JANUARY 1981

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL RENEWAL AND RADICAL CHANGE

Editorial / 3
Theme Note / 7

DIMENSIONS OF THE CURRENT CRISIS

Sheldon S. Wolin / The People's Two Bodies / 9
Christopher Lasch / Democracy and the "Crisis of Confidence" / 25
Lawrence Goodwyn / Organizing Democracy:
The Limits of Theory and Practice / 41
David Dickson / Limiting Democracy:
Technocrats and the Liberal State / 61

EXPLORATIONS

Norman O. Brown / Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent / 80
Walter LaFeber / The Last War, the Next War, and the New Revisionists / 93

CONTESTED TERRAIN

William Connolly and Michael Best / The Decline of Economic Virtue / 104
Joyce Appleby / Social Science and Human Nature / 116

CLASSICS OF DEMOCRACY

Isaac Kramnick / Tom Paine: Radical Democrat / 127

Contributors / 139
The Future of democracy / 140
Why democracy?

The reasons for beginning this journal now and calling it democracy come down to what, in our view, is the most significant political fact about contemporary American life: the steady transformation of America into an antidemocratic society. Every one of the country's primary institutions—the business corporation, the government bureaucracy, the trade union, the research and education industries, the mass propaganda and entertainment media, and the health and welfare system—is antidemocratic in spirit, design, and operation. Each is hierarchical in structure, authority oriented, opposed in principle to equal participation, unaccountable to the citizenry, elitist and managerial, and disposed to concentrate increasing power in the hands of the few and to reduce political life to administration.

At the same time, the political institutions historically associated with democracy are on the decline. Political parties no longer function to organize the electorate into a stable following or to bind elected representatives to a party program and strategy. Elections, supposedly the grand expression of the will of the people, are becoming more like rituals of despair in which the voters heap their scorn and embarrassment upon the national institutions of Congress and the presidency. At the same time that vast sums of private money are being spent to buy candidates, public millions are, in effect, handed over to the public-relations and public-opinion industries so that their flacks can purchase the right to debase public discourse during prime time and encourage a level of political deliberation somewhere between idiocy and prolonged adolescence. Historically, great cities have provided many of the models and much of the inspiration.
Editorial

for democracy; our cities are becoming the digs of industrial archaeology, the abandoned places where permanently marginal and unabsorbed people huddle in squalor while the political power of nonelected corporate and financial representatives is legitimated through "control boards."

We have been hypnotized so long by the ideology of economic and technological progress that we have scarcely noticed that, politically, we have become a retrogressive society, evolving from a more to a less democratic polity and from a less to a more authoritarian society. These tendencies define the meaning of the present as the moment in our national history when democracy is forced into opposition.

The basic objective of democracy is to help repair the democratic fabric where it has been rent and to invent and encourage new arrangements that will point the way toward a better society. To do this, democracy will encourage a different kind of understanding, one that tries to combine what is usually separated. Baldly put, most historical analysis tends to be untheoretical; most theoretical analysis tends to be unhistorical; and most of the analyses that boast of being pragmatic, tough-minded, and practical are neither historical nor theoretical. Our aim will be to encourage the development of an historical and theoretical understanding around the concrete problems of the present. We cannot offer recipes or specific policies, but we can bring a critical approach that will illumine what is at stake for the future of democracy in current debates; how specific problems have come to have their present form; and what kinds of broad alternatives, consistent with democracy, are possible.

An historical and theoretical understanding has, we believe, not only intellectual merits but real political implications. At this moment in the historical development of a capitalist civilization in America—including under "civilization" not only the economy, but politics, state organization, technology, and organized or "big science"—the crucial challenge to radical democracy is to be as zealous in preventing things of great value to democracy from passing into oblivion as in bringing into the world new political forms of action, participation, and being together in the world. Radicals need to cultivate a remembrance of things past for in the capitalist civilization, which Schumpeter saw as based upon the principle of "creative destruction," memory is a subversive weapon. The ideology of progress fostered by science and capitalism depends upon the steady elimination of historical consciousness and of the customs, sensibilities, and textures of everyday life nourished by that consciousness; just as it depends upon the emasculation of the critical function of theory. What is at stake simultaneously is the past and the future. Radicals cannot leave the past to the conservatives; they need to remind themselves that they, too, have a past rich with democratic experience and wisdom, and that the arts of conservation have as much to do
with learning how to live with the past as with learning how to live within nature and with other human beings. The subtitle of democracy states our highest aim: renewal and radical change.

To help realize these aims, there will be regular departments, each designed to present articles that will add to the development of a democratic understanding of our present condition—the present being the point where the past and future intersect. Each issue will have a major theme with three or four articles analyzing various aspects of it. Themes will be chosen because they concern, in vital ways, society as a whole and because they affect, in ways that matter, the daily lives of the vast run of people in society. Our boldest hope is that with each issue there will be a gradual deepening of the understanding, not only of the problems and prospects of democracy, but of the meaning of it. We are, in other words, trying to get somewhere with each issue rather than to start with some predetermined doctrine and apply it mechanically to every question.

Each number will also contain a section devoted to "explorations" where our authors will seek to expand the democratic dialogue, sometimes by introducing ideas and experience from other countries, other times by going back into either the very recent or the more remote past, or by opening up some new possibility in the present.

One way to use the past is to reflect critically upon some of the important writings or writers who have shaped, or perhaps misshaped, the democratic traditions. As a regular feature we plan to have a reconsideration of a major "classic of democracy." We expect to have essays on familiar figures, such as Jefferson and Thoreau; important foreign writers (Tocqueville); more recent thinkers (Veblen and Dewey); some who are less well known than they ought to be (Henry George, Eugene Debs, J. Allen Smith); and some who may be surprises (Schumpeter and Arendt).

Book reviews will be an important department of democracy. We have opted for the review-essay rather than the conventional book review because we shall be choosing books for their importance to the specific concerns of this journal. Occasionally we shall deal with books of a few years ago on the grounds that subsequent developments have increased their significance.

These, then, are our hopes. We invite the reader to a dialogue about democracy.

Sheldon S. Wolin
The word "crisis" fairly oozes with banality, so overused has it become by TV and the daily press. In selecting "the current crisis" as the first theme of democracy, there is a clear risk of being swamped by its familiarity. Part of the crisis is that pseudo-crisis has become a technique of governance and of social control that produces dependence while distracting attention from fundamental questions. Hardly a day passes without some government official, corporate spoke (our contribution to sexual linguistics), or media personality demanding that we worry about the crisis in energy, the money supply, the Middle East, inflation, teenage sex, or the missile gap. The natural mindlessness of television is particularly suited to a politics of pseudo-crisis because it can compensate for its lack of content by producing a charged atmosphere of near-hysteria, faked excitement, and phony drama that prepares the way for the soothing homilies of the fatherly commentator. The interminable crises of daily soap operas have their nightly counterparts in the political and economic crises produced in time for the six o'clock news.

The idea in the trivialization of crisis is that it should be made to appear as an "event," a specific happening that is being managed, first, by the protagonists, who are shown coping with the event or disclosing their plans for dealing with it, and, second, by the televised production itself that frames the event, reduces its scope to "highlights," and reassures the somewhat anxious viewer—who has become conditioned to need the very product that television is so glibly criticized for supplying, namely, "managed news."

One of the oldest meanings of crisis derives from ancient Greek medicine where it was associated with the turning point of a severe disease. Krisis referred to a developing general condition of the body, rather than to a specific ailment or organ. But it is precisely this general condition of the body politic that daily crisis-talk is designed to avoid. By dissolving crisis into discrete events, the idea is turned on its head and, instead of being the symbol of a fundamental disorder, it becomes a discrete event, specialized, speciously concrete, and the preserve of experts. Thus the managed news of crisis becomes an element in the legitimation of the crisis manager, the expert from the great castles of Washington, New York, and Cambridge. While the generality of crisis is trivialized and the crisis manager exalted, the citizen-viewer is diminished and reduced to resigned dependence. How can he or she do anything about these huge and complex problems except what their leaders constantly exhort them to do—pray.

Pseudo-crisis is when fundamental questions are defined as though they were policy questions and hence the business of an elite of policy "makers."

Policy questions are real and so are experts, but the fundamental questions pro-
voked by a genuine crisis are not about policy and are not the monopoly of ex-
erts. They concern the basic presuppositions that determine who is to take deci-
sions in the name of the society; how they come to have that authority; what
standards of common well-being are to be binding on authorities; and what kind
of people and society are supposed to be nurtured over the long pull. A genuine
crisis appears when the presuppositions on which the society has based its ex-
istence and worked out its history for a fairly long time become incompatible,
even contradictory. But these presuppositions were not themselves the work of
yesterday or the discovery of the most recent issue of Business Week. A true
crisis extends to the deep structure of historical existence. A crisis is not
something that is but a condition that becomes. It is a gathering of the past and
the present crystallized into opposing forces and ideas.

The contradictions have produced a political crisis, but we are dissuaded
from reflection upon our political condition because virtually all of the
authorities in the society insist that the crisis is economic in nature and that it will
be responsive to policies of state action or inaction. This is, however, a false
claim for the simple reason that "the economy" is a political creature—shaped by
a long history of public actions and supported by astronomical sums of money
ever since the birth of the republic. But it is a political economy that is implicitly
and explicitly antidemocratic: it is governed by the few and for the few at the ex-
 pense, moral and material, of the many. It contradicts the basic premises of
democracy that ordinary human beings can govern themselves, take respon-
sibility for developing and caring for a shared way of life, and deliberate about
and choose among the social conditions that structure their lives and limit their
choices.

The first article attempts to identify some of the basic presuppositions of
our national life and to trace their uneasy coexistence. This is followed by
an analysis of some of the most important misunderstandings of our current
condition. Then the question is posed of why we, as a society, have thought so
little and so badly about how a democratic people can get itself (or selves)
together and act in democratic ways. The final article in this section poses some
troubling questions about one means of action—regulation by public agen-
cies—that has enjoyed favor among liberals and even among many who have
regarded themselves as democrats.

Many, perhaps most, of the questions posed in this issue of democracy are
being taken up in a preliminary way. We hope to return to them in later issues
and to explore them further.
In the span of a few short years, as Americans have watched the visible deterioration of their nation's power at home and abroad, they have experienced something unknown to American history since the early nineteenth century: a sense of collective vulnerability. The several idols of our common cave—unlimited power, growth, and prosperity—have toppled, depriving us of the collective image by which we had come to recognize ourselves, the American colossus astride the American century. A lot of anxious talk has followed: about America's dependence (on foreign oil, capital, etc.); about the conditions that other nations are able to impose on us; about America as victim rather than autonomous power.

That Americans were beginning to perceive their government as powerless was confirmed by the astonishing rapidity with which the "hostage crisis" in Iran was converted from an incident into a general symbol of national impotence. The government's inability to impose its will on a raggle-taggle mob led by a frail fanatic seemed proof that the familiar world had suddenly been inverted: they were strong and convinced of their righteousness, we were disorganized and morally ambivalent. The nation's sense of weakness was further deepened by the President's response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, by the incongruity between his interpretation of the event and his actions. "The Soviet invasion," he declared, "... could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War." He proposed to meet that danger by a series of gestures: boycotting the Olympic games, imposing an embargo on grain and high technology, and instituting a system of registration for a possible draft.

Perhaps the clearest proof of the widespread perception of powerlessness is
The Current Crisis

in the eagerness with which virtually all segments of the American public have supported the extraordinary increases in defense spending over the past decade. Doubtless these trends have been encouraged and orchestrated by representatives of geographical regions and of specific sectors of the economy, just as they have been enthusiastically hailed by many trade unions. But knowing who is “behind” the escalation of military spending is less important than grasping its meaning. There is broad support for it because of a deep fear about the loss of collective power and a desperate hope that a huge injection of money will arrest the decline in power.

Reliance upon the technology of war to revive American power marks a shift in the theory and practice of power in this country. As everyone knows, today’s military weapons are the products of an economy that is remarkable for its integration of scientific knowledge, its technological adaptation of that knowledge, and the translation of technology into mass production. This economy has increasingly become the means of manufacturing state power, rather than goods and services. Its products, whether armaments, high technology, or the food of agribusiness, are essentially counters to be used to gain advantage in the political market of the international economy of power. Thus the domestic economy produces forms of power that, by their nature and design, can only be used by the state—the state whose symbol is the Pentagon, where “public” and “private” representatives mingle identities and rotate jobs. What the domestic economy does not produce is democratic power: the material, cultural, and educational goods that enable ordinary people to gain dignity, understanding, and power. Defense budgets are the quantified form of our domestic subjection and personal powerlessness. Every neutron bomb is the ritual symbol of a thousand or more children destined to remain ignorant, spiritually empty, incompetent, and morally retarded.

The question that this development poses is this: what does it mean for America to ground its collective existence upon the type of power embodied in a highly advanced economy whose destructive effects upon nature, society, and the human body and psyche are documented daily with depressing regularity? The question is about political identity, about who we are as a people.

Political identity is shaped by the ways a society chooses to generate power and to exercise it. Societies must generate power if they are to survive in the world, and they have to be constituted so as to be able to generate it continuously. The particular ways in which a society is constituted to generate power is its political constitution. The historical project of most societies, including our own, is to shape its members so that they do more than obey or submit: they become disposed, inclined in such a way that political authorities can count on their active support most of the time. These dispositions have to be cultivated if power is to be generated and continuously available. Power depends
importantly on an historical accumulation of dispositions. But dispositions are not something so trite as "learned behavior." They are inscribed demands of the kind that the village laborer had to "learn" in the factories and slums. Power is not, therefore, an exchange or a transaction but an exaction. It is had on terms that exact over time and become cumulative. The terms of power take away from the place in which the collectivity is located and from the time in which it exists. A place consists of land, resources, and indigenous forms of life; time refers to the tempos and rhythms by which beings live and things exist: societies define time and enforce it (think of the mechanization of animal life). The most fundamental terms of power are those that exact from the members of a collectivity by prescribing and proscribing activity that will enable power to be generated and to be continuously available. The working out of the terms of power determines the political identity of the collectivity. Power and identity are never fixed once and for all: they are historical projects being worked out over time and in a claimed space.

The current crisis is widely proclaimed to be a crisis of governmental power, but it may be wider and deeper than that. To ask, what have we become? we must first ask, what kind of people did we conceive ourselves to be?

Our starting point is the eighteenth century, when the sovereign position of monarchs was challenged by revolutionary movements and when, in some countries, the sovereignty of the people was proclaimed and the political theories of the day began to refer to "the body of the people." I want to suggest that in the American political tradition, the people has had two "bodies," with each standing for a different conception of collective identity, of power, and of the terms of power. In one of these bodies the people was conceived to be politically active, while in the other it was essentially, though not entirely, passive. The one collectivity was political and democratic and can be called a body politic; the other was primarily economic and intentionally antidemocratic and it can be called a political economy. Each of these bodies has a long tradition of theory and practice.

The classic statement of the body politic was the Declaration of Independence, its charter, the Articles of Confederation. The conception of political economy is more composite: the Constitution, The Federalist papers, and Hamilton's great state papers dealing with finance, manufacturing, and the interpretation of the powers of the national government. The first American body politic was formed by the revolution of 1776, the second by the ratification of the Constitution.

On the first: revolution is the most radical action that a people can undertake collectively. Revolution means rejecting an established mode of authority, withdrawing the power that flows to it, and snapping the continuity between
The gravity of the act requires a people to ask themselves who they are as a collectivity, what justifies the destruction of their prior identity, and who they hope to become by reconstituting themselves.

The greatness of the Declaration of Independence was its sensitivity to these questions and its attempt to capture a new and emergent identity. For about ten years the colonists had been arguing and protesting about their status within the British Empire. The Declaration caught and preserved the moment when Americans renounced their status as colonial dependents who were required to accept and obey a system of political authority over which they exerted little control and in which they did not directly participate. In the words of the Declaration, the revolutionaries had determined “to dissolve the political bands which . . . connected them” with the mother country, and “to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them.” The Declaration conceived of a new kind of political being, not the colonial subject of an empire, or even the “citizen,” who demanded “the rights of Englishmen” and especially the right not to be taxed by some distant authority. “. . . All men are created equal . . . with certain unalienable rights . . . to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed . . . .” The new conception went beyond even Aristotle’s political man, who knew how to rule and be ruled in turn. The Declaration envisaged a being who would not just participate in politics, but would join in actually creating a new political identity, to “institute,” “alter,” or “abolish” governments, to lay a “foundation” and to organize power. The “self-evident truths” of the Declaration were not, as later generations often assumed, abstract and ideal constructions with no basis in experience, but a recapitulation of nearly one hundred years of practice. Not only had the colonists been practicing something close to self-government for over a century before the revolution, but in the years immediately preceding its outbreak they had telescoped and compressed that experience in novel ways.

About two years before the Declaration, the committees of correspondence and the Continental Congress had been invented to coordinate the resistance of the colonies, and in May of 1776, the Congress instructed the colonial assemblies to undertake the one political act that alone compares in significance to the act of revolution: the founding of new governments that would “best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents . . . .”

The Declaration summarized a political identity in the making, one that stretched back to the Mayflower compact and to seventeenth-century ideas about political and religious associations as voluntary unions. That identity was perpetuated and strengthened in the eighteenth century by two profound political experiences, those of revolutionary struggle and of the construction of new political orders. Both experiences were experiences of action, of ordinary
people acting together to order their common existence. Thus the Declaration had a profoundly political conception of collective identity and a profoundly democratic conception of power; power was grounded in the deliberations of the governed and exercised within a structure that had been democratically organized.

Throughout most of the 1780s, the states operated under the loose system of authority set up by the Articles of Confederation. Save for certain powers relating to war and diplomacy, the Confederation clearly favored a decentralized condition in which the states were the major political entities. It represented a widespread belief that democracy and equality had an appropriate scale. The political discourse of the day was full of references to the affection and loyalty commanded by the states and towns. From reading these documents, it is apparent that the colonists recognized that democracy depended upon making political experience—the true basis of equality—accessible to all.

The conception of the body politic as participatory, democratic, and egalitarian did not mean that economic relations were ignored. The emphasis upon political participation was directly related to the great economic controversies of the 1770s and 1780s concerning debtor laws, paper money, interest rates, and taxes. Those who formed the body politic and opposed the new Constitution tended to be small farmers who suffered from shortages of money and credit, and hence were frequently in debt. They believed that it was natural and desirable for their government to “interfere” in the economy. The economy was not a sacred object, but a set of relationships that might have to be amended when the good of the members required it.

All of the notions of a body politic were challenged throughout the 1780s by a gathering movement among the higher social classes and the more powerful economic interests. It produced the Constitution, with its very different conception of collectivity and power. The framers of the Constitution made no secret of the fact that representative government was designed, as Madison put it, “to preserve the spirit and form of popular government” but to take away its substance, so that an “unjust and interested majority” could not invade the rights and freedom of the propertied classes. The new Constitution aimed to reverse the direction of the country, to set it against the democratic and participatory politics flourishing in the states. This was to be accomplished by two wide-sweeping changes. One was to construct a national government that would be based on the principle of representation instead of on democracy. Except for the House of Representatives, no officer of the new government would be directly elected by the people. “We the people” were acclaimed as “the pure original

---

1 The Federalist, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), no. 22, p. 64.
foundation of all legitimate authority” (Hamilton), but this was a formula to give the Constitution a legitimate basis, not to encourage an active citizenry.

The second change was aimed at breaking the power of the states where the democratic tradition of the body politic had taken hold. The Constitution created a centralized system of government with strong powers to tax, regulate, legislate, and coerce citizens who, hitherto, had been the objects of the state legislatures. Thus the citizen was placed in an entirely new set of relationships—with a government that was almost as remote as the British Parliament. At the same time, the state governments, to which the citizen stood closest, were forced to surrender or share many of the powers they had exercised during the era of the Articles of Confederation—powers over currency, commerce, and taxes.

Hamilton saw that the new Constitution would take hold only if it were able to attract the loyalties of citizens away from their state governments and local institutions and change democratic citizens into beings disposed to render “a due obedience to [the federal government’s] authority.” The transformation of the citizenry would come about, he reasoned, if the activities of the national government were to penetrate the states and localities so as to become part of “the common occurrences of . . . political life.” The role of a strong state would be to promote, regulate, and protect the economic interests crucial to state power—manufacturing, commerce, banking, and agriculture—“those objects which touch the most sensible chords and put into motion the most active springs of the human heart . . . “ In appealing to self-interest and economic motives, Hamilton hoped to promote a new set of civic dispositions that would strengthen “the authority of the Union and the affections of the citizens towards it.”

The nature of these “dispositions”—Hamilton himself used the word—and their potential for producing power were associated by Hamilton with the division of labor and specialization. “The results of human exertion,” he observed, may be immensely increased by diversifying its objects. When all the different kinds of industry obtain in a community, each individual can find his proper element, and can call into activity the whole vigor of his nature. And the community is benefitted by the services of its respective members in the manner in which each can serve it with most effect.

These dispositions ran squarely against the ones incorporated into the Declara-

2 Ibid., p. 146.
3 Ibid., no. 27, p. 174.
4 Ibid., p. 173.
tion's conception of a body politic, for the "community" that he conjured up was not an association of equals or of sharers. By "diversifying" the "objects" set before man, the division of labor encouraged "the diversity of talents and dispositions which discriminate men from each other." While it could be claimed that human potentialities were thus being encouraged, there is no doubt that this was not Hamilton's main aim. "The addition of a new energy to the general stock of effort" had as its end "the wealth of a nation," that is, the foundation of the material basis of national power. Hamilton's concern with the human dispositions that generate power was part of a larger strategy to make economic activity the basis of political order. "The possession" of the "means of subsistence, habitation, clothing, and defense" is, he wrote,

necessary to the perfection of the body politic, to the safety as well as to the welfare of the society; the want of either is the want of an important organ of political life and motion. . . .

The strategy was based on two assumptions, that the collectivity was symbolized in the state, not in the citizenry, and that state power was derived from the structure of the economy. A political economy, in which the state would be grounded in economic relationships and act mainly through its administrative branch, was to be promoted by a system of subsidies and incentives. This vision was later incorporated into Hamilton's program for the national government to assume the war debts of the states, to establish a national bank ("a political machine of the greatest importance to the state"), and to encourage "infant" industries. The dynamics of economic growth that would be unleashed by encouraging self-interest was expected to produce "the momentum of civil power necessary to . . . a great empire." The emphasis upon the capacity of the new national political economy to generate great power was not an incidental consideration, but was central to a bold conception of the Constitution that envisaged a political society that would stretch from the Atlantic coast far into the unexplored westward regions. "Civil power properly organized and exerted is capable of diffusing its force to a very great extent; and can in a manner reproduce itself in every part of a great empire . . . " (Hamilton). The founders clearly understood that a large, expand-

6 Ibid., p. 196.
10 The Federalist, no. 13, p. 81.
11 Ibid.
The Current Crisis

...ing state was inconsistent with a participatory body politic, but they knew as well that there had to be concessions to the democratic tradition of "free government," in which, as one of its anti-Federalist defenders put it, "the people is the sovereign and their sense or opinion is the criterion of every public measure." They opted for a representative government because, as a system capable of being extended almost indefinitely, it fitted more snugly with an economy that was conceived in dynamic terms. At the same time, westward expansion was expected to dilute political passions and to frustrate popular political action. Enlarging the scope would increase the number of competing interests and thereby make it difficult for a majority will to form among such a widely scattered people. "Extend the sphere and . . . you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will . . . discover their own strength and act in unison with each other." Thus the aim of the Federalists' was not only to found a strong state, but also to depoliticize the people. They posed a choice to Americans between "pure democracy," in which "a small number of citizens . . . assemble and administer the Government in person," and an extended republic, in which there was "the delegation of the Government . . . to a small number of citizens elected by the rest." The choice was between participatory democracy, with its inherent inability to generate sufficient power—a vision of America that Hamilton ridiculed as "an infinity of little, jealous, clashing, tumultuous commonwealths, the wretched nurseries of unceasing discord . . ."—and, on the other hand, a powerful republic, "one great American system, superior to the control of all trans-atlantic forces or influence, and able to dictate the terms of the connection between the old and the new world."

The two bodies coexisted throughout the nineteenth century. The democratic and participatory body politic found expression at the local levels—in the westward movement that saw Americans founding communities along the way and improvising political forms to meet their needs, and in the great Populist movements of farmers and workers after the Civil War. But it was the political economy that displayed the greater vitality. Its political component, the state, became more centralized and acquired a professional bureaucracy. Under the pressures of the world wars of the twentieth century and the Great Depression, the American state grew in size, power, and functions. Its economic basis radically changed in nature, evolving from a society of small-scale producers and small farmers into an integrated economy dominated by large cor-

---

13 The Federalist, no. 10, p. 64.
14 Ibid., no. 10, p. 61-62.
15 Ibid., no. 9, pp. 52–53.
16 Ibid., no. 12, p. 73.
porations and monopolies and characterized by the concentration of economic wealth and power in a small number of giant firms. Despite ritual conflicts between "government and business," the union of the polity and the economy became ever tighter, as the antidemocratic, antipolitical implications of the terms of power under this form of collectivity became clearer.

After the victory of World War II, Americans were taught, and they avidly learned, to conceive of themselves in the image of a nation of power, the greatest power in the world, the superpower among superpowers. American power was able to girdle the globe, police the world, claim the moon, and even, if necessary, destroy most life on earth. "Man holds in his mortal hands," John Kennedy declaimed at his inauguration, "the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life."

An incident recorded in Harry Truman's unpublished papers expressed perfectly the nation's self-intoxication with power during the postwar years. During the negotiations for ending the Korean War, Truman grew incensed at what he perceived to be the obstructionist tactics of the Chinese and Russians, and so he 'vented his rage and frustration by dashing off an imaginary ultimatum to them: "You either accept our fair and just proposal or you will be completely destroyed." 17

Although Truman never sent the ultimatum, such fantasies of power had begun to obsess Americans far beyond what was needed to sustain and protect collective life. Lyndon Johnson gave them expression for the space age:

We are, even now, concerned with what some currently regard as the ultimate weapon. . . . There is something more important than any ultimate weapon. That is the ultimate position—the position of total control over earth that lies somewhere out in space. 18

To support power that was cosmic rather than political, the citizenry would have to acquire civic dispositions corresponding to the new forms of power. What were the new elements being incorporated into the constitution of the collectivity? One was imperialism. The United States accepted almost every opportunity for extending its influence to all parts of the globe, taking responsibility for stabilizing regimes perceived as favorable and destabilizing those deemed hostile, and for developing a world market in which the natural and human resources of the globe were organized mainly for the benefit of America. Accordingly, the American had to adopt the attributes of an imperial citizen. He had not only to support military and economic interventions abroad and to

identify his own well-being—his job, his profession, his very identity—with the expansion of American power, but to profess a servile patriotism such that, for example he would submit to having his sons rot in the stinking jungles of remote lands. The imperial citizen could not be a democratic citizen, because imperial power called for dispositions different from those which generate democratic power. Democratic power, as Tom Paine had noted, is possible when people “mutually and naturally support each other.” Imperial power is not just more power, but qualitatively different: it is always remote and exercised far from where the citizen lives; he cannot feel immediately involved in it, nor is he required to. The dispositions needed from him were being defined by the code words of the imperial state: “national security” becomes the substitute for the “common good,” and “defense spending” the primary means for promoting it. Each of these was a symbol that connected with the terms required for the new magnitudes of power and the dispositions of deference that they would exact. “National security” meant not only unquestioning support for wide discretionary power for the President, but support, too, for invasions of civil liberties and the harassment of dissenters. “Defense spending” meant not only applauding huge defense budgets, but identifying, too, with the corporate and financial institutions that actually produced the weapons and the jobs. The new vision of power was expressed by John Kennedy in his message to Congress of February 1961:

America has the human and material resources to meet the demands of national security . . . and the obligations of world leadership while at the same time advancing well-being at home. But our nation has been falling further and further short of its economic capabilities.

These enlarged notions of the scope of American power signified the end of the Hamiltonian political economy with its vision of a powerful and autonomous nation-state grounded in a national economy and preoccupied with the development of its own territory. The new age would see the imperial state attempt to derive its power from and to assert its mastery over an international economy. That change would undermine the political settlement established by the original Constitution of the Federalists. The institutions of representative government, including the party system that was developed to lend plausibility to the legitimation process of popular elections, would weaken and decline. The successors to Hamilton would take his case one step further. While careful to continue his tirade against democracy for arousing unrealistic

expectations among ordinary people and for encouraging them to question the superior wisdom of elites, the new men would also turn against representative government itself. They had to find a new basis of legitimacy to replace the political compact that had drawn the original colonies and their citizens into "a more perfect union." One was found in a form of agreement, a social contract, that would signal the demise of the political citizen and the emergence of the American voter. In return for the surrender of their political power, and along with it the practice of the arts of the citizen, Americans would be rewarded with purchasing power and "consumer sovereignty."

After World War II, Americans traded off or bargained away the vestigial remains of democratic citizenship in exchange for new forms of participation. They wanted to participate in the economy on a guaranteed basis, to share in the rising levels of consumer goods and in the expanding job market. In committing their being, individual and collective, to the economy, Americans did not explicitly reject political values of equality, participation, or popular sovereignty; nor did they specify that greater authority and discretion should be allowed to elected officials and bureaucrats, or that the principle of elitism, thinly disguised as meritocracy, should be the dominant social and political principle.

By a simple kind of action that spoke as eloquently as the provisions of any contract imagined by Locke, Rousseau, or Jefferson, Americans simply abdicated the political realm, allowing their civic involvements to languish to the point that by the 1970s, scarcely one-half of the electorate could stir itself to vote in national elections, while the percentages ran even lower for local elections. From the 1950s onward political passivity was presented as a civic virtue. The crucial requirement of the society, Americans were told increasingly, was "leadership," and hence they should always seek "strong" Presidents to "provide" leadership. As for the citizen, he should think of himself as playing a "role" in a "system"—a supportive role requiring only that he stir himself on occasion and vote, so that those who ruled could thereby claim "authority" for their actions and exactions.

These civic dispositions, passive and deferential, were a natural complement to the forms of rule that were rapidly taking hold. For this same period also saw the rise of the manager, the counterpart to the apolitical citizen. The new type was remarkable for ruling without the appearance of it. The manager combined professional skill with selflessness, low visibility, and a pronounced aversion to public discourse. His unthreatening, technical mien helped to conceal the authoritarianism inherent in the idea of "strong Presidents." It is an historical fact that the credit for systematically introducing "professional" management
into government belongs to the New Deal, the administration that, more than any other in this century, was identified with "social legislation" and with the policies and programs that came to form the provisions of the "social contract." Fittingly, the New Deal poetized the "managers," describing them as men with "a passion for anonymity."20

The terms of the new social contract and the depoliticization of the body politic were confirmed at a specific moment when it seemed as though America might take a first step toward reclaiming its political life. Throughout most of the '60s and the early years of the '70s, a continuous and vocal opposition was mounted against the legitimate rulers of the society and their policies. This resistance originated and remained outside the conventional political institutions. For the most part its forms were local, spontaneous, and improvised. It had started with the civil rights demonstrations of the early '60s, gathered momentum in the campus rebellions of the mid-'60s, and become ominous in the revolts that occurred in the urban ghettos of major cities. It reached a climax in the "Cambodian Spring" of 1970, when the extension of the Vietnam war into Cambodia provoked the greatest expression of antiwar opposition.

There were many ingredients in these events—youthful rebellion, black resentment, provocative cultural forms (such as rock), radically changing sexual mores, etc.—but also the possibility of a repoliticization of America, a revocation of the social contract that was stifling political life. But it never got much beyond the campuses and the ghettos. American working-class families were mostly hostile, as were the overwhelming majority of middle- and lower-middle-class Americans.

The failure of the opposition politics of the 1960s to take hold and to encourage different dispositions toward power and authority was clearly demonstrated by the smashing electoral triumph of Nixon in 1972. He received a larger majority of votes than any previous presidential candidate. It was not only a defeat for the forces of repoliticization loosely gathered around McGovern's candidacy but powerful evidence of how the terms of the social contract had sapped the political will of most Americans. The Watergate revelations, which disclosed a systematic pattern of lying, bribery, corruption, arbitrary exercises of power, and calculated invasion of the rights of private citizens, and the continual intimidation of public officials and private individuals by civilian and military agencies of the federal government, should have shaken the legitimacy of our most basic political institutions. Instead the crisis was contained and then resolved by the resignation of the President.

By focusing upon the "abuses of power" by the President and the misdeeds

of his henchmen, those who ran the system managed to avoid the fundamental question of what the political society had become, such that Richard Nixon was being punished for doing what his immediate predecessors had done less crudely; that with a public record of having lied, misrepresented, and offered himself to the major corporate and financial interests of the country, he had been reelected by an unprecedented popular majority of the American voters. The conclusion was not so much that the elites succeeded in containing the legitimation crisis, but that the citizens had dutifully honored their engagement. By the terms of the social contract the average American had agreed not to be actively engaged in the life of the citizen and not to challenge the enlarged authority and discretion of public officials, the increased power of bureaucracy over ordinary life, or the thinly concealed power structure in which public institutions and private corporations were striking daily bargains about the direction of the society and the use of its resources and common wealth.

The depoliticization of America is the necessary precondition for the current demand for “reindustrialization” that has become the slogan of the powerful political and economic forces rallying around the vision of a new, more rationally planned society. Its manifesto was composed by Business Week. Calling for a “new social contract” that would replace the politics of conflict by a “collaborative relationship” among labor, management, and academia, this influential voice of corporate America coolly noted that “the drawing of a social contract must take precedence over the aspirations of the poor, the minorities, and the environmentalists.” Declaring that “the goal must be nothing less than the reindustrialization of America,” it stated clearly the antidemocratic, corporatist vision of the new America:

... the question of whether the U.S. will reindustrialize depends on whether the business, bureaucratic, and political elites can get together to provide the leadership.21

The vision, in its silence, adopts the advice recommended ironically by Brecht in The Solution:

Wouldn't it
be simpler in that case if the government
Dissolved the people and
Elected Another?

