in the world."

The Brazilian government's interest in computers began during the early 1970s, when attempts were made to set up joint ventures between foreign and Brazilian firms to build minicomputers. Most failed. U.S. firms claimed that Brazilian law restricted their royalties. In 1976, Brazil established the Commission for the Coordination of Electronic Activities (CAPRE), with a "market-reserve" strategy; imports would be restricted, but Brazilian firms could buy licenses to foreign computer technology.

CAPRE's decision allowed the Brazilian microcomputer industry to thrive. Because microcomputers are relatively easy to copy, licensed Brazilian manufacturers readily cloned IBM-PCs, Apple-IIs, and Tandy TRS-80s. While a Brazilian Apple-II clone in 1982 cost 2.2 times as much as the original model, by 1984 the Brazilian copy had become eight percent cheaper than the original.

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Brazilian computer exports have risen rapidly, doubling in 1985 to \$11 million, and shipments abroad continue to grow. The firm of Racimec, for example, has contracted to sell \$20 million worth of lottery-processing equipment to other countries.

Botelho believes that Brazilian protectionist policies would not work in other nations. In Mexico, for example, import controls could not stop the smuggling that accounts for two-thirds of the microcomputers used there. But in Brazil, import controls should allow the computer industry to grow rapidly for years to come.

*Japan's Choices*

"Japan's Choices" by Peter F. Drucker, in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1987), 58 East 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Low wages and high productivity have allowed Japan's economy to grow for over 30 years. But the export boom that has fueled that growth is sputtering. Because labor in South Korea, Brazil, and Mexico is so inexpensive, these countries can now produce more cheaply goods of a quality equal to that of their Japanese rivals.

Japan, says Drucker, professor of social science and management at the Claremont Graduate School, must decide whether such traditional policies as lifetime employment and "administrative guidance" of industry by the state are economically viable. "The choices Japan makes," he argues, "will determine how the world's youngest economic great power . . . integrates itself into the world economy."

Japanese corporations have responded to foreign competition by becoming multinational. Two percent of all goods sold by Japanese companies in 1983 were produced overseas; the figure rose to five percent in 1986, and may reach 20 percent by the early 1990s. One-third of all foreign-employed workers in Tijuana, Mexico, for example, work in Japanese-owned factories.

But the jobs created by subsidiaries abroad do not give new opportunities to Japan's blue-collar workers. Unemployment in Japan may continue to rise as domestic industries (most notably the Japanese national railroads and automobile-makers that have built plants in the U.S. and Spain) continue to reduce their payrolls. The official unemployment rate in Japan of three percent, Drucker argues, is a "statistical fiction." Japanese businesses prefer mandatory early retirement (with up to a two-thirds reduction in wages) to layoffs. Were these "retired" workers counted as unemployed, the actual unemployment rate would be between 7.5 and 8 percent—higher than in the U.S.

Japan, Drucker concludes, still thinks of itself as *kazoku*—"a family" or clan, separate from, but equal to the West. But the rise of the Japanese multinational corporation evokes *haragai* (a "gut feeling") that domestic social harmony will be destroyed by alien Western values. While many Japanese accept the *economic* rationale for diversifying overseas, they have yet to accept cultural integration with the West. Japan's decision, Drucker says, will determine not only "the meaning of Japan" but also, to some degree, "the meaning of the West itself."

## RESEARCH REPORTS

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

### **“Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities.”**

Basic Books, 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022. 243 pp. \$21.95.  
Authors: James S. Coleman and Thomas Hoffer

What makes a high school successful?

Coleman, a sociologist at the University of Chicago, and Hoffer, a research associate at Northern Illinois University's Public Opinion Laboratory, conducted a four-year study of 1,015 private and public high schools. They conclude that successful high schools result from strong communities reinforcing teachers' efforts.

The authors distinguish between two types of school communities. “Functional communities” are those where the school's goals mesh with the values of the surrounding neighborhood. During the first half of the century, because parents and teachers both taught values “which place[d] importance upon learning” (hard work, respect for teachers), even children from lower-class families mastered the skills needed to better themselves.

Many “functional communities” died during the 1960s, as school consolidation and busing created huge high schools that had little to do with their surrounding neighborhoods. Faced with public schools that were increasingly disorderly and bureaucratic, a growing number of parents placed their children in schools tied to “value communities,” whose common bond is a set of values endorsed by the parents of the children enrolled in them. These schools range from fundamentalist Christian academies to such selective public schools as New York's Stuyvesant High and Walnut Hills High in Cincinnati.

Unlike most private and public schools in the 1980s, Catholic high schools are still part of functional communities; values learned in school are shared by both home and church. Parents are more involved in Catholic high schools than in public schools; 17 percent more parents of Catholic high school students attended a parent-teacher conference and 19 percent more parents

did volunteer work for their school than did public school parents. Fifty-three percent of public high school principals said that parents “lack interest in students' progress,” compared to only seven percent of Catholic high school principals.

Because parents support teachers who make students work hard, Catholic high schools outperform public high schools and match other private schools in learning, even though Catholic schools pay their teachers less. Students in Catholic high schools learn three grades' worth of reading and mathematics in two years; public high school students learn two grades' worth in two years.

In part, the authors attribute Catholic high schools' success to “relative inflexibility” which “has been able to withstand the curriculum watering-down . . . that occurred in American [public] high schools in the 1970s.” Students in Catholic high schools are also more dutiful than those in comparable institutions; 49 percent of Catholic high school sophomores had perfect attendance records compared to 34 percent of other high school students. While 15 percent of public school sophomores and 12 percent of other private school sophomores later dropped out, only three percent of Catholic high school sophomores dropped out by their senior year.

The authors are not optimistic about transforming public schools. They conclude that using tax credits to create private schools affiliated with a factory or other workplace probably would be the best way to restore “functional communities.” These schools, similar to laboratory schools linked to universities, would be “the next step in a social evolution” that has replaced the neighborhood with “formal organizations” as the center of most American lives.

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### **"After Apartheid: The Solution for South Africa."**

Institute for Contemporary Studies, 243 Kearny St., San Francisco, Calif., 94108. 253 pp. \$17.95.

Authors: Frances Kendall and Leon Louw

Militance is rising steadily in South African politics. Both white neo-fascist groups (such as the *Afrikanerweerstandsbeweging*, the Afrikaner Resistance Movement) and black socialist groups (such as the African National Congress) are willing to use violence to gain power. Each faction, should it gain power, will have to overcome violent opposition to survive.

Kendall, editor of *The Individualist*, and Louw, executive director of the Free Market Foundation, argue that South Africa should be divided—peacefully. They believe that South Africa should adopt the Swiss solution of cantons—largely autonomous provinces clustered around a weak central government.

If South Africa were divided into dozens of cantons, ideologues of the right and left could impose the political system of their choice. Cantons would permit social democratic, Marxist, anarchist, or even racist local regimes. With free movement between cantons, each South African could choose his own regime. To prevent *swart gevaar*—the race war many whites fear will follow black majority rule—a weak central government would not have the

power to tax citizens directly, and a bill of rights would ensure that private property could not be arbitrarily nationalized.

South Africans would be citizens of three entities—the nation, the canton, and their community. In most cases, citizens' only contact with government would be with canton officials.

Dismantling the current government, the authors say, would remove economic curbs now imposed on blacks under apartheid. Removing licensing restrictions, which prohibit the creation of new businesses, is a better tonic for curing poverty among blacks than is the Botha government's policy of subsidizing inferior housing, transportation, and "independent homelands." While the government has spent 2.2 billion rand (\$1.1 billion) per annum on the homelands, gross domestic product per capita there only rose from 40 rand to 46 rand between 1970 and 1980.

Devolution of power, the authors argue, would mean that racial groups could rule themselves, instead of fighting to control all of South Africa. A canton system, they claim, could make South Africa "blissfully depoliticized."

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### **"The New Consensus On Family and Welfare: A Community of Self-Reliance."**

American Enterprise Institute/Univ. Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Md., 20706. 143 pp. \$22.50.

Principal author: Michael Novak

Recently, said U.S. demographer Samuel Preston, "an earthquake [has] shuddered through the American family structure."

Since 1965, the fastest growing group of poor people (now 30 percent of all the U.S.

poor) has been black, Hispanic, and white single mothers and their children under 18 years of age. Today in America, there are 3.7 times as many poor children as there are poor elderly adults. Nearly half of all

7.1 million children receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1983 were born out of wedlock. Among poor urban blacks, clustered in America's central cities, single-parent households now outnumber married-couple families by more than three to one; rates of illegitimacy in some cities exceed 80 percent.

The authors of this data-packed survey were members of the American Enterprise Institute's Working Seminar on Family and American Welfare Policy. They believe that current trends point to a "crisis"—but not yet an intractable one. In fact, they argue, the inability of many able-bodied Americans to break the cycle of dependency is often due as much to their own *behavior*, and that of their parents, as to outside factors, such as racism or local economic doldrums.

What kind of behavior? For starters: failing to complete high school, failing to get married (and stay married), or failing to find (and keep) a steady job. Dependency, the authors argue, is more than just an economic condition; it is a *moral* one. The old popular notions of "self-control, self-

mastery, self-determination, and self-reliance" have eroded since the 1960s.

What was once understood as moral law has come to be described as "social convention," they add, while defiance of convention is portrayed in the popular media as "cool, brave, and heroic." Most affected are poor youths.

Some statistics:

- Seventy percent of poor women surveyed by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1985 agreed ("almost always/often") with the statement that "poor young women have babies so they can collect welfare."

- If the United States had the same proportion of female-headed households in 1985 as in 1959 (about 9.3 percent), there would be 5.2 million fewer persons living in poverty today, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

- Of all U.S. husband-wife families (nearly 51 million), only 6.7 percent fall under the official poverty line, but 34 percent of mother-only families are poor.

- Of those poor Americans who worked only part of the year in 1985, 60 percent said that the inability to find a job was not

NUMBER OF FEMALE HEADS OF FAMILIES, 1985  
(thousands)

	Total	Widows	Divorced, Separated	Never Married	Poverty Rate
Total	10,129	2,671	5,607	1,850	34.0
White	6,941	1,967	4,150	825	27.4
Black	2,964	627	1,350	989	50.5
Ages 15-24	785	17	269	499	74.2
25-44	5,155	346	3,759	1,052	40.5
45-64	2,736	1,115	1,443	179	21.1
65+	1,454	1,193	139	121	13.3
Median age	41	63	39	29	—

*The number of black female-headed households increased by 133 percent between 1968 and 1985, while white female-headed households increased by 73 percent.*

their main reason for not working all the time, according to the Census Bureau. More often than not, surveys show, low-wage entry-level jobs are now *unacceptable* rather than unavailable to native-born poor; new immigrants take those jobs and climb the economic ladder.

- In the poorest 20 percent of American households, total expenditures are more than three times as much as their reported pretax incomes, according to a 1984 survey by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. An "underground economy" allows the poor to earn money without reporting it to the state.

Such realities, the authors argue, sug-

gest that able-bodied poor Americans must be held accountable for their condition to a greater degree than has been done by politicians, academics, and welfare reformers since Lyndon Johnson launched the War on Poverty in 1964.

"At the heart of the poverty problem in 1987 is . . . the problem of behavioral dependency," they conclude. "Dependency will not go away through economic growth alone or through government action alone. In many places it has evidently become encysted and is now impenetrable except by the concerted efforts of all, in a more intensive and imaginative way than the nation foresaw two decades ago."

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### "Europe's Second Demographic Transition."

Population Reference Bureau, 777 14th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. 59 pp. \$5.00.  
Author: Dirk J. van de Kaa

Eastern European nations have failed to deliver the high standard of living that most *Western* Europeans enjoy. But the communist countries, reports University of Amsterdam demographer Van de Kaa, have managed to maintain significantly higher levels of reproduction.

Most Americans would recognize the social and demographic trends that are common in Western Europe. Preoccupied with their careers or individualistic lifestyles, young people are delaying (or forgoing) marriage, postponing (or forgoing) having babies, and usually having only one or two children when they do choose to have them.

Consequently, the overall population of Europe (Eastern and Western) will increase by only six percent (to 524 million) by the year 2025. Indeed, the rate of population growth across Europe has fallen below the "replacement level" of 2.1 births per woman. If that trend continues, the European continent's population will eventually decrease—as the populations of Aus-

tria, Denmark, Hungary, and West Germany already have.

This fertility decline, says Van de Kaa, represents Europe's "second demographic transition." The first transition took place during the late 19th century, when both fertility and mortality rates sharply declined. But whereas the first transition toward low fertility, Van de Kaa says, "was dominated by concerns for family and offspring . . . the second emphasizes the rights and self-fulfillment of individuals."

Indeed, many Western European young people are reluctant to take on the responsibilities associated with marriage and child rearing. The mean age at which women marry has climbed to 26.1 in Denmark and 27.3 in Sweden. Yet many men and women who remain officially single live together *and* have children. That is why virtually all Western European countries have witnessed an increase in out-of-wedlock births since the mid-1950s. In Sweden and Denmark, where 40 percent of all births are illegitimate, the mean age of women at

first marriage has actually exceeded the mean age of women when they have their first child. Thus, in Sweden, Van de Kaa observes, "children tend to be present at their parents' first wedding ceremony."

In most Eastern European countries, by contrast, women usually marry between ages 20 and 22, out-of-wedlock births account for only five to 10 percent of all births, and fertility rates, while not high, hover around the replacement level.

These nations offer young people incentives to have children. In East Germany, for example, a woman bearing her second child is entitled to a "baby year"—that is, a year off from work, during which she receives 70 to 80 percent of her salary.

Eastern European countries have also raised fertility rates by restricting abor-

tion, which had become a common form of birth control. In Romania in 1965, there were 4,000 abortions per every 1,000 live births. During the 1960s, the average Romanian woman had more than seven abortions during her lifetime.

In 1966, Romania, like other Eastern European nations, restricted abortion—making it legal only for victims of rape or incest, women over 45, or those with four or more children. Doctors performing illegal abortions face 25 years' imprisonment, or even death.

With these and other measures, Romania hopes to increase the fertility rate to four children per woman. Having babies, says Romanian president Nicolae Ceausescu, is "the most sublime duty toward the nation and its people."

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### **"Ally vs. Ally: America, Europe, and the Siberian Pipeline Crisis."**

Praeger Publishers, 1 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y., 10010. 193 pp. \$37.95.  
Author: Antony J. Blinken

One of the Reagan White House's more controversial decisions came in 1982, when American firms (including their European subsidiaries) were barred from selling machinery to equip a proposed 3,000-mile pipeline to bring Soviet natural gas from Siberia to Western Europe.

Western European politicians charged that prohibiting such firms as General Electric and Dresser Industries from exporting turbine engines and pipemaking equipment amounted to American "economic warfare" against her allies. "This day . . . could well go down as the beginning of the end of the Atlantic Alliance," French foreign minister Claude Cheysson said in June 1982.

While the Western alliance has survived the pipeline controversy, Blinken, a former reporter for *The New Republic*, says that U.S. export controls increase the American trade deficit because European corpora-

tions are reluctant to trade with American firms whose exports could be banned if they were declared "strategic." (The Reagan administration banned exports of some thermostats and microwave ovens until 1985; it currently considers some light-bulb filaments and certain pocket calculators strategically valuable.) U.S. prohibitions on pipeline equipment exports, he argues, "warned countries and companies the world over that the United States is not the most reliable trading partner."

Despite U.S. export controls, the Siberian pipeline was operational by late 1985. Energy conservation, however, has reduced European demand for natural gas. Moreover, both Norway and the Netherlands have increased gas exports within Europe. New discoveries in the Troll fields in the North Sea will allow Western Europe to reduce its dependence on the Euro-Siberian pipeline over the next 10 years.



*A peaceful finale to 83 years of British rule in Malaya. Tunku (Prince) Abdul Rahman, soon to be the new nation's first prime minister, addresses his countrymen at merdeka (independence) ceremonies in Kuala Lumpur on August 31, 1957. Great Britain's official representative, the Duke of Gloucester (right), looks on.*

# Malaysia

Thirty years ago, two new nations achieved independence from Britain. One was prosperous Ghana in West Africa; it has since become a textbook case of Third World economic folly, official corruption, and chronic repression. The other, in Southeast Asia, was Malaysia (born as Malaya), which had just weathered a bitter communist guerrilla war. Largely ignored by American headline writers, Malaysia's politicians quietly found ways to overcome deep-seated antipathies among its Malay, Chinese, and Indian citizens, and to achieve an unexpected level of prosperity and political tranquillity. Here, our contributing authors sketch Malaysia's history under a succession of foreign rulers, including the British, and analyze both Malaysia's success and the new threats that may undermine it.

## MONSOON COUNTRY

The capital of Malaya's Red Earth Kingdom was an impressive city, with "triple gates more than 100 paces apart . . . bedecked with golden flowers, light bells, and hair tassels." Its king sat "on a three-tiered couch, facing north and dressed in rose-colored cloth, with a chaplet of gold flowers and necklaces of varied jewels."

This detailed seventh-century A.D. Chinese description of a vanished Malay city is one of many that have intrigued scholars during the last century. But, as British scholar Sir R. O. Winstedt notes, "Muslim fanaticism" and British ignorance led to the destruction of many important records and artifacts of ancient Malaya. Scholars' knowledge of the era is as fragmentary as the shards of a magnificent urn.

Archaeologists generally agree that the ancestors of the modern Malays trekked overland from the Asian mainland beginning around 2,000 B.C. Some settled along the peninsula's many jungle rivers, forcing Malaya's aborigines to retreat into the wilderness. Others pushed on, journeying by outrigger canoe throughout the Malay Archipelago—the scattered islands of present-day Indonesia and the Philippines.

It was Malaya's good fortune to lie midway between India and China, blessed by seasonal monsoons that swept sailing ships from China

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to Malaya and thence to India during part of the year, then shifted, reversing the seaborne commerce. "Few traders made complete journeys between India and China," writes British historian John M. Gullick. "Instead they made a crossing to Malaya where they could exchange cargoes with merchants coming in the opposite direction."

The first mariners to reach Malaya from outside the archipelago were probably traders from India, who seem to have established a solid presence on the peninsula by the second century A.D. Missionaries, fortune-seekers, and settlers followed, bringing with them the customs of India and also its religions—Buddhism and Hinduism. The insular Chinese journeyed to Malaya only sporadically, and their influence was far outweighed by that of the Indians.

By the 10th century, at least 30 "Indianized" Malay city-states had taken root along the peninsula's coast and rivers. They were surrounded by a lush but inhospitable land, inhabited by elephants, tigers, macaws, cobras, and an occasional tribe of wandering aborigines. The coast was fringed with leech-infested mangrove swamps, which gave way to smothering jungles of bamboo and other flora, and a central mountain range cloaked in rain forests—all nurtured by the unremitting equatorial heat and up to eight feet of annual rainfall. The heavy rains depleted the soil, sharply reducing crop yields and making it hard for farmers to support large towns.

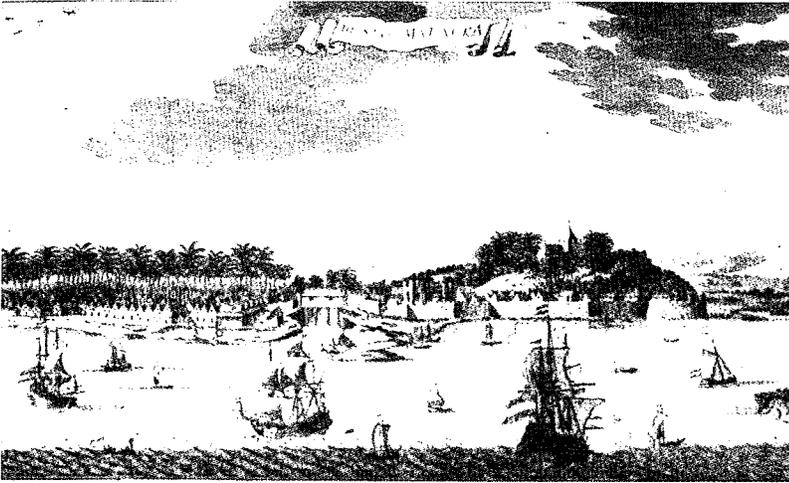
The Malay city-states were, in truth, minor settlements, probably little more than large fishing and trading *kampongs* (villages). They were all weak, variously owing fealty to distant rulers in Siam, or the kingdoms of Buddhist Sri Vijaya (in Sumatra) and Hindu Majapahit (in Java). In 1292, when Marco Polo sailed through the Strait of Malacca, between Malaya and Sumatra, on his way home to Venice from China, he found nothing in Malaya worth noting in his journal.

#### 40,000 Souls, 84 Tongues

Barely a century later, Malacca blossomed into one of Southeast Asia's greatest kingdoms.

Malacca was a fishing village of perhaps a few hundred souls when a Sri Vijaya nobleman named Parameswara sought refuge there around the year 1400. Driven from his Sumatran homeland years before, he had traveled to Tumasik (Singapore), where he murdered the local chief, seized power, and formed a small pirate fleet. But his reign was brief. To escape the vengeance of the murdered chief's Siamese protectors, he had fled to Malacca, taking with him perhaps 1,000 followers.

Malacca was an excellent pirate's lair. Strategically located at a choke point along the busy Strait, it boasted a sheltered harbor dominated by a low, easily fortified hill. But the shrewd Parameswara soon realized that Malacca's future lay in legitimate trade, and not in racketeering. When an envoy of China's Emperor Chu Ti sailed into Malacca



*A view of Malacca and its harbor around 1700, when the Dutch used the city chiefly as a fortress, trying to control shipping in the Strait. Inland, in the jungles, the Malays continued to live much as they had for centuries.*

Harbor around 1403, Parameswara pledged his fealty and gained the protection (and Chinese trade) that would allow Malacca to grow into a thriving port—"a vast fair" writes historian D. G. E. Hall, where "products of China and the Far East were exchanged for those of Europe."

Parameswara's successors extended their domain north to the mountainous border with Siam, and across the Strait of Malacca, to enclaves on the east coast of Sumatra. On the peninsula, they established sultanates in Perak and Johor, which survive today as Malaysian states.

Of greater importance, Malacca introduced Islam to Malaya. In 1445, after one of Malacca's frequent palace coups, a nobleman named Muzaffar Shah seized the throne and took a new title, sultan. Muzaffar was half Indian, and his family had converted to the mysticism-tinged Islam of the subcontinent. Malacca's nobles, and, eventually, its *ra'ayat* (commoners), obediently adopted their sultan's creed. The city became a seat of Islamic learning; zealous Malacca-based traders and missionaries spread Islam throughout the Malay Archipelago. Yet the Malays were not doctrinaire; they blended the ways of Islam with the familiar rites and customs of older faiths. Noblemen retained their Hindu titles; Buddhist rituals remained a part of everyday living.

Malacca reached its zenith soon after Muzaffar converted its people to Islam. His successor, Sultan Mansur Shah, erected a grand palace, boasting a seven-tiered roof, plated in copper and zinc and topped by gilded spires that overlooked the port. The *Malay Annals* (circa 1534), a Malay-authored mixture of history and fable, boast that the city's fame spread "from below the wind to above the wind."

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In 1511, Malacca's riches attracted the attention of the Portuguese Viceroy Alfonso d'Albuquerque. He was a man of grand ambitions, who had once plotted to defeat the hated Moorish infidels of Egypt by building a canal to empty the Nile River. He arrived off Malacca, fresh from victories in India, with a small fleet and some 1,400 infantrymen. For two months, the Malays repulsed d'Albuquerque's assaults. "But the Portuguese soldiers were disciplined and fanatical," writes Winstedt, "and their artillery outranged the Malay guns." During a last ferocious assault, the Malays were routed and the city was sacked.

The Portuguese gloated over their prize. "Men cannot estimate the worth of Malacca, on account of its greatness and profit," wrote Tomé Pires, an entrepreneur who visited a year after the conquest. "The trade and commerce between the different nations for a thousand leagues on every hand must come to Malacca."

Pires found a city of some 40,000 souls, many of them merchants and transients from other lands. Among them were Moors from Cairo, Mecca, and Aden; and Indians, Chinese, and Cambodians. All told, Pires counted 84 languages in Malacca's thriving bazaars and marketplaces. In reports to Lisbon, he catalogued the city's riches with the feverish precision of a man who fears that he will not be believed: indigo, pearls, tin, opium, rosewater, tapestries, silks, raisins, gold, damask, and especially spices—pepper, nutmeg, cloves.

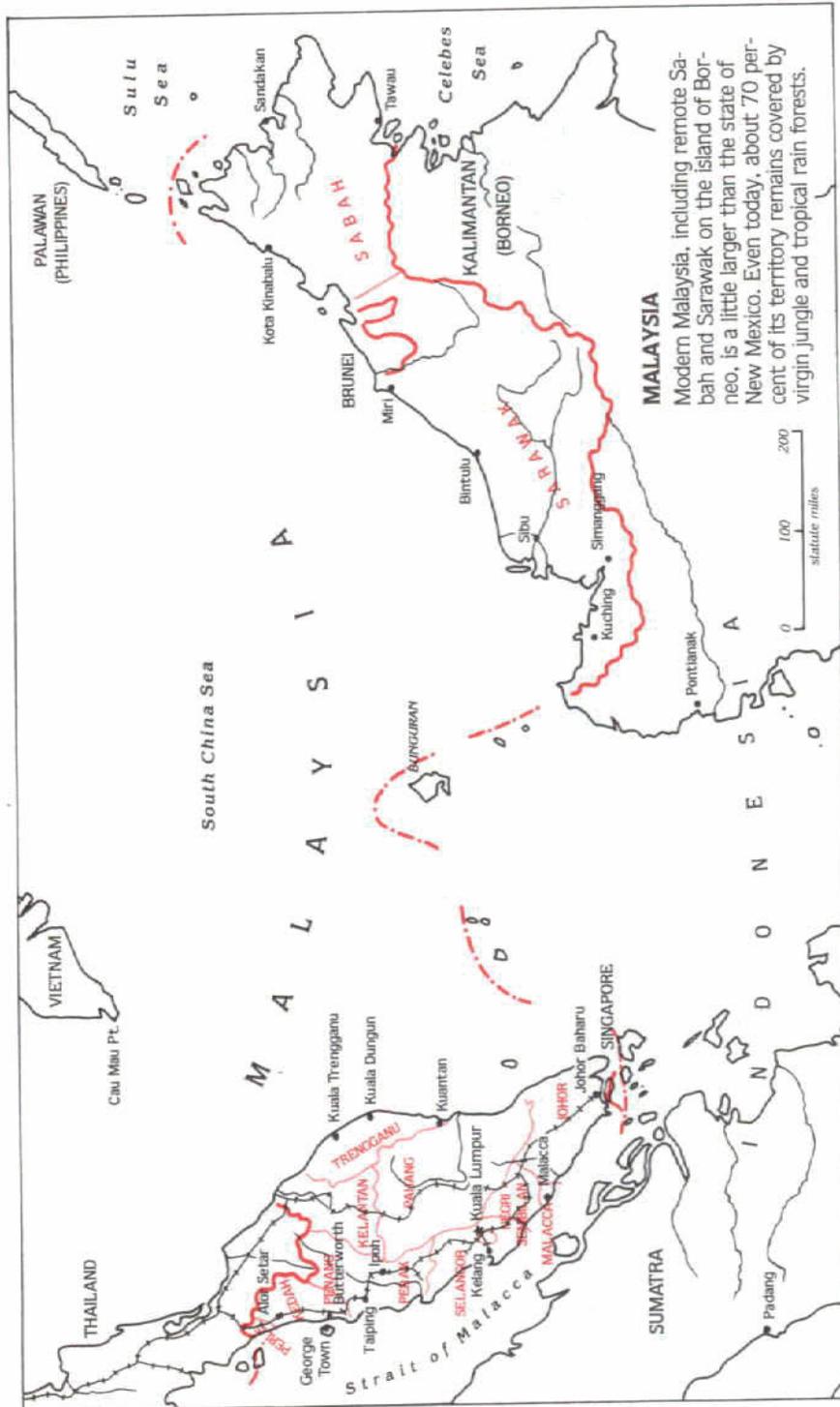
Pires pleaded for "excellent officials, expert traders, lovers of peace" to rule Portugal's new colony; instead, Lisbon sent greedy opportunists. "Ask if they pay taxes, if they make monopolies, if they help themselves with the King's money," demanded the angry Jesuit missionary, St. Francis Xavier. Soon the ships from India, China, and the nearby islands found other ports of call; the foreign merchants departed.

### Going Dutch

To all but a few Malays, the riches of Malacca had never been anything but a fantasy. While the city's trade prospered under the sultans and, for a time, the Portuguese, most of its wealth remained in the hands of foreigners or the royal family and its retainers. Farming folk and fishermen, the Malays kept to their *padi* (rice) fields and boats.

The Malay *kampongs* clung to the banks of the country's many rivers or nestled in small inlets along the Strait. The living was easy. Inhabiting simple thatch-roofed houses built on stilts, the villagers fished, tended their *padi*, and harvested coconuts and bananas from trees planted near their homes. Some bartered tin, rattan, or gold with river traders. More than a few restless lads turned to piracy, prowling the rivers and the Strait in their long-prowed *prahus*, hoping to catch a lightly armed merchant vessel unaware.

An *imam* saw to each *kampung*'s Islamic customs, while a *penghulu* (headman) presided over secular affairs. Near the mouth of



each major river lived the regional chieftain, or raja, who, often by possessing a brass cannon, enjoyed feudal powers over his subjects upstream. He collected taxes on all river trade, and exercised the right to requisition his subjects' labor to erect a mosque or anything else that pleased him. His revenues enabled him to hire a private army of mercenaries. "Debt slaves," subjects who had borrowed money from him on terms that offered little hope of repayment, were his household servants.

In theory, the rajas variously owed allegiance to one of a handful of sultans. But the sultans were largely powerless, exercising real authority only in times of war.

After Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511, the sultans of Johor, Perak, and Pahang (joined at times by the Sumatran kingdom of Aceh, and later by the Dutch) intermittently laid siege to the city. It was not until 1641, when the Portuguese had been driven from much of Southeast Asia, that strongly fortified Malacca finally fell to the Dutch.

### **Tin, Coolies, *Pax Britannica***

But the Dutch, whose lucrative traffic in East Indian spices flowed through Batavia (Jakarta) on the island of Java, had no wish to support a rival port. Malacca's population soon dwindled to some 5,000; a visitor in 1699 called it "a Place of no great Trade." Attacks by the Bugis, a seafaring tribe of ethnic Malays from the Celebes Islands, hastened its decline. The Bugis never conquered Malacca, but they carved out fiefdoms elsewhere on the peninsula, creating a new sultanate in Selangor.

Toward the end of the 18th century, the Dutch, overextended like the Portuguese before them, began to lose their grip on their Asian empire. In 1786, Britain acquired the island of Penang from the sultan of Kedah and established a naval base at George Town; in 1795, British troops occupied Malacca; in 1819, Thomas Stamford Raffles established Singapore (Tumasik having long since disappeared) on a swampy island at the tip of the peninsula.\*

The Dutch bowed to the inevitable in 1824. The British won sovereignty over the so-called Straits Settlements and an exclusive sphere of influence in much of the Malay Peninsula. The king of Siam retained indirect control over four northern states (Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu), content to leave the sultans of these impoverished districts mostly to their own devices.

The British did not seek to *rule* the entire peninsula. In 1824, London was reluctant to add to Britain's vast and costly empire. By acquiring the Straits Settlements, the Colonial Office hoped mainly to protect the India-China trade route against European competitors—notably France and Spain—and local pirates. Once again, however, events in far off lands altered Malaya's destiny.

\*The future of Singapore, settled mostly by Chinese immigrants, was to diverge sharply from that of the rest of Malaya (see "Singapore," *Wilson Quarterly*, Winter '83).

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During the 1860s, a new industry was born when manufacturers in Baltimore and New York pioneered the mass production of tinned meats and fish to provision Union troops on America's Civil War battlefields. In Malaya, enterprising Chinese merchants in the Straits Settlements were already operating small-scale commercial tin mines in the steamy interior of Perak and Selangor. Demand for Malaya's tin soared. In desperate need of cheap labor—the Malay states in Britain's domain contained at most some 300,000 inhabitants—the Chinese mine owners began importing tens of thousands of indentured "coolies" from South China to mine tin from open pits. Ultimately, the Chinese would play as important a role as the British in shaping Malaya's future.

Arriving by junk in Singapore or Penang, sometimes in chains, a new arrival was immediately inducted into the Chinese secret society that ruled his particular mining camp. Living far from family and friends, succumbing by the thousands to malaria and other tropical diseases, the miners purchased the protection of the societies with their absolute loyalty. The societies clashed repeatedly. A drunken brawl between two miners belonging to rival societies, or a dispute over a land claim, could bring hundreds of armed Chinese into battle, with the victors celebrating by dyeing their shirts in the blood of the vanquished. The local Malay chiefs, their small armies vastly outnumbered by the Chinese, had no hope of keeping order.

The Strait merchants had long clamored for British protection of the tin mines. Now, Her Majesty's government feared that French or German interlopers would step in to assure law and order if Britain did not. Late in 1873, Sir Andrew Clarke, the new governor of the Straits Settlements, arrived in Singapore with fresh orders from London.

Within months, he reported the results to the Colonial Office. His superiors were not displeased to find that he had greatly exceeded his mandate. Not only had he negotiated a peace between the warring Ghee Hin and Hai San societies in Perak, but he had also intervened in a Malay dispute over the succession to the sultanate's throne, throwing British support behind Sultan Abdullah. In return, under the Pangkor Engagement, Abdullah had agreed to accept a British resident "adviser."

A new era was about to begin. Malaya had been convulsed by war and unrest for centuries. The British, reluctant at first, would bring prosperity and the rule of law to Malaya, along with the burden of foreign direction. And the Malay leaders, with equal reluctance, would gradually come to embrace the British solution.

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## THE BRITISH LEGACY

by *J. Norman Parmer*

J. W. W. Birch was an odd choice to be the first British adviser in Perak. An imperious colonial bureaucrat with 30 years of service, mostly in Ceylon, he had little knowledge of Malaya's customs or its language. But he exemplified the patriotism and starchy self-confidence of the Victorian Englishman, convinced, as historian Joseph Kennedy put it, that "if one Mr. Birch died, another would take his place."

Upon his arrival in Perak in 1874, Birch, along with his deputy, Captain T. C. S. Speedy, promptly set to work imposing British notions of good government on Sultan Abdullah's land.

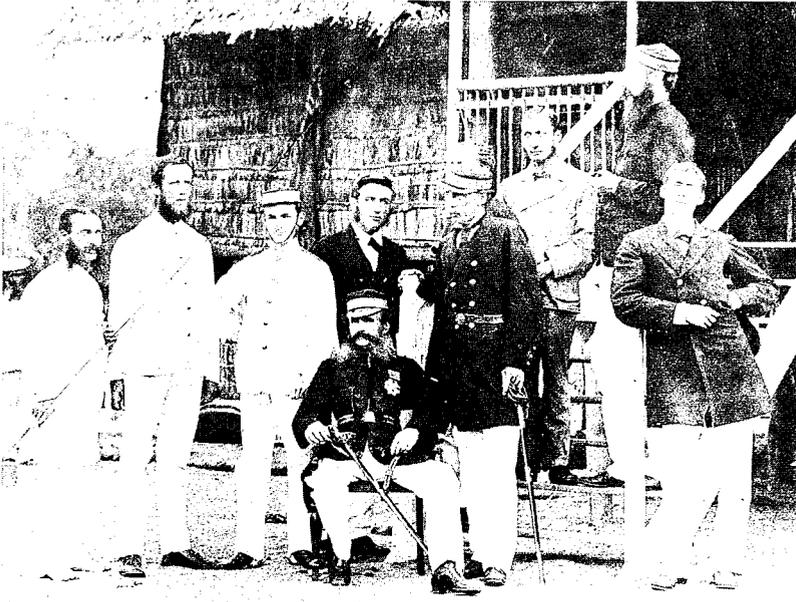
To the horror of the local chiefs, Birch decreed that taxes on the river trade would be collected only by the sultan's agents, and Birch himself sometimes patrolled the Perak River and its tributaries, hunting for violators. While he would have liked to ban debt slavery immediately, Birch settled for turning the British compound at Bandar Bharu into a sanctuary for escaped slaves. He did little to soothe local sentiment. As his successor later noted, Birch "was violent, drank, and did some high-handed things."

The resulting uproar among the Malay nobles was enough to unite Abdullah and his former rivals for the throne in a plot to rid themselves of the Englishman. On November 2, 1875, a band of Malays murdered Birch as he bathed in the Perak River near the *kampung* of Pasir Salak.

In the age of *pax Britannica*, retribution for such crimes was swift. After a small expedition of British-led Sikh policemen was mauled by Malay defenders at Pasir Salak, a stronger force of 1,200 troops and five gunboats summoned from British garrisons in India and Hong Kong eventually put the rebels to rout. The malefactors surrendered and some were executed; Sultan Abdullah was exiled and replaced by a more tractable regent, Raja Yusuf.

