

Still alive and kicking

You don't hear much about Susquehanna 1 or San Onofre 2. And when was the last time anybody mentioned Summer 1. McGuire 2. LaSalle 1, and St. Lucie 2? Yet these six nuclear power stations, generating thousands of megawatts of electricity, were all successfully started up in the past 17 months. Though the troubled Shorehams and Seabrooks are getting the headlines, nuclear energy is still very much alive and hard at work in America.

More than 80 nuclear plants across the country now provide about 13 percent of the nation's electrical output—displacing some 1.5 million barrels of oil a day (equal to about a third of last year's net oil imports). Despite the financial uncertainty surrounding several plants under construction, and the cancellations already announced, experts are still projecting that U.S. capacity for the nuclear generation of electricity could double by the end of the century, because of the nuclear plants already nearing completion.

The enormous cost overruns some utilities have suffered, while often ascribed to poor planning, were due in part to design and safety improvements following the Three Mile Island incident. They also reflect construction delays caused by environmentalists and other protesters. But these cost problems should not blind the nation to the solid economic advantages of nuclear electricity. For every Public Service of New Hampshire, whose Seabrook plant drove it to the edge of bankruptcy, there's a Commonwealth Edison that generates nuclear power profitably. A recent study by the intergovern-mental Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that nuclear generation could be cheaper than even coal-fired electricity in some areas

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of the U.S. And the savings over oil-fired plants would be even higher.

Nuclear power would get a real economic face-lift if construction lead times in the U.S .- and the resulting interest chargescould be brought more in line with Europe's. There it takes six to seven years to bring a new plant on stream, compared to an average of 12 years here. More uniform technical standards would help. Nuclear stations built in the U.S.-unlike those in France, for example-are, to some extent, custom-made. so each time it's necessary to reinvent the wheel, so to speak. The Congressional Office of Technology Assessment says standardizing the design and expediting the licensing of nuclear stations could lower construction costs by 20 to 25 percent, and the Reagan administration is now seeking to do this.

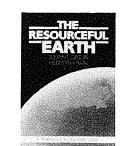
Many of the other problems that once hampered nuclear power have been solved. Witness the improvements in nuclear safety and regulation since the Three Mile Island accident. And now, under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, the government is developing a detailed plan and timetable for the safe, permanent disposal of radioactive waste in deep geologic formations.

In the past 10 years, electricity has been steadily replacing oil and gas in homes and factories, and currently accounts for about 35 percent of domestic energy use. As electrical demand continues to grow in the years ahead, clean, cheap, politically secure, and environmentally safe nuclear power should play an increasingly important role in supplying it. To those who feel that the nuclear option has expired in America, we can think of no better reply than Mark Twain's wry comment: "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."



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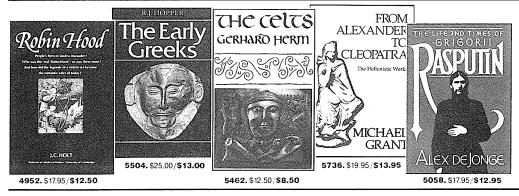
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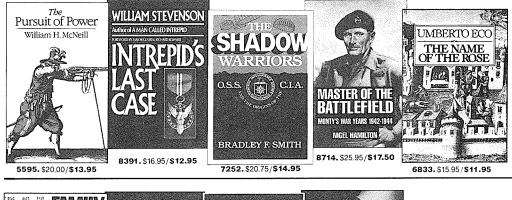
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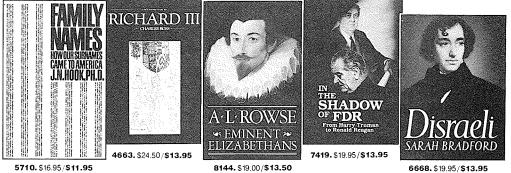
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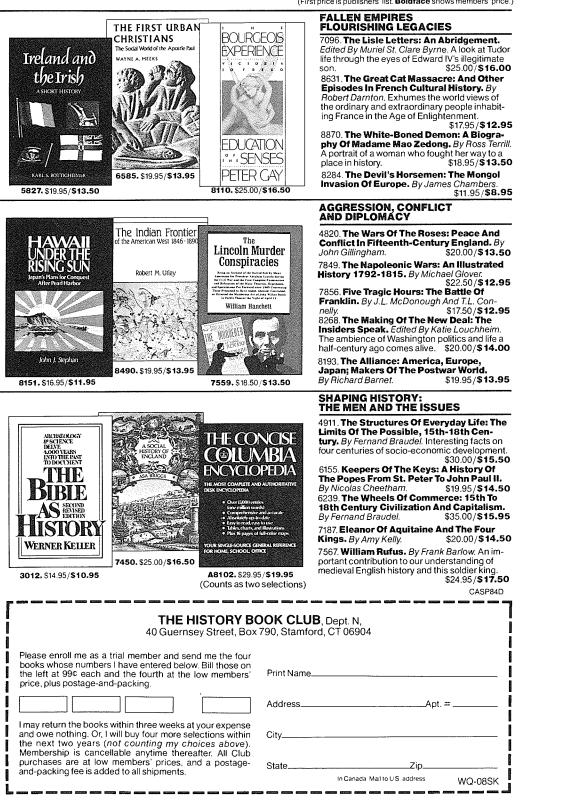
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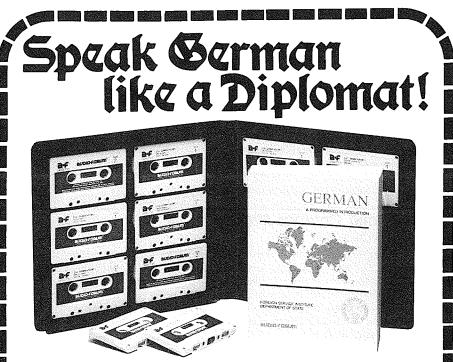
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Editor's Comment

The War on Poverty launched by Lyndon Johnson with high hopes two decades ago has not ended poverty in America. Indeed, there are now more Americans living in poverty, as officially defined, than there were in 1970. Why?

The question has not loomed large in the current presidential election campaign. Scores of federal studies of various antipoverty programs have been completed and filed away. A few scholarly assessments have been published; but, in general, the assumptions and effects of the War on Poverty have not been closely examined by journalists or politicians, even as debate over its funding erupts periodically in Congress.

In this issue of the *Quarterly*, Charles Murray suggests that a new look is in order. An MIT-trained political scientist, he sees progress in increased federal help for the aged and the disabled. But he argues that Washington's inability to move millions of *able-bodied* Americans of working age, especially young adults, into the economic mainstream stems from basic flaws in the War on Poverty itself.

Mr. Murray's analysis is not likely to go unchallenged. Other explanations of persistent poverty have already been published in the *Quarterly* (most recently in "Blacks in America," Spring 1984). Still other scholarly views will be aired in future issues. The thorny question of poverty and social policy in America merits continuing investigation.

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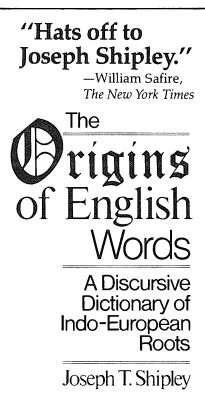
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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Debating the Democrats' Fate "Is the Democratic Party Disintegrating?" by Walter Dean Burnham, Paul R. Abramson, Thomas R. Dye, Lee Sigelman, and others, in *Society* (July-Aug. 1984), Box A, Rutgers—The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

Even as the Democratic Party gathers its considerable forces for the November elections, its long-term future is, once again, a matter of debate.

To Burnham, an MIT political scientist (and a key advocate of the theory that U.S. political parties undergo "critical realignments" every 30 years or so), the party's future looks bleak—unless it turns sharply Left. Since the early 1960s, he argues, the American political and economic system has been in a state of more or less continual crisis. The old centrist politics once practiced by both parties no longer works, as evidenced by the growing, disillusioned "party of nonvoters." (Only 53 percent of the voting-age public turned out to vote in 1980.)

The Republicans' answer was to become an ideological party of the Right, Burnham contends, unified behind Ronald Reagan's programs. The Democratic Party, by contrast, remains "a welter of conflicting groups held together by increasingly tenuous historic loyalties." What appears to be a decline of American political parties is, in fact, just the disintegration of the Democratic Party.

"Reaganomics," he believes, is doomed to failure. The likely result: a U.S. economic and political collapse whose rescue might require "some form of dictatorship," or the rise of a socialist movement based on the Democratic Party—if it avails itself of the opportunity.

Few of Burnham's co-contributors share his views. To Abramson, a Michigan State political scientist, the importance of the "party of nonvoters" is frequently exaggerated. Conservative Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964 and liberal Democrat George McGovern in 1972 both predicted—incorrectly—that erstwhile nonvoters would put them over the top. Public-opinion surveys show that even if nonvoters *were* to vote, they would not vote much differently from their more responsible fellow citizens.

Florida State's Dye writes that the collapse of Reaganomics, far from forcing the Democrats to embrace socialism, would unite them around

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

the need for a federal "industrial policy" devoted in part to restoring corporate profits. He dismisses Burnham's prediction of a severe U.S. political crisis as "fanciful."

The Democrats' seeming disarray obscures the fact that they remain America's majority party, outnumbering registered G.O.P. adherents by two to one. The party, notes Sigelman, who teaches at the University of Kentucky, is "one of the oddest political coalitions ever assembled" and is by nature and tradition given to bickering, turmoil, and more than a dash of excitement. As Will Rogers put it more than half a century ago: "I belong to no organized party. I am a Democrat."

New Checks And Balances "After the Congressional Veto: Assessing the Alternatives" by Robert S. Gilmour and Barbara Hinkson Craig, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Summer 1984), John Wiley & Sons, 605 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10158.

Between 1932 and 1983, Congress periodically granted itself a "legislative veto" as a check on the power of the White House and the federal bureaucracy. Last year, however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the congressional veto unconstitutional.

Before the Supreme Court acted, Congress had written its veto power into some 200 pieces of legislation. In each case, either the President or an executive agency was "required to submit proposed orders, regulations, and plans to Congress for review and potential veto by majority vote of one or both houses," note Gilmour and Craig, political scientists at the University of Connecticut and Wesleyan University, respectively.

The Court's ruling dismayed the legislators; but, say the authors, Congress can live without the veto. In fact, the lawmakers have exercised only 125 such vetoes: Of those, 66 overruled presidential "budget impoundments" (refusals to spend money appropriated by the Congress), and 24 halted executive office reorganizations. Only 35 actually dealt with a proposed regulation or project. More important than the veto itself was the leverage that the *threat* of using it gave Congress over the White House. A case in point: The 1976 stipulation that major overseas arms sales be submitted for review on Capitol Hill led to a reshaping of five controversial U.S. arms packages but no actual vetoes.

Congress will retain considerable leverage simply because whenever controversy simmers, the White House still needs support from Capitol Hill. If all else fails, Congress can just pass a law barring any executive activity that displeases it (though this would face a presidential veto requiring a two-thirds Congressional vote to override).

Congress has been known to grant itself the veto power as a way of putting off tough decisions. In 1980, for example, it created the U.S. Synthetic Fuels Corporation but left the new agency to figure out for itself how much its programs would cost—subject to legislative veto. Now, the Congress will have to make such decisions itself and write them into law. That, the authors suggest, is a good thing.

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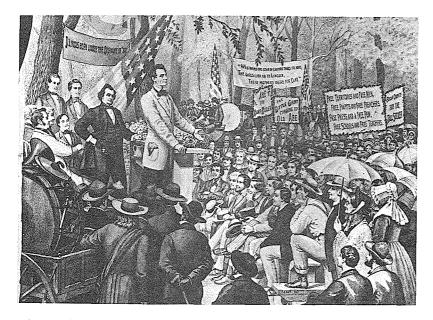
Rhetoric's Fall

"The Decline of Oratory" by Henry Fairlie, in *The New Republic* (May 28, 1984), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Once "it was impossible to think of the practice of politics without the eloquence with which kings and politicians tried to move individuals and multitudes." Today, laments the *New Republic*'s Fairlie, oratory has no place in American politics.

Of course, television is responsible for much of the change. Before the advent of broadcasting, public gatherings and newspapers were the sole outlets for political expression; a public speech was "almost a sporting event." Only by speaking eloquently or passionately could a politician hold the crowd's attention. "If a speech fell flat for the immediate audience," writes Fairlie, "it would not travel the nation."

TV guarantees contemporary politicians an audience, no matter how banal their utterances, but it strips political speeches of the crucial element of human exchange. Surrounded by microphones, loud-speakers, and TV cameras, shielded by security personnel, today's speakers are deprived of give-and-take with listeners. More often than not, observes Fairlie, they address only "the red eye of the camera." They see little more than the text of a speech reflected in the mirrors of Teleprompters; they feel little of the ur-



A landmark in American political oratory, the six Lincoln-Douglas debates during the 1858 Illinois Senate contest drew up to 15,000 people, as the candidates argued over the future of slavery in the United States.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

gency or inspiration that crowds can impart.

Today's orators also lack a rich lode of common literary allusions and images. Even references to the Bible—to Job or to Balaam's ass, for example—are no longer universally understood. "What do our politicians now quote?" asks Fairlie, "A television commercial: 'Where's the beef?'"

But neither TV nor politicians are solely to blame for the decline of oratory. After all, Fairlie observes, the purpose of public speaking is to persuade the public to support a certain course of action. "But a nation with its ears in a Sony Walkman does not wish to act." It is not that our public officials cannot lead, but that we do not want them to. Oratory will return, he predicts, when Americans once again look to their politicians for leadership.

Social Security's Cloudy Future

"Budget Cutters Think the Unthinkable—Social Security Cuts Would Stem Red Ink" by Linda E. Demkovich, in *National Journal* (June 23, 1984), 1730 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Nobody in Washington wants to admit it before the November elections, but public officials of both political parties who are looking for ways to reduce federal budget deficits are contemplating cuts next year in that most sacred of federal programs, Social Security.

The retirement program itself seems assured of solvency for the foreseeable future, thanks to the \$165-billion rescue package signed into law last year. And while the system is self-contained (it is financed by a designated payroll tax), reports *National Journal* correspondent Demkovich, its outlays and revenues are counted in federal budget totals. (In 1992, Social Security will be separated out of the budget.) Trimming its expenditures—\$180 billion, or 20 percent of Washington's spending in 1984—would thus reduce federal red ink during the present crisis.

A look at the options illustrates why the system is such a juicy target. A one-year freeze on its annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), for example, would save \$15 billion in 1985 alone. By reducing the base from which future COLAs are calculated, it would also save some \$20 billion annually thereafter.

Tinkering with the COLA, however, would hurt the poorest recipients most: Elderly individuals who live alone and are in the bottom fifth of the U.S. income scale will have an average income of only \$3,600 this year, \$2,600 of it from Social Security. That makes another plan attractive: If half of *every* recipient's benefits were subject to the federal income tax, the poor would pay virtually nothing. Such a tax would reap \$6.5 billion in general revenues in 1985. (Well-to-do retirees will pay such a tax this year as a result of the 1983 rescue package.)

Taxation and COLAs offer the quickest savings, Demkovich says, and are thus most apt to get serious attention after the November elections. But more far-reaching "reforms" are also possible. Treasury Secretary

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Donald T. Regan has wondered aloud whether Social Security might be converted to a "means tested" program, with benefits available only to the needy. The Brookings Institution backs a five-percent cut in the benefits paid new retirees, which would reduce later COLA costs as well.

Social Security's 36 million beneficiaries (not to mention younger folk) may not like such medicine, Demkovich concludes, but making a serious dent in a federal budget deficit edging up to \$200 billion a year may require it.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Democratic Vistas

"Will More Countries Become Democracies?" by Samuel P. Huntington, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1984), 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-0148.

Democracy has planted new flags in recent years, notably in Spain, Argentina, and Greece. But Huntington, a Harvard political scientist, is not optimistic about the overall prospects for the spread of representative government.

For more than a century after the American Revolution, democracy was on the rise around the world. Its momentum faltered around 1920, only to revive between 1942 and 1953, in part because the victorious World War II allies imposed it on the defeated powers. Ever since, however, there has been no clear trend. In January 1984, 36 percent of the world's population lived in "free" states, from Denmark to Trinidad and Tobago—no more, no less than 10 years before.

Some political scientists link the rise of democracy to increasing national wealth: As developing states reach a certain level of affluence, they seem simply to outgrow their (usually authoritarian) political institutions. Members of the political elite are thus forced to choose new institutions. In 1981, 21 countries stood within this "transition zone" of economic development. (Among them: Chile, Yugoslavia, Iran.) But democracy is not the inevitable result: In most cases, transition nations face a choice between democracy and communism. In 1981, every country that had passed through the "transition zone" and achieved a per capita gross national product of at least \$4,220 (with the exception of the small Arab oil exporting nations and Singapore) fell into one camp or the other.

Ironically, democracy must, in Huntington's view, be established from the top down, by political leaders, businessmen, and the middle class. "The passionate dissidents from authoritarian rule and the crusaders for democratic principles, the Tom Paines of this world, do not create democratic institutions; that requires James Madisons." Revolutionaries may *call* for democracy, but once in power "almost all turn out to be authoritarian themselves."

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Islamic traditions in the Middle East, dire poverty in black Africa, and Moscow's firm grip on Eastern Europe dim democratic prospects in these regions, Huntington believes. He is more optimistic about Latin America (notably Brazil), where "cultural traditions, levels of economic development, previous democratic experience, social pluralism, and elite desires to emulate European and North American models all favor movement toward democracy." The prosperous industrializing countries of East Asia—South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore—may also move in a democratic direction, despite hostile religious and cultural influences.

Huntington says that, in general, "the limits of democratic development in the world may well have been reached." Even so, by promoting economic development and free-market economies and by increasing its influence in world affairs, the United States may be able to aid the democratic cause.

Nurturing Ties To Moscow

"Why Trust the Soviets?" by Richard J. Barnet, in *World Policy Journal* (Spring 1984), World Policy Institute, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Distrust and ill will have poisoned relations between the United States and the Soviet Union since the late 1970s. Yet "it is a dangerous delusion to believe that we are not already trusting the Soviet Union," warns Barnet, a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.

"No less than arms control," he writes, "the arms race is a system based on *faith*—faith that human nature works in the way that deterrence theorists say it does, faith that deterrence itself should be credited with preventing war." In short, U.S. policy-makers are trusting Moscow to act in certain ways. A new kind of trust, he says, is needed to halt a "slide toward war."

To be sure, today's rivalry has real causes: Each side sees the other as an "expansionist" power, but views its own behavior as "defensive." Adding to the enmity is American disillusionment with the détente of the 1970s. But Barnet contends that détente was oversold by U.S. politicians: Moscow never agreed to end its arms build-up or to curb its role in the Third World; the Kremlin agreed only to "manage" the arms race. Building real trust would mean going far beyond détente-style policies.

The most likely source of conflict is the Third World. Yet both superpowers have suffered sharp setbacks there over the years—the United States in Iran and Vietnam, the Soviets in Egypt, Somalia, China. The cost of trying to control events in such nations has become "prohibitive," argues Barnet. By pledging to keep U.S. and Soviet arms and forces out of the Third World, the two powers could reduce the potential for conflict. Eventually, in Barnet's view, they would also need to abandon all military bases beyond their own borders.

It makes little sense for the United States to treat the Soviet Union like a second-rate power by excluding it from Middle East peace talks or attacking it with "poisonous rhetoric" that feeds the Kremlin's paranoia.

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American advocates of "linkage" oppose arms control talks with Moscow until the Soviets curb their expansionist policies.

Barnet writes: "Until Soviet leaders feel secure enough to permit greater diversity in Eastern Europe . . . and even within the Soviet Union itself, Soviet society will remain militarized to a degree that is incompatible with a normal relationship with the United States."

"Around the world," Barnet concludes, "even in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, the avoidance of nuclear war has become a popular political issue that can no longer be easily manipulated by governments." This ground swell of public opinion, along with the high cost of the arms race, opens the door to a "historic" transformation of U.S.– Soviet relations.

| Creating Two New |
|------------------|
| Superpowers |

"Europe's Nuclear Superpowers" by George M. Seignious II and Jonathan Paul Yates, in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1984), P.O. Box 984, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

Talk of the nuclear "superpowers" brings just two countries to mind, the United States and the Soviet Union. But they may be joined by two more nations during the 1990s.

According to Seignious and Yates, retired Army general and U.S. Senate

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aide, respectively, arms build-ups now planned by Great Britain and France could make them nuclear powers of the first rank—and pose nearly as much of a challenge to Washington as to Moscow.

Both of these U.S. allies already maintain small nuclear forces: a combined total of 300 warheads in land- and submarine-based missiles. Moscow's installation of new SS-20 missiles targeted on Western Europe and European doubts about Washington's commitment to defend the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at all costs prompted the Anglo-French plans. During the next 20 years, Great Britain plans to spend \$20 billion and France \$30 billion to modernize and expand these forces to a total 1,200 warheads.

Yet, the authors argue, the dynamics of the arms race assure "that Soviet strategic concerns will soon become American strategic concerns." The twin build-ups will mean more missiles beyond Washington's control, will complicate NATO efforts to unify military commands, and will probably trigger another Soviet arms-buying spree. Paris and London, meanwhile, are sure to skimp on allimportant conventional forces to help finance their new nuclear arms. France already plans to cut its total troop strength (290,000) by 35,000 over the next five years.

France and Great Britain both have been "standoffish" about participating in future Soviet-American arms control talks, say the authors. Washington should encourage them to participate. The *prospect* of large European nuclear arsenals would be a valuable bargaining chip at East-West arms control talks; actually creating such arsenals could cause as many problems as it might solve.

ECONOMICS, LABOR, & BUSINESS

Examining U.S. Trade Deficits

"The American Trade Deficit in Perspective" by Arthur F. Burns, in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1984), P.O. Box 2515, Boulder, Colo. 80321.

America's foreign trade deficit will probably reach a record \$100 billion this year. It is a problem worth worrying about, writes Burns, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and now U.S. ambassador to West Germany, but not for the reasons most analysts cite.

The United States enjoyed foreign-trade surpluses for most of the years after World War II, until rising oil prices and stiffer overseas competition began during the early 1970s. By the end of the decade, annual trade deficits of about \$30 billion were routine. Such figures, however, measure only trade in goods. Offsetting surpluses from other branches of international commerce, notably services (e.g., engineering, banking) and income from overseas investments, kept total U.S. accounts in the black. No longer. This year, the U.S. "current account" will probably be \$70 to \$80 billion in deficit.

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Burns warns against alarmism. The impact of U.S. industrial decline and of "unfair" competition from overseas has been vastly exaggerated, he contends. There are more important factors. A postrecession recovery has lifted the U.S. economy much faster than those of our biggest trading partners, especially those in Western Europe. Moreover, the strong dollar makes American goods extra costly to buyers overseas, foreign merchandise cheaper at home: Between 1980 and 1984, the dollar appreciated by 50 percent against the currencies of 10 major world-trade nations. Third, the international debt crisis has forced many loan-burdened Third World nations to slash imports. Latin American orders for U.S. goods, for example, dropped by 50 percent between 1981 and 1983.

The circumstances behind today's trade imbalance are far from permanent, Burns asserts. And there are already signs that the international economy is beginning to correct itself—the dollar has declined somewhat, Latin America's import cuts have ceased. Nevertheless, he favors reduced U.S. interest rates to tide over heavily indebted Third World nations.

Burns is skeptical of other calls to action. Many U.S. industries (notably steel) that are clamoring for protectionist legislation, for example, are suffering not from "unfair" foreign competition but from worldwide overproduction of their product. And while massive U.S. government budget deficits contribute to the strong dollar and steep interest rates around the world, Burns believes that they are not the only cause.



Alarm over U.S. trade deficits flares periodically: This cartoon lamenting Americans' appetite for imported goods dates from 1978.

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West Europeans and others are bidding up the dollar and interest rates because they have little faith that their own governments will adopt economic policies that make investing at home as attractive as investing capital in the United States.

Why You Can't Afford a House "Structuring the Future" by George Sternlieb and James W. Hughes, in Society (Mar.-Apr. 1984), Box A, Rutgers— The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

By 1980, an American home-buying binge that had lasted nearly 50 years had come to an end. But Sternlieb and Hughes, both urbanplanning specialists at Rutgers, warn of the dangers of letting the American dream of home ownership die.

The foundations for the 50-year spree were laid during the New Deal. The federal government, by offering insurance on both deposits and mortgages, fostered the growth of local savings-and-loan banks that issued low-interest home loans. Typical pre–New Deal home mortgages ran for five years and bore interest rates of up to 20 percent; after the 1930s, the normal term was 20 years, and interest was as low as five percent. The results were dramatic. In 1940, only 44 percent of all American households held title to their homes. In 1979, the homeownership rate reached 65.4 percent.

But that may have been the peak. Home ownership has since declined slightly. The authors blame both persistent high interest rates and the Carter administration's decision to "deregulate" the banking industry. Once savings-and-loan institutions were allowed to offer competitive interest rates to depositors, they were forced to charge borrowers more as well. The result: Home buyers now compete with Fortune 500 corporations, among others, for a single pool of credit. Today's mortgage terms are not much better than those of the 1920s. "We have reinvented the housing equivalent of the Dark Ages," the authors contend.

Complicating matters is a new "postshelter mentality" that took root during the 1970s. Housing "became much more important as a form of investment, of forced savings (and tax savings), and as a refuge from inflation than as a refuge from the elements." Builders and contractors began catering to "up-scale" buyers looking for sound investments. Left in the lurch were first-time home buyers of limited means.

For the last 50 years, home ownership has served as the "glue" of the American system. It is the reward that middle-class Americans feel that they deserve for maintaining the "work and thrift habits of yore." To ensure long-term social harmony, Sternlieb and Hughes argue, Washington must take steps to make housing affordable again.

One step would be allowing first-time home buyers to use their taxsheltered Individual Retirement Accounts, now largely untouchable until retirement, to finance home purchases. The authors also urge a federal attack on the building code "red tape" and local zoning regulations that make low-cost housing so hard to build.

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The Fiscal Policy Of the States "State and Local Governments: An Assessment of their Financial Position and Fiscal Policies" by Peter D. Skaperdas, in *Federal Reserve Bank of New York Quarterly Review* (Winter 1983/84), 33 Liberty St., New York, N.Y. 10045.

Most economists' eyes now are on the river of budgetary red ink gushing from Washington, D.C. Forgotten is the fiscal importance of America's state and local governments.

In 1983, their combined outlays totaled \$430 billion, as compared to Washington's \$796 billion, notes Skaperdas, a New York Federal Reserve Bank economist. While the federal government ran up a \$195 billion deficit that year, its state and local counterparts registered a \$15 billion surplus (and will probably do far better this year).

Historically, state and local governments have functioned as one of the nation's major economic "shock absorbers." Their spending for schools and roads cushions economic downturns; in boom times, they help curb inflation by raising taxes to rebuild their budget surpluses. Now, however, there are signs that this old pattern may not hold up.

Now, however, there are signs that this old pattern may not hold up. During the "tax-revolt" years of 1978–80, 32 states cut taxes. Total state and local government outlays dropped just as the nation was entering the 1980 recession. A second economic downturn in 1981–82 occurred as 26 states were enacting big tax *increases* needed to keep their budgets balanced. Their purchases of goods and services, however, rose by only \$.2 billion, not enough to stimulate the national economy. (The Reagan tax cuts amounted to \$39 billion during the 1981–82 recession, but state and local tax increases offset 37 percent of the reductions.) Today, the state and local governments' combined budget surplus is

Today, the state and local governments' combined budget surplus is at an all-time high: Taxes (as a percentage of personal income) are steeper than they have been in years while outlays (as a percentage of gross national product) are at a 21-year low. A similar combination spurred the tax revolt of the 1970s, Skaperdas recalls. His guess is that the state and local surpluses that now partially offset federal red ink are not likely to last much longer.

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Paying More for Medical Care "The Monetarization of Medical Care" by Eli Ginzberg, in *The New England Journal of Medicine* (May 3, 1984), 1440 Main St., P.O. Box 9140, Waltham, Mass. 02254-9140.

Next to the legendary "military-industrial" complex, make room for the "medical-industrial" complex.

According to Ginzberg, who teaches at Columbia University, Americans' outlays for health care grew from 4.5 percent of the gross

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national product in 1950 to 10.5 percent (or \$322 billion) in 1982. On a per capita basis, that amounts to a fivefold increase (in constant dollars). He blames the cost explosion on the rapid "monetarization" of medical care.

Before World War II, medicine in the United States was "quasieleemosynary": Hospitals relied heavily on charitable donations, young interns worked at hospitals in return for their room and board, and physicians who sought admitting privileges at a prestigious hospital were required to work without pay in its clinics for several half days a week. Even staff doctors were expected to "volunteer" in this way. After the war, all that began to change due to rising U.S. affluence, the spread of private medical insurance, and (in 1965) the creation of federal Medicaid and Medicare.

With more revenue and fewer bad debts, hospitals were able to raise the salaries of nurses and other staff people; at the same time they reduced their reliance on nuns and volunteers. As doctors found it easier to earn good livelihoods, Ginzberg writes, "they curtailed their hours of work and particularly the amount of time that they donated to hospitals for the care of the poor." (No small contributing factor was the cost of maintaining a medical practice: for a New York City neurosurgeon, about \$70,000 yearly for malpractice insurance and \$80,000 for rent and other expenses in 1984.) Gradually, medical care has entered the "money economy."

Monetarization set the stage for the rapid growth of profit-making hospital chains after 1970, Ginzberg says. These new hospital-businesses, unlike their nonprofit competitors, cater to well-insured patients to the exclusion of the less well-off and otherwise seek to maximize income.

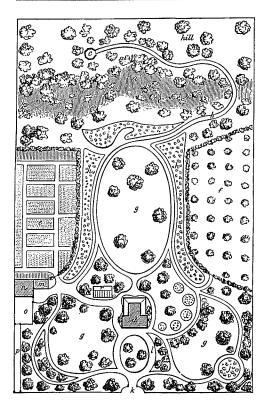
Nonprofit hospitals are being forced to follow suit just to stay alive. But Ginzberg argues that the United States cannot afford more runaway health costs. He lauds Congress for imposing limits last year on how much hospitals can collect from Medicare for certain kinds of services. Curbing financial opportunities for health-care providers, he believes, will give Americans their best chance for quality treatment whose cost will not bleed them to death.

The Moral Value Of Gardening "The Moral Dimensions of Horticulture in Antebellum America" by Tamara Plakins Thornton, in *The New England Quarterly* (Mar. 1984), Merserve Hall, 243 Northeastern University, Boston, Mass. 02115.

Early in the 19th century, Boston's wealthy merchants, manufacturers, and lawyers suddenly discovered the joys of gardening. For them, the cultivation of fruits and vegetables was more than a pleasant pastime. It was a moral act, writes Thornton, a Yale historian.

To the Boston elite (and, eventually, to other well-heeled Americans), horticulture was a balm for anxieties about their role in America's tran-

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Horticulture's importance is evident in landscape-architect Andrew Jackson Downing's 1842 plan for a two-acre homestead. The lawn (center) is flanked by a sizable vegetable garden (right) and an orchard.

sition from a land of yeoman farmers and small shopkeepers to a commercial society governed by materialistic impulses. So long as the "mind is absorbed at the shrine of Mammon," warned the journal of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in the 1840s, the products of horticulture will be "neglected or despised." Businessmen, eager to show their appreciation of the finer things in life, repaired to their gardens on Saturdays, where they cultivated the old virtues along with their apples, peaches, and pears.

The gardening craze did have its critics. Some writers denounced it as "antirepublican," because of its historical association with the landed aristocracy. But defenders of horticulture, such as landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing, replied that it had the practical value of improving plant breeds. Indeed, the new back-yard gardeners generally avoided the cultivation of flowers as too frivolous. Fruits were preferred.

Downing and his fellow true believers made some ambitious claims for horticulture. Because it offered a "pleasant alternative to the dramshop," Thornton writes, it was thought to encourage temperance. In 1848, Downing pointed to "the rapid increase of taste for ornamental

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gardening and rural embellishment" as evidence of America's growing refinement. He also saw it as an antidote to the characteristically American "spirit of unrest": Growing plants in a way encouraged men to put down their own roots.

Between 1818 and 1857, some 40 horticultural societies had sprung up in towns and cities across the youthful republic. It might be said that the gardening movement bloomed—and has never withered.

A Failing Grade For Colleges "Trying Higher Education: An Eight Count Indictment" by Chester E. Finn, Jr., in *Change* (May-June 1984), 4000 Albemarle St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

The recent flurry of published outcries over the sorry performance of the nation's public schools has left America's 2,013 four-year colleges and universities largely unscathed. It is only "a matter of time" before that oversight is corrected, predicts Finn, who teaches at Vanderbilt University, and a "huge ruckus" erupts. He will be among the first to stand up and cheer.

Finn contends that America's colleges must share the blame for the defects of the public schools: They train the schools' teachers and happily accept their mediocre graduates.

Partly because the pool of college-age youths is shrinking, "Our colleges will do practically anything to lure warm, tuition-paying bodies into their classrooms," Finn asserts, and "practically anything to hold onto them"—from supplying such amenities as bowling alleys and psychological counseling to "individualizing" instruction so that students can avoid required courses. Grade inflation further eases the pain. A University of California study found that the percentage of "A" grades awarded by the faculty doubled between 1963 and 1974.

The universities are ill equipped to cure such decadence, Finn believes. Most university presidents stick to fund raising and alumni relations, leaving academic affairs in the hands of faculty committees. Change will be slow in coming without strong, centralized leadership.

Finn has few kind words for his fellow professors. Of the 850,000 fulland part-time teachers in U.S. higher education, he speculates, only about 10 percent contribute materially to the "enlargement of human knowledge." Few are "workaholics." None punch time clocks. A fulltime professor typically teaches only three courses per semester, involving at most some 22 hours of classroom and office work, according to Finn. Some spend additional hours on faculty committees, which he dismisses as largely unnecessary. And faculty pay averages \$28,509—not bad for a nine-month year of "flex-time."

America's university educators must be made more accountable, Finn argues. Needed is a set of common measures to gauge the performance of individual students and, thereby, of the institutions charged with their education. If academe does not heal itself, he warns, the public is likely to apply "some very painful therapies."

PRESS & TELEVISION

How TV Covered The Vietnam War

"The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media" by Daniel C. Hallin, in *The Journal of Politics* (Feb. 1984), Dept. of Political Science, Univ. of Fla., Gainesville, Fla. 32611.

American television journalists turned against the U.S. government during the 1960s, "lost" the war in Vietnam, and have been systematically undermining public trust in American institutions ever since.

That view enjoys wide currency today. But Hallin, a political scientist at the University of California at San Diego, found little support for it in a survey of 779 TV network news reports on the war broadcast between August 1965 and the January 1973 cease-fire.

Hallin did find marked changes in TV news coverage of the war after the Communists' surprise 1968 Tet Offensive—a costly military setback for Hanoi but a key victory in its psychological war with Washington. Before Tet, for example, positive TV news assessments of U.S. prospects in Vietnam outnumbered negative ones by 10 to 1; afterward, the ratio was roughly 1 to 1. But, overall, such editorializing by TV newsmen was rare: Only eight percent of the news stories that Hallin surveyed contained any discernable commentary at all.

There was also a shift in the *kinds* of stories that TV producers put on the screen. After Tet, morale problems among U.S. troops and dissent at home began to receive much more attention. In part, Hallin suggests, the television newscasts were simply "mirroring" fresh developments,



The impact of Tet: A front-page editorial in the Washington Daily News described the "bold, massive" offensive as "a shocker."

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not challenging Washington's policies. And in fact, TV reporters preparing stories on the Vietnam War (excluding antiwar protest in the United States) relied just as heavily on government spokesmen after Tet as they had earlier and rarely questioned their reliability.

Beyond mirroring changing events, Hallin contends, newsmen reflected the dissolution of consensus, particularly among national leaders, behind the U.S. war effort. As Max Frankel of the *New York Times* explained: "As protest moved from the left groups, the antiwar groups, into the pulpits, into the Senate . . . it naturally picked up coverage. . . . Because we're an Establishment institution, and whenever your natural constituency changes, then naturally you will too." Indeed, in Hallin's sample of TV news segments on domestic dissent after Tet, 49 percent of *all* criticisms of U.S. policy were attributed to public officials, chiefly U.S. senators and congressmen.

In sum, Hallin argues, television coverage of Vietnam changed not because newsmen were suddenly at odds with their government, but because the nation's political leadership itself was increasingly divided.

The Woes of The Black Press "The Black Press: A Victim of Its Own Crusade?" by Courtland Milloy, in *The Washington Journalism Review* (June 1984), 2233 Wisconsin Ave: N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

During much of its history, the greatest preoccupation of the black press was the fight for civil rights. Now, the economics of survival is foremost in the minds of black publishers.

"Since the first black newspapers appeared on the scene in 1827," reports *Washington Post* columnist Milloy, "more than 4,000 have been published. Only 300 exist today, with an estimated combined circulation of about six million." Only three cities (New York, Chicago, and Atlanta) sustain daily black newspapers; many notable black papers are weeklies or biweeklies, such as the weekly *New York Amsterdam News* (circulation: 90,000). The majority of the papers are "service publications" that feature local news and personalities and are given away free at supermarkets and drugstores.

The future of black newspapers is in doubt because their combined advertising revenues are slim—about \$3 million annually, or just 15 percent of all advertising dollars collected by the black communications media. Milloy explains: "It is the top 20 percent of the black population—white-collar blacks earning \$40,000 and up—that accounts for 45 percent of the total black income, and more than half of that segment shows little interest in black news publications." Advertisers look to black radio, magazines, and other media to reach these prime customers. (Thanks partly to the civil-rights gains that the black newspapers helped bring about, white-owned dailies now give much more coverage to blacks.)

Some black publishing executives believe there is still a need for a national black newspaper. The much-praised *National Leader*, a weekly launched in 1982, folded last February for lack of advertising revenues after achieving a circulation of 40,000 nationwide. But its former publisher, Claude Lewis, believes that a successor will arise once more major advertisers are persuaded that there is still a distinctive black market.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Is There a Right To Height? "Short Children, Anxious Parents: Is Growth Hormone the Answer?" by Martin Benjamin, James Muyskens, and Paul Saenger, in *The Hastings Center Report* (Apr. 1984), 360 Broadway, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. 10706.

Americans routinely turn the latest tools of medicine into instruments of vanity. Indeed, some doctors have become virtual sculptors, performing cosmetic face-lifts, hair transplants, and orthodontic work. Soon, thanks to laboratory genetic technology, they will also be able to control children's height.

Human growth hormone (hGH) has long been available in limited quantities from human cadavers. But pharmaceutical companies can now make large batches of the hormone artificially, report Benjamin and Muyskens, philosophers at Michigan State University and Hunter College, respectively, and Montefiore Medical Center's Saenger. Once Washington gives its approval, hGH will be widely available.

That is good news for children who suffer from hGH deficiency. But only 10 percent of abnormally short children do. Delayed growth, genetic make-up, psychological stress, and other factors account for the remaining cases. The new technology will make hGH available to these children, as well as to youngsters who may be short, but not abnormally so. Inevitably, the authors warn, doctors will have to decide whether to prescribe hGH for cosmetic or other nonmedical purposes (e.g., to ensure that a child will be tall enough to play college basketball).

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that physicians limit hGH treatment to children deficient in the hormone. But the authors suggest that other uses may be legitimate. The practice of medicine has never been limited simply to remedying ill health: For example, doctors provide therapy for "tennis elbow" and the like. Moreover, research suggests that shortness can be a professional disadvantage to adults trying to get ahead in the work world.

Still, the authors favor a cautious approach. Pediatricians are sure to encounter parents who demand treatment that is not in the best interests of their child; the youngster would receive painful intramuscular injections three times a week for a minimum of one year and might suffer harmful side effects. Physicians should not forget that "those who run the risks are young children."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Reviving American Philosophy

"On Goodman, Putnam, and Rorty: The Return to the 'Given'" by Mark Lilla, in *Partisan Review* (no. 2, 1984), 121 Bay State Rd., Boston, Mass. 02215.

Since the turn of the century, philosophers in the United States and Great Britain have been preoccupied with increasingly esoteric studies of language. In the process, they have become "peripheral to American intellectual life," writes Lilla, executive editor of the *Public Interest*. But he sees signs of a "postmodern" revival in American philosophy.

Anglo-American philosophers first focused their attention on language under the influence of logical positivists Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The two thinkers argued that there is a single reality; understanding it is largely a matter of devising accurate descriptions of it. Improving accuracy became philosophers' chief task—one that led them to concentrate on methodology and to write ever more arcane treatises, often in mathematical jargon.

Three American postmodern philosophers—Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam of Harvard, the University of Virginia's Richard Rorty—are leading the way back to consideration of such "eternal questions" as the meaning of art or human morality, writes Lilla.

Not that they are complete traditionalists. In his *Ways of World-making* (1978), Goodman argues that there is not one reality; there are many. But they stop far short of the position staked out by Michel Foucault and others, who turn the Russell-Wittgenstein thesis on its head by arguing that language *creates* different realities. No, say the Americans, there may be different realities, but language unifies them. Language is needed to describe every reality; and, as Putnam writes, "Using any word . . . involves one in a history, a tradition."

