

sand copies of *Looking Backward* were sold in the first year, more than 100,000 the next. "Bellamy Clubs" began to spring up all over the country, their members intent upon turning Bellamy's vision into a reality.

Looking Backward also inspired dozens of other utopian novels. Fictional heroes in increasing numbers began falling asleep and waking up, to their wonderment, a century later. The hero of Paul DeVinnie's *Day of Prosperity*, found himself in New York City in the year 2000 and saw around him "only these 10-story palaces, varied in decoration, surrounded by fruit trees, flower beds, vases, statues, and marble seats." Some utopian authors were provoked by Bellamy's work. British Marxist William Morris pronounced *Looking Back-*

ward "a horrible cockney dream"—and then proceeded to set down, in *News From Nowhere* (1890), his own vision of the future, an arcadian community of artisans and craftsmen.

Bellamy's age, Collins writes, "was the last in which futuristic novels would take such an optimistic bent." Although the 20th century brought far more technological progress than Bellamy and his contemporaries anticipated, it also brought world wars and other previously unimagined horrors that have soured most futuristic novelists on the future. "Looking backward now from Bellamy's future," Collins says, "the saddest thing is not that we have failed to create the utopia he imagined but that we have stopped dreaming up utopias of our own."

Latin Heroes

"Literature and Politics in Latin America" by Mark Falcoff, in *The New Criterion* (Dec. 1990), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.

The Latin American writer is often thought to cut a heroic figure. As an independent critic of a corrupt society, he stands up in defense of humane and liberal values against an established order of greed and violence. But that familiar image is much exaggerated, says Falcoff, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Most writers in Latin America, he says, "have been unusually drawn to power, for reasons both of economic necessity and cultural predisposition," and in this century, they've been especially drawn to non-liberal or anti-liberal ideologies.

Popular indifference has been a more powerful enemy of literature than has censorship, and Latin American writers have often relied upon the state for economic sustenance. Many governments, Left and Right, have kept writers on the public payroll. Successive Chilean governments, for example, rewarded poet Pablo Neruda with minor diplomatic posts in Spain and elsewhere. Short-story writer Jorge Luis Borges was appointed director of Argentina's National Library after having worked for years at the Buenos Aires Public Li-

brary. When individual writers were persecuted or driven into exile, Falcoff says, it was usually "due to their affiliation with the party out of power, not to the allegedly subversive content of their work."

Devotion to democratic principle has not been characteristic of Latin American writers, on the whole. Many older writers were attracted to Marxism at one time, and few allowed any disillusionment with it to lead them to embrace liberal democracy. Since the late 1960s, younger New Left writers, such as Chile's Ariel Dorfman and Uruguay's Eduardo Galeano, have taken as their themes protest, revolution, repression, solidarity, and North American consumerism's threat to the "authenticity" of native cultures.

The literary establishments in Western Europe and the United States, Falcoff says, have encouraged the writers' "anti-liberal bias." Not all of Latin America's writers have responded with political themes, but "the more ambitious (or unscrupulous) among them could not help noting that revolutionary posturing was the most expeditious route to success in the North At-

lantic publishing and literary worlds.”

The most important development in Latin American letters in recent years, Falcoff says, has been the emergence of writers who have made “a decisive liberal

and democratic commitment, explicitly denouncing totalitarian regimes and utopian ideologies.” The most prominent examples are Mexican poet and diplomat Octavio Paz and Peruvian novelist (and

Seeing Norman Rockwell

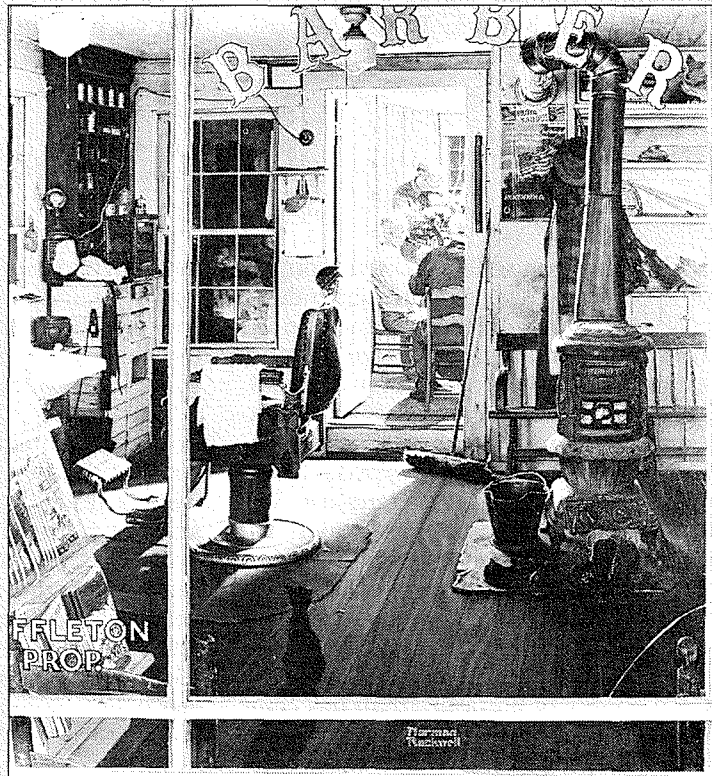
An appreciation of the works of Norman Rockwell (1894–1978) by novelist John Updike in *Art & Antiques* (Dec. 1990).

