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# THE RISE OF EUROPE'S

*The formation of the European Community and the end of the Cold War had one common and quite unintended result: Both gave encouragement to the nationalist urges of numerous regions within Europe's established nation-states. What these stirrings will finally produce in places such as the former Yugoslavia, Scotland, or Lombardy is impossible to predict. But three of our contributors—Alastair Reid, William McPherson, and David Gies—look at three different cases to show what has already come to pass. Our fourth author, G. M. Tamás, explores the ideological foundations of this unsettling ethnic nationalism.*



## THE SCOTTISH CONDITION

Some years ago, I came across a few references to the Fourth World, a geopolitical coinage that was meant to embrace all those ex-nation-states, ethnic and religious minorities, and other sovereignties lost through the twists of history, small races swallowed up at some point by larger, latter-day states. The Fourth World

remains, however, a linguistic abstraction. Unlike the countries we group together as the Third World, which do have realities in common, those entities that make up the so-called Fourth World are unlikely to pool their grievances or make common cause, for their situations are utterly separate and unique, some of them very ancient indeed, as in the case of the

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# LITTLE NATIONS



BY ALASTAIR REID

Basques of Spain. The demands of such enclaves may very well occupy an international small-claims court for the next century. At present, we are made only too brutally aware of the ruthlessness and mindlessness of their impatience. In talking about thwarted nationalism, however, one fundamental point has to be made: While it is quite possible to under-

stand from the outside the arguments, legal and historical—the entire rationale behind the surges of nationalism—it is impossible to apprehend the nature and intensity of the feelings involved.

I am aware of those feelings, though in a milder form, through my growing up in Scotland, and although I have often enough explained Scotland's case to friends from elsewhere, I know how impossible it is to make them feel how it feels, for it is something close to the bone and fiber of being. The kind of nationalism I am talking about arises from situations in which a smaller country is taken over by a larger power, which imposes on it a new official identity, a culture, and often a new language, suppressing the native identity and driving it inward to become a secret, private self. In conditions of such subjugation, a people is forced to become both bilingual and bicultural. That duality lies at the heart of suppressed nationalism. While many such takeovers have had successful conclusions in human history, some decidedly have not; it is from these that nationalist feelings arise, from situations of deep discontent, from a resentment of a ruling authority coupled with a deep fear of losing the particular ways and myths of being and believing that have always told a once-independent people who they were.

For a very long time, whenever I went back to Scotland, I put out an extra-wary antenna to pick up any trace of what we used to call the "Scottish Condition." The Scottish Condition can show itself fleetingly in the smallest of gestures, a sniff or a sigh, or it can take a voluble spoken form, but it has lurked for a long time in the undercurrents of Scottish life. It wells from ancestral gloom, from the shadows of a severe Calvinism, and from a gritty mixture of disappointment and indignation, and it mantles the Scottish spirit like an

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ancient moss. "It's no' right," that cry that echoed through my childhood, is one wrenched from the Scottish soul, implying a deep unfairness at the heart of things. I grew up under a low cloud of girth and grumble, never quite understanding what the injustice was, for it was never identified. It was just something in the air, a kind of national weather, a damp mist of dissatisfaction.

**S**cotland would qualify as a senior member of the Fourth World. In essence, the Scottish Condition stems from the fact that, since 1707, Scotland has been an ex-nation, a destiny that its people have never quite accepted or even understood, but one that they have so far been unable to alter. The year 1707 is a date as dire as doomsday to Scottish ears. In 1707, the parliaments of the sovereign countries of England and Scotland signed an Act of Union, yielding up their separate sovereignties and parliaments to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain, ruled over by a British parliament. But the omens were not exactly favorable to union: The two countries had fought each other on more than 300 occasions, according to Sir Walter Scott, and were accustomed to regarding each other as enemies. Although the majority of Scots were opposed to union, Scotland was in an impoverished condition, its coffers emptied out by the failure, in 1699, of its ill-planned colonial enterprise in Darién (in present-day Panama), on which it had banked for survival. It badly needed access to the rich trading markets of England and its colonies, and the fact that union brought immediate economic relief to Scotland swept aside deeper considerations and ignored the wishes of the majority. By the terms of the act, Scotland retained certain autonomies—it kept its own legal code, the body of Scots law; it kept the Presbyterian Church of Scotland; it kept its

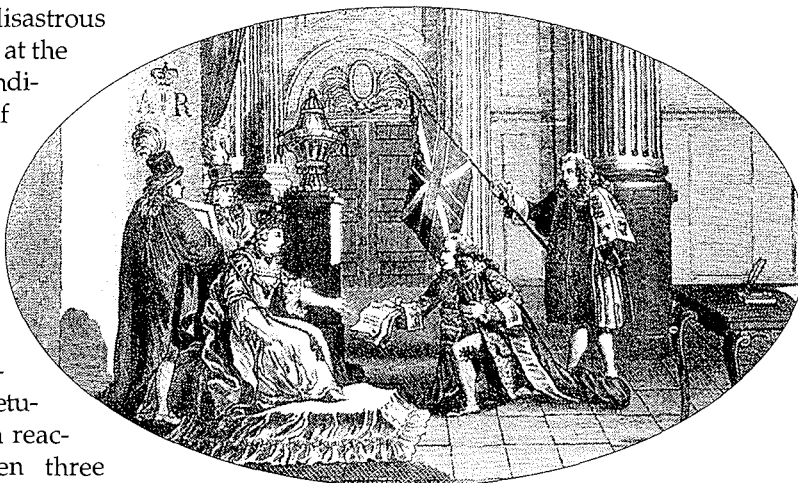
own educational system; and it was granted representation in the Parliament in Westminster. At present, there are 72 Scottish members of Parliament out of 650, a proportion that is a constant reminder of their minority status.

While the Act of Union was always seen as a Scottish sellout, there could have been no way of knowing how much it was to become an English takeover. Whatever expectations may have been, no "union," in any deep sense of the word, took place, no national self-image was replaced by another, no "British" meta-character evolved. Citizens of the United Kingdom rarely refer to themselves as British, except when traveling abroad, for "Great Britain" exists more in a diplomatic and legislative sense than in a human one. Union suddenly handed the Scots a dual nationality: Officially, they were British, but in their own minds, their own mirrors, they were Scots. No such duality afflicted the English. For them, "Britain" and "England" were synonyms from the beginning, an assumption that has always infuriated the Scots. In the eyes of the English, Scotland had gone from being a troublesome neighbor to becoming a remote northern region, a market, an occasional playground, a ghost of its former fierce self. From the beginning, English culture dominated, but it took some time for it to dawn on the Scots that by the terms of union, England appeared to have made considerable gains, while they, on the contrary, had acquired an ambiguous identity. At first, there was a degree of confidence among the Scots that they would remain stoutly themselves, and would hold together in a cultural sense. But the Scottish self, with the passing of time, became an increasingly resentful one, as Scottish affairs were given short shrift in the proceedings at Westminster. To be left with a culture, a history, and a national character, and yet to have no longer any political control over the terms of national ex-

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istence, amounts to a disastrous emasculation. That lies at the heart of the Scottish Condition. The distinctness of Scottish nationality had little to sustain it but memory, and so, for almost 300 years, the Scots have wallowed in an aggrieved nostalgia, uncertain of what it means now to be Scottish, and gnawing perpetually at the problem. In reaction, they have taken three courses: Some have left Scotland behind, to find fortune in some other country; some have taken the Union at face value and gone south to England; some have stayed at home, to see what Scotland would become, to see what would become of it.



*Queen Anne receiving the Act of Union in 1707*

I had a geography teacher in Edinburgh who used to tell us gleefully (he was English), "The Scots are like dung, only good when spread." History may very well bear him out. I am always astonished by the ubiquity of Scottish emigrants. What they took with them was an austere self-sufficiency and a sturdy independence, determined to make the most of what they found. Since what they found was generally more than what they had left behind, they prospered, the homeland a flinty, waning memory. I am aware that my Scottish beginnings, frugal and somewhat severe, splendidly prepared me for a peripatetic life, since I have always felt my needs to be few, and portable. Of the Scots who remained, however, a fair proportion of them accepted, and still accept, the Union, moving to England to enjoy a life in which their Scottishness lies all but buried, or is kept as a kind of fancy dress. While the case for union can be argued coherently, it is contradicted by the grumble of discontent that underlies Scottish realities, a grumble that has never gone away.

That the Union was engineered by a minority of Scots became clear when, in the first

half of the 18th century, the Highlands twice rose in armed rebellion. The ruthlessness with which an English army put down Prince Charles's rebellion in 1746, and the brutal subduing of the Highlands that followed, left no doubt as to where the power lay. Yet in the latter part of the 18th century, Edinburgh enjoyed such a flowering, intellectually and architecturally, and housed such a concentration of distinguished thinkers, that it could justifiably claim to be an influential European capital. The "Scottish Enlightenment," as it came to be called, gained for the Scots such renown that Voltaire wrote, "It is from Scotland that we receive rules of taste in all the arts, from epic painting to gardening." Around 1750, a visionary lord provost of Edinburgh, George Drummond, set in motion the plan to build a New Town to the north of Edinburgh's craggy, overcrowded center. The New Town took 50 years to complete, but the grace of its broad avenues, its ample squares and curved terraces, all with a unifying Georgian facade, make it even today as elegant a piece of city as you could ever find. By some curious architectural alchemy, the New Town seemed to summon into being, as though to fill its graceful mold, the extraordinary men of the time—law lords, men of science, social thinkers, philosophers, many of them holding university chairs.

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David Hume and his friend Adam Smith remain the most illustrious names from that period, but their peers were many, and with Scotland in a relatively settled state, it seemed for a time that the Union might allow it to maintain a purely cultural identity, relieved of having to govern itself.

**T**hat was the fervent belief of the Enlightenment's favorite son, Sir Walter Scott. No one could have been a more dedicated Scot than he, yet he saw union as a forward step, relieving Scotland of its ancient rages and bringing it a relative prosperity. Bewitched by Scotland's vivid and violent past, Scott proceeded to mummify it in all his many writings, lighting it with the candle glow of nostalgia. That prevailing view locked Scotland into the fixed attitude of looking backward, the present and the future being out of its hands. As my history master in Edinburgh was fond of saying, Scotland was from 1707 on a country with its future behind it. Yet Scott has to be credited with a certain prescience: In one of his letters, he wrote, "If you unscotch us, you will find us damned mischievous Englishmen."

Improbably enough, Queen Victoria contributed to the mummification of Scotland's image. On the death of Prince Albert in 1861, she virtually took refuge in Scotland, where she encouraged the cultivation of a historical identity for the Scots by reviving the ancient fabric of clans and tartans and helping to create the image of Scotland that still shows up in the whisky advertisements. That image persists, and the Scots are certainly not innocent of exploiting it. Scotland's summers, which can be glorious, are thick with tourists, and the degree of tartan hype makes it not too difficult to imagine a quite different future for Scotland, in which it turns into a living museum, a heritage park for global travelers.

As I grew up, I felt the Scottish past intruding thickly into the present, in the form of ruins and history lessons and a litany of heroes and battles, the past of pugnacious nationhood. In our playground games, the English

were always the enemy; occasional English children at school were regarded as Martians, beings beyond us. That past is monumentalized all over Scotland, and it is thickly and meticulously documented in the National Library in Edinburgh, studied, pored over, and fed on. Scotland was something that had been lost; it was The Past, and the past in consequence was held in some reverence, throwing a long shadow on the present. The other shadow was cast by a long-engrained Calvinism, severe, judgmental, unforgiving. In Scotland, I once remarked to a passing neighbor on the beauty of the day, to hear her mutter in reply, "We'll pay for it."

A Scottish identity, which the Scots had once worn easily and naturally, had by the 19th century become for them a kind of secret self, which could only emerge on certain occasions, such as sporting confrontations, but which otherwise hung about like a rueful shadow. Scottishness became a kind of free-floating nationality, something like a dress suit, to be worn on unspecified occasions, a pointlessness. None of the compensatory forms that nationalism could take, in the arts, in sporting competition, provided more than a brief venting of steam. The country lived, it seemed, in a state of mourning for itself. I recall feeling this secretiveness about things Scottish as a child. I remember being puzzled by it, as I was by the habit Scots have of looking warily at the sky, as though something darkly unforeseen might fall from it.

**I**t seems that at the heart of nationalist discontents lies always a dilemma of language. As often as not, when smaller states or cultures are overrun by larger powers, they are overrun at the same time by a dominant outside language, so that the native language becomes secondary, separate, secret even. To speak it is a subversive act. A language imposed from the outside forces a people to become bilingual in order to survive, and saddles them with a dual nature. That duality is experienced over and over again simply in the act of speaking. When the public use

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of Catalan was officially banned in Franco's Spain, the language became for the Catalans a secret weapon, a readily available expression of defiance and complicity, a bond felt in the tongue. Now that Catalonia has its own language restored to it, Catalans use it aggressively and ubiquitously.

It is Scotland's curious linguistic situation that feeds its cultural ambiguity, that underlines its discontents and keeps them palpable. While Scotland and England were still independent countries, the language used by the Scots had much the same relation to the English of England that, say, Dutch has to German today.\* The two languages, Scots and English, had, after all, a common source, and were mutually intelligible, at least in their written form, to English and Scots alike. But English was certainly the more dominant of the two, particularly since, from the 16th century on, the Scots had used an English version of the Bible, and through it were well familiar with written English, although they pronounced it in their own manner. After union, however, it became clear that English culture, and the English language in particular, had no intention of moving over to accommodate the Scots in any mode or manner. Scotland needed the Union more than England did, and as their merchants went south to better themselves, they were obliged to conduct their business in the English language, a tacit condition they had no choice but to accept. It was English that was taught in Scottish schools—English was the official, public language, and was synonymous with "correctness." I remember well, at school in the Scottish Border Country, that we would speak in our own local fashion in the playground, but as we entered the classroom, we crossed a linguistic threshold and spoke English. A Scots word used in class made us laugh aloud: It was an irregularity. Speaking English was, to us, speaking "proper," which rendered our own local speech improper by implication, secondary,

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\*Gaelic, at least since the 14th century, has been largely confined to the northwest Highlands, where its use has steadily declined.

somehow inferior. David Hume, although the staunchest of Scots, would nevertheless send his manuscripts to English friends for them to weed out his Scotticisms, which he did not consider appropriate to serious discourse. Yet I treasure the Scots I still have, for its downrightness and for its blunt vocabulary, for words as wonderfully apt as the verb *to swither*, which means to be of two minds about something, like an undecided voter. I also feel, as is often the case in bilingual situations, that I write English with especial care, feeling it somehow a foreign language, and having to dominate it as a form of self-defense.

**I**t is no longer accurate to say that Scots today is a separate language, as once it was; rather, it is a linguistic mode, a manner of using English, yet with a rich extra vocabulary of Scots words. In speech, the Scots reject the mannerisms of "English English" for a blunt directness, a spare and wary address; ingrained in the Scottish spirit is a downright egalitarianism that insists on taking others as they present themselves, whatever they may represent, a natural democracy of feeling. The way the Scots speak among themselves, in their own words, has remained domestic and intimate. But although all Scots are well schooled in English, even the remaining Gaelic speakers in parts of the Highlands, it still has the feel for them of a foreign language, something that, although they live comfortably enough in it, does not quite fit them. Among themselves, they modify it so that it does, but to outsiders they speak English. As Robert Lewis Stevenson put it, "Even though his tongue acquired the southern knack, he will still have a stray Scot's accent of the mind."

Every time I hear a Scot speaking with an Englishman, I am acutely aware of how different are the two modes, the manners of speaking the language. The "official" English accent, called variously "Oxford," or "BBC English," or "Nobspeak," is a curious phenomenon. It is left over from the Empire, an accent that is clearly designed to command, that implies a

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whole morality and a view of history, and carries a certain condescension, a superiority, a distancing. It is not a regional accent, though it became the language of a ruling class. It can be acquired, and is, by Scots as well as English, through the agency of institutions such as the English public schools. It is in utter contrast to the manner in which the Scots use English—direct, vigorous, unadorned, even blunt. The different speech modes embody all the differences of history, of nature, of human manner, and although on an everyday level they co-exist easily, they still speak across a distance of being.

I grew up with the labyrinthine arguments of Scottish nationalism ringing early in my ears. Every Scottish community seemed to have at least one blunt and vociferous nationalist, an agent provocateur who hectored those who came to listen about the string of injustices they were supposed to be suffering. I used to go to meetings of the Scottish National Party (SNP) occasionally, as schoolboy and student, and what I recall most of all is the petulance, the air of injury that hung over those gatherings: Their speakers were daring—even provoking—their audiences to admit to buried feelings of having been wronged, exhorting them to turn their secret sense of injury into a banner and, in election years, to vote accordingly. But there were Scots, patriots enough in their own eyes, who rejected the badgering of the SNP, hoping for a different, though yet undreamed, expression for their nationalism. Indeed, the nationalist movement has always been beset by ardent factionalism. The plain reason is that nationalist feelings, although present in every Scot, vary in degree from white-hot to infinitesimal, and take on so many different forms that the only common ground of agreement among Scots is the sense of having been wronged. It is to be hoped, however, that the day of “grievance” nationalism is waning, for it has led not so much to clear thinking about Scotland’s situation as to something verging on a gloomy expectation of disappointment.

Where Irish nationalism burned, Scottish nationalism barely smoldered. But Ireland had

been conquered, while Scotland had merely made a questionable deal. Ireland, besides, had a history, a religion, a language, a clear identity, something to fight for, to die for.

Scotland had no such incendiary cause, only a slow fire that often seems to have gone out, only to flare unexpectedly at times. “The English yoke” had meaning in Ireland, but in Scotland only irony, for Scotland had not been oppressed, only slighted. Instead, English culture and language became so dominant as to saddle the Scots with enough of a duality of being to make their conflict an inward one. The Irish had a tangible enemy, England; in Scotland, the argument really took place between separate parts of the self, a circumstance as paralyzing to the Scots as it was to Hamlet. Scotland has been less a subdued country than a self-subduing one. Scottish nationalism does not turn violent, except possibly on sporting occasions, and its notion of civil disobedience amounts to no more than sticking stamps with the queen’s head on them upside-down on their envelopes, all of which might suggest that the Scots have become so accustomed to their aggrieved state that it feels like home to them.

**D**uring the last 50 years, national feelings have seethed in Scotland at irregular intervals. In the 1970s, as the vast oil fields of the North Sea were being discovered, there was a lot of muttering in Scotland, muttering that brought the SNP into the fray with the slogan, “It’s Scotland’s Oil.” The campaign brought the SNP a lot of votes; in the two elections of 1974, it found itself with first seven and then 11 Scottish Nationalist members of Parliament, enough to force the Labour Party, then in power, to commit itself to devolving some power to Scotland and Wales. In 1977, after weary years of commissions of inquiry and parliamentary committees, separate acts for Scotland and Wales were put on the Westminster agenda, to be preceded by a national referendum. On March 1, 1979, the Scottish electorate was given the opportunity to vote yes (for a form of Scottish self-govern-



*The Scottish National Party calls for a politically autonomous Scotland as a nation among nations within the encompassing embrace of the European Community.*

ment) or no (opposing it). It seemed that Scotland's moment was arriving; but the result only intensified the national frustration. With an electorate then of 3.8 million, 32 percent voted yes, 30 percent no, and 37 percent did not vote. Of the votes cast, as the SNP was quick to point out, the yes votes had 51.6 percent as against 48.4 percent voting no. The results, however, could by no stretch of



the imagination be called emphatic. More important, the government had set a threshold for the referendum: 40 percent of the electorate must register a yes vote for devolution to proceed to the next stage. So the referendum failed to carry, and Scotland slumped back into a kind of stupefaction. What always infuriates the Scots is English indifference to their difference, and the Scottish MPs took their revenge by voting with the Tories to bring down the government, thus propelling into power Margaret Thatcher, who, during her 11 years in office, inadvertently did wonders for the cause of Scottish nationalism by uniting the Scots in the loathing they felt for her. With her party holding only 12 Scottish seats out of 72, the Scots felt that she in no way represented them. She in turn made it clear from the beginning that she had no interest whatsoever in any Scottish claims to a devolution of power, and that in her book the Union was not open to question.

Thatcher was mightily indifferent to the Scottish situation, but, worse than that, she patronized the Scots. Curiously enough, it was to her accent, which she had gone to great pains to

acquire, that she owed much (though certainly not all) of her extreme unpopularity in Scotland, an accent that grated on Scottish ears. Hackles rose at its presumptions of rightness, its lofty self-assurance, its dismissiveness—all Scots have endured similar English schoolteachers, similar public pomposities, to the muttering point. I have heard Thatcher's voice on



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the evening news suddenly cut through the clishmaclaver of an Edinburgh pub, abruptly stilling the conversation, and causing a dark flush to spread collectively up the necks of its grim listeners. Such moments are at the inexplicable core of nationalism; it is at such moments that it occurs to me all over again that the Union, from the beginning, was not really a very good idea.

**T**en years after the referendum, a group of concerned Scots formed a Campaign for a Scottish Assembly and, after a year of consultation, published a Claim of Right for Scotland, a document that laid out, in a clear and dispassionate manner, the case for Scotland's having an elected assembly of its own to deal with Scottish affairs. The document also stressed the need for constitutional reform in the United Kingdom, and made its case so sensibly that most intelligent Scots today view it as something of a blueprint for an inevitable future. The Scottish National Party, however, clinging to its grievances, refused to associate itself with the Claim of Right, instead pressing somewhat wishfully for full Scottish independence under the somewhat wishful umbrella of European union. The squabbles over independence or devolution effectively splintered the main argument: that Scotland should govern itself directly, in some form or other.

The cautious expectation at present is that, should the Conservatives lose the next election, which seems increasingly likely, Scotland will eventually get a Scottish assembly sitting in Edinburgh, with control over Scottish affairs, and limited fiscal powers. All emotion aside, it makes sense. It almost came to pass in March 1992, when the Labour Party was confidently projected by all the polls to win power from the Conservatives, and had promised a devolved assembly to the Scots. The whole country fizzed with expectation. The

polls, however, were wrong, and the Tories returned to power. I was in Scotland in the wake of that election, and I have never felt it so deflated, so dashed, so desolate, for John Major soon made it clear that his party would not budge from its stance on the Union. The SNP's fanciful plan for an independent Scotland in a European union seemed also suddenly inconceivable, and Scotland has since remained dormant, lying in wait.

Among themselves, the Scots are nothing if not contentious, obstinate in argument. Yet, as I write that, I remember being frequently checked in my youth for making such broad statements. "You can't generalize," my elders would declare, shaking their heads, an admonishment I resented bitterly, since they themselves seemed to do so with alacrity. I see now, however, that when they said that, they had Scotland in mind, for while most Scots partake of the national discontent to a greater or lesser degree, they are very far from unanimous about how to remedy it. Nor are they unanimous in their resentments, which run all the way from the small and snifty to the voluble and impassioned. After Scotland was deprived of its public existence, it really turned into countless secret countries, private Scotlands, from the sentimental to the politically committed. For that reason, Scottish self-government, while generally wished for, is infinitely disputed, causing some to voice the view that, were Scotland granted its own assembly, such a body might be the beginning of its country's troubles, rather than an end to them. I doubt that. I think that the Scots have shed in large part their ancestral gloom and their defeatism, if not their contentiousness, and will do very well at taking charge of their own affairs. In spite of nearly 300 years of ambiguous history, Scotland has persisted as a reality in its own mind, and it certainly has the energy and the imagination (and the humor) to become one in a responsible, political sense.