The Perak War, as one colonial official put it, "furnished to the civil officers that material support which was necessary to enforce respect for their advice in trying to introduce a better form of government." But it also taught the British a lesson. To rule Malaya, a minor outpost of the Empire, without great cost in blood and treasure, they would have to win over its sultans and nobles.

Birch's successor in Perak, a botanist-turned-bureaucrat named Hugh Low, became the model British adviser. Fluent in Malay, forceful yet diplomatic, Low persuaded the new regent, Raja Yusuf, to create a State Council to govern in his name. Yusuf would preside, but Low and his assistant, the principal Malay chiefs, and the heads of the two local



*British colonial officials posed for a photograph in January 1874, after the signing of the Pangkor Engagement. Included are J. W. W. Birch (second from left), Sir Andrew Clarke (seated), and Frank Swettenham (far right).*

Chinese secret societies would have equal votes. Low seldom failed to carry a majority of the council with him. When the chiefs were barred from collecting taxes, Low carefully arranged to compensate them for their revenue losses with generous "political allowances." Lesser Malay notables were awarded sinecures as local magistrates or police officials. Low's move to abolish "debt slavery" in 1884 stirred little protest.

The bargain Low struck laid the foundation of British rule for the next 73 years, as Britain peacefully extended the adviser system to the rest of the peninsula. Malaya would never formally become a colony; the British would rule "in the name of the sultans." As a saying of the time expressed it, "The British adviser ruled and the Malay ruler advised."

The key to British rule was the mutually satisfactory accommodation between the British and the Malay aristocrats. "The Malay ruling class," writes Stanley S. Bedlington, an ex-colonial administrator, "found the transition to British rule not too difficult a pill to swallow." The aristocrats grew rich on their pensions and perquisites, surrounding themselves with princely trappings, even as their real power over Malaya's destiny waned. But the British obligingly vowed not to disturb Malay customs or the practice of Islam; ordinary Malays would remain farmers and fishermen, loyal subjects of their sultans.

The British took a paternalistic, sometimes sentimental, interest in their new subjects. They admired the Malays' generosity and hospitality, their ingrained sense of etiquette, and their veneration of tradition and authority. A proud people, the Malays nevertheless spoke with great circumspection, using proverbs and allegories to avoid affronting others. "There is something in the Malay character which is congenial to British minds," Thomas Stamford Raffles had observed during his early years in Singapore. The Malays, it was said, were "Nature's gentlemen."

But even the British found the Malays too tradition-bound—"better the death of one's child than the death of one's *adat* [custom]," says an old Malay proverb. And virtually every European was puzzled by the Malays' reluctance to abandon their *kampongs* and their way of life for low-paying jobs in the larger towns and tin mines. The Malays saw it as no fair exchange. The *tuans* (masters) generally concluded that the Malays were lazy—"the leading characteristic of the Malay of every class," asserted Frank Swettenham, a prominent colonial official.

### 'Kuala L'impure'

Perhaps, he speculated, it was the enervating tropical climate, or what he saw as the ease of keeping food on the table. Perhaps the Malays had concluded that "possessions immediately attracted the attention of those who felt that they could make better use of them than the owner." The British could not understand how a people seemingly so indifferent to the accumulation of wealth could perform "prodigies" when ordered to work *for others*, especially their rajahs.

Whatever the explanation, the British decided that the Malays were largely unprepared (and too few) to build a modern economy. That, they determined, without reckoning the future consequences, would be the work of imported Chinese and Indian immigrant laborers. The Malays would be "protected"; a few would be trained for civil service jobs.

In time, the British selected a handful of the more ambitious young Malay blue bloods and a few *ra'ayat* (commoners) to receive an English education at "the Malay Eton," the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar, and to join the civil service in low-level positions. They could advance in their careers only by adopting English attitudes and dress—and even English sports such as cricket and golf. The result was a small, but ultimately very influential, corps of English-educated Malay administrators.

At first, however, the British advisers were virtually alone in their jungle outposts. They saw themselves as bearers of the White Man's Burden, bringing the fruits of Western civilization to an untamed land.

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### THE WHITE RAJAS OF SARAWAK

On November 24, 1841, Raja Muda Hasim of Sarawak, clad in a splendid silk suit, with a large ceremonial *kris* (sword) protruding from beneath his sarong of gold brocade, solemnly informed his subjects that he would rule no more. Henceforth, an Englishman, James Brooke, would be raja of Sarawak.

Six years earlier, at age 32, Brooke had inherited the fortune that enabled him to buy a six-gun schooner, the *Royalist*, and pursue his dream of finding riches and glory in the East. In August 1839, he was more or less at loose ends in Singapore when intriguing news arrived from Sarawak, on the island of Borneo, 400 miles to the east. The native Dyak headhunters had taken up arms against their indolent Malay ruler; Hasim had appealed for British aid.

Lacking official sanction, but armed with the *Royalist's* cannon, Brooke immediately set sail. "I feel *confident* something is to be done," he wrote.

Hasim was a man of about 40, writes Brooke's biographer, Robert Payne, "a little fat, pleasant, with a delightful smile and winning manners." He was weary of fighting. After weeks of elaborate ceremonies and feasts, Hasim made his offer: If Brooke would defeat the rebels and pay Hasim a handsome pension, Sarawak would be his. The Englishman's victory was quick and bloodless. There were more feasts and honors. Brooke received his reward only when he threatened to sail away from Sarawak, leaving Hasim to the Dyaks. Without his protection, Hasim would lose his throne *and* his head. And so James Brooke became the first white raja of Sarawak.



Raja James Brooke

Sarawak, however, was not the paradise of Raja Brooke's youthful dreams. Its capital, Kuching (pop. 800), lay deep in the jungle, 35 miles up the Sarawak River, "a very Venice of hovels," Brooke wrote, "fit only for frogs." But Raja Brooke was no ordinary imperialist. He regarded the white man as the leading source of corruption in the East. "No rational Englishman," he wrote, "can observe the deterioration of the native character arising from their [contact] with the whites, without a blush." Brooke and his successors (his nephew, Charles, and Charles's nephew, Vyner) sought to restrain the "ogre 'Progress.'" Foreign investment and native education were restricted.

Yet the white rajahs were also reformers. James curbed piracy, ended the Malays' tyranny over the Dyaks and other native tribes (who were sometimes forced to sell their children into slavery), and outlawed headhunting. Charles and Vyner nudged the Malays and natives toward self-government.

Sarawak became a British protectorate in 1888 and a British colony in 1946. By 1963, when Britain ceded Sarawak (and the neighboring colony of North Borneo) to the new Federation of Malaysia, Sarawak had become a peaceful Asian backwater. The Brookes, as historian N. J. Ryan wrote, had "made haste slowly, perhaps a little too slowly for the well-being of their subjects in the 20th century."

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"Things moved quickly," Swettenham later recalled, "the country was very rich, and only required peace and order to develop with amazing rapidity." In fact, however, what Malaya needed most was capital, and Swettenham and other senior British advisers often went home to London to woo potential investors. The local Chinese were more eager than the British to put money into Malaya. In the tin-rich states of Perak and Selangor, new mining camps were hacked out of the jungle overnight and instantly filled with Chinese laborers.

Kuala Lumpur (translation: Muddy River Junction), founded in 1857 by Chinese tin prospectors, became the center of the tin industry. In Swettenham's time, it was a lawless, smelly, disease-ridden town of some 4,000 people presided over by Yap Ah Loy, the famous *Capitan China*. Although he was appointed by the sultan, the iron-willed *Capitan*, who was known to pay in silver coin for the heads of those who dared oppose him, made few concessions to his host's Islamic sensibilities. Kuala Lumpur, like Ipoh, Larut, and most of Malaya's other larger settlements, was a Chinese town. A huge open-air gambling hall in the town's main square attracted throngs of boisterous Chinese miners around the clock, while the brothels, bars, and opium dens that lined the narrow, muddy side streets offered other amusements. Decades later, Jean Cocteau could still call it *Kuala L'impure*.

### 'Straits Tin'

Using license fees from the trade in vice and the growing revenues from levies on tin, Swettenham and his colleagues financed a network of roads and rail lines from the interior to small ports along the Strait of Malacca. Chinese-owned coastal steamers plied the Strait.

The new roads and railways transformed the jungles and rain forests, invading the Malayan hinterland with money and people. Sugar, tapioca, coffee, and coconut plantations, started by Chinese and British planters, sprouted along the railroad tracks. Chinese financiers bankrolled dozens of new tin mines in Perak and Selangor, while British entrepreneurs built tin smelters in Penang and Singapore. At the turn of the century, "Straits tin" claimed half of the world market.

By 1896, prosperity and the influx of immigrant labor had greatly complicated the affairs of the four states with British advisers—Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and Negri Sembilan. In the interest of efficiency, Swettenham persuaded the sultans to join in forming the Federated Malay States under a single resident-general (Swettenham) in Kuala Lumpur. (A fifth state, Johor, maintained such close ties to the British authorities in Singapore that it was not included in the federation.) The Malay rulers hoped that the new arrangement would restore some of their lost powers. In fact, the British tightened their control.

Thus, in 1909, when Siam finally yielded to Britain its suzerainty over relatively prosperous Kedah, tiny Perlis, and isolated Kelantan and

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Trengganu, the four ruling sultans accepted British advisers but refused to join the federation. The latter two states, shielded by jungle and mountains from the prosperous west coast and its busy ports, were sparsely populated and poor. Only during the 1960s would they begin to catch up to the other states of the Malay Peninsula.

It was typical of the prosaic quality of British rule that it was another unheroic botanist, following in the footsteps of Hugh Low, the botanist-bureaucrat, who made a decisive contribution to Malaya's destiny. The man was H. N. Ridley, director of the Singapore Botanical Gardens. Around the turn of the century, he single-handedly promoted the commercial potential of Brazilian rubber plants among Malaya's coffee growers, literally shoving handfuls of seeds into their pockets.

### The Rubber Boom

"Rubber Ridley" could not have guessed that the Western industrial revolution, especially the introduction of Henry Ford's mass-produced Model T in 1908, would create such an enormous demand for rubber tires. By 1910, the price of rubber had soared to \$5 per pound. The coffee growers who had heeded Ridley's advice made fortunes; others rushed to get in on the bonanza.

In one year alone, Chinese laborers using little more than axes and machete-like *parangs* cleared and planted nearly 200,000 acres of virgin jungle and rain forest, which their Chinese employers in the Straits Settlements then sold to European planters.

The first rubber plantation was a Chinese venture, and the Chinese rapidly carved out rubber smallholdings of their own, employing Chinese workers. But the great majority of large estates (more than 100 acres) were British-owned. To tap the long-stemmed trees and weed the fields, the owners of large plantations imported tens of thousands of Indian laborers, mostly dark-skinned Tamils from the south of India. Working six- to eight-hour days, they lived on the isolated rubber estates in long, ramshackle, wooden "lines" (buildings) partitioned into cubicles. The estate's toddy shop, its Hindu temple, and the occasional family quarrel or vagrant tiger provided the sole relief from the tedium of plantation existence. Funerals were common: The freshly cleared countryside provided ideal breeding grounds for malaria-bearing mosquitoes.

Some higher caste Indians made their way to the cities, where they worked as clerks, shopkeepers, and lawyers. As subjects of the British Crown, the Indians enjoyed some protections that the Chinese did not—a 1912 law, for example, required the proprietors of large estates to provide rudimentary schooling for Indian children.

The rubber boom was sustained by the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Apart from the shelling of Penang by the roving German cruiser *Emden* (soon sunk by British warships) that October, Malaya participated in the war only by proxy—through the Atlantic exploits of the

battleship H. M. S. *Malaya*, financed and presented to the British Crown by the sultans as a token of their esteem.

Rubber brought a new wave of prosperity. Singapore, by virtue of its superior harbor and location, had long before surpassed Penang as Malaya's leading port city, and had become one of the busiest ports in Asia. The trade in rubber strengthened its claim as the new Malacca, a cosmopolitan entrepôt for all the products of East and West—tin, spices, machinery, oil, textiles, and now, rubber. Rubber was a British innovation, but the Chinese were deeply involved in the business, as indeed they were in everything that involved money in Malaya. The Chinese were everywhere, from the outskirts of the cities, where some scratched out a living as truck farmers, to the rough tin mining camps, to the streets of Kuala Lumpur, where they worked as domestic servants, street vendors, shoemakers, or shopkeepers. At the top of the heap were the financiers, importers, and small factory owners of Singapore, George Town, Kelang, and other cities.

The clannish Chinese maintained a network of mutual aid organizations—funeral and benefit societies, trade associations, schools—divided chiefly along lines of dialect and education. The Malays regarded the Chinese with distaste and muted resentment, the British with admiration touched by disdain. "It is questionable," Swettenham wrote, "whether



*A plantation worker cuts raw, coagulated rubber into strips. Next, the strips will be pressed and smoked before being shipped to market.*

we should deserve [the Malays'] thanks if we could teach them the tireless energy, the self-denying frugality of the Chinese."

British, European, and Chinese investors, attracted by Singapore's free port status and its cheap Chinese labor, poured in millions of dollars. The city flourished. A 1933 British travel guide advised gentlemen to pack four white drill suits ("this is, of course, in addition to the thin summer suits and flannels which one would already possess") as well as two white dinner jackets for evening meals at Singapore's fine hotels.

For Europeans outside the cities, life was comparatively quiet. In the interior, every large town had a club, where the British plantation managers (usually the employees of large companies headquartered in London) could retreat from plantation life perhaps once a week to sip *stengahs* (whiskey and water) and gimlets, read the newspapers from home, and play soccer, rugby, or a few rubbers of bridge. The unofficial capital of the white man in Malaya—planters and colonial bureaucrats alike—was Kuala Lumpur's segregated, Tudor-style Selangor Club, affectionately known as the Spotted Dog. In the evening, the scene shifted to the palatial Lake Club, with its beautiful gardens and manmade lake.

At home, the planters rose at dawn but, in a concession to the oppressive heat and humidity, returned to their bungalows at noon for lunch and a nap. It was not always an easy existence. The planters' memoirs tell of bloody disturbances in the "lines" by Chinese or Indian coolies or the occasional Malay *amok*. (An *amok* was a man who was suddenly and inexplicably seized by a homicidal rage, a revolt against "his perpetual observance of the rules and regulations of his life.") And, as W. Somerset Maugham's melancholy stories reveal, more than a few Europeans were driven by the loneliness and torpor of plantation life to seek solace in the bottle and in other distractions.

### Keeping Apart

Thousands of native Malays (and many ethnic Malay immigrants from Sumatra) worked on the plantations, chiefly, writes Lim Teck Ghee, "on short-term contracts such as forest felling and timber removal, which did not involve permanent collision with their traditional way of life." The vast majority of Malays remained in their quiet *kampongs*. Their thatch-roofed houses, surrounded by small gardens, fruit trees, and coconut palms, were built on stilts, often near an irrigation canal or just beyond a river's flood line. Closer to the river were the brilliant green *padi* (rice) fields; on the ground rising above the village began the darker greens of the rubber smallholdings. Not all Malays were equal. Some were relatively prosperous peasant landholders, others impoverished tenant farmers.

The few Malays who tried city life, taking jobs as policemen, teachers, and office boys, tended to keep to their old ways. At the behest of the sultan of Selangor, the British even established a Malay enclave near



*British P.O.W.s in Singapore with their Japanese captors in February 1942. The Japanese took some 110,000 prisoners of war in Malaya; many of them were sent to labor on the infamous Burma-Siam "Death Railway."*

downtown Kuala Lumpur in 1899. But, in fact, even downtown, where Chinese, Indian, and a few Malay shops were crowded side by side, Malay Muslims, Chinese Buddhists, and Indian Hindus kept apart. Each group lived as if in a separate country, in its own community, with its own leaders, language, religion, and culture. The British authorities discouraged assimilation. A divided country is always easier to rule.

Yet the Britons' motives were not totally selfish. Many colonial officials looked upon themselves as guardians of the Malays against the more aggressive Indians and Chinese. A 1913 law, for example, sought to "protect Malays against themselves" by limiting their right to sell off their ancestral farmlands to speculators and rubber planters. But the law also helped to confine the Malays to their traditional *kampong* existence.

Few ambiguities surround British policy on Malay education. Around the turn of the century, the authorities felt obliged to offer the sons of the *ra'ayat* a rudimentary four-year elementary education in horticulture, arithmetic, and the Malay language. And when the Malays proved reluctant to send their children to the new schools, the authorities did add instruction in the Koran to make schooling more attractive.\*

\*The literacy rate (in Malay) among Malay men rose from less than 20 percent in 1911 to 48 percent in 1931.

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But the "vernacular" schools were emphatically not designed to turn the sons of rice farmers into plantation managers, government administrators, or businessmen. Of the young Malay schoolteachers graduated from the Sultan Idris Training College (founded in 1922), the English-language *Malacca Guardian* wrote with approval: "They teach nothing to distract the Malay villager from the pursuits of his independent agricultural life."

### A Thunderbolt

The British felt no obligation to educate the children of the Chinese "sojourners." But they were happy to permit the Chinese (and Indians) to create their own private schools. To placate those who demanded more, the government provided cash grants to the few private secondary schools run by British and American missionaries. Applicants needed some knowledge of English (the language of opportunity) and enough money to pay tuition. Those requirements excluded all but a few Malays, which suited the British fine. As long as the students in the Christian schools were mostly non-Malays, Britain was honoring its pledge to the sultans not to interfere with Islam in Malaya.

By the 1920s, the Chinese-run schools had become incubators of anti-British propaganda, inspired by Dr. Sun Yat-sen's 1911 revolution in China (plotted in part during visits to Penang, and aided financially by the city's Chinese merchants). Later, youthful communist activists from China opened more schools. The new agitation among the Chinese alarmed not only the British authorities but also the traditional Malay leadership. Urged on by the sultans, the British deported hundreds of Kuomintang (Chinese nationalist) and communist activists to China. In 1930, when the Great Depression threw thousands of tin and rubber workers out of jobs, the British seized the opportunity to reduce drastically further immigration by Chinese men. Chinese women were still welcome; the British believed that unwed Chinese men in Malaya were natural troublemakers.

The growth of the Chinese population had worried educated Malays since the 1920s. The census of 1931 confirmed their fears. It showed that they were outnumbered in their own land by foreigners. (Of the total population of 4.4 million, 44 percent were Malays, 39 percent Chinese, 14 percent Indians, and the remainder mostly Eurasians and Europeans.) Educated Malays were outraged when a Chinese political leader in Penang named Lim Ching Yan reminded an audience that the British had discovered Chinese settlers, not Malays, when they came to Penang in 1786. The Chinese, he argued, had built Penang and much of Malaya. Then, the thunderbolt: "It's ours," Lim declared, "our country."

The notion that there was a larger Malaya that *anybody* could claim as his own had not even occurred to most Malays. The virulent nationalism that was awakening in India, French Indochina, the Dutch East

Indies, and the Philippines still slumbered in Malaya. Malays gave their allegiance to their home state and its sultan. The elite looked to the British chiefly as friends and protectors, and the *ra'ayat* were not about to spearhead change. They would wait, respectfully, until their aristocratic betters led the way.

Reflecting the English view of Malay village traditions, the few English-educated Malay civil servants and professionals in the towns and cities channeled their political energies into campaigns for Malay self-improvement. In Negri Sembilan, for example, Dato Abdullah, a member of the Federal Council, founded a Better Living Society aimed at curbing a major social problem: heavy Malay indebtedness to Indian and Chinese moneylenders, incurred to finance elaborate wedding ceremonies.

At a conference of Malay civic groups held in Singapore in December 1940, as Britain was bracing for a Nazi assault across the English Channel, the aristocratic Malay delegates could not agree on any plan to unify their organizations, much less Malaya. But they did agree on two things: They created a Spitfire Fund to buy fighter planes for the defense of Britain, and they petitioned Kuala Lumpur to increase the number of English schools for Malays!

Some Malays and British officials feared that Spitfires might be



*A Malaysian institution: the Chinese village shopkeeper, or towkay. The ubiquitous Chinese merchants often live with their families (and perhaps an employee or two) over their shops, which open onto narrow, covered lanes.*

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needed to defend Malaya some day, but the country's war jitters were subdued. Heavily involved in China since 1937, Japan was aggressive but, for the moment, preoccupied. London had entrusted the defense of Malaya to Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Percival, who had devised a textbook-perfect defense. At the peninsula's southern tip, the important British naval base at Singapore, though lacking a permanent complement of Royal Navy warships, was guarded against sea attack by imposing batteries of coast artillery.

### **Yamashita's Surprise**

On December 8, 1941, Japanese dive bombers struck Singapore from bases in southern Indochina. The same day, as Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Siam, the first of some 100,000 combat veterans, led by General Yamashita Tomoyuki, easily established a beachhead in Kelantan, on Malaya's east coast near the Siamese border. On December 10, Japanese torpedo planes sank two of His Majesty's biggest warships, the old *Repulse* and the new *Prince of Wales*, just north of Singapore.

The battle ashore went no better. The 89,000 British, Indian, and Australian troops (along with a Malay regiment, formed reluctantly by the British) under General Percival seemed totally unprepared for an assault from the northeast. To take Singapore, it was said, Yamashita's forces would have to march south through hundreds of miles of "impene-trable" jungle. That is just what the "Tiger of Malaya" did.

Within 10 weeks, he had swept down the peninsula and crossed the Strait of Johor to Singapore, outthinking and outfighting his foes. Britain threw tens of thousands of reinforcements into the battle, to no avail. When Percival handed his sword to Yamashita at a Ford auto plant in Singapore on February 15, 1942, the Japanese commander, with only a three-day supply of ammunition remaining, suspected a ruse. He need not have. Percival surrendered, in what Winston Churchill later called "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history." The British imperial forces lost some 125,000 men, mostly prisoners; Japan's toll was 15,000 dead and wounded.

Malaya was still in Japanese hands when the U.S. B-29 bomber *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945. The British returned to Malaya without a fight, and, virtually alone among the colonial peoples of Asia, the Malays, Chinese, and Indians of Malaya greeted the return of their European masters with genuine enthusiasm. A story is told of a British official who emerged from an internment camp in 1945 to find his Malay servant waiting with a suit, cleaned and crisply pressed, which he had last worn in 1942.

Yet much had changed. Far from unifying Malaya's diverse population, the Japanese occupation had divided it more bitterly. The British returned to find bands of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army

### THE EMERGENCY

Early on the morning of June 16, 1948, three young Chinese on bicycles arrived at the headquarters of the Elphil Estate, a large rubber plantation in Perak, Malaya. Courteously, they greeted Arthur Walker, the estate manager. Then they calmly shot him twice, killing him instantly.

It was no ordinary murder. Only weeks before, the leaders of the Malayan Communist Party had agreed during a secret jungle meeting to abandon their campaign to undermine British rule by inciting strikes and riots among Malaya's tin and rubber workers. Instead, Party Secretary Chin Peng would summon 5,000 veterans of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army to wage a terrorist war in the countryside. Arthur Walker was one of its first victims.

Panic swept Malaya. On June 17, Sir Edward Gent, the British high commissioner, reluctantly declared a state of emergency. He authorized the police to issue Sten guns to civilians. The *Straits Times* clamored for stronger measures: "Govern or Get Out," a headline said.

Eventually, some 40,000 British and Commonwealth troops would be deployed against the "CTs" (Communist Terrorists). At first, though, London was reluctant to send reinforcements. In Kuala Lumpur, British authority was awkwardly divided between civil officials and military commanders. In the field, wrote the *Straits Times's* Harry Miller, soldiers and policemen were deployed as "a static defense force operating behind barbed-wire fences" at important mines and buildings.

That gave Chin Peng the run of the countryside; his small guerrilla bands struck isolated plantations, tin mines, and rural towns at will. In 1949, the guerrillas suffered 958 killed and captured, but slew more than 700 soldiers, policemen, and civilians—Britons, Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

Mao Zedong inspired Chin Peng's strategy, but did little more; the CTs used weapons hoarded during World War II. Food and clothing came (sometimes at the point of a gun) from Chinese squatters living in camps on the jungle's fringes, where they had fled to evade the Japanese during World War II. Most guerrillas were Chinese; few Malays or Indians offered them aid.

In 1950, a new British military commander, Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs, took aim at Chin Peng's vulnerable supply network. Under the Briggs Plan, some 500,000 Chinese squatters were forcibly resettled in well-guarded New Villages. But the plan moved slowly, and the war continued to go badly for Britain. On October 6, 1951, the war's blackest day, British High Commis-

(MPAJA), the communist, largely Chinese wartime resistance group, settling old scores with suspected Malay collaborators in the countryside. Malay mobs were taking their revenge on Chinese villagers. Order was quickly restored. But the British also found that they no longer enjoyed quite the same unquestioned authority that they had in bygone days. They had posed as protectors of Malaya and failed.

The message was driven home in October 1945, when a special envoy, Sir Harold MacMichael, arrived from London with a new plan of government prepared by Whitehall. The proposed Malayan union, drawn

sioner Sir Henry Gurney was slain in a hail of machine gun fire during a roadside ambush near Kuala Lumpur.

But then the tide began to turn. Lieutenant General Sir Gerald Templer, taking overall command, ordered his men to take the offensive. Using helicopters, parachute drops, and small-unit tactics, Templer's elite units patiently tracked the guerrillas to their jungle hideouts. And it was Templer who made famous the notion of a campaign for "the hearts and minds" of the people. He ordered planters to provide decent housing for their workers, and, in a symbolic gesture, forced Kuala Lumpur's elite Lake Club to admit non-whites.

Public support for the guerrillas, never very broad, began to evaporate; most of Chin Peng's hard-core faithful were confined in the New Villages. Rice reached the guerrillas grain by grain. Scores of starving defectors stumbled out of the jungles: "Our minds were focused on nothing else but food," recalled Osman China, the party's top propagandist, who surrendered in 1954. Like many other defectors, he agreed to work against his former comrades.

In the spring of 1953, Chin Peng stunned his top aides by announcing that he was retreating with a small force into "neutral" (i.e. indifferent) Thailand. His diminishing guerrilla army was to stay behind to wage war in Malaya. The emergency dragged on for another seven years, boosting the toll of dead and missing soldiers and civilians to some 4,000. About 7,000 guerrillas died. Chin Peng had never come close to victory.

During America's involvement in Vietnam, U.S. and South Vietnamese officials sought to apply the "lessons of Malaya," notably in President Ngo Dinh Diem's "strategic hamlet" program of 1961-63. Yet there were crucial differences between the two conflicts: Malaya's communist guerrillas were members of a despised ethnic minority, fighting on an isolated peninsula without aid from abroad. In South Vietnam, the Vietcong guerrillas were supported by Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. As Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., notes, the Vietcong played a subordinate role: They "harassed and distracted" their foes, but North Vietnamese regulars had to invade South Vietnam to win the struggle. Malaya's was a true guerrilla war.

Today, Malaysian troops (and Thai police) still skirmish occasionally with some of the estimated 2,000 communist guerrillas hanging on near the border. Chin Peng, if he is alive, is approaching age 70, and, presumably, is still hoping for a new dawn.

up during the war without consulting the sultans, would unify all nine states of Malaya (along with Penang and Malacca) under a single colonial government. (Chinese-dominated Singapore would be a separate colony.) Most shocking of all to the Malays, sovereignty would be transferred from the sultans to the British Crown, and Malays, Indians, and Chinese would enjoy equal rights of citizenship.

Intending to rationalize the administration of Malaya and to reward the Chinese for their wartime resistance, the British inadvertently accomplished what the Malays alone could not. They united the Malays.

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To the surprise of the Colonial Office, Malay aristocrats and *ra'ayat* alike turned out by the thousands for mass protest rallies across the land.

Addressing a throng of 18,000 Malays in Batu Pahat, Dato Onn bin Ja'afar, a charismatic Johor aristocrat, called for the creation of a new United Malays National Organization (UMNO) to represent the interests of Malays in all the states. Within months, it was done. In July 1946, London abandoned its plan for a Malayan union. Instead, UMNO consented in 1948 to a new Federation of Malaya, which restored the sultans' sovereignty and restricted non-Malay citizenship. London promised to provide "the means and prospects of development in the direction of ultimate self-government."

At this moment, the communist veterans of the wartime MPAJA returned to the jungles and took up arms against the British. With Moscow's encouragement, wars of "national liberation" broke out at about the same time in Burma, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. At first, the guerrillas, under the party chief Chin Peng, had the initiative; "the emergency," as it was called, lasted until 1960 [see box, p. 66].

The emergency deepened hostility between the Malays and Chinese; Dato Onn's proposal in 1951 to admit Chinese and Indians to UMNO cost him the leadership of the party. He was succeeded by another aristocrat, Tunku Abdul Rahman. This great-grandson of the sultan who had ceded the first slice of Malaya (Penang) to the British in 1786 was to lead Malaya to *merdeka* (independence).

### A Knack for Compromise

The Tunku argued that Britain "must be prepared either to foster the growth of genuine nationalism or hand over this country to the Malayan Communist Party." In London, the successive Conservative governments of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden reluctantly faced the fact that Britain could no longer afford its vast overseas empire. London was prepared to let Malaya go.

In the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections of 1952, the Tunku showed how democracy of a sort might be made to work in racially divided Malaya. UMNO formed an unusual alliance with the moderate businessmen of the three-year-old Malayan Chinese Association (MCA): The MCA would help finance UMNO's campaign and in return UMNO would back certain MCA candidates. It was an alliance of necessity, for Britain would not grant independence if Malaya's races could not prove that they could coexist. The two parties worked well together once their victorious candidates were installed in city hall, with the Malays as senior partners. In 1953, the Malayan Indian Congress joined this remarkable coalition, which came to be known as the Alliance Party.

Two years later, the Alliance Party crushed its opponents in the voting for the 52 elected seats on the 98-member National Legislative Council. Tunku Abdul Rahman became chief minister under the British

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high commissioner, and vowed to win independence within two years.

To allay British fears of a post-independence racial conflagration, the three parties hammered out (with British help) the outlines of a new national constitution. It provided for a British-style parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarch (the *yang di-pertuan agong*, or paramount ruler), elected by the Malay sultans from among their own number to a five-year term. But the key provisions of the new constitution codified a series of understandings among Malaya's three races. The Malays were promised de facto political control of the nation and preferential treatment in such matters as education and government hiring, at least during the first few years of independence; the Chinese and Indians received guarantees of economic freedom and liberal access to citizenship. Islam would be the state religion, but freedom of worship would be guaranteed.

It was a peculiarly Malayan arrangement, a tribute to the Malays' knack for compromise—a trait that would serve them well after independence. When the Tunku traveled to London in January 1956 to demand a timetable for independence, he was surprised that Prime Minister Anthony Eden agreed to fix a date just a year and a half hence.

Everything went according to plan. At the stroke of midnight on August 31, 1957, as a band played "God Save the Queen," the Union Jack was lowered for the last time over British Malaya. The new Federation of Malaya was born. In 1963, with the addition of Britain's ex-colonies Sabah, Sarawak, and (for two years) Singapore, it became the Federation of Malaysia. Britain left behind a healthy, export-oriented economy (which provided the highest standard of living in Southeast Asia), and a racially divided society that had, for the moment, managed to discover a kind of unity.

Historians who write about the Third World countries that gained their independence after World War II usually use words like "struggle" or "drive." By comparison, *merdeka* was a peaceful Sunday morning stroll. "There has been nothing quite like it in the entire history of colonies and dependencies," declared the *Straits Times*.

## MAHATHIR'S DILEMMA

by James S. Gibney

"What went wrong?"

Those were the first words of *The Malay Dilemma* (1970), by Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, a young, up-and-coming Malaysian politician and future prime minister. Little more than a decade after their nation had achieved independence from Britain, many Malaysians were asking themselves the same question.

On May 13, 1969, a dozen years of relative harmony among Malays, Chinese, and Indians had ended abruptly in bloody street riots that racked Kuala Lumpur. The cause of the violence was an acrimonious national election in which the Malay-dominated Alliance Party lost 23 of its 89 parliamentary seats, but kept control of Parliament. Most of the lost Alliance seats went to moderate Chinese and Indian opposition parties. Following their "victory," the opposition's supporters spilled into the streets, shouting "Malays, go back to your villages!" and other slogans. Malay counterdemonstrations exploded into wild battles with sticks and knives. "We lived together as brothers for 20 years," an anonymous Malay told the *New York Times*, "but once the rioting began it was Malay against Chinese. Some Chinese ran away and we killed the rest."

By the conservative official count, when the riots ended, 196 Malaysians (mostly Chinese) were dead and thousands of homes and stores were in ashes. Under a state of national emergency declared by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's democratic constitution was suspended for 18 months and its Parliament was dismissed. It was, wrote historian John M. Gullick, "the end of an era for Malaysia."

That era had begun smoothly enough under the avuncular Tunku, scion of the royal family of Kedah and graduate of Cambridge University. The reign of *Bapa Merdeka* ("the father of independence") had not been without its travails, but racial conflict had seemed largely submerged. The chief difficulties lay elsewhere, in the events surrounding the 1963 merger of independent Malaya with Singapore and Britain's ex-colonies on Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak, into the new Federation of Malaysia.

Proposed by the Tunku and favored by London, the merger struck Indonesia's mercurial President Sukarno as a "neo-colonial conspiracy" and "an affront to Asia's new emerging forces"—and, though he did not say so, an obstacle to his own designs on isolated Sabah and Sarawak. Vowing to "crush Malaysia," he launched a *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) with the new nation. For two years, Indonesian guerrillas skirmished along the remote jungle borders in Borneo with some 10,000 British, Gurkha, and Malaysian troops; Sukarno even dispatched small sea- and



*Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad raises his arms in triumph as his United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and its National Front allies sweep to victory in the April 1982 election that confirmed him in office.*

air-borne units on ill-fated raids on the Malay Peninsula.

Absurd as Sukarno's campaign was, it paled in improbability next to the effort to incorporate Chinese-dominated Singapore into the new Federation of Malaysia. Unlike the Chinese of old Malaya, the city's irrepressible Lee Kuan Yew (who insisted on continuing to use the title of prime minister) was not content to play junior partner to the Malays. To the dismay of the Tunku and other Malay leaders, he sharply questioned Malay special privileges and campaigned for a "Malaysian Malaysia," in which "the nation and state [are] not identified with the supremacy, well-being, and interests of any one community or race." A falling out was inevitable. In the summer of 1965, the Tunku expelled Singapore from the federation. "If we had not separated," he later commented, "there would have been blue murder."

It was easy to dismiss these disturbances as the natural growing pains of a remarkably healthy new nation. Unlike most Third World countries, Malaysia held regular democratic elections. Its government bureaucracy was well-trained and efficient. Its senior military officers, steeped in the British Sandhurst tradition, steered clear of politics.

Throughout the 1960s, rubber and tin, the old standbys, supported Malaysia's sturdy economy. Shunning the dreams of instant industrialization, which led so many contemporary Third World leaders to squander

millions on giant steel mills and other grandiose projects, the Tunku and his top aides encouraged a variety of modest private ventures in light industry—pineapple canneries, textile mills, television assembly plants—on the island state of Penang, and in Kuala Lumpur and other growing cities. Plantation managers diversified into palm oil, a lucrative commodity used in the manufacture of soaps, cosmetics, and chocolate.

In May 1969, Malaysians could look back upon a decade of quiet, but enviable, economic accomplishments: Despite a rate of population expansion equal to that of Ethiopia (2.6 percent annually), economic growth averaged six to seven percent a year, and inflation was nearly zero. Along with Hong Kong and Singapore, observed Australian economist Wolfgang Kasper, Malaysia rated as one of the Switzerlands of Southeast Asia, “a well-to-do, politically stable, neutral, and rather conservative country with a *laissez-faire* economy.”

So what went wrong?

Dr. Mahathir’s answer was, in part, that “the Malays were disenchanting because in their eyes the Government continually favoured the Chinese and had failed to correct the real imbalance in the wealth and progress of the races.” Despite Kuala Lumpur’s efforts to bring the Malays into the economic mainstream—an ambitious rural education and development program, racial quotas for government jobs, subsidies for Malay businessmen—they generally remained at the bottom of the economic ladder. Moreover, argued Mahathir, the Tunku mistakenly “believed that the Chinese were only interested in business and acquisition of wealth.” To the Malays who rioted in Kuala Lumpur, the elections of 1969 raised the specter of eventual Chinese economic *and* political domination of Malaysia.

### Tun Razak’s Remedy

For his unseemly personal criticism of the Tunku, Mahathir was expelled from the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the dominant faction of the Alliance Party coalition (which also included the Malaysian Chinese Association and the Malaysian Indian Congress). *The Malay Dilemma* was banned from bookstores. But what Malaysians now call the May 13 Incident was a watershed. *Bapa Merdeka* resigned from office the next year and his successor, Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, veered sharply in Mahathir’s direction.