Today's crisis is centered in the economy, but not in economic problems as such. The crisis is one of collective identity and of power because “the economy” has come to embody the identity of the collectivity and to serve as the ground of

its power. According to a 1977 poll, nearly 70 percent of Americans believed that while the economy could stand some improving, it was basically sound. This vote of confidence in "the economy" was in sharp contrast to the findings of a 1979 poll reporting that a majority of Americans (55 percent) believed that the "political system" needed revision or was completely outmoded. The civics lesson contained in the contrast had been delivered in a slightly earlier poll, which had found that 96 percent of those polled believed that Americans must be "ready to sacrifice for the free enterprise system." Clearly some profound displacement of loyalty had occurred in which citizens declared themselves in favor of getting rid of a significant part of their political order and, at the same time, announced that they were prepared to sacrifice for an economic system, even, apparently, for one that existed nowhere except in the prose of the inspired clerks of Mobil Oil and Citibank.

Historically the Carter Administration has played a pivotal role in expressing the meaning of "the economy," the new and depoliticized form of collectivity. Jimmy Carter correctly perceived that for such a collectivity the search for "energy" would be the moral equivalent of war, that "on the battlefield of energy . . . we can seize control again of our common destiny," and that "every gallon of oil" saved "gives us more freedom . . . that much more control over our own lives so that solutions to our energy crisis can also help us to conquer the crisis of the spirit in our country." The historical mission of Jimmy Carter's pseudo-populism—with its laments about a lost purity and a government grown "distant" from "the people"—was to provide a mass basis for a new state-corporate, bureaucratic, technocratic, and managerial. "We are talking about the United States of America," Jimmy Carter thundered in his speech accepting renomination, "and those who count this country out as an economic superpower are going to find out just how wrong they are."

That speech pays reconsidering, for it was perhaps the most important statement of the nature of the new collectivity. Declaring that his administration had "laid the groundwork for a new economic age," he made it clear that the new ground would represent a reversal of the modestly progressive social policies of the New Deal tradition in the Democratic Party:

We've slashed government regulation and put free enterprise back into airlines, to trucking and the financial system of our country . . .

Then he interred the New Deal for good and identified the concerns of the new collectivity:

This is the greatest change in the relationship between government and

business since the New Deal. We've increased our exports dramatically. We've reversed the decline into [sic] basic research and development. And we have created more than eight million new jobs, the biggest increase in the history of our country.

The new collectivity in the new economic age would be devoted to “revitalization”—not of the body politic—but “revitalization of American industry”; the new citizen would be absorbed in the “real work [of] modernizing American industry,” not in reclaiming his or her political self or recreating a common life. The President’s speech was another expression of the forces that are exploiting the current crisis to accelerate the movement of the society toward a new and undemocratic form. The ideology for this new form starts from the claim that the crisis is located in the economy, whose woes are the result of the fact that American products are no longer competitive in the world market. Our declining competitive position, it is said, is due to lower productivity, inefficiency, lack of “discipline” among the work force, and an “adversary mentality” of trade unionists. But we must not only “reindustrialize” but emulate the proper model—which turns out to be West Germany or Japan. “We have two ways to go,” warned an Assistant Secretary of Labor, “the way of the British or the way of the Japanese.”  

During the last several months something that looks suspiciously like a concerted campaign has been mounted against the “citizens” of the present political economy, contrasting the lazy and contentious American worker with the regimented enthusiasm of Japanese workers, who have appeared at their obliging best on several television shows, hopping up and down to canned music during their “breaks,” making constructive suggestions about how to improve further their highly automated production lines, and displaying the serenity of a work force that has been given paternalistic reassurances of cradle-to-grave security. The television cameras did not stray from the factories to explore the political implications of a model citizen who would combine, in equal parts, the values of automation and of feudalism; much less have the media invited their audience to consider the broad implications of “learning” from West Germany and Japan, societies with old, rich authoritarian traditions and fresh totalitarian pasts, while turning away from virtually the only society, Britain, whose political values were once closest to our own.

The current crisis is inherent in the form of state power constituted by, and grounded in, an economy whose “dynamism” and “innovations” exact an awesome price in the destruction of received values, skills, knowledge, and the

basic human institutions for transmitting them. Family, school, and city: they have all been damaged and twisted to the point where they produce more despair than happiness. The present constitution of power, and the social contract that legitimates it, has produced the present deepening crisis. The crisis consists of two interrelated parts: the unprecedented magnitudes of power at the disposal of the American state and the peculiarly abstract quality of it. Think of the proposed MX missile system, its tracks winding through the “empty” spaces of western states, its lethal payload disappearing and reappearing, and its power wholly disconnected from any community. It is a symbol of contemporary power. It takes hold by destroying existing human relationships and then expanding its logic in the void it has created.

What is remarkable about these forms of power is that we know perfectly well that they are, at bottom, antihuman. Everyone knows that the two most powerful institutions of our society, the “private” corporation and the “public” bureaucracy, are unaccountable, unresponsive, distended, and inept. It is equally plain that the social evils that they produce are inherent in them, and that no subtlety of cost/benefit analysis can begin to comprehend the genetic and ecological damage done to generations unborn, much less even attempt to come to grips with the terrible demands that are being endlessly pounded into each generation of the permanently poor and the racially excluded. Everyone knows, too, that the dominant position of the corporation and the government bureaucracy means that the most powerful institutions in our society are radically antidemocratic. Both are hierarchical, and hence biased toward authority and elitism. Finally, everyone knows, too, that these institutions have betrayed and continue to betray the American promise: they have shaped a society of ever widening disparities of wealth that translate into increasing inequalities of power, of life chances, and of access to cultural and educational values.

Nothing short of a long revolution, aimed at deconstituting the present structure of power, makes much sense. It is illusory to believe either that the same modes of power that, by their constitution, use up humans, society, and nature at a fearful rate can simply be “turned around” and trained in a more benign direction; or that the same human dispositions toward power—passivity by the many, control by the few—will serve as well for a new social order as for the current one.

The task is an enormous one—difficult, endless, full of unknowns. We need new forms, new scales, new beings. The forms need to be what constitutions truly are: life forms for taking care of a part of the earth and of the beings who are there. That constitution cannot be given; it can only come to be in the concrete actuality of people taking hold of conditions at hand and steadily shaping them to accord with how they think equal beings should live and by what time they should order their lives together.
Democracy
and the
"Crisis of Confidence"

CHRISTOPHER LASCH

The presidential election of 1980 dramatizes the bankruptcy of political leadership and the "crisis of confidence" among the American people. Although it is impossible at this writing to foresee the outcome of this interminable campaign, the outcome itself is in many ways less important than the circumstances leading up to the final decision. Once again it is clear that millions of voters have no particular enthusiasm for any of the candidates that have presented themselves to the public. Those who voted for Carter in the Democratic primaries admitted that they had little confidence in his leadership. Those who voted for Kennedy had to overcome grave doubts about his character. Of the various Republican candidates, John Anderson alone seemed for a time to inspire a feeling of trust, but his unexpectedly strong showing in some of the early primaries probably reflected his ability to project a fresh face, not widespread support for his policies. As Anderson's face became more familiar and his independent candidacy forced him into the usual evasions, equivocations, and compromises, it became increasingly clear that his political ideas were quite conventional and embodied no real alternative to the status quo.

Meanwhile Barry Commoner of the Citizens Party—the only presidential candidate worth listening to—could not get a hearing. As usual, the only political ideas considered worth reporting were the ones everyone has heard before—the ideas that haven't worked in the past and won't work any better in the future. It is no wonder that Americans are bored to death by their politics. The media ignore serious attempts to challenge political orthodoxy, while attempting to invest politics with an air of emergency and high-class entertainment. "Wherever we see glamour in the object of attention," David Riesman wrote in The Lonely Crowd, "we must suspect a basic apathy in the spectator."
This apathy has become too obvious to ignore: hence the official outcry about the “national malaise.”

In July 1979, President Carter, then at one of the lowest points in his political fortunes, lectured the nation on a “fundamental threat to American democracy . . . the erosion of our confidence in the future.” Polls conducted by Patrick Caddell—the subject of much discussion in the White House during the weeks leading up to this curious speech—indicated that Americans no longer had much faith in the political process, in the country’s economic future, or in their own prospects for personal advancement. The President, in passing, correctly identified the source of our malaise. “Ordinary people are excluded from political power,” he said. Instead of pursuing this idea, however, he went on to criticize the spirit of self-seeking and the pursuit of material possessions, calling for a “restoration of American values” and a revival of “hard work, strong families, close-knit communities.” Thus he diverted attention from the failure of our political system to the moral failure of the average American, allegedly sunk in an orgy of materialism.

Although Carter quickly dropped the subject of political participation, the important point is that he mentioned it at all. Democracy survives as an ancestral memory even as it disappears from political practice. The disparity between practice and profession—between centralized bureaucratic and corporate power and the ideal of a self-governing society—remains a sensitive issue that cannot be altogether ignored so long as our political traditions retain even the lingering force of an historical myth.

Let us explore the implications of Carter’s statement that ordinary people have been excluded from political power. Without assuming that ordinary people ever had a great deal of power to lose, we can safely say that the structures of political and economic power today seem more remote and inaccessible, more impervious to popular influence, than at any time since the pre-Jacksonian era. After the initial successes of the democratic movement, beginning with the English revolutions of the seventeenth century and continuing through the establishment of equality before the law and universal suffrage, democracy in the twentieth century seems to have suffered a series of setbacks and defeats. The rise of fascism and Stalinism furnished premonitory signs of a reversal in the direction of history. In our own country, popular participation in decision making has declined gradually but steadily over the course of the twentieth century. The proportion of active voters has dwindled, even as formal suffrage requirements have been relaxed. Many governmental processes have been taken out of the political realm and entrusted to an elite of professional administrators. The decline of political parties makes the political process itself less re-
Lasch / Democracy and Confidence

responsive to the popular will. Bureaucracy discourages grass-roots initiatives. Increasingly people live and work in large impersonal organizations over which they have no control. Scientific technology has replaced traditional and customary know-how and rendered people dependent on experts. Citizens now take part in politics merely as consumers, and even in their private lives they find themselves unable to satisfy their needs except by consuming the products of modern technology and the advice of expert technicians—advice that extends even to child rearing, marital "adjustment," and sexual fulfillment. Our government has ceased to be in any important sense a government of, by, and for the people. At its best, it functions merely as a government for the people, a benevolent paternalism. At its worst, it represents a warfare state, with the potential of developing into a thoroughgoing form of totalitarianism. 1

The centralization of power in the United States and the decline of popular participation in community life have become dramatically visible only in the period since World War II. The roots of these conditions, however, go back to the formative period around the turn of the century. We have been living ever since then with the long-term consequences of the momentous changes inaugurated at that time. The most important of these changes, of course, was the emergence of the corporation and the spread of the corporate form throughout American industry. Often misunderstood as a shift from entrepreneurial to managerial control, the corporation emerged out of conflicts between capital and labor for control of production. It institutionalized the basic division of labor that runs all through modern industrial society, the division between brain work and handwork—between the design and the execution of production. Under the banner of scientific management, capitalists expropriated the technical knowledge formerly exercised by workers and vested it in a new managerial elite. The managers extended their power not at the expense of the owners of industry, who retained much of their influence and in any case tended to merge with the managerial group, but at the expense of the workers. Nor did the eventual triumph of industrial unionism break this pattern of managerial

1 Sheldon Wolin has called attention to an extraordinary statement in Carter's 1978 State of the Union speech: "We must have what Abraham Lincoln sought—a government for the people [sic]." Lincoln, of course, described democracy—it no longer seems superfluous to quote his exact words—as a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

This same address contains an early variation on the theme of the national malaise. Carter deplored the estrangement of the people from the government and "described the mood of the citizens," as Wolin noted, "in language reminiscent of a textbook account of political alienation." Comparing citizens in their dealings with government to travelers in a foreign country, the President observed that "often we have to deal with [our government] through trained ambassadors who have become too powerful and influential." In an ominous tone, he warned: "This cannot go on." Sheldon Wolin, "The State of the Union," New York Review of Books, May 18, 1978, p. 31.
The Current Crisis

control. By the 1930s, even the most militant unions had acquiesced in the division of labor between the planning and execution of work. Indeed the very success of the union movement was predicated on a strategic retreat from issues of worker control. Unionization, moreover, helped to stabilize and rationalize the labor market and to discipline the work force. It did not alter the arrangement whereby management controls the technology of production, the rhythm of work, and the location of plants (even when these decisions affect entire communities), leaving the worker with the task merely of carrying out orders.

Having organized mass production on the basis of the new division of labor—most fully realized in the assembly line—the leaders of American industry next turned to the organization of a mass market. The mobilization of consumer demand, together with the recruitment of a labor force, required a far-reaching series of changes that amounted to a cultural revolution. The virtues of thrift, avoidance of debt, and postponement of gratification had to give way to new habits of installment buying and immediate gratification, new standards of comfort, a new sensitivity to changes in fashion. People had to be discouraged from providing for their own wants and resocialized as consumers. Industrialism by its very nature tends to discourage home production and to make people dependent on the market, but a vast effort of reeducation, starting in the 1920s, had to be undertaken before Americans accepted consumption as a way of life. As Emma Rothschild has shown in her study of the automobile industry, Alfred Sloan's innovations in marketing—the annual model change, constant upgrading of the product, efforts to associate it with social status, the deliberate inculcation of an insatiable appetite for change—constituted the necessary counterpart of Henry Ford's innovations in production. Modern industry came to rest on the twin pillars of Fordism and Sloanism. Both tended to discourage initiative and self-reliance and to reduce work and consumption alike to an essentially passive activity.

Passivity, however, created new problems of labor discipline and social control—problems of "morale," of "motivation," of the "human factor," as they were known to the industrial sociologists and industrial psychologists who began to appear in the '20s. According to these professional students of "human relations," modern industry had created a feeling of drift, uncertainty, anomie: the worker lacked a sense of "belonging." Problems of labor discipline and "manpower recruitment" demanded an extension of the cultural reforms already inaugurated by the rise of mass marketing. Indeed the promotion of consumption as a way of life came to be seen as itself a means of easing industrial unrest. But the conversion of the worker into a consumer of commodities was

soon followed by his conversion into a consumer of therapies designed to ease his “adjustment” to the realities of industrial life. Experiments carried out at Western Electric by Elton Mayo and his colleagues at the Harvard Business School—the famous Hawthorne studies—showed how complaints about low wages and excessive supervision could be neutralized by psychiatric counseling and observation. Mayo and his colleagues found, or claimed to find, that changes in the physical conditions of work, wage incentives, and other material considerations had little influence on industrial productivity. The workers under observation increased their output simply because they had become the object of professional attention and for the first time felt as if someone cared about their work. Interviews instituted with the intention of eliciting complaints about the quality of supervision, which might in turn have enabled management to improve supervisory techniques, turned up instead subjective and intensely emotional grievances having little relation to the objective conditions of work. The workers’ complaints, according to Mayo, had no “external reference,” and the new sense of freedom expressed by the workers under study had to be taken, therefore, not as an objective description of an actual change in the conditions of work but as “prejudiced judgments,” as “symptoms,” as, in short, “simply a type of statement almost inevitably made when a not very articulate group of workers tries to express an indefinable feeling of relief from constraint.” As Mayo took pains to point out, “their opinion is, of course, mistaken: in a sense they are getting closer supervision than ever before, the change is in the quality of the supervision.”

It would be hard to find a statement that describes so clearly the shift from an authoritative to a manipulative style of social control—a shift that has transformed not only industry but politics, the school, and finally even the family. On the strength of such studies, sophisticated administrators came to regard moral exhortation, or even appeals to enlightened self-interest in the form of wage incentives, as outmoded techniques of social discipline. They envisioned a change in the “quality of supervision,” described by Douglas MacGregor of MIT

in *The Human Side of Enterprise*—another study that has had enormous impact on managerial thought and practice—as a shift from an authoritarian style of control, relying on rewards and punishments, to a more “humanistic” style that treated the worker not as a child but as a partner in the enterprise and sought to give him a sense of belonging. Note the irony of this talk of “partnership.” The new style of management defined the worker (just as he was defined by the advertising industry) as a creature of impulse, shortsighted, irrational, incapable of understanding the conditions of his work or even of formulating an intelligent defense of his own interests. Drawing not only on their own experiments but also on a vast body of sociological and psychological theory, members of the new administrative elite replaced the direct supervision of the labor force with a far more subtle system of psychiatric observation. Observation, initially conceived as a means to more effective forms of supervision and control, became a means of control in its own right.

The systematic observation of symptomatic data, even before it became a technique of labor discipline and social control, had already come to serve as the basis of a new system of industrial recruitment, centered on the school. The modern system of public education, remodeled in accordance with the same principles of scientific management first perfected in industry, has replaced apprenticeship as the principal agency of training people for work. The transmission of skills is increasingly incidental to this training. The school habituates children to bureaucratic discipline and to the demands of group living, grades and sorts them by means of standardized tests, and selects some for professional and managerial careers while consigning the rest to manual labor. The subordination of academic instruction to testing and counseling suggests that “manpower selection” has become almost indistinguishable from social control—“adjustment to reality”—and that the school system constitutes part of a larger apparatus of counseling or resocialization intended to assign people to their appropriate social roles and to enable them to accept those roles with a minimum of emotional distress. This tutelary complex, which includes not only the school but also the juvenile court, the psychiatric clinic, the social-work agency, in short, the whole range of institutions operated by the “helping professions,” discourages the autonomous transfer of power from one generation to the next, mediates family relationships, and thus socializes the population to the demands of industrial life.

All these institutions operate according to the underlying principle that a willingness to cooperate with the proper authorities offers the best evidence of “adjustment” and the best hope of personal success, while a refusal to cooperate signifies the presence of “emotional problems” requiring more sustained thera-
Lasch / Democracy and Confidence

peutic attention. As an agency of manpower selection, the school system, supplemented by other tutelary agencies, serves as an effective device for rationing class privilege, as Christopher Jencks has pointed out, in a society that feels uneasy about privilege and wants to believe that people get ahead on merit alone. As an agency of social discipline, the school, together with other elements in the tutelary complex, both reflects and contributes to the shift from authoritative sanctions to psychological manipulation and surveillance—the redefinition of political authority in therapeutic terms—and to the rise of a professional and managerial elite that governs society not by upholding authoritative moral standards but by defining normal behavior and by invoking allegedly nonpunitive, psychiatric sanctions against deviance.

The extension of these techniques into the political realm transforms politics into another article of consumption. Here again, the emergence of new techniques of control and new styles of political leadership marks the growing influence of the managerial elite. One does not have to accept the thesis of a "managerial revolution" or a "new class" to acknowledge the force of Riesman's observation that the "bullet that killed McKinley marked the end of the days of explicit class leadership." Nineteenth-century politics, according to Riesman, turned on "easily moralized judgments of good and bad" and on "agreement between the leaders and led that the work sphere of life was dominant." Although the power of the ruling classes rested at bottom on force, they sought for the most part to govern through moral persuasion. They defended their leadership by appealing to a common fund of moral principles and to common standards of political justice. These ideals, of course, were open to conflicting interpretations, and the standards of right and wrong upheld by the governing classes—for example, the proposition that every man had a right to the fruits of his own labor—could be turned against the established order and made to serve as the basis of demands for its reformation or even its overthrow. But the bitterness of ideological conflicts in nineteenth-century politics itself testified to an underlying agreement about the nature of political discourse. All parties to these debates assumed that political actions had to be justified by an appeal to a body of moral principles accessible to human reason and subject to rational discussion. The idea that moral judgments are by definition subjective and therefore lie outside the realm of rational debate played little part in nineteenth-century politics.

Political leadership remained essentially the art of oratory: this explains the persistence of a classical and Renaissance tradition of humanistic education having as its object the training of the "good man skilled in public speaking," in

Cato's phrase. Quintilian's description of the orator, which retained consider­able influence among educators right down to the middle of the nineteenth century, envisioned the political leader as a "man who has added to extraordin­ary natural gifts a thorough mastery of all the fairest departments of knowledge," and who employed his skills in the "defense of the innocent, the repression of crime, the support of truth against falsehood in suits involving money," and in the still more important work of "guiding the people from the paths of error into better things." In the second half of the nineteenth century, the decline of the liberal arts college and the rise of the modern university, with its devotion to specialization, scientific research, professional training, and community service, already signaled the waning of an older tradition of statecraft and its replacement by a new science of administration. The founders of the university movement conceived of the new statesman as a professional administrator, skilled in the science of organization and management. The twen­tieth century added to his duties responsibility for crisis management, conflict resolution, and social pathology—the diagnosis and cure of anomie.

The growth of a professional civil service, the rise of regulatory commissions, the proliferation of governmental agencies, and the dominance of executive over legislative functions provide merely the most obvious examples of the shift from political to administrative control, in which issues allegedly too abstruse and technical for popular understanding fall under the control of professional experts. Governmental regulation of the economy has often been advocated with the explicit objective of insulating business and government against popular ignorance—as when George W. Perkins, one of the founders of Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive party and a leading champion of the regulatory commission, demanded that economic issues like tariffs and trusts be taken "out of politics," deplored the "shockingly incompetent manner in which our great business problems have been handled," and cited the "hullabaloo over the Sherman Law" as an example of the incompetence of politicians and their constituents. But even reforms intended to increase popular participation, such as the presidential primary, have had the opposite effect. Twentieth-century politics has come to consist more and more of the study and control of public opinion. The study of the "American voter" incorporates techniques first perfected in market research, where they served to identify the whims of the

“sovereign consumer.” In government as in industry, devices originally intended merely to register opinion—polls, samples, and balloting itself—now serve to manipulate opinion as well. They define a statistical norm, deviations from which become automatically suspect. They make it possible to exclude unpopular opinions from political discussion (just as unpopular wares are excluded from the supermarket) without any reference to their merits, simply on the basis of their demonstrated lack of appeal. By confronting the electorate with the narrow range of existing choices, they ratify those choices as the only ones capable of attracting support. Just as the interviews conducted at Hawthorne trivialized the workers' grievances, polls and surveys trivialize politics by reducing political choices to indistinguishable alternatives. In both cases, those in power invite popular “input” strictly on their own terms, under cover of scientific impartiality. The study of “voting behavior” becomes at the same time an important determinant of that behavior.

In industry, the exclusion of workers from control over the design of work went hand in hand with the rise of a new and profoundly undemocratic institution, the corporation, that has centralized the technical knowledge once administered by craftsmen. In politics, the exclusion of the public from political participation is bound up with the decline of a democratic institution, the political party, and its replacement by institutions less amenable to popular control. The policy-making function of the party has been taken over by the administrative bureaucracy; its educative function by the mass media. Political parties now specialize in marketing politicians for public consumption, and even here party discipline has broken down to a remarkable extent. The electorate is “no longer bound to party through the time-honored links of patronage and the machine,” as Walter Dean Burnham points out. As a result, politics has become an “item of luxury consumption . . . an indoor sport involving a host of discrete players rather than the teams of old.”

The decline of party loyalty, the prevalence of split-ticket and single-issue voting, the dissociation of presidential and congressional voting coalitions, and the stabilization of membership in the House (with an increasing proportion of incumbents regularly reelected and giving more attention to the requirements of reelection—to the immediate interests of a particular constituency—than to policy formation or even to the interests of the party as a whole) have created what Burnham calls an “institutional deadlock.” Many of President Carter's political troubles have reflected these underlying conditions, which are likely to confront future Presidents as well, even those who do not suffer so obviously from the stigma of being outsiders to the Washington political game. Given the

decomposition of party loyalty, the growing gap between Washington and the rest of the country, and the popular demand for presidential leadership that transcends party politics, the President has become an outsider almost by definition. The condition of standing to one side of the Washington scene, a disadvantage in governing, works to his advantage in political campaigns. The "future for policy-making," Burnham writes, thus "rests uneasily between the alternatives of reinforced institutional deadlock and of executive imposition of policy on the rest of the system." 8

The new machinery of social discipline, far from stabilizing the industrial system, has created a state of permanent crisis, which gives a certain plausibility to the claims of the crisis managers, to be sure, but at the same time makes the system more difficult to govern. Advanced industrial society appears at first sight to have achieved a highly efficient system of hierarchical control that approximates the benevolent totalitarianism predicted by Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and other prophets of a technological anti-utopia in the no longer distant future. The corporations, the military, and the bureaucratic state appear to constitute an interlocking, self-contained structure of power, impervious to criticism and change. The common people, effectively barred from decision making but diverted by an expanding array of consumer goods and consumer choices, accept their disfranchisement with few profound or searching complaints. The modern organization combines an unprecedented concentration of power with anonymity, a diffusion of responsibility that protects those in power from public accountability. Power exercised in the name of benevolence, moreover, escapes the check of legal safeguards designed to limit the powers of governments that confronted the citizen frankly as an adversary, not as a counselor and friendly helper.

This appearance of monolithic control is deceptive, however. The whole system depends on the illusion, even to some extent on the reality, of popular consent; and the illusion has begun to wear thin. The modern corporate state took shape as a compromise between traditionalism and revolution—between traditional forms of authority on the one hand, based on the family, the church, and the institution of absolute monarchy, and the all-powerful state on the other hand, the Jacobin or Stalinist dictatorship that extinguishes all trace of autonomous private initiative in the name of a higher historical necessity. The liberal state operates through indirect controls allegedly designed to protect private property and individual rights against encroachment by other citizens or by the state itself. It therefore has to maintain at least the appearance of political freedom and individual autonomy. Yet the effect of its discipline, as we have

change. Those movements, based on declining classes—artisans and yeomen—incorporated preindustrial traditions of work and preindustrial definitions of the political community, and they remained close enough to an earlier way of life to retain a vision of how society could be organized on principles completely alien to those of industrial capitalism. The strength of the labor movement in the 1870s and 1880s, writes Gregory S. Kealey in his study of the Toronto working class, “lay in the workers’ knowledge of a past that was totally different from their present. They knew that industrial capitalism was a social system with a history [and that] the economy had been, and thus could be, organized in radically different ways.”

Nineteenth-century artisans and farmers did not mindlessly reject machinery or seek to revive the preindustrial order, as legend has it, but neither did they accept the destruction of their way of life as a foregone conclusion, preordained by the march of historical progress. They grappled with the problem of how the advantages of modern technology might be combined with small-scale production and grass-roots political control. In the twentieth century, a new kind of Left emerged that dismissed as hopelessly reactionary their attachment to such “outmoded” institutions as the family farm. Both the Marxist Left and the non-Marxist Left—with a few important exceptions on either side—now embraced modern technology without reservations and sought merely to free it from capitalist constraints. If anything, non-Marxists like Edward Bellamy and Thorstein Veblen waxed even more lyrical about the wonders of technology than the advocates of “scientific” socialism. But Marxists too condemned the farmer’s devotion to his land, or the artisan’s devotion to his craft, as backward and “nostalgic.” It followed almost inevitably from these premises that such forms of false consciousness had to be forcibly eradicated by a radical vanguard of professional revolutionaries, enlightened engineers, and/or disinterested social planners. The elitism of the twentieth-century Left, Marxist and non-Marxist, grew out of its commitment to the dream of a society fully rationalized and integrated into a single productive machine—a vision resisted by those among whom the Left sought a following, hence one that had to be imposed on the masses by an intelligentsia in command of the underlying logic of historical progress.

In a review of Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*—a book that did so much to convert American intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the cause of social reform and also to identify socialism with centralization and state control—William Morris put his finger on the “unmixed modern” mentality, which conceives of the ideal society as “one great monopoly,” or again as a “huge standing army, tightly drilled” and chained to the

---

machines that have ostensibly liberated mankind from toil. Himself the product of another tradition prematurely discarded by the Left, the romantic critique of capitalism, Morris noted that Bellamy had "no idea beyond existence in a great city"—a "Boston beautified." Bellamy's Nationalist utopia represented the social vision "of the industrious professional middle-class men of to-day purified from their crime of complicity with the monopolist class, and become independent instead of being, as they now are, parasitical."11

The goal of social reconstruction, according to Morris, should have been not to replace human labor by labor-saving machines but to make work artistic and varied. Capitalism had debased the pleasure of creation by turning it into a wage relation, and a utopia based on equal pay for equal work merely carried the logic of capitalism to its conclusion. "If you are going to ask to be paid for the pleasure of creation," Morris wrote in News from Nowhere, "the next thing we shall hear of will be a bill sent in for the begetting of children."12 Unfortunately, Bellamy's militaristic and technocratic vision of the future left a much deeper imprint on the Left than that of Morris, easily dismissed as "anachronistic."13

The poverty of the progressive and socialist Left appears most clearly in its failure to criticize the industrial division of labor and its political consequences—the root cause of all those forms of misery and injustice that are peculiar to modern society. Far from criticizing the division of labor, the Left began to advocate its extension even into the domain of domestic life, the one area not yet completely assimilated to the standards of industrial production.

13 In his book on American progressivism, Daniel Aaron echoes the received wisdom when he dismisses Morris's utopia as "aristocratic." (Men of Good Hope [New York: Oxford University Press, 1961], p. 126.) In fact, Morris was a socialist, a revolutionary socialist at that, and he wrote News from Nowhere (in reply to Bellamy) during the same period of his life in which he was pointing out that Fabian socialism would contribute to the solidification of capitalist control. But, of course, it was not his kind of socialism that finally prevailed, but "scientific" socialism, whether in the form of Fabianism, Leninism, or Bellamy's Nationalism, movements radically different in some respects but similar in their central assumptions and in the elitist political strategies to which those assumptions led. Even E. P. Thompson has to go to great lengths to prove that News from Nowhere—to which he devotes only a couple of paragraphs in a book of nine hundred pages—embodied a certifiably scientific brand of utopian thinking. Thompson's retraction of this interpretation, in the new edition of his biography of Morris, should be required reading for the Left, not only because it shows Thompson at his best, but also because it exposes so clearly the tyranny formerly exercised by Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, even over a writer temperamentally drawn to Morris and to the romantic critique of industrial capitalism but capable of dealing with Morris, in the mid-'30s just before his own break with the Communist Party, only by trying to assimilate Morris to the Leninist tradition. (E. P. Thompson, William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary [New York: Pantheon, 1976], pp. 763-810.)
Thus the socialist (Bellamite) feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman called, in
effect, for the application of scientific management to the home. I bring up her
arguments not in order to belabor feminism, which is profoundly anti-
technocratic when it becomes truly radical, but to show how completely the
socialist Left has assimilated the underlying principles of the social order it
claims to criticize. According to Marxist tradition, the destruction of the ties of
home and neighborhood (a painful but historically necessary process) would
emancipate the proletariat from “rural idiocy.” The results do not seem to have
borne out this sanguine view of the industrial revolution.

“Cooking is a matter of law,” said Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “not the
harmless play of fancy. Architecture might be more sportive and varied if every
man built his own house, but it would not be the art and science that we have
made it; and while every woman prepared food for her own family, cooking can
never rise beyond the level of the amateur’s work.” Here is the pure gospel of
modernism. Like other household tasks, the “selection and preparation of food
should be in the hands of trained experts,” according to Gilman; nor did she
hesitate to extend the same reasoning to motherhood itself.14

This program, which it is hardly necessary to add still commands
widespread support among socialists, exemplifies the poverty of the moderniz­
ing Left and its failure to offer an alternative to industrial capitalism. The
development of a democratic Left in the 1980s depends first of all on the
recognition that when the worker forgot how to build his own house, and his
wife forgot how to cook, they lost control over much else besides. Now that the
machine technology that replaced architectural and culinary craftsmanship has
proven to be not only inhumane but intolerably inefficient as well, the fatal
weaknesses in the modernist tradition stand fully exposed. Just as the tech­
nology of housekeeping and motherhood has turned its back on the household
arts of an earlier day—thereby making women less capable of providing for their
families at the same time that it raises the cost of housekeeping, floods the
market with adulterated and poisonous products, and generally depresses the
standard of living—so modern architecture has replaced craftsmanship with
prefabricated steel and glass, repudiating as a grotesque example of rural idiocy
the idea that “architecture might be more sportive and varied if every man built
his own house.” It is no longer any secret (thanks to Lewis Mumford, Jane
Jacobs, Paul and Percival Goodman, Peter Blake, Moshe Safdie, and other
critics of modernism) that such an architecture has made cities boring,
monotonous, unconvivial, and finally even unsafe, since the absence of street
life and the rigorous separation of working and living quarters create vacant

14 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Women and Economics (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1900),
pp. 231, 237.
spaces ideal for mugging and murder. The high-rise offices and apartment buildings that turn their backs on the street—human filing cases, as Mumford has called them—exemplify in the most palpable form the bankruptcy of the technocratic “city of the future.” Yet the underlying principles of industrial civilization—the separation of planning from the execution of tasks, of living from working, of expertise from experience—continue to find almost automatic acceptance, even by the Left, as part of the inexorable march of historical progress. Anyone who calls these principles into question is accused of wanting to turn back the clock to the days of cottage industry. But what if industrial civilization should prove to have been itself an aberration in the course of history, not its climax? Future developments may show that industrialism was a step fundamentally in the wrong direction, the mounting costs of which mankind can no longer afford. Is it still too soon to consider how some of our mistakes might be undone?