## THE TRANSYLVANIA TANGLE

**D**riving through the rolling Transylvanian countryside from Cluj toward Tîrgu-Mures one wintry Sunday afternoon some six weeks after the fall of Ceausescu in December 1989, I passed a group of about 100 peasants—virtually the entire village, it appeared—clustered with their priest around a cenotaph. Curious, I backed up the car and joined them. The cenotaph commemorated Romanian heroes of former wars. It was being dedicated again that day to include, especially, the fallen heroes of December. When I approached, the peasants were angry, and suspicious. At first they were afraid I was Hungarian. Their fear was palpable and, I have no doubt, genuine.

Eventually the stories poured out. "It

doesn't matter what will occur, only that the Hungarians don't come back," one very old woman told me. "I have lived under the Russians. I have lived under the Germans. Anybody but the Hungarians." Although Romanians formed an absolute majority of the population of Transylvania, and had for centuries, Hungarian nobles—a minority within a minority—had been their overlords for most of the preceding 1,000 years. The woman who addressed me had, in fact, been born in the dying days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when Transylvania was under direct Hungarian control and the Hungarian government pursued a harsh policy of Magyarization among all its subject peoples. She had lived

through two world wars and under two

BY WILLIAM McPHERSON

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monarchies, through the unification with Romania in 1918 and the annexation by Hungary from 1940 to 1944, and finally through 45 years of communism. And today, or maybe yesterday, Hungarian peasants had attacked Romanians in their fields, in their villages, with pitchforks. They had burned their houses.

"Which houses? Who was pitchforked? Where?" I asked. "Here?"

"No, not in our village."

"In what village, then?" Everyone now seemed to be talking at once.

"Not the next village, a village beyond." I left in search of the village, but I never found it. It was always a village beyond the next village. And the same was true in Hungarian villages—stories of Romanians attacking, marauding, raping, pillaging, burning, but always in other villages.

So I made my way to Țirgu-Mures. By the time I got there, I was very familiar with atrocity stories. And by the time violence actually broke out in Țirgu-Mures, little more than a month later, the rumors had escalated to the point where "they were killing our children."

I do not know of a single Romanian or Hungarian who had been pitchforked, or of a village that had been burned, or of a child who had been murdered. I do not believe there were any. But there were many rumors, and soon the stories became all too real.

For two days, on March 19 and 20, 1990, Romanians and Hungarians battled with clubs and pipes and bottles in the center of Țirgu-Mures, a once largely Hungarian city whose population is now almost equally divided between ethnic Romanians and Hungarians. Romanian peasants arrived on buses and in trucks from the nearby villages of Hodac and Ibanesti to join the fray. The first death toll was six; the second figure announced was three; local police and medical sources said eight; the

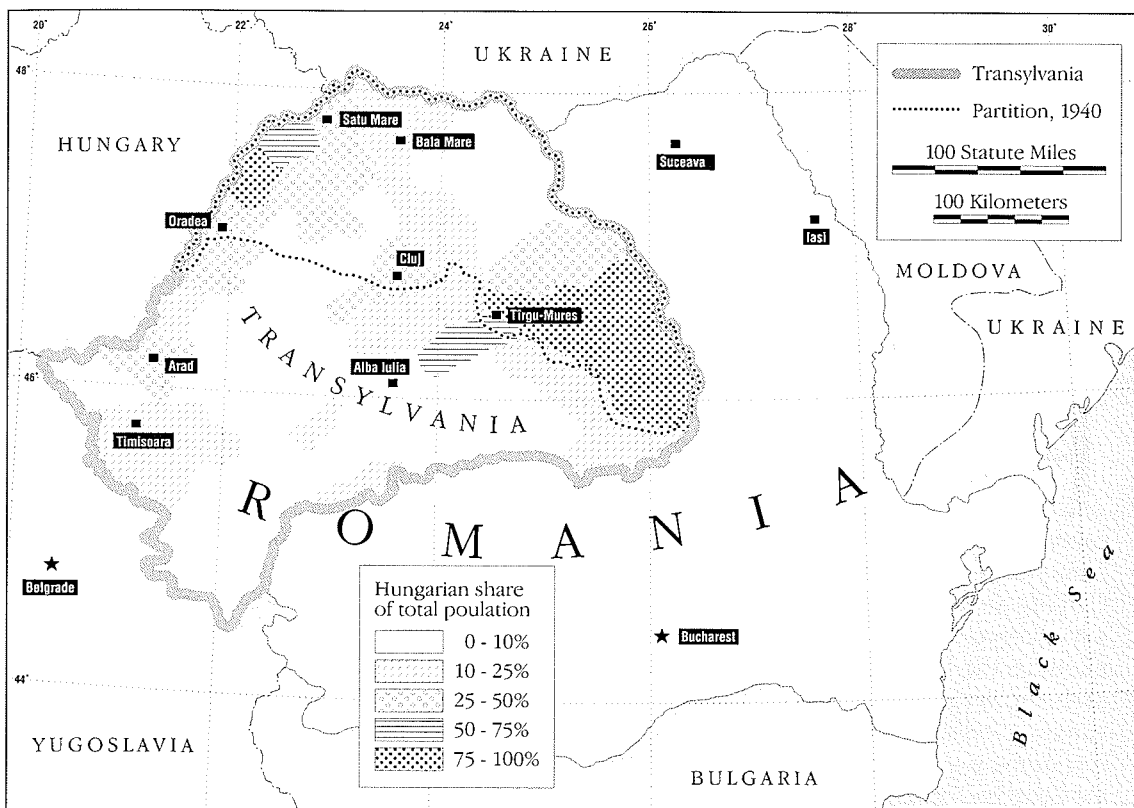
Helsinki Watch investigating mission found five. At least four of the dead were Hungarians. Two hundred sixty-nine—perhaps more—Romanians and Hungarians were wounded, some viciously. András Süt, the best known writer in the Hungarian language in Romania, lost an eye. It was not, as so many Romanians say of their revolution, a "movie," a "scenario," though it seems likely to have been a manipulation. The difference between movies and life is that in life the scenario can kill.

Figures vary as to the number arrested and convicted for crimes committed in those days—42? 47? (accurate figures are extraordinarily difficult to come by in Romania)—but it is clear that of those arrested only two were Romanians; the great majority were Hungarian-speaking Gypsies. Seven of the latter, unable to read their statements (which had been written by the police), were tried and convicted under a Ceausescu-era decree of being social parasites; five are still in prison.

Two days after the disturbances a parliamentary investigating commission was established. Its first report was never officially released. A second report was written because the first was deemed inaccurate, and finally was presented to Parliament in January 1991. Neither report addressed the controversial role the police and the army had played in the events, the worst ethnic violence in Romania in years, in which real people really died as they had during the events of December 1989. (The role of the secret police and the army in the final days of the Ceausescu regime has never been clarified either.) The final report did point out that among the guilty were "some agents of the former political police" whose names it was not able to reveal because it did not have enough proof, largely because of the lack of an intelligence service at the time, an arguable state of affairs that was in any event immediately rectified.

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MapLine / Paul Woodward

A week after the events in Tîrgu-Mures, hinting darkly at foreign “agents provocateurs,” the provisional government of that time reconstituted and rehabilitated the former secret police, known as the S curitat —officially dissolved shortly after the fall of Ceausescu three months before but in fact only reshuffled, under the inoffensive name of the Romanian Intelligence Service (Serviciul Rom n Informa ii or SRI).

“From humanity, through nationality, to bestiality,” the 19th-century Austrian dramatist Franz Grillparzer wrote. It was once explained to me that all the seemingly irrational attitudes and behavior in Eastern and Central Europe can be construed as the result of a series of interlocking, more or less aggressive, inferiority complexes: The Austrians feel inferior to the Germans, the Hungarians to the Austrians, the Romanians to the Hungarians, the Slovaks to the Czechs and the Hungarians, the Bulgarians to the Romanians, etc., etc. The

Albanians, in this view, are at the bottom of the explosive heap. “Kiss the hand you cannot bite”—a common Romanian expression that describes a particular mode of survival—applies not only to Romanians. In this part of the world, the Balkans and Mitteleuropa, where the borders of peoples correspond only roughly to the borders of political states, hand-kissing is the custom. But every inferiority complex implies a corresponding superiority complex, and the converse of the duplicity suggested in the statement, “Kiss the hand you cannot bite,” and implicit in it, is the straightforward message, “Bite the hand you can.” That seems to be the custom, too.

In the terrible, tangled politics of Romania, the past is always present, never forgotten and never forgiven—especially in Transylvania, the largest and richest and in many ways the most beautiful area of Romania. Enclosed within the great protecting arc

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of the Carpathians, the Bihor Massif, and the Tisa Plain, it is—or has been—rich in gold and silver, vital salt and copper, forests, rivers, and fertile earth. Its history is complex, with an early mysterious gap of some 1,000 years, and inextricably entwined with the idea of the Romanian nation struggling to be born—and of the Hungarian nation fighting to establish and then to preserve itself against the forces of Constantinople and of Vienna, the Ottoman invaders and the Hapsburg Empire.

**F**ierce Magyar horsemen crossed the Carpathian passes from the northern Urals and the steppes of Central Asia at the beginning of the tenth century to terrorize the Christian West with their arrows. Before being driven back to the Carpathian Basin, they succeeded in dominating whatever indigenous peoples were (Romanians, as the Romanians claim) or were not (nobody, as the Hungarians claim) in Transylvania, as well as the Slavs and Germans in the rest of the region. By the year 1000, Stephen the Great had brought his warrior nobles to the still-united Christian Church, for which Rome later canonized him, and the Kingdom of Hungary was established under the Crown of Saint Stephen: a gift, it is said, of the pope. Although a part of Hungary, Transylvania was ruled for the next 300 years by its own Orthodox princes, who gradually became Magyarized, especially after 1365, when Catholicism became a qualification for holding land and titles. The Romanians, after the Great Schism of 1054, had remained loyal to the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople.

But how the mighty are laid low. Hungary's King John I, who waged war against the powerful Hapsburgs, was forced to kiss the hand of Süleyman the Magnificent a year after the disastrous Battle of Mohács in 1526, which is to the Hungarians what the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 is to the Serbs: the burial ground of their greatness as a nation. After Mohács, the Turks occupied Budapest, and Hungary was split into three parts: Royal Hungary to the west and north, which became

part of the Hapsburg Empire; the middle triangle of the Turkish *pashalik* of Buda, which was increasingly absorbed into the Ottoman Empire and now included a large Sephardic community; and Transylvania—Erdély as the Hungarians call it—a semi-autonomous principality nominally loyal to the sultan and jealously coveted by all and which, until 1686, remained largely independent. Encouraged by an influx of Hungarian nobles fleeing the *pashalik*, the purest Hungarian culture was here preserved, free of extraneous influence of Turk and Jew and German and Slav—and presumably of the autochthonous Romanian as well. Thus for some Magyars here and abroad, the cradle of Hungarian civilization indisputably lies within Romania today—in that exact same Transylvania which a fact sheet from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs describes as “the cradle of the Romanian people and the inexhaustible source that has kept alive and constantly strengthened the Romanity, East and South of the Carpathians.”

As a people, the Romanians are presumed to descend from the Dacian tribes who inhabited present-day Romania (including Transylvania) and Trajan's Roman legions who conquered them in A.D. 106. Rome abandoned its province of Dacia 170 years later but left its language with the people, who remain an isolated “island of Latinity in a sea of Slavs,” as the somewhat inaccurate saying goes. It is inaccurate because the Magyars are not Slavs. Surrounded but certainly never enslaved by the Slav—and German and Latin—people, the Magyars are equally if not more isolated by their language, which does not belong to the Indo-European family but is related to Finnish and more distantly to Turkish.

As a country, however, Romania is young, younger even than the United States. On the edge of three great and contending empires, Russian, Ottoman, and Austrian, it was formed by the union of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859, but it did not gain real independence until 1878, when it was at last released from some 400 years of Turkish suzerainty and—with the arrival from

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Germany of the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen line—turned its face toward the West, toward Europe. Three years later, Carol I, prince of the Regat, or Old Kingdom, since 1866, was crowned king of Romania. The dynasty he founded held the throne until the communists forced King Michael to abdicate at the end of 1947. The deposed king now lives in exile in Switzerland but remains a source of considerable irritation to the present regime.

**U**ntil the 19th century, it was not possible to think in terms of nationalism or nationalistic movements in this part of the world. What united people, and what separated them, was social class. At the top was the single political class: a tiny group of nobles, an often charming and well-spoken supranational elite who, like the royal houses of Europe after Queen Victoria, were mostly related or otherwise connected to one another. In Transylvania, whatever Romanian aristocracy there was having long since been Magyarized, these nobles were entirely Hungarian, although the circumstance of their being Hungarian was far less important than the astonishingly privileged circumstances of their birth.

Shortly before his death in 1991, one of the last survivors of this class, Ioan de Mocgony Stircea, born an Austrian in Bukovina but bearing both Hungarian (Mocgony) and Romanian (Stircea) names, a “double baron” who could trace his ancestry to Charlemagne and who once possessed the “the greatest fortune in Romania after the king’s,” told me quite unself-consciously, “When I was arrested [by the communists], 43,000 of my peasants marched in protest in Timisoara. Our family founded Moldavia in 1212.” During World War II he saved 1,000 Jews from deportation from Bukovina. “We used to run our places with them,” he said. His places included a 200-year-old oak forest of 54,000 acres, and this after the most thorough interwar land reform in Europe. In another place in Transylvania, “we had all the stone.” He had places in every region of the land-banks, too. Prompted by

President Truman, he organized the Romanian anti-communist underground, joined by 314,000 peasants, many of them “his.” After 15 years in prison, and penniless, he was released and made his way—with four bottles of *uica*, four bottles of vodka, and a sandwich in his knapsack—to Switzerland, and to his wife. “Luckily, she inherited.”

Below that loftiest aerie, for centuries there was the vast sea of peasants. Then came 1848, the year of revolution in Europe. The peasants—Hungarian as well as Romanian—had been subject since 1517 to “the lords of the land in absolute and eternal servitude,” as the Werbóczy Code, or Tripartitum, put it. (Serfdom was abolished in Wallachia in 1746, and in Moldavia in 1749.\*) Although there had been several violent rebellions, more violently quelled, it was only in 1848 that what in Transylvania had been primarily a social conflict—serf against virtually absolute lord—became clearly, strongly national: Romanian peasant against Hungarian peasant.

**T**he Romanian majority demanded status as a nation equal to the three long-recognized “nations” of the land: the Hungarian nobles, and the lesser, quasi-noble Germans and Széclers (a Hungarian subgroup). The Romanians demanded equal recognition of their Orthodox church, which had been merely “tolerated” alongside the four “privileged” religions: Catholicism, Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Unitarianism. They also wanted the right to their language in schools and in administration and legislation (rights, incidentally, which the Hungarians in Transylvania are claiming today). In exchange for social equality and the abolition of serfdom, the Hungarians demanded that Transylvania, still under the rule of Vienna, be incorporated into the Hungarian state.

By the end of 1848, serfdom had been reinstated and all the Romanian demands rejected. In 1867, Hungary and Austria resolved

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\*Until the 19th century, the word *român* (Romanian man) in both principalities was synonymous with “serf.”



Admiral Miklós Horthy, Regent of Hungary, leads his troops into Nagy Varad, a town in the part of Transylvania that Hungary acquired in 1940.

their quarrels, and Transylvania was incorporated into the Hungarian "unitary" state under the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. An intensive campaign of Magyarization began. The Romanian demands that had been rejected since they were first formulated in 1791 continued to be rejected until 1914.

With the signing of the peace treaties at the end of World War I, Romania more than doubled its size and population, from about 137,000 to 295,049 square kilometers, and from 7,160,682 people in 1912 to 15,541,424 in 1920. For the first time in history, the vast majority of the Romanian-speaking people were united in one political state—excessively centralized after the French model, and now with significant minorities and cultural differences. Although Romania gained Bessarabia from the ruins of the Russian Empire, Bukovina from Austria, and Southern Dobrudja from Bulgaria, România Mare, or Greater Romania, came into being largely at the expense of Magna Hungaria, defeated in the war and shrunk to one-third of its former size by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, losing three-fifths of

its population in the process. Most of those three-fifths, however, were not Magyars but other nationalities. The Hungarian census of 1910 indicates that Magyars were a minority in their own country, making up only 48.1 percent of the 18.3 million inhabitants. (The largest minority—14.1 percent, almost entirely in Transylvania—was Romanian.) Twenty years later, Magyars composed 89.5 percent of the 7.2 million inhabitants of post-Trianon Hungary, which had become in fact a "unitary" state.

The popular response in Budapest to its radically diminished status in Central Europe after 1918 was "*Nem, nem soha!*" (No, no, never!) After a

brief interlude in 1919 as the Hungarian Socialist Republic under Béla Kun—enthusiastically assisted in its fall by the invading Romanians—a truncated but now ethnically homogeneous Hungary settled into the fascist regime of Miklós Horthy, an admiral who no longer had a sea. István Lázár, the Hungarian author of a history of his country that seems otherwise predictable in its national feeling, wrote that "the chief and, at times, the only rallying cry heard during the quarter century of the Horthy period concerned the enlargement of the country, rectification of its borders: 'Dismembered Hungary is not a country, undivided Hungary is heaven.' . . . From the very first moment, Horthy and his White Army made efforts to revise the borders."

**I**n 1940 Horthy succeeded. The Vienna Diktat—the Second Vienna Award whose anniversary is still dolorously noted in the Romanian press every August 30—forced Romania to cede northern Transylvania to Hungary, the so-called "Horthyist tongue," an area of 43,243 square

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kilometers—two-fifths of the territory that Hungary had lost to Romania under Trianon—with a population of 2.6 million. According to not-always reliable Romanian statistics, 50.2 percent of them were ethnic Romanians, 37.1 percent Hungarians and Széclers. (Hungarian figures allot Romanians a less generous portion, 48.4 percent, and Magyars an additional four percentage points.) Admiral Horthy rode triumphantly into the Transylvanian capital of Cluj—Kolozsvár, now that it was Hungarian again—on a white horse, as he had in Budapest in 1919. Romania had had its revenge in 1918; now, in the implacable dialectic of progress and violence that followed 1848, it was Hungary's turn. The notion of heterogeneity within a single imposed political framework, which the Ottomans, the Austrians, the Russian tsars, and finally their Soviet heirs tried to realize, was never deeply rooted in the Europe of the West, much less in the East, and it had died with the archduke at Sarajevo; the Soviet empire was simply an anachronism. Neither Hungary nor Romania gave it much more than lip service.

**A**lthough the Vienna Diktat was reversed after World War II when a defeated Hungary once again retreated to the borders established by Trianon, it is in this "tongue" where Romanian nationalist feeling is most intense today. It is fueled in part by Hungary's refusal thus far to sign a treaty with Romania, such as it signed with Ukraine and Germany signed with Poland, stating that neither country has any territorial claim on the other. Romania, for its part, refuses to sign an agreement guaranteeing minority rights, saying that its minority policy is exemplary and is in any event an internal matter. Both Hungary and Romania rather disingenuously justify their refusal on the grounds that the inviolability of borders and minority rights are already affirmed in various international agreements, including the Helsinki Final Act. Despite Helsinki, three East European states have broken up since 1990, two of them bordering Romania.

The Helsinki Final Act, to which both countries are signatories, prohibits the changing of borders by force—but not by peaceful means, a loophole left in order to allow for the eventual reunification of Germany. It is worth noting that the Vienna Diktat was *technically* a peaceful arbitration, as both parties—certainly Romania—are doubtless aware. However, Budapest has said unequivocally that it has no territorial claims on Romania and considers the current borders permanent, "irrespective of their being just or unjust," as a statement of the six Hungarian parliamentary parties put it. The political parties that head the governing coalitions in both countries—the newly renamed Romanian Party of Social Democracy in Romania (formerly the Democratic National Salvation Front) and the Hungarian Democratic Forum—in an attempt to maintain their tenuous holds on power, play to varying degrees the nationalist card, which has always and everywhere served as a useful distraction from more immediate problems.

As to Admiral Horthy, Hitler's ally who died in exile in Portugal 36 years ago, he was reburied in Hungary on September 4 of last year, with much of the grandeur of a hero's funeral. The obsequies were covered live on state television, and the mint issued gold and silver coins in commemoration. Although Hungarian prime minister Jozsef Antall (who died last December) chose not to attend the ceremony—his wife did—he praised Horthy as a patriot and anticommunist. So far, at least, the Romanians have not reburied with such honors their wartime leader, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was also a staunch anticommunist and Hitler ally and was executed for that in 1946—though many would if they could.

This cursory sketch of a history that has consumed untold thousands of pages and the productive lives of nationalist Hungarian and Romanian historians alike may explain, if it does not excuse, Romania's current fear of Hungarian irredentism, a fear that sometimes seems to verge on the irrational, and Romania's attitude toward the restive Hungarian minority within its borders.



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As Ceausescu pursued his vigorous policies of industrialization and homogenization in the last two decades of his rule, the populations of the great Transylvanian cities—Cluj, Oradea, Tîrgu-Mures—began to change character. The factories needed workers. Large numbers of Romanian peasants from the countryside and especially from other regions, particularly Moldavia, moved in to the stark new blocks on the edges of town which they had first been brought in to build. The proportion of Magyars diminished. The new arrivals had a different accent, different values—more Balkanic, the Transylvanians would say, less civilized. They had more children. The population of Cluj is now 328,000.

**U**rban Transylvanians—Romanian as well as Hungarian—are proud of their heritage, and scornful of the Byzantine and slothful ways of Moldavia and Wallachia, where Bucharest is located. The newcomers, in turn, were envious—and of course the Hungarian language, still heard daily on the streets, was impenetrable to them. It was clear that these cities possessed a kind of provincial imperial style, however faded—almost a grandeur quite unlike anything in the places where the new residents had come from or the cities they had seen. It was also clear, to Hungarians and Romanians alike, that living conditions were steadily improving across the border, in Hungary, while at home the reverse was true. To divert attention from this disastrous economic condition, the already chauvinistic Ceausescu became even more stridently nationalistic, and to a paranoid degree. Hungarians became his scapegoat. The message sank in, especially among those who did not know any Hungarians.

After the dictator fell, Hungarians remained the scapegoats, blamed, with the Jews, for bringing communism to Romania because a disproportionate number of the early communists were one or the other or both, the indigenous Communist Party in Romania at that time numbering only about 1,000, which made it the smallest such party in Europe.