What makes the trio distinctly American is their rejection of European hyperrationalism and nihilism, their pragmatic recognition of the importance of "the given." But Lilla believes that they have been too busy refuting the old philosophy to focus on the new. What they do next will determine whether American philosophy begins to matter again.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Pros and Cons Of Sex in Plants "The Flowering of Sex" by G. Ledyard Stebbins, in *The Sciences* (May-June 1984), 2 East 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Is Sex Necessary? asked humorists James Thurber and E. B. White in the title of their 1929 book. The question is not as silly as it seems, writes Stebbins, a University of California, Davis, geneticist.

Nature has gone to remarkable lengths to "make sex work," he observes. In northern Africa, an orchid of the genus Ophrys "looks and

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smells remarkably like a female bee"—an elaborate stratagem that ensures that male bees will be dusted with pollen and carry it to other orchids. But the tenacious dandelion is another story. Though the dandelion grows bright flowers inviting to bees and produces pollen, these are sterile vestiges of an earlier time when the weed reproduced sexually. Today's dandelions reproduce by asexual parthenogenesis: Each seed will grow, without being fertilized, into an exact genetic copy of its parent plant.

Sex has some obvious advantages. For a species adapting to a changing environment, "the myriad natural variations that sex produces can spell the difference between success and failure, survival and extinction." The chief disadvantage of sex is uncertainty. Because male and female each contribute half of their offspring's genes, the result can be the worst of both worlds—an individual inferior to both of its parents.

A few plant and animal species have resolved the dilemma by relying on two means of reproduction. A single strawberry plant, for example, can take over an entire meadow by reproducing asexually—the plant sends out runners (called "stolons") that put down roots and then send out more runners. And yet, strawberries also flower and form seeds that are spread much farther afield than runners.

Aphids, coral polyps (whose shells form coral reefs in the tropics), and rust fungi are among the many organisms that fluctuate between sexual and asexual reproduction. And in general, there is a pattern to the changes, notes Stebbins. "As long as the environment is favorable, they reproduce asexually, multiplying greatly those genetic plans that have already proved themselves fit." But once they saturate their habitats or if their environment changes radically, they reproduce sexually, assuring that the next generation will be different and, thus, will have a better chance of survival.

For thousands of plant species, then, sex is only necessary *sometimes*. Most animals, however, cannot escape it. The reasons are unclear. More complex than plants, animals may be more susceptible to harmful mutations, Stebbins speculates. Sex may be the device by which mistakes are erased, since, in most cases, both parents must possess a genetic blemish to pass it on to their offspring.

Where Computers Fear To Tread

"Synthesizing Chemicals by Computer" by James B. Hendrickson, in *Technology Review* (Apr. 1984), Room 10-140, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

It is easy for laymen to imagine that scientists everywhere are rushing headlong to computerize their laboratories. A few scientists, however, are still unenthusiastic about computers.

The holdouts are organic chemists, writes Hendrickson, himself a chemist at Brandeis. Since the mid-19th century, they have created some eight million compounds, of which perhaps 500,000 have found practical uses—all without the aid of computers. The chemists have

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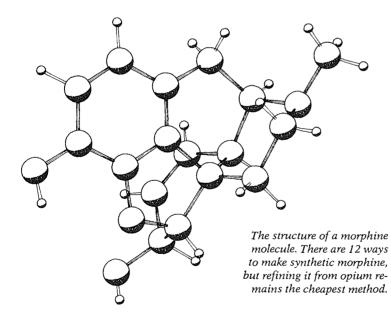
replicated natural material, such as quinine and indigo, and created entirely new substances, such as aspirin, Novocain, and Valium. The color mauve did not exist before organic chemists cooked it up in the laboratory during the 1890s. It was an instant fashion sensation. Indeed, Hendrickson and his colleagues have created innumerable hues never seen before.

Making new chemicals is akin to an art, he says, and organic chemists are "jealous of their intuitive understanding of synthesis."

To create a chemical compound, the scientist must first decide upon the correct atomic formula. (To invent one useful new drug, a chemist may have to create and "audition" up to 10,000 useless compounds.) Then he must imagine the molecular structure in three dimensions. The formula for rubbing alcohol (C_3H_8O), for example, is the same as that for two other liquids—only the shape of the molecules is different.

But the hardest part of the chemist's job is figuring out how to make the new molecule. Usually, it must be built step by step through a series of chemical reactions. The chemist thinks the problem through backward: "Each product along the route back [from the new substance] can be seen as the result of several possible reactions, each of which means using different molecules one step earlier along the chain. The possibilities multiply spectacularly as chemists push back to reactions that involve simple starting compounds."

The more steps, the more room for error. The chemist's challenge is to pick from hundreds of possibilities the right reaction.



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Computers may someday speed the art of synthesis, but so far they have helped little. The three-dimensional world of the organic chemist is hard to translate into the binary language of computers. And while a computer can list all the choices facing the scientist at each step of the way in building a new chemical, the scientist must still decide which offers the best chance of success. Hendrickson himself is working on computerized chemistry, but he doubts that much progress will be made until more of his colleagues "soften their resistance" and help develop a new computer technology appropriate to their unusual needs.

Inventing Plastic

"The Development of Plastics" by Herman F. Mark, in *American Scientist* (Mar.-Apr. 1984), P.O. Box 2889, Clinton, Iowa 52735.

Nearly everything in the industrialized world seems to be made of plastic or at least to contain some of it. Yet it was only a few decades ago that scientists began to understand this remarkable material.

As is so often the case with great discoveries, writes Mark, Dean Emeritus of the Polytechnic Institute of New York, plastic was first created by accident. In 1846, Swiss chemist Christian Schoenbein used his wife's apron to mop up some acids he had spilled and hung it in front of a hot stove to dry, whereupon it flared up and disappeared. Schoenbein had discovered cellulose nitrate. Others were quick to apply his finding to the manufacture of, among other things, explosives. A second step came in 1907, when chemist Leo H. Baekeland, an American, made the first plastic molecule that was entirely new, not a derivative of cellulose. "Bakelite" was soon used to make everything from billiard balls to gramophone disks.

But scientists did not begin to understand the chemistry of plastics until Germany's Herman Staudinger suggested in 1920 that "polymers," which include plastics, as well as wool, wood, and silk, were distinguished by the huge size of their molecules. One prominent chemist of the day objected that it was like being told that "somewhere in Africa an elephant was found that was 1,500 feet long and 300 feet high." In 1953, however, Staudinger received a Nobel Prize for his work.

Gradually, scientists have come to understand the structure of plastics: They are long chains of atoms. In their natural state, the chains are a more or less useless jumble. But they can be shaped in two ways to produce useful materials.

One way is to cause "crystallization" by applying mechanical force: The chains form themselves into relatively straight bundles, linked together by weak atomic bonds. The more crystallized a plastic is, the harder it is. Thus, the nylon in a fishing line is about 90 percent crystallized, the nylon in women's lingerie only 20 to 30 percent.

"Cross-linking" is the second treatment for plastics. It involves the formation of very strong chemical bonds between the "macromolecules." A plastic with the hardness of a television cabinet, for example, has far more chemical bonds between molecules than does the plastic of a surgeon's gloves.

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Plastic manufacturing is now a \$23 billion-a-year business in the United States. Mark foresees the application of plastics to ever more specialized uses—as wire-like electrical conductors, or as ingredients in replacement bones and arteries for humans.

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Gauging the Need For Electricity "Lights Out in the Year 2000?—It Depends on Whose Forecast You Believe" by Rochelle L. Stanfield, in *National Journal* (Apr. 14, 1984), 1730 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Americans take electricity almost as much for granted as they do the air they breathe. "Flick the switch," says *National Journal* correspondent Stanfield, "and the lights are sure to go on." But in Washington and at utility company headquarters around the country, specialists are debating how to ensure that the lights will still go on during the next century.

The problem: Nobody agrees on how much electricity will be needed. In a 1983 study, the U.S. Department of Energy predicted a dramatic increase in consumer demand for electricity by the year 2000 and recommended a \$1.8 trillion building program to nearly double the nation's generating capacity. But environmentalists and "public interest" consumer groups say that the hundreds of new nuclear and coal-fired power plants called for would be too costly and too dirty. They point to a 1983 study by the Congressional Research Service. It concludes that sharp increases in energy conservation would eliminate the need for *any* new power plants.

Cautious utility company executives are caught in the middle. Prior to the 1973 Arab oil embargo and subsequent price increases by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), utilities could count on about seven percent annual growth in demand for electricity and plan expansion accordingly. But after 1973, homeowners and industry cut back sharply on electricity use. Since 1972, America's power companies have canceled earlier plans to build 143 new nuclear-, oil-, and coal-powered generating plants, but plans for many other new plants have not been shelved. U.S. power companies are now capable of generating "half again as much power as the 20 percent cushion above demand considered to be a prudent reserve."

Future demand for electricity is "notoriously hard to forecast," notes Stanfield. During the 1970s, demand grew by about 2.5 percent annually. But last year it jumped by 5.5 percent. The utilities, once burned, are reluctant to embark on an ambitious expansion program. Says Stanfield, "Most experts still foresee an excess of electric capacity."

The utilities' luck has not been all bad, Stanfield adds. The mistakes of the 1970s have left them with enough surplus generating capacity to provide a "grace period" before they have to make tough decisions about what to do next.

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Why Sell Off Public Lands? "The Fallacy of 'Privatization" by Carlisle Ford Runge, in *The Journal of Contemporary Studies* (Winter 1984), Transaction Periodicals Consortium, Dept. 541, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

The Reagan administration's efforts to "privatize" large tracts of federally owned land by auctioning it off to individuals and corporations strike some critics as a sellout to "special interests."

In fact, says Runge, a University of Minnesota economist, "privatization" is chiefly motivated by a new economic theory that aims to *end* such "deals." But he argues that the sales are misguided anyway; the theory behind them is flawed.

The theory is called the New Resource Economics. Its intellectual father is the late Garrett Hardin, who argued in a seminal 1968 essay called "The Tragedy of the Commons" that publicly owned land will always be abused. He blamed the phenomenon on what economists call "the freerider problem." Individuals have an incentive to overexploit things that are owned in common. For example, explains Runge, "There is always an incentive on common land to graze another head of cattle, regardless of the impact that this has on range quality [because] the benefits . . . are captured by the individual grazer while the costs of reduced range quality are spread across all those who share the commons."

There are two possible solutions. One is tight government regulation. But the New Resource economists argue that regulatory bureaucracies are costly and cater to organized interest groups. They believe that land (and the minerals and other resources it contains) is best managed by private owners. The reason: If owners abuse the land, they pay all the costs.

But the facts do not seem to support the theory, Runge observes. Government data on 217 million acres of federally owned rangeland and 433 million acres in private hands show that 68 percent of the public land and only 35 percent of the private acreage can be classified as in "fair" condition or better. (The remainder is in "poor" condition.) Ironically, Runge writes, backers of the New Resource Economics in

Ironically, Runge writes, backers of the New Resource Economics in the U.S. Department of the Interior who favor "privatization" as a way to curb the power of the federal bureaucracy have wound up forcing land sales over the objections of local residents, state and county governments, and even some of the supposed corporate beneficiaries.

A Fuel Cell in Your Future "The Procrastinator's Power Source" by Eliot Marshall, in *Science* (Apr. 20, 1984), 1515 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

What generates electricity but creates no significant pollution or noise and is efficient and relatively inexpensive? A fuel cell, says Marshall, a *Science* correspondent.

The fuel cell is a cousin of the battery and, he believes, "an environ-

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mental dream." Within its walls, hydrogen and oxygen react with an electrolyte (such as phosphoric acid) to produce electricity and two waste products, water and carbon dioxide. The hydrogen and oxygen are supplied, in most cases, by natural gas, but methanol or synthetic gas can also be used. The cells are enormously efficient. They capture about 40 percent of the energy in natural gas; conventional gas turbines, by contrast, achieve only 30 percent efficiency.

A fuel cell provided electricity and drinking water for the two U.S. astronauts who flew Gemini V in 1965, but there have been problems bringing the technology down to earth. A small demonstration plant in New York City is already a year late for start up thanks to a plague of technical troubles and what builders call "silly rigors" imposed by nervous local politicians. But a similar plant in Tokyo has been operating intermittently for a year with few problems.

The two companies involved in fuel cell production, Westinghouse and the United Technologies Corporation, believe that they will get all the kinks out by 1990. Since 1976, they have spent—along with participating utilities—some \$250 million in fuel cell research; the federal government has invested a like amount.

Fuel cells will never take the place of coal, oil, or nuclear power. The commercial cells planned for the 1990s will have a capacity of only about 7.5 megawatts: An average coal-fired generator supplies 100 times more power. Construction costs per kilowatt (\$850) are about the same for both kinds of generators. But with demand for electricity growing very slowly nationwide, Marshall says, fuel cells could be very valuable where small boosts in output are needed—unless they fail to shake the "lemon" label earned by the New York test plant.

ARTS & LETTERS

Photographing U.S. History "Brady's Portraits" by Alan Trachtenberg, in *The Yale Review* (Winter 1984), Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. 06520.

"When the history of American photography comes to be written," declared *Harper's Weekly* in 1863, "Brady, more than any other man, will be entitled to rank as its Father."

The magazine was referring, of course, to Mathew B. Brady, the famed Civil War era photographer. Brady was "neither an innovator nor a great artist" observes Trachtenberg, a Yale English teacher, but he deserved the *Harper's* accolade. Skill with a camera, sheer energy, and a dash of entrepreneurship helped him, but Trachtenberg believes that the key to Brady's success was his conception of the photographic portrait as "a vehicle of certain ideas and feelings important to the culture of his age."

Born in upstate New York in 1823 or 1824, Brady opened his first da-

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Brady's widely distributed picture of General Robert E. Lee, dignified in defeat after Appomattox, helped assure the Confederate general's place in history.

guerreotype studio in Manhattan in 1844. "From the first," he later explained, "I regarded myself as under obligation to my country to preserve the faces of its historic men and mothers." Brady was already a wealthy celebrity by the time the Civil War broke out. "His galleries, in New York and Washington, belonged with Barnum's American Museum as places not to be missed," writes Trachtenberg. (As early as the 1850s, failing eyesight apparently prevented Brady from actually taking many pictures on his own. He arranged the poses, lighting, and background; assistants snapped the actual photographs.)

Other photographers pursued the powerful and eminent of the day, but none were as successful as Brady. "To have been invited for a sitting by the impresario himself, 'the indefatigable Brady,' was a sure mark of distinction," Trachtenberg reports.

Unlike his modern-day successors, Brady "did not probe, did not try to lift the corner of a mask or to elicit an off-guard betrayal." He and most of his contemporaries believed that faces were "maps of character, of moral life, and so they expressed a *history* of behavior as well as innate qualities." Viewers could visit Brady's emporiums or buy his *Gallery of Illustrious Americans* (1850) to see and understand "a miniature symbolic America." Brady's pictures, Trachtenberg writes, showed the public "the *look* of the lofty, the famed, and the mighty." They also offered "a promise of transformation for everyone"—and in so doing provided a generation more confident than our own with its "idea of itself."

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Musicals Then and Now "Can't Stop the Musicals" by Dave Kehr, in *American Film* (May 1984), American Film Institute, Box 966, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

Although Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers might not consider them worthy of the name, three of Hollywood's most successful movies last year—*Flashdance, Staying Alive, Yentl*—were musicals. Movie musicals have changed drastically over the years, notes Kehr,

Movie musicals have changed drastically over the years, notes Kehr, film critic for the *Chicago Reader*. During the "golden age," from *Monte Carlo* in 1930 to *My Fair Lady* in 1964, the hallmark of the Hollywood musical was the sudden leap from a conventional story into a spectacular song and dance number—a form of escapism that provided the musicals' "deepest pleasure," says Kehr. The stars of these films could sing, dance, and act, helping to fuse all of the movies' elements.

Golden-age musicals were also the showcase for "Hollywood Magic"—the technical innovations and special effects that often awe audiences. Technicolor was introduced to the public in *La Cucaracha* (1934); Fred Astaire danced upside down in *Royal Wedding* (1951).

In 1964, the Beatles sang their way through their first movie, A Hard Day's Night, and musicals were never the same again. Rock music soundtracks posed a number of challenges to film-makers. Rock's rhythmic, nonmelodic character, its limited emotional range, and the monotony of rock dances such as the Twist all conspired against the musical's traditional format.

On top of all that, the Beatles' director, Richard Lester, had to work with four stars who could not dance. His solution to these problems was to rely on montage. The quick camera cuts and fragmentation supplied a sense of rhythm, energy, and exuberance akin to that of dance. The technique quickly became a staple of musicals. Montage, for example, allowed the makers of *Flashdance* to conceal the fact that a stand-in was used for most of star Jennifer Beals's dance scenes.

But montage also reflects some more fundamental changes. Contemporary musicals regularly feature singers who do not dance (Barbra Streisand in *Yentl*) or dancers who do not sing (John Travolta in *Staying Alive*). The characters these actors play are, in a sense, incomplete, not quite "at one" with the world. They are also alone: "The montage musical," Kehr argues, "produces not the romantic communion of a couple, but the isolated exaltation of a single person." *Yentl* ends when Streisand departs, alone, for America; Travolta in his film struts, solo, down Broadway.

Meanwhile, other film genres have encroached on the musical's old territory. Science-fiction films now hold the monopoly on special effects and other "Hollywood Magic"; comedies by the likes of Mel Brooks and Woody Allen frequently take the sudden surrealistic leap from reality.

Hollywood still produces a few musicals in the classic vein—Annie, At Long Last Love, Pennies from Heaven—but, says Kehr, they are growing "steadily more feeble."

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The Case of Sherlock Holmes "Sherlock Holmes, Order, and the Late-Victorian Mind" by Christopher Clausen, in *The Georgia Review* (Spring 1984), University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. 30602.

Sherlock Holmes surely would have enjoyed unraveling the mysteries of his own existence.

Starting with A Study in Scarlet, in 1887, author Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) made a career for his famous character that spanned three other novels and 56 short stories over 40 years. The Holmes canon covers so much ground, writes Clausen, who teaches at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, that it offers an "unrivaled and largely overlooked" record of evolving British social attitudes.

Holmes exemplifies the Victorian faith in scientific reason. "I am a brain, Watson," he announces to his faithful companion in "The Mazarin Stone," "The rest of me is a mere appendix." Indeed, writes Clausen, Holmes is "the sort of isolated intellectual who today would be called alienated: introverted, frighteningly analytical, and often cynical." When he is not wrapped up in a case, Holmes indulges in cocaine and morphine to combat his ennui.

Holmes's single-minded devotion to "the science of deduction" allows him to "serve as the guardian of a threatened society that his author means him to be." To the affluent classes of late-Victorian England, the specter of social upheaval loomed most immediately in violent crime. "The butler did it" was no joke to them, says Clausen, it was "a revealing fear."

"When all else has failed—and the police almost always fail in the Holmes stories—the isolated, disclassed genius is the one who saves the day." Holmes's cases reflect the paranoia of well-to-do Victorians: blackmail, illicit attempts to claim inheritances, labor union terrorism. And the Baker Street sleuth's clients are far from ordinary: They include Queen Victoria, a pope, and several prime ministers.

World War I brought an end to such Victorian preoccupations. Domestic crimes paled beside the horrors of war. Britain's real enemies were across the Channel; the Victorian faith in the ability of cool reason to triumph in human affairs lay in ruins.

Even Doyle sensed that Holmes was outmoded: The post-1914 tales are inferior, Clausen believes. Other authors created a new crop of sleuths, but none would take crime quite as seriously as the master did.

Opera's Fate

"Opera 1984: Dead or Alive?" by Samuel Lipman, in *The New Criterion* (Mar. 1984), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.

Operas today are being staged more often, and are attracting larger audiences, than ever before. Yet Lipman, publisher of the *New Criterion*, detects signs of decay amid all the vigor.

"At a time when there is new literature, new poetry, new visual art, new dance, and even (most wanly received, it is true) new music," he

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complains, "there just isn't much new opera to be seen." Among the 87 opera companies that make up OPERA America, opera's equivalent of a national trade association, the most frequently performed work during the 1981–82 season was Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*, written in 1851. Of the 47 operas that were performed at least 10 times during the season, only 13 were creations of the 20th century (and six of those were Puccini operas from the early 1900s).

A look at the 1983–84 production schedule of the OPERA America companies suggests that the situation is getting worse. Out of 263 planned presentations, 222 were written before 1930.

The companies reply that because of cuts in subsidies from the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), they cannot afford to take chances on modern works that might not draw large audiences. Lipman is skeptical: The NEA's grants to opera companies totaled only \$2 million in 1975, peaked at over \$6 million in 1981, and fell only to \$5 million in 1983.

But the NEA is responsible in another way for at least some of opera's ossification, he argues. In 1978, it lumped together its subsidies for opera and for more popularly oriented musical theater. Ever since, opera companies have had to contend with "arts bureaucrats" who often prefer lighter musicals. Lipman insists, however, that the opera companies themselves are most at fault. He says that it is the responsibility of the top companies, such as New York's Metropolitan Opera, to present new works regardless of how many people turn out to hear them.

The classic operas of Mozart, Verdi, and others are "treasures of civilization" and must be performed. But if newer works—e.g., Dominick Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire*, Roger Sessions's *Montezuma*—are not staged more often, opera itself could face eventual extinction.

OTHER NATIONS

Does Europe Still Exist?

"The Tragedy of Central Europe" by Milan Kundera, in *The New York Review of Books* (Apr. 26, 1984), P.O. Box 940, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

In November 1956, as Soviet troops moved in to suppress a rebellion in Budapest, the director of the Hungarian News Agency telexed a last message to the outside world: "We are going to die for Hungary and for Europe."

Sadly, most of those for whom his message was intended could not quite comprehend it, writes Czechoslovakian-born novelist Milan Kundera. To Western Europeans, Hungary and the other nations of Central Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania—had become part of the Soviet bloc after 1945. They had already "vanished from the map of the West." How could Hungarians choose to die for something to which they no longer belonged?

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In fact, says Kundera, the European continent had been naturally divided between East and West centuries before the Soviet "iron curtain" descended in 1945. Eastern Europe, which included Russia, was "anchored in Byzantium and the Orthodox Church," while Western Europe was "tied to ancient Rome and the Catholic Church." Kundera's homeland and its neighbors were clearly tied to the West. "After 1945," Kundera writes, "the border between the two Europes shifted several hundred kilometers to the west, and several nations . . . woke up to discover that they were now in the East."

Culturally, however, Central Europeans still considered themselves part of the West. As their native political institutions were stamped out, they clung ever more tenaciously to their culture, the culture of Europe. It is no coincidence, Kundera says, that the region's frequent anti-Soviet rebellions—the Hungarian uprising in 1956, Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring of 1968, and the Polish dissident outbreaks in 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1980—were sparked and nourished by an efflorescence in the arts. "The identity of a people and of a civilization is reflected and concentrated" in culture, Kundera writes. "If this identity is threatened with extinction, cultural life grows correspondingly more intense."

But even as culture was increasing in importance in captive Central Europe, it was declining in Western Europe. Indeed, Kundera believes, the mass-communications media have supplanted culture there: Sophisticated Western Europeans now discuss TV programs, not poetry, painting, or philosophy. They would scarcely notice if their "highbrow" literary journals disappeared, Kundera argues. But the Czechs were "in a state of anguish" when the Soviets shut down such publications in 1968.

The "real tragedy" for Central Europe, Kundera concludes, is not Soviet domination, grim as it is, but the demise of traditional European culture. In 1956, the director of the Hungarian News Agency did indeed die for Europe: "Behind the iron curtain, he did not suspect that the times had changed and that in Europe itself Europe was no longer experienced as a value."

Nigeria's Retreat From Democracy

"Dateline Nigeria: Democracy Down but Not Out" by Jean Herskovits, in *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1984), P.O. Box 984, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

Nigeria was the world's fourth largest democracy until a bloodless coup toppled President Alhaji Shehu Shagari's government on New Year's Eve day of 1983.

Major General Muhammadu Buhari took over "with no resistance and to wide popular acclaim," reports Herskovits, a historian at the State University of New York at Purchase. But Nigerians have not permanently turned their backs on democracy, she says.

The West African nation adopted a parliamentary system when it gained independence from Great Britain in 1960, but an army coup

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A 1980 Nigerian Herald cartoon depicts President Alhaji Shehu Shagari and the leaders of the four top opposition parties sailing the "ship of state." Nigeria's political parties were banned after the 1983 coup.

ended that era in 1965. Nigeria's second republic, established by the military in 1979, was modeled on the American federal system—not out of "adoration" for America, Herskovits says, but out of the feeling that a U.S.-style presidency and separation of powers might work better in a nation of such size and diversity. Nigeria's 100 million people are divided among 250 ethnic groups and speak nearly 400 "mutually unintelligible" languages.

President Shagari, first elected in 1979 and overwhelmingly re-elected in August 1983, fell victim to Nigeria's severe economic crisis. One of the world's top 10 oil exporters, Nigeria has been badly hurt by the world oil glut. The nation's petroleum revenues plummeted from \$22.4 billion in 1980 to \$9.6 billion in 1983. Oil earnings provide 90 percent of the nation's foreign exchange and most of the money for the government's ambitious development projects. To make matters worse, a severe drought in 1983 cut Nigerian food production by up to 50 percent.

As a result of these misfortunes, Nigeria has run up some \$13.5 billion in medium- and long-term debt to Western banks—not much compared to Mexico's \$91 billion, but enough to require harsh austerity measures.

Buhari's chief task is to find a way to put the Nigerian economy back together again. Herskovits argues that he has "preserved the essence" of the second republic: Civilians rule the 19 states; the federal cabinet is composed mostly of civilians and is multiethnic; "freedom of speech seems as unbridled as ever." Herskovits is confident that Buhari will eventually return the reins of power to civilians. One Nigerian diplomat told her: "Democracy is ingrained in us—we will go back to it."

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Fascism in Italy And Germany

"Conquest, Foreign and Domestic, in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany" by MacGregor Knox, in *Journal of Modern History* (Mar. 1984), University of Chicago Press, P.O. Box 37005, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

Among scholars, decades of debate have made it harder to see what Adolf Hitler's Germany and Benito Mussolini's Italy had in common and what distinguished their fascism from the other major totalitarian ideology of the 20th century—Marxism.

Knox, a University of Rochester historian, says that the confusion arises because scholars refuse to take the two dictators at their word. But, he argues, Hitler and Mussolini both "expressed at the beginning of their careers coherent ideologies that were not necessarily entirely popular or plausible.... The steady radicalization of their policies suggests an attempt to bring practice into line with theory."

What distinguishes fascism from other forms of "political gangsterism," in Knox's view, is its peculiar strategy. Mussolini and Hitler both believed that to achieve revolution at home, conquest abroad was necessary. "Domestic policy must secure the inner strength of a people so that it can assert itself in the sphere of foreign policy," Hitler declared, "Foreign policy must secure the life of a people for its domestic political development."

Both Hitler and Mussolini advocated war as a means of national redemption that would prove the superiority of *das Volk* or *il Popolo* over the peoples of other nations. Hitler's goals were unlimited; he sought world domination. Mussolini's designs were more modest; he sought to erase Italy's image as "a small nation, disorderly, noisy, and fidgety," as he explained in 1925. Italy would extend its political rule over the Mediterranean (Mussolini's costly invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 was a first step in this direction) and recapture the glory of Rome to establish its cultural supremacy in Europe.

Mussolini had far more powerful domestic opponents than did Hitler, but neither dictator could eliminate all internal foes—in Mussolini's case, they included the Catholic Church, the military establishment, and King Victor Emmanuel III. Nor could either leader count on the unquestioning support of his people. Hitler, standing on the Reich Chancellery balcony to review Nazi troops on their way to occupy Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland in September 1939, was stunned to find the civilian spectators not ecstatic but "silent and sullen," Knox writes. War was the most effective way to keep potential dissidents quiet and to mobilize public support for fascism.

For most communist totalitarian states, Knox writes, "Ideology may dictate expansion, but in practice, foreign conquest is a bonus, not the indispensable prerequisite for transformation." Hitler could murder millions of Jews, but it took an all-out war effort to overcome the reservations of some clergymen, army officers, and other members of the German establishment. Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, by contrast, were not constrained to accept any domestic opposition at all after they took power.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions

"Maritime Strategy or Coalition Defense?"

Abt Books, 55 Wheeler St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. 116 pp. \$19.00. Author: Robert W. Komer

America's loss of its nuclear "edge" over the Soviet Union during the 1970s makes U.S. conventional military strategy more important than ever before.

Indeed, Washington has been forced to ponder the kind of choice that eventually confronts all great powers: Should the nation adopt a land-based "continental" defense (in Western Europe) or a global "maritime" strategy? Komer, a long-time senior U.S. defense official now at the Rand Corporation, fears that the United States is "drifting by default" toward the maritime alternative.

Led by Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, advocates of "blue-water" strategy believe that Western Europe is practically indefensible. Better to base our defenses on the oceans, they say, using the U.S. Navy not chiefly to defend vital shipping lanes, as it does today, but as an offensive force to attack Soviet vulnerabilities.

The maritime strategists favor responding to a Soviet thrust into Western Europe, for example, with strikes by carrier-based jets at Russian client states, such as Cuba and Angola, or perhaps at naval bases in the Soviet Union itself.

Lehman has already won congressional authorization to build the 600-ship Navy (an increase of nearly 100) needed to carry out a maritime strategy. In 1983, the Navy claimed 34 percent of the Pentagon's budget for conventional nonnuclear forces, the Army only 23.7 percent. But Komer complains that Congress has approved bigger Navy budgets without considering the implications and shortcomings of the strategy that goes with them.

The bold carrier attacks that Lehman and his allies envision would amount to no more than "naval pinpricks," even if successful. The "real prize" in any Soviet-American contest would be Eurasia (Western Europe, Japan, the Persian Gulf), Komer insists; and even if the U.S. Navy "swept the Soviets from all the seven seas," Moscow could easily triumph on the ground in the all-important Eurasian theaters.

Indeed, Komer argues, "the single greatest remaining U.S. strategic advantage over the U.S.S.R. is that we are blessed with many rich [European] allies, while the Soviets have only a handful of poor ones."

Komer recognizes the need for a stronger Navy. But control of the seas, he suggests, can be won with the 13 aircraft carriers that the Navy already has. The four to five new U.S. carrier battle groups (carriers plus support ships) now planned will cost some \$17 billion each. Spending that much would lock the United States into a heavily maritime strategy.

Komer favors diverting these extra dollars to continental forces—ground troops, tanks, support aircraft—for the defense of Western Europe, Japan, and the Persian Gulf. He would also demand greater efforts from our allies. A revitalized Western coalition, Komer believes, would have little to fear from Moscow, but the Soviets would have little to fear in Europe or elsewhere from a United States that pursued a unilateral, almost irrelevant, maritime defense.

"Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide."

Longman Inc., 1560 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036. 241 pp. \$27.50 cloth, \$15.95 paper. Author: Doris A. Graber

Some critics of the nation's news media believe that America's newspapers and TV networks are omnipotent persuaders, capable of molding public opinion at will.

Graber, who teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago, studied 21 residents of Evanston, Illinois, for a full year (1976) to see just how much influence the news media have. Her conclusion: not much.

Graber's subjects kept regular "diaries" of their TV and newspaper consumption and were interviewed periodically. They had developed a simple solution to the "information explosion"—they blocked out most of what the news media told them. In interviews, they could remember only one of the 15 to 18 stories on TV newscasts that they had viewed the night before. They paid more attention to newspapers, reading about one-third of the stories on any given day.

(Interestingly, Graber's subjects were convinced that they got most of their news from TV, but when asked where they first learned of a particular story, nearly half cited a newspaper. Only 27 percent pointed to TV.)

Graber's subjects did not, however,

sort the news randomly. They tended to focus on information that could be fitted into their existing mental "schemas"—they paid more attention to information that confirmed what they already believed. Graber calls this the "I thought so" syndrome.

These schemas were fairly impervious to news-media influence. For example, the 21 subjects viewed crime as largely the work of young, nonwhite males, even though 70 percent of the criminals identified in Evanston-area newspapers were white men over age 25. Nor could the news media make people pay attention to subjects that did not interest them. While foreign developments, such as Soviet and Cuban activity in Africa, were constantly in the news during 1976, few of Graber's subjects could recall much about particular events overseas.

Graber makes clear that Americans do not screen out *all* new information. Average folk, she says, customarily extract "enough meaningful political information from the flood of news . . . to perform the moderate number of citizenship functions [e.g., voting] that American society expects of them."

"Violence and Crime in Cross-National Perspective."

Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. 06520. 341 pp. \$30.00.

Authors: Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner

Common sense suggests that big cities have higher crime rates than do small cities. Statistics bear this out. Yet data on individual cities show that crime does not always grow in tandem with increases in population. How, then, do big cities get high crime rates? Archer and Gartner, sociologists at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Britain's Brunel University, respectively, studied crime reports from 110 countries and 44 cities for the years 1900 to 1970 to answer this and other questions.

Oddly, data from 34 of the cities showed that while crime, as measured by homicides, did indeed grow worse as the city expanded in one-half of the cases, it *fell* in the other half. The authors argue that what is important is not a city's absolute size but its size relative to the rest of the country how "urban" the city is. Once a town crosses the urban threshold and becomes a "city"—however that is defined in different lands—it will suffer higher crime.

They note that while New York and Paris both had roughly seven million residents in 1970, the sidewalks of New York were considerably more dangerous. In the French capital, there were an average of .61 murders annually per 100,000 people between 1966 and 1970; the rate for New York was 11.54. Both cities suffered homicide rates nearly double their national averages. Thus, by French standards, Paris was a dangerous high-crime zone.

Is the death penalty an effective deterrent? Archer and Gartner contend that it is not. In eight of the 14 nations in their study that banned capital punishment, homicides actually dropped in the year following abolition. Even many years after executions were discontinued, only five nations—including Austria, Canada, Denmark, England, and New Zealand—experienced more murders. There may be good arguments for the death penalty (e.g., retribution), the authors say, but deterrence is not one of them.

Homicides almost always rise in the wake of war, the authors found—even though war takes the lives of those who are statistically most likely to commit murder: young men. In only seven of the 50 cases that the authors examined did a national homicide rate drop in the five years following a war. Another seven cases showed no change; the remainder showed increases.

Winners and losers of wars both suffered higher postwar homicide rates. In terms of violent crime, the citizens of countries that had lost the fewest men during each war suffered less severely during the peace that followed. War, they conclude, legitimizes violence and temporarily boosts postwar murder rates.

"Population Profile of the United States: 1982."

U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. 79 pp. \$3.00. (Series P-23, No. 130).

In 1982, the median age of the U.S. population reached 30.6 years, the highest ever in American history. The proportion of the population over age 65 grew to 11.6 percent—another all-time high.

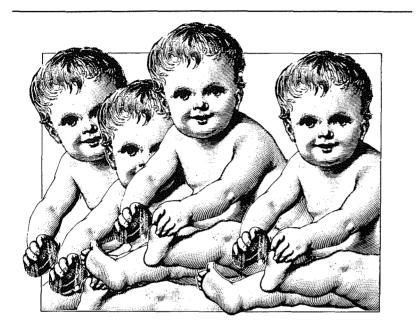
These are among the findings in a U.S. Bureau of the Census summary of recent demographic trends in the United States.

The total U.S. population reached 233.3 million at the close of 1982, a one percent increase for the year. (The

South and West accounted for 92 percent of the population gain.) According to the Bureau's "middle projection," U.S. population should peak at about 309 million in the year 2050; Americans' median age is projected to be 41.6 that year. By 2030, the proportion of the population over age 65 will have climbed from 11.6 percent to 21.1 percent. And population growth will be highest among those over 85.

The graying of the U.S. population

RESEARCH REPORTS



First came the Baby Boom, now there is a lesser "Baby Blip": Births in the United States numbered 4.3 million in 1957, 3.7 million in 1982.

is chiefly the product of changing "lifestyle" patterns among the younger set. The maturing Baby-Boom generation is marrying later and having fewer children than its predecessors—the average childbearing rate per woman has dropped to 1.8. (Nevertheless, that represents a slight increase over the nadir of 1.7 reached in 1976.) But because there are so many Baby-Boom grown-ups, the *number* of births has been on the upswing since 1976. There were about 3.2 million births that year, as compared to 3.7 million in 1982.

There are signs that increasing numbers of Americans may choose never to marry. Among women in their early thirties in 1982, for example, 11.6 percent had never been married, nearly a 100 percent increase over the 1970 level. Just over 17 percent of the men in this age group in 1982 had never walked down the aisle, also close to a twofold increase.

Meanwhile, divorce statistics are far from encouraging. The "divorce ratio"—the number of divorced persons per 1,000 married people—more than doubled between 1970 and 1982. There were 47 divorced adults per 1,000 married folk in 1970, 114 in 1982. (The divorce ratio is a conservative gauge, since people who have divorced and remarried—which is the pattern in most marital breakups—are counted as married people.

Today's trends are not, however, set in concrete. While the Census Bureau's best guess is that U.S. population will peak at about 309 million, for example, its high and low estimates cover a very great range—from 429 million souls to 262 million.

WILSON CENTER PAPERS

Summaries of key reports given at recent Wilson Center meetings

"The Role of Law and Lawyers In Japan and the United States."

Transcript of a discussion sponsored by the Wilson Center's East Asia Program, June 6, 1983.

Few Americans would deny that theirs is a "litigious society." U.S. law schools, for example, graduate 35,000 students every year; in all of Japan there are fewer than 15,000 practicing attorneys.

Such comparisons, however, can be misleading. Michael K. Young, who teaches law at Columbia University, notes that Japanese *undergraduate* law departments turn out 38,000 graduates yearly. Most take the entrance exam for the Legal Training and Research Institute, which educates all of Japan's lawyers. But only some 500 students are admitted; the rest find their way into government and corporate bureaucracies.

Counting all those involved in legal work, not just attorneys (e.g., tax experts, administrative law officials), yields a different Japanese-American comparison. Japan has 1,119 people per legal worker; the United States, 505 (For Great Britain, the number is 1,023.)

That is not to deny that there are vast differences between the Japanese and American conceptions of law.

Japan adopted Western-style law only after the 1867 Meiji Restoration, notes Isaac Shapiro, a New York attorney who has practiced in Tokyo. Japanese attitudes toward the law still reflect the older Confucian system, under which it was "the duty of the faithful commoner not to disturb the lord's peace by becoming involved in a lawsuit." An obstinate commoner who pursued his grievance in court might find himself dealt with as harshly by the judge as a guilty defendant.

Thus, while Americans see the law as "a set of neutral principles that serve as an arbiter of human affairs," Shapiro notes, the Japanese see it as a source of trouble. Indeed, Western-style logic and analysis strike most Japanese as odd—one reason why they refer to Westerners as "dry," Shapiro says. More emotional and intuitive in matters of morals and mores, the Japanese think of themselves as "wet."

Koichiro Fujikura, who teaches law at the University of Tokyo, adds that the difference extends to legal education and practice: "Defining the issues," the first priority of American lawyers, "is the last thing Japanese do" because it "highlights the points of conflict." Similarly, the idea that the best way to arrive at the truth is to set two adversaries against one another is alien to the Japanese mind.

The Japanese, Fujikura writes, are at least as contentious as Americans. But preserving relationships is more important to them than winning a point. The Japanese have a "rather long ledger in mind in which every favor we dispense and every obligation we incur [is] entered."

Moreover, Tokyo has established a kind of no-fault insurance, administered by the government, whereby automatic (though modest) compensation for victims of car accidents, defective drugs, and the like is routinely awarded.

The chief lesson that an overburdened American judiciary can learn from Japan, the participants agree, is that it pays society to actively discourage lawsuits.

Some techniques: Japanese courts impose a stiff tax on plaintiffs. Court delays—even longer than in the United States—are not entirely accidental. In Japan, Young notes, many people "simply do not like lawsuits [and] a lot of those people ... happen to be wearing judicial robes."

"Stalinism versus Bolshevism? A Reconsideration."

A paper by Robert C. Tucker, presented at a colloquium sponsored by the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, January 12, 1984.

Western scholars and dissident Soviet intellectuals have long debated whether Joseph Stalin's tyrannical 24-year rule was a culmination or corruption of the Bolshevik theory articulated by his predecessor, V.I. Lenin.

Stalin's sins were numerous. Upon consolidating his power in 1929, five years after Lenin's death, he embarked on a four-year-long forced collectivization of Soviet farms and, later, a decade-long series of bloody purges against dissenters within the Soviet Communist Party. Millions of Russians died.

Stalin himself claimed that his policies were a fulfillment of Lenin's Bolshevism, notes Tucker, a Princeton Soviet-studies specialist. Many Western writers agree with the dictator's claim—though they tend to view it as an indictment of communism, not a defense of Stalin.