In arguing that the modern development of industry—the modern division of labor—has destroyed both craftsmanship and ordinary know-how (both true professionalism and amateurism), made people dangerously dependent on experts (while reducing the experts themselves to semiliteracy), centralized political and economic power, and created an energy-wasteful and environmentally destructive technology, I have said nothing new. A long line of critics have made us familiar with this indictment of modern society. But the point that should invite second thoughts on the Left is that few of those critics are socialists or radicals in the accepted sense of the word, and some of them, in fact, are out-and-out conservatives. Why is it that we so often have to turn to the Right for the most penetrating criticisms of modern life? Why has the Left found so little to say against capitalism beyond what was said long ago by Marx and Engels? Not only has the twentieth-century Left added very little to the Marxian analysis of capitalism, it has clung to those elements in the socialist tradition that are hopelessly dated or were dubious to start with. It is essential for people on the Left to understand that the arguments I have outlined here—arguments for which I claim little originality, some of which derive from conservative thinkers, some from a structuralist critique of the tutelary complex, some from anarchists, and some from a few independent-minded Marxists, whose ideas are more subversive than they realize—cut sharply across the grain of progressive, Marxist, enlightened modern thought. The critical reinterpretation of modern technology, professionalism, and expertise, and of the new system of social control with which they are bound up, suggests the conclusion, among others, that Marx's own faith in the historically progressive character of the industrial revolution, like that of his followers, may have been fundamentally misguided. Recent interpretations of working-class history, by showing how working-class radicalism in the nineteenth century drew not so much on factory experience as
The Current Crisis

on earlier traditions of solidarity and political republicanism, point to a similar conclusion. It appears that the modern factory system, instead of serving as the nursery of working-class revolution, has proved instead to be its burial ground.

A radical movement capable of offering a democratic alternative to corporate capitalism will have to draw on traditions that have been dismissed or despised by twentieth-century progressives and only recently resurrected both by scholars and by environmentalists, community organizers, and other activists. It will have to stand for the nurture of the soil against the exploitation of natural resources, the family against the factory, the romantic vision of the individual against the technological vision, localism over democratic centralism. Such a radicalism would deserve the allegiance of all true democrats.
Democracy is something most people feel they can experience at close range. But, over generations, we have developed very abstract ways of talking and thinking about political experience, and these abstractions now conceal much of the social reality we believe we are talking and thinking about. These abstractions have intense emotional value for everyone throughout the world. They are, primarily, “capitalist” or “Marxist” abstractions, and people feel deeply that one or the other describes modes of behavior that are essential to the achievement of a decent social order. The “free market” and the “free market place of ideas” are as legitimizing for many millions of people as the “free society of the associated producers” and “egalitarian social relations” are for other millions. Most important of all, when we commit political error, as we seem habitually to do, our abstractions console us by reminding us that we are, despite temporary setbacks, still on the road to the good society. Modern political language is an essential part of the structure of modern morale. We therefore hang on grimly to the mental images that confine us, with the result that, though we talk about democracy all the time, we really don’t know very much about it.

Because we know so little about democracy in our own time, we do not know how to go about locating it in the human past. We thus deprive ourselves of historical examples of human striving toward what we seek. Because the
The Current Crisis

democratic heritage is so remarkably misunderstood, each new generation of in­
cipient democrats finds itself beginning its social journey from, so to speak, square one. Our systematic and sophisticated ways of misreading our own past have led directly to the crisis of modern political immobility. We are trapped, not so much by our past failures, as by our need to justify those failures, and by an underlying need to create modes of analysis that legitimize our justifications.

It is essential to reflect upon the ways we Americans have taught ourselves to think about social and political realities, for example, the Idea of Democracy. The capitalized words reflect the intuition that democracy can be thought about and described most easily when viewed with sweep—that is, not at close range, but from afar. The result of this conceptual distancing is the production of a disembodied political language in which actual people simply disappear from view.

Without going into great detail on the subject—it having been well ad­dressed by others—it is helpful to note that the assumptions we bring to these questions are grounded in our now largely unconscious acceptance of the idea of progress. It is the emotional engine that drives the ideological trains of modern capitalism and Marxism. Indeed, the idea of progress is now so much a part of our outlook that we underestimate how abstract the idea really is, and yet our psychological and ideological investment in it is so great that we stubbornly ig­nore the mounting evidence against it. We take it for granted that our political system has developed so far beyond previous American experience and understand­ing that we have nothing to learn from reflecting upon the past.

Given the historical evidence that human beings have accumulated, at great cost, in the twentieth century, it now seems possible to offer a direct counter­premise to the idea of progress: societies based on large-unit production have a verifiable historical tendency to become increasingly more hierarchical over time. Supporting evidence is so pervasive that this may now be taken as a law.

Unfortunately, the psychological evasions embedded in capitalist and Marxist thought have made it difficult for people to imagine what to do about their confinement within prevailing twentieth-century hierarchies. Sophisticated modes of narrowness contribute decisively to this helplessness. Consider the national economy, for example. Because economic decision mak­ing in industrial societies takes place within a presumed context of efficiency rather than one of equity, we have, relatively speaking, an efficient economic order that, by democratic standards, works very badly. While our economists debate ways to make it work more efficiently, democratic criteria are not con­sidered germane to the discussion. Whatever the merits of the current debate between Milton Friedman and his liberal critics, the essential point is that both accept authoritarian production relations, substantial permanent unemploy­ment, and gross permanent inequity as unavoidable components of the
American social system. That is to say, what they share is something very modern: a sophisticated capacity to use science to be resigned in the face of unpleasant historical facts.

Marxists see this ideological element in bourgeois economics, but are helpless to explain the direction taken historically by their own economic organizations. This history can be swiftly summarized: all power to the soviets of workers and peasants, became all power to the party, became all power to the central committee. The Gulags necessarily expanded, as the circle of democratic possibility contracted. The law of organizational hierarchy may be seen to be universal, encompassing rival ideologies effortlessly.

It is axiomatic that human beings cannot create a society they cannot imagine. Have we imagined democracy? I would say, in broad terms, “Adequately.” Have we imagined how we could achieve it? Here, I would say, “Much less than we think.” It is apparent, for example, that we have conceptualized a place “where all men are created equal.” We have capitalized and counterposed Liberty and Equality, conjuring up a meritocracy in an effort to bridge the rough places of conjunction. As is often told, Adam Smith and his contemporaries and disciples, concerned with the burdens of unshackling the race from the cultural confines of feudal privilege, extolled the liberating qualities of the unseen hand of the market. When, rather quickly as it turned out, the hand itself not only became visible, but was seen to promote privilege and exploitation that fashioned new forms of constraint unimagined under feudalism, another vision of a mass democracy—the exploited proletariat—came into being. Upon discovering the teeming industrial masses, we analyzed the social relations of production, and thereupon imagined a society governed by the “associated producers.”

Offered as intellectual propositions, advanced in reasoned argument, and resting their moral appeal on a particularized interpretation of the idea of democracy, Marxism and liberalism both have relied on abstract descriptions of human societies that have the effect of concealing a central political fact: namely, that the role in the new order of things to be played by the democratic polity—the citizenry—was to be a minimal one. Though we have developed many ways to hide from it, the historical record of both capitalist and socialist regimes over the past two centuries has made this circumstance transparent to anyone who cares to look. Large numbers of people have been permitted and even encouraged to participate in moments of historic democratic breakthrough, but they have subsequently been excluded from shaping their own social relations in the new “democratic” society that emerged.

Consider the capitalist case. Though the classical economists and their Lockeian advance men sought to hasten the passing of feudal forms by prevail-
The Current Crisis

ing in reasoned argument, in point of fact, the functionaries of the new capitalist order took power by mobilizing populations to social protest and armed combat. They decided the matter with guns. But in America, precisely who "they" were became obscured by layers of mystifying historical literature that blurred the identities of the specific historical actors engaged in bringing "freedom and democracy" to the revolutionary colonies. The result, two-hundred years after the fact, is that we are quite unclear about who made our revolution, and in behalf of what ideas, and who and what ideas were defeated in that struggle. It will require a certain measure of demystification to fix the visible connections; it is a most essential task, one that bears directly on our present circumstances.

It is first necessary to observe that Americans have been taught to understand their own founding moment as an abstract event. An abstract entity, called "the people," made the revolution in conjunction with a second entity, called the "Founding Fathers." We are not dealing with fine points of scholarly research; we are dealing with cultural memory—with what we "know" of the American Revolution because it was taught to us in grammar school.

The Founding Fathers, then—as memory. They include the good democratic radicals—Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Jefferson, as well as the good democratic conservatives—Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington. Collectively, "the people" and the "Founding Fathers" orchestrated the events of the revolution: the Declaration, the Constitution, The Federalist papers, and an epic moment of victory at Yorktown, sometime after a winter of discontent. These jumbled images constitute the adult memory, though there are additional schoolday stories now largely forgotten—stories for the young about Nathan Hale, Paul Revere, Benedict Arnold, and Valley Forge. Considered as a whole this swirl of people and events becomes a dim, romantic blur that somehow adheres hazily to the idea of democracy.

In pursuing our assessment of democracy in the modern world, it will be necessary shortly to return to this founding moment and to this most central of American social myths, but, for the present, it is sufficient to observe that, as a cultural "truth," we have been instructed to remember that the American revolutionaries achieved a relative unanimity among themselves, and forthwith formed "the American democracy." (The "Tories," of course, excluded themselves from the favored circle.) As to who made the revolution, the verdict is that everyone did. What needs to be stressed is that through this mode of political description, and through this means of creating an American memory of the nation's primal moment, the tactical and theoretical dilemmas of how to achieve democracy never really became a central focus of debate in the mainstream of American culture. It is, after all, unnecessary to explore for answers to problems that have already been solved. How to achieve democracy is therefore not a
question modern Americans ask themselves; rather, we seek to improve the democracy we already have.

We shall return to the mystique of the bourgeois democratic revolution, but for the moment, let us briefly examine the "other" democratic revolution, the socialist one. The relevant point here, I believe, is that Marx filled the tactical lacuna of how to make a democratic society much less fully than most of his modern admirers and detractors suppose. Indeed, Marx's lack of theoretical preoccupation with the specific human process of democratic social transformation may be taken as a product of his belief in the historic inevitability of it all. The revolution of the "associated producers" would come as a "burst" that sundered the old order. As the evocative, but tactically opaque, phrase went: "The expropriators are expropriated!

As it turned out, the bastions of capitalism, guarded by increasingly well-trained police forces and armies, did not crumble. Marx's disciples learned in Paris in the 1870s and elsewhere over the next two generations the practical limits of ideological exhortation. It was left to Lenin to provide the practical answer that has come to dominate the socialist world down to our time: a tightly organized vanguard party of dedicated professionals, trained to seize the revolution at any moment. Human actors are at least in view, though unfortunately, in rather small and highly select numbers. Be that as it may, like their capitalist predecessors, Marxists came to power and declared the result to be founded on the "real" will of the people. All subsequent construction could now proceed from a theoretically valid social base, one already in place.

The presumption that fundamental democratic preconditions have been fulfilled is thus a feature of both Marxist-Leninism and bourgeois liberalism. Therefore, there is no need to ponder how to create democratic societies, it is sufficient to generate refinements within the framework of these inherited democratic achievements.

This is where we are. We have engaged in democratic speculation, but we have essentially bypassed, as objects of theoretical and tactical discussion, the problem of how to actually construct a democratic order. We have tended to ignore the concreteness of this problem for two reasons: because of our assumption, traceable to the Idea of Progress, that we have already traveled much of the distance, and by our development of languages of political description that leave out most of the human race.

To those who do not find capitalist social relations intrinsically diminishing to the human species, adequate improvement, we are told, can be anticipated through the established mechanisms of the received political culture. Thus, we can debate whether the Democratic or Republican party is the proper mechanism of social reform, satisfying ourselves that the resulting contest is "politics." In the meantime, corporate domination of both major parties and of the polit-
ical process itself can be construed as pluralism. The corporate shape of foreign policy can be justified as a defense of freedom. Corporate domination of the range of permissible political discussion can be understood to be "balanced" by public opinion—although it is never explained how public opinion gains autonomy from the surrounding corporate culture itself. On those many occasions when proper "balance" is not forthcoming, the modern psychology of mass behavior can be invoked, and the preoccupations of the "me generation" can be lamented. The corporate invasion of the universities and of the disciplines of social and scientific inquiry can be explained as benign philanthropy, or passed over as a subject too complex for popular discussion. Corporate shaping of the frames of reference within which print and electronic journalists operate is understood to be minimized by the constitutional guarantees of the first amendment; meanwhile, sensitive reporters repress the thought that the free press they work for is not corporate-dominated, but is itself corporate.

For all those who are not persuaded by the apologetics of pluralism, there is the opposing conception of political activity as an abstractly defined kind of class struggle. Approved participants—industrial workers, certainly, and landless agricultural workers, conceivably—can be recruited to this historic task, but unsanctioned participants—the bourgeoisie, reformist workers, and entrepreneurial farmers—are to be guarded against. One is asked to understand that an elite vanguard party, subject to intermittent purges, will do the guarding. Stalinism can be grasped as a transitory aberration. Secret police and their political prisons, admittedly not so transitory, can be most easily handled by unblinking analyses of some of the activities of the CIA. The destruction of art and literature and the crushing of civil liberties can be understood as an excess of historically mandated progressive administration.

I would suggest that the 200-year history of the industrial era points rather starkly to the conclusion that though we can imagine democratic social relationships, we are baffled by the task of finding concrete ways to proceed from where we are to where we wish to be. Mainstream bourgeois and Marxist theories endure essentially as religious faiths, to tide us over our bafflement. The contradictions embedded in each would surface for all to see if the mass of people—in the flesh rather than abstractly—were vital to either. Rhetorical habits, long ingrained, obscure the antidemocratic features of both traditions.

Let us turn, then, to this question of what can be done. And let us recognize at the outset that it was specifically Lenin's question, addressed in a work entitled, appropriately enough, *What Is to Be Done?* We have been living with his answer ever since. Indeed, Lenin's vanguard formula, both for those who approve of it and those who are appalled by it, has taken up a great deal of space in
our imagination. So much so, in fact, that, in one decisive sense, twentieth-cen-
tury people have been forced to participate in what can be taken as a Leninist
approach to politics and society. In this one sense, capitalist and socialist archi-
tects have managed to create a worldwide Leninist paradigm, and now argue
with each other within its framework. The one seminal feature of this shared
approach is impatience with mass human performance. It is the absolute pre-
condition for the intellectual justification of rule by experts.

The starting point for democratic theory turns on the relationship of ends
and means: it is unreasonable to expect a revolutionary regime in power to
behave in ways that are more democratic than the theories of politics, and the
social relations, generated within the insurgent movement that brought that
regime to power. Authoritarian elements that emerge within the ruling
institutions of a regime are the empowered forms of similar ingredients present
in the earlier insurgent movement that created that regime. I know of no
exceptions in human history to this causal relationship.

The implications of this premise are large. In excluding the population
from decision making, the Leninist approach reveals itself as inherently authori-
tarian in its very formulation. For reasons having to do with the historical asso-
ciation of capitalism with liberalism, the elite formations of capitalism have had
to function under nominally democratic ground rules. Accordingly, the corpo-
rate hierarchy is impelled by self-interest to depoliticize the electorate, to block it
off from effective access to decision making, to purchase the party system, to
exploit while weakening the parliamentary process, and, eventually, to sponsor
the creation and sanctioning of cultural norms that legitimate the achieved proce-
dures as "democratic." All of these things have long since transpired in America.

The only democratic counterforce to vanguard politics or to corporate pol-
itics is a politically democratic presence in society—that is, some kind of empow-
ered, and democratic, polity. Such an organized democratic presence is quite lit-
erally the most fundamental threat conceivable to the continuing dominance of
corporate or vanguard elites. The historical evidence is conclusive that both will,
when confronted with even the apparent beginnings of an autonomous demo-
cratic presence, move promptly to destroy it, divert it, buy it, or try in any way to
gain effective control over it.

For democratic social relations to materialize—that is, to materialize
among human beings rather than as a theoretical abstraction—these relations
must develop first within a group of associated people. This incipient "move-
ment" must grow into a mass movement—to the point that it eventually achieves
state power. Internal democratic social relations must be maintained in the proc-
ess, must literally exist as a cultural form that spreads as the movement expands.
This, then, is the relevant circumference of modern politics.

It may be noted at the outset that the creation of mass democratic move-
ments as the essential prerequisite to the creation of mass democratic societies was not a Marxist preoccupation, nor a Leninist one, nor within the interests of the classical economists. The matter was not central to the politics of the American Revolution, though people like Daniel Shays in Massachusetts, and the Regulators in North Carolina, acted as if they thought it were. Similarly, no theory of mass democratic movement-building undergirded the French Revolution, the failed bourgeois revolutions of 1848 in Europe, or the construction of the major working-class institutions that subsequently materialized in western Europe and the United States. There were individual persons, and even groups of persons, participating in a number of these historical moments who nursed certain highly relevant democratic intentions, but the movements themselves proceeded from other conceptual principles of organization and function. Some of them contained elements of a popular base, sometimes substantial elements, but they simply were not conceptualized as, and did not function as, mass democratic structures.

The heritage of democratic movement-building is quite meager.

The initial task of persuasion, then, is to gain agreement that the sole relevant form of democratic politics is to create and maintain mass democratic structures that can bring an authentic democratic presence to bear on the hierarchical political inheritance.

So tentative is our grasp of mass democratic movement-building that we have little experiential knowledge to bring to bear on a whole host of practical questions. What is a democratic movement, how is one built, how is it preserved against its myriad opponents, and, above all, how does it maintain its egalitarian momentum as it struggles to bring into being an authentic democratic culture?

If one thing is clear after two centuries of industrial politics, it is that mass democratic movements happen only when specific instruments of recruitment are fashioned. The stages of development, both in numbers of recruits and the level of political consciousness the recruits attain, unfold slowly, which is why the building of democratic movements requires patience above all.

Here we have come upon a cornerstone of democratic theory. Human beings organized into a democratic movement, and striving cooperatively to challenge one or more unjust features of the received hierarchical order, discover in the ensuing struggle a number of exploitative qualities about that hierarchy that they did not previously grasp. This discovery is a collective experience of the movement’s participants, a shared heightening of political consciousness that, in setting them off from their nonmovement fellow citizens in the larger society, alters (by emotionally improving) their interior social relations within
the movement. This is to say merely that they perceive more clearly their collective—and now overtly political—relationship to the existing social order that confines them.

What is being described is a public coalescing of a certain kind of positive human energy, a development that encourages individual hope and facilitates collective striving. This shared perception of social possibility among many people, one that is a product of a shared experience within a voluntary and cooperative effort, may be characterized as the way we are when we are at our best, when we have hope, when we have attained a modicum of self-respect, and have a vision of even greater self-respect. It is a sense of possibility that occurs when people have been encouraged by their own initial experience in collective effort, and by the corroborating and enhancing knowledge that one is not alone, that many others are sharing in the same transforming sense of political possibility. At such moments in human history, things can happen. We are dealing here with mass democratic empowerment. Specifically, we are dealing concretely with some of the ingredients of cultural transformation, and with some of the prerequisites to the achievement of a democratic social environment.

There are other stages in this sequential evolution of a democratic movement culture, as well as gradations of sentimentalism and/or Realpolitik within each stage, but the development itself requires more precise definition of its components. The process of constructing a democracy can perhaps most easily be conveyed by recourse to a metaphor. An appropriate one is hard to formulate. In one sense, the process can be likened to a tall ladder, a very tall ladder, that has to be constructed by those attempting to climb it. The rungs of the ladder can be understood symbolically as sequential levels of popular awareness of "what is to be done." The ladder is not prefabricated; the rungs are not in place at the start of construction. If this is to be a democratic building project, the rungs have to be grasped by the carpenters; their functions must be understood, and they must then be set in place by the people who intend to use them. "Scientific" abstractions aside, "consciousness" is something that develops in human beings one step at a time. The ladder must be ascended, then, one step at a time. Patiently. One cannot construct what one cannot imagine.

Movements can fail because their organizers ask too much of them too soon, as happens when highly conscious theorists, standing on, say, rung 25 in their awareness of the authoritarian culture of the modern world, ask the movement's people, located around the vicinity of rung 10, to proceed forthwith to rung 26. "Vanguard" theorists have a habit of doing this. Indeed, the error is built into the vanguard theory itself. Bold leaps forward—and especially "great leaps forward"—are almost always fatal; if the movement's spokesmen themselves do not misstep and fall to the ground, most of the rank-and-file certainly
The Current Crisis

will. To reach this conclusion is not to be condescending toward the general populace, but rather to engage in a democratic acceptance of the integrity of abused people in being where they are. This is democratic patience.

Movements can also fail because their spokesmen decide—in order, for example, to settle a strike or to prevail at the next election—to ask the rank-and-file to descend below levels already attained. The American political system routinely functions this way. These retreats from levels only reached arduously are almost always destructive to mass morale, and morale is an absolutely essential component of the social energy that fuels democratic (i.e., voluntary) movements.

These sundry requirements are patently unfair, it would seem. Movements must develop neither too rapidly, nor too slowly, their elected spokesmen must neither lead too zealously nor ever stop to rest, and rung placement and rung climbing must be steady and relentless, lest the oncoming mass of would-be carpenters ceases to grow in political consciousness beyond the prevailing level of social awareness they brought with them originally. To say the least, this litany of performance asks a great deal of mere mortals—of theorists, strategists, tacticians and humanity generally. Clearly too much! Far simpler to conceptualize a vanguard party, or an invisible hand guiding a rational market.

Precisely. The difficulty of the task helps explain why it has yet to happen in human history. Upon closer examination, the metaphor of the ladder, while providing a measure of clarity about the sequential dynamics of democratic social construction, is too mechanistic to convey the experimental quality of building mass movements and of political consciousness as an aspect of human intelligence. In the most practical terms, what we are dealing with here is human perception of social possibility, as distinct from simple perceptions of justice. Unjust social conditions have existed throughout history and masses of people have been quite adequately aware of their own victimization—indeed, to an extent that only the most alert elites have even suspected. But “awareness” is a passive condition, one necessary as a precursor to democratic activity, but not one inherently active in itself. In consequence, victimized people have suffered silently throughout history—grudgingly, resignedly, perhaps deferentially, perhaps cynically, but, in whatever style, in a state of political acceptance rather than one of active insurgency. Established regimes invest a great deal of energy in encouraging this passivity, by instructing the lower orders in deference, by intimidating them with police and prisons, and, most effectively of all, by developing cultural norms that make mass democratic experience difficult for the citizenry to imagine.

How, then, is it possible to overcome this multiplicity of inherited social forms? To begin the process, the first requirement is the achievement of a certain measure of individual self-respect: the simple ability to say “no” to one or more
forms of the received culture and to propose an alternative. Individuals who achieve this capability not only are the ones who initiate political movements, they transparently are the only people who can. Throughout history, their shared problem has been one of recruitment. Their task demands that they find a way to instill mass hope where weariness lives, to generate self-respect where deference reigns, to stimulate conscious action where resignation prevails. The problems of recruitment, practical as well as theoretical, are enormous; it is sufficient for our purposes to note that the entire subject has received much less attention than we assume it has and, as a result, we know far less about it than we think we do. A number of rather simplistic assumptions conceal our ignorance, or our faith. People are presumed to rise in insurgency “when times are hard,” and badly isolated vanguard functionaries are consoled by the knowledge that their moment will come “when the people rise.” What speculative literature we have on the subject is riddled with quasi-religious tautologies of this kind. Unfortunately, for most human beings over the centuries, times have routinely been “hard,” but this circumstance has been insufficient, in itself, to generate mass efforts for social change.

Perhaps the most enduring misapprehension among activist-intellectuals is that people cannot be expected to act “intelligently” until after they have achieved a proper level of “ideological consciousness.” Under this prescription, political “organizing” is perceived to be essentially a matter of tutorial education. “The masses,” or at least literate sectors, can be induced to read approved works. For the more energetic, the “propaganda of the deed” offers activists a means of teaching through spectacular public acts of display or terrorism. Such endeavors are presumed to help engender in the observing populace the level of consciousness that then, and only then, permits “real mass organizing” to begin.

As an aspect of political science, “recruitment” thus comes down to us in our time as a topic that is imbued with the essential qualities of pregnancy: the citizenry either is, or is not, capable of being fertilized, and genuine political life begins only after an embryo has consciously, very consciously, “seen” the light of day. Since most people have not “seen” it, movements are hopeless, or, at best, almost hopeless. Our penchant for viewing human society in this way accounts in part for the widespread political resignation that is such a notable feature of contemporary life in America.

Mass democratic recruitment manifestly is no simple task, but it is not beyond human achievement. Rather, such historical evidence as we have indicates that movements begin when unresigned and self-respecting activists find a way to connect with people as they are in society, that is to say, in a state that sophisticated modern observers are inclined to regard as one of “inadequate consciousness.”

Since humanity is routinely in a state of political longing, and thus in a state
of incipient insurgency, human beings are forever starting local movements of one kind or another. But since they necessarily function under the sundry constraints I have outlined, they clearly need some sort of early institutional success. If movements do not achieve it, as most do not, they die. In historical terms, most incipient movements collapse in such early obscurity that subsequent generations of observers are unaware that they ever existed.

There are three important moments of democratic movement-building in American history that provide concrete guidance about the process itself. They are the Massachusetts "Regulation" during the American Revolution, the Populist rural mobilization of the 1880s and 1890s, and the sit-down strikes of the 1930s that led to the partial organization of the industrial working class. We shall examine the earliest of these shortly. The other two can be briefly examined as a unit, for they shared a common characteristic—a searing collective experience that heightened the consciousness of the participants. For the Populists, mass recruitment was made possible by the development of a plan of cooperative marketing and purchasing. Unpoliticized farmers were recruited to the basic Populist institution—the National Farmers Alliance—because these recruits wished to participate in the Alliance cooperative. The subsequent experience of these farmers, as they labored to make their co-ops functional in the face of implacable banker, railroad, and merchant opposition, had a transforming political impact upon them. They learned to perceive the coercive elements of commercial exchange embedded in the structure of the emerging corporate system. This insight in itself did not insure political insurgency—the Alliance was not structurally geared for insurgent politics—but the experience did bring the farmers to a level of consciousness that facilitated the creation of a new democratic political institution, the People's Party. The "Agrarian Revolt" in America was a sequential process that began when ordinary people, their traditional political beliefs intact, were recruited to a collective effort. Subsequent successes in their cooperatives helped engender a collective self-confidence that overcame inherited patterns of deference and resignation. Many things were possible after that stage was reached.

Meanwhile, efforts to organize the urban work force foundered for over a half century following industrialization in America. Workers repeatedly organized themselves to form unions, but continually lost the pivotal recognition strikes that would have insured a continuing institutional shelter for their collective efforts. The problem was a tactical one, namely the ability of corporate managers, supported by court injunctions, the National Guard, and the Pinkertons to immobilize the picket line and hire strikebreakers. Not much could subsequently be done to heighten political consciousness among the workers when...
they did not have an institutional forum of their own. The story of the organization of the sit-down strike at the huge General Motors facility at Flint, Michigan in 1936—a story that is too complex to relate here—is, like the Populist experience, one that is grounded in the achievement of sequential levels of both organizational development and a corresponding development of rank-and-file consciousness. Here, too, the dynamics of democratic political development describe a sequential process of movement-building.

With this perspective as a guide, let us take a closer look at the third (and earliest) of these three movements, the Massachusetts “Regulation.” It came at the nation’s primal moment, when the American political ethos was originally being shaped during the revolutionary struggle. One caveat: viewing “history” or “politics” through the window of democratic social construction changes all that one sees; it alters our understanding of democratic striving in human history. Among others, the “Founding Fathers” will not look the same.

Adopting the democratic perspective, let us look at the formative moment in the early republic when “Shays’s Rebellion” erupted.

We might begin by training our democratic lens upon that symbol of revolutionary ardor, Samuel Adams. To a royal governor such as Thomas Hutchinson, Sam Adams had seemed on the eve of the revolution to be an insufferable “incendiary,” bent upon manipulating “the lower part of the people” into a political “mob.” Things had reached such a state that the common people were no longer even being respectful of their betters on the streets of Boston. “It is,” sighed the outraged and depressed Hutchinson, “more than I can bear.” When revolutions are successful, officious agitators like Samuel Adams naturally gain considerably in stature; after the war, he became one of those to be courted by the new democratic Commonwealth of Massachusetts. And courted he was—by the new merchant aristocracy that took effective control of state affairs. Rather quickly, for a firebrand, Adams became deeply concerned about what he called “the dignity of government.”

Let us inspect the new environment in which Samuel Adams moved. The merchant peers were able to flourish, despite the self-serving and highly exploitative monetary and taxation system they created—systems that promptly plunged large sectors of the state’s farming population into crippling debt. The seaboard merchants, who had taken pains to become holders of virtually all the massively depreciated wartime bonds extant, wanted this near worthless “continental paper” redeemed at par. They initiated a combined financial system of high taxes and tight money that wrecked the agricultural economy, opened up promising opportunities for land speculation, and gained them windfall profits. The tax burden, payable only in specie, was steeply regressive. It fell very heavily upon farmers, only lightly upon holders of stocks and bonds. Foreclosed farmsteads, brokered for taxes at sheriffs’ auctions, were soon available to specula-
tors at one-third to one-tenth value. The principal instruments of enforcement of the new financial system were cooperating judges who foreclosed farms and ordered farmers to jail for what today would be considered trifling debts. Indeed, with money so scarce it had almost disappeared from circulation in the agricultural districts, court actions for debt reached astonishing proportions. In some rural counties, as many as 800 farmers were haled before magistrates—a total that represented heads of households of a majority of the agricultural population! Throughout the period of enforcement, merchants held tightly to their wartime bonds in anticipation of handsome profits.

Needless to say, the full dimensions of the emerging economic power relationships provided a somewhat different perspective on the new democracy than most of the farmers had anticipated when they marched in the revolutionary armies. Some debtors drew the economic connections and indignantly pointed out that the oppressions of the newly arrived merchant commonwealth far exceeded those of the departed royal colony.

So began, with impressive democratic patience, considering the circumstances, the series of escalating agrarian political actions aimed at merchants and their judicial allies that became known as the "Regulation."

Mass democratic organization began in the countryside. As dockets burgeoned with debt litigation and foreclosures, crowds of cooperating farmers, bearing agreed-upon agendas for political action, began descending on court sessions; their massed presence caught the judges' attention and slowed the legal machinery considerably. Meanwhile, agrarian mass meetings of organized Regulators not only condemned the tax and currency procedures, but proposed a wholesale democratic restructuring of both. When the legislature continued to balk, the chorus of dissent grew louder, the organizational and communication network expanded, and the movement grew. In the process, it seems that Massachusetts farmers became remarkably well informed. They fashioned their own internal network of communications, and they were able to see through, and ignore, much unsolicited advice that emanated from the commercial press of Massachusetts. Let us take note of this: masses of people had constructed their own autonomous sources of information and were acting politically on the basis of their own conclusions. Self-evidently, central ingredients of a democratic society had appeared in the new nation.

Let us now endeavor to place Samuel Adams within this expanding dynamic of a developing democratic culture. His response to the upsurge of popular energy among Massachusetts people revealed the transformation of his prerevolutionary outlook caused by his associations with the world of Boston commerce. To Adams, the farmers of the Regulation appeared "to view themselves as [of] equal if not better standing than the legislature." But when this assessment failed to instruct the agrarian upstarts, Adams reached a conclusion
that involved a fine democratic distinction: "In monarchy the crime of treason may admit of being pardoned, or lightly punished, but the man who dares rebel against the laws of the republic ought to suffer death." Samuel Adams was a revolutionary, but it is clear that he had only a truncated understanding of a democratic society and how to achieve one.

The Regulation had brought the very economic ground rules of the new society under democratic review. In question was the range of permissible modes of fortune seeking—that is, at issue were the prerogatives of commercial elites in harnessing governmental tax and monetary authorities to private, exploitative, and transparently undemocratic purposes. Too much popular democracy patently limited merchant-inspired attempts to sanction these new departures. Given the stakes involved, it is understandable that the Massachusetts legislature, despite enormous popular pressure, should have rejected Regulator proposals for monetary and tax reform.

By the end of 1786, the organized farmers faced stark choices. As they saw the options, democratic relief having been foreclosed, they could disband, or they could mobilize a rising. Since the issues for them—the preservation of their homes and livelihoods—were fundamental, it is not surprising that they chose the latter course. They reorganized the movement into regiments, and moved to take state power. But their attack on the Springfield armory to acquire necessary weapons failed, and the Regulation was thereupon crushed.

Impressive numbers of Massachusetts farmers in due course were sent to debtors' prison. The new financial relationships having been both installed and consolidated, there quickly ensued in Massachusetts what in later terminology would be called a "substantial capital readjustment." A number of merchants and merchant bankers got richer at the expense of a much larger number of farmers who got poorer.

The dynamics of English mercantilism had ceased to inform the economy of the state; the dynamics of American capitalism had begun. A certain kind of world view about politics and social relations had found an institutional focus. It was a demonstrably new and antiroyalist framework. But it was not a democratic one.

Indeed, it is sobering and even diminishing to learn of the public humiliation that was demanded of Daniel Shays and his associate, Eli Parsons, as the price of the official pardon that would permit them to return from Canadian exile. They were admonished to affirm, and to have recorded in their petition, that: "They will never cease to remember and regret their not having trusted for relief of the wisdom and integrity of the ruling power." Shays eventually got his pardon, but neither he, nor the rest of the farmers, got "relief." Indeed, Shays eventually joined many of his fellow agriculturalists in debtors' prison.