The displaced workers in the great industrial complexes, resentful of their lot and fearful of their future, by and large, form the popular base of the Romanian nationalist parties today, which repeat in one form or another the old Ceausescu propaganda. These people elected the virulently nationalistic mayor of Cluj, Gheorghe Funar, a laughingstock to the outside world but a man to be reckoned with in Romania. He ran for the presidency in 1992 and placed third, getting almost 11 percent of the vote. He heads the largest nationalist party in the Parliament, the Party of Romanian National Unity, a vital part of the ruling government coalition. The Party of Social Democracy (formerly the Democratic National Salvation Front), which ranked first with 28 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections, also includes among its embarrassing but necessary allies the extremist România Mare and Socialist Labor parties. The former is headed by Corneliu Vadim Tudor, whose notoriously anti-Semitic journal of the same name declares in a banner headline each week: "The year 1993 Continues the Fight against Hungarian Fascism." The president of the latter is Ilie Verdet, Ceausescu's prime minister in the early 1980s; its vice president is Adrian Paunescu, a favorite of Ceausescu's, who tried to seek refuge in the American Embassy when the crowd spotted then attacked him in December 1989.

**A**mild nostalgia for past glories—a common enough phenomenon in the world, especially in a diminished present—does not necessarily entail a fanatical irredentism or a virulent nationalism; it is only nostalgia, neither the most constructive of human feelings nor the most malign, but familiar to all. The emphasis, however, is on mild. With all this, a few things must be kept in mind.

First, Hungary would be destroyed if it suddenly returned to its 1914 borders. The great majority of Hungarians know this full well. Instead of 11 million not entirely satisfied Hungarians, the state would contain an additional six million very unhappy Romanians, and another million each of Slovaks and Serbs,

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not to mention Ukrainians, Croats, Slovenians, Ruthenians, and so on. The dream of a Greater Hungary, which figures far more prominently in the minds of Romanian extremists than in actual Hungarian designs, would be a nightmare, not only for Hungary but for Europe. Incipient Hitlers, of which there are several waiting in the wings (as has been amply demonstrated in the former Yugoslavia), would sprout like mushrooms after a rain.

Second, it is in no one's interest to escalate ethnic conflict to a point where it cannot be controlled. Open, armed conflict would utterly destroy both countries. The horror now being enacted in the former Yugoslavia has been salutary in this regard. Fortunately, neither the Romanian people nor the Hungarian people are toting Kalashnikovs, and the military leaders of both countries are generally behaving responsibly.

Third, fanning nationalist flames in order to deflect attention from the real and difficult problems at hand is in the narrow interest of certain groups in Romania, and in Hungary as well, who wish to maintain power, to augment it, or to achieve it—not by force of argument or superiority of political program but by manipulating in the most cynical way (or the most stupid) the passions of those unhappy people most grievously affected by the changes in their countries, particularly the economic changes. These latter are not the old communists who were in power before—they have adapted all too well to the new situation in both countries, which is one of the problems—but those who were miserable before and, bearing the brunt of economic changes and a new and unfamiliar capitalism whose laws are more akin to the laws of the jungle than to the modern (and to varying degrees mixed) market economies, are indeed more miserable now.

In this vein, Antall several times stated that he felt in his soul that he was prime minister of 15 million Hungarians. Only 11 million of them live within the Hungarian border, a fact not lost on any of Hungary's neighbors. Just before Funar was elected mayor of Cluj,

the Hungarian minister of defense, Lajos Für, said that the safeguarding of Hungarians everywhere was inseparable from the security of the Hungarian state. "This nut in Cluj is the direct result of the Hungarian defense minister's popping off," a high Western diplomatic source told me. The Romanian government immediately accused the Hungarian government of being "irredentist and revisionist." In the autumn of 1993 the Hungarians lobbied forcefully (but fruitlessly) against the admission of Romania into the Council of Europe and the granting of most-favored-nation status by the United States. Shortly afterward, Romania's President Ion Iliescu accused the Hungarian government of using Hungarians from abroad as a "subversive fifth column" in neighboring states—an old charge: It was the reason, in fact, that Romania at first refused international observers for the 1992 national elections. The Hungarian government was "shocked." And on and on. The polarizing effect of these actions makes radicals out of moderates. Bad money drives out good, as the economists say.

Fourth and finally, no rational person could argue that the Magyars are a persecuted minority in Romania today, although without doubt some injustices have been inflicted upon them, and innumerable smaller and larger harassments. Nonetheless, it is irresponsible and a degradation of the language to speak, as some have done in this regard, of "ethnic purification." Magyars may be envied, even feared, but they are not despised. That misfortune falls on the Gypsies, disdained by Romanians and Hungarians alike.

So what then do the Magyars in Romania want? Essentially what Romanians in Transylvania before Trianon wanted: to be citizens, not subjects. In the local context, that means first the right to public education, local government, and the administration of justice in their mother tongue by their own people—all of which were enunciated in the Declaration of Alba Iulia on December 1, 1918, the birthday and since 1990 the national day of today's Romania. Although there are Hungarian schools

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in Romania, most of the promises in the declaration, repeated in January 1990, have never been kept. In an attempt to achieve their goals, Hungarians formed the Democratic Union of Magyars in Romania, the first new political party in Romania after the fall of Ceausescu. It is not a monolithic organization, however, but a coalition of some 16 different parties and associations spanning the political spectrum and held together largely by their self-identification as Hungarians against the attacks of the extreme nationalists.

**S**pecifically, Hungarians want the 400-year-old Hungarian Boylai University in Cluj re-established. It was incorporated into the Romanian Babes University in 1959 and effectively terminated a few years later under Ceausescu. In the early autumn of 1993, however, the decision was taken to begin by yearly stages the teaching of the entire curriculum in Hungarian as well as in Romanian. As of last October, out of almost 3,500 first-year students, some 500 are in the Hungarian section. (Of course, some Magyars enroll in the Romanian section.) They can compete for entrance in the Romanian section, too, so if they fail at one they have a chance at the other. Now the more radical Magyars want a completely separate university, with a separate administration. Andrei Marga, the Romanian rector of the combined university, called Babes-Boylai, and an intelligent and rational man, is worried. "This is a potential source of serious conflict in Cluj," he says. There are so many. Older Romanian physicians remember 1940, when the Romanian medical faculty there was closed and they had to move it to Sibiu, which was outside the "Horthyist tongue." Many of these doctors now vote for the nationalist parties, whose support is not limited solely to the urban proletariat. Physicians have considerable influence in Romania. They are not inclined to be sympathetic to demands such as the call for a separate university.

Below the university level, Hungarians want history and geography taught in their own language. They want bilingual street

signs in areas where minorities make up a significant proportion of the population. They want a law on national minorities enacted, and a ministry of minorities. They want collective rights for their community, an embryonic concept that the Hungarian government is promulgating in international forums. In his biography, *With God, for the People*, the Calvinist pastor László Tokés, a hero to all Romanians in December 1989 but today a hero to only a few, wrote: "The concept of 'the rights of the individual' has always sounded somewhat strange to me. Individualism is a kind of alienation, and in many parts of the world, community has been lost as individuality has thrived." True enough. Tokés is honorary president of the Democratic Union of Magyars in Romania and leader of its radical wing.

Hungarians also want a somewhat hazily defined cultural, not territorial, autonomy. The word is anathema to Romanians because they consider autonomy the first step toward the dismemberment of Romania. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Antall, seeking to bolster his party's plummeting popularity at home by focusing the attention of the nation on Hungarians abroad, recently vowed to support Magyar aspirations to autonomy within Romania, which he characterized as "fundamental."

**A**utonomy is a difficult problem, but one might think that bilingual street signs, common for years and still seen in many Transylvanian cities, would be a simple and insignificant concession. But in the increasingly divided city of Cluj, the fanatical mayor has changed the names of many streets to eliminate any that honor Hungarians and has threatened to melt down the statue of a Hungarian king in the center of the city, although the king, Matthias the Just, was the son of a Romanian noble and born in Cluj. There, the most minor concession—any conciliatory gesture at all—is viewed as opening the gates to the Hungarian invaders. It is no wonder that the Hungarians joke, "We are a double minority. First, we are clever. . . ."

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In a normal country, in a normal time, Funar would be laughed out of office—and investigated for corruption as well. Neither the country nor the times are normal, however. Last summer the headline in a local newspaper loyal to the mayor proclaimed, “Hungary Planning Surprise Attack In Next Five Months.” The distinguished elderly woman who showed it to me believed it. She also believed that Hillary Clinton had adopted an extraterrestrial, and proceeded to describe the creature to me. His skin was a green crust, and he was an “absolute vegetarian.” She had read it in the newspaper.

Absurd as some of this may seem, it is just such absurdities that could be the cause of serious ethnic conflict, particularly in a country where rumor replaces information and the economy is headed over the brink of disaster. Another absurdity: The largest money-making machine in Romania—and the largest scam going in all of Europe—is a pyramid scheme called Caritas, which has been running in Cluj for 18 months now and has attracted the savings of virtually the entire adult population of the city plus some three million other Romanians—more than one-sixth of the adult population—with the promise of a sevenfold return on investment in three months. As of October 1993, it was taking in the equivalent of almost five million dollars each day. Cluj now boasts several Caritas dollar millionaires—in a country where the average monthly income is less than \$70 and annual inflation approaches 300 percent. Caritas—no connection with the international charity of the same name—is run by an obscure accountant from Fagara and promoted by Funar, who has gotten rich off it. Right now, it is the single factor uniting Hungarians and Romanians in Cluj: They all want to be rich. The only good thing this indicates is that if Romania ever really gets its economy going, ethnic problems will fade fast. But when

Caritas collapses—as it must—the repercussions will be staggering.

Tristan Tzara, founder of the Dadaist movement, was born in Romania. So was absurdist playwright Eugène Ionesco. Surely there is some connection.

“This is the Balkans,” the editor of Romania’s largest newspaper told me a while ago, making the connection. “We are at the gates of the Orient. Everything is dangerous, and nothing is serious.”

**T**hat is the Balkanic excuse, but the rest of us can only hope he is correct. The “power” needs scapegoats. When Caritas collapses, it will need them desperately. In Romania, the most popular scapegoats are first Gypsies and then Hungarians, followed at some distance by Jews. Hungarians and Romanians have lived together in Romania for hundreds of years, usually with a reasonable degree of peace and within living memory too. If left to their own devices, there is no reason to believe that they cannot continue to work out existing problems or others that may arise. There is reason to believe, however, that neither Romanians nor Hungarians are left to their own devices. The Romanian Intelligence Service is quite keen on maintaining an undefined “national spirit,” which it appears to find under threat from foreign influences both sacred and secular. If the Hungarian government is up to a tenth of what the Romanian government seems honestly to believe, then there is a very big problem.

“We don’t have a functioning economy,” a Romanian told me recently, “but we do have history.” The springtime of hopes that began in the euphoria of December 1989 had pretty much faded when the leaves were still in bud. Right now, except for the Caritas millionaires, the mass of the population does not have much else besides history. For this and other reasons, ethnic tensions are kept on the simmer but still below the boil.

# A COUNTRY IN SPAIN

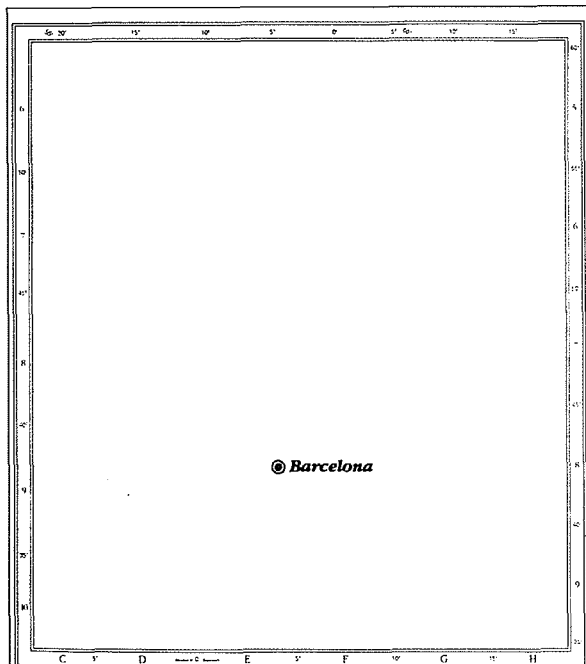
BY DAVID T. GIES

**A**t their outset at least, the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona appeared to be organized by people who had nationalism, not sports, foremost in mind. Consider the curious fact that the three official languages of the games were English, French, and Catalan. Why Catalan and not Spanish? Because Olympic Committee rules allow for the use of English, French, and the language of the country hosting the games. More to the point, the organizers had no doubt that Catalan was the language of their country.

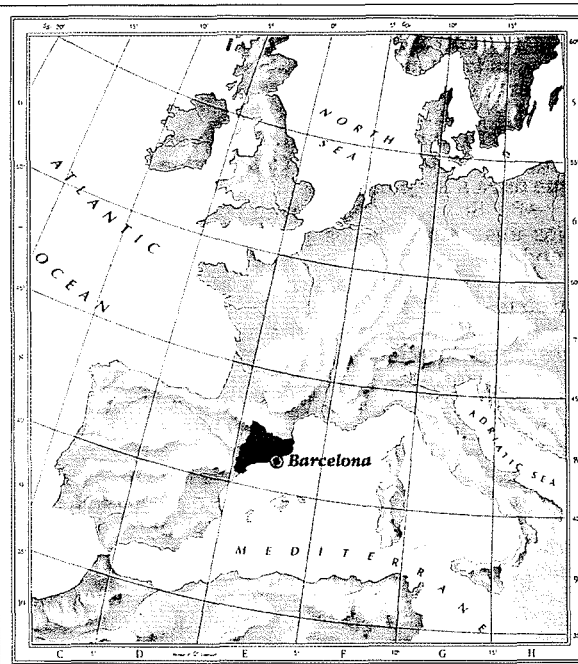
But Catalonia a *country*? Yes, if one be-

lieved an advertisement, designed and paid for by the Generalitat, the governing body of Catalonia, that appeared in several international magazines. This provocative piece of self-promotion located Barcelona in Catalonia, "a country in Spain," the copy read, "with its own culture, language, and identity." In case readers missed the point, the advertisement depicted the "country" of Catalonia in sharply colored relief on an otherwise borderless map of Europe.

The advertisement was only part of a campaign by the Catalan organizers of the Olympic Games to inform the world of their



**IN WHICH COUNTRY WOULD YOU PLACE THIS POINT?**



**IN CATALONIA, OF COURSE.**

This is where Barcelona is, in Catalonia, a country in Spain with its own culture, language and identity.

A country with a population of only six million people, which has experienced a growth which has made it one of the richest of Europe.

A country in which many foreign enterprises - European, North American, Japanese - have invested and are still heavily investing.

A country which has understood and embraced the genius of Picasso, the force of Miró, the imagination of Dalí, the visionary approach of Tàpies, the work of Montaner Caballé and Jaume Plensa, the mastery of Pau Casals, the Gaudí of Gaudí.

A country which is visited every year by 16 million people from all over the world for its climate and its unique natural, sports and cultural facilities.

A country with the know-how to get the

Olympic Games for its capital, Barcelona. Now you know where Barcelona is, in Catalonia, of course.

**GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA**  
AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT OF CATALONIA

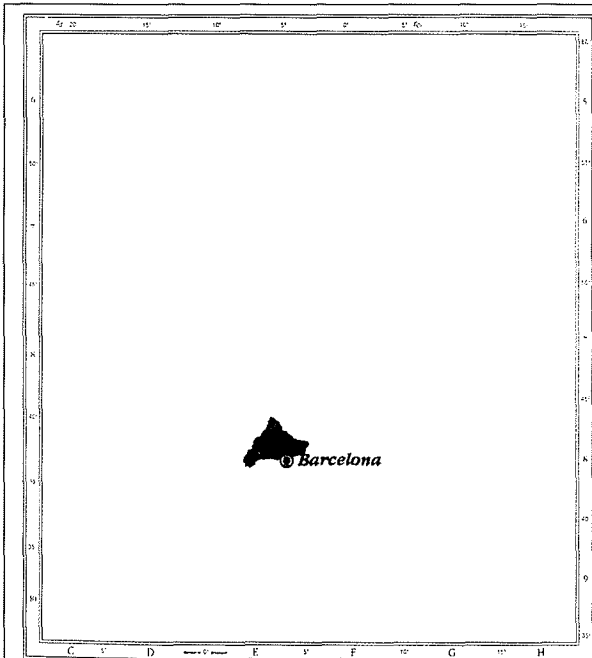
independence from the Spanish state—the very state that had contributed nearly 70 percent of the funding for the games. To be sure, the Spanish language was heard throughout the games, but the Catalan national anthem played before the Spanish anthem as the games got under way each day.

Even the timing of the advertisement was provocative, appearing as it did just two days before King Juan Carlos's scheduled mid-July visit to the Olympic Village. Jordi Pujol, the president of the Generalitat, did little to smooth matters when he proclaimed, "We are a small country, but we are moving forward." And when tourists finally arrived in Barcelona for the games, they were greeted with signs that read, "Catalonia: A Country in Europe."

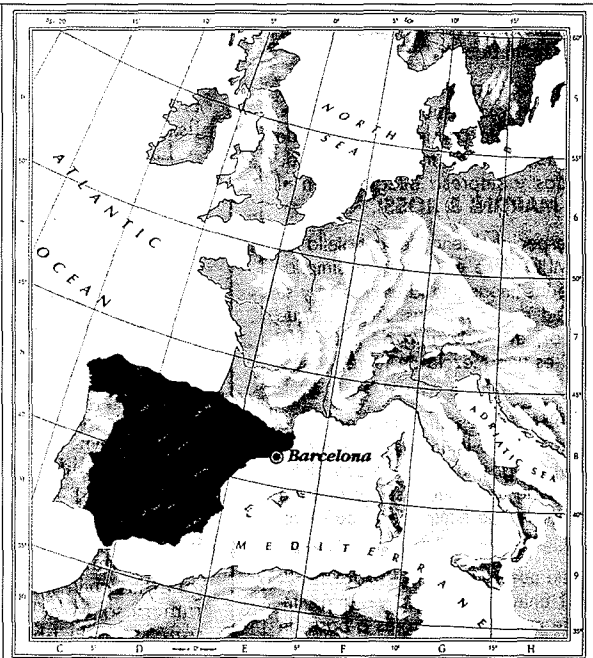
Madrid reacted with official indignation—and a smattering of unofficial humor. *Cambio 16*, Spain's leading newsweekly magazine, published a parody of the Generalitat advertisements by two well-known political

cartoonists. In the first block of the cartoon, the question, "In which country would you place this point," was reproduced as in the original. In the second block, the point, Barcelona, is revealed to be a livid boil on the backside of Spain's president, Felipe González. Less imaginative responses simply wrote the ad off as an imbecilic mistake, a betrayal, the latest idiotic effort by the Generalitat to fan the flames of an old and often bitter controversy.

**A**t the center of the controversy is the autonomous region of Catalonia, which lies in the northeast corner of the Iberian Peninsula. Occupying some 32,000 square kilometers, it is roughly the size of Belgium, and consists of the provinces of Barcelona, Tarragona, Lérida (Lleida in Catalan), and Gerona (Girona). It looks, in writer Ian Gibson's words, somewhat like a fan opening upward toward France, with its base perched southward near



**IN WHICH COUNTRY WOULD YOU PLACE CATALONIA?**



**IN SPAIN, OF COURSE**

This is where Catalonia is, in Spain, one of the oldest nations in Europe, proud of its rich identity based on the several languages and cultures of its peoples.

A country which encompasses in a varied and fascinating culture peoples like the Catalans, Basques and Galicians, each with their own tradition, history and language,

with their own identities which are inextricably linked to Spain.

A country that has made available all its resources so that Catalonia and Barcelona can show themselves to the world as being the best possible venue for the Olympic Games.

A country that has proved itself gene-

rous with Catalonia and Barcelona because their worldwide success is the triumph of all Spaniards.

A country with the know-how to get the Olympic Games for its beloved Catalonia and its capital, Barcelona.

Now you know where Catalonia is. In Spain, of course.

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Valencia. Its six million inhabitants constitute about 16 percent of Spain's population, and many of them carry in their heads a rich and complicated history of their region.

**I**nvasion by the Arabs in A.D. 717 and recovered for Christianity in A.D. 801 with the help of Charlemagne, the area became first the County of Barcelona and eventually an independent kingdom. In the 11th century, an expansionist Barcelona conquered territories south and west of the city. In the 12th century, allied through marriage to the daughter of the King of Aragon, the Count of Barcelona (Ramón Berenguer IV) became the King of Aragon and Catalonia. Further conquests in Valencia, Mallorca, Sardinia, and Sicily strengthened the power of the kingdom and extended the influence of the Catalan language. By the 13th century, the local powers (mostly the aristocratic elite) had created a parliament whose main function was to dictate laws, defend local rights and privileges, and check the powers of the king. This parliament eventually gave way to what is now the local government, called the Generalitat. When the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon fused shortly after the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, in 1469, and later, when their daughter Juana married the son of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, Catalonia came increasingly under the will of the Hapsburg rulers. While the central government, soon to be permanently located in Madrid, outwardly respected the area's local rights, it refused to grant it permission, for example, to trade with the New World. The cession of the French side of the Catalan area in 1659 in the so-called Treaty of the Pyrenees and the loss of central-government support following the War of the Spanish Succession reduced Catalonia to the status of a mere province in the larger nation-state.

That Catalonia today should wish to dis-

tance itself from the central government should come as no surprise to those who know the record of Madrid's past dealings with the region. Felipe V, the first Bourbon king in Spain (reigned 1700-46), was so incensed at Catalonia's support of the Hapsburgs during the War of the Spanish Succession that he organized a campaign against the ancient kingdom that included the elimination of the Generalitat, the suppression of the Catalan language, and the closing of the University of Barcelona in 1714. But this and subsequent attacks over the centuries only stiffened the backbone of Catalonians and fed enthusiasm for separatism. Catalonia has always had individuals eager to rally support for independence, the most articulate of these in the 20th century being E. Prat de la Riba, who published his *La Nacionalitat Catalana* in 1917, re-energizing the debate over regional rights. The fall of the Bourbon monarchy in 1931 and the proclamation of the Second Republic, whose Parliament approved the Statutes of Autonomy for the region in 1932, seemed to bring full autonomy closer to reality.

**B**ut Francisco Franco, for reasons similar to those acted upon by Felipe V (the Catalans sided with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War), squashed those hopes of autonomy in 1939. As Robert Hughes observes in his hugely entertaining *Barcelona*, the civil war had been more than a class struggle. Franco saw clearly that the Catalans were also animated by strong feelings of local nationalism and that these were bound up with the preservation and use of their language. The repression was extreme, if uneven. A Barcelona student in his early thirties recently related to me an incident from the mid-1960s, one that had decisively marked his attitude toward the Francoist state. One day he and his grandfather were having a chat

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on the street in downtown Barcelona. A policeman happened to overhear them and promptly slapped the young man's grandfather with a stiff fine. The crime was "deviant activity"—speaking Catalan, a language that Franco had banished from all public discourse, from the public schools, and from the media for years following the Nationalist victory in the civil war. Everyone was supposed to speak in Christian, that is, in Spanish. Thousands of books were burned, and even the Catalan national dance, the *sardana*, was formally banned (although the fiercely independent Catalans danced it frequently and defiantly in spite of the ban). Inconsistently, by the mid-1960s, Catalan was tolerated in the universities and in private secondary schools. However unevenly applied, though, repression inevitably backfires, and today the reclaiming of Catalan rights and privileges forms the background of a game of political cat-and-mouse played between the politicians in Catalonia and those in Madrid.