On the other side of the issue, arguing that Stalin's policies were a perversion of Bolshevism, is a "motley collection" of Western academics and Soviet dissidents. Evidence for their point of view came from Nikita Khrushchev, who succeeded Stalin and revealed damaging details about Stalin's paranoia and the extent of the 1930s purges.

But Tucker objects to "either/or" terms. He sees Stalin as an example of "fringe Bolshevism," representing a hitherto unrecognized third strand of Bolshevism.

After Lenin died, Tucker notes,

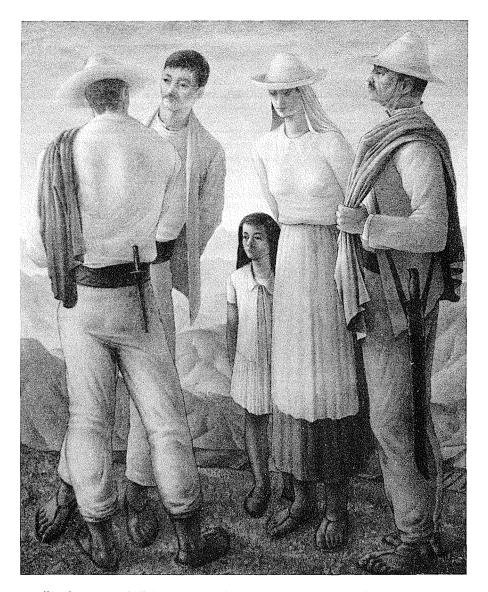
two main factions took shape; and both claimed Lenin's legacy, with some justice.

The "Rights," led by Alexei Rykov, emphasized Lenin's belief that it would take a full generation to implement communism in Russia. They saw the traditional Russian peasant village, or mir, as the foundation for the gradual development of "agrariancooperative socialism."

The "Lefts" were eager to export Bolshevik revolution to other nations. They doubted that the Soviet peasantry would quickly embrace communism, and thus favored rapid industrialization. But "it never occurred to them," contends Tucker, to impose Stalin's brand of brutal forced collectivization.

Where does Stalin fit in? Unlike the Lefts and Rights, he flavored his Bolshevism with a strong dose of traditional Russian nationalism. He joined the Rights in emphasizing Russia's heritage. But Stalin adopted and enlarged upon the most brutal practices of tsarist rule (and wed them to Lenin's call for "revolution from above") at the expense of the Rights' treasured mir.

Like the Lefts, Stalin was outward looking. But his gaze, like that of the tsars before him, fell on the neighboring nations of Eastern Europe. The Lefts, by contrast, had hoped to export revolution to the advanced industrial nations—Great Britain, France, the United States.



"Andean Family," by Venezuela's painter Héctor Poleo, born in 1918. Tough, hard-working, laconic, the Andino is a product of his bleak mountain habitat, which figures prominently in Venezuelan history, first as the road to the mythical kingdom of Eldorado, later as the country's chief coffee-growing region and home to Venezuela's caudillos (strong men).

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Venezuela

Venezuela stands out among its Latin American neighbors. On a continent beset by dictatorships and periodic coups, Venezuela boasts more than a quarter century of democratic government. The country is rich in petroleum, as its neighbors are not. For more than three decades, Venezuela's leaders have sought to "sow the oil," plowing petroleum revenues back into schools, hospitals, and factories. The harvest has been mixed. Unhappily, many development projects have become little more than monuments to inefficiency and corruption. The oil bonanza of the 1970s, triggered by the worldwide OPEC price increases of 1973, did not foster the work ethic. But the recent "softening" of oil prices and the decline of global demand for oil have ended what President Jaime Lusinchi called a decade of "soft living and easy money." Our contributors survey a people in transition, as dependent as ever on its mineral wealth but aware, at last, that there are some things that oil money cannot buy.

WHERE DEMOCRACY LIVES

by Robert D. Bond

South America, it would seem, does not provide a natural habitat for democracy. Few countries on that continent can boast an unbroken succession of popularly elected leaders that dates back more than a decade. In 1979, Ecuador returned to democracy after nine years of military rule. Peruvians freely chose their president in 1980, following almost 12 years of military rule. Argentinians went to the polls in 1983 for the first time in eight years. Uruguay has scheduled a return to presidential elections for this year, Brazil for next. Given the long chronicle of coups and countercoups, citizens in none of these countries, rich or poor, can be certain that their elected governments will survive. And in Paraguay and Chile, where dictatorships of varying

harshness have reigned since 1954 and 1973, respectively, the immediate prospects for democracy are not bright.

But Venezuela is different. Since 1958, Venezuelans have demonstrated their commitment to democracy by holding honest elections every five years. Over 90 percent of all eligible voters regularly participate—compared with 53.9 percent in the 1980 U.S. presidential election—in a contest that can last almost 16 months. The candidates of the two major parties (Democratic Action, or AD, and Committee of Independent Electoral Organizations, or COPEI) and of the score of minor ones spare no effort or expense to win the Presidency and gain control of the 230-member Congress. Indeed, on a per capita basis, Venezuelan election campaigns—which cost an estimated \$200 million in 1983—are perhaps the most expensive in the world. All in all, as political scientist John Martz notes, Venezuela demonstrates a "public vigor and political vibrancy unparalleled in Latin America."

Mixing Coffee and Milk

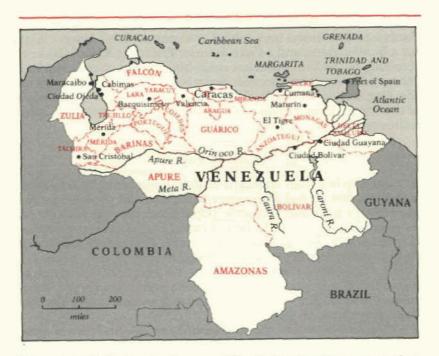
Political freedom is only one of Venezuela's assets. The country's 352,142 square miles encompass enough good soil and rich mineral resources to sustain a per capita income of \$4,170 in 1982. (That was the highest per capita income in South America and roughly equivalent to that of Greece.) The snowcapped Venezuelan Andes—dominated by the 16,423-foot summit of Pico Bolívar—run through the northwestern corner of the country, dividing the vast, cattle-grazing eastern plains, or llanos, from the oil-producing region around Lake Maracaibo.

In the southeast, the llanos give way to the Guiana Highlands, a plateau of dense rain forest and rivers that inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912). Venezuela is also endowed with ample deposits of iron ore and bauxite. Venezuela's steel and aluminum plants at Ciudad Guayana run on electricity generated by the Guri Dam; when completed, this power plant near the confluence of the Caroni and Orinoco rivers will supply almost all of Venezuela's electricity.

In demographic terms, the country is young, rapidly expanding, and increasingly urban. More than 65 percent of all

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VENEZUELA



Venezuela, which sits atop the map of South America like an inverted triangle, is roughly equivalent in area to Texas and Oklahoma combined.

Venezuelans are under 35 years of age. The population has tripled since 1950. And whereas 50 years ago some 70 percent of all Venezuelans lived in rural areas, fewer than 20 percent remain outside the cities today.

Besides being young and mobile, Venezuela's population is something of a "melting pot." Seventy percent of all *Venezolanos* are mestizos (of mixed European and Indian blood); 17 percent are "pure" European; seven percent, black; one percent, Indian. Describing this amalgam of white, Indian, and black, former President Rómulo Betancourt once remarked, "We are all café au lait—some more café, some more au lait." Thanks to postwar immigration from Portugal, Italy, and other European nations, "un-Spanish" names such as Boulton, Vollmer, Neumann, Phelps, Pietri, and Petkoff are prominent in Venezuelan politics and business.

North America, too, has left its mark. Baseball, not soccer, is the national sport. Emigré stars such as Dave Concepción, César Tovar, and Luis Aparicio—recently inducted into the U.S. Baseball Hall of Fame—are regarded as national heroes. On their way to or from a baseball game, Venezuelans drive their

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Fords and Chevrolets (assembled in Venezuela) to a Burger King for a *hamburguesa* and a Coke. Former President Rafael Caldera, referring to the U.S. influence upon his country, once remarked, "Our radio stations transmit your music and your outlook on life. Our television is full of an imagery that reflects your mode of thinking." Even homes in Venezuela's barrios, or slums, have radios and TVs.

A Blank Page

Venezuela's high standard of living, nurtured by its ample resources, has helped democracy to survive and prosper. So has the country's diverse, dynamic population, blessed with a zeal for upward mobility and a lack of racial prejudice. But Venezuelan democracy is a product of far more than an abundance of riches and a variety of races. Neighboring Brazil, after all, shares these same characteristics. It is a unique combination of historical, economic, and political forces that has spared Venezuela the class hatred and political repression that afflict its Latin American neighbors.

Modern Venezuela shares the unhappy colonial past of most Latin American nations. In 1498, on his third Atlantic crossing, Christopher Columbus discovered mainland Venezuela and claimed the land for Spain. The young colony languished, exporting coffee, cacao, sugar, and indigo at a time when the Spanish Crown wanted only gold. Indolent royal administrators presided over a stagnant, class-ridden society made up of white, wealthy *criollos* (Creoles), Spanish-born *peninsulares*, *pardos* (mulattos), African slaves, and Indians. After the expulsion of Spanish forces in 1821 by Venezuelan Simón Bolívar, Venezuela became part of the Gran Colombia federation (with Colombia and Ecuador).* It withdrew to form an independent nation in 1829.

But independence did not bring good times. Instead, factional struggles plunged Venezuela into civil strife, causing Bolívar to declare, near the end of his life, that "those who have

^{*}Simón Bolívar, the Liberator of South America, was born of well-to-do parents in Caracas on July 24, 1783. At the age of 16, he went to Europe, where the works of the French philosophers Montesquieu and Rousseau inspired him to fight for his country's freedom from Spanish domination. One year after Bolívar's return to Venezuela in 1807, Napoleon's invasion of Spain touched off the struggle for South American independence. At first, the Spanish had the upper hand, defeating a Venezuelan army led by Bolívar at Puerto Cabello in 1812. Bolívar fled to neighboring Colombia. There he assembled an army that first ousted the Spanish from Colombia (1819) and then, two years later, from Venezuela. Victories in Ecuador (1822), Peru (1824), and Bolivia (1825) followed. But Bolívar's hopes for a pan-American union were destroyed by a series of territorial wars among the newly independent nations. Disillusioned, he died on December 17, 1830.

served the cause of the revolution have plowed the sea." The Venezuelans endured an 80-year period of recurrent violence, political disintegration, and dictatorship. One caudillo, or strong man, after another seized power, only to be overthrown in turn by a greedy successor.

The political turmoil that prevailed from 1830 to 1908 had profound consequences. Never able to get established were the self-perpetuating, land-owning "elites" that emerged in other Latin American countries. Today, few influential Venezuelan families can trace their origins to the nation's colonial past. Indeed, in some ways Venezuelans seem to regard their country's 19th-century history (after the decades surrounding independence) as a blank page. As the essayist Arturo Uslar Pietri observed, "We have reduced our history to 15 years [1810–25] when in reality our past is at least four and a half centuries old."

The Generation of '28

By the early 1900s, Venezuela had become a nation without an effective national government. Not until the dictatorship of General Juan Vicente Gómez (1908–35) was Venezuela ruled by a centralized authority. But stability under Gómez came at great cost. The Tyrant of the Andes well deserved his reputation. Infatuated with Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, he curled his moustache and fancied Prussian-style spiked helmets. For 27 years, he also systematically imprisoned, exiled, tortured, or murdered political opponents.

So harsh was Gómez's rule that even his old comrades conceded that he had gone too far. The governments of generals López Contreras (1936–41) and Medina Angarita (1941–45) allowed political parties to organize and permitted the formation of labor organizations such as the National Petroleum Workers' Union, still in existence today.

The return of a group of political exiles, the so-called Generation of '28, spurred political change. Named for an abortive 1928 student revolt against the Gómez regime, the Generation of '28 included future Venezuelan leaders such as Raúl Leoni and Rómulo Betancourt. Betancourt in particular, a tough, gifted politician, kept up a steady barrage of demands for "a radical reform of the electoral system." His Democratic Action Party (AD, legally established in 1941) rested on a strong alliance of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and members of the urban lower class—everyone, that is, except wealthy landowners, bigcity merchants, and the Catholic Church.

Another powerful social and political agent was petroleum.

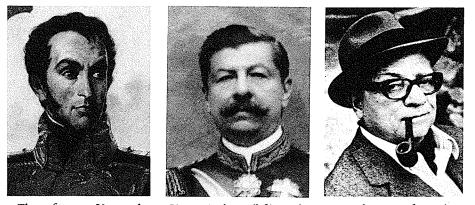
VENEZUELA

Dominated by foreign companies such as Royal Dutch Shell and Standard Oil, Venezuela's oil industry had an impact on all levels of society. Peasants abandoned their farms for jobs on the oil derricks. In the oil fields, large landowners sold their acreage to the oil companies and joined the members of a growing middle class—merchants, lawyers, accountants, traders—in Caracas, Maracaibo, and other cities. The net effect was a further dilution of the traditional, class-bound rural hierarchy that still defined political life in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.

As time went on, the combination of increased freedom and heightened prosperity created popular expectations of "more" that the Medina government could not satisfy. In 1944, a restless group of junior officers—headed by Major Marcos Pérez Jiménez—formed the Patriotic Military Front, dedicated to the overthrow of Medina. Initially reluctant to participate in a coup, Betancourt and AD went along when it became clear that a popular rising was imminent. In October 1945, Medina was ousted from the Presidency.

Betancourt, backed by AD, promised "to put a program of national salvation into effect." His government passed legislation authorizing land redistribution, educational reform, and the construction of hospitals, schools, power plants, and sewers. Labor unions prospered under AD's leadership, their numbers rising from 252 in 1945 to 1,014 in 1948.

Not all Venezuelans agreed with Betancourt's definition of "national salvation." A major breach opened between the church hierarchy (90 percent of all Venezuelans are nominally



Three famous Venezuelans: Simón Bolívar (left), 19th-century Liberator of South America; Juan Vicente Gómez (center), Tyrant of the Andes, who ruled from 1908 to 1935; and Rómulo Betancourt (right), President of Venezuela (1959–1963).

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Roman Catholic) and the national government over educational reforms. The AD leadership proposed to restrict the use of foreign-born teachers (often priests who staffed parochial schools) and to impose national examinations on all students. The bishops feared an erosion of their role in education, traditionally a stronghold of the church.

Opposition to the reform decree was led by students in Catholic high schools and universities. Chief among these activists was Rafael Caldera, a 30-year-old university professor who formed COPEI (which later adopted the label of Social Christian) in 1946 to oppose AD at the polls. In contrast to the broad-based AD, COPEI's strength initially lay in the traditionally Catholic rural areas, especially the Andes Mountains. A lack of organization, however, put COPEI at a serious disadvantage. Not surprisingly, in 1947 voters chose the AD candidate, novelist Rómulo Gallegos, as Venezuela's first popularly elected president.

A Suitcase on the Runway

Faced with five more years of AD's ambitious plans for land reform and the redistribution of income, the military intervened. A junta led by Major Carlos Delgado Chalbaud and including Pérez Jiménez overthrew the Gallegos government in November 1948. (Gallegos and Betancourt escaped to Mexico and the United States, respectively.) Thus ended the three-year period of democracy now known as the *trienio*.

After the assassination of Delgado Chalbaud by a retired army general in 1950, Pérez Jiménez assumed command. During a decade of political repression, he banned AD-sponsored labor unions and used the *Seguridad Nacional* (National Police) to quash any dissent. Pérez Jiménez justified his dictatorship by saying, "My people are not ready for democracy."

By 1958, however, the corruption, brutality, and inefficiency of the dictator's regime had prepared them. A general strike, organized by students and workers with the help of political exiles, was supported by the church, the business community, and elements of the military. Pérez Jiménez fled Caracas by plane to the Dominican Republic on January 23, 1958, leaving behind a suitcase full of cash and incriminating documents on the runway of La Carlota Airport.

Honest elections (the first since 1947) were held in 1958. Capitalizing on its strength in the labor unions, AD carried Rómulo Betancourt back to the Presidency. The 1961 Constitution gave the new President sweeping powers over the military, the monetary system, and all taxes and tariffs. As a check on ex-

THE PLAINSMAN

Like the cowboys in America, the llaneros—or plainsmen—of Venezuela loom large in national folklore. Author (and future president) Rómulo Gallegos once sketched the mestizo cattlemen who inhabit the grasslands that stretch from the Andes Mountains to the Orinoco River in Doña Bárbara (1929), his novel of life in Venezuela's "Wild West."

There [were] . . . the light-hearted, swaggering herdsmen in the midst of the wide prairie, sharing the morsel of meat and bit of yucca their frugality demanded, treating themselves only with a cup of coffee and a quid of tobacco, resigned to the hammock and poncho as long as their horses were fine and their harness handsome, plucking the banjo, strumming the guitar, singing at the top of their lungs at night when the rude toil of starting and pursuing the herd was over, and dancing the joropo wildly until dawn....

The Plainsman was indomitable and yet worsted in the contest with life, lazy yet indefatigable; impulsive yet calculating in strife, undisciplined yet loyally obedient to his superiors. With his friends he was suspicious and self-denying, with women, voluptuous and harsh, with himself, both sensual and sober; and in his conversations, both malicious and ingenuous, incredulous and superstitious —in every case merry, yet melancholy, a realist and yet imaginative; humble afoot, proud on horseback—all these at once, without any clash, like the virtues and faults in a newborn soul.

Something of this shines through the ballads in which the singer of the Plain combines the boastful jollity of the Andalusian, the smiling fatalism of the negro, the stubborn melancholy of the Indian all the peculiar features of the souls that have gone to make his.

ecutive power, however, no former chief executive could run for president until two five-year presidential terms had elapsed since his last day in office.

Democracy got off to a shaky start during its first years. Betancourt, hailed by U.S. President John F. Kennedy as "one of the great democratic statesmen of the Western Hemisphere," had to surmount an economic crisis, several abortive military coups, and at least two attempted assassinations. From afar, Rafael Trujillo, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, regarded Betancourt—who had frequently called for Trujillo's ouster—as his Number One enemy. Trujillo personally authorized a June 1960 bombing attack on Betancourt's car that left the Venezuelan leader badly burned.

Betancourt had enemies on the Left as well. Disappointed by their leader's moderate policies of reform, the younger, leftist members of AD split off in 1960 to form the Movement of the

Revolutionary Left (MIR). With moral and logistical support from Fidel Castro, MIR activists and members of the small Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) began, in 1962, an armed insurgency in both the cities and the countryside.

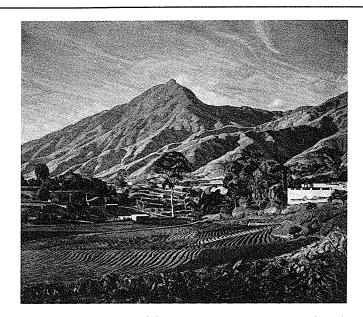
As historian John Lombardi notes, "While the guerrillas ... spoke to peasants about world revolution and the need for radical social change, the government ... spoke about housing, land reform, education, electricity, highways, and health care. ..." Undermined by Betancourt's commitment to welfare democracy, the insurgents eventually succumbed to Venezuela's armed forces. After a 1964 election, Raúl Leoni, an AD stalwart, succeeded Betancourt as president, marking Venezuela's first transfer of power from one democratic administration to another.

Where Did the Money Go?

Democracy survived in Venezuela during the early 1960s in part because the country's leaders made its survival their highest priority. Together with Caldera and the other parties' leaders (excluding the Communists), Betancourt agreed before the 1958 elections to share positions in the new cabinet, regardless of the electoral outcome. A decision-making process evolved that featured compromise, bargaining, and extensive consultation among leaders in business, labor, the church, and the political parties.

Nor was the military ignored. Heeding Bolívar's dictum that "the military spirit is incompatible with civilian government," Betancourt took great pains to soothe the generals who since 1945 had periodically hindered his cause. He asserted that "the armed forces are indispensable to the Republic" and backed up his encomia with pay increases and funds for modernization (in 1980, continuing this policy, Venezuela spent roughly \$42 per capita in tax dollars on the military, versus \$14 in Brazil and \$10 in Mexico). In return for his generosity, Betancourt asked that the armed forces remain "an apolitical institution, obedient and not deliberative." Political statements by military commanders were frowned upon, and Betancourt was quick to cashier or transfer any officer suspected of plotting against the government.

The moderate, compromising stance adopted by Venezuelan politicians during the early days of democracy concentrated power in the hands of COPEI and AD. With its ties to businessmen and the church, COPEI favored free enterprise over government intervention and lacked AD's union support. As AD came closer to the center of the political spectrum, its more radical members split off to form their own parties. One such fragmen-



Agriculture was once Venezuela's economy. In 1982, it contributed six percent to Venezuela's gross domestic product—the lowest percentage in South America.

tation, the 1967 formation of the People's Electoral Movement (MEP), cost AD the 1968 election, won by Caldera of COPEI. Still, these smaller factions, whether of the Right or the Left, failed to attract much lasting support.

By 1973, when Carlos Andrés Pérez of AD was elected president, COPEI and AD together polled 85 percent of the vote. So similar had their positions become that José Vicente Rangel, a disgruntled leftist candidate, snapped that "choosing between [AD and COPEI] is like choosing between Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola." In the 1978 elections, the two parties garnered 90 percent of the total vote, this time with Luis Herrera Campíns of COPEI narrowly winning the Presidency. Herrera's victory was viewed as a referendum on the incumbent AD government, which he accused of squandering the nation's oil revenues through corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. The COPEI campaign slogans for 1978 were "Where did the money go?" and "Luis Herrera will fix this."

Unfortunately, Herrera fixed very little. In fact, many Venezuelans would argue that he did more harm than good. Despite a \$5.5 billion jump in government oil revenues between 1979 and 1981 (thanks to higher world prices caused by the start of

the Iran-Iraq war in 1980) and substantial foreign borrowing, Venezuela's economy had stagnated. Herrera's failure to carry out sensible economic reforms had saddled his country with a \$34 billion foreign debt. The bolivar—stable against the dollar for 20 years—had to be devalued in February 1983, ending the days of extravagant shopping trips to Miami and other U.S. cities (where Venezuelans spent an estimated \$1 billion in 1980).

Ten years of exuberant government spending had left Venezuelans facing the same problems, often in worse condition. Government outlays of more than \$4.5 billion on public housing since 1971 had failed to eradicate the slums that girdled Venezuela's cities. In Caracas, swamped by a tide of urban migration that began during the 1940s, the congestion became so bad that Planning Minister Ricardo Martínez declared in 1980 that "it is almost impossible to improve the efficiency of public services." Dr. Jose Felix Gamboa Gómez, a spokesman for the Venezuelan Medical Federation, described the nation's free health-care program as being in "a state of chaos."

Politics As Spectator Sport

Not surprisingly, the public mood on the eve of the 1983 elections was one of deep pessimism. Herrera, the man who had promised reform, had not delivered. For the most part, Venezuelans looked to one of the two major candidates, Jaime Lusinchi of AD and Rafael Caldera of COPEI, to pull their country out of what had become known widely as *La Crtsis*.

Lusinchi, 59, a pediatrician by training, had been a member of Venezuela's House of Deputies for 25 years and was AD's secretary general. His campaign slogan—"Jaime es como tú" (Jaime is like you)—depicted him as a man of the people. Once, when asked about the hearing aid he wore, Lusinchi bristled, "I wear this so I can hear [the] people, unlike others who have good hearing but don't listen."

His rival, Caldera, was the 67-year-old founder of COPEI and the first ex-president of Venezuela to run for re-election. Caldera had attended Saint Ignatius College in Caracas, where he was strongly influenced by anti-Marxist Jesuit priests. Many Venezuelans, while impressed with his intellectual talent and leadership ability, considered him excessively aloof. But Caldera's experience as president allowed him to portray himself as the only political figure with the wisdom and moral authority necessary to "save" Venezuela. Advertisements touted him as "Caldera, the Complete Man."

Competition between the two candidates was fierce. COPEI

spokesmen harped on Lusinchi's relative lack of experience. AD propagandists cast aspersions on Caldera's commitment to democracy by pointing out that he had failed to flee Venezuela during the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship.

To a Venezuelan, such personal attacks on politicians are common. Politics is surpassed only by baseball as a national sport in Venezuela, and it arouses a high degree of partisan fanaticism. Observing the residents of Venezuela's barrios, sociologist Talton Ray noted, "Close acquaintanceships ... are as likely to be based on common party affiliations as they are on the fact that [two friends] live on the same street or hail from the same region." Many Venezuelans are careful when they buy their cars or paint their houses: The "wrong" color might identify them erroneously as a member of AD (white), COPEI (green), or one of the smaller parties. During the early 1960s, when Fidel Castro was an idol of the Left, anyone wearing a beard in the slum areas was naturally assumed to be a *fidelista*.

Old-fashioned "personal" politics prevail. In January 1983, as a prelude to the many mass rallies that would follow, COPEI and AD, one after the other, packed the 20,000-seat Poliedro Stadium in Caracas to announce the nominations of their respec-



Wearing an ordinary white guayabera, Acción Democratica's candidate Jaime Lusinchi woos rural voters during his successful 1983 campaign for the Presidency.

tive candidates. Sound trucks blaring political jingles cruised the streets, singing the praises of Lusinchi or Caldera. Campaign stickers—AD's read *Si!*, playing on Lusinchi—plastered billboards, trees, sidewalks, the doors of automobiles, and the exterior walls of churches and private homes. Only the statues of Simón Bolívar, which stand in the central square of almost every Venezuelan town, were left untouched.

Great Expectations

Few U.S. politicians would feel out of place in a Venezuelan election. Since 1968, American "media consultants" have run the campaigns of COPEI and AD. All told, Venezuela has more than two dozen political consulting firms, including a local branch office of the Gallup Poll. Joseph Napolitan of Boston, who aided Hubert Humphrey in 1968, supervised Lusinchi's campaign. He counseled Lusinchi to shed his jovial manner and adopt a more "presidential" image, complete with dark suits and conservative ties. David Garth, responsible for John Anderson's 1980 U.S. presidential bid, ran the rival campaign of Caldera.

The Americans presided over advertising efforts that saturated Venezuela's 40 daily newspapers, 150 radio stations, and four television networks (including two government-owned stations). Sandwiched between broadcasts of *Charlie's Angels*, *I Love Lucy*, and *Kojak*, television spots featuring Caldera and Lusinchi reached the more than half of all Venezuelan households that own television sets.

With the spread of television, the traditional regional and social differences between AD and COPEI have broken down. Neither of the two parties can assume that a particular social group or region is an automatic source of votes. At the same time, however, the increasing sophistication of Venezuelan campaigns has reinforced the dominance enjoyed by AD and COPEI. Only they have the organizational strength and financial support to use modern campaign techniques effectively. Such thirdparty candidates as Teodoro Petkoff of the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) have difficulty attracting contributions from Big Business. And without heavy funding, it is almost impossible to do well in Venezuela's expensive elections.

But as the 1983 campaign showed, expense does not necessarily bring enlightenment. Kim Fuad, the former editor of the Caracas *Daily Journal*, complained that "this has been the most insubstantial presidential campaign I've ever seen. Neither party has discussed the real issues." An acrimonious May 10 television debate between Lusinchi and Caldera illustrated the

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point. Lusinchi blamed outgoing President Herrera's COPEI administration, and by extension Caldera, for the country's poor economic performance over the past five years. In his closing statement, Caldera chose to accuse Lusinchi of lying about his age and to ridicule his baldness. Neither candidate seized the occasion to spell out specific proposals to cure the nation's ills.

Ultimately, Caldera could not escape the taint of Herrera's presidency. On Sunday, December 4, Venezuelans obeyed the mandatory voting law that, among other things, also closes down all bars and liquor stores on election day. The result: Lusinchi bested Caldera by 56.8 percent to 34.6 percent. Once again, AD and COPEI dominated the electoral arena, together drawing 91 percent of the votes cast. Petkoff of MAS came in third with four percent. Ironically, after a year of multimillion-dollar campaigning, Lusinchi's margin of victory was essentially what the opinion polls had predicted as the campaign began.

Last year, after the euphoria of victory wore off, Lusinchi warned that "for a long time, Venezuelans have lived in the shelter of an easily acquired wealth, creating an illusion that the state could solve all national problems." With an ailing world oil market, the government in Caracas no longer enjoys the luxury of tapping ever-growing petroleum revenues to subsidize everything from agriculture and education to the governmentowned steel and aluminum industries. Unemployment, as officially measured, stood at 10 percent in 1983, and government planners are predicting little if any growth in Venezuela's gross national product, which declined in 1983.

Despite great faith in their democracy, the patience of Venezuelan voters is not inexhaustible. How long will they be content to switch periodically from COPEI to AD, each time only to find themselves with more promises and fewer results? Clearly, Jaime Lusinchi has a strong electoral mandate to press for sensible economic reforms. His success in doing so will determine whether or not Venezuela remains in the forefront of South American democracy.



'SOWING THE OIL'

by David E. Blank

To a Venezuelan, being a *Caraqueño*—a resident of Caracas—has until recently meant having the best and most that money can buy. Blessed with a cool, temperate climate, the City of Eternal Spring is nestled in a 3,000-foot-high mountain valley, 11 miles long and three miles wide. It is as modern as any North American metropolis. Gleaming white office buildings and apartment blocks crowd the slopes of the valley. The twin glass towers of the Simón Bolívar Center, housing government offices, and the three 56-storied structures of the Parque Central business and residential complex pierce the skyline. Freeways snake through the city, meeting in elaborate interchanges popularly known as *la Araña* (the spider), *el Ciempiés* (the centipede), and *el Pulpo* (the octopus).

Its citizens' passion for the good life (and, until recently, their ability to afford it) has stocked store shelves in Caracas with goods from almost everywhere but Venezuela. A stroll down the Sabana Grande, Caracas's main boulevard, takes the visitor past sidewalk cafés and store windows displaying merchandise by Gucci, Pierre Cardin, and Yves Saint Laurent. The supermarkets boast, among other items, Kraft *mayonesa*, Cheez Whip *pimentón*, and Colgate *dental crema*. Affluent Venezuelans have also taken a liking to imported Scotch. In 1980, they purchased 1.8 million cases of the whiskey, making them the world's Number One per capita consumers. At Christmas, fir trees are flown in from Canada. Mercedes Benz sedans are a familiar sight on downtown streets.

Not surprisingly, the cost of living in Caracas has been high. Indeed, until the devaluation of the bolivar in February of 1983, Caracas was one of the most expensive cities in North or South America. Yet many of the 3.5 million *Caraqueños* have been able to afford it. In 1983, white- and blue-collar workers in Caracas earned an average of \$13,500 and \$7,000, respectively.

The source of Venezuela's relative affluence has been, of course, oil. Since the 1973 quadrupling of oil prices by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), oil revenues, which totaled \$14.1 billion in 1983, have allowed many Venezuelans to enjoy a level of material well-being that would otherwise have been out of reach.

But if Caracas makes visible Venezuela's oil wealth, it also

reflects Venezuela's failure to use that wealth either effectively or equitably. The city's faltering infrastructure—"brownouts" of electric power and water shortages are common—has been strained by the doubling of the population since 1971. More than 600,000 motor vehicles now crowd the avenues and highways, churning out carbon monoxide, nitrogen, and sulfur, and turning a cross-town journey which used to take minutes into an odyssey of an hour or more.

At least half of Caracas's inhabitants live in tin and tarpaper ranchos on the high hills that ring the city. Lured from the countryside during the boom years, these slum-dwellers are either unemployed or toil at menial jobs. To them, the wealth enjoyed by their neighbors on the lower slopes has remained a dream.

Politicians worry, moreover, that oil can no longer help to solve Caracas's—and Venezuela's—problems. Venezuela's earnings from petroleum, though considerable, were nevertheless \$5 billion less in 1983 than in 1981. With oil revenues accounting for more than 70 percent of government tax revenues and 95 percent of Venezuela's export earnings, the drop has had serious consequences.

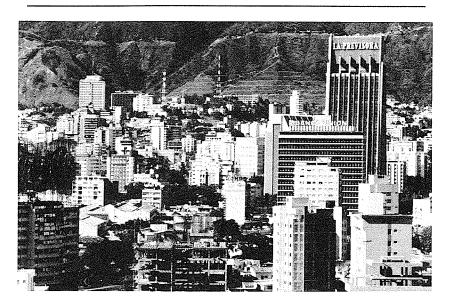
In 1983, Venezuela's gross national product (GNP) declined by 2.4 percent. Inflation hovered at seven percent in 1983, unemployment at eight percent. Foreign debt now stands at \$34 billion—owed to more than 450 foreign banks—with some \$22 billion of that debt falling due in 1984.* As they try to adjust to their new economic circumstances, Venezuelans are slowly realizing that *la fiesta ha terminado*—the party is over.

It was a party almost a century in the making. Before the discovery of oil in the area surrounding Lake Maracaibo at the turn of the century, most Venezuelans had lived off the land as slash-and-burn farmers or itinerant cowboys. Only a few growers in the northwestern Andes Mountains and the coastal valleys had developed a stable and prosperous agriculture based on coffee and cocoa, then Venezuela's main exports. Manufacturing was confined to handicrafts. Some concessions for the extraction of asphalt—used for road building and waterproofing—were

*Despite its \$34-billion debt in 1984, Venezuela is better off than other Latin American borrowers. Brazil owes \$93 billion; Mexico, \$89 billion; and Argentina, \$44 billion. Venezuela also has, at 6.4 percent, the lowest rate of inflation, compared with 400 percent in Argentina, 210 percent in Brazil, and 90 percent in Mexico.

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Set on the foothills of Avila Mountain, Caracas's office towers and high-rise apartments dominate the capital. On the outskirts are the ranchos (slums).

granted during the 1870s to foreign firms, but few Venezuelans had the capital or the inclination to exploit what the country's first Spanish settlers had called "the devil's excrement." With a foreign debt equivalent in 1902 to 10 years of its national income, Venezuela seemed destined to remain yet another destitute, caste-ridden, underdeveloped Latin American nation.

A growing foreign interest in the oil that the asphalt portended promised a change in Venezuela's prospects. In 1909, the dictatorship of General Juan Vicente Gómez sold one of the first foreign petroleum concessions to an Englishman, John Allen Tregelles, who represented the British-owned Venezuelan Development Company. By 1914, the Anglo-Dutch firm of Royal Dutch Shell had drilled the first successful commercial well; total oil production stood at 121,000 barrels in 1917. Thirteen years later, Royal Dutch Shell, Gulf, and Standard Oil were pumping Venezuelan oil at an annual rate of almost 135 *million* barrels.

Gómez, whose 27-year tenure lasted until his death in 1935, was not a demanding host from the perspective of the oil companies. He preferred to let Venezuela remain a backward agricultural nation, one that was easy to control, and sought to minimize the effect of oil revenues on Venezuela's economy. From 1919 to 1936, the Venezuelan government gleaned only

seven percent of all oil-company profits. Gómez used much of the revenue to maintain his loyal, German-trained army, build schools and roads in his native region of Táchira, and support his flock of more than 80 acknowledged offspring.

Even so, Gómez proved powerless to arrest the impact of the oil business. Agriculture, once the dominant force in Venezuela's economy, was gradually pushed aside. In 1920, coffee and cocoa made up 92 percent of Venezuela's exports; oil, a mere two percent. Ten years later, oil accounted for 83 percent of all exports, coffee and cocoa, 15 percent—a decline aggravated by a drop in the two commodities' total volume and value.

P. J.'s Rise and Fall

The death of Gómez marked the beginning of modern Venezuela. Instead of using oil revenues solely for personal enrichment, the Venezuelan leadership under generals Eleazar López Contreras (1936–41) and Isaias Medina Angarita (1941–45) gradually instituted the policy of *sembrar el petróleo*—sowing the oil—and put oil funds back into government investment schemes designed to diversify the economy. At the same time, it also began pressing the foreign oil companies for a greater share of their profits.

Nevertheless, the emerging political opposition, led by Rómulo Betancourt and his allies, remained dissatisfied with the pace of social and economic progress. Restless junior officers in the military joined them in a coup that replaced Medina's government on October 18, 1945, with a junta headed by Betancourt.

Betancourt and his Democratic Action Party saw oil revenues as the country's only means to modernization. Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonzo, a former lawyer and a member of the Venezuelan Congress, was appointed Minister of Energy. Pérez Alfonzo was fond of telling parables. One of his best known concerns the creation of Venezuela, "the perfect country that has everything that human beings desire," given by God to the Venezuelans, the "most imperfect people in the world." He was also an ardent nationalist, convinced that, left to themselves, foreign oil companies would maximize their own profits, not aid in the development of a backward nation such as Venezuela. Under his stewardship, Venezuela's share of foreign oil profits increased to 50 percent. In addition, Pérez Alfonzo declared that Venezuela would sell no more drilling concessions to foreigners.

The revenues created by Pérez Alfonzo's fifty-fifty split of oil profits allowed the Democratic Action government to expand the meaning of "sowing the oil." Public expenditure in 1946 was

VENEZUELA AND WORLD OIL

Venezuela, as Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D.-Mass.) noted in 1980, has been "a reliable source of petroleum through two world wars and numerous world crises." Today, it is OPEC's third largest producer (behind Saudi Arabia and Iran) and the Western Hemisphere's greatest exporter. The changing nature of the world oil market promises only to enhance Venezuela's importance.

Turmoil in the Middle East—highlighted by the three-year-old Iran-Iraq war—has led both the Western Europeans and the United States to cut back on their Persian Gulf imports. The United States now counts on the Middle East for three percent of its oil, versus six percent in 1973. France, which in 1973 bought 96 percent of its oil from OPEC's Arab members, today takes only 36 percent. The amount of West Germany's oil that comes from the Persian Gulf has fallen from 49 percent a decade ago to 13 percent. Japan, however, has remained an unhappy hostage: 56 percent of its oil still comes from the Mideast.

Reduced U.S. reliance on Middle East petroleum has not ended America's days of dependency. As domestic supplies dwindle, the United States—which ranks eighth in reserves, but second in production (behind the USSR)—will have to find more and more of its oil abroad. In 1983, U.S. oil imports, mostly from Mexico, totaled 31.9 percent of domestic consumption. (Venezuela supplied three percent of U.S. domestic consumption.) So far, a global recession has reduced overall demand, now at a 10-year low. But according to the *Oil and Gas Journal*, the nation's need for energy will increase significantly as the U.S. economy expands.

If and when that happens, it may turn out that the oil glut of 1982–84 has done more harm than good. Most Americans seem to have forgotten the 1973–74 predawn gas lines, "odd-even" rationing, and chill winter evenings. Last year, William A. Niskanen, a member of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, dismissed U.S. dependence on oil imports as "not a front-burner kind of issue." Once again, energy policy is off the political menu [see "Energy: 1945–1980," WQ, Spring 1981]. Declining prices and new environmental constraints have discouraged the costly search for new domestic supplies, notably those found offshore. Development of nuclear power, solar energy, synthetic fuel, and tar sands has stagnated. Even the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve, planned in 1974 as a 750-million barrel nest egg, is now being filled at a slower rate than that mandated by Congress.

Venezuela's rich Orinoco Heavy Oil Belt could help to ease the pain. The Belt is not scheduled for full-scale development until the 1990s, but talks between U.S. engineering firms such as Bechtel and Venezuela's state oil company, PDVSA, have been under way for the last four years.

triple its 1945 level; in 1947, it was four times that of 1945.

The 1948 ouster of Democratic Action by the disenchanted military temporarily sidetracked Venezuela's increasingly aggressive petroleum policy. The military junta headed by Major Marcos Pérez Jiménez ("P. J.") abandoned Pérez Alfonzo's plans for a gradual takeover of the oil industry. New concessions were sold to the foreign oil companies, often to fill P. J.'s own coffers. (His personal fortune grew to an estimated \$13.5 million.) Venezuela's share of the industry's profits gradually declined.

Sowing the oil continued, this time in a different direction. The dictator chose to concentrate on "conquest of the physical environment," building irrigation canals, highways, dams, power plants, steel mills, apartment complexes, luxury hotels—and officers' clubs. One such establishment, the Military Circle Club in Caracas, cost more than \$15 million in 1953—6.5 times more than government expenditures on social security that year and twice what P. J. spent on irrigation. Despite P. J.'s corruption and fiscal ineptitude, many of Caracas's urban underclass today look back with pride on the mammoth jobcreating construction projects of P. J.'s day and remember his rule fondly.

The downfall of P. J. in a 1958 popular revolt brought the return of Betancourt, elected President that same year. Pérez Alfonzo again became Minister of Energy; and, in 1960, he took two farreaching steps. The first was the creation of the Venezuelan Petroleum Corporation (CVP), a state-owned firm set up to teach Venezuelans how to run an oil company. The second was the founding of OPEC in partnership with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran. Twenty years later, OPEC would have 13 members.

Seismic Changes

Thanks to a world oil glut during the 1960s, the efforts of Pérez Alfonzo had little immediate economic impact. A steady decline in the price of oil (from \$2.65 a barrel in 1957 to \$1.85 a barrel in 1970) at first curbed the growth of government income. But legislation passed during the presidency of Rafael Caldera (1969–73) tightened the screws further on the foreign oil companies—Venezuela's profit share rose to more than 70 percent. Furthermore, the 1971 Hydrocarbons Reversion Law stipulated that all of the oil companies' Venezuelan assets would revert to the state when their concessions expired.

