

"Columbus, The Indians, and Human Progress" - Chapter 1

from Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States : 1492 - Present*, Revised and Updated Edition, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995) - by permission

Arawak men and women, naked, tawny, and full of wonder, emerged from their villages onto the island's beaches and swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat. When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, speaking oddly, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts. He later wrote of this in his log:

They...brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned...They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features....They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane...They would make fine servants....With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.

These Arawaks of the Bahama Islands were much like Indians on the mainland, who were remarkable (European observers were to say again and again) for their hospitality, their belief in sharing. These traits did not stand out in the Europe of the Renaissance, dominated as it was by the religion of popes, the government of kings, the frenzy for money that made Western civilization and its first messenger to the Americas, Christopher Columbus.

Columbus wrote:

As soon as I arrived in the Indies, on the first Island which I found, I took some of the natives by force in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts.

The information that Columbus wanted most was: Where is the gold? He had persuaded the king and queen of Spain to finance an expedition to the lands, the wealth, he expected would be on the other side of the Atlantic - the Indies and Asia, gold and spices. For, like other informed people of his time, he knew the world was round and he could sail west in order to get to the Far East.

Spain was recently unified, one of the new modern nation-states, like France, England, and Portugal. Its population, mostly poor peasants, worked for the nobility, who were 2 percent of the population and owned 95 percent of the land. Spain had tied itself to the Catholic Church, expelled all the Jews, driven

out the Moors. Like other states of the modern world, Spain sought gold, which was becoming the new mark of wealth, more useful than land because it could buy anything.

There was gold in Asia, it was thought, and certainly silks and spices, for Marco Polo and others had brought back marvelous things from their overland expeditions centuries before. Now that the Turks had conquered Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean, and controlled the land routes to Asia, a sea route was needed. Portuguese sailors were working their way around the southern tip of Africa. Spain decided to gamble on a long sail across an unknown ocean.

In return for bringing back gold and spices, they promised Columbus 10 percent of the profits, governorship over new-found lands, and the fame that would go with a new title: Admiral of the Ocean Sea. He was a merchant's clerk from the Italian city of Genoa, part-time weaver (the son of a skilled weaver), and expert sailor. He set out with three sailing ships, the largest of which was the *Santa Maria*, perhaps 100 feet long, and thirty-nine crew members.

Columbus would never have made it to Asia, which was thousands of miles farther away than he had calculated, imagining a smaller world. He would have been doomed by that great expanse of sea. But he was lucky. One-fourth of the way there he came upon an unknown, uncharted land that lay between Europe and Asia - the Americas. It was early October 1492, and thirty-three days since he and his crew had left the Canary Islands, off the Atlantic coast of Africa. Now they saw branches and sticks floating in the water. They saw flocks of birds. These were signs of land. Then, on October 12, a sailor called Rodrigo saw the early morning moon shining on white sands, and cried out. It was an island in the Bahamas, the Caribbean Sea. The first man to sight land was supposed to get a yearly pension of 10,000 maravedis for life, but Rodrigo never got it. Columbus claimed he had seen a light the evening before. He got the reward.

So, approaching land, they were met by the Arawak Indians, who swam out to greet them. The Arawaks lived in village communes, had a developed agriculture of corn, yams, cassava. They could spin and weave, but they had no horses or work animals. They had no iron, but they wore tiny gold ornaments in their ears.

This was to have enormous consequences: it led Columbus to take some of them aboard ship as prisoners because he insisted that they guide him to the source of the gold. He then sailed to what is now Cuba, then to Hispaniola (the island which today consists of Haiti and the Dominican Republic). There, bits of visible gold in the rivers, and a gold mask presented to Columbus by a local Indian chief, led to wild visions of gold fields.

On Hispaniola, out of timbers from the *Santa Maria*, which had run aground, Columbus built a fort, the first European military base in the Western Hemisphere. He called it Navidad (Christmas) and left thirty-nine crewmembers there, with instructions to find and store the gold. He took more Indian prisoners and put them aboard his two remaining ships. At one part of the island he got into a fight with Indians who refused to trade as many bows and arrows as he and his men wanted. Two were run through with swords

and bled to death. Then the *Nina* and the *Pinta* set sail for the Azores and Spain. When the weather turned cold, the Indian prisoners began to die.

Columbus's report to the Court of Madrid was extravagant. He insisted he reached Asia (it was Cuba) and an island off the coast of China (Hispaniola). His descriptions were part fact, part fiction:

Hispaniola is a miracle. Mountains and hills, plains and pastures, are both fertile and beautiful...the harbors are unbelievably good and there are many wider rivers of which the majority contain gold...There are many spices, and great mines of gold and other metals...

The Indians, Columbus reported, "are so naive and so free with their possessions that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say no. To the contrary they offer to share with anyone..." He concluded his report by asking for a little help from their Majesties, and in return he would bring them from his next voyage "as much gold as they need...and as many slaves as they ask." He was full of religious talk: "Thus the eternal God, our Lord, gives victory to those who follow His way over apparent impossibilities."

Because of Columbus's exaggerated report and promises, his second expedition was given seventeen ships and more than twelve hundred men. The aim was clear: slaves and gold. They went from island to island in the Caribbean, taking Indians as captives. But as word spread of the Europeans' intent they found more and more empty villages. On Haiti, they found that the sailors left behind at Fort Navidad had been killed in a battle with the Indians, after they had roamed the island in gangs looking for gold, taking women and children as slaves for sex and labor.

Now, from his base on Haiti, Columbus sent expedition after expedition into the interior. They found no gold fields, but had to fill the ships returning to Spain with some kind of dividend. In the year 1495, they went on a great slave raid, rounded up fifteen hundred Arawak men, women, and children, put them in pens guarded by Spaniards and dogs, then picked the five hundred best specimens to load onto ships. Of those five hundred, two hundred died en route. The rest arrived in Spain and were put up for sale by the archdeacon of the town, who reported that, although the slaves were "naked as the day they were born," they showed "no more embarrassment than animals." Columbus later wrote: "Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold."

But too many of the slaves died in captivity. And so Columbus, desperate to pay back dividends to those who had invested, had to make good his promise to fill the ships with gold. In the province of Cicao on Haiti, where he and his men imagined huge gold fields to exist, they ordered all persons fourteen years or older to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months. When they brought it, they were given copper tokens to hang around their necks. Indians found without a copper token had their hands cut off and bled to death.

The Indians had been given an impossible task. The only gold around was bits of dust garnered from the streams. So they fled, were hunted down with dogs, and were killed.

Trying to put together an army of resistance, the Arawaks faced Spaniards who had armor, muskets, swords, horses. When the Spaniards took prisoners they hanged them or burned them to death. Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began, with cassava poison. Infants were killed to save them from the Spaniards. In two years, through murder, mutilation, or suicide, half of the 250,000 Indians on Haiti were dead.

When it became clear that there was no gold left, the Indians were taken as slave labor on huge estates, known later as *encomiendas*. They were worked at a ferocious pace, and died by the thousands. By the year 1515, there were perhaps fifty thousand Indians left. By 1550, there were five hundred. A report of the year 1650 shows none of the original Arawaks or their descendants left on the island.

The chief source - and, on many matters the only source - of information about what happened on the islands after Columbus came is [Bartolomé de las Casas](#), who, as a young priest, participated in the conquest of Cuba. For a time he owned a plantation on which Indian slaves worked, but he gave that up and became a vehement critic of Spanish cruelty. Las Casas transcribed Columbus's journal and, in his fifties, began a multivolume [History of the Indies](#). In it, he describes the Indians. They are agile, he says, and can swim long distances, especially the women. They are not completely peaceful, because they do battle from time to time with other tribes, but their casualties seem small, and they fight when they are individually moved to do so because of some grievance, not on the orders of captains or kings.

Women were treated so well as to startle the Spaniards. Las Casas describes sex relations:

Marriage laws are non-existent: men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please, without offense, jealousy or anger. They multiply in great abundance; pregnant women work to the last minute and give birth almost painlessly; up to the next day, they bathe in the river and are as clean and healthy as before giving birth. If they tire of their men, they give themselves abortions with herbs that force stillbirths, covering their shameful parts with leaves or cotton cloth; although on the whole, Indian men and women look upon total nakedness with as much casualness as we look upon a man's head or at his hands.

The Indians, Las Casas says, have no religion, at least no temples. They live in

large communal bell-shaped buildings, housing up to 600 people at one time...made of very strong wood and roofed with palm leaves.... They prize bird feathers of various colors, beads made of fishbones, and green and white stones with which they adorn their ears and lips, but they put no value on gold and other precious things. They lack all manner of commerce, neither buying nor selling, and rely exclusively on their natural environment for maintenance. They are extremely generous with their possessions and by the same token covet the possessions of their friends and expect the same degree of liberality....

In Book Two of his HISTORY OF THE INDIES, Las Casas (who at first urged replacing Indians by black slaves, thinking they were stronger and would survive, but later relented when he saw the effects on

blacks) tells about the treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards. It is a unique account and deserves to be quoted at length:

Endless testimonies...prove the mild and pacific temperament of the natives....But our work was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy; small wonder, then, if they tried to kill one of us now and then....The admiral, it is true, was blind as those who came after him, and he was so anxious to please the King that he committed irreparable crimes against the Indians....

Las Casas tells how the Spaniards "grew more conceited every day" and after a while refused to walk any distance. They "rode the backs of Indians if they were in a hurry" or were carried on hammocks by Indians running in relays. "In this case they also had Indians carry large leaves to shade them from the sun and others to fan them with goose wings." Total control led to total cruelty. The Spaniards "thought nothing of knifing Indians by tens and twenties and of cutting slices off them to test the sharpness of their blades." Las Casas tells how "two of these so-called Christians met two Indian boys one day, each carrying a parrot; they took the parrots and for fun beheaded the boys." The Indians' attempts to defend themselves failed. And when they ran off into the hills they were found and killed. So, Las Casas reports, "they suffered and died in the mines and other labors in desperate silence, knowing not a soul in the world to whom they could have turn for help." He describes their work in the mines:

...mountains are stripped from top to bottom and bottom to top a thousand times; they dig, split rocks, move stones, and carry dirt on their backs to wash it in the rivers, while those who wash gold stay in the water all the time with their backs bent so constantly it breaks them; and when water invades the mines, the most arduous task of all is to dry the mines by scooping up pansful of water and throwing it up outside....

After each six or eight months' work in the mines, which was the time required of each crew to dig enough gold for melting, up to a third of the men died. While the men were sent many miles away to the mines, the wives remained to work the soil, forced into the excruciating job of digging and making thousands of hills for cassava plants.

Thus husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides....they ceased to procreate. As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7000 children died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation....In this way, husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk...and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile...was depopulated....My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write....

When he arrived on Hispaniola in 1508, Las Casas says, "there were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a

knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it...."

Thus began the history, five hundred years ago, of the European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas. That beginning, when you read Las Casas - even if his figures are exaggerations (were there 3 million Indians to begin with, as he says, or less than a million, as some some historians have calculated, or 8 million as others now believe?) - is conquest, slavery, death. When we read the history books given to children in the United States, it all starts with heroic adventure - there is no bloodshed - and Columbus Day is a celebration.

Past the elementary and high schools, there are only occasional hints of something else. [Samuel Eliot Morison](#), the Harvard historian, was the most distinguished writer on Columbus, the author of a multi-volume biography, and was himself a sailor who retraced Columbus's route across the Atlantic. In his popular book [CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, MARINER](#), written in 1954, he tells about the enslavement and the killing: "The cruel policy initiated by Columbus and pursued by his successors resulted in complete genocide."

That is on one page, buried halfway into the telling of a grand romance. In the book's last paragraph, Morison sums up his view of Columbus:

He had his faults and his defects, but they were largely the defects of the qualities that made him great - his indomitable will, his superb faith in God and in his own mission as the Christ-bearer to lands beyond the seas, his stubborn persistence despite neglect, poverty and discouragement. But there was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities - his seamanship.

One can lie outright about the past. Or one can omit facts which might lead to unacceptable conclusions. Morison does neither. He refuses to lie about Columbus. He does not omit the story of mass murder; indeed he describes it with the harshest word one can use: genocide.

But he does something else - he mentions the truth quickly and goes on to other things more important to him. Outright lying or quiet omission takes the risk of discovery which, when made, might arouse the reader to rebel against the writer. To state the facts, however, and then to bury them in a mass of other information is to say to the reader with a certain infectious calm: yes, mass murder took place, but it's not that important - it should weigh very little in our final judgments; it should affect very little what we do in the world.

It is not that the historian can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural to him as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth, then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map.

My argument cannot be against selection, simplification, emphasis, which are inevitable for both

cartographers and historians. But the mapmaker's distortion is a technical necessity for a common purpose shared by all people who need maps. The historian's distortion is more than technical, it is ideological; it is released into a world of contending interests, where any chosen emphasis supports (whether the historian means to or not) some kind of interest, whether economic or political or racial or national or sexual.

Furthermore, this ideological interest is not openly expressed in the way a mapmaker's technical interest is obvious ("This is a Mercator projection for long-range navigation - for short-range, you'd better use a different projection"). No, it is presented as if all readers of history had a common interest which historians serve to the best of their ability. This is not intentional deception; the historian has been trained in a society in which education and knowledge are put forward as technical problems of excellence and not as tools for contending social classes, races, nations.

To emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to deemphasize their genocide, is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves - unwittingly - to justify what was done.

My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus *in absentia*. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, to save us all) - that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth. We have learned to give them exactly the same proportion of attention that teachers and writers often give them in the most respectable of classrooms and textbooks. This learned sense of moral proportion, coming from the apparent objectivity of the scholar, is accepted more easily than when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly.

The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks) - the quiet acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress - is only one aspect of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders. It is as if they, like Columbus, deserve universal acceptance, as if they - the Founding Fathers, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt, Kennedy, the leading members of Congress, the famous Justices of the Supreme Court - represent the nation as a whole. The pretense is that there really is such a thing as "the United States," subject to occasional conflicts and quarrels, but fundamentally a community of people with common interests. It is as if there really is a "national interest" represented in the Constitution, in territorial expansion, in the laws passed by Congress, the decisions of the courts, the development of capitalism, the culture of education and the mass media.

"History is the memory of states," wrote Henry Kissinger in his first book, *A WORLD RESTORED*, in which he proceeded to tell the history of nineteenth-century Europe from the viewpoint of the leaders of Austria and England, ignoring the millions who suffered from those statesmen's policies. From his standpoint, the "peace" that Europe had before the French Revolution was "restored" by the diplomacy of

a few national leaders. But for factory workers in England, farmers in France, colored people in Asia and Africa, women and children everywhere, except in the upper classes, it was a world of conquest, violence, hunger, exploitation - a world not restored but disintegrated.

My viewpoint, in telling the history of the United States, is different: that we must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.

Thus, in that inevitable taking of sides which comes from selection and emphasis in history, I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserting soldiers of Scott's army, of the rise of industrialism as seen by the young women in the Lowell textile, of the Spanish-American war as seen by the Cubans, the conquest of the Philippines as seen by black soldiers on Luzon, the Gilded Age as seen by southern farmers, the First World War as seen by socialists, the Second World War as seen by pacifists, the New Deal as seen by blacks in Harlem, the postwar American empire as seen by peons in Latin America. And so on, to the limited extent that any one person however he or she strains, can "see" history from the standpoint of others.

My point is not to grieve for the victims and denounce the executioners. Those tears, that anger, cast into the past, deplete our moral energy for the present. And the lines are not always clear. In the long run, the oppressor is also a victim. In the short run (and so far, human history has consisted only of short runs), the victims, themselves desperate and tainted with the culture that oppresses them, turn on other victims.

Still, understanding the complexities, this book will be skeptical of governments and their attempts, through politics and culture, to ensnare ordinary people in a giant web of nationhood pretending to a common interest. I will try not to overlook the cruelties that victims inflict on one another as they are jammed together in the boxcars of the system. I don't want to romanticize them. But I do remember (in rough paraphrase) a statement I once read: "The cry of the poor is not always just, but if you don't listen to it, you will never know what justice is."

I don't want to invent victories for people's movements. But to think that history-writing must aim simply to recapitulate the failures that dominate the past is to make historians collaborators in an endless cycle of defeat. If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, occasionally to win. I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past's fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.

That, being as blunt as I can, is my approach to the history of the United States. The reader may as well know that before going on.

What Columbus did to the Arawaks of the Bahamas, Cortés did to the Aztecs of Mexico, Pizarro to the Incas of Peru, and the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts to the Powhatans and the Pequots.

The Aztec civilization of Mexico came out of the heritage of Mayan, Zapotec, and Toltec cultures. It built enormous constructions from stone tools and human labor, developed a writing system and a priesthood. It also engaged in (let us not overlook this) the ritual killing of thousands of people as sacrifices to the gods. The cruelty of the Aztecs, however, did not erase a certain innocence, and when a Spanish armada appeared at Vera Cruz, and a bearded white man came ashore, with strange beasts (horses), clad in iron, it was thought that he was the legendary Aztec man-god who had died three hundred years before, with the promise to return - the mysterious Quetzalcoatl. And so they welcomed him, with munificent hospitality.

That was Hernando Cortés, come from Spain with an expedition financed by merchants and landowners and blessed by the deputies of God, with one obsessive goal: to find gold. In the mind of Montezuma, the king of the Aztecs, there must have been a certain doubt about whether Cortés was indeed Quetzalcoatl, because he sent a hundred runners to Cortés, bearing enormous treasures, gold and silver wrought into objects of fantastic beauty, but at the same time begging him to go back. (The painter Dürer a few years later described what he saw just arrived in Spain from that expedition - a sun of gold, a moon of silver, worth a fortune.)

Cortés then began his march of death from town to town, using deception, turning Aztec against Aztec, killing with the kind of deliberateness that accompanies a strategy - to paralyze the will of the population by a sudden frightful deed. And so, in Cholulu, he invited the headmen of the Cholula nation to the square. And when they came, with thousands of unarmed retainers, Cortés's small army of Spaniards, posted around the square with cannon, armed with crossbows, mounted on horses, massacred them, down to the last man. Then they looted the city and moved on. When their cavalcade of murder was over they were in Mexico City, Montezuma was dead, and the Aztec civilization, shattered, was in the hands of the Spaniards.

All this is told in the Spaniards' own accounts.

In Peru, that other Spanish conquistador Pizarro, used the same tactics, and for the same reasons-the frenzy in the early capitalist states of Europe for gold, for slaves, for products of the soil, to pay the bondholders and stockholders of the expeditions, to finance the monarchical bureaucracies rising in Western Europe, to spur the growth of the new money economy rising out of feudalism, to participate in what Karl Marx would later call "the primitive accumulation of capital." These were the violent beginnings of an intricate system of technology, business, politics, and culture that would dominate the world for the next five centuries.

In the North American English colonies, the pattern was set early as Columbus had set it in the islands of

the Bahamas. In 1585, before there was any permanent English settlement in Virginia, Richard Grenville landed there with seven ships. The Indians he met were hospitable, but when one of them stole a small silver cup, Grenville sacked and burned the whole Indian village.

Jamestown itself was set up inside the territory of an Indian confederacy, led by the chief, Powhatan. Powhatan watched the English settle on his people's land, but did not attack, maintaining a posture of coolness. When the English were going through their "starving time" in the winter of 1610, some of them ran off to join the Indians, where they would at least be fed. When the summer came, the governor of the colony sent a messenger to ask Powhatan to return the runaways, whereupon Powhatan, according to the English account, replied with "noe other than prowde and disdaynefull Answers." Some soldiers were therefore sent out "to take Revendge." They fell upon an Indian settlement, killed fifteen or sixteen Indians, burned the houses, cut down the corn growing around the village, took the queen of the tribe and her children into boats, then ended up throwing the children overboard "and shoteinge owtt their Braynes in the water." The queen was later taken off and stabbed to death.

Twelve years later, the Indians, alarmed as the English settlements kept growing in numbers, apparently decided to try to wipe them out for good. They went on a rampage and massacred 347 men, women and children. From then on it was total war.

Not able to enslave the Indians, and not able to live with them, the English decided to exterminate them. [Edmund Morgan writes, in his history of early Virginia, *American Slavery, American Freedom*:](#)

Since the Indians were better woodsmen than the English and virtually impossible to track down, the method was to feign peaceful intentions, let them settle down and plant their corn wherever they chose, and then, just before harvest, fall upon them, killing as many as possible and burning the corn.... Within two or three years of the massacre the English had avenged the deaths of that day many times over.

In that first year of the white man in Virginia, 1607, Powhatan had addressed a plea to John Smith that turned out prophetic. How authentic it is may be in doubt, but it is so much like so many Indian statements that it may be taken as, if not the rough letter of that first plea, the exact spirit of it:

I have seen two generations of my people die....I know the difference between peace and war better than any man in my country. I am now grown old, and must die soon; my authority must descend to my brothers, Opitchapan, Opechancanough and Catatough - then to my sisters, and then to my two daughters. I wsh them to know as much as I do, and that your love to them may be like mine to you. Why will you take by force what you may have quietly by love? Why will you destroy us who supply you with food? What can you get by war? We can hide our provisions and run into the woods; then you will starve for wronging your friends. Why are you jealous of us? We are unarmed, and willing to give you what you ask, if you come in a friendly manner, and not so simple as not to know that it is much better to eat good meat, sleep comfortably, live quietly with my wives and children, than to run away from them, and to lie cold in the woods, feed on acorns,

roots and such trash, and be so hunted that I can neither eat nor sleep. In these wars, my men must sit up watching, and if a twig break, they all cry out "Here comes Captain Smith!" So I must end my miserable life. Take away your guns and swords, the cause of all our jealousy, or you may all die in the same manner.

When the Pilgrims came to New England they too were coming not to vacant land but to territory inhabited by tribes of Indians. The governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, created the excuse to take Indian land by declaring the area legally a "vacuum." The Indians, he said, had not "subdued" the land, and therefore had only a "natural" right to it, but not a "civil right." A "natural right" did not have any legal standing.

The Puritans also appealed to the Bible, Psalms 2:8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee, the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And to justify their use of force to take the land, they cited Romans 13:2: "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

The Puritans lived in uneasy truce with the Pequot Indians, who occupied what is now southern Connecticut and Rhode Island. But they wanted them out of the way; they wanted their land. And they seemed to want also to establish their rule firmly over Connecticut settlers in that area. The murder of a white trader, Indian-kidnaper, and troublemaker became an excuse to make war on the Pequots in 1636.

A punitive expedition left Boston to attack the Narragansett Indians on Block Island, who were lumped with the Pequots. As Governor Winthrop wrote:

They had commission to put to death the men of Block Island, but to spare the women and children, and to bring them away, and to take possession of the island; and from thence to go to the Pequots to demand the murderers of Captain Stone and other English, and one thousand fathom of wampom for damages, etc. and some of their children as hostages, which if they should refuse, they were to obtain it by force.

The English landed and killed some Indians, but the rest hid in the thick forests of the island and the English went from one deserted village to the next, destroying crops. Then they sailed back to the mainland and raided Pequot villages along the coast, destroying crops again. One of the officers of that expedition, in his account, gives some insight into the Pequots they encountered: "The Indians spying of us came running in multitudes along the water side, crying, What cheer, Englishmen, what cheer, what do you come for? They not thinking we intended war, went on cheerfully...."

So, the war with the Pequots began. Massacres took place on both sides. The English developed a tactic of warfare used earlier by Cortés and later, in the twentieth century, even more systematically: deliberate attacks on noncombatants for the purpose of terrorizing the enemy. That is [ethnohistorian Francis Jennings's interpretation](#) of Captain John Mason's attack on a Pequot village on the Mystic River near Long Island Sound: "Mason proposed to avoid attacking Pequot warriors, which would have overtaxed

his unseasoned, unreliable troops. Battle, as such, was not his purpose. Battle is only one of the ways to destroy an enemy's will to fight. Massacre can accomplish the same end with less risk, and Mason had determined that massacre would be his objective."

So the English set fire to the wigwams of the village. By their own account: "The Captain also said, We must Burn Them; and immediately stepping into the Wigwam...brought out a Fire Brand, and putting it into the Matts with which they were covered, set the Wigwams on Fire." William Bradford, in his *History of the Plymouth Plantation* written at the time, describes John Mason's raid on the Pequot village:

Those that scraped the fire were slaine with the sword; some hewed to peeces, others rune throw with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatchte, and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fyer, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stincke and sente there of, but the victory seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prayers thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to inclose their enemies in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting an enimie.

As Dr. Cotton Mather, Puritan theologian, put it: "It was supposed that no less than 600 Pequot souls were brought down to hell that day."

The war continued. Indian tribes were used against one another, and never seemed able to join together in fighting the English. [Jennings](#) sums up:

The terror was very real among the Indians, but in time they came to meditate upon its foundations. They drew three lessons from the Pequot War: (1) that the Englishmen's most solemn pledge would be broken whenever obligation conflicted with advantage; (2) that the English way of war had no limit of scruple or mercy; and (3) that weapons of Indian making were almost useless against weapons of European manufacture. These lessons the Indians took to heart.

A footnote in [Virgil Vogel's book *This Land Was Ours* \(1972\)](#) says: "The official figure on the number of Pequots now in Connecticut is twenty-one persons."

Forty years after the Pequot War, Puritans and Indians fought again. This time it was the Wampanoags, occupying the south shore of Massachusetts Bay, who were in the way and also beginning to trade some of their land to people outside the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their chief, Massasoit, was dead. His son Wamsutta had been killed by Englishmen, and Wamsutta's brother Metacom (later to be called King Philip by the English) became chief. The English found their excuse, a murder which they attributed to Metacom, and they began a war of conquest against the Wampanoags, a war to take their land. They were clearly the aggressors, but claimed they attacked for preventive purposes. As Roger Williams, more friendly to the Indians than most, put it: "All men of conscience or prudence ply to windward, to maintain their wars to be defensive."

Jennings says the elite of the Puritans wanted the war; the ordinary white Englishman did not want it and often refused to fight. The Indians certainly did not want war, but they matched atrocity with atrocity. When it was over, in 1676, the English had won, but their resources were drained; they had lost six hundred men. Three thousand Indians were dead, including Metacom himself. Yet the Indian raids did not stop.

For a while, the English tried softer tactics. But ultimately, it was back to annihilation. The Indian population of 10 million that lived north of Mexico when Columbus came would ultimately be reduced to less than a million. Huge numbers of Indians would die from diseases introduced by the whites. A Dutch traveler in New Netherland wrote in 1656 that "the Indians...affirm, that before the arrival of the Christians, and before the smallpox broke out amongst them, they were ten times as numerous as they now are, and that their population had been melted down by this disease, whereof nine-tenths of them have died." When the English first settled Martha's Vineyard in 1642, the Wampanoags there numbered perhaps three thousand. There were no wars on that island, but by 1764, only 313 Indians were left there. Similarly, Block Island Indians numbered perhaps 1,200 to 1,500 in 1662, and by 1774 were reduced to fifty-one.

Behind the English invasion of North America, behind their massacre of Indians, their deception, their brutality, was that special powerful drive born in civilizations based on private property. It was a morally ambiguous drive; the need for space, for land, was a real human need. But in conditions of scarcity, in a barbarous epoch of history ruled by competition, this human need was transformed into the murder of whole peoples. Roger Williams said it was

a depraved appetite after the great vanities, dreams and shadows of this vanishing life, great portions of land, land in this wilderness, as if men were in as great necessity and danger for want of great portions of land, as poor, hungry, thirsty seamen have, after a sick and stormy, a long and starving passage. This is one of the gods of New England, which the living and most high Eternal will destroy and famish.

Was all this bloodshed and deceit-from Columbus to Cortés, Pizarro, the Puritans-a necessity for the human race to progress from savagery to civilization? Was [Morison](#) right in burying the story of genocide inside a more important story of human progress? Perhaps a persuasive argument can be made - as it was made by Stalin when he killed peasants for industrial progress in the Soviet Union, as it was made by Churchill explaining the bombings of Dresden and Hamburg, and Truman explaining Hiroshima. But how can the judgment be made if the benefits and losses cannot be balanced because the losses are either unmentioned or mentioned quickly?

That quick disposal might be acceptable ("Unfortunate, yes, but it had to be done") to the middle and upper classes of the conquering and "advanced" countries. But is it acceptable to the poor of Asia, Africa, Latin America, or to the prisoners in Soviet labor camps, or the blacks in urban ghettos, or the Indians on reservations - to the victims of that progress which benefits a privileged minority in the world? Was it acceptable (or just inescapable?) to the miners and railroaders of America, the factory hands, the men and women who died by the thousands from accidents or sickness, where they worked or where they lived-

casualties of progress? And even the privileged minority-must it not reconsider, with that practicality which even privilege cannot abolish, the value of its privileges, when they become threatened by the anger of the sacrificed, whether in organized rebellion, unorganized riots, or simply those brutal individual acts of desperation labeled crimes by law and the state?

If there *are* necessary sacrifices to be made for human progress, is it not essential to hold to the principle that those to be sacrificed must make the decision themselves? We can all decide to give up something of ours, but do we have the right to throw into the pyre the children of others, or even our own children, for a progress which is not nearly as clear or present as sickness or health, life or death?

What did people in Spain get out of all that death and brutality visited on the Indians of the Americas? For a brief period in history, there was the glory of a Spanish Empire in the Western Hemisphere. As [Hans Konings sums it up in his book *Columbus: His Enterprise*](#) :

For all the gold and silver stolen and shipped to Spain did not make the Spanish people richer. It gave their kings an edge in the balance of power for a time, a chance to hire more mercenary soldiers for their wars. They ended up losing those wars anyway, and all that was left was a deadly inflation, a starving population, the rich richer, the poor poorer, and a ruined peasant class.

Beyond all that, how certain are we that what was destroyed was inferior? Who were these people who came out on the beach and swam to bring presents to Columbus and his crew, who watched Cortés and Pizarro ride through their countryside, who peered out of the forests at the first white settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts?

Columbus called them Indians, because he miscalculated the size of the earth. In this book we too call them Indians, with some reluctance, because it happens too often that people are saddled with names given them by their conquerors.

And yet, there is some reason to call them Indians, because they did come, perhaps 25,000 years ago, from Asia, across the land bridge of the Bering Straits (later to disappear under water) to Alaska. Then they moved southward, seeking warmth and land, in a trek lasting thousands of years that took them into North America, then Central and South America. In Nicaragua, Brazil, and Ecuador their petrified footprints can still be seen, along with the print of bison, who disappeared about five thousand years ago, so they must have reached South America at least that far back.

Widely dispersed over the great land mass of the Americas, they numbered approximately 75 million people by the time Columbus came, perhaps 25 million in North America. Responding to the different environments of soil and climate, they developed hundreds of different tribal cultures, perhaps two thousand different languages. They perfected the art of agriculture, and figured out how to grow maize (corn), which cannot grow by itself and must be planted, cultivated, fertilized, harvested, husked, shelled. They ingeniously developed a variety of other vegetables and fruits, as well as peanuts and chocolate and tobacco and rubber.

On their own, the Indians were engaged in the great agricultural revolution that other peoples in Asia, Europe, Africa were going through about the same time.

While many of the tribes remained nomadic hunters and food gatherers in wandering, egalitarian communities, others began to live in more settled communities where there was more food, larger populations, more divisions of labor among men and women, more surplus to feed chiefs and priests, more leisure time for artistic and social work, for building houses. About a thousand years before Christ, while comparable constructions were going on in Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Zuñi and Hopi Indians of what is now New Mexico had begun to build villages consisting of large terraced buildings, nestled in among cliffs and mountains for protection from enemies, with hundreds of rooms in each village. Before the arrival of the European explorers, they were using irrigation canals, dams, were doing ceramics, weaving baskets, making cloth out of cotton.

By the time of Christ and Julius Caesar, there had developed in the Ohio River Valley a culture of so-called Moundbuilders, Indians who had constructed thousands of enormous sculptures out of earth, sometimes in the shapes of huge humans, birds, or serpents, sometimes as burial sites, sometimes as fortifications. One of them was 3 1/2 miles long, enclosing 100 acres. These Moundbuilders seem to have been part of a complex trading system of ornaments and weapons from as far off as the Great Lakes, the Far West, and the Gulf of Mexico.

About A.D. 500, as this Moundbuilder culture of the Ohio Valley was beginning to decline, another culture was developing westward, in the valley of the Mississippi, centered on what is now St. Louis. It had an advanced agriculture, included thousands of villages, and also built huge earthen mounds as burial and ceremonial places near a vast Indian metropolis that may have had thirty thousand people. The largest mound was 100 feet high, with a rectangular base larger than that of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. In the city, known as Cahokia, were toolmakers, hide dressers, potters, jewelers, weavers, saltmakers, copper engravers, and magnificent ceramists. One funeral blanket was made of twelve thousand shell beads.

From the Adirondacks to the Great Lakes, in what is now Pennsylvania and upper New York, lived the most powerful of the northeastern tribes, the League of the Iroquois, which included the Mohawks (People of the Flint), Oneidas (People of the Stone), Onondagas (People of the Mountain), Cayugas (People at the Landing), and Senecas (Great Hill People), thousands of people bound together by a common Iroquois language.

In the vision of the Mohawk chief Hiawatha, the legendary Dekaniwidah spoke to the Iroquois: "We bind ourselves together by taking hold of each other's hands so firmly and forming a circle so strong that if a tree should fall upon it, it could not shake nor break it, so that our people and grandchildren shall remain in the circle in security, peace and happiness."

In the villages of the Iroquois, land was owned in common and worked in common. Hunting was done together, and the catch was divided among the members of the village. The concept of private ownership

of land and homes was foreign to the Iroquois. A French Jesuit priest who encountered them in the 1650s wrote: "No poorhouses are needed among them, because they are neither mendicants or paupers...Their kindness, humanity and courtesy not only makes them liberal with what they have, but causes them to possess hardly anything except in common."

Women were important and respected in Iroquois society. Families were matrilineal. That is, the family line went down through the female members, whose husbands joined the family, while sons who married then joined their wives' families. Each extended family lived in a "long house." When a woman wanted a divorce, she set her husband's things outside the door.

Families were grouped in clans, and a dozen or more clans might make up a village. The senior women in the village named the men who represented the clans at village and tribal councils. They also named the forty-nine chiefs who were the ruling council for the Five Nation confederacy of the Iroquois. The women attended clan meetings, stood behind the circle of men who spoke and voted, and removed the men from office if they strayed too far from the wishes of the women.

The women tended the crops and took general charge of village affairs while then men were always huntings or fishing. And since they supplied the moccasins and food for warring expeditions, they had some control over military matters. As [Gary B. Nash notes in his fascinating study of early America, *Red, White, and Black*](#): "Thus power was shared between the sexes and the European idea of male dominancy and female subordination in all things was conspicuously abesent in Iroquois society."

Children in Iroquois society, while taught the cultural heritage of their people and solidarity with the tribe, were also taught to be independent, not to submit to overbearing authority. They were taught equality in status and the sharing of possessions. The Iroquois did not use harsh punishment on children; they did not insist on early weaning or early toilet training, but gradually allowed the child to learn self-care.

All of this was in sharp contrast to European values as brought over by the first colonists, a society of rich and poor, controlled by priests, by governors, by male heads of families. For example, the pastor of the Pilgrim colony, John Robinson, thus advised his parishioners how to deal with their children: "And surely there is in all children...a stubbornness, and stoutness of mind arising from natural pride, which must, in the first place, be broken and beaten down; that so the foundation of their education being laid in humility and tractableness, other virtues may, in their time, be built thereon."

[Gary Nash](#) describes Iroquois culture:

No laws and ordinances, sheriffs and constables, judges and juries, or courts or jails - the apparatus of authority in European societies - were to be found in the northeast woodlands prior to European arrival. Yet boundaries of acceptable behavior were firmly set. Though priding themselves on the autonomous individual, the Iroquois maintained a strict sense of right and wrong...He who stole another's food or acted invalourously in war was "shamed" by his people

and ostracized from their company until he had atoned for his actions and demonstrated to their satisfaction that he had morally purified himself.

Not only the Iroquois but other Indian tribes behaved the same way. In 1635, Maryland Indians responded to the governor's demand that if any of them killed an Englishman, the guilty one should be delivered up for punishment according to English law. The Indians said:

It is the manner amongst us Indians, that if any such accident happen, wee doe redeeme the life of a man that is so slaine, with a 100 armes length of Beades and since that you are heere strangers, and come into our Countrey, you should conform yourselves to the Customes of our Countrey, than impose yours upon us....

So, Columbus and his successors were not coming into an empty wilderness, but into a world which in some places was as densely populated as Europe itself, where the culture was complex, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations among men, women, children, and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world.

They were people without a written language, but with their own laws, their poetry, their history kept in memory and passed on, in an oral vocabulary more complex than Europe's, accompanied by song, dance, and ceremonial drama. They paid careful attention to the development of personality, intensity of will, independence and flexibility, passion and potency, to their partnership with one another and with nature.

[John Collier](#), an American scholar who lived among Indians in the 1920s and 1930s in the American Southwest, said of their spirit: "Could we make it our own, there would be an eternally inexhaustible earth and a forever lasting peace."

Perhaps there is some romantic mythology in that. But the evidence from European travelers in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, put together recently by an American specialist on Indian life, [William Brandon](#), is overwhelmingly supportive of much of that "myth." Even allowing for the imperfection of myths, it is enough to make us question, for that time and ours, the excuse of progress in the annihilation of races, and the telling of history from the standpoint of the conquerors and leaders of Western civilization.

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Drawing the Color Line

By Howard Zinn

(Excerpted from "A People's History of the United States," published by Harper & Row, 1990; copyright 1980, by Howard Zinn. This excerpt is reprinted in the national interest of the American people).

A black American writer, J. Saunders Redding, describes the arrival of a ship in North America in the year 1619:

Sails furled, flag drooping at her rounded stern, she rode the tide in from the sea. She was a strange ship, indeed, by all accounts, a frightening ship, a ship of mystery. Whether she was trader, privateer, or man-of-war no one knows. Through her bulwarks black-mouthed cannon yawned. The flag she flew was Dutch; her crew a motley. Her port of call, an English settlement, Jamestown, in the colony of Virginia. She came, she traded, and shortly afterwards was gone. Probably no ship in modern history has carried a more portentous freight. Her cargo? Twenty slaves.

There is not a country in world history in which racism has been more important, for so long a time, as the United States. And the problem of "the color line," as W. E. B. Du Bois put it, is still with us. So it is more than a purely historical question to ask: How does it start? --and an even more urgent question: How might it end? Or, to put it differently: Is it possible for whites and blacks to live together without hatred?

If history can help answer these questions, then the beginnings of slavery in North America -- a continent where we can trace the coming of the first whites and the first blacks -- might supply at least a few clues.

Some historians think those first blacks in Virginia were considered as servants, like the white indentured servants brought from Europe. But the strong probability is that, even if they were listed as "servants" (a more familiar category to the English), they were viewed as being different from white servants, were treated differently, and in fact were slaves. In any case, slavery developed quickly into a regular institution, into the normal labor relation of blacks to whites in the New World. With it developed that special racial feeling -- whether hatred, or contempt, or pity, or patronization -- that accompanied the inferior position of blacks in America for the next 350 years -- that combination of inferior status and derogatory thought we call racism.

Everything in the experience of the first white settlers acted as a pressure for the enslavement of blacks.

The Virginians of 1619 were desperate for labor, to grow enough food to stay alive. Among them were survivors from the winter of 1609-1610, the "starving time," when, crazed for want of food, they roamed the woods for nuts and berries, dug up graves to eat the corpses, and died in batches until five hundred colonists were reduced to sixty.

In the Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia is a document of 1619 which tells of the first twelve years of the Jamestown colony. The first settlement had a hundred persons, who had one small ladle of barley per meal. When more people arrived, there was even less food. Many of the people lived in cavelike holes dug into the ground, and in the winter of 1609-1610, they were

...driven through insufferable hunger to eat those things which nature most abhorred, the flesh and excrements of man as well of our own nation as of an Indian, digged by some out of his grave after he had laid buried there days and wholly devoured him; others, envying the better state of body of any whom hunger has not yet so much wasted as their own, lay wait and threatened to kill and eat them; one among them slew his wife as she slept in his bosom, cut her in pieces, salted her and fed upon her till he had clean devoured all parts saving her head...

A petition by thirty colonists to the House of Burgesses, complaining against the twelve-year governorship of Sir Thomas Smith, said:

In those 12 years of Sir Thomas Smith, his government, we aver that the colony for the most part remained in great want and misery under most severe and cruel laws... The allowance in those times for a man was only eight ounces of meale and half a pint of peas for a day... mouldy, rotten, full of cobwebs and maggots, loathsome to man and not fit for beasts, which forced many to flee for relief to the savage enemy, who being taken again were put to sundry deaths as by hanging, shooting and breaking upon the wheel... of whom one for stealing two or three pints of oatmeal had a bodkin thrust through his tongue and was tied with a chain to a tree until he starved...

The Virginians needed labor, to grow corn for subsistence, to grow tobacco for export. They had just figured out how to grow tobacco, and in 1617 they sent off the first cargo to England. Finding that, like all pleasureable drugs tainted with moral disapproval, it brought a high price, the planters, despite their high religious talk, were not going to ask questions about something so profitable.

They couldn't force the Indians to work for them, as Columbus had done. They were outnumbered, and while, with superior firearms, they could massacre Indians, they would face massacre in return. They could not capture them and keep them enslaved; the Indians were tough, resourceful, defiant, and at home in these woods, as the transplanted Englishmen were not.

White servants had not yet been brought over in sufficient quantity. Besides, they did not come out of slavery, and did not have to do more than contract their labor for a few years to get their passage and a start in the New World. As for the free white settlers, many of them were skilled craftsmen, or even men of leisure back in England, who were so little inclined to work the land that John Smith, in those early years, had to declare a kind of martial law, organize them into work gangs, and force them into the fields for survival.

There may have been a kind of frustrated rage at their own ineptitude, at the Indian superiority at taking care of themselves, that made the Virginians especially ready to become the masters of slaves. Edmund Morgan imagines their mood as he writes in his book *American Slavery, American Freedom*:

If you were a colonist, you knew that your technology was superior to the Indians'. You knew that you were civilized, and they were savages... But your superior technology had proved insufficient to extract anything. The Indians, keeping to themselves, laughed at your superior methods and lived from the land more abundantly and with less labor than you did... And when your own people started deserting in order to live with them, it was too much... So you killed the Indians, tortured them, burned their villages, burned their cornfields. It proved your superiority, in spite of your failures. And you gave similar treatment to any of your own people who succumbed to their savage ways of life. But you still did not grow much corn...

Black slaves were the answer. And it was natural to consider imported blacks as slaves, even if the institution of slavery would not be regularized and legalized for several decades. Because, by 1619, a million blacks had already been brought from Africa to South America and the Caribbean, to the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, to work as slaves. Fifty years before Columbus, the Portuguese took ten African blacks to Lisbon -- this was the start of a regular trade in slaves. African blacks had been stamped as slave labor for a hundred years. So it would have been strange if those twenty blacks, forcibly transported to Jamestown, and sold as objects to settlers anxious for a steadfast source of labor, were considered as anything but slaves.

Their helplessness made enslavement easier. The Indians were on their own land. The whites were in their own European culture. The blacks had been torn from their land and culture, forced into a situation where the heritage of language, dress, custom, family relations, was bit by bit obliterated except for remnants that blacks could hold on to by sheer, extraordinary persistence.

Was their culture inferior -- and so subject to easy destruction? Inferior in military capability, yes -- vulnerable to whites with guns and ships. But in no other way -- except that cultures that are different are often taken as inferior, especially when such a judgment is practical and profitable. Even militarily, while the Westerners could secure forts on the African coast, they were unable to subdue the interior and had to come to terms with its chiefs.

The African civilization was as advanced in its own way as that of Europe. In certain ways, it was more admirable; but it also included cruelties, hierarchical privilege, and the readiness to sacrifice

human lives for religion or profit. It was a civilization of 100 million people, using iron implements and skilled in farming. It had large urban centers and remarkable achievements in weaving, ceramics, sculpture.

European travelers in the sixteenth century were impressed with the African kingdoms of Timbuktu and Mali, already stable and organized at a time when European states were just beginning to develop into the modern nation. In 1563, Ramusio, secretary to the rulers in Venice, wrote to the Italian merchants: "Let them go and do business with the King of Timbuktu and Mali and there is no doubt that they will be well-received there with their ships and their goods and treated well, and granted the favours that they ask..."

A Dutch report, around 1602, on the West African kingdom of Benin, said: "The Towne seemeth to be very great, when you enter it. You go into a great broad street, not paved, which seemeth to be seven or eight times broader than the Warmoes Street in Amsterdam. ...The Houses in this Towne stand in good order, one close and even with the other, as the Houses in Holland stand."

The inhabitants of the Guinea Coast were described by one traveler around 1680 as "very civil and good-natured people, easy to be dealt with, condescending to what Europeans require of them in a civil way, and very ready to return double the presents we make them."

Africa had a kind of feudalism, like Europe based on agriculture, and with hierarchies of lords and vassals. But African feudalism did not come, as did Europe's, out of the slave societies of Greece and Rome, which had destroyed ancient tribal life. In Africa, tribal life was still powerful, and some of its better features -- a communal spirit, more kindness in law and punishment -- still existed. And because the lords did not have the weapons that European lords had, they could not command obedience as easily.

In his book *The African Slave Trade*, Basil Davidson contrasts law in the Congo in the early sixteenth century with law in Portugal and England. In those European countries, where the idea of private property was becoming powerful, theft was punished brutally. In England, even as late as 1740, a child could be hanged for stealing a rag of cotton. But in the Congo, communal life persisted, the idea of private property was a strange one, and thefts were punished with fines or various degrees of servitude. A Congolese leader, told of the Portuguese legal codes, asked a Portuguese once, teasingly: "What is the penalty in Portugal for anyone who puts his feet on the ground?"

Slavery existed in the African states, and it was sometimes used by Europeans to justify their own slave trade. But, as Davidson points out, the "slaves" of Africa were more like the serfs of Europe -- in other words, like most of the population of Europe. It was a harsh servitude, but but they had rights which slaves brought to America did not have, and they were "altogether different from the human cattle of the slave ships and the American plantations." In the Ashanti Kingdom of West Africa, one observer noted that "a slave might marry; own property; himself own a slave; swear an oath; be a competent witness and ultimately become heir to his master... An Ashanti slave, nine cases out of ten,

possibly became an adopted member of the family, and in time his descendants so merged and intermarried with the owner's kinsmen that only a few would know their origin."

One slave trader, John Newton (who later became an antislavery leader), wrote about the people of what is now Sierra Leone:

The state of slavery, among these wild barbarous people, as we esteem them, is much milder than in our colonies. For as, on the one hand, they have no land in high cultivation, like our West India plantations, and therefore no call for that excessive, unintermitted labour, which exhausts our slaves: so, on the other hand, no man is permitted to draw blood even from a slave.

African slavery is hardly to be praised. But it was far different from plantation or mining slavery in the Americas, which was lifelong, morally crippling, destructive of family ties, without hope of any future. African slavery lacked two elements that made American slavery the most cruel form of slavery in history: the frenzy for limitless profit that comes from capitalistic agriculture; the reduction of the slave to less than human status by the use of racial hatred, with that relentless clarity based on color, where white was master, black was slave.

In fact, it was because they came from a settled culture, of tribal customs and family ties, of communal life and traditional ritual, that African blacks found themselves especially helpless when removed from this. They were captured in the interior (frequently by blacks caught up in the slave trade themselves), sold on the coast, then shoved into pens with blacks of other tribes, often speaking different languages.

The conditions of capture and sale were crushing affirmations to the black African of his helplessness in the face of superior force. The marches to the coast, sometimes for 1,000 miles, with people shackled around the neck, under whip and gun, were death marches, in which two of every five blacks died. On the coast, they were kept in cages until they were picked and sold. One John Barbot, at the end of the seventeenth century, described these cages on the Gold Coast:

As the slaves come down to Fida from the inland country, they are put into a booth or prison... near the beach, and when the Europeans are to receive them, they are brought out onto a large plain, where the ship's surgeons examine every part of everyone of them, to the smallest member, men and women being stark naked... Such as are allowed good and sound are set on one side... marked on the breast with a red-hot iron, imprinting the mark of the French, English or Dutch companies... The branded slaves after this are returned to their former booths where they await shipment, sometimes 10-15 days...

Then they were packed aboard the slave ships, in spaces not much bigger than coffins, chained together in the dark, wet slime of the ship's bottom, choking in the stench of their own excrement. Documents of the time describe the conditions:

The height, sometimes, between decks, was only eighteen inches; so that the unfortunate human beings

could not turn around, or even on their sides, the elevation being less than the breadth of their shoulders; and here they are usually chained to the decks by the neck and legs. In such a place the sense of misery and suffocation is so great, that the Negroes... are driven to frenzy.

On one occasion, hearing a great noise from belowdecks where the blacks were chained together, the sailors opened the hatches and found the slaves in different stages of suffocation, many dead, some having killed others in desperate attempts to breathe. Slaves often jumped overboard to drown rather than continue their suffering. To one observer a slave-deck was "so covered with blood and mucus that it resembled a slaughter house."

Under these conditions, perhaps one of every three blacks transported overseas died, but the huge profits (often double the investment on one trip) made it worthwhile for the slave trader, and so the blacks were packed into the holds like fish.

First the Dutch, then the English, dominated the slave trade. (By 1795 Liverpool had more than a hundred ships carrying slaves and accounted for half of all the European slave trade.) Some Americans in New England entered the business, and in 1637 the first American slave ship, the *Desire*, sailed from Marblehead. Its holds were partitioned into racks, 2 feet by 6 feet, with leg irons and bars.

By 1800, 10 to 15 million blacks had been transported as slaves to the Americas, representing perhaps one-third of those originally seized in Africa. It is roughly estimated that Africa lost 50 million human beings to death and slavery in those centuries we call the beginnings of modern Western civilization, at the hands of slave traders and plantation owners in Western Europe and America, the countries deemed the most advanced in the world.

In the year 1610, a Catholic priest in the Americas named Father Sandoval wrote back to a church functionary in Europe to ask if the capture, transport, and enslavement of African blacks was legal by church doctrine. A letter dated March 12, 1610, from Brother Luis Brandaon to Father Sandoval gives the answer:

Your Reverence writes me that you would like to know whether the Negroes who are sent to your parts have been legally captured. To this I reply that I think your Reverence should have no scruples on this point, because this is a matter which has been questioned by the Board of Conscience in Lisbon, and all its members are learned and conscientious men. Nor did the bishops who were in SaoThome, Cape Verde, and here in Loando -- all learned and virtuous men -- find fault with it. We have been here ourselves for forty years and there have been among us very learned Fathers... never did they consider the trade as illicit. Therefore we and the Fathers of Brazil buy these slaves for our service without any scruple...

With all of this -- the desperation of the Jamestown settlers for labor, the impossibility of using Indians and the difficulty of using whites, the availability of blacks offered in greater and greater numbers by profit-seeking dealers in human flesh, and with such blacks possible to control because they had just

gone through an ordeal which if it did not kill them must have left them in a state of psychic and physical helplessness -- is it any wonder that such blacks were ripe for enslavement?

And under these conditions, even if some blacks might have been considered servants, would blacks be treated the same as white servants?

The evidence, from the court records of colonial Virginia, shows that in 1630 a white man named Hugh Davis was ordered "to be soundly whipt... for abusing himself... by defiling his body in lying with a Negro." Ten years later, six servants and "a negro of Mr. Reynolds" started to run away. While the whites received lighter sentences, "Emanuel the Negro to receive thirty stripes and to be burnt in the cheek with the letter R, and to work in shackle one year or more as his master shall see cause."

Although slavery was not yet regularized or legalized in those first years, the lists of servants show blacks listed separately. A law passed in 1639 decreed that "all persons except Negroes" were to get arms and ammunition -- probably to fight off Indians. When in 1640 three servants tried to run away, the two whites were punished with a lengthening of their service. But, as the court put it, "the third being a negro named John Punch shall serve his master or his assigns for the time of his natural life." Also in 1640, we have the case of a Negro woman servant who begot a child by Robert Sweat, a white man. The court ruled "that the said negro woman shall be whipt at the whipping post and the said Sweat shall tomorrow in the forenoon do public penance for his offense at James citychurch..."

This unequal treatment, this developing combination of contempt and oppression, feeling and action, which we call "racism" -- was this the result of a "natural" antipathy of white against black? The question is important, not just as a matter of historical accuracy, but because any emphasis on "natural" racism lightens the responsibility of the social system. If racism can't be shown to be natural, then it is the result of certain conditions, and we are impelled to eliminate those conditions.

We have no way of testing the behavior of whites and blacks toward one another under favorable conditions -- with no history of subordination, no money incentive for exploitation and enslavement, no desperation for survival requiring forced labor. All the conditions for black and white in seventeenth-century America were the opposite of that, all powerfully directed toward antagonism and mistreatment. Under such conditions even the slightest display of humanity between the races might be considered evidence of a basic human drive toward community.

Sometimes it is noted that, even before 1600, when the slave trade had just begun, before Africans were stamped by it -- literally and symbolically -- the color black was distasteful. In England, before 1600, it meant, according to the Oxford English Dictionary: "Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul. Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister. Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horribly wicked. Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc." And Elizabethan poetry often used the color white in connection with beauty.

It may be that, in the absence of any other overriding factor, darkness and blackness, associated with

night and unknown, would take on those meanings. But the presence of another human being is a powerful fact, and the conditions of that presence are crucial in determining whether an initial prejudice, against a mere color, divorced from humankind, is turned into brutality and hatred.

In spite of such preconceptions about blackness, in spite of special subordination of blacks in the Americas in the seventeenth century, there is evidence that where whites and blacks found themselves with common problems, common work, common enemy in their master, they behaved toward one another as equals. As one scholar of slavery, Kenneth Stampp, has put it, Negro and white servants of the seventeenth century were "remarkably unconcerned about the visible physical differences."

Black and white worked together, fraternized together. The very fact that laws had to be passed after a while to forbid such relations indicates the strength of that tendency. In 1661 a law was passed in Virginia that "in case any English servant shall run away in company of any Negroes" he would have to give special service for extra years to the master of the runaway Negro. In 1691, Virginia provided for the banishment of any "white man or woman being free who shall intermarry with a negro, mulatto, or Indian man or woman bond or free."

There is an enormous difference between a feeling of racial strangeness, perhaps fear, and the mass enslavement of millions of black people that took place in the Americas. The transition from one to the other cannot be explained easily by "natural" tendencies. It is not hard to understand as the outcome of historical conditions.

Slavery grew as the plantation system grew. The reason is easily traceable to something other than natural racial repugnance: the number of arriving whites, whether free or indentured servants (under four to seven years contract), was not enough to meet the need of the plantations. By 1700, in Virginia, there were 6,000 slaves, one-twelfth of the population. By 1763, there were 170,000 slaves, about half the population.

Blacks were easier to enslave than whites or Indians. But they were still not easy to enslave. From the beginning, the imported black men and women resisted their enslavement. Ultimately their resistance was controlled, and slavery was established for 3 million blacks in the South. Still, under the most difficult conditions, under pain of mutilation and death, throughout their two hundred years of enslavement in North America, these Afro-Americans continued to rebel. Only occasionally was there an organized insurrection. More often they showed their refusal to submit by running away. Even more often, they engaged in sabotage, slowdowns, and subtle forms of resistance which asserted, if only to themselves and their brothers and sisters, their dignity as human beings.

The refusal began in Africa. One slave trader reported that Negroes were "so wilful and loth to leave their own country, that they have often leap'd out of the canoes, boat and ship into the sea, and kept under water til they were drowned."

When the very first black slaves were brought into Hispaniola in 1503, the Spanish governor of

Hispaniola complained to the Spanish court that fugitive Negro slaves were teaching disobedience to the Indians. In the 1520s and 1530s, there were slave revolts in Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Santa Marta, and what is now Panama. Shortly after those rebellions, the Spanish established a special police for chasing fugitive slaves.

A Virginia statute of 1669 referred to "the obstinacy of many of them," and in 1680 the Assembly took note of slave meetings "under the pretense of feasts and brawls" which they considered of "dangerous consequence." In 1687, in the colony's Northern Neck, a plot was discovered in which slaves planned to kill all the whites in the area and escape during a mass funeral.

Gerald Mullin, who studied slave resistance in eighteenth-century Virginia in his work *Flight and Rebellion*, reports:

The available sources on slavery in 18th-century Virginia -- plantation and county records, the newspaper advertisements for runaways -- describe rebellious slaves and few others. The slaves described were lazy and thieving; they feigned illnesses, destroyed crops, stores, tools, and sometimes attacked or killed overseers. They operated blackmarkets in stolen goods. Runaways were defined as various types, they were truants (who usually returned voluntarily), "outlaws"... and slaves who were actually fugitives: men who visited relatives, went to town to pass as free, or tried to escape slavery completely, either by boarding ships and leaving the colony, or banding together in cooperative efforts to establish villages or hide-outs in the frontier. The commitment of another type of rebellious slave was total; these men became killers, arsonists, and insurrectionists.