In 1971, Tun Razak announced his New Economic Policy (NEP), a kind of super affirmative action program for Malays and other indigenous people—or, as they were increasingly called, the *bumiputras* (sons of the soil). Among the NEP’s goals: the reduction of poverty from about 49 percent of the population (mostly Malays) to 17 percent in 1990;

*James S. Gibney, 26, former managing editor of the Wilson Quarterly, has recently traveled to Malaysia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. He is now a writer based in Tokyo.*

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“racial balance” in various occupations, to be achieved partly through informal quotas (e.g., Malays were granted 75 percent of all university admissions); and an increase in the Malays’ share of corporate equity from one percent in 1969 to 30 percent by 1990. Tun Razak created a handful of large, government-backed institutions, such as Bank Bumi-putra, to aid Malay entrepreneurs and to buy up and manage corporate assets “in trust” for the Malays.

Tun Razak thus scrapped any pretense that Malays, Chinese, and Indians were equal political partners. Summoning Parliament in 1971, he virtually commanded the legislators, who normally did little more than rubber stamp government proposals, to approve a series of constitutional amendments that codified existing Malay special privileges.

Other amendments outlawed, in the *Singapore Herald’s* words, all discussion of “sensitive” issues (even in Parliament) “which might arouse racial emotions in respect of the National Language, the special position of the Malays and other natives, citizenship rights and the sovereignty of the Malay rulers [sultans].” These restrictions also apply to the nation’s many Malay-, Chinese-, and English-language newspapers. No censors are at work, but newspapermen have been held in check by the need to seek renewal of their government publishing licenses every year.

### No Losers

Before the 1974 general elections, in the discreet style of Malaysian politics, Tun Razak had dissolved the Alliance Party and skillfully forged a broader nine-party *Barisan Nasional* (National Front). Included in the coalition were not only the old Alliance partners but several strange bedfellows and one-time foes of the Alliance: the largely Chinese, communist-influenced, Sarawak United People’s Party and the fundamentalist Islamic Party (PAS).

Somehow, Tun Razak’s conservative revolution worked. With all debate over the fundamental issues of Malaysian politics banned, his political rivals had little reason to remain in opposition. They could be wooed with the traditional rewards of one-hand-washes-the-other politics: cabinet posts, patronage, honors. And while the NEP stirred deep resentment among the Chinese, Tun Razak did not intend to take from Peter to pay Paul. During the early 1970s, it appeared that the NEP’s ambitious goals could be financed simply by skimming off some of the nation’s growing bounty—“no particular group will experience any loss or feel any sense of deprivation,” the plan promised.

Fortunately for Tun Razak and his successor, Datuk Hussein Onn, also a member of UMNO, the 1970s were generous to Malaysia’s planters and businessmen. Between 1970 and 1978, the country’s gross national product per capita increased by 7.9 percent annually. The discovery of fresh reserves of oil and natural gas off the coast of Sabah and Sarawak, along with steep increases in the prices they fetched overseas,

### SKYSCRAPERS, MINARETS, AND FAMOUS AMOS

Hong Kong has its monumental high-rises, Bangkok, its chaotic urban sprawl, Singapore, its clockwork capitalism. But Kuala Lumpur remains, as British novelist W. Somerset Maugham wrote almost half a century ago, "busy, but without haste," a city with "a sense of the rhythm of life."

Almost entirely surrounded by low hills covered with lush jungle vegetation, which seems forever to be on the verge of engulfing the city, "K. L." lacks the air of metropolitan frenzy that prevails in other Asian capitals. Its people are also more diverse. Walking along the narrow lanes of Chinatown, past stalls offering roast duck and other delicacies, one sees sedate crowds of Chinese, Malays, and Tamils. Women stroll by clad in the Malay *sarong*, the Indian *sari*, or the Chinese *samfoo*. A turbaned Sikh on a motorcycle is followed by a helmeted Malay. A British businessman makes his way through the crowd. This is a city that celebrates the New Year four times a year.

In K. L., as in most Malaysian cities, the Chinese predominate, making up slightly more than half of the city's population of 940,000. While more and more Malays are leaving the rural *kampongs*, they still account for only one-third of the inhabitants. The economic pecking order is neatly symbolized by the headquarters of the Rubber Trade Association of Selangor & Pahang, which proudly spells out its name in Chinese characters on a sign outside its top floor, and in English and Malay on successive stories below.

Nowhere is Malaysia's odd mix of races and traditions more apparent than around the *Padang*, the large, well-manicured field near the city's center, which functions as cricket pitch, soccer field, and site of official ceremonies. On one side sits the Selangor Club, a mock Tudor-style legacy of colonial times, still the place where the city's elite—now mostly wealthy Chinese businessmen and Malay officials—gather over *stengahs* and gimlets.

Across the *Padang* is the old Secretariat building, a fusion of white arches and copper minarets, with a decidedly English clock tower at its center. On a third side of the *Padang* is the Anglican Church of St. Mary's. And nearby is the Arabic-style, red brick Jame Mosque, the center of Islam in Malaysia until the construction of the modernistic National Mosque in 1965. Surrounding these structures are two- and three-story tin-roofed Chinese dwellings and businesses, overshadowed by a thicket of glass-and-steel towers which house Citibank, the Hong Kong Bank, and other multinational enterprises.

The building boom of the last decade, now stalled, has imposed increasing uniformity on Kuala Lumpur's once-ragged skyline. Affluence has brought other changes. K. L.'s Chinese, Malays, and Indians can sample the "international" cuisine of Wendy's or Shakey's Pizza, and buy Famous Amos cookies for dessert. The well-to-do can drive their BMWs to posh watering holes at the Hilton, Merlin, Equatorial, and other first-class hotels. Just as prosperity has muted Malaysia's racial conflicts, it has created a more "international," and thus less colorful, Kuala Lumpur.

—J. G.

provided an unexpected bonus.\*

The relatively tranquil 1970s also saw the return of Dr. Mahathir from the political wilderness to the UMNO ranks, and in July 1981 he succeeded the ailing Datuk Hussein as prime minister. Mahathir represents a "first" in many ways. He is the first prime minister not of royal blood, and the first neither educated in Britain nor trained in law (he is a physician). He has a reputation as something of an intellectual—impatient, idiosyncratic. "I'm not a very nice personality," Mahathir declared after assuming office. "I like to speak my mind and I may offend people in the process. But, apart from differences in style and abrasiveness, perhaps, there will be very little change."

### The Proton Bomb

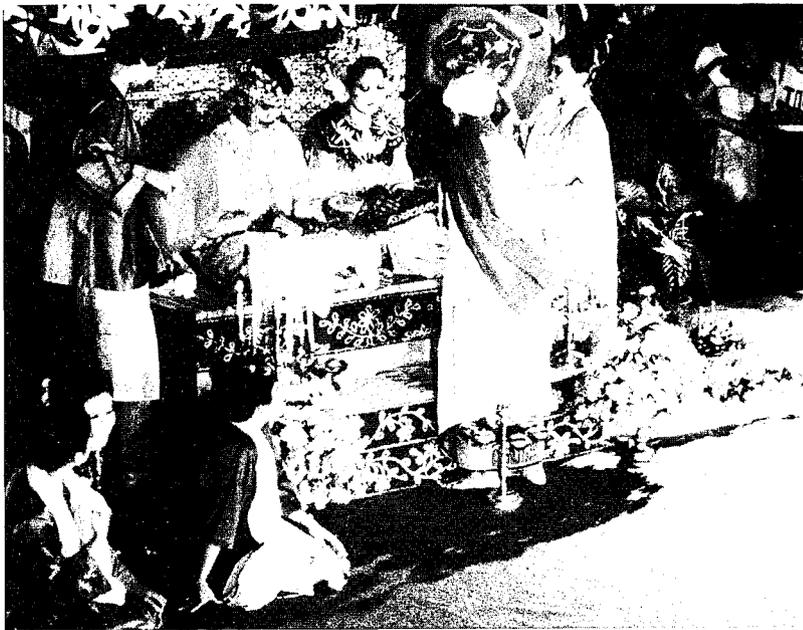
Those reassuring words aside, Dr. Mahathir swiftly demonstrated that some things would be different. In 1981, he snubbed a meeting of British Commonwealth leaders, complaining that the Commonwealth "doesn't carry out its word."† At the same time, a protracted economic dispute with Britain led him to pursue (briefly) a "Buy British Last" policy—pointedly announced as the British trade minister was on a "Buy British" regional tour. Dismissing the "decadent" West, Mahathir exhorted his fellow Malays to "Look East" and emulate the industrious Japanese and South Koreans. The United States, Malaysia's third largest trading partner after Japan and Singapore, also came in for criticism. During a 1984 speech in Washington, Mahathir charged that the United States "often supports vested interests and opposes much needed international reforms [e.g., the Law of the Sea treaty, the new international economic order] that would bring relief to many small Third World countries." Yet Malaysia's relations with Washington have remained cordial. And the premier has kept his country firmly attached to the six-member Association of South East Asian Nations, critical of Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea and watchful of China.

At home, Mahathir called for "clean, efficient and trustworthy" government. He demanded that civil servants wear name tags, conform to a dress code, and arrive for work punctually every morning. The prime minister took his schoolmaster role seriously, sometimes inspecting offices to see if government employees were at their desks.

Arguing that too many Malaysians (23 percent of the work force in 1984) were employed by government and by bloated public enterprises,

\*Sabah and Sarawak are far more independent of Kuala Lumpur than are the peninsular states. To visit Sabah, for example, a peninsular Malaysian needs an internal passport. Sparsely populated, poor, renowned in the past for corrupt government, the two Borneo states have forged their own distinct political arrangements. The Malays and Chinese are minorities, outnumbered by dozens of diverse Muslim, Christian, and animist Borneo tribes. The current chief minister of Sabah, for example, is Datuk Pairin Kitingan, a Catholic member of the Kadazan tribe.

†A long-planned withdrawal of Commonwealth military forces in Malaysia will be completed this spring, when an Australian jet fighter squadron based at Butterworth is scheduled to return home.



*Malay tradition and Islamic fundamentalism are sometimes at odds. Here, a Malay couple exchange vows in a wedding ritual called the bersanding ceremony, now denounced by Islamic revivalists as Hindu-inspired.*

the prime minister has put the national airline, the telephone system, and some port facilities on the auction block. The receipts are to be channeled into Mahathir's new effort to create, virtually from scratch, whole new industries—cement, steel, autos. One reason: Many of the nation's older, established light industries, such as Penang's integrated circuit assembly plants, were jarred by recession during the 1980s. (Malaysia is the world's Number One exporter of semiconductors.) And growing competition from Indonesia and other Asian competitors with lower labor costs threatened the slow strangulation of these enterprises.

The chief symbol of Dr. Mahathir's new effort has been the Proton Saga, a subcompact car manufactured by the government's Malaysian Heavy Industries Corporation and Japan's Mitsubishi conglomerate. ("Japanese made, Malaysian chop [name]," joke Malaysians who note that nearly three-quarters of the car's parts are imported from Japan.) Amid great fanfare, the first Proton Saga rolled off the assembly line in 1985. With the help of generous government subsidies and high tariff walls it soon captured half the domestic small car market. Yet, the ultra-modern plant is operating at only 75 percent of capacity. Despite the ceremonial sprinkling of holy water on Protons bound overseas, plans to export the car to the United States have hit numerous snags.

To expand the domestic market for the Proton and other products of Malaysia's planned "mass consumption" industries, Mahathir in 1984 unveiled another startling policy: Kuala Lumpur would offer workers tax breaks and maternity leaves to encourage a nearly five-fold *increase* in the population (now 15 million) by the year 2100.\*

All of this, however, has come at a time when fortune has begun to frown on Malaysia's commodity-based economy. The price of petroleum, the country's largest foreign exchange earner, dropped from \$34 per barrel in 1982 to \$15 in 1986. The markets for tin and palm oil likewise collapsed. Malaysia suffered its worst recession in 30 years.

In Kuala Lumpur, that has meant readily available taxis, sparse crowds of evening shoppers, and fire sale prices (a barely used Rolls Royce could be had earlier this year at one-third its original sticker price). A building boom that began at the turn of the decade has ended; the glittering new high-rise office buildings and hotels are plagued by vacancy rates of up to 35 percent, much like Houston, Texas. Malaysia had become, as the *Economist* put it recently, "a shop stocked with things that nobody much wants."

### Veils In, Swimsuits Out

Yet the political consequences of the economic downturn have been more disturbing. Last year, Mahathir announced—indirectly, during an interview on Australian TV—that the timetables and some rules of Malaysia's ambitious NEP were temporarily "in abeyance." As University of Malaya economist Paul Chan explained it, "There cannot be redistribution [of wealth] if there is no growth." In fact, the relaxation had already begun; last year Mahathir loosened restrictions on foreign investments (e.g., requirements that Malays own part of all foreign ventures in Malaysia). In 1985, Kuala Lumpur had been shocked to discover not only that *bumiputra* ownership of Malaysia's corporate assets had inched up to only 18 percent, but that foreign investment had dropped even below the NEP's 30 percent target (to 25 percent).

For many Malays, this has been a frustrating decade. The NEP has brought change, but not the great socioeconomic transformation that some expected. During the 1970s, Malay university graduates had their pick of jobs in government and business; now hundreds of them are unemployed. According to Kuala Lumpur, poverty among all races had dropped to 18 percent by 1984. But the official data also showed that Malay *padi* (rice) farmers and rubber smallholders, living mostly in the northern states of the Malay Peninsula, were still overwhelmingly poor.†

\*Malays now make up 48 percent of the population of Malaysia, the Chinese 34 percent, and the Indians nine percent, with indigenous peoples, who are considered *bumiputras*, accounting for most of the remaining nine percent. The Malays are increasing their numbers faster than the Chinese.

†Overall, according to the World Bank, Malaysians enjoy incomes per capita of \$2,050. They thus lead the Indonesians (\$530) and Thais (\$830), but lag behind the Singaporeans (\$7,420).

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The spread of disaffection has cost UMNO some supporters. Today, for example, the rural north is the stronghold of a fundamentalist Islamic revival, which began during the first heady days of the NEP, largely among the university students who were some of the NEP's chief beneficiaries. "On local campuses," explains Suhaini Aznam of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "rural students unused to tough academic competition from Malay and non-Malay urbanites, turned to Islam as the one familiar aspect of a more traditional village lifestyle, one in which they could shine" and find security. Gradually, the poor and the middle class followed the students' example.

The most visible sign of the Islamic resurgence has been the vast increase in the wearing of "correct" Islamic garb. A decade ago, one would have been surprised to see women in Kuala Lumpur wearing the *selendang* or *mini-telekung*, partial veils that cover the head but not the face. Today, they are a common sight. Among men, *songkoks* and other Islamic caps are commonly worn.

As always, most Malays tend to be pragmatic. For example, fearful of offending Muslim sensibilities, the sponsors of the 1986 Miss Malaysia contest decided that the pageant would go on as usual, except that the provocative "swimsuit competition" would be closed to the public. But Islamic fundamentalists are now everywhere. *Dakwah* (proselytizing) groups, whose members often live apart from society in order to remain true to the Koran, have blossomed since the 1970s; radicals promoting a *jihad* (holy war) to transform Malaysia into an Islamic state have clashed with police. In politics, the fundamentalists are represented chiefly by Haji Yusof Rawa's PAS, which left the *Barisan Nasional* coalition in 1977, calling for Malaysia's transformation into an "Islamic state" partly modeled on Iran. (The Iranians, however, are Shi'ite Muslims; most Malays belong to the Sunni sect.)

### The Missing Links

Mahathir has dismissed his Muslim critics as "reckless and emotional extremists," but he has taken the fundamentalist threat seriously. During his first two years in office, he aimed to "out-Islam" PAS by creating such institutions as the Islamic Bank (which now has 116,000 account holders) and the International Islamic University. He has accused "Zionists" of sabotaging the economy, and regularly attacks Israel in speeches. Following the customary practice of Malaysian politics, he enticed a charismatic Muslim youth leader, Encik Anwar Ibrahim, into joining UMNO, and later appointed him minister of education. Encik Anwar is now a strong candidate to become prime minister someday.

Yet, whenever "Islamicization" has stirred deep Chinese and Indian opposition, Mahathir has retreated. Compulsory college classes in Islamic civilization became voluntary for non-Muslims; the government proposed public morality laws (e.g., making it a crime for an unmarried

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couple to hold hands in public), then withdrew them.

For the time being, Mahathir's strategy seems to have succeeded. In the August 1986 parliamentary elections, PAS won only one seat of the 85 it contested. But Mahathir must also worry about maintaining the unity of the *Barisan Nasional*. Its non-Malay member parties, notably the Malaysian Chinese Association, are losing support as they face growing pressure from their rank-and-file to stand up for non-Malay interests. And a series of financial scandals ("hanky-panky," the Malaysians call it) has turned Mahathir's 1982 "clean, efficient and trustworthy" slogan into a joke. Commented Tunku Abdul Rahman, the ex-prime minister, this year on his 84th birthday, "Everybody seems to be corrupt."

No one has accused Mahathir himself of any impropriety, but his autocratic style has angered many. In March 1987, Trade and Industry Minister Tunku Razaleigh Hamzah observed that "sometimes people in power get a bit swollen-headed." Shortly thereafter, during UMNO's regular internal elections, he mounted a bitter, unprecedented challenge to Mahathir's party leadership. Bumper stickers appeared declaring "We want two-car"—a pun on the Malay word *tukar*, or change.

A loss to Razaleigh within UMNO probably would have cost Mahathir the prime ministership. Obliquely, Mahathir's critics suggested that the future of Malaysia's "modified" democracy was at stake. "How many people have I shot?" the prime minister responded. Last April, by a wafer-thin margin (43 votes out of 1,479 cast), Mahathir retained the presidency of his party.

Yet Mahathir's victory will bring him little respite. The battle within UMNO is largely over for now, but Malaysia's larger struggle as a nation may be just beginning. In homogenous South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Thailand, hard-won economic gains have been fueled by consensus and unimpeded by racial strife. In Malaysia, however, the long easy years of post-independence prosperity, which allowed its politicians to buy racial calm, seem to be over. And the old, multi-racial, British-educated leadership, whose shared values, as one historian wrote, "provided the main links by which a communally fragmented society was held together," is gone. For Dr. Mahathir—and his successors—the problem will be to appease the dissatisfied majority, the *bumiputras*, without once again angering the minorities and threatening the peace which is essential to Malaysia's future as a Third World success story.

## BACKGROUND BOOKS

### MALAYSIA

From **The Suma Oriental** (Hakluyt Society, London, 1944) of the 16th century, by Portugal's Tomé Pires, to the present day, most studies of Malaysia have been written by Europeans. And, until recently, argues Syed Hussein Alatas of the University of Singapore, most have perpetuated **The Myth of the Lazy Native** (Cass, 1977).

In a colorful tour of earlier historical writings, Alatas cites dozens of examples of this stereotype. In 1927, for example, Hugh Clifford flatly stated that the Malay "never works if he can help it, and often will not suffer himself to be induced or tempted into doing so by offers of the most extravagant wages."

But, as Alatas notes, the Europeans themselves often unwittingly provided contrary evidence. An English missionary reporting on a visit to Malacca households in 1879 wrote that "the women were lounging about the houses, some cleaning fish, others pounding rice; but they do not care for work."

Asks Alatas: "Is cleaning fish and pounding rice not work?"

In fact, he writes, the Malays were successful in many ventures, not only as independent farmers, but as surveyors, prospectors, drivers, and boatmen. They *did* shun poorly paid jobs in the tin mines, on the rubber plantations, and in other corners of the burgeoning colonial economy. And that earned them the scorn of the *tuans* (masters).

The Malays "were considered indolent," Alatas argues, only "because they avoided the type of slave labor which the Chinese and the Indians were compelled to do owing to their immigrant status."

In **Peasants and their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya, 1874-1941** (Oxford, 1977), Lim Teck Ghee, of the University of Malaysia, seconds some of Alatas's views. The British, he argues, often thwarted the Ma-

lays' efforts to enter the modern cash economy on their own terms.

During the turn-of-the-century rubber boom, for example, thousands of enterprising Malay peasant farmers cleared virgin forests to plant the new cash crop. "Instead of encouraging peasant cultivation of the crop . . . the colonial government, persisting in the view that peasants should be subsistence [rice] producers and that cash cropping should be a monopoly of the planters, tried to prevent its growth." In some cases, British officials refused to lease government lands to Malay rubber smallholders.

Even so, many Malays do not subscribe to the "damned colonialists" theory. Among them is Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Malaysia's prime minister since 1981.

His diagnosis of **The Malay Dilemma** (Asia Pacific, 1970) includes a few jibes at the British, whom he accuses of creating an informal "partnership" with the Chinese at the expense of the Malays. But, in Dr. Mahathir's idiosyncratic view, the "debilitating" effects of heredity and environment are the chief causes of Malay "backwardness."

In ancient Malaya, he writes, "No great exertion or ingenuity was required to obtain food. There was plenty for everyone throughout the year . . . Even the weakest and the least diligent were able to live in comparative comfort, to marry and procreate. The observation that only the fittest would survive did not apply."

Dr. Mahathir contends that by 1970, political dominance, hiring quotas, and other advantages were making the Malays softer. "Removal of all protection would subject the Malays to the primitive laws that enable only the fittest to survive . . . It would perhaps be possible to breed a hardy and resourceful race capable of competing against all comers.

Unfortunately, we do not have 4,000 years to play around with."

After the Chinese-Malay riots of 1969, other Malay politicians concluded (for reasons of their own) that *more* special privileges for Malays were needed. These were contained in the 1971 New Economic Policy (NEP).

The mystery is why the Chinese, who own and manage so much of Malaysia's economy, have so readily accepted second-class political status.

The short answer is that they have little choice. They make up only about one-third of the population. And, despite the NEP, Malaysia's Chinese are generally more prosperous than overseas Chinese in Thailand and many other nearby lands. **The Chinese in Malaya** (Oxford, 1967), by Victor Purcell, is the classic account of their success.

As John M. Gullick writes in **Malaysia: Economic Expansion and National Unity** (Westview, 1981), the Chinese, traditionally indifferent to local politics, have never been able to unite—which may be fortunate for Malaysia. The Chinese city street vendor and trishaw (combination rickshaw and bicycle) driver, and the poor farmer of the rural New Villages created during the emergency, have little in common with the British-educated businessmen who head the Malaysian Chinese Association.

In **The Consul's File** (Simon & Schuster, 1984), a collection of short stories set in Malaysia involving one family, novelist Paul Theroux portrays some of the schisms that divide the Chinese community.

Woo Boh Swee, the owner of a small-town coffee shop, "was thoroughly Chinese; he was a chain smoker, he played mahjong on a back table of the shop, he observed all the Chinese festivals.... He and his wife were great gamblers, and they had two children. The children

went to different schools. It was as if, this once, the Woos were hedging, making an each-way bet. The girl, Jin Bee, was at the Chinese primary school; the boy, Reggie, had been to the Anglo-Chinese school, then to Raffles Institution and the University of Singapore."

Another fine fictional description of the many hues and anomalies of Malaysian life, set during the 1950s, is Anthony Burgess's **Malayan Trilogy** (Penguin, 1973).

A sultan is described as a sophisticate abroad, but "bounded by his own blood and his own river" at home; a high Malay official regards the British as "haughty, white, fat, ugly, by no means *sympathique*, cold, perhaps avaricious," but feels "a sort of warmth" toward them. English-educated Lim Cheng Po concludes: "When we British finally leave, there's going to be hell."

A more recent visitor to Malaysia found the racial antipathies every bit as strong as they were during the 1950s. "It was said in Malaysia," writes V. S. Naipaul in **Among the Believers** (Random, 1982), "that if the Chinese as a community became Muslims, the Malays would become Buddhists."

As Gordon P. Means observes in **Malaysian Politics** (Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), even the remarkably effective political system that Malaysia's leaders have fashioned to accommodate the nation's racial divisions is potentially explosive. The ban on public discussion of racial issues, a muzzled press, and restrictions on opposition parties leave dissenters few outlets.

Easy as it is for Westerners to criticize Malaysia's stunted democratic institutions and the pro-Malay bias of the NEP, Means concludes, it is difficult to imagine workable alternatives that would make "a more unified and democratic society."

## Ideas

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# JOHN STUART MILL AND LIBERTY

The leading philosopher of mid-Victorian England, John Stuart Mill (1806–73), claimed an “ability and willingness to learn from everybody.” This was not necessarily a celebrated man’s ritual, if becoming, modesty. In Mill’s mind, the ideas of earlier thinkers—e.g., John Locke, David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, his own father James Mill—were transformed over the years into classical liberalism, the idea that society is best served by maximum personal freedoms and minimal government. Recent scholarship, as Maurice Cranston relates, has provided new insight into the life of the philosopher who may have learned “from everybody,” but was driven to heed some more than others.

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*by Maurice Cranston*

John Stuart Mill has held the attention of the reading public of the Western world longer than any other 19th-century philosopher, with the notable exception of Karl Marx.

Each man is known as theorist of one central idea. Marx is read by his admirers as a champion of equality. Mill is read for his words on liberty, words that have contributed much to the debates of our own time about the freedom of dissenters, minorities, and women. He was always controversial. William Gladstone, the great Liberal Party leader, disapproved of Mill’s ideas, and refused to attend his funeral. Yet he called him “the Saint of Rationalism.”

John Stuart Mill was born in his father’s comfortable London home in 1806, a time when the Industrial Revolution was already beginning to transform England into a prospering urban nation with a rising middle class, whose leaders’ concerns included how to govern and “improve” such a rapidly changing society. James Mill, a strict disciplinarian who had risen from humble origins to become a senior civil servant with the East India Company, was by then a noted historian, economist, and philosopher. He was an advocate of Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism, which held that all issues of right and wrong



Mill, circa 1860, and Harriet Taylor. The English, he lamented, set "some value" on liberty, yet found the "idea of equality" so "strange."

could be settled by measuring the amount of pleasure or pain that might be caused by any private action or public policy.

James Mill did not send his eldest child to any school; he taught him at home following a strenuous plan of education devised by himself and Bentham to produce the perfect utilitarian. John learned both Greek and Latin before he was nine years old. Religion was excluded from his upbringing.

Mill's education was completed early—and early, too, appeared his oddly coexisting streaks of conformism and rigorous independence. At age 17, he was earning his living as a clerk in the India Office where his father worked. During that year he published his first article—in *The Westminster Review*, the leading English literary journal—and also made his debut as a radical reformer, spending two nights in jail for distributing pamphlets recommending contraceptive techniques as a solution to the problem of poverty in Britain.

At age 20—as he recalled in his *Autobiography*, published after his death in 1873—Mill suffered a depression, from which he recovered by reading poetry. Through Wordsworth and others he discovered romanticism, which challenged the rationalistic philosophy that had been so carefully inculcated in him. "I did not lose . . . sight," he wrote, of "that part of the truth which I had seen before." But "I thought that it had consequences which required to be corrected, by

joining other kinds of cultivation with it.”

Mill aimed at working out a new system of philosophy combining the virtues of rationalism with those of romanticism. But how to reconcile two schools of seemingly opposed thought? The rational solution, Mill decided, could only be to revise logic itself. Mill's chief contribution to this endeavor was his *System of Logic* (1843), which he began at age 24. That it took him 13 years to finish the work was closely related to Mill's less than rational personal life.

Mill was afflicted by a deep sense of loneliness. Once, at the age of 23, he wrote to a friend of his longing for a “perfect friendship.” Soon after he started on his *Logic* essay, Mill met a handsome, intelligent, and imperious young woman named Harriet Taylor. He fell in love with her, and she with him. But Harriet happened to be married—to John Taylor, a prosperous wholesale druggist with a house in London and a country place. She was also the mother of two small children (soon to be joined by a third).

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Even so, during the 19 years before the druggist's death in 1849 enabled them to marry, she and Mill kept constant company.

Alternately reckless and furtive, they behaved as if they were lovers, something they always denied. And yet it was a strangely guilt-ridden relationship. Harriet set up house on her own in rural Blackheath and traveled on the Continent with Mill. They remained, in Harriet's word, *Seelenfreunden* (“soul mates”), because, Mill said, they did not wish to hurt her husband. Mill seems not to have guessed that Mr. Taylor might be as much wounded by the appearance of adultery as by its reality. Nevertheless, Mill, in nervous anger, broke with both his friends and his relatives to lead a rather solitary life with Harriet at Blackheath.

Her hold over his thinking was considerable. If her situation with Mill was a “romantic” one, a triumph of love over convention, her views were not Wordsworthian at all. They were closer to those of the Enlightenment—rationalistic, utilitarian, and radical. Hence, paradoxically, she reinforced on Mill the influence of his father, and not that of the poets.

One example of her influence on Mill is his *Principles of Political Economy*, a long and not conspicuously original book, which debuted in 1848 when Mill was 42. It was originally dedicated to “Mrs. John Taylor,” from whom, Mill wrote, he first grasped many of the book's ideas. After John Taylor's death, and their marriage nearly two years

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later in 1851, Mill took to describing each of his works as a "joint-production" with Harriet. He even spoke of his wife as "the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings." Mill's contemporaries took these tributes as polite hyperbole, but recent scholarship on his manuscripts confirms her larger role.

For instance, in the first edition of *Political Economy*, Mill accepted David Ricardo's theory of value, which focuses on the amount of labor invested in the manufacture of a product. Mill also accepted the Malthusian doctrine that any improvement in the condition of the poor will be negated by the growth of population (although Mill's remedy for overpopulation is not Thomas Malthus's "moral restraint," but contraceptive devices). And Mill endorsed Adam Smith's teaching against the state's intervention in the nation's economic life, arguing that England was already sufficiently burdened with taxes. Economic well-being, he said, required the spur of competition.

When, within a year, a second edition appeared, an essential part of the thesis was reversed. Harriet, who had been won over to the Left by the antimonarchical revolts that shook France and other Continental countries in 1848, pressed Mill to delete criticisms of socialism and communism. Thus, Mill first dismissed proposals for communal property ownership as "almost too chimerical to be reasoned with." In the new edition, these ideas became "the most valuable elements of human improvement now existing."

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Harriet's influence is most significant in Mill's best-known work, *On Liberty*, published in 1859, not long after her death. It is not simply a defense of freedom in the liberal tradition of John Milton and John Locke; it outlines a conception that differs with their ideas, and, strikingly, with Mill's other writings.

For example, Mill described *On Liberty* as a "kind of philosophic textbook of a single truth." This truth was that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection." Elsewhere, Mill attacked the notion of building on a "single truth" in politics; he had criticized the French philosopher Auguste Comte for seeing only one point of view "when there are many others equally essential."

In a later work, *Utilitarianism* (1863), his best-known work on ethics, Mill saw liberty as a part of man's "social state," at once "so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that [except at rare times] he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body." In *On Liberty*, society is the enemy.

The essay is very much a plea for something that both Mill and Harriet felt strongly about: the freedom of the isolated person stand-

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ing outside of and apart from the social body. Whereas earlier liberal philosophers, such as John Locke, had depicted freedom as something to be secured against the constraints of governments or the state, Mill represents freedom as something to be secured primarily against the constraints of other people. Mill does not say much about political rulers; he dwells on the domination of the individual by unwritten laws, conventional ideas, social rules, and public opinion. "When society is itself the tyrant"—over the individuals it comprises—its tyranny is worse than "many kinds of political oppression." A need exists for protection against society's tendency to impose, "by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them."

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We need to remember that Mill wrote *On Liberty* at a time and place when the constraints of the state were few and those of society were many, and, often, onerous. Victorian England was not the land of the despotic Stuart kings, where the liberty Locke pleaded for was mainly a right endangered by political interference. Mill's Victorian contemporaries were seldom oppressed by government, which was minimal (the 1851 census counted fewer than 75,000 public employees, compared with 932,000 in France in 1846). But nearly all individuals were constantly pressured by neighbors, employers, husbands, and fathers, who were dominated in turn by taboos and conventions governing a host of matters—courtship, dress, recreation, use of the Sabbath, and much else.

If Mill felt these constraints keenly, and Harriet even more so, he took care in presenting his case, so it should not seem to be the romantic protest of an alienated individual against a bourgeois environment. He argued as coldly and logically as possible.

There are, he suggested, three possibilities to consider when deciding if men should have freedom of opinion and expression. First, the opinion in question may be true, in which case it is plainly right that it should be published. Second, the opinion may be false; it would still be good for it to be published, because truth gains vigor from being challenged and vindicated. (A true belief that is never challenged becomes a dead maxim, which everyone repeats and nobody thinks about.) Third, the opinion may be partly true and partly false. Again Mill argued for expression, on the ground that the exercise of disentangling the false from the true would help to correct errors.

Since these exhaust the possibilities, Mill concluded, it must always be right to grant liberty of opinion and expression.

"If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion," Mill wrote, "mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the

power, would be justified in silencing mankind." The "peculiar evil" of silencing one opinion is that it robs "the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion still more than those who hold it."

Discussing freedom of action, Mill staked out even more dangerous ground, again under Harriet's sway. Mill rejected the Christian teaching that men are born in sin and that the self must be denied. He asserted his belief in the goodness—and the *potential* goodness—of man. While he conceded that there was sometimes a need for self-denial in putting public happiness before private happiness, Mill emphasized the value of self-expression. Far from accepting the doctrine of the depravity of man, he suggested that it is chiefly through the cultivation of their individuality that "human beings"—and it is to be noted that he uses that term rather than "men"—become "noble and beautiful object[s] of contemplation."

He pleaded for personality, variety, even eccentricity. "In this age the mere example of non-conformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service." Eccentricity rises where "strength of character" abounds. "The amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigour and moral courage which it contains."

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Yet Mill was not advocating unbridled self-expression, or unlimited freedom. Indeed, he said at the beginning of *On Liberty* that his task was to set out exactly what the limits of freedom were. His conclusion: One man's right to liberty of action stops at the point where it might injure or curb the freedom of another man. "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." Otherwise every adult should be allowed to do as he likes.

But supposing, the critic might ask, that what a man likes to do is wrong? Surely he should not then be allowed to do it? Surely the important thing is not that men should do what they want to do but what they *ought* to do? And might it not be the duty of society to help men do what they ought to do?

Mill did not shirk these questions. Take alcoholism, for instance.

Britain's 19th-century prohibitionists viewed drunkenness as a social evil, which could be remedied by enforced abstinence. Mill denied that prohibition would uphold morality. If there was no temptation to overcome, he pleaded, there would be no virtue in overcoming temptation. Morality lies in choosing the better and rejecting the worse. No option, no morality. There would be no scope for character development in a society that closed its bars and brothels, making vice impossible. Mill did not deny that drink did harm. Yet his remedy

was not to curb liberty, but to promote responsible behavior by spreading enlightenment.

It may be that Mill was too optimistic about the power of enlightenment to educate people, too confident about the capacity of men to better themselves morally. And yet, one must not overstate his optimism. His concern for freedom for self-improvement was essentially a concern for those individuals who *chose* to improve themselves. He did not think that the majority had yet developed that capacity. This was why the majority was, in his eyes, the chief enemy of the individual's liberty.

Mill was a liberal, but not a democrat.

Of all tyrannies, he dreaded most the "tyranny of the majority." When Mill thought of freedom, he had in mind the rights of minorities—for example, Irish Catholics, West Indian blacks, and, above all, the minority that was a numerical majority, women. In two tracts, *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1851) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869), he made a remarkable contribution to the literature of feminism, though neither essay had much impact until years later.

Harriet surely inspired these writings. But what is singular about them is that they do not demand, in the manner of most feminist writing, equality for women. Rather, Mill argues for the *liberty* of women, which is linked with the liberty of men. He does not urge that women should be freed from the domination of men, but that women as well as men should be freed from the rule of custom, habit, and tradition, which holds both sexes in bondage.

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"Women's rights" are claimed—for instance, the right to own property or to vote in parliamentary elections. Yet these are not claimed as natural rights or ends in themselves, but as elements of a wider program of human emancipation, in which women's interests are seen as identical to men's. In *Considerations On Representative Government* (1861), Mill rejected the idea of "Mr. [John] Bright and his school of democrats" that a vote was any man's or woman's right. A vote, Mill argued, was a trust. It should be exercised only by responsible people, male or female. Mill recommended that educated persons be allowed plural votes, to give their voice the added weight it deserved. He suggested that proportional representation be introduced into parliamentary elections, not because it was more democratic, but to provide better for the representation of minorities.

Mill believed that the day would come when the demand for universal suffrage would prove irresistible. The answer, he thought, would be to reform the tax system so that "every grown person in the community" should become a taxpayer. He did not want a system of voting "like that of New York," which enabled people who paid no

taxes to vote for levies on people who did.\*

Mill also urged preparation for universal suffrage via immediate universal education. His belief in the saving powers of enlightenment led him to favor the enlargement of the state's powers to counteract the pressures of society. He agreed that the state had the right to interfere with the freedom of the family in forcing children to go to school. Since children are excluded from the class of people for whom freedom is demanded in *On Liberty*, his proposal for compulsory education (which began, at the primary level, in 1880) is not, in itself, inconsistent with his principles. But his plea for the control of marriage and childbearing cannot escape that criticism. He asks not only for laws that would "forbid marriage unless the parties can show that they have the means for supporting a family," he also invites society to step in where the laws are ineffective, so that an improvident marriage shall become a subject of social stigma.