Venezuela's increased "take" of oil company profits boosted government revenues by 15 percent between 1970 and 1971. Life for Juan Bimba (Venezuela's John Doe) was looking up. His 1972

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First tapped in 1914, the oil fields of Lake Maracaibo today produce some 1.3 million barrels of oil a day, 75 percent of Venezuela's total production.

per capita income of over \$1,000 was the highest in Latin America. Some 93 percent of his 10 million countrymen were employed, many of them (22 percent) in agriculture or (16.2 percent) in manufacturing. Inflation stood at three percent. And Caldera, who had announced plans for a subway system in Caracas, expansion of the state steel industry, a new international airport, and scores of hotels, highways, schools, apartment houses, and hospitals, promised the public that things would steadily get better.

But no Venezuelan could have foreseen the bonanza that was to come. On October 6, 1973, in a surprise attack some 6,500 miles east of Caracas, Egyptian tanks and assault troops crossed the Suez Canal, seeking to oust the Israelis from the Sinai Desert. The October War had begun. Two weeks later, the Arab members of OPEC led a drive to raise the price of "marker" crude oil from \$3.01 to \$5.12 a barrel. Enraged by an emergency U.S. airlift of war materiel to Israel, they also began an oil embargo of the United States. Venezuela did not participate in the embargo, but it did go along when, on Christmas Eve 1973, OPEC again raised the price of "marker" crude, this time to \$11.65. In the space of two months, the world price of oil had almost quadrupled.

As Henry Kissinger later noted, "All the countries involved,

even the producers themselves, faced seismic changes in their domestic structures."

In Venezuela, government revenues were 256 percent higher in 1974 than in 1973. Sternly promising to "manage abundance with the mentality of scarcity," President Carlos Andrés Pérez (elected in 1973) set up the Venezuelan Investment Fund as a "reservoir" for 35 percent of the unexpected oil revenues.

But Pérez, a consummate politician who loved grand gestures, soon forgot the mentality of scarcity. Instead, he asserted that the oil windfall was "the last chance for Venezuelan democracy."

The Pains of Indigestion

His government embarked on a spending spree. And Pérez launched a series of ambitious programs designed to redistribute wealth and power to the have-nots of Venezuelan society. He enacted the 1974 Law of Unjustified Dismissals, which made it difficult to fire workers and provided ample severance pay. Price controls were introduced to keep food prices down, and the government subsidized the importation of rice, wheat, and other commodities. To spur employment, Pérez issued decrees that called for "padding" the work force: Additional personnel, for example, were assigned to all public rest rooms and public elevators. To help farmers, in 1974 Pérez canceled \$350 million worth of agricultural debts owed to various state agencies.

The Pérez years also saw an attempt to "buy" Venezuela a modern, diversified industrial base. The government-owned steel and aluminum industries were beefed up with an investment of almost \$1 billion in 1975. Ciudad Guayana, a planned "model" city erected in the grasslands near the confluence of the Caroni and Orinoco rivers, became in 1977 the site of a \$4 billion construction project designed to quintuple the Orinoco Steel Company's (SIDOR) output from one million to five million tons a year. In addition, the government took over or formed textile and lumber companies, hydroelectric consortia, shipbuilding firms, and, among other transportation ventures, a steamship company and a national airline. American, German, and Japanese technicians were brought in as hired supervisors; not enough local cadres had been trained to run the new enterprises.

Primed by government authorization of a wage increase and a temporary price freeze, the public went on a buying binge. Japanese stereos and televisions, German cars and cameras, American clothing and foodstuffs all helped to increase Venezuela's imports by an estimated 235 percent between 1973 and 1978. The shops in Caracas catered to the newly rich by offering

Limoges china, Bohemian crystal, and Italian marble statuary.

When they could not find what they wanted at home, Venezuelans were quick to go abroad. Air France inaugurated Concorde flights from Caracas to Paris in 1976. Florida, however, was more accessible. Venezuelan tourists became known among merchants in Miami as *los dámedos*—the "give-metwo" people. Venezuelans liked it so much in Miami that more than 16,000 of them bought apartments there. Former President Betancourt lamented in 1977 that "the nation's scale of values has suffered a shameful distortion." His old colleague Pérez Alfonzo warned that Venezuela "could die of overeating as certainly as from hunger."

The pains of indigestion were not long in coming. In 1976, the profligate policies of the Venezuelan government resulted in a sizable budget deficit. To cover the shortfall, Venezuela began borrowing abroad with the promise of future oil earnings as collateral. The industrial diversification projects—especially in steel and petrochemicals—designed to wean Venezuela from dependency on oil turned into financial disasters. From 1974 to 1977, industrial productivity actually *declined* by five percent. Agricultural output, projected by government planners to grow by nine percent, slack-ened by 1.8 percent instead. But government bureaucracy did prosper, doubling in size (from 350,000 in 1973 to 750,000 in 1978) and, between 1973 and 1976, tripling in cost.

Nationalizing Oil

While the rest of the Venezuelan economy floundered in waste, corruption, and inefficiency, the petroleum sector steadily soldiered on. Even as the government expanded its control of the foreign-owned oil industry, it carefully avoided taking any steps that would reduce the petroleum revenues upon which the country relied.

By the mid-1970s, however, both Venezuela's leaders and the executives of the multinational oil companies realized that they had come to an impasse. Since 1960, Caracas had granted no new concessions. A steady increase in taxes had reduced the oil companies' share of profits to 30 percent. Not surprisingly, Shell, Exxon (formerly Standard Oil), Gulf, and the other oil giants began pulling back. As exploration declined, the size of proven reserves shrank. Nationalization seemed to be the most reasonable alternative for all concerned.

After two years of intense debate and arduous negotiations with 14 foreign companies, on August 29, 1975, Venezuela nationalized the petroleum industry in what President Pérez

DEALING WITH THE 'YANQUIS'

Unlike the citizens of some other Latin American nations, Venezuelans do not harbor a historical grudge against the *Yanquis*. They do not echo the Mexican lament that their country is "so far from God, so close to the United States." Nevertheless, relations between the two nations have had their ups and downs.

The United States extended formal diplomatic recognition to Venezuela in 1836. No close ties existed until the 20th century when the discovery of oil in Venezuela, along with the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, heightened the country's strategic significance from Washington's point of view. To show support for General Juan Vicente Gómez's regime (1908–35), U.S. warships began calling frequently at Venezuelan ports. During the Second World War, Venezuela, though officially neutral, supplied the Allies with oil.

Venezuela became a democracy in 1945, after a violent coup that unseated General Isaias Medina Angarita. But the United States came to conclude that ensuring a stable oil supply was more important than trying to implant democracy abroad. Disturbed by the new government's plan to boost Venezuela's "take" of the profits of foreign oil companies from roughly 30 percent to 50 percent, and worried about a "Red menace" in Latin America, Washington uttered no protests when Rómulo Gallegos, the nation's first popularly elected president, was removed from office by the military in 1948. Six years later, Venezuelan dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez pleased Washington by hosting the Organization of American States meeting that endorsed the 1954 CIA-sponsored overthrow of Guatemala's leftist government. President Dwight D. Eisenhower rewarded Pérez with the Legion of Merit.

Eisenhower lost his friend in January 1958, when a revolt against Pérez led to the restoration of constitutional democracy. Washington's longtime support of Pérez and Eisenhower's 1958 decision (during a recession at home) to curb U.S. imports of Venezuelan oil did not please the new government. When Vice President Richard Nixon visited Caracas in May 1958, angry mobs stoned his limousine.

John F. Kennedy's three years in office (1961–63) brought a gradual improvement in relations. President Rómulo Betancourt impressed Kennedy with his strong anti-Castro stance and his commitment to agrarian reform. For a time, Venezuela became a showcase for Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, obtaining \$100 million in U.S. economic aid in 1961 alone. But Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy's successor, sent in U.S. troops to restore order (and democracy) in the Dominican Republic in 1965. Venezuelan President Raúl Leoni denounced Johnson's action for its "inexplicable disregard of the principles of the Inter-American system."

Coolness persisted into the Nixon-Ford years. Among the reasons: U.S. covert intervention in Chile, Venezuela's aggressive Third World stance, and the 1973 decision by the Organization of Petro-

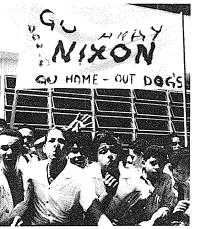
leum Exporting Countries (OPEC), of which Venezuela was a founding member, to quadruple the price of oil from \$3 to \$12 per barrel. In 1974, President Carlos Andrés Pérez criticized the reluctance of the Nixon and Ford administrations to turn the Panama Canal over to Panama. Congress also angered Caracas by excluding Venezuela from the 1974 Trade Act, which lowered U.S. tariffs on designated imports from developing nations.

Jimmy Carter's election to the Presidency in 1976 ushered in a period of warmer ties. The new President's emphasis on human rights found favor with Pérez, who shared Carter's distaste for Anastasio Somoza's regime in Nicaragua, among others. Carter pushed the Panama Canal treaties, popular in Latin America, through the Senate in 1978 and signed in 1980 a bill rescinding Venezuela's exclusion from the 1974 Trade Act.

Washington and Caracas initially saw eye to eye on how to contain the spreading civil war in El Salvador. President Luis Herrera Campíns's conservative government (1979–83) helped to train Salvadoran troops. A grateful Reagan administration agreed in 1981 to sell Venezuela 24 advanced F-16 fighter-

bombers (for \$615 million).

But the widening of the conflict in Central America has eroded Venezuelan confidence in a military solution. Least popular have been the efforts of U.S.-backed "contras" to destabilize Nicaragua's Sandinista government, a regime that Caracas initially supported. More recently, Venezuela's current President, Jaime Lusinchi, denounced Nicaragua's leaders as "antidemocratic." Lusinchi has emphasized negotiations sponsored bv the so-called



Contadora group (comprising Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia, and Panama) as "an honorable way out for all sides in Central America."

In 1984, a handful of other issues beclouds U.S.–Venezuelan relations. Caracas would like to see increased American aid for economic development throughout Latin America. Above all, Venezuelan leaders would like their country to be treated by Washington as something more than a "client state," to be stroked when necessary and ignored when not. As President Herrera stated during his 1982 visit to Washington, "The United States must not forget that [Venezuela is] where it can best project its understanding, its cooperation, and its friendship. But we are friends who need to be cultivated with kindness and perseverance."

called the "moment of national frankness." Foreign assets reverted to a holding company, Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), which acquired 5.68 million acres of land, roughly 12,500 wells, 12 oil refineries, and an aggregate capacity to produce 1.5 million barrels a day. In return, the oil companies received \$1 billion, or one-seventh of the estimated replacement cost of the assets, and less than Venezuela earned every month in 1983.

Joining the Country Club

The transfer was effected with intelligence and patience. The Pérez administration realized that Venezuela would still be forced to rely on the foreign oil companies for marketing and technology. Venezuela was also determined not to let PDVSA go the way of Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), Mexico's government-owned, corruption-plagued company, which had taken 21 years to show a profit and 36 years to export a drop of oil. "What is essential," emphasized Pérez, "is to grant PDVSA the power to manage the industry without guild, political, or bureaucratic intervention, no matter how well-intentioned these interventions may be."

The 14 foreign subsidiaries were consolidated into four companies, each modeled on one of the four largest oil firms in Venezuela. The industry's 23,100 employees—90 percent of whom were Venezuelans at the time of nationalization—and the procedures under which they worked did not change. To ensure PDVSA's financial self-sufficiency, Pérez permitted the new conglomerate to retain 10 percent of its net income from oil exports.

The autonomy granted to PDVSA by the new government was a tacit acknowledgment of Venezuela's dependence on the petroleum industry and its homegrown executives. Politicians knew that the Venezuelan economy would founder without the steady flow of oil. Radical promises of economic reform had always been tempered by that reality. Every elected government had been forced in some way or another to negotiate with PDVSA's "technological elite"—often members of the upper middle class recruited by the foreign oil companies and educated in America.

The existence of this elite, however, and the dependency that Venezuela has upon it, have generated no small amount of jealousy, distrust, and resentment. Many Venezuelans suspect that PDVSA managers, because of their long affiliation with the foreign oil companies, are insufficiently nationalistic. The lavish, cosmopolitan way of life enjoyed by many of the senior executives has reinforced that impression. Most Venezuelans cannot

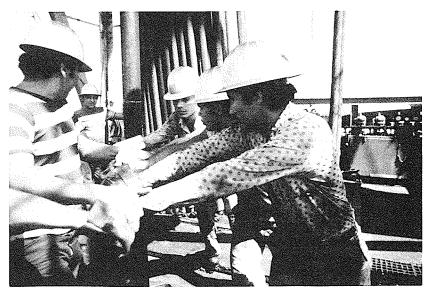
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afford to belong to the elite Caracas or Lagunita country clubs (where a "membership share" can cost \$100,000 and \$60,000, respectively). Nor can they afford to buy the mansions in the Caracas neighborhoods of Prados del Este or Cerro Verde. For PDVSA's upper echelon, such things are possible.

The rank and file in the oil companies also tap into the good life. Outside the town of El Tigre, in the oil-producing state of Anzóategui, employees live in the San Tomaé oil camp—a holdover from the days when foreign engineers ran the derricks. There, behind tall fences, they have their own schools, their own hospital, and their own nine-hole golf course.

Still, even the pampered petroleum industry could not save Venezuela from the consequences of its rapid expansion during the oil boom. When the value of Venezuela's oil exports dropped in 1978, Venezuela faced a growing budget deficit and sizable due bills for expensive, uncompleted factories and construction projects. Public debt stood at \$11.7 billion, as opposed to \$2.4 billion four years earlier. In March 1979, the newly elected Christian Democrat President, Luis Herrera Campíns, announced that Venezuela could not continue as a "nation that [only] consumes rivers of whiskey and oil." Herrera cut public spending, reduced government price controls, and increased interest rates. His actions set off howls of protest and, ultimately,



Venezuela's state oil company employs less than one percent of the work force. Yet, in 1982 it accounted for 23 percent of Venezuela's gross national product.

labor unrest, as the price of basic foodstuffs like rice, sugar, and milk, freed from controls, soared.

Unfortunately, Herrera, like his predecessors, lacked persistence. When the Iran-Iraq war raised the price of oil from \$16.77 a barrel in 1979 to \$27.60 a barrel in 1980, the days of belt-tightening ended before they could even begin. Venezuela's oil income jumped from \$13.5 billion to \$18 billion. Responding to political pressure, especially from Venezuela's powerful labor unions, Herrera's administration agreed to a bill in January of 1980 that doubled the minimum wage (to \$12.20 a day). The legislature also approved additional outlays that added up to a sudden 35 percent increase in the government budget.

The weakening of the oil market in late 1981 finally burst the bubble. The economic contradictions obscured by the windfall years of 1979–80 reappeared in an aggravated form. Inflation soon stood at 20 percent, unemployment at 6.2 percent. A foreign worker registration drive began in an attempt to reduce the number of "guestworkers"; an estimated 500,000 to one million had arrived from Colombia during the boom years, virtually taking over farm labor and filling low-wage jobs everywhere. Agriculture stagnated, with Venezuela importing more than half its food—including black beans, the national staple. Despite a \$200-million subsidy, SIDOR racked up a \$232-million deficit in 1980. One-third of the aluminum industry's capacity was knocked out in 1981 when one plant's electricity was accidentally shut off, "freezing" the molten metal in its "pots."

All told, the 200-odd government-owned industrial firms (responsible in 1982 for over half of Venezuela's gross domestic product) lost \$8 billion between 1979 and 1982. In a 1983 *Miami Herald* op-ed piece, Carlos Rangel, a former Venezuelan diplomat, remarked, "There must be examples of worse fiscal mismanagement than that of Venezuela in the last eight or nine years, but I am not aware of them."

Creating Trouble

Against this dismal economic backdrop, Herrera's administration demanded that the oil industry be brought to heel. In the words of Alberto Quiros, the head of one of PDVSA's subsidiaries, "the honeymoon was over." Humberto Calderon Berti, Herrera's Minister of Energy, vowed to "deepen the meaning of nationalization." Calderon bound the company closer to the state by ruling that its budget had to be approved by his ministry, by reducing the terms of the company's board of directors from four years to two, and by appointing board members for

partisan political reasons rather than for technical proficiency. PDVSA also lost much of its financial self-sufficiency in September 1982, when the government unceremoniously appropriated its \$8-billion cash reserve.

Herrera added insult to injury by appointing Calderon as PDVSA's new president. Five months later, the incoming administration of current President Jaime Lusinchi (elected in 1983) ousted Calderon and installed Brígido Natera, the president of one of PDVSA's four operating subsidiaries. Lusinchi also pledged to "guarantee the self-sufficiency of the oil industry."

Still the damage has been done. The political turmoil that engulfed the oil company has left its managers demoralized. They now fear that a precedent for government intervention has been established and that PDVSA's capital investment funds will be squandered by the government elsewhere whenever things look bad in the general economy.

But making PDVSA subservient to the state will not ease Venezuela's predicament. The stagnation of the oil market since 1982 has already cut into revenues. By arrangement with OPEC, Venezuela's production has been limited to 1.75 million barrels a day (down from a peak of 3.7 million barrels in 1970). And it is estimated that Venezuela's reserves of more marketable "light" oil will run out in another 25 to 35 years.

No More Roller Coasters?

Venezuela does possess ample amounts of "heavy" oil, and this reserve, noted Finance Minister Luis Ugeto, means that Venezuela "no longer runs the risk of running out of oil." The 15,000-square-mile Orinoco Heavy Oil Belt, a tract of swamps and jungle along the Orinoco River in northeastern Venezuela, contains anywhere from 700 billion to three trillion barrels of heavy oil—five to 15 times Saudi Arabia's oil reserves. In 1981, PDVSA began an \$8-billion "megaproject" to exploit the region's riches. Plans called for a separate power plant, refineries to upgrade the oil, a 187-mile pipeline, and housing for close to 30,000 workers and their families. Because the oil is thick and impure, extraction and refining will be expensive. In the current depressed market, and in Venezuela's present financial situation, the estimated \$14-per-barrel production cost is too high. Pending better days, the heavy-oil project has been scaled back.

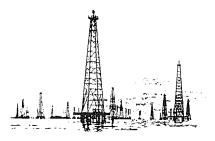
Many Venezuelans are relieved that the Orinoco will not be forced to surrender its oil quickly. Some feel that the last thing their society needs is another roller coaster ride that begins with rising expectations and ends with a bad headache. Jorge Olavar-

ría, the former editor of the Venezuelan magazine *Resumen*, observed that "oil has virtually eliminated our capacity to work productively, because we have an artificial economy." Businessmen and politicians are increasingly aware that Venezuelans must be broken of their habit of waiting for the next bonanza to bail them out.

Today, no sudden Klondike appears forthcoming. Indeed, exactly the reverse seems possible. Venezuela's dependence on the petroleum industry has never been more glaringly apparent. Every \$1-per-barrel reduction in world prices costs Venezuela almost half a *billion* dollars; every drop of 100,000 barrels in production, a full billion.

Given such circumstances, it was hardly surprising that President Lusinchi conceded in his inaugural address that "Venezuela is passing through one of its most difficult moments." Whether Lusinchi will be able to spark a revival in Venezuela's government-owned economic enterprises outside the oil industry is open to question. Some hope exists. The steel and aluminum industries, after years of handouts, are slowly inching into the black. And despite its massive foreign debt, Venezuela, by virtue of its oil revenues, is still regarded by international bankers as the Latin country most likely to pay its debts.

The real challenge goes far beyond economics. Surveying the Venezuelan landscape—much changed since his early years as Minister of Energy—Pérez Alfonzo observed that "oil has not made us any better Venezuelans." Have Venezuelans learned that throwing money at a problem does not necessarily solve it? Or will they wait for another Mideast war or an act of God to boost the world price of oil and provide another temporary cure for their underlying economic woes?



BACKGROUND BOOKS

VENEZUELA

Three hundred million years ago, most of present-day Venezuela was a shallow sea off the coast of the Paleozoic continent Gondwanaland. Dead marine vegetation and crustaceans, deposited on the sea floor, began their slow metamorphosis into one of the world's largest pools of oil.

In 1499, the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda sailed into Lake Maracaibo and observed that the Indian natives lined their dugouts with pitch from the lake bottom. The Spaniards followed suit, later bottling and selling the black sludge in Europe as a cure for gout.

Ojeda had not been looking for oil. Like his fellow conquistadors, he was seeking the mythical Eldorado, the City of Gold. But Eldorado proved elusive. As historian John Lombardi notes in **Venezuela** (Oxford, 1982), the Venezuelan wilderness yielded "no mighty Amerindian empires, no storehouses of golden objects, and no fabulous cities." Disappointed gold hunters stayed on to raise cattle, cacao, and later coffee for export.

As late as 1600, most of the Spanish settlers, plagued by disease and harassed by hostile Indians, still congregated in isolated settlements. A lack of centralized authority—Venezuela remained under the jurisdiction of Chile and Colombia until 1777—left towns such as Caracas (founded in 1567) open to raids by Dutch and English pirates and French freebooters, who sacked the town in 1680.

By the mid-18th century, however, Spain had Venezuela under firm control, having established a trading monopoly that excluded any European rivals. The Indians were subjugated and worked beside imported African slaves on large coffee plantations. Miscegenation was common, but the melting pot did not erase racial tension or economic rivalry. Factional strife between the wealthy, white *criollos* of the coastal cities and the impoverished, mixed-blood *pardos* of the plains persisted.

During the 13-year struggle for independence (1808–21), the royalists used this animosity to divide the rebels. Historian Edward Lieuwen describes this transformation of a "separatist movement into a social upheaval" in his authoritative history of **Venezuela** (Oxford, 1961). The prospect of an independent Venezuela ruled by the Caracas elite disturbed the plainsmen, who at first enlisted on the side of the throne.

Simón Bolívar eventually united the rebels. The Spanish were defeated in 1821, and Venezuela joined Colombia and Ecuador in the Republic of Gran Colombia. While Bolívar was off liberating the rest of South America, General José Antonio Páez seized power and led Venezuela out of the federation in 1830.

Damaging civil wars followed the end of Páez's rule in 1848. In **Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela** (Ohio, 1964), a survey of the period from 1840 to 1908, historian R. L. Gilmore cites the 1855 letter of a Venezuelan bishop that described "families reduced to impoverished circumstances ... the absolute absence of any police regulation ... every social tie violated."

Order was finally restored in 1908 by General Juan Vicente Gómez. In **Gómez, Tyrant of the Andes** (1941), journalist Daniel Clinton chronicles Gómez's rise to power and the brutal excesses that kept him there.

Gómez's death in December 1935 ended the despotic days of the caudillos. In **The Venezuelan Armed Forces in Politics, 1935–1959** (Missouri, 1972), Winfield Burggraff asserts that modern schooling instilled in Venezuela's younger officers "a desire to [undertake] reform—beginning at the top."

Indeed, a rebellion of discontented officers set off the coup of 1945. So began **The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution** (Rutgers, 1964), as chronicled by Robert Alexander. The experiment in civilian rule, however, proved shortlived. Disturbed by what they saw as the excesses of "upstart civilians," the military overthrew President Rómulo Gallegos in 1948.

A popular uprising restored democracy in January 1958. But opposition from the Right dogged the 1959 Betancourt presidency until he persuaded conservatives that a leftwing revolution would overwhelm them both unless they united. Indeed, Cuba's Fidel Castro backed a serious challenge by university-led radicals during the 1960s.

In Conflict and Political Change in Venezuela (Princeton, 1973), Daniel Levine examines the leftist threat during the early 1960s. Both the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) saw Caracas's universities as "a strong point and source of shock troops."

But while the vision of world revolution appealed to urban students, it never gained favor among other Venezuelans. Repeated efforts by armed insurgents to disrupt elections and overthrow the government lasted for almost seven years; the last disheartened guerrillas gave up in 1969, after the government offered them a choice of amnesty or a plane ticket out of the country. Levine concludes that democracy "emerged strengthened from a lengthy and severe test."

Other detailed surveys of the country's political system include John Martz's Acción Democratica (Princeton, 1965) and Donald Herman's Christian Democracy in Venezuela (North Carolina, 1980).

Herman points out that COPEI, the Christian Democratic party, derived many of its ideas from papal encyclicals that emphasized the importance of social justice. Venezuela's priests, 80 percent of whom are foreigners and most of whom work in the barrios, have been an important voice for social reform. Still, Herman feels that the influence of the church has been "more indirect than direct." Other factors contributed to COPEI's victory in the 1968 presidential elections.

John Powell asserts that rapid urbanization was responsible. In **The Mobilization of the Venezuelan Peasant** (Harvard, 1971), he argues that the mass migration of farmers from the back country to the city weakened the rural, peasant core of the Democratic Action Party's support.

The stimulus to all this internal migration and development was the foreign-owned oil industry. Edwin Lieuwen observes that there was enough **Petroleum in Venezuela** (Russell & Russell, 1967) to almost quadruple (in real terms) the gross national product from 1935 to 1954.

Franklin Tugwell maintains that Venezuela's leaders struck "a balance between righteousness and flexibility" in their approach to **The Politics of Oil in Venezuela** (Stanford, 1975). While firm in their demands on the foreign oil giants, the Venezuelans strove to avoid "nationalistic posturing."

Buoyed by oil wealth, Venezuela has risen to prominence in OPEC, Latin America, and the Third World. Editor Robert Bond and other contributors survey Venezuela's attempts to promote "continental nationalism, political unity, and economic liberation from the industrialized nations" in **Contemporary Venezuela and Its Role in International Affairs** (N.Y. Univ., 1977, cloth & paper).

Even communist Cuba, once ostracized by President Rómulo Betancourt, now plays a part in Venezuela's vision of pan-American solidarity: Venezuela led the unsuccessful 1974 drive to lift sanctions imposed on Cuba by the Organization of American States (OAS). More conventionally, petrodollars have been used to finance low-interest loans and oil subsidies to Venezuela's neighbors.

Yet Venezuela itself remains, in many ways, a member of the Third World. Guayana and the Amazonas territories in the south are still inhabited by Indians who covet the white man's "machete skin" (metal) for shields and spearheads.

Anthropologist Johannes Wilbert wonders if the cultures of these **Survivors of Eldorado** (Praeger, 1972, cloth & paper) will survive the steady encroachment of civilization. Members of one tribe, the Yanoama, live almost exactly as their PaleoIndian ancestors did some 20,000 years ago—except that the nomadic hunters now track deer and boar instead of the Pleistocene mammoth and glyptodon.

Far removed from the jungle habitat of the Yanoama, but almost as untouched by Venezuela's oil wealth, are the slum-dwellers of the urban barrios. They exist in sharp contrast to the high-living 10 percent of the population that owns almost 40 percent of Venezuela's wealth.

Talton Ray focuses on the plight of these aspirants to progress in **The Politics of the Barrios** (Calif., 1969). In a Caracas barrio, the visitor can see, as Ray did, "pigs and dogs running down the street" past dwellings made of "mud, cardboard, flattened tin cans, and cinder blocks." Naked brown children, probably born out of wedlock, as are half of all Venezuelan offspring, stand in the doorways.

In **The View from the Barrio** (Michigan, 1968, cloth; 1970, paper), sociologist Lisa Peattie remarks that Venezuela remains "a curious mixture of extremes: people who believe in witchcraft and [drink] Pepsi Cola; superhighways next to ... traditional corn-patch agriculture; great national wealth, with a mass of very poor people." Oil money does not change everything.

—Linda S. Robinson

EDITOR'S NOTE: Linda S. Robinson, a former Wilson Quarterly assistant editor, is a member of the editorial staff at Foreign Affairs.

Ideas

REINHOLD NIEBUHR'S 'REVOLUTION'

Ever since the 18th century, Western intellectuals have been tempted by what might be described as the "Enlightenment heresy"—a simple faith in the perfectibility of man and human society. Fortunately for the survival of the liberal tradition, there have been thinkers within the fold, John Stuart Mill among them, who have discerned and pointed out the excesses of the reformist creed. Another such thinker was the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971). Historian Richard Fox here recounts how Niebuhr, reminding his contemporaries of the Christian notion of Original Sin, helped to steer American academics and policy-makers away from utopian schemes and toward greater recognition of the ethical dilemmas that loom up in everyday political life.

by Richard Wightman Fox

When *Esquire* magazine turned 50 last year, it released a much-ballyhooed golden anniversary number devoted to "50 Who Made the Difference" over the past half century. Celebrity writers such as Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, and Tom Wolfe were enlisted to profile "American Originals" as diverse as Dwight D. Eisenhower and Muhammad Ali. Despite their differences, nearly all of *Esquire*'s elect had one thing in common: They were themselves celebrities, household names.

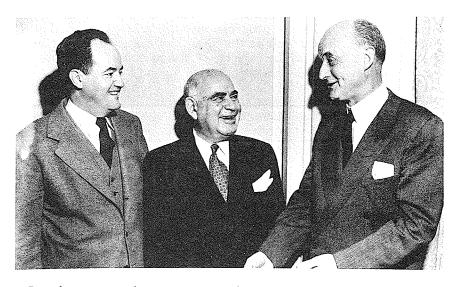
One exception—a choice bound to confuse the magazine's up-scale readers—was philosopher-theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. He was not the only preacher. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were there. But Niebuhr was the only full-time professor and the only social, political, or religious thinker in the group. Why had Niebuhr been chosen and not, say, Lewis Mumford, Talcott Parsons, or Margaret Mead?

The answer is simple: Niebuhr had influence in places

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REINHOLD NIEBUHR



Preacher among politicos: Senator Hubert Humphrey (D.-Minn.) and Senator Herbert Lehman (D.-N.Y.) converse with Reinhold Niebuhr at a 1950 dinner sponsored by Americans for Democratic Action.

where the others did not. Like them, he had a following among academic and general readers; unlike them, he had caught the attention of such luminaries as Henry Luce (who had put him on *Time*'s anniversary cover in 1948), as well as Felix Frankfurter, Isaiah Berlin, George Kennan, Walter Reuther, Adlai Stevenson, Hubert Humphrey, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., himself the author of the *Esquire* profile.

In the years after World War II, Niebuhr was, as journalist Richard Rovere once put it, "theologian of the establishment." Occasionally, the theologian mused that it might have been nice to be a man of power himself. But he contented himself with a career as a preacher, writer, and teacher—one in which he, nevertheless, exercised substantial influence. "Singlehandedly," writes Schlesinger, "Niebuhr accomplished a revolution in American liberal thought." That, of course, is the hyperbole of a disciple, but it raises the central question: What, precisely, did Niebuhr contribute to American liberalism?

To the generation of liberals who came of age between the two world wars, Niebuhr was, first of all, a powerful personal presence. Born between the early years of the century and the end of World War I, that group was too young to have been demoralized by the disillusionment that followed the Treaty of

Versailles. Many kept their hopeful assumptions about man and history—their belief in progress through science, education, good will—until the end of the '30s. The rise of fascism, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and the carnage of World War II led to their own rendezvous with disillusionment. A good number of liberals faced the '40s with deep self-doubt. Niebuhr shepherded them at that critical moment, offering them both a firm commitment to liberal politics and a skeptical view of man's nature.

Liberalism could survive, he insisted, only if it embraced what he termed a "realistic" perspective on human nature and community. Liberals would have to reacquaint themselves with the Biblical notion of sin: Human beings always did some evil in the course of doing good. Niebuhr often quoted Saint Paul, saying, "There is a law in our members that wars against the law in our mind." No human actions were purely altruistic; even the most disinterested harbored seeds of selfishness. Every act of justice carried at least a measure of injustice with it. That paradox was not a justification for inaction, but a warning against inflated hopes. There were no utopias. Preaching that message day after day in print and in person, Niebuhr attracted a zealous corps of admirers. Schlesinger was not the only one to recollect that the encounter with Niebuhr changed his life.

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Those who knew Niebuhr are unanimous about one thing: None of them ever knew another person remotely like him. Words such as "charismatic," "intense," and "energetic" fall repeatedly from their lips. "Reinie," they say, immediately dominated any group, large or small. Legendary fast-talkers such as Felix Frankfurter and Isaiah Berlin were captivated because they had met their match. Niebuhr outtalked, outdebated, and outquipped the quickest tongues in the English-speaking world. The agnostic Frankfurter once filed out of church after a riveting Niebuhr sermon and shook the preacher's hand as he went by. "I liked what you said, Reinie," the Supreme Court Justice remarked, "and I speak as a believing unbeliever." That was fitting, Niebuhr replied, since he had spoken as "an unbelieving believer."

Richard Wightman Fox, 38, is associate professor of history and humanities at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, he received from Stanford University both his B.A. (1966) and his Ph.D. (1975). Fox is the author of So Far Disordered in Mind: Insanity in California, 1870–1930 (1979) and coeditor of The Culture of Consumption, 1880–1980 (1983). He is completing a biography of Reinhold Niebuhr.

The impact of Niebuhr's person was reinforced by the example of his daily devotion to the tasks of liberal politics. He was a founder of the Union for Democratic Action (UDA) in 1940 and composed its prolabor, anticommunist policy statements. After the war, he was also an active leader in its successor, Americans for Democratic Action, and a dominant figure in New York State's Liberal Party. All the while, he managed to teach full-time at Union Theological Seminary, publish books every couple of years and articles every couple of days, edit two journals of Christian opinion—*Christianity and Crisis* and *Christianity and Society*—and travel to speak at colleges and meetings across the East and Midwest. Niebuhr persuaded not just by personal charisma but by working harder than anyone else. Bruce Bliven, editor of the *New Republic*, remembered him laboring into the night at the UDA office, "struggling on, like a man walking in thick sand."

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But there is another reason for Niebuhr's extraordinary influence during the postwar period. His tough-minded theology gave moral sanction to the policies pursued by the generation of liberals who came to power during the 1960s. Simplifying Niebuhrian ideas about using "power," not just "reason" and "good will," in international affairs helped to buttress a New Frontier regime pledged to "support any friend, oppose any foe."

"John F. Kennedy," Schlesinger reports, "valued not only his philosophical slant but also his practical wisdom." In 1963, McGeorge Bundy, a prominent New Frontiersman, noted that Niebuhr was "probably the most influential single mind in the development of American attitudes which combine moral purpose with a sense of political reality."

Niebuhr, for his part, was never at home with the hardbitten elegance of the Kennedy forces. He was better suited to the rumpled, hole-in-the-sole-of-the-shoe philosophizing of fellow Midwesterner Adlai Stevenson. Nor was he pleased to have his "realism" reduced to "realpolitik." New Frontiersmen spoke of the "necessary amorality of foreign affairs," in Schlesinger's phrase, a position quite at odds with Niebuhr's stress on the "ambiguous morality" of foreign affairs.

Niebuhr was always ready to challenge American pretensions in the world, even as he castigated the Soviets, whom he regarded in the post-1945 period as the primary evildoers on the international scene. He could never be comfortable as house theologian for a party in power. Yet there is no doubt that his name

and his image became supports for the interventionist foreign policy of the liberal Democrats in the 1960s—when he was too old and too incapacitated (from a series of strokes that began in 1952) to enter the fray in person.

The extent of Niebuhr's help to American liberals at midcentury is clear. But what about Schlesinger's claim that Niebuhr effected a revolution in American liberal thought? To judge it fairly, we have go back to Niebuhr's origins—and those of modern American liberalism itself—in the late 19th century.

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Niebuhr was born in Wright City, Missouri, in 1892, the son of a German immigrant minister in the Evangelical Synod of North America, a Protestant denomination whose hybrid theology contained both Lutheran and Calvinist elements. His father, Gustav, had the same irrepressible energy as Reinhold. When he moved his family to Lincoln, Illinois, in 1902, in order to take a larger church, Gustav's star was ascending in the Synod. Powerful clerics and laymen passed through the house in a steady stream; young Reinhold decided, at age 10, that this was the life for him. The bond between father and son was intense. Gustav doubtless caught his own reflection in his dynamic boy and encouraged him to follow in his path.

At age 15, Niebuhr left public school and entered the seminary, emerging at age 20 an ordained minister. His academic training was spotty—he later complained bitterly that the Synod had cheated him out of a college education—but he had acquired a strong interest in social issues and political movements. Although an immigrant church, the Evangelical Synod promoted the liberal Protestant view that the gospel was social, not just individual. The Christian preacher had to address cultural and political matters, not just moral and religious issues.

When he arrived at Yale Divinity School for two years of further study in 1913, Niebuhr faced a challenge both emotional and intellectual. He was quickly made to feel inferior to the school's genteel New Englanders. He tried in vain to camouflage his Midwestern accent and struggled to untangle his densely Teutonic prose. But he could not help feeling, as he wrote to a friend, "like a mongrel among thoroughbreds."

At the same time, he was confronted with a much more militant liberalism than he had experienced in the Bible-centered Synod. The liberals at Yale tended to reduce theology to ethics, to transform the transcendent creator into the sympathetic spirit, to strip Jesus of his divinity and make him instead a model individual.

The early 20th-century social gospel was the legacy of the 19th-century Protestant effort to re-create a society of brotherly reasonableness, to combat the marketplace values of industrial capitalism, and to restore the "organic" community presumed to have existed a century earlier. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Protestant quest for "community" was, in fact, the major force in reform movements both explicitly religious and ostensibly secular—from Edward Bellamy's nationalism and the northern populist movement to Eugene Debs's socialism and Woodrow Wilson's progressivism.

In the wake of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and of the perceived debacle of Wilsonian ideals, Niebuhr joined the legion of liberal Protestants who turned gradually leftward. He teamed up with Sherwood Eddy and Kirby Page of the Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA) in a national campaign for a radical Christian pacifism: not just for the elimination of war, but for the reform of the capitalist society that, they believed, inevitably spawned war.

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At a time when many secular liberals were abandoning politics altogether, religious liberals were radicalized in large numbers. It would not be too far-fetched to say that American radicalism could flourish only in the churches in the wake of the politically repressive measures that followed the war, including the notorious 1920 "Palmer raids" directed by Woodrow Wilson's Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, against Communists and other leftists. *Religious* radicals were relatively safe from attack by vigilantes on the right, who proclaimed themselves Christians. By the mid-1920s, Niebuhr—who also served Detroit's Bethel Church as pastor—had become the star speaker on Eddy's payroll, which funded a touring band of left-leaning evangelists. That group helped create the powerful student Christian movement of the 1920s—a decade mistakenly labeled by most historians as one of uncontested youthful hedonism.

Niebuhr was by far the most influential figure on the student Christian circuit. Several times a year, he addressed student assemblies that packed the largest municipal halls and armories in the East and Midwest. While their elders had mobilized for overseas missionary efforts during the 1890s, the youthful idealists of the '20s focused on the "industrial question"—how to "Christianize" the relations between labor and capital. Reinhold Niebuhr was their leader. It was beside the point, he thundered, to convert foreigners to Christianity when Americans, despite their religious

pretensions, failed to heed the Gospel.

Niebuhr's position on the industrial question, like that of his colleagues in the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (founded in 1921), was well to the left of the prewar social gospel. Where the social gospelers had usually seen the church as a moral referee between labor and capital, Niebuhr proclaimed that it was time for the church to take the side of labor. If industrial strife were to be abolished, he wrote in 1922, "the whole motive power of our modern industry" would have to be transformed. Niebuhr could not condone striking, since coercion contravened the Christian law of love. But if strikes were "antisocial," he insisted, "the organization of modern industry, which the strike disturbs and challenges, is as antisocial as the strike itself." Niebuhr was stuck; he realized that it was too late to try coaxing capitalists into voluntary redistribution of their wealth.

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Through the first half of the decade, Niebuhr remained mired in his dilemma, though he cheered for labor from the sidelines. In 1926, still preaching at Bethel Church, he made a decisive turn. Detroit auto manufacturers, fearful that their open-shop metropolis might fall to the forces of unionization, began to put pressure on prolabor churchmen. Ford Motor Company officials approached wealthy laymen and suggested that they conduct frank discussions with their pastors. When one of his parishioners reported the Ford initiative to him, Niebuhr became furious. He decided to take on no less a figure than Henry Ford himself, who for years had been posing as a proud Christian philanthropist.

In 1926, Ford had proclaimed a new era in cooperative labor-capital relations. To the earlier five dollars-a-day wage that he paid his laborers, he would now add the beneficent fiveday week, which, he claimed, would give each worker an extra holiday each week since wages would not decline. But Niebuhr, who, as chairman of the Detroit mayor's Inter-racial Committee, had privileged access to unpublished data on wages in Ford plants, publicly denounced Ford. He demonstrated that during the previous year "the average Ford man has lost between \$200 and \$300 through the Ford method" of shortening the work week and accelerating the speed of the assembly line. In 1925, the company manufactured the same number of cars in five days as it had the previous year in six.

Niebuhr had thought Ford a fool for a long time—ever since the quixotic journey of the Ford "peace ship" during World War I,

a short-lived effort to persuade the Europeans to lay down their arms. But only now did Niebuhr realize that Ford's apparent foolishness and his vaunted Christian piety were far less innocent than he had imagined. They were the means by which Ford extended his power over labor.