Slaves recently from Africa, still holding on to the heritage of their communal society, would run away in groups and try to establish villages of runaways out in the wilderness, on the frontier. Slaves born in America, on the other hand, were more likely to run off alone, and, with the skills they had learned on the plantation, try to pass as free men.

In the colonial papers of England, a 1729 report from the lieutenant governor of Virginia to the British Board of Trade tells how "a number of Negroes, about fifteen... formed a design to withdraw from their Master and to fix themselves in the fastnesses of the neighboring Mountains. They had found means to get into their possession some Arms and Ammunition, and they took along with them some Provisions, their Cloths, bedding and working Tools... Tho' this attempt has happily been defeated, it ought nevertheless to awaken us into some effectual measures..."

Slavery was immensely profitable to some masters. James Madison told a British visitor shortly after the American Revolution that he could make \$257 on every Negro in a year, and spend only \$12 or \$13 on his keep. Another viewpoint was of slaveowner Landon Carter, writing about fifty years earlier, complaining that his slaves so neglected their work and were so uncooperative ("either cannot or will not work") that he began to wonder if keeping them was worthwhile.

Some historians have painted a picture -- based on the infrequency of organized rebellions and the

ability of the South to maintain slavery for two hundred years -- of a slave population made submissive by their condition; with their African heritage destroyed, they were, as Stanley Elkins said, made into "Sambos," "a society of helpless dependents." Or as another historian, Ulrich Phillips, said, "by racial quality submissive." But looking at the totality of slave behavior, at the resistance of everyday life, from quiet noncooperation in work to running away, the picture becomes different.

In 1710, warning the Virginia Assembly, Governor Alexander Spotswood said:

...freedom wears a cap which can without a tongue, call together all those who long to shake off the fetters of slavery and as such an Insurrection would surely be attended with most dreadful consequences so I we cannot be too early in providing against it, both by putting our selves in a better posture of defence and by making a law to prevent the consultations of those Negroes.

Indeed, considering the harshness of punishment for running away, that so many blacks did run away must be a sign of a powerful rebelliousness. All through the 1700s, the Virginia slave code read:

Whereas many times slaves run away and lie hid and lurking in swamps, woods, and other obscure places, killing hogs, and committing other injuries to the inhabitants... if the slave does not immediately return, anyone whatsoever may kill or destroy such slaves by such ways and means as he... shall think fit... If the slave is apprehended... it shall... be lawful for the county court, to order such punishment for the said slave, either by dismembering, or in any other way... as they in their discretion shall think fit, for the reclaiming any such incorrigible slave, and terrifying others from the like practices...

Mullin found newspaper advertisements between 1736 and 1801 for 1,138 men runaways, and 141 women. One consistent reason for running away was to find members of one's family -- showing that despite the attempts of the slave system to destroy family ties by not allowing marriages and by separating families, slaves would face death and mutilation to get together.

In Maryland, where slaves were about one-third of the population in 1750, slavery had been written into law since the 1660s, and statutes for controlling rebellious slaves were passed. There were cases where slave women killed their masters, sometimes by poisoning them, sometimes by burning tobacco houses and homes. Punishment ranged from whipping and branding to execution, but the trouble continued. In 1742, seven slaves were put to death for murdering their master.

Fear of slave revolt seems to have been a permanent fact of plantation life. William Byrd, a wealthy Virginia slaveowner, wrote in 1736:

We have already at least 10,000 men of these descendants of Ham, fit to bear arms, and these numbers increase every day, as well by birth as by importation. And in case there should arise a man of desperate fortune, he might with more advantage than Cataline kindle a servile war... and tinge our rivers wide as they are with blood.

It was an intricate and powerful system of control that the slaveowners developed to maintain their labor supply and their way of life, a system both subtle and crude, involving every device that social orders employ for keeping power and wealth where it is. As Kenneth Stampp puts it:

A wise master did not take seriously the belief that Negroes were natural-born slaves. He knew better. He knew that Negroes freshly imported from Africa had to be broken into bondage; that each succeeding generation had to be carefully trained. This was no easy task, for the bondsman rarely submitted willingly. Moreover, he rarely submitted completely. In most cases there was no end to the need for control -- at least not until old age reduced the slave to a condition of helplessness.

The system was psychological and physical at the same time. The slaves were taught discipline, were impressed again and again with the idea of their own inferiority to "know their place," to see blackness as a sign of subordination, to be awed by the power of the master, to merge their interest with the master's, destroying their own individual needs. To accomplish this there was the discipline of hard labor, the breakup of the slave family, the lulling effects of religion (which sometimes led to "great mischief," as one slaveholder reported), the creation of disunity among slaves by separating them into field slaves and more privileged house slaves, and finally the power of law and the immediate power of the overseer to invoke whipping, burning, mutilation, and death. Dismemberment was provided for in the Virginia Code of 1705. Maryland passed a law in 1723 providing for cutting off the ears of blacks who struck whites, and that for certain serious crimes, slaves should be hanged and the body quartered and exposed.

Still, rebellions took place -- not many, but enough to create constant fear among white planters. The first large-scale revolt in the North American colonies took place in New York in 1712. In New York, slaves were 10 percent of the population, the highest proportion in the northern states, where economic conditions usually did not require large numbers of field slaves. About twenty-five blacks and two Indians set fire to a building, then killed nine whites who came on the scene. They were captured by soldiers, put on trial, and twenty-one were executed. The governor's report to England said: "Some were burnt, others were hanged, one broke on the wheel, and one hung alive in chains in the town..." One had been burned over a slow fire for eight to ten hours -- all this to serve notice to other slaves.

A letter to London from South Carolina in 1720 reports:

I am now to acquaint you that very lately we have had a very wicked and barbarous plot of the designe of the negroes rising with a designe to destroy all the white people in the country and then to take Charles Town in full body but it pleased God it was discovered and many of them taken prisoners and some burnt and some hang'd and some banish'd.

Around this time there were a number of fires in Boston and New Haven, suspected to be the work of Negro slaves. As a result, one Negro was executed in Boston, and the Boston Council ruled that any slaves who on their own gathered in groups of two or more were to be punished by whipping.

At Stono, South Carolina, in 1739, about twenty slaves rebelled, killed two warehouse guards, stole guns and gunpowder, and headed south, killing people in their way, and burning buildings. They were joined by others, until there were perhaps eighty slaves in all and, according to one account of the time, "they called out Liberty, marched on with Colours displayed, and two Drums beating." The militia found and attacked them. In the ensuing battle perhaps fifty slaves and twenty-five whites were killed before the uprising was crushed.

Herbert Aptheker, who did detailed research on slave resistance in North America for his book *American Negro Slave Revolts*, found about 250 instances where a minimum of ten slaves joined in a revolt or conspiracy.

From time to time, whites were involved in the slave resistance. As early as 1663, indentured white servants and black slaves in Gloucester County, Virginia, formed a conspiracy to rebel and gain their freedom. The plot was betrayed, and ended with executions. Mullin reports that the newspaper notices of runaways in Virginia often warned "ill-disposed" whites about harboring fugitives. Sometimes slaves and free men ran off together, or cooperated in crimes together. Sometimes, black male slaves ran off and joined white women. From time to time, white ship captains and watermen dealt with runaways, perhaps making the slave a part of the crew.

In New York in 1741, there were ten thousand whites in the city and two thousand black slaves. It had been a hard winter and the poor -- slave and free -- had suffered greatly. When mysterious fires broke out, blacks and whites were accused of conspiring together. Mass hysteria developed against the accused. After a trial full of lurid accusations by informers, and forced confessions, two white men and two white women were executed, eighteen slaves were hanged, and thirteen slaves were burned alive.

Only one fear was greater than the fear of black rebellion in the new American colonies. That was the fear that discontented whites would join black slaves to overthrow the existing order. In the early years of slavery, especially, before racism as a way of thinking was firmly ingrained, while white indentured servants were often treated as badly as black slaves, there was a possibility of cooperation. As Edmund Morgan sees it:

There are hints that the two despised groups initially saw each other as sharing the same predicament. It was common, for example, for servants and slaves to run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together. It was not uncommon for them to make love together. In Bacon's Rebellion, one of the last groups to surrender was a mixed band of eighty negroes and twenty English servants.

As Morgan says, masters, "initially at least, perceived slaves in much the same way they had always perceived servants... shiftless, irresponsible, unfaithful, ungrateful, dishonest..." And "if freemen with disappointed hopes should make common cause with slaves of desperate hope, the results might be worse than anything Bacon had done."

And so, measures were taken. About the same time that slave codes, involving discipline and

punishment, were passed by the Virginia Assembly,

Virginia's ruling class, having proclaimed that all white men were superior to black, went on to offer their social (but white) inferiors a number of benefits previously denied them. In 1705 a law was passed requiring masters to provide white servants whose indenture time was up with ten bushels of corn, thirty shillings, and a gun, while women servants were to get 15 bushels of corn and forty shillings. Also, the newly freed servants were to get 50 acres of land.

Morgan concludes: "Once the small planter felt less exploited by taxation and began to prosper a little, he became less turbulent, less dangerous, more respectable. He could begin to see his big neighbor not as an extortionist but as a powerful protector of their common interests."

We see now a complex web of historical threads to ensnare blacks for slavery in America: the desperation of starving settlers, the special helplessness of the displaced African, the powerful incentive of profit for slave trader and planter, the temptation of superior status for poor whites, the elaborate controls against escape and rebellion, the legal and social punishment of black and white collaboration.

The point is that the elements of this web are historical, not "natural." This does not mean that they are easily disentangled, dismantled. It means only that there is a possibility for something else, under historical conditions not yet realized. And one of these conditions would be the elimination of that class exploitation which has made poor whites desperate for small gifts of status, and has prevented that unity of black and white necessary for joint rebellion and reconstruction.

Around 1700, the Virginia House of Burgesses declared:

The Christian Servants in this country for the most part consists of the Worser Sort of the people of Europe. And since... such numbers of Irish and other Nations have been brought in of which a great many have been soldiers in the late warrs that according to our present Circumstances we can hardly governe them and if they were fitted with Armes and had the Opertunity of meeting together by Musters we have just reason to fears they may rise upon us.

It was a kind of class consciousness, a class fear. There were things happening in early Virginia, and in the other colonies, to warrant it.

ATTENTION:

The reprinting of this excerpt here is for the purpose of encouraging the reader to purchase and read the book *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn, as published by Harper Perennial, a

The Modern Era of Law

from Howard Zinn's *Declarations of Independence*

In ancient societies, in feudal society, there were no clear rules, written in statute books, accompanied by constitutions. Everyone was subject to the whims of powerful men, whether the feudal lord, the tribal chief, or the king.

But as societies evolved modern times brought big cities, international trade, widespread literacy, and parliamentary government. With all that came the rule of law, no longer personal and arbitrary, but written down. It claimed to be impersonal, neutral, apply equally to all, and, therefore, democratic.

We profess great reverence for certain symbols of the modern rule of law: the Magna Carta, which set forth what are men's rights as against the king; the American Constitution, which is supposed to limit the powers of government and provide a Bill of Rights; the Napoleonic Code, which introduced uniformity into the French legal system. But we might get uneasy about the connection between law and democracy when we read the comment of two historians (Robert Palmer and Joel Colton) on Napoleon: "Man on horseback though he was, he believed firmly in the rule of law."

I don't want to deny the benefits of the modern era: the advance of science, the improvements in health, the spread of literacy and art beyond tiny elites, and the value of even an imperfect representative system over a monarchy. But those advantages lead us to overlook the fact that the modern era, replacing the arbitrary rule of men with the impartial rule of law, has not brought any fundamental change in the facts of unequal wealth and unequal power. What was done before - exploiting the poor, sending the young to war, and putting troublesome people in dungeons - is still done, except that this no longer seems to be the arbitrary action of the feudal lord or the king; it now has the authority of neutral, impersonal law.

The law appears impersonal. It is on paper, and who can trace it back to what men? And because it has the look of neutrality, its injustices are made legitimate. It was not easy to hold onto the "divine right" of kings-everyone could see that kings and queens were human beings. A code of law is more easily deified than a flesh-and-blood ruler.

Under the rule of men, the oppressor was identifiable, and so peasant rebels hunted down the lords, slaves killed plantation owners, and revolutionaries assassinated monarchs. In the era of the corporate bureaucracies, representative assemblies, and the rule of law, the enemy is elusive and unidentifiable. In John Steinbeck's depression - era novel *The Grapes of Wrath* a farmer having his land taken away from him confronts the tractor driver who is knocking down his house. He aims a gun at him, but is confused when the driver tells him that he takes his orders from a banker in Oklahoma City, who takes his orders from a banker in New York. The farmer cries out: "Then who can I shoot?"

The rule of law does not do away with the unequal distribution of wealth and power, but reinforces that inequality with the authority of law. It allocates wealth and poverty (through taxes and appropriations) but in such complicated and indirect ways as to leave the victim bewildered.

Exploitation was obvious when the peasant gave half his produce to the lord. It still exists, but inside the complexity of a market society and enforced by a library of statutes. A mine owner in Appalachia was asked, some years ago, why the coal companies paid so little taxes and kept so much of the wealth from the coal fields, while local people starved. The owner replied: "I pay exactly what the law asks me to pay."

The modern system of the rule of law is something like roulette. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. No one can predict in any one instance whether the little ball will fall into the red or the black, and no one is really responsible. You win, you lose. But as in roulette, in the end you almost always lose. In roulette the results are fixed by the structure of the wheel, the laws of mathematical probability, and the rules of the house." In society, the rich and strong get what they want by the law of contract, the rules of the market, and the power of the authorities to change the rules or violate them at will. What is the structure of society's roulette wheel that ensures you will, in the end, lose? It is, first of all, the great disparities in wealth that give a tremendous advantage to those who can buy and sell industries, buy and sell people's labor and services, buy and sell the means of communication, subsidize the educational system, and buy and sell the political candidates themselves. Second, it is the system of "checks and balances," in which bold new reforms (try free medical care for all or sweeping protections of the environment) can be buried in committee, vetoed by one legislative chamber or by the president, interpreted to death by the Supreme Court, or passed by Congress and unenforced by the president. In this system, the occasional victories may ease some of the pain of economic injustice. They also reveal the usefulness of protest and pressure, suggest even greater possibilities for the future. And they keep you in the game, giving you the feeling of fairness, preventing you from getting angry and upsetting the wheel. It is a system ingeniously devised for maintaining things as they are, while allowing for limited reform.

Continue to Obligation to the State
Return to Resistance

Excerpt from Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*

covering the period 1945-1960

New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980

[Howard Zinn's other publications](#)

Chapter Sixteen: "A People's War?"

The victors [of World War II] were the Soviet Union and the United States (also England, France and Nationalist China, but they were weak). Both these countries now went to work--without swastikas, goose-stepping, or officially declared racism, but under the cover of "socialism" on one side, and "democracy" on the other, to carve out their own empires of influence. They proceeded to share and contest with one another the domination of the world, to build military machines far greater than the Fascist countries had built, to control the destinies of more countries than Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan had been able to do. They also acted to control their own populations, each country with its own techniques--crude in the Soviet Union, sophisticated in the United States--to make their rule secure.

The war not only put the United States in a position to dominate much of the world; it created conditions for effective control at home. The unemployment, the economic distress, and the consequent turmoil that had marked the thirties, only partly relieved by New Deal measures, had been pacified, overcome by the greater turmoil of the war. The war brought higher prices for farmers, higher wages, enough prosperity for enough of the population to assure against the rebellions that so threatened the thirties. As Lawrence Wittner writes, "The war rejuvenated American capitalism." The biggest gains were in corporate profits, which rose from \$6.4 billion in 1940 to \$10.8 billion in 1944. But enough went to workers and farmers to make them feel the system was doing well for them.

It was an old lesson learned by governments: that war solves problems of control. Charles E. Wilson, the president of General Electric Corporation, was so happy about the wartime situation that he suggested a continuing alliance between business and the military for "a permanent war economy."

That is what happened. When, right after the war, the American public, war-weary, seemed to favor demobilization and disarmament, the Truman administration (Roosevelt had died in April 1945) worked to create an atmosphere of crisis and cold war. True, the rivalry with the Soviet Union was real--that country had come out of the war with its economy wrecked and 20 million people dead, but was making an astounding comeback, rebuilding its industry, regaining military strength. The Truman administration,

however, presented the Soviet Union as not just a rival but an immediate threat. In a series of moves abroad and at home, it established a climate of fear--a hysteria about Communism--which would steeply escalate the military budget and stimulate the economy with war-related orders. This combination of policies would permit more aggressive actions abroad, more repressive actions at home.

Revolutionary movements in Europe and Asia were described to the American public as examples of Soviet expansionism--thus recalling the indignation against Hitler's aggressions.

In Greece, which had been a right-wing monarchy and dictatorship before the war, a popular left-wing National Liberation Front (the EAM) was put down by a British army of intervention immediately after the war. A right-wing dictatorship was restored. When opponents of the regime were jailed, and trade union leaders removed, a left-wing guerrilla movement began to grow against the regime, soon consisting of 17,000 fighters, 50,000 active supporters, and perhaps 250,000 sympathizers, in a country of 7 million. Great Britain said it could not handle the rebellion, and asked the United States to come in. As a State Department officer said later: "Great Britain had within the hour handed the job of world leadership . . . to the United States."

The United States responded with the [Truman Doctrine](#), the name given to a speech Truman gave to Congress in the spring of 1947, in which he asked for \$400 million in military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey. Truman said the U.S. must help "free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

In fact, the biggest outside pressure was the United States. The Greek rebels were getting some aid from Yugoslavia, but no aid from the Soviet Union, which during the war had promised Churchill a free hand in Greece if he would give the Soviet Union its way in Rumania, Poland, Bulgaria. The Soviet Union, like the United States, did not seem to be willing to help revolutions it could not control.

Truman said the world "must choose between alternative ways of life." One was based on "the will of the majority . . . distinguished by free institutions"; the other was based on "the will of a minority . . . terror and oppression . . . the suppression of personal freedoms." Truman's adviser Clark Clifford had suggested that in his message Truman connect the intervention in Greece to something less rhetorical, more practical--"the great natural resources of the Middle East" (Clifford meant oil), but Truman didn't mention that.

The United States moved into the Greek civil war, not with soldiers, but with weapons and military advisers. In the last five months of 1947, 74,000 tons of military equipment were sent by the United States to the right-wing government in Athens, including artillery, dive bombers, and stocks of napalm. Two hundred and fifty army officers, headed by General James Van Fleet, advised the Greek army in the field. Van Fleet started a policy--standard in dealing with popular insurrections of forcibly removing thousands of Greeks from their homes in the countryside, to try to isolate the guerrillas, to remove the source of their support....

[A]ccording to the State Department's own White Paper on China, Chiang Kai-shek's government had lost the confidence of its own troops and its own people. In January 1949, Chinese Communist forces moved into Peking, the civil war was over, and China was in the hands of a revolutionary movement, the closest thing, in the long history of that ancient country, to a people's government, independent of outside control.

The United States was trying, in the postwar decade, to create a national consensus excluding the radicals, who could not support a foreign policy aimed at suppressing revolution-of conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, around the policies of cold war and anti- 949, had given \$2 billion in aid to Chiang Kai-shek's forces, but, according to the State Department's own White Paper on China, Chiang Kai-shek's government had lost the confidence of its own troops and its own people. In January 1949, Chinese Communist forces moved into Peking, the civil war was over, and China was in the hands of a revolutionary movement, the closest thing, in the long history of that ancient country, to a people's government, independent of outside control.

The United States was trying, in the postwar decade, to create a national consensus excluding the radicals, who could not support a foreign policy aimed at suppressing revolution-of conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, around the policies of cold war and anti- Communism. Such a coalition could best be created by a liberal Democratic President, whose aggressive policy abroad would be supported by conservatives, and whose welfare programs at home (Truman's "Fair Deal") would be attractive to liberals. If, in addition, liberals and traditional Democrats could-the memory of the war was still fresh- support a foreign policy against "aggression," the radical-liberal bloc created by World War II would be broken up. And perhaps, if the anti-Communist mood became strong enough, liberals could support repressive moves at home which in ordinary times would be seen as violating the liberal tradition of tolerance. In 1950, there came an event that speeded the formation of the liberal-conservative consensus--[Truman's undeclared war in Korea](#).

Korea, occupied by Japan for thirty-five years, was liberated from Japan after World War II and divided into North Korea, a socialist dictatorship, part of the Soviet sphere of influence, and South Korea, a right-wing dictatorship, in the American sphere. There had been threats back and forth between the two Koreas, and when on June 25, 1950, North Korean armies moved southward across the 38th parallel in an invasion of South Korea, the United Nations, dominated by the United States, asked its members to help "repel the armed attack." Truman ordered the American armed forces to help South Korea, and the American army became the U.N. army. Truman said: "A return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far-reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law."

The United States' response to "the rule of force" was to reduce Korea, North and South, to a shambles, in three years of bombing and shelling. Napalm was dropped, and a BBC journalist described the result:

In front of us a curious figure was standing, a little crouched, legs straddled, arms held out from his sides. He had no eyes, and the whole of his body, nearly all of which was visible through tatters of burnt rags, was covered with a hard black crust speckled with yellow

pus. . . . He had to stand because he was no longer covered with a skin, but with a crust-like crackling which broke easily. . . . I thought of the hundreds of villages reduced to ash which I personally had seen and realized the sort of casualty list which must be mounting up along the Korean front. ar mobilized liberal opinion behind the war and the President.

It created the kind of coalition that was needed to sustain a policy of intervention abroad, militarization of the economy at home. This meant trouble for those who stayed outside the coalition as radical critics. Alonzo Hamby noted (*Beyond the New Deal*) that the Korean war was supported by *The New Republic*, by *The Nation*, and by [Henry Wallace](#) (who in 1948 had run against Truman on a left coalition Progressive party ticket). The liberals didn't like Senator Joseph McCarthy (who hunted for Communists everywhere, even among liberals), but the Korean war, as Hamby says, "had given McCarthyism a new lease on life."

The left had become very influential in the hard times of the thirties, and during the war against Fascism. The actual membership needed to sustain a policy of intervention abroad, militarization of the economy at home. This meant trouble for those who stayed outside the coalition as radical critics. Alonzo Hamby noted (*Beyond the New Deal*) that the Korean war was supported by *The New Republic*, by *The Nation*, and by [Henry Wallace](#) (who in 1948 had run against Truman on a left coalition Progressive party ticket). The liberals didn't like Senator Joseph McCarthy (who hunted for Communists everywhere, even among liberals), but the Korean war, as Hamby says, "had given McCarthyism a new lease on life."

The left had become very influential in the hard times of the thirties, and during the war against Fascism. The actual membership of the Communist party was not large-fewer than 100,000 probably-but it was a potent force in trade unions numbering millions of members, in the arts, and among countless Americans who may have been led by the failure of the capitalist system in the thirties to look favorably on Communism and Socialism. Thus, if the Establishment, after World War 11, was to make capitalism more secure in the country, and to build a consensus of support for the American Empire, it had to weaken and isolate the left.

Two weeks after presenting to the country the Truman Doctrine for Greece and Turkey, Truman issued, on March 22, 1947, Executive Order 9835, initiating a program to search out any "infiltration of disloyal persons" in the U.S. government. In their book *The Fifties*, Douglas Miller and Marion Nowack comment:

Though Truman would later complain of the "great wave of hysteria" sweeping the nation, his commitment to victory over communism, to completely safeguarding the United States from external and internal threats, was in large measure responsible for creating that very hysteria. Between the launching of his security program in March 1947 and December 1952, some 6.6 million persons were investigated. Not a single case of espionage was uncovered, though about 500 persons were dismissed in dubious cases of "questionable loyalty." All of this was conducted with secret evidence, secret and often paid informers, and neither judge nor jury. Despite the failure to find subversion, the broad scope of the

official Red hunt gave popular credence to the notion that the government was riddled with spies. A conservative and fearful reaction coursed the country. Americans became convinced of the need for absolute security and the preservation of the established order.

World events right after the war made it easier to build up public support for the anti-Communist crusade at home. In 1948, the Communist party in Czechoslovakia ousted non-Communists from the government and established their own rule. The Soviet Union that year blockaded Berlin, which was a jointly occupied city isolated inside the Soviet sphere of East Germany, forcing the United States to airlift supplies into Berlin. In 1949, there was the Communist victory in China, and in that year also, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. In 1950 the Korean war began. These were all portrayed to the public as signs of a world Communist conspiracy.

Not as publicized as the Communist victories, but just as disturbing to the American government, was the upsurge all over the world of colonial peoples demanding independence. Revolutionary movements were growing--in Indochina against the French; in Indonesia against the Dutch; in the Philippines, armed rebellion against the United States.

In Africa there were rumblings of discontent in the form of strikes. Basil Davidson (*Let Freedom Come*) tells of the longest recorded strike (160 days) in African history, of 19,000 railwaymen in French West Africa in 1947, whose message to the governor general showed the new mood of militancy: "Open your prisons, make ready your machine guns and cannon. Nevertheless, at midnight on 10 October, if our demands are not met, we declare the general strike." The year before in South Africa, 100,000 gold mine workers stopped work, demanding ten shillings (about \$2.50) a day in wages, the greatest strike in the history of South Africa, and it took a military attack to get them back to work. In 1950, in Kenya, there was a general strike against starvation wages.

So it was not just Soviet expansion that was threatening to the United States government and to American business interests. In fact, China, Korea, Indochina, the Philippines, represented local Communist movements, not Russian fomentation. It was a general wave of anti-imperialist insurrection in the world, which would require gigantic American effort to defeat: national unity for militarization of the budget, for the suppression of domestic opposition to such a foreign policy. Truman and the liberals in Congress proceeded to try to create a new national unity for the postwar years--with the executive order on loyalty oaths, Justice Department prosecutions, and anti-Communist legislation.

In this atmosphere, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin could go even further than Truman. Speaking to a Women's Republican Club in Wheeling, West Virginia, in early 1950, he held up some papers and shouted: "I have here in my hand a list of 205--a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department." The next day, speaking in Salt Lake City, McCarthy claimed he had a list of fifty-seven (the number kept changing) such Communists in the State Department. Shortly afterward, he appeared on the floor of the Senate with photostatic copies of about a hundred dossiers from State Department loyalty files. The dossiers were three years old, and most of the people were no

longer with the State Department, but McCarthy read from them anyway, inventing, adding, and changing as he read. In one case, he changed the dossier's description of "liberal" to "communistically inclined," in another form "active fellow traveler" to "active Communist," and so on.

McCarthy kept on like this for the next few years. As chairman of the Permanent Investigations Subcommittee of a Senate Committee on Government Operations, he investigated the State Department's information program, its Voice of America, and its overseas libraries, which included books by people McCarthy considered Communists. The State Department reacted in panic, issuing a stream of directives to its library centers across the world. Forty books were removed, including *The Selected Works of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Philip Foner, and *The Children's Hour* by [Lillian Hellman](#). Some books were burned. McCarthy became bolder. In the spring of 1954 he began hearings to investigate supposed subversives in the military. When he began attacking generals for not being hard enough on suspected Communists, he antagonized Republicans as well as Democrats, and in December 1954, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to censure him for "conduct . . . unbecoming a Member of the United States Senate." The censure resolution avoided criticizing McCarthy's anti-Communist lies and exaggerations; it concentrated on minor matters on his refusal to appear before a Senate Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections, and his abuse of an army general at his hearings.

At the very time the Senate was censuring McCarthy, Congress was putting through a whole series of anti-Communist bills. Liberal Hubert Humphrey introduced an amendment to one of them to make the Communist party illegal, saying: "I do not intend to be a half patriot. . . . Either Senators are for recognizing the Communist Party for what it is, or they will continue to trip over the niceties of legal technicalities and details."

The liberals in the government were themselves acting to exclude, persecute, fire, and even imprison Communists. It was just that McCarthy had gone too far, attacking not only Communists but liberals, endangering that broad liberal-conservative coalition which was considered essential. For instance, Lyndon Johnson, as Senate minority leader, worked not only to pass the censure resolution on McCarthy but also to keep it within the narrow bounds of "conduct . . . unbecoming a Member of the United States Senate" rather than questioning McCarthy's anti-Communism. John F. Kennedy was cautious on the issue, didn't speak out against McCarthy (he was absent when the censure vote was taken and never said how he would have voted). McCarthy's insistence that Communism had won in China because of [softness on Communism](#) in the American government [was close to Kennedy's own view](#), expressed in the House of Representatives, January 1949, when the Chinese Communists took over Peking. Kennedy said:

Mr. Speaker, over this weekend we have learned the extent of the disaster that has befallen China and the United States. The responsibility for the failure of our foreign policy in the Far East rests squarely with the White House and the Department of State.

The continued insistence that aid would not be forthcoming unless a coalition government with the Communists was formed, was a crippling blow to the National Government. (*More on [Kennedy](#) below.*)

So concerned were our diplomats and their advisers, the Lattimores and the Fairbanks [both scholars in the field of Chinese history, Owen Lattimore a favorite target of McCarthy, John Fairbank, a Harvard professor], with the imperfection of the democratic system in China after 20 years of war and the tales of corruption in high places that they lost sight of our tremendous stake in a non- Communist China. . . .

This House must now assume the responsibility of preventing the onrushing tide of Communism from engulfing all of Asia.

When, in 1950, Republicans sponsored an Internal Security Act for the registration of organizations found to be "Communist-action" or "Communist-front," liberal Senators did not fight that head-on. Instead, some of them, including Hubert Humphrey and Herbert Lehman, proposed a substitute measure, the setting up of detention centers (really, concentration camps) for suspected subversives, who, when the President declared an "internal security emergency," would be held without trial. The [detention-camp bill](#) became not a substitute for, but an addition to, the Internal Security Act, and the proposed camps were set up, ready for use. (In 1968, a time of general disillusionment with anti-Communism, this law was repealed.)

Truman's executive order on loyalty in 1947 required the Department of Justice to draw up a list of organizations it decided were "totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive . . . or as seeking to alter the form of government of the United States by unconstitutional means." Not only membership in, but also "sympathetic association" with, any organization on the Attorney General's list would be considered in determining disloyalty. By 1954, there were hundreds of groups on this list, including, besides the Communist party and the Ku Klux Klan, the Chopin Cultural Center, the Cervantes Fraternal Society, the Committee for the Negro in the Arts, the Committee for the Protection of the Bill of Rights, the League of American Writers, the Nature Friends of America, People's Drama, the Washington Bookshop Association, and the Yugoslav Seaman's Club.

It was not McCarthy and the Republicans, but the liberal Democratic Truman administration, whose Justice Department initiated a series of prosecutions that intensified the nation's anti-Communist mood. The most important to a box of Jell-o, and told him a man would show up in New Mexico with the other half, and that, in June 1945, Harry Gold appeared with the other half of the box top, and Greenglass gave him information he had memorized.

were either in prison or under indictment. David Greenglass, the brother of Ethel Rosenberg, was the key witness. He had been a machinist at the Manhattan Project laboratory at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 1944-1945 when the atomic bomb was being made there and testified that Julius Rosenberg had asked him to [get information for the Russians](#). Greenglass said he had made sketches from memory for his brother-in-law of experiments with lenses to be used to detonate atomic bombs. He said Rosenberg had given him half of the cardboard top to a box of Jell-o, and told him a man would show up in New Mexico with the other half, and that, in June 1945, Harry Gold appeared with the other half of the box top, and Greenglass gave him information he had memorized.

Gold, already serving a thirty-year sentence in another espionage case, came out of jail to corroborate Greenglass's testimony. He had never met the Rosenbergs, but said a Soviet embassy official gave him half of a Jello box top and told him to contact Greenglass, saying, "I come from Julius." Gold said he took the sketches Greenglass had drawn from memory and gave them to the Russian official.

There were troubling aspects to all this. Did Gold cooperate in return for early release from prison? After serving fifteen years of his thirty-year sentence, he was paroled. Did Greenglass-under indictment at the time he testified-also know that his life depended on his cooperation? He was given fifteen years, served half of it, and was released. How reliable a memorizer of atomic information was David Greenglass, an ordinary-level machinist, not a scientist, who had taken six courses at Brooklyn Polytechnical Institute and flunked five of them? Gold's and Greenglass's stories had first not been in accord. But they were both placed on the same floor of the Tombs prison in New York before the trial, giving them a chance to coordinate their testimony.

How reliable was Gold's testimony? It turned out that he had been prepared for [the Rosenberg case](#) by four hundred hours of interviews with the FBI. It also turned out that Gold was a frequent and highly imaginative liar. He was a witness in a later trial where defense counsel asked Gold about his invention of a fictional wife and fictional children. The attorney asked: ". . . you lied for a period of six years?" Gold responded: "I lied for a period of sixteen years, not alone six years." Gold was the only witness at the trial to connect Julius Rosenberg and David Greenglass to the Russians. The FBI agent who had questioned Gold was interviewed twenty years after the case by a journalist. He was asked about the password Gold was supposed to have used-"Julius sent me." The FBI man said:

Gold couldn't remember the name he had given. He thought he had said: I come from - or something like that. I suggested, "Might it have been Julius?"

That refreshed his memory.

When the Rosenbergs were found guilty, and Judge Irving Kaufman pronounced sentence, he said:

I believe your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb as already caused the Communist aggression in Korea with the resultant casualties exceeding 50,000 Americans and who knows but that millions more of innocent people may pay the price of your treason. . . .

He sentenced them both to die in the electric chair.

Morton Sobell was also on trial as a co-conspirator with the Rosenbergs. The chief witness against him was an old friend, the best man at his wedding, a man who was facing possible perjury charges by the federal government for lying about his political past. This was Max Elitcher, who testified that he had once driven Sobell to a Manhattan housing project where the Rosenbergs lived, and that Sobell got out of

the car, took from the glove compartment what appeared to be a film can, went off, and then returned without the can. There was no evidence about what was in the film can. The case against Sobell seemed so weak that Sobell's lawyer decided there was no need to present a defense. But the jury found Sobell guilty, and Kaufman sentenced him to thirty years in prison. He was sent to Alcatraz, parole was repeatedly denied, and he spent nineteen years in various prisons before he was released.

FBI documents subpoenaed in the 1970s showed that Judge Kaufman had conferred with the prosecutors secretly about the sentences he would give in the case. Another document shows that after three years of appeal a meeting took place between Attorney General Herbert Brownell and Chief Justice Fred Vinson of the Supreme Court, and the chief justice assured the Attorney General that if any Supreme Court justice gave a stay of execution, he would immediately call a full court session and override it.

There had been a worldwide campaign of protest. Albert Einstein, whose letter to Roosevelt early in the war had initiated work on the atomic bomb, appealed for the Rosenbergs, as did Jean-Paul Sartre, Pablo Picasso, and the sister of Bartolomeo Vanzetti. There was an appeal to President Truman, just before he left office in the spring of 1953. It was turned down. Then, another appeal to the new President, Dwight Eisenhower, was also turned down.

At the last moment, Justice [William O. Douglas](#) granted a stay of execution. Chief Justice Vinson sent out special jets to bring the vacationing justices back to Washington from various parts of the country. They canceled Douglas's stay in time for the Rosenbergs to be executed June 19, 1953. It was a demonstration to the people of the country, though very few could identify with the Rosenbergs, of what lay at the end of the line for those the government decided were traitors.

In that same period of the early fifties, the House Un-American Activities Committee was at its heyday, interrogating Americans about their Communist connections, holding them in contempt if they refused to answer, distributing millions of pamphlets to the American public: "One Hundred Things You Should Know About Communism" ("Where can Communists be found? Everywhere"). Liberals often criticized the Committee, but in Congress, liberals and conservatives alike voted to fund it year after year. By 1958, only one member of the House of Representatives (James Roosevelt) voted against giving it money. Although Truman criticized the Committee, his own Attorney General had expressed, in 1950, the same idea that motivated its investigations: "There are today many Communists in America. They are everywhere--in factories, offices, butcher shops, on street comers, in private business--and each carries in himself the germs of death for society." (*More on HUAC's role in [Hollywood blacklisting](#) See also Ellen Schrecker's ["Blacklists and Other Economic Sanctions"](#).*)

Liberal intellectuals rode the anti-Communist bandwagon. Commentary magazine denounced the Rosenbergs and their supporters. One of *Commentary's* writers, [Irving Kristol](#), asked in March 1952: "Do we defend our rights by protecting Communists?" His answer: "No."

It was Truman's Justice Department that prosecuted the leaders of the Communist party under the Smith Act, charging them with conspiring to teach and advocate the overthrow of the government by force and

violence. The evidence consisted mostly of the fact that the Communists were distributing Marxist-Leninist literature, which the prosecution contended called for violent revolution. (*For more on this prosecutorial tactic, and its relation to literary interpretation, click [here](#); see Hugo [Black's dissenting opinion](#) in Dennis.*)

There was certainly not evidence of any immediate danger of violent revolution by the Communist party. The Supreme Court decision was given by Truman's appointee, Chief Justice Vinson. He stretched the old doctrine of the "clear and present danger" by saying there was a clear and present conspiracy to make a revolution at some convenient time. And so, the top leadership of the Communist party was put in prison, and soon after, most of its organizers went underground.

Undoubtedly, there was success in the attempt to make the general public fearful of Communists and ready to take drastic actions against them--imprisonment at home, military action abroad. The whole culture was permeated with anti-Communism. The large-circulation magazines had articles like "How Communists Get That Way" and "Communists Are After Your Child." The *New York Times* in 1956 ran an editorial: "We would not knowingly employ a Communist party member in the news or editorial departments . . . because we would not trust his ability to report the news objectively or to comment on it honestly. . . . An FBI informer's story about his exploits as a Communist who became an FBI agent--"I Led Three Lives"--was serialized in five hundred newspapers and put on television. Hollywood movies had titles like *I Married a Communist* and *I Was a Communist for the FBI*. Between 1948 and 1954, more than forty [anti-Communist films](#) came out of Hollywood. [Victor Navasky, in *Naming Names*, has something to say about the fad of [anticommunist films](#).]

Even the American Civil Liberties Union, set up specifically to defend the liberties of Communists and all other political groups, began to wilt in the cold war atmosphere. It had already started in this direction back in 1940 when it expelled one of its charter members, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, because she was a member of the Communist party. In the fifties, the ACLU was hesitant to defend Corliss Lamont, its own board member, and Owen Lattimore, when both were under attack. It was reluctant to defend publicly the Communist leaders during the first Smith Act trial, and kept completely out of the Rosenberg case, saying no civil liberties issues were involved.

Young and old were taught that anti-Communism was heroic. Three million copies were sold of the book by Mickey Spillane published in 1951, *One Lonely Night*, in which the hero, Mike Hammer says: "I killed more people tonight than I have fingers on my hands. I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. . . . They were Commies . . . red sons-of-bitches who should have died long ago. . . ." A comic strip hero, Captain America, said: "Beware, commies, spies, traitors, and foreign agents! Captain America, with all loyal, free men behind him, is looking for you. . . ." And in the fifties, schoolchildren all over the country participated in air raid drills in which a Soviet attack on America was signaled by sirens: the children had to crouch under their desks until it was "all clear."

It was an atmosphere in which the government could get mass support for a policy of rearmament. The system, so shaken in the thirties, had learned that war production could bring stability and high profits.

Truman's anti-Communism was attractive. The business publication *Steel* had said in November 1946--even before the Truman Doctrine that Truman's policies gave "the firm assurance that maintaining and building our preparations for war will be big business in the United States for at least a considerable period ahead."

That prediction turned out to be accurate. At the start of 1950, the total U.S. budget was about \$40 billion, and the military part of it was about \$12 billion. But by 1955, the military part alone was \$40 billion out of a total of \$62 billion.

In 1960, the military budget was \$45.8 billion--9.7 percent of the budget. That year John F. Kennedy was elected President, and he immediately moved to increase military spending. In fourteen months, the Kennedy administration added \$9 billion to defense funds, according to Edgar Bottome (*The Balance of Terror*).

By 1962, based on a series of invented scares about Soviet military build-ups, a false "bomber gap" and a false "missile gap," the United States had overwhelming nuclear superiority. It had the equivalent, in nuclear weapons, of 1,500 Hiroshima-size atomic bombs, far more than enough to destroy every major city in the world--the equivalent, in fact, of 10 tons of TNT for every man, woman, and child on earth. To deliver these bombs, the United States had more than 50 intercontinental ballistic missiles, 80 missiles on nuclear submarines, 90 missiles on stations overseas, 1,700 bombers capable of reaching the Soviet Union, 300 fighter-bombers on aircraft carriers, able to carry atomic weapons, and 1,000 land-based supersonic fighters able to carry atomic bombs.

The Soviet Union was obviously behind--it had between fifty and a hundred intercontinental ballistic missiles and fewer than two hundred long-range bombers. But the U.S. budget kept mounting, the hysteria kept growing, the profits of corporations getting defense contracts multiplied, and employment and wages moved ahead just enough to keep a substantial number of Americans dependent on war industries for their living.

By 1970, the U.S. military budget was \$80 billion and the corporations involved in military production were making fortunes. Two-thirds of the 40 billion spent on weapons systems was going to twelve or fifteen giant industrial corporations, whose main reason for existence was to fulfill government military contracts. Senator Paul Douglass, an economist and chairman of the Joint Economic Committee of the Senate, noted that "six-sevenths of these contracts are not competitive. . . . In the alleged interest of secrecy, the government picks a company and draws up a contract in more or less secret negotiations."

C. Wright Mills, in his book of the fifties, *The Power Elite*, counted the military as part of the top elite, along with politicians and corporations. These elements were more and more intertwined. A Senate report showed that the one hundred largest defense contractors, who held 67.4 percent of the military contracts, employed more than two thousand former high-ranking officers of the military.

Meanwhile, the United States, giving economic aid to certain countries, was creating a network of

American corporate control over the globe, and building its political influence over the countries it aided. The Marshall Plan of 1948, which gave \$16 billion in economic aid to Western European countries in four years, had an economic aim: to build up markets for goods, a policy of relief and reconstruction today chiefly as a matter of national self-interest."

From 1952 on, foreign aid was more and more obviously designed to build up military power in non-Communist countries. In the next ten years, of the \$50 billion in aid granted by the United States to ninety countries, only \$5 billion was for nonmilitary economic development.

The Marshall Plan also had a political motive. The Communist parties of Italy and France were strong, and the United States decided to use pressure and money to keep Communists out of the cabinets of those countries. When the Plan was beginning, Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson said: "These measures of relief and reconstruction have been only in part suggested by humanitarianism. Your Congress has authorized and your Government is carrying out, a policy of relief and reconstruction today chiefly as a matter of national self-interest."

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When John F. Kennedy took office, he launched the Alliance for Progress, a program of help for Latin America, emphasizing social reform to better the lives of people. But it turned out to be mostly military aid to keep in power right-wing dictatorships and enable them to stave off revolutions.

From military aid, it was a short step to military intervention. What Truman had said at the start of the Korean war about "the rule of force" and the "rule of law" was again and again, under Truman and his successors, contradicted by American action. In Iran, in 1953, the Central Intelligence Agency succeeded in overthrowing a government which nationalized the oil industry.

In Guatemala, in 1954, a legally elected government was overthrown by an invasion force of mercenaries trained by the CIA at military bases in Honduras and Nicaragua and supported by four American fighter planes flown by American pilots. The invasion put into power Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, who had at one time received military training at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The government that the United States overthrew was the most democratic Guatemala had ever had. The President, Jacobo Arbenz, was a left-of-center Socialist; four of the fifty-six seats in the Congress were held by Communists. What was most unsettling to American business interests was that Arbenz had expropriated 234,000 acres of land owned by United Fruit, offering compensation that United Fruit called "unacceptable." Armas, in power, gave the land back to United Fruit, abolished the tax on interest and dividends to foreign investors, eliminated the secret ballot, and jailed thousands of political critics.

In 1958, the Eisenhower government sent thousands of marines to Lebanon to make sure the pro-American government there was not toppled by a revolution, and to keep an armed presence in that

oilrich area.

The Democrat-Republican, liberal-conservative agreement to prevent or overthrow revolutionary governments whenever possible whether Communist, Socialist, or anti-United Fruit-became most evident in 1961 in Cuba. That little island 90 miles from Florida had gone through a revolution in 1959 by a rebel force led by **Fidel Castro**, in which the American-backed dictator, Fulgencio Batista, was overthrown. The revolution was a direct threat to American business interests. Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy had repealed the Platt Amendment (which permitted American intervention in Cuba), but the United States still kept a naval base in Cuba at Guantanamo, and U.S. business interests still dominated the Cuban economy. American companies controlled 80 to 100 percent of Cuba's utilities, mines, cattle ranches, and oil refineries, 40 percent of the sugar industry, and 50 percent of the public railways.

Fidel Castro had spent time in prison after he led an unsuccessful attack in 1953 on an army barracks in Santiago. Out of prison, he went to Mexico, met Argentine revolutionary Che Guevara, and returned in 1956 to Cuba. His tiny force fought guerrilla warfare from the jungles and mountains against Batista's army, drawing more and more popular support, then came out of the mountains and marched across the country to Havana. The Batista government fell apart on New Year's Day 1959.

In power, Castro moved to set up a nationwide system of education, of housing, of land distribution to landless peasants. The government confiscated over a million acres of land from three American companies, including United Fruit.

Cuba needed money to finance its programs, and the United States was not eager to lend it. The International Monetary Fund, dominated by the United States, would not loan money to Cuba because Cuba would not accept its "stabilization" conditions, which seemed to undermine the revolutionary program that had begun. When Cuba now signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union, American-owned oil companies in Cuba refused to refine crude oil that came from the Soviet Union. Castro seized these companies. The United States cut down on its sugar buying from Cuba, on which Cuba's economy depended, and the Soviet Union immediately agreed to buy all the 700,000 tons of sugar that the United States would not buy.

Cuba had changed. The Good Neighbor Policy did not apply. In the spring of 1960, President Eisenhower secretly authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to arm and train anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Guatemala for a future invasion of Cuba. When Kennedy took office in the spring of 1961 the CIA had 1,400 exiles, armed and trained. He moved ahead with the plans, and on April 17, 1961, the CIA-trained force, with some Americans participating, landed at the Bay of Pigs on the south shore of Cuba, 90 miles from Havana. They expected to stimulate a general rising against Castro. But it was a popular regime. There was no rising. In three days, the CIA forces were crushed by Castro's army.

The whole Bay of Pigs affair was accompanied by hypocrisy and lying. The invasion was a violation--recalling Truman's "rule of law"--of a treaty the U.S. had signed, the Charter of the Organization of

American States, which reads: "No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state."

Four days before the invasion-because there had been press reports of secret bases and CIA training for invaders-President Kennedy told a press conference: ". . . there will not be, under any conditions, any intervention in Cuba by United States armed forces." True, the landing force was Cuban, but it was all organized by the United States, and American war planes, including American pilots, were involved; Kennedy had approved the use of unmarked navy jets in the invasion. Four American pilots of those planes were killed, and their families were not told the truth about how those men died.

The success of the liberal-conservative coalition in creating a national anti-Communist consensus was shown by how certain important news publications cooperated with the Kennedy administration in deceiving the American public on the Cuban invasion. *The New Republic* was about to print an article on the CIA training of Cuban exiles, a few weeks before the invasion. Historian Arthur Schlesinger was given copies of the article in advance. He showed them to Kennedy, who asked that the article not be printed, and *The New Republic* went along. James Reston and Turner Catledge of the *New York Times*, on the government's request, did not run a story about the imminent invasion. Arthur [Schlesinger](#) said of the *New York Times* action: "This was another patriotic act, but in retrospect I have wondered whether, if the press had behaved irresponsibly, it would not have spared the country a disaster." What seemed to bother him, and other liberals in the cold war consensus, was not that the United States was interfering in revolutionary movements in other countries, but that it was doing so unsuccessfully.

Around 1960, the fifteen-year effort since the end of World War II to break up the Communist-radical upsurge of the New Deal and wartime years seemed successful. The Communist party was in disarray-its leaders in jail, its membership shrunken, its influence in the trade union movement very small. The trade union movement itself had become more controlled, more conservative. The military budget was taking half of the national budget, but the public was accepting this.

The radiation from the testing of nuclear weapons had dangerous possibilities for human health, but the public was not aware of that. The Atomic Energy Commission insisted that the deadly effects of atomic tests were exaggerated, and an article in 1955 in the *Reader's Digest* (the largest-circulation magazine in the United States) said: "The scare stories about this country's atomic tests are simply not justified."

In the mid-fifties, there was a flurry of enthusiasm for [air-raid shelters](#); the public was being told these would keep them safe from atomic blasts. A government consultant and scientist, Herman Kahn, wrote a book, *On Thermonuclear War*, in which he explained that it was possible to have a nuclear war without total destruction of the world, that people should not be so frightened of it. A political scientist named Henry Kissinger wrote a book published in 1957 in which he said: "With proper tactics, nuclear war need not be as destructive as it appears...."

The country was on a permanent war economy which had big pockets of poverty, but there were enough people at work, making enough money, to keep things quiet. The distribution of wealth was still unequal.

From 1944 to 1961, it had not changed much: the lowest fifth of the families received 5 percent of all the income; the highest fifth received 45 percent of all the income. In 1953, 1.6 percent of the adult population owned more than 80 percent of the corporate stock and nearly 90 percent of the corporate bonds. About 200 giant corporations out of 200,000 corporations--one-tenth of 1 percent of all corporations--controlled about 60 percent of the manufacturing wealth of the nation.

When John F. Kennedy presented his budget to the nation after his first year in office, it was clear that, liberal Democrat or not, there would be no major change in the distribution of income or wealth or tax advantages. *New York Times* columnist James Reston summed up Kennedy's budget messages as avoiding any "sudden transformation of the home front" as well as "a more ambitious frontal attack on the unemployment problem." Reston said:

He agreed to a tax break for business investment in plant expansion and modernization. He is not spoiling for a fight with the Southern conservatives over civil rights. He has been urging the unions to keep wage demands down so that prices can be competitive in the world markets and jobs increased. And he has been trying to reassure the business community that he does not want any cold war with them on the home front.

. . .this week in his news conference he refused to carry out his promise to bar discrimination in Government-insured housing, but talked instead of postponing this until there was a "national consensus" in its favor. . . .

During these twelve months the President has moved over into the decisive middle ground of American politics. . . .

On this middle ground, all seemed secure. Nothing had to be done for blacks. Nothing had to be done to change the economic structure. An aggressive foreign policy could continue. The country seemed under control. And then, in the 1960s, came a series of explosive rebellions in every area of American life, which showed that all the system's estimates of security and success were wrong.

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from the pages of **Z**MAGAZINE

Book Serial

Going South: From Chapter One of You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train

By Howard Zinn

I had worked for three years loading trucks in a warehouse on the four-to-midnight shift, while going to New York University and Columbia. (I never paid a cent in tuition, thanks to the GI Bill of Rights, still a good example of how governments can run vast programs, with minimum bureaucracy, to enormous human benefit.) One day I hurt my back lifting one eighty-pound carton too many, and began to teach part-time, learning quickly that "part-time" teachers often work longer and get paid less than full-timers. I taught four daytime courses at Upsala College, a Swedish-Lutheran, absurdly up-tight college in New Jersey, and two evening courses, at absurdly chaotic Brooklyn College in New York. So from the "project" where we lived in lower Manhattan I traveled an hour west to New Jersey on some days, an hour east to Brooklyn other days, teaching six courses for a total of \$3,000 a year.

Roz was doing secretarial work to help support us all. In high school, though editor of the literary magazine and winner of the English medal, she had taken typing and shorthand, as even the brightest of girls were expected to do. Only when the children were grown-up did she have a chance to go to college, teach English to "special students" (tough kids who were failing their courses), then become a social worker, first with black high-school dropouts, afterwards with elderly poor people in the Italian-Irish sections of Boston. She wanted to "give back," as she put it, what life had given her.

Close to finishing my Ph.D. work in history at Columbia University, I was contacted by the Placement Bureau of Columbia for an interview with the president of Spelman College,

who was visiting New York. The idea of a "Negro college" hadn't occurred to me. Spelman College at that time was virtually unknown to anyone outside of the black community. He offered me the chairmanship of his history & social sciences department, and \$4000 a year. I summoned up my courage: "I have a wife and two kids. Could you make it \$4500?"

In August of 1956, Roz and I trundled the two kids and our belongings into our ten-year old Chevy, and drove South. We arrived in Atlanta on a hot and rainy night and Roz and the children (Myla was nine, Jeff almost seven) awoke to watch the shimmering wet lights on Ponce de Leon Avenue. We were in a different world, a thousand miles from home, a universe removed from the sidewalks of New York. Here was a city thick with foliage, fragrant with magnolias and honeysuckle. The air was sweeter and heavier. The people were blacker and whiter; through the raindrops on the windows they appeared as ghosts gliding through the darkness.

The campus of Spelman College was not far from the center of town, an oval garden of dogwood and magnolia trees, ringed with red brick buildings. Our family was given temporary quarters in one of those buildings until we could find a place to live in town. That wasn't easy. Landlords wanted to know where I worked. When I told them I was teaching at Spelman, the atmosphere changed; apartments were no longer available. This was our first personal encounter with the depth of that malignancy which has for so long infected all of America, but was then so much more visible in the Southern states.

What for us was an inconvenience was for blacks a daily and never-ending humiliation, and behind that a threat of violence to the point of murder. Just ten years earlier, a sheriff in Baker County, Georgia, taking a black man to jail, smashed his head repeatedly with a blackjack, in view of witnesses. The man died. The sheriff, Claude Screws, was acquitted by a local jury, found guilty by a federal jury under an old civil rights statute, and sentenced to six months in prison. This was overturned by the Supreme Court, which found no proof that the sheriff intended to deprive the prisoner of his constitutional rights. One day I looked down the list of members of the Georgia legislature, and saw the name of Claude Screws.

The city of Atlanta at that time was as rigidly segregated as Johannesburg, South Africa. Peachtree Street, downtown, was white. Auburn Avenue, ("sweet Auburn," as it was known in the Negro community) was a five-minute ride away from downtown, and was black. If black people were downtown, it was because they were working for whites, or shopping at Rich's Department Store, where both races could come to buy, but the cafeteria was for whites only. If a white person and a black person walked down the street together, as equals, with no clear indication that the black was a servant of some kind, the

atmosphere on the street suddenly became tense, threatening.

I began my classes. There were no white students at Spelman. My students, in a rich variety of colors, had wonderful names, like Geneva, Herschelle, Marnesba, Aramintha. They were from all over the country, but mostly from the South, and these had never had a white teacher. They were curious, and shy, but the shyness disappeared after we came to know one another. Some were the daughters of the black middle class--teachers, ministers, social workers, small business people, skilled workers. Others were the daughters of maids, porters, laborers, tenant farmers.

A college education for these young women was a matter of life and death. One of my students told me one day, sitting in my office: "My mother says I've got to do well, because I've already got two strikes against me. I'm black and I'm a woman. One more strike and I'm out."

And so they accepted--or seemed to accept--the tightly controlled atmosphere of Spelman College, where they were expected to dress a certain way, walk a certain way, pour tea a certain way, There was compulsory chapel six times a week. They had to sign in and out of their dormitories, and be in by 10 P.M. Their contacts with men were carefully monitored; the college authorities were determined to counter the stories of the sexually free black woman, and worse, the pregnant unmarried black girl. Freshmen were not permitted to go across the street to the library at Atlanta University, where they might encounter the young men of Morehouse College. Trips into the city of Atlanta were closely supervised.

It was as if there was an unwritten, unspoken agreement between the white power structure of Atlanta and the administrations of the black colleges: "We white folk will let you colored folk have your nice little college. You can educate your colored girls to service the Negro community, to become teachers and social workers, maybe even a doctor or lawyer. We won't bother you. You can even have a few white faculty. At Christmas some of our white citizens may come to the Spelman campus to hear the famous Spelman choir. And in return, you will not interfere with our way of life, with racial segregation in Atlanta. You will leave us alone."

This pact was symbolized by a twelve-foot high stone wall around the campus, at certain points replaced by a barbed wire fence. After our family moved into an apartment on campus, near that fence, our eight-year old son, Jeff, who seemed to be an expert on such matters, at that time spending his spare hours with the black buildings-and-grounds workers on campus, pointed out to us that the barbed wire was slanted not so as to keep intruders out, but to keep the Spelman students in.

One day, the students would leap over that wall, climb over that barbed wire fence. But in the fall of 1956, there was no indication of that defiance. One year before, the bus boycott in Montgomery had ended in victory. The year before that, the Supreme Court had finally come around to deciding that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibited racial segregation in the public schools. Very little was done, however, to enforce that decision; the Supreme Court order was "all deliberate speed," and the key word was not "speed" but "deliberate."

I soon learned that beneath my students' politeness and decorum, there was a lifetime of suppressed indignation. Once I asked them to write down their first memory of race prejudice, and the feelings tumbled out.