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It was precisely because Mill set such a high value on intellectual and general culture that he mistrusted those who lacked it. He scorned the proletariat. The English working classes, he wrote, "are in conduct the most disorderly, debauched, and unruly, and least respectable and trustworthy of any nation whatsoever." He was, therefore, anxious to ensure that universal suffrage did not raise the status of the people in any more than a nominal sense. "The people ought to be the masters," he wrote, "but they are masters who must employ servants more skilful than themselves." He even proposed that institutions be set up to ensure a "standing opposition to the will of the majority."

Mill detested the idea of the nation being ruled by nobles or by the rich. But he did favor rule by another elite—professional administrators, civil servants, and bureaucrats like himself and his colleagues at the India Office, who were responsible for governing millions on the subcontinent.

"There is a radical difference," he wrote, "between controlling the business of government and actually doing it." He wanted the controlling to be done by Parliament and a representative body of taxpayers, and the actual governing to be done by specialists, with a "commission of legislation" (also composed of specialists) to draft measures on which Parliament would be invited to vote.

Ordinary people "do not need political rights in order that they

\*Various qualifications (e.g., property ownership, taxpayer status) kept British voter rolls low during the 19th century. Mill, as a Liberal M.P., tried but failed to amend the Reform Bill of 1867 to allow women to vote in national elections. In 1918, Parliament enfranchised all men over age 21 and women over 30 who could (or had husbands who could) vote in local elections. Women were finally welcomed at the polls on the same terms as men only in 1928—nine years after U.S. women got the vote, 16 years before French women did.

may govern, but in order that they may not be misgoverned.”

When Harriet died in 1858, at Avignon, France, Mill wrote to Louis Blanc, the French socialist, that England had lost its “greatest mind.” Mill’s grief was intense, but short-lived. His health, frail throughout his years with Harriet, improved. During their seven years of marriage, he had published little. He emerged from his long seclusion, during which he had earned the reputation of a misanthrope, to become a popular figure in London intellectual society.

In 1865, at age 59, Mill was invited to stand for Parliament as a Liberal Party candidate in London’s Westminster district. He said he would do so if it was understood that his only object in the House of Commons would be to promote the ideas expressed in his writings and that no further pledges were demanded of him.

As a campaigner, Mill did not promise to be a crowd-pleaser. At one of his election meetings, the novelist Thomas Hardy—a distant relation of Harriet’s—described him standing “bareheaded,” with “his vast pale brow, so thin-skinned as to show the blue veins, sloped back like a stretching upland,” conveying “to the observer a curious sense of perilous exposure.”

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Yet Mill had blunt-spoken charm. Once he held a meeting for working people—who had no vote, but, Mill thought, possessed as much right as the middle classes to see and hear their representative. Mill’s foes exhumed all the harsh words he had ever written about the proletariat. A man carrying a placard saying that the lower classes, “though mostly habitual liars, are ashamed of lying,” asked Mill if he had written those words. Said Mill: “I did.” After a pause, the workers cheered. Their leader told Mill that they appreciated his candor. Mill soon found he had more power to sway such a crowd than any other Liberal M.P. except William Gladstone.

In his *Autobiography*, Mill recalls the time when a Tory government sent police to break up a meeting of workingmen in Hyde Park. The men, says Mill, “showed a determination to make another attempt at meeting in the Park, to which many of them would probably have come armed; the Government made military preparations to resist the attempt, and something very serious seemed impending.” Mill decided to address the workers’ meeting. “I told them that a proceeding which would certainly produce a collision with the military could only be justifiable on two conditions; if the position of affairs had become such that a revolution was desirable, and if they thought themselves able to accomplish one. To this argument, after considerable discussion, they at last yielded.”

In Parliament, Mill upheld workers’ right of assembly and backed working-class candidates. In general, Mill argued for progres-

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sive causes in the Commons. He tried to save the lives of some Irish nationalists condemned for fomenting rebellion. He led a campaign against Governor Edward Eyre of Jamaica, who had arrested and hanged more than 30 black rebels. He fought for prostitutes' civil liberties, imperiled by a Contagious Diseases Act, and gave speeches (invariably to a derisive audience) in favor of women's suffrage.

But Mill was not always progressive. He distanced himself from the men he called "philanthropists" on, for instance, the abolition of capital punishment. In 1868, he spoke in the Commons for retention of the death penalty for murder, with his arguments drawn from his utilitarian theory of morals.

The threat of death, he said, was uniquely powerful as a deterrent, more likely than any other form of punishment to diminish the number of murders. Since the general goal of public policy should be to minimize pain, such deterrence should be paramount. Second, Mill argued that a quick death on the gallows was less painful in fact than a lingering death in prison (even though the fear of such a death had a greater power to deter criminals); execution was thus less cruel than life imprisonment. Mill did not imagine that even the "philanthropists" would be so foolish as to advocate any punishment for murder less severe than a life sentence without parole.

Mill's support for capital punishment was popular, but some of his other views were too advanced for even Westminster's enlightened 19th-century bourgeoisie. His support for contraception and divorce, his association with union leaders, and above all his feminism, cost him re-election in 1868. When he lost his Commons seat, he went to Avignon; there, near the cemetery where Harriet was buried, he bought a house, which he furnished with items from the hotel room in which she had died.

Five years later, at age 66, Mill died at Avignon.

Before he left London, Mill had become a close friend of a fellow parliamentarian, Viscount Amberley, who shared his ideas and continued to champion them. Shortly before he died, Mill became the agnostic's equivalent of a godfather to the Amberleys' infant son. Said Lady Amberley: "There is no one in whose steps I would rather see a boy of mine following." The child's name was Bertrand Russell.



*"Our hero," Harry Raymond, leaves home to seek his fortune in Sink or Swim (1870), by Horatio Alger, Jr. One of America's all-time best-selling authors, Alger once said that he aimed to provide the nation's youth with "inspiring examples of what energy, ambition, and an honest purpose may achieve."*

# Social Mobility In America

Not since the 1920s has the United States experienced such topsy-turvy economic change. During the current decade, the nation has witnessed a deep recession, a roaring bull market, instant Wall Street tycoons, bankrupt Texas oilmen, millionaire baseball players, a wave of farm foreclosures, Yuppies, and unemployed steelworkers. Who has gained, who has lost are matters of intense debate.

This year, politicians and academics ponder a “shrinking middle class” (variously defined) and a seemingly permanent black and white “underclass” (also variously defined). Are the losses of high-wage factory jobs and federal cuts in college aid hurting individual opportunities to get ahead? In short, is upward mobility—a key element of the American Dream—in a sudden decline?

It may seem so, if the U.S. economy turns sour. And, in that case, some historians predict that we may see a revival of class tensions, of political appeals to new “have-nots” to take it away from the “haves,” as during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Nevertheless, as measured by sociologists, social mobility in America—people moving up or down the socioeconomic ladder in each generation—seems to be continuing at roughly the same lively tempo as it has been during most of this century. Of today’s white-collar male professionals and managers, more than 40 percent are the sons of blue-collar workers.

At any given moment, a statistical snapshot shows considerable income inequality in America; but there are also considerable changes in individuals’ status during their own lifetimes. Fewer than one-half of all Americans below the poverty line in one year, for example, are still below the poverty line the following year.

Here, Clyde C. Griffen describes the evolution of upward mobility—as ideal and reality—in America. Robert W. Hodge and Steven Lagerfeld analyze the changing politics of opportunity. And Howard M. Bahr revisits “Middletown, U.S.A.” (Muncie, Indiana) to report on the fortunes of three local families.

## UPWARD BOUND

*by Clyde C. Griffen*

Land of opportunity, of self-made men, where newcomers from every nation can slough off old habits and restrictions and strive for advancement. That is one of the ways Americans like to think of their country. And it seems as if they always have. In 1782, the French-born New York farmer-author, J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, wrote of the immigrant in the New World: "He forms schemes of future prosperity, he proposes to educate his children better than he has been educated himself; he thinks of future modes of conduct, feels an ardor to labor he never felt before."

In one sense, the contemporary ring of Crèvecoeur's observation is misleading, for the popular meanings of "self-improvement" and "opportunity" have varied over the years. Chattel slaves aside, Crèvecoeur's America was mostly a nation of farmers, savoring the freedom of thought and action that comes with tilling one's own land. The early goals that he described were those of sturdy independence or a modest rise in earnings and status. Later came visions of "rags-to-riches," and, especially during the 20th century, notions of success as "self-fulfillment" and psychic well-being.

But, in another sense, the freshness of Crèvecoeur's words is a reminder of the tension that has always existed between American ideas of material success and other notions of self-improvement—moral, religious, and intellectual. Today, in academe, in the popular press, and in opinion polls, Americans still seem to vacillate among these diverse ideas, even as "social mobility" is generally equated with individual movement up or down the socioeconomic ladder.

Moreover, only during the past few decades have historians looked closely at the changing visions and realities of social mobility in American history. Easiest to see were the heroes and maxims held aloft by authors of popular fiction (e.g., Horatio Alger, Jr.) and advice books. Even with the help of computers, the more difficult task has been the analysis of masses of data (censuses, tax lists, probate records, and other quantifiable sources) in an attempt to reconstruct changing patterns of Americans' fortunes during individual careers and between generations. Archives vary in quality and coverage. Scholars' confidence in generalizing from these sources also varies. But historians have enough of an outline to see that the story of social mobility—up and down—in America is much more complex and significant than was previously thought.

Anglo-Americans began life in America with Old World visions of a static social order. In 1630, when John Winthrop addressed his Puritan



*"The wilderness ever opened the gate of escape to the poor, the discontented and oppressed," declared historian Frederick Jackson Turner. But the West was most important as a safety valve for displaced farmers from the East, aided by the Homestead Act of 1862. Here, a family arrives in Nebraska's Loup Valley in 1886.*

shipmates aboard the *Arbella* before leading them ashore in Massachusetts, he reminded them that a fixed social hierarchy was God's ordering of "differences for the preservation and good of the whole . . . in all times some must be rich some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection."

In Winthrop's austere Massachusetts Bay Colony, personal ambition received no encouragement. The well-being of the community required that all individuals fulfill the responsibilities of their respective ranks in life. The vast majority would follow in the footsteps of their fathers and become farmers. (In a more unusual example of continuity, Winthrop, his son, and his grandson all served as colonial governors.) The few colonists who rose from lowly origins to grander positions would simply adopt the customs, dress, and manners of their new peers.

A century and a half later, Benjamin Franklin signaled the beginning of a shift in American conceptions of both individual mobility and community. Once a poor boy, now rich and famous, the plump, bespectacled Franklin sailed to Europe at age 70 in 1776 to enlist the aid of France in the war against Britain. Presenting himself to the elegant court of King Louis XVI "plainly dressed," he served notice on the world that upward mobility in the United States need not entail putting on the trappings of aristocracy. The French adored the author of *Poor Richard's Almanack*

(1733–58); the Comte de Ségur marveled that such a “rustic” sage could appear in “our effeminate and slavish age.”

Much earlier, Franklin had begun shedding the habits of deference and dependence bred by the hierarchical Anglo-Saxon social order. He had started his career as a printer in colonial Boston during the 1720s with the traditional hope of finding helpful patrons in high places. Sadly disabused of that notion by Sir William Keith, the colonial governor, who had deceived him with empty promises, Franklin moved to Philadelphia and turned to self-reliance. With 11 other artisans and tradesmen, he founded the Junto, a voluntary association devoted to civic uplift—it created a subscription library and a volunteer fire company—and to the advancement of its members’ business interests.

In effect, Franklin pointed the way from an Anglo-American tradition of order and hierarchy to new ideals of voluntary association designed to meet collective needs and to provide opportunities for individual social and economic progress for everyone.

### **An Aristocracy Is Born**

Ironically, this change began even as upward mobility was, in fact, declining in some areas of the country, notably parts of the South.

Many of the first Southern settlers had made extraordinary gains. During the early 1600s, Maryland and Virginia were the extreme cases, where economics (i.e. a tobacco boom) and demographics conspired to create striking opportunities. The profits from producing and exporting tobacco leaf spurred growers to import hundreds of young male indentured servants from England. They contracted to labor for roughly five years in the tobacco fields and curing sheds, in return for passage to the New World and room and board once there. Typhoid fever and other diseases took a heavy toll of the new arrivals in the humid Chesapeake lowlands. But, perversely, the high mortality rate opened possibilities for those who survived.

They prospered amid adversity, often quite visibly. In 1618, John Pory of Virginia noted that “a wife of one that in England had professed the black arte not of a scholler but of a collier of Croydon, weares her rough bever hatt with a faire perle hattband, and a silken suite therto correspondent.” (The next year, the colonial authorities felt impelled to enact an ordinance banning such flamboyant dress.) Of the indentured Englishmen who entered Maryland before 1642, and who survived for a decade or more, only about one-tenth failed to become landowners. Their holdings—usually 50 to 400 acres—might be enough only to

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allow a "rude sufficiency" of living, but the owners were independent.

By the 1660s, however, falling tobacco prices sharply reduced opportunities for ex-servants. Only half of the young indentured English who stepped ashore in Maryland during that decade eventually obtained their own land. Ordinary farmers struggled just to stay out of debt. It generally took money—enough capital or credit to support large-scale enterprises, or to branch out into trade—to make money. Throughout the Chesapeake region, this disparity between rich and poor promoted a new social structure, a nascent Southern "aristocracy." The self-made men acquired titles—mister, gentleman, esquire—and demanded deference from the less fortunate souls who were now their social inferiors. The *nouveaux riches* presumed, as people back in England did, that hierarchy was the Divinely intended order of things, even though their own ranking within it had changed. Upward mobility had not yet emerged as a popular ideal.

In New England, the 17th-century settlers were soon established in well-regulated towns and villages. Religious faith, poorer soils, the least dynamic economy in the colonies, and a healthier climate combined to create a more stable society. Often surviving into old age, Yankee parents did not designate their heirs early, thus giving older people subtle influences over the careers of the young. Individual progress largely followed the life cycle. The men at the bottom of society at a given moment, mostly young and single, would generally gain entry to the middling ranks of established farmers if they lived long enough to inherit their parents' farms. Those who lost the favor of their parents might light out for the frontier to acquire land, or seek jobs in the coastal towns and cities as dockworkers, stable boys, or sailors.

### Looking West

Few struck it rich. Colonial seaport cities, even in New England, were not showcases of rapid individual advancement. During the decades before the Revolution, thanks in part to windfall profits reaped by merchants who secured contracts to provision British troops and warships in the colonies, the size of the largest fortunes in Boston and Philadelphia increased dramatically—and so did conspicuous consumption. The wealthy built fine new homes and purchased country estates. In the City of Brotherly Love, John Cadwalader, a hugely successful merchant, rode through the cobblestone streets during the early 1770s in an elegant new English-made coach behind a coachman and six horses, with two of his 12 slaves riding postilion.

At the other extreme, the harsh Northern winters often brought joblessness and uncommon hardships to dockworkers, bricklayers, and ordinary laborers. The rising cost of living reduced even journeymen in some crafts (e.g., tailors, cobblers) nearly to the subsistence level. The indigent filled almshouses. But historians know relatively little about mo-



*The "log cabin" myth. In 1840, General William Henry Harrison, the hero of Tippecanoe, boasted of humble origins when he ran for president on the Whig ticket. Actually, he was born on a Virginia plantation. But Harrison and his running mate, John Tyler, defeated Democrat Martin Van Buren.*

bility in the middling ranks, among men in the professional, commercial, and artisan classes, who in theory had fair prospects for self-employment and at least modest prosperity.

What is clear is that by the 1770s, a small but influential patriotic gentry had emerged in Boston, New York, and other cities, and in the plantation colonies of the South. These were the men who would lead the Revolution. When Thomas Jefferson proposed in 1778, during the Revolution, that 20 bright but poor Virginia boys "be raked from the rubbish" and educated at state expense, he consciously did so to enlarge, as historian Robert Wiebe says, "the small pool of leaders at the top of the pyramid where gentlemen of breeding, wealth, and talent made their contribution 'to the general happiness' by forming and directing the revolutionary republics."

But the gentry's heyday was brief. Only a few decades after Jefferson made his proposal, the nation's rapid expansion toward the midwestern prairies mixed and dispersed the population, creating new societies where even those settlers who had been leaders in the East had to prove themselves anew. "The feeblest and most obscure do not now despair of exerting influence," declared temperance leader Justin Edwards.

"No longer looking upward within a contained system," writes

Wiebe, Americans "looked outward, saw the land stretching endlessly ahead, and followed it."

By the 1820s, universal white manhood suffrage had been achieved in nearly every state, as property qualifications and other restrictions were dropped by well-to-do Federalists in some states, and by their equally well-heeled Jeffersonian opponents in others. Each party hoped that the new voters would remain loyal out of gratitude to their upper-class benefactors. Instead, the spokesmen for the unwashed engaged in scathing attacks on the "privileged aristocracy" and clamored for more egalitarian reforms. "We find ourselves oppressed on every hand," complained Philadelphia's "Unlettered Mechanic," a pamphleteer, in 1827. "We labor hard in producing all the comforts of life for the enjoyment of others, while we ourselves obtain but a scanty portion."

### Being First Is Best

After Andrew Jackson, widely perceived as the candidate of "King 'Mob,'" defeated the Old Guard's John Quincy Adams in the election of 1828, American politicians learned to portray themselves and their allies as men with a common touch. In 1832, Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky found it prudent to describe the home state manufacturers whom he wished to aid with a protective tariff as "self-made men, who have acquired whatever wealth they possess by patient and diligent labor."

Generally, as historian David Brion Davis notes, "mobile men began boasting of their humble origins and their ability to have made it on their own, without influence and patronage, even without education, or at least a gentleman's education."

It is now easy to forget, says Davis, how "novel, indeed, radical" this was. The new American obeisance to the self-made and the self-taught baffled English visitors like Mrs. Trollope, mother of the famous novelist, to whom these labels meant badly made and badly taught. In Europe, kings, generals, and poets might be considered worthy of respect; the entrepreneur as hero was a preposterous notion. The London *Daily News* was still flying in the face of received opinion at mid-century when its editors wrote, "It is time that the *millionaire* should cease to be ashamed of having made his own fortune."

During the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville emphasized how restless and mobile Americans were, endlessly abandoning homes, occupations, and half-completed projects to pursue new opportunities. In fact, recent research shows, population turnover was dizzying: Because of out-migration and deaths, for example, 56 percent of the men living in Boston in 1830 had disappeared by the end of the decade, replaced by new arrivals. (Similarly, today in Boston and other cities, 40 to 60 percent of the inhabitants depart every decade.) Tocqueville and some American conservatives worried about the social costs of this continual upheaval. But most Americans seemed to find change exhilarating. Ralph Waldo Emer-

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son cheered the “sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who teams it, farms it, peddles, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth . . . and always like a cat falls on his feet.”

The path of advancing settlement from Ohio to Iowa comes closest to Tocqueville’s portrait of a bubbling, restless society, uncongenial to the aristocrat. In the towns that sprang up on the frontier, deference to “gentlemen” vanished, and so did many an Eastern fortune, lost in land speculation. The first settlers honed their political skills building local governments and campaigning for roads, bridges, and canals. Possession of at least some capital gave many a head start, but, generally, first arrivals made greater gains than either their descendants or latecomers. Being first was best. Here and there, “first families”—such as the Coulters, Fogles, Shorbs, Lathrops, and Stidgers of Canton, Ohio—managed to preserve their local pre-eminence for generations.

Back East, as factories began to develop, opportunities for artisans to work for themselves dwindled. As early as 1802, a New York City journeyman in Benjamin Franklin’s trade complained that “the business of Printing being very expensive to establish, from the high price of materials, very few of those, who are obliged to resort to journey-work . . . ever have it in their power to realize a capital sufficient to commence business on their own account.”

### **The Rich Get Richer**

Yet opportunity contracted so unevenly in different places and in different industries that urban Americans could easily fail to see that, for the majority, industrialization was destroying the old dream of becoming one’s own boss.

In Paterson, New Jersey, for example, only a small number of workmen actually became iron, machinery, and locomotive manufacturers after 1830. But most of Paterson’s successful industrialists had been apprentices and journeymen before opening small shops or factories of their own, so it was tempting for artisan wage-earners to imagine becoming entrepreneurs themselves. In the bigger cities, most workers probably saw that aspiration as fantasy by 1860. Indeed, the first stirrings of class-conscious labor activity had already appeared in the metropolises; in 1828, Philadelphia’s Mechanics’ Union of Trade Associations created the first of many local workingmen’s political parties.

But, even before the Civil War, industrialization created a host of new white-collar jobs in the towns and cities—downtown retailer, mill supervisor, bookkeeper. From Baltimore to Chicago, the new middle class enjoyed important advances in consumption—wool carpets, indoor toilets, pianos, and other “luxuries” that few had known earlier.

Ironically, the new age also brought the first marked overall rise in economic stratification since the late 17th century, chiefly because the

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profits from emerging industries, such as textiles and iron, lined the pockets of the well-to-do. The rich got richer. Among the 52 men in Boston worth more than \$200,000 in 1848, notes Edward Pessen of the City University of New York, 75 percent had been rich already in 1833, and most of the rest had been at least well-off. By 1860, five percent of the nation's families owned more than half of its wealth.

Amid the economic ferment of the era, Americans struggled to reconcile different models of success—fulfilling the obligations of one's calling, improving one's character, becoming a capitalist. They devoured popular almanacs, advice books for the young, and sentimental fiction, penned mostly by men from "proper" middle-class families, who tended to uphold the old notion of achievement only within limited bounds. "Instruct them that the farmer's frock and the mechanic's apron are as honorable as the merchant's and clerk's paletot or the student's cap," wrote Sylvester Judd, a Massachusetts minister and popular novelist. "Show them how to rise *in* their calling, not out of it."

### The Wheel of Fortune

Franklin remained the great symbol and teacher for all Americans, but it was possible to draw different lessons from his writings. At mid-century, Connecticut's famous "learned blacksmith," Elihu Burritt, who had schooled himself in ancient languages, mathematics, and geography while working at the forge, gained national fame as a living incarnation of Franklin's credo that the dignity of manual labor could be reinforced through self-education.

Businessmen emphasized Franklin's view that success depended upon practice of the simple economic virtues—thrift, zeal, honesty, hard work. But strains appeared as the marketplace changed and the size of fortunes increased. When John Jacob Astor, fur trader and real-estate speculator *extraordinaire*, died in 1848, leaving almost all of his \$20 million to his relatives and a pittance to charity, newspaper obituary writers hinted darkly that Astor had made part of his fortune by illicit means. The New York *Herald* accused the "self-invented money-making machine" of trying to create an "Astor dynasty"; another newspaper noted that Astor's estate was "much less than was expected, but still too much for any man."

As attacks on the rich grew sharper, many conservatives feared that the rights of property—and the future of the Republic—might be in jeopardy. They insisted even more vehemently that the wealthy in America generally succeeded by their virtues, that every American could be a capitalist. "The wheel of fortune is in constant operation," declared Governor Edward Everett of Massachusetts, "and the poor in one generation furnish the rich of the next."

Even after the Civil War, many Americans probably accepted one of these idealized visions of self-improvement. But also popular were doz-

### THE GOLDEN DOOR

“With me bundle on me shoulder,/Faith! there’s no man could be bolder;/I’m lavin’ dear old Ireland without warnin’/For I lately took the notion/For to cross the briny ocean,/And I’m off for Philadelphia in the mornin’.”

So went a 19th-century ditty, hummed, presumably, by many of the 650,000 Irish who fled the Great Potato Famine of the 1840s. Between 1820 and 1880, they were joined by some nine million other immigrants—Germans, Britons, Scandinavians. A “second wave” of some 23 million immigrants, mainly from Italy, Greece, Poland, Russia (mostly Jews), and other Slavic countries, arrived between 1880 and 1920.

Many of the immigrants sailed into New York Harbor, hoping, as the famous inscription at the base of the Statue of Liberty promised, that they were passing through a “golden door.” But a good number were driven across the Atlantic less by dreams of wealth than by the lash of necessity. Some, such as the Irish, were escaping economic misfortune, or, in the case of Russian Jews, religious persecution. Others hoped chiefly to win better pay for their toil. At the turn of the century, for example, a Hungarian mechanic could multiply his wages fivefold simply by emigrating to the United States.

Disillusionment awaited more than a few. “I looked out into the alley below and saw palefaced children scrambling in the gutter,” recalled Russian-born novelist Anzia Yezeirska (1885–1970) of her early years in New York City. “‘Where is America?’ cried my heart.” But Yezeirska, like many others, did finally make her way out of the slums.

How the various ethnic groups fared in the New World depended not only on what attitudes and skills they brought with them, but also on where they settled. Many mid-19th century Irishmen, for example, clustered in relatively stagnant, pre-industrial Yankee Boston. Having worked mostly as unskilled farm laborers at home, Irishmen took jobs as bartenders, teamsters, and dockworkers; women often served as maids or mill hands. Only a handful managed to escape to Dorchester or other “lace curtain” neighborhoods. The Irish knack for politics—Hugh O’Brien’s Democratic machine captured City Hall in 1885—yielded Thanksgiving turkeys and street-cleaning jobs for the party faithful, but upward career mobility for only a few.

Several generations later, many Irish of South Boston work at the same jobs as their forefathers did. But, in cities where economic opportunities were greater, such as San Francisco and Detroit, the Irish moved somewhat more easily into the economic mainstream.

By contrast, the German immigrants tended to arrive with useful skills, as shoemakers, tailors, and butchers. In St. Louis, Milwaukee, and other cities, they often advanced relatively quickly; many opened their own shops. Likewise, many Jews of the “second wave” were experienced in the needle trades, and arrived in the United States just as New York City’s garment industry was beginning its rapid expansion.

The Jews quickly embraced the American “success ethic.” Like the Ger-

mans, they opened their own small shops as soon as they were able, or became subcontractors to garment manufacturers. One such “sweater” family was described by Danish-born New York journalist Jacob Riis in his 1890 classic, *How the Other Half Lives*: The family “hoards up \$30 a month, and in a few years will own a tenement somewhere and profit by . . . rent collecting. It is the way the savings of [the Jews] are universally invested.”

With their traditional respect for learning, the Jews emphasized the education of their young at all costs, while Irish, Polish, and Italian Catholic families, if forced to choose, tended to send their children to work instead of to school. In 1907, the editors of New York’s Italian-language *Bolletino della Sera* complained that “Italian families falsify even the ages of their children in order to send them to the factories.”

The Italians, as well as the Jews, Poles, and Scandinavians, benefited from active religious traditions, and the various charitable and mutual-aid organizations that revolved around their churches or synagogues. Strong families and a commitment to community seem to have helped all of these groups adjust to life in America. But, as in Irish South Boston, too much ethnic solidarity could hinder assimilation.

In certain enclaves, such as the working-class Italian North End in Boston, cloistered immigrant groups simply rejected the success ethic as destructive to church, family, and community life. Studying these “urban villagers” as late as the 1950s, sociologist Herbert Gans found that “the idea that work can be a central purpose of life . . . organized into a series of related jobs that make up a career is virtually nonexistent.” In the close-knit Scandinavian farming communities of Minnesota and Wisconsin, “overachievers” were discouraged. Garrison Keillor recalls in his fictional memoir of his Minnesota boyhood, *Lake Wobegon Days* (1985), that the firing of Bernie Carlson, host of the local radio station’s “Farm Hour,” was held up by local folk as an example of “what happens to people who get too big.”

By the second generation, differences in the mobility of the various groups became more pronounced. Jews progressed the fastest, followed by Italians, Catholic Slavs, and Scandinavians. The Irish lagged behind. But, as historians Alice Kessler-Harris and Virginia Yans-McLaughlin observe, the link between ethnic background and individual progress weakens dramatically by the third generation, except among Jews. By 1969, for example, Italian-Americans and Irish-Americans had achieved nearly identical levels of schooling, income, and occupational status. After three generations, the “golden door” had finally swung wide for them, and new immigrants—Mexicans, Koreans, Chinese—were arriving to test Miss Liberty’s promise again.



Ellis Island, 1905

—C.G.

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ens of satires that undercut all the solemn talk about sticking with the daily grind as the way to succeed. "It is good to be shifty in a new country," was the motto of J. J. Hooper's fictional Simon Suggs.

By the end of the 19th century, the wealth of the very rich both awed and alarmed the American public. Carnegie, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, and Duke became household names; the New York *Tribune* astonished its readers in 1892 when it published a list of reputed millionaires containing more than 4,000 names. That year, the Populist Party platform of presidential candidate General James Baird Weaver warned that the nation was splitting into two classes: tramps and millionaires. "The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind."

"The problem of our age," declared steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, one of the few truly self-made men among the millionaires, "is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor." As Carnegie noted, the transformation of the economy by big corporations meant that, in many cases, face to face contact between employer and employees "is at an end. Rigid Castes are formed, and, as usual, mutual ignorance breeds mutual distrust." But Carnegie argued that the change was both inevitable and beneficial, that cheaper and better goods provided by the modern economy meant that the "poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford."

He had a point. Real wages had increased after the Civil War, so that skilled workers, and even ordinary factory hands with children who brought home wages, could acquire decent housing, sewing machines, and other comforts that helped take the edge off the huge disparities in wealth during the Gilded Age. A workingman might resent those who dined at Delmonico's or owned mansions in Newport, but a rising standard of living could be enough to resign him to his lot.

### Doing Better Than Dad

Redefining the meaning of opportunity in an age of Big Business proved to be a long and often confusing process. Dozens of new books about success appeared, increasingly with that word in their title. Many were soothing but largely irrelevant sermons, harking back to the bygone world of small shops and counting rooms, defining success in terms of "living an earnest, honest, pure life." Contrary to today's popular impression, even the prolific Horatio Alger, Jr. (1832-99) did not emphasize money-getting. As historian John G. Cawelti writes, Alger's young heroes did not go from "rags to riches," but (often with more luck than hard work) from "rags to respectability."

White Americans who extolled the "land of opportunity" before 1900 did not have blacks or women in mind. Unless economic hardship forced women to work after marriage, they belonged at home. Their social status depended on that of their menfolk. The feminization of



*Henry Adams (1838–1918), whose grandfather and great-grandfather had occupied the White House, was one of the harshest critics of materialistic individualism. At the turn of the century, he criticized America’s “20 million horsepower society” for its excessive rationalism and naive optimism.*

teaching did provide careers, and, in the larger city school systems, some upward mobility for single women. But female achievement was discouraged and remained exceptional, and so, like that of blacks, invisible in the literature on success.

Not until 1891 did an American dictionary, *The Century Dictionary*, define success as the “art of gaining money.” By then, the careers of the notorious “robber barons”—Daniel Drew, Jay Gould, and Cornelius Vanderbilt—rendered largely implausible the traditional notion that wealth was a reward for personal virtue. The defenders of the very rich increasingly emphasized not their personal virtues or how they made or disposed of their money, but simply the number of jobs which their capital created—a far more utilitarian justification.

Neither the robber barons nor the growth of corporate business, nor sermons on success seemed to have any effect on American opportunities during the late 19th century. Surveying studies of U.S. cities, Stephan Thernstrom found that little changed; indeed, mobility remained the same at least through the early 20th century. Overall, he discovered much more upward mobility in individual careers (12 to 22 percent of his sample population per decade) than downward (seven to 12 percent). Progress *between generations* was even greater: In Boston, more than

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two-fifths of the sons in every generation climbed at least one rung above their fathers on the ladder.

The men who managed to get ahead within their own lifetimes generally took small steps: A casual laborer might land a regular factory job; a wage-earning shoemaker might open his own shop; or a clerk in a hardware store might become a partner in the enterprise. During the mid-19th century in Boston, the nation's fourth largest metropolis, and Poughkeepsie, a small Hudson River city, 60 percent of skilled manual workers remained at that level. But an impressive one-fourth or more rose (mostly to run their own small workshops and stores), and just one-seventh or less sank into lower status jobs.

In the two cities, according to Thernstrom, one-third or more of the men who started work in menial jobs (e.g., porter, stable man) managed to better themselves. In Boston, the largest percentage found low-paying white-collar jobs, probably reflecting the greater opportunities for sales and clerical workers in a commercial entrepôt; in Poughkeepsie, more found their way into the higher-paid skilled trades as masons, coopers, or machinists.

### Mental Sunshine

Beyond showing how differences among cities and their occupational structures affected one's chances of getting ahead—best in a commercial center like Boston, worst in a one-industry mill town—historians have been unable to pin down other factors affecting individual mobility during the nation's 19th-century industrial surge. We can say, however, that the school of "hard knocks" had more graduates than did formal institutions of learning. In 1870, only two percent of the nation's teenagers received high school diplomas; by 1910, only nine percent did. But many professionals, shopkeepers, and some craftsmen saw that the future lay in the expanding world of white-collar work. Increasingly, they sent their children to the new public high schools.

As if to reconcile urban Americans to their dwindling chances of becoming their own bosses, a number of popular writers around the turn of the century offered a new definition of success that seemed more compatible with the emerging economy of affluence and large firms. With the right outlook, these writers suggested, one could make just about any confining corporate job satisfying. Ralph Waldo Trine, Orison Swett Marden, and other advocates of "New Thought" saw success chiefly in terms of "fulfillment" and "self-realization." They spoke of the "creative life" and of the pleasures of achievement rather than of competition in the world of work. Philosopher William James lent crucial support: "*Believe what is in the line of your needs*, for only by such belief is the need fulfilled . . . . Have faith that you can successfully make it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment."

The New Thinkers also advised middle-class readers to cultivate

“mental sunshine” and to take time to savor nature, family, and hobbies; they warned against total obsession with business.

Even writers who clung to more materialistic notions of success began to emphasize new virtues, such as “personality” and “psychic energy,” which seemed useful in getting ahead within the new corporate bureaucracies. Americans would have to learn to sell themselves. In *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), adman Bruce Barton portrayed Jesus as both the exemplar of these qualities and the founder of modern business. Jesus, wrote Barton, had “picked up 12 men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world.”

Jesus was no “kill-joy,” he said, but “the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem” who could teach modern Americans “a happier more satisfying way of living.”\*

At various times later in the 20th century, popular writers, politicians, and academics would reconsider the challenge that the rise of Big Business (and, later, Big Government) posed to traditional American notions of success and independence. Few would take so complaisant a view of the challenge as did these early writers.

The rise of Big Business may have made self-employment a receding prospect for most urban Americans, but studies of the early 20th century show an increase in upward *occupational* mobility, most of it due to the massive American exodus from the farms to the cities (which began around the time of the Civil War). Already by 1900, 20 farmers were leaving the land for every city dweller who became a farmer. A man fresh from the hinterland might land a job in a Dayton, Ohio, cash register factory or as a shipping clerk in a Chicago warehouse; his sons could expect to do better.

### Moving Up In Europe, Too

Helping them along was the influx of cheap labor, chiefly from Italy and Eastern Europe (1.2 million people in 1907), which pushed many earlier immigrants and American-born white unskilled factory workers up into foremen’s jobs and other supervisory occupations [see box, p. 102]. The immigrants, or their sons, could hope eventually to follow the same route, although members of different ethnic groups would progress at widely different rates. “If America was the land of promise,” writes Hartmut Kaelble of West Berlin’s Free University, “this was more true for the unskilled workers . . . than for any other social group.”

But many scholars now believe that for everybody else, from carpenters to schoolteachers to business executives, opportunities were no greater in the United States after 1850 than they were in Europe. In

\*Later writers, such as the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie, expanded on the notion of reshaping one’s personality in order to get ahead. Peale’s 1952 best-seller, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, is still in strong demand.

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essence, industrialization seems to have had the same effect on both sides of the Atlantic. In cities as diverse as Graz, Austria, and Waltham, Massachusetts, Kaelble found that 17 to 25 percent of the male workers moved up or down at least one rung on the class ladder during every decade through 1930.

Why, then, this notion of America as a *unique* "land of opportunity?" It simply may have been the legacy of the years before 1850, when opportunities probably were greater in the United States than anywhere else. Or perhaps the existence of hereditary aristocracies at the top of society in Europe discouraged the expression of yearnings that Europeans felt as keenly as Americans did. In the United States, where all it took to join the "aristocracy" was enough money, anybody could hope, in theory, to scale the very summit. Today, the persistence of the "rags to riches" myth and its variants testifies to the depth of Americans' belief in the ideal of opportunity. But historians still do not know how strong or pervasive the hunger actually was to "make it," and especially to make it big, among Americans in the past.

Tocqueville gave us lasting images of the restless American, forever hoping to better his lot: "Death at length overtakes him, but it is before he is weary of his bootless chase of that complete felicity which forever escapes him." But labor historians during the last decade have suggested that the visions of personal advancement among many farmers and workers before 1900 were relatively modest. To Americans with strong community or ethnic loyalties, happiness meant staying put. If they were farmers, they aimed chiefly to secure the family patrimony, while many urban workers aspired simply to a decent standard of living, to job security, and to dignity in the workplace.

Thus, then as now, individual Americans' ambitions for themselves or their children varied; not everyone aspired to reach the top, despite the impression often given by best-selling writers of the day. But broadly popular goals did seem to change. If during the early 1800s one ideal appears to have been independence through self-employment, something new had begun to emerge by the turn of the century.