For his part, Samuel Adams, having established his usefulness and credi-
bility within the aggressive new commercial hierarchy of Massachusetts, went on to become governor of the Commonwealth. There, he presided over the newly established social relationships of the citizenry, and did nothing further to tarnish his prewar credentials. He thereby assured for himself a secure place in history alongside his somewhat less adaptable comrade, Thomas Paine, within the pantheon of radical democrats among the Founding Fathers.

A century after the Regulation, similar circumstances (bondholder domination of the monetary system) would produce a similar commercial objective (projected windfall profits on depreciated Civil War paper) that, in turn, would generate a similar financial policy (an artificially contracted currency) and similar social results: the immiseration of the agricultural population and a financial bonanza for bondholders. The same dynamics that inspired the Regulation in the eighteenth century thus underlay the Populist uprising of the nineteenth century. Merchant bankers, in power before, during, and after the Regulation, remained in power before, during, and after Populism. It is instructive to observe that an inherently exploitative system of exchange in America (as polished into final form with the creation of the Federal Reserve System in 1913) has persisted uninterruptedly throughout the twentieth century. However, the modern victims, the American people, who are forced to purchase homes, automobiles, and other goods under undemocratic and highly usurious credit procedures, have been socialized into such an ethos of mass deference that they no longer contest the matter, as their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors did. This is so despite the fact that millions of working Americans, who could enjoy the dignity of owning their own homes under ground rules of a democratic system of money and credit, are forced under the prevailing system to spend their lifetimes as transient renters. The relevant long-term development is that the American people understandably no longer even comprehend the financial formulas that ensnare them, since such matters are no longer on the agenda of national political discussion. Along the pathways of industrial progress, a popular democratic sense of self—never victorious but also never expunged—has been slowly eroding under persistent attack within American culture. It is certainly not an irreversible trend, but it does not help matters to pretend it does not exist.

The interplay of history and political culture is clear here—for “culture” is the name we give to conduct predicated upon sanctioned memory. If the farmers of Massachusetts were in fact proceeding politically from democratic assumptions, which they were, and if they had in fact organized themselves into an energetic democratic movement of Massachusetts people, which they had, our way of viewing them, and Samuel Adams, and the national history as a whole, suddenly appears profoundly skewed. Despite some impressive exceptions, the academic rendition of American history cannot in general be said to constitute a democratic literature. It is an aggregate literature that catalogues and interprets
two centuries of rule by a financial and commercial elite and characterizes the result as “popular government.” As one of the many, many political consequences of this historical literature, the full dimension of the constitutional crisis in the new nation, and the profound implications of the democratic issues that generated the crisis, echo unheard down to our own time. At the decisive formative moment for the new society, a number of democratic values suffered an enormous defeat.

The immediate consequence was structural. So shaken were the colonial commercial classes, not only by the Regulation but by the questions of democratic prerogative and commercial privilege that the Regulation called into debate, that the events of 1786-87 had an absolutely galvanizing political effect. It extended beyond Boston merchants and their counterparts in New York and Pennsylvania to George Washington, James Madison, and the Southern gentry generally.

Anticipating Lenin by 120 years, they decided, in the name of their own understanding of political values, that the democratic polity could not be trusted. They forthwith set aside regional differences and moved to replace the Articles of Confederation with a new code that provided for more effective insulation against an excess of popular aspiration. Amid specific warnings that popular “regulations” had to be prevented, they enshrined their efforts in the new federal Constitution. It was offered for ratification even as debt imprisonments and foreclosures of the Regulators were proceeding. It was in such a political context that the specific structure of commercial politics in America was set into place—where it has, no doubt needless to add, since remained. In finding a way to inhibit popular democracy, the eighteenth-century revolution completed itself.

The persons who gathered at Philadelphia and drafted the Constitution thus joined, as Founding Fathers, their countrymen who had signed the Declaration of Independence a decade earlier. In the generated consciousness of hundreds of millions of Americans then unborn, they would all be remembered, in blurred harmony, as “revolutionaries” and “democrats.”* 

*Charles Beard, Merrill Jensen, and Jackson T. Main are among the most prominent of three generations of American historians who have attempted to come to grips with the implications of the thwarted popular democratic thrust of the revolutionary period. Beard went so far as to portray the Constitutional Convention of 1787 as a counter-revolution.

These studies, and those of rival interpretive schools, have unfortunately covered too narrow a time span to illuminate the social forces engaged in the struggle or the size of the stakes involved. The era of contention in which the ground-rules for American governance were shaped extended over a quarter of a century, ending in 1789. The debate was not over property rights per se, but turned, rather, on the ability of popular majorities to constrain merchant-banker efforts to fashion, in the latter's own self-interest, undemocratic structures of monetary and taxation policy. The multiple popular “regulations,” which first burst into prominence in the Southern Colonies in the mid-1760s, ended with the Massachusetts upheaval of 1786-87. The latter can best be under-
Though democratic movements, when closely viewed, force established hierarchies to reveal themselves, they offer even more useful instruction about democratic politics as a continuing historical process. In this latter sense, the Massachusetts agrarian democrats speak more directly to the twentieth century than they did to the elites of the 1780s who defeated them. We merely have to ask the right questions.

How did New England farmers achieve the organizational feat of "the regulation"—a task that intimidates us in our own time? And where, in terms of democratic movement-building, did they fail? And what can be learned from other such experiences—from the efforts for land reform by black advocates during Reconstruction in the post-Civil War South, from the Populist moment in the 1890s, from the Debsian socialists, from the evolution of the CIO in the 1930s and 1940s, from the variegated politics of the 1960s? I am not here trying to evoke some mystical progressive past. I am suggesting that we don't understand these historical moments in democratic terms because we ask the wrong questions of them and, given our modern penchant for sophisticated abstractions, we often tend to understand them so quickly that we scarcely ask any questions at all. Could it be possible—the Idea of Progress to the contrary notwithstanding—that we know less about these central matters of democratic politics than some of our earnestly striving and self-respecting predecessors? Indeed, is it possible that if we historically consult past defeated democrats, we might learn enough to feel less naked before the corporate monolith?

To extend these historical analogies to the present, can we profitably criticize the fledgling efforts toward contemporary movement-building in America? To name some: the spreading local-level cooperative movements now numbering over a million participants; the proliferating neighborhood "citizen action" movement, which now reaches into every state in the nation and has generated some statewide and even regional organizational structures; the various antinuclear mobilizations; and the fragile reality of the Citizens Party in national politics. An analysis of the interior life of these multiple and uncoordinated efforts would seem to offer an applicable test of the democratic criteria I have outlined—modes of recruitment, attempts at long-term consciousness raising, the presence or absence of interior democratic social relations, and ideological patience. Collectively, these efforts represent the democratic Realpolitik developed in the 1970s that materialized outside the sustained consciousness of both the national media and the academic community. They reveal that intensive, if fragile, experimentation in movement-building is proceeding in America.

stood as the volatile climax of a long struggle, not the essence of that struggle. Nor can it properly be seen as some sort of regional aberration. From beginning to end the issue was fundamental: the extent of permissible popular governance.
But here, too, we will have to learn to ask the right questions. That we are not yet close is evidenced by the level of commentary that accompanied the maiden voyage of the Citizens Party. The new third party was dismissed by some observers during the campaign for alternatively being “invisible,” or “too radical,” and condescended to by others for presenting a “minimalist” program inadequate to the contemporary crisis.

What is to be done? A necessary starting point would seem to be to rethink what democratic politics actually embraces. To do this, we shall have to develop democratic terminology beyond that promulgated by Adam Smith, Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, and John Maynard Keynes if we are to impart understandable social meaning to clear democratic criteria. This done, we shall have to experiment in democratic movement-building and generate some practical experience in answering the difficult questions about recruitment that heretofore have defeated us.

The questions of democratic recruitment are more numerous than we have been encouraged to imagine: how narrow can an appeal be before it is decisively narrow, before it works against the possibility of reaching a broad democratic spectrum? And how broad before it is so sweeping that it soars irrecoverably beyond prevailing cultural assumptions? In contemporary America, the first question can be asked of the antinuclear movement; the second, to those wishing ritually to advocate the social ownership of the means of production. In either case, to ask the question is not to imply a negative answer; it is merely to insist that the question, offered in the explicit context of movement-building, is essential if we are to raise beyond currently primitive levels the contemporary discourse about democratic politics.

These are the difficult questions at the heart of the democratic quest. I would suggest that usable answers depend upon the adoption, at the very least, of one specific theoretical premise: our maxims of democratic procedure must be grounded upon an acceptance of human consciousness where it is, a willingness to address people in society as it appears around us. Though conservatives and radicals can readily agree that this level of consciousness has historically been “inadequate,” the remedies that have emerged from the mainstreams of these traditions have the effect of precluding democratic development. The conservative solution, rule by a more or less enlightened commercial elite, is undemocratic in its very premises, as is the Leninist formulation of an ideological elite. Another tradition, which may be loosely described as social democratic, has relied heavily on the transforming potential of impoverished working classes. After all the holocaust of the twentieth century, it should by now be clear
that whatever transforming potential is assigned to the working class, we cannot conceptualize "the social question" in terms of dehumanized "others" who can be treated as historically endowed abstractions and counted upon to act politically in certain preconceived and heroic ways. The tragedies daily assaulting working people in America and around the world continue to constitute, as they have for generations, a political and social priority of the first magnitude; but most abstractions about "the working class," including the patronizing ones that are currently fashionable in many professional circles, can be characterized as ranging from complacent and callous condescension to expressions of passionate religious belief. Granting all exceptions, what most of these diverse and generalized descriptions have in common is a shared distance from working people.

After two centuries of desperate thinking about our common plight as a "lonely crowd" in an industrial world, it should now be clear to all that the abstractions of modern politics have simply been overwhelmed by the events of history itself. The mass of humanity cannot imagine generously or coherently within them.

We begin with this understanding. How far we proceed depends upon our ability to develop democratic terminology and modes of discourse of sufficient clarity and sufficient civility to permit ourselves to hear one another.

What we know—the intellectual content of modern sophistication—is a cover for modern resignation in the face of overwhelming centralized power. Most people on the planet, less sophisticated than the commercial and intellectual mandarins of this technologically drunken age, are also less resigned. We are blessed that they are.
Limiting Democracy: Technocrats and the Liberal State

DAVID DICKSON

As science and technology have increased in importance in all spheres of social life, so debates about their proper control have gradually moved closer to the center of the political stage. One recent topic in these debates has been the type of federal regulation that should be imposed on technological developments to minimize their harmful side effects, in particular, damage to the natural environment and to the health of workers and communities. Perhaps inevitably, the last few years have witnessed a growing backlash against what is characterized as excessive government regulation in such fields, especially where compliance has proved economically costly to the private sector. And “regulatory reform” has consequently been demanded as a necessary exercise in social efficiency, leading in particular to new ways of limiting environmental pollutants or occupational hazards that are compatible with the pursuit of profitability by the private sector.

Yet more than the question of efficiency is involved. The social regulation resulting from legislation passed by Congress in the late 1960s and early 1970s was an attempt to allow democratically sanctioned goals (and thus more democratic planning procedures) to be imposed on an economic system that would otherwise tend to dismiss many such goals as irrelevant to the purpose of making money. The potential for shifting control of technology away from the corporate sector soon became clear. From this perspective, the current regulatory reform movement is not merely an attempt to ease the economic burden of regulation; nor just a tactic to reestablish the hegemony of the economic over the social (e.g., “economic productivity” concerns over “quality of life” concerns). Rather, attempts to “rationalize” the regulatory apparatus must be seen as part of a broader political strategy aimed at limiting public participation in decisions about how the control of technology should be exercised.
And there is a growing divergence between the more authoritarian forms of political control considered necessary to reestablish a rapid rate of technological innovation and attempts to ensure that economic activities are tailored to socially determined goals.

The issues are therefore broader than regulatory reform, and the debates around them invoke basic political differences on questions about the public control of technology in general. If, for example, the traditional institutions of the liberal state are becoming outmoded, what are the implications for the limits of liberal reform—and can we design adequate institutions to put in their place? To focus on regulatory reform provides insights into the dynamics of the larger picture. Furthermore, while the principles involved may sound abstract, the concerns they raise are grounded in reality. Recently, for example, officials of the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) complained that pressures to analyze the economic impact of new health regulations—one of the demands placed on them by "regulatory reformers"—has resulted in extending from three to six years the time that it takes for a new regulation to be developed and put into effect. And the Union of Concerned Scientists has filed suit against the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), complaining about new licensing procedures proposed by the NRC that allow nuclear companies to protest if they consider new safety requirements to be too stringent—but prevent the intervention by critics who might consider them inadequate. In such ways, efforts to reduce the burden of regulation inevitably have political repercussions in affecting the balance of power between rival political institutions.

Early in 1980 Dr. John Kemeny, chairman of the presidential commission set up to investigate the Three Mile Island (TMI) nuclear accident, suggested after reviewing the failures of the NRC that "Jeffersonian democracy cannot work in the year 1980—the world has become too complex." 1 It is a challenging proposition. For the dilemma facing nuclear power—or more correctly, facing those responsible for the public acceptance of nuclear power—is symptomatic of a wider crisis being experienced by the traditional political institutions of liberal democracy. The main function of these institutions has been to balance different political interests in a way that provides a stable environment for the growth and dissemination of technology as a tool for generating wealth and, ultimately, power. So far, these institutions have been barely adequate to contain the potentially destabilizing side effects of technological growth, from the tensions caused by unequal distribution of the wealth, to complaints about technology's impact on the social and natural environment. In Europe, this has been achieved by various forms of welfare statism; in the United States, by

burgeoning government regulations. Yet two factors are now straining these institutions to their limits. The first is the increasing complexity, not merely of technology itself, but of the ways in which it interacts with society—what might be called its second-order effects. To this has been added the political tensions caused by a global slowing down of economic growth, and by endemic inflation in the economies of most Western countries, where policies aimed primarily at economic recovery and structural adaptation are shifting attention back to ways of stimulating technological change, rather than dealing with its side effects.

The result is a growing conflict between those who promote a rapid growth of technology, on the one hand, and those who seek its democratic control, on the other. It raises the uncomfortable question of whether, given political institutions in their present form, these two purposes may not prove incompatible. In other words, we may be discovering that the most significant limits that technological growth places on capitalist society are not, as the Club of Rome might have us believe, energy and resource constraints; nor are they limits to social expectations. Rather, they are the limits that technological change, geared in its present form, places on the effectiveness of the democratic process. For much of the twentieth century, technology and the liberal state have appeared the perfect couple; today they seem candidates for divorce.

There is little new in the observation that technology, Janus-like, offers both promises and threats. Or that, for most industrialized countries at least, the former have tended to outweigh the latter. But the lessons of the late 1970s are enough to give cause for concern. For each of the many threats that have been successfully dealt with (DDT, chlorofluorocarbons, recombinant DNA), there are as many that remain serious problems (toxic dumps, carbon dioxide, nuclear proliferation). Furthermore, the institutions formally responsible for dealing with these problems are finding it increasingly difficult to know how to respond. We find Congress pushed into decisions its members do not fully understand; courts asked to make decisions for which they are not technically—and sometimes not even constitutionally—equipped; and the regulatory agencies responding schizophrenically to a spectrum of legislative and political pressures.

In the past, the system was simpler, and it was sufficiently flexible to permit a certain vagueness and even ambiguity. The Founding Fathers seemed consciously to prefer a little waste in government to an efficient tyranny. Such commitments to participatory democracy, however, are wavering. We find John Kemeny, in an address at MIT, uttering a growing orthodoxy when he tells his audience:

I've heard many times that although democracy is an imperfect system, we somehow always muddle through. The message I want to give you, after long and hard reflection, is that I'm very much afraid it
is no longer possible to muddle through. The issues we deal with do not lend themselves to that kind of treatment.\(^2\)

Increasingly, the state is taking on the role of an efficient manager, responsive to the demands of its corporate backers, eager to maintain discipline and productivity among its workforce. There are more than echoes here of the nineteenth-century engineer Frederick Taylor, father of “scientific management,” which raised productivity (and profits) by removing control over the labor process from the worker, and from his or her immediate foreman, and concentrating it in the hands of a corporate class, yet disguised this change of control by integrating it into the way that the work was defined and performed. One hundred years later, we find federal agencies involved in a comparable attempt to promote economic efficiency by limiting political participation in decisions that will determine the shape and direction of technological change.

That the bureaucracy has been able to do this—even in the face of the fact that such participation is both possible and necessary—is partly the result of uncertainties over both the causes and effects of technological change. Society is not a machine, and does not react mechanically to stimuli; given this unpredictability, choices must inevitably be made. As Jerome Wiesner, the immediate past president of MIT, has put it: “In a new and very complicated technology like nuclear power, you have to make assumptions that are not testable, and you can have a wide range of conclusions.”\(^3\) Joseph M. Hendrie, then chairman of the NRC, put it more graphically when, in the middle of trying to cope with the confusion of the TMI accident, he incautiously admitted, “We are operating ... like a couple of blind men staggering around making decisions.”\(^4\) With no obviously correct answer, regulatory decisions are made for political rather than technical reasons—a simple statement, but one with many complex ramifications.

What has since become known as “social regulation” first came into prominence in the mid-1960s. Until then, the main regulatory role of the federal government had been to establish the ground rules for competition in industries such as railroads or telecommunications. However, the public outcry that followed a series of widely publicized developments, such as the unanticipated effects of DDT and thalidomide, spurred Congress to pass several pieces of wide-ranging legislation within a few years. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), bringing governmental environmental responsibilities under a central roof, was created by the National Environmental Protection Act of 1970, a year after President Nixon had set up the Council on Environmental

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Quoted in “Credibility Gap,” Newsweek, April 23, 1979, p. 86.

\(^4\) Quoted in “A New Distrust of the Experts,” Time, May 14, 1979, p. 54.
Quality (CEQ). The same year saw sweeping amendments added to the Clean Air Act, and the establishment of OSHA. This was followed, in 1972, by the setting up of the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC). Twenty of the nation's fifty-five major regulatory agencies were established during the 1970s; and the budgets of the eighteen major social regulatory agencies—largely concerned with mitigating the side effects of technological change—grew from $1.4 billion at the beginning of the decade to $7.6 billion in 1979, an average annual growth rate of 20 percent.

At first the private sector generally acquiesced in the new regulations. A few complained that they were unnecessary, that the environmental and health complaints had been blown out of proportion, or that technology's side effects were a small price to pay for economic affluence. To others, however, society's new concern for the safety and health of its members appeared to be a sign of maturity. "As private consumption grows, because of the interaction among parts of the economic system, it is probably necessary that the social infrastructure grow even more rapidly, in order to maintain the quality of life and to vent dislocations in the economy," said a 1971 report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The report added that research and development in the public sector might therefore become more important than that of industry. Others realized that, unless brought under suitable control, undirected technological growth could also spawn politically threatening social movements (particularly after the student revolts of 1968). A report written by three members of the Trilateral Commission in 1975 emphasized that since social and political resistance to industrial change had become strong, it was necessary to devise policies to facilitate necessary structural changes in advanced economies "at a socially acceptable pace."

It took a few years before the full potential significance of the new environmental and safety legislation was realized—and to some it came as a shock. In several instances, it was not until the courts started interpreting the statutes that the implications of congressional policy directions started to register. One such ruling resulted from a case brought by the conservationist Sierra Club against the EPA, in which the Supreme Court held that under the Clean Air Act, the agency had a responsibility not only to cut back on existing sources of pollution, but also to prevent a "significant deterioration of air quality" in areas that were relatively unpolluted. In another case, the EPA was forced by the Environmental Defense Fund to introduce strict standards on lead emissions, after the agen-

seen, is to erode individual rights and to reduce the citizenry to an inert mass. The contradiction between formally democratic institutions and the reality of class power, exercised through psychological manipulation and surveillance, has become increasingly difficult to conceal. Official pronouncements encounter mounting disbelief; voters sink into "apathy"; and the decision makers themselves fall victim to their own lies, their endless manipulation of images, and lose the capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood, national interests from a "winning image."

The pretense that the sovereign consumer reigns supreme—that the public good represents the sum total of individual choices—makes it difficult to ask the citizen to make sacrifices on behalf of a larger cause, especially when most of the sacrifices usually end up falling on those who can least afford to bear them. Even appeals to patriotism, to manifest destiny, or to the mystical solidarity of the white race have become passé. Liberalism never developed an adequate idea of the common good in the first place, and this failure becomes critical in a period when mounting economic problems require decisive leadership and a sense of common goals. As Burnham points out, the "massive public controls" needed to deal with the energy crisis "cannot be maintained without consent in a democracy," and this consent will require in turn that "more than rhetorical effort to approximate equality of sacrifice will have to be made by policy elites." Unhappily those policy elites, closely tied to the corporate hierarchy—often indistinguishable from it, in fact—can hardly be expected to equalize sacrifices of their own accord. Faced with a choice between democracy and open dictatorship, many of them will choose the latter. Already the rise of Ronald Reagan suggests the attraction of militarism disguised as a return to traditional values. Other signs of the times include the adoption of more or less openly elitist ideologies by the policy-making establishment, the fascination with Nazism in popular culture, the glorification of crime and crime prevention on television, and the current of sadomasochism that runs through so much contemporary pornography and has gained a certain respectability among free-swinging intellectuals.

Whether the West chooses democracy depends not on political and intellectual elites but on the people themselves. To be more precise, it depends on the revival and transformation of the Left. Why has the Left been so ineffective in opposing the rise of the corporate, therapeutic state? A full answer to this question lies beyond the scope of this essay. As a first step, however, it should be noted that one of the preconditions of the corporate state, as it began to solidify during the Progressive period, was the decisive defeat of Populism and the Knights of Labor, democratic movements of the late nineteenth century that advanced fundamental criticisms of industrial capitalism and radical proposals for

9 Ibid., p. 353.
The Current Crisis

cy had stalled under pressure from the oil industry. And the effects of this early legislation were reinforced when many of the public-interest lawyers, who had cut their professional teeth suing the government, were recruited by the Carter administration. In office they became known to industry as the "coercive utopians."

Much of the regulatory legislation is, indeed, broad-ranging, and potentially profound in its implications. The safety and health legislation, for example, required employers to provide a workplace "free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees." Similarly, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1970, which has been called an "unusually powerful and uncompromising piece of legislation," not only sets stringent air-pollution standards and a timetable for their implementation, but authorizes states to use broad planning instruments to insure that these goals are met. These include systematic land use and transportation controls, as well as the power to review the location of new sources of pollution, all of which are to be included in state plans for pollution control submitted for approval to the EPA. According to Richard Walker and Michael Storper, writing in the Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review: "The Act is . . . a classic piece of single-purpose legislation, containing the (probably unanticipated) potential to generate far-reaching political and economic changes in American society."6

Such political changes may have been unanticipated by Congress when it passed the legislation. But they soon became obvious to private industry, which realized by the mid-1970s that the combined effect of many separate pieces of regulatory legislation had created a significant shift in the control of technological decision making from the private to the public sector. Their concern was expressed by raising the specter of creeping, or even galloping, socialism, as one public-relations expert has described it, with warnings that the private enterprise system was in danger of collapsing under the weight of government controls.7 Replying to a 1975 survey by the American Management Association, the president of one company said: "Corporations must resist actions and legislation that increase government controls on them. Frankly I don't see this happening and really believe that our country will become a socialized welfare state by the year 2000.\"8 Another voiced fears about allowing an excess of democracy: "Social responsibility can be integrated into the existing struc-

---

8 Ibid., p. 13.
ture, but if the 'tail wags the dog' it is unlikely that most businesses can survive.”

Economists took up the refrain. To them, the social regulation of technology's side effects through stringent legislation introduced an inefficient element into the proper functioning of the market economy. They stuck to the principle that, to the fullest extent possible, economic efficiency was best achieved by leaving choices to the "freedom" of the marketplace, rather than by delegating it to centralized political institutions. The government's role, it was argued, should be, wherever possible, to concentrate on creating a system of costs and prices sufficient to compensate for the impact of technology on "social goods" such as clean water and air, but to leave choices to private decision making. Charles L. Schultze, for example, then a senior fellow of the Brookings Institution, set this out explicitly in his 1976 Godkin lectures at Harvard University (later published as The Public Use of Private Interest). "Command-and-control" forms of legislation, he said, had little disruptive impact on centrally planned economies, in which the productive sector was already organized along these lines; but the problem of intervention was more difficult in a society that relied on private enterprise and market incentives, in which modifications to the flow of information or patterns of incentives might be more appropriate. "Our political system almost always chooses the command-and-control response and seldom tries the other alternatives, regardless of whether that mode of response fits the problem," he complained.

Not surprisingly, the recasting of environmental and safety regulations into a form compatible with the private decision making of the market became a central demand of the corporate sector on the government—and an early goal of the Carter administration when it came to power in 1977. Schultze was appointed chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), which soon took a lead in promoting regulatory reform along these lines. In May 1977, for example, Schultze, along with Stuart Eizenstadt, head of the domestic policy staff, and Bert Lance, then director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), signed a memorandum to the President suggesting that "serious consideration should be given to totally eliminating most safety regulations and replacing them with some form of economic incentives (for example, an improved workmen's compensation program, or economic penalties tied to the injury rate).”

Some agency heads have strongly resisted such pressure. Eula Bingham, for example, Assistant Secretary of Labor and head of OSHA, while successfully shifting the focus of her agency from safety to health issues, has consistently

9 Ibid., p. 16.
argued that her prime mandate is to protect the health of workers; and that the complexities of the decisions involved in improving the safety of the workplace, as well as the imbalance of negotiating power between employer and employee, make it unrealistic to expect the marketplace to produce rational choices on health and safety issues. Other agency heads have been more accommodating.

The EPA, for example, under the guidance of its administrator Doug Costle, and with the full support of CEA, has recently introduced what is called a "bubble" system of air-pollution control. Under this system, firms can select their own strategies for meeting aggregate emission levels, perhaps decreasing pollution from one source in order to increase it from another, rather than having each source required to meet specified emission standards. In another experiment, states are allowing companies to buy and sell the "right" to pollute the air, on the ground that those who choose to continue polluting will be those prepared to shoulder the additional cost.

The net effect of these policies is an attempt to shift control of the consequences of technological change from the public back to the private sector. In advocating this shift, the CEA has had the active support and collaboration of two other agencies in the executive office of the President, namely the OMB and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). The influence of both in shaping the federal government's role in regulation has been far greater than their names suggest. OMB is increasingly taking on the role of a strategic social-planning organ; on the one hand, responsible for the organizational efficiency of the government apparatus, on the other, emphasizing the government's role, in the words of OMB executive director Bowman Cutter, in creating an environment in which "investment decisions . . . can be made rationally." 11 Part of these efforts has been the attempt to mold environmental and health and safety regulations into the appropriately "rational" form, and OMB has put considerable time and effort into reorganizing regulatory responsibilities along these lines.

OSTP and its director, Dr. Frank Press, have been at OMB's elbow in its attempts to rationalize social policy. Under Dr. Press, the science adviser's office has formed close links with the budget agency. On the one hand, the latter has agreed to support more funds for basic research; on the other, OSTP has played loyal ally to the administration's social and economic policies. When the Office of Science Policy was first established in the 1950s, the major policy issues requiring a scientific input related to questions of technological strategy—for example, judging the effectiveness of particular lines of defense or space research—where the choices could relatively easily be reduced to a matter of tech-

nical judgment. In the 1970s, however, reflecting growing political concern about the second-order impacts of science and technology, the role of the science adviser was expanded to assist the White House in making decisions about how these impacts should be handled. Science has become politically important, not merely as a source of technological power, but as a tool to gather information about and to make judgments on the social impact of that technology—a tool whose use has become an integral part of the framing of social regulation.

OSTP has been influential in many of the recent controversies about the regulation of technology, from orchestrating the administration's response to the Kemeny Commission's report on the Three Mile Island accident (including playing an active role in selecting a new chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission), to promoting strategies for dealing with occupational and environmental carcinogens. Distancing itself from those who admit to playing an "advocacy" role within the White House—such as the staff members of the Council on Environmental Quality—OSTP invokes the apparent neutrality of its scientific expertise to legitimate the policies that it proposes. But in philosophy and outlook it has remained committed to those in the White House who consider "excessive" regulation to be holding back industrial innovation, and hence economic growth. As Frank Press put it before the House Committee on Science and Technology: "Our approach is consistent with that of industrial leaders who ask the federal government for a climate that fosters innovation."12

CEA, OMB, and OSTP have been at the heart of the Carter Administration's efforts at regulatory reform (together with the Council on Wage and Price Stability)—and it is therefore important to understand how these three agencies, while explicitly seeking to improve the efficiency of government regulation, have in the process implicitly been involved in shifting the social control of technology back from the public to the private sector. The dominant ideology supported by these agencies is that, since regulation inevitably involves weighing the costs and the benefits of a particular line of action, the most efficient way of doing this is by using the marketplace as the manifestation of social choices. Indeed, in both its form and its content, regulatory reform is the reverse side of the innovation coin. And to the extent that federal policy under President Carter sought to stimulate innovation, not by direct means such as research and development investment, but by improving the operating climate for private decision makers, it is not surprising that the marketplace calculus increasingly became the matrix within which regulatory decisions have been evaluated.

Three closely related trends have emerged from the regulatory reform movement. The first is a general pressure to quantify the risks and the benefits of a particular technology—from expensive medical equipment to car safety innovations—enabling a balance to be drawn between the two in an apparently nonpolitical way. Both Congress and the White House have, at the coaxing of industry, turned toward cost-benefit analysis as a decision-making tool, in order to challenge particularly restrictive regulations. An executive order from President Carter in 1978, for example, prompted by the CEA, required all agencies to carry out an economic analysis of the expected costs and benefits of any proposed regulation. The agencies were not required to demonstrate that the benefits outweighed the costs before introducing the regulation, since this would in some cases have required changes in their legislative mandate. But in several instances—for example, EPA's smog and lead air-quality standards, OSHA's cotton-dust regulations, or the Department of Interior's strip-mining standards—the figures produced by the agency provided a handle that government economists were able to use to persuade the agency to reduce the stringency of the regulations. Such moves led then Senator Edmund Muskie, a keen promoter of environmental legislation, to complain that "our standards of what is healthy are being compromised by economics."\textsuperscript{13}

The second important dimension of the regulatory reform movement has been the variety of attempts made to centralize regulatory decision making within the administration, in order to make it both more efficient and more accessible to political control. Dr. Press told a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in the summer of 1979 that "we have a regulatory structure which is highly segmented, wide-ranging and almost totally uncoordinated," and that the almost total delegation of authority to an individual agency left "some control to the President, but little to the Congress, on individual regulations."\textsuperscript{14} Numerous moves to centralize regulatory decision making have been made. Administratively, a Regulatory Council was established, responsible for increasing coordination and consistency between the regulatory agencies. OSTP actively promoted the National Toxicology Program, initiated by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, but subsequently broadened into an interagency program to centralize decision information about toxic substances. Within the White House, responsibility for assessing the economic impacts of regulation was given to the Regulatory Analysis Review Group (RARG). More recently, OMB has been establishing a central coordinating mechanism for environmental health research. This followed, in particular, the politically embarrassing public differences between different agencies over the

\textsuperscript{13} Environmental Study Conference, \textit{Factsheet}, April 26, 1979, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{14} Phillips et al., eds. \textit{Federal R & D}, p. 18.
Finally, there have been various attempts to separate what are claimed to be the scientific from the political aspects of regulation. Each regulatory agency has traditionally been given a broad mandate to decide which problems it should tackle, based on certain criteria of what should or should not be considered a hazard. But there have been disagreements over how these criteria should be interpreted. Several agencies have chosen to regulate substances for which there is a suspicion of toxic or carcinogenic properties, but not enough data to claim scientific proof. Those agencies have claimed that often it would be irresponsible to wait for such proof, and that they have a responsibility to protect individuals against potential, as well as proven, threats. Industry, however, has challenged this approach, arguing that controls should be based on established scientific evidence, not merely on speculation (evidence that is, of course, much more difficult to provide). The American Industrial Health Council, for example, a lobby group set up by chemical companies and trade associations, has countered carcinogen standards introduced by OSHA—which requires controls following minimal evidence of carcinogenicity—by proposing a two-stage process. In the first stage, a scientific panel of experts—perhaps convened by the National Academy of Sciences—would adjudicate whether a substance is or is not a carcinogen; only then would a regulatory agency be responsible for devising appropriate controls. This strategy has been supported by a number of pro-industry groups, from the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce to the Heritage Foundation. It has also been included in a number of pieces of proposed regulatory reform legislation. And, in less explicit form, it has been included in several recommendations by OSTP on how the role of science could be enhanced in the design of regulations.

Each of these managerial devices—an emphasis on cost-benefit analysis, the centralization of regulatory policies, and the dividing of the scientific from the political aspects of regulation—can be criticized on pragmatic grounds. Cost-benefit analysis, for example, inevitably requires an oversimplification of complex social phenomena, and the incorporation of highly subjective assessments (such as the value of a life, or of an unspoilt panoramic view) into a neatly quantified statistic. The centralization of regulation ignores the widely different legislative histories of the various regulatory agencies, as well as their responsibilities to different sectors of the community. And, in practice, separating the science from the administration of regulation has often—as with the Delaney clause—proved artificial and unworkable. (A recent report from the Toxic Substances Control Program, largely written by environmentalist advocates within the

---

15 The Delaney Clause prevents the use in food of any chemical additive known to be capable of causing cancer in laboratory animals, regardless of dosage.
White House, said that it did not consider attempts to separate facts from values as realistic, "because of the inseparability of science and policy at every stage of decision making".16)

Each of these management devices, however, can be, and frequently is, defended as a necessary element for managing a complex technological society, regardless of the extent to which it cuts across other political considerations. What is therefore open to criticism is not the fact that some type of management is necessary, but the way that it is being exercised: the form of these decisions has as much significance as their content. The three devices listed above share in common a tendency to force the complex, and often contradictory, second-order effects of technology into a form that can be directly controlled from the center. As in Taylor's scientific management, individual regulatory tasks are designed according to a division of labor suited to hierarchical management control. The result is that aspects of regulation that do not fit neatly into this managerial mold—for example, greater shop-floor involvement in capital investment decisions or product design—are given less weight than those factors that contribute directly to the production and reproduction of capital.