One told how, as a teenager, she sat down in the front of a bus next to a white woman. "This woman immediately stormed out of her seat, trampling over my legs and feet, and cursing under her breath. Other white passengers began to curse under their breaths. Never had I seen people staring at me as if they hated me. Never had I really experienced being directly rejected as though I were some poisonous, venomous creature."

A student from Forsyth, Georgia wrote: "I guess if you are from a small Georgia town, as I am, you can say that your first encounter with prejudice was the day you were born.... my parents never got to see their infant twins alive because the only incubator in the hospital was on the 'white' side."

I had already decided, when I contemplated being a teacher, that I could not possibly be a neutral observer of events swirling around, in the world outside the classroom. My life, growing up poor, working in a shipyard, being in a war, nurtured an indignation against the bullies of the world, those who used wealth or military might or social status to keep others down. And now I was in the midst of a situation where human beings, by accident of birth, because of their skin color, were being treated as inferior beings.

I knew that it was wrong for me, a white teacher, to lead the way. But I was open for anything my students wanted to do, refusing to accept the idea that a teacher should confine his teaching to the classroom when so much was at stake outside.

I had been at Spelman six months when, in January of 1957, my students and I had a small encounter with the Georgia State Legislature. We had decided to visit one of its sessions. Our intent was simply to watch the Legislature go about its business. But when we arrived we saw, and should have expected, that the gallery had a small section on the side marked "colored." The students conferred and quickly decided to ignore the signs, to sit in the main section which was quite empty. Listening to the legislators drone on, even for a few minutes, about a bill on fishing rights in Georgia rivers, we could understand why the gallery was empty.

As our group of about thirty filed into the seats, panic followed. The fishing bill was forgotten. The Speaker of the House seemed to be having an apoplectic fit. He rushed to the microphone and shouted: "You nigras get over to where you belong! We got segregation in the state of Georgia."

The members of the Legislature were now standing in their seats and shouting up at us, the sounds echoing strangely in the huge domed chamber. The regular business was forgotten. Police appeared quickly and moved threateningly towards our group.

We conferred again, while the tension in the chamber thickened. Students were not yet ready, in those years before the South rose up en masse, to be arrested. We decided to move out into the hall, and then to come back into the "colored" section, me included.

What then followed was one of those strange scenes that the paradoxes of the racist, courteous South often produced. A guard came up to me, staring closely, apparently not able to decide if I was "white" or "colored," then asked where this group of visitors was from. I told him. A moment later, the Speaker of the House came up to the microphone, again interrupting a legislator, and intoned: "The members of the Georgia State Legislature would like to extend a warm welcome to the visiting delegation from Spelman College."

A few male students from Morehouse College were with us on that trip. One of them was Julian Bond, son of the distinguished educator and former president of Lincoln University, Horace Mann Bond. Julian was an occasional visitor at our house on the Spelman campus, introducing us to the records of Ray Charles, bringing poems he had written. A decade later, Julian, by now a well-known civil rights leader, would be elected to the Georgia state legislature, and, in an odd reprise of our experience, would be expelled by his fellow legislators because of his outspoken opposition to the war in Vietnam. A Supreme Court decision, upholding his right to free speech, restored him to his seat.

Sometime in early 1959, I suggested to the Spelman Social Science Club, to which I was faculty adviser, that it might be interesting to undertake some real project involving social change. The discussion became very lively. Someone said: "Why don't we try to do something about the segregation of the public libraries?" And so, two years before the sit-ins swept the South and "the Movement" excited the nation, a few young women at Spelman College decided to launch an attack on the racial policy of the main library in Atlanta, the Carnegie Library.

It was a non-violent assault. Black students would enter the Carnegie Library, to the stares of everyone around, and ask for John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, or John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, or Tom Paine's *Common Sense*. Turned away with evasive answers ("We'll send a copy to your Negro branch.") they kept coming back, asking for *The Declaration of Independence*, the *Constitution of the United States*,

and other books designed to make sensitive librarians uneasy.

The pressure on the libraries was stepped up. We let it be known that a lawsuit was next. One of the plaintiffs would be a professor of French at Spelman, Dr. Irene Dobbs Jackson. She came from a distinguished Atlanta family. Her sister was Mattiwilda Dobbs, the distinguished opera singer. Her father was John Wesley Dobbs, a great orator in the old Southern tradition. Once, sitting in the Wheat Street Baptist Church, I heard John Wesley Dobbs keep a crowd of a thousand in an uproar: "My Mattiwilda was asked to sing here in Atlanta," he thundered. "But she said, `No sir. Not while my daddy has to sit in the balcony.'"

Years later, Irene Jackson's son, Maynard Jackson, would be elected mayor of Atlanta. That was impossible to imagine, in those days when we were pressing for something so absurd as the right of black people to go to the library.

In the midst of our campaign, I was sitting in the office of Whitney Young, Dean of the School of Social Work of Atlanta University, who was working with us. We were talking about what our next moves should be, when the phone rang. It was a member of the Library Board. Whitney listened and said "Thank you," and hung up. He smiled. The Board had decided to end the policy of racial segregation in the Atlanta library system.

A few days after that, four of us rode downtown to the Carnegie Library: Dr. Irene Jackson, Earl Sanders, a young black professor of music at Spelman, Pat West, the white Alabama-born wife of Henry West, who taught philosophy in my department at Spelman, and myself. As the youngish librarian handed a new library membership card to Irene Jackson, she spoke calmly, but her hand trembled slightly. She understood that a bit of history was being made.

Pat and Henry West, both white Southerners who scandalized their families in coming to live in a black community, had a three year old boy who was the first and only white child in the Spelman College nursery school. At Christmas time, it was traditional for schoolchildren to be taken to Rich's Department store downtown to meet Santa Claus, where the children would take turns sitting on Santa's lap and whispering what they wanted for Christmas, Santa was a white man in need of a job, and he had no qualms about holding little black kids on his lap. When little Henry West climbed onto his lap, Santa Claus stared at him, looked at the other children, back at Henry, and whispered in his ear: "Boy, you white or colored?" The nursery school teacher stood by, listening. Little Henry answered: "I want a bicycle."

I have told about the modest campaign to desegregate Atlanta's libraries because the history of social movements often confines itself to the large events, the pivotal moments. Typically, surveys of the history of the civil rights movement deal with the Supreme Court

decision in the Brown case, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham demonstrations, the March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the March from Selma to Montgomery, the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Missing from such histories are the countless small actions of unknown people that led up to those great moments. When we understand that, we can see that the tiniest acts of protest in which we engage may become the invisible roots of tumultuous social change.

Sitting in our living room on the Spelman campus one evening, Dr. Otis Smith, a physician, told of his recent departure from Fort Valley, Georgia, an agricultural town of 12,000 people where he was the only black doctor. "Run out of town," he smiled. "It sounds like something out of an old Western movie."

Dr. Smith had been a star athlete for Morehouse College, then a student at Meharry Medical School in Nashville, when he accepted an offer from the Georgia's Board of Regents to help pay for his last year in medical school, in return for a promise to spend fifteen months in a rural area in Georgia. Fort Valley, in Peach County, seemed a likely place. The last black doctor in town had died several years before, leaving blacks there (60 percent of the population) at the mercy of those humiliations that often accompanied white doctor-colored patient relations in the Deep South: entrance through the side door, a special "colored" waiting room, and sometimes the question "Do you have the money?" before a sick call was made to the house.

Otis Smith made a down payment on a home, hung out his shingle, and soon his office was full. But when he showed up at the Fort Valley Hospital, for his first obstetrical stint in the town, the two white nurses stared at him and left the room, with a black woman in labor on the table. He delivered the baby with the aid of a black attendant.

One evening, while he was talking on the telephone to a patient who needed his help, a white woman cut in on the party line, and demanded that he get off so she could speak. He told her he was a doctor talking to a patient. She replied: "Get off the phone, nigger." Perhaps an old-style Negro doctor would have responded differently, but the young Dr. Smith said: "Get off the phone yourself, you bitch."

He was arrested the next day, brought into court before his attorney even knew that the trial was going to take place, and sentenced to eight months on the chain gang for using obscene language to a white woman. In prison, facing the chain gang, he was offered release if he would leave town immediately. Dr. Otis Smith decided to leave, and the next day, the black people of Fort Valley were without their doctor.

In Atlanta, as all over the South, in the "quiet" years before the eruption of the sit-ins, there were individual acts, obscure, unrecorded, which kept the spirit of defiance alive. They

were often bitter experiences, but they nurtured the anger that would one day become a great force and change the South forever.

This is an excerpt from Chapter One of You Can't Be Neutral On A Moving Train by Howard Zinn. Reprinted by arrangement with Beacon Press, Boston.

(From The Progressive)

January 26, 1998

Lessons of Vietnam -- 30 years after the Tet offensive

by Howard Zinn

On Jan. 30, 1968, Daniel Berrigan, a Jesuit priest and poet teaching at Cornell and I, once an Air Force bombardier but then a historian teaching at Boston University, traveled (illegally) to North Vietnam. Our mission was to pick up the first three captured American pilots to be released by the North Vietnamese government and bring them home.

It was the time of the Tet offensive. We spent a week in Laos, waiting for the battered World War II plane that flew six times a month from South Vietnam to Cambodia to Laos to North Vietnam, to be able to leave the besieged airport in Saigon, South Vietnam's capital. Then, there was a week of intensive observation in North Vietnam, after which we flew back with the three airmen to Laos.

They returned to the Air Force. We returned to the anti-war movement -- Berrigan to a series of civil-disobedience protests that landed him in prison, I to a crowded schedule of teach-ins and demonstrations against the war.

Now, 30 years later, this is a good time to reflect on what we might learn from that longest of our wars -- a war that has brought agreement from both its opponents and some of its masterminds (including then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara) that it was a shameful episode in our nation's history.

To me, the war was a disaster, but not for McNamara's reason, that it could not be won. The dispatch of a huge army to a small country, the merciless bombing of both "enemy" and "friendly" territory, the deaths of perhaps 3 million people and the destruction of a beautiful land, the brutal massacres at My Lai and other places -- these were all morally indefensible, win or lose.

None of the reasons given to explain what we did -- stopping the spread of communism, defending an ally, fulfilling our "treaty obligations" -- could stand up under examination. And even if any element of that explanation had been true, would it have justified the mass slaughter of Asian peasants and the deaths of 58,000 Americans, to say nothing of all those left blind, maimed and paralyzed on both sides?

Most Americans finally concluded that the answer was no. Their basic sense of decency came to the fore when they learned what was going on. As writer Kurt Vonnegut has said, in responding to the claim that violence is basic to human nature, there is such a thing as original virtue, as well as original sin. The surveys of public opinion showed a steady growth of opposition to the war. In August 1965, 61 percent of the population approved of the American involvement in Vietnam. By May 1971 it was exactly reversed -- 61 percent thought our involvement was wrong. Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of the change was that veterans coming back from Vietnam organized to oppose the war.

What have we learned from the war that might be of use in our world today? I suggest the following as starters:

That with the indiscriminate nature of modern military technology, all wars are wars against civilians, and are therefore inherently immoral. This is true even when a war is considered "just" because it is fought against a tyrant or an aggressor. The "good war" against Saddam Hussein has succeeded, for example, in bringing about the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children, according to U.N. reports.

That no political leaders should be trusted when they urge their people to war. The North Vietnamese leaders asked enormous sacrifices of their people on behalf of national independence and socialism, both of which may be in jeopardy. The recently released tapes of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson show a terrifying common thread: They were willing to watch soldiers and civilians die in large numbers while they calculated the effect on their re-election of stopping those deaths by withdrawing from Vietnam.

Vietnam War veteran and novelist Tim O'Brien said it right: "If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue."

If we have not learned that, after reflecting on Vietnam 30 years later, but also on the history of modern warfare, we are poor learners.

Howard Zinn is the author of the best-selling "A People's History of the United States" (HarperCollins, 1995) and "The Zinn Reader" (Seven Stories Press, 1997).

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Columbus and Western Civilization

by Howard Zinn

George Orwell, who was a very wise man, wrote: "Who controls the past controls the future. And who controls the present controls the past." In other words, those who dominate our society are in a position to write our histories. And if they can do that, they can decide our futures. That is why the telling of the Columbus story is important.

Let me make a confession. I knew very little about Columbus until about 12 years ago, when I began writing my book *A People's History of the United States of America*. I had a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University--that is, I had the proper training of a historian, and what I knew about Columbus was pretty much what I had learned in elementary school.

But when I began to write my *People's History*, I decided I must learn about Columbus. I had already concluded that I did not want to write just another overview of American history-- I knew my point of view would be different. I was going to write about the United States from the point of view of those people who had been largely neglected in the history books: the indigenous Americans, the black slaves, the women, the working people, whether native or immigrant.

I wanted to tell the story of the nation's industrial progress from the standpoint, not of Rockefeller and Carnegie and Vanderbilt, but of the people who worked in their mines, their oil fields, who lost their limbs or their lives building the railroads.

I wanted to tell the story of wars, not from the standpoint of generals and presidents, not from the standpoint of those military heroes whose statues you see all over this country, but through the eyes of the GIs, or through the eyes of "the enemy". Yes, why not look at the Mexican War, that great military triumph of the United States, from the viewpoint of the Mexicans?

And so, how must I tell the story of Columbus? I concluded, I must see him through the eyes of people who were here when he arrived, the people he called "Indians" because he thought he was in Asia.

Well, they left no memoirs, no histories. Their culture was an oral culture, not a written one. Besides, they had been wiped out in a few decades after Columbus' arrival. So I was compelled to turn to the next best thing: The Spaniards who were on the scene at the time. First, Columbus himself. He had kept a journal.

His journal was revealing. He described the people who greeted him when landed in the Bahamas--they were Arawak Indians, some times called Tainos--and told how they waded out into the sea to greet him and his men, who must have looked and sounded like people from another world, and brought them gifts of various kinds. He described them as peaceable, gentle, and said: "They do not bear arms, and do not know for I showed them a sword--they took it by the edge and cut themselves."

Throughout his journal, over the next months, Columbus spoke of the native Americans with what seemed like admiring awe: "They are the best people in the world and above all the gentlest--without knowledge of what is evil--nor do they murder or steal...they love their neighbors as themselves and they have the sweetest talk in the world...always laughing."

And in a letter he wrote to one of his Spanish patrons, Columbus said: "They are very simple and honest and exceedingly liberal with all they have, none of them, in the midst of all this, in his journal, Columbus writes: "They would make fine servants. With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want."

Yes, this was how Columbus saw the Indians--not as hospitable hosts, but "servants," to "do whatever we want."

And what did Columbus want? This is not hard to determine. In the first two weeks of journal entries, there is one word that recurs seventy-five times: GOLD.

In the standard accounts of Columbus what is emphasized again and again is his religious feeling, his desire to convert the natives to Christianity, his reverence for the Bible. Yes, he was concerned about God. But more about Gold. Just one additional letter. His was a limited alphabet. Yes, all over the islands of Hispaniola, where he, his brothers, his men, spent most of their time, he erected crosses. But also, all over the island, they built gallows--340 of them by the year 1500. Crosses and gallows--that deadly historic juxtaposition.

In his quest for gold, Columbus, seeing bits of gold among the Indians, concluded there were huge amounts of it. He ordered the natives to find a certain amount of gold within a certain period of time. And if they did not meet their quota, their arms were hacked off. The others were to learn from this and deliver the gold.

Samuel Eliot Morison, the Harvard historian who was Columbus' admiring biographer, acknowledged this. He wrote: "Whoever thought up this ghastly system, Columbus was responsible for it, as the only means of producing gold for export.... Those who fled to the mountains were hunted with hounds, and those who escaped, starvation and disease took toll, while thousands of poor creatures in desperation took cassava poison to end their miseries."

Morison continues: "So the policy and acts of Columbus for which he alone was responsible began the depopulation of the terrestrial paradise that was Hispaniola in 1492. Of the original natives, estimated by modern ethnologist at 300,000 in number, one-third were killed off between 1494 and 1496. By 1508, an enumeration showed only 60,000 alive...in 1548 Oviedo (Morison is referring to Fernandex de Oviedo, the official Spanish historian of conquest) doubted whether 500 Indians remained.

But Columbus could not obtain enough gold to send home to impress the King and Queen and his

Spanish financiers, so he decided to send back to Spain another kind of loot: slaves. They rounded up about 1200 natives, selected 500, and these were sent, jammed together, on the voyage across the Atlantic. Two hundred died on the way, of cold, of sickness.

In Columbus' journal, an entry of September 1498 reads: "From here one might send, in the name of Holy Trinity, as many slaves as could be sold..."

What the Spaniards did to the Indians is told in horrifying detail by Bartolome de las Casas, whose writing give the most thorough account of the Spanish-Indian encounter. Las Casas was a Dominican priest who came to the New World a few years after Columbus, spent forty years on Hispaniola and nearby islands, and became the leading advocate in Spain for the rights of the natives. Las Casas, in his book *The Devastation of the Indies*, writes of Arawaks: "...of all the infinite universe of humanity, these people are the most guileless, the most devoid of wickedness and duplicity...yet into this sheepfold...there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravening beasts.... Their reason for killing and destroying... is that Christian's have an ultimate aim which is to acquire gold..."

The cruelties multiplied. Las Casas saw soldier stabbing Indians for sport, dashing babies' heads on rocks. And when the Indians resisted, the Spaniards hunted them down, equipped for killings with horses, armor plate, lances, pikes, rifles, crossbows, and vicious dogs. Indians who took things belonging to Spaniards--they were not accustomed to the concept of private ownership and gave freely of their own possessions--were beheaded, or burned at the stake.

Las Casas' testimony was corroborated by other eyewitnesses. A group of Dominican friars, addressing the Spanish monarchy in 1519, hoping for the Spanish government to intercede, told about unspeakable atrocities, children thrown to dogs to be devoured, new-born babies born to women prisoners flung into the jungle to die.

Forced labor in the mines and on the land led to much sickness and death. Many children died because their mothers, overworked and starved, had no milk for them. Las Casas, in Cuba, estimated that 7000 children died in three months.

The greatest toll was taken by sickness, because the Europeans brought with them disease against which the native had no immunity: typhoid, typhus, diphtheria, smallpox.

As in any military conquest, women came in for especially brutal treatment. One Italian nobleman named Cuneo recorder an early sexual encounter. The "Admiral" he refers to is Columbus, who, as part of his agreement with Spanish monarchy, insisted he be made an Admiral. Cueno wrote:

"...I captured a very beautiful Carib women, whom the said Lord Admiral gave to me and with whom...I conceived desire to take pleasure. I wanted to put my desire into execution but she did not want it and treated me with her finger nails in such manner that I wished I had never begun. But seeing that, I took a rope and thrashed her well.... Finally we came to

an agreement."

There is other evidence which adds up to a picture of widespread rape of native women. Samuel Eliot Morison: "In the Bahamas, Cuba and Hispaniola they found young beautiful women, who everywhere were naked, in most places accessible, and presumably complaisant." Who presumes this? Morison, and so many others.

Morison saw the conquest as so many writers after him have done, as one of the great romantic adventures of world history. He seemed to get carried away by what appeared to him a masculine conquest. He wrote:

"Never again may mortal men hope to recapture the amazement, the wonder, the delight of those October days in 1492, when the new world gracefully yielded her virginity to the conquering Castilians."

The language of Cueno ("we came to an agreement"), and of Morison ("gracefully yield") written almost five hundred years apart, surely suggests how persistent through modern history has been the mythology that rationalizes sexual brutality but seeing it as "complaisant."

So, I read Columbus' journal, I read Las Casas. I also read Hans Koning's pioneering work of our time-- Columbus: His Enterprise, which, at the time I wrote my People's History was the only contemporary account I could find which departed from the standard treatment.

When my book appeared, I began to get letters from all over the country about it. Here was a book of 600 pages, starting with Columbus, about one subject: Columbus. I could have interpreted this to mean, that since this was the very beginning of the book, that's all these people had read. But no, it seemed that the Columbus story was simply the part of my book that readers found most startling. Because ever American, from elementary school on, learns the Columbus story, and learns it the same way: "In Fourteen Hundred and Ninety Two, Columbus Sailed the Ocean Blue.

How many of you have heard of Tigard, Oregon? Well, I didn't until, about seven years ago, I began receiving, every semester, a bunch of letters, twenty or thirty, from students at one high school in Tigard, Oregon. It seems that their teacher was having them (knowing high schools, I almost said "forcing them") read my People's History. He was photocopying a number of the chapters and giving them to the students. And then he had them write letters to me, with comments and questions. Roughly half of them thanked me for giving them data which they had never seen before. The others were angry, or wondered how I got such information, and how I had arrived at such outrageous conclusions.

One high school student named Bethany wrote: "Out of all the articles that I've read of yours I found 'Columbus, The Indians, and Human Progress' the most shocking." Another student named Brian, seventeen years old, wrote: "An example of the confusion I feel after reading your article concerns Columbus coming to America.... According to you, it seems he came for women, slaves, and gold. You've

said you have gained a lot of this information from Columbus' own journal. I am wondering if there is such a journal, and if so, why isn't it part of our history. Why isn't any of what you say in my history book, or in history books people have access to each day."

I pondered this letter, It could be interpreted to mean that the writer was indignant that no other history books had told him what I did. Or, as more likely, he was saying: "I don't believe a word of what you wrote! You made this up!"

I am not surprised at such reactions. It tells something about the claims of pluralism and diversity in American culture, the pride in our "free society," that generation after generation has learned exactly the same set of facts about Columbus, and finished their education with the same glaring omissions.

A school teacher in Portland, Oregon named Bill Bigelow has undertaken a crusade to change the way the Columbus story is taught all over America. He tells of how he sometimes starts a new class. He goes over to a girls in the front row, and takes her purse. She says: "You took my purse!" Bigelow responds: "No, I discovered it."

Bill Bigelow did a study of recent children's books on Columbus. He found them remarkably alike in their repetition of the traditional point of view. A typical fifth grade biography of Columbus begins: "There once was a boy who loved the salty sea." Well! I can imagine a children's biography of Attila the Hun beginning with the sentence "There once was a boy who loved horses."

Another children's book in Bigelow's study, this time for second graders: "The King and queen looked at the gold and the Indians. They listened in wonder to Columbus' stories of adventure. Then they all went to church to pray and sing. Tears of joy filled Columbus' eyes."

I once spoke about Columbus to a workshop of school teachers, and one of them suggested that school children were too young to hear of the horrors recounted by Las Casas and others. Other disagreed, said children's stories include plenty of violence, but the perpetrators are witches and monsters and "bad people," not national heroes who have holidays named after them.

Some of the teachers made suggestions on how the truth could be told in a way that would not frighten children unnecessarily, but that would avoid the falsification of history taking place.

The arguments about children "not being ready to heard the truth does not account for the fact that in American society, when the children grow up, they still are not told the truth. As I said earlier, right up through graduate school I was not presented with the information that would counter the myths told to me in the early grades. And it is clear that my experience is typical, judging from the shocked reactions to my book that I have from readers of all ages.

If you look in an adult book, the Columbus Encyclopedia (my edition was put together in 1950, but all the relevant information was available then, including Morison's biography), there is a long entry on

Columbus (about 1,000 words) but you find no mention of the atrocities committed by him and his men.

In the 1986 edition of the Columbia History of the World, there are several mentions of Columbus, but nothing about what he did to the natives. Several pages are devoted to "Spain and Portugal in America," in which the treatment of the native population is presented as a matter of controversy, among the theologians at the time, and among historians today. You can get the flavor of this "balanced approach," containing a nugget of reality, by following passage from that History.

"The determination of the Crown and the Church to Christianize the Indians, the need for labor to exploit the new lands, and the attempts of some Spaniards to protect the Indians, resulted in a very remarkable complex of customs, laws, and institutions which even today leads historians to contradictory conclusions about Spanish rule in America.... Academic disputes flourish on this debatable and in a sense insoluble question, but there is no doubt that cruelty, overwork and disease resulted in an appalling depopulation. There were, according to recent estimates, about 25 million Indians in Mexico in 1519, slightly more than 1 million in 1605."

Despite this scholarly language---"contradictory conclusions...academic disputed...insoluble question"--- there is no real dispute about the facts of enslavement, forced labor, rape, murder, the taking of hostages, the ravages of disease carried from Europe, and the wiping out of huge numbers of native people. The only dispute is over how much emphasis is to be placed on these facts, and how they carry over into the issue of our time.

For instance, Samuel Eliot Morison does spend some time detailing the treatment of the natives by Columbus and his men, and uses the word "genocide" to describe the overall effect of the "discovery." But he buries this in a midst of long, admiring treatment of Columbus, and sums up his view in the concluding paragraphs of his popular book Christopher Columbus, Mariner, as follows:

"He had hid faults and his defects, but they were largely the defects of the qualities that made him great-- his indomitable will, his superb faith in God and in his own mission as the Christ-bearer to lands beyond the seas, his stubborn persistence despite neglect, poverty and discouragement. But there was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities-- his seamanship."

Yes, his seamanship!

Let me make myself clear. I am not interested in either denouncing or exalting Columbus. It is too late for that. We are not writing a letter of recommendation for him to decide his qualification for undertaking another voyage to another part of the universe. To me, the Columbus story is important for what it tells us about ourselves, about our time, about the decisions we make for our country, for the next century.

Why this great controversy today about Columbus and the celebration of the quincentennial? Why the

indignation of native Americans and others about the glorification of that conqueror? Why the heated defense of Columbus by others? The intensity of the debate can only be because it is not about 1492, it is about 1992.

We can get a clue to this if we look back a hundred years to 1892, the year of the quadricentennial. There were great celebrations in Chicago and New York. In New York there were five days of parades, fireworks, military marches, naval pageants, a million visitors to the city, a memorial statue unveiled at a corner of Central Park, now to be known as Columbus Circle. A celebratory meeting took place at Carnegie Hall, addressed by Chauncey DePew.

You might not know the name of Chauncey DePew, unless you recently looked at Gustavus Myers' classic work, *A History of the Great American Fortune*. In that book, Chauncey DePew is described as the front man for Cornelius Vanderbilt and his New York Central railroad. DePew traveled to Albany, the capital of New York State, which satchels of money and free railroad passes for members of the New York State Legislature, and came away with subsidies and land grants for the New York Central.

DePew saw the Columbus festivities as a celebration of wealth and prosperity--you might say "marks the wealth and the civilization of a great people...it marks the things that belong to their comfort and their ease, their pleasure and their luxuries...and their power."

We might know that at that time he said this, there was much suffering among the working poor of America, huddled in the city slums, their children sick and undernourished. The plight of people who worked on the land--which at this time was a considerable part of the population--was desperate, leading to the anger of the Farmers' Alliances and the rise of the People's (Populist) Party. And the following year, 1893 was a year of economic crisis and widespread misery.

DePew must have sensed, as he stood on the platform at Carnegie Hall, some murmurings of discontent at the smugness that accompanied that spirit of historical inquiry which doubts everything; that modern spirit which destroys all the illusions and all the heroes which have been the inspirations of patriotism through all the centuries.

So, to celebrate Columbus was to be patriotic. To doubt was to be unpatriotic. And what did "patriotism" mean to DePew? It meant the glorification of expansion and conquest--which Columbus represented and which America represented. It was just six years after his speech that the United States, expelling Spain from Cuba, began its own long occupation (sporadically military, continuously political and economic) of Cuba, took Puerto Rico and Hawaii, and began its bloody war against the Filipinos to take over their country.

That "patriotism" which was tied to the celebration of Columbus and the celebration of conquest, was reinforced in the Second World War by the emergence of the United States as the superpower, all the old European empires now in decline. At that time, Henry Luce, the powerful president-maker and multimillionaire, owner of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* (not just the publication, but the things!) wrote that

the twentieth century was turning into "American Century," in which the United States would have its way in the world.

George Bush, accepting the presidential nomination in 1988, said: "This has been called the American Century because in it we were the dominant force of good in the world... Now we are on the verge of a new century, and what country's name will it bear? I say it will be another American Century."

What arrogance! That the twenty-first century, when we should be getting away from the murderous jingoism of the century, should already be anticipated as an American century, or as any one nation's century. Bush must think of himself as a new Columbus, "discovering" and planting his nation's flag on new world, because he called for a U.S. colony on the moon early in the next century. And forecast a mission to Mars in the year 2019.

The "patriotism" that Chauncey DePew invoked in celebrating Columbus was profoundly tied to the notion of inferiority of the conquered peoples. Columbus' attacks on the Indians were justified by the status as sub-humans. The taking of Texas and much of Mexico by the United States just before the civil War was done with the same racist rationale. Sam Houston, the first governor of Texas, proclaimed: "The Anglo-Saxon race must pervade the whole southern extremity of the whole southern extremity of this vast continent. The Mexicans are no better than the Indians and I see no reasons why we should not take their land."

At the start of the twentieth century, the violence of the new American expansionism into the Caribbean and the Pacific was accepted because we were dealing with lesser beings.

In the year 1990, Chauncey DePew, now a U.S. Senator, spoke again in Carnegie Hall, this time to support Theodore Roosevelt's candidacy for vice-president. Celebrating the conquest of the Philippines as a beginning of the American penetration of China and more, he proclaimed: "The guns of Dewey in Manila Bay were heard across Asia and Africa, they echoed through the palace at Peking and brought to the Oriental mind a new potent force among western nations. We, in common with the countries of Europe, are striving to enter the limitless markets of the east.... These people respect nothing but power. I believe the Philippines will be enormous markets and sources of wealth."

Theodore Roosevelt, who appears endlessly on lists of our "great presidents," and whose face is one of the four colossal sculptures of American presidents (along with Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln) carved into Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, was "a crime against white civilization." In his book *The strenuous Live*, Roosevelt wrote:

"Of course our whole national history has been one of expansion...that the barbarians recede or are conquered...is due solely to the power of the mighty civilized races which have not lost the fighting instinct."

An army officer in the Philippines put it even more bluntly: "There is no use mincing words... We

exterminated the American Indians and I guess most of us are proud of it...and we must have no scruples about extermination this other race standing in the way of progress and enlightenment, if it is necessary..."

The official historian of the Indies in the early sixteenth century, Fernandes de Oviedo, did not deny what was done to natives by the conquistadors. He described "innumerable cruel deaths as countless as the stars." But this was acceptable, because "to use gunpowder against pagans is to offer incense to the Lord."

(One is reminded of President McKinley's decision to send the army and navy to take the Philippines, saying it was the duty of the United States to "Christianize and civilize" the Filipinos.)

Against las Casas' plea for mercy to the Indians, the theologian Juan Gines de Sepulveda declared: "How can we doubt that these people, so uncivilized, so barbaric, so contaminated with so many sins and obscenities, have been justly conquered."

Sepulveda in the year 1531 visited his former college in Spain and was outraged by seeing the students there protesting Spain's war against Turkey. The students were saying: "All war...is contrast to the Catholic religion."

This led him to write philosophical defense of the Spanish treatment of the Indians. He quoted Aristotle, who wrote in his Politics that some people were "slaves by nature," who "would be hunted down like wild beasts in order to bring them to the correct way of life."

Las Casas responded: "Let us send Aristotle packing, for we have in our favor the command of Christ: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The dehumanization of the "enemy" has been a necessary accompaniment to wars conquest. It is easier to explain atrocities if they are committed against infidels, or people of an inferior race. Slavery and racial segregation in the United States, and European imperialism in Asia and Africa, were justified in this way.

The bombings in Vietnamese villages by the United States, the search and destroy missions, the My Lai massacre, were all made palatable to their perpetrators by the idea that the victims were not human. They were "gooks" or "Communists," and deserved what they received.

In the Gulf War, the dehumanization of the Iraqis consisted of not recognizing their existence. We were not bombing women, children, not bombing and shelling ordinary Iraqi young men in the act of flight and surrender. We were acting against a Hitler-like monster, Saddam Hussein, although the people we were killing were the Iraqi victims of this monster. When General Colin Powell asked about Iraqi casualties he said that was "really not a matter I am terribly interested in."

The American people were led to accept the violence of the war in Iraq because the Iraqis were made invisible--because the United States only used "smart bombs." The major media ignored the enormous death toll in Iraq, ignored the report of the Harvard medical team that visited Iraq shortly after the war

and found that tens of thousands of Iraqi children were dying because of the bombing of the water supply and the resultant epidemic of disease.

The celebrations of Columbus are declared to be celebrations not just of his maritime exploits but of "progress," of his arrival in the Bahamas as the beginning of that much-praised five hundred years of "Western civilization." But those concepts need to be re-examined. When Gandhi was once asked what he thought about Western civilization, he replied: "It's a good idea."

The point is not to deny the benefits of "progress" and "civilization"--advances in technology, knowledge, science, health, education, and standards of living. But there is a question to be asked: progress yes, but at what human cost?

Is progress simply to be measured in the statistics of industrial and technological change, without regard to the consequences of that "progress" for human beings? Would we accept a Russian justification of Stalin's rule, including enormous toll in human suffering, on the ground that he made Russia a great industrial power?

I recall that in my high school classes in American history when we came to the period after the Civil War, roughly the years between that War and World War I, it was looked on as the Gilded Age, the period of the great Industrial Revolution, when the United States became an economic giant. I remember how thrilled we were to learn of the dramatic growth of the steel and oil industries, of the building of the great fortunes, of the criss-crossing of the country by the railroads.

We were not told of the human cost of this great industrial progress: how the huge production of cotton came from the labor of black slaves; how the textile industry was built up by the labor of young girls who went into the mills at twelve and died at twenty-five; how the railroads were constructed by Irish and Chinese immigrants who were literally worked to death, in the heat of summer and cold of winter; how working people, immigrants and native born, had to go out on strike and win the eight-hour day; how the children of the working-class, in the slums of the city, had to drink polluted water, and how they died early of malnutrition and disease. All this in the name of "progress."

And yes, there are huge benefits from industrialization, science, technology, medicine. But so far, in these five hundred years of Western civilization, of Western domination of the rest of the world, most of those benefits have gone to a small part of the human race. For billions of people in the Third World, they still face starvation, homelessness, disease, the early deaths of their children.

Did the Columbus expedition mark the transition from savagery to civilization? What of the Indian civilizations which had been built up over thousands of years before Columbus came? Las Casas and others marveled at the spirit of sharing and generosity which marked the Indians' societies, the communal building in which they lived, their aesthetic sensibilities, the egalitarianism among men and women.

The British colonists in North America were startled at the democracy of the Iroquois--the tribes who

occupied much of New York and Pennsylvania. The American historian Gary Nash described Iroquois culture: "No laws and ordinances, sheriffs and constables, judges and juries, or courts or jails--the apparatus of authority in European societies--were to be found in the northeast woodlands prior to European arrival. Yet boundaries of acceptable behavior were firmly set. Through priding themselves on the autonomous individual, the Iroquois maintained a strict sense of right and wrong..."

In the course of westward expansion, the new nation, the United States, stole the Indians' land, killed them when they resisted, destroyed their sources of food and shelter, pushed them into smaller and smaller sections of the country, went about the systematic destruction of Indian society. At the time of the Black Hawk War in the 1830s--one of hundreds of wars waged against the Indians of North America--Lewis Cas, the governor of the Michigan territory, referred to his taking of millions of acres from the Indians as "the progress of civilization." He said: "A barbarous people cannot live in contact with a civilized community."

We get the sense of how "barbarous" these Indians were when, in the 1880s, Congress prepared legislation to break up the communal lands in which Indians still lived, into small private possessions, what today some people would call admiringly, "privatization." Senator Henry Dawes, author of this legislation, "visited the Cherokee Nation, and described what he found: "...there was not a family in the whole nation that had not a home of it's own. There was not a pauper in the nation, and the nation did not owe a dollar...it built its own schools and its hospitals. Yet they defect of the system was apparent. They have got as far as they can go, because they own their land in common...there is not enterprise to make you home any better than that of your neighbors. There is no selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization."

That selfishness at the bottom of "civilization" is connected with what drove Columbus on, and what is much-praised today, as American political leaders and the media speak about how the West will do great favor to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe by introducing "the profit motive"

Granted, there may be certain ways in which the incentive of profit may be helpful in economic development, but that incentive, in the history of the "free market" in the West, has had horrendous consequences. It led, throughout the centuries of "Western Civilization," to a ruthless imperialism.

In Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, written in the 1890s, after some time spent in the Upper Congo of Africa, he describes the work done by black men in chains on behalf of white men who were interested only in ivory. He writes: "The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it... To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe."

The uncontrolled drive for profit has led to enormous human suffering, exploitation, slavery, cruelty in the workplace, dangerous working conditions, child labor, the destruction of land and forests, the poisoning of the air we breath, the water we drink, the food we eat.

In his 1933 autobiography, Chief Luther Standing Bear wrote: "True the white man brought great change. But the varied fruits of his civilization, though highly colored and inviting, are sickening and deadening. And if it be the part of civilization to maim, rob, and thwart, then what is progress? I am going to venture that the man who sat on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning, accepting the kinship of all creatures, and acknowledging unity with the universe of things, was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization."

The present threats to the environment have caused a reconsideration among scientists and other scholars of the value of "progress" as it has been so far defined. In December in 1991, there was a two-day conference at MIT, in which fifty scientists and historians discussed the idea of progress in Western thought. Here is part of the report on that conference in the Boston Globe.

"In a world where resources are being squandered and the environment poisoned, participants in a MIT conference said yesterday, it is time for people to start thinking in terms of sustainability and stability rather than growth and progress... Verbal fireworks and heated exchanges that sometimes grew into shouting matched punctuated the discussions among scholars of economics, religion, medicine, history and the sciences."

One of the participants, historian Leo Marx, said the working toward a more harmonious coexistence with nature is itself a kind of progress, but different than the traditional one in which people try to overpower nature.

So, to look back at Columbus in a critical way is to raise all these question about progress, civilization, our relations with one another, our relationship to the natural world.

You probably have heard--as I have, quite often--that it is wrong for us to treat Columbus story the way we do. What they say is: "You are taking Columbus out of context, looking at him with the eyes of the twentieth century. You must not superimpose the values of our time on events that took place 500 years ago. That is ahistorical."

I find this argument strange. Does it mean that cruelty, exploitation, greed, enslavement, violence against helpless people, are values peculiar to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? And that we in the twentieth century, are beyond that? Are there not certain human values which are common to the age of Columbus and to our own? Proof of this is that both in his time and in ours there were enslavers and exploiters; in both his time and ours there were those who protested against this, on behalf of human rights.

It is encouraging that, in this year of the quincentennial, there is a wave of protest, unprecedented in all the years of celebration of Columbus, all over the United States, and throughout the Americas. Much of this protest is being led by Indians, who are organizing conferences and meetings, who are engaging in acts of civil disobedience, who are trying to educated the American public about what really happened five hundred years ago, and what it tells us about the issues of our time.

There is a new generation of teachers in our schools, and many of them are insisting that the Columbus story be told from the point of view of the native Americans. In the fall of 1990 I was telephoned from Los Angeles by a talk-show host who wanted to discuss Columbus. Also on the line was a high school student in that city, named Blake Lindsey, who had insisted on addressing the Los Angeles City council to oppose the traditional Columbus Day celebrations. She told them of the genocide committed by the Spaniards against the Arawak Indians. The city council did not respond.

Someone called in on that talk show, introducing herself as a woman who had emigrated from Haiti. She said: "That girl is right--we have no Indians left--in our last uprising against government the people knocked down the statue of Columbus and now it is in the basement of the city hall in Port-au-Prince." The caller finished by saying: "Why don't we build statues for the aborigines?"

Despite the textbooks still in use, more teachers are questioning, more students are questioning. Bill Begelow reports on the reactions of his students after he introduces them to reading material which contradicts the traditional histories. One student wrote: "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.... That story is about as complete as Swiss cheese."

Another wrote a critique of her American history textbook to the publisher, Allyn and Bacon, pointing to many important omissions in that text. She said: "I'll just pick one topic to keep it simple. How about Columbus?"

Another student: "It seemed to me as if the publishers had just printed up some glory story that was supposed to make us feel more patriotic about our country.... They want us to look at our country as great and powerful and forever right.... We're being fed lies."

When students discover that in the very first history they learn--the story of Columbus--they have not been told the whole truth, it leads to a healthy skepticism about all of their historical education. One of Begelow's students, named Rebecca, wrote: "What does it matter who discovered America, really?... But the thought that I've been lied to all my life about this, and who knows what else, really makes me angry."

This new critical thinking in the schools and in the colleges seems to frighten those who have glorified what is called "Western civilization." Reagan's Secretary of Education, William Bennett, in his 1984 "Report on the Humanities in Higher Education," writes of Western civilization as "our common culture...its highest ideas and aspirations."

One of the most ferocious defenders of Western civilization is philosopher Allan Bloom, who wrote *The Closing of the American Mind* in the spirit of panic at what the social movements of the Sixties had done to change the educational atmosphere of American universities. He was frightened by the students demonstrations he saw at Cornell, which he saw as a terrible interference with education.

Bloom's idea of education was a small group of very smart students, in an elite university, studying Plato and Aristotle, and refusing to be disturbed in their contemplation by the noise outside their windows of

students rallying against racism or protesting against the war in Vietnam.

As I read him, I was reminded of some of my colleagues, when I was teaching in a black college in Atlanta, Georgia at a time of the civil rights movement, who shook their heads in disapproval when our students left their classes to sit-in, to be arrested, in protest against racial segregation. These students were neglecting their education, they said. In fact, these students were learning more in a few weeks of participation in social struggle than they could learn in a year of going to class.

What a narrow, stunted understanding of education! It corresponds perfectly to the view of history which insists that Western civilization is the summit of human achievement. As Bloom wrote in his book: "...only in the Western nations, i.e. those influenced by Greek philosophy, is there some willingness to doubt the identification of the good with one's own way." Well, if this willingness to doubt the hallmark of Greek philosophy, then Bloom and his fellow idolizers of Western civilization are ignorant of that philosophy.

If Western civilization is considered the high point of human progress, the United States is the best representative of this civilization. Here is Allen Bloom again: "This is the American moment in the world history.... America tells one story: the unbroken, ineluctable progress of freedom and equality. From its first settlers and its political foundings on, there has been no dispute that freedom and equality are the essence of justice for us..."

Yes, tell black people and native Americans and the homeless and those without health insurance, and all the victims abroad of American foreign policy that America "tells one story...freedom and equality."

Western civilization is complex. It represents many things, some decent, some horrifying. We would have to pause before celebrating it uncritically when we note that David Duke, the Louisiana Ku Klux Klan member and ex-Nazi says that people have got him wrong. "The common strain in my thinking," he told a reporter, "is my love for Western civilization."

We who insist on looking critically at the Columbus story, and indeed at everything in our traditional histories, are often accused of insisting on Political Correctness, to the detriment of free speech. I find this odd. It is the guardian of the old stories, the orthodox histories, who refuse to widen the spectrum of ideas, to take in new books, new approaches, new information, new views of history. They, who claim to believe in "free markets" do not believe in a free marketplace of ideas, any more than they believe in a free marketplace of goods and services. In both material goods and in ideas, they want the market dominated by those who have always held power and wealth. They worry that if new ideas enter the marketplace, people may begin to rethink the social arrangements that have given us so much sufferings, so much violence, so much war these last five hundred years of "civilization."

Of course we had all that before Columbus arrived in this hemisphere, but resources were puny, people were isolated from one another, and the possibilities were narrow. In recent centuries, however, the world has become amazingly small, our possibilities for creating a decent society have enormously magnified,

and so the excuses for hunger, ignorance, violence, racism, no longer exist.

In rethinking our history, we are not just looking at the past, but at the present, and trying to look at it from a point of view of those who have been left out of the benefits of so-called civilizations. It is a simple but profoundly important thing we are trying to accomplish, to look at the world from other points of view. We need to do that, as we come into the next century, if we want this coming century to be different, if we want it to be, not an American century, or a Western century, or a white century, or a male century, or any nation's, any group's century, but a century for the human race.

Please contact HowardZinnFans@yahoo.com, with any compliments, questions, or concerns about this site.

***The Zinn Reader: Writings on Civil Disobedience and Democracy*
(New York, 1997): 499-508.**

The Uses of Scholarship

Howard Zinn

[author of an anti-establishment *People's History of the United States* and numerous essays of social criticism and commentary over the last thirty years. Of this piece Zinn writes]: *We were sad to hear of the death in 1996 of Mario Savio, leader in the Sixties of the "Free Speech Movement" at the University of California in Berkeley. It reminded us that the movements of that decade provoked a re-examination of the role of the university and the position of the scholar in a world needing radical change. The following essay appeared in the **Saturday Review** of October 18, 1969, under the title "The Case for Radical Change." It appeared also as the opening chapter in my book **The Politics of History**, "Knowledge As A Form Of Power."*

It is time that we scholars began to earn our keep in this world. Thanks to a gullible public, we have been honored, flattered, even paid, for producing the largest number of inconsequential studies in the history of civilization: tens of thousands of articles, books, monographs, millions of term papers; enough lectures to deafen the gods. Like politicians we have thrived on public innocence, with this difference: the politicians are paid

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for caring, when they really don't; we are paid for not caring, when we really do.

Occasionally, we emerge from the library stacks to sign a petition or deliver a speech, then return to produce even more of in consequence. We are accustomed to keeping our social commitment extracurricular and our scholarly work safely neutral. We were the first to learn that awe and honor greet those who have flown off into space while people suffer on earth.

If this accusation seems harsh, read the titles of doctoral dissertations published in the past twenty years, and the pages of the leading scholarly journals for the same period, alongside the lists of war dead, the figures on per capita income in Latin America, the autobiography of Malcolm X. We publish while others perish.

The gap between the products of scholarly activity and the needs of a troubled world could be borne with some equanimity as long as the nation seemed to be solving its problems. And for most of our history, this seemed to be the case. We had a race question, but we "solved" it: by a war to end slavery, and by papering over the continued degradation of the black population with laws and rhetoric. Wealth was not distributed equitably, but the New Deal, and then war orders, kept that problem under control--or at least, out of sight. There was turmoil in the world, but we were always at the periphery; the European imperial powers did the nasty work, while we nibbled at the edges of their empires (except in Latin America where our firm control was disguised by a fatherly sounding Monroe Doctrine, and the pose of a Good Neighbor).

None of those solutions is working anymore. The Black Power revolt, the festering of cities beyond our control, the rebellion of students against the Vietnam war and the draft--all indicate that the United States has run out of time, space, and rhetoric. The liberal artifacts that represented our farthest reaches toward reform--the Fourteenth Amendment, New Deal welfare legislation, the U.N. Charter--are not enough. Revolutionary changes are required in social policy.

The trouble is, we don't know how to make such a revolution. There is no precedent for it in an advanced industrial society where power and wealth are highly concentrated in government, corporations, and the military, while the rest of us have pieces of that fragmented power political scientists are pleased to call "pluralism." We have voices, and even

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votes, but not the means--more crassly, the power--to turn either domestic or foreign policy in completely new directions.

That is why the knowledge industry (the universities, colleges, schools, representing directly \$65-billion of the national spending each year) is so important. Knowledge is a form of power. True, force is the most direct form of power, and government has a monopoly on that (as Max Weber once pointed out). But in modern times, when social control rests on "the consent of the governed," force is kept in abeyance for emergencies, and everyday control is exercised by a set of rules, a fabric of values passed on from one generation to another by the priests and the teachers of the society. What we call the rise of democracy in the world means that force is replaced by deception (a blunt way of saying "education") as the chief method for keeping society as it is.

This makes knowledge important, because although it cannot confront force directly, it can counteract the deception that makes the government's force legitimate. And the knowledge industry, which directly reaches seven million young people in colleges and universities, thus becomes a vital and sensitive locus of power. That power can be used, as it was traditionally, to maintain the *status quo*, or (as is being demanded by the student rebels) to change it.

Those who command more obvious forms of power (political control and wealth) try also to

commandeer knowledge. Industry entices some of the most agile minds for executive posts in business. Government lures others for more glamorous special jobs: physicists to work on H-bombs; biologists to work on what we might call, for want of a better name, the field of communicable disease; chemists to work on nerve gas (like that which killed 6,000 sheep in Utah); political scientists to work on counter-insurgency warfare; historians to sit in a room in the White House and wait for a phone call to let them know when history is being made, so they may record it. And sometimes one's field doesn't matter. War is interdisciplinary.

Most knowledge is not directly bought, however. It can also serve the purpose of social stability in another way--by being squandered on trivia. Thus, the university becomes a playpen in which the society invites its favored children to play--and gives them toys and prizes to keep them out of trouble. For instance, we might note an article in a leading journal of political science not long ago, dealing with the effects of *Hurricane*

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Betsy on the mayoralty election in New Orleans. Or, a team of social psychologists (armed with a fat government grant) may move right into the ghetto (surely the scholar is getting relevant here) and discover two important facts from its extensive, sophisticated research: that black people in the ghetto are poor, and that they have family difficulties.

I am touching a sensitive nerve in the academy now: am I trying to obliterate all scholarship except the immediately relevant? No, it is a matter of proportion. The erection of new skyscraper office buildings is not offensive in itself, but it becomes lamentable alongside the continued existence of ghetto slums. It was not wrong for the Association of Asian Studies at its last annual meeting to discuss some problems of the Ming Dynasty and a battery of similarly remote topics, but no session of the dozens at the meeting dealt with Vietnam.

Aside from trivial or esoteric inquiry, knowledge is also dissipated on pretentious conceptualizing in the social sciences. A catch phrase can become a stimulus for endless academic discussion, and for the proliferation of debates that go nowhere into the real world, only round and round in ever smaller circles of scholarly discourse. Schemes and models and systems are invented that have the air of profundity and that advance careers, but hardly anything else.

We should not be surprised then at the volatile demonstrations for black studies programs, or for the creation of new student-run courses based on radical critiques of American society. Students demanding relevance in scholarship have been joined by professors dissenting at the annual ceremonials called scholarly meetings: at the American Philosophical Association, a resolution denouncing U.S. policy in Vietnam; at the American Political Science Association, a new caucus making radical changes in the program; at the American Historical Association, a successful campaign removing the 1968 meeting from Chicago to protest Mayor Daley's hooliganism; at the Modern Language Association, the election of a young, radical English teacher as president.

Still we are troubled, because the new urgency to use our heads for good purposes gets tangled in a cluster of beliefs so stuck, fungus-like, to the scholar, that even the most activist of us cannot cleanly extricate ourselves. These beliefs are roughly expressed by the phrases "disinterested scholarship," "dispassionate learning," "objective study," "scientific method"--all adding up to the fear that using our intelligence to further

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our moral ends is somehow improper. And so we mostly remain subservient to the beliefs of the profession although they violate our deepest feelings as human beings, although we suspect that the traditional neutrality of the scholar is a disservice to the very ideals we teach about as history, and a betrayal of the victims of an unneutral world.

It may, therefore, be worthwhile to examine the arguments for "disinterested, neutral, scientific, objective" scholarship. If there is to be a revolution in the uses of knowledge to correspond to the revolution in society, it will have to begin by challenging the rules that sustain the wasting of knowledge. Let me cite a number of them, and argue briefly for new approaches.

Rule 1: *Carry on "disinterested scholarship."* (In one hour's reading some weeks ago I came across three such exhortations, using just that phrase: in an essay by Walter Lippmann; in the Columbia University Commencement Address of Richard Hofstadter; in an article by Daniel Bell, appearing, ironically in a magazine called *The Public Interest*.) The call is naive, because there are powerful interests already at work in the academy, with varying degrees of self-consciousness.

There is the Establishment of political power and corporate wealth, whose interest is that the universities produce people who will fit into existing niches in the social structure rather than try to change the structure. We always knew our educational system "socialized" people, but we never worried about this, because we assumed our social norms were worth perpetuating. Now, and rightly, we are beginning to doubt this. There is the interest of the educational bureaucracy in maintaining itself: its endowment, its buildings, its positions (both honorific and material), its steady growth along orthodox lines. These larger interests are internalized in the motivations of the scholar: promotion, tenure, higher salaries, prestige--all of which are best secured by innovating in prescribed directions.

All of these interests operate, not through any conspiratorial decision but through the mechanism of a well-oiled system, just as the irrationality of the economic system operates not through any devilish plot but through the mechanism of the profit motive and the market, and as the same kinds of political decisions reproduce themselves in Congress year after year.

No one *intends* exactly what happens. They just follow the normal rules of the game. Similarly with education; hence the need to

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challenge these rules that quietly lead the scholar toward trivia, pretentiousness, orotundity, and the production of objects: books, degrees, buildings, research projects, dead knowledge. (Emerson is still right: "*Things* are in the saddle, and ride mankind.")

There is no question then of a "disinterested" university, only a question about what kinds of interests the university will serve. There are fundamental humanistic interests--above any particular class, party, nation, ideology--that I believe the university should consciously serve. I assume this is what we mean when we speak (however we act) of fostering certain "values" in education.

The university should unashamedly declare that its interest is in eliminating war, poverty, race and national hatred, governmental restrictions on individual freedom, and in fostering a spirit of cooperation and concern in the generation growing up. It should *not* serve the interests of particular nations or parties or religions or political dogmas. Ironically, the university has often served narrow governmental, military, or business interests, and yet withheld support from larger, transcendental values, on the ground that it needed to maintain neutrality.

Rule 2: *Be objective*. The myth of "objectivity" in teaching and in scholarship is based on a common confusion. If to be objective is to be scrupulously careful about reporting accurately what one sees, then of course this is laudable. But accuracy is only a prerequisite. Whether a metalsmith uses reliable measuring instruments is a prerequisite for doing good work, but does not answer the crucial question: will he now forge a sword or a plowshare with his instruments? That the metalsmith has determined in advance that he prefers a plowshare does not require him to distort his measurements. That the scholar has decided he prefers peace to war does not require him to distort his facts.

Too many scholars abjure a starting set of values, because they fail to make the proper distinction between an ultimate set of values and the instruments needed to obtain them. The values may well be subjective (derived from human needs); but the instruments must be objective (accurate). Our values should determine the questions we ask in scholarly inquiry, but not the answers.

Rule 3: *Stick to your discipline*. Specialization has become as absurdly extreme in the educational world as in the medical world. One no longer is a specialist in American government, but in Congress, or the

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Presidency, or pressure groups: a historian is a "colonialist" or an "early national period" man. This is natural when education is divorced from the promotion of values. To work on a real problem (such as how to eliminate poverty in a nation producing \$800-billion worth of wealth each year), one would have to follow that problem across many disciplinary lines without qualm, dealing with historical materials, economic theories, political problems. Specialization insures that one cannot follow a problem through from start to finish. It ensures the functioning in the academy of the system's dictum: divide and rule.

Another kind of scholarly segregation serves to keep those in the university from dealing with urgent social problems: that which divorces fact from theory. We learn the ideas of the great philosophers and poets in one part of our educational experience. In the other part, we prepare to take our place in the real occupational world. In political science, for instance, a political theorist discusses transcendental visions of the good society; someone else presents factual descriptions of present governments. But no one deals with both the *is* and the *ought*; if they did, they would have to deal with how to get from here to there, from the present reality to the poetic vision. Note how little work is done in political science on the tactics of social change. Both student and teacher deal with theory and reality in separate courses; the compartmentalization safely neutralizes them.

It is time to recall Rousseau: "We have physicists, geometricians, chemists, astronomers, poets, musicians, and painters in plenty, but we have no longer a citizen among us."

Rule 4: *To be 'Scientific' requires neutrality.* This is a misconception of how science works, both in fact and in purpose. Scientists *do* have values, but they decided on these so long ago that we have forgotten them; they aim to save human life, to extend human control over the environment for the happiness of men and women. This is the tacit assumption behind scientific work, and a physiologist would be astonished if someone suggested that he starts from a neutral position as regards life or death, health or sickness. Somehow the social scientists have not yet got around to accepting openly that their aim is to keep people alive, to distribute equitably the resources of the earth, to widen the areas of human freedom, and therefore to direct their efforts toward these ends.

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The claim that social science is "different," because its instruments are tainted with subjectivity, ignores the new discoveries in the hard sciences: that the very fact of observation distorts the measurement of the physicist, and what he sees depends on his position in space. The physical sciences do not talk about certainty anymore, but rather about "probability"; while the probabilities may be higher for them than in the social sciences, both fields are dealing with elusive data.

Rule 5: *A scholar must, in order to be "rational," avoid "emotionalism."* (I know one man in Asian studies who was told by university administrators that the articles he wrote upon his return from Vietnam were too emotional.") True, emotion can distort. But it can also enhance. If one of the functions of the scholar is accurate description, then it is impossible to describe a war both unemotionally and accurately at the same time. And if the special competence of the mind is in enabling us to perceive what is outside our own limited experience, that competence is furthered, that perception sharpened, by emotion. Even a large dose of emotionalism in the description of slavery would merely *begin* to convey accurately to a white college student what slavery was like for the black man.