The idea that Spain is synonymous with Castile is one that the Franco regime repeated ad nauseam during the first decades of the dictatorship, but it was never as deeply embedded in Iberian history as Francoist historians would have had people believe. In fact, it was developed a mere century ago by a generation of writers struggling to find an identity in a world that was changing more rapidly than they might have wished. The Spanish Empire in America finally crumbled by 1898, and intellectuals began to propagate the belief that the essence of Spain, its soul, was to be found in the dour, self-negating, stoical Castilian farmer. Even philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) thought that Castile had made Spain what it was in his day.

Residents of Catalonia, where nationalist sentiment was on the rise, had a decidedly different view. Their resistance to the idea that Castile somehow meant Spain ran deep, and it encouraged them to turn their eyes away from the center. Many residents of Barcelona considered themselves to be more European than Spanish—and many still do. To them, the

axis of Barcelona's economic and cultural life turns to Paris rather than to Madrid. "Well, Barcelona is Europe," announces one of the characters in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's 1977 novel, *The Manager's Solitude*, and that statement reflects a broad-based popular sentiment. Many of Europe's major philosophical and political movements entered the Iberian Peninsula via Barcelona in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (republicanism, anarchism, federalism, communism). And Catalonians point with pride to their great artists, including Antonio Gaudí, Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and Pau Casals. Of course, such pride can sometimes get the better of a people. With little real justice, many residents of Barcelona claim to be culturally superior to their counterparts in Madrid, whom they view as distant, slightly less sophisticated relatives.

Such feelings are not discouraged by Jordi Pujol, the undisputed leader of Catalan regionalism today. "Regionalism is not something which is anachronistic or romantic or pure folklore," he declared to the press in January 1993. "It is a modern movement and a movement of progress."

Pujol has been the president of the Generalitat since 1980, and his popularity still runs high, even though his political organization, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), has faced competition from other groups championing independence. (*Terra Lliure*, a terrorist group active in the 1970s and '80s, disbanded in 1991, but *Esquerra Republicana*, the *Partit Socialista Catalán*, and the *Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* still push hard for independence.) To underscore Catalonia's semi-autonomous status, Pujol's Generalitat has set up quasi-diplomatic offices in many large cities outside Spain, and Pujol himself often travels in the manner of a head of state, giving lavish dinners to which the Spanish ambassador in the host country is pointedly not invited. When Pujol speaks of the federal government, he more frequently refers to it as the Spanish state rather than as Spain to underscore his convic-



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tion that Spain is merely an administrative structure, a political entity, an invention.

**B**ut finally, these are minor provocations, skirmishes in a war of words, because neither Pujol nor his party really believes in Catalonia's full independence from Spain. *Convergència i Unió* is a minority party that controls only the Generalitat, not the Barcelona mayor's office. In fact, it does not even speak for the majority of Socialist-leaning residents of Catalonia, who vote for Pujol on local matters but for the representatives of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party in national elections. "Catalanism does not necessarily mean separatism," Jordi Solé-Tura, a Catalan law professor who rose to become Spain's minister of culture in 1990, wrote in 1970. Pujol agrees in principle but plays what writer David Rosenthal once called "a perpetual game of chicken with Madrid."

Money and language are the two keys to Catalan politics. Catalonia is the strongest economic region on the Iberian Peninsula. While it occupies just six percent of the landmass, it produces 19 percent of the gross national product and ships 23 percent of Spain's exports. Twenty-three percent of Spanish banking is controlled by Catalan interests, and nearly one-quarter of foreign investments in Spain are made in Catalonia. Pujol himself rose to prominence by founding the *Banca Catalana* in the 1960s and enjoyed enormous success with it until the mid-1980s, when huge losses and suggestions of financial mismanagement forced it into restructuring. The *Banco de Sabadell*, Catalonia's oldest bank (founded in 1891), is one of Spain's more profitable financial institutions, and *La Caixa* savings bank is the second largest in Europe. Per capita income in Catalonia is 20 percent higher than the national average.

Catalans save more than their Spanish counterparts (not a difficult achievement, given that most Spaniards save nothing at all), which gives them a reputation as money-conscious and tight. According to one local joke, wire was invented by two Catalans pulling on

a penny. Despite such frugality, per capita consumption is higher in Catalonia than in any other region of Spain. Some people contend, not entirely unjustifiably, that the industrial area around Barcelona, which produces 25 percent of the peninsula's total industrial employment (in textiles, electronics, plastics, automotive products, and chemicals), has more in common with Germany's Ruhr Valley than it does with any other part of Spain.

Spain's loose federal arrangement, established in the post-Franco Constitution of 1978, gives Catalonia and other autonomous regions significant latitude in making laws and spending funds for culture, infrastructure, and government services. The central government collects all tax monies and redistributes them based not on who gave and how much, but according to other formulas that are more geographic than economic and more in keeping with the philosophy of the main national party, the Socialists. The result is that Catalonians feel that they receive less than their fair share and that their region subsidizes poorer areas (particularly Andalusia). Pujol's harping on this issue creates tension not only between his Generalitat and the central government of Felipe González but between the Generalitat and the mayor's office of Barcelona, which is held by a member of the Catalan Socialist Party, Pasqual Margall.

**L**anguage is at least as much an issue as the wallet, for Catalan, unlike Basque, has a long and distinguished literary history completely separate from Castilian language and literature. In fact, nothing was more irritating to Catalans than the Francoists' insistence that Catalan was a mere dialect of Castilian. The first book printed on the Iberian Peninsula, *Tirant lo Blanc*, a chivalric romance by Joanot Martorell, was published in Catalan in Valencia in 1490, but well before that great thinkers and writers from Catalonia had expressed themselves eloquently in their native language. In the early 13th century, the kings of Catalonia were ordering the production of

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chronicles in Catalan. Ramon Llull (1235–1316), known as Doctor Illuminat throughout the medieval world, used Catalan brilliantly in his encyclopedic works of science, philosophy, religion, and literature. His *Blanquerna* has been called one of the first modern European novels. Other writers, including the pre-Renaissance humanist Bernat Metge (1343–1413), and the poets Anselm Turmeda (1352–1430), Jordi de Sant Jordi (1400–24), and Ausiàs March (1397–1459) created a tradition of contemplative lyric in the Catalan language which, however, seemed to fall into disfavor as Castilian language and politics grew to dominate the Iberian Peninsula. All were fully conscious of themselves as Catalans, not Spaniards.

Not until the mid-19th century, during what has become known as the *Renaixença* of Catalan letters, did the use of Catalan as a means of literary expression come back into favor. Bonaventura Carles Aribau (1798–1862) initiated a new wave of nationalist sentiment with his tendentious but stirring poem “Oda a la Pàtria” (1859), “To the Fatherland,” and poet and essayist Jacint Verdaguer i Santaló (1845–1902) led the rebirth of Catalan literature, behind which pulsed the recognition of Catalonia as a separate state. Other poets, philologists, dramatists, and novelists followed the lead of Verdaguer i Santaló and created an important flowering of Catalan letters that has lasted to this day. Among the most widely read Catalan authors today are J. V. Foix (1893–1987), Joan Salvat-Papasseit (1894–1924), Tomàs Garcés (1902– ), Mercè Rodoreda (1909–83), and Salvador Espriu (1913–85).

However, while Catalonia dominates the publishing industry in both Spanish and Catalan, only 5,806 of the 51,000 titles edited on the peninsula last year were published in Catalan. Still, it must be recognized that many of the peninsula’s best-selling novelists (such as Eduardo Mendoza, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Juan Goytisolo, Juan Marsé, and Esther Tusquets), although born and raised in Catalonia, write in Spanish rather than in Catalan because the former was the language of their

education and also because Spanish is where the market is. (Some 600 million people speak Spanish throughout the world; six million speak Catalan.)

**T**he language issue still provokes heated debate. Although the Law of Linguistic Normalization of 1983 stipulates that Catalan is the dominant language of instruction in the region, it also provides for Spanish to be used in the classroom. In the autumn of 1993, however, the department of education of the Generalitat decreed that Catalan would be used exclusively in all public schools for children ages three through eight. This touched off howls of protest from a small group of parents who insisted on their right to have their children educated in Spanish. The parents’ association adopted the unfortunate tactic of comparing Pujol’s “repression” of Spanish to Franco’s attempted extermination of Catalan. This comparison in turn roused *El País* to denounce the ultra-Right for ignoring the more than 10 years of civil peace and social consensus built up in the country.

The Generalitat’s move underscores the reality that Catalan has not yet reached equal status in Spain. The recently published *Dictionary of Spanish and Spanish-American Literature* (1993) never mentions Catalan language or literature, and last summer’s opening of Madrid’s first Catalan bookshop and cultural center—called *Blanquerna*, after Llull’s novel—was cause for widespread comment in the Spanish-language newspapers. The bookshop bills itself as a bridge of dialogue between the two cultures, underscoring just how different they are considered to be both by proponents of Castilian and by defenders of Catalan. (Anyone interested in seeing how these differences play out in fiction should read Juan Marsé’s riotous recent novel, *El amante bilingüe*.) In attendance at the ribbon-cutting ceremony was a who’s who of the cultural and political elite, including Pujol himself, Pere Gimferrer (who began his career in poetry writing in Spanish, but who now writes exclusively in

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Catalan), the mayor of Madrid, the Catalan cultural attaché, a representative of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, and the president of the Spanish Royal Academy, who proclaimed that Blaquerna would "help us get to know Catalan cultural reality better."

Just why this creative tension between the center and the periphery seems to be working in contemporary Spain is difficult to establish. While Pujol's views on Catalonia as a separate "country" are immensely popular in his region, they are, when all is said and done, mere chin music. He does not want real independence for Catalonia. Nor does he attempt to maneuver the political structure toward that goal. In fact, he has recently agreed to collaborate informally with Felipe González's minority government in Madrid, guaranteeing not only stability in the central government but also the continuation of the Socialist lock on power. (González and the Socialists have ruled Spain since 1982.) Because of his long and intelligent leadership—no Spanish politician has ever served in elective office longer than Pujol—Catalonia has settled into a relaxed stand-off with the federal government.

It has been able to do so because many of its immediate objectives—the teaching of Catalan language and history in the schools, the use of the language in print, on TV, and in official government business (the Generalitat drafts its documents and makes requests in Catalan, and the central government answers in Spanish)—were achieved without the armed conflicts that have marked dealings between Madrid and some extreme separatist movements within Spain, notably that of the Basques. Observers credit this levelheadedness to what the Catalans call *seny*, that is, a sense of balance, perspective, and common wisdom which they claim has always ruled their lives. For all intents and purposes, cen-

trists and separatists alike have bought into the ideal of consensus and cooperation that was outlined by the king in his very first post-Franco speech in 1975 and subsequently written into law by the Constitution of 1978.

Juan Tomás de Salas, editor of *Cambio 16*, probably reflected the entire country's mood when he noted that at the Olympic Games "Catalan and Castilian fused together harmoniously as a symbol of the fact that both peoples have lived together for over 500 years. The great mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Margall, symbolized better than anyone the Catalan who is as Spanish as he is Catalan, or who is Spanish precisely because he is Catalan." He challenged his country's new generation to ensure that such harmony continue and that Spain not fragment itself into what he called a "bicephalic, cuatriligual Mediterranean and Atlantic" state.

Spain seems to have learned how to balance the obligations of a modern nation-state with the requirements of regional rights. The federal system of autonomous regions is working nicely in post-Franco, post-Constitution Spain, although each year brings new tensions to test the resolve of frequently disparate interest groups. But now at least those tensions can be expressed in Catalan as well as in Spanish. Amusingly, the Olympic Games as conceived by Pujol—that is, as a glorification of Catalan autonomy—became a worldwide celebration of Spain, with Spain winning an unexpected number of gold medals. By the time the closing ceremony was broadcast to millions of viewers around the world, more Spanish flags were in evidence than Catalan flags, and the real hero turned out to be none other than King Juan Carlos, king not of that country, Catalonia, but of all of Spain.

# A LEGACY OF EMPIRE

BY G. M. TAMÁS

An idea very much afoot in Europe today—one that arouses political passions everywhere from Abkhazia to Scotland—is the notion of cultural and territorial autonomy. The idea is, in fact, a compromise between the old principle of state sovereignty and the new one of a separate ethnocultural identity of linguistic or racial groups. It was born in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire around the turn of this century, when people preoccupied with the decline of the supranational state (especially socialists) tried to save it by taking account of the emerging ethnic identities. These new and fractious identities were arrayed against the old baroque monarchy, whose legitimacy was upheld by the divine right of kings and by a notion of sovereignty heavily influenced by natural law: both theological convictions that seemed increasingly outmoded in an age of secularism and nationalism.

The wish to preserve a supranational state with no identifiable ethnic or class character, and at the same time the inclination to placate the awakening ethnic and regional consciousness, resulted in the idea of *autonomy*, an idea inherited by the post-Hapsburg successor states and, through the influence of socialist thought, by other European areas as well. But

this solution, while it worked in certain parts of Europe for a time, today proves to be a troubling inheritance. Not only is it ill-suited to nation-states (to those that have existed for centuries as well as to those that have emerged in the postcommunist era); it is a threat to their integrity and stability.

The great Viennese novelist Robert Musil once noted that there was only one nation in Austria-Hungary, the Austrian nation, and it had no ethnic identity whatsoever. As an ethnic group, Austrians called themselves Germans and longed, when in a nationalistic mood, for the merger of Little Austria with Greater Germany: *Anschluss*. Nationalist movements are always filled with love for the mother country, but German-Austrian nationalism was filled as much with hatred for it. Still, the king-emperor Franz Josef I called himself *ein deutscher Fürst*, a German prince, because for a long time he hoped to restore the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation finished off by Napoleon half a century earlier.

Musil, to my mind the greatest authority on the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, writes in his masterpiece, *The Man Without Qualities*, that the Joint Empire was supported by a strange alliance, a motley crowd of



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Galician-Polish aristocrats, Bohemian-German landowners, the German-speaking bourgeoisie in the east (and only in the east), the officer corps, the Catholic Church, the Jews, and socialists.

**T**hese elements had a vested interest in the continuance of universalistic imperial power because they were, or felt themselves to be, surrounded by hostile aliens. Equal subjecthood obscured the fact that Galician peasants spoke Ukrainian, that the Bohemian indentured laborers spoke Czech, that the German-speaking gentile burghers hated the Jews, that the simple fellows who served as privates in the imperial army had difficulty understanding German commands, that the Protestant churches sided with destructive nationalist sedition, and that the workers' movement was fractured by ethnic tensions.

The socialists of Eastern and Central Europe were the first to realize that their emancipatory utopia had a potent rival in ethnic nationalism. Fin-de-siècle socialists—the only heirs to the Enlightenment apart from the imperial court and the upper echelons of the imperial bureaucracy—understood that if they wanted citizenship *à la française* to succeed imperial-universalistic subjecthood, they had to deal somehow with the emerging consciousness of ethnicity.

Ethnic nationalists in countries that were ruled by a foreign aristocracy and dynasty and a rationalist-universalist central bureaucracy set two goals for themselves: a restoration of ethnic or national identity, and the creation of an independent state led by a home-bred elite. Citizenship was to be defined not only by impersonal law and abstract obedience to the sovereign but also by cultural tradition, language, and racial stock. "Our kind" was to be predominant within the state, and it was to

give the state a specific cultural and racial hue. This emphasis on ethnic attributes was as alien to socialists as it had been to officials of the Joint Empire.

Socialists in Austria-Hungary and in the Russian Empire tried to identify the different demands of ethnic nationalists. They stipulated the right of each and every ethnic and regional group to preserve its language, cultural tradition, historical identity, and racial pride. *Cultural autonomy*, the brainchild of the great Austrian socialist thinker Otto Bauer, was intended to provide every ethnocultural group within a given polity the right to decide everything pertaining to its identity (education, the arts, the cult of national past) while remaining loyal to the supranational state as subjects or citizens, taxpayers, and soldiers. Laws were to be uniform everywhere within the future federal republic (or, failing that, in a federal monarchy), but taught and learned in various idioms. The struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat was and remained a universal goal, but it was to be synchronized with the liberation of the subject nations from the dictates of cultural oppression, from the forced imposition of alien ethnocultural identities masquerading as abstract discourses of justice, science, religion, and philosophy.

Thus, in the view of the Austro-Marxists, liberation and emancipation meant also the emergence of hitherto concealed cultures. These in turn would contribute, by means of an open dialogue made possible by a noncoercive society, to the new and variegated texture of the mental life of the New Man. Political obligation, civic duty, and the like need not extend, held the Austro-Marxists, to conformity with a culturally alien discourse.

Both the imperial and the socialist solutions to the problem of ethnicity stem from the late-Enlightenment teaching on citizenship.

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According to this teaching, citizenship is determined by an equality of rights, by sovereignty residing in the people, and by a symmetrical relationship to the state. Both the universalistic monarchy and universalistic socialism fought the separateness of the estates and all forms of aristocratic, parochial, or regional privilege, which they viewed as potential excuses for resistance to benevolent central rule. By divorcing ethnicity from citizenship, Austrian socialists hoped, ethnic nationalism would be removed from the sphere of politics and nationality kept separate from citizenship. The body politic of the future was to be a loose federation of "nations"—i.e. ethnocultural groups. (And without the socialist vision, one should note, contemporary East European ethnic nationalism would never have become so apolitical, so oddly noncivic and anti-authoritarian, as it is now.)

Although World War I blew the Austro-Hungarian Empire to pieces, the legacy of the universalistic empire, along with the later Austro-Marxist emendations, was inherited by the Soviet Union. It is easy to forget that what appears today as a fossil of a societal and cultural monster was originally mapped out as a utopia designed to liberate mankind. The Soviet Union accomplished what had been thought to be the utopia of Hapsburg socialism. It created a uniform political order and a symmetric relationship of all subjects to central power, and it successfully separated ethnicity and politics. In all Soviet republics, autonomous territories, and other localities, one could everywhere find the same political discourse, the same system of symbols, the same activist, mobilizing, futuristic ideology—translated into hundreds of languages. Ethnic, even tribal, folklore was celebrated by myriads of choirs and dance troupes; naive odes to the Supreme Helmsman and Little Father of All His Peoples were sung in hundreds of languages; an official popular literature ("ethnic in form, socialist in content") was executed, under orders from above, by Artists of the People. In each federal or autonomous republic, ethnocultural uniformity was im-

posed—for a long while, even ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan had to learn Kazakh. Ethnic tradition was considered to be the outer garment of socialist man, as indeed it was. The Communist Party fostered the creation of local elites, composed, for the first time in many cases, of people drawn from a region's ethnic majority. The party thus provided a way of preferment and advancement to people who, under the tsars, had been considered rebellious and disloyal serfs. And precisely because the road to ethnocultural self-assertion led through the Communist Party and its auxiliaries, many ethnic demands being voiced today in the old communist bloc hearken back—albeit unconsciously—to the Stalinist system of privileges granted to ethnic elites. This fact alone poses a serious obstacle to those who are trying to promote the universalism of modern liberal citizenship in the states of the former communist bloc.

**W**hat we are witnessing today in Eastern and Central Europe is a repoliticization of ethnicity based on criteria that were instituted by the Soviet system. After all, if possession of a distinct language, folkloric tradition, and shared sense of identity is sufficient reason for cultural and territorial autonomy, then why not for independence? When the heady wine of socialist utopia evaporated from the poisoned chalice of Soviet "federalism," what was to hold the tribes together? When the belief in the divine right of kings vanished under the impact of the bitter experience of trench warfare in 1914–18, the old continental empires were shattered beyond all realistic hope of repair. (Hapsburg or Romanov nostalgia is a toy for the intelligentsia only.) When—to quote the idiotic formula of Soviet "social realism"—the "socialist content" (communist-futurist utopia) disappeared from the "ethnic form," the guardians of this "ethnic form," the political, ideological, cultural ruling strata of the federal and autonomous republics, people such as Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Georgia and the war criminal

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Radovan Karadzic from Serb Bosnia (both poets, typically) wanted to fill that “form” with national content, that is, national independence, ethnic or racial purity, and a politics inspired by the great ethnic narrative culled from ancestral folk epics. It is interesting to note, however, that the new ethnic states claim to deny their ethnic-autonomist origins and to embrace an assimilationist view of citizenship. But the claim is a charade. The new ethnic statelets, born from older Soviet-style autonomous regions, are all trying to annihilate everything alien within their borders, exactly as the successor states of the Hapsburg Empire did with their minorities after World War I.

The legacy of the former empires, cultural autonomy combined with territorial autonomy, can also be found in countries that were not part of the communist bloc. In Spain, for example, the regionalist-autonomist movements, such as those of the Catalonians and Basques, are movements of the Left that were reinvigorated by the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent ferocious persecution by Franco. All, moreover, are indirect legatees of Hapsburg socialism.

Throughout Europe, we find yet another aspect of the emerging ethnic national politics, and it too is of socialist origin. I am speaking here of the regionalist movements, such as the Scottish Nationalist Party in Great Britain and the Northern League in Italy, that have been encouraged directly or indirectly by the European Community. The “federal” bureaucracy in Brussels and Strasbourg tries, quite naturally, to weaken the authority of national decision-making bodies, especially national parliaments and supreme courts, and it has found a precious ally in the form of regionalist movements. The Scottish Nationalist Party and the Northern (formerly Lombard) League both pretend that their scission from Great Britain or the Italian Republic will pose no problems and may even pass unnoticed within a united Europe. Other ethnic and religious minorities pin similar hopes on the improbable unifica-

tion of Europe. Even the European states themselves have postponed the granting of cultural rights to their minorities on the grounds that a future unified Europe will make “all this” of no importance.

The European Community is the creation of a special brand of French socialism, not that of the streets or of the factories but that lesser-known variety that reigns supreme in the hushed corridors of the Council of State or the old Ministry of Planning, a kind that is taught at the *École Nationale d'Administration* and in every *grande école* in Paris to Gaullists and leftists alike. It is basically the old Bourbon-Bonaparte idea of politics as administration, *gestion*. The administrator, or *gérant*, of public affairs is a member of the ruling, truly aristocratic *crème* of high bureaucracy, a worshiper of Reason, state intervention, and planning—thus a figure reminiscent of the old, Spanish-Austrian civil servant of the Hapsburgs, who typically received his education at the feet of learned monks.