That something new was simple consumerism.

Higher average incomes, the rapid proliferation of widely advertised goods, and the availability of consumer credit whetted the appetites of Americans for everything from washing machines to automobiles. As time went on, people of all classes seemed increasingly to measure personal accomplishment by the ability to satisfy growing material expectations. Indeed, by the late 1920s, more Americans than ever before seemed to embrace Tocqueville's "bootless chase," which continues to this day.

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## THE POLITICS OF OPPORTUNITY

*by Robert W. Hodge and Steven Lagerfeld*

Trying to account for the absence of a self-conscious, politically cohesive working class in the United States, Karl Marx observed in 1852, that, "though classes, indeed, already exist, they have not yet become fixed, but continually change and interchange their elements in a constant state of flux."

There have been other explanations.

In *Why is There No Socialism in the United States?* (1906), Werner Sombart, a left-leaning German economist, cited the availability of Western farmland—even though, in 1906, the frontier was "closed." On other points, Sombart was more perceptive. He noted that the American belief in political equality, in "the efficacy of the People's will," firmly attached almost all citizens to the existing political system.

Like Tocqueville 70 years earlier, Sombart also put great store in the easy American sense of social equality. "The worker," he wrote, "is not being reminded at every turn that he belongs to a 'lower' class." Moreover, American wage earners lived rather well compared to their European counterparts, and their standard of living was rising.

"All Socialist utopias," he observed, "came to nothing on roast beef and apple pie."

But the most important ingredient of all in the American "proletarian psyche," in Sombart's view, was the opportunity to "escape into freedom." Reluctantly, he concluded that there was some truth to the "rags to riches" sagas that he had heard everywhere in the United States during a visit in 1904. "A far from insignificant number of ordinary workers ascend the rungs of the ladder of the capitalist hierarchy to the top or almost to the top." Others rose more modestly, he noted, but rose nonetheless.

In the years since, both American and foreign scholars have offered fresh theories to explain the scant appeal of egalitarian socialism in the United States. Among them: 1) the continual influx of various immigrant groups hindered working-class solidarity; 2) enormous *geographical* mobility hampered efforts to unite workers; 3) American socialist leaders were inept organizers and divided among themselves.

Of course, the United States does have social classes, and, more obviously, class politics—think of the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the Great Society. Frequently, class tensions have been played out in debates over taxes, or, especially since the 1960s, welfare.

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But what most Americans do *not* entertain is the belief that individual status and earning opportunities are fixed for life. Among Europeans that belief has been far more common. In 1926, Austrian-born economist Joseph Schumpeter defied Europe's conventional wisdom when he compared the social strata to various rooms in a hotel, "always full, but always [full] of different people."

Historians doubt that individual opportunities have actually been vastly greater in the United States than in other Western industrial societies. But sociologists, studying more precise 20th-century data, conclude that America's current advantages are at least "statistically significant." In any event, the vision of upward mobility retains its popular appeal. It bridges two often contradictory ideals: equality (discouraging overt distinctions of rank) and individualism, which tugs the other way, encouraging enterprise, self-reliance, and success based on merit.

### 'Every Man A King'

The belief in equal opportunity, that everybody *begins* with a roughly equal chance to get ahead, is what eases the tension between equality and individualism. "Although denied every day by experience," wrote Margaret Mead, the belief "is maintained every day by our folklore and our daydreams."

A rising standard of living, allowing ordinary workers as well as the rich to own cars, television sets, and houses, is essential to the general sense of opportunity. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, social mobility among the employed did not decrease. However, massive unemployment, widespread farm foreclosures, and a sharp drop in living standards for millions of citizens (but not all citizens) provided harsh reminders of what had always been (and still is) true: In America, as elsewhere, opportunities are not equal for all.

"Looking at the world," wrote French socialist Léon Blum in 1932, as bread lines lengthened throughout the West, "one has the impression of an audience . . . waiting restlessly for the end of one act" and the beginning of another. Four years later, after Italy and Germany had succumbed to fascism, Blum became premier of France.

In the United States, there were fears of open class warfare. But the voters turned to Franklin D. Roosevelt, a wealthy Hudson Valley patrician, who promised on one hand to help the "forgotten man" and, on the other, to slash government spending by 25 percent!

Roosevelt, observed columnist Walter Lippmann, "is no crusader. He is no tribune of the people. He is no enemy of entrenched privilege."

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*In August 1935, Senator Huey Long (D-La.) tells reporters that he will make an independent bid for the presidency if no other "liberal" mounts a challenge. At the time, some observers thought Long might be able to win.*

He is a pleasant man who, without any important qualifications for the office, would very much like to be president."

Economic hard times brought the tiny Moscow-run American Communist Party few new supporters, except among writers and intellectuals; Norman Thomas's milder Socialist Party claimed a grand total of 15,000 members the year Roosevelt was first elected—although Thomas won nearly one million votes in the 1932 presidential election.

Instead of doctrinaire leftists, the Great Depression spawned a host of popular demagogues, notably Father Charles E. Coughlin, the Detroit "radio priest," and California's Francis E. Townsend, advocate of generous pensions for the elderly. The most popular of the new leaders was Huey P. Long, the colorful Louisiana "Kingfish," who promised to make "Every Man A King."

A spellbinding orator who served as Louisiana's governor and then as a U.S. senator, Long gained a national following by blaming the nation's ills on J. P. Morgan and a cabal of Wall Street "plutocrats." "All of our businesses have been taken over by a few men," he thundered. If they were not stopped there would be "no profitable enterprise left to anyone except them."

Long promised to raise living standards through a scheme to Share Our Wealth. New taxes would gradually eliminate all personal fortunes

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over \$3 million or \$4 million; inheritances would be limited to \$1 million. The tax revenues would, he claimed, supply a basic household nest egg of \$5,000 for every needy family—"enough for a home, an automobile, a radio, and the ordinary conveniences"—and a minimum income of about \$2,000 annually. As one contemporary study indicated, even stiffer taxes than the ones Long proposed would have produced only a bit more than \$400 per needy family. No matter. Millions of Americans were ready to believe that a tiny upper class had grabbed a greater share of the nation's wealth, an inequity that "soak the rich" taxes could remedy.

By the mid-1930s, the Kingfish loomed as a possible third party candidate running against FDR in the presidential election of 1936. That threat ended in 1935 when Long was assassinated by the son-in-law of a Louisiana political foe.

Dangerous as he may have seemed, concludes historian Alan Brinkley, Long was not quite as radical as he often sounded. His followers were not workers aiming to topple "the bosses," but mostly members of the small-town lower-middle class, struggling to hold on to hard-won respectability. Long's attacks on Wall Street's "plutocrats" echoed a tradition of American politics going back to the Revolution—opposition to concentrated economic or political power. (Indeed, Long also criticized FDR for accumulating too much power for his New Deal agencies in Washington.) The Kingfish harked back to a simpler America where even the least well-off could hope to improve their lot by going into business for themselves. "Where is the corner groceryman?" he asked the Senate. The "little independent businesses operated by middle class people . . . have been fading out . . . as the concentration of wealth grows like a snowball."

Attacks on "bigness" would recur under different circumstances, from the Left and the Right, later in the 20th century. The villains would be giant institutions—variously public or corporate—which seemed to threaten not only the American egalitarian ethos, but the spirit of individual enterprise and self-reliance.

### Soaking the Rich

In June 1935, before Long died, FDR decided to "steal Huey's thunder" with a tax program of his own. The so-called Second New Deal also included Social Security, the Wagner Act (which encouraged the organizing of labor unions), and banking reform. In proposing new taxes—stiff levies on Big Business, an inheritance tax, and sharply higher income taxes on the well-to-do—FDR appealed to a mixture of class resentment and fears of "bigness." "Social unrest and a deepening sense of unfairness," he declared, "are dangers to our national life which we must minimize by rigorous methods." Then, as the Hearst newspapers opened fire on what they called his "Soak the Successful" plan, the president blithely departed for the annual Harvard-Yale boat races at

New London, Connecticut.

Eventually, Congress approved FDR's Second New Deal. But the president's tax proposals, denounced by conservatives as "class legislation," were whittled down. No inheritance tax was passed.\* The top income tax rate did jump from 63 to 79 percent, but only one man in the country (John D. Rockefeller) fell into this bracket.

Many historians now conclude that Roosevelt's soak-the-rich scheme was largely a symbolic gesture. Overall, writes William Leuchtenburg, because FDR insisted on financing Social Security with a regressive payroll tax, the wealthy claimed about the same share of the nation's income after the Second New Deal as they had before.

### The G.I. Bill

Nevertheless, during the 1936 presidential campaign, FDR barely mentioned the GOP's candidate, Kansas Governor Alf Landon, and gleefully campaigned against America's "economic royalists." On Election Day, FDR lost only two states to Landon. (William Lemke, running as the candidate of Father Coughlin's Union Party, won 892,267 ballots; Socialist Norman Thomas garnered 187,833; and Communist Earl Browder collected 80,171.) "As Maine goes," the president's advisers joked, "so goes Vermont."

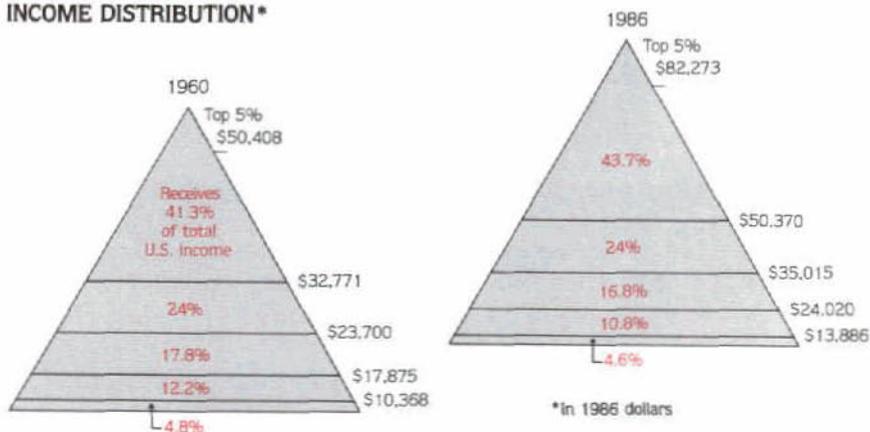
Roosevelt's re-election firmed up the New Deal coalition and signaled the political realignment of Americans more closely along socioeconomic lines. Business contributions to the Democratic Party dropped sharply. Blacks deserted the Party of Lincoln, and fiery labor leader John L. Lewis, until then a Republican, aligned the one million-member Congress of Industrial Organizations with the Democratic Party. Blacks and Big Labor have remained more or less firmly attached to the Democrats ever since. But class politics, even the polite form practiced by FDR, never seem to get very far in the United States. The defection of conservative Southern Democrats in Congress from Roosevelt's coalition in 1937, coupled with Republican gains in the congressional elections of 1938, wrote *finis* to any possibility of a radical Third New Deal, even if FDR had desired one. (It would be almost 40 years before a Democratic presidential candidate, George McGovern, would appeal quite so openly to class resentment again.)

After a decade of economic hardship, Americans still longed for a restoration of national prosperity and individual opportunities, not a sharpening of class conflict or a general redistribution of wealth.

Such sentiment has always helped bar the way to class-based politi-

\*Except during the Civil War, Washington has never imposed an *inheritance* tax (i.e. a tax paid by the recipients of bequests). Congress imposed a modest levy (one to 10 percent) on large estates in 1916. The estate tax remained essentially unchanged until 1976, when it was lowered, and it was reduced again in 1986. The tax, which falls on less than one percent of all estates, yields some \$6 billion annually. Sweden and other European nations levy an annual tax on wealth. The United States does not, but individual states *do* tax "personal property," real estate, and estates and inheritances.

**THE UNCHANGING U.S. INCOME DISTRIBUTION\***



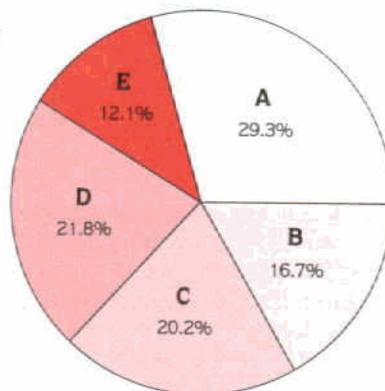
Overall, the distribution of income (above) has changed very little since 1960. (Each segment represents one-fifth of all U.S. families.) The dollar figures show the lowest income in the top five percent and the highest income in each of the lower four quintiles. The chart below shows how Americans aged 25-30 who had established their own households by 1981 fared as compared to their parents. Not many offspring remained in their parents' bracket (see the percentages underlined in red). And more than half of all these young adults will rise or fall into a new bracket by 1991.

**INCOME MOBILITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS, 1981**

**Percentage of Sons and Daughters In Various Income Quintiles**

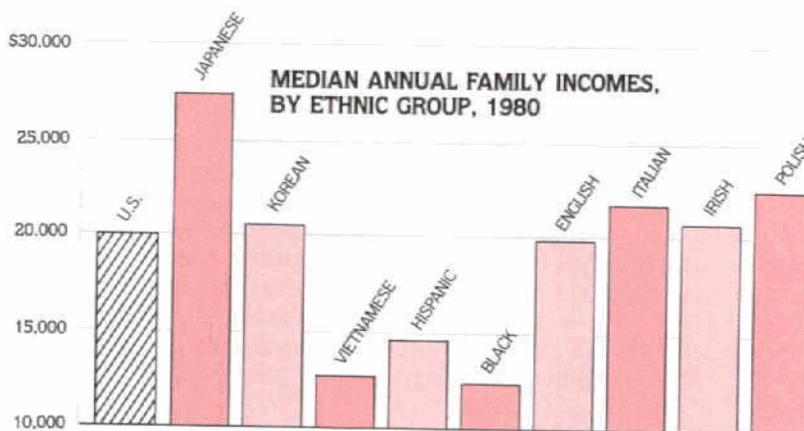
Income Quintile of Parents	Highest	Second	Third	Fourth	Lowest
Highest	<u>36</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>
Second	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>10</u>
Third	<u>17</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>11</u>
Fourth	<u>15</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>23</u>
Lowest	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>44</u>

**MOVING UP:  
SOCIOECONOMIC ORIGINS OF  
HIGH-STATUS  
WHITE-COLLAR MEN,\*  
1973**



\*Includes professionals, executives, officials, and non-retail salesmen

The chart shows the occupations of the fathers of American men (aged 21-64) who held high-status white-collar jobs in 1973: A) Same as son; B) Proprietors, retail salesmen, and clerical and kindred workers; C) Craftsmen and foremen; D) Semi-skilled or unskilled factory workers and service employees; E) Farmers and farm managers and laborers.



The family incomes of various American ethnic groups have tended to grow more equal over time. But some groups progress faster than others, and a few (e.g., Japanese-Americans) seem consistently to surpass others.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Panel Study of Income Dynamics, University of Michigan; David Featherman and Robert Hauser, *Opportunity and Change* (1978).

cal parties, so common in Europe. Yet, curiously, the nation's widespread belief in individual opportunity has never spurred elected officials to *promote* individual upward mobility.\*

In the United States, politicians hail the "common man," not the "self-made" man. The ideal of the self-made man and "making it" has been nurtured mostly by popular authors and by magazines (from *Work and Win* at the turn of the century to *Inc.* today), clergymen, and business leaders. Politicians promise prosperity (or a "safety net") for all; to promote openly the success of some individuals, but not others, is to court political oblivion.

After the Great Depression, however, the federal government did begin to do more to boost the long-term prospects of selected classes of individuals. The first of these measures was the so-called G.I. Bill of Rights (passed by Congress in 1944), which provided a massive array of benefits for World War II veterans. It was intended only partly as a reward to the returning soldiers. More to the point, as a government report said, it provided a "solution of a problem as old as war—the returning soldier embittered against the society he fought to protect."

### Free-Swinging S.O.B.'s

At the time, it also seemed possible that after the World War II boom ended, the Depression would simply resume. The G.I. Bill, by pumping money into the economy and keeping veterans out of the job market, would help to prevent such a disaster. Looking further ahead, Harvard president James Bryant Conant declared in 1943: "The demobilization of our armed forces is a God-given moment for reintroducing the American concept of a fluid society. If it is handled properly we can insure a healthy body politic for at least a generation." Two decades later, the idea of drawing a potentially alienated minority into the mainstream by giving its members a chance to get ahead would reappear.

During the late 1940s, however, few veterans seemed alienated. The nation was grateful; the economy stayed healthy. The G.I. Bill offered a smorgasbord of benefits, such as low-interest home mortgages, but the most important, symbolically, was generous aid for the college bound: up to \$500 annually for tuition plus a modest stipend for living expenses. All told, 2.2 million World War II veterans went to college on the G.I. Bill, and another 5.6 million attended vocational and technical schools, at a cost of \$14.5 billion.

Hailed, in the words of one educator, as "one of the most significant contributions to the development of our human resources that this nation has ever undertaken," the impact of the G.I. Bill has been, in fact, somewhat overrated. Although the G.I. Bill made it easier for 2.2 million

\*One could argue that federal efforts to increase farm ownership (e.g., the 1862 Homestead Act), or the creation of the Small Business Administration (1953) to help struggling entrepreneurs, assisted upward mobility in many cases, but they were not promoted as such.

veterans to attend universities, scholars estimate that only about one-third of them would not have done so without federal aid.\*

At first, few of the returning veterans aimed for the top. They went to school, worked hard, and sought promising but secure jobs. *Fortune* magazine, surveying the college Class of '49, found that only two percent of the graduates planned to go into business for themselves. "I know AT&T might not be very exciting," explained one young man, "but there'll always be an AT&T."

*Fortune* noted with dismay that "the Forty-Niners" were reluctant even to discuss money, but generally seemed to aim for relatively modest incomes of about \$10,000. They conceived of the Good Life chiefly in terms of a happy family (with three children), a comfortable home, and two cars. It was just about what Huey Long had promised their parents during the 1930s. *Fortune* worried that the new generation might not furnish enough of the "free-swinging s.o.b.'s we seem to need for leavening the economy."

As it turned out, there would be, eventually, a sufficiency of s.o.b.'s. But memories of the Great Depression had lowered, temporarily, the ceiling on popular expectations. The wartime military, by throwing men of varied ethnic backgrounds together, had acted as a giant Mixmaster of the social classes, at least among whites. With the return of prosperity during the late 1940s, Americans seemed to strike a new balance between egalitarianism and competitive individualism. As politicians saw it, the United States would "level up": Everybody—everybody white, that is—would be middle-class.

In this optimistic postwar climate there was no significant agitation for redistribution of the wealth, and hardly any public discussion of what had happened to the "one third of a nation" that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had found to be ill-housed and ill-fed.

### The Lonely Crowd

Assessing the political landscape in 1952, shortly before the election that put Dwight D. Eisenhower in the White House, political scientist Samuel Lubell argued that there were now two middle classes. One was older, small-town, mostly Yankee (or from established immigrant groups), "instinctively" Republican; the other, composed mostly of first- and second-generation Jews, Irish, and other urban ethnics who had "made it" since the Depression, was also conservative, but wedded by sentiment to the Democratic Party.

"We are witnessing an almost complete refutation of the Marxian thesis," Lubell concluded. "Our class struggle, if it can be called that, arises not from the impoverishment of the masses but from their

\*College enrollments had grown by about 400,000 during the Depression, reaching 1.5 million in 1940. With the return of the veterans, enrollments reached 2.3 million in 1950. A decade later, 3.6 million youths were in college, and by 1970, 7.9 million were.



From The New Yorker  
(1987): "Stop moping. Lots  
of people who don't make a  
million by thirty make tons  
later on."

progress in postwar America."

Even the intellectuals seemed to have forgotten the poor. During the 1930s, they had decried the nation's poverty and clamored for collective action by the masses; now, they recoiled from the prosperous "mass man" of the 1950s, and jeered at his *spiritual* impoverishment.\* Among the most famous of the many books in this vein was *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), by Yale's David Riesman, and two colleagues. Riesman warned that the sturdy, enterprising, "inner-directed" man of the past was rapidly being replaced by a joyless, conformist, "other-directed" type. The cause of this new phenomenon: "a centralized and bureaucratized society." Or, in a word, *bigness*.

In a world of large institutions, Riesman argued, getting ahead "depends less on what one is and what one does than on what others think of one—and how competent one is in manipulating others." Yet, what Riesman conceded then is still true: Only a fraction of the working population is, in fact, employed by Big Business. (Today, only 10 percent of

\*Ironically, the "classless" 1950s produced a burst of scholarly writing on social mobility, class, politics, and status. Thus, sociologist Martin A. Trow argued that Senator Joseph McCarthy (R.-Wisc.) drew his main support for his anti-Communist, anti-Eastern Establishment crusade from small-town businessmen who looked to him to express "their fear and mistrust of bigness, and the slick and subversive ideas that come out of the . . . big institutions to erode old ways and faiths."

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working Americans are on the payrolls of private firms with more than 1,000 employees.) But he had a point. A personal reputation for old-fashioned rectitude, thrift, and honesty counted for more in a close-knit town of small merchants and farmers than it did in large, impersonal organizations, where nice guys might finish last. But hard work and intelligence still mattered a great deal, then as later. As certain small-town virtues faded in importance, for better or worse, the values of "meritocracy" took their place.

There was a socially benevolent side to the postwar growth of corporate capitalism, but it was not widely appreciated at the time. The rise of publicly owned corporations, underway since the turn of the century, spelled the demise of "family capitalism," and all that went with it. In former days, a Swift, duPont, or Rockefeller could create an enormously successful company and hope to pass its management on to his children and grandchildren. Especially in smaller cities, such as St. Louis, locally prominent families could thus also preserve their social and political power for generations.

### **More Room at the Top**

When companies are owned by a vast, amorphous group of shareholders, such perpetuation of wealth and power is far more difficult. By the 1950s, large family-controlled enterprises, such as the Ford Motor Company, were anomalies; much more common were publicly owned corporations, such as General Motors, run for many years by Alfred P. Sloan, Jr. Sloan and other professional managers could pass on whatever wealth (usually modest) they accumulated to their sons and daughters, and they could provide them with superior educational opportunities, but they could not confer automatic "position" and power, as Henry Ford I did, in effect, in his last will and testament. Under the pressure of competition, Big Business had created room at the top.

Not that "rags to riches" sagas became more common. In 1959, reviewing various studies of the "business elite" stretching back to colonial times, sociologists Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix found that only 10 to 20 percent of executives have ever come from the most humble socioeconomic origins. Instead, the changing structure of business allowed those Americans whose parents already had made it into the middle class to stand on the shoulders of their fathers and climb a bit higher.

By 1950, according to one study, such "second-generation" Americans occupied 18 percent of the offices in executive suites, up from only two percent in 1870. White Anglo-Saxon Protestants still dominated the business establishment, but the "old" families were losing their grip. In 1870, 86 percent of top business leaders traced their origins to colonial forebears; by 1950, the proportion had dropped to 50 percent, mirroring the composition of the U.S. population at large.

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Overall, sociologists have found, the 20th century has seen a slight but measurable rise in social mobility in America. It has been steady, unaffected even by the Great Depression—although the careers of young people during the 1930s were set back—or by the great burst of prosperity after World War II.

No single factor seems to explain the increase. The growth of service industries, which employed 39 percent of U.S. workers in 1920 and employ 73 percent today, is one likely contributor. Despite its current reputation as the domain of hamburger flippers, the service sector created thousands of relatively high-paying jobs for educated workers—nurses, bankers, government bureaucrats, engineers. And, partly because high school enrollments swelled during the Depression and later, Americans became steadily more educated: By 1960, they possessed a median of 10.5 years of schooling (today, the median is 12.6 years), and nearly eight percent of the population held college degrees.

### The Decline of the WASP

Progress was uneven. During the 1950s and into the 1960s, lingering social discrimination kept the rising generation of college-educated Dapolitos, Steins, O'Briens, and other descendants of recent white immigrants out of many places at the very apex of society, especially in the older precincts of the Northeast.

As late as 1964, E. Digby Baltzell of the University of Pennsylvania could still write about *The Protestant Establishment*. If well-to-do White Anglo-Saxon Protestants did not throw open the doors of their preparatory schools, Ivy League colleges, private clubs, and other institutions to more non-WASP men of achievement, he warned, the nation would lose its last chance to ensure the survival of a cohesive upper class of "real distinction and wide authority." Baltzell, no egalitarian, argued that a permeable but well-defined upper class was essential to the proper governance of a democracy.

As Baltzell conceded, the 1960 presidential election victory of John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, Harvard alumnus, and grandson of an Irish immigrant, suggested that half of Baltzell's argument might already have been all but won. The other half—preserving a cohesive national upper class—was already lost; America was now just too big and diverse.

Despite its symbolism, Kennedy's election represented, in large measure, a continuation of 1950s-style politics. "Soak the rich" rhetoric was out. Indeed, in 1962, when the young Democratic president proposed a tax cut to stimulate the economy, ultimately slashing the income tax rate on the nation's top earners from 91 percent (where it had been fixed during World War II) to 70 percent, he sounded for all the world like Calvin Coolidge. The existing tax structure, he told the New York Economic Club that December, "reduces the financial incentives for personal effort, investment, and risk-taking."

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Thus, when Kennedy administration officials began planning what would eventually emerge as the core of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, the initial approach was also traditional. One early target: juvenile delinquency in the black ghettos. As Allen J. Matusow of Rice University writes, their diagnosis was simple: "Society encouraged slum kids to have high aspirations but provided few legitimate opportunities to satisfy them . . . . Temptation was great, therefore, to exploit 'illegitimate opportunities.'" Better schools and job-training were the solution. The slum kids would grow up and prosper.

By the time LBJ declared War on Poverty early in 1964, however, the Democrats' efforts had been transformed into a broad assault on economic, political, and racial inequality. A new kind of class politics had been born—not "soak the rich" but lift up the poor and the minorities. "The central problem," LBJ declared, "is to protect and restore man's satisfaction in belonging to a community where he can find security and significance." Ambitious programs designed to enhance the upward mobility of the poor, especially blacks—Head Start, Upward Bound, Job Corps—had been linked to the Community Action Program, an ill-fated effort to increase the political power of the poor in the cities and elsewhere. Meanwhile, many of the remaining legal props of racial discrimination were swept away by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The egalitarian spirit of the age may have peaked in 1969, when President Richard M. Nixon, a conservative Republican, backed the so-called Philadelphia Plan, which greatly expanded the scope of LBJ's 1965 "affirmative action" directive by requiring federal contractors to establish hiring quotas for blacks. In the space of five years, the federal government had shifted decisively from seeking equality of *opportunity* for racial minorities to promoting equality of *results*.

### Trust Fund Hippies

One of the biggest efforts came in education. Local public school desegregation had mixed effects, including "white flight," and, in some cities, middle-class black flight. But federal money was pumped into private colleges and universities and into student grants, loans, and loan guarantees. Congress extended its largesse to the children of the middle class as well as to the poor. By 1970, two million college students were receiving some form of federal aid; by 1981, when Washington paid out nearly \$12 billion to assist higher education, more than eight million students were beneficiaries. During the 1970s, fostered by such subsidies, black enrollment in colleges nearly doubled, topping one million. Partly as a result of affirmative action, preparatory schools and elite colleges and universities opened their doors wider to minorities, including many who were "academically disadvantaged." At Harvard, blacks constituted 7.5 percent of the entering freshman class by 1975.

### IS THE MIDDLE CLASS SHRINKING?

In one recent survey, 92 percent of Americans—rich, poor, and in-between—told pollsters that they were members of the “middle class.”

Such responses reveal more about individual psychology in this country than they do about the actual size of the “middle class.” Scholars, pundits, even politicians disagree over how to measure the “middle,” but, in recent years, many of them have come to the disturbing conclusion that it is shrinking. Warns U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D.-Iowa): “Freedom and democratic institutions rest on the widest possible dissemination of wealth and power, and we’ve come to the point where too few people have too much and the rest of us have too little.”

Using one broad definition—the proportion of families with inflation-adjusted incomes of between \$15,000 and \$50,000—scholars have found that the “middle class” declined from 65 to 58 percent of the population between 1970 and 1985. Such data can be deceptive: For every family that dropped below the \$15,000 level, more than three rose above the \$50,000 level. Yet, the “shrinking middle” turns up “no matter what definition you use,” says James Smith, a Rand Corporation economist. Dividing the population into income quintiles, for example [see chart, p. 114], reveals that the *share* of all income received by the middle three-fifths of the population dropped from 53.8 percent in 1969 to 52 percent in 1985.

But it is not clear whether the recent shift is a statistical “blip” or an ominous trend.

Forty years ago, on the eve of the greatest economic surge America has ever known, sociologist W. Lloyd Warner gloomily concluded that “there has been a steady decline of skilled jobs and a decrease in the worker’s chances to get ahead.” Today’s pessimists echo that fear, citing the long-term decline of both U.S. manufacturing employment and high-wage unionized jobs.

A 1986 study by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, for example, detected an “alarming trend toward low-pay jobs.” Nearly 60 percent of all the new jobs created between 1979 and 1984, the study found, paid less than \$7,012 annually. Yet about 90 percent of the workers in these jobs worked only part-time or part of the year. And, as scholars note, the summary data in

However, there were limits to how far the American people were willing to go in the direction of egalitarianism and the new class politics.

In January 1972, Senator George McGovern (D.-S.D.) was on the presidential primary trail in Ames, Iowa, when he presented new proposals designed, as Theodore H. White wrote, to “gut the rich, comfort the middle class, and sustain the poor.” Among them were the now-famous “demogrant” (a \$1,000 federal grant to every man, woman, and child) and an astonishing new tax on inheritances: No individual would be allowed to inherit more than \$500,000. To the surprise of McGovern’s aides, the inheritance tax proposal was no less unpopular among working-class voters than was the demogrant idea. As McGovern’s spokes-

such studies varies depending on the time period covered, among other factors. For example, only six percent of the jobs created between 1981 and 1985 had yearly salaries of less than \$7,012.

Frank Levy, of the University of Maryland, argues that much of today's alarm over the state of the middle class reflects the fact that the total U.S. economic pie shrank after 1973. The sharp increase in oil prices imposed that year by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) triggered a recession in the United States, followed by a decade of domestic economic turmoil. The results were painful. Between 1973 and 1984, the median U.S. family income slipped (in 1984 dollars) from \$28,200 to \$26,400. It was the first such sustained drop since World War II.

The middle class "is not getting much smaller," Levy concludes, "but it is growing a little poorer."

At the same time, demographic and other changes have altered the position of various groups within the income distribution—heightening *perceived* inequality. In part because Congress indexed Social Security payments to the Consumer Price Index in 1972, just as inflation was beginning to outstrip wages, the elderly improved their lot relative to some young families. And more and more of these young families (21 percent by 1984) were headed by women; a majority of them wound up at the bottom of the economic heap.

The influx of the large "baby boom" generation (those born between 1946 and 1960) into the work force held down wages and salaries for younger Americans. But the effects are frequently overstated. For example, home ownership among married couples under age 35 is down from 62 percent in 1980 to 55 percent today. The drop seems significant to baby boomers, but only 43 percent of their parents owned homes when they were in their thirties.

Levy believes that many Americans have tried to maintain living standards by postponing marriage, keeping families small, and sending wives to work. Such adjustments, he warns, "can take us only so far." A healthy economy, Levy says, is the only way to sustain a prosperous American middle class. Fortunately, median family income has resumed its upward climb in recent years; it is now (in 1984 dollars) \$27,906, nearly what it was in 1973. Barring economic catastrophe, the middle-class "crunch" should ease.

man, Richard Dougherty, mournfully acknowledged, "it wipes out dreams."

The proposal also helped to wipe out McGovern, although many other factors contributed to Nixon's landslide re-election (61 percent of the popular vote) that November. Significantly, Nixon made inroads into the core of FDR's New Deal coalition—including blue-collar workers in the big cities of the North, many of whom had supported George Wallace's independent bid for the presidency in 1968.

As White observed, they "had fought their way up to the status, the comfort, the neighborhoods in which they now dwelt—and wanted to preserve their neighborhoods and way of life against the tide of change."

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At the same time, paradoxically, many of the sons and daughters of affluent America were rejecting the "rat race" of acquisitive individualism. Many offspring of the rich became "trust fund hippies," going back to nature in rural Vermont, New Mexico, and other havens. Children of the respectable middle class joined the quest for personal "self-fulfillment," or at least some measure of felicity, via sex, group therapy, communal living, drugs, and other noneconomic pursuits. It was a much-publicized but short-lived trend.

As the 1970s progressed, severe economic recessions and chronic inflation led many more Americans to worry about advancing or preserving their standard of living. The national mood changed. Archie Bunker, TV's blue-collar bigot, faded from popularity, replaced by "Dallas" (which premiered in 1978) and other series that fed audiences' fascination, however ambivalent, with the rich. "Peasant" dresses were out; "status wear," such as "alligator" shirts, and, later, the "preppie" look, was in. Law, business, and medical schools expanded. Before long, the media gave birth to the Yuppie (Young Urban Professional). In California, Miss Lisa de Longchamps prospered by offering a new form of psychotherapy, which she described as a "divine plan of opulence" aimed at "getting rid of all that junk in our consciousness [e.g., money is the root of all evil] so that we can join the rich."

If the Great Depression of the 1930s had stirred resentment of the wealthy, the "stagflation" of the 1970s spurred many Americans to try harder to *become* rich (or, at least, well-to-do). The difficulties of the 1970s and early '80s, with their uneven impact, bred a popular desire to "level up," especially among younger couples, often putting wife as well as husband to work outside the home.

### An Old Dream Revived

One explanation of the change lies in the U.S. tax code, which was to undergo two drastic and unprecedented overhauls during the 1980s. "Bracket creep," caused by affluence and the high inflation of the 1970s, meant that many more ordinary working people began to pay higher income taxes, and thus a larger share of the bill for the nation's modest program of income redistribution.

As a result, much of the electorate was receptive in 1980 when Ronald Reagan proposed a massive 30 percent cut in federal income tax rates. Now it was Big Government, not Big Business and Wall Street, that was to blame for the citizen's woes. "If there's one thing we've seen enough," Reagan declared, "it's this idea that for one American to gain, another American has to suffer . . . . If we put incentives back into society, everyone will gain. We have to move ahead. But we can't leave anyone behind."

Reagan scored a remarkable election victory, receiving 50.7 percent of the popular vote to incumbent Jimmy Carter's 41 percent, and



*Making it in America: Lee Iacocca, chairman of Chrysler, Roberto C. Goizueta, chairman of Coca Cola, and An Wang, chairman of Wang Laboratories. Iacocca is the son of Italian immigrants; Goizueta was born in Cuba, Wang in China.*

independent John Anderson's 6.6 percent. Reagan's victory was decried by Democrats as a triumph of the "haves," but analysts searched in vain for a sharp pattern of class divisions. The well-to-do gave the majority of their votes to the Republicans, as they always have. But, while voters earning under \$10,000 had cast their ballots overwhelmingly for Carter (against Gerald Ford) in 1976, Carter garnered only 50 percent of the "poor" vote, Reagan, 41 percent, in 1980.

In short order, Congress adopted the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, slashing the top income tax rate to 50 percent. In 1985, Reagan proposed a sweeping new tax plan based on "freedom, fairness, and hope." Adopted by Congress the next year, it further cut rates, but closed many loopholes that had been available to businesses and the well-to-do. The top income tax rate was slated to drop to 28 percent.

In part because of these and other tax cuts (e.g., the 1978 reduction in taxes on capital gains), the entrepreneurial spirit flourished. In 1985, despite the long odds against success, Americans launched some 669,000 business enterprises, more than twice as many as they had in 1970. Most of the new ventures were small businesses. The old dream of independence, of being one's own boss, had not died.

Through all of this, and despite deep budget cuts in some federal programs for the poor (e.g., public housing and rent subsidies) and reduced rates of growth for many others, the less fortunate did not fade from public view, as they had during the 1950s. Indeed, political and scholarly discussion of the plight of the poor, especially the black poor, has revived and sharpened during the past half decade.

In a recent study of *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), for example, sociologist William Julius Wilson notes that, overall, blacks have made significant economic progress since 1960. While only 10.4 percent of black families earned more than \$25,000 (in 1982 dollars) in 1960, nearly a quarter of black families did so by 1982. Especially among young, married, working couples, the white-black income gap shrank.\*

It is unclear how much of this progress would have come about without federal intervention, how much was due to "color-blind" anti-bias laws, and how much was owed to "color-conscious" quotas and affirmative action programs. But it is plain, Wilson and others argue, that whatever gains individual blacks have made, thanks to affirmative action, have gone overwhelmingly to "advantaged" blacks—those who began with more income and education and higher occupational status than their fellows. "Class," Wilson once said, "has become more important than race in determining black life-chances."

For the black urban poor, many of them isolated in demoralized, crime-ridden ghettos, the disadvantages of social class today translate into serious handicaps—an astronomic high school dropout rate, teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency, semi-literacy, unemployment, drugs, the exodus of respectable blacks (and thus of local leadership and "role models"), a rising proportion of female-headed households. By 1984, 43 percent of black families (as compared to 13 percent of white families and 23 percent of Hispanic families) were headed by women. More than half of these women and their children were poor.