Moreover, Ford's pious posturing, and the admiring reception that it received in much of the Protestant press, made Niebuhr realize that his own repeated calls for industrial justice were themselves so much pious rhetoric. Ford's rhetoric was a cover for power; his own, for weakness. He had been vainly trying to marshal public opinion in support of labor's cause. But rational persuasion, Ford made him see, was unavailing in the industrial sphere. Until now, he had refused to embrace the notion of industrial struggle. For him, as for other radical Protestants, that smacked of what he termed the "Marxian strategy of hate." But the encounter with Ford altered his thinking.

It was another five years before Niebuhr was able to reconcile the idea of group conflict with the Christian law of love. No doubt, it was difficult to cast off the ethical views he had acquired in childhood and preached with enthusiasm for over a decade. It is also clear that he was reluctant to antagonize the liberal Protestants in the YMCA college department, upon whom he depended for much of his income. He was already persuaded that the idealism of Eddy and Page was a head-in-thesand delusion, but he was not prepared to break with them.

Only in the summer of 1932, after his future at Union Theological Seminary (to which he had moved in 1928 and where he remained until retirement in 1960) was assured, did he decide to write the book that he knew would outrage his liberal colleagues. It took him only 10 weeks in his isolated cottage in Heath, Massachusetts, to produce *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. When it appeared in December of the same year, his friends did not hesitate to brand him as a heretic, a traitor to the cause. He had "unequivocally" deserted the Christian fellowship, wrote one former friend in a review.

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The importance of the book lay not in its militant support of the proletarian movement that Niebuhr believed would spread inexorably from Europe to the United States, leaving justice in its wake. Many other Protestant ministers had joined the same cause. In some cases, they viewed the workers' revolt as a manifestation of the coming Kingdom. Like Niebuhr, most of them were supporters of Norman Thomas's Socialist Party, which, in

their view, was far preferable to the Communist Party because it was free of foreign control. The real originality of *Moral Man* lay in its repudiation, in the name of Protestantism itself, of the liberal Protestant quest for community—the main driving force in American radicalism since the 1830s.

Protestant liberals long had contended that Christianity was a social program as well as an individual faith, that the law of love applied equally to both spheres. Niebuhr rejected that view. The law of love applied to the individual sphere, but not to the social arena. Human society was not a potential Kingdom of God. It was not love that Christians should try to establish in the social sphere but justice. Individual morality and group morality were radically different. The former might be a haven of charity, but the latter was an arena of perpetual conflict of interest. "The dream of perpetual peace and brotherhood for human society," he announced in the first chapter of *Moral Man*, "is one which will never be fully realized."

Moral Man was a repudiation not just of liberal Protestantism but of much of late 19th- and early 20th-century secular American liberalism as well. Most American thinkers between 1880 and 1930 had Protestant roots even if they lacked explicit Protestant convictions. Whether placing their hopes on the spread of scientific expertise (Edward Bellamy, Lester Ward, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Thorstein Veblen) or on the renaissance of aesthetic sensibility (Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, Waldo Frank), most liberal thinkers believed that the fragmented world of the marketplace could be restructured or spiritually revived. "It is a new life I would aim at, not a new balance of power," wrote Lewis Mumford, in 1930, with a utopian flourish typical of liberal reformers.

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Niebuhr delivered a powerful blow to this still prevalent dream—prevalent, he pointed out, both in liberal and in Marxist circles. He insisted that the Christian life demanded political commitment, but in his view, there would be no breaking through to a new form of society. Indeed, Christians would have to accept the fact that in the social struggle for justice they might have to bloody their hands, to accept not only coercion and force but also violence.

Most Christian liberals had granted the propriety of nonviolent coercion ever since Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931: They supported economic penalties against the Japanese. Now, however, Niebuhr argued that there could be no absolute dis-

tinction between violent and nonviolent coercion. He could imagine some situations in which violent force would be preferable to nonviolent action—if, for example, an elected leftist government were defending itself against counter-revolutionary attacks. In other cases, nonviolence was better. "The emancipation of the Negro race in America," he suggested, depended upon the strategy of nonviolent coercion. Violent upheaval would be suicidal. The moral acceptability of violence depended on the circumstances.

To Niebuhr's former allies on the Christian Left, this smacked of resignation to the brutal ways of the world. Many of them correctly noted the influence of Martin Luther's political attitudes upon Niebuhr's new position. Like the 16th-century reformer, Niebuhr tended to consign politics to the realm of necessity and strife. Yet, the remarkable thing about Niebuhr is that, despite his skeptical view of man's ability to create an ideal society, despite his commitment to a "worldly" realism, he refused to rest content with the status quo—even after the ardent fires of the '30s had cooled.

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During the decade after *Moral Man*, Niebuhr put the finishing touches on his exposition of Christian realism. His twovolume *Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941, 1943) was its classic expression. Every social order, he insisted, stood subject to God's judgment. From God's standpoint, every society was in drastic need of reformation. The tragic reality, however, was that no group of human beings was so disinterested that it could create a reform movement free of debilitating pretensions, much less a future society free of deceit and injustice. Only deluded liberals and Marxists thought it could be done.

Though Niebuhr was not tempted by the Freudian outlook, which he felt reduced the self to its hidden sexual impulses, he did believe that Freud had glimpsed a truth that liberals usually missed: The self was not a unified, simple, rational entity that an individual possessed and controlled. It was, instead, a cauldron of conflicting impulses, some rational, some irrational, some power-seeking, some self-sacrificial. People were poor judges of their own motives; no one could be sure whether he were a sinner or a saint.

Yet Christians, Niebuhr argued day after day, were still called to ethical and political action—despite the evil, that they were bound to commit in the course of trying to do good. The genius of the Judeo-Christian conception of man was that it comprehended man as both determined and free, both creature and creator, both bumbling sinner and image of God. Liberal Protestants had tended to reduce God to the status of a spirit of reason and love, to the same kind of rational person of good will that they imagined themselves to be.

Niebuhr countered that the orthodox "myth" of God as creator, judge, and redeemer was a superior notion in several respects. Only a distant creator could spark a never-ending quest for justice: If all men were creatures of the same creator, they all deserved equal treatment. Only an exacting judge could serve as an ultimate vantage point from which that quest for justice could be held under constant criticism. Only a forgiving redeemer could supply the grace to persevere in moments of despair.

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Niebuhr's experience in the political debates of the 1930s had persuaded him that political faiths such as communism tended inexorably to make absolutes of themselves, to identify themselves with God's will or the laws of history. Christian realism, by contrast, taught people to commit themselves to political struggle while reconciling themselves to the futility of trying to perfect the world. Christian realism was "true" not because it was supernaturally revealed but because it was validated by experience. It was the only faith that did justice both to man's weakness and to his strength, and it was the only faith that could spark a nonfanatical movement for democratic change.

Did Christian realism amount, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., claimed, to a "revolution" in American liberal thought—a revolution that Niebuhr conducted "singlehandedly"? Schlesinger is too exuberant. Niebuhr was only one of many thinkers in midcentury who picked up the task begun in the previous generation by thinkers such as Walter Lippmann. Man was not simply a rational being, they argued, but also a creature of impulse.

Niebuhr continued to plow the ground that they had broken, as did such men as Richard Chase and Lionel Trilling in literature, Richard Hofstadter in history, David Riesman and Daniel Bell in sociology, Dwight MacDonald in cultural criticism, T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden in poetry, and George Kennan in international politics.

They, and many others, sought to transcend the essential liberal view that history was a Manichaean conflict between the forces of popular enlightenment and the powers of inherited privilege. Instead of seeing history as the progressive development of the consciousness of "the people," the midcentury

thinkers viewed it as ironic, cyclical, and full of contradictions. Niebuhr was just one voice among many in the creation of a postprogressive mentality.

Yet, there is still a kernel of truth in Schlesinger's grandiose claim. If Niebuhr did not conduct a one-man revolt in American liberal thought, he did carry out a one-man assault against the dominant liberal Protestantism. He was the guiding voice, the thundering polemicist who tore down the liberals' temple. He was so devastating in the religious arena precisely because he spoke with the robed authority of the Christian preacher.

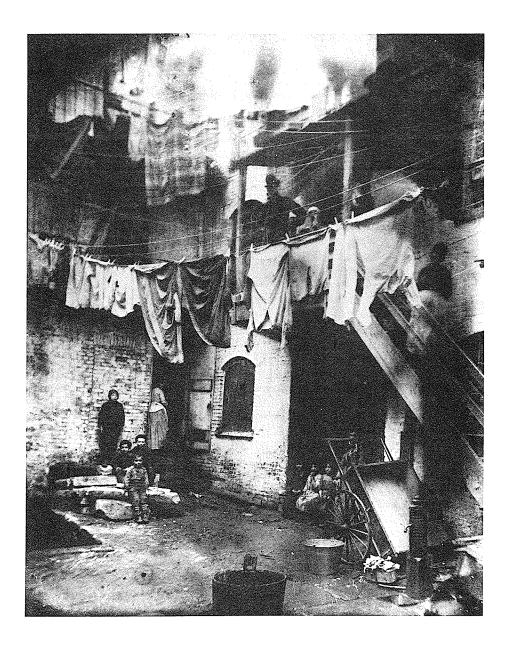
It is unlikely that any other man could have persuaded so many Christians in the 1920s and 1930s to embrace the labor movement and even to sanction the use of force in labor disputes. No other man could have swung so many previously pacifistic Protestants to the support of American assistance to the Allies in Europe in 1940. No other preacher could have persuaded so many young people to reassess their secular values and embrace not the liberal Protestant God of love and brotherhood but the orthodox Christian notions of sin, judgment, and a hidden God whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways.

Niebuhr has been dead for over a decade now, and his influence has noticeably waned. That, perhaps, was to be expected, since his impact was so intimately linked to specific historical events—the growth of the labor movement, the Second World War, and the Cold War. He was a more topical writer than his friend Paul Tillich or his brother Richard Niebuhr, both of whom have larger followings among theology students today.

Yet one still finds loyal Niebuhrians among the older generation, including neoconservative writer Michael Novak, liberation theologian Robert McAfee Brown, author-psychiatrist Robert Coles, and, of course, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Though fewer in number, disciples of Niebuhr appear on every point of the political spectrum, unified by their adherence to the cardinal Niebuhrian premise that while there is no ultimate fulfillment in politics, there can be no salvation outside it.

Niebuhr probably would not have minded his own posthumous eclipse. In fact, he would have taken it as a sign of how deeply engaged he was in the moral and political struggles of his own day. The moral man—or moral human being, as he would surely put it today—was a person of one time, not of all times.

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Photograph by Jacob Riis of the courtyard at 22 Baxter Street, Manhattan, about 1890. The poor in the slums, Riis wrote, "are the victims, not the masters, of their environment; and it is a bad master."

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The War on Poverty 1965–1980

No one disputes that poverty exists in America. But how serious is the problem? *Who* are the poor? *Why* are they poor? Are there more poor people than there used to be? On such questions there is little agreement. Budget director David Stockman contends that failure to count the value of noncash benefits to the poor artificially inflates the number living below the official poverty line; critics respond that, even using Stockman's criteria, the poor population in the United States rose by some eight million between 1979 and 1982. White House counsellor Edwin Meese's comments about hunger in December 1983—he had never, he said, seen any "authoritative figures" on hungry children, only "anecdotal stuff"—prompted angry, if largely inconclusive, efforts to quantify the problem.

The debate over statistics carries over into the discussion of policy. The Reagan administration contends that its domestic budget cuts have left intact a basic "safety net" for the truly needy; opponents argue the contrary. The nonpartisan Urban Institute published *its* analysis earlier this summer. Most analysts seem to agree that increased federal aid has reduced material hardship, improved health, increased access to higher education. Scholars variously blame continuing poverty among Americans on shifting job markets, growing family dissolution, past racial discrimination, culture, inadequate schooling (see Background Books, pages 137–139).

In Losing Ground, to be published this autumn by Basic Books, Charles Murray takes a different look at poverty and U.S. social policy in the United States since 1950, especially since 1965, when Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty began. His provocative point of departure is the paradox suggested by the chart on the next page: The number of people living below the official poverty line failed to decline *and even began to rise* during the very years when government spending to combat pov-

erty was growing the fastest. Was the War on Poverty itself inviting many of the poor to remain poor? In essence, Murray believes, the answer is Yes. During the late 1960s, he writes, Washington began to change "the rules of the game—the stakes, the risks, the payoffs, the tradeoffs, and the strategies for making a living, raising a family, having fun, defining what 'winning' and 'success' can mean." The rules were changed for the family, the schools, criminal justice, the workplace, for assistance to the poor. Murray examines them all in his book. His essay below focuses on one aspect: the effects of a drastic shift in



the government's attitude toward the disadvantaged and how to help them.

The problem that Murray addresses is not federal social spending per se. It is not federal aid to the elderly and disabled, where clear progress has occurred. It is the growing problem of bringing into the American mainstream the able-bodied poor of working age: women with children and no husbands, men who have dropped out of the labor force or who have never really been in it. How many

American adults and their children are mired in "long-term poverty"? As cited in Ken Auletta's *The Underclass* (1982), the best estimates range from 30 to 45 percent of those 29 million Americans of all ages officially defined as poor by the 1980 census.

There are no villains in this story, Murray emphasizes. The War on Poverty was launched two decades ago with the noblest of intentions. Today, with the 1984 presidential campaign under way, such intentions are not much in evidence. As Jesse Jackson complained last spring, basic issues of social policy and poverty have gotten little attention. Murray, a political scientist who spent eight years evaluating federal social programs in the field, argues that a new look is overdue.

Charles Murray

LOOKING BACK

In early 1950, in that year of transition from the first half of the century to the second, *Life* magazine's editors paused to editorialize on the state of the U.S. economy. They found the country still "hip-deep in a postwar boom" that had been under way for more than four years. The editorial did not mention poverty. There was a passing reference to four million unemployed citizens but no indication that the country was troubled by a sizable number of people who were even chronically hard up, let alone impoverished.

Life was not alone. The other leading popular magazines contained very little about poverty in America. Nor did the newspapers have much to say about the problem except during the Christmas charity appeals. The New York Times index contained no "poverty" heading in 1950.

Two of the scarce references to poverty are instructive today. In a 15-page State of the Union editorial marking the new year, the *New Republic* included a subsection entitled "The Lowest Third," referring to "the 10 million American families who earned less than \$2,000." The writers, however, could not muster much indignation. They suggested that "some of the causes for the condition of the lowest third are beyond the power of any Congress to solve."

A second exception to the general silence on the topic was a piece in the June issue of *Harper's*, by Harvard economist Robert L. Heilbroner, entitled "Who Are the American Poor?"

Heilbroner's analysis should have been a shocker. He sliced the population into several groups (the elderly, blacks, farmers), discussed how the poverty level might be defined, and eventually came up with estimates of poverty that ranged from one-quarter to one-third of the population, depending on the definition and statistics used. "It is because our total national income is so large," Heilbroner wrote, "that the thinness of 30 million slices of the income cake at the bottom is disturbing and provoking."

Heilbroner's numbers were accurate. Retrospectively applying the official definition of poverty—the one now employed by federal spokesmen, the press and TV, and academics when they discuss poverty—one discovers that in 1950 approximately 30 percent of the U.S. population lived below the poverty line.

By today's standards, the United States was in the midst of an agonizing crisis of poverty.

Yet hardly anyone noticed, except the poor.

If, by later standards, the poverty problem was appallingly large, the federal effort to deal with it was irresponsibly puny. In 1950, social-welfare spending for the general public (excluding programs for veterans and government personnel) cost a little over \$3 billion—roughly \$11.6 billion in 1980 dollars. This figure includes outlays for Social Security pensions, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), unemployment insurance —in short, the entire federal effort.

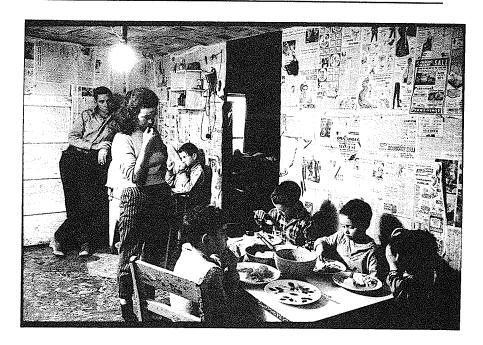
From Complacency to Panic

We skip now to 1968, when the expansive confidence of 1950 had turned to something close to despair. In 1968, the nation's economy was booming once more. Real gross national product (GNP) had risen for nine straight years, while inflation had been held to an average of only 1.6 percent during those same years. Real income, fringe benefits, and job security had all been improving. Among the poor, who had been so ignored in 1950, joblessness had vanished. In 1968, the unemployment rate was running at 3.6 percent, which economists considered tantamount to full employment.

Concern for the underprivileged had also grown apace. During the four years of the Johnson administration, Congress had passed into law landmark legislation in civil rights, medical care, housing, education, and job training. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was a new and active force for urban renewal, community development, drug rehabilitation, alternatives for juvenile delinquents, and yeasty experimentation with solutions for just about every other known social problem.

In the courts, the poor and uneducated were winning legal

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Americans "rediscovered" poverty during the early 1960s. The picture above appeared in a January 1964 Life photo-essay on Appalachia.

protections that previously had been enjoyed largely by people with the money to hire good lawyers. Constitutional precepts one man, one vote; separation of church and state; protection against self-incrimination, to name but a few—were being interpreted with unprecedented literalism and applied with unprecedented scope.

There was ample reason for satisfaction in early 1968 but very little of it to be found. The prevailing spirit ranged from determination to grim foreboding. The Vietnam War was part of the reason, of course, but hindsight can easily distort our memories of what happened when. The Tet Offensive, generally accepted as the pivotal event in American political perceptions of the war, was still in the future as 1968 began. Cambodia and Kent State were more than two years away. Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Watts, and, most recently, Detroit, were battlefields closer to home. In its lead editorial for the first issue of 1968, the *New Republic* assessed the domestic scene: "We no longer ask whether there will be mass violence and racial war next summer," the editors wrote, "but whether it will break out sooner.

To respond constructively would be to see what we are (and could be) and to admit that the United States, its immense wealth and managerial technology notwithstanding, has slipped out of rational control. Real reform could then begin."

Real reform? What, if not "real reform," had been going on during the past four years?

The editors of the *New Republic* were not alone in dismissing the progress to date. Two months into the new year, the President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders would release its report recommending emergency legislation to create *two million* new jobs, lest the deep frustrations of the poor push them to more desperate measures to pry action from an unresponsive system—this in an economy with an unemployment rate of 3.6 percent. From complacency in the face of real want, in 1950, to hysteria in a time of plenty, in 1968: In less than two decades, the perception (or misperception) among opinion-leaders of what was happening in America had done an about-face.

How Much Progress?

During the 1970s, the poor receded from public attention. Their plight was invoked in Congress or by civil-rights spokesmen, when it had to be, as the justification for new and expanded social programs. But the poor were at the periphery of our national concerns even during election campaigns, presumably taken care of, more or less.

Within three months of Ronald Reagan's inauguration on January 20, 1981, the poor were once more at center stage. A budget crisis was upon us, and something had to give. The Reagan administration sought to cut the "fat" from the nation's social-welfare programs without ripping the "social safety net." Liberals argued that the cuts savaged the lives of the poor and vulnerable. Both sides proceeded from the premise that the important progress in overcoming poverty should be preserved.

Few stopped to ask exactly how much progress had actually been made.

The statistics were—and are—there for all to see. In 1968, as Lyndon Johnson left office, 13 percent of Americans were poor, according to the official definition. Over the next 12 years, in constant dollars, federal spending on all social-welfare programs quadrupled.* Yet, in 1980, 13 percent of Americans were

^{*}The social-welfare budget includes the categories "social insurance" (e.g., government pensions; old-age, survivors', and disability insurance; Medicare), "public aid" (e.g., AFDC, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps), "health and medical," "veterans," "housing," and "education."

poor still according to the U.S. census.

Worse yet, despite the best of governmental intentions and the expenditure of vast amounts of public money, the *quality* of life for poor people in America deteriorated sharply between 1965 and 1980. In terms of crime, welfare dependency, family disintegration, education quality, and chronic unemployment, the poor became worse off.

The question is, Why? Why at that moment in history did so many trends in the quality of life for the poor go sour? The complex answer begins with understanding the fundamental way that not-poor and advantaged Americans changed their view of what it means to be poor, who the poor are, and what they are owed by the rest of society.

A HAND, NOT A HANDOUT

The increases in federal expenditures for social-welfare programs between 1950 and 1980 were extraordinary. Using constant dollars as the basis for comparison, spending for health and medical programs in 1980 was six times greater than in 1950; public assistance costs, 13 times greater; education costs, 24 times greater; social insurance costs, 27 times greater; housing costs, 129 times greater. Overall, civilian social-welfare costs increased 20-fold from 1950 to 1980. During the same period, the U.S. population increased by half.

The revolution began, as so many revolutions begin, with reform. It sprang from the simplest, most benign of objectives. President John F. Kennedy wanted the federal welfare effort to be a force for social progress. In his welfare message to Congress in 1962, he wrote: "The goals of our public welfare program must be positive and constructive [The welfare program] must stress the integrity and preservation of the family unit. It must contribute to the attack on dependency, juvenile delinquency, family breakdown, illegitimacy, ill health, and disability. It must reduce the incidence of these problems, prevent their occurrence and recurrence, and strengthen and protect the vulnerable in a highly competitive world."

Innocuous as his words sound today, Kennedy was engaged in a major departure from precedent. No president—not Dwight D. Eisenhower, nor Harry S Truman, nor Franklin D. Roosevelt, nor any of their predecessors—had seen the federal role in this

light. This was something new.

The 1950s saw the last years of a popular consensus about the purpose of welfare that had survived, with remarkably little alteration, since the Republic was founded and, for that matter, could trace its roots to the Poor Laws of Elizabethan England. Its premise was elemental: A civilized society does not let its people starve in the streets. It makes "a decent provision," as Samuel Johnson put it, for those who would otherwise be destitute.

This decent provision was hedged with qualifications, for while some people could be considered the "deserving" poor (the involuntarily unemployed and the helpless) others were undeserving indeed and merely sought to take advantage of the community's generosity. Everyone, including many of the poor, agreed that this was so. Thus the dilemma: How is a civilized society to take care of the deserving without encouraging people to become undeserving? How does it do good without also doing harm?

Indignation ...

By the late 1950s, there was widespread dissatisfaction with the American system's failure to resolve the dilemma. Care for the elderly and the disabled was not at issue. Social Security and other measures to help them were generally accepted as appropriate steps for the federal government to take. The problem—and, it should be emphasized, the one that will be addressed throughout this discussion—was what to do for the able-bodied of working age. On this score, two broad, very different, perceptions of the current state of affairs had fed the dissatisfaction.

On the Right and among large numbers of blue-collar Democrats, there was increasing resentment at the *permanence* of welfare. It was acceptable for a worker to receive unemployment checks while looking for a job. But it was quite another thing for society to be supporting a healthy adult year after year.

Although it accounted for only one percent of the federal budget in 1958, AFDC was the focal point for the resentment. The New Deal sponsors of AFDC had intended to help the widow with small children—to tide her over between the loss of her husband and the day when the children were old enough to take over her support.

By the 1950s, however, it had become embarrassingly clear that most of the women receiving AFDC were not widows. Many of them had not even been married. Worst of all, they did not stop having babies after the first lapse. They kept having more. This had not been part of the plan.

The most flagrantly unrepentant, to judge from media

portrayals, seemed to be black. The statistics show, in fact, that whites have always been the largest single group of AFDC recipients, but the stereotype that stirred the critics was the family of four, five, six, and more children reared at government expense, and somehow the stories published about such families always seemed to talk about black families.

Thus the *Atlantic Monthly*, a sober-minded and liberally oriented magazine, ran a story in its April 1960 issue describing, in muckraking detail, the cases of "Charlotte," with 14 children, "Maude," with nine (several of whom were fathered, it was reported, by an illiterate mental defective), and others who were portrayed as mindlessly accumulating children, neglecting them, and producing generations that would come back to haunt America in the decades to come. All of the examples were black, lending a troubling overtone to the closing paragraph. "What is particularly disturbing to social workers, judges, and other public officials," the author concluded, "is not simply the failure of these people to support themselves but the complete breakdown of moral values...."

Meanwhile, as many politicians, writers, and middle Americans were inveighing against the welfare mother, leaders of the Left and of minorities of all political persuasions were beginning to express their outrage at what they saw as pervasive injustice in the American system. The statistics on unemployment and wages, on infant mortality and life expectancy, on education and voter registration—the open, sanctioned discrimination in everything from union membership, to access to lunch counters, to admission to universities—all were counterpoint to articles in the news media about welfare mothers. Yes, the critics of the system agreed, welfare was too often permanent, but thanks to opportunity denied rather than opportunity spurned.

... Versus Guilt

White indignation at the deplorable morals of the welfare recipients and white guilt over who was responsible collided, and at just about the same time that a new political center was evolving. During the 1950s, the Right had, in effect, accepted the New Deal and made it respectable. The Left, for its part, was now less dogmatic, more wary of ideologues. *New York Times* columnist Arthur Krock commented in 1960 that "when the national platforms and candidates of 1960 have been chosen, the American voters will find it difficult to detect a major ideological difference between the two major parties." The "New Center" was not only a matter of issues; perhaps more importantly,

DEFINING POVERTY: OFFICIAL, NET, AND LATENT

Before Washington could launch a War on Poverty, social scientists had to define the enemy. For this purpose, the Social Security Administration set up a task force in 1963. The result of its efforts was the definition of poverty that has been used since then, the one that is meant when politicians cite the percentage of "people living in poverty."

The task force had hoped to define a minimal decent existence—i.e., what constituted adequate (if barely) shelter, clothing, food, and various amenities. Unfortunately, no one really knew what "adequate" meant in terms of housing, clothes, or recreation. Diet, however, was another story. The task force reckoned that it might reasonably call on objective knowledge of basic nutritional requirements, integrate that knowledge with the realities of food preference in the United States, and settle on a dollar figure for the cost of a "minimal-but-adequate diet."

The task force parlayed this one relatively objective datum (though a subject of controversy to this day) into a definition of poverty by making the elegantly simple assumption that the proportion of the typical American family's budget spent on food—about onethird—is the "right" proportion. The "core calculation" for the poverty line then became easy: Multiply the cost of the minimal-but-adequate diet times three. The figure that resulted would, of course, be adjusted over the years for inflation and adjusted as well to reflect a variety of family characteristics, such as the size of a family or whether it lives in a rural or nonrural setting.

The "official" definition of the poverty threshold has been attacked from all sides but continues to be used because, despite its flaws, it has a good deal of merit. The poverty line does not truly divide the "poverty-stricken" from the rest of us—the transition consists of a continuum rather than a distinct border—but it gives us a common yardstick for talking about the issue. It is widely accepted, takes family size and inflation into account, and provides a consistent definition for examining income over time.

The official poverty statistic is based exclusively on cash income: It does not take into account what was during the 1970s one of the fastest growing components of the social-welfare budget—the "in-kind" or noncash benefits, such as food stamps, Medicaid, and public housing. What would happen to the official poverty statistic if the dollar value of these benefits—\$28.6 billion in 1980 for the three programs just cited—were added to cash income? What would happen if income underreporting and tax liabilities were also considered? Counting this way, economist Timothy Smeeding has calculated that the proportion of Americans living below the poverty line in 1979 would have stood at 6.1 percent, rather than 13 percent.

Let us call this figure "net poverty": the percentage of the population remaining beneath the poverty level after all resources, cash and non-

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cash, are taken into account. Net poverty looks to be very small. Bear in mind, however, that while slicing the data in this fashion may provide a useful analytic tool, many people who are statistically "above the net" are, nevertheless, living in considerable hardship.

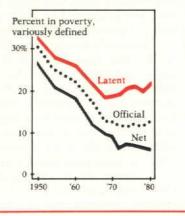
Another way to measure progress in eliminating poverty is to tally the number of poor *before* governmental cash and noncash transfers are taken into account. This population, the "latent poor," includes not only those below the "official" poverty line but also those above it solely by virtue of government support. The concept of latent poverty affords a glimpse of the total dependent population in the United States, the people whom the Kennedy and Johnson administrations sought to help to "help themselves" off the welfare rolls. Neither the official nor the net poverty statistic measures progress toward this goal. The latent poverty statistic does.

The graph below shows the trend line for latent poverty, compared with those for official and net poverty. Latent poverty decreased from approximately one-third of the U.S. population in 1950 to 21 percent in 1965. The proportion of latent poor continued to drop through 1968, when it was calculated at 18 percent. This proved to be the limit of progress. At some point during 1968–70, the ranks of the latent poor began to expand, reaching 22 percent by 1980.

Can the increase in latent poverty be attributed to the elderly, whose numbers grew significantly during the 1970s? Data broken out by age group are available for only two years, 1976 and 1982. In 1976, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the rate of latent poverty for households headed by people under age 65 was 31 percent lower than the rate based on the entire population. Seven years later, the Census Bureau, looking at individuals rather than at households, fixed the gap at only 17 percent—a substantial narrowing. Had the data been strictly comparable, the clear implication would be that latent poverty was climbing more steeply among the working-age popu-

lation than among the elderly. A prudent interpretation of the evidence suggests in any event that the rate of increase in latent poverty in the 1970s was not inflated by the presence of older folks and did increase among Americans of working age.

The increase since the late 1960s in latent poverty, particularly as it affects those of working age, is a telling statistic. For those who consider personal independence to be a paramount consideration in determining the quality of life, it is perhaps the most important. -C. M.





it reflected a new frame of mind.

John F. Kennedy exploited this frame of mind and found support for an entirely new approach to the welfare mess. In substance, the program President Kennedy proposed in his 1962 message to Congress was modest. It consisted of a few training programs and other rehabilitative efforts amounting to only \$59 million in the 1963 budget. But by shifting the focus of welfare policy away from the dole and toward *escape* from the dole, Kennedy gave the federal government a continuing responsibility for helping Americans to help themselves. The essence of the approach was expressed in the slogan that later became a rallying cry for the War on Poverty, "Give a hand, not a handout."

Second Thoughts

Editorialists took up the theme. The time was right: The country was at peace, the economy was healthy, and the cause was worthy. In the "can-do," sleeves-rolled-up spirit of the since-maligned Best and Brightest, the domestic policy-makers of the Kennedy administration and, later, the managers of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty saw themselves as hard-nosed idealists who would be able to get results where the social workers had failed. Their premise: Most of the able-bodied folk on welfare would work if only given the opportunity. Their program: Train the chronically unemployed, train the youngsters growing up without skills or resources, help them get that first job. Their promise: The able-bodied would soon be on their way to permanent self-sufficiency.

The ultimate test of a new welfare program, Charles Frankel wrote at the time, "will be the effect it will have on producing individuals who, like Eliza Doolittle at the conclusion of *Pygmalion*, are prepared to walk out on those who have helped them and to open competitive enterprises of their own."

Kennedy implemented fragments of his program—the Public Welfare Amendments of 1962, the first Manpower Development and Training Act, for example. But, taken as a whole, he did not preside over costly social innovations. Social-welfare outlays under Kennedy rose less rapidly than they had under Eisenhower. Kennedy's legacy to Lyndon Johnson was not a new system but a new tone, new expectations, and a new consensus that the federal government had a continuing responsibility to help poor Americans help themselves.

Johnson lost no time in giving substance to Kennedy's rhetoric. The initial antipoverty bill, the Economic Opportunity Act, was written, debated, passed, and signed (in August of 1964) within

Johnson's first nine months in the Oval Office. The bill was a faithful attempt to follow the "hand, not a handout" script. It provided for job training; part-time jobs for teen-agers and college students; community antipoverty programs; loans to low-income farmers and businessmen; and establishment of a domestic Peace Corps, later to become part of ACTION. There was not a handout in the lot. Johnson was careful to point this out at the signing ceremony, incorporating into his remarks the cheerful prediction that "the days of the dole in this country are numbered."

President Johnson waged war on poverty enthusiastically. In rapid order, he and Congress gave the nation food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid, a vastly expanded public housing program, and other subsidies. But in the process, he also worked the revolution. In only three years, from 1964 to 1967, social-welfare policy switched from the intention of ending the dole to the institution of permanent income transfers. These transfers embraced not only the traditionally eligible recipients of the dole but large new segments of the American population who are best described as the "working poor." It was a polar change in policy that went almost entirely unrecognized as such while it was happening.

Four major forces impelled this fundamental shift:

1) The triumph of the economy. One explanation for the reforms of the 1964–67 period, and why they came then rather than earlier, is so simple that it is sometimes overlooked: 1964–67 was the first time that we thought we could afford them. The nation was extremely rich and extremely confident of its ability to keep getting richer. Economists believed that in Keynesian economics they had found the key to perpetual prosperity. Judicious use of public spending to revive consumer buying power seemed as if it would preclude any repetition of the Great Depression. John Maynard Keynes graced *Time*'s cover in 1965, and the magazine quoted President Johnson's economic adviser, Charles Schultze: "We can't prevent every little wiggle in the economic cycle, [but] we now can prevent a major slide."

2) The discovery of "structural" poverty. As previously indicated, from the end of World War II until the early 1960s, little in the popular press, in political rhetoric, or in the published work of American scholars focused on poverty in America. Then, in 1962, came Michael Harrington's *The Other America*. His thesis was that a huge population of poor people—50 million by his count—was living in our midst, ignored. "To be poor," Harring-

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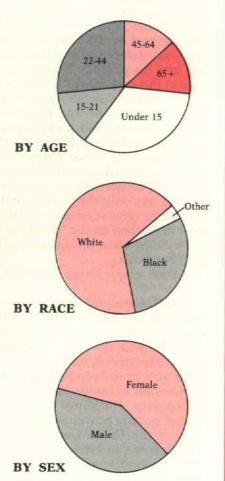
WHO THE POOR WERE IN 1980

Some 29 million individuals in 11.7 million households lived below the official poverty line in 1980. By sex, age, and other characteristics, "the poor," who represented 13 percent of all Americans, were a diverse group whose internal composition had changed over a period of two decades. Several trends dominated the recent picture.

One was the relative *decline* of poverty among the elderly. In 1959, more than one-third of those over age 65 lived in poverty; by 1980, thanks to generous increases in Social Security, the figure shrank to less than one-sixth.

As a proportion of all poor people, both the old and the young in 1980 accounted for *smaller* fractions (13.2 and 38 percent, respectively) than they did in 1959 (13.9 and 43.6 percent). Making up the difference have been growing numbers of poor adults of working age (48.8 percent of the total in 1980, versus 42.5 percent in 1959), clustered in 8.5 million households, including 5.3 million families.

More than half (2.8 million) of these poor families were headed by women with no husband present (versus less than one-quarter in 1959), and female-headed families in 1980 accounted for more than half of the 11 million children living in poverty (versus less than 25 percent two decades earlier).



The flip side of the "feminization" of poverty has been the deteriorating economic status of working-age black males, in particular. In 1980, nearly two million of these men—30 percent of all black males in the 18-to-64 age group—were unemployed or had dropped out of the labor force.

In 1980, 58 percent of all poor families received Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Some 6.4 million poor households (or 55 percent of all such households) and nearly eight million *nonpoor* households also received one or more noncash benefits (e.g., food stamps, Medicaid).

ton wrote, "is not simply to be deprived of the material things of this world. It is to enter a fatal, futile universe, an America within America with a twisted spirit." The ranks of the poor consisted of the aged, the unskilled, women heading households with small children, and others who were bound to be bypassed, no matter how much economic growth occurred, because of the way that the capitalist economy distributed income. Poverty was not just a matter of isolated "pockets"; it was built into the American system. Within a few years, an almost unbroken intellectual consensus had formed behind the structuralists' underlying premise: Poverty is not a consequence of indolence or vice. The system is to blame.

3) *The long, hot summers*. This perception of the "system" as the problem and of the individual as a victim was obliquely reinforced by the racial violence of the mid-1960s. The first phase of the civil-rights movement had culminated in the signing of a sweeping Civil Rights Act by Lyndon Johnson in July of 1964; for all practical purposes, the national legislative struggle for equality was over. A voting-rights bill remained to be enacted a year later, but the generalized legal clout granted in the 1964 act was enormous. Yet 13 days after the Civil Rights Act became law, bloody race riots erupted in Harlem. More riots followed that summer in Rochester, Paterson, Philadelphia, and Dixmoor, a suburb of Chicago. In 1965, came the week of Watts. In 1967, rioting in Detroit claimed 43 lives.

Why did these and scores of other cities explode in racial violence? High expectations had gone unfulfilled. Long-delayed equality of rights under the law had not quickly been translated into equality of condition. Blacks blamed this situation on an entrenched pattern of Northern racism, and whites who saw themselves as friends of the civil-rights movement tended to agree. White confusion and guilt created what Daniel Patrick Moynihan has called "a near-obsessive concern to locate the 'blame' for poverty, especially Negro poverty, on forces and institutions outside the community concerned." If American society were to blame for the riots, for the economic discrepancies between whites and blacks, for poverty among all races; and if society's responsibilities were not fulfilled simply by enforcing *legal* equality, then a social-welfare program would have to be devised to go beyond equality of opportunity. It would have to promise equality of outcome. A "hand" was no longer enough.

4) *The failed experiment*. Riots and black militancy constituted one of the two real-world developments that made the

structural view of poverty attractive. The second was the early realization, within the senior ranks of the Johnson administration as well as among its critics, that the much-publicized bootstrapping programs were not working as expected. Scores of case studies of Community Action programs showed projects that either had never gotten beyond the planning stage or were bogged down in bureaucratic infighting. Job-training programs produced disappointing results.

It soon became clear that the Eliza Doolittle model was not going to end poverty. In April of 1967, Joseph Califano, a principal aide to President Johnson, called reporters into his office to tell them that a government analysis had shown that only 50,000 persons, or fewer than one percent of the 7.3 million people then on welfare, were capable of being given skills and training to make them self-sufficient. The repudiation of the dream—to end the dole once and for all—was complete.

Later that year, in a column that ran on Christmas Eve, *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker summed up the implications for policy toward the poor: "Really compassionate and effective reforms to do something about poverty in America," he wrote, "would have to recognize, first, that large numbers of the poor are always going to have to be helped. Whether for physical or mental reasons, or whatever, they cannot keep pace. . . . Thus the aim of getting everyone off welfare and into 'participation in our affluent society' is unreal and a pipe dream. . . . [A] decent standard of living ought to be made available not just to an eligible few but to everyone, and without degrading restrictions and police-like investigations."

Once it was accepted in Washington that the American system was to blame for able-bodied people being poor, principles that had largely gone unchallenged since the Republic's early days became hoary and obsolete. A new wisdom took over.

II

THE NEW WISDOM

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn describes the history of science as a sequence of "paradigm shifts." The intellectual universe was Aristotelian for centuries, then, abruptly, Newtonian; Newtonian for centuries and then, abruptly, Einsteinian. Kuhn likens it to a religious conversion

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experience. What was heresy yesterday becomes dogma today. An analogy with what happened to notions of social welfare during the post-1967 period is apt.

It is important to specify, of course, who was converted. Despite all the tumult, the mid- and late-1960s did not see a revolution in American *opinion*. Among the blue-collar and white-collar electorate, opinion did not much change. To them, what George Wallace called "welfare loafers" still loomed large. Sturdy self-reliance was still a virtue.

Blaming the System

The shift in assumptions about welfare policy occurred among a group that was small relative to the entire population but of enormous influence. It is perhaps best labeled the "intelligentsia"—a broad and diffuse group in late 20th-century America. It includes the upper echelons of (in no particular order of importance) academia, journalism, publishing, and the vast network of foundations, institutes, and research centers that has been woven into partnership with government during the last 30 years. It also includes congressional staffers as well as many civil servants in key positions just below the presidential appointment level, where so much of policy formation goes on.

The salient feature of the intelligentsia is that, at any given moment, it is the custodian of the received wisdom. It originates most of the ideas in the dialogue about policy, writes about them, embeds them in memoranda for presidential aides. Most of all, it confers respectability on ideas. The process is akin to fashion. Ideas are "in" and ideas are "out" for reasons having something to do with their merit but also with their being new.

The last half of the 1960s saw remarkably broad agreement among the various sectors of the intelligentsia on the directions in which a just and effective federal social policy must move, and this agreement, this "elite wisdom," represented an abrupt shift from the past. By the end of 1967, the nature of the political dialogue had been altered beyond recognition. It was not just that certain types of legislation had more support than before, but that the premises themselves—the "everybody-knows-that" premises—had shifted in the minds of the people who were instrumental in making policy. The most important of these changed premises was the one that I have described: the belief that, left alone, the system would perpetuate unacceptable inequalities. The system itself was flawed.

The policy ramifications of the new wisdom were labyrinthine. Eligibility requirements were loosened for welfare of all kinds. New "in-kind" transfer programs, such as food stamps and Medicaid, were set into place and gradually expanded. And for the first time, provision was made for the *working* poor.