The elevated, elusive, and secretive world of progressivist French civil servants retains the old imperial belief in the shape of the state as a fortuitous product of expediency and historical accident. The advantages of a larger market and the possibility of rational governance unencumbered by querulous parliaments are of such importance to their subtle minds that they will, when necessary, make concessions to the irrational rump of obsolete, ancient statehood. With similar condescension, they will also deign to protect national culture and tradition for the delectation of connoisseurs and the feigned admiration of domesticated philistines. Socialist utopians always wanted us to believe that, in a free society, government will be administration, since the question of the good life and of a good polity will be settled by a philosophy that understands human needs and can mold society accordingly. The EC version of socialist centralization and planning regards the plurality of cultures and ethnicities precisely as if

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they were part of what Hegel called “the wrong infinite.” There is no necessity, hence no dignity, to cultural expression. The benign *gérant* of human affairs will provide funds for the upkeep of the ethnographic zoo, knowing full well that cultural diversity, as an expression of ethnicity, has nothing to do with serious politics, just as tradition has nothing to do with serious economic and social science.

Socialism, by its very nature, is incapable of delimiting or defining the body politic (for socialist liberation is deliverance *from* politics, and the end of all politics). So any peculiarity, anything specific expressed by one or another technique of human imagination, will be seen as contingent. At least while socialism still had a utopia, that belief presupposed a link between the community and something outside it (the Grand Project). The imperial faith linked the community to the divinely anointed monarch. But the contemporary state of affairs—which I shall call, for want of a better term, postsocialist socialism—affirms only the abstract, empty identity bordered by difference, difference bordered by identities, a human condition shown to be nothing but contingency contiguous to other contingencies. Politics and polities based upon such identities can multiply indefinitely and infinitely—and will, until a new idea of the state is found or discovered.

To recapitulate, then: The principle of cultural and territorial autonomy—a limited self-government in some areas of public life without pretensions to statehood, independence, or full sovereignty—was invented for the sake of reforming the crumbling supranational empires before and during World War I. The principle was implemented by means of revolutionary socialism in the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav federation and for quite a long

time worked surprisingly well. But the abandonment of the supranational socialist state after the democratic upheavals of 1989 left only the possibility of the creation of new nation-states.

**T**he odds that these new nations will successfully reform themselves along the lines of the older nation-states of Western Europe are not great. The reason is almost paradoxical. For while the old nation-states were much more closely tied to ethnicity, folk traditions, racial pride, and other tribal affiliations than either the Hapsburg Empire or the Soviet Union was, they were also committed to a liberal politics of rights, equality, tolerance, and universalism. This commitment to liberal ideals, while far from perfect and often little more than a cover for domination by the majority culture, did at least provide a limit to raw tribalism and a check against centrifugal tendencies. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, in the lands of the former empires, the absence of such powerful, countervailing ideals has allowed, or at least encouraged, the disintegration of nation-states along strictly ethnocultural lines. The fatal combination of the contradictory principles of nation-states and of ethnocultural autonomy are quickly destroying the state as such. Combined in Eastern and Central Europe with a generalized contempt for institutions of any kind, a profound distrust of the law, and the collapse of all spiritual and secular authority—and inspired by a well-founded suspicion of the intentions of ethnic majorities and nationalist governments—ethnocultural autonomy, which seemed to have a conservative aspect in its commitment to tradition and custom, is today the mightiest weapon of nihilism.



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## CURRENT BOOKS

### Consuming Visions

**LAND OF DESIRE:** Merchants, Money, and the Rise of a New American Culture. *By William Leach. Pantheon. 510 pp. \$30*

The American critique of consumer culture is embedded in an honorable but narrow tradition. From Thorstein Veblen to John Kenneth Galbraith, Vance Packard to Christopher Lasch, critics have assailed the captains of commerce for fostering an obsession with material goods and distracting the populace from public duty. Although they articulated the critique in various secular idioms, all of these observers had inherited Protestant commitments to plain speech, plain living, and the independence of the individual self. They were haunted by the vision of the future evoked in Dostoevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor": a docile mass society, preoccupied by reckless extravagance and sedated by packaged fun.

A little more than a decade ago, that critical tradition began to go out of style, among both popular and scholarly audiences. In the summer of 1979, cultural pessimism peaked. Soon after summoning Lasch to Camp David, Jimmy Carter denounced wasteful consumption habits and called for ecologically grounded sacrifice. Not much more than a year later, Carter was out of office, his warnings drowned out by Ronald Reagan's strategies of systematic denial. America was back, and weekly news magazines spoke of a "return to elegance"—which mostly meant stretch limousines and suspenders for stockbrokers. In academic circles, scholars re-examined the older critique of consumer culture and found it wanting. Some discovered the emancipatory potential in acts of consumption and the creative energies in commercial pageantry.

This was more than a shift in intellectual fashion. There were serious conceptual questions raised by social scientists such as Mary Douglas and Michael Schudson. The scolding Veblenesque attack on materialism over-

looked the nearly universal human tendency to make meaning from material objects. Goods have always served symbolic as well as utilitarian purposes, and advertisers' efforts to associate silverware with status or cars with sex were a recent and well-organized example of a widespread cultural practice. As Theodor Adorno once observed, Veblen's celebrated assault on "conspicuous consumption" in social, domestic, and religious life was really an "attack on culture," so much of which depended on apparently frivolous display.

Along with this antimaterialist bias, the existing critical tradition revealed other limitations as well—a distrust of fantasy and play, a productivist ethic that implicitly devalued leisure and aesthetic experience, a failure to catch the affinity between consumer desires and ancient religious longings. The consumer's dream world, Adorno wrote, bears some resemblance to the "land flowing with milk and honey." Only if we acknowledged that resemblance could we begin to understand how the promise of modern advertising could exert such broad appeal. During the 1980s, revisionist scholars took up the challenge, avowing the utopian dimensions of consumer culture even as they sought to maintain a critical perspective on it.

On one point, though, nearly everyone agreed: Consumer culture emerged during the half-century between the Civil War and America's entry into World War I. Only a few historians of the colonial period claimed to have traced its origins to an earlier time. For most scholars and critics, the period 1865–1917 marked the watershed between Victorianism and modernity; the rise of national corporations selling brand-name goods and the transformation of department stores into palaces of consumption coincided with a "revolution in manners and morals" that overturned the ethic of fixed character and replaced it with a new emphasis on fluid personality. Rooted in these changes, a "hedonistic"

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consumer culture flowered in baseball parks, movie theaters, and dance halls—all sites of the new urban-based mass amusements. Victorian discipline dissolved. Some lamented its passing, others were jubilant.

Among the more influential of the celebrants was the historian William Leach, who insisted that consumer culture might well have been a liberation—especially for women—from the pinched, patriarchal world of rural republican virtue, and that the secular utopian faith was not entirely false. Leach was fascinated by the *joie de vivre* of the lavish department-store spectacles staged during the early 20th century, and entranced by the imaginative new uses of color, glass, and light in store design. Like the old confessor envisioning the amusement park lights in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Absolution," Leach became convinced that things had gone "a-glimmerin' " in the metropolitan commercial landscape of the early 20th century. And like the boy in the story, Leach came to believe that "there was something ineffably gorgeous that had nothing to do

with God." Leach appeared poised to make a major case for the emancipatory potential of consumer culture, based primarily on the carnivalesque qualities of the urban retail scene.

**N**ow, Leach's *Land of Desire* has appeared. It is the fruit of a decade's worth of digging in archives, libraries, and private collections, of interviewing retired department-store buyers such as Dorothy Shaver (who became president of Lord & Taylor) and public relations counselors such as Edward Bernays (who staged media events

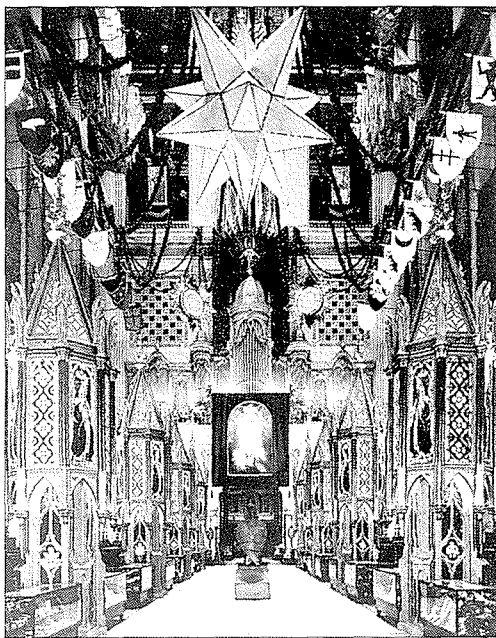
to dramatize the appeal of transparent velvet, featuring assorted models in alluring poses). The book is a remarkable achievement, an extraordinary synthesis of business and cultural history that casts new light on broad areas of American commercial life. Leach documents an efflorescence of theatricality and exoticism, especially during the years before America's entry into World War I. He describes spectacles designed to promote retail commerce, ranging from John Wanamaker's lush *tableau vivante* from *The Garden of Allah*, a steamy sentimental novel of 1904, to the opening of the

Coconut Grove nightclub in 1917. All the spectacular displays, all the color and light and glass, are here in abundance.

But they are accompanied by a detailed account of the "circuits of power" that lay behind and energized the spectacle—the network of moneyed men who set up the credit apparatus for entrepreneurs as well as consumers, who financed the expansion of retail chains, who fixed things with the

relevant government officials. Having uncovered this nest of investment bankers, real-estate brokers, and politicians, Leach is unable to sustain his enthusiasm for the emancipatory potential of consumer culture. On the contrary, he asserts that "the culture of consumer capitalism may have been among the most nonconsensual public cultures ever created," because it was produced by elites rather than the population as a whole, and because "it raised to the fore only one vision of the good life and pushed out all others."

That vision pervaded religion, literature,



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and the arts as well as commercial life. It combined a commitment to ceaseless acquisition with a smiley-face view of human fate. It was no accident that L. Frank Baum was the author of both *The Art of Shop-Window Display* and *The Wizard of Oz*, Leach claims; the latter book embodied the sanitized religion of mind-cure and positive thinking that seemed to suit consumer culture. *Oz*, as Baum saw it, was “a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out.” The same could be said for the world of pure wish that department-store magnates fashioned to entice adults as well as children. In the 1890s as in the 1980s, a strategy of cheery and systematic denial obscured the destructive underside of ever-expanding consumption—the sweated labor that produced the elegant lace, the neighborhoods cleared to create new “business opportunities.”

Leach has abandoned any sympathy for consumer culture and returned to the critical tradition he once rejected. What he does from within that framework is often most impressive, as when he writes that the consumer capitalist “conception of the desiring self” requires rejection of the most desirable capacities of human beings: “their ability to commit themselves, to establish binding relationships, to sink permanent roots, to maintain continuity with previous generations, to remember, to make ethical judgments, to seek pleasure in work, to remain steadfast in behalf of principle and loyal to community or country (to the degree that community or country strives to be just and fair), to seek spiritual transcendence beyond the self, and to fight a cause through to the end.” This is a moral critique that, however familiar, remains necessary and eloquent.

Nevertheless, Leach’s framework could have been more capacious, both historically and conceptually. The main historical problem is that Leach clings to a dualistic scheme, juxtaposing 19th-century producer culture with 20th-century consumer culture, assuming that the latter marked a fundamental departure

from the former. Thus he scants the carnivalesque elements in 19th-century commerce—the exoticism and theatricality, the protuberant flesh and gaping orifices, just as he neglects the puritanical elements in 20th-century management—the preoccupation with personal efficiency, with systematic control of one’s self and environment. Tensions between release and control persisted throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, but the idioms used to orchestrate harmony shifted from moral to managerial. The fundamental process, though, remained the same. One might call it the containment of carnival.

European carnival tradition celebrated the temporary upending of social authority amid an overflow of sausages, wine, sex, and aggression. By the 1600s the carnival was merging with the market fair, a congregation of peddlers, acrobats, musicians, and traveling scoundrels; in such a setting, hierarchies were not so much overturned as dissolved amid the centrifugal movements of the throng. Although in market fairs as well as carnivals the dissolution was temporary, both venues may have provided a *frisson*, a sense of fluid selfhood and awakened possibilities for personal transformation. Exotic goods—jewelry, silks, spices, fragrances, and elixirs—might seem to possess an almost magically regenerative power, to promise a transfiguration of everyday identity. As market exchange spilled over boundaries of time and place, the magic of goods was unmoored from traditional animistic frameworks and set afloat amid a society of mobile, shape-shifting selves.

In the United States, these developments took place later and faster than in Europe. The point men of capitalist modernization were the itinerant peddlers who swarmed across the countryside throughout the 19th century, selling exotic finery as well as utilitarian items, bringing the carnivalesque promise of magical self-transformation in a bit of silk, a pair of earrings, or a regenerative patent medicine. But in the United States, as in Europe, established elites sensed the need to stabilize the

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sorcery of the marketplace, to control the centrifugal movements of commercial culture. Institutional remedies such as peddler licensing laws, the growth of credit reporting, and the enforcement of contractual obligations were supplemented by a morality of self-control and plain dealing; all of these measures were designed to counteract chaotic economic expansion and a flourishing subculture of sensuality—to contain the carnival of American commerce.

By 1900, new structures of containment had appeared. The reorganization of the economy under the dominance of major corporations brought bureaucratic rationality to commercial institutions; a new managerial culture recast the morality of self-control in a secular, pragmatic idiom. Rather than plod along a path of disciplined, steady work, ambitious young managers were urged to cultivate a more demanding regime of personal efficiency. The “chief end of man,” psychologist G. Stanley Hall announced in 1920, “is to keep ourselves, body and soul, always at the very tip-top of condition.” The emerging performance ethic evoked metaphors of electricity: the “live wire” provided the “vital spark” that kept the “whole system” humming. Such language captured the managerial emphasis on dynamic energy subordinated to a smoothly functioning, ever-growing corporate economy.

Yet economic growth could not be secured by managerial controls alone. As Simon Nelson Patten (whom Leach discusses) and other economists began to understand, the avoidance of periodic crises induced by overproduction required the maintenance of a mass-consumer market. Somehow even lumbering oligopolies had to sustain the aura of variety and unpredictability that had attracted people to the marketplace since the great 16th-century fairs of Leipzig and London.

The carnival atmosphere had to be evoked, but also sanitized and controlled. In national advertising the sanitizing pattern became clear by the 1920s. Not only were male

and female ideal body types remade on slimmer, more youthful, and more uniformly Anglo-Saxon models, but exotic settings faded in favor of the bland and the familiar—the soda fountain and the suburban neighborhood. Yet to preserve some semblance of vitality, advertisements had to seek out and incorporate vestiges of spontaneity and excitement in the popular arts. One example of this strategy was the use of comic-strip formats in the 1930s. The comics had been a boisterous product of urban commercial culture, bursting with burlesque humor and barely suppressed rage, sometimes rising to a vernacular surrealist art form—as in Winsor McCay’s “Little Nemo.” Advertisers appropriated comic forms and shackled them to leaden, didactic, and ultimately self-parodic narratives about lonely girls triumphing over b.o. and soiled underwear to win the hearts of their hypercritical husbands-to-be. This was the dominant pattern in managerial advertising—the containment of carnivalesque fantasy with literalist realism.

Yet the carnival was still in town, in the retail shopping districts. Leach demonstrates this with abundant descriptions of Orientalist fantasies enacted in restaurant murals and Turkish harems set up in shop windows. It was as if all the exoticism of 19th-century commercial culture, having been largely excluded from the official iconography of corporate capitalism (national advertising), had survived and flourished in retail stores, restaurants, and movie theaters. Perhaps this was partly because the managerial culture was overwhelmingly WASP, and the retail trade more heavily Jewish. Whatever the reason, the distinction underscores some of the fault lines between economic elites, and suggests that consumer culture was hardly monolithic.

Yet even on the retail side, the impulse toward rationalization was at work. As Leach perceptively observes, during the 1920s John Powers’ modeling agency (and others like it) promoted a “standardized conception of female beauty” and “freed . . . modeling from its



association with loose, off-color theatrical living . . . by connecting it with 'naturalness,' and 'the all-American way.' " This was the sort of shift that was also occurring in national advertising. An even clearer illustration was the transformation of Macy's Thanksgiving parade, which began as one of the "ragamuffin parades" that were "probably rooted in European traditions of carnival," Leach observes. Macy's replaced this undisciplined gathering of the people out of doors with a clean, well-managed spectacle of technological display—gargantuan, helium-filled Katzenjammer Kids, Santa Clauses arriving by airplane and zeppelin: a foreshadowing of the theme park fun of the late 20th century.

The fundamental pattern of 20th-century consumer culture, at least at the level of national advertisers and big-ticket retailers, has been the effort to conjure up the promise of unpredictability, excitement, and magic—while at the same time subordinating that promise to a broader agenda of control. Indeed, as Simon Patten realized, the successful maintenance of equilibrium in the "economy of abundance" required a balance between routinized work and consumption-dominated leisure. Far from undermining commitments

to work, Patten believed, the glittering world of goods would be the carrot that kept the worker showing up every day, seeking more money to buy more things. It was as if Patten foresaw the implicit bargain that would be struck between labor and management during the late 1930s, the bargain that formed the basis for the triumph of American consumer culture during the midcentury decades: steady work and a family wage in exchange for restricted union

demands and labor discipline.

Now business has abandoned that bargain and fled overseas in search of cheaper labor. The institutional base of consumer culture, a well-paid working population, has begun to crumble.

For the first time in decades, we have the opportunity to think about alternatives. The productivist tradition needs to be opened up and rendered more flexible. We need to realize that the problem with consumer culture is not materialism, but antimaterialism: a tendency, through the promotion of planned obsolescence and stylistic novelty, to disconnect human beings from sustained, sensuous connection with the natural or manmade world. And we need to revive an anthropological perspective on the cultural meanings of goods, a recognition that material artifacts can acquire symbolic, even sacramental meaning—not merely as status markers but as bonds between past and present, memory and desire.

*—Jackson Lears, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is a professor of history at Rutgers University. His book on advertising and culture will be published next fall by Basic Books.*

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## Paranoia Unbound

### DEEP POLITICS AND THE DEATH OF JFK.

By Peter Dale Scott. Univ. of Calif. Press. 413 pp. \$25

**CASE CLOSED:** Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK. By Gerald Posner. Random House. 607 pp. \$25

**WHO SHOT JFK?:** A Guide to the Major Conspiracy Theories. By Bob Callahan. Fireside. 159 pp. \$12

It is instructive to contrast the mythology surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy with the public and scholarly attitudes toward Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor—the other “flashbulb” event that seared America's collective memory. Like the assassination of Kennedy, the surprise attack was the subject of an executive branch investigation followed by congressional hearings. As with the assassination, explanations based on conspiracy have dogged the official story about Pearl Harbor. (The latest accusation surfaced only three years ago.)

But distortions of the record and questionable logic have always helped relegate Pearl Harbor conspiracy theories to the political fringes; the official story remains intact. The phenomena surrounding the JFK assassination could not present a starker contrast. Here the passage of time has only heightened public disbelief in the official account of the assassination, commonly known as the Warren Report. After the Warren Commission published its findings in September 1964, a Gallup poll indicated that 56 percent of Americans believed the report's main finding: that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, was President Kennedy's assassin. Today, however, approximately 90 percent of the public believes there was some kind of conspiracy to kill JFK.

This figure includes some who toil in the halls of academe. Among the plethora of new offerings on the 30th anniversary of the assassination is *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, by Peter Dale Scott, an English professor at the University of California at Berkeley. In one sense, there is nothing remarkable about this work. Indeed, its outstanding characteristics put it squarely in the tradition of most books about the assassination. *Deep Politics* is an unreadable compendium of “may haves” and “might haves,” non sequiturs, and McCarthy-style innuendo, with enough documentation to satisfy any paranoid. The assassination, Scott writes (in typically opaque prose), was “the product of ongoing relationships and processes within the deep American political process.” What is this deep process? A virtual political Disneyland: the CIA, drug dealers, Somoza, Fred Hampton, COINTELPRO, Oliver North. And that's just from two pages.

The manuscript apparently went unpublished for years, and one is mightily tempted to say that it should have remained so. Astoundingly, though, the book won the majority approval of the 20 professors, including four historians, who served on the University of California's editorial committee in 1991–92.

To understand the JFK phenomenon, it



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helps to revisit the classic lecture "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," delivered at Oxford 30 years ago by Columbia University historian Richard Hofstadter (and published in a book of essays by the same title in 1965). The most prominent qualities of the paranoid style, according to Hofstadter, are "heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy." Propagators don't see conspiracies or plots here and there in history; they regard "a 'vast' or 'gigantic' conspiracy as *the motive force* in historical events." To be sure, as Hofstadter noted, the paranoid style isn't unique to America. Witness Germany under Hitler or the Soviet Union under Stalin, where it actually came to power. But it is an old and recurring mode of expression in American public life, as evinced by the anti-Masonic movement in the 1820s, the anti-Catholicism of the 1850s, Populists' claims about an international banking conspiracy in the 1900s, and Senator Joe McCarthy's "immense conspiracy" of the 1950s. Purveyors often feel threatened by sweeping change, whether it be waves of new immigrants or a revolution in the economic order. At other times, they articulate an acute sense of dispossession, such as that felt by the far Right from the 1930s into the early 1950s.

Although the Kennedy conspiracy choir has some voices on the Right, the great preponderance of books (450 since 1963) and articles (tens of thousands) have been written from the liberal/left perspective. Factual disputes have much less to do with this than one might think. "Catastrophe . . . is most likely to elicit the syndrome of paranoid rhetoric," Hofstadter wrote. And putting aside venal reasons, clearly the liberal/left outpouring is related to its sense of political dispossession since 1963. (Democrats were out of power for 20 of the next 30 years.) Indeed, every wrong in America is considered traceable to the presidency that was aborted and the future that died on November 22, 1963.

Still, what is markedly different about this phenomenon from previous manifestations of paranoia is that the distrust is so deep and pervasive. Glancing through *Who Shot JFK?*

one can find a conspiracy theory for practically every contingency and political belief: The Mafia did it; Robert Kennedy did; Jackie was upset because her husband had extramarital affairs, so she did it. The KGB, Cubans (both anti- and pro-Castro), the CIA and/or FBI, right-wing Texas oilmen, tsarist Russians, rocket scientist Wernher von Braun—and on the zany list goes. The "friendly fire" theory holds that a Secret Service agent riding in the limousine behind JFK fired the fatal shots, by accident. And apparently the latest trend among conspiracy theorists is to bash one another for believing in the wrong conspiracy.

Commentators usually ascribe the public's paranoia to the disturbing events that followed Kennedy's murder: Vietnam, other assassinations, Watergate, exposure of FBI and CIA abuses in the 1970s, and finally the Iran-contra scandal, all of which undermined Americans' trust in their elected government. But a more complicated argument can be made. The assassination and its aftermath have never been firmly integrated into their place and time, largely because of Cold War exigencies. Consequently, Americans have neither fully understood nor come to grips with the past.

But the assassination is very much a part of the Cold War, an unintended consequence of U.S. policies. And once bolted down, it ceases to be unfathomable and becomes another defining post-World War II event, as much as Vietnam or the Cuban missile crisis.