### The X-Factor

Yet there is surprisingly high mobility among the poor of all races. "Only a little over one-half of the individuals living in poverty in one year are . . . poor in the next," concludes Greg J. Duncan, of the University of Michigan. This applies to Appalachian whites, to Hispanics in south Texas, to newly arrived Vietnamese. Even among the daughters of poor, black, single mothers, two-thirds manage to escape poverty when they leave home.

The antipoverty formula *for young people* seems simple. "To complete high school, to work consistently full-time year-round (even at a minimum-wage job), and to [marry] and to stay married are characteristics statistically correlated with avoiding poverty," concludes a panel of specialists headed by Michael Novak, of the American Enterprise Institute. But if, as some scholars fear, the *long-term* poor are increasingly concentrated in a "culture" that only perpetuates social pathologies, it may become increasingly difficult for the children to better themselves.

\*Recently, David L. Featherman and Robert M. Hauser, both of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, found that in 1962, only 20 percent of the sons of "upper white collar" blacks managed to secure white-collar jobs themselves. By 1973, the proportion had jumped to 55 percent. For the male population as a whole, such white-collar "status inheritance" generally averages 60 to 70 percent.

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(Estimates of the current size of the "underclass" vary, from roughly 1.6 million blacks, whites, and Hispanics, to more than five million.)

As Harvard's Edward Banfield observed in 1970, a willingness to delay gratification and an orientation toward the future are essential to getting ahead. Lacking such self-discipline, many younger members of today's underclass, black or white, may simply be unable to repeat the old American pattern, now seen among Asian and Cuban immigrants, of upward progress from father to son to grandson.

Broader research by sociologists into the sources of intergenerational upward mobility supports some of these worries. Having black skin still hinders an individual's chances to advance. But lack of schooling, a broken home, and a large number of siblings hurt as well.

The three most important *known* ingredients of "success" are education, one's father's occupation (and the advantages it may bring), and one's first job. A positive outlook (shown in work effort and strong career ambitions), high intelligence, and coming from a small, intact family also help, but they seem less significant than schooling. Education level matters most.

However, sociologists, using intricate computer formulas, have been able so far to account for only about half of the elements of any given individual's career success, or lack of it. Education and the other factors cited above usually pay off. But, there remains a mysterious "X" Factor; in the great Horatio Alger tradition, good luck and the ability to find one's proper niche, along with other intangibles (such as those attitudes which sociologists have *not* yet measured as well as they might) seem to matter a great deal.

That is as it should be, for a society in which all individual prospects could be more or less calculated in advance would be extraordinarily dreary, and, almost inevitably, prone to harsh class conflict and other ills. In the imaginary hotel of the social classes that Joseph Schumpeter described back in 1926, it is never certain who will occupy the luxury suites, and who will inhabit the dingy lower floors—or for how long. That uncertainty, along with rising material well-being for all, has helped to keep the big American hotel a relatively peaceful establishment.

## UPS AND DOWNS: THREE MIDDLETOWN FAMILIES

by Howard M. Bahr

*Middletown*, published in 1929 by Robert and Helen Lynd, was the nation's first sociological bestseller. Together with a sequel, *Middletown in Transition* (1937), written during the Great Depression, it secured a reputation for Muncie, Indiana, as the archetypal middle American city. Muncie, rhapsodized the editors of *Life* in 1937, was "every small U.S. city from Maine to California," a place where pollsters and market researchers could flock to take the pulse of America.

*Life* claimed more for Muncie than the Lynds did. They said only that Muncie was not demonstrably *atypical*. Their cautious proposition still holds: When compared to the national population, Middletown's people still turn out to be fairly average.

*Middletown* was about work and the way it defines one's life. Middletown, said the Lynds, had two relatively static classes. About two-thirds of its people were working-class, laboring with their hands and backs, while members of what the Lynds called the "business class" earned their livings as clerks, salesmen, managers, and teachers.

"The mere fact of being born upon one or the other side of the watershed roughly formed by these two groups," the Lynds wrote in 1929, "is the most significant single cultural factor tending to influence what one does all day long throughout one's life; whom one marries; when one gets up in the morning; whether one belongs to the Holy Roller or Presbyterian church; or drives a Ford or a Buick; . . . whether one belongs to the Odd Fellows or the Masonic Shrine; whether one sits about evenings with one's necktie off; and so on indefinitely throughout the daily comings and goings of a Middletown man, woman or child." When the Lynds revisited Middletown in 1937, they found that the Great Depression had nudged the classes even further apart.

Fifty years have wrought enormous changes in Middletown, and in the United States. The city's population has nearly doubled, to 74,000. Blue-collar work is cleaner, safer, and better paid; many married women have joined the labor force; and the economy has created whole new varieties of white-collar jobs, many of them highly paid.

Today, Middletown's traditionally black neighborhoods are still black, and the old South Side remains a working-class haven. But even Middletown's "better" neighborhoods now have at least a sprinkling of



*A Middletown clan of the "business class" in 1924. One comfort enjoyed by such residents then, a short (40-45 hour) work week, is now nearly universal.*

black residents, and a few homes there are owned by plumbers rather than doctors. We do not know whether, overall, upward *mobility* in Middletown has increased since 1929. But, partly because of the increasing affluence of wage earners, there are fewer social barriers between the classes and more social contacts across class lines than there were during the Lynds' time.

Consider, for example, the families of Henry Franklin and Robert Michaels,\* two men whom the Lynds might have met 50 years ago. Henry Franklin was a crack salesman who sold paper during most of a long career. Robert Michaels worked as a farm-implement mechanic. His son, Tom, and Henry Franklin's daughter, Margery, both attended Central High. They dated, and in 1948, they married.

The marriage of Tom and Marge Michaels, now both in their late fifties, is a "mixed" marriage in several senses. She grew up in the business class, he in the working class; her family was Catholic, his Protestant; she has been a white-collar professional since 1975, while he has been a blue-collar worker during much of his working life.

Tom Michaels' career shows how misleading a simple answer to a social scientist's query—"Occupation?"—can be. He has often held two, sometimes three, jobs at a time, a burden imposed in part by the need to

\*All names in this essay are pseudonyms.

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support the eight children the couple raised together. He has hopped back and forth across the class divide several times. He drove a truck for a stock rendering plant, worked as a mechanic, owned his own service station, built and sold houses in a business with his father, ran a fleet of school buses, and, after 1960, served in the city police department. He now teaches at the state law enforcement academy.

Tom Michaels exemplifies the optimistic "Middletown spirit" described by the Lynds, the belief that "hard work is the key to success." The rewards for the Michaels are a big, rambling, white frame house in one of Middletown's respectable old neighborhoods, a late model Buick and a new Ford light truck, occasional dinners out, the prospect of retirement and travel, and the satisfaction of a close family, although the children now have families of their own.

### Fathers and Sons

Like many American couples, the Michaels won their piece of the American Dream partly by means once considered unorthodox. During the 1920s, almost half of Middletown's working-class women had jobs, but other married women generally stayed home to look after their children and husbands. Today, in Middletown, as throughout the United States, women of all classes work—by 1980, almost half of the employed people were women. Like many women of her generation, Marge Michaels spent more than 20 years as a homemaker before returning to work part-time, later full-time, as a university librarian. She also returned to school, earning an undergraduate and a master's degree.

The Michaels' children and their spouses exemplify the progressive erosion of class divisions in Middletown. This single generation includes professionals and laborers, blue-, pink-, and white-collar workers. Overall, the story of the Michaels' family is one of upward mobility: salesman and mechanic in the first generation; police officer and university librarian in the second; and in the third, police officer, accountant, attorney, bank trust officer, technician, and warehouse worker.

There is also downward mobility in Middletown, but it is less common. Some movement upward has been built into the U.S. economic system: As the number of higher status jobs as clerks or service workers has grown, the fraction of the city's population employed as menial laborers and domestic help has shrunk.

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It is still fairly common for sons to grow up to do the same work their fathers did. But sometimes a closer look reveals that the nature of the job has changed, even when the title remains the same, or that a father and son who do the same job differ sharply in educational achievement or general outlook.

Take, for example, the Winslows. Great-grandfather Winslow worked in Middletown's factories, rising to foreman in an auto parts company. Grandfather Winslow followed him, eventually becoming a supervisor in a plant that made tire recapping equipment. His three sons are all blue-collar workers. Two are skilled tool and die makers, and one, Duane, is a welder at Middletown's Westinghouse plant.

Duane Winslow, now 53, grew up on Middletown's South Side, at a time when working-class families were separated from those of the business class by the great gulf the Lynds described. He attended the prestigious Burriss High School, but as one of only three boys from blue-collar families in his class, he chafed at his inferior status. "It was a stigma in my life when I was young, up until I graduated," he says, and his account of a recent 30-year class reunion demonstrates that his sense of injury lingers. Most of his classmates, he says, are now college-educated, professional, even prominent men. And yet, "I'm as good as any of 'em," he says. "I'm as wealthy as any of 'em . . . I live *here*."

"Here" is a fashionable West End area. When he was growing up, it was among the most affluent neighborhoods of the city. By 1935, the Lynds said, subdivisions like his had supplanted the "aristocratic old East End" in prestige, and the "ambitious matrons of the city" were moving their families there. When Duane was in high school, many of the boys who snubbed him lived there. If the neighborhood is less distinguished today, it retains enough of its eminence to give him a sense of personal progress. The Winslows live in a brick ranch-style home, unassuming on the outside, well furnished within.

### No 'Working Stiff'

"Back when I was a kid," Duane says. "I used to think, 'I'll never live here. I could never attain that.' But I live in a country, and work for a corporation that thought enough of me that I could do it."

After graduating from high school, Duane followed his father to the firm that made recapping equipment, and, in 1960, moved to Warner Gear, a plum of a job in Middletown's manufacturing economy. It did not last long. After the company laid him off during a business downturn, he sold insurance for a year. He liked the work but not the travel, so, in 1962, he jumped at the chance to join Westinghouse. He has worked there ever since, in a variety of shopfloor and management positions, and will retire in five years, at 58, as a supervisor of welders.

"As a working man," Duane says, "I am proud of what I have attained. I'm not a poor man. My wife [who also works at Westinghouse]

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and I live here, and my home is paid for. I have money in the bank.”

Duane calls himself a “working man,” like his father, but when asked if that means he identifies with blue-collar workers or labor unions, he is adamant: “I’m middle-class.” Trim and energetic, he jogs, plays racquetball, and reads three newspapers a day, including the *Wall Street Journal*. He is not a stereotypical “working stiff.”

Like many fathers of his generation, Duane worries that his children have had it too easy. Duane’s daughter, 24, is married to a house painter and works as a receptionist; his bachelor son Don, at 27, recently landed a job as a tool and die maker at Warner Gear but still lives at home. “Don looks at what I’ve attained, and thinks, ‘Why in the hell can’t I do that?’ Well, I didn’t have that when I was 27 either. That’s what I try to get through to him [but] it’s never sunk in.”

### Where the Grass Is Greener

Don meanwhile, is trying to “get his time in” (i.e. six months without a layoff) so that he can gain a measure of job security under the union contract. He first applied for a job at Warner Gear nine years ago, and was hired at last, he thinks, because he “knew someone.” The money is good (about \$23,000 annually) and “the job’s not all that hard.” He hopes to stay at Warner Gear until he retires.

Duane admits that his son faced a far more difficult job market than he did. During the recession of the early 1980s, many local plants closed or cut back, and unemployment rates soared to half again as high as the national average, peaking at 14 percent in 1982. By 1985, Middletown’s jobless rate was still nine percent.

Reflecting a growing skepticism among Middletowners, Duane does not have much faith that a college education would have been the answer for his son. “Many people I work with have college educations. They have master’s degrees, they have B.A. degrees . . . and they cannot find a job in their field.”

In contrast to Tom Michaels, Duane is gloomy about the future. He hopes above all that his son will secure a safe berth at Westinghouse or Warner Gear: In the end, security and stability mean more to Duane than upward mobility.

For one group of Middletown workers, opportunities clearly have blossomed since the Lynds’ time. “The cleft between the white and the Negro populations of Middletown,” they wrote in 1937, “is the deepest and most blindly followed line of division in the community.”

Before 1950, blacks were almost entirely excluded from Middletown’s business class; racial discrimination was overt. By 1980, however, one-sixth of Middletown’s employed black men and half the working black women held sales, clerical, managerial, or professional positions. Still, the black-white split is closing much more slowly than the class divide. In Middletown, it appears that bridging the gap will be a matter



*A crowd gathers downtown to cheer the 1986 Veteran's Day Parade. Despite Middletown's appearance of settled contentment, more than half of its citizens move every decade, often to seek opportunities in other cities.*

of six generations, or perhaps nine, rather than three.

"Across the tracks," in southeast Middletown, is one of the city's two black districts. Ada Jackson and many of the other black domestic servants who served what the Lynds called the "ambitious matrons" of the West End used to live there. Now their children and grandchildren do. Ada cleaned house for white people for over 40 years. Her husband, Lucas, had a good job as a wire drawer at Indiana Steel and Wire, but even during the best of times the family needed both incomes to make ends meet.

Ada and Lucas were high school graduates, and their daughter Lila, now in her sixties, remembers that they valued education. "There was always books, there was always newspapers," she says. But Lila only got as far as the 10th grade before, in 1937, she dropped out, married, and began working as a part-time domestic. Her husband was an auto body mechanic, and also a high school dropout. In 1945, he left Lila and their four children, and she began working full-time as a maid. Lila had two more children under circumstances she does not discuss.

During the mid-1960s, both of Lila's parents and one of her grown daughters died within two years. It was a turning point. "I went back to school and went back to church," Lila says. In 1967, three decades after dropping out, she graduated from high school.

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Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty was in full swing, and Lila was hired under the auspices of her Methodist church, as a federally funded outreach "volunteer with a stipend" while she continued to work part-time as a maid. Finally, in 1971, she was able to quit cleaning houses for good. Ever since, she has been a full-time counselor to adult university students and to young blacks seeking schooling. She has also found time to help herself by working toward a bachelors degree in political science and social work at Ball State University, a thriving (enrollment: 17,513) branch of the state system in Middletown. She will graduate this year.

Despite her own success, Lila does not believe that Middletown's blacks have made much progress during her lifetime, and her negative view is widely shared among the city's blacks. "Most black people who are educated have to leave," Lila says. "The opportunities just aren't here for black people."

Lila will admit to slight local gains. But she is sure that the prospects for Middletown's blacks are worse now than they were during the late 1970s, when there seemed to be many more local blacks attending Ball State. (Partly as a result of federal budget cutbacks, black enrollment fell from 808 in 1977 to 621 last year.)

### Backing Into the Future

Lila is a great-grandmother now, and she speaks from the experience of kin as well as clients. The jobs of her children and in-laws, now in their thirties and forties, support her dim view of the pace of black progress in Middletown: two males unemployed, the rest blue-collar workers, with the exception of a daughter-in-law who is an accountant.\*

In part, the fate of Lila's family, especially her sons, is a reminder of a larger social problem—the rise of female-headed families, especially among blacks. Hence, in Middletown, as in other American cities, black women bear heavier family burdens than white women, and the children suffer. In 1980, 34 percent of Middletown's black families were headed by women without husbands, compared to 14 percent of its white families. Middletown's black women are almost as likely to be employed as are the men. (In 1980, 44 percent of black women and 51 percent of black men were employed, compared to 44 and 62 percent, respectively, among whites.) The women tend to have higher status jobs.

While Lila's family may not appear to be an example of great occupational upward mobility, there are signs of progress. Lila's eldest daughter, May, 47, represents the third generation of Jackson women in domestic work, but she served as a maid for only two years. Over the years, she supplemented her husband's factory paychecks with various

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\*The occupations of Lila's children and their spouses: 1.) May, a homemaker, married to a factory worker; 2.) Dolores, a utility company teller, married to a factory worker; 3.) Sandra (now deceased), was a hospital x-ray technician; 4.) William, a former bartender, now unemployed; 5.) Samuel, a factory worker; 6.) Edward, a former hotel clerk, now unemployed, married to an accountant.

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other part-time jobs. The couple stayed together. In 1980, she passed the high school equivalency exam, and enrolled as a social work major at her mother's alma mater, Ball State. She will graduate this year.

Three of May's six children are grown. One daughter manages a public housing project in Middletown. Her first and second sons, both in their mid-twenties, have degrees from Ball State in telecommunications. They are, in part, victims of their own high expectations. "Neither one . . . wanted to work in the factory," May says. "They said the work was too hard. They had seen my husband drag in after work . . . . The children do have more alternatives than I had." One son is now an enlisted man in the Air Force; the other works in a fast food restaurant while he looks for another job.

Because of discrimination, May is not sure that education will be a key to the local job market for her family. But she has worked hard to get her own university degree, and has pushed her children to finish high school and go on to college. Unlike many of Middletown's whites, she remains convinced that education ultimately will make things better.

The Michaels, Winslows, and Jacksons have all "moved up" since the Lynds studied Middletown, but they have advanced unequally, and in different ways.

Only the Michaels followed the stereotypical path of fairly steady generation-to-generation improvement in income and status. But the Winslows seem equally satisfied, even though their gains have come chiefly through a rising standard of living. Crumbling class barriers have allowed Duane Winslow and his family to feel that they have moved up to become a part of the vast American "middle class," even though they remain, after three generations, a blue-collar family. By contrast, the Jacksons have, in a sense, come further than the Winslows, but they are still cut off from the larger community. And, despite their gains, they remain near the bottom of the economic ladder. Yet, as their commitment to education suggests, they are also aiming somewhat higher than some of their white counterparts.

To the Lynds, all of this might seem quite astonishing. By 1937, when they published *Middletown Revisited*, they had moved sharply to the political left, partly in reaction to the Great Depression. By then, they were impatient with Middletown's working class, unable to understand why widening inequality did not foster greater class consciousness and activism. They concluded their book with a quotation from R. H. Tawney, which seemed to apply to Middletowners: "They walked reluctantly backwards into the future, lest a worse thing should befall them." Viewed in retrospect, that walk has moved Middletown's people a considerable distance up the incline to "success."

## BACKGROUND BOOKS

### SOCIAL MOBILITY IN AMERICA

Unlike many European writers, the American novelist rarely speaks of class. As Lionel Trilling once observed, "the great characters of American fiction, such, say, as Captain Ahab and Natty Bumppo, tend to be mythic . . . and their very freedom from class gives them a large and glowing generality." In the United States, he believed, "the real basis of the [English] novel has never existed—that is, the tension between a middle class and an aristocracy."

American novelists were more interested in the frontier; their protagonists fled from civilization on whaling ships, on the open road—even on river rafts, as in Mark Twain's **Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** (1885). Yet Huck and Jim's escape from St. Petersburg, Missouri, floating down the Mississippi on a raft, and their encounters with "white trash," scoundrels, and local gentry also say a lot, in passing, about class sensibilities and social mobility.

Thus, American novelists, especially between the Civil War and the 1950s, did not *ignore* such matters. Indeed, after the turn of the century, many of them illuminated (variously) American visions of success and failure, tensions between classes, and the continuing drama of individual strivings to move up the socioeconomic ladder.

No writer spread the American gospel of success more widely than Horatio Alger (1832–1899). Beginning with **Ragged Dick** (1867), Alger wrote some 130 novels, which preached that hard work and cheerful perseverance would put "a young gentleman on the way to fame and fortune." His tales influenced several generations of young readers, future achievers, and memoir-writers, from Andrew Carnegie to Malcolm X.

Most serious writers, however, dismissed the Alger stories as fantasy. And William Dean Howells and Theodore

Dreiser, among others, saw a dark side to the American Dream. In **The Rise of Silas Lapham** (1885), Howells tells the story of a Vermont farmer who becomes a wealthy paint manufacturer. Lapham moves his family to Boston, where he builds a mansion and expects to take his rightful place in Boston's high society. But he mismanages his money, and his wife and children fail to impress the Brahmins. Lapham turns down an opportunity to pass on his financial woes to someone else. In the end he returns to Vermont, sadder, poorer, but wiser.

Clyde Griffiths, the amoral protagonist in Theodore Dreiser's long-popular **American Tragedy** (1925), is eager to rise in life—by any means. He is a poor but handsome lad living in upstate New York. Employed in his uncle's collar factory, Clyde enters into a liaison with a working-class girl, Roberta Alden. Shortly thereafter, he starts to court Sondra Finchley, the daughter of a wealthy local notable. Roberta informs Clyde that she is pregnant, and she demands that he provide for her. To free himself for Sondra and his dreams of a brighter future, Clyde plans to kill Roberta; she drowns in an apparent accident, but Clyde is tried for murder and condemned to death.

In their fiction, Dreiser and Howells blamed human failure on personal weaknesses. But other writers, such as socialist Jack London, saw working-class people as victims of society; in London's view, their difficulties stemmed not only from upper-class *hauteur* but also from the capitalist system.

As an oysterman in San Francisco Bay, and as a miner in the Klondike, London came to know the harsh life of the manual laborer. His hero in **Martin Eden** (1909) is a sailor who becomes a writer in order to win the love of Ruth Morse, a well-to-do college graduate.

### A BRIEF SAMPLING OF THE RESEARCH

Of the many historical studies of social mobility in the United States, the best is Stephan Thernstrom's **Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970** (Harvard, 1973). Edward Pessen's anthology of scholarly essays, **Three Centuries of Social Mobility in America** (Heath, 1974), is illuminating but marred by some contributors' determination to depict the United States as a land of intractable inequality. Useful as an overview of research is **Social Mobility in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Europe and America in Comparative Perspective** (Berg, 1985), by Hartmut Kaelble.

Thomas Kessner's **Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915** (Oxford, 1977) is among the most vivid chronicles of the immigrant struggle to "make it" in the United States. For a general survey of immigrant group experiences, readers may consult **American Ethnic Groups** (Urban, 1978), edited by Thomas Sowell.

Scholarly interest in mobility blossomed during the 1950s. In **Social Mobility in Industrial Society** (Univ. of Calif., 1959), Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix inaugurated several debates, arguing, for example, that industrialization had equalized opportunities on both sides of the Atlantic.

In recent years, scholars have returned to the subject, producing landmark studies such as **Opportunity and Change** (Academic Press, 1978), by David L. Featherman and Robert M. Hauser. Unfortunately, few laymen will be able to decipher the jargon, regression analyses, and loglinear models now employed in this and other academic studies in this field.

An exception is Greg J. Duncan's **Years of Poverty, Years of Plenty** (Univ. of Mich., 1984). Based on a study of 5,000 families, he concludes that about 25 percent of all Americans slip into poverty at some point in their lives, but seldom for long. Other scholars contend that, for various reasons, a large number of today's poor are unable to progress out of poverty. In his once-controversial **The Unheavenly City** (Little, Brown, 1970), Harvard's Edward Banfield argued that the new urban "lower class" simply lacked key "attitudes, motivations, and habits" of respectable working-class people. In effect, **The Underclass** (Random, 1982), by journalist Ken Auletta popularized Banfield's thesis, while William Julius Wilson and Charles Murray analyzed it in **The Declining Significance of Race** (Univ. of Chicago, 1980) and **Losing Ground** (Basic, 1984), respectively.

The American ideal of upward mobility pervades the discussion of many social issues. In the *Wilson Quarterly*, relevant background books essays include "Money and the Pursuit of Plenty in America" (Autumn 1977), "The Public Schools" (Autumn 1979), "Jobs in America" (Winter 1980), "Immigration" (New Year's 1983), "Teaching in America" (New Year's 1984), "Blacks in America" (Spring 1984), "The War on Poverty: 1965-1980" (Autumn 1984), "The Irish" (Spring 1985), "Miami" (Winter 1985), and "The Struggle for Literacy" (Spring 1986).

But no magazines will agree to buy Martin's writing; at her parent's instigation, Ruth deserts him. The young man eventually writes a book which wins him wealth and fame (of course), and she returns. But his love for her fades when he realizes that she is only "worshipping at the shrine of the established."

Indiana's Booth Tarkington wrote less about Americans who were struggling up the social ladder, than about those who were sliding down it. Tarkington's best-selling **Magnificent Ambersons** (1918) chronicles the gradual decline of a prominent midwestern family. In **Alice Adams** (1921), Tarkington tells the story of a girl who falls in love with the wealthy Arthur Russell. To attract him, she fabricates a web of lies to suggest that her family is well-off too. But Arthur discovers on his own that Alice, her father (who runs a small glue-making factory), and the rest of the Adams clan are faring badly, and he leaves her.

Elsewhere, writers dwelt on other tensions in American life—between Northerners and Southerners, between city folk and country folk, and between the intellectual and the money-minded middle class, what Baltimore columnist H. L. Mencken called the "booboisie."

Sinclair Lewis's **Babbitt** (1922) assailed the small-town, materialistic mentality. Lewis's "extremely married and unromantic" George F. Babbitt was the kind of fellow who worshipped "Modern Appliances" but "disliked his family." And Nathanael West's **Cool Million** (1934) presented "Shagpoke" Whipple, ex-president of the Rat River National Bank. Shagpoke, as another character described him, "ain't no nigger-lover, he don't give a damn for Jewish culture, and he knows the fine Italian hand of the Pope when he sees it."

Several generations of American writers drew portraits of the robber baron, a favorite villain during the country's late

19th-century industrial surge. Dreiser did so in his three-part fictional biography of Frank Cowperwood, **The Financier**, **The Titan**, and **The Stoic** (1912, '14, '47), based on the life of Charles T. Yerkes, the Chicago traction [streetcar] magnate. And F. Scott Fitzgerald described Nick Carraway's fascination with bootlegger Jay Gatsby in **The Great Gatsby** (1925).

Yet Cowperwood and Gatsby, like many businessmen in American fiction, were tragic figures. Gatsby had started life as a poor North Dakota farm boy, and wound up as proprietor of a Long Island estate. He made the mistake of thinking that his (ill-gotten) riches would win him true happiness, in the person of lovely, upper-class Daisy Fay. In pursuing "the green light, the orgiastic future," Gatsby learned, he had "committed himself to the following of a grail."

The Depression years saw the first novels that presented, often in vaguely Marxist colors, distinct classes in American life. In his mammoth, kaleidoscopic **U.S.A.** trilogy (1930-36), which covered the first 30 years of this century, John Dos Passos saw two Americas: one privileged, rich, and corrupt, the other poor and powerless.

A genteel Harvard graduate, Dos Passos sympathized with his more optimistic characters. In **The Big Money**, Charley Anderson returns to New York as a World War I hero. He first plans to organize workers in an airplane factory, but ends up getting corrupted by booze, gambling, women, and shady business deals. More than anything, as Alfred Kazin has written, **U.S.A.** sought to show that "the force of circumstances that is twentieth century life is too strong for the average man."

A number of new writers described the working class from the inside looking out. Some of their novels rank among the better examples of modern American literature. These include Abraham Cahan's **Rise of David Levinsky**

(1917), about the Americanization of a Jew living on the East Side of New York; Henry Roth's **Call It Sleep** (1934), a portrait of Manhattan's slum dwellers; and James T. Farrell's Studs Lonigan trilogy (1932-35), the story of a poor Irish Catholic boy growing up on the South Side of Chicago.

American writers paid some attention to the other side of the tracks too. John Marquand, for example, slyly poked fun at the Anglophile snobbism of moneyed Bostonians in **The Late George Apley** (1937). The shrewd efforts of shipping magnate Moses Apley, George's grandfather, have made the family rich—and, rather quickly, “old Boston.”

Inherited wealth eases George's path through life, from Hobson's School on Marlborough Street (where he meets “the scions of his own social class”), to Harvard College and Harvard Law, to the gentle wooded slopes of Pequod Island, Maine. “Nothing is more important than social consideration,” writes George's father to his son, summing up the acquired Apley sensibility.

John O'Hara detailed Americans' social life in a more dramatic vein. A Manhattan newspaperman-turned-novelist from Pottsville, Pennsylvania, O'Hara reported on the manners and morals of lower-, middle-, and upper-class Americans in the Northeast.

In his “Gibbsville” novels, such as **Appointment in Samarra** (1934), **A Rage to Live** (1949), and **Ten North Frederick** (1955), O'Hara's perceptions of small-town life were particularly acute. “The small town, like my invention Gibbsville,” O'Hara observed, “has it all; the entrenched, the strivers, the

climbers, the rebellious . . . they interest me so much, it's hard for me to know when to stop.”

For the most part, however, the post-World War II American novel has said little about upward (or downward) mobility or class friction. One reason may be that the increasing material well-being of middle- and upper-middle class Americans, as Wesleyan's Richard Ohmann said, has led to “a truce in class conflict,” if not an end to Getting Ahead.

Moreover, movies and television have taken over much of the contemporary story-telling function. Significantly, John Sayles, the author of **Union Dues** (1977), and one of the most promising young writers of working-class life, has turned his talents to writing and directing films such as *Matewan* (1987), which chronicles the West Virginia coalmine wars of the 1920s.

Today's serious novels, for the most part, are written by and for college-educated people. And, perhaps reflecting the current *Zeitgeist*, most of the critically acclaimed novels by writers such as Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, J. D. Salinger, and John Updike focus not on money, status, work, or ambition, but on the personal problems of educated, often affluent Americans: sex, love, marriage, the meaning of life.

Lionel Trilling, it seems, saw the trend coming nearly four decades ago. “I think it is true to say,” he observed in 1948, “that money and class do not have the same place in our social and mental life that they once had. They have certainly not ceased to exist, but [not] . . . as they did in the nineteenth century, or even in our own youth.”

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Michael Denning, assistant professor of American studies at Yale University, suggested several ideas and book titles for this essay.*

# CURRENT BOOKS

## SCHOLARS' CHOICE

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

**CAPITALISM AND  
ANTISLAVERY**  
**British Mobilization in  
Comparative  
Perspective**  
by Seymour Drescher  
Oxford, 1987  
300 pp. \$19.95

Until the 1780s, slavery flourished almost everywhere in the Americas between Boston and Buenos Aires, and was sustained by a steadily expanding trade in new imports from Africa. A century later, however, the age-old institution had been eradicated from the New World and was retreating in Africa and Asia before the self-righteous onslaught of the former slave-trading powers of Europe. At the center of this story of conversion and redemption was rapidly industrializing Great Britain, which abolished its slave trade in 1807 and slavery itself in its colonies in 1833, campaigning vigorously thereafter to persuade other nations around the world to follow suit.

Exactly why one of the oldest, most widespread, and most profitable of human institutions should, at the turn of the 19th century, suddenly metamorphose from a national asset into a moral evil has long intrigued historians. The coincidence in Britain of a new and growing antislavery movement, the Industrial Revolution, and the spread of Protestant nonconformity is especially suggestive.

Early historical tradition depicted slave emancipation as the work of a small group of high-minded reformers (among them the evangelist William Wilberforce) whose 50 years of campaigning finally forced the British government to sacrifice greed to conscience. Then, during the 1940s, economic historians turned the antislavery "Saints" (as their contemporaries knew them) into villains, holding that the British abandoned slavery only when it had ceased to be profitable, and that the abolitionists were merely a front for capitalists who sought a new economic order based on free trade and free labor. This view, most fully expressed in Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), won wide acceptance until it was comprehensively debunked in *Econocide* (1977) by Seymour Drescher, professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh. Britain's slave economy, Drescher demonstrated, had an enduring vitality.

In his new book, whose title pointedly echoes Williams's, Drescher mounts a challenge to more recent evaluations of Britain's antislavery movement, notably the award-winning work of Yale's David Brion Davis, author of *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (1966), *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (1975), and *Slavery and Human Progress* (1984). Davis relates the emergence of abolitionism to various independent developments in secular and religious thought and human sensibility, and seeks more subtle connections between industrialization and the antislavery movement.

Drescher begins by focusing on the unique political culture of 18th-century England. Where Davis emphasizes a temporal break in European

thought concerning slavery late in the century, Drescher sees a geographical discontinuity on the issue. In northwest Europe, and especially England, he argues, slavery was never accepted as either normal or legal as it was in Iberia and the Mediterranean lands, from which the idea of slaveholding was carried to the New World. Long before the Enlightenment, Englishmen viewed bondage as polluting and abhorrent. They tolerated their national involvement in slavery only because it was economically valuable and took place far away, "beyond the line," where it had always existed. Although slaves were sometimes bought and sold in England itself, runaways as often as not were treated favorably by magistrates, juries, and the crowd. Racism, it appears, was not a significant factor.

In this reformulation of the position of slavery in European thought, and of blacks in British society, abolitionism becomes more a matter of mobilization than of conversion. This is the crux of Drescher's argument. Searching out the broad social context of antislavery sentiment, he looks beyond the select coterie of abolitionist leaders like Wilberforce and the parliamentary elite whom they battled to win over. Rather, Drescher emphasizes the role of the anonymous masses who—in pamphlets and local meetings—vicariously experienced the brutalities of plantation life and deluged Parliament with antislavery petitions.

With little evidence of the identity or size of this base of abolitionism (usually assumed to be middle-class), historians have generally neglected it. Drescher locates the base in the new industrial towns of northern England (e.g., Manchester, Sheffield), and shows heavy involvement on the part of lower-class Britons and independent artisans, whose ranks grew during the early Industrial Revolution.



Moreover, Drescher's study reveals, the event that made the movement's fortunes was the irruption of this mass element. What earlier historians saw as milestones (e.g., the formation in 1787 of the London Abolition Society by Quakers and evangelicals) shrink in significance beside the mammoth petition (nearly 11,000 names) to abolish the slave trade, which issued from the boom town of Manchester in 1787. In Drescher's view, it was such pressure from below that shaped the movement's tactics and forced Britain's ruling elite to respond.

Drescher also contests Davis's view that the movement reinforced the power of the ruling class. Far from channeling domestic discontent toward extraneous matters, as Davis argues, antislavery both opened the way for other movements—e.g., Chartism, the workingmen's drive for political reform—and actively encouraged them. Antislavery flourished in times of tranquillity rather than crisis, and, broadly based, was not tied to any particular social group, religious denomination, or ideology.

Setting aside 20th-century cynicism, Drescher in some ways returns the historiography of abolitionism to where it started—without a hidden

economic agenda—much as historians of slavery currently give more credence than they once did to the counterarguments offered by the slaveholders themselves. *Capitalism and Antislavery*, however, is no hagiography of the “Saints.” Marshaling masses of new evidence, it digs down to what Drescher calls the “anthropological roots” of antislavery, and puts in new perspective many facets of a long-running debate. Combining a brief text with copious notes, it should appeal both to the general reader and to the specialist.

—David Geggus '87

**READING THE NEWS:  
A Pantheon Guide to  
Popular Culture**

edited by Robert Karl  
Manoff and Michael  
Schudson  
Pantheon, 1986  
246 pp. \$19.95

Citizens of a free society require a free flow of information—what Americans call “the news”—to remain free. But news reporting today is a much more complex process than the simple phrase “free flow” might suggest. In the United States, not only the press but also political parties and public and private interest groups mediate among various sectors of government and between government and the people. *Reading the News* tells

how journalists—one of the key links in this complex communications chain—use the six “commandments” of reporting (the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of a story) to choose facts and shape them into stories that the public recognizes as news.

Wesleyan University government professor Leon V. Sigal begins with the “who.” Brushing aside the well-known fact that most news stories (over 90 percent of them, according to sociologist Herbert Gans’s 1980 study, *Deciding What’s News*) are in the main *about* people, he addresses a more piquant problem: objectivity. A reporter’s objectivity, Sigal maintains, “has no bearing whatsoever on the truthfulness or validity of a story.” Objective reporting simply means “avoiding as much as possible the overt intrusion of the reporter’s personal values into a news story and minimizing explicit interpretation.” Yet to do this, the reporter must rely on “sources”—preferably authoritative—to tell the story. The objective reporter quotes and remains aloof, but his “sources make the news.”

The *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s Carlin Romano tells us that “what” the press covers “is a straightforward empirical question with a straightforward empirical answer: box scores, beauty pageants, press conferences, Richard Nixon, and so on.” But which among the myriad of “bare facts” get reported, and, once reported, rate top billing? Do reporters simply cover what they feel like covering? Do their choices guide the public or

does the public guide the choices?

Romano cites a number of unwritten rules that determine what is news. In addition to the sensational—neatly epitomized by the wry title of Washington reporter Arnold Sawislak's 1985 book, *Dwarf Rapes Nun; Flees in U.F.O.*—the press covers the possible, the easy, and the tasteful. Less edifyingly, it covers political friends favorably and enemies unfavorably: Romano asks us to "recall how many strictly upbeat stories you've read about the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, or South Africa."

It is the public, the people who actually buy and read the news, who ultimately establish the practical, if unwritten, limits for reporters. If "what the press covers is what it feels like covering," Romano observes, it is nevertheless also true that "rebels against mainstream journalistic beliefs don't rise to managing editor."