In the fiscal 1964 federal budget, the last of the pre-Johnson budgets, public-assistance funds for working people had been essentially nil. The major programs for people of working age—AFDC and unemployment compensation—were for the jobless.

The exclusion of working people (no matter how small their incomes) was not accidental, but neither was it much talked about. A citizen in good standing was self-supporting. To have a job was *ipso facto* to be self-supporting. If the income from that job was less than one liked, it was up to one to do something about it. This was not the opinion only of middle America; it was the old elite wisdom as well. Certainly, it did not seem to occur to leaders of either political party prior to 1964 that people who had jobs ought to get welfare assistance.

Mr. Nixon's Great Society

At bottom, however, the consensus about no welfare for working people rested on a fragile assumption—that adults are responsible for the state in which they find themselves. The assumption required a certain suspension of disbelief. (Most people had recognized for years that one's inheritance mattered, circumstances mattered, luck mattered.) Because this assumption was not absolutely true, a second assumption was needed to buttress it: All things considered, the "system" was doing all that it *properly* could do by trying to provide equal opportunity.

Once the second assumption had been toppled—once it was accepted that the system itself was to blame for people being poor—policy principles that had gone unargued were instantaneously outdated. Among these was the principle that government should not support employed people. If the system were to blame for a person's entrapment in a job that paid too little money for a decent existence, then the principle was palpably unfair—so unfair that, like the principle that it replaced, it did not need to be debated.

Richard Nixon exemplified the breadth of the new consensus. Nixon lambasted the Great Society during the 1968 campaign. In office, he set about dismantling its symbolic appurtenances (including the OEO). But it was Nixon who, in 1969, proposed the Family Assistance Plan, a form of negative income tax that would have guaranteed every American family of four a "floor" income of \$1,500 to \$1,800. He argued that Washington must "recognize that it has not less of an obligation

to the working poor than to the nonworking poor."

Congress rejected the Family Assistance Plan. But the same legislators authorized the creation of a new category of welfare assistance (Supplemental Security Income) and voted large increases in funding for food stamps, public housing, Social Security, and other forms of welfare for which working people were eligible. The number of participants in the Food Stamp Program, for example, grew from 424,000 in 1965 to 11.6 million by the end of President Nixon's first term. In constant dollars, Washington during the five Johnson years spent some \$57 billion on the category the Census Bureau calls "public aid" (*not* including pensions, Social Security, education or housing programs); during the first five Nixon years, the government spent more than twice that amount on these same public-aid programs.

Hardly anyone except the most obdurate reactionaries opposed such efforts in principle, and once the principle was established, the scope and cost of the programs continued to escalate. Hardly anyone now argued that it was fundamentally *wrong* to take tax dollars from one worker, whose paycheck the government had decided was too large, and give the dollars to another worker, whose paycheck the government had decided was too



This 1973 Oliphant cartoon captures Richard Nixon's popular image. Yet the 37th President significantly expanded most of the Great Society's antipoverty programs and signed new ones into law.

small. Ten years earlier, hardly anyone, in or out of Congress, would have argued the opposite.

Other changes in the nature of the rapidly expanding welfare system were wrought less by legislation than by administrative fiat. As Nathan Glazer has written, "Today, crucial documents in American history are not necessarily to be found in legislation, executive action, or even the court orders of our powerful judiciary. The modest reporting forms issued by regulatory agencies may be as consequential as any of these." The enforcement of eligibility rules for unemployment insurance, disability compensation, AFDC, and other welfare programs was relaxed considerably during the 1960s, occasionally by means of explicit directives but often through a generally understood but hard-to-document change in the "way of doing business."* From time to time, the judicial branch mandated its own procedural refinements, such as when the Supreme Court, in 1968, struck down the "man-in-the-house" rule, declaring that a woman is entitled to receive AFDC benefits even if she is cohabiting with a man.

Changing Goals

Underlying all of these developments was the assumption that the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor was no longer relevant. That assumption, plus the companion federal commitment to assisting both the working and the nonworking poor, animated the changes in the rules that took place beginning in the mid-1960s. By the mid-1970s, a sizable welfare complex had been built on the foundation laid during the Johnson administration. It consisted of a broad range of jobtraining programs, "entitlements," and noncash transfers of goods and services. In 1980, it cost the taxpayer some \$64 billion. This figure does *not* count Social Security or Medicare, which are for the elderly; does *not* count unemployment insurance, which is for the temporarily out-of-work; and does *not* count Workman's Compensation, which is for those who have suffered work-related disabilities.

During an average month in that year of 1980, some 21.1

^{*}Disability compensation provides a case in point. The program was established in 1956 and liberalized in 1960. Thereafter, at least on paper, the definition of a qualifying disability remained quite strict. Medical advances in rehabilitating the disabled were rapid during the 1960s. By all logic, then, the proportion of the U.S. population receiving disability benefits should have increased only modestly over time, perhaps even dropped. Instead, the number of disability beneficiaries increased from 687,000 in 1960 to 4,352,000 in 1975. Something odd was happening to the everyday administration of the disability compensation program.

million Americans were participating in the Food Stamp Program, 10.6 million were recipients of AFDC, 4.2 million received Supplemental Security Income, and 21.6 million availed themselves of health care under Medicaid. All of these programs were "means-tested," meaning that one's eligibility depended essentially on the level of one's income. In this manner did the social system identify its victims and offer redress.

Policy-makers and legislators hoped for a variety of good things from the War on Poverty, from the creation of entitlements, the expansion of benefits, and the widening population of eligible recipients. Perhaps some of the poor might even "escape" from the dole. But escaping the dole was no longer as important as escaping poverty. Whatever else they did, the new programs were to increase the *material well-being* of the poor. They were now meant to reduce poverty, not dependency.

III

THE BOTTOM LINE

The story of what happened to poverty in the years after the reforms took effect, when compared to the situation *before* they were enacted, does not appear to make sense. The numbers go the wrong way at the wrong time.

Yes, the proportion of the population living in poverty did fall during the five Johnson years, from 18 percent in 1964 to 13 percent in 1968. But it is difficult to argue that the Great Society programs were primarily responsible. Not only was the funding for these programs still small during that period, the drop in poverty was not any greater than past experience would have led policy-makers to expect.

In 1950, as noted above, approximately 30 percent of the population would be considered poor. From that level, the number of people living in poverty dropped by 17 percentage points over the next 18 years. The Johnson administration, with a spectacular economy at work, presided over a five-percentage-point drop in five years—its fair share. Then, during the late 1960s, improvement slowed. During the 1970s, it stopped altogether. A higher proportion of the American population was officially poor in 1980 than at any time since 1967. This proportion hit a low point, 11 percent, in 1973. By 1980, it stood at 13 percent and was heading up. The number of people living in poverty stopped declining just as the public assistance program budgets and the rate of increase in those budgets were highest.

This perverse result was vividly apparent, for example, in the federally funded job training and employment programs. During the early years of the Great Society, it was thought that making enough jobs available would win the War on Poverty. To be sure, some poor people—the disabled, some of the elderly, perhaps single-parent mothers of young children—would have to be given other kinds of help as well; but for most of the working-age population, making a job available was believed to be the answer.

Between 1950 and 1960, the Department of Labor did virtually nothing to help poor people train for, or find, jobs. During the first half of the 1960s, it spent a comparatively trivial \$500 million (in 1980 dollars) on jobs programs. Between 1965 and 1969, as the Johnson initiatives got under way, a more substantial \$8.8 billion (in 1980 dollars) was spent. During the 1970s, through fiscal year 1980, expenditures totaled a whopping \$76.7 billion.

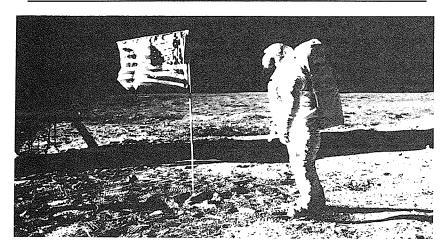
The number of persons involved is even more impressive than the money. From the time that the first Manpower Development and Training Act trainees were cycled through the program (in 1962–63) through fiscal year 1980, some 32.6 *million* persons were reported to have enrolled in one or another of the Department of Labor's jobs programs. The total number cannot, of course, be taken at face value. Many of the programs were short-lived or badly run, many participants dropped out before they finished, and many individuals counted in that 32.6 million figure were repeaters. But the training and employment programs constituted an enormous national effort nonetheless.

Something Happened

Furthermore, the effort was concentrated on a relatively small portion of the population. From the beginning, the focus of the government jobs programs was on disadvantaged youths in their late teens and early twenties. These young people had reached the most critical time in their job development. They were supposed to be the most trainable. And they had the longest time to reap the benefits of outside help.

The contrast between the government's hands-off policy during the 1950s and its massive intervention during the 1970s is so great that it seems inconceivable that we should not be able to observe positive changes in the employment statistics. And yet the statistics went in exactly the wrong direction for the group that was at the top of the priority target list—black youths in the 16-to-24 age bracket.

THE WAR ON POVERTY



"It is by now almost a platitude," editorialized the New York Times the day after the first moon landing in 1969, "to contrast the fantastic efficiency of the Apollo program with the ineffectual approaches the country has made to combat the poverty and malnutrition of its least fortunate citizens."

During the early 1950s, black youths had an unemployment rate almost identical to that of whites. (For 16-to-17-year-olds, in 1951, it was 9.5 percent for whites, 8.7 percent for blacks.) During the last half of the 1950s, the rate of unemployment among young blacks increased, largely because of the loss of agricultural jobs for black teen-agers, especially in the South. The rate stabilized during the early 1960s at the unacceptably high rate of roughly one-quarter of the black labor force in this age group. It appeared to observers at the time that a large segment of black youth was being frozen out of the job market, and this concern motivated congressional support for the early jobs programs.

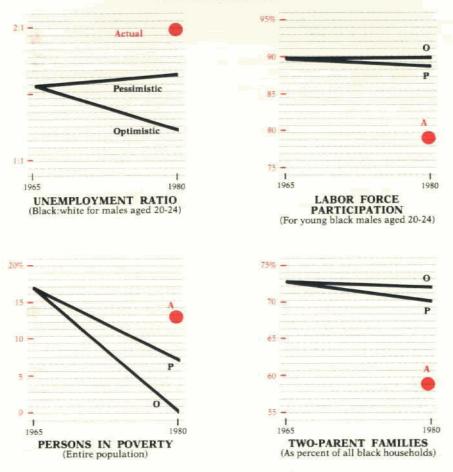
Black unemployment among the older of the job entrants improved somewhat during the Vietnam War years, although the figures remained higher than one might have predicted from the Korean War experience. But during the late 1960s—at the very moment when the jobs programs began their unprecedented expansion—the black youth unemployment rate began to rise again, steeply, and it continued to do so throughout the 1970s. In 1980, for example, it stood at 33 percent for black males aged 18 to 19, and 38 percent for those aged 16 to 17.

If young whites had been doing as badly as young blacks, we could ascribe the trends to economic factors that affected everybody, educated or not, rich or poor, discriminated against or not. But young blacks lost ground to whites. This is apparent

THE WAR ON POVERTY

EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY: HOW THE UNDER-

A thought experiment: Imagine that it is June of 1966, and Lyndon Johnson has asked you to project the progress of the disadvantaged in the United States some years out—to 1980. As the easiest test population for this purpose, you are told to use black Americans. Good statistics exist for blacks; no data have been compiled to provide comparable portraits of, say, Appalachian whites. You begin by plotting an *optimistic* scenario and a *pessimistic* one. Thus, an "envelope" is formed within which the true future is likely to fall. As the basis for the optimistic scenario, you select the rate of economic and social progress, as manifested in various statistics, made by black Americans during the Kennedy-Johnson years, a period of steady economic growth. As the basis for your pessimistic scenario, you

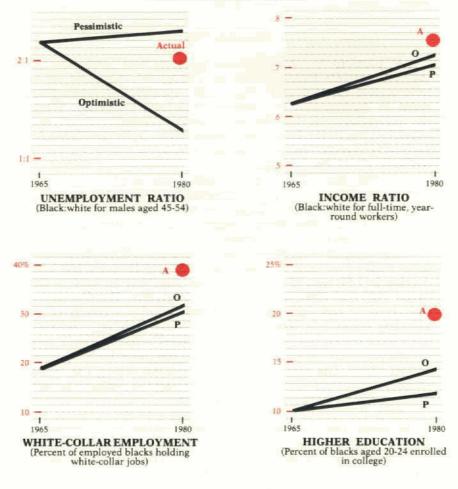


THE UNDERCLASS

CLASS AND WORKING CLASS HAVE FARED SINCE 1966

choose the corresponding rates of progress during 1954-61.

If you, the analyst, had actually produced such projections, the trend lines for one group of indicators (below, left), such as labor-force participation, would have been most pertinent to the progress of blacks at the bottom of the economic ladder—the "underclass." A second group of indicators (below) would have been most pertinent to the progress of working-class blacks, regularly employed but held down by discrimination in 1966. Ironically, your projections for indicators in both categories would almost never fall within the envelope. In 1966, you would have been too optimistic about the underclass, not optimistic enough about the working class.



THE WORKING CLASS

when we examine the ratio of black unemployment to white unemployment—the measure of the racial differential—for new job entrants. From 1961 to 1965, for example, when there were virtually no jobs programs, the black-to-white ratio for 18-to-19year-olds averaged 1.7 to 1. From 1966 to 1970, with a much stronger economy *plus* the many new jobs programs, the ratio averaged 2.2 to 1. From 1970 to 1980, when the jobs programs were enrolling millions annually, the ratio averaged 2.3 to 1.

Something was happening to depress employment among young blacks. The easy explanation—that job opportunities for young blacks were just not there no matter how hard people searched—runs into trouble when statistics on labor-force participation (LFP) are considered.

Dropping Out

A "participant" in the labor force is one who either is working or is actively looking for work. The statistics on LFP are as informative in their own way as the statistics on unemployment. In the long run, they may be even more important. While the unemployment rate measures current economic conditions, participation in the labor force measures an individual's fundamental economic stance: Does he have an active intention of working, given the opportunity?

In 1954, fully 85 percent of black males aged 16 and older were in the labor force, a rate essentially comparable to that of white males. This was nothing new. Black males had been participating in the labor force at equal or higher rates than white males since the turn of the century.

Beginning in 1966, black-male LFP started to fall substantially faster than white-male LFP. Between 1954 and 1965, the black reduction in LFP was 17 percent greater than that for whites. Between 1965 and 1980, it was 252 percent greater. The divergence that occurred was not a minor statistical blip but a change of astounding magnitude. America had seen large-scale *entry* into the labor force before, but never had it witnessed large-scale voluntary *withdrawal* from (or failure to enlist in) the labor force by ablebodied males. The sharpest slide occurred not during the 1970s, when the economy was troubled, but during the 1965–69 period, when unemployment was at historic lows.

As in the case of unemployment, age is at the center of the explanation. The younger the age group, it turns out, the greater the decline in black LFP, the greater the divergence with whites, and the sooner "dropping out" began. The phenomenon, in other words, was generational. For whatever reasons, black

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males born during the early 1950s and thereafter shared an attitude toward the labor market different from that of black males born earlier. If one looks at three different age "cohorts"—say, black males born in 1938, 1944, and 1952—one discovers that, as far as labor-force participation is concerned, members of the two older black groups behaved much like each other and much like their white contemporaries. The younger group, the cohort of 1952, was far less fortunate.

What was different about being born in 1952? Nothing, necessarily. The difference lay in the environments in which the three age cohorts came of age in the labor market. The members of the 1938 cohort turned 16 in 1954, when the world was not different *in the rules governing the job market* from the world of 1960, the year that the youths born in 1944 turned 16. The cohort born in 1952, on the other hand, reached the age of 16 in 1968; by then the rules had been changed radically.

As far as the labor market was concerned, the changes were surely all for the best—more training programs for poor and minority youth, better regulations on equal opportunity and widespread social support for their enforcement, higher minimum wages, a red-hot economy—and still the cohort of 1952 youngsters fared far worse than their older brothers and their white counterparts.

They behaved in ways that, for many, forfeited their futures as economically independent adults. They behaved in those ways because, under the new rules, it seemed both profitable and rational to do so. For the new rules pandered to that most human of impulses, the pursuit of one's short-term advantage.

IV

THE REASONS WHY

There is bitter irony in the fact that poverty stopped dropping as spending on poverty increased, that labor-force participation decreased as the economy boomed, and that unemployment increased as the jobs programs reached their height. And yet, throughout the 1970s, mainstream politicians, academics, journalists, and bureaucrats remained committed to a way of thinking about poor people and social policy that manifestly failed to produce results. There seemed little to be done except sweat it out. The budgets for job training, food stamps, and the various social-action programs continued to grow almost by inertia.

There had been an alternative set of ideas all along, of course. If, during the 1960s and 1970s, there was an elite wisdom that shaped the directions of social policy, there was also a popular wisdom that explained why things were falling apart.

The popular wisdom is just that—the views to be heard in blue-collar bars or country-club lounges in most parts of the United States. It is the inarticulate constellation of worries and suspicions that helped elect Ronald Reagan in 1980. It is perhaps more precisely called a white popular wisdom, but some of its major themes are also voiced quietly by a conservative black working class, and by many among the poor of both races.

The popular wisdom is characterized by hostility toward welfare (it makes people lazy), toward lenient judges (they encourage crime), and toward socially conscious schools (too busy busing kids to teach them how to read). The popular wisdom disapproves of favoritism for blacks and of too many written-in rights for minorities of all sorts. It says that the government is meddling far too much in things that are none of its business.

The hostility one hears in the *vox populi* accounts, perhaps, for the reluctance of more intellectually sophisticated people to consider whether it might not be right. To listen carefully to the popular wisdom is also to hear a good deal of mean-spirited (often racist) invective. Acknowledging the merits of its insights is seen by many well-meaning Americans as approving of the invective as well. And one might add that, to the minds of many professional social analysts, the explanations of the popular wisdom are too *simple*, too unsubtle, to be true.

Harold and Phyllis

By the end of the 1970s, however, a synthesis of wisdoms was under way. Too much of what Americans saw going on around them confirmed too many of the popular view's premises. Stripped of the prejudices and the bombast, these, as I see them, are three core premises of the popular wisdom that need to be taken into account:

Premise one: Individuals respond to incentives and disincentives. Sticks and carrots work.

Premise two: Individuals are not inherently hardworking and moral. In the absence of countervailing influences, many people will avoid work and be immoral.

Premise three: Individuals must be held responsible for their actions. Whether they *are* responsible in some ultimate philosophical sense cannot be the issue if society is to function.

It is my contention that social policy in the United States

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since 1964, though well-meaning, has ignored these premises and that it has thereby created much of the mess that we are in. It is not necessary to invoke the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960s, or changes in the work ethic, or racial differences, or the complexities of postindustrial economies in order to explain increasing unemployment among the young, the growing labor-force drop-out rate, or higher rates of illegitimacy and welfare dependency. It is only necessary to see how the rules were changed: how judges, bureaucrats, and policy-makers altered the rewards and penalties, the carrots and sticks, that help to shape an individual's attitude toward work and its alternatives.

The technical evidence in support of this view has been growing (albeit couched in the most obscure and reluctant terms) for two decades. But the essence of the argument is simple. Imagine a young couple—call them Harold and Phyllis who have just graduated from an average public school in an average American city. Neither of them is particularly industrious or indolent, intelligent or dull. They are the children of lowincome parents, do not wish to go to college, and have no special vocational skills. Harold and Phyllis "went together" during their last year in high school and find themselves in a familiar predicament. She is pregnant.

They will have a child together. They will face the kinds of painful decisions that many young people have had to face. What will they decide? What will seem to them to be "rational" behavior? We shall examine the options twice—first, as they were, in 1960, before the changes in incentives; then as they were only 10 years later, in 1970.

Options in 1960

Harold's parents have no money. Phyllis has no money. He has two choices if he remains within the law. He can get a job, or he can try to get Phyllis to help support him. Getting Phyllis to support him is intrinsically more attractive, but the possibilities are not promising. If Phyllis has the baby, she will qualify for \$23 a week in AFDC (\$64 in 1980 purchasing power).* This is not enough to support the three of them. And, under the rules of AFDC, Phyllis will not be able to contribute more to the budget. If

^{*}The figures used here for AFDC payments are based on the "highest amount for payment standard" (i.e., the amount guaranteed a woman with one child and no other income, as in Phyllis's hypothesized case), according to data obtained from the Office of Family Assistance, Department of Health and Human Services. The specific figures for AFDC and unemployment benefits are based on those applicable in Pennsylvania, neither the most liberal nor the most conservative of states on social-welfare payments but typical of the industrial states in which most of the welfare population lives.

POVERTY: A FIRSTHAND VIEW

The nation's poor are most often assessed by analysts from a distance, through the wide-angle lens of statistical data. Less common, but no less useful, are close-up accounts by journalists and anthropologists of what it is *like* to be poor, of various material and psychological dimensions of poverty in America.

One of the first chronicles of this sort in the United States was How the Other Half Lives (1890), by Jacob Riis, the Danish-born journalist and photographer. Drawing on 12 years as a police reporter on Manhattan's Lower East Side during the 1870s and 1880s, Riis described the horrors of immigrant life in the slums in graphic detail.

The boundary line of the "other half," he wrote, ran through the tenements. "The boundary line lies there because . . . in the tenements all the influences make for evil; because they are the hotbeds of the epidemics that carry death to rich and poor alike; . . . that throw off a scum of forty thousand human wrecks to the island asylums and workhouses year by year; . . . that maintain a standing army of ten thousand tramps with all that that implies; because, above all, they touch the family life with deadly moral contagion."

Lorena Hickok described a very different sort of poverty in One Third of a Nation (1981)—the sudden poverty inflicted on smalltown folk and farmers by the Great Depression. Hickok was recruited in 1933 by Harry L. Hopkins, director of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, to tour the United States and report back to him on conditions across the land. She did so in hundreds of letters.

To Hopkins, from Bismarck, North Dakota, November 3, 1933: "Yesterday I visited one of the 'better-off' families on relief. In what was once a house I found two small boys, about two and four years old, running about without a stitch on save some ragged overalls. No stockings or shoes. Their feet were purple with cold....

"The mother of those children, bare-legged, although she wore sneakers on her feet, is going to have another baby in January. IN THAT HOUSE. When she diffidently asked the investigator who was with me for assurance that a doctor would be on hand to see her through her confinement, I could hardly bear it."

Hickok documented the plight of people who were, for the most part, victims of temporary hard times. Three decades later, during far better times, anthropologist Elliot Liebow spent a year and a half among Washington, D.C.'s "streetcorner men," men whose plight would probably be permanent despite the nation's growing prosperity. Liebow relates what he learned in *Tally's Corner* (1967).

Middle-class values, often disparaged by self-appointed champions of the poor, were not alien to streetcorner men, Liebow contends. At some point in their lives, they had all *wanted* to get an

education, had wanted to land a decent job, had wanted to marry and support a family. When, for various reasons, they did not succeed, they took refuge from self-loathing in a shiftless streetcorner culture "where failures are rationalized into phantom successes and weaknesses magically transformed into strengths."

Among other institutions, the school system cheated many of these men, Liebow contends. He offers "Richard's" story: "I graduated from high school [in Baltimore] but I don't know

anything. I'm dumb. . . . They graduated me but I didn't know anything. I had lousy grades but I guess they wanted to get rid of me.... I was at Margaret's house the other night and her little sister asked me to help her with her homework. She showed me some fractions and I knew right away I couldn't do them. I was ashamed so I told her I had to go to the bathroom.

Susan Sheehan looks at underclass life in A Welfare Mother (1976), a vivid profile of Mrs. Carmen Santana, a 43-year-old mother of four who lived during the mid-1970s in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. As Michael Harrington notes in an introduction, Mrs. Santana "is not really 'poor' in the sense that she has no money to buy basic food and shelter"-the welfare system takes care of that. But welfare has in turn created "a hapless and hopeless group of recipients who will never become integrated into our society.'

Sheehan describes her subject with both candor and sympathy. "Mrs. Santana takes welfare as matter-of-factly as she takes everything else in her life. Although she has been the beneficiary of thousands of dollars of welfare for fourteen years, she doesn't consider welfare the only thing that stands between her and starvation. Because welfare exists, she avails herself of it. She believes that if there were no welfare she would find some means of surviving."

In The Underclass (1982), Ken Auletta underlines the difficulties faced by federal planners who want to move the "hardcore" poor off the welfare rolls and into paying jobs. Auletta spent seven months in 1979-80 observing a federally subsidized, experimental training program run in Manhattan by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. He notes that those of the participants who did not drop out had to be taught "not just English, math, and typing but how to use an alarm clock and telephone, follow dress codes, cash checks, say Please and Thank You, tell the truth about their pasts, write letters, conduct job interviews."

Even the best such uplift programs get mixed results, Auletta explains, for the simple reason that "some members of the underclass [can use] help and some are beyond help.'

Like Riis, Hickok, Liebow, Sheehan, and others who have studied the problem firsthand, Auletta emphasizes the sheer human *diversity* of the poor population in America. "It does not take long to learn," Auletta writes, "that too many

poverty experts . . . generalize about people they barely know."

she gets a job, she will lose benefits on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Also, Harold and Phyllis will not be able to live together. AFDC regulations in 1960 prohibit benefits if there is "a man in the house." Apart from its psychic and sexual disadvantages, this regulation also means that Harold cannot benefit from Phyllis's weekly check. The amount could not possibly be stretched across two households. It follows that, completely apart from the moral stance of Harold, his parents, and society, it is in 1960 not possible for Harold to use Phyllis for support. Whether or not he decides to stay with her, he will have to find some sort of job.

The only job that he can find is working the presses in a drycleaning shop. It pays the rock-bottom minimum wage—\$40 for a 40-hour week (or about \$111 in the purchasing power of the 1980 dollar). It is not much of a living, not much of a job. There is no future in it, no career path. But it pays for food and shelter. Harold has no choice. Unemployment insurance will pay him only \$20 (\$56 in 1980 purchasing power).

Phyllis has three (legal) options: to support herself (either keeping the baby or giving it up for adoption), to go on AFDC (which means keeping the baby), or to marry Harold.

Other things being equal, supporting herself is the least attractive of these options. Like Harold, she can expect to find only menial minimum-wage employment. There is no intrinsic reason to take such a job.

The AFDC option is worth considering. The advantage is that it will enable her to keep the baby without having to work. The disadvantages are the ones that Harold perceives. The money is too little, and she is not permitted to supplement it. Harold would not be permitted to be a live-in husband or father. If she tries to circumvent the rules and gets caught, she faces being cut off from any benefits for the foreseeable future.

Right now, setting up a household with Harold is by far the most sensible choice, even given the miserable wage he is making at the laundry. Being married (as opposed to just living together) has no short-term economic implications. This is shown in the following table:

| Harold | Living Together | |
|-----------|-----------------|---------|
| employed? | Unmarried | Married |
| | | |
| Yes | \$111 | \$111 |
| | | |
| No | \$0 | \$0 |

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THE WAR ON POVERTY



Members of the National Welfare Rights Organization stage a "sit-in" at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1970. In an average month in 1960, about three million individuals received Aid to Families with Dependent Children. That number climbed to 10.6 million in 1980.

The choice of whether to get married is dependent primarily on noneconomic motivations plus the economic advantages to Phyllis of having Harold legally responsible for the support of her and the baby.

Once the decision not to go on AFDC is made, a new option opens up. As long as Phyllis is not on AFDC, no penalty is attached to her getting a part-time or full-time job, so she goes job-hunting to supplement Harold's income. And though they may not be aware of it, by establishing a two-income household, they are taking what the economists know to be the surest way to escape poverty permanently.

Options in 1970

Harold and Phyllis's namesakes just 10 years later find themselves in an identical situation. Their parents have no money, he does not want to go to school any longer, she is pregnant, the only job he can get is in the back room of a dry cleaner's. That much is unchanged from 1960.

Harold's options have changed considerably. First, the

AFDC option. In 1960, he had three objections to letting Phyllis go on welfare: too little money, no way to supplement it, and having to live separately from his family. By 1970, all these objections have been removed. The rules have changed.

Rewarding Dependence

Economically, the total package of AFDC and other welfare benefits has become comparable to working. Phyllis will get about \$50 a week in cash (\$106 in 1980 dollars) and another \$11 in food stamps (\$23 in 1980 dollars). She will get Medicaid, which will add an estimated \$5 a week in 1980 dollars to a package of benefits available to her in a typical Northern state, amounting to a total purchasing power of about \$134 in 1980 dollars. This minimal package adds up to \$23 more in 1980 dollars than the purchasing power of 40 hours of work at a minimum-wage job 10 years earlier, in 1960.

Also, the money can be supplemented. If Phyllis works, she can keep the first \$30 she makes. After that, her benefits are reduced by \$2 for every three additional dollars of income.

Harold has even greater flexibility. As long as he is not legally responsible for the care of the child—a crucial proviso—his income will not count against her eligibility for benefits. He is free to work when they need a little extra money to supplement their basic (welfare) income.

The third objection—being separated from Phyllis—has become irrelevant. After 1968, the presence of a man in the house of a single woman could no longer be used as a reason to deny that woman benefits. The Supreme Court had said so.

The old-fashioned solution of getting married and living off the combined earned income has become markedly less appealing. Working a full 40-hour week in the dry-cleaning shop will pay Harold \$64 (\$136 in 1980 dollars) *before* Social Security and taxes are taken out. After deductions, Harold will take home less money than Phyllis does. The bottom line is this: Harold can get married and work 40 hours a week in a hot, tiresome job; or he can live with Phyllis and their baby without getting married, not work, and have more disposable income. From an economic point of view, getting married is dumb. From a noneconomic point of view, it involves him in a legal relationship that has no payoff for him. If he thinks he may someday tire of Phyllis and of fatherhood, the 1970 options provide a further incentive for keeping the relationship off the books.

What are the pros and cons for Phyllis? Keep the baby or give it up? Get married or not? Phyllis comes from a poor fam-

ily. They want her out of the house, and she wants to get out of the house. If she gives up the baby for adoption (or, in some states by 1970, has a legal abortion), she will be expected to support herself; and, as in 1960, the only job that she will be able to find will probably be unattractive, have no security, and provide an income no larger than her baby could provide. Giving up the baby is rational behavior only if she prefers *any* sort of job to having and caring for a baby.

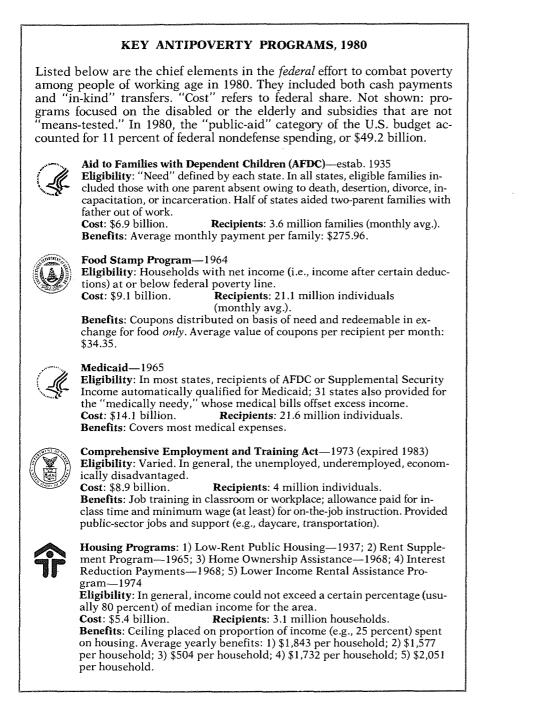
What about getting married? Say Phyllis and Harold marry. If he is employed, she will lose her AFDC benefits. His minimumwage job at the laundry will bring no more income than she can obtain and, not insignificantly, he, not she, will have control of the check. In exchange for giving up this degree of independence, she gains no real security. Harold's job is not nearly as stable as the welfare system. And, should her marriage break up, she will not be able to count on residual benefits. In sum, marriage buys Phyllis nothing—not companionship she could not have otherwise, not financial security, not even increased income. In 1970, her child, thanks to the government, provides her with the economic insurance that a husband once represented.

Assuming that the two want to live together, their maximum weekly incomes (ignoring payroll deductions and Harold's means-tested benefits) are, in 1980 dollars:

| Harold | Living Te | ogether |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| employed? | Unmarried | Married |
| Yes | \$270 | \$136 |
| No | \$134 | \$134 |

Harold and Phyllis take the economically logical step: She has the baby, they live together without marrying, and Harold finds a job at the laundry to provide some extra cash. But when the back room gets too hot, it becomes economically feasible, and indeed reasonable, for Harold to move out of the labor market temporarily. It is not reasonable in the long-term because he is systematically, though unwittingly, making it impossible to move into a secure, better paying job. It is reasonable in the short term—which is not an unusual term for adolescents to use in their calculations.

Such is the story of Harold and Phyllis. They were put in a characteristically working-class situation. In 1960, the logic of their world led them to behave in traditional working-class ways. Ten years later, the logic of their world has changed and,



lo and behold, they behave indistinguishably from "welfare types." Their tragedy in 1970 is not that they are permanently poor or wholly dependent, but that they will never be permanently not-poor and wholly independent.

It is too easy to jump from stories such as these to one of two reactions. One is to assume that the evil effects derive from a particular piece of legislation or a particular court decision and that the solution is to exorcise a few demons: Fix AFDC (to take the easiest target), and all will be well. In fact, the story of Harold and Phyllis, to be fully told, must deal as well with multidimensional changes in the rules involving education, crime, community, and family. All point in the same direction.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, it was easier to get along without a job. It was easier to have a baby without being responsible for it (for a man) and without having to have a husband (for a woman). It was easier to get away with crime. Because it was easier to get away with crime, it was easier to support a drug habit. Because it was easier to get along without a job, it was easier to ignore education. Because it was easier to get along without a job, it was easier to walk away from a job—and thereby accumulate a record as an unreliable employee which, in turn, made it more difficult to get any but the least important, most dispensable kinds of work.

A Matter of Status

The second too-typical reaction is to ask, usually in a tone of heavy disbelief: "Do you seriously think that these girls are deciding to have babies so that they can get on welfare?" To which the answer is, of course, No—in the sense that (presumably) few calculate the decision so deliberately. But if the question is changed slightly, to be: "Are decisions about marriage and children and work affected by economic considerations?" the answer is, of course, Yes—throughout history, and in every social class. During the 1960s and 1970s, the nature of these considerations was decisively altered for one set of Americans and one only: poor people. And millions of poor people, especially the young, began to behave much differently from before.

Changes in the tangible incentives and disincentives are only part of the story. Another equally important tool that society uses (consciously or not) to manage behavior is status, which serves as both a goad to ambition and a reward for certain types of behavior. Beginning in the 1960s, changes in social policy withdrew status from the low-income, independent working family, with disastrous consequences for the quality of life of

THE GREAT EXPERIMENT: CARROTS, NO STICKS

By 1966–67, planners at the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) increasingly assumed that providing some form of guaranteed annual income was the only way that the War on Poverty was going to be won.

In the face of opposition from congressional moderates and conservatives, who worried about the negative impact of a guaranteed income on the recipient's "work ethic," the OEO sought to show that all would be well. OEO would obtain proof that a guaranteed income would *not* cause people to reduce their work effort, divorce more quickly, or prompt any of the other things that the popular wisdom said that it would.

OEO's vehicle for providing the proof took the form of the most ambitious social-science experiment in American history. Known as the Negative Income Tax (NIT) experiment, it began in 1968, ultimately used 8,700 people as subjects, and lasted for 10 years. Briefly defined, a negative income tax provides payments to individuals whose income falls below a certain "floor"—thereby guaranteeing, in effect, a minimum income.

The federally financed NIT experiment was launched at sites in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, then extended to Iowa, North Carolina, Indiana, Washington, and Colorado. At each site, a sample of low-income individuals was selected by researchers and randomly split into two groups, the "experimental" group and the "control" group. The members of the experimental group were told that for a specified number of years (usually three) they would have a floor put under their incomes, whether they worked or not. The benefits to participants varied, to test the sensitivity of subjects' reactions to the generosity of the guaranteed income. The most common benefit established a floor at roughly the same dollar level as the official poverty line. The members of the control group received no benefits.

During the next decade, the results dribbled in. Finally, by the end

such families. Status was withdrawn from the very kinds of behavior that help poor people escape from poverty.

Historically, poor people in America have been a variegated group with complex status distinctions. There were the genteel poor, who had lost their money but not their manners. There were the poor people who were called "trash"—not just without money but also uncouth and generally unpleasant company. There were the immigrant poor who, even as they were climbing out of poverty, maintained elaborate status structures, even in the most crowded tenements. And there were the farmers, most of whom were cash-poor but, nevertheless, were widely believed to be the backbone of the nation and on a considerably higher moral plane than the effete rich.

of the 1970s, the social scientists working on Washington's behalf had enough information in hand to begin drawing some conclusions. It soon became clear that the NIT experiment validated not its federal sponsors' hopes but their fears, with methodological rigor and in enormous detail.

The key question was whether the NIT would reduce work effort among the poor. The answer was Yes, and the reduction was substantial. In Seattle and Denver, for example, the NIT trimmed "desired hours of work" by nine percent for husbands and by 20 percent for wives. ("Desired hours of work" was measured by actual employment after factoring involuntary work reductions, such as layoffs, out of the calculation.) Young males who were not yet heads of families—"nonheads" in the jargon—were especially affected. They were at a critical age in their lives: about to enter into the responsibilities of marriage and just establishing themselves in the labor force. If they were going to escape from poverty, now was the time to start. The NIT had a disastrous impact on the number of hours they worked weekly-down 43 percent for those who remained nonheads throughout the experiment, down 33 percent for those who married. The NIT also produced a striking increase in the *duration* of unemployment after a participant in the experiment lost his or her job.

What about the impact of welfare on the family? Looking again at the Seattle and Denver experiments, the marriage dissolution rate was 36 percent higher for whites receiving NIT payments than for those who did not, 42 percent higher among blacks. Interestingly, no effect was observed among participants in Indiana. The reason was that in Indiana couples were under the impression that they would lose their NIT payments if they split up.

The NIT experiment made a shambles of the expectations of its sponsors. But even as it got under way during the late 1960s, the disincentives that it would demonstrate were being woven into the fabric of the expanding welfare system. -C. M.

The status distinctions were based on the assumption that people were responsible for their actions and, specifically, responsible for taking care of themselves and their families as best they could. A person who was chronically unable to hold a job, who neglected children and spouse, was a bum and a no good, and was consigned by his neighbors to the lowest circle of status. This held true in most communities, regardless of race.

But once it was assumed by policy-makers or their intellectual advisers that the system was to blame when a person was chronically out of work and that the system was even to blame when a person neglected spouse and family, then the moral distinctions eroded. It was no longer deemed proper among mainstream writers, politicians, and rule-makers to draw a



Food stamps changing hands. Thomas Jefferson appears on the \$5 coupon; the \$1 coupon features the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. The very term "deserving poor" was laughed out of use—witness the reaction of political columnists and cartoonists to the use of "truly needy" by officials of the Reagan administration. The poor were simply poor: None were permitted to be superior to others, all were victims.

Viewing the poor as victims prompted several new departures. One was the drive to rid welfare of its stigma. Welfare had heretofore been a blot on the recipient's reputation. Now, because it was no longer deemed the recipient's fault that welfare aid was needed, the stigma had to be removed. To this end, the portrayal and administration of the welfare system was changed dramatically. In addition to changing practices that stigmatized recipients (by discouraging at-home eligibility investigations, for example), the government deliberately mounted a propaganda effort. As early as 1965, the OEO began sending out emissaries to spread the word that it was morally permissible to be on welfare. Federal Community Action grants provided the wherewithal for booklets, speeches, and one-onone evangelizing by staff workers. Welfare was to be considered a right, not charity.

The government's efforts were reinforced by the National

Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), founded in 1966 and led by George Wiley. The innovative aspect of the welfare-rights movement was not that poor people were organizing. It was that their focus had shifted. No longer did the protestors proclaim, "We don't want charity, we want jobs." During the last half of the 1960s, the NWRO demonstrators were agitating not so much for jobs as for the right to long-term, unfettered, generous charity. Without stigma attached to being on welfare, how was one to take pride in *not* being on welfare?

Arguably, the most insidious single change affecting status relationships within the poor community was the introduction of "means-tested" welfare benefits, benefits available to anyone whose income fell below a certain threshold.

The Chump

One of the insights of game theory involves the psychological importance of natural boundaries—What makes it easier to quit smoking than to cut down? What leads bargainers to compromise on a round number or to "split the difference"? With poor people, the traditional boundary was accepting *no charity at all* from anyone outside the family.

Means-tested programs effectively ended such useful taboos. One may approve or disapprove of food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance, but one result was unavoidable: In time, virtually all low-income persons became recipients of federal charity. Pride in independence was further compromised, and so was a certain degree of pressure on the younger generation to make good on the family tradition of never accepting charity. The notion that there is an intrinsic good in working, even if one does not *have* to, may have impressive philosophical credentials, but it is not very convincing, at least to many young people whose values are still being formed.