One consequence of such a design is that we find, in many regulatory disputes, that much more is involved than merely a difference of scientific opinion or of technical strategy. Frequently, the clash is between conflicting approaches to the way that social regulation should be both conceived and executed, based on different political conceptions of how social control of technology should be exercised. We might label these, in their purest forms, the "democratic" and "technocratic" paradigms for regulatory action, in the sense that they represent mutually exclusive fields of discourse, and invest scientific and technical data with different types of significance.

The democratic paradigm sees the problem of the real and potential hazards created by technology from the point of view of the individual or social group exposed to the hazards. Given the choice, it errrs on the side of caution rather than recklessness, of safety rather than profits. It does not require definitive or conclusive evidence of a hazard before taking preventive action. Perhaps most importantly, this approach gives political responsibility for choosing how to cope with the problem of risk to those most likely to have to bear the direct consequences.

The technocratic paradigm, in contrast, tries to make a "best estimate" of risk, and uses this to fine-tune the regulatory apparatus so that it presents the minimal economic burden to the corporate sector. It will argue that those who

There is a common understanding among technocrats that promote technology do bear a responsibility to protect individuals and groups from risk, but places such concerns within the broader calculus of the economic viability of the private sector—with warnings of the dire consequences if this viability is not maintained. It, too, will err, if possible, on the side of caution; but will be equally cautious of overestimating risks and thus creating what it considers unnecessary obstacles to profitability. It will listen to complaints from those who claim to have suffered from the consequences of corporate actions, but then use scientific experts to certify these claims before accepting that they have any significance. In the face of public surveys that continue to show widespread support for stringent environmental and health legislation, this approach will emphasize other surveys that, not surprisingly, show public opposition to “unnecessary” regulation. Finally, the technocratic paradigm seeks to return responsibility for controlling risks back to private-sector decision makers, in the belief that (ignoring the unbalanced distribution of economic power) marketplace decision making will ultimately prove to be the most efficient.

Conflict between the two paradigms is inevitable. Technocrats claim that the democratic paradigm is both unworkable and unnecessarily expensive. In public debate, they will argue that democratic policy decisions are based on emotion rather than objectivity. And by characterizing the democratic paradigm as a “command-and-control” approach, they imply that it is inherently undemocratic. Conversely, the technocratic paradigm is accused by democrats of skewing regulatory decision making away from the best interests of the community, to serve instead the interests of private capital. It is claimed that the attempt to limit the direct influence of political considerations on regulatory decisions, however much it may appear to improve management efficiency, has dangerously one-sided implications. Dorothy Nelkin of Cornell University warns that political conflict and ambiguity are “basic realities of technological decisions.”

The technocratic paradigm tries to deny this basic reality, removing debates about risk as far as possible from the sphere of public decision making and at the same time circumscribing those limited aspects of the debate in which political involvement is considered legitimate. As Frank Press puts it: “Where the stakes are high, there is ample incentive for the parties involved to interpret the data in ways which suit their own purposes. We need to develop ways of fencing in these areas so that the debates on regulation can be confined to legitimate differences in value.”

The so-called regulatory reform movement can be looked on as an attempt to shift the basis of regulation from the democratic paradigm, in which regulatory decisions are open to full public participation, to the technocratic para-

---

The Current Crisis

digm, which is more compatible with the political strategies of private corporations. The common theme running through supporters of “reform” is that regulation has become too democratic, allowing public opinion too much leverage over the private sector, and thus sapping its vitality. In the case of nuclear power, for example, one author compares the United States, where environmentalist challenges have successfully delayed a number of major nuclear projects, to Europe, where critics have less legal leverage on the licensing process, and greater control is retained by the state and the private sector. In contrast to Europe, the U.S. regulatory system is “inimical to nuclear power,” writes Michael M. Golay of MIT. He quotes the views of U.S. utility managers that the current nuclear regulatory system is perceived as “capricious, irrational and unpredictable”; their conclusion, he says, is that this perceived unpredictability is substantially inhibiting the growth of nuclear power. Thus, according to Golay, from the point of view of the nuclear industry, the most fundamental problems of nuclear power regulation come from the design of the regulatory system, rather than the efficiency with which it is managed. And he suggests that the essential reform needed for the U.S. nuclear regulatory system, in line with the strategies described above, is the separation of political and technical issues. 19

Part of the problem, however, is that the conflict between these two paradigms reaches down to the heart of the scientific process itself, to its attempts to establish a legitimate basis of “fact,” upon which socially acceptable levels of environmental and health effects can be agreed. A typical conflict is that between epidemiologists, used to starting from health problems as they occur in real-world situations, and health physicists, whose methodology is more firmly rooted in laboratory-bench practices and criteria. One example of this conflict has been the recent disputes over the health effects of low levels of ionizing radiation. Many epidemiologists argue that, although a precise scientific explanation may not have been developed, there is sufficient empirical evidence and statistical ambiguity in human cancer data to support a highly conservative approach to such dangers. Health physicists, in contrast, lean more heavily on the results of laboratory animal tests, and existing knowledge of, for example, biological repair mechanisms, to argue that excessive caution may be unnecessary, and may indeed be damaging to the cause of nuclear power. It was such a difference in perspective, rather than disagreements between rival scientists from the same discipline, that was at the heart of the conflict in the recent report from the National Academy of Science on “The Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation.” In this instance, epidemiologists, prepared to argue the case in favor of stricter regulation, were outflanked by health physicists, who argued that current radia-

tion standards are perfectly adequate—and may already be more stringent than necessary.

Another similar example has been the controversy over the potential hazards arising from research using recombinant DNA techniques to alter the genetic material of living organisms. The activities of the Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee, set up by the National Institutes of Health to oversee regulation of DNA research, have consistently polarized into scientists (and industrial promoters of the research), who want to see the research continue as fast as possible—and therefore to minimize the possible dangers—and the minority “public interest” representatives, seeking a more cautious approach and greater outside participation in the decision-making process. The difference came out most sharply in reports on risk-assessment experiments carried out in top-security laboratories in Fort Detrick, Maryland. Scientists used the outcome of the experiments to claim that recombinant DNA research had virtually been given a clean bill of health; public-interest critics, who pointed out that many aspects of the tests were either ambiguous or indicative of further unexplored hazards, were virtually ignored.

As the technocratic paradigm comes to dominate regulatory decision making in the name of management efficiency, it is important to understand some of the dangers that it entails. The first is that its use of cost-benefit analysis (or in its expanded form, risk-benefit analysis), while it can be defended on the logical ground that any social or individual action should be based on weighing the arguments for and against, inevitably locks social values into a mold whose features are determined by whether or not they are of interest to the corporate sector. Health damage is assessed in terms of lost earnings, environmental damage in terms of lost “amenity.” Furthermore, however much scientists may qualify their judgments about the dangers of a particular chemical substance, or of nuclear power, by emphasizing the uncertainties involved, their qualifications tend to get lost when an administrator plucks out the figures to support a particular decision. Often this is blamed on the public’s difficulties in coming to terms with complex phenomena: “The public’s desire for simple answers gets scientists into trouble,” says Dr. Russell Peterson, until recently director of the Office of Technology Assessment.20 But the fault as often lies with administrators, who find a security in precise numbers that is lacking in more subjective assessments. A recent report on decision making in the Environmental Protection Agency, produced by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences, reported that the agency’s use of quantification was carried to “unwarranted extremes” in the

20 Quoted in “Credibility Gap,” Newsweek, April 23, 1979, p. 86.
regulation of pesticides, and it recommended that the EPA abandon its attempts to produce numerical estimates of the impact of human health data because of the many uncertainties on which these were based, and to develop instead a system of relative carcinogenicity indicators. The overuse of cost-benefit analysis results in a language that, according to Christopher Lasch, "surrounds the claims of administrators and advertisers alike with an aura of scientific detachment."^21

Even beyond its inherent limitation, the technocratic paradigm for regulation also has several broader political implications. One is that it restricts the potential effectiveness of the regulatory agencies by giving them broad mandates—and then defining narrowly the way these mandates are expected to be met. Thus, instead of being allowed to devise the most effective strategy for meeting its particular mandate, a regulatory agency will frequently find that its strategy has been predetermined; and even if this has not been explicitly done, its methodology remains vulnerable to outside pressure. In practice, those agencies prepared to mold their strategies—as the EPA, for example, has done in the case of the bubble concept—into a form compatible with corporate sector decision making found political support within the Carter administration. Those who pursued a different strategy, challenging industry's attempts to shape the structure of regulatory decisions, faced an uphill battle in getting their regulations accepted. As one biweekly newsletter commented, on efforts by OMB to reorganize health-effects research within the EPA: "It now faces the prospect of redirecting its resources... in ways that will be compatible with—let's face it—the political decision-makers."^22

Congress does not make the process any simpler by trying to retain control of regulatory strategy by specifying detailed goals and rigid means. In theory, this is supposed to protect against too much power being concentrated in the bureaucracy; in practice, the congressional mandates are often impractical or badly thought out, leading to inevitable confusion as problems become more complex. The effect of adding the Delaney clause, which forbids the use of food additives known to cause cancer in laboratory animals, to the Food and Drug Administration's charter, creates difficult policy choices when the level of carcinogenicity is low—as with saccharin—and there is no other evidence of harm. Within agencies, detailed mandates can stifle initiative and imagination; it becomes safer to play by the rules, for which one can seldom be faulted, than to rely on potentially vulnerable personal judgment. The result is a reading of the letter rather than the spirit of the law—and frequent myopia. John Kemeny expressed his astonishment that the NRC seemed to have missed "the really signifi-

---

The growing hegemony of the technocratic paradigm also reduces the potential impact of public participation in decision making over the control of technology. As early as 1971, the OECD report *Science, Growth and Society* had warned that the more groups participating in decisions, the more likely that their goals and values would come in conflict. “At the same time, the growing complexity of society demands greater harmonization among the many separate decisions that are made,” the report said. “Thus participation and coherence often collide head-on, leading to paralysis of the decision-making process.” 23 Five years later, a report to the Trilateral Commission on *The Crisis of Democracy* took up the same theme. One of the authors, Samuel Huntington, wrote that “The vitality of democracy in the 1960s (as manifested in increased political participation) produced problems for the governability of democracy in the 1970s (as manifested in the decreased public confidence in government)” 24 And more recently, Dr. Jerome Wiesner of MIT (which has been actively engaged in helping private companies devise a response to the new demands for risk accountability that are being placed on them) claimed, in an interview with *U.S. News and World Report*, that the increase in public participation had lead to a paralysis of decision making; “What is needed is reestablishment of a governmental mechanism to end the paralysis.” 25

Wiesner's analysis is that “we have created a society that is unmanageable because we no longer have established ground rules for decision making.” In other words, those ground rules that we do have—those on which the traditional institutions of liberal democracy are based—are no longer adequate. In the battle for new ground rules, the dominant voice that is being heard is not that of democratic liberalism, but that of corporate planning. Cost-benefit analysis, the reinstatement of the rule of experts—even at the top levels of science policy—the separating out of public participation in technical decision making, these are all part of the new ground rules. Industry is busy writing them, arguing that they are necessary to reestablish profitability; universities are being recruited to provide legitimacy to “rationalizing” regulation. (Edward Kane of Dupont told a university meeting: “None of us is well served by inefficient and uneconomic regulations. . . . you in universities are in a good position to present that argument and point the policy-makers towards sensible decisions.”) 26 The federal government is busy trying to put these new ground rules into practice.

24 Crozier et al., *The Crisis of Democracy*, p. 76.
Ideologically, the whole package has been given a boost by the concept of "reindustrialization." Popular with both political parties during the 1980 presidential election campaign, "reindustrialization" has become an umbrella term used to describe the uniting of two sets of policies. The first set includes tax incentives, patent-law reforms, and similar means to stimulate technological innovation in the private sector through a reconcentration of wealth. The second involves a growing realization that, even in capital's own terms, the marketplace may be inadequate for the type of strategic planning required by advanced economies. As early as 1975, Henry Ford II spoke of the need for a federal planning body, "not because some wild radical demands it, but because businessmen will demand it to keep the system from sputtering to a halt." Since then a growing number of business leaders have come to accept the necessary role of the state in helping to shape industrial policy.

Plans for "reindustrialization" envisage three-way cooperation between business, labor, and the federal government. However, it remains clear that business will be the major partner, and that both labor and the government are expected to cooperate with its demands. From labor's point of view, this means restraining wage demands, dropping any opposition to technological innovation, and responding more "flexibly" to the demands of capital; it also means accepting less rigid health and safety standards in cases where more stringent regulation might adversely affect corporate profitability. As the dean of one business school has warned: "If government is reluctant...to review unreasonable regulations, and if labor is unwilling to relax onerous work rules, then what has happened in steel will eventually occur in every basic industry." Business Week warned, in a special issue on reindustrialization, that "Government must face up to the fact that the explosion of federal regulations placed on business to achieve goals—a cleaner environment, equal employment, and a safer workplace, for example—has diverted vast amounts of capital from production and research and development."29

What message does this hold for the future? The shift from the democratic to the technocratic paradigm for controlling side-effects of technological change is likely to continue into the 1980s. The effect of the change will be to make it increasingly difficult for environmentalist and labor groups to achieve their social objectives by the same legislative means that they did in the 1970s. Single-issue politics may have reached its limitations as a political strat-

28 Quoted in Business Week, June 30, 1980, p. 75.
29 Ibid., p. 88.
egy; the new type of politics requires a new type of response. If the corporate sector seeks to pull control of technology's social impact back to its own turf, by persuading the state to regulate through market mechanisms and tax incentives rather than direct interference, then its critics need a similarly coherent response, merging the interests of environmentalists, labor, and minority groups into a broad-based political coalition and a new strategy to address the same issues.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote that “whenever the people are well informed they can be trusted with their own government.” The dilemma faced by the modern state is that, although this axiom may remain a premise of democracy, in the field of technology and technical change it has become virtually impossible to achieve. Some delegation of authority is therefore necessary; but the complexities and uncertainties of our technological environment have made traditional political solutions even less appropriate than they may have been in the past. We have a choice of what to put in their place. We are being offered, in the spirit of what the president of a large drug company has called “the new age of reason,” a system that allows profit motive and financial gain to control not only the future direction of technological development, but also the way that society deals with its side effects. What we need to work for, in contrast, is a way for control of technology and its side effects to be molded in the direct interests of those most affected. There is still hope, but time is running out.
EXPLORATIONS

Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent

NORMAN O. BROWN

The Venture of Islam—Marshall Hodgson's title. Epic history; the history of human initiative, leadership accepting responsibility and taking risks; releasing and organizing vast collective energies; in a struggle to master the recalcitrant environment and the even more recalcitrant facts of human nature.

Marshall Hodgson's three volumes on *The Venture of Islam* for the first time does for Islam what Mommsen did for Rome; carrying forward what was started by H. A. R. Gibb. But Hodgson has done much more. By a singular feat of self-overcoming, he has shown us how to begin to think of Islam without Western prejudice. Edward Said's *Orientalism* prosecutes the prejudice of Western scholarship, even in the case of H. A. R. Gibb; there is no mention of Marshall Hodgson's transcendent achievement. It is a masterpiece and a miracle: universal history with cosmopolitan intent, from the University of Chicago. How was it possible?

On the one hand an original Quaker sensibility, self-consciously elaborated into an intellectual discipline, the “psychosociological science of compassion,” proceeding on the path of mutual understanding between Islam and Christianity pioneered by Louis Massignon.1 On the other hand an ecumenical sociological awareness, ultimately Marxist in origin, of world history as a unity resulting from the commitment of the human race to the city and civilization.

Quaker compassion and Marxist realism are combined with prophetic seriousness. Hodgson borrows Jaspers’s notion of the first millennium B.C. as an Axial Age in which the civilized world (Oikoumene) is diversified into four areas, Chinese, Indian, Irano-Semitic (“from Nile to Oxus”), and Mediterranean. Each of these regions develops its own variety of civilized tradition; all of them have been undermined by the Great Transformation (borrowing from Polanyi) initiated in Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the core of the Great Transformation, says Hodgson, was the pattern of multiple technical specialization. Hodgson’s understanding of the technological society is explicitly based on the work of John Nef; the sociology of Jacques Ellul could be included in this understanding if it could be liberated from its Calvinist presupposition of predetermined damnation. The crucial next step here is to overcome the residues of nineteenth century complacency; to begin to perceive the city, civilization itself, as a questionable institution, posing unsolved problems, problems not to be solved automatically by “progress” and “development,” but also not inevitably doomed to destruction and salvation by divine grace. In the middle of the muddle is Marxism.

We cannot dispense with the Marxist vision of world history as a unity, the evolution of a species destined (programmed “by nature”) for city life. We cannot dispense with the Marxist anatomy of the contradictions (class antagonisms, but not only class antagonisms) inherent in the structure of civilization, and inherent in it from the start. In this respect Marxist “materialism” is modern realism, and attempts to do without it, or to refute it, are self-stultifying. This still has to be said, and has to be said to Islamic Revolutionaries, Iranian Islamic Revolutionaries such Ali Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam, Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*. And it has been said by Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism*. On the other hand, Marxism has been from its inception contaminated (and is still so in Rodinson) precisely by the Western fallacy of economic development as an automatic solution to the problems of economic development; or, in Ellul’s terminology, technical solutions to the problems of technological society. Ellul is a Christian Revolutionary corresponding to the Islamic Revolutionary Shariati. Both preach a return to prophetic scripture; both try to found sociology on scriptural insights (cf. Ellul’s *The Meaning of the City*). We end with the static trench warfare between Marxism and Religion registered in the sociology of Rodinson.

Can we move this debate off dead center? Hodgson’s work is a very serious and very deep effort to work toward a synthesis rather than a confrontation between sociological realism and religious idealism. Christianity and Islam (let us bypass Indic and Chinese civilization and concentrate on the prophetic tradition)—the whole prophetic tradition is an attempt to give direction, or quality of

---

1 Hodgson III, p. 184.
life, to the civilizational structure precipitated by the urban revolution; an attempt to control and mitigate its inherent contradictions (anomie, injustice). For interesting reasons (not unrelated to but not simply attributable to Quaker presuppositions) Hodgson thinks Islam provided a more promising framework than Christianity for the task of world unification or world order that is set by the nature of civilization as such. But the fact is that traditional inhibitions, Islamic or Christian, have been destroyed by the Great Transformation, modernization, Marx's capitalism: "Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind." *The Communist Manifesto* is not out of date.

Where do we stand then? The prophetic tradition, which was from its inception a critique of the sociological forces inherent in civilization and an attempt to control and redirect them, has been overwhelmed. Hodgson concludes, rather bleakly, with a call for the renewal of the prophetic tradition: "The Great Transformation has posed a common set of problems to the whole world." "The deepest problem of the Modern world is to find a vision at once challenging and genuine." 4

If the static confrontation between Marxist realism and religious idealism is to be transcended, there will have to be some exercises of purgation and penitence on the Marxist side. What kind of exercises, and with what result, can at the present moment best be perceived by taking seriously the witness of Rudolf Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*. 5 Rudolf Bahro faces the reality of the outcome of the Russian Revolution. He is to be juxtaposed to Marshall Hodgson because he sees coming to terms with the reality of the outcome of the Russian Revolution as requiring substantial modification of the Marxist vision of world history and of the fundamental sociological categories of civilization: the nature of classes, the nature of the state.

4 Hodgson, III, pp. 427, 429.
5 Rudolf Bahro is an East German political philosopher who was jailed in 1977 for writing *The Alternative—A Contribution to a Critique of Socialism as It Actually Exists*. (Published in English as, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* [London: New Left Books, 1978]. Hereafter referred to as *Alternative.* ) In 1979 the author of this important original and radical critique was allowed to migrate to West Germany.
It is at first sight surprising, and then on second thought not surprising, that Bahro's modifications bring the traditional Marxist model of world history into line with Hodgson's. The genius and authority of Marx and Engels burdened Marxism with their version of the nineteenth century image of world history. This nineteenth century image of world history is the great idol that Hodgson is out to smash: "The view I have presented runs radically counter to the usual Westernistic image of world history, which not only pure Westernists but most Western Christians and Jews have accepted to some degree. That image—in direct continuity with Medieval Occidental notions—divides the world into three parts: the Primitives, who were supposed to have no history; the Orient, which produced great cultures at a certain point, but, for want of a sense of due proportion, stagnated thereafter and regressed; and lastly the West (composed, by arbitrary fiat, of Classical Greece plus the Latin Occident), where due proportion was introduced by the Greek genius, which in turn produced Truth and Liberty and hence a Progress which, if at first less spectacular than the Orient, at last necessarily led to Modernity and to world dominion. In accord with this image, Islamicate culture, as a late manifestation of the "Orient," ought to be at most a latter-day reworking of earlier cultural achievements, and must certainly have soon degenerated into the normal "Oriental" stagnation. So it has been interpreted almost unanimously by modern Western scholars. On the other hand, Modernity would be but the latest stages of age-long progress as exemplified most normally in the West. In accordance with this image, many speak of the "impact of the West"—not of technicalism—on Islamdom, as if it were two societies, not two ages, that met; as if it were that Western progress had finally reached the point where Muslims could no longer escape it, rather than that something new had happened to Western culture which thereby was happening to Islamdom and the whole world as well." 6

As Hodgson notes, the "Westernistic" world image achieved classic formulation in Hegel's philosophy of history. Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1891), proposed the schema of stages that still in the twentieth century weighs heavily on all minds with a decent respect for Marxism: (1) primitive communism; (2) origin of the family, private property, and the state, passing through three stages, (a) the ancient (Greco-Roman) city with slavery, (b) feudalism, (c) capitalism; (3) return to communism at a higher level. Engels's schema omits what was in Hegel a major phase, the Orient. The decisive thing in Bahro's revision of the Marxist model of world history is the return of the Orient, under the name of the "Asiatic Mode of Production," as the key to Marxist understanding of the latest social structure precipitated by world history, the "actually existing socialism" of the USSR.

6 Hodgson III, p. 204.
The "Asiatic Mode of Production," or "Oriental Despotism," is first of all an attempt to define the archetypal essence of civilization in its original manifestations, in the river valleys of China, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, or in the highlands of Central and South America. Civilization (as outlined already in Plato's Republic) is the transformation of the division of labor into the division into classes, as a result of the development of the new science of management. Bahro starts from the modernization of Plato in Marx and Engels's German Ideology: "The division of labour implies the possibility, nay the fact, that intellectual and material activity, that enjoyment and labour, production and consumption, devolve on different individuals." Civilization begins with the urban or managerial revolution. Philosophical sociology has to be supplemented with philosophical archaeology: there has been in the twentieth century a real advance in our understanding of the origins of civilization in the ancient Near East; see Gordon Childe, Man Makes Himself and What Happened in History. The fundamental categories of Marxist sociology are being remodeled. That central feature of civilization as seen from a Marxist point of view, exploitation of human labor, is being detached from the institution of private property and connected rather with that other primal institution, the state. The riddle of history is shifted from the fetishism of commodities to the mystery of the state. "Our popular textbooks often give the bland Enlightenment-type idea that these priests first appropriated the power of disposal over the common wealth and only then discovered the religion of domination, linking this up with naive popular mythology and adding it on as a kind of justifying ideology. In reality it was the other way round. The power of disposal grew out of the priestly magic as a task of consciousness that, while privileged, was expressly necessary for the progress of the community. To use an anachronistic expression taken from our present situation: in order to expropriate these priests, it would first be necessary to socialize the magic, and only then—or rather, in this way!—the wealth. And what is involved in magic is nothing more than the ability to understand the whole community in its internal functioning and hence represent its needs vis-à-vis the natural and social environment." 8

World-historically considered, the Russian Revolution is a return to the original position. "Class domination . . . has been reduced to its most basic starting-point, and this is where it is now so obstinately defending itself. I have shown how the Bolsheviks came to establish their party and state apparatus as a substitute for an exploiting class, as the labour lord of Soviet society." "The non-capitalist apparatus-state is at once administrative superstructure and political expression of the traditional division of labour. It appears as the absolute task-

8 Ibid., p. 144.
master of society. It functions, as Marx in his time characterized the universal bank of the Saint-Simonians, as a 'papacy of production.' "

As in Hodgson, capitalism, i.e., the abdication of the state to the market, is an aberrant interlude. The world disorder that resulted from the free enterprise system provoked the Russian Revolution, and the exigencies of the situation in which the Russian Revolution found itself occasioned the inevitable relapse into the more normal pattern of state despotism. "The relations of private property gradually drive the state function to the margin of the economic process. The classical bourgeois state in particular was— as the young Marx called it— simply a 'political state,' in other words merely an additional shield for the relations of production, in the last analysis economically superfluous. In actually existing socialism, on the other hand, the state wins back its original all-pervading character in an expanded sense." Bahro's vision of the Russian Revolution as a convulsive restoration of the ancient Oriental urban empire explains why the revolution took place in "backward" countries with a still lively tradition of despotism, which need to find a "non-capitalist road" to industrialization. Bahro replaces the Marx-Engels schema of a return to communism "at a higher level," with a return to state despotism at a higher level. The exigencies of national survival in the increasingly antagonistic world economy will dictate general evolution in this direction, enabling the "advanced" capitalist countries to "catch up." In any case, the state will have to bring the economy back under control. There is no "progressive" way to get from free-enterprise capitalism to "free socialism" (whatever that would be). "Overall social organization on the basis of traditional division of labour can only be overall state organization, it can only be socialization in this alienated form, especially in the modern mass societies with their hyper-complex process of reproduction." 

As in Hodgson, world history is no story of Progress. Economic development is not denied, but rather the (capitalist) assumption that economic development is the meaning of history and the solution of the social problem. There is no connection between the emancipation of the bourgeoisie and the emancipation of the working class. Socialism is no solution, but rather a disclosure of the essential nature of the problem. After five thousand years, the contradiction inherent in civilization as such—the antagonistic creation of surplus value, the hierarchical organization based on the division of labor into manual

and managerial functions—remains as it was in the beginning. For Bahro, this recognition is the starting point for a program of “cultural revolution,” to transform the nature of socialism, to give socialism a human face, in the spirit of Marx’s early philosophic writings and the Czech spring of 1968.

“Socialism with a human face.” The Sphinx that frustrates humanity is not the fetishism of commodities but the mystery of the state. In Bahro’s analysis of “actually existing socialism”—declared by Marcuse in his last published pronouncement to be the most important contribution to Marxist theory and practice in recent decades—\(^{12}\) the fundamental concept is theocracy. “The dictatorship of the politbureau is a fateful exaggeration of the bureaucratic principle, because the party apparatus which obeys it is, so to speak, an ecclesiastical hierarchy and a supra-state rolled into one. The whole structure is quasi-theocratic. For the essence of political power here—to say nothing of the hypertrophy of executive and police organs—is spiritual power, with its constant tendency towards an inquisition, so that the party itself is the actual political police. The party apparatus as the nucleus of state power signifies the secularization of the theocratic state. Never, since the collapse of the theocracies of antiquity, have the secular and spiritual authorities been concentrated in this way in a single hand. This institutional identity between the authority of the state, the power to make economic decisions, and the claim to an ideological monopoly, as well as the consequent lack of any control over the politbureau and its apparatus, which reaches right down to the base, is the main politico-economic problem in socialism as it actually exists. That is the Gordian knot which has first to be cut.”\(^{13}\)

To disclose the inner nature of Soviet bureaucracy, Bahro uses Marx’s dialectical analysis of Hegel’s idealization of the Prussian bureaucracy as the universal class, or representative of the general interest of society, in the alienated form of the state: “The bureaucracy’ holds the state, the spiritual essence of society, in thrall, as its private property. . . . The universal spirit of bureaucracy is secrecy; it is mystery preserved within itself by means of the hierarchical structure and appearing to the outside world as a self-contained corporation. . . . The principle of its knowledge is therefore authority, and its patriotism is the adulation of authority. . . . The bureaucrats are the Jesuits and theologians of the state.”\(^{14}\) Bahro quotes Lenin to register the transformation, unbeknownst to Lenin, of the Bolshevik party into the new priesthood: “We have given the workers visual proof that the Party is a special kind of thing which needs forward-looking men prepared for sacrifice; that it does make


mistakes, but corrects them; that it guides and selects men who know the way and the obstacles before us.” Bahro comments: “This is unambiguously reminiscent of the self-portrayal of the authenticated priesthood of ancient times, and the fount of all later party metaphysics and mysticism. Yet it is no fantasy, but simply the expression of the new social formation in statu nascendi.” The science of Marxism-Leninism was not enough to reveal to the participants what was really going on: “All the party struggles of the 1920s between ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ were nothing but the birthpangs of the new despotism. The combatants recognized too late that what was at stake was nothing to do with ‘Left’ and ‘Right,’ and that they had only one unmistakeable result: the strengthening of the apparatus.” Bahro shows that the self-deception goes back to Marx himself, and is revealed in Marx’s reactions to Bakunin’s criticisms: “We can therefore read today in incredulous astonishment, in Marx’s own extracts, what Bakunin claimed to have seen at the basis of Marxist theory and practice. Bakunin viewed the Marxist goal as ‘a despotism of the governing minority, and only the more dangerously in so far as it appears as expression of the so-called people’s will.’ ‘But this minority, say the Marxists’ (Marx interrupts with ‘where?’) ‘will consist of workers. Certainly, with your permission, of former workers, who however, as soon as they have become representatives or governors of the people, cease to be workers and look down on the whole common workers’ world from the height of the state. They will no longer represent the people, but themselves and their pretensions to people’s government.’ With respect to Bakunin’s charge of ‘government of the educated,’ Marx interrupts with the exclamation ‘quelle rêverie.’ And this even though it is on that very point that Bakunin’s fantasies are somewhat more concrete. After the people have placed all power in their hands, the Marxists plan to establish ‘a single state bank concentrating in its hands all commercial-industrial, agricultural and even scientific production, and to divide the mass of the people into two armies, an industrial and an agricultural, under the direct command of state engineers, who will form a new privileged scientific-political class.” This last expression is strikingly exact. It was probably necessary to be both an anarchist and a Russian, to perceive behind the authority of Marx and his doctrine, in the year 1873, the shadow of Stalin.”

If we persevere, as we must, in the Marxist tradition of sociological realism, we must go back to theology. The concept of theocracy is not just a (poetic) analogy. Marxist political theory has to be political theology: see E. Kan-

15 Ibid., p. 110.
16 Ibid., p. 116.
17 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
torowicz, *The King's Two Bodies, A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, and Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body*, Chapters 5–7, on “Person,” “Representative,” and “Head.” For Marxists the starting point of political theory has to be Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*; recall Bahro's use of it in his analysis of Soviet bureaucracy. But Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is not medieval but modern political theology. Take Colletti's exposition of the relation of Marx to Hegel. In Hegel, “The meaning of the argument could not be clearer: God becomes real in the world. And this indwelling of God's in the world is represented by His presence in the civil and political institutions of modern bourgeois society: marriage, the family, commerce, 'action to acquire goods through one's own intelligence and industry' (i.e., entrepreneurial activities), and finally obedience to the laws of the State. These institutions . . . to Hegel appear (like the 'bread' and 'wine' of the *Jugendschriften*) as the presence itself of God in the world—not profane realities but 'mystical objects,' not historical institutions but sacraments. . . . Just as Hegel sees in the 'Germanic-Christian' world the realization of the *verkehrte Welt* previously presaged in the *Phenomenology*; so Marx sees in this world, which is after all bourgeois society itself, a world 'stood on its head,' starting with its most elementary institution, the commodity—a world which, if it is to be put back on 'its feet,' must therefore be overturned from its very foundations. The difference is only that whereas Hegel sees the actualization of God in the suprasensate's becoming sensate, Marx (who obviously reasons in a way that goes beyond the Christian horizon) sees a process whereby *forces alienated and estranged* from mankind become present and real, beginning with capital and the State themselves."

Modern bourgeois society is a theocracy. Marx's unbearably controversial essay *On the Jewish Question* extends his dialectical political theology to the American Constitution, to show that the separation of Church and State still leaves us with a Christian State.

The Marxist tradition has taken it for granted that the proletarian revolution carries forward the achievements of the bourgeois revolution; that socialism is the perfection of the bourgeois process of secularization; that Marxism itself is the perfection of bourgeois enlightenment, that is to say, atheism. In this tradition, Bahro uses the term “theocracy” unself-consciously as a term of abuse, as something to be liquidated; *écrasez l'infâme*. But atheism leaves Marxist political theory at a dead end: Marxism inherits an abstract theoretical injunction to abolish the state and a sociological practice that can lead only to the strengthening of the state. The Marxist tradition of atheism is wedded to the false perspective on world history that, with the help of Hodgson and Bahro, we are trying to overcome. Secularization is the ideology of the Great Transforma-

---

tion, the emancipation of economy from sacred controls; the ideology of bourgeois nihilism and anomie. “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all newly formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned...” The Communist Manifesto is not out of date; but it is not true that “man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind.” It is not true that secularization leaves man at last “with sober senses,” demystified. After writing The Communist Manifesto, Marx devoted his life to exposing capitalism as idolatry—a political theology of capitalism. Money, or capital, says Marx, as “universal equivalent,” takes the place of Christ as representative of “man before God,” as “Lord and God of the world of commodities.” 19 Karl Marx, the last of the Hebrew prophets. The result of the Great Transformation is that we can see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not: “Modern society greets gold as its Holy Grail, as the glittering incarnation of the very principle of its own life.” 20

A political theory of the stature of Marx’s Capital would reveal the state as the new Leviathan, the new idol that fills the vacuum left by the death of God (Nietzsche, Zarathustra, Part I, §15). Such a Marxism would be on speaking terms with Jacques Ellul, who says that “technique makes the state a god in the most theologically accurate sense of the term: a power which obeys nothing but its own will and submits to no judgment from without.” 21 Such a Marxism would also be on speaking terms with Islam: Islam has always said the choice was between theocracy and idolatry. And, challenged by Islam, Marxism could ask itself the Nietzschean question: How, after the death of God, do you define idolatry? Or is everything permissible?