"Recency," says Michael Schudson, writing on the "when" of news, "is not a sufficient guarantee of newsworthiness, nor is uniqueness." To become *hard* news, stories must have a "peg" that links them to the concerns of today's reader. For instance, during Chinese president Li Xiannian's 1985 visit to the United States, it was announced in Beijing that the government had put on display 70,000 books to help the capital's residents "locate and reclaim materials [confiscated] from their personal libraries during the Cultural Revolution." The story made page one of the *Los Angeles Times*. Yet a year earlier, when there was no compelling news peg, the same paper did not consider newsworthy an announcement that "one hundred thousand volumes were displayed and a third of them reclaimed" in a similar Beijing book give-back.

Schudson, a University of California professor of communications and sociology, worries that hard news about the most recent events tends to "place greatest emphasis on what may often be the least publicly vital feature of media work." Feature and in-depth reporting allow reporters to escape the present-tense tyranny of the front page, where they must often be both superficial and mouthpieces for the government.

The "where" of news—often found only in a story's dateline—rarely gives us pause. Yet in "SANTA BARBARA, Calif., Aug. 20 — The White House announced [here] today that, despite Soviet objections, the United States would proceed with the first American test of an antisatellite weapon against an object in space," it is the dateline—placing the reporter on the spot—that establishes his authority. The "where" also occasionally serves as a hard news subject, as with "The Philippines: Another Iran?," but setting is most often omitted in objective political reports as too evocative. Locations in the news are most often information—where a concert will take place, for example—or serve to orient and involve a reader, as when a local person takes part in a distant event.

"A story is worthless if it doesn't tell me why something happened," remarked one *New York Times* editor. Yet, according to James W. Carey, dean of the University of Illinois College of Communications, "'why' is the question most often left unanswered, or answered with an insinuation." It

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is "the dark continent and invisible landscape" of journalism—what readers most want to get out of a news story and are least likely to receive. Leaving aside random, uncanny (often sensational) occurrences, "matters of fundamental importance . . . in the news . . . cannot be treated as secular mysteries and left unexplained. They must be accounted for, must be rendered sensible. The economy and the political system form the sacred center of modern society. With them, we are unwilling to sit about muttering 'It's fate' or 'So be it.' We insist that the economy and the polity be explicable . . ."

The "why" of journalism requires reporting in depth. If, as Carey maintains, reporting is ideally a "curriculum and not merely a series of news flashes," present-day journalism—"identified with [and] defined by breaking news, the news flash, the news bulletin"—is unsatisfactory.

New York University's Robert Karl Manhoff concludes the volume by considering the power of the news "story" as a literary form. While most readers understand that they are getting something more than the facts, few stop to consider "that in reading the news they [are] being told a tale." Each news narrative seeks to persuade the reader that it is the "one story to tell and [the] one right way to tell it." But the form of a news story is never inevitable. It is, maintains Manhoff, the product of collaboration between reader and writer to follow established conventions that make events understandable.

*Reading the News* is a worthwhile exercise. It leaves one better equipped to frame answers to a number of fundamental questions: What is news? What are facts? What are truths? Can a journalist be objective and factual, and still distort the truth?

But it is hardly the whole story. The news media are just one element in a vast communications network in the United States. Government leaders, for instance, bombard their staffs with memoranda and newsletters, and their constituents with leaflets and 10-second sound bites (radio and TV's "paid political announcements"), funneling their message to the public through parties and election committees. The White House—wanting to be kept informed as well as to inform—conducts almost daily polls of public opinion.

The people, too, speak their minds. Traditionally, the public speaks through letters to congressmen and the lobbying of special interest groups. When Lt. Col. Oliver North achieved instant stardom during the recent Iran-Contra hearings, the senators who were grilling him had to face a roomful of flowers and two stacks of telegrams sent by his fans, while two Californians expressed an opposing view by editing Los Angeles' famous HOLLYWOOD sign to read an ironic "OLLYWOOD."

In the United States, "reading the news" demands an understanding of this larger communications complex. Without it, one can see trees—scraps of news—but not the forest, the broad picture of U.S. politics and society, which is much more than the sum of its parts.

—Miao Frank Li '87

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## NEW TITLES

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### *History*

**A HISTORY OF  
PRIVATE LIFE**  
**Volume I: From Pagan  
Rome to Byzantium**  
edited by Paul Veyne  
translated by  
Arthur Goldhammer  
Harvard, 1987  
670 pp. \$29.50

"I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble." So boasted Augustus Caesar, whom the Senate in 27 B.C. appointed as the first Roman emperor. But marble and military prowess were only a part of the story of the Empire. What was everyday existence like for its inhabitants? Here, five historians—four French, one British—describe the tone and texture of life, leisure, and mores during the Empire's pre- and early Christian era, circa 50 B.C. to A.D. 1100.

Editor Veyne analyzes social institutions, such as marriage and slavery, at the Empire's peak. Peter Brown tells how pagans came to embrace Christianity's austere monotheism. Yvon Thébert deals with architecture; Michel Rouche and Evelyne Patlagean describe personal conduct in the divided Empire of Byzantium's later years.

Of these, Brown, author of *Augustine of Hippo* (1967) and *The Making of Late Antiquity* (1978), goes furthest beyond merely assembling engaging facts. In late antiquity, he notes, only a "wellborn few" enjoyed the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship. But Christianity, dedicated to universal solidarity, encompassed all. The disenfranchised flocked to the Church; even women could earn respect through good works. Eventually, compassion due the poor by the rich—analogue to God's relation to man—replaced civic duty as the guiding moral principle of Mediterranean life.

Christianity also affected relations between the sexes. Yearning for "singleheartedness" in God's service, many fifth-century believers became monks or hermits. Celibacy and sexual passion, no big issues to pagans, became theological obsessions in the Western church. Discarding the pagan notion that only hot (to "cook" the fetus) and pleasurable lovemaking produced good children, early Catholicism's major theologian, St. Augustine (354–430), saw the sexual urge as uncontrollable and antisocial—a curse which, like death, had plagued mankind since the Fall. His ideas stuck. "Of all the battles," wrote a Christian in 1200, "the struggle for chastity is the most great. Combat is constant and victory rare."

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**IN HITLER'S GERMANY:  
Everyday Life in  
the Third Reich**

by Bernd Engelmann  
Pantheon, 1987  
335 pp. \$21.95

**INSIDE NAZI GERMANY:  
Conformity, Opposition, and  
Racism in Everyday Life**

by Detlev J. K. Peukert  
Yale, 1987  
288 pp. \$25

"I belong to a nation . . . rich in military heroes, but . . . underdeveloped in civil courage," an elderly German told Studs Terkel when the writer visited Hamburg in 1967. Yet 22 years after Hitler's fall, the question remained: Why? Engelmann, a German journalist who belonged to the anti-Nazi Resistance, details ordinary life in the Third Reich in a book that complements the more theoretical analysis of Peukert, a University of Essen historian.

The Nazis, writes Peukert, wanted to replace "the unpalatable *variety* of real life" with "system, utility and efficiency." They split society into "a multiplicity of opposing groups" while imposing "steps of compliance" on individuals: To play sports, school children joined the Hitler Youth and their parents were obliged to give to the Nazis' Winter Relief Fund. Hitler's "Reich Cultural Chamber," notes Engelmann, sought to mold creative people "in a cultural uniformity of the mind."

But it was fear, he argues, that kept Germans mute in the face of such horrors as the *Kristallnacht* (the "Night of Broken Glass," November 9, 1938), when Nazis raided Jewish homes and businesses, and sent thousands to concentration camps (12,000 to Buchenwald alone).

More than 100,000 suspected opponents of the regime were arrested in the first weeks of Hitler's rule. Of the 3,000 pastors openly "opposed to the Nazification of the Church, to the racial theories and other anti-Christian teachings of the Nazis, and to their cult of the Führer," notes Engelmann, 1,700 were sent to the camps.

Moving from an "aimless rebellion" to a drive to homogenize Germany, Peukert says, the Nazis forged an "atomised . . . society abjuring social, political and moral responsibilities."

**NEW YORK INTELLECT:  
A History of Intellectual  
Life in New York City from  
1750 to the Beginnings of  
Our Own Time**

by Thomas Bender  
Knopf, 1987  
422 pp. \$25

Once a raw colonial port far behind Boston and Philadelphia in importance, New York became the cultural mecca of America and the world. Bender, a New York University historian, traces this metamorphosis to New York's uniquely symbiotic civic, academic, and literary worlds.

Early New York's educated elite founded, in good 18th-century Enlightenment tradition, a "Society for Encouraging Useful Knowledge." But by the 1840s, such rich men's clubs, no longer vehicles for civic reform, lost their municipal sup-

port. The base of civic-minded citizenry was broadened by such institutions as the penny press, the tuition-free New York University (originally the University of the City of New York, founded in 1832), and the Cooper Union, opened in 1859 "by a mechanic for the education of mechanics." Older and more select, Columbia College continued to offer classical education to the deserving rich.

By 1875, New York had one million people and a large bourgeoisie, some of whom (e.g., Theodore Dreiser and Edith Wharton) refused to ignore the even more numerous poor. While *The Century* magazine aired polite society's faith in Victorian Anglo-American values, Frederick Law Olmsted built Central and Prospect Parks for everyone.

By 1900, poor New Yorkers were entering college in force—except at Columbia, where as late as the 1920s officials still judged East Europeans "not particularly pleasant companions" and too "enthusiastic" about "accomplishment." Yet, in 1913, Christian and Jewish editors together produced *Seven Arts* magazine. In 1917 they were joined by Columbia-educated Randolph Bourne, "the founder," says Bender, "of the . . . tradition of the New York literary intellectual."

Through New York's universities and magazines, such thinkers as Charles Beard and John Dewey were able to disseminate their ideas. If today—after Hitler, Stalin, and the Bomb—their progressivism seems less relevant, Binder insists that their "model of the critical academic intellect" does not. But, he warns, with its world of ideas "academicized" and no longer reaching "the center of city life," New York risks becoming "a museum of its own culture."

### *Contemporary Affairs*

#### **MANUFACTURING MATTERS:**

#### **The Myth of Post-Industrial Economy**

by Stephen S. Cohen  
and John Zysman  
Basic, 1987  
297 pp. \$19.95

Can America survive without its industrial base, its steel mills as well as its newest micro-electronics factories? It can and must, say advocates of the so-called post-industrial state. Services are the economic future of the United States.

Cohen and Zysman, economists at the University of California, Berkeley, find such thinking a formula for disaster, supported by false analogies (e.g., as farms once ceded to factories, so factories will give way to services), vague statistics, and

fuzzy definitions. What, for instance, is a "service?" The government counts returns on U.S. loans abroad as service income, but this has little to do with the health of the domestic economy.

There is a vast network of "tight linkages," the authors say, between industries and supporting services (e.g., transportation, telecommunications). Let an industry die or move offshore, and many service businesses will collapse. Proponents of a service-based economy note that the shrinkage of agricultural employment—down from 20 percent of the work force in 1929 to less than three percent today—raised similar fears of economic Armageddon, which proved groundless. The authors counter that while farm productivity actually increased, thanks mostly to mechanization, the decline in industrial employment has *not* been paralleled by a rise in productivity.

The authors' remedies for U.S. industry's ills include concerted government and private investment in technological development and the training of highly skilled labor. The nation's "wealth and power," they warn, still "depends upon maintaining mastery and control of production."

**GUNNAR MYRDAL  
AND BLACK-WHITE  
RELATIONS:  
The Use and Abuse of  
*An American Dilemma*,  
1944–1969**

by David W. Southern  
Louisiana State Univ., 1987  
341 pp. \$35

In 1944, Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal published *An American Dilemma*, the comprehensive study of race relations in the United States that gave new impetus to the nascent civil rights movement. Southern, a Westminster College historian, assesses the Myrdal legacy.

Myrdal argued that racism—being contrary to Christian morality and to the "American creed" stated in the Declaration of Independence—posed a moral dilemma. Although his 1,535-page book documented the depth of racist attitudes, Myrdal concluded that the imperatives of democracy and man's basic goodness would prevail.

Myrdal's views were influential throughout the 1940s and '50s. President Harry S. Truman's Commission on Civil Rights drew on Myrdal's ideas, and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People used them in arguments; Chief Justice Earl Warren cited Myrdal in his majority opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Martin Luther King shared Myrdal's faith that whites would feel morally bound to sup-

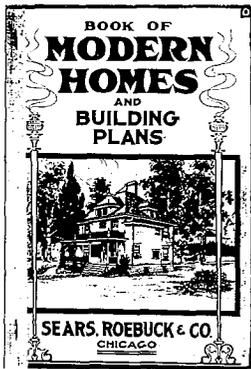
port the civil rights movement.

But black nationalists, whose day was heralded by the 1965 riots in Los Angeles' Watts district, rejected integration because it ignored blacks' real problem: poverty. In addition, empirical studies showed that for most whites, blatant inconsistencies in values posed no dilemma. They saw racism, writes Southern, as "an integral part of a stable and productive cultural order," and thus did not support social equality for blacks or affirmative action to achieve it.

Although Myrdal's "consensual liberalism" gave way to a "conflict model" of race relations during the 1960s, he remained sanguine—until the 1980s, when the slowing of civil rights gains and the persistence of black poverty tempered his optimism. At his death last May at age 89, he was reconsidering his views in a sequel, *An American Dilemma Revisited*.

### Arts & Letters

**THE COMFORTABLE HOUSE:**  
North American Suburban Architecture, 1890–1930  
by Alan Gowans  
M.I.T., 1986  
246 pp. \$35



Focusing on the frankly derivative Roman temple, Spanish colonial mission, and Cotswold cottage styles shunned by the architectural establishment, art historian Gowans brings order to the crazy quilt of early 20th-century American housing.

Distinguishing the utilitarian family "homestead" from the "mansion" built for show, Gowans defines three basic house types.

One is the bungalow. Developed by the British in Bengal (hence the name), by 1910 it was thoroughly identified with California, sun, and fun. The bungalow had one story (or one and a half), a sweeping roof over a verandah, easy access between inner and outer spaces (via porches, open living and dining rooms, moveable screen walls), and no basement. A family might move up from a small "beginner's" bungalow to another basic house type: the two-story "foursquare" (featuring four equal-sized rooms per floor, a verandah, and a pyramidal roof) or the "homestead temple-house" (separate access to the upper floor, the columned look of a classical temple).

If house types of the time were few, house styles were many. In a mania for the picturesque, even simple homes from 1850 to 1880 were decked out with "a plethora of ornamental addi-

tions." But with the revival of Spanish, Dutch, French, and especially English colonial styles in the early 1900s (later in mass-produced houses), designers strove for "Academic correctness."

Between the wars, most Americans turned their backs on the modernist dictum that all ornament should be dispensed with, and insisted instead that their houses be spacious, well-proportioned, and tasteful. Suburbs mushroomed during the 1920s (which brought building techniques almost as standardized as those of the Detroit automakers), refuges from increasingly impersonal factories and office buildings. The middle-class American home had become, as President Warren Harding himself said, "the apex and the aim . . . of our whole social system."

**THE LIFE OF  
LANGSTON HUGHES**  
**Volume I: I, Too,  
Sing America**  
by Arnold Rampersad  
Oxford, 1986  
468 pp. \$22.95

James Langston Hughes sometimes felt like a parentless child. Shortly after his birth in 1902 in Joplin, Missouri, his father ran off to Mexico. His mother, an aspiring actress, left him in the care of his grandmother, who cradled him in the bullet-holed shawl of an abolitionist relative killed in John Brown's 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry.

Through his grandmother's tales, writes Rutgers English professor Rampersad, the future author of such verse collections as *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *One-Way Ticket* (1949), and of plays, novels, and children's books, was indoctrinated early "into a relationship with his family's past, into a relationship with history, so intimate as to be almost sensual."

At age 18, on a train bound for Mexico, Hughes penned "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," a poem whose blues rhythms and imagery shocked both black and white middle-class readers. His celebration of blackness brought him to prominence in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. But his wanderlust and antifascist commitment drove him to worlds beyond: to Africa in 1923, to Paris for the first time in 1924, to Cuba and Haiti in 1930-31, to Russia in 1932, and to Spain in 1937. He befriended and influenced a number of West Indians and Africans—among them Senegal's Leopold Senghor—who were developing a concept of "negritude," and who later led independence movements in their native countries.

Despite his fame, back in the States Hughes

barely made a living. Shuttling between New York and California, he wrote scripts for Broadway and Hollywood in addition to more serious works, such as *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), a volume of short stories.

Rampersad's superb first volume takes Hughes to World War II, when—bankrupt, ailing, a victim of red-baiting—he saw his literary eminence challenged by Richard Wright and his 1940 novel, *Native Son*.

### Science & Technology

**WILBUR AND ORVILLE:  
A Biography of  
the Wright Brothers**  
by Fred Howard  
Knopf, 1987  
446 pp. \$24.95



Civil engineer Octave Chanute said in 1890 that one man could not invent the airplane. How, he wondered, could anyone be simultaneously inventor, mechanical engineer, mathematician, practical mechanic, and “a syndicate of capitalists?”

“Chanute was right,” says Howard, a former aeronautics specialist at the Library of Congress. One man could not have had the required expertise. But *two* could, if they were Wilbur (1867–1912) and Orville (1871–1948) Wright.

The Wright brothers' career as Ohio bicycle manufacturers proved to be ideal for aircraft pioneers. They were practical builders and their successful business enabled them to test flying machines without outside backers.

Open-hearted as well as talented, the brothers published their research even before they made the first successful sustained flight (59 seconds) by a powered aircraft at Kill Devil Hills, four miles from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in December 1903. If the European press did not always report their progress accurately (France's *Le Pays* referred to glider flights by “Monsieur Wilbug Bright”), European inventors scrambled frantically to match the Wrights' achievements.

Yet it was years before the airplane became a commercial success. In 1905, the U.S. War Department refused to buy a Wright Flyer, claiming it was “far from a stage of practical operation.” Only in 1909, after a test at Fort Myer, Virginia, witnessed by 7,000 people (including President William Howard Taft), did the Wrights sell a craft to the government. The price? Better builders than bargainers, the brothers first sought \$100,000, but wound up accepting \$30,000.

**THE THORN IN  
THE STARFISH:  
The Immune System  
and How It Works**  
by Robert S. Desowitz  
Norton, 1987  
270 pp. \$16.95

In 1882, Elie Metchnikoff, an eccentric Russian zoologist, observed that thorns placed "under the skin of beautiful starfish larvae" were attacked by certain cells. These attackers he called "phagocytes," derived from the Greek word *phagein*, to eat. Thus began immunology: the study of how the body fights disease.

Phagocytes, explains Desowitz, a noted parasitologist, are the first of the immune system's three lines of defense.

Second are antibodies, substances that combine with specific toxins or microbes to neutralize them. To make antibodies, the body uses two types of lymphocytes, white blood cells with round nuclei. T-cells from the thymus recognize antigens (foreign invaders), while B-cells (possibly created in bone marrow) prompt production of the correct antibodies to fight them. An immunity has been "built up" when lymphocytes "remember" earlier antibody-antigen battles and spring into action against an invader.

The third defense is the complement system, nine major proteins in blood serum that kill antigens and assist the antibodies.

Nature provides other avenues of protection. When—after being fed—people in famine-stricken Somalia became ill with malaria, tuberculosis, and brucellosis, researchers traced the phenomenon to lactoferrin, a protein that consumes iron. As long as food was scarce, the protein got all the iron and the disease-causing bacteria starved. But when Somalis were given food, there was enough iron for both lactoferrin and the bacteria; the protein no longer offered protection.

Other matters addressed by Desowitz: AIDS, and why smoking suppresses the immune system but lessens the suffering of some asthmatics.

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## PAPERBOUNDS

**A CHINESE PIONEER FAMILY: The Lins of Wu-feng, Taiwan 1729-1895.** By Johanna Menzel Meskill. Princeton, 1987. 375 pp. \$12.50

A tale of mayhem and murder emerges from the documents of the Lin family, wealthy Chinese landowners of Taiwan. Their story illuminates the rough frontier life on the island, China's wild East. Arriving from the mainland in 1754, the Lins wrested land from the natives and prospered until 1786, when Taiwan's Chinese rebelled against the Manchu Dynasty. Caught in this failed uprising, patriarch Lin Shih saw his land confiscated, his family dispossessed. Regaining their fortune over the next half century, the Lins became local strongmen. During the Taiping rebellion of 1859-63, Lin Wen-cha took his personal army to the mainland to fight on the side of the Manchus. Upon his return he massacred his neighbors and seized their lands. The brother who succeeded him was also a buccaneer—until he was ambushed and killed by a cabal of local officials, who charged him posthumously with inciting rebellion. Dragged into court, the surviving Lins mounted a vigorous defense, fearing a conviction that would mean death or castration for the men, slavery for the women. After 12 years, the litigation ended in compromise. The Lin family—now respectable gentry—kept their land until the 1950s, when reforms pushed them to seek careers in new fields: insurance and banking.

**THE LAST DALAI LAMA, A Biography.** By Michael Harris Goodman. Shambhala, 1987. 364 pp. \$15.95

The Dalai Lama is not Tibet, nor Tibet the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th of that line, modestly concedes. But as British historian Goodman shows, the Buddhist people of "the Land of Snows" disagree. As the incarnation of the Bodhisattva of Mercy and Compassion and Tibet's patron

saint, Gyatso is his nation's spiritual—and ostensibly political—leader. In 1950, the Chinese "liberated" the "Roof of the World" from Western imperialists (there were six expatriate Europeans in Tibet at the time). "Assimilating" the one million Tibetans, they killed thousands, pillaged temples, and destroyed records of Tibet as a sovereign state. The "God-King" later fled to India, where he awaits signs to return. "Nations that suffer the most—here the Jewish people come to mind—become the toughest," he says. Why, then, the *last* Dalai Lama? Gyatso himself dismisses a prophecy that he is his line's end. "As long as there is suffering in the world, I shall be back." Whether "I return as Dalai Lama is unimportant."

**ALLEGORY AND THE MIGRATION OF SYMBOLS.** By Rudolf Wittkower. Norton, 1987. 223 pp. \$14.95

Berlin-born art historian Rudolf Wittkower (1901-71) forged his reputation with brilliant scholarship on the Italian baroque, including a classic text on 18th-century Italian art and architecture. But his studies took him far beyond those geographic and chronological limits. These 14 essays, first published between 1937 and 1972, explore a theme that long engaged Wittkower: the meanderings of symbols and their meanings from culture to culture. He traces, for example, the motif of an eagle fighting a serpent from its origins in the earliest Mesopotamian civilizations, where it represented the cosmic combat of light and darkness, to the late 18th century, when William Blake used it in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as a metaphor for the imagination at war with earthly dullness. Wittkower also deals with such topics as monsters, allegorical figures of the Renaissance (Time, Death, Virtue) and their later mutations, and the basic problem of art—"whether and how far the visual symbol in art can yield its meaning to the interpreting beholder."

## Mr. Ito's Dance Party

It was not much more than a century ago that the youthful, pragmatic aristocrats who ran things in Japan following the Meiji Restoration (1868) led the nation's fateful rejection of political, economic, and cultural isolation. "Intellect and learning," pledged Mutsuhito, emperor from 1867 to 1912, "would be sought from throughout the world, in order to establish the foundations of Empire." One result, among many others, would be a crisis of cultural identity among the Japanese. Historian James L. McClain describes that crisis, in the context of a gala that took place in Tokyo 100 years ago.

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*by James L. McClain*

The spring of 1887 was a season of great entertainment in Tokyo.

Much of that social swirl took place at the Hall of the Baying Stag, an elaborate Renaissance-style building opened by the government in 1883 to provide an appropriate setting for social intercourse between Japanese and foreigners. With rooms for dining, billiards, cards, musical presentations, and dancing, the Baying Stag quickly became Tokyo's leading social center for elite foreigners and prominent Japanese industrialists, aristocrats, and government officials. By 1887, costume balls had become a Sunday evening tradition. Newspaper articles complimented the Japanese men, "stylish in their tuxedos," and lavished even more praise on their women, whose hair, "fashionably trimmed in bright ribbons, shimmered in the lovely, bluish glow" of the newly imported gas lamps.

So popular were these balls that dance studios sprang up around the capital. The wife of Japan's prime minister, Hirobumi Ito, fostered a Ladies Costume Society to encourage the wearing of Western dress, and some women even ordered their gowns from famous shops in Berlin.

In tune with his wife's enthusiasm, Mr. Ito decided to host a masquerade ball at his official residence on the evening of April 20, 1887. More than 400 guests attended. Driven to the Itos' in gaily decorated carriages, they were greeted by the prime minister incongruously dressed as a Venetian nobleman. Mrs. Ito appeared in a yellow silk dress of obvious Spanish design, topped off with a mantilla, while her daughter was decked out in



*A rendering of the Western-style ball hosted in 1887 by Japan's Prime Minister Ito. One novelty was the presence of wives—in traditional Japanese society, “persons of the interior” with no social life outside the family.*

the garb of an Italian peasant girl. The foreign minister of Japan came as a mendicant Buddhist monk; Prince Arisugawa as a medieval European knight; the industrialist Eiichi Shibusawa as a mountain aesthete; the home minister as a Japanese warrior with black body armor, two crossed samurai swords, and, curiously, a whistle.

The Japanese women, also dressed as characters from Japanese and European legends, were reportedly much in demand as dance partners by the foreign gentlemen, most of whom came in Japanese costumes. The dancing lasted until four in the morning.

To understand why a Strauss waltz would bring Japanese and Westerners together on the dance floors of Tokyo, we must go back to 1853 when U.S. Commodore Matthew C. Perry sailed his four “black ships” into the waters of Edo, today’s Tokyo. Perry carried a letter from President Millard Fillmore demanding that the Japanese end their isolation and open themselves to full intercourse with the United States by establishing permanent trade relations. The commodore saw his role in the more grandiose terms of Manifest Destiny: “It has so happened, in the order of Providence, the [United States] has, as it were, taken the end of the thread which, on the shores of America, broke in the hands of Columbus, and fastening it again to the ball of destiny, has rolled it onward.”

The Japanese had little choice in formulating a response to the Fill-

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more letter. Perry's flotilla was clearly capable of breaching Japan's rudimentary defenses. Certainly the Japanese were more impressed by the black ships than by the rolling ball of destiny. As one of them noted, Japan's "military class had during a long peace neglected the military arts; they had given themselves up to pleasure and luxury . . . so that they were greatly alarmed at the prospect that war might break out." Perry quickly got his treaty. Other Western nations followed close in the commodore's wake. By 1858, Japan had signed treaties with more than a dozen nations giving them clearly unequal (most would say grossly unfair) trading rights with Japan and also permitting foreigners, those "hairy outsiders," to reside in Japan's newly opened treaty ports.

Although Perry's rude and forceful arrival stirred up waves of bitterness among some Japanese, it ultimately served to open an era of intense cultural borrowing that lasted through the 1870s and well into the 1880s.

In large part, the new enchantment of the Japanese with the West flowed from the decision by the Meiji oligarchs, the young men who took control of Japan in the years following Perry's arrival, to "let the foolish argument be abandoned which has hitherto described foreigners as dogs, goats, and barbarians." The Meiji leaders decided to Westernize—to emulate the institutions and organizations of the West—because they were determined to revise the unequal treaties, and believed that the West would agree to do so only if Japan could assimilate enough imported culture to appear to be a civilized country, equal to those of the West. Thus, Kaoru Inoue, foreign minister during the 1880s, argued that "what we must do is to transform our Empire and our people, make the Empire like the countries of Europe and our people like the people of Europe."

Only thus could Japan "be independent, prosperous, and powerful."

Consequently, by 1890 the Japanese had adopted a constitutional system similar to that of Prussia, constructed a British-style navy, and begun an industrialization program that achieved success by importing the best available Western technology.

Much of the Westernization evident during the 1870s and 1880s, however, was spontaneous change that welled up from the people themselves, who seemed to believe that the West represented an advanced, superior culture. Perry himself helped to plant this idea in the Japanese mind. When the Japanese accepted the terms of President Fillmore's letter, Perry hosted a minstrel show (a form of entertainment that fortunately never found popularity in Japan) and then presented the Japanese

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with some of the West's latest inventions: a miniature railroad train, a telegraph set, a Dollard's telescope, and a French opera glass. Soon the fascination with Western technology became so great that one young Japanese was driven to declare that he and his fellow students "all fervently believed that we could not become real human beings without going abroad." Other Japanese sought to import Western culture into Japan.

Amane Nishi, a government official, wrote in 1874 that "At the present time an immense number of European customs are pouring in on us; it is as though a bottle has been overturned. Clothing, customs, even all kinds of crafts and scholarly pursuits—there is nothing which we are not today taking from the West."

Nishi was not exaggerating. By the end of the 1870s short haircuts had replaced the topknot, men wore gold watches, carried black rolled umbrellas, and dressed in knitted underwear. Cheap glass outsold pottery produced by craftsmen and in many homes gaudy tin boxes became more highly esteemed than traditional lacquer ware. A railroad linked Tokyo and nearby Yokohama, and gas lights and telegraph poles dotted the land.

#### **Dancing Fish, Wobbling Women**

New foods appeared. Japanese first tasted ice cream and lemonade during the 1860s. The first beer halls opened in downtown Tokyo in 1899, some 11 years after the first coffee shop, a social institution popular among students and geisha, two groups that seem always drawn to the new and the exotic. Beef became a fad. Buddhist prohibitions against consuming flesh had traditionally steered the Japanese away from beef, but after Westerners were seen cutting into steaks, a man named Horietsu started a restaurant in Tokyo that specialized in meat dishes. Opening day was not encouraging: People held their noses when passing by and no customers appeared until ten at night, when two men, so drunk they could barely stand, came tumbling into Horietsu's shop and demanded beef—"We want to try this strange, new stuff." But eventually, people of all classes began to patronize several beef restaurants in Tokyo and Yokohama.

Occasionally, the craze for things Western took on absurd dimensions. Some Japanese claimed that their civilization lagged behind that of the West because of the rice diet, and one university professor nearly died when he vowed to eat only the outer skin of the sweet dumplings known as manju, because they were bread-like. Not all the new beefeaters really enjoyed meat, concluded one song popular in the streets of Tokyo:

Behold him; unwilling to admit his weakness, even to himself;  
He stuffs his face with the unfamiliar, Western food;  
And then stealthily steals out to the hallway, there to disgorge  
it all over the floor  
Putting on a feigned smile of enjoyment, he returns to finish  
his coffee.



*When the International Red Cross extended membership to Japan in 1886, upper-class Japanese women (e.g., these Red Cross volunteers) were elated. They took to charitable work as eagerly as their Western counterparts did.*

Nonetheless, even intellectuals began to champion things Western. Arinori Mori, a future minister of education, proposed abolishing the Japanese language and adopting English. Yoshio Takahashi's *On Improving the Race* (1884) argued that the Japanese were "inferior barbarians" and suggested that the fastest route to progress was to expand the gene pool by having Japanese men marry Western women.

Given all this, it is difficult to imagine that Mr. Ito's dance party would become a matter of public concern. Certainly Ito himself had no intention of creating controversy. Yet, as chance would have it, the masquerade ball was held at the exact moment that many Japanese were beginning to have second thoughts about imitating Westerners. The Ito party touched off a sudden, violent backlash of criticism. Angry conservatives likened the attending Japanese gentlemen to carp—"dancing fish, swimming in a sea of perfume"—and mocked them for "clutching" at foreign women and "waltzing until dawn." Previously idolized, the Japanese women were now ridiculed for "mangling their hair in curling irons" and "wobbling about, pigeon-toed in foreign-style shoes." One newspaper dubbed Ito and his ministers the "dancing cabinet." Another observer wrote that Ito's country had learned the decadence of the Roman Empire without first attaining its pinnacle of glory.

At the heart of the criticism was a new and growing fear that the innovations brought on by the more bizarre forms of cultural borrowing during the 1870s and the 1880s might have been too radical, too sudden,

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too far-reaching. Many Japanese began to feel that they had become separated from their past. Nearly two decades of emulating the West now caused many to doubt their very Japaneseness. In short, in the pools of darkness around the edges of Mr. Ito's dance floor, serious fears lurked about the destruction of native traditions and the loss of national identity.

For some Japanese, baseball provided a means of maintaining their national identity in the modern world. The American game was introduced into Japan by a railroad engineer named Hiraoka who had journeyed to the United States to study. When he returned to Japan in 1873 he brought a bat and three balls, which occasionally had to be restuffed with red azuki beans (and thus could perhaps be called the first true bean balls). The game's popularity spread quickly, first among young company workers. During the 1880s several schools founded teams. By 1890, the First Higher School (Ichiko) of Tokyo emerged as the Japanese champions.

### Searching for Japaneseness

Americans, of course, had already claimed baseball as their own "national game," one ideally "suited to the American character." As Albert G. Spalding declared, it uniquely expressed American "Courage, Confidence, Combativeness . . . Vim, Vigor, Virility." The Japanese felt that the game nourished their traditional skills and virtues: loyalty, order, perseverance, courage, and honor. Batters were likened to samurai swordsmen.

The first official confrontation between Japanese and U.S. teams took place between Ichiko and American members of the Yokohama Cricket and Athletic Club (YCAC) on May 23, 1896. Ichiko had issued annual challenges to the YCAC from 1891, only to be turned away with haughty condescension. Finally, however, the idea of an international match had become a matter of national honor, and the Yokohama Americans agreed to a game on their field, previously off-limits to Japanese. The first inning belonged to the Americans, but the middle of the Japanese batting order asserted itself. The day ended with an embarrassing 29-4 defeat for the Americans. It was no fluke. Ichiko won two of three rematches that year.

The Japanese victories triggered an outpouring of national sentiment. The Ichiko student president proclaimed "victory for the Japanese people," national newspapers gave front-page coverage to the games, and the local heroes were toasted with sake in the streets of Tokyo and Yokohama, where they became the idols of the beer hall and coffee shop denizens. The Ichiko players had proved Japanese modernity and equality with the West, and in a way that was compatible with the islanders' own sense of dignity and perception of traditional values.

When Mr. Ito hosted his dance party in 1887, many Japanese had been held suspended between the poles of a powerful magnet. Decades of emulating the West were being challenged by a renewed interest in the unique traditions and rituals of Japan's past. Out of this conflict some Japanese, like the Ichiko baseball players, fashioned a new cosmopolitan-

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ism. Unfortunately, the new national self-confidence nurtured by baseball would not last much beyond the fading echo of the Ichiko bats before being overwhelmed by the fanatical patriotism of the 1930s and '40s.

Yet, having suffered total defeat in war, the Japanese after 1945 again turned to the West as a source of inspiration. And again Western influence poured out of the overturned bottle: ski weekends and summer houses, bourbon and Big Macs, blue jeans and miniskirts—each had its moment of glory during the post-war decades. The new Japanese search for modernity was different from that of a century ago. It was not as frantic, for one thing, and it was accompanied by a deepening self-confidence born of economic success. Still, during the 1960s, traditional values seemed to be losing ground as Japan moved toward the kind of technological, urban-centered society found in the United States.

By the 1970s, however, the gulf between past and present began to reopen, and the Japanese once again entered a period of reassessment. The initial sign came when bookstore shelves began to overflow with best sellers concerning the *Nihonjin-ron*, "the debate on being Japanese." By way of explanation, novelist Shotaro Yasuoka, author of a sort of Japanese *Roots*, argued in a recent interview that "we've absorbed too much foreign culture and education and so it is more difficult for us to re-establish ourselves as Japanese within our traditional way of life." He suggested that "by searching for common roots" through works like his, the Japanese "might begin to understand ourselves and regain our identity."

The old confrontation, then, between what is perceived as a national Japaneseness and an alien, essentially Western style has again come to the fore. For many modern Japanese, the difficulty remains as real as it was for those men and women who waltzed away the evening a century ago at Mr. Ito's dance party.

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## Hating (and Loving) The U.S.A.

Nikita Khrushchev's impassioned 1956 line, "We will bury you," is one illustration of the peculiar mix of emotions (in this case, ire and envy) that has colored Soviet perceptions of the United States. But other sentiments exist, too, observes Vassily Aksyonov, the noted Soviet émigré writer who now resides in Washington, D.C. Here, in the second of two excerpts from Aksyonov's recently published book, *In Search of Melancholy Baby*, the author dwells on the shifting images of America in the eyes of Soviet "Stateniks" and others, during the early post-World War II decades.

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by Vassily Aksyonov

Even now, after living in America for more than five years, I keep wondering what provokes so many people in Latin America, Russia, and Europe to anti-American sentiment of such intensity that it can only be called hatred. There is something oddly hysterical about it all, as if America were not a country but a woman who has hurt a man's pride by cheating on him.

Let us forget (for the time being) the role of anti-American propaganda in the strategy of the opposition, which, in the case of the Soviet Union, is managed by the anything but friendly people down at Agitprop. In the international arena this "war of ideas" exists on a par with bacteriological warfare and the anthrax bomb. Let us limit our discussion here to feelings, complexes, and unconscious hostility.