In a letter to the *New York Times* last year, William Manchester, author of *Death of a President*, identified the key source of the public's incomprehension:

To employ what may seem an odd metaphor, there is an esthetic principle here. If you put six million dead Jews on one side of a scale and on the other side put the Nazi regime—the greatest gang of criminals ever to seize control of a modern state—you have a rough balance: greatest crime, greatest criminals.

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But if you put the murdered president of the United States on one side of a scale and that wretched waif Oswald on the other side, it doesn't balance. You want to add something weightier to Oswald. It would invest the president's death with meaning, endowing him with martyrdom. He would have died for *something*.

A conspiracy would, of course, do the job nicely.

Actually, though, Oswald carries more weight than Americans have dared admit to themselves. As the Warren Report showed and Gerald Posner, a former Wall Street lawyer, reiterates in *Case Closed*, Oswald was a highly politicized Marxist sociopath. Disappointed with Soviet-style communism, he returned to the United States in June 1962 and began to see Cuba as the purest embodiment of communist ideology, the only truly revolutionary state: In New Orleans, he started his own "Fair Play for Cuba" chapter and walked the streets with a "Viva Fidel" placard.

Oswald, who fervently read left-wing periodicals and monitored Radio Havana, was acutely aware of the depth and nature of U.S. hostility toward Cuba. In all likelihood, he believed the worst rumors of U.S. attempts to overthrow—even assassinate—Castro, information that was later kept from the Warren Commission. After leaving New Orleans, Oswald tried to obtain a visa to Cuba to enlist in the country's defense. But the Cuban embassy failed to see him as a "friend of Cuba," and he returned to Dallas, embittered.

**A** month later, Kennedy came to town. The opportunity to subject Kennedy to the same dangers plaguing Castro presented itself. As Posner writes, Oswald, who had failed at almost everything he tried, "was suddenly faced with the possibility of having a much greater impact on history." Jack Ruby was equally emotional, violent, and opportunistic, though not political.

Because of the Cold War, the CIA and FBI did not inform the Warren Commission about

the covert operations to remove Castro. Such information, the agencies reasoned, would not contradict the central conclusion and therefore could be, and was, kept secret. Consequently, the Warren Report depicted Oswald as acting upon inchoate feelings (compounded by marital troubles) but without acute political motives.

Twelve years later, however, Senator Frank Church's select committee on intelligence revealed the extent of anti-Castro plotting and the fact that the CIA and FBI had lied by omission to another arm of government. This shattered whatever trust remained in the official story and ripped the lid off a Pandora's box of conspiracy theories. A slightly amended version of the official story should have become the new dogma by the late 1970s: The Kennedys' fixation with Castro had inadvertently motivated a political sociopath. Instead, the disturbing truths were again obfuscated by Cold War exigencies, and by Kennedy partisans, who tried to disavow JFK and RFK's knowledge of the plots.

**T**he 30th anniversary of the assassination, especially since it coincided with the end of the Cold War, should have been marked by attempts to integrate the assassination into history. Of all the offerings, Posner's *Case Closed* would seem the most suitable. But though Posner exhaustively debunks every canard proposed to date about the assassination, he largely ignores the contextual history of Oswald's act and provides little more insight than the Warren Commission did as to why Kennedy became Oswald's target. In addition, Posner's stamina fails him when he writes about events after 1964, and the aftermath is almost as important in understanding the assassination now as the act itself. (In his new biography, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, Richard Reeves doesn't shrink from depicting Kennedy as a Cold Warrior, intent on overthrowing Castro. Yet he fails to draw any connections to the assassination; indeed, Oswald is not even mentioned in the book.)



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So long as it lacks historical coherence, the official story will probably never be believed, and Americans will continue to ask questions based on cunningly manufactured falsehoods. To be sure, every nation is sustained by its own myths, which occasionally collide with reality. But when myths are as divorced from reality as these are, they become dangerous. Americans are encouraged to feel nostalgia for a past that never was, wax dreamily about

what might have been, or indulge in elaborate paranoid fantasies about their own government. Such states of mind hardly conduce to a rational consideration of America's role in a new world.

—Max Holland, a contributing editor of the WQ and a former Wilson Center Fellow, is writing a biography of John McCloy, a member of the Warren Commission.

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## OTHER TITLES

### *History*

**A HISTORY OF GOD:** The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. By Karen Armstrong. Knopf. 460 pp. \$27.50

Armstrong's sweeping history of the idea of God is something of a hybrid. Parts of it read like philosophy and theology; parts might best be described as the history of human psychology. The book as a whole reflects the experiences of its author, who, she tells us, spent seven disappointing years as a Roman Catholic nun, lost her faith, left the order, and turned to the study of the history of religion. Today, she teaches at a rabbinical institute and is affiliated with the Association of Muslim Social Scientists.

Armstrong organizes her sprawling material

around the simple notion that seeking God, or seeking an overarching meaning to the universe under whatever name, is just one of those things that human beings do. As many times as the monotheistic idea disappoints them or fails to accord with events, humans come back with yet another variation to bring their God into conformity with what they've learned. This process has given rise to an endless oscillation between conceptions such as the serenely impersonal God of Aristotle—unmoved mover at the top of the hierarchy of forms, existing in the state of divine and unregarding *apatheia* toward the Creation—and the personalized deity in such forms as Jesus.

Much of this is familiar, though it becomes less so once Armstrong traces the same patterns into the rationalist and mystic movements that followed the emergence of Islam. "Just as there are



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only a given number of themes in love poetry," she argues, "so too people have kept saying the same things about God over and over again."

The image is of a constant systole and diastole of belief: The monotheistic vision, while exercising what appears to be an irresistible draw on the imaginations of people born with a certain "spiritual talent," is just abstract enough to be exceedingly difficult to maintain. Slippage recurs in several directions: toward idolatry, the reduction of God or God's will to some person or small part of the ideal; toward the anthropomorphism that finally makes it difficult to see the divinity as a Being of a radically different order of existence from oneself; or, the opposite danger, toward the Platonic idealism that becomes so remote that people cease to apply human standards of decency or logic to what's seen as God-inspired. As for the future, Armstrong suggests, "The anthropomorphic idea of God as Lawgiver and Ruler is not adequate to the temper of postmodernity."

Though the tone veers occasionally, as here, toward the peremptory, the author surely is entitled to a few wobbles in the course of writing 400 pages on the (by definition) inexpressible. The compendium hangs together because of her unflinching warmth of appreciation for the human phenomena she records: the steady pull toward the "particularly difficult virtue" of compassion and the continual "shock of human surprise and wonder" that anything should exist at all.

**THE AGE OF FEDERALISM:** The Early American Republic, 1788–1800. By Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick. Oxford Univ. Press. 925 pp. \$39.95

In the annals of political catastrophe, it is hard to top the story of the Federalists. From the commanding heights of American politics after the ratification of the Constitution in 1788, the Federalists plunged to nearly complete oblivion 12 years later with the election of the Republicans' Thomas Jefferson to the presidency.

The Federalists' collapse undoubtedly owed much to their uncanny knack for the political boner. Even before the brilliant and irascible John Adams succeeded George Washington as president in 1797, the Federalists—never for-

mally constituted as a party—fell to brawling among themselves. By 1800 the nation's two leading Federalists were openly at odds, with Adams disdaining the very idea of party and Alexander Hamilton violently slandering Adams for "vanity without bounds," among other real and imagined defects. But Elkins and McKittrick, historians at Smith College and Columbia University, respectively, argue that deeper historical forces were undermining the Federalist cause. Seeking to extend into the post-Revolutionary era the historical interpretation of the American "mentality" begun by Bernard Bailyn in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967) and lately enlarged by Gordon Wood's *Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992), they argue that changing "modes of thought and feeling" in America during these years rendered the Federalist idea unworkable.

That idea was a similar but more partisan version of the Founding Fathers' vision of a society ruled by men of "enlightened views and virtuous sentiments." It was a vision that could accommodate neither the rise of new wealth and the political interests it generated nor the arrival and integration of immigrants, especially the Irish. It left no room for the rise of political parties. It was a vision, in short, that was spectacularly unsuited to democratic politics, and especially to the clash of interests and parties in the commercial republic then aborning. (James Madison, the chief author and defender of the Constitution, thus shifted to the Republican camp.)

As the authors show, the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798, one of the Federalists' most dramatic blunders, amounted to little more than a desperate attempt to stamp out the practice of politics. Under these laws, the Federalists in 1799 had John Fries and other rather meek German tax protesters in Pennsylvania dragged from their homes in the middle of the night and tried on charges of treason before what was virtually a kangaroo court. Fries was saved from the gallows the next year only by John Adams's pardon, which the president granted over the angry protests of his own cabinet. But the Federalists lost the once-solid support of the Germans and with it the entire state of Pennsylvania. So it went for the Federalists in case after case—in seeking an active federal government and a standing army,

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and in opposing the French Revolution, they proved to be hopelessly out of step with the times.

Unfortunately, this argument about the decline of the Federalists is really one of two books struggling to emerge from the roughly three and a half pounds of smallish print here. The other is a conventional survey of the period, and both books suffer from their cohabitation between the same covers. Oddly, something that would have greatly enhanced both, an extended discussion of the economic and demographic forces that reshaped the country during the Federalist years, is missing. A delightful chapter-long digression on the siting and construction of the new national capital, which itself contains digressions on matters such as the Egyptian hieroglyph for "city," is typical of the book's charms. Read as a kind of Federalist era omnibus, it succeeds.

**AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURES.** *By Richard Ellis. Oxford Univ. Press. 251 pp. \$45*

Whatever else may be said about it, revisionism is scholarship's one dependable growth industry. Ellis, a history-minded political scientist, here offers a new critique of Louis Hartz's decades-old "consensus theory." According to that much-attacked theory, political and social disagreements in America occur within the dominant and largely unchallenged framework of liberal capitalism.

Ellis urges historians to cast aside Hartz and consider the more capacious model of anthropologist Mary Douglas. While consensus scholars deem competitive individualism the defining aspect of the American social and political experience, Douglas finds it to be one of five "competing cultural biases." The other four are hierarchical collectivism, egalitarianism, fatalism, and "hermitude." (That's three more "isms" and one more "tude," for those keeping score.)

Ellis finds challenges to competitive individualism everywhere: in Puritan New England, with its strong group orientation and orthodox community rules that limited individual autonomy; in the socialist utopian communities of the mid-19th century; in Jane Addams's Hull House, which, as Addams said, provided "little islands of affection in the vast sea of impersonal forces."

Louis Hartz believed that the absence of feudal-

ism in America meant that it never developed hierarchical political and social cultures. But Ellis finds a great deal of hierarchy in American social life: among Virginia's Anglican gentry, among 19th-century New England Federalists, in the civil-service reform movement of the late 19th century, and, of course, in the system of slavery.

Armed with new data and theories on race and class, scholars have been attacking the consensus theory with some success since the 1960s. Ellis brings a new historical/anthropological dimension to this campaign. Unfortunately, the framework he proposes is somewhat strained. He occasionally ignores the complexity of historical figures and movements, and seems perplexed when they don't fit neatly into his pigeonholes. "Paine's credo was 'question authority' and Madison's was 'check authority,'" he writes, citing Madison's success at limiting executive authority in the Constitution. But look harder: Madison's original draft, known as the Virginia Plan, provided for a truly powerful national executive and a congress that could veto state legislation.

What Ellis inadvertently shows is that there *has* always been a consensus: a consensus of contradictory attitudes. Americans—the People of Paradox, as Michael Kammen put it 20 years ago—have agreed to disagree. Of course, *how* the country has been able to live with antithetical beliefs without ripping apart at the seams remains the unanswered question.

### *Arts & Letters*

**THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY: The Marriage of Diana and Lionel Trilling.** *By Diana Trilling. Harcourt Brace. 442 pp. \$24.95*

Long before his death in 1975, Lionel Trilling—University Professor at Columbia and perhaps the most distinguished literary critic in America—was a distant figure. It was widely believed that he had refined himself out of existence. If Morningside Heights were England, one ex-student griped, he would have been known as "Professor Sir Lionel Trilling." When he spoke of human consciousness, he characteristically dropped the definite article and addressed himself directly to "mind," as if it were a downstairs neighbor.

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Lionel Trilling did not want to be remembered this way, Diana Trilling claims, and, thanks to her memoir, he won't be any longer. The Lionel Trilling who appears here is a sympathetic, troubled, and complex man who was prone to bouts of depression and harbored a secret contempt for "seriousness and responsibility." Like her husband, Diana herself hid "private timidities" beneath a confident and magisterial public persona.

In this intimate, plainspoken memoir, Diana unflinchingly records the Trillings' illnesses and phobias, as well as their faithful drinking habits (they were "never wholly sober" in each other's company before their marriage), chronic indebtedness (which lasted until 1970), and interminable adventures in psychoanalysis (three of her seven analysts died while they were treating her). The book has much wit, and little mirth. "For more than a decade," she writes, "Lionel and I squandered life not in pleasure but in fearfulness."

Considering their low opinion of happiness, it appears their marriage was quite happy. Diana lent her husband confidence and improved his writing. Yet even as Lionel encouraged her to develop an independent public voice, she never doubted that her "first responsibility" was to the home. It was an unequal partnership, but a partnership all the same.

As a female writer starting out in the 1940s, Diana overcame many obstacles, not the least of them a Radcliffe education designed to teach diligent wives how to recite "favorite poems of Shelley or Keats" while "drying our dishes." When she began to contribute book reviews to *The Nation*, Lionel's friends insisted she write under her maiden name so as not to embarrass him in public. She refused, and her writing career quickly acquired a momentum of its own. Her first reviews skewered the "little man" heroes of left-wing novelists and challenged their faulty assumption that "capitalism was responsible for all the woes of mankind, from stuttering to sexual impotence." When Lionel Trilling wrote of the "dark and bloody crossroads" where literature and politics meet, he may have had his wife's work in mind. Prone to sudden panics and fears, though, she pursued a life of diffidence and caution: "I could more readily challenge Sidney Hook in political debate than defend my place in line at a supermarket."

Diana Trilling concludes her memoir in 1950, the year her husband established his reputation with the publication of *The Liberal Imagination*. In the preface to that book, he wrote that the "job of criticism" is to "recall liberalism to its essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty." These words were Trilling's touchstones, his credo, and he did not choose them hastily.

Some of the exquisitely crafted ambivalences of *The Liberal Imagination* were experienced, his wife's memoir shows, as messy and intractable contradictions. The man who always said, "It's more complicated . . ." was quite complicated himself. Among other things, Diana Trilling's book will forever silence those critics who charge that her husband led a life of airy abstraction. She herself is proof to the contrary.

**MARK MORRIS.** *By Joan Acocella. Farrar, Straus. 287 pp. \$27.50*

By the early 1980s American modern dance had strayed far from its originators' intentions. Isadora Duncan's turn-of-the-century Grecian improvisations and Martha Graham's midcentury expressionistic dramas had given way during the '60s and '70s to conceptualist choreographers' theater pieces: concerts staged on spiral staircases; musicless pieces in which the dancers spoke; whole evenings in which "real" people—nondancers—stooped, sat, and ran. Although modern dance had always puzzled the uninitiated, it had become too self-absorbed to notice that the audience was losing interest.

But dance watchers stirred in 1984, when a 27-year-old choreographer named Mark Morris presented three new works at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Morris was not "in-your-face," not even avant-garde; he eschewed the use of theatrical tricks to create visual interest. As dance critic Joan Acocella writes in her new biography, "His work is not a Happening. . . . There is no effort to break down the fourth wall." Morris's goal, instead, is to communicate feeling, logic, and emotion through dance steps. As he puts it, "My philosophy of dance? I make it up, and you watch it. End of philosophy."

Now 36 and still actively choreographing—

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indeed, perhaps just entering his artistic prime—Morris may seem not quite ready for the confining entombment of a biography. Yet given that Acocella credits Morris with rescuing American modern dance from minimalist torpor, an exploration of his methods may not be premature.

An exceptionally talented dancer himself—though tall and beefy, he achieves a simultaneous playfulness and seriousness, massiveness and grace—Morris soon became frustrated with the artifice of ballet (“[I] got tired of pretending to be a straight guy in love with a ballerina”) and the shortsightedness of modern dance. In 1980 he formed his own company and set to creating dances that unabashedly hearken back to the work of modern dance’s founders: the naturalism of Duncan, the exoticism of Ruth St. Denis, the lonely inner landscapes of Graham, the exaltation of Doris Humphrey, the heroism of José Limón.

Yet Morris’s choreography is distinguished from his predecessors’ by three traits that are strongly associated with ballet and usually considered anathema to modern. First, he is not afraid to make dances that tell stories. His inspirations range from pop novelist Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* to the essays of Roland Barthes. Second, Morris understands music as well as he understands dance. Although he favors baroque choral music, his tastes range from Vivaldi to the Violent Femmes. Third, Morris favors “classical” structure over ostensible (or real) randomness. He’s a sucker for symmetry and doesn’t worry, like the generation of choreographers before him, about coordinating his dance steps note by note with the music.

The source of Morris’s appeal—itself subject to wide debate in the dance world—lies in his synthesis of existing steps, and in his accessibility, whether that accessibility is provided by a tragic story line, a witty costume, or a gesture that means what it looks like.

Unfortunately, *Mark Morris* as book is less accessible than Mark Morris as choreographer. Sometimes simplistically descriptive, at others the book presumes the reader’s familiarity with ballet terminology. Still, the choreographer emerges as feverishly creative, exuberantly ambitious, and disarmingly vulnerable. It’s too soon to tell if Mark Morris is the savior of American modern dance, but Acocella’s biography offers an early glimpse of what may be a resuscitation in progress.

**WILLIAM FAULKNER AND SOUTHERN HISTORY.** By Joel Williamson. Oxford Univ. Press. 509 pp. \$35

“History,” says the young Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce’s epic *Ulysses*, “is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.” One can also imagine William Faulkner uttering such a lament about his troubled cultural and historical heritage. Unlike Dedalus, Faulkner was neither an escapist—he rarely left his native Mississippi—nor an idealist. Indeed, Faulkner’s love for and loyalty to the American South, the region he wrote about so obsessively, was tempered by a strong sense of its failings: its ignorance, poverty, and racism. Faulkner’s literature, writes Williamson, was “an exhaustive critique of Southern Society and . . . its failure to bring the human values inherent in man, evident in the natural setting, into the world.”

In his new biography, Williamson, a professor of history at the University of North Carolina, examines four generations of Faulkner’s predecessors in Mississippi—William himself does not appear until page 141—and through these lives constructs a detailed historical image of “the world which constructed William Faulkner . . . the universe of race, class, sex and violence, of family, clan and community.” Inquiring into whether Faulkner’s great-grandfather, Colonel William C. Falkner, maintained a “shadow family” (an unacknowledged marriage to and children with a female slave), Williamson provides an enlivening historical explanation of miscegenation in the South, a central theme in Faulkner’s literature.

Although Joseph Blotner’s two-volume, 2,000-page biography of Faulkner, published in 1974 and revised in 1984, remains the most comprehensive biographical source available, Williamson’s tenacious sleuthing yields an occasional nugget of fresh information for the serious Faulkner scholar. He debunks many commonly held myths about Colonel Falkner: for instance, that he was a great slaveholding planter and that his wife Lizzie saved his life when she was only nine years old. Yet Williamson indulges in a bit of mythmaking himself. One theory regarding grandfather Charlie Butler’s abrupt departure—that he ran off with an “octaroon” (someone one-

eighth black) and sired “perhaps three or four children who would have been William Faulkner’s cousins”—is so speculative that it is written under the qualifying section title “Maybe.”

Moreover, in his determination to find Faulkner’s one and only literary inspiration in the culture of the American South, Williamson does not leave open the possibility that Faulkner was greatly influenced by other sources, notably his artistic contemporaries—Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Joyce. And Williamson’s interpretation of Faulkner’s literary texts often passes from the banal to the trite, with insights such as “buildings stood for artificial, man-made institutions and the ‘outdoors’ for the natural order.”

Nevertheless, the book is a valuable demonstration of what the cultural historian can contribute to literary interpretation. While William Faulkner never read books about Southern history, he once noted that “he was just saturated with it.” So too was his art.

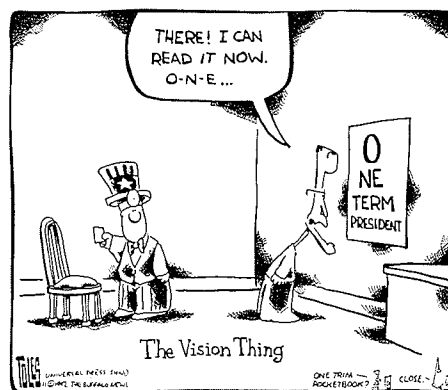
### Contemporary Affairs

**WHITE HOUSE DAZE:** The Unmaking of Domestic Policy in the Bush Years. By Charles Kolb. Free Press. 387 pp. \$22.95

**HELL OF A RIDE:** Backstage at the White House Follies 1989–1993. By John Podhoretz. Simon & Schuster. 249 pp. \$21

As George Bush’s presidency recedes into political history, two young Reaganites who served under Bush have stepped forward to offer their spin on the rise and fall of an administration. Both books have a great deal in common: Each scolds Bush for not being more like Reagan, each praises the same heroes and fingers the same villains, and each falls under the category of political memoir that Peggy Noonan has called “If Only They’d Listened to Me, the Fools!”

In *White House Daze*, Charles Kolb, formerly a domestic policy adviser, engagingly describes a White House gripped by inactivity and arrogance. Since Bush himself never bothered to define a “vision thing” for domestic policy, his senior underlings emphasized process over ideology. Believing in little beyond themselves, they



fought hard for nothing of importance. “The agenda was a nonagenda,” writes Kolb.

Kolb lodges the standard Republican complaint against Bush: He wrecked his presidency because he broke his promise. The “no new taxes” pledge was just campaign rhetoric. Bush might have recovered from this blunder after the Persian Gulf War by launching an attack on domestic problems with innovative proposals such as school choice and tort reform. But he decided to coast along on saved-up political capital. The enormous egos of Chief of Staff John Sununu and Budget Director Richard Darman only made matters worse, Kolb claims. Both men unflinchingly blocked creative reform efforts.

The Bush administration’s paralysis is on full display in Kolb’s best chapter, which focuses on a single day, December 12, 1990. On that day, the administration had to confront three small crises: the poorly handled firing of Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos, former “drug czar” William Bennett’s surprise refusal to assume command of the Republican National Committee, and education official Michael Williams’s decision to ban funding for colleges and universities that administered or accepted race-based scholarships. To be sure, any administration would have had its hands full that Wednesday morning. But to a White House with no inner compass, the day’s frenetic activity achieved an almost comic quality as the nation’s leaders aimlessly mucked about with no sense of what they wanted to accomplish. As Kolb shows in great detail, almost every day was December 12.