The alternative in Eastern Europe, more realistically considered, is a choice between theocracy and idolatry. Bahro has inherited from the Marxist tradition the unexamined assumption that the thing to do with theocracy is abolish it. But the logic of his analysis leads him to call for a new Communist party, or a renewal of the party; exactly, in his own words, the “spiritual renewal” of the party. “Bringing all this together, one can say that the party must wager its old institutional existence against its spiritual renewal.” 22

19 Ibid., pp. 217-72.
This “spiritual renewal” of the party is based on a redefinition of the party and the “cultural revolution” in purely spiritual terms. The cultural revolution is a struggle between “emancipatory” and “compensatory” interests. The struggle is for “emancipation from modern slavery to material things and the state”: “compensatory interests” seek “compensation in consumption, in passive amusements, and in attitudes governed by prestige and power”; “emancipatory interests” are “oriented to the growth of man as a personality, to self-realization of individuality,” etc. In the tradition of conventional Marxist materialism, it is not clear where “idealism” ends and “religious mystification” begins; or where “spiritualism” lies on the spectrum. Certain it is that Bahro’s cultural revolution regresses to that “German” or “True” socialism attacked in The Communist Manifesto as expressing “not the interest of the proletariat, but the interests of human nature, of man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical fantasy.”

The spiritual revolution has to be led by a spiritual elite. It is obvious that the new party must function as philosopher-kings and educators, and therefore must perpetuate the situation stigmatized in Marx’s third thesis on Feuerbach, which Bahro repeatedly cites in criticism of the old party: “This doctrine must therefore divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.” The new party differs from the old only as regenerate true believers from degenerate soulless bureaucrats. The real model for the cultural revolution is the Protestant Reformation: “As I have shown, the existing order is formed almost like a church, so that the idea comes to mind of applying to the party the model of a reformation. Time and again, this word rears its head. Reformations do not perhaps always achieve their aim of reconstruction, re-establishment and regeneration, indeed rebirth, but this is at least their intent; they are thus essentially ‘positive,’ if not seldom with ultimately conservative consequences, as in the case of Luther. It is a constant for any kind of church organization that its reformation has to come from its most fervent heretics: the temple must be destroyed in order to build it anew, the money-changers driven out, so that the faithful can again make their appearance. There is no doubt that this psychostructural model plays a role in the present situation, where we are facing the rapid ideological decay of the power of the ‘catholic’ party. As reformations of the church presuppose the Christian sentiment, so party reformations presuppose the communist.”

The cultural revolution would be a new intrusion, to change the course of history, of the prophetic impulse: “There have been historical moments which have something to tell us as to the possible form of the transition. We can see

23 Ibid., p. 17.
24 Bahro, Alternative, pp. 346-47.
those moments in many books of the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in
the chorales of the Reformation and the songs and hymns of the infant workers'
movement. There have always been times in which people were pressed beyond
existing arrangements without being subordinated to the rule of a priestly caste,
times of movement, times of a people led by prophecy. Only in such movements
did masses and classes who were otherwise inevitably subaltern manage to reach
the level of a historical consciousness, of immediate communication with the
universal. In movements of this kind, fishermen from Galilee and Paris workers
suddenly rose to the highest possible human dignity attainable. . . . It is hope
that leads the people, and its prophets are nothing more than interpreters who
give their deepest emancipatory needs a concrete, articulated and historical ex­
pression, in which the totality of what is promised is not lost.” 25 This is Marxism
that, without knowing it, is Islamic socialism.

“Cultural Revolution” and “Hegemony” are Marxism’s cumbersome and
not entirely candid way of breaking free from its tradition of materialism and
economic determinism. The pitiless pressure of real historical developments is
forcing Marxism to make choices, to become political, to become theologicopo­

tical. History does not confront us with inevitable developments that we can at
most hasten or delay by our action or inaction; it confronts us with ineluctable
choices, and opportunities to fall in love with, on which we have to wager our
immortal soul, and the survival of the species. Sociological realism is blind with­
out visionary idealism. Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no vision the people
perish.”

Facing the prospect of the new Leviathan, Western intelligentsia, the clerisy
—what is left of the prophetic tradition—must overcome the myopia that
has prevented us from recognizing Islam as an alternative interpretation of our
own tradition. Christianity is a wager that the kingdom is not of this world; its
political theology commands us to render unto Caesar the things that are
Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s. In this tradition, the clerisy con­
stitute a Church, a culture, a counterculture, confronting the State; see Col­
eridge, On the Constitution of the Church and State. Theologicopolitical real­
ism discloses an alternative to Bahro’s alternative in Eastern Europe: the organi­
zation of a new Church to confront the power of the State. Islam on the other
hand recognizes no duality between Church and State. Its commitment is to
struggle (“holy war”) to establish theocracy, world wide; one theocratic world
government. It is Dante’s De Monarchia, without the fatal inner contradiction
consequent upon accepting Christianity’s accommodation with the Roman

25 Ibid., p. 372.
Empire. Book I of *De Monarchia* is pure Islam: “Of all things ordained for our happiness, the greatest is universal peace”; “To achieve this state of universal well-being a single world-government is necessary”; “Since any particular institution needs unity of direction, mankind as a whole must also need it”; “Human government is but a part of that single world-administration which has its unity in God”; “Man is by nature in God’s likeness and therefore should, like God, be one”; “At the root of what it means to be good is being one; thus we can see what sin is: it is to scorn unity and hence to proceed to multiplicity.” But his tradition committed Dante to proceed to duality (Church and State); and even to Trinity. Islam’s unequivocal unitarianism is closer to the Old Testament, the “Psalmist” cited by Dante; but also to Greek philosophy, the “Philosopher” cited by Dante.

Muhammad is the supreme example of the Prophet Armed. Islam is committed by the Hegira and by the subsequent takeover of Medina to the seizure of power. The elemental energy that Islam immediately displayed is the result of its overcoming of the fatal inner irresolution that had condemned Hebrew-Christian versions of the prophetic tradition to political impotence. Islam was a decision to break the stalemated confrontation between Prophet and King in the Old Testament, between Caesar and Christ in the New; to take responsibility; to seize power. Islam is the theology of political (and sociological) realism; mediating between Dante and Machiavelli. The new Machiavellians, who include Marxists influenced by Gramsci, as well as utopian preachers of the primacy of politics as a neo-Pagan heresy, must not ignore the example of Muhammad and the Venture of Islam. Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise* needs to be rewritten, starting, as he does, with Chapter 1, “Of Prophecy,” but not restricting the phenomenology of prophetism to Moses and Christ. It would not be a step backward to regain the awareness of the Muslim alternative, and of the philosophy of al-Farabi, that Maimonides had. Nothing less than a transvaluation of all values is at stake; Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, no. 983: “Education in those ruler virtues that achieve rule even over one’s benevolence and pity: the great breeder virtues [Nietzsche uses *Zucht* and *Züchtung* to suggest the double sense of “breeding” and the importance of discipline (*Zucht*) for cultivation (*Züchtung*)—forgiving one’s enemies’ is by comparison child’s play—to bring the creative temperament to the highest pitch, no longer chipping marble! The exceptional power-status of these beings compared with that of princes hitherto: the Roman Caesar with Christ’s soul.” The Roman Caesar with Christ’s soul. If Nietzsche had been conscious of Muhammad, he would have seen how much our future lies behind us; what world-historical opportunities have been lost. We really need to absorb Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*.

The Last War, the Next War, and the New Revisionists

WALTER LAFEBER

As if to prove Lord Acton's dictum that "the strong man with the dagger is followed by the weak man with the sponge," a remarkable rewriting of the Vietnam war's history is under way. It is especially remarkable because the new revisionists are either ignorant of American policy in the conflict or have chosen to forget past policies in order to mold present opinion. More generally, they are rewriting the record of failed military interventionism in the 1950 to 1975 era in order to build support for interventionism in the 1980s. More specifically, the new revisionists are attempting to shift historical guilt from those who instigated and ran the war to those who opposed it.

Immediately after South Vietnam fell in 1975, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger urged Americans to forget the quarter-century-long war. That advice was no doubt related to his other concern at the time: committing U.S. military power to Angola and the Horn of Africa. Congress had fortunately learned from experience and stopped Kissinger from involving the country in an African Vietnam. The next year, however, influential authors began to discover that Vietnam's history was more usable than Kissinger had imagined. General William Westmoreland, who commanded U.S. forces during the worst months of fighting in the 1960s, set the line when he argued in his memoirs and public speeches that the conflict was not lost on the battlefield, but at home where overly sensitive politicians followed a "no-win policy" to accommodate "a misguided minority opposition . . . masterfully manipulated by Hanoi and Moscow." The enemy, Westmoreland claimed, finally won "the war politically in Washington."

Part of Westmoreland's thesis was developed with more scholarship and cooler prose by Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts in The Irony of Vietnam: the System Worked. It was not the "system"—that is, the Cold War national security establishment—that failed, the authors argued. Failure was to be
Explorations

blamed on the American people, who never understood the war and finally tired of it, and on the Presidents who supinely followed the people. Thus the “system” worked doubly well: the professional bureaucrats gave the correct advice, as they were paid to do, and the Presidents followed the public’s wishes, as democratic theory provides that they should.

Westmoreland’s argument that the antiwar groups wrongly labeled Vietnam an illegal and immoral conflict was developed by Guenter Lewy’s America in Vietnam. Lewy, however, was so honest that his own evidence destroyed the thesis. Although he wrote that U.S. soldiers followed civilized modes of war even though this sometimes meant virtual suicide, Lewy also gave striking examples of how the troops ruthlessly destroyed villages and civilians. “It is well to remember,” he wrote, “that revulsion at the fate of thousands of hapless civilians killed and maimed” because of American reliance upon high-technology weapons “may undercut the willingness of a democratic nation to fight communist insurgents.” That becomes a fair judgment when “thousands” is changed to “hundreds of thousands.” Lewy nevertheless held grimly to his thesis about the war’s morality and legality, even as he reached his closing pages: “the simplistic slogan ‘No more Vietnams’ not only may encourage international disorder, but could mean abandoning basic American values.” It apparently made little difference to Lewy that those basic American values had been ravaged at My Lai, or at Cam Ne, where a Marine commander burned down a village and then observed in his after-action report that “It is extremely difficult for a ground commander to reconcile his tactical mission and a people-to-people program.” Lewy’s conclusions, not his evidence, set a tone that was widely echoed, particularly after the foreign policy crises of late 1979.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was seized upon with almost audible sighs of relief in some quarters. Commentary, which had publicly introduced Lewy’s argument in 1978, published a series of essays in early 1980 that developed some of his conclusions, especially the view that if the Vietnam experience inhibited future U.S. interventions, it “could mean abandoning basic American values.” In an essay that thoughtfully explored the meaning of his own antiwar protests in the 1960s, Peter Berger nevertheless drew the conclusion that the American defeat in Vietnam “greatly altered” the world balance of power, and that “American power has dramatically declined, politically as well as militarily.” Charles Horner condemned President Jimmy Carter’s early belief that Vietnam taught us the limits of U.S. power. “That view,” Horner claimed, “is the single greatest restraint on our capacity to deal with the world, and that capacity will not much increase unless the view behind it is changed, thoroughly and profoundly.”

1 Charles Horner, “America Five Years After Defeat,” Commentary, April 1980. Horner was special assistant to Senator Daniel P. Moynihan.
LaFeber / The New Revisionists

but it was Commentary's editor, Norman Podhoretz, who best demonstrated how history could be rewritten to obtain desired conclusions. Podhoretz wrote in the March 1980 issue, "the policy out of which it grew is also coming to be seen in a new light." He believed that the "policy—of defending democracy [sic] wherever it existed, or of holding the line against the advance of Communist totalitarianism by political means where possible and by military means when necessary," was based on the Wilsonian idea that "in the long run," U.S. interests depended on "the survival and the success of liberty' in the world as a whole." This revisionist view of Vietnam, Podhoretz argued, is helping to create a "new nationalism"—the kind of outlook that "Woodrow Wilson appealed to in seeking to 'make the world safe for democracy' and that John F. Kennedy echoed." 2

Podhoretz's grasp of historical facts is not reassuring; the essay has three major errors in its first three pages. 3 George A. Carver, Jr.'s essay subtitled "The Teachings of Vietnam," in the July 1980 issue of Harper's, only adds to that problem. An old C.I.A. hand who was deeply involved in Vietnam policy planning, Carver is identified in Harper's only as "a senior fellow" at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies. That identification is nevertheless of note, for the Center serves as an important source of personnel and ideas for what passes as Ronald Reagan's foreign policy program. In the article, Carver set out to "dispel Vietnam's shadows" so the United States could

3 (1) "The . . . Cold War began in 1947 when the United States, after several years of acquiescence in the expansion of the Soviet empire, decided to resist any further advance. . . . Up until this point the Russians had enjoyed a free hand." They actually did not enjoy a "free hand" in parts of Central Europe (for example, Germany), or even Eastern Europe. In 1946 the United States exerted strong pressure to get the Russians out of Iran, then helped the Iranians renge on the deal that the Soviets had accepted in return for agreeing to leave. The United States also sent warships to the Eastern Mediterranean in 1946 to reinforce its policy that Russia should not have new rights of control over the Dardanelles. The United States certainly was not passive in 1945-1946. (2) "The Korean War [broke] out as a result of American encouragement" to the Communists "in the form of an announcement by Secretary of State Dean Acheson seeming to suggest that the defense of South Korea was not a vital American interest." Podhoretz is referring to Acheson's speech of January 12, 1950. That speech clearly announced that the United States would help defend such areas as South Korea "under the Charter of the United Nations"—which is what the United States did in the Korean War. (3) "In refusing to do more in Korea than repel the North Korean invasion ... Truman served notice on the world that [the United States] had no intention of going beyond containment to rollback or liberation." In truth, of course, Truman did change containment to attempted liberation when he ordered U.S.-U.N. forces across the thirty-eighth parallel and into North Korea in late summer, 1950. That order proved to be a disaster; it produced the overwhelming majority of the war's casualties, led to war with Chinese armies, and produced a new McCarthyite response in the United States.
again exercise great power and influence. When he mentioned earlier policy, Carver simply postulated that South Vietnam fell to North Vietnamese conventional forces, not to "any popular southern rebellion," and that "the press and media, and their internal competitive imperatives" misrepresented the real progress the U.S. forces were making in the war. Beyond that, the analysis consists of empty generalizations (Americans are encumbered in their foreign policy by "theological intensity" and "childlike innocence"), and it climaxes with the insight that "the world is cruel."

Read closely, Carver's warning about the dangers of "theological intensity" contradicts Podhoretz's call for a new Wilsonianism. But in the wake of the Iranian and Afghanistan crises, few read these calls to the ramparts of freedom very closely. The essays were more valuable for their feelings than for their historical accuracy. The new revisionists wanted to create a mood, not recall an actual past, and their success became dramatically apparent when that highly sensitive barometer of popular feelings, commercial television, quickly put together a new sitcom on the war, "The Six O'Clock Follies." One reviewer labeled it a "gutlessly cynical comedy," signaling that "suddenly we are supposed to be able to laugh at Vietnam."4 As the Washington Post's critic observed, however, since the conflict has "been deemed a safe zone . . . all three networks have Vietnam sitcoms in the works" for 1980-1981. Television was placing its seal of approval on a revisionism that promised to be commercially as well as ideologically satisfying.5

Given this new mood, it was natural that those who wielded, or planned to wield, power were also prepared to help wring the sponge. In 1978 Zbigniew Brzezinski had lamented privately to Senate staff members that the floundering administration needed a Mayaguez incident so Carter, as Ford had in 1975, could get tough with Communists (preferably, apparently, from a small country), and rally Americans behind a battle flag. By the end of 1979, Carter had not one but two such opportunities with the Iranian hostage issue and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and as usual Americans indeed closed ranks behind the President. In mid-December, Brzezinski observed that the country was finally getting over its post-Vietnam opposition to military spending and overseas intervention.

Three months later, Ronald Reagan, in his only major foreign policy speech prior to the Republic Convention, urged a return to Wilsonianism—what one reporter characterized as a belief that Americans have "an inescapable duty to act as the tutor and protector of the free world in confronting . . . alien ideologies."6 To carry out this mission, Reagan proclaimed, "we must rid

5 Future plans for Vietnam sitcoms are also noted in Washington Post, April 24, 1980.
ourselves of the ‘Vietnam syndrome.’” He of course meant the old “syndrome,” not the new syndrome of the revisionists that the war was to be admired for its intent if not its outcome. A frustrated job seeker at the Republican Convention best captured the effects of the new revisionism. A reporter teased Henry Kissinger about his prediction in the early 1970s that if the war did not end well for Americans there would be a fierce right-wing reaction. “It turned out just about the way I predicted it would,” Kissinger replied. The former Secretary of State, however, contributed to the mood that threatened to confine him to academia. In recent writings and speeches, Kissinger has argued that if the Watergate scandal had not driven Nixon from office, South Vietnam would not have been allowed to fall. His claim cannot, of course, be completely disproved, but it is totally unsupported by either the post-1973 military and political situation in Vietnam, or the antiwar course of American policies, including Nixon’s, that appeared long before the Watergate scandal paralyzed the administration.

The arguments of the new revisionists—or the new nationalists, as some prefer to be called (in perhaps unconscious reference to the New Nationalism of Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Croly that pledged an imperial “Big Stick” foreign policy)—dominated the foreign policy debates and, indeed, the Carter-Brzezinski foreign policies in early 1980. Because those arguments rest heavily on interpretations of the Vietnam conflict, their use of the war’s history deserves analysis. This can be done on two levels: the new revisionists’ explicit claims, and the events they choose to ignore.

The most notable explicit theme is captured by Westmoreland’s assertion that the war was lost because of pressure from a “misguided minority opposition” at home, or by Peter Berger’s more careful statement that “the anti-war movement was a primary causal factor in the American withdrawal from Indochina.” Since at least the mid-1960s, detailed public opinion polls have existed that show that Americans supported a tough policy in Vietnam. In this, as in nearly all foreign policies, the public followed the President. As Herbert Y. Schandler concluded after his careful study of public opinion between 1964 and 1969, “If the administration is using increasing force, the public will respond like hawks; if it is seeking peace, the public responds like doves.” When Lyndon Johnson tried to convince doubters by whipping out the latest opinion polls showing support for the war, he did not have to make up the figures. George Ball has testified that the antiwar protests only “dug us in more deeply” and in-

7 Quoted in ibid.
tensified the administration's determination to win. Ball, who served as Under Secretary of State under Johnson, rightly calculated that "only late in the day did widespread discontent . . . appreciably slow the escalation of the war." Even those who dissented in the 1960s were more hawk than dove. Richard Scammon and Ben Wattenberg's analysis of the 1968 election concluded that a plurality of the Democrats who voted for Eugene McCarthy in the primaries supported George Wallace in November, and that finding is corroborated by polls revealing that a majority of those who opposed the conduct of the war also opposed protests against the war. Westmoreland's "misguided minority opposition" was of significantly less importance than a much larger group that wanted him to have whatever he needed to end the war. It simply is not true, as Barry Goldwater claimed at the 1980 Republican Convention, that the "will" to win the war was missing in the 1960s.

By 1970–1971, antiwar opposition had increased, but it did not stop Nixon from expanding the conflict into Cambodia and Laos. One statistic stands out: before Nixon sent in the troops, 56 percent of college-educated Americans wanted to "stay out" of Cambodia, and after he committed the forces, 50 percent of the same group supported the Cambodian invasion. When Nixon carpet-bombed North Vietnam two years later and for the first time mined the North's ports, 59 percent of those polled supported the President, and only 24 percent opposed him, even though it was clear that the mining could lead to a confrontation with the Russians and Chinese, whose ships used the harbors.

The effectiveness of the antiwar movement has been greatly overrated by the new revisionists, and the movement has consequently served as the scapegoat for them as well as for the national security managers whose policies failed in Vietnam. Given the new revisionist arguments, it needs to be emphasized that the United States lost in Vietnam because it was defeated militarily, and that that defeat occurred because Americans could not win the war without destroying what they were fighting to save—or, alternatively, without fighting for decades while surrendering those values at home and in the Western alliance for which the cold war was supposedly being waged. The antiwar protesters only pointed up these contradictions; they did not create them.

The new revisionists argue that the nation has largely recovered from the disaster. Carl Gershman writes that "as the polls reveal, the American people have now overwhelmingly rejected the ideas of the new [Carter-Vance-Young] establishment." The strategy of the post-Vietnam "establishment" is to con-

11 Carl Gershman, "The Rise and Fall of the New Foreign Policy Establishment," Commentary, July 1980. Gershman is executive director of Social Democrats, U.S.A.
tain communism only in selected areas, and by using nonmilitary means if possible. The polls actually reveal considerable support for this strategy. In January 1980, after the invasion of Afghanistan, a CBS/New York Times survey showed that about two-fifths of those polled wanted to respond with nonmilitary tactics, two-fifths wanted to "hold off for now," and less than one-fifth favored a military response. Lou Harris discovered that within six weeks after the seizure of the hostages in Iran, support for military retaliation dropped off sharply. Quite clearly, if the new nationalists hope to whip up public sentiment for using military force wherever they perceive "democracy" to be threatened, they have much work yet to do. Most Americans have not overwhelmingly rejected nonmilitary responses, even after being shaken by the diplomatic earthquakes of 1979-1980. And they appear too sophisticated to agree with Podhoretz's Wilsonian assumption that "American interests in the long run [depend] on the survival and the success of liberty in the world as a whole." A majority of Americans seem to agree with that part of the post-Vietnam "establishment" represented by Vance and Young that it is wiser to trust nationalisms in the Third World than to undertake a Wilsonian crusade to rescue those nationalisms for an American-defined "liberty."

There is a reason for this confusion among new revisionist writers. They focus almost entirely on the Soviet Union instead of on the instability in Third World areas that the Soviets have at times turned to their own advantage. Such an approach allows the new revisionists to stress military power rather than the political or economic strategies that are most appropriate for dealing with Third World problems. The new nationalists, like the old, pride themselves on being realists in regard to power, but their concept of power is one-dimensional. Once this military dimension becomes unusable, nothing is left. A direct military strategy is appropriate for dealing with the Soviets in certain cases—for example, if the Red Army invaded Western Europe or Middle East oil fields. That strategy, however, has existed since the days of Harry Truman; the Vietnam war, regardless of how it is reinterpreted, has nothing new to teach us about that kind of massive response. A quarter-century ago, when the United States took its first military steps into Vietnam, Reinhold Niebuhr warned that the policy placed "undue reliance on purely military power" and therefore missed the fundamental political point: a U.S. military response was incapable of end-

13 Ibid.
Explorations

...ing the injustices of [Asia's] decaying feudalism and the inequalities of its recent colonialism." Niebuhr's advice was of course ignored. The supposed realists of the day proceeded to commit military power in Vietnam— to contain China. For, in the mid-1960s, China was the villain for the national security managers, as the Soviets are now for the new revisionists.

The reason for the failure of U.S. military power was not that it was severely limited. Lyndon Johnson bragged that he put 100,000 men into Vietnam in just one hundred and twenty days. Those troops were supported by the most powerful naval and air force ever used in Asia. Laos became the most heavily bombed country in history, North Vietnam's ports and cities were bombed and mined almost yard by yard, and Nixon dropped a ton of bombs on Indochina for every minute of his first term in the White House. Neither the will nor the power was missing. As Michael Herr wrote in Dispatches, "There was such a dense concentration of American energy there, American and essentially adolescent, if that energy could have been channeled into anything more than noise, waste and pain, it would have lighted up Indochina for a thousand years." Vietnam provides a classic lesson in the misuse of military power, but that lesson is being overlooked by the new revisionists.

And if they have misunderstood the conflict's central political and military features, so have the new revisionists lost sight of the historical context. They stress that Vietnam caused the decline of American power. It is quite probable, however, that when historians look back with proper prospective on the last half of the twentieth century, they will conclude that U.S. foreign policy problems in the 1970s and 1980s resulted not from the Vietnam experience, but more generally from political misperception and from an overestimation of American power. The hubris produced by the American triumph in the Cuban missile crisis contributed to such misestimation, but the problems also resulted from the failure to understand that U.S. power began a relative decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was during those earlier years that the American economy and international trade began a decline that only accelerated—not started—in the 1970s; that such important allies as Japan and West Germany directly attacked American markets and helped to undermine the dollars; that the Western alliance displayed its first signs of slipping out of Washington's control; and that the Third World rapidly multiplied its numbers and decided—as the creation of OPEC in 1960 demonstrated—that it no longer had to join either one of the superpower camps. Future historians will consequently see the Vietnam war as one result, not a cause, of the relative decline of American power that began in the late 1950s. They will also probably conclude that space ventures, and the achievement of independence by nearly one hundred nations in the Third

World, were of greater historical significance than the Vietnam conflict or the U.S.-USSR rivalry that obsesses the new revisionists.

Even with their narrow focus on the lessons of Vietnam, it is striking how much the new revisionists omit from their accounts of the war. They say relatively little about the South Vietnamese. The war is viewed as an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between Americans and Communists, and the turn comes when the Americans, undone by what Carver calls their "childlike innocence," blink. This approach resembles watching two football teams but not noticing the ball that is being kicked and passed around. The new revisionists have downplayed the inability of the South Vietnamese to establish a stable and effective government amid a massive U.S. buildup, the Vietnamese hatred for the growing American domination, and the massive desertions from the South's army in 1966-1967, even when the U.S. forces arrived to help. As early as 1966, non-Communist student leaders accurately called the country's presidential elections "a farce directed by foreigners." By 1971, a Saigon newspaper ran a daily contest in which readers submitted stories of rape or homicide committed by Americans. As Woodrow Wilson learned in 1919, some people just do not want to be saved—at least by outsiders with whom they have little in common.

The new revisionists also overlook the role the allies played in Vietnam. There is a good reason for this omission: of the forty nations tied to the United States by treaties, only four—Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Thailand—committed any combat troops. The major European and Latin American allies refused to send such forces. We later discovered that the South Koreans, whom Americans had saved at tremendous cost in 1950, agreed to help only after Washington bribed them with one billion dollars of aid. The key Asian ally, Japan, carefully distanced itself from the U.S. effort. This was especially bitter for American officials, for Truman and Eisenhower had made the original commitment to Vietnam in part to keep the area's raw materials and markets open for the Japanese. Relations between Tokyo and Washington deteriorated rapidly. When Lyndon Johnson asked whether he could visit Japan in 1966, the answer came back, "inconceivable." An article in the authoritative Japan Quarterly stated that if the United States became involved in another war with China, divisions in Japanese public opinion "would split the nation in two" and lead to "disturbances approaching a civil war in scale.

As Jimmy Carter admitted in early 1980, the United States needs strong support from allies if it hopes to contain the Soviets in the Middle East. It would

be well, therefore, to note carefully the allied view of U.S. policy in Vietnam and elsewhere before embarking on a Wilsonian crusade to make "democracy" safe everywhere. Having chosen to ignore the lesson that Vietnam teaches about the allies, the new revisionists resemble traditional isolationists, who, as scholars have agreed, were characterized by a desire for maximum freedom of action, minimum commitment to other nations ("no entangling alliances"), and a primary reliance on military force rather than on the compromises of political negotiations.

Finally, these recent accounts neglect the war's domestic costs. The new revisionists stress the decline of the American "will" to win, but they say little about how the economic disasters and a corrupted presidency produced by the war influenced that "will." As early as January 1966, Lyndon Johnson admitted that "Because of Vietnam we cannot do all that we should, or all that we would like to do" in building a more just society at home. As the phrase went at the time, Americans—those "people of plenty"—suddenly discovered they could not have both guns and butter. The butter, or, more generally, the Great Society program, was sacrificed. A Pentagon analysis drawn up under the direction of Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford after the 1968 Tet offensive faced the problem squarely. It concluded that militarily the war could not be won, "even with the 200,000 additional troops" requested by Westmoreland. A drastic escalation, moreover, would result not only in "increased defiance of the draft," but in "growing unrest in the cities because of the belief that we are ignoring domestic problems." A "domestic crisis of unprecedented proportions" threatened. If the new revisionists and Reagan Republicans plan to manipulate the war's history to obtain higher defense budgets and unilateral commitments overseas, they should discuss this crucial characteristic of the war's course: it was determined less by campus protesters than by the growing realization that the costs worsened the conditions of the poorest and most discriminated against in American society until an "unprecedented" crisis loomed. Clifford turned against the war after businessmen he respected suddenly became scared and dovish. Clifford learned, but there is little evidence that the new revisionists understand the choices that were embedded in what they dismiss as the "Vietnam syndrome."

As persons who attack centralized power in the federal government, the new revisionists and the Reagan Republicans should at least discuss the effect of Vietnam on the imperial presidency. They could note, for example, that nothing centralizes power more rapidly than waging the cold war militarily, unless it is waging hot war in Korea and Vietnam. In 1967, Under Secretary of

LaFeber / The New Revisionists

State Nicholas Katzenbach told the Senate that the power given by the Constitution to Congress to declare war was "an outmoded phraseology." In 1969–1972, Nixon used "national security" as the rationale for ordering a series of acts that resulted in nearly forty criminal indictments. Vietnam raised the central question in American foreign policy: How can the nation's interests be defended without destroying the economic and political principles that make it worth defending? In their extensive study of Vietnam, the new revisionists have chosen to ignore that question.

They have instead concentrated on an objective that is as simple as it is potentially catastrophic: the removal of the restraints of history, so that the next war can be waged from the start with fewer limitations. They are offering a particular interpretation of the last war, so the next war can be fought differently. This purpose helps explain why these writers stress the narrow military aspects of the war and ignore the larger problems of historical context, the Western allies, economic costs, and political corruption. Westmoreland again set the tone with his remark that "If we go to war...we need heed the old Oriental saying, 'It takes the full strength of a tiger to kill a rabbit' and use appropriate force to bring the war to a timely end." 20 In his reassessment of the tragedy, Ambassador Robert Komer condemned the "institutional factors—bureaucratic restraints" that made success impossible. 21 Lewy argued that the struggle was considered a mistake at the time because of "the conviction that the war was not being won and apparently showed little prospect of coming to a successful conclusion." If only the restraints had been lifted, the new revisionists imply, the war—which they consider morally and politically justified—could have been fought to a successful conclusion. This inference is drawn with little attention to either the inherent contradictions in Vietnam military strategy (for example, that villages had to be destroyed to be saved) or the nonmilitary aspects of the conflict. It comes perilously close to an end-justifies-the-means argument.

By trying to make the last war more acceptable, the new revisionists are asking us to make the next war legitimate, even before we know where it will be or what it will be fought for. A Chinese official once told Henry Kissinger that "One should not lose the whole world just to gain South Vietnam." 22 Nor, it might be added, should men with sponges try to legitimize their global cold-war policies by whitewashing the history of the war in South Vietnam.

20 The remarks were reprinted in Congressional Record (Senate), March 5, 1979.
21 Komer's views are given in Willard Scott Thompson and Donald D. Frizzell, eds., The Lessons of Vietnam (New York: Crane-Russak, Co., 1977), especially pp. 266-68.
The spirit has gone out of American capitalism. The malaise is rooted in the evolutionary logic of a civilization mobilized around the pursuit of productivity, economic growth, and private affluence. Its traces can be detected even in those texts that celebrate the virtues of the order. For they constantly repudiate one set of virtues traditionally ascribed to the order to save another set in jeopardy. Charles Schultze, an economic adviser to President Carter, and Milton and Rose Friedman, advisers to Ronald Reagan, provide two cases in point.

Schultze is a welfare-state enthusiast who has grown increasingly cautious. He continues to sing praises for the market as a coordinator of economic activity because it deploys the self-interest of participants for public purposes, without sacrificing either individual freedom or social efficiency:

Market-like arrangements not only minimize the need for coercion as a means of organizing society; they also reduce the need for compassion, patriotism, brotherly love and cultural solidarity as motivating forces behind social improvement. Harnessing the “base” motives of material self-interest to promote the common good is perhaps the
Connolly and Best / Economic Virtue

most important social convention mankind has achieved. (*Public Use*, pp. 17-18)

Schultze also believes, as a good Democrat should, that while the market must be protected, it must be supplemented by the state in a variety of areas. Extreme inequalities in income and security, transactions that perpetuate racial or sexual discrimination, agreements that impose harsh environmental effects on third parties, and cyclical shifts toward unemployment or inflation must be adjusted through corrective state intervention. The defect in the welfare state as now constituted is its tendency to intervene directly through bureaucratic institutions that are clumsy and expensive. Schultze would introduce a more subtle technique of control, one that will work with the market, rather than against it, and one that will not spawn unmanageable bureaucracies. When a clear case for state intervention is established, the state must itself adjust the market prices in target areas to bring private transactions and the public interest closer together. Firms polluting food, air, or water, auto commuters contributing to traffic congestion and energy shortages, and homeowners wasting energy will be given price or tax incentives to reduce pollution, auto traffic, and energy waste. The market will become a selective instrument of state power; it will adjust self-interest to the public interest “with almost frightening efficiency.”