For a number of years now, a poster-size reproduction of Norman Rockwell's Shuffleton's Barber Shop, originally a cover for the April 29, 1950, issue of the Saturday Evening Post, has hung over the water closet of my office toilet, where I cannot help but look at it . . . several times a day. After perhaps . . . 5,000 such absent-minded examinations, I am still finding new things to see in it. The boots and rubbers, for instance, in front of the stove, with its red-hot coals, and, in the diagonally opposite corner, the ghostly row of old shaving mugs in the top cells of the obsolete cabinet, between the ceiling fixture of frosted glass and the little gooseneck lamp . . . [T]he illustration is saturated in every corner with an avid particularizing that allows us to forgive the cuteness of the cat and the stogy quaintness of the whole, the idealization of small-town life.

In the Fifties twilight of the slick magazines, before television had quite stolen away their audience, their advertisers, and their kitschy energy, Rockwell, always zealous in his pursuit of visual anecdote, put the stylizations of J. C. Leyendecker and Maxfield Parrish far behind him and let his attention range across the entire plane of

the picture, overflowing the margins of the anecdote . . . In the ocean of commercial art, his always stood out by virtue of an extra intensity, a need (bred, psychology inevitably will say, of insecurity) to provide a little more than the occasion strictly demanded . . .

As small-town America and its family magazines faded around him, his painterly excess



became more apprehensive and lavish—a preservative varnish, a nostalgic greed, a self-satisfying perfectionism, an art for art's sake. Widely loved like no other painter in America, yet despised in high-art circles, he pushed on, into canvases that almost transcend their folksy, crowd-pleasing subjects.

1990 presidential candidate) Mario Vargas Llosa. Paz says that socialism in underdeveloped countries swiftly turns into despotic "state capitalism." Vargas Llosa, once an enthusiastic backer of Fidel Cas-

tro, has since concluded that sacrificing freedom is not the way to overcome injustice. Perhaps there may be something to the heroic image of the Latin American writer after all.

OTHER NATIONS

Going Halfway

"The Vietnam Communist Party Strives to Remain the 'Only Force'" by Charles A. Joiner, in *Asian Survey* (Nov. 1990), Univ. of Calif., Room 408, 6701 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, Calif. 94720.

Communist leaders in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have taken two big steps toward revitalizing their moribund economies. One is to move toward free markets, the other is to surrender the communist monopoly of political power. Many analysts believe that both steps are essential for the nations' economic health. But not everyone has agreed. Kim Il Sung in North Korea and Fidel Castro in Cuba have refused to take either step. Others have not been quite so steadfast in their Marxist-Leninist faith. In Vietnam, Nguyen Van Linh and his colleagues, like their counterparts in China, have decided to go halfway—they're taking the economic step, but not the political one.

Since the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986, says Joiner, a Temple University political scientist, Vietnam has tried to free up the command economy. "The 'new way of thinking' (*doi moi*), 'renovation' (*canh tan*), and 'openness' (*cong khai*) have become the entrenched party line," he says. Despite some limited gains, however, the country's enormous economic difficulties remain. Among them: low productivity, inadequate public services, and continued dependence on subsidized loans and trade with the Soviet

Union and the nations of the former Soviet bloc. Declines in the loans and trade are sure to worsen Vietnam's problems.

Overcoming them requires political, as well as economic, reform, one member of the party's Politburo dared to suggest last year. Tran Xuan Bach, who was a leader in party ideological affairs, warned that "You can't walk with one long leg and one short leg and you can't walk with only one leg." His "erroneous views" were not well received by his colleagues. He was expelled from the Politburo and the party's Central Committee. Linh, the party's general secretary, said in a major address in 1990 that the Vietnam Communist Party must remain the "only force" because "ours is a party of the people, by the people, relying on the people and for the people."

Vietnam's "ubiquitous security system" is, of course, "a major deterrent to most forms of dissenting behavior" by the 67 million Vietnamese, Joiner notes. Perhaps it and "renovation" will be enough to enable the party to maintain its monopoly of political power. Still, he says, "whether it is possible to walk with one long leg and one short one throughout much of the 1990s is far from being definitively resolved."

A Swedish Dilemma

"Sweden: Social Democrats in Trouble" by Stefan Svallfors, in *Dissent* (Winter 1991), 521 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

During the early 1930s, when the United States and Europe were trying to cope with the Great Depression, many progres-

sives looked to Sweden's social democracy as a successful "middle way" between dogmatic free enterprise and doctrinaire so-