Thus, exactly from the standpoint of what intellect is supposed to do for us--to extend the boundaries of our understanding the "cool, rational, unemotional" approach fails. For too long, white Americans were emotionally separated from what the Negro suffered in this country by cold, and therefore inadequate,

historical description. War and violence, divested of their brutality by the prosaic quality of the printed page, became tolerable to the young. (True, the poem and the novel were read in the English classes, but these were neatly separated from the history and government classes.) Reason, to be accurate, must be supplemented by emotion, as Reinhold Niebuhr once reminded us.

Refusing, then, to let ourselves be bound by traditional notions of disinterestedness, objectivity, scientific procedure, rationality--what kinds of work can scholars do, in deliberate unneutral pursuit of a more livable world? Am I urging Orwellian control of scholarly activities? Not at all. I am, rather suggesting that scholars, on their own, reconsider the rules by which they have worked, and begin to turn their intellectual energies to the urgent problems of our time.

Specifically, we might use our scholarly time and energy to sharpen the perceptions of the complacent by exposing those facts that any

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society tends to hide about itself. the facts about wealth and poverty, about tyranny in both communist and capitalist states, about lies told by politicians, the mass media, the church, popular leaders. We need to expose fallacious logic, spurious analogies, deceptive slogans, and those intoxicating symbols that drive people to murder (the flag, communism, capitalism, freedom). We need to dig beneath the abstractions so our fellow citizens can make judgments on the particular realities beneath political rhetoric. We need to expose inconsistencies and double standards. In short, we need to become the critics of the culture, rather than its apologists and perpetuators.

The university is especially gifted for such a task. Although obviously not remote from the pressures of business and military and politicians, it has just that margin of leeway, just that tradition of truth-telling (however violated in practice) that can enable it to become a spokesman for change.

This will require holding up before society forgotten visions, lost utopias, unfulfilled dreams--badly needed in this age of cynicism. Those outside the university who might act for change are deterred by pessimism. A bit of historical perspective, some recapitulation of the experience of social movements in other times, other places, while not wholly cheering, can at least suggest possibilities.

Along with inspirational visions, we will need specific schemes for accomplishing important purposes, which can then be laid before the groups that can use them. Let the economists work out a plan for free food, instead of advising the Federal Reserve Board on interest rates. Let the political scientists work out insurgency tactics for the poor, rather than counter-insurgency tactics for the military. Let the historians instruct us or inspire us, from the data of the past, rather than amusing us, boring us, or deceiving us. Let the scientists figure out and lay before the public plans on how to make autos safe, cities beautiful, air pure. Let all social scientists work on modes of change instead of merely describing the world that is, so that we can make the necessary revolutionary alterations with the least disorder.

I am not sure what a revolution in the academy will look like, any more than I know what a revolution in the society will look like. I doubt that it will take the form of some great cataclysmic event. More likely, it will be a process, with periods of tumult and of quiet, in which we will,

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here and there, by ones and twos and tens, create pockets of concern inside old institutions, transforming them from within. There is no great day of reckoning to work toward. Rather, we must *begin* now to liberate those patches of ground on which we stand--to "vote" for a new world (as Thoreau suggested) with our whole selves all the time, rather than moments carefully selected by others.

Thus, we will be acting out the beliefs that always moved us humans but rarely as scholars. To do that, we will need to defy the professional mythology that has kept us on the tracks of custom, our eyes averted (except for moments of charity) from the cruelty on all sides. We will be taking seriously for the first time the words of the great poets and philosophers whom we love to quote but not to emulate. We will be doing this, not in the interest of the rich and powerful, or in behalf of our own careers, but for those who have never had a chance to read poetry or study philosophy, who so far have had to strive alone just to stay warm in winter, to stay alive through the calls for war.

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Introduction to Law & Order: A chapter on Civil Disobedience

from Howard Zinn's *Declarations of Independence*

In 1978 I was teaching a class called "Law and Justice in America," and on the first day I handed out the course outline. At the end of the hour one of the students came up to the desk. He was a little older than the others. He said, "I notice in your course outline you will be discussing the case of U.S vs. O'Brien. When we come to that I would like to say something about it."

I was a bit surprised, but glad that a student would take such initiative.

I said, "Sure. What's your name?"

He said, "O'Brien. David O'Brien."

It was, indeed, his case. On the morning of March 31, 1966, while American troops were pouring into Vietnam and U.S. planes were bombing day and night, David O'Brien and three friends climbed the steps of the courthouse in South Boston where they lived - a mostly Irish, working-class neighborhood - held up their draft registration cards before a crowd that had assembled, and set the cards afire.

According to Chief Justice Earl Warren, who rendered the Supreme Court decision in the case: "Immediately after the burning, members of the crowd began attacking O'Brien," and he was ushered to safety by an FBI agent. As O'Brien told the story to my class, FBI agents pulled him into the courthouse, threw him into a closet, and gave him a few blows as they arrested him.

Chief Justice Warren's decision said, "O'Brien stated to FBI agents that he had burned his registration certificate because of his beliefs, knowing that he was violating federal law." His intention was clear. He wanted to express to the community his strong feelings about the war in Vietnam, trying to call attention, by a dramatic act, to the mass killing our government was engaged in there. The burning of his draft card would get special attention precisely because it was against the law, and so he would risk imprisonment to make his statement.

O'Brien claimed in court that his act, although in violation of the draft law, was protected by the free speech provision of the Constitution. But the Supreme Court decided that the government's need to regulate the draft overcame his right to free expression, and he went to prison.

O'Brien had engaged in an act of civil disobedience - the deliberate violation of a law for a social purpose. To violate a law for individual gain, for a private purpose, is an ordinary criminal act; it is not

civil disobedience. Some acts fall in both categories, as in the case of a mother stealing bread to feed her children, or neighbors stopping the eviction of a family that hadn't been able to pay the rent. Although limited to one family's need, they carry a larger message to the society about its failures.

In either instance, the law is being disobeyed, which sets up strong emotional currents in a population that has been taught obedience from childhood.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Great Silence

by Howard Zinn

excerpted from the book

Howard Zinn on History

Seven Stories Press, 2000, paper



As the presidential race for the year 2000 got under way, it became clear that all the candidates, Democrat and Republican, were ignoring those aspects of American policy which had the most consequences for the people of the world-war, militarism, and what the World Bank called a "silent genocide," the deaths by malnutrition and sickness of millions of children.

Every day, as the soggy rhetoric of the presidential candidates accumulates into an enormous pile of solid waste, we see more and more evidence of the failure of the American political system. The candidates for the job of leader of the most powerful country in the world have nothing important to say. On domestic issues, they offer

platitudes about health care and social security and taxes which are meaningless given the record of both political parties. And on foreign policy, utter silence.

That silence is what I want to talk about.

In domestic policy, there are enough slight differences among the candidates to make some liberals and progressives, desperate for hopeful signs, seize upon the most feeble of promises. No candidate, Democrat or Republican, as they propose lame and wobbly steps towards taking care of some fraction of the forty million uninsured, suggests universal, non-profit, government-guaranteed health care. None of them, muttering unintelligibly about one or another tax plan, talk about taxing the wealth and income of the super-rich in such a way as to make several trillion dollars available for housing, health, jobs, education.

But in foreign and military policy, there are not even mutterings about change. All the candidates vie with one another in presenting themselves as supporters of the military, desirous of building our military strength. Here is Mr. Universe, bulging ridiculously with muscles useless for nothing except winning contests and bullying the other kids on the block (it is important to be #1, important to maintain "credibility"), promising to buy more body-building equipment, and asking all of us to pay for it.

How can we, if we have any self-respect, support candidates- Republican or Democrat- who have nothing to say about the fact that the United States, with 4% of the world's population, consumes 25% of its wealth, who have nothing to say about our obligation to the other 96%, many of whom are suffering as a result of American policy?

What is that obligation? First, to follow the principle of the physicians' Hippocratic Oath, "Do No Harm." Instead, we are doing much harm. By depriving the people of Iraq of food, medicine, and vital equipment, we are causing them enormous suffering, under the pretense of "sending a message" to Saddam Hussein. It appears we have no other way to send a message but through killing people. How does this differ, except in scale, from the killings done by terrorists around the world, who also defend their acts by their need to "send a message."

Similarly with the Cuban embargo. We pretend we care about "democracy" in Cuba, we who have supported dictatorship there and all over Latin America for a hundred years. Truth is, we cannot bear the thought that Castro for forty years has defied us, refused the homage-its material form being part of the world capitalist club-to which we are accustomed in this hemisphere. And there are precious votes in Florida, more precious than any possible deprivation for the children of Cuba.

Which candidate, Democrat or Republican, has had the decency to speak out on this?

What meaning has the phrase "human rights" if people are denied the necessities of life?

Which of them has said a word about our obscene possession of thousands of nuclear weapons-while Washington goes into hysterics over the possibility that some country in the Middle East may some day have one nuclear bomb? None of them has the courage to say what common sense tells us, and what someone so expert on military issues and so tied to the Establishment as Paul Nitze (an ambassador-at-large in the Reagan administration) has publicly said: "I see no compelling reason why we should not unilaterally get rid of our nuclear weapons....It is the presence of nuclear weapons that threatens our existence."

While the front pages report the latest solemn pronouncements of the candidates, claiming to care about the well-being of Americans, the inside pages report the brutal Russian assault on Chechnya, with not a word from these candidates about the well-being of men, women, and children huddled in the basements of Grozny, awaiting the next wave of bombings.

There have been a few lame expressions of protest from the Clinton administration, but it is careful not to offend the Russian leaders, and so last October, The Toronto Sun reported: "In Moscow, standing next to her beaming Russian hosts, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright proclaimed 'we are opposed to terrorism,' meaning Islamic rebels in the Caucasus fighting Russian rule." We can't forget that Clinton supported the Russian war on Chechnya from 1994 to 1996, going so far (he does get carried away) as to compare Chechnya to the Confederacy of the Civil War, which had to be put down for the sake of the larger nation. Yeltsin as Lincoln-that does seem a bit of a stretch.

Is it possible that the various candidates, all supported by huge corporate wealth (it is expected that three billion dollars will be spent for the elections of the year 2000), do not dare challenge a foreign policy whose chief motivation is not human rights but business profit? Behind the coldness to the people of Chechnya-there is the crass matter of oil in that part of the world.

Last November, Stephen Kinzer of The New York Times reported from Istanbul:

"Four nations in the Caspian Sea region took a giant step today toward embracing one of President Clinton's cherished foreign policy projects, a pipeline that would assure Western control over the potentially vast oil and natural gas reserves...and give the United States greater influence in the region."

The word "cherished" suggests an emotional attachment one cannot find with regard to human rights in the Third World.

Does Clinton equally "cherish" projects designed to eliminate hunger and illness in the world?

The World Health Organization has described the plight of ten million people in the world-dying of AIDS or tuberculosis-as "a silent genocide."

The numbers make it as serious and frightening as Hitler's genocide, which our political leaders regularly deplore, at no cost to them. But no candidate proposes that we stop spending several hundred billions on the military, stop selling arms to countries all over the world, stop the use of land mines, stop training the officers of military dictatorships in the Third World-and use that money to wipe out tuberculosis and try to stem the spread of AIDS.

The candidate Gore, speaking to the UN Security Council a few weeks ago, and required to say something about the epidemic, promised to increase the U.S. commitment to fight AIDS up to \$325 million. That is a tinier commitment than that of other industrialized countries, and less than the money spent for one fighter-bomber. That sum should be compared to \$1.6 billion dollars proposed by the Clinton administration for Colombia to deal with drugs, but perhaps really to deal with rebellion.

I suppose the problem is that people who are being bombed around the world, or people who are dying as the result of preventable illnesses, do not vote in American elections. If our political system is not sensitive to human suffering in this country where there are no votes to be counted-the homeless, the imprisoned, the very poor- how can we expect it to care a whit about people a thousand miles from our voting booths, however miserable their situation?

Since our political system-bi-partisan in its coldness to human rights-determines that no candidate will talk about such a system cannot be respected. It can only be protested against, challenged, or, in the words of the Declaration of Independence, referring to a/ government that has violated its responsibility to its people, "altered or abolished." That's a tall order, but it can be prepared for by a multitude of short steps, in which citizens act, outside of the party system, to redress their grievances. Ultimately, the power of government, of big business, is fragile. We have seen this many times in history. When people, moved by indignation, wanting to live in a decent society, act together, a new and irresistible power is created, and democracy comes alive.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Old Way of Thinking

by Howard Zinn

The Progressive magazine, November 2001

The images on television were heartbreaking: people on fire leaping to their deaths from a hundred stories up; people in panic racing from the scene in clouds of dust and smoke.

We knew there must be thousands of human beings buried under a mountain of debris. We could only imagine the terror among the passengers of the hijacked planes as they contemplated the crash, the fire, the end. Those scenes horrified and sickened me.

Then our political leaders came on television, and I was horrified and sickened again. They spoke of retaliation, of vengeance, of punishment.

We are at war, they said. And I thought: They have learned nothing, absolutely nothing, from the history of the twentieth century, from a hundred years of retaliation, vengeance, war, a hundred years of terrorism and counterterrorism, of violence met with violence in an unending cycle of stupidity.

We can all feel a terrible anger at whoever, in their insane idea that this would help their

cause, killed thousands of innocent people. But what do we do with that anger? Do we react with panic, strike out violently and blindly just to show how tough we are? "We shall make no distinction," the President proclaimed, "between terrorists and countries that harbor terrorists."

So now we are bombing Afghanistan and inevitably killing innocent people because it is in the nature of bombing (and I say this as a former Air Force bombardier) to be indiscriminate, to "make no distinction."

We are committing terrorism in order to "send a message" to terrorists.

We have done that before. It is the old way of thinking, the old way of acting. It has never worked. Reagan bombed Libya, and Bush made war on Iraq, and Clinton bombed Afghanistan and also a pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan to "send a message" to terrorists. And then comes this horror in New York and Washington. Isn't it dear by now that sending a message to terrorists through violence doesn't work, that it only leads to more terrorism?

Haven't we learned anything from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Car bombs planted by Palestinians bring air attacks and tanks by the Israeli government. That has been going on for years. It doesn't work.

And innocent people die on both sides.

Yes, it is an old way of thinking, and we need new ways. We need to think about the resentment all over the world felt by people who have been the victims of American military action.

In Vietnam, where we carried out terrorizing bombing attacks, using napalm and cluster bombs, on peasant villages.

In Latin America, where we supported dictators and death squads in Chile and El Salvador and Guatemala and Haiti.

In Iraq, where more than 500,000 children have died as a result of economic sanctions that the United States has insisted upon.

And, perhaps most important for understanding the current situation, in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza, where a million and more Palestinians live under a cruel military occupation, while our government supplies Israel with hightech weapons.

We need to imagine that the awful scenes of death and suffering we were witnessing on our television screens have been going on in other parts of the world for a long time, and only now can we begin to know what people have gone through, often as a result of our policies. We need to understand how some of those people will go beyond quiet anger to acts of terrorism.

That doesn't, by any means, justify the terror. Nothing justifies killing thousands of innocent people. But we would do well to see what might inspire such violence. And it will not be over until we stop concentrating on punishment and retaliation and think calmly and intelligently about how to address its causes.

We need new ways of thinking.

A \$300 billion military budget has not given us security.

Military bases all over the world, our warships on every ocean, have not given us security.

Land mines and a "missile defense shield" will not give us security.

We need to stop sending weapons to countries that oppress other people or their own people. We need to decide that we will not go to war, whatever reason is conjured up by the politicians or the media, because war in our time is always indiscriminate, a war against innocents, a war against children.

War is terrorism, magnified a hundred times.

Yes, let's find the perpetrators of the awful acts of September 11. We must find the guilty parties and prosecute them. But we shouldn't engage in indiscriminate retaliation. When a crime is committed by someone who lives in a certain neighborhood, you don't destroy the neighborhood.

Yes, we can tend to immediate security needs. Let's take some of the billions allocated for "missile defense," totally useless against terrorist attacks such as this one, and pay the security people at airports decent wages and give them intensive training. Let's go ahead and hire marshals to be on every flight. But ultimately, there is no certain security against the unpredictable.

True, we can find bin Laden and his cohorts, or whoever were the perpetrators, and punish them. But that will not end terrorism so long as the pent-up grievances of decades, felt in so many countries in the Third World, remain unattended. We cannot be

secure so long as we use our national wealth for guns, warships, F-18s, cluster bombs, and nuclear weapons to maintain our position as a military superpower. We should use that wealth instead to become a moral superpower.

We must deal with poverty and sickness in other parts of the world where desperation breeds resentment. And here at home, our true security cannot come by putting the nation on a war footing, with all the accompanying threats to civil liberties that this brings. True security can come only when we use our resources to make us the model of a good society, prosperous and peacemaking, with free medical care for everyone, education and housing, guaranteed decent wages, and a clean environment for all. We cannot be secure by limiting our liberties, as some of our political leaders are demanding, but only by expanding them.

We should take our example not from our military and political leaders shouting "retaliate" and "war" but from the doctors and nurses and medical students and firefighters and police officers who were saving lives in the midst of mayhem, whose first thoughts were not violence but healing, not vengeance but compassion.

Howard Zinn is a columnist for The Progressive.

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THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Greatest Generation?

by Howard Zinn

The Progressive magazine, October 2001

They tell me I am a member of the greatest generation. That's because I saw combat duty as a bombardier in World War II, and we (I almost said "I") won the war against fascism. I am told this by Tom Brokaw, who wrote a book called *The Greatest Generation*, which is all about us. He is an anchorman for a big television network, meaning that he is anchored to orthodoxy, and there is no greater orthodoxy than to ascribe greatness to military valor.

That idea is perpetuated by an artillery barrage of books and films about World War II: Pearl Harbor, *Saving Private Ryan*, and the HBO multi-episode story of the 101st Airborne, *Band of Brothers*, based on Stephen Ambrose's book of the same name. And Ambrose has just published an exciting history of the valiant "men and boys" who flew B-24s.

The crews who flew those planes died in great numbers. We who flew the more graceful-looking B-17s sardonically called those other planes Bdash2crash4. I wrote from my air base in England to my friend Joe Perry, who was flying B-24s out of Italy, kidding him about his big clunk of a plane, but the humor was extinguished when my last letter to

him came back with the notation "Deceased."

Those who saw combat in World War II, whether they lived or died, are celebrated as heroes. But it seems clear that the degree of heroism attributed to soldiers varies according to the moral reputation of the war. The fighters of World War II share a special glory because that war has always been considered a "good war," more easily justified (except by those who refuse to justify any war) than the wars our nation waged against Vietnam or Korea or Iraq or Panama or Grenada. And so they are "the greatest generation."

What makes them so great? These men-the sailors of Pearl Harbor, the soldiers of the D-Day invasion, the crews of the bombers and fighters- risked their lives in war, perhaps because they believed the war was just, perhaps because they wanted to save a friend, perhaps because they had some vague idea they were doing this "for my country." And even if I believe that there is no such thing as a just war, even if I think that men do not fight for "our country" but for those who run our country, the sacrifice of soldiers who believe, even wrongly, that they are fighting for a good cause is to be acknowledged. But not admired.

I refuse to celebrate them as "the greatest generation" because in doing so we are celebrating courage and sacrifice in the cause of war. And we are miseducating the young to believe that military heroism is the noblest form of heroism, when it should be remembered only as the tragic accompaniment of horrendous policies driven by power and profit. Indeed, the current infatuation with World War II prepares us-innocently on the part of some, deliberately on the part of others-for more war, more military adventures, more attempts to emulate the military heroes of the past.

To decide which is "the greatest generation" involves a double choice. One is the choice of a particular time period. The other is the choice of who will represent that time period, that generation. Neither is decided arbitrarily, but rather on the basis of one's political philosophy. So there is an ideological purpose in choosing the generation of World War II, and then in choosing the warriors of that time to represent "greatness."

I would propose other choices if we are to educate the young people of our time in the values of peace and justice.

We might take the generation of the American Revolution, another generation almost universally considered "great." I would not choose the Founding Fathers to represent it. Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, Madison have had enough adulation, and their biographies clog the book review sections of the major media.

The Founding Fathers did lead the war for independence from Britain. But they did not

do it for the equal right of all to life, liberty, and equality. Their intention was to set up a new government that would protect the property of slave owners, land speculators, merchants, and bondholders. Independence from England had already been secured in parts of the country by grassroots rebellion a year before the battles at Lexington and Concord that initiated hostilities with Britain. (See Ray Raphael's *A Peoples History of the American Revolution*, New Press, 2001.) It is one of the phenomena of modern times that revolutions are not favored unless they are led by people who are not revolutionaries at heart.

I would rather recognize the greatness of all those who fought to make sure that the Founding Fathers would not betray the principles of the Declaration of Independence, to make sure that the dead and maimed of the Revolutionary War did not make their sacrifices in vain. And so I would honor the soldiers of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey lines, who mutinied against George Washington and Mad Anthony Wayne. They were rebelling against the luxurious treatment of their gentry officers, and their own mistreatment: 500 lashes for misconduct, Washington decreed, and execute a few mutinous leaders to set an example.

Add to the honors list in that great generation the farmers of western Massachusetts who resisted the taking of their homes and land for nonpayment of exorbitant taxes. This was the Shays Rebellion, which put a fright into the Founding Fathers, especially as it led to uprisings in Maryland, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. That rebellion persuaded the Founding Fathers that a strong central government was needed to maintain law and order against unruly dissidents, slave rebels, and Indians. These were the true revolutionaries of the Revolutionary generation.

I submit as additional candidates for "the greatest generation" those Americans who, in the decades before the Civil War, struggled against the takeover of Indian and Mexican lands. These were the Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes, and especially the Seminoles, who resisted their removal from Florida in eight years of guerrilla warfare, succumbing finally to a combination of deception and superior force. And the dissidents of the Mexican War: Seven regiments deserted on the way to Mexico City. And the Massachusetts volunteers- that half of them who survived-who booed their commanding officer at a reception after the war ended.

And what of the abolitionist generation-the leaders of slave revolts, the conductors of the underground railroad, the speakers and writers, the likes of David Walker and Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass? It was they who gave honor to the decades leading up to the Civil War, they who pressured Lincoln and the Congress into ending slavery.

Why do we use the term "greatest generation" for participants in war? Why not for those who have opposed war, who have tried to make us understand that war has never

solved fundamental problems? Should we not honor, instead of parachutists and bomber pilots, those conscientious objectors who refused to fight or the radicals and pacifists who opposed the idea that young people of one nation should kill young people of another nation to serve the purposes of politicians and financiers?

The generation of the First World War was not made honorable by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, by General Pershing and Admiral Dewey. What nobility it had came from the courage of Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Kate Richard O'Hare, and the leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World, all of whom were imprisoned for opposing the entrance of the United States into the slaughterhouse of Europe.

If there is to be a label "the greatest generation," let us consider attaching it also to the men and women of the sixties: the black people who changed the South and educated the nation, the civilians and soldiers who opposed the war in Vietnam, the women who put sexual equality on the national agenda, the homosexuals who declared their humanity in defiance of deep prejudices, the disabled people who insisted that the government recognize the discrimination against them.

And I suggest that some future writer-not an anchorman, but someone unmoored from traditional ways of thinking-may, if the rebels of Seattle and Genoa persist and grow, recognize the greatness of this generation, the first of the new century, for launching a world movement against corporate domination, for asserting human rights against guns and greed.

Howard Zinn is a columnist for The Progressive.

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THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



One Iraqi's Story

by Howard Zinn

excerpted from the book

Howard Zinn on War

Seven Stories Press, 2000, paper



My reaction to the December 1998 bombing of Iraq by the Clinton Administration was sent out over the Internet, although I was not aware of this until I received an e-mail from an Iraqi physician living in London. It cut through the abstraction of "bombing" to see what happened to a single family. After my article appeared, a number of Americans began a correspondence with Dr. Al-Obaidi.

As Bill Clinton and Tony Blair were bombing Iraq on December 20, I received an e-mail message from England:

Dear Professor Zinn,

I am an Iraqi citizen who sought refuge here in the U.K. because of the brutality of Saddam's regime, which, within two years, killed my innocent old father and my youngest brother, who left a wife and three children....

I am writing to you to let you know that during the second day of bombarding Iraq, a cruise missile hit my parents' house in a suburb of Baghdad. My mother, my sister-in-law (wife of my deceased brother), and her three children were all killed instantly.

Such a tragedy shocked me to such an extent I lost my tears. I am crying without tears. I wish I could show my eyes and express my severe and painful suffering to every American and British [citizen]. I wish I could tell my story to those sitting in the American Administration, the U.N., and at Number 10 Downing Street. For the sake of Monica and Clinton, my family has to pay this expensive and invaluable cost. I am wondering, who will compensate me for my loss? I wish I could go to Iraq to drop some tears on my mother's grave, who always wanted to see me before her death....

Please convey my story to all those whom you think can still see the truth in their eyes and can hear this tragic story with their ears.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Mohammed Al-Obaidi

It seems to me this conveys with terrible clarity that Saddam Hussein and the leaders of our government have much in common: They are both visiting death and suffering on the people of Iraq.

In response to the possibility that Saddam Hussein may have weapons of mass destruction" and the additional possibility that he may use them ~n the future, the United States, in the present, shows no compunction about using weapons of mass destruction: cruise missiles, B-52 bombers, and, most of all, economic sanctions, which have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children.

With the December bombings, Bill Clinton was perfectly willing to kill a number (how many we do not know) of Iraqis, including five members of Dr Mohammed Al-Obaidi's family. Why? "To send a message," his Administration said.

Would the United States be willing to take the lives of a similar number of Americans "to send a message"? Are Iraqis less worthy of life than we are? Are their children less innocent than ours?

President Clinton said that Saddam Hussein poses a "clear and present danger" to the peace of the world. Whatever danger Saddam Hussein may pose in the future, he is not a clear and present danger to the peace of the world. We are. Notice the President's use of this much-abused term. The Supreme Court of the United States invoked it to justify the imprisonment of people distributing leaflets protesting the U.S. entrance into World War I. Cold Warriors used it to justify McCarthyism and the nuclear arms race. Now President Clinton has pulled it off the shelf for equally disreputable purposes.

President Clinton also said that other nations besides Iraq have weapons of mass destruction, but Iraq alone has used them. He could say this only to a population deprived of history. No nation in the world possesses greater weapons of mass destruction than ours, and none has used them more often, or with greater loss of civilian life. In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, more than 100,000 civilians died after the United States dropped atom bombs on them. In Korea and Vietnam, millions died after the United States dropped "conventional" weapons on them. So who are we to brag about our restraint in using weapons of mass destruction?

The U.S. penchant for bombing blots out the government's ability to focus on humanitarian crises-and not just in Iraq. When Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America, leaving tens of thousands dead and more than a million people homeless, there was a desperate need for helicopters to transport people to safety and deliver food and medicine. Mexico supplied sixteen helicopters to Honduras. The United States supplied twelve. At the same time, the Pentagon dispatched a huge armada-helicopters, transport planes, B-52s-to the Middle East.

Every cruise missile used to bomb Iraq cost about \$1 million, and the Pentagon used about 250 of them: a quarter of a billion dollars in cruise missiles alone. At the same time, the Knight-Ridder News Service reported that the Department of Defense, on the eve of winter, had stopped distributing millions of blankets to homeless programs around the country. The Senate Armed Services Committee had not approved the appropriation. According to the news dispatch, "The Congressional committee said the cost of the blanket program diverted needed money from weaponry."

Thus, our weapons kill people abroad, while homeless people freeze at home. Are not our moral priorities absurdly distorted?

When I received the message from Dr. Al-Obaidi, I tried to meet his request by reading from his letter on a number of radio interviews in various parts of the country. I have written to him to tell him that. Nothing, of course, can restore his family. All we can do is try to convey to the American public the human consequences of our government's repeated use of violence for political and economic gain. When enough of them see and

feel what is happening to people just like us-to families, to children-we may see the beginning of a new movement in this country against militarism and war.

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THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Their Atrocities-and Ours

by Howard Zinn

The Progressive magazine, July 1999

There was a headline recently in my hometown newspaper, The Boston Globe: **PENTAGON DEFENDS AIRSTRIKE ON VILLAGE. U.S. SAYS KOSOVARS WERE HUMAN SHIELDS.** That brought back the ugliest of memories. It recalled My Lai and other Vietnam massacres, justified by such comments as "the Vietnamese babies are concealing hand grenades."

Here's the logic: Milosevic has committed atrocities, therefore, it is OK for us to commit atrocities. He is terrorizing the Albanians in Kosovo; therefore, we can terrorize the Serbs in Yugoslavia.

I get e-mail messages from Yugoslav opponents of Milosevic, who demonstrated against him in the streets of Belgrade before the air strikes began. They now tell me their children cannot sleep at night, terrified by the incessant bombing. They tell of the loss of light, of water, of the destruction of the basic sources of life for ordinary people.

To Thomas Friedman, columnist for The New York Times, all Serbs must be punished, without mercy, because they have "tacitly sanctioned" the deeds of their leaders. That is a novel definition of war guilt. Can we now expect an Iraqi journalist to call for bombs placed in every American supermarket on the grounds that all of us have "tacitly sanctioned" the hundreds of thousands of deaths in Iraq caused by our eight-year embargo?

Official terrorism, whether used abroad or at home, by jet bombers or by the police, always receives an opportunity to explain itself in the press, as ordinary terrorism does not. The thirty-one prisoners and nine guards massacred on orders of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller in the Attica uprising, the eleven MOVE members, five of whom were children, killed in a fire after their homes were bombed by Philadelphia police; the eighty-six Branch Davidians, including twenty-four children, who died at the Waco compound in an attack ordered by the Clinton Administration; the African immigrant murdered by a gang of policemen in New York—all of these events had explanations that, however absurd, are dutifully given time and space in the media.

One of these explanations seeks comfort in relative numbers. We have heard NATO spokesperson Jamie Shea, as well as Clinton, pass off the bombing of Yugoslav civilians by telling us the Serb

forces have killed more Albanians than we have killed Serbs—although as the air strikes multiply, the numbers are getting closer. No matter: This math work justifies NATO's killing not just Serbs but Albanian refugees, not just adults but children.

There were those who defended the 1945 firestorm bombing of Dresden (100,000 dead?—we can't be sure) by pointing to the Holocaust. As if one atrocity deserves another! I have heard the deaths of more than 150,000 Japanese citizens in the atomic strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki justified by the terrible acts of the Japanese military in that war.

I suppose if we consider the millions of casualties of all the wars started by national leaders these past sixty years as "tacitly supported" by their populations, some righteous God who made the mistake of reading Thomas Friedman might well annihilate the human race.

Steven Erlanger reported, also in The New York Times, that NATO missiles killed at least eleven people in a residential area of Surdulica, a town in southern Serbia. He described "the mounded rubble across narrow Zmaj Jovina Street, where Aleksandar Milic, thirty-seven, died on Tuesday. Mr. Milic's wife, Vesna, thirty-five, also died. So did his mother and his two children, Miljana, fifteen, and Vladimir, eleven—all of them killed about noon when an errant NATO bomb obliterated their new house and the cellar in which they were sheltering."

Are these "accidents," as NATO and U.S. officials solemnly assure us?

One day in 1945 I dropped canisters of napalm on a village in France. I have no idea how many villagers died, but I did not mean to kill them. Can I absolve what I did by calling it "an accident"?

Aerial bombings have as inevitable consequences the killing of civilians, and this is foreseeable, even if the details about who will be the victims cannot be predicted.

The deaths and mutilations caused by the bombing campaign in Yugoslavia are not accidents but the inevitable result of a deliberate and cruel campaign against the people of that country.

There was an extraordinary report by Tim Weiner in The New York Times contrasting the scene in Belgrade with that in Washington where the NATO summit was taking place. "In Belgrade . . . Gordana Ristic, thirty-three, was preparing to spend another night in the basement-cum-bomb shelter of her apartment building. 'It was a really horrible night last night. There were explosions every few minutes after 2 A.M. . . . I'm sorry that your leaders are not willing to read history.'

"A reporter read to her from Clinton's speeches at the summit meeting. She sounded torn between anger and tears. 'This is the bottom to which civilization, in which I believed, has gone. Clinton is playing a role, singing a song in an opera. It kills me.' As she slept, NATO's leaders dined on soft-shell crabs and spring lamb in the East Room of the White House. Dessert was a little chocolate globe. Jessye Norman sang arias. And as the last limousine left, near midnight, Saturday morning's all-clear sounded in Belgrade."

The television networks, filling our screen with heartrending photos of the Albanian refugees-and those stories must not be ignored-have not given us a full picture of the human suffering in Yugoslavia. An e-mail came to me, a message from Djordje Vidanovic, a professor of linguistics and semantics at the University of Nis: "The little town of Aleksinac, twenty miles away from my hometown, was hit last night with full force. The local hospital was hit, and a whole street was simply wiped off. What I know for certain is six dead civilians and more than fifty badly hurt. There was no military target around whatsoever."

That was an "accident." As was the bombing of the Chinese Embassy. As was the bombing of a civilian train on a bridge over the Juzna Morava River. As was the bombing of Albanian refugees on a road in southern Kosovo. As was the destruction of a civilian bus with twenty-four dead, including four children.

Some stories come through despite the inordinate attention to NATO propaganda, omnipresent on CNN and other networks (and the shameless Shea announced we bombed a television station in Belgrade because it gives out propaganda).

There was a rare description of the gruesome scene at the bus bombing by Paul Watson of The Los Angeles Times.

The New York Times reported the demolition of four houses in the town of Merdare by anti-personnel bombs, "killing five people including Bozina Tosovic, thirty, and his eleven-month-old daughter, Bojana. His wife, six months pregnant, is in the hospital."

When I read a few weeks ago that cluster bombs are being used against Yugoslavia and have caused unprecedented amputations in Kosovo hospitals, I felt a special horror. These bombs have hundreds of shrapnel

Now if NATO were just a club for white people of non-Slavic origin, a place for them to gather over sherry and reminisce about the fun times at Normandy and Ypres, what would it matter how big it got? But it is, of course, a military alliance, meaning a kind of armed gang, and the first thing new members have to do is take a sacred oath to increase their military budgets. This is called "modernizing" and is justified by the need to have all members, including the paupers among them, achieve "NATO-compatible" levels of armaments. As noted by many in the press, the biggest U.S. supporters of NATO expansion were not the Polish-derived citizens of Chicago, they were the manufacturers of missiles and fighter jets.

But what is a military alliance without something militaristic to do? Serb atrocities in Kosovo seemed to present the ideal mission. No one, except perhaps the occupants of Belgrade's bomb shelters, can reasonably deny that Serbia excels in the atrocity-production business (although the Croats and even the Kosovar Albanians can claim some success in this department, too). So Madeleine Albright, consummate hostess that she is, launched her war according to a timetable designed-her aides have since revealed-to get the whole business over with in time for NATO's fiftieth anniversary bash in April. This was to be the beefed-up NATO's inaugural war and proof of its lasting relevance. So what if Serbia's longstanding ally, Russia, had started growling about re-aiming its nuclear warheads at Albright's Washington office?

No victory in sight, NATO held its birthday party in April anyway, with the diplomats all feigning the gravitas appropriate to people engaged in acts of random vandalism from the air. But there were no long faces among some of the partygoers, no indeed. U.S. weapons manufacturers' stocks were booming, thanks to the "excitement in Kosovo," as one market analyst put it, and the arms dealers not only showed up at NATO's party, they actually sponsored it. Well, to be fair, some communications firms like Ameritech

pitched in for the hors d'oeuvres, too, but the bulk of the sponsors were defense companies like Boeing, which contributed \$250,000, and Raytheon, which has seen its stock soar by 17 percent since NATO's war began. As a reward for their generosity, the executives of sponsoring companies were allowed to mingle with the assembled diplomats, no doubt using the occasion to whisper little pleasantries like, "Boy, do I have a cluster bomb for you!"

But you can't have a meaningful Cold War against just poor old basket-case Russia, whose soldiers can usually be found roaming the streets, panhandling for vodka and turnip money. Hence the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade-and this "hence" does not derive

from any privileged insider information. It would just be too painful to admit that NATO's great moral undertaking includes bombing a crowded city without an up-to-date map. Never mind that China today is no more communist than Connecticut: At least its military is in good enough shape to have funded an American Presidential campaign.

Maybe it's not 1958, though. Maybe it's really 1914. Then, too, a bit of nastiness perpetrated by Serbs-a minor bit, by present-day standards, involving the murder of just two people, who happened to be

the Hapsburg crown prince and his wife- provoked a mighty urge to punish. Nations all over the world suddenly realigned themselves into two opposing camps. Huge war machines, polished to perfection during the preceding decades of relative peace, rolled onto the field. Nothing at all was accomplished in the four years of fighting that followed- nothing, that is, beyond a major expansion of cemetery acreage. So Cold War II is looking a lot like World War I, except that if the nuclear warheads start flying, this could turn into a war that not even Boeing will win.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



excerpted from

The Ultimate Power

from the book

Declarations of Independence

by Howard Zinn

publisher - HarperCollins



As the twentieth century draws to a close, a century packed with history, what leaps out from that history is its utter unpredictability. Who could have predicted, not just the Russian Revolution, but Stalin's deformation of it, then Khrushchev's astounding exposure of Stalin, and in recent years Gorbachev's succession of surprises?

Or that in Germany, the conditions after World War I that might have brought socialist revolution-an advanced industrial society, with an educated organized proletariat, and devastating economic crisis- would lead instead to fascism? And who would have guessed that an utterly defeated Germany would rise from its ashes to become the most prosperous country in Europe?

Who foresaw the shape of the post-World War II world: the Chinese Communist revolution, and its various turns-the break with the Soviet Union, the tumultuous cultural revolution, and then post-Mao China making overtures to the West, adopting capitalist enterprise, perplexing everyone?

No one foresaw the disintegration of the old Western empires happening so quickly after the war, in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, or the odd array of societies that would be created in the newly independent nations, from the benign socialism of Nyerere's Tanzania to the madness of Idi Amin's Uganda.

Spain became an astonishment. A million had died in the Spanish Civil War and Franco's fascism lasted forty years, but when Franco died, Spain was transformed into a parliamentary democracy, without bloodshed. In other places too, deeply entrenched regimes seemed to suddenly disintegrate-in Portugal, Argentina, the Philippines, and Iran.

The end of the war left the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers, armed with frightening nuclear arsenals. And yet these superpowers have been unable to control events, even in those parts of the world considered to be their spheres of influence. The United States could not win wars in Vietnam or Korea or stop revolutions in Cuba or Nicaragua. The Soviet Union was forced to retreat from Afghanistan and could not crush the Solidarity movement in Poland.

The most unpredictable events of all were those that took place in 1989 in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where mass movements for liberty and democracy, using the tactic of nonviolent mass action, toppled long-lasting Communist bureaucracies in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and East Germany.

Uncertain Ends, Unacceptable Means

To confront the fact of unpredictability leads to two important conclusions:

The first is that the struggle for justice should never be abandoned on the ground that it is hopeless, because of the apparent overwhelming power of those in the world who have the guns and the money and who seem invincible in their determination to hold on to their power. That apparent power has, again and again, proved vulnerable to human qualities less measurable than bombs and dollars: moral fervor, determination, unity, organization, sacrifice, wit, ingenuity, courage, and patience-whether by blacks in Alabama and South Africa; peasants in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Vietnam; or workers

and intellectuals in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. No cold calculation of the balance of power should deter people who are persuaded that their cause is just.

The second is that in the face of the obvious unpredictability of social phenomena all of history's excuses for war and preparation for war- self-defense, national security, freedom, justice, and stopping aggression-can no longer be accepted. Massive violence, whether in war or internal upheaval, cannot be justified by any end, however noble, because no outcome is sure. Any humane and reasonable person must conclude that if the ends, however desirable, are uncertain, and the means are horrible and certain, those means must not be employed.

We have had too many experiences with the use of massive violence for presumably good reasons to willingly continue accepting such reasons. In this century there were 10 million dead in World War I, the war "to end all wars"; 40 to 50 million dead in World War II to "stop aggression" and "defeat fascism"; 2 million dead in Korea and another 1 to 2 million dead in Vietnam, to "stop communism"; 1 million dead in the Iran-Iraq war, for "honor" and other indefinable motives. Perhaps a million dead in Afghanistan, to stop feudalism or communism, depending on which side was speaking.

None of those ends was achieved: wars did not end, aggression continued, fascism did not die with Hitler, communism was not stopped, there was no honor for anyone. In short ... the traditional distinction between "just" and "unjust" war is now obsolete. The cruelty of the means today exceeds all possible ends. No national boundary, no ideology, no "way of life" can justify the loss of millions of lives that modern war, whether nuclear or conventional, demands. The standard causes are too muddy, too mercurial, to die for. Systems change, policies change. The distinctions claimed by politicians between good and evil are not so clear that generations of human beings should die for the sanctity of those distinctions.

Even a war for defense, the most morally justifiable kind of war, loses its morality when it involves a sacrifice of human beings so massive it amounts to suicide. One of my students, a young woman, wrote in her class journal in 1985, "Wars are treated like wines-there are good years and bad years, and World War II was the vintage year. But wars are not like wines. They are more like cyanide; one sip and you're dead."

Internal violence has been almost as costly in human life as war. Millions were killed in the Soviet Union to "build socialism." Countless lives were taken in China for the same reason. A half million were killed in Indonesia for fear of communism; at least a million dead in Cambodia and a million dead in Nigeria in civil wars. Hundreds of thousands killed in Latin America by military dictatorships to stop communism, or to "maintain order." There is no evidence that any of that killing did any good for the people of those nations.

Preparation for war is always justified by the most persuasive of purposes: to prevent war. But such preparation has not prevented a series of wars that since World War II have taken more lives than World War I.

... the arms race has deterred what would not take place anyway. And it has not deterred what has taken place: wars all over the world, some involving the superpowers directly (Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan), others involving them indirectly (the Israeli-Arab wars, the Iran-Iraq war, the Indonesian war against East Timor, the contra war against Nicaragua).

While the supposed benefits of the arms race are very dubious, the human costs are obvious, immediate, and awful. In 1989 about a trillion dollars-a thousand billion dollars-were spent for arms all over the world, the United States and the Soviet Union accounting for more than half of this. Meanwhile, about 14 million children die every year from malnutrition and disease, which are preventable by relatively small sums of money.

The new-style Trident submarine, which can fire hundreds of nuclear warheads, costs \$1.5 billion. It is totally useless, except in a nuclear war, in which case it would also be totally useless, because it would just add several hundred more warheads to the thousands already available. (Its only use might be to start a nuclear war by presenting a first-strike threat to the Soviet Union.) The \$1.5 billion could finance a five-year program of universal child immunization against certain deadly diseases, preventing 5 million deaths.

The B-2 bomber, the most expensive military airplane in history, approved by the Reagan and Bush administrations, and by many members of Congress in both parties, was scheduled to cost over a half billion dollars for each of 132 bombers. A nuclear arms analyst with the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the total cost would run between \$70 billion and \$100 billion. With this money the United States could build a million new homes.

Over the past decade, several trillions of dollars have been spent for military purposes-to kill and to prepare to kill. One can only begin to imagine what could be done with the money in military budgets to feed the starving millions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; to provide health care for the sick; to build housing for the homeless; and to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic to millions of people crippled by their inability to read or write or count.

There have been hundreds of nuclear weapons tests by the Soviet Union and the United

States over the years. ... The \$12 million used for one of these tests would train 40,000 community health workers where they are desperately needed in the Third World.

The United States spent about \$28 billion to build 500 B-1 bombers, 9 which turned out to be an enormous waste, even from the standpoint of the military, involving stupidity, greed, and fraud (critics said the B-1 would not survive a collision with a pelican). Imagine what could be done for human health with that \$28 billion.

Health and education in the eighties were starved for resources. But in 1985 it was disclosed that \$1.8 billion dollars had been spent on sixty-five anti-aircraft guns called the Sergeant York, all of which had to be scrapped as useless.

Imagine what could be done to stop the most frightening fact of our time, the steady poisoning of the world's environment-the rivers, the lakes, the oceans, the beaches, the air, the drinking water, and the soil that grows our food-the depletion of the protective ozone layer that covers the entire earth, and the erosion of the world's forests. The money, technology, and human energy now devoted to the military I could perform miracles in cleaning up the earth we live on.

... hundreds of billions have been spent to maintain an image. The image of the United States is that of a nation possessed of a frightening nuclear arsenal. What good has that image done, for the American people, or for anyone in the world? Has it prevented revolutions, coupe, wars? Even from the viewpoint of those who want to convey an image of strength-for some mysterious psychic need of their own, perhaps- what image is conveyed when a nation so over-armed is unable to defeat a tiny country in Southeast Asia, or to prevent revolutions in even tinier countries in the Caribbean?

The weapons addiction of all our political leaders, whether Republican or Democrat, has the same characteristics as drug addiction. It is enormously costly, very dangerous, provokes ugly violence, and is self-perpetuating-all on a scale far greater than drug addiction.

It is sad to see how, in so many countries, citizens have been led to war by the argument that it is necessary because there are tyrannies abroad, evil rulers, murderous juntas. But to make war is not to destroy the tyrants; it is to kill their subjects, their pawns, their conscripted soldiers, their subjugated civilians.

War is a class phenomenon. This has been an unbroken truth from ancient times to our

own, when the victims of the Vietnam War turned out to be working-class Americans and Asian peasants. Preparations for war maintains swollen military bureaucracies, gives profits to corporations (and enough jobs to ordinary citizens to bring them along). And they give politicians special power, because fear of "the enemy" becomes the basis for entrusting policy to a handful of leaders, who feel bound (as we have seen so often) by no constitutional limits, no constraints of decency or commitment to truth.

Justice Without Violence

Massive violence has been accepted historically by citizens (but not by all; hence desertions, opposition, and the need for bribery and coercion to build armies) because it has been presented as a means to good ends. All over the world there are nations that commit aggression on other nations and on their own people, whether in the Middle East, or Latin America, or South Africa-nations that offend our sense of justice. Most people don't really want violence. But they do want justice, and for that ~~ sake, they can be persuaded to engage in war and civil war.

All of us, therefore, as we approach the next century, face an enormous responsibility: How to achieve justice without massive violence. Whatever in the past has been the moral justification for violence- whether defense against attack, or the overthrow of tyranny-must now be accomplished by other means.

It is the monumental moral and tactical challenge of our time. It will make the greatest demands on our ingenuity, our courage, our patience, and our willingness to renounce old habits-but it must be done. Surely nations must defend themselves against attack, citizens must resist and remove oppressive regimes, the poor must rebel against their poverty and redistribute the wealth of the rich. But that must be done without the violence of war.

Too many of the official tributes to Martin Luther King, Jr., have piously praised his nonviolence, the praise often coming from political leaders who themselves have committed "Teat violence against other nations and have accepted the daily violence of poverty in American life. But King's phrase, and that of the southern civil rights movement, was not simply "nonviolence," but nonviolent direct action.

In this way, nonviolence does not mean acceptance, but resistance - not waiting, but acting. It is not at all passive. It involves strikes, boycotts, non-cooperation, mass demonstrations, and sabotage, as well as appeals to the conscience of the world, even to individuals in the oppressing group who might break away from their past.

Direct action does not deride using the political rights, the civil liberties, even the voting mechanisms in those societies where they are available (as in the United States), but it recognizes the limitations of those controlled rights and goes beyond.

Freedom and justice, which so often have been the excuses for violence, are still our goals. But the means for achieving them must change, because violence, however tempting in the quickness of its action, undermines those goals immediately, and also in the long run. The means of achieving social change must match, morally, the ends.

It is true that human rights cannot be defended or advanced without power. But, if we have learned anything useful from the carnage of this century, it is that true power does not-as the heads of states everywhere implore us to believe-come out of the barrel of a gun, or out of a missile silo.

The possession of 10,000 thermonuclear weapons by the United States did not change the fact that it was helpless to stop a revolution in Cuba or another in Nicaragua, that it was unable to defeat its enemy either in Korea or in Vietnam. The possession of an equal number of bombs by the Soviet Union did not prevent its forced withdrawal from Afghanistan nor did it deter the Solidarity uprising in Poland, which was successful enough to change the government and put into office a Solidarity member as prime minister. The following news item from the summer of 19X9 would have been dismissed as a fantasy two years earlier: "Solidarity, vilified and outlawed for eight years until April, jubilantly entered Parliament today as the first freely elected opposition party to do so in a Communist country. "

The power of massive armaments is much overrated. Indeed, it might be called a huge fake-one of the great hoaxes of the twentieth century. We have seen heavily armed tyrants flee before masses of citizens galvanized by a moral goal. Recall those television images of Somoza scurrying to his private plane in Managua; of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos quickly assembling their suitcases of clothes, jewels, and cash and fleeing the Philippines; of the Shah of Iran searching desperately for someone to take him in; of Duvalier barely managing to put on his pants before escaping the fury of the Haitian people.

In the United States we saw the black movement for civil rights confront the slogan of "Never" in a South where blacks seemed to have no power, where the old ways were buttressed by wealth and a monopoly of political control. Yet, in a few years, the South was transformed.

I recall at the end of the great march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 when, after our twenty-mile trek that day, coming into Montgomery, I had decided to skip the speeches at the capitol and fly back to Boston. At the airport I ran into my old Atlanta colleague

and friend, Whitney Young, now head of the Urban League, who had just arrived D to be part of the celebration in Montgomery. We decided to have coffee together in the recently desegregated airport cafeteria.

The waitress obviously was not happy at the sight of us. Aside from ~ the integration of it, she might have been disconcerted by the fact that the white man was still mud-splattered, disheveled, and unshaven from the march, and the black man, tall and handsome, was impeccably dressed with suit and tie. We noticed the big button on her uniform. It said "Never!" but she served us our coffee.

Racism still poisons the country, north and south. Blacks still mostly live in poverty, and their life expectancy is years less than that of whites. But important changes have taken place that were at one time unimaginable. A consciousness about the race question exists among blacks and whites that did not exist before. The nation will never be the same after that great movement, will never be able to deny the power of nonviolent direct action.

The movement against the Vietnam War in the United States too was powerful, and yet nonviolent (although, like the civil rights movement, it led to violent scenes whenever the government decided to use police or National Guardsmen, against peaceful demonstrators). It seemed puny and hopelessly weak at its start. In the first years of the war, no one in public life dared to speak of unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam. When my book *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal* was published in 1967, the idea that we should simply leave Vietnam was considered radical. But by 1969 it was the majority sentiment in the country. By 1973 it was in the peace agreement, and the huge U.S. military presence in Vietnam was withdrawn.

President Lyndon Johnson had said; "We will not turn tail and run." But we did, and it was nothing to be ashamed of. It was the right thing to do. Of course, the military impasse in Vietnam was crucial in bringing the war to an end, but it took the movement at home to make American leaders decide not to try to break that impasse by a massive escalation, by more death and destruction. They had to accept the limits of military power.

In that same period, cultural changes in the country showed once again the power of apparently powerless people. Women, a century before, had shown their power and won the right to go to college, to become doctors and lawyers, and to vote. And then in the sixties and seventies the women's liberation movement began to alter the nation's perception of women in the workplace, in the home, and in relationships with men, other women, and children. The right to abortion was established by the Supreme Court against powerful opposition by religious conservatives (although that decision is still under heavy attack).

Another apparently powerless group -homosexual men and lesbian women-encouraged perhaps by what other movements had been able to accomplish against great odds, took advantage of the atmosphere of change. They demanded, and in some places received, acceptance for what had before been unmentionable.

These last decades have shown us that ordinary people can bring down institutions and change policies that seemed entrenched forever. It is not easy. And there are situations that seem immovable except by violent revolution. Yet even in such situations, the bloody cost of endless violence-of revolt leading to counterrevolutionary terror, and more revolt and more terror in an endless cycle of death-suggests a reconsideration of tactics.

We think of South Africa, which is perhaps the supreme test of the usefulness of nonviolent direct action. It is a situation where blacks have been the victims of murderous violence and where the atmosphere is tense with the expectation of more violence, perhaps this time on both sides. But even the African National Congress, the most militant and most popular of black organizations there, clearly wants to end apartheid and attain political power without a blood bath that might cost a million lives. Its members have tried to mobilize international opinion, have adopted nonviolent but dramatic tactics: boycotts, economic sanctions, demonstrations, marches, and strikes. There will undoubtedly be more cruelty, more repression, but if the nonviolent movement can grow, perhaps one day a general strike will paralyze the economy and the government and compel a negotiated settlement for a multiracial, democratic South Africa.

The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, under the military occupation of the Israelis since the war of 1967, began around 1987 to adopt nonviolent tactics, massive demonstrations, to bring the attention of the world to their brutal treatment by the Israelis. This brought more brutality, as hundreds of Palestinians, unarmed (except for clubs and rocks), were shot to death by Israeli soldiers. But the world did begin to pay attention and if there is finally a peaceful arrangement that gives the Palestinians their freedom and Israel its security, it will probably be the result of nonviolent direct action.

Certainly, the use of terrorist violence, whether by Arabs placing bombs among civilians or by Jews bombing villages and killing large numbers of noncombatants, is not only immoral, but gains nothing for anybody. Except perhaps a spurious glory for macho revolutionaries or ruthless political leaders puffed up with their "power" whenever they succeed in blowing up a bus, destroying a village, or (as with Reagan) killing a hundred people by dropping bombs on Tripoli.

People made fearful by politicians but also by real historical experience worry about invasion and foreign occupation. The assumption has always been that the only defense

is to meet violence with violence. We have pointed out that, with the weaponry available today, the result is only suicidal (South Korea against North Korea, Iran against Iraq, even Vietnam against the United States).

A determined population can not only force a domestic ruler to flee the country, but can make a would-be occupier retreat, by the use of a formidable arsenal of tactics: boycotts and demonstrations, occupations.) and sit-ins, sit-down strikes and general strikes, obstruction and sabotage, refusal to pay taxes, rent strikes, refusal to cooperate, refusal to obey curfew orders or gag orders, refusal to pay fines, fasts and pray-ins, draft resistance, and civil disobedience of various kinds. Gene Sharp and his colleagues at Harvard, in a study of the American Revolution, concluded that the colonists were hugely successful in using nonviolent tactics against England. Opposing the Stamp Tax and other oppressive laws, the colonists used boycotts of British goods, illegal town meetings, refusal to serve on juries, and withholding taxes. Sharp notes that "in nine or ten of the thirteen colonies; British governmental power had already been effectively and illegally replaced by substitute governments" before military conflict began at Lexington and Concord.

Thousands of such instances have changed the world, but they are nearly absent from the history books. History texts feature military _ heroes, lead entire generations of the young to think that wars are the only way to solve problems of self-defense, justice, and freedom. They are kept uninformed about the world's long history of nonviolent struggle and resistance.

Political scientists have generally ignored nonviolent action as a form of power. Like the politicians, they too have been intoxicated with power. And so in studying international relations, they play games (it's called, professionally, "game theory") with the strategic moves that use the traditional definitions of power-guns and money. It will take a new movement of students and faculty across the country to turn the universities and academies from the study of war games to peace games, from military tactics to resistance tactics, from strategies of "first-strike" to those of "general strike."

It would be foolish to claim, even with the widespread acceptance of nonviolent direct action as the way of achieving justice and resisting tyranny, that all group violence will come cleanly to an end. But the gross instances can be halted, especially those that require the cooperation of the citizenry and that depend on the people to accept the legitimacy of the government's actions.

Military power is helpless without the acquiescence of those people it depends on to carry out orders. The most powerful deterrent to aggression would be the declared determination of a whole people to resist in a thousand ways.

When we become depressed at the thought of the enormous power that governments, multinational corporations, armies and police have to control minds, crush dissents, and destroy rebellions, we should consider a phenomenon that I have always found interesting: Those who possess enormous power are surprisingly nervous about their ability to hold on to their power. They react almost hysterically to what seem to be puny and unthreatening signs of opposition.

For instance, we see the mighty Soviet state feeling the need to put away, out of sight, handfuls of disorganized intellectuals. We see the American government, armored with a thousand layers of power, work strenuously to put a few dissident Catholic priests in jail or keep a writer or artist out of this country. We remember Nixon's hysterical reaction to a solitary man picketing the White House: "Get him!"

Is it possible that the people in authority know something that we don't know? Perhaps they know their own ultimate weakness. Perhaps they understand that small movements can become big ones, that if an idea takes hold in the population, it may become indestructible.

Nonviolent direct action is inextricably related to democracy. Violence to the point of terrorism is the desperate tactic of tiny groups who are incapable of building a mass base of popular support. Governments much prefer violence committed by disciplined armies under their control, rather than adopt tactics of nonviolence, which would require them to entrust power to large numbers of citizens, who might then use it to threaten the elites' authority.

A worldwide movement of nonviolent action for peace and justice would mean the entrance of democracy for the first time into world affairs. That's why it would not be welcomed by the governments of the world, whether "totalitarian" or "democratic." It would eliminate the dependence on their weapons to solve problems. It would bypass the official makers of policy and the legal suppliers of arms, the licensed dealers in the most deadly drug of our time: violence.