In the end, post-1964 social policy robbed the responsible and deserving poor of neighborhood status even as it eroded their incentive to make investments—in time, energy, psychic commitment, and money—that might pay off in upward mobility for themselves, or for their children, over the long-term. Over a period of years, the changes in the rules of the economic game caused status conventions to flip completely in some communities. To someone who is not yet persuaded of the satisfactions of making one's own way, there is something truly laughable about an individual who doggedly keeps working at a lousy, "dead-end" job for no tangible reason at all. The man who keeps working is a chump.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Realistically, it makes little sense to suppose that anything actually *can* be done, or in any event will be. Significant reform of social policy in the United States does not seem likely in the near future. Ours is, after all, a system that, faced with bankruptcy of Social Security during the early 1980s, went into paroxysms of anxiety at the prospect of delaying the recipients' cost-of-living increase for six months.

But the cautiousness of the system is not in itself worrisome. Reform is often inappropriate, and it should always be undertaken carefully and slowly. What *should* worry us is a peculiar escapism that has for two decades gripped the consideration of social policy in America. It seems that those who legislate, administer, and write about social policy can tolerate any increase in actual suffering or demoralization so long as the system in place does not explicitly permit it. It is better, by the logic we have been living with, that we *try* to take care of 100 percent of the problem and make matters worse than that we solve 75 percent of the problem with a solution that does not try to do anything about the rest.

Escapism is a natural response. Most Americans want to help. It makes us feel bad to think of neglected children and ratinfested slums, and we are happy to pay for the thought that people who are good at taking care of such things are out there. If the number of neglected children and the number of rats seem to be going up instead of down, it is understandable that we choose to focus on how much we put into the effort instead of what comes out. The tax checks we write buy us, for relatively little money and no effort at all, a quieted conscience. The more we pay, the more certain we can be that we have done our part. A solution—say, scrapping much of the modern welfare edifice—that would have us pay less, accomplish more, *and* acknowledge that some would go unhelped, is unacceptable.

As a result, the barrier to radical reform of social policy is not the pain that it would cause the intended beneficiaries of the present system, but the pain that it would cause the donors. The real contest over the direction of social policy in America is not between people who want to cut budgets and people who want to help. When reforms finally do occur, they will happen not because stingy people have won but because generous people have stopped kidding themselves.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE WAR ON POVERTY

For centuries, poverty was widely perceived in the West as both natural and inevitable. The 19th century marked a turning point.

Swayed by a combination of factors, including industrialization, population growth, and the blossoming of social science, Western governments, led by Great Britain, began looking at poverty afresh and experimenting with new strategies for ameliorating the condition of the poor.

As Gertrude Himmelfarb points out in **The Idea of Poverty** (Knopf, 1983), the half centuries on either side of 1800 were times of ferment in social theory. In the preindustrial England of 1750, poet Thomas Gray could speak of the "short and simple annals of the poor"; by 1850, Himmelfarb writes, the poverty literature—its contributors included Thomas Malthus, Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and Jeremy Bentham—had become "long and complicated."

Poverty came to be viewed as a product of powerful social forces economic, technological, political, demographic. As such, its elimination became "a matter for social action rather than the exercise of private virtue."

Several volumes trace America's shifting attitudes (and policies) toward the poor, from colonial times through the Great Society. These include **Poverty and Policy in American History** (Academic Press, 1983, paper only), edited by Michael B. Katz, and James T. Patterson's **America's Struggle against Poverty**, **1900–1980** (Harvard, 1981, cloth & paper). Marking milestones along the way are William Leuchtenberg's **Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal** (Harper, 1983, cloth; 1975, paper), John Kenneth Galbraith's **The Affluent Society** (Houghton, 1958, cloth; New American Library, 1978, paper), and Michael Harrington's **The Other America** (Macmillan, 1962, cloth; Penguin, 1981, paper).

Lyndon B. Johnson was not the first U.S. President to proclaim the virtues of social engineering, but he proved the most ambitious in pursuing its elusive potential. Published assessments of LBJ's Great Society programs, from Headstart to Job Corps, from the Food Stamp Program to Operation Mainstream, run the gamut between mild praise and outright dismay.

The Great Society (Basic, 1974, cloth & paper), edited by Eli Ginzberg and Robert M. Solow, depicts the record as "one of successes mixed with failures, as any sensible person should have expected." The successes: in varying degree, civil-rights legislation, Medicare (but not Medicaid), and some of the educational, jobtraining, and housing programs. The failures: most of the programs explicitly aimed at eradicating poverty and bringing the poor into the mainstream. "The promises were extreme; the specific remedial actions were untried and untested; the finances were grossly inadequate.⁴

Other studies dealing broadly with the Great Society and its aftermath include **Progress against Poverty** (Academic Press, 1975), by Robert D. Plotnick and Felicity Skidmore, and **A Decade of Federal Antipoverty Programs** (Academic Press, 1977, cloth & paper), edited by Robert H. Haveman.

Often more illuminating to the layman are a few good case studies of specific programs.

Oakland's Not for Burning

(McKay, 1968), by Amory Bradford, and **Implementation** (Univ. of Calif., 1973, cloth; expanded edition 1979, paper), by Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, provide two contrasting snapshots, taken five years apart, of the work of the Economic Development Administration in Oakland, California. Bradford's book, published in 1968, depicted Oakland as a potential showcase for the War on Poverty, where federal plans to create jobs and rebuild the slums "may have made the difference" in preventing local mayhem.

Yet, by 1969, three years after the program got under way, only \$3 million of an authorized \$23 million had been spent; only 20 jobs had been created. The Pressman and Wildavsky account was subtitled in part: "How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; or, Why It's Amazing That Federal Programs Work at All ..."

Other case studies include Daniel P. Moynihan's **Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding** (Free Press, 1969, cloth; 1970, paper), which deals with the Great Society's troubled Community Action programs. **The Politics of a Guaranteed Income** (Vintage, 1973, cloth & paper), by the same author, describes the birth and death of the Family Assistance Plan (FAP), proposed by Richard Nixon in 1969 and rejected by Congress.

Economist Martin Anderson helped conceive the FAP. Anderson's **Welfare** (Hoover, 1978) and Blanche Bernstein's **Politics of Welfare** (Abt Books, 1982) coldly appraise the welfare system as currently administered. Anderson argues that the most effective weapon against poverty, now as in the past, is overall economic growth.

Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward see the welfare system's chief purpose to be that of **Regulating the Poor** (Tavistock, 1971, cloth; Random, 1972, paper). Historically, they contend, relief measures have been "initiated or expanded" by governments only when economic ills threatened social chaos. When good times return, relief programs are kept in place in order to "demean and punish those who do not work" and thereby implicitly exalt "even the meanest labor at the meanest wages."

In Unheavenly City Revisited (Little, Brown, 1974, cloth & paper), Harvard's Edward C. Banfield sees hardcore poverty as stemming from a pervasive set of attitudes that render members of the underclass largely incapable of surviving unaided in a modern industrial society.

The idea that there exists a "culture of poverty," with its own selfperpetuating pathology, was first popularized by Oscar Lewis in Children of Sánchez (Random, 1961, cloth; Vintage, 1966, paper). Widely supported, it has also been widely challenged. For a critique, see Charles A. Valentine's Culture and Poverty (Univ. of Chicago, 1968, cloth & paper), Lee Rainwater's And the Poor Get Children (New Viewpoints, 1960, cloth; 1974, paper), and, most recently, Greg J. Duncan's report, Years of Poverty, Years of Plenty (Institute for Social Research, Univ. of Mich., 1984).

Daniel P. Moynihan's once-controversial study, **The Negro Family: The Case for National Action** (Greenwood, 1965, 1981), links the impact of the "startling" increase in welfare dependency among American blacks to "the breakdown of the Negro family." One-quarter of all black families, Moynihan noted in 1965, were headed by women, and one-quarter of all black children were born out of wedlock. (Both percentages have doubled

during the past two decades.)

Not all analysts have agreed with Moynihan. Some scholars, notably Joyce A. Ladner, in Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman (Doubleday, 1971, cloth; 1972, paper), and Robert Bernard Hill, in The Strengths of Black Families (National Urban League, 1971), have stressed the resilience of the slum family in the face of great obstacles. In William Ryan's view, implicating the female-headed family amounts to Blaming the Victim (Pantheon, 1971, cloth; Random, 1972, paper).

Has immigration exacerbated poverty in America? According to a recent study by Thomas Muller, The Fourth Wave (Urban Institute, 1984), an estimated eight million immigrants, legal and undocumented, entered the United States during the 1970s. Many of them were willing to take menial jobs for low pay, jobs that some labor leaders have argued would otherwise have gone to Americans at higher pay.

California, Muller finds that an influx of Mexican workers did depress wages locally—which helped create more jobs. It had little or no *negative* impact on employment, not even among black teen-agers. To what degree Hispanic and Asian immigrants simply fill low-wage jobs that unemployed poor whites and blacks now disdain, thanks to welfare, remains a matter of controversy.

Perhaps the most spirited recent defense of Washington's health, education, job-training, and other social uplift efforts of the past two decades has come from John E. Schwarz, a University of Arizona economist, in America's Hidden Success: A Reassessment of Twenty Years of Public Policy (Norton, 1983).

In alleviating sheer misery, Schwarz believes, Washington's efforts have paid off. Taking into account income from all sources-including the unrecorded "private economic activities" that supplement many welfare checks-as well as inkind transfers, Schwarz estimates the true number of Americans, young and old, living in poverty during the late 1970s at only between four and eight percent of the population-down from 18 percent in 1960. In Schwarz's view, "the post-Eisenhower era was in fact an age of distinguished public achievement."

The scholarly debate over the Looking closely at the situation in causes and cure of poverty continues. And vet, Gertrude Himmelfarb writes, "Whatever progress has been charted on the graph of 'progress and poverty,' it is poverty that still strikes the eye and strikes at the heart. It is as if the modern sensibility can only register failure, not success, as if modernity has bequeathed to us a social conscience that is unappeasable and inconsolable.'

EDITOR'S NOTE: Interested readers may also wish to consult WQ's Background Books essays on Money and the Pursuit of Plenty in America (Autumn 1977), The Public Schools (Autumn 1979), The American Family (Summer 1980), The New Deal (Spring 1982), Immigration (New Year's 1983), Crime in America (Spring 1983), and Blacks in America (Spring 1984).

CURRENT BOOKS

FELLOWS' CHOICE

Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows of the Wilson Center

THE ZIONIST DREAM REVISITED: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back by Amnon Rubinstein Schocken, 1984 192 pp. \$14.45 Most current American writing about Israel dwells on the Arab-Israeli conflict. This book focuses on the country itself—its heated internal politics and its social tensions. Above all, it offers a timely report on how Israel has measured up to the ideals of its founders, under less-than-ideal circumstances, since it emerged as a modern nation in 1948.

Amnon Rubinstein, a professor of law at Tel Aviv University and a member of the Knesset (Parliament), is one of Israel's leading intel-

lectuals. As a member of the small, centrist Shinui (Change) Party, he is troubled by a drift in Israeli society and politics from a liberal quest for selfdetermination to an insular and abrasive nationalism, exemplified by the rhetoric and politics that prevailed during Menachem Begin's tenure as Prime Minister (1979–83).

The last 14 years, Rubinstein believes, have sorely tested, and in some ways corrupted, the original Zionist ideal. The version of Zionism that was first made popular by the turn-of-the century Viennese writer, Theodor Herzl, was imbued with the best traditions of European liberalism. An independent Jewish state seemed, says Rubinstein, to be "the embodiment of the spirit of modernism and progress . . . compatible with the interests of the family of enlightened nations." This ideal, which eventually included socialist elements, helped steer the Israeli nation under the Labor governments of David Ben-Gurion (1948–53; 1955–63) and Golda Meir (1969–74). Rubinstein reminds readers that most early Zionists also believed in peaceful coexistence with the Arabs. At least one Zionist, Israel Belkind, even harbored a romantic hope for a rediscovered Jewish-Arab brotherhood: "It is certain that among the Palestinian Arabs, we meet a great number of our own people who had been severed from us for the last 1500 years. . . ."

Arab enmity doomed such fraternal visions, forcing Israelis to live and survive by the sword. Rubinstein sees the 1967 Six Day War as the tragic turning point. The war stirred support for Israel throughout the West, thus assuring the besieged nation's survival. But the quick victory also fostered within Israel a kind of martial hubris and a worship of military power alien to the old Zionist ideals.

At the same time, the religious Zionists—long a minority within the largely secular movement—became both more influential and more chauvinistic. For decades, the small, moderate, religious Zionist parties had been coalition partners in the Labor-led governments. After 1967, things changed. Arising within the National Religious Party was the *Gush Emunim*, the Bloc of the Faithful, dedicated to massive Jewish settlement of the West Bank and to the preservation of this region within the boundaries

of the Jewish state. It was with the help of these religious extremists that Begin rose to power. Since 1967, Israel has been a house divided, and the Lebanon war of 1982 has, if anything, widened the chasm between the two sides claiming to be the true Zionists.

Israel is still at a crossroads. Will it maintain its "Athenian" character, its openness and pluralism, despite pressures that make life in the Levant seem like that in 17th-century Germany during the Thirty Years' War? Or will it succumb to those pressures and become a closed Middle Eastern "Sparta"? Despite the shifts deplored in Rubinstein's book, Israel remains an open society, searching for a sense of itself and holding, however precariously, to the ideals of its initial dream. Rubinstein's book bears testimony to that search.

-Shlomo Avineri

CINCINNATUS: George Washington and the Enlightenment by Garry Wills Doubleday, 1984 272 pp. \$18.95 Garry Wills is an honorable representative of a vanishing species, the American man of letters. Now a professor of history at Northwestern, he prepared for his avocation as a social critic at William F. Buckley's *National Review*. His prose sometimes shows the legacy: a tendency to substitute a sneer for a critique or a parade of erudition for a convincing argument. But Wills's best books have transcended those lapses. In *Inventing America*

(1978), by rediscovering the importance of 18th-century moral philosophy to the Declaration of Independence, Wills demonstrated that Thomas Jefferson and his contemporaries were concerned with communal welfare as well as with individual rights. And in *Nixon Agonistes* (1979), Wills shot from the hip and nailed a moving target. At his best, Wills's learning is solid, his range wide.

In many ways, *Cincinnatus* represents Wills at his best. He deftly explores the relationship between George Washington's public career and popular representations of it. In fact and myth, Washington *became* Cincinnatus—the Roman farmer who left his plow to lead the Republic in an hour of crisis, returning to private life as soon as the peril was ended. In Wills's hands, the image of Cincinnatus also illuminates early American attitudes toward power and morality.

The key was self-restraint, and Washington epitomized it at every turn of his career. The haste with which he resigned his commission at the end of the War of Independence first linked Washington to the Cincinnatus myth; the reluctance with which he returned in 1788 to public life as President reinforced the popular impression. From his resignation in 1783 to the Farewell Address in September 1796, Washington "had to use power most adroitly in order to give it up in useful ways." Unlike other more charismatic American leaders, he could relinquish power gracefully because he believed in what Wills calls the "republican ideology"; it included a "vision of emergency powers given to some worthy man, who proves his worthiness by refusing to exercise the powers beyond the emergency's demands." The early American Republic's central tenet: Power is most usefully exercised when it is most carefully contained.

Wills draws on a wide variety of sources to demonstrate his point. He examines the shift from Biblical to classical republican imagery in the cult of George Washington, showing how Parson Weems's homiletic *Life of Washington* (1800), the source of the famous cherry tree story, emphasized the Founding Father's simple virtues and eclipsed such lumbering epics as Timothy Dwight's *Conquest of Canaan* (1785), which depicted Washington as a latter-day Moses. Wills contrasts the popular failure of Horatio Greenough's statue—a grandiose and bare-chested Zeus (completed during John Tyler's administration and installed in the Capitol Rotunda)—with the success of Jean-Antoine Houdon's earlier statue in Richmond (1788). The latter presented what Wills describes as a "spiritual 'striptease' in which the emblems of power are being removed one by one." The great leader in Houdon's work is shown putting aside the Roman fasces and preparing to return to the plow—a triumph of restraint over pomp.

For all its virtues, *Cincinnatus* is hobbled by Wills's one-sided view of the historical process. Great men and great ideas march in procession across the stage of history; the importance of changes in popular thinking or of underlying economic arrangements is largely ignored or dismissed. For example, an emphasis on the "enlightened" outlook of Washington and the other leaders of his generation leads Wills to exaggerate the secular cast of the Revolutionary era. The United States may have been "the world's first truly secular state," but the process of nation building involved more than the stately march to independence led by Washington; it also required a widespread popular movement to rid the land of British "luxury" and "corruption." And that movement was fired by evangelical Protestantism. As historian Rhys Isaac has demonstrated in *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (1982), even Washington's home state, once the bastion of the "established" Anglican Church, had been thoroughly evangelized by the time Washington took office. Focusing on the great men, Wills overlooks the popular evangelical currents that influenced the emerging civil religion.

Wills's approach also obscures the contradictions between republican reverence for simplicity of life and the nation's developing capitalist economy. American republicans, including Washington and Jefferson, viewed the independent yeoman as the ideal "economic man." Concerned about "the vices of commerce," they warned against the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. They held up "public virtue" as an antidote to the lust for private gain that seemed to be engulfing the infant republic. Yet they exemplified the virtues of self-control and disciplined achievement that were well suited to the accumulation of capital.

Despite its flaws, *Cincinnatus* remains an elegant and compelling book. It describes the meaning of Washington's career to his own contemporaries and explains it to us. Amid the current celebration of powergetting and private gain, Wills recalls America's early public ideals.

----T. J. Jackson Lears '83

CURRENT BOOKS

NEW TITLES

History

THE NIGHT BATTLES: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the 16th and 17th Centuries by Carlo Ginzburg translated by John and Anne Tedeschi Johns Hopkins, 1984 209 pp. \$18.50

In the Friuli region of northern Italy during the Middle Ages, people who happened to be born in the caul-the intact amniotic membrane-were thought to have benign magical powers. Called benandanti, or "good walkers," they engaged in nocturnal battles at four different times of the year against evil spirits threatening the fertility of crops and livestock. During the 16th and 17th centuries, these valued folk came under the hostile scrutiny of representatives of the Holy Inquisition. As in his study of a 16th-century Italian miller, The Cheese and the Worms, Ginzburg's concern is with the clash between the popular mind, with its memories of ancient rituals, and the educated minds of churchmen, cut off from folk practices and rigidly bound by dogma. Drawing on Inquisition records, Ginzburg, a University of Bologna historian, shows how, at the end of a century-long struggle, the benandanti submitted to the church's judgment: They confessed to being not only diabolical witches but the very sort of witches whose rituals conformed to the patterns described in Inquisition reference books. The fate of the "good walkers" was not unique. Throughout Europe, and even in America, a narrow and intolerant religiosity was perhaps more effective than science in eradicating the older world of superstition.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF COTTON MATHER by Kenneth Silverman Harper, 1984 479 pp. \$29.95

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As revered during his lifetime as he was reviled after it, the arch-Puritan Cotton Mather (1663–1728) emerges as a complex figure in this sympathetic biography. Descended from several generations of clerics (his father, Increase, was the famed pastor of Boston's North Church), young Cotton had no doubts about his calling. He entered Harvard at the age of 11 and began preaching at 16, quickly gaining renown for his eloquence. Recognition as a prodigious writer and scholar was to follow. The Mather output eventually com-



prised some 388 titles, including a sevenvolume history of New England and a scientific account of America's natural "curiosities." For the latter, he was admitted to England's Royal Society. Silverman, a New York University historian, does more than tally his subject's accomplishments: He shows how Mather's commitment to preserving "Christian Israel," God's Puritan "chosen people," contributed to his posthumous image as religious fanatic. Declining church membership during the 1680s spurred Mather's fear of Puritan vulnerability; but, as Silverman explains, Mather's paranoia also reflected his fellow New Englanders' "mentality of invasion." Menaced during the 1670s by the Dutch and French foes of England, their settlements repeatedly ravaged by fires and epidemics, unable to fend off the encroachments of "popish" English governors, Mather's generation of colonial Puritans had grown fearful, suspicious, and inflexible. Near the end of his life, however, Mather began to be seen by a younger generation as a half-crazed, self-promoting pedant. Forgetting the circumstances of Mather's time, later critics were even less kind to the man who wanted only to "Do Good."

THE CONQUEST OF AMERICA by Tzvetan Todorov translated by Richard Howard Harper, 1984 274 pp. \$17.95

The discovery and conquest of the New World by the Europeans is usually seen as part of the inevitable "geopolitical" march of history. Todorov, a Bulgarian-born philosopher who now teaches in France, treats the Spanish triumph in America during the 16th century as an illuminating chapter in Western intellectual and moral history. Examining diaries and chronicles of explorers, conquistadors, and historian-priests, he shows how the Spanish slowly fashioned an ideology to justify their subjugation of the natives. From Christopher Columbus onward, Todorov explains, the Spaniards were reluctant to view Indians as human, even as they marveled at the "natural" goodness of the Caribbean islanders or the civilization of the Aztecs. The



Spaniards' Christianity complicated matters. Many devout Catholics, including the Dominican bishop and chronicler Bartolomé de Las Casas, deplored the brutal mistreatment of the Indians and feared that conquest would corrupt the conquerors. Other churchmen used Christian doctrine to sanction colonialism. Wrote the theologian Ginés de Sepúlveda: "The loss of a single soul dead without baptism exceeds in gravity the death of countless victims." His countrymen concurred: In Mexico alone, the number of Indian "souls" declined from an estimated 25 million to one million between A. D. 1500 and 1600. Why did the Indians offer so little resistance to the conquistadors? One reason, Todorov argues, was the Aztecs' fateful reliance on myth, ritual, and the reading of signs to interpret daily reality. Cortés, for example, encouraged the Aztecs in their belief that he was Quetzalcoatl, a legendary ruler and demigod whose return had been predicted by soothsayers. The cunning European seized Montezuma's empire with hardly a struggle.

Contemporary Affairs

LONG ROAD HOME: A China Journal by Vera Schwarcz Yale, 1984 284 pp. \$19.95

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For a glimpse into the personal side of life in China, Western readers usually must turn to journalistic accounts, which, while colorful, too often ignore the historical context. Hence the value of this diary by a gifted China scholar. As a member of the first group of officially sponsored American scholars to the People's Republic, Schwarcz, now a professor of history at Wesleyan, spent 16 months (February 1979-June 1980) in Beijing. At Beijing University, she did research on the May Fourth Movement of 1919, an early attempt by Chinese intellectuals to import Western ideas and democratic politics. Schwarcz's research neatly dovetailed with her daily experience. Her journal describes her growing contacts with a variety of philosophers, critics, poets, and artists-people badly treated



during and disillusioned by Mao Zedong's 1966-76 Cultural Revolution but still committed to Marxism. As Schwarcz learned, what "Marxism" means, or should mean, to the Chinese today is far from certain. The lament of Zhu Guangian, a leading literary historian and grizzled veteran of the May Fourth Movement, was in many ways typical: "Too bad that those of us who can really read Marx and understand him are so few." Schwarcz did not restrict her observations to intellectuals. Her notes on factory workers, farmers, or even a chance occurrence on the streets of Beijing reveal a perceptive and knowing eye: "Next to a bus stop, a mother slaps her daughter. Another breach in China's painstaking orderliness."

FROM BONSAI TO LEVI'S: When West Meets East: An Insider's Surprising Account of How the Japanese Live by George Fields Macmillan, 1984 213 pp. \$14.95

As specialists in the behavior of consumers, marketing researchers may well become the anthropologists of the modern world. Fields, born in Japan and raised in Australia, is now chairman of the Japanese branch of Audience Studies, Inc. His chief argument is consistently and vividly made: Despite the fact that Levis-clad Japanese eat Kentucky Fried chicken and use Max Factor cosmetics, they will buy Western products only if they fit into Japanese culture. And the differences between Japanese and Western cultures are far more pronounced than appearances suggest. Why, for instance, did Johnnie Walker Black scotch succeed while the cheaper Johnnie Walker Red languished on the shelves? Because, Fields explains, Japanese view American whiskey as a gift item, and they pride themselves on giving only the best. For personal consumption, they buy the inexpensive domestic whiskey, Suntory. Consider also the sad fate of American cake mixes, which first failed to sell because Americans neglected to notice that Japanese households had no ovens. Then U.S. businessmen created mixes that could be used in the ubiquitous rice cooker. No go: Japanese housewives believed "soiled" cookers would contaminate the highly regarded purity of rice.

CURRENT BOOKS

THE DEMOCRATIC MUSE: Visual Arts and the Public Interest by Edward C. Banfield Basic, 1984 244 pp. \$15.95

To "make fresher the winds of the arts"that, announced President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, was his reason for signing legislation to establish the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Nineteen years later, Banfield, a Harvard professor of government, suggests that LBJ's hopes were misguided. Echoing James Madison, the fourth U.S. president. Banfield asserts that the powers of the federal government are "few and defined." Supporting the arts is not one of them. For one thing, the ever-evolving definition of "art" makes subsidizing it a questionable proposition. Even Michael Straight, a former NEA deputy chairman, confessed that the Endowment had "funded activities which I can only characterize as frivolous." Banfield contends that modern museums have contributed to the misuse of NEA subsidies by using them to sponsor "monster" exhibits that encourage the "substitution of pecuniary and curiosity values for aesthetic ones." (In fiscal 1980, the NEA gave \$100 million to art museums. Most of it went for "blockbuster" exhibits, rather than for the collection, preservation, or interpretation of art.) Banfield wryly proposes a way for the government to bring at least one form of art to a wider public: Subsidize the purchase and exhibit of near-perfect reproductions of the works of the masters. Better still, he argues, would be to abolish the Endowments and return art to the private sector. Banfield makes some telling points; his unflattering portrait of the contemporary art scene will not gain him many converts among curators and their patrons.

Arts & Letters

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SWEENEY ASTRAY by Seamus Heaney Farrar, 1984 85 pp. \$13.95 Twelve centuries before James Joyce banished himself from Ireland, only to devote his self-imposed exile to describing his native land, Irish bards fashioned another story of banishment: Sweeney, king of Dal-Arie, slays an innocent Christian psalmist while fighting

at the Battle of Moira (A.D. 637); for this he is cursed by a cleric named Ronan, transformed into a bird, and banished to the treetops and cliffsides of Ireland. Shivering and afraid, "the bare figure of pain," Sweeney creates poem after poem out of his despair. Astray is Heaney's faithful translation of the medieval Gaelic prose poem, Buile Suibhne, an anonymous work comprising Irish (and perhaps English) myths and traditions dating back to the seventh century. Heaney, perhaps the most accomplished Irish poet since W. B. Yeats, preserves the flavor of the original work by blending narrative prose passages and verse. He renders Sweeney's songs of solitude—"I am the madman of Glen Bolcain, / wind-scourged, stripped / like a winter tree / clad in black frost / and frozen snow."-as well as the bird-man's paens to Ireland's natural beauty: "Birch tree, smooth and blessed, / delicious to the breeze, / high twigs plait and crown it / the queen of trees." The poem's cli-max—Sweeney murdered by a swineherd on the grounds of a monastery but reconciled with God as a result of his suffering-may signal what Heaney terms an "uneasy reconciliation" between Christianity and a "recalcitrant Celtic temperament.'

FAME BECAME OF HIM: Hemingway as Public Writer by John Raeburn

Ind. Univ., 1984 231 pp. \$17.50

Ernest Hemingway always pretended to resent his celebrity status; and toward the end of the 1950s, when it appeared as though his talent had run dry, he even blamed personal publicity for destroying his art. But Raeburn, a University of Iowa professor of English, meticulously demonstrates that Hemingway himself was, beginning in the 1920s, "the architect of his public reputation." During that lively decade, Hemingway wrote five books (including In Our Time, 1925, and The Sun Also Rises, 1926) that made him a favorite of intellectuals and high-culture critics. At the same time, Hemingway began playing a role that attracted newspapermen and literary journalists—that of the "good" expatriate, manly, unpretentious, and not anti-

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American. Hemingway the bon vivant appeared during the early '30s; his essays, many written for Esquire, instructed American readers in the pleasures of hunting, traveling, and drinking well. The sportsman gave way at the end of the decade to the journalistparticipant in the Spanish Civil War and, in turn, to "the combat-wise veteran of World War II." Self-promotion began to take its toll: Hemingway penned no fiction between 1940 (For Whom the Bell Tolls) and 1950 (Across the River and into the Trees). Hemingway's last public image was that of the sage, the gray-haired "Papa," whose emergence coincided with the 1952 publication of The Old Man and the Sea. Describing the events that led to Hemingway's suicide in 1961, Raeburn tells us much about modern American lifethe clash of highbrow and middlebrow, the search for heroes in a consumer society, and the process by which the news media, the audience, and ultimately the writer himself confuse the artist's public persona with his work.

VIEWS AND VIEWMAKERS OF URBAN AMERICA by John W. Reps Missouri, 1984 570 pp. \$89.50



From the 1820s, when lithography was brought from Bavaria to this continent, until roughly a century later, Americans' curiosity about their vast country was partly satisfied by pictorial overviews, or "views," of cities and towns. Reps, a professor of city planning at Cornell, has catalogued nearly all of them-some 4,500 representations of over 2.500 U.S. and Canadian cities and towns. In addition, Reps offers both a social, technical, and economic history of urban lithography and thumbnail biographies of the lithographers. Thus, one learns about such matters as how long it took an artist to make a view (from 10 days to four months) and how local merchants used views and their border vignettes for advertising. Remarkably accurate in detail and topography, these charming black-and-white, three-tone, or full-color townscapes have become valuable sources for scholars attempting to chronicle the transformation of America's urban centers.

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Science & Technology

MEMOIRS OF AN UNREPENTANT FIELD GEOLOGIST: A Candid Profile of Some Geologists and Their Science, 1921–1981 by F. J. Pettijohn Univ. of Chicago, 1984 260 pp. \$25

Pettijohn's scientific career spans an era of transition in geology-from the heyday of rock-climbing field work to the rise of geochemistry. This memoir is, in part, a hymn to older ways. Born at the turn of the century, graduating from the University of Minnesota in 1924, Pettijohn set out with a friend in 1927 on a 600-mile geological trek through the wilds of north Canada. His recollections of this "young man's odyssey" read more like tales by Mark Twain than a diary of a scientist. Included are stories of his canoe, constructed Indian style with "birch bark on spruce frame, sealed with pine pitch"; "Rattlesnake Bill," the gold prospector with a mail-order bride; an attempted ride on a flatcar that ended when an irate train conductor discovered the author and his companion. Pettijohn also recounts his work with some of the great geologists of his youth, including W. H. Twenhofel, a pioneer in sedimentology, which became Pettijohn's area. It was a thriving specialty during the 1920s: Sedimentary rocks contained the oil on which the nation's economy depended. The author taught for 23 years at the University of Chicago where he observed the arrival of geochemistry-analysis of rock formations based on the use of isotopes, x-ray diffraction, and mass spectrometry. "Just ex-pensive hand lenses," he jeers. Pettijohn moved on to Johns Hopkins, where he continues through retirement "to depend on field boots, hammer, and eyes."

THE TECHNOLOGY EDGE: Opportunities for America in World Competition by Gerard K. O'Neill Simon & Schuster, 1984 299 pp. \$16.95 O'Neill, a Princeton physicist, is quick to warn that this is not another Japan, Inc. sermon or another "book about management." His focus is on the international market opportunities (worth "tens and hundreds of billions" of dollars) that the United States stands a chance of losing—opportunities created through American technological innovation. Through "timidity, shortsightedness, greed, laziness, and misdirection," says

O'Neill, U.S. industry may lose its edge in such fields as microengineering, private aircraft construction, space transportation, and genetic engineering. Long-range production planning and "abundant internal capital," for example, may soon enable Japan to dominate what specialists see as the most lucrative potential use of genetic engineering-the making of commodity chemicals and synthetic fuels. O'Neill balances his warnings with applause for those American industries, such as IBM and the "Silicon Valley" firms that have been technologically innovative and shrewd in long-range planning and financing. He also provides what most economists and business analysts cannot: clear, authoritative explanations of the scientific principles involved in various advanced technologies. With O'Neill's help, even nonscientists can understand how dynamic magneticlevitation (maglev) may one day make magnetic "flight"—with vehicles traveling in a vacuum at speeds of up to 1,200 miles per hour-a safe and efficient form of human transportation.

THE COEVOLUTION OF CLIMATE AND LIFE

by Stephen H. Schneider and Randi Londer Sierra Club, 1984 576 pp. \$25 In March 1975, Senator William Proxmire (D.-Wis.) publicly ridiculed the National Science Foundation for investing \$112,000 in a study of the African climate during the Ice Age. This book makes the argument that such historical studies are anything but frivolous. Schneider, a climatologist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and Londer, a science writer, contend that taking the long view of climate yields information that Americans would do well not to ignore: Interglacial periods last from 10,000 to 12,000 years, and our current period has lasted 10,000 years already; worldwide droughts have occurred about every 22 years since 1700, making the next round due in the mid-1990s. The authors explain how everything from archaeological finds to sunspot cycles to computer models helps climatologists to predict likely future climatic "actions" and the probability of biological catastrophes.

Some climate changes defy forecasting. Both air pollution and rising temperatures resulting from the release of carbon dioxide have altered climate so quickly that prediction has become almost impossible. Even so, to prevent, or at least to prepare for, such weather-related disasters as Ireland's great famine (1845–50), governments and international agencies should take climatic models into consideration when they formulate agricultural, industrial, and energy policies. Schneider and Londer acknowledge that the crystal ball that such models provide is still dim and "dirty," but they wonder how long "we should clean the glass before acting on what we see inside."

NOT IN OUR GENES: Biology, Ideology, and Human Nature by R. C. Lewontin, Steven Rose, and Leon J. Kamin Pantheon, 1984 322 pp. \$21.95

Biological determinists are those scientists who see the causes of social and individual behavior in human genes. They are also, the authors of this book insist, bad guys. Professors Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin-a Harvard geneticist, a neurobiologist at England's Open University, and a Princeton psychologist, respectively-mix analysis with polemic to argue that the determinists practice not only bad science but also unhealthy (i.e., reactionary bourgeois) politics. The authors are more persuasive when they discuss science: They explain, for instance, how the sociobiologists, led by Harvard's E. O. Wilson, have narrowed Darwin's sense of the gene-environment relationship; Darwin believed evolution was influenced by chance as well as by "opti-mal adaptation." Classic determinist studies of twins designed to prove the heritability of behavioral traits are, the authors contend, invalid on several counts: biased observers, inadequate sampling, and faulty reporting procedures. When the authors press their political case—that biological determinists have helped others to justify social inequalities-they transform a partial truth into a blunderbuss of generalization.

PAPERBOUNDS

CO-WIVES AND CALABASHES. By Sally Price. Univ. of Mich., 1984. 224 pp. \$12.50

Anthropologists who have studied primitive cultures throughout the world have tended to conclude that matrilineal societies are also matriarchal. Johns Hopkins anthropologist Sally Price, who lived for 17 years among the Saramaka Maroons of South America's Suriname rain forest, found that what the "co-wives" in this polygynous society enjoy are the appearances of power and independence. Husbands, for instance, are required by custom to spend equal amounts of time with each wife, and each wife has her own dwelling. But men assert their greater autonomy in myriad ways-in their freedom to travel, in their access to tools, and even in their attitudes toward art objects. Men receive gifts of art from their spouses graciously but invest them with no special significance; women, however, view them as symbols of their standing with their husbands.

THE PRINTING REVOLUTION IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE. By Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. Cambridge, 1983. 297 pp. \$9.95 paper

During the late 1450s, according to one story, Johann Fust set off from Mainz to Paris to market a dozen Bibles fresh off the new printing press of his partner, Johann Gutenberg. Parisian manuscript dealers, incredulous at Fust's stock of identical Bibles, accused him of trafficking with the devil, and the hapless burgher was forced to flee for his life. The Parisians were not the last to recognize the revolutionary nature of the printing press. But, observes Eisenstein, a University of Michigan historian, those who acknowledge the momentous changes "always seem to stop short of telling us what they were." This shortened version of her 1979 book remains a fascinating inquiry

into the effects of printing on religion, politics, science, and the Renaissance. She explains, for instance, how printing helped splinter Christendom while drawing together the world of science. It was possible for every man to own a Bible and to become his own interpreter of the Word; thus printing helped bring on the Reformation. By easing the circulation of ideas, printing also created a community of physicists, astronomers, and map makers whose work led to the rise of modern science.

GOING ALL THE WAY: Christian Warlords, Israeli Adventurers, and the War in Lebanon. By Jonathan C. Randal. Vintage, 1983. 317 pp. \$5.95

Lebanon was once called the "Land of Welcome and Tolerance." To its prosperous capital, Beirut, flocked Western journalists, diplomats, and businessmen to savor its nightclubs, the Mediterranean beaches, and modern hustle-bustle. But in April 1975, "warlords and looters"that is, Christians and Moslems-turned Lebanon into a "non-place, a killing ground." So writes Randal, a Washington Post correspondent, in this clear-eved account of the 1975-76 civil war and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Randal argues that "Operation Peace for Galilee" (as the Israelis called the invasion) demonstrated that "Israel had become part of the callous Middle East environment." No interested party was innocent, Randal finds, in the destruction of Lebanon. But he puts the heaviest blame on the Maronite Christians, who have controlled Lebanon politically since 1943. The Maronites, he says, "have no real sense of state," and no understanding that "[political] legitimacy requires sharing power and privilege"-fatal flaws "in a land shot through with the accumulated paranoia of so many minorities."



"They held in their hands the fate of millions!" The stars of MGM's The Beginning or the End—from left, Robert Walker, Audrey Totter, Tom Drake, and Beverly Tyler—pose for a publicity photo.

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MGM Meets The Atomic Bomb

During the past decade, the film genre known as the "docudrama"—a dramatized recreation of recent events in the headlines—has become increasingly popular in both the movie theater and on television. Prominent recent examples include *The Right Stuff, Silkwood,* and *Star 80,* along with such "madefor-TV" miniseries as *Kennedy*. One of Hollywood's first attempts at docudrama was MGM's widely publicized *The Beginning or the End* (1947), a film about the making of the first atomic bomb. Despite some initial encouragement from President Truman, it ran into many of the same difficulties as do modern docudramas, for the same reasons, and with similar results. The story of the making of the movie makes a curious tale, and historian Nathan Reingold tells it below. In so doing, he helps to explain why art, at least in Hollywood, has such trouble holding a mirror up to life.

by Nathan Reingold

In February 1947, barely 18 months after an American-made atomic bomb known as Little Boy leveled the Japanese city of Hiroshima, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released to the world what would today be called a "docudrama" about the making and deployment of that bomb. It was the first such movie of the atomic age, the first full-length feature film describing what *Life* magazine called the "biggest event since the birth of Christ."

In theaters across the United States, before millions of moviegoers, the MGM lion growled his customary two growls. Below his mane appeared the company's celebrated motto: *Ars Gratia Artis*, "Art For Art's Sake." Then came what purported to be a newsreel, showing canisters of film—supposedly, copies of the film that the audience was about to see being buried in a grove of California redwoods.

"A message to future generations!" the voice-over proclaimed: "Come what may, our civilization will have left an enduring record behind it. Ours will be no lost race."

Thus began *The Beginning or the End*, Hollywood's ambitious and ul-

timately ill-starred portrayal of the World War II Manhattan Project and the people behind it.

No one man or woman was responsible for the way this motion picture turned out (badly). Then as now, docudrama film-making in Hollywood involved a triad of conflicting interests: the commercial hopes of the producers, the perceived demands of a mass audience for entertainment, and the personal qualms of the participants in the events described in the film. Taken together, these proved to be a recipe for a fiasco, in terms of both historical veracity and box-office receipts.

Happily, we can reconstruct what happened, thanks to a legal requirement that no longer exists: In order to depict living, well-known public figures, MGM had to secure their permission in writing. These individuals, in turn, often demanded the right to review the script. The result is a vast harvest of correspondence scattered among the MGM files, the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and various universities. The letters, along with the film, supply a bizarre footnote to the dawn of the atomic age.*

The idea for The Beginning or the

For related reading, see also Alice K. Smith's A Peril and a Hope (1965) and Michael J. Yavenditti's "Atomic Scientists and Hollywood: The Beginning or the End?" in Film and History (December 1978, vol. 8, no. 4).

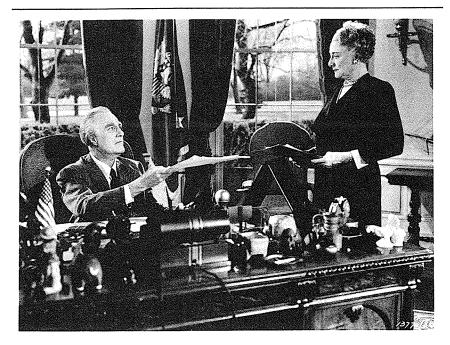
End grew out of contacts between MGM producer Sam Marx and members of the so-called atomic scientists' movement, a group of young, liberal, rather antimilitary Manhattan Project alumni who hoped to educate the lay public about the nature of atomic weapons and their disturbing implications for both domestic and foreign policy. (The movement soon developed into the Federation of American Scientists.) Edward R. Tompkins of the Clinton Laboratories, now the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, in Tennessee seems to have been the first to suggest the idea of a movie—in a letter to a former high school student of his, actress Donna Reed, who brought the concept to MGM's attention. MGM eventually paid Tompkins a modest honorarium of \$100.