The attraction of Schultze’s program—it has already become conventional wisdom among liberal economists—resides in its realism by comparison with other modes of state intervention. State coordination of economic life can, Schultze says, draw upon coercion, moral incentives, or self-interest. The first cuts against the grain of American values, and the second against the grain of human nature. Only the third is acceptable; it requires the state to enter more actively into market transactions. The politicization of the market preserves its ability to promote economic growth and private affluence while reducing the adverse “side effects” increasingly attached to those pursuits.

But the program makes one uneasy upon further reflection. First, the technique is itself coercive unless it reflects the standards and priorities of those whose conduct is manipulated by the pricing system. Second, the bureaucracy required to monitor these price and tax charges will be very extensive; its size will be proportionate to the size of the gap between the ends promoted by the pricing system and the values and priorities of those who bear the costs. For the market method does create temptations to evade artificial prices; it encourages the growth of that “irregular” or “underground” economy that has already become so large. To limit the proliferation of these evasions, it will take a bureaucracy invulnerable to the self-interest that characterizes other organizations. Third, the traditional virtue ascribed to the market—it is said to coordinate economic transactions by nonpolitical means—is sacrificed by these political intrusions into the market. The visible politicization of the market will create new space for
political struggle, and the constituencies with the most political leverage will undoubtedly receive the best breaks in the application of the incentive system.

As each of these criticisms implies, the technical solution proposed by Schultze ignores the profound public disaffection from the civilization of productivity, which impairs the performance of economic institutions and generates resistance to state attempts to shore them up. We will examine this phenomenon later. But first we must show how Schultze bumps into it, even though the assumptions governing his program screen it out of account.

Schultze believes it is unrealistic to expect citizens to consider the public interest when engaged in work, consumption, education, investment, management, childrearing, tax payments, and recreation. The "realism" of his program resides in its refusal to draw upon such vague and unreliable sentiments. But Schultze eventually concedes that a high degree of civic virtue is needed if the institution of these new policies is to be achieved democratically. People generally act as "their self-interest dictates... given the existing set of incentives," yet his program requires that as voters and citizens these people also "have views about the public good of incentives" (p. 73).

But Schultze gives us no reason to believe that the motives prevailing in the economic marketplace will be suspended in the political marketplace. Nor does he explain how we have reached this impasse. He merely ends "rather lamely," admitting that "there is no instrumental solution to the dilemma." The only hope for the order, he concludes, "is a steady maturing of both electorate and political leaders" (p. 90). The cultural solidarity dismissed in one part of the theory reemerges as a critical part of the solution in another.

The liberalism represented by Schultze—for this is what liberalism has come to today—stands at a critical juncture. It must either show how its economic program can secure support, or acknowledge that economic rationality and democratic politics, as it construes each, no longer cohere inside the political economy it endorses. Since Schultze gives primacy to the received conception of economic rationality, the logic of the argument justifies the further insulation of the administrative state from the vicissitudes of democratic politics. It generates implications Schultze himself is unwilling to draw.

Schultze's song faintly echoes a more pervasive cynicism and disaffection within the order. Though the underlying theme remains unfocused, it does find public expression in the widespread resentment against and by welfare recipients, the general public contempt for state bureaucracies, the perception of extensive corruption in private and public institutions, the growth of the irregular economy, the insecurities engendered by unemployment and inflation, the
tax revolts, the anxiety that America has become a pitiful giant in an irrational world, and the dissolution of traditional political coalitions. The gentle, paternal voice of a Ronald Reagan fills this void with the sounds of reassurance. And the economics of nostalgia peddled by Rose and Milton Friedman is packaged to give that gentle voice the tough undertones it needs. All the performers play their parts.

The Friedmans possess a double tactical advantage that is destined to leave a lasting imprint on the terms of political debate. They blame a variety of economic dislocations on the long-term effects of welfare-state expansion and they call for a return to the competitive market, the minimal state, and the traditional virtues of workers, parents, consumers, and citizens. The program allows responsible people to act with initiative once again, and it enables the market and the state to discipline those who refuse to exercise that initiative. It speaks thereby to both the nostalgia and the hostility of many who stand on slippery ground in the current order of things; and it does so at a time when the liberal opposition has lost its self-confidence and public credibility.

"Government," the Friedmans insist, "is today the major source of economic instability" (Freedom, p. 90). And the expansion of governmental programs has induced a corollary retreat from the principles that earlier produced economic growth, prosperity, personal independence, and freedom in America. The country has drifted "from belief in individual responsibility, laissez-faire, and a decentralized and limited government, to belief in social responsibility and centralized and powerful programs" (p. 94).

Each new state failure is a clone of previous failures. Welfare programs give recipients the incentive to avoid work. Minimum-wage laws promote unemployment, making it too expensive for employers to hire workers with marginal skills. Public school systems, protected from the disciplines of the market, fail to educate children. Environmental agencies impair economic growth and competition while expanding the size of the state bureaucracy. Labor unions—from the AMA to the UAW—secure high wages, job security, and low productivity for organized workers, while generating increased costs for unorganized workers. And state programs financed through state expansion of the monetary system produce inflationary spirals damaging to all consumers. In each case, the answer is to pull the state out of the economy and to allow the market to reestablish its historic role as the coordinator of economic transactions and as the motor of economic growth.

Consider one of these charges more closely. There is only one real cause of inflation, the Friedmans insist, and fortunately it is a factor readily subject to state control. Inflation occurs when the state increases the supply of money faster than the economy generates increases in the rate of productivity. The
Friedmans refuse to treat as causes of inflation any of the following: the costs of financing a war, the organization of an international oil cartel, the rapid expansion of consumer credit, the demand for higher wages by workers, or the ability of major corporations to set prices. This for two reasons, they say. First, none of these "factors" can actually produce inflation, unless price increases are validated by state decisions to expand the supply of money; and, second, each is itself a result of unnecessary state intrusions into the market.

Overlooked in the Friedman position is the understanding that a democratic state must validate a variety of pressures structured into the political economy or court severe economic and political troubles. If we accept this conception of the democratic state, the locus of irrationality proves not to be in the history of unnecessary state action but in the nature of the relationship between the state and the economy. To avoid the force of this argument, the Friedmans must show why the state persistently increases the money supply in the absence of any imperative to do so.

"In the United States," they assert, "the accelerated money growth during the past fifteen years or so has occurred for three related reasons: first, the rapid growth in government spending; second, the government's full employment policy; third, a mistaken policy pursued by the Federal Reserve System" (p. 264).

The third cause consists in the attempt by the Federal Reserve Board to control inflation through the manipulation of interest rates rather than through the regulation of the money supply. But even here it is probable that the Friedmans exaggerate when they call the policy a "mistake."

For the state, in an order where competing interests organize politically, is expected to respond to a variety of economic pressures at once. During the period under scrutiny, it tried to finance an unpopular war, support a series of corporations squeezed by liquidity problems, maintain the financial community's confidence in the banking system, keep a lid on inflation, and protect the dollar in the international economy. It thus faced contradictory pressures, responding to some with adjustments in the discount rate and to others by validating bank credit policies through increases in the supply of money.

The political dynamic implicit in the state's monetary policy is more explicit in its "growth in spending" and "full employment" policy. It is this dynamic that destroys the Friedman thesis from within. For, according to the Friedman theory, such tendencies are built into the relationship between the state and the economy. The theory anticipates, first, an impressive array of demands to increase state expenditures; second, responsiveness by state officials to these demands proportionate to the relative power of each faction; and, third, resistance by the electorate to tax increases sufficient to cover escalating state expenditures.

One virtue of the market, according to the Friedmans, is that it provides a
base from which a variety of interests can organize to advance claims upon the
government. And according to market theory, each interest must be expected to
use its resources to extend its market and political power. Firms with temporary
market leverage will deploy these resources in the political marketplace, seeking
state policies to consolidate and extend these advantages. Given these same
assumptions, we must expect constituencies with unfavorable market positions
to strive to rectify those disadvantages through appeals to the state. The predict­
able historical result is a large set of state programs subsidizing the most power­
ful corporations, and a smaller set supporting constituencies placed at a com­
petitive disadvantage in the market. When the political implications of market
theory are acknowledged, it can be seen to anticipate the historical transforma­
tion of the market economy into the corporate/welfare system.

If the result they oppose is built into the historical dynamic of the political
economy they endorse, how can the Friedmans seek to reverse it? They might try
to limit the freedom of interests to organize politically, thereby liberating the
state from these destructive pressures. But that would defeat the central virtue of
the market economy—its protection of free association and democratic ac­
countability. The Friedmans opt for a compromise. They support a series of self­
denying constitutional amendments that would limit the future right of the elec­
torate to exercise its will through the state.

Our founding fathers have shown us a more promising way to pro­ce­ed: by package deals, as it were. We should adopt self-denying or­
dinances that limit the objectives we try to pursue through political
channels. We should not consider each case on its merits, but lay down
broad rules limiting what government may do. (p. 299)

The package is a large one, and it is to be incorporated into the American
Constitution. The preliminary list includes rules to maintain a balanced budget,
limit tariffs, prohibit wage and price controls, reduce drastically the state's role
in economic regulation, mandate a flat tax rate, and confine the ability of the
state to expand the money supply. When economic rationality (as they define it)
and democratic politics collide, the Friedmans are unwilling to reassess the
priorities and imperatives of the political economy within which that collision
occurs. Instead they would restrict the legitimate sphere of action of the one in­
stitution accountable to its citizens through elections.

Pretend these amendments would promote general prosperity, even with­
out producing the side effects Schultze sees produced by such a minimally
regulated market. It is still unclear how the civic energies to support the reconsti­
tuted relations between the state and the economy are to be mobilized. Appar­

---

ently the support is to come from citizens who conclude that the new ordinances will promote the public interest over the long run. But that expectation belies one of the central tenets of the Friedmans' theory. They repeatedly debunk liberal and radical proposals as noble but misguided exactly because they call upon people "to act against their own immediate interests in order to promote a supposedly general interest." Yet in this instance, they themselves call upon a variety of constituencies to give up specific advantages accruing to them now, to promote a future and uncertain public interest—the restoration of the market system.

Of course, a successful coalition might push these amendments through anyway. It might consist of one constellation of voters who perceive that the program will give them a comparative advantage in future competition for scarce resources, and another constellation of voters who would express both their general hostility against the system and the vague hope that this program will work better than the options currently dominating the political dialogue. Such a result would be effective politically, especially since the constitutional amendments would be extremely difficult to overturn once passed. But it would also call into question the claim that the proposed withdrawal of the state from market regulation supports the public interest rather than consolidating the hegemony of one class over another.

The Friedman theory undermines its own pretensions at two key points: it denies its own claim that the market is an internally stable and self-sustaining system, and it eventually appeals to the civic virtue it initially debunks. The second issue is especially important. Once the necessity of civic virtue has been acknowledged, then the following question must be posed: Does the historical development of the civilization of productivity tend by its nature to undermine the allegiance it needs to sustain itself democratically?

The logic of the Friedman theory, like that of its Schultzean competitor, nudges its proponents toward a critique of the politics of democratic accountability. In both cases, democracy is thought to collide increasingly with economic rationality. And since both theories endorse enthusiastically the prevailing priorities of economic life, both identify an excess of democracy as the principal obstacle to be surmounted.

These theories deconstruct themselves because neither reassesses the assumption and priorities governing the civilization of productivity. Neither possesses the categories to comprehend the reasons for the progressive public disaffection from these imperatives, or to detect its indirect expression in contemporary orientations toward self, work, consumption, politics, education, family, and nature. Because the Friedmans and Schultze are stuck on the surface of public life, their proposals to curtail the web of evasions, resistances, and
oppositions that have penetrated deep into the substance of our political economy carry repressive political implications.

The defining institutions of this civilization are mobilized around the pursuit of economic growth, private affluence, leisure, personal freedom, and constitutional government. As long as these pursuits seemed mutually compatible and intrinsically valuable, the disciplines essential to them could appear legitimate to a majority of participants. But a set of purposes that inspires a populace at one moment in history can assume a different appearance once the dangers and burdens imposed by its achievement are recognized. The gap between the old expectations and the actual achievement drains the order of normative significance for many who must continue to work, consume, bargain, and politic within it. The economic institutions of the civilization of productivity are particularly vulnerable to such normative disruptions. For these institutions have been justified primarily in instrumental terms as necessary means to desirable ends external to them. If the ends eventually come to seem unattainable or necessarily productive of undesired side effects, the performance within the central institutions will deteriorate in a variety of ways. There are many signs that such a disillusionment now permeates the civilization of productivity. Consider some of them.

1. It is now apparent that the pursuit of universal, private affluence is self-defeating, even if the unit of universalization is restricted to one country. Many private goods (e.g., cars, quiet resorts, technical training, suburban living) decline in personal value as they are extended to everyone. Their enjoyment is intrinsically bound up with the expectation that only a few will possess them, because when they are extended indefinitely, traffic congestion increases, resorts get crowded, technical training loses its comparative advantage, and suburban living becomes disorganized urban living. Similarly, as the pursuit of private affluence proceeds, an increasing proportion of private consumption becomes a means to other ends rather than an end in itself. The car, once a vehicle of pleasure, becomes a necessity when shopping malls and workplaces are built around the assumption of its general use. Clean air and water shift from free goods to commodities. And a similar evolution from luxury to necessity occurs with respect to refrigerators, credit cards, telephones, health and liability insurance, business apparel, and a university education, to name only a few items. Work is for the end of consumption, and consumption increasingly becomes organized around the requirements of work. The motivation to sacrifice in work, school, and politics declines as the word gets out that the rewards for these sacrifices cannot be extended to everyone and that they do not produce the desired satisfaction for those who receive them.

2. Labor mobility, from a private point of view, is an indispensable means to an improved standard of living; it is, from the vantage point of the market, an
efficient way to deploy human resources. But as a perpetual feature of social life, it eventually operates to weaken ties of kinship, neighborhood, and local community. Paradoxically, the erosion of these traditional sources of sustenance and identity encourages people to demand more of those rewards that the order is capable of providing: commodities. That which is rational from the vantage point of economic efficiency undermines social institutions that are highly prized by those served by that efficiency. And the damage done to these institutions is then converted into pressure on the state to finance care for the elderly, the control of delinquents, centers for abused women and children, etc.

3. The stratified labor market, designed to motivate the lowliest workers as well as the most skilled professionals, combines with the self-defeating character of the universal pursuit of private affluence to guarantee that a large portion of the populace will never share fully in the ends legitimizing the civilization of productivity. The realization that this is so eventually seeps into the body politic. It intensifies pressures to collectivize some services through the state (e.g., health care, unemployment insurance, environmental protection); it increases disaffection from the social roles imposed on those closed out of the circle of affluence; and it eventually impels public and private bureaucracies to extend disciplinary control over those whose motivation to work, pay taxes, and obey laws voluntarily begins to deteriorate.

4. The political economy that generates an internal dialectic of corporate concentration and worker disaffection also impels corporations to introduce detailed disciplinary control over an ever larger percentage of workers. The crisis of productivity that worries the Schultzes and the Friedmans flows partly from worker resistance to this process of work rationalization; it is exacerbated by the growing proportion of workers who must then be hired to monitor, control, discipline, and observe their disaffected brothers and sisters. Work slowdowns, quality debasement, strikes, and sabotage emerge as unorganized responses to the extension of disciplinary control in the workplace, and the disciplinary reactions to these developments further accentuate the problem of "worker motivation."

5. A frantic pace of technological and occupational change is central to a civilization of productivity, but it ensures that the knowledge acquired by older generations will be of little apparent use to younger ones. It renders each generation of workers obsolescent (even if some hang onto their jobs), just when those workers most need the respect and dignity bestowed on those functionally important to the society. The old are cast off in the name of economic progress; they see themselves closed out at the end from the world they helped to build during the middle years of the life cycle. The perception of this reality, of course, infects the orientations of those in their middle years as well, since they can now observe the future before them.
6. The necessity to exploit a constantly expanding portion of the earth's resources to fuel perpetual economic growth not only reduces the opportunity to comprehend and appreciate the natural state of things, it eventually increases the state's dependence on essential productive resources located outside its boundaries. The country must support a huge military machine to protect precarious supplies, and it becomes increasingly apparent that this combination of awesome military strength and extreme economic dependence threatens this civilization itself.

As these consequences accumulate and become more visible, as the gap between the abstract ends legitimizing the civilization and the actual life experiences of participants becomes increasingly apparent, the suspicion grows that these are not minor side effects to a series of otherwise laudable imperatives and priorities. These consequences form an intrinsic part of the historical trajectory of the civilization of productivity itself. These suspicions remain cloudy and inarticulate because they are not yet incorporated into the mainstream of our political dialogue. They emerge indirectly in the dissatisfaction with family and school, in the rapid turnover of countercultures, in the deteriorating performance within the institutions of work and politics, in the expansion of institutions to monitor, observe, confine, and discipline a large variety of constituencies, in the loss of confidence in the efficacy of political leaders, in corruption and tax evasion, in high rates of divorce and child abuse.

Schultze and the Friedmans cannot comprehend this social dialectic because they treat citizens, workers, and consumers as if the question of identification with the roles and purposes of the civilization could never become problematic. The categories guiding their inquiry thereby slide over shifts in the social infrastructure of the order. And when they do detect discrepancies between the imperatives of the order and the behavior of people, they consistently endorse an expansion of disciplinary controls through the market or the bureaucracies to bring conduct back in line with the order of things.

Suppose a more complete statement of the alternative account of the trajectory of the civilization presented here showed it to have a high degree of credibility. It would still be necessary to ask: Why, then, does the mainstream political dialogue continue to float between a cautious defense of a modest welfare state and a robust appeal to return to the market principles that made this country great? Why is the disaffection from the imperatives of the order screened out of the official debate? Since we find theories of ruling-class manipulation to be too simplistic and too contemptuous of the people to be saved, we must look in another direction for the answer.

Part of the answer resides in the inability of the Left to display in theory or practice a version of socialism that tames these market imperatives while pro-
tecting civil liberties and political democracy. The failure to articulate a credible alternative immobilizes critical energies and hinders public articulation of the underlying issues. Another part of the answer flows from the double accountability of the welfare state to the electorate and to the privately incorporated economy. We shall consider the second factor more closely here.

Since the state is the one institution that is formally accountable to the electorate through elections, we can see ourselves as collectively free, free as a people, only if we believe that it has legitimate resources at its disposal to promote justice and the common good as we understand them. If we believe that current governmental failures are due to the absence of effective state leadership and management, we are then able to believe that the election of new, more competent leaders will resolve these ills. We are potentially free, if current state officials are unnecessarily inept. And the connection between these two beliefs helps to explain why the questions of competence and leadership tend to become the defining issues in each presidential election.

But the state is accountable not only to the electorate. It is also accountable to the privately incorporated economy. At this second level it responds to organized economic interests but, more importantly, it must support the general preconditions of economic growth through private profit to secure the tax revenues needed to carry out its social programs. Its accountability to the electorate depends on its effectiveness in supporting the performance of the economy, and the second imperative severely limits the options it can pursue in meeting the first. The double accountability of the state thus encourages state officials to believe that the rational solutions to popular grievances fall within the limits set by the state's need to support the preconditions of economic growth through private profit.

Citizens, wishing to see the state as the agency of public accountability, also strive to define issues and grievances within the limits of existing state resources. We call, for instance, upon the state to control inflation through a reduction in state expenditures rather than concentrating on how the economy of productivity constantly produces new effects that increase the level of needed state expenditures. Or, similarly, candidates are scrutinized for their views on abortion, gun control, capital punishment, and the draft, because these issues appear to fall within the orbit of potential state effectiveness; the candidates' comparative standing on the role of the family, the elimination of poverty, the structure of work, or the threat of war posed by our dependence on foreign energy supplies are considered less salient. These latter conditions, falling outside the orbit of state capability in the current order, are treated as if they resided in the necessary order of things.

The dynamic of party competition solidifies this process. Candidates competing for office concentrate on those instruments currently available to the
state that have not been deployed (or deployed effectively) by the opposition party. The state possesses the right to punish criminals, regulate the money supply, reduce regulation of business, and revise tax incentives to favor investors, so one of our parties insists that this mix of "tools" will suffice to correct current economic ills. The state has the right to institute welfare programs, to rationalize regulatory bureaucracies, and to use tax incentives to bring private interests closer to the public interest, so the other party insists that this mix of "tools" will work. Since at every election one of these packages has not been given a try recently, the challenging party can always contend that it is time for a change. Both parties emphasize the importance of leadership and competence within the existing order. Neither party asks whether the self-receding character of the collective pursuit of private affluence, the ecological effects of ceaseless growth, the social consequences of continuous mobility, the rapid obsolescence of old workers, the extension of disciplinary controls over workers, and the threat of war flowing from international economic dependence support the need to reconstitute the economy itself. Neither party is prone to ask whether it is unlikely that the state can promote justice and the common good in the current order of things.

The disenchantment with the civilization of productivity thus does not find direct expression in electoral politics. It is expressed symptomatically in the crisis of worker motivation, the growth of the irregular economy, high divorce rates, increasing drug use, withdrawal into private hedonism or fundamentalist religion, and the widespread distaste for the welfare state. Ironically, these symptomatic expressions deepen performance defects in the economy and further confine the state's ability to respond to them.

The Schultzes and the Friedmans do not perceive this dynamic clearly. Their simple solutions promise to extend it in one way or another, either by accelerating the dialectic of social dissolution or by extending the logic of social regimentation. More likely, these two tendencies will move in tandem, each providing the action to which the other reacts, in a cycle closing in on itself. The Schultze/Friedman agenda is doomed to be cramped increasingly by the economic unreason embodied in public policy, and that unreason must appear to those captured by this defunct vision to reside in the excesses of democratic politics. The contemporary affirmation of democracy is thus bound up with the exposé of the unreason lodged inside the new imperatives and the old priorities of the civilization of productivity.
Has the time come to liberate ourselves from the social sciences? And, if it has, what will be involved in freedom from an intellectual persuasion that has held sway for nearly a century? More to the point of this review, what relevance do such insurrectionary questions have to Barrington Moore's *Injustice* and to *States and Social Revolutions* by his brilliant student Theda Skocpol? The temptation is great to unload twenty years of idiosyncratic stewing onto them, but this would be fair neither to the books nor to the issues they raise. The social scientific perspective, I believe, exercises an unexamined power over our collective intelligence, and these two works offer an excellent opportunity for exploring this proposition. The fact that they reflect a Marxist approach only improves the occasion, for I shall argue that the essence of the social scientific enterprise, Marxist and non-Marxist, is the conviction that human behavior is rational and consistent and hence susceptible to causal analysis.

On their own terms, *Injustice* and *States and Social Revolutions* are so dissimilar as to make risky their review in a single article. They are joined by the close intellectual association of their authors and by their common belief that the violent outbursts of social passion that we label revolutionary can be understood through an analysis of social structure. *Injustice*, however, is a rambling monologue, while *States and Social Revolutions* presents a tightly argued thesis about the structural constraints operating in revolutionary France, Russia, and China. In calling *Injustice* a monologue, I intend to conjure up not the megalomaniac frequently encountered at political fund raisers, but rather
the professional monologuist who charms with his informality and commanding presence. This style invites tolerance for what is certainly a perplexing study of moral outrage. The problems involved have both theoretical and empirical roots. Using a Marxist approach, Moore assumes that the culture created by a dominant social class will distort the basic and universal nature of men and women. This concept of a second nature, or false consciousness, enabled Marx to reconcile a belief in a universal, human rationality with the historical record of lower-class submissiveness. Workers were prevented from acting on their own interests because their exploiters had laid on them their own perception of reality, and this perception, as worked out in laws, literature, science, and religion, justified the disproportionate share of power enjoyed by the culture-producing ruling class. More a deus ex machina than an analytical tool, the theory of false consciousness offered no hint of when or how the "true" human nature would manifest itself in concrete situations. It did, however, mock the pretensions of those nineteenth-century capitalists who viewed their own ethical preferences as a set of eternal verities. Now, a hundred years later, the cultural relativism of the original Marxist formulation has boomeranged, and the belief in socially determined values threatens to undermine the moral concern at the core of Marx's thought. With this in mind, Injustice can be seen as an effort to save Marxist humanism by proving the existence of a universal sense of justice, while marshaling social scientific evidence to explain why men and women have so frequently acquiesced in their own oppression. Moore draws from research on concentration camps, on the plight of India's untouchables, and on the way ordinary Americans have behaved in clinical experiments on authority to sketch a theory of obedience. These rather diverse explorations of oppression, persecution, and ritual humiliation are then brought to bear on three episodes in German labor history: the revolution of 1848, the period of industrialization prior to the First World War, and the reformist revolution of 1919-1920.

As a social scientific study, Injustice doesn't work, and Moore, with engaging candor, manages to convey that he shares this judgment. The argument sprawls outside the conceptual framework; the theoretical foundation is cracked with exceptions and contradictions, many of which are left to the reader to ponder unassisted. Rarely does the revolutionary consciousness that Moore expects to form appear. Dislocating social changes and economic exploitation fail to ignite the sparks of collective fire, and the moral outrage of workers more often becomes a piteous cry for help: "Once again we see that the workers' idea of a good society . . . is the present order with its most disagreeable features softened or eliminated" (p. 370). Although one is told at the outset that the book will take a series of soundings into "exotic societies, both literate and nonliterate" in order to build up a picture of uniformities, none in fact turns up. The gap between generalization and exemplary detail remains wide. Comment-
ing on a Chinese rebellion under the Sung, Moore confidently says that "the ring of universality comes from the likelihood that any set of subjects will have certain ideas about the proper tasks and obligations of the rulers... whose flagrant violation will produce a sense of moral outrage and injustice" (p. 27). But the history of the iron- and steelworkers in the Ruhr suggests to him instead that human beings may have to be taught what their rights are. Moore's comparison between Germany's failed revolution and the successful establishment of the USSR points to the even more imponderable role of a single individual. Of course, all of these variations in human behavior can be understood, but not in the same terms. In fact, the more attuned one is to the specific context of events, the less puzzling become deviations from some norm. Yet these unanticipated outcomes do not build confidence in theories that treat human beings as the agents of social class or as the bearers of universal traits.

The unresolved tension between the humanist's temperament and the social scientist's assumptions mars the logic of this book. The political sociologist in Moore deftly summarizes the literature on behavior modification, or on cross-cultural Piagetian research, while the sympathetic observer of the human scene studies the ambivalent signals coming from actual protest. Aside from some chatty remarks, no serious attempt is made to reconcile these two perspectives. What comes through instead is Moore's readiness to follow his insights wherever they lead, and sometimes they lead him to kick some very sacred cows. Unwilling to idealize the social solidarity of premodern villages, Moore reaches the startling conclusion that "by and large the destruction of community may be the most valuable achievement of modern civilization" (p. 420). Such a tough-minded observation reflects the importance he attaches to individual autonomy, and it is exactly this commitment that silently saps the vitality from the analytical framework of his thesis. Assumptions about a universal human nature undergird all structural arguments—indeed all notions of an objective reality—yet it is the subjectivity of the human being as a moral agent that moves Moore. The lack of coherence between evidence and theory is but the most apparent flaw in an approach riven by this inner contradiction.

Skocpol's goal, on the other hand, is not to take the measure of a social passion, but rather to reveal the inadequacies of several prominent theories about revolution. Because of this goal, States and Social Revolutions is a good deal more like Moore's earlier Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy than it is like Injustice. She has fashioned an excellent comparison of revolutionary France, Russia, and China into a brief for the structural approach to the study of social upheavals. Two examples will illustrate what she means by structural. The late eighteenth-century economy of France provided no commanding
heights for the state to occupy. Hence the Jacobins' piecemeal efforts to set prices and wages offended as many *sans-culottes* and peasants as they satisfied. Without support from below the Montagnards could not retain their power when the exigencies of governing conflicted with the demands of their revolutionary constituents. In an analogous situation, the Bolsheviks made major policy changes and remained in power because the more industrialized structure of the Russian economy gave them factories to control. Similarly, the revolutionary zeal of the French peasantry abated after the destruction of feudal obligations in 1789. Peasant property rights then became obstacles to further social reform, whereas, in Russia, a more egalitarian village structure prevented this stabilization of the old rural order around what Moore criticized as the status quo with its abuses removed.

Skocpol consistently criticizes the reductionism in most theories about revolution. Whereas other models collapse society into the economy, or the state into the ruling class, hers draws out the diverse components of the social structure to permit an inspection of the relevant distinctions. She examines the conflicts among the groups in a particular national elite, as well as the more fundamental struggles between the exploiters and the exploited in the old regime societies. Equally important to her ultimate finding is the fact that governing a country involves imperatives that divide those who actually wield power from the putative ruling class. These emphases upon the complicated interplay of groups in a revolutionary situation make for a textured account of the events. Her syntheses of recent scholarship on revolutionary France, Russia, and China are masterful. Indeed she is at her best when she writes as an historian, first examining concrete details and then turning them into a form appropriate for comparative analysis. The conclusion she presents is that these classic social revolutions were essentially political. Despite their origins in economic grievances, and their fulfillments in new class alignments, they were made possible by governmental crises, shaped by the struggles inherent in ruling a country in turmoil, and secured only when the coercive power of the state had passed into the right hands. The social transformations that turned these rebellions into revolutions occurred when new leaders—not necessarily the initiators of the upheavals—began state-building anew. Napoleon, not Robespierre, prefigured Lenin. Differences in revolutionary ideology and timing pale a bit, Skocpol implies, beside the uniform consequence that all the revolutions left the government more powerful at home, more menacing abroad.

Since Skocpol attends to the neat rows plowed by fellow social scientists, and not to the untidy terrain of human experience, she is able to contain her argument and concentrate her efforts. Her strictures are principally aimed at erring structuralists: modernization theorists who trace all social change to commercial development; structural-functionalists who exaggerate the importance
of the cohesion supplied by social values; and Marxists who have strayed from
the objective pastures of class conflicts into the quagmires of hegemony and
ideology. What is particularly culpable with all of them is their flagging faith in
the determining power of structures. Her critique entails a direct attack on the
purposive conception of social action. This conception fails at two levels, she
says. First, there is the assumption that political power rests upon the consensus
of the ruled, a proposition she dismisses with an unconvincing reference to
South Africa. More telling as an argument against the purposive image is the
contention that neither the beginning nor the end of civil struggles can be traced
to programs or propaganda: "The cognitive content of the ideologies in [no]
sense provides a predictive key to either the outcomes of the Revolutions or the
activities of the revolutionaries . . . " (p. 170). Having toppled these two straw
men, she raises a counterthesis that assumes human passivity. Revolutionary
situations emerge; existing institutions define situations; diverse groups are ob­
jectively conditioned; and the intermeshing of these social agencies shapes the
revolutionary process. What is at stake here is more than the analysis of social
revolutions; it is a basic view of human existence. Are men and women moved
by their intentions? Do they act, or do socioeconomic forces act through them?

The validity of the structural perspective in States and Social Revolutions
depends upon vanquishing the subjectivity implicit in the realm of belief, feel­
ing, and choice. Skocpol sidesteps this problem. Although she criticizes the
voluntarist view of how revolutions take place, what she is really talking about is
how political rhetoric affects decisions. Finding no successful social revolutions
planned and executed by radical vanguards, Skocpol dismisses ideas themselves
without examining the responses and decisions of the groups whose interactions
she says determine revolutionary outcomes. The fact that Chinese peasants
worked for concrete goals and not for socialist aims does not impugn the pur­
posive image. Nor is it a disproof of the centrality of intentions that men and
women make unforeseen decisions, or that groups act at cross-purposes and
produce results no one wished for. Skocpol has confounded the control of
events with the issue of human choice. Having laid to rest the ghost of all­
powerful ideologies, she has raised instead the phantom of passive men and
women reacting to life situations predetermined by previously passive men and
women, in an endless retreat of structural causality.

Much of what Skocpol describes as a structural constraint turns out to be
the influence in the present of decisions made in the past. This power is a many-
faceted force. It works through memory, preemptive social arrangements,
child-rearing practices, and inherited institutions. The agricultural productivity
of one generation, for instance, will set limits to the range of economic choices
open to the next, but so too will the aversion of rural families to buying clothes
from townsmen rather than making their own. A certain level of technology ob-
viously constrains, as do cultural norms, but there is no place in Skocpol's model to weigh these differences, for her structures have become reified into something called objective conditions. These conditions are presented as more fixed and rigid, less open to rupture and rejection, than the amalgam of human decisions that create the only structures we encounter in society. People, moreover, have multiple identities, which confuses the structural picture. Within the French peasantry, women, as Olwen Hufton has shown, turned against the civil religion with a sudden fury that helps account for the conservative reaction after 1795. A structuralist might reply that French peasant women form a separate group; but, carried far enough, the logic of distinctions leads back to the particular and the personal, which have been banished from the analytical framework. Nor can ideologies—those socially organized purposes—be dismissed as forces because they tend to break and change in revolutionary situations. What is thinkable is affected by the influences of time and place, but what is actually thought is nonetheless a powerful determinant upon what is actually done.

*States and Social Revolutions* is not about revolutions, but rather about theories of revolution. At the end of her book, Skocpol assesses the long-range applicability of her model derived from the French, Russian, and Chinese examples. Its limits arise from the historical epoch, she says, but this in no way invalidates the structural approach. Indeed she confidently goes on to discuss the structural obstacles to social revolutions in the Third World today. There are two new ones. Now even the frailest states benefit from the high level of military technology available to them. In addition, the personnel for these repressive military establishments are drawn from social groups connected only tenuously to their societies. Both structural factors will work to inhibit social revolutions in the future, Skocpol concludes. Read with the megawatt illumination of hindsight, one thinks of Iran and the events there that have thrown such judicious generalizations into a cocked hat. Skocpol can, of course, take comfort from the company of equally baffled pundits, State Department experts, native observers, and academics of every stripe. But the fact remains that all social predictions—as distinguished from predictions about particular societies—are premised upon untested, and possibly untestable, assumptions about human nature. Clearly one of the best of its genre, *States and Social Revolutions* succeeds, by its clarity, in focusing attention on the flaws in the entire social science enterprise.