It was 200 years ago that the idea of democracy was introduced into modern government, its philosophy expressed in the American Declaration of Independence: Governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed and maintain their legitimacy only when they answer the needs of their citizens for an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is surely time to introduce that basic democratic concept into _ international affairs. The terrifying events of this century make it clear that the political leaders of the world

and the experts who advise them are both incompetent and untrustworthy. They have put us all in great danger.

If the U.S. government can give several hundred billion dollars in contracts to corporations to build weapons, why can it not (by powerful public demand) give that valuable money to public-service corporations whose contracts will require them to employ people, young and old, to make life better for everyone? The conversion of resources requires a conversion of language. New definitions of old terms could become a part of the common vocabulary. The old definitions have misled us and caused monstrous harm.

The word security, for instance, would take on a new meaning: the health and well-being of people, which is the greatest strength and the most lasting security a nation can have. (A simple parable makes this clear: Would a family living in a high-crime city feel more "secure" if it put machine guns in its windows, dynamite charges in the yard, and tripwires all around the house, at the cost of half the family income and less food for the children? The analogy is not far-fetched. It is an understatement of what nations do today.)

The word defense would mean, not the waging of war and the accumulation of weapons, but the united actions of people against tyranny, using every ingenious device of nonviolent resistance.

Democracy would mean the right of people everywhere to determine for themselves, rather than have political leaders decide for them, how they will defend themselves, how they will make themselves secure, and how they will achieve justice and freedom.

Patriotism would mean not blind obedience to a nation's leaders, but a commitment to help one's neighbors and to help anyone, regardless of race or nationality, achieve a decent life.

It is impossible to know how quickly or how powerfully such new ways of thinking, such reversals of priorities, can take hold, can excite the imagination of millions, can cross frontiers and oceans, and can become a world force. We have never had a challenge of this magnitude, but we have never had a need so urgent, a vision so compelling.

History does not offer us predictable scenarios for immense changes in consciousness and policy. Such changes have taken place, but always in ways that could not be foretold, starting often with imperceptibly small acts, developing along routes too complex to trace. All we can do is to make a start, wherever we can, to persist, and let

events unfold as they will.

On our side are colossal forces. There is the desire for survival of 6 billion people. There are the courage and energy of the young, once their adventurous spirit is turned toward the ending of war rather than the waging of war, creation rather than destruction, and world friendship rather than hatred of those on the other side of the national boundaries.

There are artists and musicians, poets and actors in every land who are ready to make the world musical and eloquent and beautiful for all of us, if we give them the chance. They, perhaps more than anyone, know what we are all missing by our infatuation with violence. They also know the power of the imagination and can help us to reach the hearts and souls of people everywhere.

The composer Leonard Bernstein a few years ago spoke to a graduating class at John Hopkins University; "Only think: if all our imaginative resources currently employed in inventing new power games and bigger and better weaponry were re-oriented toward disarmament, what miracles we could achieve, what new truths, what undiscovered realms of beauty!"

There are teachers in classrooms all over the world who long to talk to their pupils about peace and solidarity among people of all nations and races.

There are ministers in churches of every denomination who want to inspire their congregations as Martin Luther King, Jr., did, to struggle for justice in a spirit of joy and love.

There are people, millions of them, who travel from country to country for business or pleasure, who can carry messages that will begin to erase, bit by bit, the chalk marks of national boundaries, the artificial barriers that keep us apart.

There are scientists anxious to use their knowledge for life instead of death.

There are people holding ordinary jobs of all kinds who would like to participate in something extraordinary, a movement to beautify their city, their country, or their world.

There are mothers and fathers who want to see their children live in a decent world and who, if spoken to, if inspired, if organized, could raise a cry that would be heard on the moon.

It is, of course, an enormous job to be done. But never in history has there been one more worthwhile. And it needn't be done in desperation, as if it had to be done in a day. All we need to do is make the first moves, speak the first words.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



excerpted from

Free Speech: Second Thoughts on the First Amendment

from the book

Declarations of Independence

by Howard Zinn

publisher - HarperCollins



Growing up in the United States, we are taught that this is a country blessed with freedom of speech. We learn that this is so because our Constitution contains a Bill of Rights, which starts off with the First Amendment and its powerful words:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the

free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The belief that the First Amendment guarantees our freedom of expression is part of the ideology of our society. Indeed, the faith in pledges written on paper and the blindness to political and economic realities seem strongly entrenched in that set of beliefs propagated by the makers of opinion in this country. We can see this in the almost religious fervor that accompanied the year of the Bicentennial, zoo years after the framing of the Constitution.

In 1987, from newspapers, television, radio, from the pulpits and the classrooms, from the halls of Congress, and in the statements issued by the White House, we heard praise of that document drawn up by the Founding Fathers. Parade magazine, read by several million people, printed a short essay by President Ronald Reagan. In it he said,

I can't help but marvel at the genius of our Founders.... They created, with a sureness and originality so great and pure that I can't help but perceive the guiding hand of God, the first political system that insisted that power flows from the people to the state, nor the other way around.

That same year, the newspapers carried large advertisements for "The Constitution Bowl," announced by the official Commission on the Bicentennial, to be made of "Lenox fine ivory China" showing the official flowers of the thirteen original states, and "bordered with pure : karat gold . . . a masterpiece worthy of the occasion." It was available for \$95. A beautiful bowl indeed. And it was a perfect representation of the Constitution-elegant, but empty, capable of being filled with good or bad by whoever possessed the power and the resources to fill it.

So it has been with the First Amendment. The First Amendment was adopted in 1791, as part of the Bill of Rights, in response to criticism of the Constitution when it was before the public for ratification. Needing nine of the thirteen states to ratify it, The Constitution was approved by very small margins in three crucial states: Virginia, Massachusetts, and New York. Promises were made that when the first government took office, a Bill of Rights would be added, and so it was. Ever since then it has been hailed as the bedrock of our freedoms.

As I am about to argue, however, to depend on the simple existence of the First Amendment to guarantee our freedom of expression is a serious mistake, one that can cost us not only our liberties but, under certain circumstances, our lives.

"No Prior Restraint"

The language of the First Amendment looks absolute. "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech." Yet in 1798, seven years after the First Amendment was adopted, Congress did exactly that, it passed laws abridging the freedom of speech—the Alien and Sedition Acts.

The Alien Act gave the president the power to deport "all such aliens as he shall judge dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States. The Sedition Act provided that "if any person shall write, print, utter, or publish . . . any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States, or either house of the Congress of the U.S. or the President of the U.S., with intent to defame . . . or to bring either of them into contempt or disrepute" such persons could be fined \$2,000 or jailed for two years.

The French Revolution had taken place nine years earlier, and the new American nation, now with its second president, the conservative John Adams, was not as friendly to revolutionary ideas as it had been in 1776. Revolutionaries once in power seem to lose their taste for revolutions.

French immigrants to the United States were suspected of being sympathizers of their revolution back home and of spreading revolutionary ideas here. The fear of them (although most of these French immigrants had fled the revolution) became hysterical. The newspaper *Gazette of the United States* insisted that French tutors were corrupting American children, "to make them imbibe, with their very milk, as it were, the poison of atheism and disaffection."

The newspaper *Porcupine's Gazette* said the country was swarming with "French apostles of Sedition . . . enough to burn all our cities and cut the throats of all the inhabitants."

In Ireland revolutionaries were carrying on their long struggle against the English, and they had supporters in the United States. One might have thought that the Americans, so recently liberated from English rule themselves, would have been sympathetic to the Irish rebels. But instead, the Adams administration looked on the Irish as troublemakers, both in Europe and in the United States.

Politician Harrison Gray Oris said he "did not wish to invite hordes of wild Irishmen, nor the turbulent and disorderly of all parts of the world, to come here with a view to disturb our tranquillity, after having succeeded in the overthrow of their own governments." He worried that new immigrants with political ideas "are hardly landed in the United States, before they begin to cavil against the Government, and to pant after a more perfect state of society."

The Federalist party of John Adams was opposed by the Republican party of Thomas Jefferson. It was the beginning of the two-party system in the new nation. Their disagreements went back to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, to battles in Congress over Hamilton's economic program. The tensions in the country were heightened at this time by an epidemic of yellow fever, with discontented citizens rioting in the streets.

Jefferson, a former ambassador to France, was friendly to the French Revolution, while Adams was hostile to it. President Adams, in the developing war between England and France, was clearly on the side of the English, and one historian has called the Sedition Act "an internal security measure adopted during America's Half War with France."

Republican newspapers were delivering harsh criticism of the Adams administration. The newspaper *Aurora* in Philadelphia (edited by Benjamin Bache, the grandson of Benjamin Franklin) accused the president of appointing his relatives to office, of squandering public money, of wanting to create a monarchy, and of moving toward war. Even before the Sedition Act became law, Bache was arrested and charged on the basis of common law with libeling the president, exciting sedition, and provoking opposition to the laws.

The passage of the Sedition Act was accompanied by denunciations of the government's critics. One congressman told his colleagues, "Philosophers are the pioneers of revolution. They . . . prepare the way, by preaching infidelity, and weakening the respect of the people for ancient institutions. They talk of the perfectibility of man, of the dignity of his nature, and entirely forgetting what he is, declaim perpetually about what he should be." The statement about what man "is," could have been taken straight from Machiavelli.

The atmosphere in the House of Representatives in those days might be said to lack some dignity. A congressman from Vermont, Irishman Matthew Lyon, got into a fight with Congressman Griswold of Connecticut. Lyon spat in Griswold's face, Griswold attacked him with a cane, Lyon fought back with fire tongs, and the two grappled on the floor while the other members of the House first watched, then separated them. A Bostonian wrote angrily about Lyon: "I feel grieved that the saliva of an Irishman should be left upon the face of an American."

Lyon had written an article saying that under Adams "every consideration of the public welfare was swallowed up in a continual grasp for power, in an unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation, and selfish avarice." Tried for violation of the Sedition Act, Lyon was found guilty and imprisoned for four months.

The number of people jailed under the Sedition Act was not large- ten-but it is in the

nature of oppressive laws that it takes just a handful of prosecutions to create an atmosphere that makes potential critics of government fearful of speaking their full minds.

It would seem to an ordinarily intelligent person, reading the simple, straightforward words of the First Amendment-"Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."-that the Sedition Act was a direct violation of the Constitution. But here we get our first clue to the inadequacy of words on paper in ensuring the rights of citizens. Those words, however powerful they seem, are interpreted by lawyers and judges in a world of politics and power, where dissenters and rebels are not wanted. Exactly that happened early in our history, as the Sedition Act collided with the First Amendment, and the First Amendment turned out to be poor protection.

The members of the Supreme Court, sitting as individual circuit judges (the new government didn't have the money to set up a lower level of appeals courts, as we have today) consistently found the defendants in the sedition cases guilty. They did it on the basis of English common law. Supreme Court Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth, in a 1799 opinion, said, "The common law of this country remains the same as it was before the Revolution."

That fact is enough to make us pause. English common law? Hadn't we fought and won a revolution against England? Were we still bound by English common law? The answer is yes. It seems there are limits to revolutions. They retain more of the past than is expected by their fervent followers. English common law on freedom of speech was set down in Blackstone's Commentaries, a four-volume compendium of English common law. As Blackstone put it:

The liberty of the press is indeed essential to the nature of a free state, but

this consists in laying no previous restraint upon publications, and not in freedom from censure for criminal matter when published. Every freeman has an undoubted right to lay what sentiments he pleases before the public; to forbid this is to destroy the freedom of the press; but if he publishes what is improper, mischievous, or illegal, he must take the consequences of his own temerity.

This is the ingenious doctrine of "no prior restraint." You can say whatever you want, print whatever you want. The government cannot stop you in advance. But once you speak or write it, if the government decides to make certain statements "illegal," or to define them as "mischievous" or even just "improper," you can be put in prison.

An ordinary person, unsophisticated in the law, might respond, "You say you won't stop

me from speaking my mind-no prior restraint. But if I know it will get me in trouble, and so remain silent, that is prior restraint." There's no point responding to common law with common sense.

That early interpretation of the First Amendment, limiting its scope to no prior restraint, has lasted to the present day. It was affirmed in 1971 when the Nixon administration tried to get the Supreme Court to stop the publication in the New York Times of the Pentagon Papers, the secret official history of the U.S. war in Vietnam.

The Court refused to prevent publication. But one of the justices held up a warning finger. He said, we are making this decision on the basis of no prior restraint; if the Times goes ahead and prints the document, there is a chance of prosecution.

So, with the doctrine of no prior restraint, the protection of the First Amendment was limited from the start. The Founding Fathers, whether liberal or conservative, Federalist or Republican-from Washington and Hamilton to Jefferson and Madison-believed that seditious libel could not be tolerated, that all we can ask of freedom of speech is that it does not allow prior restraint.'

Well, at least we have that, a hopeful believer in the First Amendment might say: They can't stop free expression in advance. It turns out, however, that such optimism is not justified. Take the case of a book, *The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence* written by Victor Marchetti, a former CIA agent, and John Marks, a journalist. The book exposed a number of operations by the CIA that did not seem to be in the interests of democracy and that used methods an American might not be proud of. The CIA went to court asking that the publication of the book be stopped, or at least, that some 225 passages, affecting "national security" (or as Marchetti and Marks said, embarrassing the CIA) be omitted from the book.

Did the judge then invoke no prior restraint and say, We can't censor this book in advance; take action later if you like? No, the judge said I won't order 225 deletions from the book; I'll only order 168 deletions

Another bit of surgery on any citizen's innocent assumption that the First Amendment meant what it said. The book was published in 1972 with the court-ordered deletions. But the publisher left blank spaces sometimes entire blank pages, where the deletions were made. It is therefore, an interesting book to read, not only for what it tells about the CIA, but what it tells about the strength of the First Amendment.'

Or take the case of another CIA agent, Frank Snepp, who wrote book called *Decent Interval*. a sharp critique of the actions of the U.S. government and the CIA during the last-minute evacuation of American forces from Saigon in 1975. Snepp's book was not

stopped from publication, but the CIA sued Snepp for violation of his contract, in which he had agreed to submit his writings for CIA approval before publication. Snepp argued the agreement only applied to material classified secret and he had not used any classified material in his book.

The Supreme Court ruled six to three (in an atmosphere of secrecy- no briefs were submitted, no oral argument took place) that even without an agreement the CIA had a right to stop publication because "the government has a compelling interest in protecting the secrecy of information important to our national security." Because the book was already published, the Court ruled that all its royalties must go to the U.S. government. Any citizen who reads Decent Interval can decide whether Snepp in any way hurt "national security" by what he wrote or if that scary phrase was once again being used to prevent a free flow of ideas.

Free Speech and National Security

The powerful words of the First Amendment seem to fade with the sounds of war, or near war. The Sedition Act of 1798 expired, but in 1917 when the United States entered World War I, Congress passed another law in direct contradiction of the amendment's command that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." This was the Espionage Act of 1917.

Titles of laws can mislead. While the act did have sections on espionage, it also said that persons could be sent to prison for up to twenty years if, while the country was at war, they "shall willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty in the military or naval forces of the United States, or shall willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the U.S..

This was quickly interpreted by the government as a basis for prosecuting anyone who criticized, in speech or writing, the entrance of the nation into the European war, or who criticized the recently enacted conscription law. Two months after the Espionage Act was passed, a Socialist named Charles Schenck was arrested in Philadelphia for distributing 15,000 leaflets denouncing the draft and the war. Conscription, the leaflets said, was "a monstrous deed against humanity in the interests of the financiers of Wall Street.... Do not submit to intimidation."

Schenck was found guilty of violating the Espionage Act, and sentenced to six months in prison. He appealed, citing the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law . . ." The Supreme Court's decision was unanimous and written by Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose reputation was that of an intellectual and a liberal. Holmes said the First Amendment did not protect Schenck:

"The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic.... The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent."

It was a clever analogy. Who would think that the right of free speech extended to someone causing panic in a theater? Any reasonable person must concede that free speech is not the only important value. If one has to make a choice between someone's right to speak, and another person's right to live, that choice is certainly clear. No, there was no right to falsely shout fire in a theater and endanger human life.

A clever analogy, but a dishonest one. Is shouting fire in a crowded theater equivalent to distributing a leaflet criticizing a government policy? Is an antiwar leaflet a danger to life, or an attempt to save lives? Was Schenck shouting "Fire!" to cause a panic, or to alert his fellow citizens that an enormous conflagration was taking place across the ocean? And that they or their sons were in danger of being thrown into the funeral pyre that was raging there? To put it another way, who was creating a clear and present danger to the lives of Americans, Schenck, by protesting the war, or Wilson, by bringing the nation into it?

Also prosecuted under the Espionage Act was Socialist leader Eugene Debs, who had run against Wilson for the presidency in 1915 and 1916. Debs made a speech in Indiana in which he denounced capitalism, praised socialism, and criticized the war: "Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder.... And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class; has always fought the battles."

Debs's indictment said that he "attempted to cause and incite insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny and refusal of duty in the military forces of the U.S. and with intent so to do delivered to an assembly of people a public speech." Debs spoke to the jury:

"I have been accused of obstructing the war. I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war. I would oppose war if I stood alone. I have sympathy with the suffering, struggling people everywhere. It does not make any difference under what flag they were born, or where they live."

He was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison, the judge denouncing those "who would strike the sword from the hand of this nation while she is engaged in defending herself against a foreign and brutal power."

When the case came to the Supreme Court on appeal, again Oliver Wendell Holmes

spoke for a unanimous court, affirming that the First Amendment did not apply to Eugene Debs and his speech. Holmes said Debs made "the usual contrasts between capitalists and laboring men . . . with the implication running through it all that the working men are not concerned in the war." So, Holmes said, the "natural and intended effect" of Debs's speech would be to obstruct recruiting.'

Altogether, about 2,000 people were prosecuted and about 900 sent to prison, under the Espionage Act, not for espionage, but for speaking and writing against the war. Such was the value of the First Amendment in time of war.

Socialist leader Kate Richards O'Hare was sentenced to five years in prison because, the indictment claimed, she said in a speech that "the women of the United States were nothing more nor less than brood sows, to raise children to get into the army and be made into fertilizer.

A filmmaker was arrested for making the movie *The Spirit of '76* about the American Revolution, in which he depicted British atrocities against the colonists. He was found guilty for violating the Espionage Act because, the judge said, the film tended to question the good faith of our ally, Great Britain." He was sentenced to ten years in prison. The case was officially called *U.S. v. Spirit of '76*.

The Espionage Act remains on the books, to apply in wartime and in "national emergencies." In 1963 the Kennedy administration proposed extending its provisions to statements made by Americans overseas. Secretary of State Rusk cabled Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge in Vietnam, saying the government was concerned about American journalists writing "critical articles . . . on Diem and his government" that were "likely to impede the war effort."

Free speech is fine, but not in a time of crisis-so argue heads of state, whether the state is a dictatorship or is called a democracy. Has that not proved again and again to be an excuse for stifling opposition to government policy, clearing the way for brutal and unnecessary wars? Indeed, is not a time of war exactly when free speech is most needed, when the public is most in danger of being propagandized into sending their sons into slaughter? How ironic that freedom of speech should be allowed for small matters, but not for matters of life and death, war and peace.

On the eve of World War II, Congress passed still another law limiting freedom of expression. This was the Smith Act of 1940, which extended the provisions of the Espionage Act to peacetime and made it a crime to distribute written matter or to speak in such a way as to cause "insubordination or refusal of duty in the armed forces." The act also made it a crime to "teach or advocate" or to "conspire to teach or advocate" the overthrow of the government by force and violence.

Thus in the summer of 1941, before the United States was at war, the headquarters of the Socialist Workers party was raided, literature seized, and eighteen members of the party were arrested on charges of "conspiracy to advocate overthrow of the government of the United States by force and to advocate insubordination in the armed forces of the U.S." The evidence produced in court against them was not evidence of the use of violence or the planning of violence, but their writings and teachings in Marxist theory.

Their crime, it appeared was that they were all members of the Socialist Workers party, whose Declaration of Principles, said the judge who sentenced them to prison, was "an application of Marxist theories and doctrines to . . . social problems in America." The judge noted that in the raid of their headquarters a "large number of communistic books were seized." The appeal of the party to the federal courts lost, and the Supreme Court refused to take the case.

The Communist party, a bitter rival of the Socialist Workers party and a supporter of World War II, did not criticize its prosecution. After the war, it was itself prosecuted under the Smith Act, and its leaders sent to prison. Here, again, the evidence was a pile of seized literature, the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.

The First Amendment, said the Supreme Court, did not apply in this case. The "clear and present danger" doctrine laid down by Holmes was still a principle of constitutional law, and now Chief Justice Vinson gave it a bizarre twist. He said that while the danger of violent overthrow was not "clear and present," the conspiracy to advocate that in the future was a present conspiracy, and so, the conviction of the Communist leaders must stand.

The First Amendment was being subjected to what constitutional experts call "a balancing test," where the right of free expression was continually being weighed against the government's claims about national security. Most of the time, the government's claim prevailed. And why should we be surprised. Does the Executive Branch not appoint the federal judges and the prosecutors? Does it not control the whole judicial process?

It seems to me that the security of the American people. indeed of the world, cannot be trusted to the governments of the world, including our own. In crisis situations, the right of citizens to freely criticize foreign policy is absolutely essential, indeed a matter of life and death. National security is safer in the hands of a debating, challenging citizenry than with a secretive, untrustworthy government. Still, the courts have continued to limit free debate on foreign policy issues, claiming that national security overrides the First Amendment.

For instance, in the spring of 1986 a debate on problems in the Middle East was

scheduled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, between Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz and Zuhdi Terzi, a Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) observer at the United Nations. The State Department went into court to prevent Terzi from traveling from New York to Boston to participate in the debate, claiming that Terzi's appearance would hurt the U.S. government's policy not to recognize the PLO. The federal district court in Boston refused to stop Terzi, but the U.S. Court of Appeals accepted the government's argument, ordered Terzi to stay away, and the debate did not take place.

Various court decisions have upheld the right of the government to bar many artists and writers from entering the United States because of their political views and activities, for example, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the Italian playwright Dario Fo. Their books could be read, but their voices could not be heard.

A Latin-American journalist Patricia Lara, a citizen of Colombia, was kept from entering the United States in 1986 to attend a journalistic awards ceremony at Columbia University. What was revealed in the legal proceedings was that the Immigration and Naturalization Service had a "lookout book" containing the names of 40,000 people who were to be kept out of this country on grounds of national security.

Poet Margaret Randall gave up her American citizenship to live for seventeen years in Mexico, Cuba, and Nicaragua, but then married an American citizen and wanted to regain her citizenship and return to the United States. The Immigration and Naturalization Service insisted she could not return. In court, it quoted from five of her books, saying, "Her writings go beyond mere dissent . . . to support of Communist dominated governments." In short, she was being kept out because of her ideas. (After a long battle in the courts, she won her case in 1989.)

Again for reasons having to do with national security, the First Amendment has been declared to have "a different application" for men in the military service. This was the language used by Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist in the Court's decision in affirming the court-martial conviction of Howard Levy, an army doctor who served during the Vietnam War.

Levy had been charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice as guilty of conduct "unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" and of harming "good order and discipline" in the armed forces. As a physician stationed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Levy had supposedly said the following to enlisted men:

"The United States is wrong in being involved in the Vietnam war. I would refuse to go to Vietnam if ordered to do so.... If I were a colored soldier and were sent I would refuse to fight. Special Forces personnel are liars and thieves and killers of peasants and murderers of women and children."

Freedom of speech is supposed to protect even the strongest of words, but these words were too strong for Justice Rehnquist, who saw them as hurting the necessary discipline of the armed forces. He said, "The fundamental necessity of obedience . . . may render permissible within the military that which would be constitutionally impermissible outside it."

Earlier in the Vietnam War, an army lieutenant named John Dippel had tried to pin the Declaration of Independence to the wall of his barracks. This was not permitted by the commander of the base, and the army's legal office in Washington advised Dippel that he had no First Amendment right to do this.

Another Supreme Court decision, in 1980, ruled that a base commander in the military had a right to approve any written material circulated or posted on the base, saying, "While members of the military services are entitled to the protections of the First Amendment, the rights of military men must yield somewhat to meet certain overriding demands of discipline and duty."

As popular protest asserted itself powerfully during the Vietnam War and helped bring it to a close, in the higher reaches of government, democracy itself came to be looked on with suspicion.

In 1975 Samuel Huntington, a Harvard political scientist and adviser to presidents, wrote a report for the Trilateral Commission, a group of powerful men from government and business in the United States, Japan, and Western Europe. Huntington pointed to the protest movements of the sixties, saying, "The essence of the democratic surge of the 1960s was a general challenge to existing systems of authority, public and private." Huntington worried about the United States losing its dominant position in the world and wrote of "an excess of democracy." He said there might be "desirable limits to the extension of political democracy."

Police Powers and the First Amendment

... the national government can restrict freedom of speech in relation to foreign policy, through judicial reinterpretations of the First Amendment. But what about state laws restricting freedom of speech or press? For over a century, the First Amendment simply did not apply to the states, because it says, "Congress shall make no law." The states could make whatever laws they wanted.

And they did. In the years before the Civil War, as abolitionists began to print antislavery literature, the states of Georgia and Louisiana passed laws declaring the death penalty

for anyone distributing literature "exciting to insurrection" or with "a tendency to produce discontent among the free population . . . or insubordination among the slaves."

When in 1833 the Supreme Court had to decide if the Bill of Rights applied to the states, Chief Justice Marshall said that the intent of the Founding Fathers was that it should not. Indeed, James Madison had proposed an amendment forbidding the states from interfering with various rights including freedom of speech, and the Senate defeated it.

Madison's intent seemed finally to become part of the Constitution with the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, which said that no state "shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." But in 1894, someone wanting to make a speech on the Boston Common was arrested because he had not gotten a permit from the mayor as required by city law. When he claimed that the Fourteenth Amendment now prevented any state from depriving persons of liberty, including freedom of speech, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the mayor could "absolutely or conditionally forbid public speaking in a highway or public park," that the Fourteenth Amendment did not affect the "police powers" of the state.

This was a localized version of the national security argument for limiting freedom of speech, and it prevailed until 1925. In that year, 137 years after the ratification of the Constitution, the Supreme Court finally said that the states could not abridge freedom of speech, because of the Fourteenth Amendment. However, this still left freedom of speech as something to be balanced against the "police powers" of the states. In the years that followed, the balance would sometimes go one way, sometimes another, leaving citizens bewildered about how much they could depend on the courts to uphold their rights of free expression.

For instance, in 1949, after Chicago police arrested Father Terminiello, an anti-Semitic preacher who had attracted an angry crowd around his meeting hall, the Supreme Court ruled that the Terminiello had a First Amendment right to speak his mind, and the fact that this excited opposition should not be used as an excuse to stop his speech. It said that one "function of free speech under our system of government is to invite dispute."

Shortly after that, however, Irving Feiner, a college student in Syracuse, New York, was making a street corner speech from a small platform, denouncing the mayor, the police, the American Legion, and President Truman, when one of his listeners said to a policeman standing by, "You get that son-of-a-bitch off there before I do." The policeman arrested Feiner, and the Supreme Court upheld the arrest, saying this was not free speech but "incitement to riot," although the tumult and excitement around Terminiello's speech had been far greater than in Feiner's case.

The uncertainty continues. In 1963 the Supreme Court overturned the arrest of 187 black students assembling peacefully on the grounds of the South Carolina state capitol to protest racial discrimination. But three years later when a group of civil rights activists demonstrated peacefully on the grounds of a Tallahassee jail, the conviction was upheld. Justice Hugo Black said for the majority that people do not have a constitutional right to protest "whenever and however and wherever they please."

The right to distribute leaflets on public streets has been affirmed by the Supreme Court on a number of occasions, even when the street was privately owned, as in 1946 when the Court upheld the right of Jehovah's Witnesses to distribute their literature in a company town. It affirmed this conclusion (that when privately owned areas are open to public use, the First Amendment protections are not surrendered) in the 1968 case of union members distributing handbills about their labor dispute at a shopping mall.

Four years later, however, when a group of people were arrested in a shopping mall for distributing leaflets against the Vietnam War, the Court said they were properly arrested. What was the difference between this case and the other? The union people, the Court said, were expressing themselves about an issue connected with the shopping center. But the Vietnam War had nothing to do with the shopping center, so those people had no First Amendment right to express themselves.'

For a long time, the public has been led to believe in the magic word precedent. The idea is that the courts follow precedents, that if a decision has been made in a case, it will not be overturned in similar cases. Lawyers and judges understand however, what laypeople often do not, that, in the rough-and-tumble reality of the courts, precedent has as much solidity as a Ping-Pong ball. All a court has to do is to find some difference between two cases and it has grounds for giving a different opinion.

_ In other words, judges can always find a way of making the decision they want to make, for reasons that have little to do with constitutional law and much to do with the ideological leanings of the judges. I would suspect that the decision against the Vietnam leafleters had much more to do with the justices' feelings about the war than with the fact that the shopping mall was not itself involved in the war.

What of the First Amendment rights of high-school students? Here again we find such conflicting decisions as to make us very dubious about the strength of the First Amendment. In the sixties, the Supreme Court said that school officials in Iowa could not prohibit students from wearing black arm bands to protest the Vietnam War. It said, "We do not confine . . . First Amendment rights to a telephone booth or the four corners of a pamphlet or to supervised and ordained discussion in a school classroom."

We might have expected after this (if we had retained our innocence about the power of

precedent) that the Court would not allow high school officials to censor student publications. But in 1988, it ruled that a high-school principal in a suburb of St. Louis could cut out two pages of a student newspaper to eliminate stories on teenage pregnancy and on the effects of divorce on children.

The Court, straining to show the difference between this and the Iowa black arm band case, said, "The question whether the First Amendment requires a school to tolerate particular student speech . . . is different from the question whether the First Amendment requires a school affirmatively to promote particular student speech."

As it had done in the case of soldiers speaking their minds, the Court found that students were not the same as ordinary citizens in their rights. "The public schools do not possess all of the attributes of streets, parks, and other traditional public forums." So the First Amendment, shaky enough for ordinary citizens, is even more feeble when the issue is the right of free speech of soldiers, foreigners, and high-school students.

To this list of groups exempt from the usual protections of the First Amendment we must add another: prisoners. In a decision that at first glance looked like a rejection of the right of prison authorities to read and censor the mail of prisoners, the Supreme Court said that the state of California could not do this . . . except when the prison officials decided it was necessary for reasons of security. In other words, it left the issue up to the same people who wanted the censorship in the first place.

The point in all this recounting of cases is that citizens cannot depend on the First Amendment, as interpreted by the courts, to protect freedom of expression. One year the Court will declare, with inspiring words, the right of persons to speak or write as they wish. The next year they will take away that right.

A cloud of uncertainty hovers over how the Supreme Court will decide free speech cases. Nor is there any guarantee, if you decide to exercise your right of free expression by speaking in public or distributing literature, that the Supreme Court will even bear your case on appeal. It does not have to take appeals in free speech cases, and your chance of getting a hearing in the Supreme Court is about one out of eighty.

A young black man named Charles MacLaurin learned this by hard experience in the year 1963. That summer, he addressed a group of fifty black people in front of the courthouse in Greenville, Mississippi, protesting the arrest of several young black people who had been demonstrating against racial segregation. It was a peaceful meeting, in which MacLaunn criticized the conviction and urged that blacks register to vote to deal with such injustices. A police officer told McLaurin to move on. He said he had a right to speak and continued. He was arrested, charged with disturbing the peace and resisting arrest, found guilty by the local court, sentenced to six months in jail, and

this was affirmed by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

When he appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, he discovered the rule that most citizens (who grow up hearing again and again from some aggrieved person: "I'll take this to the Supreme Court!") don't know: Four of the nine justices must agree to take a case (in technical terms, to grant certiorari). Only three Supreme Court justices voted to take MacLaurin's case. By now, it was 1967, and so, four years after his conviction, he went to prison.

An even more serious problem with the First Amendment is that most situations involving freedom of expression never make it into the courts. How many people are willing or able to hire a lawyer, spend thousands of dollars, and wait several years to get a possible favorable decision in court? That means that the right of free speech is left largely in the hands of local police. What are policemen likely to be most respectful of- the Constitution, or their own "police powers"?

I was forced to think about this one day in 1961 when I was teaching at Spelman College and several black students showed up at my house to talk to me about their plan to go into downtown Atlanta to distribute leaflets protesting racial segregation in the city. They wanted to know from me, who taught a course in constitutional law, if they had a legal right to distribute leaflets downtown.

The law was plain. A series of Supreme Court decisions made the right to distribute leaflets on a public street absolute. It would be hard to find something in the Bill of Rights that was more clear cut than this.

I told my students this. But I knew immediately that I must tell them something else: that the law didn't much matter. If they began handing out leaflets on Peachtree Street and a white policeman (all police were white in Atlanta at that time) came along and said "Move!" what could they do? Cite the relevant Supreme Court cases to the policeman? "In *Lovell v. Griffin*, sir, as well as in *Hague v. C.I. O.* and *Largent v. Texas* . . . "

What was more likely at such a moment, that the policeman would fall prostrate before this recitation of Supreme Court decisions? Or that he would finger his club and repeat, "Move on!" At that moment the great hoax in the teaching of constitutional law, the enormous emphasis on the importance of Supreme Court decisions, would be revealed. What would decide the right of free expression of these black students in Atlanta in 1961, what would be more powerful-the words in the Constitution, or the policeman's club?

It wasn't until I began to teach constitutional law in the South, in the midst of the struggle against racial segregation, that I began to understand something so obvious

that it takes just a bit of thought to see it, something so important that every young person growing up in America should be taught it: Our right to free expression is not determined by the words of the Constitution or the decisions of the Supreme Court, but by who has the power in the immediate situation where we want to exercise our rights...

The Control of Information

We have not yet come to perhaps the most serious issue of all in regard to freedom of speech and press in the United States. Suppose all of the restrictions on freedom of speech were suddenly removed-the Supreme Court's limitations on the absolute words of the First Amendment, the power of the local police over people wanting to express themselves, the fear of losing one's job by speaking freely, and the chill on free speech caused by the secret surveillance of citizens by the FBI. Suppose we could say anything we want, without fear. Two problems would still remain. They are both enormous ones.

The first is Okay, suppose we can say what we want-how many people can we reach with our message? A few hundred people, or 10 million people? The answer is clear: It depends on how much money we have.

Let's say no one can stop us from getting up on a soapbox and speaking our mind. We might reach a hundred people that way. But if we were the Procter and Gamble Company, which made the soapbox, we could buy prime time for commercials on television, buy full-page ads in newspapers, and reach several million people.

In other words, freedom of speech is not simply a yes or no question. It is also a "how much" question. And how much freedom we have depends on how much money we have, what power we have, and what resources we have for reaching large numbers of people. A poor person, however smart, however eloquent, truly has very limited freedom of speech. A rich corporation has a great deal of it.

The writer A. J. Liebling, who wrote about freedom of the press, put it this way, "The person who has freedom of the press is the person who owns one." Owning a press gives you a lot more freedom of speech than having to write a letter to your local newspaper, hoping the editor publishes it. It takes more and more money to own a newspaper, and even if you owned one, it is harder and harder to prevent it being taken over by some giant corporation. At the end of World War II, more than 80 percent of the daily newspapers in the United States were independently owned. Forty years later only 28 percent were independent, the rest owned by outside corporations. And fifteen huge corporations controlled half of the nation's newspaper business.

Three television networks (CBS, ABC, and NBC) control about three-fourths of the prime time on television. With 90 million households owning TV sets, that gives those networks enormous influence on the American mind. Ten publishing companies have half of the \$10 billion in book sales. Four giants dominate the movie business.

Mergers and consolidations have created huge media empires, in which ordinary business corporations have bought out publishers, television stations, and newspapers. For instance, International Telephone and Telegraph (IT&T) merged with ABC television in the mid-sixties. Time, Inc. and Warner Communications, Inc. joined in the 1980s to form the world's largest media firm, worth \$18 billion. Ben Bagdikian, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of *The Media Monopoly*, summarized the situation: "When 50 men and women, chiefs of their corporations, control more than half the information and ideas that reach 220 million Americans, it is time for Americans to examine the institutions from which they receive their daily picture of the world."

Not only is the usefulness of the First Amendment dependent on wealth, but when occasionally a state legislature tries to remedy the situation slightly, the corporations plead the First Amendment. This is what happened in 1977 when the Massachusetts legislature said corporations could not spend money to influence a public referendum. The idea behind the law was that corporations could so dominate the debate around a public issue as to make freedom of speech on that issue meaningless for people without money.

The corporation lawyer, arguing before the Supreme Court, said,

"Money is speech." (He might have added, "And we have lots of money, so we should have lots of speech.") The Supreme Court decided heroically that the First National Bank of Boston should not be deprived of its First Amendment rights by limiting its use of money to influence a referendum.

The Supreme Court is clearly reluctant to put meaning in the First Amendment by recognizing the great inequality of resources and trying to do something about that. Back in 1969 it unanimously upheld the Federal Communications Commission's "fairness doctrine," which said people attacked on the air had a right to respond. But since then the Court has refused to interfere with the moneyed powers in broadcasting and their ability to keep off the air views they don't like.

In 1973 the Supreme Court decided that CBS had a right to refuse an ad placed by a group of business executives who opposed the war in Vietnam. Even the liberal Justice William O. Douglas went along with the majority, arguing that the government should not interfere with the right of CBS to sell time to whomever it wanted. In saying that, of

course, it was approving the right of CBS to interfere with the access of concerned citizens to television time.

Douglas argued that "TV and radio . . . are entitled to live under the laissez faire regime which the First Amendment sanctions." He was succumbing to the basic flaw in all of laissez-faire theory: It pretends to leave people free by keeping government out of a situation and ignores the fact that they are then left to the mercy of the rich in society.

The fairness doctrine itself, which is at least a step toward insisting that the broadcast media give time for opposing views, was considerably weakened by Congress in 1959, when it exempted news conferences and debates. This means that the president or any of his staff can hold news conferences, say whatever they want to a huge television audience, with no opportunity for rebuttal by political critics of the president. It also means that in the campaign for president, the debates between contenders can be limited to the Republican and Democratic parties, excluding minor parties. The Democratic party challenged the provision on news conferences, but the Supreme Court would not hear its appeal. The Socialist Workers party also went to court, claiming its presidential candidate had a right to be heard by the public. The Court refused to take the case.

The second enormous problem for free speech is this: Suppose no one—not government, not the police, not our employer—stops us from speaking our mind, but we have nothing to say. In other words what if we do not have sufficient information about what is happening in the country or in the world and do not know what our government is doing at home and abroad? Without such information, having the freedom to express ourselves does not mean much.

It is very difficult for the ordinary citizen to learn very much about what's going on, here or in other countries. There is so much to know. Things are so complicated. But what if, in addition to these natural limitations, there is a deliberate effort to keep us from knowing? In fact, that is the case, through government influence on the media, through self-censorship of the media (being prudent, as Mark Twain said), and through the government's lies and deceptions.

There is no democratic conscience at work when the government decides that it must manipulate the press on behalf of its foreign policy objectives. An editor of Strategic Review (A. G. B. Metcalf, also chairman of the board of trustees of Boston University), a right-wing publication dealing with military strategy, delivered a stern warning to the media in 1983:

"In a free democracy where every act, every appointment, every policy is subject to public questioning and public pressure, the mass media have a special responsibility for

not impairing, in the name of free speech, the credibility of its duly elected leadership upon whose success in a dangerous world the maintenance of that freedom depends.... This is a matter which-in the name of the First Amendment-has gotten completely out of hand."

It's the old argument of national security. It goes like this: We are in a dangerous conflict with a ruthless foe; our leaders are taking care of us in this conflict, so don't criticize them too much. Sure, we have a free press, but it must behave responsibly. Trust our leaders.

Metcalf is a private citizen, but undoubtedly he reflected some of the thinking in the highest circles of the government. Rather than trust the press to be responsible on its own, our government, for a long time has tried to use the press as an adjunct to official policy. Sometimes it fails. Sometimes it succeeds. . Here are a few examples of how it was done

In 1954 the U.S. government was secretly planning to overthrow the democratically elected government of Guatemala, which had decided to take back land from the United Fruit Company. A New York Times correspondent there, Sidney Gruson, thought it was the job of the press to report what it saw. His reports became troublesome. CIA Director Allen Dulles contacted his old Princeton classmate, Julius Ochs Adler, business manager of the Times, and Gruson was transferred to Mexico City.

In late 1960 the editor of The Nation magazine, Carey McWilliams, was informed by a Latin American specialist at Stanford University, just returned from Guatemala, that Cuban exiles were being trained in that country by the United States for an invasion of Cuba. McWilliams wrote an editorial on this and sent copies to all the major news media, including the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI). Neither the AP nor the UPI used the story. Nine days later, the New York Times reported that the president of Guatemala denied rumors of any pending invasion.

The press went on playing the role of adjunct to the government, even though the evidence of a U.S. sponsored invasion began to grow. Time magazine (which later confirmed that it was a CIA operation) at first talked of Castro's "continued tawdry little melodrama of invasion." This was right in line with the statement by the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations James J. Wadsworth, who said the Cuban charge of a planned invasion was "empty, groundless, false and fraudulent."

The White House asked the magazine New Republic not to print a planned story about the invasion preparations, and it complied. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., later referred to this as "a patriotic act which left me slightly uncomfortable."

Four days before the invasion began, Kennedy told a press conference, "There will not be under any conditions an intervention in Cuba by the U.S. armed forces." Kennedy knew that the CIA was using Latin Americans for the invasion. But he also knew that American pilots were flying some of the planes in the invasion. Four of those pilots were killed, but the circumstances of their deaths were withheld from their families. By the time of that press conference, the evidence of U.S. complicity in the invasion was clear, yet the press did not challenge Kennedy.

When the Times Latin American correspondent Tad Szulc prepared a story that the CIA was behind the invasion plans, and that the invasion itself was imminent, the big guns of the Times—publisher Orvil Dryfoos, editor Turner Catledge, and columnist James Reston—got together to edit Szulc's story to eliminate references to the CIA and to the imminence of the invasion. Instead of a headline running over four columns, it was given a one-column headline.

In their 1963 essay on the press and the Bay of Pigs, Victor Bernstein and Jesse Gordon wrote,

"The press had a right to be angry. It had been lied to, again and again, by President Kennedy, Allen W. Dulles, Dean Rusk, and everyone else.... But it also had the duty to be ashamed. No law required it to swallow uncritically everything that officialdom said. On the very day the American-planned, American-equipped expedition was landing at the Bay of Pigs, Secretary Rusk told a group of newsmen "The American people are entitled to know whether we are intervening in Cuba or intend to do so in the future. The answer to that question is no." Where was the editorial explosion that should have greeted this egregious lie?"

The general manager of the Associated Press, retiring in 1963, said, "When the President of the United States calls you in and says this is a matter of vital security, you accept the injunction."

The slavishness of the major media (with a few heroic exceptions) to the power and the bullying of government goes a long way toward nullifying that right declared in the First Amendment, "the freedom of the press." More instances of government influence on the media include the following.

I. When CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr managed to get a copy of the House of Representatives report on the CIA in ~1976 (a report suppressed and withheld from the public), he was investigated by the Justice Department and then fired by CBS.

∴ At one time the CIA secretly owned hundreds of media outlets and also used the services of at least fifty individuals who worked for news organizations in this country

and abroad, including Newsweek, Time, the New York Times, United Press International, CBS News, and various English-language newspapers all over the world.

3. After Ray Bonner, Central American correspondent for the New York Times, wrote a series of articles critical of U.S. policy in El Salvador in 1982, he was removed from his post.

4. In 1981 a new one-hour series titled Today's FBI began on national television. The program got official approval and support from William Webster, the director of the FBI, who was given veto power over all the scripts.

5. A CBS television show on the Vietnam War called Tour of Duty was given free use by the Pentagon of all sorts of military facilities, including helicopters, planes, and personnel. In return, the Pentagon was allowed to review and veto the scripts. The producer of the show, Ron Schwary, said, "The outlines are sent to Washington, and if they approve them, they're written and then the final approval is made through the project officer here."

6. In the 1980s a number of documentary films were labeled as propaganda by the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and denied the certificates that would enable them to be sent abroad. One of them was about children and drug problems. It had won an Emmy award and a prize at the American Film Festival but the USIA said it "distorts the real picture of youth in the U.S." A film on the historical roots of the Nicaraguan revolution was also refused certification because, the USIA said, it gave "an inaccurate impression of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua today."

7. President Jimmy Carter tried to discourage the Washington Post from printing a story about CIA payments to King Hussein of Jordan.

8. Also in the Carter era, a dispatch in the New York Times related, "The White House made several calls to officials of CBS News late last week to try to delete a long segment from the '60 Minutes' news program about American relations with the Shah of Iran and on the activities of Savak, the deposed Shah's secret police force." (The CIA had helped train the Savak, which was notorious for its use of torture and general brutality.)

9. In the spring of 1988 it was disclosed that the FBI was asking librarians to report suspicious behavior by library users. The American Library Association listed eighteen libraries that in the last two years were approached by the FBI. For instance, at the University of Maryland, FBI agents asked for information on the reading habits of people with foreign-sounding names.

10. During Reagan's administration, CBS News management kept toning down White

House correspondent Lesley Stahl's coverage of the president. Her scripts were changed a number of times to make her stories less critical of Reagan.

11. A documentary film made by Japanese scientists who rushed to Hiroshima just after the bombing to record the effects of the bombing on the city's residents was confiscated by the American army and then finished. But the film was not allowed to be shown until 1967. It was nicknamed in Japan "the film of illusion," because it was not supposed to exist.

12. When in 1981 the U.S. government leaked documents designed to prove that the Cubans, with the aid of the Soviet Union, were suddenly sending large amounts of arms to El Salvador—a claim that turned out to be a great deception—CBS correspondent Diane Sawyer and others reported it without a critical examination. It was an attempt to portray the rebellion in El Salvador as a foreign operation rather than arising from the terrible conditions in that country. National Wirewatch, a newsletter for editors of wire-service dispatches, criticized the wire services for "heeding in lock-step fashion" the "party line from Washington on Communist infiltration."

In general, according to Washington Post writer Mark Hertsgaard, during Reagan's presidency the press, although claiming objectivity, "was far from politically neutral—largely because of the overwhelming reliance on official sources of information." Hertsgaard said the press and television were "reduced . . . to virtual accessories of the White House propaganda apparatus." The role of a critical press was especially important at that time, because the supposed opposition party, the Democrats, "were a pathetic excuse for an opposition party—timid, divided, utterly lacking in passion, principle, and vision."

All this is not just a recent phenomenon. During World War II, the U.S. government put all sorts of pressure on the black press to support the war. Attorney General Francis Biddle pointed to news stories in the black press about racial clashes between white and black soldiers and said this hurt the war effort; he threatened to close down the black newspapers.

The evidence is powerful that the government has tried, often successfully, to manipulate the press. But, as Noam Chomsky has said, "It is difficult to make a convincing case for manipulation of the press when the victims proved so eager for the experience."

In short the First Amendment without information is not of much use. And if the media, which are the main source of information for most Americans, are distorting or hiding the truth due to government influence or the influence of the corporations that control them, then the First Amendment has been effectively nullified.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that in the United States we have no freedom of speech, no freedom of the press. There are totalitarian countries all over the world in which one can say that. In the Soviet Union, before Gorbachev's glasnost policies opened things up, such a flat statement would have been accurate. Here the situation is too complicated for that.

Perhaps the difference between totalitarian control of the press and democratic control of the press can be summed up by the observation of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky in their book *Manufacturing Consent: In Guatemala dissident journalists were murdered; in the United States they were fired or transferred.*

By reading the mainstream press carefully (the inner pages, the lower paragraphs, the quick one-day mention) it is possible to learn important things. Occasionally, there is a burst of boldness, as when the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Boston Globe* printed, in defiance of the government, the Pentagon Papers, revealing embarrassing facts about the Vietnam War. From time to time, honest, courageous pieces of reporting appear in the big newspapers.

A dissident media exists in the United States. Its editors and writers are not jailed. But they are starved for resources, their circulations limited. On the air, there is a glimmer of independence in cable television, which, of course, has only a small corner of the viewing population. There are small local radio stations (for example, WBAI in New York and Radio Pacifica on the West Coast) that run programs not heard on national radio.

Public radio and television teeters between constant caution and occasional courage. The MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour, the leading news program of national public television, concentrates on caution. It loads its programs with establishment spokesmen and cannot discuss any major issue without bringing in government officials and members of Congress. It is open to ultraconservatives, but not to radicals. For instance, it has never put on the air the leading intellectual critic of American foreign policy, a man who is a world-renowned scholar, Noam Chomsky. It would be as if, throughout the post-World War II period, Jean-Paul Sartre had been blacklisted in France and could not be heard by any mass audience. Courage was shown by Bill Moyers, who interviewed Noam Chomsky in two extraordinary sessions on public broadcasting.

We mislead ourselves if we think that "public television," because it has no commercial advertising, is therefore free. It depends on government funding, and it worries about corporate donations. Here is an Associated Press dispatch that appeared in the *New York Times* under the headline "Public Broadcasting Head Eyes Donors."

William Lee Hanley Jr., the new chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, wants to make educational radio and television programs such a good investment for

American businesses that they will readily donate more money.

The problem with free speech in the United States is not with the fact of access, but with the degree of it. There is some access to dissident views, but these are pushed into a corner. And there is some departure in the mainstream press from government policy, but it is limited and cautious. Some topics are given big play, others put in the back pages or ignored altogether. Subtle use of language, emphasis, and tone make a big difference in how the reading public will perceive an event.

Herman and Chomsky in Manufacturing Consent document this with devastating detail. They point out how the American press paid much attention to the genocide in Cambodia (which deserved attention, of course), but ignored the mass killings in East Timor, carried on by Indonesia with U.S. military equipment. They note the very large attention given to Arab terrorism and the small attention given to Israeli terrorism. They comment on the sensational coverage of the break-in of Democratic party headquarters (Watergate) and the very tiny coverage of the much more extensive series of break-ins by the FBI of the headquarters of the Socialist Workers party.

There is difference of opinion in the American mainstream press, but it is kept within bounds, just as there is difference between Republican and Democratic parties, but also within bounds. It is a puny pluralism that gives us a choice between Democrats and Republicans, Time and Newsweek, CBS, ABC, and NBC, MacNeil-Lehrer and William Buckley.

On a very small scale, I got a taste of American freedom of the press-its positive side and its limits-back in the mid-1970s. The Boston Globe, in the more open atmosphere created by Vietnam and Watergate and the increased skepticism of government, invited me and young Boston radical Eric Altmann (he had spent time in prison for trashing the offices of Harvard's Center for International Affairs) to alternate in writing a weekly column. We were to be the left counterpart of George Will and- William Buckley, conservatives whose columns appeared regularly on the Globe's Op-ed page.

And indeed, our columns appeared, uncensored, for more than a year. Probably no big-city newspaper in the country went as far as the Globe in opening its pages to radical views. But then two things happened. A column by Eric Mann critical of Israel was not run. When we went to the Globe building to protest, the person who regularly received our column explained to us sadly that the Globe had to think about its Jewish advertisers.

Not long after that, on Memorial Day 1976, I submitted my column as usual. It was not a traditional Memorial Day statement, celebrating military heroism and past wars, but a passionate ... statement against war. It certainly did not fit in neatly with the usual

Memorial Day pictures of veterans with caps and flags and the tributes to patriotism. The column didn't get printed. When I inquired, I was told that, in fact, no column of mine would appear again. There was a new editor of the op-ed page, who explained that the page needed less political material and more family columns. Buckley and Will, I noted, continued to appear. They seemed to constitute a family.

Lies, Deception, Secrecy

When the government acts in secrecy, free speech is thwarted, and democracy undermined. With World War II over, the two victorious nations, the United States and the Soviet Union, immediately became rivals in a race for world power. The cold war was on. In such an atmosphere, the openness of a democratic society was bound to suffer.

The National Security Council was created in 1947 to consult with the president on foreign policy. Established with it, presumably to feed it information and advise it, was the Central Intelligence Agency. National Security Council Report #68, prepared in early 1950 under the direction of Secretary of State Dean Acheson, called for a larger military establishment. It also said that people had to "distinguish between the necessity for tolerance and the necessity for just suppression." It worried about the "excess of tolerance degenerating into indulgence of conspiracy."

The mood of the government became the mood of vigilantism, which might be expressed this way: We are good. Our enemy is evil. We mustn't tie our hands with the law, the Constitution, democratic procedures, or the ordinary rules of decency. In 1954 Lieutenant General James Doolittle, appointed by President Eisenhower to head a commission to advise him on foreign policy matters, reported back that what was needed was

" an aggressive covert psychological, political and paramilitary organization - more effective, more unique and, if necessary, more ruthless than that employed by the enemy. No one should be permitted to stand in the way of the prompt, efficient, and secure accomplishment of this mission.... There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply."

The commission was just putting into frank language what the United States, like other imperial powers in the world, had been doing throughout its history, long before there was a "Communist threat." But there was something different now in the language of the Doolittle Commission-the word covert. It is always a tribute to the citizenry when a government must do its dirty deeds in secrecy. The phrase covert operations was defined in National Security Council memorandum #5412 of March 15, 1954, as "all activities . . . which are so planned and executed that any U.S. Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the

U.S. Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them."

When the Doolittle Commission made its report, covert actions had already begun. The CIA had already tried to influence elections in Italy (that had to be secret; wasn't this country always talking about "free elections"?). In 1953 the CIA successfully engineered a coup in Iran to overthrow the nationalist leader Mossadegh, because he was too unfriendly to our oil corporations. And in the very year of the report, the United States was preparing to overthrow the government of Guatemala.

The excuse for covert action is that telling the truth will endanger the country, while secrecy will save lives. But secrecy may result in the taking of people's lives, behind the backs of the public, which if it knew what was happening, might stop it. People were killed in the coup that put the shah back on the throne of Iran; many more were killed by the shah's police afterward. The secret operation in Guatemala resulted in a police state that later killed tens of thousands of Guatemalans. In the invasion of Cuba, thousands died. Secrecy did not save lives.

Nor did it save lives in Vietnam. The secret undermining of the elections that were supposed to take place in 1956 to unite Vietnam led to a hard division between North and South, and ultimately to a war that cost over a million lives. What if the American public had been told what the government recorded secretly in the Pentagon Papers-that the South Vietnamese government whose independence we were supposedly defending was "essentially the creation of the United States"? And that "only the Viet Cong had any real support and influence on a broad base in the countryside"? Perhaps the movement to stop the war would have started sooner and saved countless lives.

The covert actions in Chile that overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in 1973 was, in part, a conspiracy between the CIA and IT&T, according to a 1975 Senate report. It led to a murderous regime whose death squads killed thousands of Chileans and engaged in torture and mutilation. Suppose the American people had known that our government was interfering in an honest election and putting a military dictatorship in place? Might there not have been a public protest, and perhaps a change in policy?

Is not that one of the purposes of the First Amendment, to enable the free flow of information, so that policies in the interests of the citizenry can be pursued, so that a few people at the head of government cannot secretly, with no accountability to the public, do things that later make the citizenry ashamed of its own government?

It was the World War II experience that led influential American journalist Walter Lippmann to distrust public opinion, and, therefore, to support government secrecy: "The unhappy truth is that the prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at

the critical junctures. The people have imposed a veto upon the judgments of informed and responsible officials."

Years later, when the United States began military action in Vietnam, Lippmann knew it was wrong. His old words must have haunted him. Because here was a case when public opinion, once it learned what was happening in Vietnam, was right in wanting out, and the "informed and responsible officials" were continuing an unspeakably brutal war.

Taking Our Liberties

If the government deceives us and the press more or less collaborates with it-to keep us from knowing what is going on in the most important matters of politics: life and death, war and peace-then the existence of the First Amendment will not help us. Unless, of course, we begin to act as citizens, to put life into the amendment's promise of freedom of expression by what we do ourselves. British novelist Aldous Huxley (Brave New World) once said, "Liberties are not given; they are taken."

We, as citizens, want freedom of expression for two reasons. First, because in itself it is fundamental to human dignity, to being a person, to independence, to self-respect, to being an important part of the world, and to being alive. Second, because we badly need it to help change the world and to bring about peace and justice.

We should know by now that we cannot count on the courts, the Congress, or the presidency, to assure us the freedom to speak, to write, to assemble, and to petition. We cannot count on the government or the mainstream press to give us the information necessary to be active, critical citizens. And we cannot count on those who own the media to give us the opportunity to reach large numbers of people.

Therefore, it seems Huxley is right; we will have to take our liberties. Historically, that has always been the case. Despite the Sedition Act after the American Revolution, in which some people were jailed for criticizing the government, hundreds of other pamphleteers and writers insisted, at the risk of prison, on writing as they pleased. They took their liberty.

We need to remind ourselves of individuals who have insisted on their freedom to speak their minds. Emma Goldman was a feminist and anarchist of the early twentieth century whose views on patriotism, (agreeing with Samuel Johnson, "the last refuge of a scoundrel"), on preparedness for war ("violence begets violence"), on marriage ("it has nothing to do with love; it is an insurance contract"), on free love ("what is love if it is not free?") and on birth control ("a woman should decide for herself whether or not she

wants a baby") outraged many people and certainly the authorities.