John Podhoretz’s *Hell of a Ride* offers much the same diagnosis. But while Kolb pays close attention to actual policy, Podhoretz, who worked in

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the drug czar's office for about half a year, focuses more on White House "culture": the social chasm separating the West Wing from the Old Executive Office Building, the catty in-fighting over press leaks, an obsession with perks verging on parody. A series of "Freeze Frames" between chapters offers brief glimpses into the lives of unnamed staffers. Narrated in the second person, they provide readers with a vicarious tour of the Bush administration. Podhoretz can turn a good phrase, but his metaphors need pruning—career government officials "attach themselves and their careers to the public trough with glue as strong as barnacles"—and he sometimes comes off as too clever by half.

Both books convey a strong sense of betrayal as they describe the Bush administration seducing, frustrating, and finally abandoning its many young and ideology-driven staffers. To them, Bush's failure—not as a Republican, but as Reagan's heir—was a personal affront.

**THE FATE OF HONG KONG:** The Coming of 1997 and What Lies Beyond. *By Gerald Segal.* St. Martin's. 234 pp. \$21.95

What exactly will happen at midnight on June 30, 1997, when the six million people living in the British colony of Hong Kong are handed over to the People's Republic of China? Journalists and businesspeople frequently envision nightmare scenarios. According to one, Hong Kong, accustomed to running itself as a near-perfect market economy, declares its *de facto* independence; the Chinese Communist rulers then forceably put down the "rebellion" and in the process reduce the island to an economic backwater. Even now, the flight of worried emigrants from Hong Kong—who by 1997 may number one million—is putting a damper on the economy.

Segal, editor of the *Pacific Review*, believes that such fears are exaggerated. What may happen, he argues, is in fact happening already. Determined that China avoid the Soviet Union's fate, Deng Xiaoping has put economic growth first and allowed China's regions to develop their own trade with other countries. For the past decade, China's southern Guangdong province has formed a trading alliance with Hong Kong,

the latter acting as the external engine for an unprecedented prosperity in a mainland Chinese region. This economic interdependence, Segal argues, will also reduce the risk of Beijing's intervention. Moreover, further successes in the Guangdong-Hong Kong region will accelerate the economic decentralization of the country, making it easier for the outside world to deal with China.

Such large-scale forecasts, Segal admits, are risky. At present growth rates, China could well be the world's largest economy after the year 2010. Then there's the fact of China's history: Healthy economic regionalism is quite different from a disunited China in chaos, for which there are precedents. But while Hong Kong's economy will surely suffer in the transfer, at this point the potential for overall benefit seems greater than that for overall disaster.

**IN EUROPE'S NAME:** Germany and the Divided Continent. *By Timothy Garton Ash.* Random House. 680 pp. \$27.50

Timothy Garton Ash is among the more distinguished contemporary journalists specializing in Central European affairs. He has written vivid accounts of the Solidarity movement in Poland and the 1989 revolutions in Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, and Berlin. Now he turns his attention to a question that is as big as any in the modern world: How will a reunited Germany exercise its power in the future? To find possible answers, Garton Ash painstakingly reconstructs the history of West Germany's foreign policy from the 1950s to the late 1980s, particularly its strategy of *Ostpolitik*.

The brainchild of Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, Willy Brandt, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Ostpolitik* was West Germany's strategy for dealing with its neighbors to the east, and was consistently implemented right up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Its central aim was "normalization": establishing full diplomatic and other relations with the communist countries. Most important, it sought to "stabilize" East Germany both by recognizing its legitimacy and by providing hard currency when its economy faltered. The ultimate goal was reunification.

Reunification was surely achieved, but, as Garton Ash shows, the path to this end was

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“radically different from that intended or expected. It was hedged with ironies and paved with unconscious as well as conscious paradoxes.” The greatest irony is that *Ostpolitik* achieved its goal inadvertently: By propping up East Germany with recognition and financial support, West Germany allowed the communist regime to skate along without ever attempting the political and economic reforms that other Soviet satellites had to institute. This made East Germany a particularly hollow state, and helps explain why the regime collapsed so completely when it was challenged.

To be sure, West German policy was “very patient, consistent, predictable . . . waiting for the big chance.” But when its “consistency hardened into rigidity,” it ended up putting West Germany’s interests—“order”—above the interests and ideals of Europe, most notably freedom. Moreover, it failed to take note of the broader changes occurring in the communist world. Nevertheless, *Ostpolitik* did succeed in removing an unattractive image of Germany, and, in conjunction with the aggressive public diplomacy of the United States, did contribute to “the necessary mixture of incentive and deterrent, punishment and reward” that helped tear down the Iron Curtain throughout Eastern Europe.

Today, Germany is still “in the condition of becoming.” Unlike most powers in history, as historian Fritz Stern has said, Germany is being given a second chance. But its dilemma is essentially the same as it was when the German state’s first chance arose a century ago. Being of that “critical size,” which Chancellor Kiesinger described in 1967 as “too big to play no role in the balance of forces, too small to keep the forces around it in balance by itself,” Germany has to decide what kind of power it will be. Will it play the traditional great-power role or forge a new role based on the conscious habit of not exerting its power to the full?

Garton Ash is not overly optimistic that Germany will use its renewed power—both military and economic—wisely. The style of *Ostpolitik* will probably prevail, which could lead to a cynical exploitation of the ideal of a united Europe for largely German interests. Moreover, the distinctive characteristics of East German culture have to be considered: “It [is] possible that tol-

erance, pluralism, democracy and the virtues of ever closer cooperation [will] spread from west to east.” But it is just as possible that “intolerance, tribalism and the forces of disintegration [will] spread from east to west.” The re-emergence—however marginal—of a very old-fashioned febrile nationalism at street level in Germany can only reinforce the sober view that Garton Ash takes of the likely future.

### *Science & Technology*

**AT THE HAND OF MAN:** Peril and Hope for Africa’s Wildlife. By Raymond Bonner. Knopf. 322 pp. \$24

**THE LAST PANDA.** By George B. Schaller. Univ. of Chicago. 291 pp. \$24.95

Kenyan president Daniel arap Moi’s 1989 decision to torch \$3 million worth of confiscated elephant ivory was not greeted with universal acclaim by conservationists. Many felt the stunt would serve only to blunt criticism of Kenya’s inconsistent enforcement of poaching laws, not to curb such slaughter in the future. Proceeds from the ill-gotten ivory might better be used to fund prevention programs, or even to help feed Kenya’s people.

The incident underscores many of the difficulties surrounding contemporary conservation efforts. Individuals and organizations devoted to saving endangered species often reside in Western countries far removed from the areas where such animals live. They have difficulty appreciating the indigenous perspective on conservation, and often fail to anticipate the potential consequences of their proposals.

Not surprisingly, the leaders of many African nations, carrying bitter memories of the colonial period, resent foreign intrusion into their affairs. Many nations, beset by civil strife and economic woes, also lack the resources or even the desire to preserve endangered animals. A curious dilemma exists concerning large-animal herds. While government officials recognize that the animals attract tourist dollars, maintaining large preserves inhibits efforts to convert land to agricultural use. And should an elephant wander out of a park and trample a farmer’s crops, it is hard to convince the farmer not to kill it, espe-



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cially since its meat can provide food and its ivory can be sold on the black market.

Bonner admires Zimbabwe's solution to the dilemma. There, tourist dollars generated by interest in wildlife "correlate as closely as possible with where the wildlife is." This provides local people with an incentive to protect animals; elsewhere, such funds go into national treasuries, from which they rarely filter down to the rural populations.



George Schaller, a noted naturalist, finds similar circumstances threatening the giant panda. The panda exists in the wild only in remote sections of China, but the combined pressures of poaching (a panda pelt fetches more than \$10,000 on the black market, while a live bear can bring more than 10 times that amount) and diminished habitat have reduced its numbers to fewer than 1,000.

In recent years, political and economic realities have all but ended panda research, and while provisional plans exist to set aside preserves, no real action has occurred. The declining numbers of wild pandas has forced Beijing to abandon the practice of sealing diplomatic relations with gifts of breeding pairs. (Hence the arrival in 1972 of Ling-Ling, since deceased, and Hsing-Hsing to Washington's National Zoo.) They have in fact come up with an alternative practice that Schaller finds more disturbing: lending out bears for limited-term zoo exhibition in return for cash. Conservation officials feel the practice puts undue stress on the remaining pandas and reduces the likelihood of their producing new cubs in captivity, and they have pressured the Chinese government to reconsider it.

How best to save the giant panda? Schaller's

conclusions are remarkably similar to Bonner's: The "effort must involve local people, based on their interests, skills, self-reliance, and traditions, and it must initiate programs that offer them spiritual and economic benefits." Conservation, he adds, "cannot be imposed from above."

**NUCLEAR RENEWAL: Common Sense About Energy.** By Richard Rhodes. *Whittle Books in association with Viking Publications.* 127 pp. \$17.50

Author of the prize-winning saga *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (1986), Richard Rhodes here looks at the peacetime fallout from that endeavor: nuclear power's current problems and future promise. Today about 100 nuclear plants operate in the United States, more than in any other country, but far fewer than the thousands once predicted for an era of electricity that would be "too cheap to meter."

Rhodes blames nuclear power's "present impasse" on contentious political control by federal and state authorities and unrealistic economic decisions that priced atomic-generated electricity out of the market. "The truth," writes Rhodes, "is that nuclear power was killed, not by its enemies, but by its friends." These friends included greedy manufacturers and contractors who escalated plant size (and costs) for elusive "economies of scale," federal regulators who ignored the financial consequences of their rules, utility executives and rate commissioners who gladly passed rising expenses on to consumers, and members of Congress who pampered the infant nuclear industry with the 1957 Price-Anderson Act, which indemnified utilities from liability for their nuclear accidents.

But while Rhodes explains nuclear power's problems astutely, his account of its promise is misplaced. For example, he hopes to solve today's political and economic problems with a technical solution: the integral fast reactor (IFR). This sodium-cooled nuclear power plant is a beguiling "breeder" reactor of the 1950s, once touted for making extra plutonium fuel but now—in a still unproven metamorphosis—also expected to consume plutonium from other reactors. Rhodes says the IFR will dispel political opposition because it is safer than today's water-

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cooled reactors and will ease economic pressures by burning some nuclear wastes. But besides being overly optimistic, Rhodes minimizes potential problems with high-level radioactive waste disposal and scants the dangers of the IFR's sodium coolant, which can burn in air or explode in water.

Rhodes is right to praise the Japanese and the French for centralizing and simplifying their nuclear-power programs. Their accomplishments stand in marked contrast to jurisdictional confusions that have hampered U.S. development. But such praise ignores how differently the French, Japanese, and American political and economic systems work. He also glides through some conjectural risk-benefit statistics for different energy sources and activities, concluding that coal burning, driving small cars, and taking birth control pills are all more dangerous than running nuclear plants—without conceding just how controversial such calculations still are.

In the end, this little book is persuasive but not convincing. Rhodes pleads for "leadership and public education" to beget safer reactor designs and to boost political support for nuclear power. But because the nuclear enterprise must be so tightly controlled, the real challenge still lies with reforming the United States's wobbly federal-state regulatory system. To duck the fundamental problem only invites new grief from nuclear power's next generation of "friends."

**SCIENCE AND ANTI-SCIENCE.** By Gerald Holton. Harvard. 203 pp. \$24.95

Václav Havel is not a creationist, but in *Disturbing the Peace* (1990) the Czech president-playwright voiced a sentiment shared by the creationists: that the decline of traditional religion has left a hole in the fabric of Western civilization that science cannot fill. It seems odd to speak of Havel and the creationists in the same breath. To Gerald Holton, a professor of physics and the history of science at Harvard University, it is both natural and important to do so. If modernity is defined by the culturally dominant posi-

tion of science, we should not be surprised if the premodern and nascent postmodern make common cause to bring science down. Yet Holton thinks scientists by and large *are* surprised, and inadequately alarmed.

The largely disconnected pieces in this volume are given some coherence by the last essay, "The Anti-Science Phenomenon," which explores the nature, sources, and motivations of the disparate forces in Western society opposed to a scientific worldview. Holton assigns the skeptics to four categories: philosophers who view science as a social myth and seek to "abolish the distinction between science and fiction," disaffected intellectuals who feel left behind by the dizzying rate of modern scientific discovery, "New Age" thinkers who believe that "one of the worst sins of modern thought is the concept of objectively reachable data," and a group that worries that modern science is "the projection of Oedipal obsessions."

Appropriately, Holton is most concerned with how easily antiscience forces can be manipulated by political concerns. The Nazis exploited Germany's alternative science movement for the horrific policy of "race purification." The Soviet Union imposed Lysenkoism—the notion that acquired characteristics can be inherited—on its scientific community. Scientists initially regarded Lysenkoism as a passing fad, but the theory reigned for several decades, with disastrous consequences for the practice of science in the Soviet Union. Today, right-wing activists such as Jimmy Swaggart and Pat Robertson espouse antievolutionism as "part of an attack on secular humanism," which they see as an element of a "Satanic ideology."

Holton reviews past and potential future strategies for defending science, but offers no panaceas beyond eternal vigilance. Nor does he argue explicitly that it *is* within science's power to influence what does ultimately fill the void left by religion. His broad erudition and synthetic intellect help define the problem, but solutions, as Havel would say, are beyond the scope of science.

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# POETRY

P E T E R   H U C H E L

*Selected and Introduced by Joseph Brodsky*

**I**n the 20th century, German history has done its best to obscure German poetry. Murder makes better copy, and when foreign troops march into your country you are not in a mood to read their bards and classics, unless of course you work for intelligence. Nor does your interest get much of a boost from those troops' defeat. Nearly 50 years after World War II's carnage, we are still more familiar with the names of the Third Reich's leaders than with those of Else Lasker-Schuler, Gottfried Benn, Gunter Eich, Karl Krolov, Ingeborg Bachmann, or Peter Huchel. Apparently, the dust hasn't settled yet.

Most likely, it never will, which alone turns dust into a form of existence. It turns out that, among its other properties, dust also possesses a voice:

*Gedenke meiner,  
Flüstert der Staub.*

Remember me,  
whispers the dust.

This is what the dust says according to one of the finest German poets of this century, Peter Huchel. Huchel was born in 1903 and died in 1981. He grew up on a farm in the eastern part of Germany, in Prussia, and studied in Berlin, Freiburg, and Vienna. Between wars, he traveled a fair bit in Hungary, Romania, Turkey, and France. That was a lean time for most Germans, and he'd often pay for his sojourns in these places with the only marketable skill he had acquired in his youth: farm work.

Huchel's poems were first published in various periodicals in the 1920s. In the '30s, he, like many a poet at the time, took up writing verse radio plays, which met with considerable success. In 1933, though, he withdrew his soon-to-be-published first collection of poems because he didn't want to be affiliated with a pro-Nazi group of poets. The war found him rather late, apparently after some looking, on his family farm near Potsdam, and he was drafted into the Wehrmacht in 1941. By that time, he was 38 years old.

Those who served with him in the trenches recall the man scribbling in his notebook while occasionally glancing out the embrasure. In 1945, shortly before the war ended, he deserted to the Russians and was interned. But, partly because of his reputedly anti-Nazi cycle of poems, "Twelve Nights," written during the war, partly because of the socialist sympathies of his youth, he was soon released and started to work in East Berlin for the state radio. In 1949 he became the editor of a highly influential magazine called *Sinn und Form* (Sense and Form).

He stayed on at this job for the next 13 years, in the course of which he

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also published several collections of his poetry and reaped various awards in the German Democratic Republic. In 1962, however, because of his independent editorial policies, he was dismissed and placed under house arrest. Presumably because of his prominence on the GDR cultural scene, nothing further was done, and in 1971, as a result of appeals from PEN International, Huchel was allowed to leave. He settled down in West Germany where, 10 years later, he died. He was married twice and had two children.

**B**y the standards of the time and especially of the place, this poet's life was rather uneventful. What's more, his poetry carries very few references to his actual circumstances. One's mind is always more complex than one's reality, and the poet presumably thought it bad manners to draw on a biography so common. He simply was a complex man who ended up with a very primitive history on his lap, or to put it a bit more accurately, he ended up in that history's clutches. To capitalize on his experience in verse would amount to intelligence honoring instinct. This had nothing to do with escapism or even the spirit of privacy, paramount in German lyric poetry for most of this century. This had to do with the man's preservation of his dignity: by showing history where it belongs.

Peter Huchel is often billed as a nature poet. Definitions are always reductive, and in the case of Huchel this label is about as misleading as it is in the case of Robert Frost. They indeed have quite a bit in common, except that unlike Frost, for whom nature mirrors man's negative potential, Huchel, whose work is imbued with a very strong Christian ethos, sees nature as a holy sacrament. This attitude was so strong in Huchel that it led him temporarily to perceive the GDR program of agricultural collectivization as the long-overdue implementation of natural laws.

Huchel's poetry is indeed marked by an instinctive reliance on the natural environment, but the label won't stick. What his poems get from nature is a bit more than nature offers. The severest and most elegiac voice in the German poetry of his time, Huchel not so much describes a landscape as reads what's been wrought upon "terrestrial things" by a pen harder held and more dispassionate than his own. Nature for him, to put it simply, is a page covered dark with a fairly dark writ.

The poems you will find here belong, however, to a later, postwar Huchel. Men's last words are often of greater consequence than their first, and this goes for poets as well. As one perceptive critic of Huchel has remarked, he began with hymns and ended with psalms. This is a fair description of this poet's evolution. In his later poetry, nature plays a lesser role, since it is no longer for him home or solace. But it is the same implacable, immanent pen, scribbling here slowly upon a terrestrial thing that is, this time, the poet's own heart: a shrinking page increasingly conscious of its finality. History enters here, but not so much that of Germany as of his whole life and with it, of the civilization to which he belongs and which he is about to exit. That is what accounts for that life and that civilization overlapping, and for the poems' long view. As perspectives go, this one is fairly universal.

"How can one write poetry after Auschwitz?" asked Theodor Adorno. It is for a German poet, obviously, to provide the answer.

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## The Angels

A shadow stands,  
crosses the room,  
smoke,  
where an old woman,  
the goose-wing  
in her feeble hand,  
brushes the oven shelf.  
A fire burns.  
Remember me,  
whispers the dust.

November fog and rain, rain  
and the sleep of cats.  
The sky black  
and muddy above the river.  
Time flows from gaping emptiness,  
flows over the fins  
and gills of the fish  
and over the frozen stare  
of the angels,  
who drop down with blackened wings,  
behind the gaunt twilight, to the daughters of Cain.

A shadow stands,  
crosses the room,  
smoke.  
A fire burns.  
Remember me,  
whispers the dust.

## The Ammonite

Sick of the gods and their fires  
I lived without the law  
in the deepest part of the valley of Hinnom.  
Gone were my old companions,  
the balance of heaven and earth;  
only the ram was true,  
his festering lameness dragged across the stars.  
Under his horns of stone,  
their smokeless glimmering, I slept at night,  
fired urns each day  
that I'd smash to pieces on the rocks  
in the evening sun.  
I never saw the twilight, a cat in the cedars,  
or the birds take wing,  
the water's splendor  
as it ran across my arms,  
while I mixed the vats of clay.  
The smell of death made me blind.

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## Aristeas I

First light of dawn,  
as the gold of the dead lay buried  
in clouds. The wind slept there,  
in branches  
where the crow sat plumed in fog.

The branches flew,  
its wingbeat hard against the gray light  
of the alders,  
the milky skin of the steppe.

I, Aristeas,  
as crow has followed god,  
I wend my way,  
drawn onward by a dream,  
through laurel groves of fog,  
to search the morning on stiff wings.  
I've spied  
in snow-encrusted caves,  
faces, one-eyed, lit by fires,  
sunk deep in smoke.  
And horses stood, manes frozen,  
hitched to posts with reins of soot.

The crow brushed past  
the wintry gate,  
through starved undergrowth.  
The frost stirred.  
And a parched tongue spoke:  
Here is a past without pain.

## Aristeas II

The solitude  
of piers in brackish water;  
at the leaky planking of a boat  
a dead rat scrapes.  
Here I sit at noon,  
in the shade of the customs house,  
an old man  
on a millstone.

Once a river pilot,  
later I steered ships, poor cargoes,  
through the tides up north.  
The captains paid in contraband,  
it was enough to live, with women enough  
and sailcloth.

The names grow dim;  
no one deciphers the text  
that lingers behind my lids.  
I, Aristeas, son of Caystrobios,  
am missing, presumed dead,  
exiled by the god  
to this narrow dirty harbor,  
not far from the Cimmerian boat,  
where people trade in skins and amulets.

At night the fulling mill still pounds.  
Sometimes I squat like a crow,  
high up in the poplars by the river,  
motionless in the setting sun,  
awaiting the death  
that dwells on ice-bound rafts.

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## The Grave of Odysseus

None shall find  
the grave of Odysseus,  
no thrust of the spade  
the encrusted helmet  
in the mist of petrified bones.

Don't look for the cave  
beneath the earth,  
where a draught of soot, a mere shadow,  
injured by the torch's flaring pitch,  
went to its dead companions,  
its hands raised, weaponless,  
smeared with the blood of slaughtered sheep.

All is mine, said the dust;  
the sun's grave beyond the desert,  
reefs filled with the water's deafening roar,  
the endless noon, that still gives warning  
to the sea-pirate's son from Ithaca,  
the rudder, gnawed by salt,  
the charts and manifests  
of the ancient Homer.

## (The Elder Tree)

The elder opens its moons,  
all passes into silence;  
the fluid lights in the stream,  
the water-borne planetarium  
of Archimedes,  
astronomical signs,  
Babylonian in their origins.

Son,  
Enkidu, my little son,  
you abandoned your mother, the gazelle,  
your father, the wild donkey,  
that you might go to Uruk with the whore.  
The milk-bearing goats have fled.  
The steppe is withered.

Behind the city gate  
with its seven bolts of iron  
Gilgamesh, who wanders both heaven and earth,  
has shown you  
how to cut the cords of death.

Noon burned darkly on the brickworks,  
Gold lay darkly in the chamber of the king.  
Turn back, Enkidu.  
What has Gilgamesh bequeathed?  
The graceful head of the gazelle downcast.  
The dust rained on your bones.

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## Elegy

It is your hour,  
man upon Chios,  
it draws near to you over the rocks  
and sets fire to your heart.  
The evening breeze mows  
the shadows of the pines.  
Your eye is blind.  
But in the gull's cry  
you know the sea's metallic shimmer,  
the sea with the dolphin's black skin,  
the stiff oar-stroke of the wind  
hard by the coast.

Down the path,  
where tufts of goat-hair  
wave upon the thistle,  
the cithara, seven-stringed, holds forth  
in the hum of telegraph wires.  
A single wall has remained,  
crowned with undulating tiles.  
The clay pot shattered,  
in which life's bill of sale,  
sealed, has lain.

Rock-high spindrift,  
rock-lapping breakers,  
sea with the cat shark's skin.  
At the cape of a cloud,  
awash in the swell of sky,  
white with the salt  
of wave after receding wave,  
is the moon's lightship.  
It illumines the voyage to Ios,  
where boys wait  
on the shore  
with empty nets  
and lice in their hair.

## Melpomene

Bitter, the forest, full of thorns,  
no coastal breeze, no foothills,  
the grass lay matted, our death to come  
with the sound of horses' hooves, endless  
across the low hills of the steppes, we returned  
to search the sky for battlements  
that would not give way.