A Soviet poet once asked the [Argen-

tine-born Cuban] revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara why he hated America with such a passion, and Che launched into a tirade against Yankee imperialism, the enslavement of economically underdeveloped nations by rapacious monopolies, expansionism, the suppression of national liberation movements, and so on. The poet, to give him his due, found Che's lesson in political literacy less than satisfactory and inquired whether there wasn't perhaps something personal behind his feelings. After a few moments of silence, during which the ever-present daiquiri turned slowly in his fingers, Che cast a glance in the direction of Florida and launched into a curious story. Since I'm not sure the story has made it into the biographies adorning leftist bookshop windows these days, I will retell it as I heard it from the poet.

As a teenager in Argentina, Ernesto

made a cult of the United States. He was wild about Hollywood westerns and the latest jazz. One day, riding his bike past the airport, he saw a plane being loaded with racehorses for America. Instantly the revolutionary in him took over. Think of it—a free ride to the land of virile cowboys and forward blondes. All he had to do was stow away. No sooner said than done: on to America, and here he is in America.

In Georgia to be exact. One hundred degrees in the shade. When the ground crew discovered the Argentine adventurer, they beat him black and blue and locked him back up in the empty plane. For three days they left him there to bake without food or water. Then they sent him home.

"I'll never forgive them that airplane," Che whispered to the poet. And flaring up again: "I hate all gringos, their easygoing voices, insolent struts, confident leers, obscene smiles . . ."

#### Fading Superman

Other Latin American anti-American revolutionaries—the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, for instance—may have just such a "plane" in their background. And even if it was not quite so burning an issue as Che made of it, it was still a blow to their self-esteem, a slap in the face. How to deal with it? Blame the fair-haired colossus of the North. Provincial inferiority complexes have played an enormous part in the spread of Marxist doctrine.

Simplistic as it may sound, many if not most of these "planes" can be chalked up to misunderstandings. Americans

take no pleasure in humiliating people. Their voices, easygoing or otherwise, reflect the intonation patterns of American speech, their "insolent struts" the way generations of American bodies have learned to propel themselves from one place to another. As for "confident leers" and "obscene smiles," they are not commonly found among the populace, and when they do occur they generally represent an innocent attempt to copy the latest TV or movie look. Besides, the image of the American superman is becoming a thing of the past.

#### Ignoring October 1917

Take the sad and instructive case of the U.S. Marines entrenched on the outskirts of Beirut in 1983. Soviet propaganda raised an international hue and cry about American invaders, but if you had taken a good look at them you would have seen that they were just a bunch of kids, young, working-class kids. The "insolent struts," "obscene smiles," and "confident leers" belonged to the more-American-than-the-Americans Arab terrorists roaming the streets of the devastated city and its surrounding hills. Anti-American sentiment is essentially hatred for an outdated stereotype, a celluloid phantom.

It would be interesting to trace the roots of anti-American feelings in societies where ideology reigns supreme. Goebbels could not get over the interrogations of the first American prisoners of war (they were captured in the Sahara). They have no ideology, *mein Führer*, he announced. In other words, they lacked

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*"Stateniks" have not been the only followers of U.S. pop culture. Visiting President Richard Nixon in San Clemente, Calif., in 1973, Soviet Premier Leonid I. Brezhnev not only readily recognized another Nixon guest, movie actor Chuck Connors, but ran to him to deliver a bear hug.*

all human qualities.

I believe it is the same lack of ideology that so infuriates today's West German leftists. When a leader of the Greens filled a test tube with his own blood and splashed it over the uniform of an American general, I was reminded of the Nazi spirit in its early days.

On the other hand, I am certain that despite decades of propaganda the Russians have not yet developed an anti-American complex. True, the post-Revolutionary Russian intelligentsia, itself a part of the European Left, has mistrusted (or is it now "used to mistrust"?) American civilization in the abstract, but the reality is something else again: America does in fact refute Spengler's thesis of the decline of the West.

The first Russian revolutionary writer to visit the United States was Maksim Gorky, in 1906. The "stormy petrel of revolution" was irritated by the place. He labeled New York "the city of the

Yellow Devil" and called jazz, with the total lack of aesthetic sensibility that was his trademark, "the music of the fat."

In 1931, Boris Pilnyak, one of the great prose stylists of the previous decade, visited the States and wrote an "American novel" entitled *Okay*. Unfortunately, another four-letter word would have described it better. Pilnyak's anti-Americanism must have been the envy of many an Agitprop hack. At every crossroads he would beat his breast and proclaim with the utmost vulgarity, "I am a Soviet man!" Everything disgusted him. He fled in panic from a vaudeville chorus line: "How can a Soviet writer show his face before such bare-bellied floozies?" And this from a man who had fought to bring naturalism and sex to puritanical Russian literature. There is always the chance that Pilnyak was bitter about a short-lived movie contract he was given in Hollywood, but I discern a modicum of sincerity behind it all.

The poet Vladimir Mayakovsky was torn between delight and hostility during his stay in America a few years earlier. The futurist, artistic side of him reveled in the skyscrapers and enormous steel bridges, and Broadway's Great White Way got his creative juices going. But the leftist, the revolutionary, the Trotskyite in him pushed in a different direction. Here is a literal version of one of his "American" poems:

I'm wild about New York City,  
Though I'm not about to bow to you.  
We Soviets have our own pride  
And look down at the bourgeoisie  
With our noses in the air.

In his prophetic way Mayakovsky saw that the United States would become the last bastion of capitalism. He was seconded in his view and in his general feelings for the country by the satirists Ilf and Petrov in their 1936 travelogue, *One-Story America*.

As I see it, all these Russian (read: leftist European) literary travelers were crushed by America's total indifference to the cardinal event of their lives, the 1917 October Revolution. Some, like Mayakovsky, were able to accept the Revolution lock, stock, and barrel; others, like Pilnyak, were more ambivalent. But for the European Left as a whole it meant a New Flood, a cleansing process, the birth pangs of a new society.

#### Tempest in a Samovar

Everything seemed to come into focus after the Revolution. All the predictions about the decline of Europe and the demise of Western civilization had apparently come true. Even the reactionary governments of England and France could feel the new age dawning. Oppose it as they might, the sun had risen in the East. Many of us may grieve in our hearts for the world we have lost, for its elegance and manners and horn of plenty, yet we still fall in step with the thunderous march of the class now on

the offensive, we still add our voices to the symphony of the future . . . . And suddenly we learn that on the other side of the ocean there is a gigantic society that does not quite grasp the oratory of the New Flood prophets and looks upon our great cosmic event, our Revolution, as a tempest in a samovar.

This society, the United States of America, scandalously refuses to pay attention to Marx or Spengler or Lenin. It shows no intention of disappearing or disintegrating or sinking into decadence. It has no time. It turns its frenzied energy to making money, money, money, a squalid, unseemly proposition resulting in skyscrapers the likes of which the Old World has never imagined and a network of highways crisscrossing the nation. Instead of making revolutions, the workers are buying cars!

Pilnyak, Mayakovsky, and Ilf and Petrov—they all sensed deep down that America represented an alternative to violent revolution. How could they help feeling threatened? America had called into question the great cause to which they had lent their lives.

#### Bing, Louis, Peggy, Woody

Now, in the twilight of the communist world, the threat is all the greater. Many Soviet leaders cannot help realizing that the world they represent is no "new world" at all but a world long past its prime. From today's vantage point the Russian Revolution looks like nothing so much as an outmoded and absurd act of violence, the kind of thing one would expect from a society in the early stages of European bourgeois decadence. American capitalism, on the other hand—riding the crest of a completely different revolution, the technological one—is on its way to a truly new, as yet unknown and undefined age of liberalism.

In 1952, when I was a 19-year-old student from the provinces, I found myself thrust into Moscow's high society. I was invited to a party at the house of an

important diplomat. The guests were mainly diplomatic corps brats and their girlfriends. It was the first time I had ever seen an American radiola, the kind that lets you stack 12 records at a time. And what records! Back in Kazan we spent hours fiddling with the dials on our bulky wireless receivers for even a snatch of jazz, and here it was in all its glory—with the musicians' pictures on the albums to boot. There they all were: Bing Crosby, Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, Peggy Lee, Woody Herman . . .

### Skirting with Freedom

One girl I danced with asked me the most terrifying question: "Don't you just love the States?"

I mumbled something vague. How could I openly admit to loving America when from just about every issue of *Pravda* or *Izvestia* Uncle Sam bared his ugly teeth at us and stretched out his long, skinny fingers (drenched in the blood of the freedom-loving peoples of the world) for new victims. Overnight our World War II ally had turned back into our worst enemy.

"Well, I do!" she said, lifting her doll-like face in challenge as I concentrated on twirling her correctly. "I hate the Soviet Union and adore America!"

Such trepidation all but shocked me speechless, and the girl dropped me on the spot: The provincial drip! Was he ever out of it!

Sulking in a corner, I scrutinized the mysterious young beauties gliding across the darkened room—the shiny hair so neatly parted, the suave, white-toothed smiles, the Camels and Pall Malls, the sophisticated English vocabulary ("darling," "baby," "let's drink")—and their partners, so elegantly attired in jackets with huge padded shoulders, tight black trousers, and thick-soled shoes. Our gang in Kazan did everything it could to ape American fashion; our girls knit us sweaters with deer on them and embroidered our ties with cowboys and cac-

tuses. But it was only imitation, do-it-yourself. This was the genuine article, made in the U.S.A.

"Wow, what class!" I gushed to the friend who'd wangled me the invitation. But when I referred to the crowd as "real *stilyagi*" (the name given to the disaffected, Western-looking Soviet youth of the 1950s), he corrected me arrogantly—though he himself fit in only slightly better than I—saying, "We're not *stilyagi*; we're Stateniks!"

As I subsequently discovered, there were whole pockets of America lovers in Moscow, and all of them rejected even French fashion in favor of American. Wearing a shirt with buttons that had two or three holes instead of the requisite American four, for example, was considered a disgrace. "Hey, man," your Statenik pals would say, "there's something wrong with your getup."

(I might add that I have met more than one Statenik-turned-émigré who has rejected everything stateside, drives a Volkswagen, and wears the latest in Italian fashion.)

The party I went to climaxed in a spectacular boogie-woogie with the girls flying this way and that. I looked on transfixed as the skirt of my former partner sailed up toward the ceiling. It was all so real—not only the dance but the skirt and what I'd glimpsed under it. I later found out she was the daughter of a high-ranking KGB officer.

### That Postwar Euphoria

Who in the States would have thought that at the height of the Cold War, America had such devoted allies among the Soviet elite? Recently a German director and I were throwing some ideas for a film satire back and forth. The setting is a large European hotel, where a round of Soviet-American disarmament talks has been going on for several months. We see the heads of the negotiation teams, both men in their fifties, sitting face to face. "They don't under-

stand each other, of course," the director said. "They're from different backgrounds, different worlds." "Not so," I objected. "They both may have jitterbugged to Elvis a few years back."

Among the Soviet rank and file, pro-American feeling had a more material base: The people connected the word "America" with the miracle of tasty and nourishing food stuffs in the midst of wartime misery. Bags of yellow egg powder and containers of condensed milk and cured ham saved hundreds of thousands of Soviet children from starving to death. American Studebakers and Dodges were instrumental in keeping lines of communication open throughout the war. Without them the Soviet Army would have taken not two but 10 years to advance. America provided a lifeline during a period of total death—and what a life that line lead to: It was like nothing we Soviets could even imagine. The American presence gave the ordinary Soviet citizen a vague hope for change after the war was over.

Before the war, that ordinary citizen had little sense of America. True, the country figured in a few crude ditties, but they reflect more the offbeat surrealism of folk humor than anything else. A typical example:

America gave Russia a steam-driven boat.  
It had two giant wheels but barely stayed afloat.

Or even worse:

An American—alas!—  
Stuck a finger up his ass  
And thought—what a laugh—  
He'd wound up his phonograph.

Despite the almost total absence of a Russian "sense of America," both these masterpieces relate in their own way to technology. America has always been connected with something revolving and springy.

Not until the war did Russians acquire

a firm sense of America as a country of fabled riches and munificence. The brief, euphoric period of postwar contact in Europe gave rise to the opinion that Russians and Americans were in fact very much alike. When you tried to pin Russians down about what it was that made the two peoples so similar, they tended to say something like: "Americans are down to earth and enjoy a drink." "And do they like to raise Cain?" you might ask to pin them down even further. "No, they don't" would be the reply, "but they can kick up a hell of a rumpus when they feel like it."

### Unmasking Stalin

The decades of anti-American propaganda that followed have done little to shake this belief. Strange as it may seem, the Russians still think of Americans as close relations. The Chinese, on the other hand, they think of as beings from outer space. And although the idea of communism traveled to China via Russia, the Russian in his heart of hearts believes that if anyone is predisposed toward communism it is the Chinese, not he or his fellow Russians.

In 1969, during the skirmishes along the Sino-Soviet border, I happened to be nearby Alma-Ata, the capital of Soviet Kazakhstan. One day I shared a table at the hotel restaurant with an officer from the local missile base. Before long he was dead drunk and weeping like a child: "There's a war about to break, and I've just bought a motorcycle, a real beaut, a Jawa. It took me five long years to save up, and now the Chinese'll come and grab it." "So you're scared of the Chinese?" I asked. "Not in the least," he slobbered. "I just don't want to lose my motorcycle." At this point I couldn't help putting a rather provocative question to him, namely, "What about the Americans, Lieutenant? Are you scared of them?" Whereupon he sobered up for a moment and said in a firm voice, "Americans respect private property."



*What Soviet audiences make of such U.S. pop hits as Billy Joel's "Piano Man," "Uptown Girl," and "Allentown" is unclear, but the American rocker-songwriter, here in Moscow, drew responsive crowds on a Soviet tour last July and August.*

The official goal of Soviet society is to reach the stage of historical development known as communism. For want of religious underpinning, the goal has taken on a purely pragmatic and rather feeble-minded "self-help" kind of image; it is now a means of "satisfying the ever-growing demands of the working people." In 1960, Khrushchev set out to overtake America (Soviet production statistics have always been measured against U.S. production statistics) and build a communist (that is, in the popular imagination, prosperous) society, both by 1980. Although the Soviet Union possibly has overtaken America in the production of tanks, it failed everywhere else: The bounty of Safeway shelves still surpasses the wildest dreams of the Soviet consumer, plagued now as then by endless lines and shortages. As for communism, it still seems to be receding into the future.

The combination of vague pro-American feelings and an all-out anti-American propaganda campaign caused a certain segment of Soviet society to start leaning unconsciously in the direction of America in matters aesthetic, emotional, and, even to some extent, ideological. I have in mind the Soviet intelligentsia of my generation.

It is no easy task to explain the exodus from the Soviet orbit of a generation so thoroughly ready for Soviet life. (What could have been better preparation than the arrests of our fathers during the 1937 purges?) Theoretically, we ought to have turned into "new men" even more ideal than our elder brothers, the intellectuals who *volunteered* to fight against Finland in the belief that their infamous sally would further the great revolutionary struggle for liberation. As far as they were concerned, everything emanating from the Kremlin had a noble,

radiant aura. Members of the Institute of Philosophy and Literature condoned both the purges of the 1930s and the anticommunist campaign of the '40s. For these intellectuals, many of whom spent time in the camps for their communist ardor, the unmasking of Stalin was a catastrophe, the "thaw" an excruciating process of self-reevaluation.

For us, however, it was the start of a great carnival. Down with Stalin! Up with jazz! We were ready for the about-face; in fact, we had been ready since before Stalin's death. Far behind the indestructible Iron Curtain we had somehow managed to develop a pro-Western mentality—and what could be farther west than America?

#### Windows from Hollywood

A number of films, gleaned from the booty brought back from Germany after the war, fell into the hands of the authorities. Most were sentimental trash or Nazi-made anti-British productions, but here and there an American classic of the 1930s would turn up. The authorities, looking for a way to bring in money, decided to swallow their ideological pride and release the films for public consumption. This decision, unusual enough in itself, was rendered even more so by the fact that the impossible burden of making ideologically pure pictures had forced the Soviet film industry to curb its output to three or four films a year.

Since the authorities had no intention of paying royalties on the films, they showed them under false titles. *Stagecoach*, for example, was called *The Journey Will Be Dangerous*; *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town—The Dollar Rules*; *The Roaring Twenties—The Fate of a Soldier in America*. In addition to ideologically emended titles, the films received ludicrous introductions—"The Journey Will Be Dangerous treats the heroic struggle of the Indians against Yankee imperialism"—which replaced the credits and therefore prevented us from get-

ting to know names like John Wayne and James Cagney.

I saw *Stagecoach* no fewer than 10 times and *The Roaring Twenties* no fewer than 15. There was a period when we spoke to our friends almost entirely in quotes from American movies. One such friend, after becoming a senior officer in the Soviet Air Force, confided in me "Comrade Stalin made a big mistake by letting our generation see those films." My friend was right: Those movies provided one of the few windows to the outside world from our stinking Stalinist lair.

Another of those windows was provided by jazz. From the moment I heard a recording of "Melancholy Baby"—a pirate job on an X-ray plate—I couldn't get enough of the revelation coming to me through the shadows of ribs and alveoli, namely, that "every cloud must have a silver lining."

In those days jazz was America's secret weapon Number One. Every night the Voice of America (VOA) would beam a two-hour jazz program at the Soviet Union from Tangiers. The snatches of music and bits of information made for a kind of golden glow over the horizon when the sun went down, that is, in the West, the inaccessible but oh-so-desirable West. How many dreamy Russian boys came to puberty to the strains of Ellington's "Take the A Train" and the dulcet voice of Willis Conover, the VOA's Mr. Jazz. We taped the music on antediluvian recorders and played it over and over at semiunderground parties, which often ended in fistfights with Komsomol patrols or even police raids.

#### Out of the Mist

Clothes provided yet another window on the West, which is why they turned into such a fetish. If a girl in an American dress (how did she come by it?) showed up walking along Leningrad's Nevsky Prospect, she would soon be followed by a crowd of *stilyagi*. Swinging and sway-

ing (which is how they thought Americans moved along Broadway—they even nicknamed Nevsky Prospect “Broad”), they would sing, “I’ve met a girl/As sweet as can be/Her name is Peggy Lee.” The first satirical article about the *stilyagi* described youths swaggering down Nevsky Prospect in stars-and-stripes ties. When you think about it, *stilyagi* were the first dissidents.

Leningrad was far ahead of the rest of the country in terms of Westernization. Soon a Leningrad variety of know-it-all began to proliferate, a cat who could fill you in on anything and everything to do with America, from the early popular (and later banned) editions of Dos Passos and Hemingway in Russian, to Dizzy Gillespie’s latest Greenwich Village concert. (Last Saturday at the Half Note—no, sorry, man, it was Friday; Saturday was Charlie Parker, and was it pouring! Can’t you just picture it, man? The rain, the Village—it’s enough to make you piss your pants.)

The picture of America that our generation pieced together in its imagination was impossibly idealized and distorted, but it also had an amazing—astral, if you like—truth to it. No one paid much attention to the pro-American phenomenon at the time, but looking back on it now from a distance of 30 years I can

say—without any pretense of scholarly analysis, of course—that the American cult had its roots in our basic antirevolutionary character.

Not that we were aware of it at first. But what had once been called the “romance of the revolution” had all but evaporated by the time our generation came along; what is more, it had started giving way to a “romance of counter-revolution”: The young now found the figure of the White Army officer more romantic than his Red counterpart. Unlike Gorky, Pilnyak, or Mayakovsky, we refused—unconsciously as yet—to see the Revolution as a latter-day deluge, a force of universal purification. We knew that instead of purity it had brought in its wake the monstrously bloody, monstrously dreary Stalinist way of life.

America rose up out of the mist as an alternative to an outdated and nauseating belief in socialist revolution, that is, the revolt of the slaves against their masters. The intervening 30 years have dispelled many of my illusions, but on this point I have not wavered. In fact, I perceive with greater clarity that totalitarian decadence must be (and is now in the process of being) outweighed by the forces of liberalism and benevolent inequality. And I thank God that the leader of those forces is a powerful America.

## 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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### *Rosika Schwimmer: Rest in Peace*

In the cluster of articles entitled "America's Peace Movement, 1900-1986," [WQ, New Year's '87], the box on "Henry Ford's 'Peace Ship'" was based on the Elmer Davis/*New York Times* version of history. Invariably Rosika Schwimmer is defamed as the woman who tricked Henry Ford into this project by pretending to have documents proving the readiness of belligerents for neutral mediation during World War I, when there was no such proof.

Those documents existed then and exist now in the Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection of the New York Public Library. They were based on some 41 interviews with neutral and belligerent prime ministers and foreign ministers; four meetings with President Wilson, with King Haakon of Norway, Pope Benedict, Prince Eugene of Sweden (brother of the King), the pacifist Grand Duchess Louise of Baden, mother of the Queen of Sweden, etc.

These interviews were made by the two delegations sent to the governments by the Hague Congress of Women (April 1915), lasting from May to November. Jane Addams led the one to the belligerents, Schwimmer, that to the neutrals.

On the Ford Peace Ship, Elmer Davis, aged 25, was the ring-leader of the half-dozen reporters from pro-war Eastern newspapers. They carried on like some college fraternity hazing party on board ship, and through the neutral countries, until they returned to the United States in late January 1916.

Davis did his utmost to destroy the Ford Peace expedition by his whispering campaign against Schwimmer and by his influence on other reporters who followed his line of attack. (Today this is called pack-journalism.) Everywhere Schwimmer had to undo the damage but she was helped in this by their arrogant, loud, demanding behavior, which antagonized the Europeans.

During the trip Davis never interviewed Schwimmer. In 1925, after a three-and-a-half-hour meeting with her—when she was already engulfed in lifelong efforts to clear

her name—Davis came to realize how greatly he had wronged Schwimmer. He expressed some of this, in 1948, in a condolence letter to Schwimmer's sister, when he wrote, "... I had failed... to appreciate at that time her complete integrity and unselfishness of purpose, of which I have ever since remained convinced." Elmer Davis's disavowal ought to be respected.

*Edith Wynner  
Consultant to the  
Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection  
of the New York Public Library*

### *Environmental Regulation*

While many will no doubt disagree with their assessments, David Vogel and Robert W. Crandall have presented interesting and informative visions of, respectively, the modern history of and the current problems facing environmental regulation in the United States ["The Politics of the Environment, 1970-1987," WQ, Autumn '87].

I have few bones to pick with either author... [However, Vogel,] in explaining the development of our regulatory statutes, [might] have ascribed more importance to the skillful "cultivation" by environmental interest groups of a handful of key members of Congress and influential committee staffers. Too few realize the important role this has played in shaping our present very stringent statutes, which in turn is not unrelated to our weak stomach for their vigorous enforcement. On the whole, though, Vogel sounds the right notes.

As for Crandall's analysis, I am more sanguine than he is about the progress we have made since 1970, particularly with respect to urban air quality. (A one-third reduction in airborne concentrations of particulate matter and sulfur dioxide is more than "marginal," I would argue.)

Also, I am somewhat less optimistic than Crandall about the potential savings that would result from widespread use of economic incentives in environmental policy; this

is largely because of the many constraints that would no doubt accompany their use and thus limit their usefulness.

These are minor quibbles, however. Crandall is dead right in implying first that the EPA should spend more time looking back and reviewing which regulatory interventions have and have not worked in the past, and second, that Congress should allow the agency the "luxury" of such careful *ex post* analysis and evaluation.

Both public health and environmental quality would be much better served by a less frenetic approach to regulation. One can only hope that we will come collectively to realize this before another 20 years and an additional \$1.5 trillion have been invested in the current approach.

*Paul R. Portney*  
Senior Fellow  
*Resources for the Future*  
Washington, D.C.

### The "What If" Factor

Measuring the success and impact of the environmental movement over the past two decades is an elusive task, as the articles by David Vogel and Robert W. Crandall illustrate [*WQ*, Autumn '87]. Clearly, measured against the boldly stated goals in many of the federal environmental statutes enacted at the outset of this period, the movement appears to have fallen far short of its objectives.

On the other hand, the quality of today's environment is better in a variety of important ways than that of two decades ago, and very likely dramatically better than what it would have been had modern environmentalism and the laws it spawned never happened. Admittedly, the latter comparison entails a significant component of speculation, yet it is the true measure of the environmental movement's actual impact.

To take one small illustration, the bald eagle and peregrine falcon are still endangered species 14 years after the enactment of the Endangered Species Act. This fact might be viewed by some as a failure to achieve the act's bold goal of rescuing species that are poised on the brink of extinction. Yet, had DDT not been banned in response to Rachel Carson's clarion warning (and the Environ-

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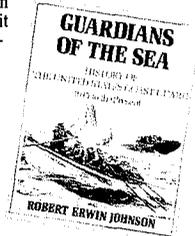
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mental Defense Fund's years of litigation), both species would surely be even more gravely imperiled and would quite possibly be extinct. So too would the osprey, brown pelican, marsh hawk, and others that have since enjoyed substantial recoveries.

As is the case with environmental problems in general, the magnitude of the [conservation] task ahead remains great, but that fact should not overshadow the enormous progress that has already been made.

*Michael J. Bean*  
Senior Attorney  
*Environmental Defense Fund*  
Washington, D.C.

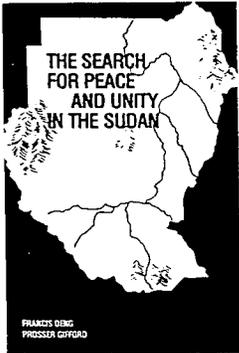
### The Conservation Challenge

David Vogel's article ["A Big Agenda," *WQ*, Autumn '87] presents a cursory, misleading overview of the history of environmental "awareness."

Environmentalism did not "smolder for years" only to catch fire in the 1970s and die out in the '80s; the decade of environmental

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activism in the '70s was but another expansionary phase in the evolution of the conservation movement that dates back to the mid-19th century.

The fact is that since the 1970s, the U.S. conservation movement has continued to gain popular momentum and support, as evidenced by the growing number of local environmental coalitions, citizen action groups, and the ever expanding membership rolls of national conservation organizations . . .

Vogel may be correct in stating that the establishment of the Forest Service [1905] and Tennessee Valley Authority [1933] may not have aroused great public support, but the establishment of a system of national parks indeed did arouse both popular and political support. Practically every president since Woodrow Wilson has recognized the tremendous vested interest the American people have in the preservation and protection of their system of national parks.

Today there is ever increasing public and political awareness of the very real global threats to our environment and health posed by pollution, acid rain, and toxic wastes to name but a few. Perhaps it is the deteriorating condition of our national parks, forests, and other public lands that will help focus still more popular attention on the conservation challenges we face in the coming decades.

*Bruce Craig*  
*Cultural Resource Coordinator*  
*National Parks and Conservation Association*

### *Re-defining "Decline"*

In discussing the "rise and fall" of nations or their "revitalization" ["Britain," *WQ*, Autumn '87], one ought to distinguish between the quest for maintaining the status quo and commitment to meta-continuity.

Those who seek to conserve the status quo see in any significant decline on any major front a cause for concern if not alarm. On the other hand, those who are concerned with meta-continuity expect major changes to occur as a normal part of history but ask if certain overarching themes can be sustained as various societal forms and elements change.

Thus, the decline of the military power of a nation, or the "loss" of an empire, even a decline of the growth rate of the standard of living, may be a sign not of national decline or

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decay but of transformation from one kind of "greathood" to another by the same nation. Sweden, for instance, once the leader of a major empire, an international superpower, ditched both features and became a leading social democracy without a loss of identity and quite possibly with a significant gain as measured by such values as humanistic-ethical consequences, for instance, fairness to other people and within its own ranks.

Other nations may use military retrenchment or an economic crisis, deliberately or unwittingly, to clean out obsolescent instructions (for instance, excessive regulations) or reexamine their direction (are we to be the world's police?) both for the better.

Once we overcome the nostalgia for the "simple" and "authoritarian" days in which Britain (and for a while the United States) ruled the world, we may begin to see the merits and benefits of a pluralistic world, of international cooperation rather than dominance, of economic interdependence rather than imperialism, and the value of internal, economic, social, cultural, and human growth.

*Amitai Etzioni  
Thomas Henry Carroll  
Ford Foundation Professor  
Harvard Business School*

### *The Problem with Protectionism*

Richard Rosecrance's essay on Great Britain's industrial decline and its parallels with modern America ["Why England Slipped," *WQ*, Autumn '87] deftly covers most of the essential points: Britain's failure to modernize its domestic industry; the lurch away from competition and competitive markets; the eclipse of British education by German and American trade schools.

But Rosecrance is off the mark when he blames Free Trade policies for the decline of British industry.

He writes: "Although Britain was the largest market for imports, London failed to respond to Continental tariffs with retaliatory trade restraints of its own—which might have forced the tariff countries to reconsider their course. (Britain did not finally abandon Free Trade and adopt tariffs until the Depression year 1932.)"

In fact, by 1915, citing the urgent necessities of wartime, Whitehall imposed duties on

cars, bicycles, watches, clocks, musical instruments, and film. These tariffs were never repealed after World War I.

Protectionism is the missing element in Rosecrance's account. How else could British managers have allowed their industries to go to seed, slipping so far behind world standards? The anti-competitive mindset of the proto-protectionists was a symptom of the same lethargy that crippled British management, labor, and educators. A strong case can be made that as the greatest trading nation in the world retreated to cower behind trade barriers, industrial decline became inevitable.

In 1903, Joseph Chamberlain addressed unemployed factory workers in words that eerily echo protectionists of today: "My lads, you see those works yonder—closed and dilapidated and fallen into decay. When you were boys, 200,000 pounds a year in wages was earned in those works. What killed them? Foreign competition. What ought you to do? Keep the foreigner out!"

Congress today is at the same policy crossroads that British politicians faced in the first decade of this century. At least one major candidate for president today, Richard Gephardt, has proposed fining our trading partners to the tune of 10 percent of the trade deficit per year, just as Chamberlain waged a national campaign to impose a 10 percent duty on all manufactured goods produced outside of the British Empire. For America today, a sharp veer to protectionism would accelerate our decline as a victim of the "British disease."

Perhaps the best lesson to be learned from Britain's decline is to reject politicians who make vulgar appeals for across-the-board trade barriers. Protectionism deepened the Great Depression, which exacerbated political fanaticism in Germany. And, as Joseph Chamberlain's son Neville learned, a trade war is not the worst that can happen.

*Mark W. Davis  
Washington, D.C.*

### *Don't Forget the Frisians*

Unfortunately Clark C. Reynolds's fine account of the very early shipping empires ["Traders," *WQ*, Summer '87] does not cover the eighth- and ninth-century Frisian Dutch maritime empire in the North Sea.

Count Oxenstierna in *The Norsemen* states that the Frisians, sailing from their port at Dorstad, east of Utrecht, "... experienced a golden age of their own, and enjoyed a leading position in Europe. They were masters at combining litoral, sea, and river voyages, and wove a far-flung mercantile network... amounting to a monopoly of North Sea commerce... at the hour of the Occident's birth."

Thus, the astonishing 16th- and 17th-century supremacy of the seven Dutch provinces was only a resumption of the very early Frisians' leadership.

Ralph C. Meima  
Fredericksburg, Va.

### Sea Power (cont.)

Mr. Gray's historical analysis ["Commentary," *WQ*, Autumn '87, in response to "Traders," *WQ*, Summer '87] of Britain's first line of defense being participation in antihegemonic Continental coalitions is fascinating and persuasive, except when he extends it by analogy to current U.S. participation in the defense of Europe. In this case, the impact is and will continue to be just the opposite. Without the United States in Europe, the Soviet Union would face, in due course, an additional superpower, as Europe cranked up its own defense and regained its independence and pride.

And as for the Soviet Union's long-term "truly global strategy," surely China and Japan will also come on as independent superpowers. Thus it is now or never for the Soviet Union, and since it can't be now, it must be never.

Horace D. McCowan, Jr.  
Richmond, Va.

### Kepler's Lunar Speculations

[In the context of the cluster of articles on astronomy and astrophysics (*WQ*, Summer '87),] I am reminded of Kepler's earlier thoughts about life on the moon.

His essay on the moon was not published until 1634, some four years after his death, as *Somnium seu opus posthumum, de astronomia lunari*. (This was translated into German and annotated by Ludwig Guenther in 1898 as *Keplers Traum vom Mond*.)

Believing that both water and an atmosphere existed on the moon (a hypothesis still supported as late as 1895 by W. H. Pickering) Kepler speculated that there should be living creatures on the moon.

Rejecting his first conjecture that the lunar craters might be sink holes, Kepler felt that their remarkable symmetry could only have been created by intelligent beings....

He even speculated that earthshine would somewhat warm the otherwise dark side of the moon.

Although he believed it would never be possible, Kepler also speculated on flight to the moon, in which he closely anticipated Newton's law of gravitation.

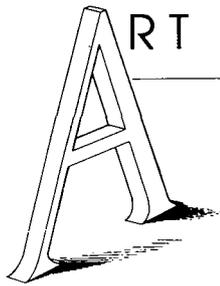
Dorrit Hoffleit  
Senior Research Scientist  
Department of Astronomy  
Yale University

### Corrections

On page 40 of the Autumn '87 *WQ* ["Heroes' Return"], Sam Houston is incorrectly described as being present at the Battle of the Alamo (February 23-March 6, 1836). Houston instead led the subsequent surprise attack on the Mexican troops at San Jacinto (April 21, 1836), where he was successful in avenging the Texans' defeat at the Alamo.

In the same periodical review, a reference to "King David's lament on the death of his brother Jonathan" should be clarified. David and Jonathan were not brothers, but close friends; in the verse author John Silber quoted, which reads: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan," the word *brother* is used figuratively.

On page 102 of the Autumn '87 *WQ*, due to a production error, the Republic of Ireland was incorrectly shown as remaining British-ruled on our map of "The British Empire, 1945." The Republic of Ireland's official status in 1945 was ambiguous. Since the Anglo-Irish agreement of December 6, 1921, it had existed as the Irish Free State, an independent member of the British Commonwealth. A 1937 constitutional plebiscite declared Ireland "a sovereign, independent, democratic state," a position that was affirmed when Ireland declared its neutrality in World War II. In 1948, the Republic of Ireland Act severed the last official ties with the Commonwealth.



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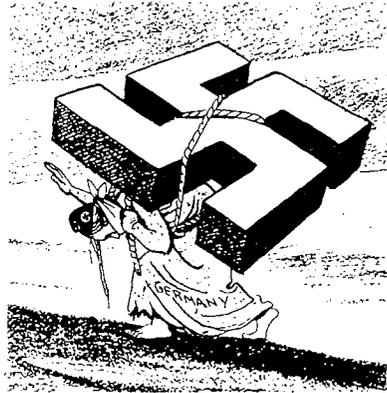
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*The Burden of the Swastika, David Low, Evening Standard, 29 June 1933.*

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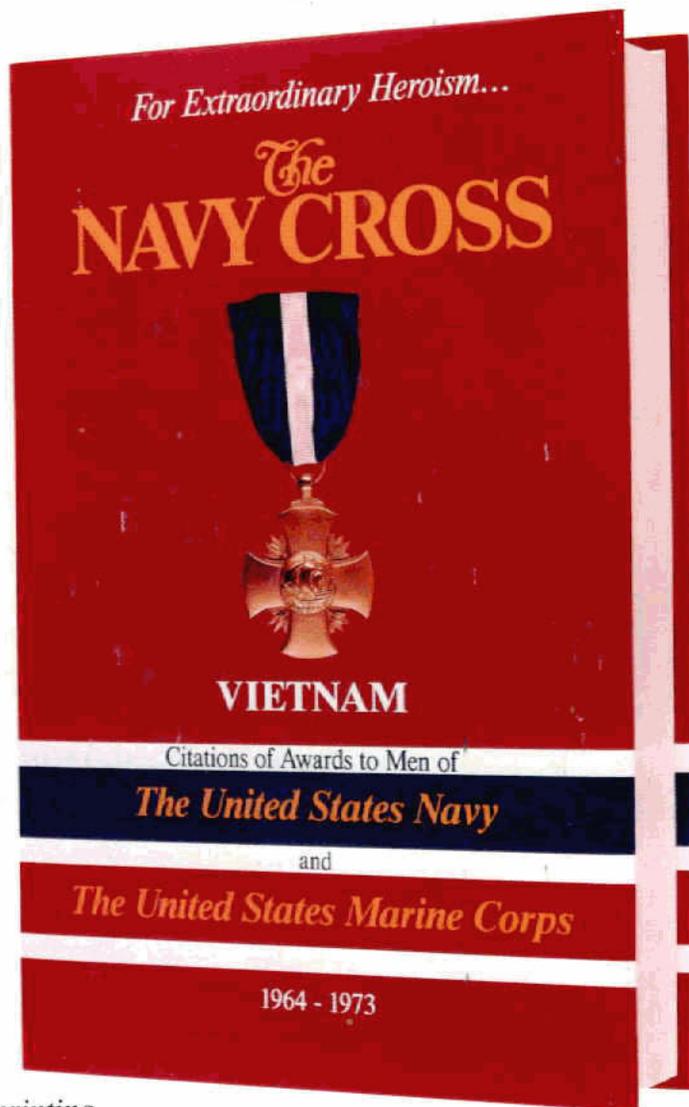
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