She lectured all over the United States, and wherever she went, the police were there to stop her. In one month, May 1909, police broke up eleven meetings at which she spoke. She was arrested again and again. But she kept coming back.

In San Francisco, she spoke to 5,000 people on patriotism; the crowd stood between her and the police, and the police retreated. When she came back to San Francisco the following year, the police broke up the meeting, using their clubs on members of the audience.

In East Orange, New Jersey, police blocked the entrance to the lecture hall. She spoke to her audience on the lawn. In San Diego, a mob kidnapped her lover and manager and tarred and feathered him. She insisted on coming back to San Diego to speak the next year.

When she lectured on birth control and the use of contraceptives, she was repeatedly arrested. But she refused to stop.

She opposed U.S. entrance into World War I, as most Socialists and anarchists did. She knew she was in danger for encouraging young men to resist the draft, but she continued to speak. She was tried and imprisoned for two years, and when she came out of prison she was deported from this country. But she continued to speak her mind on American events-the Tom Mooney case and the case of Sacco and Vanzetti- flinging her thoughts across the ocean, during her long exile in Europe.'

In the decade before World War I, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical trade union, was organizing all workers- skilled and unskilled, men and women, native born and foreign-into "One Big Union." IWW organizers, going to speak in cities in the far west to miners and lumberjacks and mill workers, were arrested again and again. They refused to stop. They engaged in what they called "Free Speech Fights": when one of them was put in jail, hundreds of others would come into that town and speak and be arrested until the jails could not hold them and they were released. But they refused to be silent.

This is always the price of liberty-taking the risk of going to jail, of being beaten and perhaps being killed.

There is another risk for people speaking and organizing in the workplace: loss of one's job. Historically, the only way workers, subject to the power of a foreman or an employer, could have freedom of expression, was to join with other workers and form a union so that they could collectively defend themselves against the power of the

employer.

Freedom of the press depends on the energy and persistence of people in developing their own newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets, to say things that will not appear in the mainstream press. Throughout American history, these little publications, pressed for money, have managed to form a kind of underground press.

The Populist Movement of the late nineteenth century spread literature throughout the farm country, north and south. The Socialist press of the early twentieth century was read by 2 million people. Black people, taking a cue from the first abolitionist newspaper printed by a black man in 1829, developed their own newspapers, because they knew they could not depend on the orthodox press to tell the truth about the race situation in the United States.

When in the 1950s journalist I. F. Stone decided he could not count on having an outlet in the regular press, he published his own little four-page newspaper. I. F. Stone's Weekly contained information unavailable elsewhere, which Stone, in Washington, D.C., put together by reading obscure government documents and the Congressional Record; it soon became a famous source of reliable facts. The first rule of journalism, Stone declared, is that "governments lie," and so alternate sources of information are desperately needed if we are to have a democracy.

The movements of the sixties—the black movement, the antiwar movement, the women's movement, and the prisoners' rights movement—produced an enormous underground press. There were 500 underground high-school newspapers alone.

Soldiers against the Vietnam War put out their newspapers on military bases around the country. By 1970 there were fifty of them: About Face in Los Angeles; Fed Up in Tacoma, Washington; Short Times at Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Last Harass at Fort Gordon, Georgia; Helping Hand at Mountain Home Air Base, Idaho.

Underground newspapers sprang up during the war in cities all over the country. In early 1969 J. Edgar Hoover instructed his field offices to target these publications. FBI agents raided and ransacked the offices of newspapers in San Diego, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Jackson, and other places. Advertisers were persuaded to withdraw. One landlord after another agreed to evict newspapers from their offices. The Underground Press Syndicate and Liberation News Service became targets of FBI infiltrators.

By 1972 these attacks badly crippled the underground press. But slowly it made its way back and today around the country community newspapers continue to print material not found in the regular media.

In the past few years, a new form of free speech has become important: "whistle-blowing." A whistle-blower is a person who risks his or her job with the government or with a large corporation to expose truths that have been kept under wraps.

For instance, Pentagon employee A. Ernest Fitzgerald embarrassed his employer in 1969 by telling Congress that a transport plane ordered by the air force would cost \$.5 billion more than it expected to pay. Fitzgerald was dismissed from the Pentagon, then reinstated but given lesser assignments.

Dr. Jacqueline Verrett, of the Bureau of Foods of the Food and Drug Administration, granted an interview with a television reporter. She was told never to speak to the press again. She was warned (in her words), "not to answer my phone but to get someone else to answer it and say I wasn't there."

Nevertheless, Fitzgerald and Verrett continued to speak their minds. So did others. A safety engineer with the Ford Motor Corporation exposed the fact that Ford, to save money, had chosen a gas tank that was prone to rupture under stress. Peter Faulkner, an engineer, exposed faults in a nuclear device made by General Electric. He was called in to discover why he had such "deep-seated hostility." Then he was fired. But he published a book about his experienced.

It takes courage to divulge information embarrassing to the government, especially when there are laws that can be used to imprison you for doing that. Daniel Ellsberg faced 30 years under the Espionage Act for photocopying the 7,000 pages of the Pentagon Papers and sending them to the newspapers, to expose the truth about the war in Vietnam. But he went ahead.

It is impossible to judge the impact of those papers on the public, but it is reasonable to assume that the several million people who read the Times, the Washington Post, and the Boston Globe learned things about the war they had not known before. This, along with all the other disclosures about the war going on at the time, helped turn public opinion against the war. But Ellsberg, and codefendant Tony Russo, had to risk prison to make the First Amendment come alive.

During the Vietnam War, with the government lying and with the press slow in getting past official propaganda, a whole network of techniques was developed to spread information about the war. There were teach-ins on college campuses, alternative newspapers, rallies, picket lines, demonstrations, petitions, ads in newspapers, and graffiti on walls.

In Southeast Asia an alternative news organization was created- Dispatch News Service- which sent out news items revealing what the government was keeping secret, like the

story of the My Lai massacre.

The thousands of acts of civil disobedience during the war were acts of communication, small works of art, appealing to the deepest feelings of people. Art plays a critical role in any social movement, because it intensifies the movement's messages. It tries to make up for the lack of money and resources by passion and wit. It communicates through music, drama, speech, demonstrative action, drawings, posters, songs, surprise, sacrifice, and risk.

During the Vietnam War, a very successful commercial artist (Seymour Chwast) turned his talents to the antiwar movement, and produced a poster with a simple design and eight large words printed on it: **WAR IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS. INVEST YOUR SON.**

It was chilling and powerful. It was just part of the work of hundreds of thousands of people all over the country, speaking to millions of people in many different ways, bringing life to the First Amendment and an end to a war.

 **Declarations of Independence**

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



excerpted from

Economic Justice: The American Class System

from the book

Declarations of Independence

by Howard Zinn

publisher - HarperCollins



Rugged Individualism and Self-Help

Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." (Or as amended by women who gathered in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, at a women's rights convention: "that all men and

women are created equal." Or as a possible children's convention might say: "that all children are created equal.")

A common reaction to Jefferson's phrase "created equal" is that it is just not so; people are endowed with different physical and mental capacities, and with different talents, drives, and energies. But this is a misreading of the Declaration of Independence. There is no period after the word "equal," but a comma, and the sentence goes on: "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." In other words, people are equal not in their natural abilities but in their rights.

Jefferson said this was "self-evident," and I would think that most people would agree. But some selves do not think it evident at all. We know that Jefferson and the Founding Fathers, almost all of whom were very wealthy, did not really mean for that equality to be established, certainly not between slave and master, not between rich and poor. And when, eleven years after they adopted the Declaration, they wrote a constitution, it was designed to keep the distribution of wealth pretty much as it existed at the time-which was very unequal. But that is no reason for anyone to surrender those rights, any more than the ignoring of the racial equality demanded by the Fourteenth Amendment was reason for discarding that goal.

To say that people have an equal right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, means that if, in fact, there is inequality in those things, society has a responsibility to correct the situation and to ensure that equality.

Not everyone thinks so. One man whose thinking was close to that of the Reagan administration in the eighties (Charles Murray, *Losing Ground*) wrote enthusiastically about doing away with government aid to the poor: "It would leave the working-aged person with no recourse whatsoever except the job market, family members, friends, and public or private locally funded services."

It is a restatement of laissez-faire-let things take their natural course without government interference. If people manage to become prosperous, good. If they starve, or have no place to live, or no money to pay medical bills, they have only themselves to blame; it is not the responsibility of society. We mustn't make people dependent on government- it is bad for them, the argument goes. Better hunger than dependency, better sickness than dependency.

But dependency on government has never been bad for the rich. The pretense of the laissez-faire people is that only the poor are dependent on government, while the rich take care of themselves. This argument manages to ignore all of modern history, which shows a consistent record of laissez-faire for the poor, but enormous government

intervention for the rich.

The great fortunes of the first modern millionaires depended on the generosity of governments. In the British colonies of North America, how did certain men obtain millions of acres of land? Certainly not by their own hard work, but by government grants. The British Crown gave one semi-feudal proprietor control of all of the land of Maryland. How did Captain John Evans of New York get an area of close to half a million acres? Simply because he was a friend of Governor Fletcher who granted three-fourths of the land of New York to about thirty people.'

After the Revolutionary War, the new Constitution of the United States was drafted by fifty-five men who were mostly wealthy slave-owners, lawyers, merchants, bondholders, and men of property. Their guiding philosophy was that of Alexander Hamilton, George Washington's closest adviser and the first secretary of the treasury. Hamilton wrote, "All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people.... Give therefore to the first class a distinct permanent share in the government."

The Founding Fathers, whether liberal like James Madison or conservative like Alexander Hamilton, felt the same way about the relationship of government and the wealthy classes. Madison and Hamilton collaborated on a series of articles (The Federalist Papers) to persuade voters in New York to ratify the new Constitution. In one of these articles (Federalist #10). Madison urged ratification on the grounds that the new government would be able to control class conflict, which came from "the various and unequal distribution of property." By creating a large republic of thirteen states, the Constitution would prevent a "majority faction" from creating trouble. "The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States."

What kind of trouble was Madison worried about? He was blunt. "A rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal distribution of property, or for any other improper or wicked project." Like the other makers of the Constitution, he wanted a government that would be able to control the rebellion of the poor, the kind of rebellion that had just taken place in western Massachusetts when farmers, unable to pay their debts, refused to let the courts take over their farms.

The Constitution set up a government that the rich could depend on to protect their property. The phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," which appeared in the Declaration of Independence, was dropped when the Constitution was adopted, and the new phrase, which became part of the Fifth Amendment and later the Fourteenth Amendment, was "life, liberty, or property."

In 1987 the Mobil Oil Corporation celebrated the adoption of that phrase in ads appearing in eight major newspapers, reaching so million people:

"Why was property so important as to be included with life and liberty as a fundamental right? Because the Framers saw it as one of the great natural rights . . . to keep what one had earned or made-that ought to be forever secure from the tyranny of governments or any covetous majority."

That phrase "covetous majority" goes back to Madison's feared majority wanting "an equal division of property, or . . . any other improper or wicked project."

The new government of the United States began immediately to give aid to the rich. Congress passed a Fugitive Slave Act to enforce the provision in the Constitution that persons "held to Service or Labor in one State" who escaped into another "shall be delivered up" to the owner.

"Why make the slave-owner dependent on the government?" a slave, holding to the conservative idea of rugged individualism, might ask. "You want your slave back? You're on your own."

The first Congress also adopted the economic program of Alexander Hamilton, which provided money for bankers setting up a national bank, subsidies to manufacturers in the form of tariffs, and a government guarantee for bondholders. To pay for all those subsidies to the rich, it began to exact taxes from poor farmers. When farmers in western Pennsylvania rebelled against this in 1794 (Whiskey Rebellion), the army was sent to enforce the laws.

This was only the beginning in the history of the United States of the long dependency of the rich on the government. In the decades before the Civil War, great fortunes were made because state legislatures gave special help to capitalists. The builders of railroads and canals, needing large sums of money, were not told Raise your own capital. They became dependents of the government, using their initial capital not to start construction, but to bribe legislators. In Wisconsin in 1856 the LaCrosse and Milwaukee Railroad got a million acres free, after distributing about \$900,000 in stocks and bonds to seventy-two state legislators and the governor.

Altogether, in the decade of the 1850s, state governments gave railroad speculators 25 million acres of public land, free of charge, along with millions of dollars in loans. During the Civil War, the national government gave a gift of over 100 million acres to various railroad capitalists.

The first transcontinental railroad was not built by laissez-faire. The railroad capitalists

did it with government land and money. The great romantic story of the American railroads owes everything to government welfare. The Central Pacific, starting on the West Coast, got 9 million acres of free land and \$24 million in loans (after spending \$200,000 in Washington for bribes). The Union Pacific, starting in Nebraska and going west, got 12 million acres of free land and \$27 million in government loans.

And what did the government do for the 20,000 workers-war veterans and Irish immigrants-who laid five miles of track a day, who died by the hundreds in the heat and the cold? Did it give their families a bit of land as payment for their sacrifice? Did it give loans to the 10,000 Chinese and 3,000 Irish, who worked on the Central Pacific for \$1 or \$2 a day? No, because that would be welfare, a departure from the principle of laissez-faire.

The historical practice in the United States of aid to the rich and laissez-faire for the poor was particularly evident in the 1920S, when the secretary of the treasury was Andrew Mellon. One of the wealthiest men in America, he sat atop a vast empire of coal, coke, gas, oil, and aluminum. Mellon cut taxes for the very rich, whose high living gave the decade its name "The Jazz Age." Meanwhile, many millions of Americans lived in poverty, with no aid from the government."

When the nation's economy collapsed after the stock market crash of 1929, a third of the labor force lost their jobs. Hunger and homelessness spread all over the country, and the historian Charles Beard wrote an essay called "The Myth of Rugged American Individualism." He noted the hypocrisy of those who said the poor should make it on their own. He recounted the ways in which the government had aided the business world: regulation of the railroads and donation of hundreds of millions of dollars to improve rivers and harbors and to build canals. Government also granted subsidies to the shipping business, built highways, and gave huge gifts to manufacturers (at the expense of consumers) through higher and higher tariffs.

Beard pointed to the use of the nation's military force to help business interests around the world, a most crass violation of the laissez-faire philosophy. In our time, the dependence of very rich corporations on the military power of the United States and on its secret interventions in other countries has become very clear. In 1954, the CIA organized the overthrow of the elected president of Guatemala to save the properties of the United Fruit Company. In 1973 the U.S. government worked with the IT&T Corporation to overthrow the elected socialist leader of Chile, Salvador Allende. Allende had not been friendly enough to the foreign corporations that exploited Chile's wealth for so long.

In 1946 a secret air force guideline (which became public knowledge when it was declassified in 1960) said that the aircraft companies would go out of business unless the government made sure they got contracts. Since that time certain major aircraft

companies have depended totally for their existence on government contracts: Lockheed, North America, and Aero-Jet.

The giant businesses depend on the government to arrange tax schedules that will, in some cases, permit them to pay no taxes, in other cases, to pay a much smaller percentage of income than the average American family. For instance, five of the top twelve American military contractors in 1984, although they made substantial profits from their contracts, paid no federal income taxes. The average tax rate for those twelve contractors, who made \$19 billion in profits for 1981, 1982, and 1983, was 1.5 percent. Middle-class Americans paid 15 percent.

All through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, landlords have depended on the government to suppress the protests of tenants (for instance, the anti-rent movement of the 1840S in the Hudson River Valley of New York) and to enforce evictions (as in the thousands of evictions during the Depression years). Employers have depended on local government's use of police and the federal government's use of soldiers to break strikes—as in the railway strikes of 1877, the eight-hour day strikes of 1886, the Pullman rail boycott of 1894, the Lawrence textile strike of 1912, the Colorado coal strike of 1913, the auto and rubber and steel strikes of the 1930S, and hundreds more. If those employers were truly "rugged individualists," as they asked their workers to be, they would have rejected government aid.

Furthermore, employers with the money to hire lawyers and to influence judges have depended on the courts to declare strikes and boycotts illegal, to limit picketing, and to put strike leaders in jail (as when Eugene Debs, the leader of the Pullman strike and boycott of 1894, was jailed for six months because he would not call off the strike)

Through the nineteenth century, according to legal historian Morton Horwitz, the courts made clear their intention to protect the business interests. Mill owners were given the legal right to destroy other people's property by flood to carry on their business. The law of "eminent domain" was used to take farmers' land and give it to canal companies or railroad companies as subsidies. Judgments for damages against businessmen were taken out of the hands of juries, which were unpredictable, and given to judges. Horwitz concludes,

By the middle of the nineteenth century the legal system had been reshaped to the advantage of men of commerce and industry at the expense of farmers, workers, consumers, and other less powerful groups within the society. . . . It actively promoted a legal redistribution of wealth against the weakest groups in the society.'

Yet when someone advocates "a legal redistribution of wealth" on behalf of the poor, the cry goes up against "government interference" and for "rugged individualism."

After the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment's phrase "life, liberty, or property," which turned out to be useless to protect the liberty of black people, was used in the courts to protect the property of corporations. Between 1890 and 1910, of the cases involving the Fourteenth Amendment that came before the Supreme Court, ~9 were concerned with the lives and liberties of blacks and 288 dealt with the property rights of corporations.

The working conditions in American industry during that much praised time of speedy industrialization were horrible and also legal. (The Senate's Committee on Industrial Relations reported that in the year ~914 alone, 3S,°° workers were killed in industrial accidents and 700,000 injured.) This led to thousands of strikes, and to demands for protective legislation.

But when the New York legislature passed a law limiting bakery workers to a ten-hour day, six-day week, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1905 declared this law unconstitutional, saying it violated "freedom of contract." It took the economic crisis of the 1930S and the turmoil it produced to get the Supreme Court to reverse its stand and approve a minimum wage law in Washington, D.C. The Court in 1937 decided that the freedom of contract was not as important as the freedom to be healthy. "

However, the Supreme Court has been careful to keep intact the present distribution of wealth and the benefits in health and education that come from that wealth. In ~973 it decided a case where poor people in Texas, seeing that much less money was allocated for the schools in a poor county than in a rich one, sued for the right of poor children to equal funds for their education. The Court turned down their plea, saying that these children (mostly Mexican-American) were not completely denied an education, but just denied an equal education, and education was not a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution.

Clearly, the same would apply to the right to food and medical care, which, like education, are not specifically mentioned in the Constitution as fundamental rights. One constitutional lawyer, however, has argued that the Fourteenth Amendment's requirement that no state can deprive any person of "life" ("life, liberty, or property") could be used to provide an equal right of the poor to food, medical care, a job. Professor Edward V. Sparer of the University of Pennsylvania Law School has said:

We guarantee income to farmers for not producing crops. We guarantee subsidies to railroads and to oil companies. It seems to me only reasonable that we should guarantee the subsidy of life to those who are starving and to those without shelter or medicine—reasonable not only on humanitarian grounds, but because there is a 14th Amendment, which guarantees equal protection of the laws.

Most of the accumulation of wealth is strictly legal. And if any question comes up about

the legality of corporate behavior, lawyers are available to straighten out any accuser. The columnist Russell Baker once wrote, "There are plenty of rich men who have no yachts and others who have no Picassos.... Every last one of them, however has a lawyer.... Having a lawyer is the very essence of richness.... What we have here is a class structure defined by degree of access to the law '

When the rich commit the truly grand larcenies, which become too flagrant to ignore, their lawyers work out deals with the government and no one goes to jail, as would happen to a petty thief. For instance, in 1977 the Federal Energy Administration found that the Gulf Oil Corporation had overstated by \$79 million its costs for crude oil obtained from foreign affiliates. It then passed on these false costs to consumers. The following year the administration announced that to avoid going into a court of law, Gulf would pay back \$42 million. Gulf cheerfully informed its stockholders that "the payments will not affect earnings since adequate provision was made in prior years." One wonders if a bank robber would be let off if he were to return half his loot.

Jimmy Carter was president at that time. It seemed that liberal Democrats did not behave terribly different from conservative Republicans where wealthy corporations were involved.

Adam Smith's famous book *The Wealth of Nations*, published around the time of the American Revolution, is considered one of the bibles of capitalism. He spoke candidly on the class character of governments:

"Laws and governments may be considered in this and indeed in every case as a combination of the rich to oppress the poor, and preserve to themselves the inequality of the goods which would otherwise be soon destroyed by the attacks of the poor, who if not hindered by the government would soon reduce the others to an equality with themselves by open violence."

Around the same time, Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, an imaginative account of how government and laws came into existence, and concluded that society and laws which gave new fetters to the weak and new forces to the rich, irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, established forever the law of property and of inequality, changed adroit usurpation into an irrevocable right, and for the profit of a few ambitious men henceforth subjected the entire human race to labor, servitude, and misery.

A roughly similar point was made in the 1980s, by a black taxi driver in Los Angeles, who was interviewed by a filmmaker about "democracy." The man laughed and said, "We have government by the dollar, of the dollar, for the dollar."

Surely we need to clear guilt from the air in the poorer districts of our cities (there are enough impurities there already) by asking: Why shouldn't people in need be dependent on the government, which presumably was set up exactly for the purpose of ensuring the well-being of its citizens? The words promote the general welfare do appear in the Preamble to the Constitution, even if ignored in the rest of it.

Indeed, is there such a thing in this complicated society of the twentieth century as true independence? Are we not all dependent on one another, and is that not a necessity of modern life? We all depend on the government for schools, garbage collection, protection against fire and theft, and many other things. Welfare is only one kind of dependency.

 **Declarations of Independence**

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



excerpted from

The Use and Abuse of History

from the book

Declarations of Independence

by Howard Zinn

publisher - HarperCollins



[Henry] Kissinger, secretary of state to Nixon, ... surrendered himself with ease to the princes of war and destruction. In private discussions with old colleagues from Harvard who thought the Vietnam War immoral, he presented himself as someone trying to bring it to an end, but in his official capacity he was the willing intellectual tool of a policy that involved the massive killing of civilians in Vietnam.

Kissinger approved the bombing and invasion of Cambodia, an act so disruptive of the delicate Cambodian society that it can be considered an important factor in the rise of the murderous Pol Pot regime in the country. After he and the representatives of North Vietnam had negotiated a peace agreement to end the war in late 1972, he approved the

breaking off of the talks and the brutal bombardment of residential districts in Hanoi by the most ferocious bombing plane of the time, the B-52.

[Henry] Kissinger's biographers describe his role [in the bombing of Cambodia]: "If he had disapproved of Nixon's policy, he could have argued against the Cambodian attack. But there is no sign that he ever mustered his considerable influence to persuade the President to hold his fire. Or that he ever considered resigning in protest. Quite the contrary, Kissinger supported the policy."

We had been brought up to believe that our political leaders had good motives and could be trusted to do right in the world; we had learned that the world had good guys and bad guys, good countries and bad countries, and ours was good. We had been trained to fly planes, fire guns, operate bombsights, and to take pride in doing the job well. And we had been trained to follow orders, which there was no reason to question, because everyone on our side was good, and on the other side, bad. Besides, we didn't have to watch a little girl's leg' get blown off by our bombs; we were 30,000 feet high and no human being on the ground was visible, no scream could be heard. Surely that is enough to explain how men can participate in war.

Once in the war [Vietnam], the tensions of combat on top of the training in obedience produced atrocities. In the My Lai Massacre we have an extreme example of the power of a culture in teaching obedience. In My Lai, a hamlet in South Vietnam, a company of U.S. soldiers landed by helicopter early one morning in March 1968, with orders to kill everybody there. In about one hour, although not a single shot was fired at them, they slaughtered about 400 Vietnamese, most of them old people, women, and children. Many of them were herded into ditches and then mowed down with automatic rifles.

One of the American soldiers, Charles Hutto, said later, "The impression I got was that we was to shoot everyone in the village.... An order came down to destroy all of the food, kill all the animals and kill all the people ... then the village was burned.... I didn't agree with the killings but we were ordered to do it.

In May of 1976 the New York Times published a series of articles in which it lamented the ignorance of American students about their own history. The Times was pained. Four leading historians whom it consulted were also pained. It seemed students did not know that James Polk was president during the Mexican War, that James Madison was

president during the War of 1812, that the Homestead Act was passed arlier than Civil Service reform, or that the Constitution authorizes Congress to regulate interstate commerce but says nothing about the cabinet.

We might wonder if the Times, or its historian-consultants, learned anything from the history of this century. It has been a century of atrocities: the death camps of Hitler, the slave camps of Stalin, and the devastation of Southeast Asia by the United States. All of these were done by powerful leaders and obedient populations in countries that had achieved high levels of literacy and education. ...

In the case of the United States the killing of a million Vietnamese and the sacrifice of 55,000 Americans were carried out by highly educated men around the White House who scored very well in tests and who undoubtedly would have made impressive grades in the New York Times exam. It was a Phi Beta Kappa, McGeorge Bundy, who was one of the chief planners of the bombing of civilians in Southeast Asia. It was a Harvard professor, Henry Kissinger, who was a strategist of the secret bombing of peasant villages in Cambodia.

Going back a bit in history, it was our most educated president, Woodrow Wilson-a historian, a Ph.D., and a former president of Princeton-who bombarded the Mexican coast, killing hundreds of innocent people, because the Mexican government refused to salute the American flag. It was Harvard-educated John Kennedy, author of two books on history, who presided over the American invasion of Cuba and the lies that accompanied it.

What did Kennedy or Wilson learn from all that history they absorbed in the best universities in America? What did the American people learn in their high-cschool history texts that caused them to submerge their own common sense and listen to these leaders? Surely ... how "educated" someone is, tells you nothing about whether that person is decent or indecent, violent or peaceful, and whether that person will resist evil or become a consultant to warmakers. It does not tell you who will become a Pastor Niemoller (a German who resisted the Nazis) or an Albert Speer (who worked for them), a Lieutenant Calley (who killed children at My Lai), or a Warrant Officer Thompson who tried to save them). ...

We do need to learn history, the kind that does not put its main emphasis on knowing presidents and statutes and Supreme Court decisions, but inspires a new generation to resist the madness of governments trying to carve the world and our minds into their spheres of efluence.

Declarations of Independence

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



American Ideology

excerpted from the book

Declarations of Independence

by Howard Zinn

publisher - HarperCollins



The idea, which entered Western consciousness several centuries ago, that black people are less than human, made possible the Atlantic slave trade, during which perhaps 40 million people died. Beliefs about racial inferiority, whether applied to blacks or Jews or Arabs or Orientals, have led to mass murder.

The idea, presented by political leaders and accepted by the American public in 1964, that communism in Vietnam was a threat to our "national security" led to policies that cost a million lives, including those of 55,000 young Americans.

The belief, fostered in the Soviet Union, that "socialism" required a ruthless policy of farm collectivization, as well as the control of dissent, brought about the deaths of countless peasants and large numbers of political prisoners.

Other ideas-leave the poor on their own ("laissez-faire") and help the rich ("economic growth")-have led the U.S. government for most of its history to subsidize corporations while neglecting the poor, thus permitting terrible living and working conditions and incalculable suffering and death. In the years of the Reagan presidency, "laissez-faire" meant budget cutting for family care, which led to high rates of infant mortality in city ghettos.

We can reasonably conclude that how we think is not just mildly interesting, not just a subject for intellectual debate, but a matter of life and death.

If those in charge of our society-politicians, corporate executives, and owners of press and television-can dominate our ideas, they will be secure in their power. They will not need soldiers patrolling the streets. We will control ourselves.

Because force is held in reserve and the control is not complete, we can call ourselves a "democracy." True, the openings and the flexibility make such a society a more desirable place to live. But they also create a more effective form of control. We are less likely to object if we can feel that we have a "pluralist" society, with two parties instead of one, three branches of government instead of one-man rule, and various opinions in the press instead of one official line.'

A close look at this pluralism shows that it is very limited. We have the kinds of choices that are given in multiple-choice tests, where you can choose a, b, c, or d. But e, f, g, and h are not even listed.

And so we have the Democratic and Republican parties (choose a or b), but no others are really tolerated or encouraged or financed. Indeed, there is a law limiting the nationally televised presidential debates to the two major parties.

We have a "free press," but big money dominates it; you can choose among Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report. On television, you can choose among NBC, CBS, and ABC. There is a dissident press, but it does not have the capital of the "Teat media chains and cannot get the rich corporate advertising, and so it must strain to reach small numbers of people. There is public television, which is occasionally daring, but also impoverished and most often cautious.

We have three branches of government, with "checks and balances," as we were taught in junior high school. But one branch of government (the presidency) gets us into wars and the other two (Congress and the Supreme Court) go sheepishly along.

There is the same limited choice in public policy. During the Vietnam War, the argument

for a long time was between those who wanted a total bombing of Indochina and those who wanted a limited bombing. The choice of withdrawing from Vietnam altogether was not offered. Daniel Ellsberg, working for Henry Kissinger in 1969, was given the job of drawing a list of alternative policies on Vietnam. As one possibility on his long list he suggested total withdrawal from the war. Kissinger looked at the possibilities and crossed that one off before giving the list to President Richard Nixon.

In debates on the military budget there are heated arguments about whether to spend 5300 billion or \$290 billion. A proposal to spend \$100 billion (thus making \$200 billion available for human needs) is like the e or f in a multiple-choice test-it is missing. To propose zero billion makes you a candidate for a mental institution.

On the question of prisons there is debate on how many prisons we should have. But the idea of abolishing prisons is too outrageous even to be discussed.

We hear argument about how much the elderly should have to pay for health care, but the idea that they should not have to pay anything, indeed, that no one should have to pay for health care, is not up for debate.

Thus we grow up in a society where our choice of ideas is limited and where certain ideas dominate: We hear them from our parents, in the schools, in the churches, in the newspapers, and on radio and television. They have been in the air ever since we learned to walk and talk. They constitute an American ideology-that is, a dominant pattern of ideas. Most people accept them, and if we do, too, we are less likely to get into trouble.

The dominance of these ideas is not the product of a conspiratorial group that has devilishly plotted to implant on society a particular point of view. Nor is it an accident, an innocent result of people thinking freely. There is a process of natural (or, rather unnatural) selection, in which certain orthodox ideas are encouraged, financed, and pushed forward by the most powerful mechanisms of our culture. These ideas are preferred because they are safe; they don't threaten established wealth or power.

For instance:

"Be realistic; this is the way things are; there's no point thinking about how things should be. "

"People who teach or write or report the news should be objective; they should not try to advance their own opinions."

"There are unjust wars, but also just wars."

"If you disobey the law, even for a good cause, you should accept your punishment."

"If you work hard enough, you'll make a good living. If you are poor, you have only yourself to blame."

"Freedom of speech is desirable, but not when it threatens national security."

"Racial equality is desirable, but we've gone far enough in that direction." "Our Constitution is our greatest guarantee of liberty and justice."

"The United States must intervene from time to time in various parts of the world with military power to stop communism and promote democracy."

"If you want to get things changed, the only way is to go through the proper channels."

"We need nuclear weapons to prevent war."

"There is much injustice in the world but there is nothing that ordinary people, without wealth or power, can do about it."

These ideas are not accepted by all Americans. But they are believed widely enough and strongly enough to dominate our thinking. And as long as they do, those who hold wealth and power in our society will remain secure in their control.

In the year 1984 Forbes magazine, a leading periodical for high finance and big business, drew up a list of the wealthiest individuals in the United States. The top 400 people had assets totaling \$60 billion. At the bottom of the population there were 60 million people who had no assets at all.

Around the same time, the economist Lester Thurow estimated that 482 very wealthy individuals controlled (without necessarily owning) over \$2,000 billion (\$2 trillion).

Consider the influence of such a very rich class-with its inevitable control of press, radio, television, and education-on the thinking of the nation.

Dissident ideas can still exist in such a situation, but they will be drowned in criticism and made disreputable, because they are outside the acceptable choices. Or they may be allowed to survive in the corners of the culture emaciated, but alive-and presented as evidence of our democracy, our tolerance, and our pluralism.

A sophisticated system of control that is confident of its power can permit a measure of dissidence. However, it watches its critics carefully, ready to overwhelm them, intimidate them, and even suppress them should they ever seriously threaten the system, or should the establishment, in a state of paranoia, think they do. If readers think I am exaggerating with words such as "watching . . . overwhelm . . . suppress . . . paranoia, " they should read the volumes of reports on the FBI and the CIA published in 1975 by the Senate Select Committee on Government Operations.

However, government surveillance and threats are the exception. What normally operates day by day is the quiet dominance of certain ideas, the ideas we are expected to hold by our neighbors, our employers, and our political leaders; the ones we quickly learn are the most acceptable. The result is an obedient, acquiescent, passive citizenry—a situation that is deadly to democracy.

If one day we decide to reexamine these beliefs and realize they do not come naturally out of our innermost feelings or our spontaneous desires, are not the result of independent thought on our part, and, indeed, do not match the real world as we experience it, then we have come to an important turning point in life. Then we find ourselves examining, and confronting, American ideology.

There is in orthodox thinking a great dependence on experts. Because \ modern technological society has produced a breed of experts who understand technical matters that bewilder the rest of us, we think that in matters of social conflict, which require moral judgments, we must also turn to experts.

There are two false assumptions about experts. One is that they see more clearly and think more intelligently than ordinary citizens. Sometimes they do, sometimes not. The other assumption is that these experts have the same interests as ordinary citizens, want the same things, hold the same values, and, therefore, can be trusted to make decisions for all of us.

To depend on great thinkers, authorities, and experts is, it seems to me, a violation of the spirit of democracy. Democracy rests on the idea that, except for technical details for which experts may be useful, the important decisions of society are within the capability of ordinary citizens. Not only can ordinary people make decisions about these issues, but they ought to, because citizens understand their own interests more clearly than any experts.

In John Le Carre's novel *The Russia House*, a dissident Russian scientist is assured that his secret document has been entrusted "to the authorities. People of discretion.

Experts." He becomes angry:

I do not like experts. They are our jailers. I despise experts more than anyone on earth.... They solve nothing! They are servants of whatever system hires them. They perpetuate it. When we are tortured, we shall be tortured by experts. When we are hanged, experts will hang us.... When the world is destroyed, it will be destroyed not by its madmen but by the sanity of its experts and the superior ignorance of its bureaucrats..

We are expected to believe that great thinkers-experts-are objective, that they have no axes to grind and no biases, and that they make pure intellectual judgments. However, the minds of all human beings are powerfully influenced (though not totally bound) by their backgrounds, by whether they are rich or poor, male or female, black or white or Asian, in positions of power, or in lowly circumstances. Even scientists making "scientific" observations know that what they see will be affected by their position.

Why should we cherish "objectivity," as if ideas were innocent, as if they don't serve one interest or another? Surely, we want to be objective if that means telling the truth as we see it, not concealing information that may be embarrassing to our point of view. But we don't want to be objective if it means pretending that ideas don't play a part in the social struggles of our time, that we don't take sides in those struggles.

Indeed, it is impossible to be neutral. In a world already moving in certain directions, where wealth and power are already distributed in certain ways, neutrality means accepting the way things are now. It is a world of clashing interests-war against peace, nationalism against internationalism, equality against greed, and democracy against elitism-and it seems to me both impossible and undesirable to be neutral in those conflicts.

... we should make the most of the fact that we live in | a country that, although controlled by wealth and power, has openings and possibilities missing in many other places. The controllers are gambling that those openings will pacify us, that we will not really use them to make the bold changes that are needed if we are to create a decent society. We should take that gamble.

We are not starting from scratch. There is a long history in this country of rebellion against the establishment, of resistance to orthodoxy. There has always been a commonsense perception that there are things seriously wrong and that we can't really depend on those in h charge to set them right.

This perception has led Americans to protest and rebel ... the Boston Bread Rioters and

Carolina antitax farmers of the eighteenth century; the black and white abolitionists of slavery days; the working people of the railroads, mines, textile mills, steel mills, and auto plants who went on strike, facing the clubs of policemen and the machine guns of soldiers to get an eight-hour workday and a living wage; the women who refused to stay in the kitchen and marched and went to jail for equal rights; the black protesters and antiwar activists of the 1960S; and the protesters against industrial pollution and war preparations in the 1980s.

In the heat of such movements brains are set stirring with new ideas, which live on through quieter times, waiting for another opportunity to ignite into action and change the world around us.

Dissenters, ... can create their own orthodoxy. So we need a constant reexamination of our thinking, using the evidence of our eyes and ears and the realities of our experience to think freshly. We need declarations of independence from all nations, parties, and programs- all rigid dogmas.

The experience of our century tells us that the old orthodoxies, the traditional ideologies, the neatly tied bundles of ideas-capitalism, socialism, democracy-need to be untied, so that we can play and experiment with all the ingredients, add others, and create new combinations in looser bundles. We know as we come to the twenty-first century that we desperately need to develop new, imaginative approaches to the human problems of our time.

For citizens to do this on their own, to listen with some skepticism to the great thinkers and the experts, and to think for themselves about the great issues of today's world, is to make democracy come alive.

 **Declarations of Independence**

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Beyond Voting

by Howard Zinn, 1976

from

The Zinn Reader

**publisher - Seven Stories Press
632 Broadway, 7th floor
New York, NY 10012**



Gossip is the opium of the American public. We lie back, close our eyes and happily inhale the stories about Roosevelt's and Kennedy's affairs, Lyndon Johnson's nude swims with unnamed partners and, now, Nixon's pathetic "final days" in office.

The latest fix is administered by reporters Woodward and Bernstein and the stuff is Nixon's sex life with Pat, Nixon drunk and weeping, Nixon cradled in the arms of Kissinger (who did it, we presume, for national security).

So we get high on trivia, and forget that, whether Presidents have been impotent or oversexed, drunk or sober, they have followed the same basic policies. Whether crooks

or Boy Scouts, handsome or homely, agile or clumsy, they have taxed the poor, subsidized the rich, wasted the wealth of the nation on guns and bombs, ignored the decay of the cities, and done so little for the children of the ghettos and rural wastelands that these youth had to join the armed forces to survive-until they were sent overseas to die.

Harry Truman was blunt and Lyndon Johnson wily, but both sent armies to Asia to defend dictators and massacre the people we claimed to be helping. Eisenhower was dull and Kennedy witty, but both built up huge nuclear armaments at the expense of schools and health care. Nixon was corrupt and Ford straightforward, but both coldly cut benefits for the poor and gave favors to rich corporations.

The cult of personality in America is a powerful drug. It takes the energy of ordinary citizens which, combined, can be a powerful force, and depletes it in the spectator sport of voting. Our most cherished moment of democratic citizenship comes when we leave the house once in four years to choose between two mediocre white Anglo-Saxon males who have been trundled out by political caucuses, million dollar primaries and managed conventions for the rigged multiple choice test we call an election. Presidents come and go. But the FBI is always there, on the job, sometimes catching criminals, sometimes committing crimes itself, always checking on radicals as secret police do all over the world. Its latest confession: ninety-two burglaries, 1960-66.

Presidents come and go, but the military budget keeps rising. It was \$74 billion in 1973, is over \$100 billion now (the equivalent of \$2000 in taxes for every family), and will reach \$130 billion in 1980.

Presidents come and go, but the 200 top corporations keep increasing their control: 45 percent of all manufacturing in 1960, 60 per cent by 1970.

No President in this century has stopped the trend. Not even FDR.

Yes, Roosevelt took steps to help poor people in the '30s. Minimum wages. Social security, WPA jobs. Relief. But that didn't change the basic nature of the capitalist system, whose highest priority has always been profits for the corporations and to hell with the rest.

Roosevelt was humane and wise, but, also, he had to react to signs of anger and rebellion in the country. He had seen the Bonus March of veterans to Washington under Hoover. In his first year, mass strikes- 400,000 textile workers out in the South and New England. Longshoremen tied up the whole city of San Francisco. Teamsters took over Minneapolis. The unemployed were organizing, the bootleg miners taking over coalfields, tenants gathering in the cities to stop evictions.

Roosevelt was a sensitive man. But something big was happening in the country to sharpen his sensitivity.

1976: the multiple choice test is here again. Sure, there are better candidates and worse. But we will go a long way from spectator democracy to real democracy when we understand that the future of this country doesn't depend, mainly, on who is our next President. It depends on whether the American citizen, fed up with high taxes, high prices, unemployment, waste, war and corruption, will organize all over the country a clamor for change even greater than the labor uprisings of the '30s or the black rebellion of the '60s and shake this country out of old paths into new ones.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Biggest Secret

by Howard Zinn, 1975

from the Zinn Reader, Seven Stories Press



Secrets are coming out of the Senate committee probing the FBI and CIA. But the biggest secrets, I suspect will remain untouched.

Yes, we learn that the FBI tapped wires illegally, kept lists of people to be put in concentration camps, wrote fake letters to destroy personal lives and used dirty tricks to disrupt organizations it didn't like. The CIA opened mail illegally, plotted the murder of foreign leaders and conspired to overthrow a democratically elected government in Chile.

It is the habit of governments everywhere, including ours, when caught lying, stealing or murdering, to murmur a few words of confession, find a scapegoat to punish and go right on doing its dirty work in more subtle ways.

Recall: Families were burned to death in Vietnam, babies were shot in their mothers' arms, Cambodia was bombed secretly and Laos openly, the land and culture of 40 million people in Southeast Asia were laid waste. And then what? Instead of trying Mr. Nixon and Kissinger for mass murder by terror bombing, we scolded their flunkies for breaking and-entering and gave them a little time in jail. Instead of trying the generals for

the massacre at My Lai, we tried Calley and put him under house arrest.

What will happen now with these revelations on the CIA and FBI? The usual. A few changes in personnel, a few new laws. But the same exclusive club of corporate billionaires, with their teams of lawyers, accountants, politicians and intellectual advisers hoping to become Secretary of State, will remain in power.

For profound changes to come about in this country, we will have to start revealing to the American public, and especially to the school kids of the coming generation, the really big secrets, which no congressional committee will touch.

First, that there is little difference between Them (the enemy- Communism) and Us (the West, American, "democracy") when it comes to a reckless disregard for human lives in pursuit of something called "national interest." That "national interest," it usually turns out, is the interest, over there, of the Kremlin bureaucracy, and here, the interest of the oil companies, the banks, the military-industrial-political complex. When we were told in grade school that the difference between Them and Us is "they believe in any means to gain their ends and we don't"-we were lied to.

People are beginning to catch on. The Spy Who Came in From the Cold was the first best-selling novel to boldly make that point: "Our side" would use ex-Nazis, would sacrifice the lives of its own people, to score points in a game whose concern was not humanity but power.

The current movie, Three Days of the Condor, is even more explicit. The CIA is portrayed as a group of sophisticated men using dazzling scientific techniques to ruthlessly exterminate anyone, including their own employees, who stood in the way of control of oil in the Middle East and Venezuela

Even the fantasies of movie scripts can't match the reality. There is evidence now that the FBI was involved in the planned murder of two black leaders in Chicago on December 4, 1969. A gang of police, armed with shotguns, pistols, rifles and submachine guns, and a plan of the house furnished by an FBI informant, attacked an apartment occupied by Black Panthers, at four in the morning, and executed Fred Hampton as he lay asleep in his bed.

The biggest secret of all is beginning to emerge: That "the enemy" of this government is anyone, here or abroad, who won't put up with control of the world by Chase Manhattan, Exxon, General Motors, I.T. & T. It is chilling but suddenly believable that a government willing to kill Vietnamese peasants and put Asian protesters in tiger cages will also assassinate native Americans and put citizens here in concentration camps.

That's a heavy secret for us to carry in our heads. But we need to know it, if we are going to figure out how to defend our lives and our liberties from those who have occupied America.

 **Zinn Reader**

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Bill of Rights

by Howard Zinn, 1991

from the Zinn Reader, Seven Stories Press



A few years back, a man high up in the CIA named Ray Cline was asked if the CIA, by its surveillance of protest organizations in the United States, was violating the free speech provision of the First Amendment. He smiled and said: "It's only an Amendment."

And when it was disclosed that the FBI was violating citizens' rights repeatedly, a high official of the FBI was asked if anybody in the FBI questioned the legality of what they were doing. He replied: "No, we never gave it a thought."

We clearly cannot expect the Bill of Rights to be defended by government officials. So it will have to be defended by the people.

If you do a bit of research into the origins of the Bill of Rights- and I had to do some because it is a job requirement of the historical profession-you will find that when the new government of the United States adopted the Bill of Rights in 1791, it did not do so with enthusiasm. The Bill of Rights was a political tool to quiet down critics of the Constitution. A Bill of Rights on paper comforts people. You don't have to take it seriously. Like that CIA man, you can smile, and say, they're only Amendments.

Well, in 1791, the first ten Amendments-the Bill of Rights- were added to the Constitution, and the First Amendment says, among other things: "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..." Seven years later, in 1798, Congress passed a law abridging the freedom of speech and the press. It was the Sedition Act of 1798, and it provided jail sentences for people who criticized the government. A number of writers and speakers were imprisoned. They appealed to the court. Now we all learned in junior high school about checks and balances and how if Congress passes a law violating the Constitution, we are very lucky to have the Supreme Court to check that and declare the law null and void. (I was always proud to know such a fancy phrase, "null and void.")

Well, the members of the Supreme Court, apparently having skipped junior high school, or perhaps understanding that the phrase "checks and balances" is just intended to satisfy schoolchildren-did not declare the Sedition Act null and void. Not at all. They said it was constitutional. You may ask: by what legal philosophy can Supreme Court justices explain how Congress can pass a law abridging the freedom of speech when the Constitution says Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech? I could tell you how they did that; but it would take a while and cause indigestion. Let us just say that legal training is a wonderful thing, it enables you to explain the unexplainable, defend the indefensible, and rationalize the irrational.

It seems that especially in time of war or near-war (and in 1798 it was such a time), the First Amendment is ignored. You may have noticed that the year 1991 did not start with a celebration of the Bill of Rights, but with a war. And that the government established control over information and the mass media became tongue-tied with patriotic fervor, and the First Amendment was bombed into oblivion. It is a truism of our political culture: if you are at war for freedom and democracy, you can't have freedom and democracy. So, exactly when free speech is most needed, that is, when it is a matter of life and death for the young people about to be sent to the battlefield-exactly at such a moment the government declares it can be suspended.

In 1917, as armies of young men in Europe were slaughtering one another in the first World War, and the United States decided to send its own young men into the butchery, Congress passed the Espionage Act, and the Sedition Act, providing heavy sentences for those criticizing the war. The Supreme Court again put our junior high school lesson to shame: checks and balances? Not in wartime. Not when you need them. The great liberal Oliver Wendell Holmes himself wrote the opinions affirming the constitutionality of the Espionage Act, sending a man named Schenck to jail for distributing a leaflet criticizing the war and the draft. Two thousand people were prosecuted for speaking or writing against the war, including Eugene Debs, the great labor leader and Socialist.

There were ludicrous episodes in all that. A filmmaker who made a movie about the

American Revolution was sent to prison for ten years because the movie portrayed the British as the enemy in the American Revolution, and now the British were our allies in the war. The name of the movie was *The Spirit of '76* and the title of the court case against the filmmaker was *U.S. v. Spirit of '76*. And that case sums up the relationship of the government to the Bill of Rights: *U.S. v. Spirit of '76*. It was the President of the United States, Harry Truman, who instituted loyalty oaths even before Joseph McCarthy waved his lists of Communists in the State Department. It was the Congress of the United States, Democrats as well as Republicans, that set up the House Un-American Activities Committee, and voted contempt citations against people who refused to bow down to that Committee. It was the Supreme Court that affirmed the convictions of the Hollywood Ten for invoking the First Amendment. It was Republicans and Democrats, it was all three branches of government, all of them swearing to uphold the Constitution of the United States, and all of them violating that oath.

A word about the Supreme Court. We now have nine conservative justices, including one conservative woman and one conservative black man. It's called American pluralism. Many people have been depressed over this. Frankly, I tried to get depressed, but didn't succeed. Sure, it's better to have a liberal Supreme Court. But the Supreme Court at its most liberal has never been a dependable protector of people's rights. One year it will say you have a constitutional right to distribute leaflets in front of a supermarket. Another year it will say you can go to jail for that. One year it will say: high school students have a right to wear black arm bands to protest a war. Another year it will say: high school students don't have the right to put out their own newspapers without censorship by the school authorities. The Supreme Court, when it was liberal, affirmed that Japanese-Americans could be put in concentration camps because we were at war. The Supreme Court, liberal or conservative, sworn to defend the Constitution, has never been a bulwark against unconstitutional wars.

If it were left to the institutions of government, the Bill of Rights would be left for dead. But someone breathed life into the Bill of Rights. Ordinary people did it, by doing extraordinary things. The editors and speakers who, in spite of the Sedition Act of 1798, continued to criticize the government. The black and white abolitionists who defied the Fugitive Slave Law, defied the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision, who insisted that black people were human beings, not property, and who broke into courtrooms and police stations to rescue them, to prevent their return to slavery.

Women, who were arrested again and again as they spoke out for their right to control their own bodies, or the right to vote. Members of the Industrial Workers of the World, anarchists, radicals, who filled the jails in California and Idaho and Montana until they were finally allowed to speak to working people. Socialists and pacifists and anarchists like Helen Keller and Rose Pastor Stokes, and Kate O'Hare and Emma Goldman, who defied the government and denounced war in 1917 and 1918. The artists and writers and labor organizers and Communists- Dalton Trumbo and Pete Seeger, and W.E.B. Du Bois

and Paul Robeson, who challenged the congressional committees of the 1950s, challenged the FBI, at the risk of their freedom and their careers.

In the 1960s, the students of Kent State and Jackson State and hundreds of other campuses, the draft resisters and deserters, the priests and nuns and lay people, all the marchers and demonstrators and trespassers who demanded that the killing in Vietnam stop, the GIs in the Mekong Delta who refused to go out on patrol, the B52 pilots who refused to fly in the Christmas bombing of 1972, the Vietnam veterans who gathered in Washington and threw their Purple Hearts and other medals over a fence in protest against the war.

And after the war, in the '70s and '80s, those courageous few who carried on, the Berrigans and all like them who continued to demonstrate against the war machine, the Seabrook fence climbers, the signers of the Pledge of Resistance against U.S. military action in Central America, the gays and lesbians who marched in the streets for the first time, challenging the country to recognize their humanity, the disabled people who spoke up, after a long silence, demanding their rights. The Indians, supposed to be annihilated and gone from the scene, emerging ghostlike, to occupy a tiny portion of the land that was taken from them, Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Saying: we're not gone, we're here, and we want you to listen to us.

These are the people, men, women, children, of all colors and national origins, who gave life to the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights was expanded after the Civil War, with the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, to apply to the states, to prevent them from keeping slavery, to require that they give all people, regardless of race or color, the equal protection of the laws. But these amendments were soon ignored, as blacks were kept in semi-slavery in the South, segregated, humiliated, beaten, lynched by mobs, unprotected by either the local police or the national government. For almost a hundred years after the 14th Amendment became law, every President, whether liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, violated his oath of office, his pledge to uphold the Constitution, by failing to enforce those Amendments. And the Supreme Court interpreted them so as to make them useless.

And so black people in the South, in the most dangerous towns and cities in the country, decided to give life to the 14th Amendment, at the risk of their own. They boycotted the buses in Montgomery, Alabama, they sat in at segregated lunch counters, they rode the buses as Freedom Riders, they marched through the streets of Albany, Georgia and Birmingham, demonstrated in Alabama, were arrested, set upon by dogs, knocked down by water hoses, beaten bloody by state troopers, and murdered. There were protests in 800 cities in the year 1963. And then the President acted, then Congress

acted, then the Supreme Court acted. The 15th Amendment was now being enforced, only a hundred years late.

It is good to have a Bill of Rights, good to have a 14th and 15th Amendment. They are useful as standards. But it is disastrous to depend on them. Words have never been enough. Ask the authors of the Ten Commandments.

For many people there were not even words-not for working people, women, gays and lesbians, disabled people. The Bill of Rights says nothing about the right to work, to a decent wage, to housing, to health care, to the rights of women, to the right of privacy in sexual preference, to the rights of people with disabilities.

But we don't need permission from on high, words approved by the authorities, to tell us that certain truths are self-evident, as the Declaration of Independence put it. That we are all created equal, that we all have rights that cannot be taken from us, the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And so working people went on strike thousands of times, were beaten and killed on the picket line, until they won an eight-hour day, and a bit of economic security. Women created a national movement that changed the consciousness of millions of people. Gays and lesbians, disabled people, organized, spoke up, declared: we exist, we must be paid attention to. And people began to pay attention.

We should look beyond the Bill of Rights to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says that all people, everywhere in the world, are entitled to work and decent wages, to holidays and vacations, to food and clothing and housing and medical care, to education, to child care and maternal care.

The guarantees of the Bill of Rights have little meaning so long as we have a class society with enormous differences of wealth and income. The rights of free speech and press depend on having the resources to use them. The right to legal counsel is different for rich and poor. The right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures is different for a family living in a mansion and another living in a housing project, or out on the street.

In the real world, the fate of human beings is decided every day not by the courts, but out of court, in the streets, in the workplace, by whoever has the wealth and power. The redistribution of that wealth and power is necessary if the Bill of Rights, if any rights, are to have meaning.

The novelist Aldous Huxley once said: "Liberties are not given; they are taken." We are not given our liberties by the Bill of Rights, certainly not by the government which either violates or ignores those rights. We take our rights, as thinking, acting citizens.

And so we should celebrate today, not the words of the Bill of Rights, certainly not the political leaders who utter those words and violate them every day. We should celebrate, honor, all those people who risked their jobs, their freedom, sometimes their lives, to affirm the rights we all have, rights not limited to some document, but rights our common sense tells us we should all have as human beings. Who should, for example, we celebrate?

I think of Lillian Gobitis, from Lynn, Massachusetts, a seventh grade student who, back in 1935, because of her religious convictions, refused to salute the American flag even when she was suspended from school.

And Mary Beth Tinker, a thirteen-year-old girl in Des Moines, Iowa, who in 1965 went to school wearing a black armband in protest against the killing of people in Vietnam, and defied the school authorities even when they suspended her.

An unnamed black boy, nine years old, arrested in Albany, Georgia, in 1961 for marching in a parade against racial segregation after the police said this was unlawful. He stood in line to be booked by the police chief, who was startled to see this little boy and asked him: "What's your name?" And he replied: "Freedom, freedom."

I think of Gordon Hirabayashi, born in Seattle of Japanese parents, who, at the start of the war between Japan and the United States, refused to obey the curfew directed against all of Japanese ancestry, and refused to be evacuated to a detention camp, and insisted on his freedom, despite an executive order by the President and a decision of the Supreme Court.

Demetrio Rodriguez of San Antonio, who in 1968 spoke up and said his child, living in a poor county, had a right to a good education equal to that of a child living in a rich county.

All those alternative newspapers and alternative radio stations and struggling organizations that have tried to give meaning to free speech by giving information that the mass media will not give, revealing information that the government wants kept secret.

All those whistleblowers, who risked their jobs, risked prison, defying their employers, whether the government or corporations, to tell the truth about nuclear weapons, or chemical poisoning. Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner, who have refused to pay taxes to support the war machine, and all their neighbors who, when the government decided to seize and auction their house, refused to bid, and so they are still defending their right.

The 550 people who occupied the JFK Federal Building in Boston in protest when

President Reagan declared a blockade of Nicaragua. I was in that group-I don't mind getting arrested when I have company-and the official charge against us used the language of the old trespass law: "failure to quit the premises." On the letter I got dropping the case (because there were too many of us to deal with), they shortened that charge to "failure to quit."

I think that sums up what it is that has kept the Bill of Rights alive. Not the President or Congress, or the Supreme Court, or the wealthy media. But all those people who have refused to quit, who have insisted on their rights and the rights of others, the rights of all human ~t, beings everywhere, whether Americans or Haitians or Chinese or Russians or Iraqis or Israelis or Palestinians, to equality, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That is the spirit of the Bill of Rights, and beyond that, the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, yes, the spirit of '76: refusal to quit.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Problem is Civil Obedience

by Howard Zinn, 1970

from the Zinn Reader, Seven Stories Press



By the latter part of May, 1970, feelings about the war in Vietnam had become almost unbearably intense. In Boston, about a hundred of us decided to sit down at the Boston Army Base and block the road used by buses carrying draftees off to military duty. We were not so daft that we thought we were stopping the flow of soldiers to Vietnam; it was a symbolic act, a statement, a piece of guerrilla theater. We were all arrested and charged, in the quaint language of an old statute, with "sauntering and loitering" in such a way as to obstruct traffic. Eight of us refused to plead guilty, insisting on trial by jury, hoping we could persuade the members of the jury that ours was a justified act of civil disobedience. We did not persuade them. We were found guilty, chose jail instead of paying a fine, but the judge, apparently reluctant to have us in jail, gave us forty-eight hours to change our minds, after which we should show up in court to either pay the fine or be jailed. In the meantime, I had been invited to go to Johns Hopkins University to debate with the philosopher Charles Frankel on the issue of civil disobedience. I decided it would be hypocritical for me, an advocate of civil disobedience, to submit dutifully to the court and thereby skip out on an opportunity to speak to hundreds of students about civil disobedience. So, on the day I was supposed to show up in court in Boston I flew to Baltimore and that evening debated with Charles Frankel. Returning to Boston I decided to meet my morning class, but two detectives were waiting for me, and I was hustled

before the court and then spent a couple of days in jail. What follows is the transcript of my opening statement in the debate at Johns Hopkins. It was included in a book published by Johns Hopkins Press in 1972, entitled *Violence: The Crisis of American Confidence*.