There are two dubious propositions that undergird the social scientific search for truth: the idea that human behavior is sufficiently uniform to understand through abstract generalizations, and the assumption that the number of influences playing upon society is small enough to be comprehended
within a single analytical framework. If these assumptions are not true, then their acceptance in our society (for these convictions are limited to the modern West) becomes a question of culture. We know that the idea of a single, unvarying human nature was on its way to becoming an article of modern faith when Edmund Burke predicted to Adam Smith that his theories would last because they were "founded on the nature of man which is always the same." By the time an awareness of humanity's similarities had hardened into an axiom about human uniformity, the study of man was ready for science. A consensus soon formed on the definition of people as economic rationalists, utility maximizers, and individual competitors in the great game of life. A once rich literature on the subject of men and women—their passions, humors, and essences—then drained funnellike into a unitary theory of behavior. If the timing for these intellectual changes is clear, their source is more elusive. They certainly did not come from the stage or pulpit where men and women continued to appear as the problematic custodians of their own best interests. My own research points to the dramatic transformation of the Western European economy as the principal stimulus to reworking thoughts about human nature.  

In the economic writings of seventeenth-century England, an instrumental conception of human motivation begins to appear. The expansion of trade, the elaboration of a domestic market, bigger harvests, and sustained investments in farming and manufacturing brought more and more people into new patterns of work and exchange. Many quite ordinary men and women—cheesemongers, cattle drovers, teamsters—initiated new trades. These small fry of an expanding commercial economy carried the productive ideal down the social ladder and out into the countryside. The relative abundance of food relieved the magistracy from the age-old concern about food shortages, while the protracted political upheavals weakened the authority of both statute and custom, those venerable restraints upon economic innovation. As men and women guided themselves toward new patterns of work and wealth-getting, they brought into being a social system that appeared to be uncoerced and undirected. At least this was how contemporaries construed it. When they began to look for the silent regulator of this orderly system of exchanges they thought they found it inside the human being—in an unvarying human drive to seek self-interest. Not only did the pursuit of profit not produce that "desolation of the whole" the Puritans talked about, it channeled constructive energies into the market, where more and more could be bought for less. The voluntary and seemingly uniform economic responses of men and women suggested a natural tendency toward economic growth. Of course, the poor, the timid, the tradition-bound—the vulnerable in general—found no place in this fluid economy, where everything

moved according to its price. But it was easy to ignore these nonconforming examples when contemplating a system of “natural social laws” at last coming to light. This apparent regularity of human responses had been observed only in the economic sphere, but from the eighteenth century on, economic concerns encroached insistently upon other domains of social life in the West. The enthusiasm with which a later century greeted Thomas Malthus’s equations linking procreation to food supplies reveals just how easily the sweet mysteries of life could yield to the scientific impulse.

There is a certain irony in the fact that this belief in a single principle of explanation of human motivation emerged from observations of a novelty: the way some English men and women acted in a freer economy. The irony, however, is an illusion, for the idea of natural social laws exerted extraordinary ideological power. Like a magnet it attracted the loose particles of scientific and moral thought set adrift in a changing society. And while there were certainly many ways that the new capitalistic economy could have been interpreted, the dramatic shift of economic initiative and control from the public to the private sector encouraged the belief that this new system of free enterprise sprang from natural drives in the individual human being and not from the state. The seemingly inexorable spread of commerce, pulling with it new techniques and tastes, only fortified the impression that here was a force as irrepressible as nature itself. Specialization, standardization, and the commercial penetration of political boundaries all worked on the imagination of contemporaries, many of whom had reason to promote the idea of a natural system of social laws. At the most obvious level of interest, liberal reformers could use the vision of an automatically functional society to mount an attack on economic regulation. Critics found the fusion of science and innovation an explosive weapon against traditional society. The new model man, *homo faber*, launched a thousand bourgeois hopes. Even John Locke, no romanticizer of the poor, once calculated how the elimination of a leisure class could cut everyone’s workday in half. God’s curse on Adam had been turned into an engine for change. The capitalistic economy had arrived to save mankind from the terrors of theodicy.

In the older view of humanity, the one of essences and capacities rather than persistent pursuits, what men and women actually did was considered indeterminant. Even the proneness to sin ascribed to the fallen sons and daughters offered no basis for predictions. When, however, there developed a belief in the ineluctable drive of self-interest, a science of man was made possible. Effects could be inferred from this cause and causes for effects attributed. From this headwater came the nineteenth-century disciplines of sociology, economics, psychology, and political science. Passing around the towering figure of Marx,
the ideas flowed into left and right streams, but the basic premise remained. Individuals are naturally self-interested and rational. From the Marxist perspective, exploitative economic systems made the identity of interests of classes more salient than the human potential for individual autonomy, while liberal thinkers continued to build their models on Adam Smith's economic man. So confident did social scientists become after World War II that they developed the theory of modernization that explained the process through which the rest of the world was going to become like us. Only recently has it become clear that not all people carry the acorn of the great Western oak within them. And now the French anthropologist, Louis Dumont, has turned the tables and claimed that belief in a uniform human nature represents "a radically aberrant world view shared by no other culture." 2

It is not that structured relations and patterned behavior—what Emile Durkheim called "social facts"—do not exist. They do, but because society's impress must compete with other, more personal pressures, generalizations about external qualities are necessarily partial truths. There are no laws of human nature like the laws of aerodynamics that inhere in the nature of things, because all human events are shaped by unpredictable purposes and unanticipated reactions. The equilibrium of *ceteris paribus* does not exist in society, and the disruptions are the very things that elude the social scientists' nets: the norm that fails, the unexpected decision, the innovation-provoking circumstance. The single human person that is the basic unit of analysis is the carrier of innate tendencies given specific direction in particular social settings by means we ill understand. The fact that we split the myriad of factors playing upon personality into dichotomies of nurture and nature, biology and society, environment and heredity only reveals the tyranny of the scientific ideal of simplicity. The unwarranted assumption that human experience is divisible, moreover, has encouraged scholars to abstract from the real person an aspect—sexual identity, ethnic background, political loyalty—and to compare it with similar aspects from other persons. Dependent parts are given independent existence. They are said to constitute objective reality when in fact these generalizations merely reflect the positivist tendency to take the measure and run. Of course, we need to study the continuous and repetitious along with the unique and exceptional. Indeed we need to learn as much as possible about lives already lived, but our observations will be retrospective, not predictive, unless we gain access to the realm of human choice where all of these factors exercise their influence.

The dangerous illusion that there exist objective conditions exercising independent sway in society is strengthened by the rhetoric of the social sciences. The medium here is indeed the message. In literature, words are selected to

evoke concrete images, to resonate in the reader's mind by unloosing vibrations of meaning. In science, quite the opposite is the case. Words are chosen to convey a single thing: one sign, one referent, one meaning. In the social sciences, neither the poetic nor the scientific aim prevails. Resonance is avoided by the constant replacement of familiar terms with unfamiliar ones. Words are coined, but rarely for exactitude. The phrase "structural/conjunctural causes" currently expresses the idea of a coming together at one time of many systematic influences. "Macrophenomena" refers to the elements in a social situation treated as a whole. "Stadial" has now taken the place of stages in a process, just as "modernization" means progressive development in the modern age. These terms are not like pristine slates upon which new meanings are written for greater analytical rigor. They are less intelligible than ordinary language, their referents are less certain. Such language does more than obfuscate; it contributes to the mystification of our social arrangements. As Marx so astutely observed, mystification alienates us from the very things we have created. A nonconforming example is illustrative of the impact of diction. John Dunn once described revolutions as performances of great complexity. The signal of multiple meanings is immediate. Performance calls to mind the theater of public meetings and crowd rituals. It evokes the size and variety of the cast in political upheavals, as well as the centrality of the sentient beings who are the actors. Thus words not only convey sense; they also form sensibilities. A generation that has grown up under the intellectual aegis of the social sciences comes dangerously close to admiring the style of the neologist. And since social scientist is also the tongue in which we often discuss national issues, our public discourse has lost its curative power, promoting instead that estrangement of language from experience that is the bane of contemporary thinking.

Would the liberation from the social sciences that tantalizes men mean the elimination of sustained, systematic investigations of society? Certainly not. Such inquiries go back a very long way in our history and are responsible for a tradition that has nurtured a distinguished group of eccentric scholars in recent time. The liberation I have in mind is akin to the nonseparating Puritans who dissociated themselves only from the evils of the Church of England. I propose freedom from the egregious errors that mainstream social sciences foster: assuming uniformities, reducing real complexity to artificial simplicity, treating fragments as independent parts of an indivisible whole, counting incommensurable things, and reifying obfuscating abstractions in words that torture the English language.

The great achievement of the social sciences has been moral. Without the positivist thrust toward certain knowledge, few would have had the courage to tackle such unwieldy subjects as class formation or political mobilization. Assumptions about the overriding importance of the systematic have embold-
ened thousands of scholars to track down the variables of social life that lie hidden in the archives. Our knowledge has been immeasurably refined and expanded by these studies. In the past twenty years, there has been a particularly extensive testing of major hypotheses, and because of this we have a bumper crop of disconfirming cases. The more we learn about specific instances, the more rapidly come unraveled the broad categories of structure and function that support our grand theories. Here is foundation for hope. It may become clear that the social sciences are actually exemplifying what they should be studying: the modern tendency toward mindless system-building. Liberation from this intellectual inheritance would then be at hand, and our imagination freed to think anew about the human enterprise.
Americans have made much of Tom Paine in the last fifteen years. His face has been on a postage stamp since 1968 (how he would have loved the irony). He was quoted repeatedly in Gerald Ford’s 1976 State of the Union address, and, more recently, Ronald Reagan cited inspirational Paine at the Republican Convention and in his “debate” with John Anderson. And why shouldn’t Americans, especially those caught up in the fervor of political rhetoric, cite Tom Paine? Few foreigners, let alone Americans, have written more eloquently of America’s messianic mission than has Paine. Throughout his career, from his arrival in Philadelphia at the age of thirty-seven through his role in the French Revolution and his efforts to bring about an English revolution, Paine sang the praises of America as the land of the chosen people. Providence, he insisted, had destined America for a special role in history. In a world “overflowed with oppression,” America was chosen “as the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty.” In his *American Crisis*, Paine claimed that “had it not been for America, there had been no such thing as freedom left throughout the whole universe.” “Freedom hath been hunted round the globe,” he wrote in a stirring passage in *Common Sense*; America would “receive the fugitive.” Her birth and existence was a flood that wiped clean the slate of history. America had it in her power “to begin the world over again. A situation similar to the present hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand.” From America would flow a stream of liberty to cleanse the world of tyranny. Well might Ronald Reagan, the crusader, invoke the rhetoric of Tom Paine.
Care must be taken by a Ford or a Reagan, however, lest he leave the poetic Paine and embrace the Paine fancied recently by other Americans. During the bicentenary, much use was made of Paine by the countercelebrants, the “People's Bicentenary.” He alone among the men of 1776 seemed worthy of celebration by the radicals of 1976, for he alone among the founders was considered a true democrat—a populist, an egalitarian, a democrat. To be sure, there was Jefferson, but few would call the slaveholder Jefferson “Tommy,” let alone “citizen Tom.” Few artisans would hold Jefferson their champion and sing of him under the liberty tree.

Paine's contemporaries agreed. Paine was a radical democrat. While John Adams appreciated Paine's role in achieving independence and shared his sense of America's uniqueness, he was frightened by the simple radicalism of Paine's political vision. It was, Adams wrote, “so democratic, without any restraint or even an attempt at any equilibrium or counterpoise, that it must produce confusion and every evil work.”1 In England, where in the 1790s the Rights of Man became as much a standard work as Robinson Crusoe and the Pilgrim's Progress, the very name Paine struck terror into the hearts of the aristocracy and government. Their response was to hang democrat Tom Paine in effigy and try him for treason.

Two centuries later, neoconservatives like the late Martin Diamond, Irving Kristol, and Samuel Huntington, in their assault on democracy are quite right to include most of the founding fathers in their camp of “sober and cautious” democrats (i.e., nondemocrats) and to see democracy as “problematic” at the founding. To abandon sobriety and caution, to see democracy as less than problematic, is to commit the modern sin of democratic “enthusiasm,” according to neoconservatism. But the seeds of this heresy were planted in the very age of the founding. Tom Paine was a democratic “enthusiast” if ever there was one. He was the first important radical in the American political tradition. His outlook was essentially democratic in its values and instincts. His writings give strength, character, and persuasiveness to the American democratic and egalitarian ideal to the extent that even today it resists the assault from the political and intellectual right. But there are limitations to Paine's world view, revealing limitations. His is a democratic enthusiasm bound inextricably to the universe of liberal discourse. It is this that ultimately explains the lack of total dissonance in his contemporary invocation by laissez-faire liberal ideologues like Reagan. Paine's is a radicalism on the left fringe of the American liberal consensus. But it is a bourgeois radicalism, nonetheless, complete with all the strengths and weaknesses of that tradition.

---

No democrat so enthusiastically rejected the aristocratic world as did Tom Paine. Burke wrote of him that he sought “to destroy in six or seven days” the feudal and chivalric past that “all the boasted wisdom of our ancestors has labored to bring to perfection for six or seven centuries.” 2 Paine’s every reflex was egalitarian, bent on undermining what he considered the “quixotic age of chivalric nonsense.” 3 Kings were the first nonsense to go. Doing nothing more than make war and give away positions, they were paid “eight hundred thousand sterling a year and worshipped into the bargain.” They were useless and unproductive; “of more worth is one honest man to society . . . than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.” 4

After kings, the nonsense of aristocracy was next to go. Is there anything more absurd than the hereditary principle, Paine asked in the Rights of Man, “as absurd as an hereditary mathematician, or an hereditary wiseman, and as ridiculous as an hereditary poet laureate?” What mattered was not a man’s pedigree, but his productivity. Society should be led by men of “talents and abilities,” yet its offices of privilege and power were filled by a nobility that, according to Paine, really meant “no—ability.” Paine, like Wat Tyler, could scan “all the vocabulary of Adam,” and find there “not such an animal as a duke or a count.” The great of the world could shout leveler at such Jacobin sentiments, and proud citizen Tom Paine would reply, “France has not levelled, it has exalted. It has put down the dwarf, to set up the man.” Monarchs and aristocrats were unproductive idlers, parasites, and “drones . . . who neither collect the honey, nor form the hive, but exist only for lazy enjoyment.”

Behind the power of these drones lay the deception that government and society were mysterious and arcane realms where secrets possessed only by some enabled the few to lead, to govern, to oppress. For Paine, “the age of fiction and political superstition, and of craft, and mystery is passing away.” The “craft of courts” is banished from popular government. “There is no place for mystery, no where for it to begin” 5 when the people govern themselves. Such a government was simple and uncomplicated. Defenders of balanced or separated powers, like John Adams, were criticized for their glorification of complexity, which, in fact, Paine insisted was merely a return to the fiction, crafts, and mystery of the predemocratic age.

In that age of mystery and "chivalric nonesense," the poor fared worst of all. To their defense, in moving and bitter language, sprang Tom Paine, the former staymaker, in terms no less meaningful two centuries later. "The present state of civilization," he wrote in Agrarian Justice, "is as odious as it is unjust. It is absolutely the opposite of what it should be, and it is necessary that a revolution should be made in it. The contrast of affluence and wretchedness continually meeting and offending the eye is like dead and living bodies chained together." There is nothing wrong with riches, he adds, "provided that none be miserable in consequence of it." In Part II of The Rights of Man, he laments that nations are "governed like animals, for the pleasure of their riders." "When . . . we see age going to the work-house and youth to the gallows" in a civilized country, he adds, "something must be wrong in the system of government." Why is it, Paine asks, "that scarcely any are executed but the poor?" Youth should be instructed, and the aged supported; instead, he fumes, "the resources of a country are lavished upon kings, upon courts, upon hirelings." What pathetic irony that the poor themselves "are compelled to support the fraud that oppresses them." Paine calculated that

the millions that are superfluously wasted upon governments are more than sufficient to reform those evils . . . were an estimation to be made of the charge of aristocracy to a nation, it will be found nearly equal to that of supporting the poor. The Duke of Richmond alone (and there are cases similar to this) takes away as much for himself as would maintain two thousand poor and aged persons. 6

Paine's solution was for the authorities to grant the poor four pounds a year for children under fourteen, and to require that the children be schooled. For the elderly there would be, at age fifty, six pounds per year, and ten pounds after age sixty. "It is painful," Paine writes, "to see old age working itself to death, in what are called civilized countries, for daily bread." 7 Paine calculated how much the poor pay in taxes over a lifetime, and in anticipation of modern social security notes, "the money he shall receive after fifty years, is but little more than the legal interest of the net money he has paid." Is it more civilized, he asks, to render comfortable the old age of 140,000 people, "or that a million a year of public money be expended on any one individual, and him often of the most worthless or insignificant character?" 8

Public education would be provided for all, if Paine had his way, at the cost

6 Paine, Rights of Man, p. 250.
7 Ibid., p. 264.
8 Ibid., pp. 265–66.
of ten shillings a year for 400,000 children. Women would receive twenty shillings immediately after the birth of a child, and couples twenty shillings upon marriage. Paine insisted that this was not the Christian philanthropy of traditional paternalist attitudes to the poor. In striking anticipation of a doctrine that even two hundred years later is unacceptable to many, he is certain that "this support, as already remarked, is not of the nature of a charity, but of a right." 9 No one else in that age of revolution, none of the "sober and cautious" democrats who were America's founders, proclaimed as Paine did: "When it shall be said in any country in the world, my poor are happy, neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive; . . . when these things can be said, then may that country boast its constitution and its government." 10

Such sentiments endeared Paine to democratic working men. He was applauded by the artisans of Philadelphia and by the members of the London Corresponding Society in the 1790s. His writings would be quoted by the Chartists and the early trade unionists in the nineteenth century. But it is a mistake to read Paine's radicalism as protosocialism, as some have. His merciless indictment of an aristocratic polity and society did serve the interests of the workers and touched their souls, but Paine's radical egalitarianism also served, and was bound up with, the interests of bourgeois liberalism, the principal architect and beneficiary of the destruction of "chivalric nonsense."

It detracts in no way from Paine's radicalism and his egalitarianism to note their liberal sources. Such, indeed, were the terms a progressive and humanitarian assault on the old order had to take in his age. The limitations liberalism placed on his radicalism would become clearer in a later age. In his day there was no incompatibility between his democratic ideals and his defense of individualism, property, and business enterprise. Bourgeois ideals in his mind were intimately linked to an egalitarian vision of society. The stratified society of privilege and rank would be leveled in a bourgeois world of competitive individualism; a world in which political and social place would be determined by talent, merit, and hard work.

His political theory was vintage liberalism. Like Smith and Madison, and like liberal apologists to this day, Paine assumed cooperation and fellowship were strangers to the political arena, a place of conflict and competition con-

9 Ibid., p. 265.
10 Ibid., p. 286.
stituted by atomistic individualism. A nation, he wrote, "is composed of distinct, unconnected individuals, following various trades, employments and pursuits; continually meeting, crossing, uniting, opposing and separating from each other, as accident, interest, and circumstances shall direct." 11

Government had no positive agency to promote justice or virtue for these clashing individuals and interests. It was merely to preside as umpire over a world where individualism was the central value. Its sole justification was providing a stable and secure setting for the operation of a commercial society: "Every man wishes to pursue his occupation and to enjoy the fruits of his labor and the produce of his property in peace and safety and with it the least possible expense. When these things are accomplished, all the objects for which government ought to be established are answered." 12

Paine was read by the artisans and the poor, but his natural friends were also the manufacturers, who were fast destroying traditional society. Paine the entrepreneur, the salesman forever hawking his iron bridge, had great respect for the Wedgewoods, the Arkwrights, the Watts, and their counterparts in America who chartered the Bank of Pennsylvania. These enterprising individuals stood outside government; indeed, their achievements occurred in spite of government: "It is from the enterprise and industry of the individuals and their numerous associations, in which, tritely speaking, government is neither pillow nor bolster, that these improvements have proceeded. No man thought about the government, or who was in, or who was out, when he was planning or executing those things; and all he had to hope with respect to government, was that, it would let him alone." 13

Paine's entrepreneurial friends were engaged in the same egalitarian crusade that he was. Like him, they sought a redistribution of wealth and power that would be based on equality of opportunity and that would enable individuals of real ability to replace those of "no-ability." Paine's most progressive writings, his Agrarian Justice and the justly celebrated Part Two of the Rights of Man, while advocating the redistribution of much wealth to the poor, still served the greater interest of individuals of "enterprise and industry," relieving them of that most burdensome of weights, the poor rates. Relief would come to both the middle and lower classes; indeed in greater measure to the former. Equal conditions, equal results, were not his goal nor theirs. The end of "chivalric nonsense" would bring not leveling but equal opportunity in a com-

12 Paine, Rights of Man, p. 220.
13 Ibid., p. 219.
petitive individualistic society. “That property will ever be unequal is certain,” he wrote in 1795. This was neither unjust nor unfair, but simply a result of “industry, superiority of talents, dexterity of management, extreme frugality and fortunate opportunities.” His political creed was a simple one, pure liberalism at its most radical and progressive historical moment: “Establish the Rights of Man; enthrone equality . . . let there be no privileges, no distinctions of birth, no monopolies; make safe the liberty of industry and trade, the equal distribution of family inheritances.”

Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil,” wrote Paine in Common Sense. With this formula Paine distills the essence of liberal social theory and in turn reveals the flaw that limits his and any radical vision operating within the confines of liberalism. From Locke through Paine and even unto Milton Friedman, the liberal sees civil society as peopled by self-reliant individuals. Such a society is benignly innocent, self-regulating and harmonious. Government is pernicious, the source of threats to individual freedom; it, along with its ally the established Church, is in essence tyrannical. Coercion and abuse are the fruits only of government, never of the social and economic institutions of civil society.

Poverty, for example, according to Paine, is a direct result of governmental interference with “the great laws of society,” the “laws of nature and reciprocal interest.” “How often is the natural propensity to society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of government,” he asks? Instead of “consolidating society, it divided it; it deprived it of its natural cohesion, and engendered discontents and disorders, which otherwise would not have existed.” The “excess and inequality of taxation” has but one effect. “A great mass of the community are thrown thereby into poverty and discontent.” Governments thus create the poor, the economic institutions of civil society do not. In America there is little or no government, according to Paine. Society performs there quite naturally, with “order and decorum.” It follows, then, that, according to Paine, poverty is unknown in America.

Paine’s preoccupation with government as the source of all coercion, his conviction that civil society is the realm of true freedom, is nowhere better revealed than in his obsession with taxation. The real threat to individual freedom, for Paine, is governmental taxation. Taxation is the symbol of tyranny.

and corruption. His self-appointed mission was to defend “the cause of the poor, of the manufacturers, of the tradesmen, of the farmer, and of all those on whom the real burden of taxes fall.” Monarchy, aristocracy, and taxes were all of a piece in Paine’s mind. In his “Anti-Monarchical Essay” (1792) he insisted that “in a word, whoever demands a king, demands an aristocracy, and thirty millions of taxes.” Royalty, he was sure, “has been invented only to obtain from man excessive taxes.” The turmoil of his revolutionary age was produced, according to Paine, by taxpayers who had had enough. He wrote in 1792, “There are two distinct classes of men in the nation [England]. Those who pay taxes and those who receive and live upon the taxes. . . . When taxation is carried to excess, it cannot fail to disunite these two, and something of this is now beginning to appear.”

America represented “a revolution in the principles and practice of governments” for Paine. By this he meant, of course, its repudiation of monarchy and the hereditary principle and its commitment to representative government. In addition, America represented liberal utopia, the triumph of civil society over government. Like Locke, who had claimed that “in the beginning all the world was America,” Paine contended that “the case and circumstances of America present themselves as in the beginning of a world.” Paine was struck with how well revolutionary America performed with little central direction. “A little more than what society naturally performed was all the government that was necessary.” American government was also cheap. Extending over a country ten times as large as England, Paine calculated its costs as “a fortieth part of the expense which government costs in England.” No vast patronage network here; no costly system of jobs. The civil list for the support of one man, the King of England, Paine noted, is “eight times greater than the whole expense of the federal government in America.” What little government there was in America was simple, local, and understandable. The Americans put into practice Paine’s maxim that the “sum of necessary government is much less than is generally thought.” In America, “the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. Industry is not mortified by the splendid extravagance of a court rioting at its expense. There taxes are few.” In England, men were envious of America, and calls for change were coming fast, Paine wrote in 1792, because “the enormous expense of government has provoked men to think.”

The triumph of civil society over government, of cheap and simple self-
regulation over expensive and tyrannical taxation, is seen in a fascinating and repeated preference Paine acknowledges for local over centralized government. England, he suggests, really governs itself, with constables, assizes, magistrates, and juries. This is done at virtually no expense, at no great intrusion of taxation on individual freedom. Central government, on the contrary, or "court government," while useless, is a leviathan, an overblown monster spewing forth jobs and wars. It was the "most productive machine of taxation that was ever invented."\(^{20}\) The latter, centralized monarchical government, was unnecessary and a constant threat to individual liberty. The former, self-regulation by local society, was natural, cheap, and really not government at all. It was thus no threat to individual rights or to the self-realization of talented men.

For the liberal Paine and for his liberal descendants, there is but one villain, government. Merchants, manufacturers, and bankers, even magistrates and justices of the peace, are part of benign and wholesome civil society. Traditional republican doctrine is turned on its head; self-serving individuals further the common good, and public government serves its own selfish and corrupt interest. "The greedy hand of government" is thrust "into every corner and crevice of industry," to grasp "the spoil of the multitude." Governments are evil incarnate. They engage in wars abroad, and practice "oppression and usurpation" at home. They "exhaust the property of the world."\(^{21}\) Reversing the conventional identification of courts and the great with civility, and provincial manufacturers and artisans with vulgarity, Paine holds that governments work for the forces of barbarism, society for the forces of civilization. "Governments . . . pervert the abundance which civilized life produces to carry on the uncivilized part."\(^{22}\) Paine pushes aside what most take to be the political issues that divide men and finds not class war but a heroic and quintessentially liberal struggle between individuals and governments: "It is not whether this or that party shall be in or not, or Whig or Tory, or high or low shall prevail; but whether man shall inherit his rights, and universal civilization take place? Whether the fruits of his labours shall be enjoyed by himself, or consumed by the profligacy of government? Whether robbery shall be banished from courts, and wretchedness from countries?"\(^{23}\)

It was inconceivable to Paine and other liberals that civil society and its institutions, economic, familial, or cultural, could be a source of coercion, of "oppression" and "usurpation." That concentrations of power and wealth in nongovernmental institutions could be the source of inequality and poverty was in-

\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp. 233–34.
\(^{22}\) Ibid.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., pp. 239–40.
compatible with the liberal urge to indict political institutions and to seek progressive change through political reform. Threats to freedom come from the state, from churches and tyrants in the liberal world, not from factory owners, corporate power, or financial manipulators.

Nowhere is this limitation of Paine's vision more apparent than in his strident defense of the Bank of Pennsylvania, a defense that alienated him from many of his Jeffersonian friends in 1786. Paine rejected the fears of the Bank's radical critics, who charged that its directors would wield great economic power even to the point of controlling the state and the government. On the contrary, Paine answered, the Bank illustrates the superiority of civil institutions over state institutions. Men in society have little need for government; they can supply their internal wants and needs by private cooperative activity. Nongovernmental institutions like the Bank by definition could not be oppressive, only taxing governments could. The Bank came into being, he wrote, because government was, in fact, inadequately financing the war. "A public spirit awakened itself with energy out of doors."24 To be sure, the Bank "facilitates the commerce of the country." But much more significantly, "If merchants by this means or farmers by similar means among themselves can mutually aid and support each other, what has the government to do with it? What right has it to expect emolument from associated industry, more than from individual industry? It would be a strange sort of government that should make it illegal for people to assist each other, or pay a tribute for doing so."25 The real threat to individual freedom here was not from any potential or real economic power of the Bank and its directors, according to Paine. The enemy is, indeed, government. Corporate groups must be free of government, Paine writes of the Bank. They must not be dependent on government each year for renewal of their charters. "The citizens who compose those corporations are not free; the government holds an authority and influence over them in a manner different from what it does over other citizens, and by this means destroys that equality of freedom which is the bulwark of the republic."26 If this be Paine's liberalism, can Milton Friedman, Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan be far behind?

When he wanted to, Tom Paine could summon citizens to collective action with stirring phrases. In The Crisis he had written that "these are the times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country." But common action and fraternity, for

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 172.
Paine, are found only in the angry response of a basically individualistic society to public oppression and injustice. When the stimulus of rebellion and war against tyrants and aristocrats is removed, equal individuals will pursue their own livelihoods, and seldom will they be moved to cooperate with one another for common purposes. Among equal citizens, there is little or no sense of community; self-regulating society, yes, but no consciousness of solidarity, nor any real emotional feelings of unity. In society, there is little need for popular power; there are, after all, no collective goals.

Democratic egalitarian citizens for Paine are free, not powerful. Power was something governments had, and with it they taxed, coerced worship, and gave jobs to incompetent second sons of elderly Peers. Its abusive association with government permanently tainted "power" for the individualist Paine and for liberals like him. America was the beacon of light in an otherwise dark world because its equal citizens were free, not because there people had power. Americans did not tax, establish churches, or give away public jobs. That power might serve less abusive ends could not occur to individualistic liberals like Paine, for a free people were not united in pursuing communal ends, nor were they even interested in community itself. Such a linkage of power, community, and freedom could come only with democratic theorists like Rousseau, less wedded to an individualistic vision of society. For such democrats, it was not power itself that corrupted, but the wielders who corrupted power.

How unfair, however, to take leave of Paine at this point, emphasizing his weaknesses not his strengths. Trapped as he was by the limitations of liberal social theory from seeing nongovernmental threats to freedom, equality, and democracy, confined as he was to seeing society only in terms of competitive individualism, it still bears repeating that there have been precious few in the liberal camp who so passionately assaulted privilege as he. There have been few liberals who were so fervently committed to democracy and egalitarianism. He was no Rousseau, to be sure, let alone Marx, but the invocation of his name and his ideas by today's defenders of privilege is an affront to America's radical tradition. Paine is, indeed, the patron saint of American radicalism, bearing in mind, of course, that our radicals, like our conservatives, often carry the stamp of operating within the framework of a fundamentally liberal society.

Lest we forget the democrat Paine, we need remember only how he was hated by the conservatives of his day. Little has changed from Adams's misgivings to the Trilateral Commission's conviction that "some of the problems of governance in the United States today stem from an excess of democracy." The villains for both are enthusiastic and mischievous radicals like Tom Paine,
radicals whose attacks on privilege and whose democratic faith lack, alas, "the sober and cautious American posture toward equality and democracy" so dear to the founders and to the right today. Before they continue to quote Paine, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan would do well to read what John Adams wrote of America's first political radical in 1805, four years before Paine's death in New Rochelle, New York:

I know not whether any man in the world has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs for the last thirty years than Tom Paine. There can be no severer satyr on the age. For such a mongrel between pig and puppy, begotten by a wild boar on a bitch wolf, never before in any age of the world was suffered by the poltroonery of mankind, to run through such a career of mischief. Call it the Age of Paine. 27

CONTRIBUTORS

SHELDON S. WOLIN is the Editor of democracy. He teaches political theory at Princeton University, and is the author of Politics and Vision.

CHRISTOPHER LASCH is an historian at the University of Rochester. His most recent books are Haven in a Heartless World and The Culture of Narcissism. He is on the editorial board of democracy.

LAWRENCE GOODWYN is the author of The Populist Moment and teaches history at Duke University. He is on democracy's editorial board.

DAVID DICKSON is Washington news editors for the British weekly science magazine, Nature. He is the author of The Politics of Alternative Technology and a member of the editorial collective of Radical Science Journal.

NORMAN O. BROWN teaches at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Among his many books are Hermes the Thief, Life Against Death and Love's Body.

WALTER LAFEBER is the author of America, Russia and the Cold War, and The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective. He is an historian at Cornell University.

MICHAEL BEST and WILLIAM CONNOLLY teach economics and political science, respectively, at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. They are the authors of The Politicized Economy.

JOYCE APPLEBY is the author of Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England. She teaches history at San Diego State University, and is on the editorial board of democracy.

ISAAC KRAMNICK is a Cornell University historian. He is the author of The Rage of Edmund Burke and editor of Essays in the History of Political Thought.
The next issue of *democracy* will focus on the disintegration and renewal of major institutions. Planned articles will include: Joe Paff on the insurgent Teamsters, Alan Wolfe on the presidency, Sheldon S. Wolin on education, Jean Elshtain on the family, Jeff Lustig on democratic movements, Philip Green on the new anti-statism, and Harry Boyte on citizen movements.

Themes of future issues will include democracy and: economy, culture, the military, technology, bureaucracy, ethnicity, religion and "the self."

There will be articles on reindustrialization, the rock-music industry, the idea of a democratic army, and the political uses of modernism. There will be book review-essays on Kissinger, Wendell Berry, and Charles Lindblom.

Among the writings and writers to be discussed under "Classics of Democracy" will be: Tocqueville, Melville, Whitman, Henry George, Veblen, Dewey, Schumpeter, and the Port Huron Statement.