Hostile the villages,  
huts emptied in haste,  
smoked skins in rafters,  
snare nets and bone amulets.  
Throughout the land only evil venerated,  
animal heads in the mist, fortunes told  
with cut wands of the willow.

Later, in the north,  
stag-eyed men  
rode by on horseback.  
We buried our dead.  
It was hard  
to sink our axes in that earth,  
we used fire to thaw the ground.

The blood of roosters killed in sacrifice  
was not accepted.



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## Brandenburg

Behind cold pitch ovens  
I walked in the burnt fragrance of pine bogs,  
where a farmhand sat at his woodcutter's fire;  
he didn't look up,  
he set the teeth of his saw.

In the evening  
the red Uhlan still dances  
with farmers' daughters on the threshing floor of fog,  
his tunic open  
to the swarms from off the marshes.

Submerged  
in the water hemlock  
the Prussian calash.

## View from a Winter Window

White willows, rounded by dancing snow,  
brooms that sweep the mist.  
Wood and misfortune  
grow at night.  
My gauge  
the fever's curve.

Who goes there without light  
and without mouth,  
dragging a steel trap  
across the ice?

Sages of the forest,  
the foxes with bad teeth,  
sit aloof in the darkness  
and stare into the fire.

## Under the Constellation of Hercules

A town,  
no larger  
than the circle  
a buzzard traces  
in the evening sky.

A wall,  
rough-hewn, stained  
with reddish lichen.  
The sound of a bell, that carries  
over shimmering water  
the smoke  
of olive.  
Fire,  
fed by straw  
and damp foliage,  
stirred by voices  
you don't recognize.

Already straining forward in the night,  
in freezing harness,  
Hercules drags  
the chained harrow of his stars  
across the northern sky.

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## Winter Morning in Ireland

At night the devil sits  
in the fog's confessional  
and counsels desperate souls.  
In the morning he's transformed himself  
into a magpie,  
flying mute above the narrow path.

In winter's dungeon  
on branches of scrub oak,  
the brittle gold of the dead.  
Light roots out the cold.  
Familiar faces of the rooftops  
reappear.

Above the sea  
the genuflection of the wind,  
the first braying of a donkey.  
The shadow of a bird drifts  
across the cliff's rocky precipice.

The surf,  
its gliding ramparts of water and light,  
the Irish Sea  
does not confide, if the rain  
will bury the noon.

## The Ninth Hour

Heat etches into stone  
the word of the prophet.  
A man labors  
up the hill,  
in his shepherd's bag  
the ninth hour,  
the nail and the hammer.

In the air the dry shimmer of the flock  
is torn apart  
and falls as tinder behind the horizon.

## Peace

The 'birds' nomadic hour.  
In the prickly awns  
of threshed corn  
the mild vacancy of summer lingers on.  
In the gun embrasures of the water tower  
the grass grows wild.

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# LIFESTYLE

*One measure of a word's currency is the frequency of its misuse. Now even historians talk about the "lifestyles" of Roman citizens and medieval peasants. Such anachronistic uses betray ignorance of the unique cultural conditions that gave birth to the word. Robert Erwin here recalls its proper provenance.*

BY ROBERT ERWIN

Once the Americans had backed into independence by demanding their rights as Englishmen, what next? No one supposed they were immune to the universal passions distinguished by Kant: for possession, for power, and for honor. To fend off anarchy and sustain a workable society they would have to govern and ration those passions, in the process evolving cultural norms that even those who did not benefit immediately or equally would abide by.

Many foreigners and a fair number of ultrafederalists did not see how this could be done without the equivalent of nobility as a social principle. Long live King George (Washington)! Nobility, after all, had been the linchpin of social order in Europe for 1,000 years. It specified rules for membership in the ruling class, designated responsibility by custom and statute, and allocated control over weapons, resources, and symbols. Holiness rivaled nobility in cultural prestige, but the highborn had privileged access to the church. To justify its position, moreover, the aristocracy conscripted language, loading the word *noble* with positive moral connotations. Intermittently at least, Europeans of all classes acceded to a cultural strategy whereby the few lived well for the many.

By the time Tocqueville came to inspect America in 1831, it was obvious that the Founding Fathers who rejected hereditary titles and official churches had read American conditions and modern conditions astutely. The commercial value of property outweighed "domain," and commercial activity in general—commodities, transport, technology, industry—propelled the society. Titles of nobility would have brought civil war instead of order. Government needed functionaries and partisans, not retainers. Instead of dwelling on novelty as such or on the absence of old ways, Tocqueville was interested in how the social system actually functioned. Although American patterns might be peculiar by comparison with historical and world standards, they were, he thought, just as definite as any others. People learned norms while growing up or settling in as immigrants; they held values in common; they regulated social transactions accordingly.

One thing Tocqueville discovered was that Americans believed in the possibility and desirability of starting over. Move to a different part of the country, take up a new occupation, begin another family, break old habits and acquire new ones, become best friends with strangers. Besides the ups and downs of wealth and status intrinsic to a

commercially frenetic society, in addition to the whirl of fashion and elections, on top of the itch to build new towns and tear up old neighborhoods, they believed on principle that the past could be disregarded and that individuals had a right to redirect their lives.

Over the years, this faith in starting over from scratch has fascinated America-watchers. "The stuff of self-improvement manuals generation after generation," writes Frances FitzGerald in *Cities on a Hill*, "is a major theme in American literature." Attitudes toward this trait differ sharply among the reflective. Someone from a country chewed up by history—a hell of prisons and massacres or a decaying society that has carried certain values to exhaustion—might scorn American naiveté and self-indulgence. Yet someone else from the same kind of place might rejoice that at least one lucky nation had preserved its innocence so long. One school of social critics might associate starting over with the loneliness, superficiality, and incoherence of American life. Other social critics might point out in good humor that many so-called changes were simply more of the same, grounded as always in human nature. (The student who dominated the radical caucus continues as the lawyer hell-bent on becoming a partner in the firm.) The especially optimistic and tolerant might hail the latitude to start over as freedom not available in hidebound societies. Still other observers might be struck by paradoxes—a tradition of the new, unanimous individualism. Whatever the attitude, the fact is not in dispute. Americans, and to a lesser extent people in all highly industrialized societies, tend to

believe they can shuck off the past and make new lives.

During the 1970s, a word came into common use that perfectly encapsulates this cultural assumption and the social patterns related to it. *Lifestyle* is the word. It was a brave word at first, hinting at rich possibilities, a broad view of human development and the life course, an order that fulfilled rather than constricted. Unfortu-



"Haven't we met in a previous life style?"

nately, however, journalists, salesmen, and pop psychologists trivialized it even more rapidly than usual. Lifestyle already stands mostly for the section of the newspaper that runs recipes for pumpkin mousse and tips on buying a futon. It sets a pseudoclassy tone when movie actresses on talk shows reveal that they own a dog. Encouraged by an interviewer to think big, a doctor in Boston recently recommended "lifestyle changes such as . . . seatbelt use."

In the short interval before it was trivialized, lifestyle sounded more impressive

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than older terms from the same cultural cluster—terms such as *moving on* and *self-help*. People who could barely count change from a five-dollar bill had fantasies of designing and redesigning their precious selves as Picasso would approach a blank canvas. Partly, the pretentiousness of the word resulted from rhetorical battles of the times in which it came into use. But partly it reflected the decline of a countervailing norm that had set limits to the idea of styling oneself.

**I**n place of the hereditary rank they refused to tolerate, Americans at the outset installed respectability as a social anchor. It held in check notions of starting over and anything goes. Achievement and character across class, occupation, gender, and ethnic identity were measured by respectability for two centuries. It lasted as a norm through industrialization, depression, and war.

The generation that came of age about the same time as lifestyle probably cannot fathom the hold respectability once had on the whole society. The better-educated and more affluent members of that generation are used to a portfolio mode of culture. Sell migrant workers and buy the homeless. Keep an eye on the greenhouse effect for potential growth in the environmental sector. As safe investments with a steady yield, beer and exercise are dependable. College degrees are down slightly. The only widely shared conception of the common good now is sufficient order and support so that trading may continue. Poorer members of the same generation are necessarily more limited in their options, but they make numerous choices in a volatile market too. Should they dye their hair blue or orange? Should they go for a continuance or a plea bargain?

By the time Elliott Gould, smiling sweetly and wearing a ratty football jersey, was allowed to tell a national television audience that he was glad to host "Saturday Night Live" because the program, in his words, "has balls," a certain number of viewers were titillated, a large number could take it or leave it, and those who were offended had a subconscious suspicion they might be cranks. Just a few years earlier Richard Nixon, villainous and squirrely as they come, had stuck his neck out 10 times farther than Elliott Gould; but he was older, and he by god wore a suit, pressed and buttoned, even to board a private airplane. Millions upon millions of decent citizens, beside themselves with anger, fright, and shame, would have been ready to join a lynching party had Gould broken the taboo in 1860 or 1960.

To reinforce the point, against Gould's show biz effervescence can be set a humorless passage from the "Judgment Day" section of James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan*, received as incendiary realism when it was published in the 1930s. In this scene a housewife with a baby is about to take on four strangers for \$2.50 each to recoup the grocery money she lost to a bookie. When Studs draws high card for first turn with her and one of the others says, "Leave a little for us," she becomes indignant. "This is my house," she snaps. "Get out if you're going to talk lewd." As the example suggests, respectability extended far beyond the bourgeoisie. Forty years after Studs's fictional lesson in etiquette, the historian Tamara Hareven interviewed former workers at the Amoskeag mill in New Hampshire, in its day the largest textile plant in the world under one roof. Virtually every one of them avoided "off-color" talk, though these men and women left school early and were poor all their lives.

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*Robert Erwin, a writer and former director of the University of Pennsylvania Press, is the author of The Current Language Panic and Other Essays in Cultural History. Copyright © 1990 by Robert Erwin.*

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Of course, youngsters did learn the underground language by hook or by crook. Taboos have to do with the forbidden, not necessarily with the unknown. Some of them, on the sly, managed a passable imitation of the toughest kid in town, destined to go directly from grammar school to prison. The boys often encountered an authority—a straw boss, a coach—who used rough language that impressed them. Later, facility in the other language might come in handy for coping with or surviving among troops, laborers, tenants. Going to bars, rooms, brothels, pool halls, and cooch shows meant having your cake and eating it too: upholding the norm by breaking taboos in a place prescribed for that purpose. Usually by a more subterranean route girls arrived at an equivalent “secret” knowledge, though in some ways a worse state of duplicity.

It would be a great mistake to shrug respectability off as antiquated taste, hypocrisy, and squeamishness. As industrialization proceeded, roles multiplied, population grew, and science put custom into question, something was needed to encourage compliance among segmented, atomized citizens. For stratified democracies and administered authoritarian states, respectability filled the bill. It suited conditions. It worked.

To spend one’s life laying trolley track or packing mothballs did not preclude wearing a starched collar on Sunday and subscribing nominally to “clean living, proper behavior.” Such behavior could be demanded by the eminently respectable from the barely respectable, or it could be rewarded with token esteem. (Address the washerwoman as “Mrs.” and share her disapproval of spitting.) According to current needs for cheap labor, dirty work, scapegoats, and disenfranchisement, the line could be redrawn expediently at the bottom, denial of respectability justifying discrimination

practiced against minorities, immigrants, and subjugated peoples.

In societies composed largely of peasants and artisans, any deliberate departure from pomp had been a manifestation of privilege by other means. This was obvious when ladies of the French court played at being milkmaids or when English peers paraded in public “drunk as lords.” As Sartre pointed out, when Saint Francis handed back his clothes to the well-to-do father who had paid for them, the gesture was a moral luxury. The majority around him had no choice but to go ragged and dirty. As per capita income rose and the number of “things” commonly owned increased in industrial societies, downward departures took on a different meaning. In their way—with pearl stickpins, donations to the church, and the like—even hustlers, gangsters, and fixers followed the code of respectability. Out-groups such as Gypsies and circus performers, as well as occupational groups remote from centers of respectability (such as cowboys, loggers, and sailors) were clearly exceptions, rare and exotic. By the same token, however, it was now easy to make dissident gestures against respectability.

Bohemians, on the whole sufficiently educated and sufficiently employable for respectability had they the inclination, in fact made an issue of rejecting it in the conviction that they knew better than respectables how to live. They ranked themselves as aristocrats of the spirit, the elite few with intellect, imagination, taste, and moral courage. Sometimes aestheticism swayed bohemia. The cultivated dandy appeared more debonair, witty, knowing, and, above all, interesting than any solid citizen. At other times, antimaterialism dominated bohemia. Dull respectables who cared about napkin rings and baths were ridiculed and despised. At still other times, a “wild” mode ruled bohemia—drugs, outlandish costumes and couplings, links with

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the underclass, living on the edge.

**F**or a long while a stand-off prevailed. On the one hand, enclaves opposed to or opposed by the respectable were often cordoned off—bohemian quarters, shantytowns, red-light districts, and the like. News from the forbidden zone reached ordinary people largely through stereotypes supplied by journalists, dramatists, politicians, and do-gooders—stereotypes of longhaired artists, bomb-throwing reds, Wild West outlaws, scarlet actresses, and rascally sporting men. Sustained, deliberate counter-respectability rarely presented itself in the barnyard, the mill, the shop, the school, or the social call. On the other hand, crossing the line for pleasure or profit was not too difficult. Novelists did it. The police did it. Real estate operators did it. Dance halls and casinos lay close to the border. A majority accepted respectability in principle and upheld it or cheated as circumstances dictated. With the cooperation of his sisters and servants, Emily Dickinson's brother, a prominent lawyer and treasurer of Amherst College, managed discreet trysts in the family dining room, which had a large fireplace and a stout door. From roughly World War I forward, furthermore, a resourceful speakeasy mentality helped preserve the stand-off. The cocktail party, the smart set, and café society accommodated "nice" people. Blues became "entertainment." The mass media upgraded notoriety to celebrity. True, psychoanalysis showed respectability in an ambiguous light. Revolutions, anticolonial movements, and totalitarianism shook the whole world, and economic depression and another cataclysmic war hit the United States directly. Nevertheless, a socially intelligible balance held through the 1940s and 1950s. Mom and Apple Pie, God and Property continued to receive their due. Cultural instructions remained clear: Get a haircut, be on time, carry proper identification. Yet room was left to

relax—to become temporarily a watered-down Rimbaud, make-believe hoodlum, or attenuated carnival dancer—without losing the thread. It was believed—indeed hoped—that movie stars had orgies galore, preferably on bearskin rugs. The few should live licentiously for the many. But the stars were expected to support the Code of Decency by day and pull the shades at night.

In short, respectability was a strong norm. It had stamina, manipulative power, coherence, and flexibility. And it is not dead yet. A "respectable" way to behave endures, fuzzy and precarious, residually enforceable at law, more or less adhered to by the executive class and the old blue-collar class, deeply ingrained in many families. Numerous "mature" men would still be mortified to appear sockless in public, and numerous women would feel disgraced by a loud belch. By the 1980s, however, respectability was simply a prominent norm in a boutique of norms. No explosion occurred if someone attended the symphony in jungle pants or showed up wearing a "gay" earring to sign a mortgage. People said *lifestyle* without a second thought.

**J**ust as real wars frequently end with both sides worse off than they were before, so lifestyle is the uncomfortable and in the long run probably untenable outcome of the cultural wars of the 1960s and 1970s. Relatively disorganized, formerly unrecognized groups in that period learned to use nonconformity to wage politics. Countercultural presence was shaped to make demands: stop the war, jobs for blacks, power to sisterhood. Rather quickly, cultural politics became an issue in itself. For a brief time one could call the Beatles lower-class deformed (as Malcolm Muggeridge did) with only music in mind. Soon those became fighting words. Respectables were held responsible for induced poverty, racism and sexism, stifling routines and alienating work, for

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police brutality, a vile war in Vietnam, and piling nuclear weapons on each other 50 times over, for shoddy goods, phony sentiments, and crooked deals, for miseducation and the destruction of the environment—in short, for the worst of human nature and an intrinsically defective way of life. As this message registered, a great many old believers felt equally hostile and betrayed. Respectability had been painfully drilled into them, they had mastered the whole complicated code and strained to live up to it, and suddenly a crowd of young nobodies, pointy-headed intellectuals, and “agitators” seized the cultural initiative. As they saw it, respectability was being sold out for nothing worth having—drugs, shoplifting, herpes simplex, a rising rate of youthful suicide, and weakness in the face of a Red Peril and a Yellow Peril. Aside from damage done in the famous campus “disruptions,” some serious force was used by both sides. The Weathermen, for example, broke windows and beat up professors, and urban rioters torched their own neighborhoods. National Guardsmen gunned down students at Kent State, and police in Berkeley blinded a painter with shotgun fire during the Battle of the People’s Park. Symbolism was the common weapon, though. On the one side, students with draft deferments and job prospects burned the flag. Movie actresses—of the type who previously sanctified the status quo by stepping out of limousines in sheath dresses under blue and rose spotlights—appeared with kinky hair, breasts dangling under worn T-shirts. Young ministers offered public prayers for Patty Hearst and her “associates” in the spirit of cheerleaders. On the other side, negotiating and conceding details of respectability so as to guard more important levers of power, the established order cranked out new merchandise: rolling papers, water beds, tape decks, mountaineer packs, socially significant overalls. Rules were dropped, and ways were found to loosen up at a safe distance from hippies, radicals, and

poor people. Off with the white shirts, you swinging dentists of Cherry Hill. On with the double knits and the psychedelic ties a yard wide (in what clothing manufacturers around 1970 called the Peacock Revolution). Hoist skirts and tighten jeans across the butt. Put on the gold chains of a good-doing pimp and his teenage whore. Pass for a hip comedian, a centerfold sexpot, a person who sings at Mafia hotels. In the end the result of the cultural battling and of the dispersion of the counterculture was a social type nobody liked: yuppies. Those who grew up under respectability but were critical of it and hoped attacks on it would lead to a freer, happier, more just society saw their movement trivialized and half-forgotten. Those who defended respectability and hoped for full restoration found themselves living in a cultural boutique among institutions of impaired legitimacy.

**D**efective institutions such as the multiversity persist. To them have been added greater national inequality and idiotic policies such as prosperity through debt. Non sequiturs are now the staff of life: commodities trading Monday through Friday and gathering wild foods on the weekend; gay liberation and campaigning to return to the mass in Latin; computer programming to produce astrological charts; save the whales and serve sashimi. With all the jogging and hopping and weightlifting, whole neighborhoods have been changed into giant track-and-field events, and yet at home the “athletes” use remote control buttons to change TV channels. Respectability has become an option, part of a jumbled social landscape through which individuals thread their way according to whim and circumstance. The Four-H club need never confront the meditation society, and neither need confront the single parents’ group. Roles coexist and succeed each other without adding up.

Among those old enough to view the



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lifestyle era as a phase, attitudes differ. Some resist, holding on as tightly as possible to what they were comfortable with in the first place—respectability or principled opposition to respectability. They assume the storm will pass, and afterwards an equilibrium such as they remember between social stability and the urge to start over will re-emerge.

Doubtful. The adulteration of the counterculture is not to be taken lightly. Now the future is partly in the hands of someone to whom lifestyle is not just a catchword. Farrell's horse-playing housewife had a grandson. Barry, age 32, lives in Houston, where he works for a real-estate trust that manages shopping malls. To him lifestyle is the sea in which he swims, as it is for his sister, who stayed in Chicago and became one of the first women hired as a sales representative in the wholesale wine business. He considers himself to be a regular member of society, in that sense respectable. Yet his world tips in a different direction from that of his grandmother. He comes home at no particular hour, throws his jacket on the floor, says the day was a pisser, throws his mail on the floor, wonders whether or not to stay in, throws a towel on the floor. After a meal that may or may not be known as dinner and that could equally well include a fast-food gristleburger or fresh-made pesto, he listens inattentively to a tape by the Booger Eaters, skims an article on tax shelters, and during the late news on TV comes to a consensus with one or more people who live with him for the time being that the telephone company sucks, the weather sucks, and Somalia sucks.

History separates this man from his grandmother as evolution positions two species to receive light from different regions of the spectrum. *Don't talk lewd*. She clutched at that even while taking on the neighborhood. Respectability was the code her culture trained her to rely on, as it was the code whose infringement made her feel that the situation in which she found herself

was a crisis. Her grandson has no special talent for breaking taboos or expanding consciousness. He will not directly test the established order's capacity to deflect and absorb. He will probably wear shined shoes if he has to go to court. Yet he may be ultimately unreachable by both respectables and their traditional opponents. How much reality can he ascribe to a norm that for him has no interior?

The question of who he was in a previous existence currently interests Barry. Next year it may be kayaks. Instead of deploring and resisting this lifestyle mentality, part of the older population joins in and counts on it functioning indefinitely. It suits rejuvenation schemes and dreams. Yet their assumption, the opposite of those waiting for the storm to pass, is doubtful too.

**T**rivial productions do not necessarily have trivial results. Lifestyle clashes with certain deep-seated and more important Western ways that are still very much in force. The notion is in the air that out of countless personal preferences will somehow flow public good—pushed along by an invisible hand such as Adam Smith imagined. In a distorted way this continues a Western tradition of individualism: choice, conscience, assent, will as a faculty of self, values created rather than granted. But it is hard to think of a social configuration up to now that makes no provision for relating the individual to a cosmos and a community. How is it possible for humans to live in groups and not share values? When lives are styled in the same space, what keeps them from tangling? To say that at present we can't agree on a reason for human association in the public realm implies that explosive pressure for a new connection will build up.

For good or bad, Western culture has fostered linear thinking. It is embedded in concepts such as prime mover, cause and effect, means and ends, input and output,

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critical mass, formative stages. It is embedded in proverbs and literature and commerce and science. As the twig is bent, so grows the tree. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. The child is father to the man. Must have successful track record. Rate of return on investment. Relative contribution of nature and nurture. It is bound to be unsettling to move daily between those assumptions and the idea that a life consists of styles that can be chosen, altered, discontinued at will, and replaced like fabrics.

Perhaps the greatest pressure for a cultural framework more settled than lifestyles arises from the strain of assembling the world from moment to moment, like walking a long distance by reinventing the step every two and a half feet. We endure and participate in a welter called experience. The categories into which we divide the welter—such as forces, conditions, stimuli, intervals, feelings, perplexities, and relationships—are not exhaustive and do not necessarily express fact or wisdom in an absolute sense.

They simply organize our experience, and thus they are largely worthless if used capriciously.

**T**he advantage of organizing experience on the biological level is clear. Every organism has a genetic program, capabilities fitted to an environment, patterned relations with others of its species, and a boundary (such as skin) to regulate inflow and outflow. Perception automatically sorts experience: focusing attention, triggering response, and enabling skills to develop.

That culture continues in this direction is obvious—economizing effort, standardizing encounters, pooling experience. But existence under the dispensation of lifestyles becomes jittery. It is exhausting to hew selves and connections over and over. It is intolerable to have to make up rules each time for each set of social transactions. If nothing else, a culture ought to provide points of reference in a whirling world.