I start from the supposition that the world is topsy-turvy, that things are all wrong, that the wrong people are in jail and the wrong people are out of jail, that the wrong people are in power and the wrong people are out of power, that the wealth is distributed in this country and the world in such a way as not simply to require small reform but to require a drastic reallocation of wealth. I start from the supposition that we don't have to say too much about this because all we have to do is think about the state of the world today and realize that things are all upside down. Daniel Berrigan is in jail-A Catholic priest, a poet who opposes the war-and J. Edgar Hoover is free, you see. David Dellinger, who has opposed war ever since he was this high and who has used all of his energy and passion against it, is in danger of going to jail. The men who are responsible for the My Lai massacre are not on trial; they are in Washington serving various functions, primary and subordinate, that have to do with the unleashing of massacres, which surprise them when they occur. At Kent State University four students were killed by the National Guard and students were indicted. In every city in this country, when demonstrations take place, the protesters, whether they have demonstrated or not, whatever they have done, are assaulted and clubbed by police, and then they are arrested for assaulting a police officer.

Now, I have been studying very closely what happens every day in the courts in Boston, Massachusetts. You would be astounded-maybe you wouldn't, maybe you have been around, maybe you have lived, maybe you have thought, maybe you have been hit-at how the daily rounds of injustice make their way through this marvelous thing that we call due process. Well, that is my premise.

All you have to do is read the Soledad letters of George Jackson, who was sentenced to one year to life, of which he spent ten years, for a seventy-dollar robbery of a filling station. And then there is the U.S. Senator who is alleged to keep 185,000 dollars a year, or something like that, on the oil depletion allowance. One is theft; the other is legislation. something is wrong, something is terribly wrong when we ship 10,000 bombs full of nerve gas across the country, and drop them in somebody else's swimming pool so as not to trouble our own. So you lose your perspective after a while. If you don't think, if you just listen to TV and read scholarly things, you actually begin to think that things are not so bad, or that just little things are wrong. But you have to get a little detached, and then come back and look at the world, and you are horrified. So we have to start from that supposition-that things are really topsy-turvy.

And our topic is topsy-turvy: civil disobedience. As soon as you say the topic is civil disobedience, you are saying our problem is civil disobedience. That is not our

problem.... Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is the numbers of people all over the world who have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience. And our problem is that scene in All Quiet on the Western Front where the schoolboys march off dutifully in a line to war. Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world, in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves, and all the while the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem. We recognize this for Nazi Germany. We know that the problem there was obedience, that the people obeyed Hitler. People obeyed; that was wrong. They should have challenged, and they should have resisted; and if we were only there, we would have showed them. Even in Stalin's Russia we can understand that; people are obedient, all these herdlike people.

But America is different. That is what we've all been brought up on. From the time we are this high and I still hear it resounding in Mr. Frankel's statement-you tick off, one, two, three, four, five lovely things .~ about America that we don't want disturbed very much. But if we have learned anything in the past ten years, it is that these lovely things about America were never lovely. We have been expansionist and aggressive and mean to other people from the beginning. And we've been aggressive and mean to people in this country, and we've allocated the wealth of this country in a very unjust way. We've never had justice in the courts for the poor people, for black people, for radicals. Now how can we boast that America is a very special place? It is not that special. It really isn't.

Well, that is our topic, that is our problem: civil obedience. Law is very important. We are talking about obedience to law-law, this marvelous invention of modern times, which we attribute to Western civilization, and which we talk about proudly. The rule of law, oh, how wonderful, all these courses in Western civilization all over the land. Remember those bad old days when people were exploited by feudalism? Everything was terrible in the Middle Ages-but now we have Western civilization, the rule of law. The rule of law has regularized and maximized the injustice that existed before the rule of law, that is what the rule of law has done. Let us start looking at the rule of law realistically, not with that metaphysical complacency with which we always examined it before.

When in all the nations of the world the rule of law is the darling of the leaders and the plague of the people, we ought to begin to recognize this. We have to transcend these national boundaries in our thinking. Nixon and Brezhnev have much more in common with one another than - we have with Nixon. J. Edgar Hoover has far more in common with the head of the Soviet secret police than he has with us. It's the international dedication to law and order that binds the leaders of all countries in a comradely bond. That's why we are always surprised when they get together -- they smile, they shake hands, they smoke cigars, they really like one another no matter what they say. It's like the Republican and Democratic parties, who claim that it's going to make a terrible difference if one or the other wins, yet they are all the same. Basically, it is us against

them.

Yossarian was right, remember, in *Catch-22*? He had been accused of giving aid and comfort to the enemy, which nobody should ever be accused of, and Yossarian said to his friend Clevinger: "The enemy is whoever is going to get you killed, whichever side they are on." But that didn't sink in, so he said to Clevinger: "Now you remember that, or one of these days you'll be dead." And remember? Clevinger, after a while, was dead. And we must remember that our enemies are not divided along national lines, that enemies are not just people who speak different languages and occupy different territories. Enemies are people who want to get us killed.

We are asked, "What if everyone disobeyed the law?" But a better question is, "What if everyone obeyed the law?" And the answer to that question is much easier to come by, because we have a lot of empirical evidence about what happens if everyone obeys the law, or if even most people obey the law. What happens is what has happened, what is happening. Why do people revere the law? And we all do; even I have to fight it, for it was put into my bones at an early age when I was a Cub Scout. One reason we revere the law is its ambivalence. In the modern world we deal with phrases and words that have multiple meanings, like "national security." Oh, yes, we must do this for national security! Well, what does that mean? Whose national security? Where? When? Why? We don't bother to answer those questions, or even to ask them.

The law conceals many things. The law is the Bill of Rights. ;'~ fact, that is what we think of when we develop our reverence for the law. The law is something that protects us; the law is our right-the law is the Constitution. Bill of Rights Day, essay contests sponsored by the American Legion on our Bill of Rights, that is the law. And that is good.

But there is another part of the law that doesn't get ballyhooed- the legislation that has gone through month after month, year after year, from the beginning of the Republic, which allocates the resources of the country in such a way as to leave some people very rich and other people very poor, and still others scrambling like mad for what little is left. That is the law. If you go to law school you will see this. You can quantify it by counting the big, heavy law books that people carry around with them and see how many law books you count that say "Constitutional Rights" on them and how many that say "Property," "Contracts," "Torts," "Corporation Law." That is what the law is mostly about. The law is the oil depletion allowance-although we don't have Oil Depletion Allowance Day, we don't have essays written on behalf of the oil depletion allowance. So there are parts of the law that are publicized and played up to us-oh, this is the law, the Bill of Rights. And there are other parts of the law that just do their quiet work, and nobody says anything about them.

It started way back. When the Bill of Rights was first passed, remember, in the first administration of Washington? Great thing. Bill of Rights passed! Big ballyhoo. At the

same time Hamilton's economic program was passed. Nice, quiet, money to the rich-I'm simplifying it a little, but not too much. Hamilton's economic program started it off. You can draw a straight line from Hamilton's economic program to the oil depletion allowance to the tax write-offs for corporations. All the way through-that is the history. The Bill of Rights publicized; economic legislation unpublicized.

You know the enforcement of different parts of the law is as important as the publicity attached to the different parts of the law. The Bill of Rights, is it enforced? Not very well. You'll find that freedom of speech in constitutional law is a very difficult, ambiguous, troubled concept. Nobody really knows when you can get up and speak and when you can't. Just check all of the Supreme Court decisions. Talk about predictability in a system-you can't predict what will happen to you when you get up on the street corner and speak. See if you can tell the difference between the Terminiello case and the Feiner case, and see if you can figure out what is going to happen. By the way, there is one part of the law that is not very vague, and that involves the right to distribute leaflets on the street. The Supreme Court has been very clear on that. In decision after decision we are affirmed an absolute right to distribute leaflets on the street. Try it. Just go out on the street and start distributing leaflets. And a policeman comes up to you and he says, "Get out of here." And you say, "Aha! Do you know Marsh v. Alabama, 1946?" That is the reality of the Bill of Rights. That's the reality of the Constitution, that part of the law which is portrayed to us as a beautiful and marvelous thing. And seven years after the Bill of Rights was passed, which said that "Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech," Congress made a law abridging the freedom of speech. Remember? The Sedition Act of 1798.

So the Bill of Rights was not enforced. Hamilton's program was enforced, because when the whisky farmers went out and rebelled you remember, in 1794 in Pennsylvania, Hamilton himself got on his horse and went out there to suppress the rebellion to make sure that the revenue tax was enforced. And you can trace the story right down to the present day, what laws are enforced, what laws are not enforced. So you have to be careful when you say, "I'm for the law, I revere the law." What part of the law are you talking about? I'm not against all law. But I think we ought to begin to make very important distinctions about what laws do what things to what people.

And there are other problems with the law. It's a strange thing, we think that law brings order. Law doesn't. How do we know that law does not bring order? Look around us. We live under the rules of law. Notice how much order we have? People say we have to worry about civil disobedience because it will lead to anarchy. Take a look at the present world in which the rule of law obtains. This is the closest to what is called anarchy in the popular mind-confusion, chaos, international banditry. The only order that is really worth anything does not come through the enforcement ... of law, it comes through the establishment of a society which is just and in which harmonious relationships are established and in which you need a minimum of regulation to create decent sets of

arrangements among people. But the order based on law and on the force of law is the order of the totalitarian state, and it inevitably leads either to total injustice or to rebellion-eventually, in other words, to very great disorder.

We all grow up with the notion that the law is holy. They asked Daniel Berrigan's mother what she thought of her son's breaking the law. He burned draft records-one of the most violent acts of this century- to protest the war, for which he was sentenced to prison, as criminals should be. They asked his mother who is in her eighties, what she thought of her son's breaking the law. And she looked straight into the interviewer's face, and she said, "It's not God's law." Now we forget that. There is nothing sacred about the law. Think of who makes laws. The law is not made by God, it is made by Strom Thurmond. If you have any notion about the sanctity and loveliness and reverence for the law, look at the legislators around the country who make the laws. Sit in on the sessions of the state legislatures. Sit in on Congress, for these are the people who make the laws which we are then supposed to revere.

All of this is done with such propriety as to fool us. This is the problem. In the old days, things were confused; you didn't know. Now you know. It is all down there in the books. Now we go through due process. Now the same things happen as happened before, except that we've gone through the right procedures. In Boston a policeman walked into a hospital ward and fired five times at a black man who had snapped a towel at his arm-and killed him. A hearing was held. The judge decided that the policeman was justified because if he didn't do it, he would lose the respect of his fellow officers. Well, that is what is known as due process-that is, the guy didn't get away with it. We went through the proper procedures, and everything was set up. The decorum, the propriety of the law fools us.

The nation then, was founded on disrespect for the law, and then came the Constitution and the notion of stability which Madison and Hamilton liked. But then we found in certain crucial times in our history that the legal framework did not suffice, and in order to end slavery we had to go outside the legal framework, as we had to do at the time of the American Revolution or the Civil War. The union had to go outside the legal framework in order to establish certain rights in the 1930s. And in this time, which may be more critical than the Revolution or the Civil War, the problems are so horrendous as to require us to go outside the legal framework in order to make a statement, to resist, to begin to establish the kind of institutions and relationships which a decent society should have. No, not just tearing things down; building things up. But even if you build things up that you are not supposed to build up-you try to build up a people's park, that's not tearing down a system; you are building something up, but you are doing it illegally-the militia comes in and drives you out. That is the form that civil disobedience is going to take more and more, people trying to build a new society in the midst of the old.

But what about voting and elections? Civil disobedience-we don't need that much of it, we are told, because we can go through the electoral system. And by now we should have learned, but maybe we haven't, for we grew up with the notion that the voting booth is a sacred place, almost like a confessional. You walk into the voting booth and you come out and they snap your picture and then put it in the papers with a beatific smile on your face. You've just voted; that is democracy. But if you even read what the political scientists say-although who can?-about the voting process, you find that the voting process is a sham. Totalitarian states love voting. You get people to the polls and they register their approval. I know there is a difference-they have one party and we have two parties. We have one more party than they have, you see.

What we are trying to do, I assume, is really to get back to the principles and aims and spirit of the Declaration of Independence. This spirit is resistance to illegitimate authority and to forces that deprive people of their life and liberty and right to pursue happiness, and therefore under these conditions, it urges the right to alter or abolish their current form of government-and the stress had been on abolish. But to establish the principles of the Declaration of Independence, we are going to need to go outside the law, to stop obeying the laws that demand killing or that allocate wealth the way it has been done, or that put people in jail for petty technical offenses and keep other people out of jail for enormous crimes. My hope is that this kind of spirit will take place not just in this country but in other countries because they all need it. People in all countries need the spirit of disobedience to the state, which is not a metaphysical thing but a thing of force and wealth. And we need a kind of declaration of interdependence among people in all countries of the world who are striving for the same thing.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Secret Word

by Howard Zinn, 1976

from the Zinn Reader, Seven Stories Press



Do you remember the old Groucho Marx quiz program where, if a contestant happened to mention a certain secret word, the word dropped down and he or she won a big prize? Well, there's a secret word I've been waiting many years for some one on TV to say—some news commentator, political figure, panelist, entertainer, anyone.

Lately, I've been especially careful in listening for it. On news programs, I've seen lines of unemployed people getting longer and longer. I've seen a movie made inside a welfare office, where old people were shunted around like cattle.

I've seen a program about citrus-fruit pickers in Florida, forced to take their little kids out of school to pick oranges with them so they could pay the rent. Meanwhile, the citrus owners were celebrating their prosperity with champagne and making speeches about how wonderful life was for everybody in the citrus industry.

I've watched the President at news conferences and his economic advisers at other news conferences, all pretending that things were going to be all right, but obviously stumbling and incapable of dealing with rising food prices, spreading unemployment,

high rents, impossible medical costs and the shameful fact of a fabulously rich country unable to take care of the most basic needs of its people.

Not one of these people, on network programs watched by millions, mentioned the word which, with the obvious failure of our economic system, I thought someone was bound to blurt out. The word? Socialism.

Of course, it's not just saying the word that is important. It's the idea of it-an idea too threatening to those who profit from the present system to be allowed adequate exploration on TV, radio, the newspapers, the motion pictures.

Let's hasten to say: I don't mean the "socialism" of Soviet Russia or any other oppressive regime claiming to be socialist. Rather, a genuine socialism which not only distributes the wealth but maintains liberty.

That may not exist anywhere in its best form, but the idea has caught the imagination of many people in world history, famous and obscure, who were sensitive to poverty and injustice and wanted a truly democratic world society, without war, without hunger, without discrimination .

There were Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg. Also, George Bernard Shaw, Helen Keller, Albert Einstein, W.E.B. DuBois.

Socialism was once an important movement in the United States. There was Eugene Debs, who organized the railroad workers in the big strike of 1894, went to prison for that, and there, reading and thinking, became a socialist: "While there is a lower class I am in it; while there is a criminal element I am of it; while there is a soul in prison I am not free."

There was Mother Jones, who at 82 fought alongside the coal miners against the Rockefeller interests in Colorado. There was Jack London, the adventure writer. And Heywood Broun, who organized newspapermen into a union and defended Sacco and Vanzetti against the cold authority of the governor of Massachusetts and the presidents of MIT and Harvard. And Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who as an Irish rebel girl, helped the women textile workers of Lawrence in their successful strike of 1912. Socialists all.

In 1776, the time was right for Tom Paine to speak "Common Sense" about Independence, and the idea spread through the country. (It has just reached Gerald Ford.) Isn't the time right, in 1976, for us to begin discussing the idea of socialism?

To break the hold of corporations over our food, our rent, our work, our lives-to produce things people need, and give everyone useful work to do and distribute the wealth of the

country with approximate equality-whether you call it socialism or not, isn't it common sense?

 Zinn Reader

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Terrorism Over Tripoli

by Howard Zinn, 1993

from the Zinn Reader, Seven Stories Press



Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." Thomas Jefferson wrote that in Notes from Virginia.

Those words came to mind as I listened to the announcement from our government that it had bombed the city of Tripoli.

We live in a world in which we are asked to make a moral choice between one kind of terrorism and another. The government, the press, the politicians, are trying to convince us that Ronald Reagan's terrorism is morally superior to Muammar Khadafi's terrorism. Of course, we don't call our actions that, but if terrorism is the deliberate killing of innocent people to make a political point, then our bombing a crowded city in Libya fits the definition as well as the bombing-by whoever did it-of a crowded discotheque in Berlin.

Perhaps the word deliberate shows the difference: when you plant a bomb in a discotheque, the death of bystanders is deliberate; when you drop bombs on a city, it is accidental. We can ease our conscience that way, but only by lying to ourselves.

Because, when you bomb a city from the air, you know, absolutely know, that innocent people will die.

That's why Defense Secretary Weinberger, reaching for morality (his reach will never be long enough, given where he stands) talked of the air raid being organized in such a way as to "minimize" civilian casualties. That meant there would inevitably be civilian casualties, and Weinberger, Schultz and Reagan were willing to have that happen, to make their point, as the discotheque terrorists were willing to have that happen, to make theirs.

In this case, the word "minimize" meant only about a hundred dead (the estimate of foreign diplomats in Tripoli), including infants and children, an eighteen-year old college girl home for a visit, an unknown number of elderly people. None of these were terrorists, just as none of the people in the discotheque were responsible for whatever grievances are felt by Libyans or Palestinians.

Even if we assume that Khadafi was behind the discotheque bombing (and there is no evidence for this), and Reagan behind the Tripoli bombing (the evidence for this is absolute), then both are terrorists, but Reagan is capable of killing far more people than Khadafi. And he has.

Reagan, and Weinberger, and Secretary of State Schultz, and their admirers in the press and in Congress are congratulating themselves that the world's most heavily-armed nation can bomb with impunity (only two U.S. fliers dead, a small price to pay for psychic satisfaction) a fourth rate nation like Libya.

Modern technology has outdistanced the Bible. "An eye for an eye" has become a hundred eyes for an eye, a hundred babies for a baby. The tough-guy columnists and anonymous editorial writers (there were a few courageous exceptions) who defended this, tried to wrap their moral nakedness in the American flag. But it dishonors the flag to wave it proudly over the killing of a college student, or a child sleeping in a crib.

There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people for a purpose which is unattainable. If the purpose is to stop terrorism, even the supporters of the bombing say it won't work; if the purpose is to gain respect for the United States, the result is the opposite: all over the world there is anger and indignation at Reagan's mindless, pointless, soulless violence. We have had presidents just as violent. We have rarely had one so full of hypocritical pieties about "the right to life."

In this endless exchange of terrorist acts, each side claims it is "retaliating." We bombed Tripoli to retaliate for the discotheque. The discotheque may have been bombed to retaliate for our killing 35 Libyan seamen who were on a patrol boat in the Gulf of Sidra-

in international waters, just as we were.

We were in the Gulf of Sidra supposedly to show Libya it must not engage in terrorism. And Libya says-indeed it is telling the truth in this instance-that the United States is an old hand at terrorism, having subsidized terrorist governments in Chile, Guatemala, and El Salvador, and right now subsidizing the terrorism of the contras against farmers, their wives and children, in Nicaragua.

Does a Western democracy have a better right to kill innocent people than a Middle Eastern dictatorship? Even if we were a perfect democracy that would not give us such a license. But the most cherished element of our democracy-the pluralism of dissenting voices, the marketplace of contending ideas-seems to disappear at a time like this, when the bombs fall, the flag waves, and everyone scurries, as Ted Kennedy did, to fall meekly behind "our commander-in-chief." We waited for moral leadership. But Gary Hart, John Kerry, Michael Dukakis and Tip O'Neill all muttered their support. No wonder the Democratic Party is in such pathetic shape.

Where in national politics are the emulators of those two courageous voices at the time of the Gulf of Tonkin incident in Vietnam- Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening-who alone in the Senate refused to go along with "our commander-in-chief" in that first big military strike that launched the ten-year shame of Vietnam?

And where was our vaunted "free press"? After the bombing, a beaming Schultz held a press conference for a group of obsequious reporters in Washington who buttered him up, who licked at his flanks, who didn't ask a single question about the morality of our action, about the civilians killed by our bombs in Tripoli. Where are the likes of I.F Stone, who did in his little newsletter for so many years what no big American daily would do-raise hard questions? Why did Anthony Lewis and Tom Wicker, who sometimes raise such questions-melt away?

Terrorism now has two names, world-wide. One is Khadafi. One is Reagan. In fact, that is a gross simplification. If Khadafi were gone, if Reagan were gone, terrorism would continue-it is a very old weapon of fanatics, whether they operate from secret underground headquarters, or from ornate offices in the capitols of the superpowers. Too bad Khadafi's infant daughter died, one columnist wrote. Too bad, he said, but that's the game of war. Well, if that's the game, then let's get the hell out of it, because it is poisoning us morally, and not solving any problem. It is only continuing and escalating the endless cycle of retaliation which will one day, if we don't kick our habits, kill us all. Let us hope that, even if this generation, its politicians, its reporters, its flag-wavers and fanatics, cannot change its ways, the children of the next generation will know better, having observed our stupidity. Perhaps they will understand that the violence running wild in the world cannot be stopped by more violence, that someone must say: we

refuse to retaliate, the cycle of terrorism stops here.

 Zinn Reader

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Wobbly Spirit

by Howard Zinn, 1965

from the Zinn Reader, Seven Stories Press



Do we see small signs these days-Selma, Berkeley, and who knows where tomorrow-of the Wobbly spirit, still alive? There is a stirring among the young, and talk of a "new radicalism." The timing could hardly be better then, for the publication of Rebel Voices.

This is a large, handsome, blazing-red book in which Joyce Kornbluh has assembled a treasury of articles, songs, poems, cartoons and photographs, from the Labadie Collection of IWW documents at the University of Michigan. Those who at some point in their lives have been excited by the story of the Wobblies, and wished it might somehow be kept alive for the new generation, will be grateful to Mrs. Kornbluh for her work.

She introduces the collection with a description of a Chicago meeting hall one June morning in 1905, when the thirty-six-year-old former cowboy and miner, "Big Bill" Haywood, walked to the front, picked up a piece of loose board, hammered on the table for silence, and called Fellow Workers: This is the Continental Congress of the Working Class. we are here to confederate the workers of this country into a working-class movement in possession of the economic powers, the means of life, in control of the machinery of production and distribution without regard to capitalist masters.

On the speakers' platform with Haywood were two of the great figures of American radicalism: white-haired Mother Jones, the seventy five-year-old organizer for the United Mine Workers of America; and Eugene Debs, leader of the Socialist Party. Also at the meeting was the sharp-tongued polemicist of the Socialist Labor Party, Daniel DeLeon; the renegade Catholic priest, black-bearded Father Hagerty; and Lucy Parsons, widow of the Haymarket Affair martyr, Albert Parsons. That day, the Industrial Workers of the World was formed, and for the next decade (until it was crushed in the repression of the war to make the world safe for democracy) gave the nation its first close look at a revolutionary movement.

In those years, the permanent characteristics of the United States in the twentieth century were being hardened. There was the growing power of giant corporations (United States Steel had been formed in 1901). A minority of the nation's workers were organized into an exclusive trade union with conservative leadership (the A.F. of L. under Samuel Gompers, had almost two million members). And this era saw the inauguration of benign governmental regulation of business, supported by a new consensus of businessmen, Presidents, and reformers, which traditional historians have called "the Progressive Era," but which Gabriel Kolko (in his book *The Triumph of Conservatism*) terms "political capitalism." In retrospect, the IWW appears to have been a desperate attempt to disrupt this structure before its rivets turned cold.

The IWW played for keeps. Where the A.F. of L. called for "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work," the Wobblies wrote, in the preamble to their constitution:

"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes, a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system."

Against the craft union concept (what they called "The American Separation of Labor") the IWW set as their goal: "One Big Union," and in each industry organized the skilled and unskilled, foreign-born and native Americans, Negroes and whites, women and men. They were fiercely militant, opposed to contracts with employers, unyielding in retaining the right to strike at all times. They were suspicious of politics for, as Father Hagerty put it, "Dropping pieces of paper into a hole in a box never did achieve emancipation of the working class...." "The abolition of capitalism would come, they believed through a series of general strikes, after which workers would run the industries themselves. "By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

The IWW never gained a mass membership as did the A.F. of L. . At its peak, it probably had 60,000 members: miners, lumberjacks, construction workers and migratory farm hands, with pockets of influence among steel and textile workers. But it shook up the nation as had no other organization of its time.

The Wobblies engaged in dozens of "free-speech fights" in places like Missoula, Montana and Spokane, Washington, to establish their right to speak on street corners to working people. Rebel Voices contains some of the eyewitness reports that came out of those campaigns. In Spokane, arrested one by one for mounting a soapbox, IWW men kept pouring into town, until too many of them were crowded into the jails, and finally the city officials, after several deaths from brutal treatment in prison, gave in to the demand for free speech and assembly.

In 1912 and 1913, the strikes organized by the IWW reached a crescendo: lumbermen in Aberdeen, Washington, streetcar workers in Portland, Oregon, dock workers in San Pedro, California. The high point of IWW organizing activity, and its greatest victory, came in the 1912 strike of textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Rebel Voices records the account of a strike meeting by journalist Ray Stannard Baker:

"It is the first strike I ever saw which sang. I shall not soon forget the curious lift, the strange sudden fire of the mingled nationalities at the strike meetings when they broke into the universal language of song... "

The Lawrence textile strike lasted ten weeks, involved 25,000 men, women and children, and was watched with mounting tension by the entire nation. Paul Brissenden, in his classic history of the IWW, wrote: "Lawrence was not an ordinary strike. It was a social revolution. The section of Rebel Voices dealing with Lawrence is one of its best. There are the cartoons (a giant policeman raising a club over huddled women and children), photographs (a portrait of poet Arturo Giovanitti, IWW organizer in Lawrence), and page after page of personal recollections. A woman observer testified about what happened at the railroad station, where 150 strikers' children were preparing to leave, to stay with families in Philadelphia who had promised them shelter and food for the duration of the strike:

"When the time came to depart, the children, arranged in a long line, two by two... were about to make their way to the train when the police...closed in on us with their clubs, beating right and left.... The mothers and the children were thus hurled in a mass and bodily dragged to a military truck and even then clubbed... "

There is the account of the strike by a fifteen-year-old textile worker in Lawrence, named Fred Beal:

"...IWO Italian spinners came to me with a long white paper The Following People Working in the Spinning Room Will Go on Strike Friday, January 12 if Wages Are Cut. Queenie read it over my shoulder "Don't sign it, Lobster," she cautioned. "Those wops'll get you in trouble."...But I signed it. so did Gyp and Lefty Louie. "

There is the testimony before the Congressional committee investigating the Lawrence strike, by teen-ager Camella Teoli:

"Well, I used to go to school, and then a man came up to my house and asked my father why I didn't go to work, so my father says I don't know whether she is 13 or 14 years old. so the man says you give me \$4 and I will make the papers come from the old country saying you are 14. So my father gave him the \$4 and in one month came the papers that I was 14. I went to work..."

A parade of fascinating figures and historic events marches through the pages of Rebel Voices the young, dark-haired Irish IWW organizer in Lawrence, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn; the pageant put on by John Reed at Madison Square Garden for the Paterson textile strikers of 1913; the songs of Joe Hill, the story of his death, and his last cry, "Don't mourn. Organize!" There are the lumberjacks and miners and harvest stiffes. Finally, there are the attacks on the IWW by the government after the nation went to war in 1917.

In 1914, the IWW had declared: "We as members of the industrial army will refuse to fight for any purpose except the realization of industrial freedom." A Wobbly orator said: "In the broad sense, there is no such thing as a foreigner. We are all native-born members of this planet.... We ought to have in the place of national patriotism, a broader concept-that of international solidarity." The IWW refused to call off strikes because the nation was at war, and a Tulsa, Oklahoma, newspaper wrote:

"The first step in the whipping of Germany is to strangle the IWWs. Kill them, just as you would kill any other kind of a snake.... It is no time to waste money on trials.... All that is necessary is evidence and a firing squad."

The year 1918 brought mass arrests and mass trials of IWW members charged with interfering with the war effort in various ways. Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis tried a hundred Wobblies in Chicago, and John Reed wrote: "Small on the huge bench sits a wasted man with untidy white hair, an emaciated face in which two burning eyes are set like jewels, parchment skin split by a crack for a mouth; the face of Andrew Jackson three years dead."

The Wobblies went to prison. Big Bill Haywood jumped bail and sailed to Russia, where he died in 1928. After the war was over, the IWW was not the same. A photo in Rebel Voices speaks eloquently: it shows the shambles made of IWW headquarters in New

York City, after a raid by federal agents in 1919.

Today, the Wobblies live, not so much in the embers of that once fiery organization but in the people whose lives they changed. They live also in that special way in which art and literature keep the past alive—in Mrs. Kornbluh's book, or in the autobiographies of Bill Haywood, Mother Jones, Ralph Chaplin, and in Wallace Stegner's novel *The Preacher and the Slave*. But when will some audacious American film maker match the Italian production *The Organizer* with a motion picture on the Lawrence textile strike of 1912, or the Ludlow, Colorado, massacre of 1914?

Half a century separates the IWW from the militant wing of the civil rights movement today, but the parallels are striking. One might see a sharp contrast in the attitudes toward violence, yet the popular image of the dynamite-carrying Wobbly was overdrawn. The IWW emphasis was on self-defense; the Wobblies' big weapons were the withholding of their labor, the power of their voices. Even their "sabotage" meant mostly slowing down on the job. Consider the other characteristics, however: the plunging into areas of maximum danger; the impatience with compromises and gradualist solutions; the deep suspicion of politics (even in the midst of so imaginative a use of politics as the Freedom Democratic Party); the emphasis on direct, militant, mass action; the establishment of pieces of the new world within the old (the Freedom Schools etc.); the migrant, shabby existence of the organizer (DeLeon reprimanded the Wobblies for their "bummery," their overalls and red neckerchiefs); the songs and humor; the dream of a new brotherhood.

Somehow, time and circumstance (or is it a feeling of security?) make the Wobblies and the Molly Maguires more palatable today to the country at large. Would those who think romantically of them now have befriended them in the days when they were hated and hunted? It does not hurt to suggest that historical perspective often shines a kindly light on those who disregard some of the proprieties of respectable liberalism in their passionate sweep toward justice. *Rebel Voices* provides such a reminder.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The CIA, Rockefeller, and the Boys in the Club

by Howard Zinn, 1975

from the Howard Zinn Reader



The CIA, it is generally understood by now (1996), has a long and dirty record of violating, again and again, norms of moral behavior: overthrowing governments, installing military dictatorships, planning the assassinations of foreign leaders, spying on American citizens, interfering in foreign elections, causing the deaths of large numbers of innocent people. In 1975, at the end of the Vietnam War, some of its activities were just coming to the fore, and to quiet further inquiry an investigating commission was set up under Nelson Rockefeller. When the commission released its report, I wrote a column 'June 7, 1975) for the Boston Globe.

"Rockefeller Inquiry Clears CIA of Major Violations" was the headline in the New York Times. Now we can relax. Except for one troubling question: who will clear Rockefeller? All these fellows go around clearing one another. It seems that only at the top levels of government is serious attention paid to the principle that criminals should be tried by

juries of their peers. What would be the public reaction to the headline: "Boston Strangler Clears Cambridge Mugger"? Is that more shocking than: "Attica Massacre Chief Clears Assassination Plotters"?

Rockefeller was the perfect choice to head a commission investigating the CIA. Questioned during his nomination hearing last fall by Sen. Hatfield: "Do you believe that the Central Intelligence Agency should ever actively participate in the internal affairs of another sovereign country, such as in the case of Chile?" Rockefeller replied, "I assume they were done in the best national interest." According to CIA head William Colby's testimony, the CIA tried-with \$8 million-to change the election results in Chile when it seemed a Marxist, Allende, would win. American corporations didn't like Allende because he stood for nationalization of Anaconda Copper and other businesses. Anaconda Copper owed a quarter of a billion dollars to a group of banks led by Chase Manhattan, whose chairman is David Rockefeller, Nelson's brother. Now we are catching on to the meaning of "national interest."

But the circle is still not closed. The CIA action to overthrow Allende was approved by the Forty Committee, whose chairman is Henry Kissinger. And it was Kissinger who recommended that Rockefeller head the commission to investigate the CIA.

Rockefeller summed up the commission report: "There are things that have been done which are in contradiction to the statutes, but in comparison to the total effort, they are not major."

The same report can be made on the Corleone family, after studying them in the motion picture *The Godfather*. True, they murdered people who challenged their power, but in comparison to all the harmless things they did, like drinking espresso, going to weddings and christenings, and bouncing grandchildren on their knees, it was nothing to get excited about.

Yes, the CIA had its little faults. For instance: It kept secret files on 10,000 American citizens. It engaged in domestic wiretapping, breaking and entering, and opening people's mail. It approved Mr. Nixon's "dirty tricks" plan, and abetted Howard Hunt's burglarizing. All this was illegal. And its director, Richard Helms, lied about it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The CIA plotted to overthrow various governments: successfully in Iran and Guatemala, unsuccessfully in Cuba. It discussed assassinating Fidel Castro, with the Kennedys' approval, Gen. Lansdale has testified.

The CIA ran a program of assassination, torture and imprisonment in Vietnam between 1967 and 1971, called Operation Phoenix, headed by the present CIA director William

Colby, who admitted over 20,000 Vietnamese civilians were executed without trial. That is a blood bath, by any definition.

One more fact: no President, no Congress, no Supreme Court, for 25 years, has done anything to stop these activities.

There is murder and deceit on the record of the CIA. But we mustn't abolish it, because we need it to fight Communism. Why do we need to fight Communism? Because Communism roams the earth, conspiring to overthrow other governments. And because we don't want to live in a society where secret police tap our wires, open our mail, and have the power to quietly eliminate anyone they decide will hurt "national security." Once, there was the Stone Age. Now, the Age of Irony. It is only fitting that Rockefeller and his commission should befriend the CIA. It would confuse us if they denounced members of their own club. The Rockefeller report clears the air; our problem is not the CIA, but the club itself.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Dow Shalt Not Kill

by Howard Zinn, 1967

excerpted from the Zinn Reader



Robber Barons

The doctrine that the "civil liberties" of corporations are violated by regulatory laws was predominant in this country during the age of the "Robber Barons," and was constitutionally sanctioned for about fifty years, until 1938. Then, a sharply-worded opinion by Justice Black (Connecticut General Life Insurance Co. v. Johnson) declared that corporations should no longer be considered "persons" to be protected by the due process clause of the 14th Amendment. It soon became established in constitutional law that the regulation of business was not a deprivation of a civil liberty, that what is known as "substantive due process" would apply only to cases where real persons were being deprived of their rights of free expression. Today, it is well-established constitutionally that the U.S. government could make illegal the manufacture of napalm, and charge any persons recruiting for a napalm-manufacturing company with conspiring to violate the law.

But there is no such law. Indeed, the government itself has ordered the napalm manufactured by Dow, and is using it to burn and kill Vietnamese peasants. Should private citizens (students and faculty-in this instance) act themselves, by physical interposition, against Dow Chemical's business activities?

To do so would be to "take the law into your own hands." That is exactly what civil disobedience is: the temporary taking of the law into one's own hands, in order to declare what the law should be. It is a declaration that there is an incongruence between the law and humane values, and that sometimes this can only be publicized by breaking the law.

Civil disobedience can take two forms: violating a law which is obnoxious; or symbolically enacting a law which is urgently needed. When Negroes sat-in at lunch counters, they were engaging in both forms: they violated state laws on segregation and trespassing; they were also symbolically enacting a public accommodations law even before it was written into the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Most of us, I assume, would support civil disobedience under some circumstances: we would commend those who defied the Fugitive Slave Act by harboring a Negro slave, and those who symbolically enacted emancipation by trying to prevent soldiers in Boston from returning Anthony Burns to his master. Otherwise, to declare that the law in all circumstances is to be obeyed, is to suppress the very spirit of democracy, to surrender individual conscience to an omnipotent state. Thus, the issue becomes: under what circumstances is civil disobedience justified and is the Dow Chemical situation one of those circumstances?

It seems to me there are two essential conditions for the right to civil disobedience. One is that the human value at stake must involve fundamental rights, like life, health, and liberty. There is no real cause, for instance, to disobey a traffic light because it is inconveniently long. But human slavery, or racism, or war-these are overwhelmingly important. Thus, the argument "what if everyone disobeyed the law every time it displeased them" falls before the observable fact that those who engage in civil disobedience are almost always law-abiding citizens who on certain very important issues deliberately, openly, temporarily violate the law to communicate a vital message to their fellow citizens.

What of Dow Chemical and napalm? Four American physicians, in a report, "Medical Problems of South Vietnam," have written: "Napalm is a highly sticky inflammable jelly which clings to anything it touches and burns with such heat that all oxygen in the area is exhausted within moments. Death is either by roasting or by suffocation. Napalm wounds are often fatal (estimates are 90 percent). Those who survive face a living death. The victims are frequently children." Napalm is dropped daily on the villages, the

forests, the people of Vietnam by American bombers; the saturation bombing of that tiny country is one of the cruelest acts perpetrated by any nation in modern history; it ranks with the destruction of Lidice by the Germans, the crushing of the Hungarian rebellion by the Russians, or the recent mass slaughter in Indonesia. Dr. Richard E. Perry, an American physician, wrote in Redbook in January 1967, on his return from Vietnam: "I have been an orthopedic surgeon for a good number of years, with rather a wide range of medical experience. But nothing could have prepared me for my encounters with Vietnamese women and children burned by napalm. It was shocking and sickening, even for a physician, to see and smell the blackened flesh."

We are not, then, dealing with trivialities, but with monstrous deeds. This fact somehow becomes lost in the bland, reasoned talk of businessmen and university officials, who speak as if Dow were just another business firm, recruiting for some innocuous purpose, making radios or toothpaste. The root issue, it should be clear, is not simply napalm; it is the Vietnam war as a whole, in which a far-off country is being systematically destroyed, and its population decimated, by the greatest military power on earth. The war itself is the object of the civil disobedience; the use of napalm is one particularly bestial tactic in this war.

This brings us to the second condition for civil disobedience: the inadequacy of legal channels for redressing the grievance. This is manifestly true in the case of the Vietnam war, which is being waged completely outside the American constitutional process, by the President and a handful of advisers. Congress is troubled, but follows sheep-like what the White House decrees. The Supreme Court, by tradition, leaves foreign policy questions to the "political" branches of government (the President and Congress) but recently one of its more conservative members, Justice Potter Stewart, said that perhaps the Court should review the constitutionality of the war. This, after 100,000 American casualties! Citizens have taken to the auditoriums and to the streets precisely because they have no other way to protest; yet both President and Vice-President declare with the brazenness of petty dictators that no civic outcry will change their policy. If ever there was an issue which called for civil disobedience, it is this run-away war.

Then why do we become uneasy when students interfere with Dow Chemical? Occasionally, we read of housewives blocking off a busy inter section because children have been killed there as a result of a lack of traffic lights. These housewives thereby interfere with the freedom of automobiles and of pedestrians, in order to temporarily regulate, or even disrupt, traffic, on behalf of the lives of children-hoping this will lead to the permanent regulation of traffic by government. (Those are not the automobiles that killed the child, anymore than this Dow Chemical representative, or the student he is recruiting, is actually dropping the napalm bomb.)

Why do we so easily sympathize with actions like that, where perhaps one child was

killed, and not with actions against Dow Chemical, where countless children have been victims? Is it possible that we subconsciously distinguish between the identifiable children down the street (who move us), and the faceless children of that remote Asian land (who do not)? It is possible also that the well-dressed, harassed representative of Dow Chemical is more human, therefore more an object of sympathy, to the well-dressed, harassed officials of the University (and to us), than the burning, bleeding, blurred faces of the Vietnamese?

There is a common argument which says: but where will these student actions lead? If we justify one act of civil disobedience, must we not justify them all? Do they then have a right to disobey the Civil Rights Acts? Where does it stop? That argument withers away, however, once we recognize the distinction between free speech, where absolute toleration is a social good, and free action, where the existence of values other than free speech demands that we choose right over wrong and respond accordingly. We should remember that the social utility of free speech is in giving us the informational base from which we can then make social choices. To refrain from making choices is to say that beyond the issue of free speech we have no substantive values which we will express in action. If we do not discriminate in the actions we support or oppose, we cannot rectify the terrible injustices of the present world.

Whether the issue of the Vietnam war is more effectively presented by protest and demonstration (that is, the exercise of speech, press, assembly) rather than by civil disobedience, is a question of tactic, and varies with each specific situation. Different student groups (at Harvard and MIT, for instance) have used one or another against Dow recruitment, and each tactic has its own advantages. I tend to favor the protest tactic as keeping the central issue of the war clearer. But, if students or faculty engaged in civil disobedience, I would consider that morally defensible.

So much for student-faculty action-but what of the University administration? The University's acceptance of Dow Chemical recruiting as just another business transaction is especially disheartening, because it is the University which tells students repeatedly on ceremonial occasions that it hopes students will be more than fact-absorbing automatons, that they will choose humane values, and stand up for them courageously. For the University to sponsor Dow Chemical activities as a protective civil liberty means that the University (despite its courses in Constitutional Law) still accepts the nineteenth century definition of substantive due process as defending corporations against regulation, that (despite a library with books on civil liberties) the University still does not understand what civil liberties are, that (despite its entrance requirement of literacy) the University has not read in the newspapers of the terrible damage our napalm bombs have done to innocent people.

The fact that there is only an indirect connection between Dow recruiting students and napalm dropped on Vietnamese villages, does not vitiate the moral issue. It is precisely

the nature of modern mass murder that it is not visibly direct like individual murder, but takes on a corporate character, where every participant has limited liability. The total effect, however, is a thousand times more pernicious, than that of the individual entrepreneur of violence. If the world is destroyed, it will be a white-collar crime, done in a business-like way, by large numbers of individuals involved in a chain of actions, each one having a touch of innocence.

Sometimes the University speaks of the "right of recruitment." There is no absolute right of recruitment, however, because (beyond the package of civil liberties connected with free expression and procedural guarantees, which are the closest we can get to "absolute" right) all rights are relative. I doubt that Boston University would open its offices to the Ku Klux Klan for recruiting, or that it would apply an absolute right of private enterprise to peddlers selling poisonous food on campus. When the University of Pennsylvania announced it would end its germ-warfare research project, it was saying that there is no absolute right to do research on anything, for any purpose.

The existence of University "security" men (once known as campus police) testifies that all actions on campus are not equally tolerable. The University makes moral choices all the time. If it can regulate the movement of men into women's dormitories (in a firm stand for chastity), then why cannot it regulate the coming and going of corporations into the university, where the value is human life, and the issue is human suffering? And if students are willing to take the risks of civil disobedience, to declare themselves for the dying people of Vietnam, cannot the University take a milder step, but one which makes the same declaration-and cancel the invitation to Dow Chemical? Why cannot the University-so much more secure-show a measure of social commitment, a bit of moral courage? Should not the University, which speaks so often about students having "values," declare some of its own? It is written on no tablets handed down from heaven that the officials of a University may not express themselves on public issues. It is time (if not now, when? asks the Old Testament) for a University to forsake the neutrality of the IBM machines, and join the human race.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Machiavellian Realism and U.S. Foreign Policy: Means and Ends

by Howard Zinn, 1991

from the Zinn Reader



While teaching courses in political theory at Boston University, and fascinated by the figure of Machiavelli, I came across the remarkable volume by Ralph Roeder, *The Man of the Renaissance*, with its brilliant portraits of the dissident Savonarola and the toady Machiavelli. At the same time I noted the respect with which Machiavelli was treated by people on all parts of the political spectrum. The Vietnam War led many people, including myself, to look more closely at the history of United States foreign policy, and to me there was a distinct Machiavellian thread running through that history. This essay appeared in my book *Declarations of Independence* (HarperCollins, 1991).

Interests: *The Prince and the Citizen*

About 500 years ago modern political thinking began. Its enticing surface was the idea of "realism." Its ruthless center was the idea that with a worthwhile end one could justify any means. Its spokesman was Nicolo Machiavelli.

In the year 1498 Machiavelli became adviser on foreign and military affairs to the government of Florence, one of the great Italian cities of that time. After fourteen years of service, a change of government led to his dismissal, and he spent the rest of his life in exile in the countryside outside of Florence. During that time he wrote, among other things, a little book called *The Prince*, which became the world's most famous handbook of political wisdom for governments and their advisers.

Four weeks before Machiavelli took office, something happened in Florence that made a profound impression on him. It was a public hanging. The victim was a monk named Savonarola, who preached that people could be guided by their "natural reason." This threatened to diminish the importance of the Church fathers, who then showed their importance by having Savonarola arrested. His hands were bound behind his back and he was taken through the streets in the night, the crowds swinging lanterns near his face, peering for the signs of his dangerousness.

Savonarola was interrogated and tortured for ten days. They wanted to extract a confession, but he was stubborn. The Pope, who kept in touch with the torturers, complained that they were not getting results quickly enough. Finally the right words came, and Savonarola was sentenced to death. As his body swung in the air, boys from the neighborhood stoned it. The corpse was set afire, and when the fire had done its work, the ashes were strewn in the river Arno.

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli refers to Savonarola and says, "Thus it comes about that all armed prophets have conquered and unarmed ones failed."

Political ideas are centered on the issue of ends (What kind of society do we want?) and means (How will we get it?). In that one sentence about unarmed prophets Machiavelli settled for modern governments the question of ends: conquest. And the question of means: force.

Machiavelli refused to be deflected by utopian dreams or romantic hopes and by questions of right and wrong or good and bad. He is the father of modern political realism, or what has been called *realpolitik*. "It appears to me more proper to go to the truth of the matter than to its imagination...for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation."

It is one of the most seductive ideas of our time. We hear on all sides the cry of "be

realistic...you're living in the real world," from political platforms, in the press, and at home. The insistence on building more nuclear weapons, when we already possess more than enough to destroy the world, is based on "realism." The Wall Street Journal, approving a Washington, D.C., ordinance allowing the police to arrest any person on the street refusing to move on when ordered, wrote, "D.C.'s action is born of living in the real world." And consider how often a parent (usually a father) has said to a son or daughter: "It's good to have idealistic visions of a better world, but you're living in the real world, so act accordingly."

How many times have the dreams of young people-the desire to help others; to devote their lives to the sick or the poor; or to poetry, music, or drama-been demeaned as foolish romanticism, impractical in a world where one must "make a living"? Indeed, the economic system reinforces the same idea by rewarding those who spend their lives on "practical" pursuits-while making life difficult for the artist, poets, nurses, teachers, and social workers.

Realism is seductive because once you have accepted the reasonable notion that you should base your actions on reality, you are too often led to accept, without much questioning, someone else's version of what that reality is. It is a crucial act of independent thinking to be skeptical of someone else's description of reality.

When Machiavelli claims to "go to the truth of the matter," he is making the frequent claim of important people (writers, political leaders) who press their ideas on others: that their account is "the truth," that they are being "objective."

But his reality may not be our reality; his truth may not be our truth. The real world is infinitely complex. Any description of it must be a partial description, so a choice is made about what part of reality to describe, and behind that choice is often a definite interest, in the sense of something useful for a particular individual or group. Behind the claim of someone giving us an objective picture of the real world is the assumption that we all have the same interests, and so we can trust the one who describes the world for us, because that person has our interests at heart.

It is very important to know if our interests are the same, because a description is never simply neutral and innocent; it has consequences. No description is merely that. Every description is in some way a prescription. If you describe human nature as Machiavelli does, as basically immoral, it suggests that it is realistic, indeed only human, that you should behave that way too.

The notion that all our interests are the same (the political leaders and the citizens, the millionaire and the homeless person) deceives us. It is a deception useful to those who run modern societies, where the support of the population is necessary for the smooth

operation of the machinery of everyday life and the perpetuation of the present arrangements of wealth and power.

When the Founding Fathers of the United States wrote the Preamble to the Constitution, their first words were, "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice..." The Constitution thus looked as if it were written by all the people, representing their interests.

In fact, the Constitution was drawn up by fifty-five men, all white and mostly rich, who represented a certain elite group in the new nation. The document itself accepted slavery as legitimate, and at that time about one of every five persons in the population was a black slave. The conflicts between rich and poor and black and white, the dozens of riots and rebellions in the century before the Revolution, and a major uprising in western Massachusetts just before the convening of the Constitutional Convention (Shays' Rebellion) were all covered over by the phrase "We the people."

Machiavelli did not pretend to a common interest. He talked about what "is necessary for a prince." He dedicated *The Prince* to the rich and powerful Lorenzo di Medici, whose family ruled Florence and included popes and monarchs. (The Columbia Encyclopedia has this intriguing description of the Medici: "The genealogy of the family is complicated by the numerous illegitimate offspring and by the tendency of some of the members to dispose of each other by assassination.")

In exile, writing his handbook of advice for the Medici, Machiavelli ached to be called back to the city to take his place in the inner circle. He wanted nothing more than to serve the prince.

In our time we find greater hypocrisy. Our Machiavellis, our presidential advisers, our assistants for national security, and our secretaries of state insist they serve "the national interest," "national security," and "national defense." These phrases put everyone in the country under one enormous blanket, camouflaging the differences between the interest of those who run the government and the interest of the average citizen.

The American Declaration of Independence, however, clearly understood that difference of interest between government and citizen. It says that the purpose of government is to secure certain rights for its citizens—life, liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness. But governments may not fulfill these purposes and so "whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government." The end of Machiavelli's *The Prince* is clearly different. It is not the welfare of the citizenry, but national power, conquest, and control. All is done in order "to maintain the state."

In the United States today, the Declaration of Independence hangs on schoolroom walls, but foreign policy follows Machiavelli. Our language is more deceptive than his; the purpose of foreign policy, our leaders say, is to serve the "national interest," fulfill our "world responsibility." In 1986 General William Westmoreland said that during World War II the United States "inherited the mantle of leadership of the free world" and "became the international champions of liberty." This, from the man who, as chief of military operations in the Vietnam War, conducted a brutal campaign that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese noncombatants. Sometimes, the language is more direct, as when President Lyndon Johnson, speaking to the nation during the Vietnam War, talked of the United States as being "number one." Or, when he said, "Make no mistake about it, we will prevail."

Even more blunt was a 1980 article in the influential Foreign Affairs by John Hopkins political scientist Robert W. Tucker; in regard to Central America, he wrote, "we have regularly played a determining role in making and in unmaking governments, and we have defined what we have considered to be the acceptable behavior of governments. "Tucker urged "a policy of a resurgent America to prevent the coming to power of radical regimes in Central America" and asked, "Would a return to a policy of the past work in Central America?... There is no persuasive reason for believing it would not....Right-wing governments will have to be given steady outside support, even, if necessary, by sending in American forces."

Tucker's suggestion became the Central America policy of the Reagan administration, as it came into office in early 1981. His "sending in American forces" was too drastic a step for an American public that clearly opposed another Vietnam (unless done on a small scale, like Reagan's invasion of Grenada, and Bush's invasion of Panama). But for the following eight years, the aims of the United States were clear; to overthrow the left-wing government of Nicaragua and to keep in place the right-wing government of El Salvador.

Two Americans who visited El Salvador in 1983 for the New York City Bar Association described for the New York Times a massacre of eighteen peasants by local troops in Sonsonate province:

Ten military advisers are attached to the Sonsonate armed forces... The episode contains all the unchanging elements of the Salvadoran tragedy- uncontrolled military violence against civilians, the apparent ability of the wealthy to procure official violence...and the presence of United States military advisers, working with the Salvadoran military responsible for these monstrous practices... after 30,000 unpunished murders by security and military forces and over 10,000 "disappearances" of civilians in custody, the root causes of the killings remain in place, and the killing goes on.

The purpose of its policy in Central America, said the U.S. government, was to protect the country from the Soviet threat: a Soviet base in Nicaragua and a possible Soviet base in El Salvador. This was not quite believable. Was the Soviet Union prepared to launch an invasion of the United States from Central America? Was a nation that could not win a war on its borders with Afghanistan going to send an army across the Atlantic Ocean to Nicaragua? And what then? Would that army then march up through Honduras into Guatemala, then through all of Mexico, into Texas, and then...?

It was as absurd as the domino theory of the Vietnam War, in which the falling dominos of Southeast Asia would have had to swim the Pacific to get to San Francisco. Did the Soviet Union, with intercontinental ballistic missiles, with submarines off the coast of Long Island, need Central America as a base for attacking the United States?

Nevertheless, the Kissinger Commission, set up by President Reagan to advise him on Central American policy, warned in its report that our "southern flank" was in danger—a biological reference designed to make all of us nervous.

Even a brief look at history was enough to make one skeptical. How could we explain our frequent interventions in Central America before 1917, before the Bolshevik Revolution? How could we explain our taking control of Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898; our seizure of the Canal Zone in 1903; our dispatch of marines to Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Guatemala in the early 1900s; our bombardment of a Mexican town in 1914; and our long military occupation of Haiti and the Dominican Republic starting in 1915 and 1916? All this before the Soviet Union existed.

There was another official reason given for U.S. intervention in Central America in the 1980s: to "restore democracy." This, too, was hardly believable. Throughout the period after World War II our government had supported undemocratic governments, indeed vicious military dictatorships; in Batista's Cuba, Somoza's Nicaragua, Armas's Guatemala, Pinoche's Chile, and Duvalier's Haiti as well as in El Salvador and other countries of Latin America.

The actual purpose of U.S. policy in Central America was expressed by Tucker in the most clear Machiavellian terms: "The great object of American foreign policy ought to be the restoration of a more normal political world, a world in which those states possessing the elements of great power once again play the role their power entitles them to play."

Undoubtedly, there are Americans who respond favorably to this idea, that the United States should be a "great power" in the world, should dominate other countries, should be number one. Perhaps the assumption is that our domination is benign and that our power is used for kindly purposes. The history of our relations with Latin America does not suggest this. Besides~ it really is keeping with the American ideal of equality of all

peoples to insist that we have the right to control the affairs of other countries? Are we the only country entitled to a Declaration of Independence?

Means: The Lion and the Fox

There should be clues to the rightness of the ends we pursue by examining the means we use to achieve those ends. I am assuming there is always some connection between ends and means. All means become ends in the sense that they have immediate consequences apart from the ends they are supposed to achieve. And all ends are themselves means to other ends. Was there not a link, for Machiavelli, between his crass end- power for the prince-and the various means he found acceptable?

For a year Machiavelli was ambassador to Cesare Borgia, conqueror of Rome. He describes one event that "is worthy of note and of imitation by others." Rome had been disorderly, and Cesare Borgia decided he needed to make the people "peaceful and obedient to his rule." Therefore, "he appointed Messer Remirro de Orco, a cruel and able man, to whom he gave the fullest authority" and who, in a short time, made Rome "orderly and united." But Cesare Borgia knew his policies had aroused hatred, so, in order to purge the minds of the people and to win them over completely, he resolved to show that if any cruelty had taken place it was not by his orders, but through the harsh disposition of his minister. And having found the opportunity he had him cut in half and placed one morning in the public square at Cesena with a piece of wood and blood-stained knife by his side.

In recent American history, we have become familiar with the technique of rulers letting subordinates do the dirty work, which they can later disclaim. As a result of the Watergate scandals in the Nixon administration (a series of crimes committed by underlings in his behalf), a number of his people (former CIA agents, White House aides, and even the attorney-general) were sent to prison. But Nixon himself, although he was forced to resign his office, escaped criminal prosecution, arranging to be pardoned when his vice-president, Gerald Ford, became president. Nixon retired in prosperity and, in a few years, became a kind of elder statesman, a Godfather of politics, looked to for sage advice.

Perhaps as a way of calming the public in that heated time of disillusionment with the government because of Vietnam and Watergate, a Senate committee in 1974-1975 conducted an investigation of the intelligence agencies. It discovered that the CIA and the FBI had violated the law countless times (opening mail, breaking into homes and offices, etc.). In the course of that investigation, it was also revealed that the CIA, going back to the Kennedy administration, had plotted the assassination of a number of

foreign rulers, including Cuba's Fidel Castro. But the president himself, who clearly was in favor of such actions, was not to be directly involved, so that he could deny knowledge of it. This was given the term plausible denial.

As the committee reported:

Non-attribution to the United States for covert operations was the original and principal purpose of the so-called doctrine of "plausible denial." Evidence before the Committee clearly demonstrates that this concept, designed to protect the United States and its operatives from the consequences of disclosures, has been expanded to mask decisions of the president and his senior staff members.