Film vs. History

Sam Marx was as much in awe of the new atomic weapons technology as the scientists were of Hollywood; initially, at least, Marx approached the subject of the bomb with unusual care. During the autumn of 1945, in preparation for his film, the producer visited the Clinton Laboratories and on the same swing east visited Harry S Truman in Washington. MGM officials later assured the President that "a great service to civilization" might be done if "the right kind of film could be made."

Nathan Reingold, 57, an Adjunct Wilson Center Fellow, is a historian at the Smithsonian Institution. Born in New York City, he received his B.A. (1947) and M.A. (1948) from New York University and his Ph.D. (1951) from the University of Pennsylvania. He is the coeditor of Science in America: A Documentary History, 1900–1939 (1982); editor of the unpublished papers and manuscripts of physicist Joseph Henry, first Secretary of the Smithsonian; and is currently working on a history of the scientific community in the United States since 1940. This essay has been adapted by the editors from a longer paper prepared for a conference on the popularization of science sponsored by the journal Sociology of the Sciences.

MGM'S A-BOMB



Godfrey Teare as President Franklin D. Roosevelt. "If it [the bomb] works and we win the race," says FDR in the movie, "it will win the war."

were, MGM faced a forbidding challenge: How to present complex, often cerebral, feats of science and engineering in a way that American audiences would sit through, without fidgeting, for 120 minutes. Then as now, the solution, inevitably, was to veer, often sharply, from factual accuracy in the interest of entertainment.

Screenwriters Robert Considine and Frank Wead, abetted by Marx and by director Norman Taurog, added several fictional characters and the mandatory "love interest" to the story. To build tension, they depicted the Manhattan Project as a race pitting America against both the Germans and the Japanese, who were said to be nearing completion with the expectation that the senior of their own atomic bombs. (In real-

High-minded though its intentions ity, there had been little concern about Japan.) The film-makers invented numerous other aspects of both nuclear technology and the development of the Manhattan Project.

The members of the atomic scientists' movement, active in shaping the script during its early stagesthey naively hoped to determine its point of view and, through a substantial contribution from MGM, to swell their organization's meager coffers-withdrew their cooperation when they saw what Hollywood was doing to the story. In the opinion of Sam Marx, who did not want his film to be "a big, long speech for world government," this was just as well.

The scientist-activists withdrew scientists and military men in the Manhattan Project, people such as J. Robert Oppenheimer, General Leslie R. Groves, Vannevar Bush, and James B. Conant, would likewise withhold their endorsements. In this they proved to be, for the most part, wrong.

Why? One reason was that some of the key military participants in the Manhattan Project had already accepted fees from MGM-\$10,000 in the case of General Groves-in return for their permission to be depicted on film. For their part, many of the important scientists (none of whom accepted money) seem to have assumed that helping the filmmakers was a professional obligation. Moreover, only by cooperating could the Manhattan Project's "big shots" exercise any control over the film's content. MGM's need to get waivers gave all of them a certain leverage that the younger, unknown scientists did not possess.

Dramatic Truth

To be sure, the senior Manhattan Project personnel protested the direction in which the movie appeared to be heading when, in the spring of 1946, the first screenplay was sent to most of them for approval. MGM, in response, agreed to make some small changes. Some of the scientists protested once more after viewing the first completed film version in autumn of the same year. Once again MGM made some changes. But when it came to what the studio insisted was a matter of both artistic principle and commercial necessity, MGM stood its ground.

In the words of an MGM memo passed on to Albert Einstein by studio head Louis B. Mayer in 1946, "It must be realized that dramatic truth is just as compelling a requirement on us as veritable truth is on a scientist." The studio reminded General Groves, who headed the Manhattan Project in its later stages, that MGM was not an endowed institution "like Harvard" but a commercial enterprise. The requirements of "dramatic truth" helped shape the film into a familiar narrative form with stock characters and stock situations.

The Plot

In the original screenplay, the movie begins with J. Robert Oppenheimer (who would be played by Hume Cronyn) recounting the flight of physicist Lise Meitner from Berlin when Nazis overrun her laboratory in 1938. She takes refuge with Nobel laureate Niels Bohr in Denmark. Soon, word of the pair's work in nuclear fission reaches America: Albert Einstein, at the behest of a fictional physicist named Matt Cochran (played by Tom Drake), writes his historic 1939 letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt suggesting the theoretical possibility of constructing an atomic bomb. An Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) is set up, leading to physicist Enrico Fermi's first controlled chain reaction at the University of Chicago's Stagg Field in 1941. ("Dr. Fermi, scientifically detached from the world, enters," reads the screenplay.)

Among the scientists at Stagg Field, the fictional Cochran is the most vocal in airing doubts about going forward with the atomic bomb. His concerns are typically dismissed out of hand. ("Get it done before the Germans and Japs, then worry about the bomb," he is told.) After the successful experiment at Chicago's Metallurgical Laboratory, a small group of scientists is shown resigning from the bomb project; both correspondence and the script make it clear that these men were in-

tended to be perceived as Quakers. The walkout, which never occurred, gives the Enrico Fermi character an opportunity to say: "Sometimes, it takes greater principles to stay than to go." In general, *The Beginning or the End* slides over issues of morality that some atomic scientists at Stagg Field, hardly pacifists, debated intensely among themselves.

Skipping over much important scientific work of the period, the screenplay shifts to the domain of the Manhattan Engineer District, which superseded the OSRD. General Groves (played by Brian Donlevy) is shown exhorting industry to support the weapons effort. We see the DuPont representative grandly waive all potential patent rights, an easy position for DuPont to take fictionally since the real Leslie Groves and Vannevar Bush would never have let atomic weapons technology fall into private hands. The movie screen bustles with a panorama of factories, railway yards, and busy assembly lines.

Dropping the Bomb

The action moves to Los Alamos, where rather little is shown, given the requirements of military security. (Until 1958, the town of Los Alamos was off limits to the general public.) Then comes the first test explosion. For the movie, the A-bomb blast at Alamogordo, New Mexico, would be impressively recreated in the MGM studios in Culver City, California. Right after the test, a turtle is seen walking across Ground Zero, a symbolic affirmation that, yes, life can survive a nuclear blast.

Declaring in the original script that "I think more of our American boys than I do of all our enemies," President Truman decides to drop the bomb on Hiroshima. Matt Cochran and his equally fictional friend Jeff Nixon (played by Robert Walker), an Army colonel on General Groves's staff, travel to Tinian, a small Pacific island, to prepare the first of two atomic bombs for use against Japan. In an impossible accident, Matt suffers a fatal radiation injury while setting up the bomb one evening all by himself.

Then, the *Enola Gay* takes off on its historic mission, braving heavy flak over Hiroshima. (In reality, the B-29 encountered no hostile fire.) Little Boy devastates the city in a spectacular film sequence that demonstrates Hollywood's skill at special effects. (The special effects won the movie an Oscar.)

Matt dies, though not before writing the obligatory final letter, resolving his own doubts about the bomb. The screenplay (like the movie) ends with Matt's pregnant widow, along with Jeff Nixon and Jeff's girlfriend, standing before the Lincoln Memorial in Washington and talking inspirationally about how the world will be better for the young scientist's sacrifice.

Oppenheimer's O.K.

This, in outline, was the screenplay that those Manhattan Project alumni depicted in *The Beginning or the End* were asked to review and approve during the spring of 1946.

The senior participants in the Manhattan Project did not like what they read and said so in no uncertain terms. The first hurdle for MGM was physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, who had served as director of the atomic laboratory at Los Alamos. Oppenheimer's chief complaint was artistic; the characters appeared "stilted, lifeless, and without purpose or insight." Producer Sam Marx wrote back, agreeing to fix certain minor factual details and to spruce up the personalities. In particular, Marx said, "the character of J. Robert Oppenheimer must be an extremely pleasant one with a love of mankind, humility, and a fair knack of cooking." Marx added that the film would make it plain that Oppenheimer, not Groves, was in command at the Alamogordo test.

Somewhat mollified, Oppenheimer signed a release in May 1946. He would be depicted in the movie as an earnest scoutmaster who accidentally had a doctorate in theoretical physics from Göttingen. Queried later by an incredulous member of the atomic scientists' movement, physicist James J. Nickson, Oppenheimer replied that while the screenplay was not "beautiful, wise, or deep...it did not lie in my power to make it so."

While Oppenheimer withdrew from further involvement in *The Beginning or the End* after May 1946, both General Groves and Vannevar Bush corresponded with MGM throughout the year. Groves was determined that the movie not violate national security (a sensitive issue in the immediate postwar era) or discredit anyone involved in the Manhattan Project. He sought assiduously, though with limited success, to correct inaccuracies.

Among other things, Groves was disturbed by the way he was shown barking orders at industrialists; relations with business, he insisted, had always been polite and respectful. The General was outraged by his fictional subordinate, Jeff Nixon, the long-haired (for an officer) womanizer and wise



Hume Cronyn (center) as J. Robert Oppenheimer. MGM assured the scientist: "We have changed all the lines at the New Mexico test so that General Groves is merely a guest and you give all the orders."

guy. Such a man, Groves argued, would not have been tolerated in the corps of engineers and would *never* have been asked to join his personal staff. As to his own film image, the rumpled, pudgy Groves raised no objection to being portrayed by the handsome Brian Donlevy.

Exit Fala

In the end, the General won some small concessions, notably the elimination of a highly imaginative scene in which Groves tells Roosevelt and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson that if the United States did not use the atomic bomb at once against Japan, Japan would greet a U.S. invasion of the home islands with nuclear weapons of its own. Essentially, though, Groves went along with MGM's plans. He was no doubt relieved by the report of an aide who attended a sneak preview of the final film version early in 1947. The aide concluded that the public impact of the movie would be minimal because the film would be a box-office flop.

Vannevar Bush, formerly director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, had better luck than Groves with the creative folk at Culver City. Bush had held the crucial discussion with FDR about launching the Manhattan Project, but in the screenplay, MGM gave the credit to another man, the National Bureau of Standards' Lyman J. Briggs. Bush objected and the movie-makers rewrote the script accordingly.

Bush did not like the rewrite either. In the new version, Bush was shown with Roosevelt (and with FDR's Scotch terrier, Fala, who leaves the room when Bush announces that he has a top-secret matter to discuss); he was portrayed as uncertain over whether an atomic bomb could be built "in time" or would even be small enough to fit inside an airplane. On the contrary, Bush insisted, he had had no doubts on either score.

Sam Marx agreed to soften but not eliminate this angle. It was a Hollywood fiction that had been deliberately introduced to heighten dramatic tension—to suggest the possibility that the Axis powers might get the bomb first.

Bush also disliked being shown leaving the White House disgruntled at not getting an immediate go-ahead from the President. The scene implied, he believed, that American scientists were "arrogant enough to feel [they] should either make the decision [themselves] or force the Commander-in-Chief into making it then and there." Again, MGM gave way. The released film shows a rather prosaic parting of Bush and Roosevelt, followed by the President placing a transatlantic call to Winston Churchill to give him the details.

On the eve of the film's release in 1947, Bush could write to financier Bernard Baruch that, insofar as his own role was concerned, "history was not unreasonably distorted" by *The Beginning or the End*.

Einstein's Dismay

Harvard president James B. Conant, a key administrator in the A-bomb effort, proved more persnickety even than Bush. Conant was hardly publicity shy. Indeed, he and Bush willingly played themselves in a 1946 March of Time documentary, *Atomic Power*, which showed the pair stretched out on the desert (actually, a sand-strewn garage floor in Boston) awaiting the first nuclear blast at Alamogordo. *The Beginning* or the End was another matter. Conant agreed to being shown at Alamogordo but not to having any words put in his mouth.

The foreign-born scientists depicted in the movie gave Sam Marx his biggest headaches. Having been told by members of the atomic scientists' movement that *The Beginning* or the End would reflect the Pentagon's viewpoint, Albert Einstein twice refused his consent to be portrayed, reluctantly giving in only at the urging of colleague Leo Szilard. Appalled by inaccuracies and outright fabrications, Lise Meitner and Niels Bohr spurned all of MGM's entreaties and had to be written out of the movie altogether.

From MGM's standpoint, the most serious refusal was that of Bohr. The early scenes of the screenplay featured him in Europe. To highlight the race against the Nazis, much was made of smuggling the physicist out of Copenhagen and then bringing him to the United States. That Bohr was essential to the A-bomb project was more than strongly implied though in fact he was not a member of the Manhattan Project. For dramatic effect, he was placed at the Alamogordo test site; but, in fact, he was not there.

Inventing Dr. Schmidt

To make up for the absence of Bohr and Meitner, MGM in December 1946 hastily began cutting the movie and reshooting scenes, a process that continued into January.

The intransigence of Bohr, Meitner, and others cost *The Beginning or the End* one of its more vivid fictional interludes. In the original script, Niels Bohr shocks Oppenheimer when he brings the news that the Germans are sending atomic experts and know-how to Japan. Later, the screenplay has a U-boat leaving Hitler's doomed Reich with a fictional German physicist aboard named Schmidt—identified as a former worker in Lise Meitner's Berlin laboratory. The submarine surfaces in Tokyo Bay, and the Japanese promptly rush Schmidt off to a modern laboratory they have built for him—in the city of Hiroshima.

Does It Matter?

Columnist Walter Lippmann was responsible for another excision. After previewing the original version of the movie in the fall of 1946, Lippmann complained that Truman's order to drop the bomb was depicted as a snap decision. This, he wrote, was an "outright fabrication and reduces the role of the President to extreme triviality in a great matter." Lippmann also objected to the movie Truman's seeming unconcern for the loss of Japanese lives. The entire scene was reshot.*

Neither Herr Doktor Schmidt nor a shoot-from-the-hip Truman appeared in the final film version, but many of MGM's other revisions of the record made it through. Before the first atomic bomb is tested at Alamogordo, for example, Oppenheimer and General Groves's deputy, Brigadier General Thomas F. Farrell, discuss the frightening possibility that the nuclear chain reaction would go around the world, converting the planet into one big fireball. In the movie, Oppenheimer rates the possibility at less than one in a million. Asked after the test if he really had been worried, the Oppenheimer character says: "In my head,

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^{*}Because Truman's visage did not actually appear—the camera shot over an actor's shoulder—MGM did not need a signed waiver from the President. Truman read the screenplay of the first film version and, judging from private letters, disliked the same sequence that Lippmann criticized, and for the very same reasons. However, wishing to avoid charges of censorship, he refused to intervene.

no, in my heart, yes."

In fact, the Manhattan Project physicists had no such worries; the possibility was raised only *after* the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by people with little expertise in nuclear fission.

Until the world première of *The* Beginning or the End in Washington, at least some MGM officials were certain they had a hit on their hands. Carter T. Barron, MGM's man in Washington, cabled to Culver City on January 7, 1947: "Seldom have we experienced more enthusiasm for the dramatic entertainment of a film than that demonstrated by small preview groups comprised of immediate friends, staff members, and associates of persons impersonated or otherwise associated with the project. It appears to be a daringly strong audience picture."

Then came the reviews. *Time*'s critic wrote that "the picture seldom rises above cheery imbecility" and scolded Hollywood for "treating cinemagoers as if they were spoiled or not-quite-bright children." (Few reviewers, however, questioned the factual accuracy of the movie.) At least 75 films in 1947 grossed more at the box office than what MGM billed as "the story of the most HUSH-HUSH secret of all time."

The reaction of groups of scientists invited to special screenings was typically one of disappointed silence punctuated by outbursts of raucous laughter. Sam Marx had once allowed that he was interested "not in how a scientist would talk but how the public thought he would talk." Hollywood's notion of how science was done—amid batteries of blinking lights and a cacophony of electronic noises—proved irresistably comic to real scientists.

Ironically, had the reactions of Bohr and others not forced so much cutting and reshooting of scenes, MGM might have produced a boxoffice hit. At a sneak preview in October 1946, the first, uncut version of the film won an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response from the audience. Imagine the impact on popular memories of World War II if tens of millions of American moviegoers had watched the fictional Herr Doktor Schmidt disembarking from his U-boat in Tokyo Bay, with a blueprint for an A-bomb in his briefcase!

Did The Beginning or the End really matter? Not in any way that is easy to describe. Although its distortions went largely unremarked, they also went largely unseen. The making of The Beginning or the End is chiefly of value as a parable of sorts. And it may serve as a timely reminder that, as the years go by, Hollywood fictions sometimes take on lives of their own. "Engrossing account of atomic bomb development, depicting both human and spectacular aspects"-that is how The Beginning or the End is described in Leonard Maltin's TV Movies (1983-84 edition). The film gets three stars, no less.

The Origins of English Words

Earlier this year, the Johns Hopkins University Press published Joseph T. Shipley's "discursive dictionary of Indo-European roots," a rich compendium of words from our lost mother tongue. English and more than 100 other "daughter languages" can today trace their origins back to Indo-European. Shipley's thousands of entries, each an eclectic *mag* of fact, anecdote, and deft quotation, reveal the author's *ksero* wit, eye for the *ozd*, and sheer love of *dinghu*. We present some selections here, following an introduction by the author.

by Joseph T. Shipley

The most widespread of all language families is the Indo-European, of which English began as a minor branch but now is the largest in vocabulary and in number of native speakers. Today, English is the world's most popular language.

From tongues in western Asia some 4,000 years ago, the Indo-European forms moved south in various Indian languages, including Sanskrit. Other branches spread across Europe and ultimately to the far ends of the Americas.

Along the Mediterranean Sea, they grew into Greek and Latin. From Latin, the speech of Rome, came the Romance languages—Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Rumanian, French.

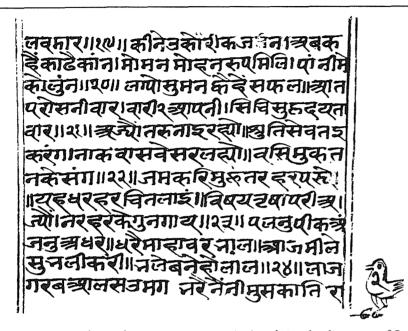
Westward through Europe came the Celtic and Germanic branches; northward turned the Scandinavian; and eastward spread the Baltic and Slavic, including Russian.

English, which in its earliest form was Germanic (Anglo-Saxon), developed as a mingling of branches, as first the Celts, then the Saxons, Danes, and Normans, took hold upon the island.

Sir William Jones (1745–1794), while a judge in Calcutta, declared that no philologer could examine Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin "without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists." He was right: The original speech, the primal Indo-European from which over 100 languages have flowered, was unwritten and therefore left no records.

It was almost a century and a half later that philologists, by a backward coursing—comparing the different developments in Sanskrit, Greek, and the Slavic, Celtic, Ger-

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A 17th-century Indian religious text, written in Sanskrit. The discovery of Sanskrit by European scholars paved the way for the modern study of linguistics.

manic, and Romance branches, and identifying family likenesses and regular shiftings of sounds-were able to set forth confidently a large number of Indo-European roots from which current words proliferated. The differences among, say, Hittite, Phrygian, Minoan, Sumerian, Tocharian, Persian, Pashto, Annamese, Oscan, Latvian, Wendish, Ukrainian, and English—all members of one family-make them mutually unintelligible; yet by tracing vowel and consonantal changes, by separating prefixes, suffixes, and midfixes from the basic stems, scholars have been able to follow seemingly quite different words back to a single root.

The original Indo-European words were fashioned to denote material objects or specific events that impinged directly upon the senses or immediate emotions. It may have

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been centuries before these terms were extended from physical to mental activity, from the concrete to the abstract. Finally, perhaps, they were given figurative uses and applications. Thus, the language grew with the growth of its makers and users—from nomads to farmers to the citizen and his civilization; from immediate concerns to general principles; from observation to speculation; from myth and magic to religion, philosophy, and science. The process, of course, continues.

As you read the selections that follow, it will help to bear several rules in mind. One concerns consonants, which sometimes shift over time. Many of the consonantal variations have been set into a pattern known as Grimm's Law, laid down in 1822 by Jacob Grimm, compiler, with his brother, of the well-known fairy

tales. Words that in earlier times began with one of the sounds listed below may later have changed to the next sound to the right:

Gutterals: g, k, kh (h), g

Dentals: d, t, th (f), d

Labials: (v) b, p, ph (f), b (v)

Thus the root *pleu* (meaning "flow") through Greek and Latin gave English *pluvial* and *plutocracy*; from Germanic *flug* came *flow*, *flee*, and *flight*. The *k* to *kh* sound shift appears in Spanish caballo, French *cheval*, English *cavalry* and *chivalry*.

A similar sort of shift often occurs with vowels. And there are other curiosities. Metathesis is the transposi-



aug

Increase. Greek, auxesis. Latin, augment, auction, auxiliary, author, authority, authorize. augur, from whom the celebrant hoped divine increase; augury; inaugurate. august: favorable; the month was named for Augustus Caesar. Germanic, eke; a nickname was "folkchanged" from an ekename. wax: to grow, opposed to wane. waist—too often seen to expand.

The young Nathaniel Hawthorne (born in 1804) wrote to his mother: "I don't want to be a doctor, and live by men's diseases; nor a minister, to live by their sins; nor a lawyer, to live by their quarrels. So I don't think there's anything left for me but to be an author."



times the *n* sound shifts between two words. The Fool in *King Lear* calls the King "Nuncle," for "Mine Uncle." An *u*mpire was originally *a n*on-pair, the odd man out, asked to referee.

tion of a sound, as when Old English

bridd became our bird. Spoonerisms (as in, "It is kisstomary to cuss the

The sound n varies frequently,

either dropping out of words or, more often, creeping in to aid pronunciation

or as a result of nasalized diction. Mes-

sage gave rise to messenger. Some-

bride.") result from metathesis.

So much, then, for a few essential tricks of the tongue. Now on to the words themselves:

Bottom. Latin, fundus: bottom. to found: "lay the bottom" of; start. foundation, profound, founder. to fund: supply means for the start. fundament, fundamental. Germanic, bottom.

Among the 19 definitions of *bot*tom is one, common in Shakespeare's time: "a clew or nucleus on which to wind thread," that makes appropriate the name *Bottom* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for the man is a weaver. And when Bottom is transmogrified into an ass, it seems likely that Shakespeare is still playing on the name, although the first recorded (i.e., written) use of *bottom* for what the Oxford Eng-

Joseph T. Shipley, 91, is an editor, writer, and radio commentator. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he received his A.M. from the City College of New York in 1912 and his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1931. He is the author of Trends in Literature (1948), Playing with Words (1960), In Praise of English (1977), and many other works. This essay is adapted from The Origins of English Words, © 1984 by the Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London.

lish Dictionary (OED) calls "the sitting part of a man" is by Erasmus Darwin in 1794.

It was on April 20, 1761, that Samuel Johnson, in mixed company, remarked: "The woman had a bottom of good sense." To the immediate tittering he responded: "Where's the merriment? I say the woman was fundamentally sensible." His almost farcical attempt to rectify the situation may still amuse us.



dinghu

Tongue. Latin, *lingua*: tongue; mother tongue. The change from d to l may be due to the Romans' Sabine wives, or to the link with Latin *lingere*: lick, the tongue being the licking organ. *lingo* is usually contemptuous of another's tongue. In 1820, Coleridge coined *linguipotence*, rarely used since. *OED* has 26 *lingu* words, all relating to the tongue or to speech. French, *langue*: tongue. Old English used *langage*, etc., but by about 1300, the u had crept into such words from the French.

"Tongue: well that's a wery good thing wen it an't a woman's," says Mr. Weller in Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*. In Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Stephano sings tipsily, "... she had a tongue with a tang." In his *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses scornfully says of Cressida:

Fie, fie upon her!

There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,

Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out

At every joint and motive of her body.



Ground. Germanic, *earth*, *earthenware*. *OED* gives 15 columns to earth and its compounds, such as *earthworm*. *earthling* was used around the year 1000 for a cultivator of the soil. Via Dutch come *aardvark* (*vark*: pig) and *aardwolf*.

"I am earth, overtaking all things except words. They alone escape me. Therefore I lie heavy on their makers," writes Rudyard Kipling in *A Book of Words* (1914).



Humped. Latin, gibbous, gibbosity. Germanic, probably hunch, hump, humpback, hunchback.

gib

To "have a hunch" may be related to the notion that rubbing a hunchback's hunch brings good luck.

Hump was first used in the 18th century; humpback was a change from crumpbacked, crump-shouldered. The Second Quarto edition of Shakespeare's Richard III has hunch-backed; the First Folio has bunch-backed.



ieuos

Sacred, binding; hence, the law. Latin, *ius*, *iuris*: that which is binding. *iurare*: to take an oath. *juror*, *jury*, *juridical*, *jurisprudence*, etc. With Latin, *dicere* (show, speak)

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came judicatory, judicious, jurisdiction, adjudicate, prejudice. Spanish, juramentado: a Mohammedan who took an oath to die killing Christians. The state of early justice in Spanish America, especially along the U.S. border, may be judged from the fact that Spanish juggado (courtroom) became folkchanged into English slang hoosegow (jail).



ksero

Dry. Greek, *xeros*. The medical terms *xeransis*, *xerasia*, *xeroderma*, etc. Several genera, such as *Xeranthemum*: thistle; *Phylloxera*: plant lice. The machine for dry reproduction, *Xerox*.

Latin, probably sear, sere, serene. Non numero horas nisi serenas: I count only the hours that are serene—inscription on many a sundial. Also French, serein: fine rain from a clear sky. serenade, its meaning influenced by Latin, sera: evening.

Elixir, from Greek via Arabic, was originally assumed to be a powder; it was the medieval alchemists' "philosopher's stone," which could transform base metals into gold, cure all human ills, and indefinitely prolong life. Fortunately, it was never found.





Strip off; bark. Sanskrit, *loot*. Greek, *lepein*: strip the rind. Latin, *liber*, *libri*: inner bark; hence, the writing thereon; hence, *library*, etc. *ex libris*: from the books of, used on a bookplate. French, *libel*: first, a little

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book. Italian, *libretto. lobby* and its doublet *lodge*: first, a roof of bark, a bower. *lodgment*; *logistics*; French, *loge*; Italian, *loggia*; Germanic, *leaf*, *lift*, *loft*, *aloft*, *leaflet*.

From *The Tempest*: "... my library / Was dukedom large enough."



Knead; mix. Early houses were made of mixed earth; hence, make. make developed many definitions, which take 37 columns in OED, with 96 numbered divisions and many subdivisions, make away with, make out, etc. In addition, there are nine columns of compounds, such as makebelieve, making-up, makeless (matchless), makepeace, makeshift.

"If you call a tail a leg, how many legs has a dog? Five? No, calling a tail a leg don't make it a leg." quipped Abraham Lincoln.

Greek, magma. Latin, massa: that which adheres like dough; mass. macerate. Germanic, mason, match, matchmaker; on a lower level, mackerel: pimp, he who makes other matchings. mingle; mongrel: mixed breed.



Below; to the left. Hence (facing the sunrise), north. (This formulation appears also in Arabic and Hebrew.) Germanic, north, northern, etc. Nordic, Norman, Norse, Norway, Norwegian. Sanskrit, Naraka: the lower regions, hell. "Your Roman-Saxon-Danish-Norman English," says Defoe in *The True-Born Englishman* (1701), which begins:

Whenever God erects a house of prayer,

The Devil always builds a chapel there;

And 'twill be found, upon examination,

The latter has the largest congregation.



ozd

Point, angle, triangle. Hence, odd number. Germanic, odd, oddity, and the odds (usually against), oddfellow.

Shakespeare's Falstaff, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, avers: "There is divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death."





Fist; strike, prick, pierce. Greek, pugme: fist; also a measure of length, elbow to knuckle of closed fist; hence, pygmy, pygm(a)ean. Latin, pugnare: fight, first with fists. pugilist, pugnacious, impugn, inexpugnable, oppugn, repugnant. Via French, poniard. Possibly prick, played upon by Shakespeare in Romeo and Juliet: "The bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noon"; and in Sonnet 20, a rebuttal to those claiming he was homosexual.

Latin nasalized pungere, punctum: punctual. pivot; poignant; point, made by pricking. appoint; appointment; reappoint; disappoint, first meant to remove from office; pointillism. pun, probably from Italian, puntiglio: a fine point. An earlier English form was pundigrion, from which pun evolved.

Swift, who in 1716 wrote A Modest Defense of Punning, less modestly called Thomas Sheridan "the greatest punner of this town next myself." Sheridan (grandfather of playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan), in his 1719 Ars Punica, gave 34 rules for the art. Rule 32, "Never speak well of another punster," became the general practice.



reup, reub

Snatch, break. *rip, reave, bereave.* A prisoner of war, or a victim, was usually stripped; persons being beheaded often left what they were wearing to the executioner on his promise of a quick, clean stroke. From a garment as booty came *robe*. What is left of the spoils is *rubble*. Hence also, *rob, robber, rover. usurp*: to snatch the use of. *abrupt, corrupt, disrupt, erupt, interruption, irruption. bankrupt* is from the broken (or confiscated) bench of the unsuccessful Italian moneylender.

Roture, rout: to break the enemy ranks; also a broken-up group. route: a way broken through. routier, routine: following a beaten path. rupestrian: consisting of broken rock. rupture, rutter. rubato is "stolen time" in music.

Gibbon, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), pictured the plague of all democracies: "Corruption, the most infallible symp-

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tom of constitutional liberty." In a letter of 1904, the First Baron Action set the idea in an (often misquoted) epigram: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."



To sense, seek. Hence, take, know. Greek, exegesis, hegemony, hegumen: head of monastery of Eastern Orthodox Church. Latin, sagacious, sagacity, presage. Germanic, sake, forsake, seek, sought. Former legal terms of tenure: soc, socage, soke, soken. Old Norse, ransack.

sag

"Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani!" (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?)—last cry of the man Jesus on the cross, before he resumed his godhead.

"Forsaking all others, keep only unto her, as long as ye both shall live," comes from *The Book of Common Prayer* and is defied by the divorce rate.



treb

Build, beam, dwelling. Latin, *trabs*, *trabis*: beam. *trabea*: state robe in ancient Rome, adorned with "beams" (horizontal stripes). *traveated*, *trabea*-

tion, trabecula, trave. Via Italian, architrave: basic beam. By metathesis, Latin, taberna: tent, booth, hut. tabernacle, tavern, contubernal: companion of the tent.

Germanic, *throp*, *thorp*: gathering place; hence, hamlet. *thorpe*, still used in names of places, such as *All-thorpe*, *Allerthorpe*.

Also troop; French, troupe; hence also French, de trop: too many. Italian, troppo, in music.

John Henry (later Cardinal) Newman, a close friend of R. H. Froude at Oxford and after, wrote in a letter of 1835: "Dear Froude is pretty well, but is languishing for want of his Oxford contubernians."



uak

Cow. Latin, *vacca. vaccinus*: of a cow. Dr. Edward Jenner, of Gloucestershire, noticing that dairymaids who had once had *vaccinia* (cowpox) did not get the then-endemic smallpox, in 1796 inoculated eight-year-old James Phipps, thus achieving *vaccine* and *vaccination*—for which Parliament granted him £30,000. Hence the spread of *vaccinotherapy*.

Spanish, *vaquero*: cowboy; folkchanged in the American West to *buckayro*, *buckaroo*. *OED* has three columns of *vacc* words, including *vaccicide* and *vaccimulgence*: the milking of cows.

COMMENTARY

We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some of those printed below were received in response to the editors' requests for comment.

Energy Options

Although Norway [WQ, Spring 1984], like most Western industrial nations, must modernize its traditional industries, the country's economic future is by no means uniformly bleak, as shown by the most recent trade statistics. Norwegian exports increased by 14 percent in 1983, with advances in the sale of traditional products, increased earnings from service industries, and gains in revenue generated by oil and gas production. The merchant marine continues to be a major source of earnings and is adjusting to changed markets, with an emphasis on greater use of dry-cargo carriers and small tankers. The country's strong export performance in 1983, combined with a marked drop in imports, produced a record surplus in the balance of payments by the year's end.

High technology industries, including those using computers and robots, are common on the Norwegian scene, and the country has adequate capital available. The value of shares on the Oslo stock exchange almost doubled in 1983, with foreign investors increasing their presence.

Norway is one of the best situated countries in the world in terms of energy availability, especially considering its small population. Its chief energy source remains hydroelectric power, a renewable resource. In 1983, production of hydroelectricity was up 14 percent, allowing energy-intensive industries to increase production. Surplus electricity is exported to Sweden and Denmark. Research in alternative energy resources, especially power generated by wave action, is advanced. Coal deposits on Spitsbergen and use of the country's considerable woodlands for heating round out the energy picture. Norway is one of the few European countries that does not need to resort to expensive nuclear energy.

> Oddvar E. Hoidal Professor of History San Diego State University

Something New

The Wilson Quarterly's informative and well-balanced articles on Norway do a great service because of otherwise scant attention paid by the U.S. news media to a country that manages to solve its problems nonviolently.

Robert Wright and Terje I. Leiren ("Paradise Retained") raise an interesting question regarding the relationship of tradition and innovation in Norway. They rightly emphasize the acceleration of economic growth in the last two decades with consequent prosperity and social change. But how could this degree of change be accomplished so well by a people that, according to the articles, is neither friendly to strangers nor readily willing to embrace foreign ideas and products?

The last century and more of Norwegian history confirms the country's readiness to accept and adapt foreign ideas and products. Even in that most conservative aspect of any society, religion, one finds, over the last century, marked influence of foreign ideas and practices. The same is true in industry, education, and politics. Not least has been the remarkable, some might say lamentable, receptivity to American ideas and products. Perhaps it is the word "readily" that needs definition, since it is true that Norwegians have not unreflectively accepted all that has come from across the seas, or even the Swedish border.

This is a small thing in an otherwise fine article. I, for one, am going to keep copies on hand for friends who want to know what contemporary Norway is all about.

> Arne Hassing Associate Professor of Religious Studies Northern Arizona University Flagstaff, Arizona

Nuclear Blackmail

Michael Howard's "Causes of Wars" [WQ, Summer 1984] was thought provoking, and I found myself in agreement with most of his observations. But I must object to his conclusion that the presence of nuclear weapons alone may create a lasting peace.

We must not conclude that nuclear weapons are the ultimate danger and thus make conflict unthinkable. They create a temporary lull that must be used to create among their possessors a respect for peaceful solutions to the differences over ideologies and policies that will inevitably develop. Otherwise, those who wish to use force will attack on two fronts—fortifying their own position while weakening the resolve of their opponents to engage in conflict. If we permit ourselves to believe that nuclear weapons will make war unthinkable, we risk finding ourselves with only two alternatives should the prospect of war arise: resorting to nuclear holocaust or being subjected to nuclear blackmail that leads to total submission.

However advanced a civilization we might become, we must always remember whence we came. In the least civilized people, there is the greatest danger, because they know best the laws of force. The preferred response is to enlighten them and create a ground for mutual respect, but we must always be prepared to step somewhat below our current level of civility in order to protect it, lest we lose it in surrender and slip in an instant from civilization to chaos.

> Richard A. Turner Massillon, Ohio

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One Man's Myth

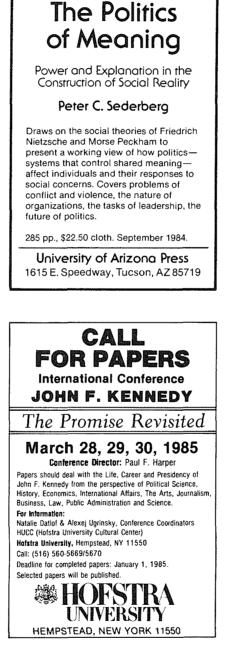
It is indeed ironic that Hugh Trevor-Roper, an English member of the British House of Lords, wrote "The Highlander Myth" [WQ, Summer 1984]. The history of the House of Lords disproves his notion that "the whole concept of a distinct [Scottish] Highland culture and tradition is a retrospective invention" [p. 105].

The Disarming Act, approved in 1746 by the House of Lords, prohibited the wearing of Highland garb, including the kilt (philibeg), and outlawed the bagpipe as an instrument of war. The House of Lords seems to have decided that Highland culture was so distinct that it required eradication. The Disarming Act was enforced by Hanoverian troops stationed in the Highlands for two generations (until repeal in 1782). If Trevor-Roper was correct, much British tax money was wasted in an attempt to erase an indistinct culture.

The House of Lords also featured prominently in the 1747 impeachment, trial, and execution of Lord Lovat for raising his Highland Clan and sending it to fight at the Battle of Culloden under his eldest son, the Master of Lovat. Had Lord Lovat only known that his feudal actions as chief of a clan were "retrospective inventions," his defense might have been more creative. As it was, the House of Lords unanimously condemned him to death.

Mr. Trevor-Roper has identified spurious Highland literature and has wittily described the Romantic era's interest in Highland culture. Nonetheless, he has failed to prove that the Scottish Highlands were bereft of a unique culture and tradition. The fraudulent poems of Ossian, like the tartans invented in the 1800s, do not prove that the Highlands culture was an extension of the Lowlands one. The Highlands did indeed contain a distinct culture: The clans did go to war, the kilt was worn, and the House of Lords acted with vigor to root out the Highland threat.

> John A. Fraser, III Alexandria, Virginia



A Rotten Apple

As a retired middle-school teacher with 27 years of experience, I would like to point out one reason that, in testing and other studies, parochial- and private-school students (and teachers) look better than those in public schools [see "A Matter of Ethos," WQ, New Year's 1984, pp. 96–97].

Catholic schools and many, if not most, of the private schools have entrance requirements. If students fail to meet them, they may not enroll. Students who do gain admission must behave and do well. Otherwise, they will be sent back to the public schools.

When I was still teaching, my publicschool colleagues and I dreaded learning that a former parochial student was about to enroll in one of our classes. Often, such students would be disruptive influences in the classroom. Public schools are the educators of "last resort." When the private schools are through selecting what they consider the top students, we get what is left. And they want a tax deduction too!

Schools do not exist in a vacuum any more than any other social institution, and their success depends on parents' support. Yet, over the years, I have sent notes home for missed assignments, unacceptable behavior, and failing grades without receiving any response. If the public-school system had the authority to call in the parents to make them responsible for their children's behavior, many educational problems would disappear.

> Leroy Izen San Francisco, California

Economics 101

Re: "Teaching in America" [WQ, New Year's 1984]

Teachers can feel underpaid even while becoming more expensive to society. Unless people learn to value teachers more, they will tend to resist paying a higher

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portion of income for what they perceive as the same or less service. So, although we can explain rising teacher wages, we can also predict that they will rise disproportionately to increases in teacher productivity, unless something happens to make education suddenly a focus of technological advance. Therefore, teachers' wages will tend to continue to lag behind the general level of wages, and people will continue to expect to get "competent teachers at bargain-basement prices" [p. 95]. They expect to pay less because they perceive themselves as paying more.

This cycle helps to explain why the United States has spent more money on education in recent decades without improving it. Although the number of students will probably decline, at least until the "Baby-Boom echo" starts to materialize, the relative cost to society of education will probably not decrease because teachers' wages will continue to rise, even though the number of teachers may decline.

> Richard H. Fahnline Washington, D.C.

Corrections

A poster of Tito appearing in "The Balkans," by David Binder [WQ, New Year's 1984], was incorrectly captioned. The Nazis offered a reward for the Yugoslav guerrilla leader's capture in 1943, not 1941 as stated.

Professor George S. Lansing of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has pointed out that Frank McConnell's essay, "Understanding Wallace Stevens" [WQ, Summer 1984], contained the following errors of fact: Stevens spent three years at Harvard as a special student but did not receive a degree when he left in 1900; he moved to Hartford, Connecticut, in 1916, not 1932. William Carlos Williams practiced medicine and lived in Rutherford, New Jersey, not Paterson, New Jersey.

Credit Due

In our cluster of articles on "Blacks in America" [WQ, Spring 1984], we printed an essay by William Julius Wilson entitled "The Black Underclass." Mr. Wilson's original essay will appear in the forthcoming book American Minorities and Civil Rights, edited by Leslie Dunbar. Copyright © 1984 by the William O. Douglas Inquiry into the State of Individual Freedom. To be published in November 1984 by Pantheon Books, A Division of Random House, Inc. We apologize for having omitted the source of Mr. Wilson's essay.

Pickled

While Robert Wright's "Paradise Retained" [WQ, Spring 1984] was informative, it did little to dispel the notion that Norwegians truly are a hard-drinking bunch. A .5 blood-alcohol level to be considered drunk? Zounds! In most parts of the world, individuals are usually comatose at that level. I would think that attaining such a level of drunkenness would require a three-week stay in the hospital rather than a stay in jail. So much for my theory that Texans are the biggest boozers in the world.

> Brian Coffee Austin, Texas

In our footnote on page 126, we intended to show that Norway's drunk-driving laws are tougher than our own. In many U.S. states, a person with .05 percent of alcohol in the blood is considered sober, whereas in Norway he would draw a minimum of three weeks in jail. We apologize for misplacing the decimal.

-ED.

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