flowers.

Nahaylo, a research analyst for Radio Liberty, and Swoboda, a scholar at the University of London, write that the "nationalities problem" today is putting "the Kremlin's entire new course to the test." The creators of perestroika envisioned democratic reforms to make a malfunctioning economy viable. But the Russian empire—under both tsars and commissars—was always held together by military power, not by democracy. The supreme irony is that the Kremlin's sharing of power has not defused but increased opposition: No longer do the Armenians, the authors write, mainly vent "their nationalist sentiments against Azerbaijanis across the border. Now they are venting them against Soviet power."

In the early 1920s both Lenin and Stalin paid lip service to the rights of national minorities, even while they engaged in a bloody seven-year struggle to reconstitute the old tsarist empire by force. The Soviet Constitution of 1923 granted the national republics the right to secede, and native language newspapers and schools were encouraged. By the end of the 1920s, however, the old empire was reassembled, and Stalin abrogated the "national contract" and resumed the tsarist policies of Russification.

The authors speculate about possible futures for the Soviet Union—disintegration, confederation, or a renewed authoritarian empire—but conclude that only "one thing is clear: Genuine democratization and the preservation of empire, however disguised, are incompatible."

One other thing, however, seems certain. Russia needs the other republics more than they need Russia. Great Russia by itself is hardly great. It has limited access to the sea, little good agricultural land, and no natural borders for defense. With its own army in turmoil, the Soviet leadership today faces the challenge of devising a federation whose advantages to the different national minorities will be clear enough to win their support. Surprisingly, Nahaylo and Swoboda write, Gorbachev has shown until quite recently little interest in this problem: "The mere fact that glasnost was now bringing certain problems to the surface did not necessarily mean that the authorities were any more receptive to what the non-Russians had to say."

LEWIS MUMFORD: A Life. *By Donald L. Miller. Weidenfeld & Nicholson. 628 pp. $24.95*
LEWIS MUMFORD: Public Intellectual. *Edited by Thomas P. Hughes and Agatha C. Hughes. Oxford. 450 pp. $39.95*

Lewis Mumford, declared his friend Van Wyck Brooks, was "one of the few men who have not *ideas* but an *idea*." Through some 30 books and more than 1,000 essays on art, history, literature, architecture, city planning, and social philosophy, Mumford elaborated his idea—his erudite and impassioned warning about technological civilization and its human toll. Mumford's heyday was the 1920s, when most people were singing the benefits of technology and he was the ugly frog croaking in dissent.

Miller, a historian at Lafayette College, here traces Mumford's life (1895–1990), which nearly spans the 20th century. Mumford called himself a "child of the city," growing up in a quainter, more humanly scaled New York that, already by the 1910s, was disappearing under megalopolitan height and sprawl. He was an illegitimate child of a patrician Jew and a German housekeeper. To offset the stigma of illegitimacy, he vowed to advance himself through his intellect. His education at New York's City College was secondary to his course of independent readings in which he discovered Sir Patrick Geddes. Geddes (1854–1932) was a Scottish botanist and town planner who believed that no living form could be understood in isolation from its environment. Geddes's organic perspective inspired Mumford's central perception that an environment fragmented by technology deprived people of the connections and unity that give meaning to life. (Mumford expressed his debt to "his master" by naming his only son Geddes.)

The 16 essays in Thomas and Agatha Hughes's volume analyze the various ways Mumford elaborated his one idea. Mumford wasn't against the contemporary world. He became the first champion of Frank Lloyd Wright and he saw the benefits of technology. His criticism of the "machine" had less to do with any particular technology than with a way of thinking. Even before the machine, Mumford argued, Western society had embraced a set of values—material progress, disregard for limits, commitment to endless growth—whose corollary was specialization, mechanization, and strict rationality.

Could technology be used to repair its own damages? In *Technics and Civilization* (1934), Mumford envisioned ways in which the automobile and electricity would allow the creation of "garden cities"—loose, decentralized "green belts" around urban centers—to replace the crowded dehumanizing concentrations built by steel and the railroads. Mumford's vision made him a "father of the suburbs," although suburbs today are hardly the green communities he intended.

In 1926 Mumford and his wife tested their principles by abandoning Greenwich Village to settle in a model housing project in Sunnyside, Queens. Ten years later, they moved to the rural upstate town of Leedsville. From there Mumford issued his manifestos with what Miller calls an irritating "priestly certainty." Yet what is most striking in retrospect is how prescient Mumford was. His warning about the dangers of unlimited growth in the 1920s, his criticism of the cold functionalism of Le Corbusier and the International Style in the 1930s, and his early jeremiads against atomic power—all out of step at the time—are today commonplace. Mumford's fate is that of the thinker whose ideas become so accepted that people forget who first sounded them.

Contemporary Affairs

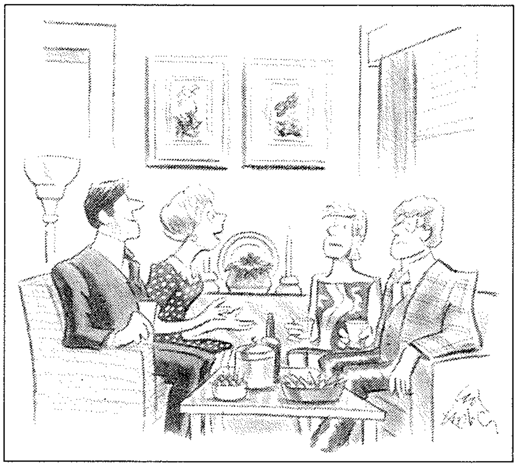
BRAVE NEW FAMILIES: Stories of Domestic Upheaval in Late Twentieth Century America. *By Judith Stacey. Basic Books. 328 pp. $22.95*

Here's an annual Thanksgiving celebration that Norman Rockwell never painted. Around the turkey dinner are Pam, her husband, her ex-husband and his children, her ex-lover and his live-in companion and their daughter, and several friends, among them a gay and a lesbian.

Anthropologist Stacey finds that such "extended kinship networks" have supplanted the traditional family. The New York Supreme Court recently validated a gay man's right to retain his deceased lover's apartment, and San Francisco passed a law that accords live-in partners the legal rights of spouses. Contrary to popular opinion, Stacey asserts, the family is not declining, but its definition is changing. Reaganites championed the working-class family as the bulwark of traditional values, yet it was during the Reagan years, as blue-collar jobs disappeared and more wives were forced to work, that the "traditional" family became an endangered species.

To write *Brave New Families*, Stacey spent time with two families working in the electronics industry of Silicon Valley in California. Both families are run by strong, independent women who in the 1970s left stifling, 1950s-style marriages to fulfill the feminist ideals of self-reliance. Silicon Valley is itself an important "character" in the book. A 1950s Promised Land for the working class, it held out the lure of good jobs and cheap houses, but by the 1980s the thousands who had flocked there saw its golden promise disappear. Stacey has a wonderful feel for the area, the inhuman production lines set in beautiful "industrial parks" and the flimsy tract houses that now cost 15 times the average worker's annual wages.

As the political analyst Andrew Hacker observed, "it is hardly news that families are not what they used to be." Stacey, however, sup-



"We used to be old-fashioned. Now we're postmodern."