In 1988, a story in a Beirut magazine led to information that Ronald Reagan's administration had been secretly selling arms to Iran, the declared enemy of the United States, and using the proceeds to give military aid to counterrevolutionaries (the "contras") in Nicaragua, thus violating an act passed by Congress. Reagan and Vice President Bush denied involvement, although the evidence pointed very strongly to their participation. Instead of impeaching them, however, congress put their emissaries on the witness stand, and later several of them were indicted. One of them (Robert McFarland) tried to commit suicide. Another, Colonel Oliver North, stood trial for lying to Congress, was found guilty, but was not sentenced to prison. Reagan was not compelled to testify about what he had done. He retired in peace and Bush became the next president of the United States, both beneficiaries of plausible denial. Machiavelli would have admired the operation.

A prince, Machiavelli suggested, should emulate both the lion and the fox. The lion uses force. "The character of peoples varies, and it is easy to persuade them of a thing, but difficult to keep them in that persuasion. And so it is necessary to order things so that when they no longer believe, they can be made to believe by force.... Fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force." The fox uses deception.

If all men were good, this would not be good advice, but since they are dishonest and do not keep faith with you, you, in return, need not keep faith with them; and no prince was ever at a loss for plausible reasons to cloak a breach of faith.... The experience of our times shows those princes to have done great things who have had little regard for good faith, and have been able by astuteness to confuse men's brains.

This advice for the prince has been followed in our time by all sorts of dictators and generalissimos. Hitler kept a copy of *The Prince* at his bedside, it is said. (Who says? How do they know?) Mussolini used Machiavelli for his doctoral dissertation. Lenin and Stalin are also supposed to have read Machiavelli. Certainly the Italian Communist

Gramsci wrote favorably about Machiavelli, claiming that Machiavelli was not really giving advice to princes, who knew all that already, but to "those who do not know," thus educating "those who must recognize certain necessary means, even if those of tyrants, because they want certain ends."

The prime ministers and presidents of modern democratic states, despite their pretensions, have also admired and followed Machiavelli. Max Lerner, a prominent liberal commentator on the post-World War II period, in his introduction to Machiavelli's writings, says of him: "The common meaning he has for democrats and dictators alike is that, what ever your ends, you must be clear-eyed and unsentimental in pursuit of them." Lerner finds in Machiavelli's Discourses that one of his important ideas is "the need in the conduct even of a democratic state for the will to survive and therefore for ruthless instead of half-hearted measures."

Thus the democratic state, behaving like the lion, uses force when persuasion does not work. It uses it against its own citizens when they cannot be persuaded to obey the laws. It uses it against other peoples in the act of war, not always in self-defense, but often when it cannot persuade other nations to do its bidding.

For example, at the start of the twentieth century, although Colombia was willing to sell the rights to the Panama Canal to the United States, it wanted more money than the United States was willing to pay. So the warships were sent on their way, a little revolution was instigated in Panama, and soon the Canal Zone was in the hands of the United States. As one U.S. Senator described the operation, "We stole it fair and square. The modern liberal state, like a fox, often uses deception to gain its ends-not so much deception of the foreign enemy (which, after all, has little faith in its adversaries), but of its own citizens, who have been taught to trust their leaders.

One of the important biographies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt is titled Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox. Roosevelt deceived the American public at the start of World War II, in September and October 1941, misstating the facts about two instances involving German sub marines and American destroyers (claiming the destroyer Greer, which was attacked by a German submarine, was on an innocent mission when in fact it was tracking the sub for the British Navy). A historian sympathetic to him wrote, "Franklin Roosevelt repeatedly deceived the American people during the period before Pearl Harbor... He was like the physician who must tell the patient lies for the patient's own good."

Then there were the lies of President John Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk when they told the public the United States was not responsible for the 1961 invasion of Cuba, although in fact the invasion had been organized by the CIA.

The escalation of the war in Vietnam started with a set of lies- in August 1964-about incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin. The United States announced two "unprovoked" attacks on U.S. destroyers by North Vietnamese boats. One of them almost certainly did not take place. The other was undoubtedly provoked by the proximity (ten miles) of the destroyer to the Vietnamese coast and by a series of CIA-organized raids on the coast.

The lies then multiplied. One of them was President Johnson's statement that the U.S. Air Force was only bombing "military targets." Another was a deception by President Richard Nixon; he concealed from the American public the 1969-1970 massive bombing of Cambodia, a country with which we were supposed to be at peace.

The Advisers

Advisers and assistants to presidents, however committed they are in their rhetoric to the values of modern liberalism, have again and again participated in acts of deception that would have brought praise from Machiavelli. His goal was to serve the prince and national power. So was theirs. Because they were advisers to a liberal democratic state, they assumed that advancing the power of such a state was a moral end, which then justified both force and deception. But cannot a liberal state carry out immoral policies? Then the adviser (deceiving himself this time) would consider that his closeness to the highest circles of power put him in a position to affect, even reverse, such policies.

It was a contemporary of Machiavelli, Thomas More, who warned intellectuals about being trapped into service to the state and about the self-deception in which the adviser believes he will be a good influence in the higher councils of the government. In More's book *Utopia*, spokesperson Raphael is offered the advice commonly given today to young people who want to be social critics, prodding the government from outside, like Martin Luther King or Ralph Nader. The advice is to get on the inside. Raphael is told, "I still think that if you could overcome the aversion you have to the courts of princes, you might do a great deal of good to mankind by the advice that you would give." Raphael replies, "If I were at the court of some king and proposed wise laws to him and tried to root out of him the dangerous seeds of evil, do you not think I would either be thrown out of his court or held in scorn?" He goes on,

Imagine me at the court of the King of France. Suppose I were sitting in his council with the King himself presiding, and that the wisest men were earnestly discussing by what methods and intrigues the King might keep Milan, recover Naples so often lost, then overthrow the Venetians and sub due all Italy, and add Flanders, Brabant, and even all Burgundy to his realm, besides some other nations he had planned to invade. Now in all this great ferment, with so many brilliant men planning together how to carry on war,

imagine so modest a man as myself standing up and urging them to change all their plans.

More might have been describing the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., adviser to President Kennedy, who thought it was "a terrible idea" to go ahead with the CIA Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, two years after the revolution there. But he did not raise his voice in protest, because, as he later admitted, he was intimidated by the presence of "such august figures as the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff." He wrote, "In the months after the Bay of Pigs I bitterly reproached myself for having kept so silent during those crucial discussions in the Cabinet room."

But-the intimidation of Schlesinger-as-adviser went beyond silencing him in the cabinet room-it led him to produce a nine-page memorandum to President Kennedy, written shortly before the invasion of Cuba, in which he is as blunt as Machiavelli himself in urging deception of the public to conceal the U.S. role in the invasion. This would be necessary because "a great many people simply do not at this moment see that Cuba presents so grave and compelling a threat to our national security as to justify a course of action which much of the world will interpret as calculated aggression against a small nation."

The memorandum goes on, "The character and repute of President Kennedy constitute one of our greatest national resources. Nothing should be done to jeopardize this invaluable asset. When lies must be told, they should be told by subordinate officials." It goes on to suggest "that someone other than the President make the final decision and do so in his absence-someone whose head can later be placed on the block if things go terribly wrong." (Cesare Borgia again, only lacking the bloodstained knife.)

Schlesinger included in his memo sample questions and lying answers in case the issue of the invasion came up in a press conference:

Q. Mr. President, is CIA involved in this affair?

A. I can assure you that the United States has no intention of using force to overthrow the Castro regime.

The scenario was followed. Four days before the invasion President Kennedy told a press conference, "There will not be, under any conditions, any intervention in Cuba by U.S. armed forces."

Schlesinger was just one of dozens of presidential advisers who behaved like little Machiavellis in the years when revolutions in Vietnam and Latin America brought hysterical responses on the part of the U.S. government. These intellectuals could see

no better role for themselves than to serve national power.

Kissinger, secretary of state to Nixon, did not even have the mild qualms of Schlesinger. He surrendered himself with ease to the princes of war and destruction. In private discussions with old colleagues from Harvard who thought the Vietnam War immoral, he presented himself as someone trying to bring it to an end, but in his official capacity he was the willing intellectual tool of a policy that involved the massive killing of civilians in Vietnam.

Kissinger approved the bombing and invasion of Cambodia, an act so disruptive of the delicate Cambodian society that it can be considered an important factor in the rise of the murderous Pol Pot regime in that country. After he and the representatives of North Vietnam had negotiated a peace agreement to end the war in late 1972, he approved the breaking off of the talks and the brutal bombardment of residential districts in Hanoi by the most ferocious bombing plane of the time, the B52.

Kissinger's biographers describe his role "If he had disapproved of Nixon's policy, he could have argued against the Cambodia attack. But there is no sign that he ever mustered his considerable influence to persuade the president to hold his fire. Or that he ever considered resigning in protest. Quite the contrary, Kissinger supported the policy."

During the Christmas 1972 bombings New York Times columnist James Reston wrote:

It may be and probably is true, that Mr. Kissinger as well as Secretary of State Rogers and most of the senior officers in the State Department are opposed to the President's bombing offensive in North Vietnam.... But Mr. Kissinger is too much a scholar, with too good a sense of humor and history, to put his own thoughts ahead of the president's.

It seems that journalists too, can be Machiavellian.

Serving National Powers

Machiavelli never questioned that national power and the position of the prince were proper ends: "And it must be understood that a prince...cannot observe all those things which are considered good in men, being often obliged, in order to maintain the state, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion."

The end of national power may be beneficial to the prince, and even to the prince's advisers, an ambitious lot. But why should it be assumed as a good end for the average citizen? Why should the citizen tie his or her fate to the nation-state, which is perfectly

willing to sacrifice the lives and liberties of its own citizens for the power, the profit, and the glory of politicians or corporate executives or generals?

For a prince, a dictator, or a tyrant national power is an end unquestioned. A democratic state, however, substituting an elected president for a prince, must present national power as benign, serving the interests of liberty, justice, and humanity. If such a state, which is surrounded with the rhetoric of democracy and liberty and, in truth, has some measure of both, engages in a war that is clearly against a vicious and demonstrably evil enemy, then the end seems so clean and clear that any means to defeat that enemy may seem justified.

Such a state was the United States and such an enemy was fascism, represented by Germany, Italy, and Japan. Therefore, when the atomic bomb appeared to be the means for a quicker victory, there was little hesitation to use it.

Very few of us can imagine ourselves as presidential advisers, having to deal with their moral dilemmas (if, indeed, they retain enough integrity to consider them dilemmas). It is much easier, I think, for average citizens to see themselves in the position of the scientists who were secretly assembled in New Mexico during World War II to make the atomic bomb. We may be able to imagine our own trade or profession, our particular skills, called on to serve the policies of the nation. The scientists who served Hitler, like the rocket expert Werner von Braun, could be as cool as Machiavelli in their subservience; they would serve national power without asking questions. They were professionals, totally consumed with doing "a good job" and they would do that job for whoever happened to be in power. So, when Hitler was defeated and von Braun was brought by military intelligence agents to the United States, he cheerfully went ahead and worked on rockets for the United States, as he had done for Hitler.

As one satirical songwriter put it:

Once the rockets are Up, Who cares where they come down? That's not our department,
Says Werner von Braun.

The scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project were not like that. One cannot imagine them turning to Hitler and working for him if he were victorious. They were conscious, in varying degrees, that this was a war against fascism and that it was invested with a powerful moral cause. Therefore, to build this incredibly powerful weapon was to use a terrible means, but for a noble end.

And yet there was one element these scientists had in common with Werner von Braun: the sheer pleasure of doing a job well, of professional competence, and of scientific discovery, all of which could make one forget, or at least put in the background, the

question of human consequences. After the war, when the making of a thermonuclear bomb was proposed, a bomb a thousand times more destructive than the one dropped on Hiroshima, J. Robert Oppenheimer, personally horrified by the idea, was still moved to pronounce the scheme of Edward Teller and Stanislaw Ulam for producing it as "technically sweet." Teller, defending the project against scientists who saw it as genocidal, said, "The important thing in any science is to do the things that can be done." And, whatever Enrico Fermi's moral scruples were (he was one of the top scientists in the Manhattan Project), he pronounced the plan for making the bombs "superb physics."

Robert Jungk, a German researcher who interviewed many of the scientists involved in the making of the bomb, tried to understand their lack of resistance to dropping the bomb on Hiroshima. "They felt themselves caught in a vast machinery and they certainly were inadequately informed as to the true political and strategic situation." But he does not excuse their inaction. "If at any time they had had the moral strength to protest on purely humane grounds against the dropping of the bomb, their attitude would no doubt have deeply impressed the president, the Cabinet and the generals."

Using the atomic bombs on populated cities was justified in moral terms by American political leaders. Henry Stimson, whose Interim Committee had the job of deciding whether or not to use the atomic bomb, said later it was done "to end the war in victory with the least possible cost in the lives of the men in the armies." This was based on the assumption that without atomic bombs, an invasion of Japan would be necessary, which would cost many American lives.

It was a morality limited by nationalism, perhaps even racism. The saving of American lives was considered far more important than the saving of Japanese lives. Numbers were wildly thrown into the air (for example, Secretary of State James Byrnes talked of "a million casualties" resulting from an invasion), but there was no attempt to seriously estimate American casualties and weigh that against the consequences for Japanese men and women, old people and babies. (The closest to such an attempt was a military estimate that an invasion of the southernmost island of Japan would cause 30,000 American dead and wounded.)

The evidence today is overwhelming that an invasion of Japan was not necessary to bring the war to an end. Japan was defeated, in disarray, and ready to surrender. The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which interviewed 700 Japanese military and political officials after the war, came to this conclusion:

Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have

surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.

After the war American scholar Robert Butow went through the papers of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the records of the International Military Tribunal of the Far East (which tried Japanese leaders as war criminals), and the interrogation files of the U.S. Army. He also interviewed many of the Japanese principals and came to this conclusion: "Had the Allies given the Prince (Prince Konoye, special emissary to Moscow, who was working on Russian intercession for peace) a week of grace in which to obtain his Government's support for the acceptance of the proposals, the war might have ended toward the latter part of July or the very beginning of the month of August, without the atomic bomb and without Soviet participation in the conflict."

On July 13, 1945, three days before the successful explosion of the first atomic bomb in New Mexico, the United States intercepted Japanese Foreign Minister Togo's secret cable to Ambassador Sato in Moscow, asking that he get the Soviets to intercede and indicating that Japan was ready to end the war, so long as it was not unconditional surrender.

On August 2, the Japanese foreign office sent a message to the Japanese ambassador in Moscow, "There are only a few days left in which to make arrangements to end the war.... As for the definite terms... it is our intention to make the Potsdam Three-Power Declaration [which called for unconditional surrender] the basis of the study regarding these terms."

Barton Bernstein, a Stanford historian who has studied the official documents closely, wrote:

This message, like earlier ones, was probably intercepted by American intelligence and decoded. It had no effect on American policy. There is not evidence that the message was sent to Truman and Byrnes [secretary of state], nor any evidence that they followed the intercepted messages during the Potsdam conference. They were unwilling to take risks in order to save Japanese lives.

In his detailed and eloquent history of the making of the bomb, Richard Rhodes says, "The bombs were authorized not because the Japanese refused to surrender but because they refused to surrender unconditionally. "

The one condition necessary for Japan to end the war was an agreement to maintain the sanctity of the Japanese emperor, who was a holy figure to the Japanese people. Former ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew, based on his knowledge of Japanese culture, had been trying to persuade the U.S. government of the importance of allowing the emperor

to remain in place.

Herbert Feis, who had unique access to State Department files and the records on the Manhattan Project, noted that in the end the United States did give the assurances the Japanese wanted on the emperor. He writes, "The curious mind lingers over the reasons why the American government waited so long before offering the Japanese those various assurances which it did extend later." Why was the United States in a rush to drop the bomb, if the reason of saving lives turns out to be empty, if the probability was that the Japanese would have surrendered even without an invasion? Historian Gar Alperovitz, after going through the papers of the American officials closest to Truman and most influential in the final decision, and especially the diaries of Henry Stimson, concludes that the atomic bombs were dropped to impress the Soviet Union, as a first act in establishing American power in the postwar world. He points out that the Soviet Union had promised to enter the war against Japan on August 8. The bomb was dropped on August 6.

The scientist Leo Szilard had met with Truman's main policy adviser in May 1945 and reported later: "Byrnes did not argue that it was necessary to use the bomb against the cities of Japan in order to win the war.... Mr. Byrnes' view was that our possessing and demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable."

The end of dropping the bomb seems, from the evidence, to have been not winning the war, which was already assured, not saving lives, for it was highly probably no American invasion would be necessary, but the aggrandizement of American national power at the moment and in the postwar period. For this end, the means were among the most awful yet devised by human beings-burning people alive, maiming them horribly and leaving them with radiation sickness, which would kill them slowly and with great pain.

I remember my junior-high-school social studies teacher telling the class that the difference between a democracy like the United States and the "totalitarian states" was the "they believe that the end justifies any means, and we do not." But this was before Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

To make a proper moral judgment, we would have to put into the balancing the testimony of the victims. Here are the words of three survivors, which would have to be multiplied by tens of thousands to give a fuller picture.

A thirty-five-year-old man: "A woman with her jaw missing and her tongue hanging out of her mouth was wandering around the area of Shinsho-machi in the heavy, black rain. She was heading toward the north crying for help."

A seventeen-year-old girl: "I walked past Hiroshima Station...and saw people with their

bowels and brains coming out.... I saw an old lady carrying a suckling infant in her arms...I saw many children...with dead mothers...I just cannot put into words the horror I felt."

A fifth-grade girl: "Everybody in the shelter was crying out loud. Those voices...they aren't cries, they are moans that penetrate to the marrow of your bones and make your hair stand on end... I do not know how many times I called begging that they would cut off my burned arms and legs." In the summer of 1966, my wife and I were invited to an international gathering in Hiroshima to commemorate the dropping of the bomb and to dedicate ourselves to a world free of warfare. On the morning of August 6, tens of thousands of people gathered in a park in Hiroshima and stood in total, almost unbearable, silence, awaiting the exact moment-8:15 A.M.-when on August 6, 1945, the bomb had been dropped. When the moment came, the silence was broken by a sudden roaring sound in the air, eerie and frightening until we realized it was the sound of the beating of wings of thousands of doves, which had been released at that moment to declare the aim of a peaceful world.

A few days later, some of us were invited to a house in Hiroshima that had been established as a center for victims of the bomb to spend time with one another and discuss common problems. We were asked to speak to the group. When my turn came, I stood up and felt I must get something off my conscience. I wanted to say that I had been an air force bombardier in Europe, that I had dropped bombs that killed and maimed people, and that until this moment I had not seen the human results of such bombs, and that I was ashamed of what I had done and wanted to help make sure things like that never happened again.

I never got the words out, because as I started to speak I looked out at the Japanese men and women sitting on the floor in front of me, without arms, or without legs, but all quietly waiting for me to speak. I choked on my words, could not say anything for a moment, fighting for control, finally managed to thank them for inviting me and sat down.

For the idea that any means-mass murder, the misuse of science, the corruption of professionalism-are acceptable to achieve the end of national power, the ultimate example of our time is Hiroshima. For us, as citizens, the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki suggests that we reject Machiavelli, that we do not accept subservience, whether to princes or presidents, and that we examine for ourselves the ends of public policy to determine whose interests they really serve. We must examine the means used to achieve those ends to decide if they are compatible with equal justice for all human beings on earth.

The Anti-Machiavellians

There have always been people who did things for themselves, against the dominant ideology, and when there were enough of them history had its splendid moments: a war was called to a halt, a tyrant was overthrown, an enslaved people won its freedom, the poor won a small victory. Even some people close to the circles of power, in the face of overwhelming pressure to conform have summoned the moral strength to dissent, ignoring the Machiavellian advice to leave the end unquestioned and the means unexamined.

Not all the atomic scientists rushed into the excitement of building the bomb. When Oppenheimer was recruiting for the project, as he later told the Atomic Energy Commission, most people accepted. "This sense of excitement, of devotion and of patriotism in the end prevailed." However, the physicist I. I. Rabi, asked by Oppenheimer to be his associate director at Los Alamos, refused to join. He was heavily involved in developing radar, which he thought important for the war, but he found it abhorrent, as Oppenheimer reported, that "the culmination of three centuries of physics" should be a weapon of mass destruction.

Just before the bomb was tested and used, Rabi worried about the role of scientists in war:

If we take the stand that our object is merely to see that the next war is bigger and better, we will ultimately lose the respect of the public.... We will become the unpaid servants of the munitions makers and mere technicians rather than the self-sacrificing public-spirited citizens which we feel ourselves to be.

Nobel Prize-winning physical chemist James Franck, working with the University of Chicago metallurgical laboratory on problems of building the bomb, headed a committee on social and political implications of the new weapon. In June 1945, the Franck Committee wrote a report advising against a surprise atomic bombing of Japan: "If we consider international agreement on total prevention of nuclear warfare as a paramount objective...this kind of introduction of atomic weapons to the world may easily destroy all our chances of success." Dropping the bomb "will mean a flying start toward an unlimited armaments race," the report said.

The committee went to Washington to deliver the report personally to Henry Stimson, but were told, falsely, that he was out of the city. Neither Stimson nor the scientific panel advising him was in a mood to accept the argument of the Franck Report.

Scientist Leo Szilard, who had been responsible for the letter from Albert Einstein to Franklin Roosevelt suggesting a project to develop an atomic bomb, also fought a hard

but futile battle against the bomb being dropped on a Japanese city. The same month that the bomb was successfully tested in New Mexico, July 1945, Szilard circulated a petition among the scientists, protesting in advance against the dropping of the bomb, arguing that "a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purposes of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale." Determined to do what he could to stop the momentum toward using the bomb, Szilard asked his friend Einstein to give him a letter of introduction to President Roosevelt. But just as the meeting was being arranged, an announcement came over the radio that Roosevelt was dead.

Would Einstein's great prestige have swayed the decision? It is doubtful. Einstein, known to be sympathetic to socialism and pacifism, was excluded from the Manhattan Project and did not know about the momentous decisions being made to drop the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One adviser to Harry Truman took a strong position against the atomic bombing of Japan: Undersecretary of the Navy Ralph Bard. As a member of Stimson's Interim Committee, at first he agreed with the decision to use the bomb on a Japanese city, but then changed his mind. He wrote a memorandum to the committee talking about the reputation of the United States "as a great humanitarian nation" and suggesting the Japanese be warned and that some assurance about the treatment of the emperor might induce the Japanese to surrender. It had no effect. A few military men of high rank also opposed the decision. General Dwight Eisenhower, fresh from leading the Allied armies to victory in Europe, met with Stimson just after the successful test of the bomb in Los Alamos. He told Stimson he opposed use of the bomb because the Japanese were ready to surrender. Eisenhower later recalled, "I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon." General Hap Arnold, head of the army air force, believed Japan could be brought to surrender without the bomb. The fact that important military leaders saw no need for the bomb lends weight to the idea that the reasons for bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki were political.

In the operations of U.S. foreign policy after World War II, there were a few bold people who rejected Machiavellian subservience and refused to accept the going orthodoxies. Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas was at the crucial meeting of advisers when President Kennedy was deciding whether to proceed with plans to invade Cuba. Arthur Schlesinger, who was there, wrote later that "Fulbright, speaking in an emphatic and incredulous way, denounced the whole idea." During the Vietnam War, advisers from MIT and Harvard were among the fiercest advocates of ruthless bombing, but a few rebelled. One of the earliest was James Thomson, a Far East expert in the State Department who resigned his post and wrote an eloquent article in the *Atlantic Monthly* criticizing the U.S. presence in Vietnam.

While Henry Kissinger was playing Machiavelli to Nixon's prince, at least three of his aides objected to his support for an invasion of Cambodia in 1970. William Watts, asked to coordinate the White House announcement on the invasion of Cambodia, declined

and wrote a letter of resignation. He was confronted by Kissinger aide General Al Haig, who told him, "You have an order from your Commander in Chief." He, therefore, could not resign, Haig said, Watts replied, "Oh yes I can-and I have!" Roger Morris and Anthony Lake, asked to write the speech for President Nixon justifying the invasion, refused and instead wrote a joint letter of resignation.

The most dramatic action of dissent during the war in Vietnam came from Daniel Ellsberg, a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard who had served in the Marines and held important posts in the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the embassy in Saigon. He had been a special assistant to Henry Kissinger and then worked for the Rand Corporation a private "think tank" of brainy people who contracted to do top-secret research for the U.S. government. When the Rand Corporation was asked to assemble a history of the Vietnam War, based on secret documents, Ellsberg was appointed as one of the leaders of the project. But he had already begun to feel pangs of conscience about the brutality of the war being waged by his government. He had been out in the field with the military, and what he saw persuaded him that the United States did not belong in Vietnam. Then, reading the documents and helping to put together the history, he saw how many lies had been told to the public and was reinforced in his feelings.

With the help of a former Rand employee he had met in Vietnam, Anthony Russo, Ellsberg secretly photocopied the entire 7,000 page history-the "Pentagon Papers" as they came to be called-and distributed them to certain members of Congress as well as to the New York Times. When the Times, in a journalistic sensation, began printing this "top-secret" document, Ellsberg was arrested and put on trial. The counts against him could have brought a prison sentence of 130 years. But while the jury deliberated the judge learned, through the Watergate scandal, that Nixon's "plumbers" had tried to break into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office to find damaging material and he declared the case tainted and called off the trial.

Ellsberg's was only one of a series of resignations from government that took place during and after the Vietnam War. A number of operatives of the CIA quit their jobs in the late sixties and early seventies and began to write and speak about the secret activities of the agency- for example, Victor Marchetti, Philip Agee, John Stockwell, Frank Snepp, and Ralph McGehee.

For the United States, as for others countries, Machiavellianism dominates foreign policy, but the courage of a small number of dissenters suggests the possibility that some day the larger public will no longer accept that kind of "realism." Machiavelli himself might have smiled imperiously at this suggestion, and said, "You're wasting your time. Nothing will change. It's human nature."

That claim is worth exploring.

 **Zinn Reader**

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Coming Revolt of the Guards

excerpted from a

People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn



... the mountain of history books under which we all stand leans ... so tremblingly respectful [in the direction] of states and statesmen and so disrespectful, by inattention, to people's movements-that we need some counterforce to avoid being crushed into submission.

All those histories of this country centered on the Founding Fathers and the Presidents weigh oppressively on the capacity of the ordinary citizen to act. They suggest that in times of crisis we must look to someone to save us: in the Revolutionary crisis, the Founding Fathers; in the slavery crisis, Lincoln; in the Depression, Roosevelt; in the Vietnam-Water gate crisis, Carter. And that between occasional crises everything is all right, and it is sufficient for us to be restored to that normal state. They teach us that the supreme act of citizenship is to choose among saviors, by going into a voting booth every four years to choose between two white and well-off Anglo-Saxon males of inoffensive personality and orthodox opinions.

The idea of saviors has been built into the entire culture, beyond politics. We have learned to look to stars, leaders, experts in every field, thus surrendering our own strength, demeaning our own ability, obliterating our own selves. But from time to time, Americans reject that idea and rebel. These rebellions, so far, have been contained. The American system is the most ingenious system of control in world history. With a country so rich in natural resources, talent, and labor power the system can afford to distribute just enough wealth to just enough people to limit discontent to a troublesome minority. It is a country so powerful, so big, so pleasing to so many of its citizens that it can afford to give freedom of dissent to the small number who are not pleased.

There is no system of control with more openings, apertures, lee ways, flexibilities, rewards for the chosen, winning tickets in lotteries. There is none that disperses its controls more complexly through the voting system, the work situation, the church, the family, the school, the mass media-none more successful in mollifying opposition with reforms, isolating people from one another, creating patriotic loyalty.

One percent of the nation owns a third of the wealth. The rest of the wealth is distributed in such a way as to turn those in the 99 percent against one another: small property owners against the propertyless, black against white, native-born against foreign-born, intellectuals and professionals against the uneducated and unskilled. These groups have resented one another and warred against one another with such vehemence and violence as to obscure their common position as sharers of leftovers in a very wealthy country.

.... Madison feared a "majority faction" and hoped the new Constitution would control it. He and his colleagues began the Preamble to the Constitution with the words "We the people . . .," pre tending that the new government stood for everyone, and hoping that this myth, accepted as fact, would ensure "domestic tranquillity."

The pretense continued over the generations, helped by all-embracing symbols, physical or verbal: the flag, patriotism, democracy, national interest, national defense, national security...

The exile of Nixon, the celebration of the Bicentennial, the presidency of Carter, all aimed at restoration. But restoration to the old order was no solution to the uncertainty, the alienation, which was intensified in the Reagan-Bush years. The election of Clinton in 1992, carrying with it a vague promise of change, did not fulfill the expectations of the

hopeful.

With such continuing malaise, it is very important for the Establishment-that uneasy club of business executives, generals, and politicians- to maintain the historic pretension of national unity, in which the government represents all the people, and the common enemy is overseas, not at home, where disasters of economics or war are unfortunate errors or tragic accidents, to be corrected by the members of the same club that brought the disasters. It is important for them also to make sure this artificial unity of highly privileged and slightly privileged is the only unity- that the 99 percent remain split in countless ways, and turn against one another to vent their angers. How skillful to tax the middle class to pay for the relief of the poor, building resentment on top of humiliation! How adroit to bus poor black youngsters into poor white neighborhoods, in a violent exchange of impoverished schools, while the schools of the rich remain untouched and the wealth of the nation, doled out carefully where children need free milk, is drained for billion-dollar aircraft carriers. How ingenious to meet the demands of blacks and women for equality by giving them small special benefits, and setting them in competition with everyone else for jobs made scarce by an irrational, wasteful system. How wise to turn the fear and anger of the majority toward a class of criminals bred-by economic inequity- faster than they can be put away, deflecting attention from the huge thefts of national resources carried out within the law by men in executive offices.

However, the unexpected victories even temporary of insurgents show the vulnerability of the supposedly powerful. In a highly developed society, the Establishment cannot survive without the obedience and loyalty of millions of people who are given small rewards to keep the system going: the soldiers and police, teachers and ministers, administrators and social workers, technicians and production workers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, transport and communications workers, garbage men and firemen. These people-the employed, the somewhat privileged-are drawn into alliance with the elite. They become the guards of the system, buffers between the upper and lower classes. If they stop obeying, the system falls.

That will happen, I think, only when all of us who are slightly privileged and slightly uneasy begin to see that we are like the guards in the prison uprising at Attica expendable; that the Establishment, whatever rewards it gives us, will also, if necessary to maintain its control, kill us. Certain new facts may, in our time, emerge so clearly as to lead to general withdrawal of loyalty from the system. The new conditions of technology, economics, and war, in the atomic age, make it less and less possible for the guards of the system-the intellectuals, the home owners, the taxpayers, the skilled workers, the professionals, the servants of government-to remain immune from the violence (physical and psychic) inflicted on the black, the poor, the criminal, the enemy overseas. The internationalization of the economy, the movement of refugees and illegal

immigrants across borders, both make it more difficult for the people of the industrial countries to be oblivious to hunger and disease in the poor countries of the world.

The system, in its irrationality, has been driven by profit to build steel skyscrapers for insurance companies while the cities decay, to spend billions for weapons of destruction and virtually nothing for children's playgrounds, to give huge incomes to men who make dangerous or useless things, and very little to artists, musicians, writers, actors. Capitalism has always been a failure for the lower classes. It is now beginning to fail for the middle classes.

The threat of unemployment, always inside the homes of the poor, has spread to white-collar workers, professionals. A college education is no longer a guarantee against joblessness, and a system that cannot offer a future to the young coming out of school is in deep trouble. If it happens only to the children of the poor, the problem is manageable; there are the jails. If it happens to the children of the middle class, things may get out of hand. The poor are accustomed to being squeezed and always short of money, but in recent years the middle classes, too, have begun to feel the press of high prices, high taxes.

In the seventies, eighties, and early nineties there was a dramatic, frightening increase in the number of crimes. It was not hard to understand, when one walked through any big city. There were the contrasts of wealth and poverty, the culture of possession, the frantic advertising. There was the fierce economic competition, in which the legal violence of the state and the legal robbery by the corporations were accompanied by the illegal crimes of the poor. Most crimes by far involved theft. A disproportionate number of prisoners in American jails were poor and non white, with little education. Half were unemployed in the month prior to their arrest.

The most common and most publicized crimes have been the violent crimes of the young, the poor-a virtual terrorization in the big cities-in which the desperate or drug-addicted attack and rob the middle class, or even their fellow poor. A society so stratified by wealth and education lends itself naturally to envy and class anger.

The critical question in our time is whether the middle classes, so long led to believe that the solution for such crimes is more jails and more jail terms, may begin to see, by the sheer uncontrollability of crime, that the only prospect is an endless cycle of crime and punishment. They might then conclude that physical security for a working person in the city can come only when everyone in the city is working. And that would require a transformation of national priorities, a change in the system.

The prospect is for times of turmoil, struggle, but also inspiration. There is a chance that ... a movement could succeed in doing what the system itself has never done-bring about great change with little violence. This is possible because the more of the 99 percent that begin to see themselves as sharing needs, the more the guards and the prisoners see their common interest, the more the Establishment becomes isolated, ineffectual. The elite's weapons, money, control of information would be useless in the face of a determined population. The servants of the system would refuse to work to continue the old, deadly order, and would begin using their time, their space-the very things given them by the system to keep them quiet-to dismantle that system while creating a new one.

The prisoners of the system will continue to rebel, as before, in ways that cannot be foreseen, at times that cannot be predicted. The new fact of our era is the chance that they may be joined by the guards. We readers and writers of books have been, for the most part, among the guards. If we understand that, and act on it, not only will life be more satisfying, right off, but our grandchildren, or our great grandchildren, might possibly see a different and marvelous world.

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Carter-Reagan-Bush: The Bipartisan Consensus

excerpted from a

People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn



The presidency of Jimmy Carter, covering the years 1977 to 1980, seemed an attempt by one part of the Establishment, that represented in the Democratic Party, to recapture a disillusioned citizenry. But Carter, despite a few gestures toward black people and the poor, despite talk of "human rights" abroad, remained within the historic political boundaries of the American system, protecting corporate wealth and power, maintaining a huge military machine that drained the national wealth, allying the United States with right-wing tyrannies abroad.

Carter seemed to be the choice of that international group of powerful influence-wielders—the Trilateral Commission. Two founding members of the commission, according to the Far Eastern Economic Review—David Rockefeller and Zbigniew Brzezinski—thought Carter was the right person for the presidential election of 1976 given that "the Watergate

plagued Republican Party was a sure loser...."

Carter's job as President, from the point of view of the Establishment, was to halt the rushing disappointment of the American people with the government, with the economic system, with disastrous military ventures abroad. In his campaign, he tried to speak to the disillusioned and angry. His strongest appeal was to blacks, whose rebellion in the late sixties was the most frightening challenge to authority since the labor and unemployed upsurges in the thirties.

His appeal was "populist"-that is, he appealed to various elements of American society who saw themselves beleaguered by the powerful and wealthy. Although he himself was a millionaire peanut grower, he presented himself as an ordinary American farmer. Although he had been a supporter of the Vietnam war until its end, he presented himself as a sympathizer with those who had been against the war, and he appealed to many of the young rebels of the sixties by his promise to cut the military budget.

In a much-publicized speech to lawyers, Carter spoke out against the use of the law to protect the rich. He appointed a black woman, Patricia Harris, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and a black civil rights veteran, Andrew Young, as ambassador to the United Nations. He gave the job of heading the domestic youth service corps to a young former antiwar activist, Sam Brown.

His most crucial appointments, however, were in keeping with the Trilateral Commission report of Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, which said that, whatever groups voted for a president, once elected "what counts then is his ability to mobilize support from the leaders of key institutions." Brzezinski, a traditional cold war intellectual, became Carter's National Security Adviser. His Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, had, during the Vietnam war, according to the Pentagon Papers, "envisaged the elimination of virtually all the constraints under which the bombing then operated." His Secretary of Energy, James Schlesinger, as Secretary of Defense under Nixon, was described by a member of the Washington press corps as showing "an almost missionary drive in seeking to reverse a downward trend in the defense budget." Schlesinger was also a strong proponent of nuclear energy.

His other cabinet appointees had strong corporate connections. A financial writer wrote, not long after Carter's election: "So far, Mr. Carter's actions, commentary, and particularly his Cabinet appointments, have been highly reassuring to the business community." Veteran Washington correspondent Tom Wicker wrote: "The available evidence is that Mr. Carter so far is opting for Wall Street's confidence."

Carter did initiate more sophisticated policies toward governments that oppressed their own people. He used United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young to build up good will for the United States among the black African nations, and urged that South Africa liberalize

its policies toward blacks. A peaceful settlement in South Africa was necessary for strategic reasons; South Africa was used for radar tracking systems. Also, it had important U.S. corporate investments and was a critical source of needed raw materials (diamonds, especially). Therefore, what the United States needed was a stable government in South Africa; the continued oppression of blacks might create civil war. The same approach was used in other countries combining practical strategic needs with the advancement of civil rights. But because the chief motivation was practicality, not humanity, there was a tendency toward token changes-as in Chile's release of a few political prisoners. When Congressman Herman Badillo introduced in Congress a proposal that required the U.S. representatives to the World Bank and other international financial institutions to vote against loans to countries that systematically violated essential rights, by the use of torture or imprisonment without trial, Carter sent a personal letter to every Congressman urging the defeat of this amendment. It won a voice vote in the House, but lost in the Senate.

Under Carter, the United States continued to support, all over the world, regimes that engaged in imprisonment of dissenters, torture, and mass murder: in the Philippines, in Iran, in Nicaragua, and in Indonesia, where the inhabitants of East Timor were being annihilated in a campaign bordering on genocide.

The New Republic magazine, presumably on the liberal side of the Establishment, commented approvingly on the Carter policies: ". . . American foreign policy in the next four years will essentially extend the philosophies developed . . . in the Nixon-Ford years. This is not at all a negative prospect.... There should be continuity. It is part of history...."

Carter had presented himself as a friend off the movement against the war, but when Nixon mined Haiphong harbor and resumed bombing of North Vietnam in the spring of 1973, Carter urged that "we give President Nixon our backing and support-whether or not we agree with specific decisions." Once elected, Carter declined to give aid to Vietnam for reconstruction, despite the fact that the land had been devastated by American bombing. Asked about this at a press conference, Carter replied that there was no special obligation on the United States to do this because "the destruction was mutual."

Considering that the United States had crossed half the globe with an enormous fleet of bombers and 2 million soldiers, and after eight years left a tiny nation with over a million dead and its land in ruins, this was an astounding statement.

One Establishment intention, perhaps, was that future generations see the war not as it appeared in the Defense Department's own Pentagon Papers-as a ruthless attack on civilian populations for strategic military and economic interests-but as an unfortunate error. Noam Chomsky, one of the leading antiwar intellectuals during the Vietnam period, looked in mid-1978 at how the history of the war was being presented in the major media and wrote that they were "destroying the historical record and supplanting it with a more

comfortable story . . . reducing 'lessons' of the war to the socially neutral categories of error, ignorance, and cost."

The Carter administration clearly was trying to end the disillusionment of the American people after the Vietnam war by following foreign policies more palatable, less obviously aggressive. Hence, the emphasis on "human rights," the pressure on South Africa and Chile to liberalize their policies. But on close examination, these more liberal policies were designed to leave intact the power and influence of American military and American business in the world.

The renegotiation of the Panama Canal treaty with the tiny Central American republic of Panama was an example. The canal saved American companies \$1.5 billion a year in delivery costs, and the United States collected \$150 million a year in tolls, out of which it paid the Panama government \$2.3 million dollars, while maintaining fourteen military bases in the area.

Back in 1903 the United States had engineered a revolution against Colombia, set up the new tiny republic of Panama in Central America, and dictated a treaty giving the United States military bases, control of the Panama Canal, and sovereignty "in perpetuity." The Carter administration in 1977, responding to anti-American protests in Panama, decided to renegotiate the treaty. The New York Times was candid about the Canal: "We stole it, and removed the incriminating evidence from our history books."

By 1977 the canal had lost military importance. It could not accommodate large tankers or aircraft carriers. That, plus the anti-American riots in Panama led the Carter administration, over conservative opposition, to negotiate a new treaty which called for a gradual removal of U.S. bases (which could easily be relocated elsewhere in the area). The canal's legal ownership would be turned over to Panama after a period. The treaty also contained vague language which could be the basis for American military intervention under certain conditions.

Whatever Carter's sophistication in foreign policy, certain fundamentals operated in the late sixties and the seventies. American corporations were active all over the world on a scale never seen before. There were, by the early seventies, about three hundred U.S. corporations, including the seven largest banks, which earned 40 percent of their net profits outside the United States. They were called "multinationals," but actually 98 percent of their top executives were Americans. As a group, they now constituted the third-largest economy in the world, next to the United States and the Soviet Union.

The relationship of these global corporations with the poorer countries had long been an exploiting one, it was clear from U.S. Department of Commerce figures. Whereas U.S. corporations in Europe between 1950 and 1965 invested \$8.1 billion and made \$5.5 billion in profits, in Latin America they invested \$3.8 billion and made \$ 11.2 billion in profits,

and in Africa they invested \$5.2 billion and made \$ 14.3 billion in profits.

It was the classical imperial situation, where the places with natural wealth became victims of more powerful nations whose power came from that seized wealth. American corporations depended on the poorer countries for 100 percent of their diamonds, coffee, platinum, mercury, natural rubber, and cobalt. They got 98 percent of their manganese from abroad, 90 percent of their chrome and aluminum. And 20 to 40 percent of certain imports (platinum, mercury, cobalt, chrome, manganese) came from Africa.

Another fundamental of foreign policy, whether Democrats or Republicans were in the White House, was the training of foreign military officers. The Army had a "School of the Americas" in the Canal Zone, from which thousands of military leaders in Latin America had graduated. Six of the graduates, for instance, were in the Chilean military junta that overthrew the democratically elected Allende government in 1973. The American commandant of the school told a reporter: "We keep in touch with our graduates and they keep in touch with us."

And yet the United States cultivated a reputation of being generous with its riches. Indeed, it had frequently given aid to disaster victims. This aid, however, often depended on political loyalty. In one six-year drought in West Africa, 100,000 Africans died of starvation. A report by the Carnegie Endowment said the Agency for International Development (AID) of the United States had been inefficient and neglectful in giving aid to nomads in the Sahel area of West Africa, an area covering six countries. The response of AID was that those countries had "no close historical, economic, or political ties to the United States."

In early 1975 the press carried a dispatch from Washington: "Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger has formally initiated a policy of selecting for cutbacks in American aid those nations that have sided against the U.S. in votes in the United Nations. In some cases the cutbacks involve food and humanitarian relief. "

Most aid was openly military, and by 1975, the United States exported \$9.5 billion in arms. The Carter administration promised to end the sale of arms to repressive regimes, but when it took office the bulk of the sales continued.

And the military continued to take a huge share of the national bud get. When Carter was running for election, he told the Democratic Plat form Committee: "Without endangering the defense of our nation or commitments to our allies, we can reduce present defense expenditures by about 5 to 7 billion dollars annually." But his first budget proposed not a decrease but an increase of \$10 billion for the military. Indeed, he pro posed that the U.S. spend a thousand billion dollars (a trillion dollars) in the next five years on its military forces. And the administration had just announced that the Department of Agriculture would save \$25 million a year by no longer giving free second helpings of milk to 1.4

million needy schoolchildren who got free meals in school.

If Carter's job was to restore faith in the system, here was his greatest failure-solving the economic problems of the people. The price of food and the necessities of life continued to rise faster than wages were rising. Unemployment remained officially at 6 or 8 percent; unofficially, the rates were higher. For certain key groups in the population-young people, and especially young black people-the unemployment rate was 20 or 30 percent.

It soon became clear that blacks in the United States, the group most in support of Carter for President, were bitterly disappointed with his policies. He opposed federal aid to poor people who needed abortions, and when it was pointed out to him that this was unfair, because rich women could get abortions with ease, he replied: "Well, as you know, there are many things in life that are not fair, that wealthy people can afford and poor people cannot."

Carter's "populism" was not visible in his administration's relationship to the oil and gas interests. It was part of Carter's "energy plan" to end price regulation of natural gas for the consumer. The largest producer of natural gas was Exxon Corporation, and the largest blocs of private stock in Exxon were owned by the Rockefeller family.

Early in Carter's administration, the Federal Energy Administration found that Gulf Oil Corporation had overstated by \$79.1 its costs for crude oil obtained from foreign affiliates. It then passed on these false costs to consumers. In the summer of 1978 the administration announced that "a compromise" had been made with Gulf Oil in which Gulf agreed to pay back \$42.2 million. Gulf informed its stockholders that "the payments will not affect earnings since adequate provision was made in prior years."

The lawyer for the Energy Department who worked out the compromise with Gulf said it had been done to avoid a lengthy and costly law suit. Would the lawsuit have cost the \$36.9 million dropped in the compromise? Would the government have considered letting off a bank robber without a jail term in return for half the loot? The settlement was a perfect example of what Carter had told a meeting of lawyers during his presidential campaign-that the law was on the side of the rich.

The fundamental facts of maldistribution of wealth in America were clearly not going to be affected by Carter's policies, any more than by previous administrations, whether conservative or liberal. According to Andrew Zimbalist, an American economist writing in *Le Monde Diplomatique* in 1977, the top 10 percent of the American population had an income thirty times that of the bottom tenth; the top 1 percent of the nation owned 33 percent of the wealth. The richest 5 percent owned 83 percent of the personally owned corporate stock. The one hundred largest corporations (despite the graduated income tax that misled people into thinking the very rich paid at least 50 percent in taxes) paid an

average of 26.9 percent in taxes, and the leading oil companies paid 5.8 percent in taxes (Internal Revenue Service figures for 1974). Indeed, 244 individuals who earned over \$200,000 paid no taxes.

In 1979, as Carter weakly proposed benefits for the poor, and Congress strongly turned them down, a black woman, Marian Wright Edelman, director of the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, pointed to some facts. One of every seven American children (10 million altogether) had no known regular source of primary health care. One of every three children under seventeen (18 million altogether) had never seen a dentist. In an article on the New York Times op-ed page, she wrote:

The Senate Budget Committee recently . . . knocked off \$88 million from a modest \$288 million Administration request to improve the program that screens and treats children's health problems. At the same time the Senate found \$725 million to bail out Litton Industries and to hand to the Navy at least two destroyers ordered by the Shah of Iran. Carter approved tax "reforms" which benefited mainly the corporations. Economist Robert Lekachman, writing in *The Nation*, noted the sharp increase in corporate profits (44 percent) in the last quarter of 1978 over the previous year's last quarter. He wrote: "Perhaps the President's most outrageous act occurred last November when he signed into law an \$18 billion tax reduction, the bulk of whose benefits accrue to affluent individuals and corporations."

In 1979, while the poor were taking cuts, the salary of the chairman of Exxon Oil was being raised to \$830,000 a year and that of the chairman of Mobil Oil to over a million dollars a year. That year, while Exxon's net income rose 56 percent to more than \$4 billion, three thousand small independent gasoline stations went out of business.

Carter made some efforts to hold onto social programs, but this was undermined by his very large military budgets. Presumably, this was to guard against the Soviet Union, but when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Carter could take only symbolic actions, like reinstating the draft, or calling for a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

On the other hand, American weaponry was used to support dictatorial regimes battling left-wing rebels abroad. A report by the Carter administration to Congress in 1977 was blunt, saying that "a number of countries with deplorable records of human rights observance are also countries where we have important security and foreign policy interests."

Thus, Carter asked Congress in the spring of 1980 for \$5.7 million in credits for the military junta fighting off a peasant rebellion in El Salvador. In the Philippines, after the 1978 National Assembly elections, President Ferdinand Marcos imprisoned ten of the twenty-one losing opposition candidates; many prisoners were tortured, many civilians were killed. Still, Carter urged Congress to give Marcos \$300 million in military aid for the

next five years.

In Nicaragua, the United States had helped maintain the Somoza dictatorship for decades. Misreading the basic weakness of that regime, and the popularity of the revolution against it, the Carter administration continued its support for Somoza until close to the regime's fall in 1979. .

In Iran, toward the end of 1978, the long years of resentment against the Shah's dictatorship culminated in mass demonstrations. On September 8, 1978, hundreds of demonstrators were massacred by the Shah's troops. The next day, according to a UPI dispatch from Teheran, Carter affirmed his support for the Shah:

Troops opened fire on demonstrators against the Shah for the third straight day yesterday and President Jimmy Carter telephoned the royal palace to express support for Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlevi, who faced the worst crisis of his 37-year reign. Nine members of parliament walked out on a speech by Iran's new premier, shouting that his hands were "stained with blood" in the crackdown on conservative Moslems and other protesters.

On December 13, 1978, Nicholas Gage reported for the New York Times:

The staff of the United States Embassy here has been bolstered by dozens of specialists flown in to back an effort to help the Shah against a growing challenge to his rule according to embassy sources. . . The new arrivals, according to the embassy sources, include a number of Central Intelligence Agency specialists on Iran, in addition to diplomats and military personnel.

In early 1979, as the crisis in Iran was intensifying, the former chief analyst on Iran for the CIA told New York Times reporter Seymour Hersh that "he and his colleagues knew of the tortures of Iranian dissenters by Savaki, the Iranian secret police set up during the late 1950s by the Shah with help from the CIA." Furthermore, he told Hersh that a senior CIA official was involved in instructing officials in Savaki on torture techniques. It was a popular, massive revolution, and the Shah fled. The Carter administration later accepted him into the country, presumably for medical treatment, and the anti-American feelings of the revolutionaries reached a high point. On November 4, 1979, the U.S. embassy in Teheran was taken over by student militants who, demanding that the Shah be returned to Iran for punishment, held fifty-two embassy employees hostage.

For the next fourteen months, with the hostages still held in the embassy compound, that issue took the forefront of foreign news in the United States and aroused powerful nationalist feelings. When Carter ordered the Immigration and Naturalization Service to start deportation proceedings against Iranian students who lacked valid visas, the New

York Times gave cautious but clear approval. Politicians and the press played into a general hysteria. An Iranian-American girl who was slated to give a high school commencement address was removed from the program. The bumper sticker "Bomb Iran" appeared on autos all over the country.

It was a rare journalist bold enough to point out, as Alan Richman of the Boston Globe did when the fifty-two hostages were released alive and apparently well, that there was a certain lack of proportion in American reactions to this and other violations of human rights: "There were 52 of them, a number easy to comprehend. It wasn't like 15,000 innocent people permanently disappearing in Argentina.... They [the American hostages] spoke our language. There were 3000 people summarily shot in Guatemala last year who did not."

The hostages were still in captivity when Jimmy Carter faced Ronald Reagan in the election of 1980. That fact, and the economic distress felt by many, were largely responsible for Carter's defeat.

Reagan's victory, followed eight years later by the election of George Bush, meant that another part of the Establishment, lacking even the faint liberalism of the Carter presidency, would be in charge. The policies would be more crass cutting benefits to poor people, lowering taxes for the wealthy, increasing the military budget, filling the federal court system with conservative judges, actively working to destroy revolutionary movements in the Caribbean.

The dozen years of the Reagan-Bush presidency transformed the federal judiciary, never more than moderately liberal, into a predominantly conservative institution. By the fall of 1991, Reagan and Bush had filled more than half of the 837 federal judgeships, and appointed enough right-wing justices to transform the Supreme Court.

Corporate America became the greatest beneficiary of the Reagan Bush years. In the sixties and seventies an important environmental movement had grown in the nation, horrified at the poisoning of the air, the seas and rivers, and the deaths of thousands each year as a result of work conditions. After a mine explosion in West Virginia killed seventy eight miners in November 1968 there had been angry protest in the mine district, and Congress passed the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. Nixon's Secretary of Labor spoke of "a new national passion, passion for environmental improvement."

The following year, yielding to strong demands from the labor movement and consumer

groups, but also seeing it as an opportunity to win the support of working-class voters, President Nixon had signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. This was an important piece of legislation, establishing a universal right to a safe and healthy work place, and creating an enforcement machinery. Reflecting on this years later, Herbert Stein, who had been the chairman of Nixon's Council of Economic Advisers, lamented that "the juggernaut of environmental regulation proved not to be controllable by the Nixon administration."

While President Jimmy Carter came into office praising the OSHA program, he was also eager to please the business community. The woman he appointed to head OSHA, Eula Bingham, fought for strong enforcement of the act, and was occasionally successful. But as the American economy showed signs of trouble, with oil prices, inflation, and unemployment rising, Carter seemed more and more concerned about the difficulties the act created for business. He became an advocate of removing regulations on corporations and giving them more leeway, even if this was hurtful to labor and to consumers. Environmental regulation became more and more a victim of "cost-benefit" analysis, in which regulations protecting the health and safety of the public became secondary to how costly this would be for business.

Under Reagan and Bush this concern for "the economy," which was a short-hand term for corporate profit, dominated any concern for workers or consumers. President Reagan proposed to replace tough enforcement of environmental laws by a "voluntary" approach, leaving it to businesses to decide for themselves what they would do. He appointed as head of OSHA a businessman who was hostile to OSHA's aims. One of his first acts was to order the destruction of 100,000 government booklets pointing out the dangers of cotton dust to textile workers.

... the preservation of a huge military establishment and the retention of profit levels of oil corporations appeared to be twin objectives of the Reagan-Bush administrations. Shortly after Ronald Reagan took office, twenty-three oil industry executives contributed \$270,000 to redecorate the White House living quarters. According to the Associated Press:

The solicitation drive . . . came four weeks after the President decontrolled oil prices, a decision worth \$2 billion to the oil industry . . . Jack Hodges of Oklahoma City, owner of Core Oil and Gas Company, said: "The top man of this country ought to live in one of the top places. Mr. Reagan has helped the energy business."

While he built up the military (allocations of over a trillion dollars in his first four years in office), Reagan tried to pay for this with cuts in benefits for the poor. There would be \$140 billion of cuts in social pro grams through 1984 and an increase of \$181 billion for

"defense" in the same period. He also proposed tax cuts of \$190 billion (most of this going to the wealthy).

Despite the tax cuts and the military appropriations, Reagan insisted he would still balance the budget because the tax cuts would so stimulate the economy as to generate new revenue. Nobel Prize-winning economist Wassily Leontief remarked dryly: "This is not likely to happen. In fact, I personally guarantee that it will not happen."

Indeed, Department of Commerce figures showed that periods of lowered corporate taxes (1973-1975, 1979-1982) did not at all show higher capital investment, but a steep drop. The sharpest rise of capital investment (1975-1979) took place when corporate taxes were slightly higher than they had been the preceding five years.

The human consequences of Reagan's budget cuts went deep. For instance, Social Security disability benefits were terminated for 350,000 people. A man injured in an oil field accident was forced to go back to work, the federal government overruling both the company doctor and a state supervisor who testified that he was too disabled to work. The man died, and federal officials said, "We have a P.R. problem." A war hero of Vietnam, Roy Benavidez, who had been presented with the Congressional Medal of Honor by Reagan, was told by Social Security officials that the shrapnel pieces in his heart, arms, and leg did not prevent him from working. Appearing before a Congressional committee, he denounced Reagan.

Unemployment grew in the Reagan years. In the year 1982, 30 million people were unemployed all or part of the year. One result was that over 16 million Americans lost medical insurance, which was often tied to holding a job. In Michigan, where the unemployment rate was the highest in the country, the infant death rate began to rise in 1981.

New requirements eliminated free school lunches for more than one million poor children, who depended on the meal for as much as half of their daily nutrition. Millions of children entered the ranks of the officially declared "poor" and soon a quarter of the nation's children-twelve million-were living in poverty. In parts of Detroit, infants were dying at the rate of Bangladesh children, and the New York Times commented: "Given what's happening to the hungry in America, this Administration has cause only for shame."

Welfare became an object of attack: aid to single mothers with children through the AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) program, food stamps, health care for the poor through Medicaid. For most people on welfare (the benefits differed from state to state) this meant \$500 to \$700 a month in aid, leaving them well below the poverty level of about \$900 a month. Black children were four times as likely as white children to grow up on welfare. Early in the Reagan administration, responding to the argument that

government aid was not needed, that private enterprise would take care of poverty, a mother wrote to her local newspaper:

"I am on Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and both my children are in school.... I have graduated from college with distinction, 128th in a class of over 1000, with a B.A. in English and sociology. I have experience in library work, child care, social work and counseling.

I have been to the CETA office. They have nothing for me.... I also go every week to the library to scour the newspaper Help Wanted ads. I have kept a copy of every cover letter that I have sent out with my resume; the stack is inches thick. I have applied for jobs paying as little as \$8000 a year. I work part-time in a library for \$3.50 an hour; welfare reduces my allotment to compensate....

It appears we have employment offices that can't employ, governments that can't govern and an economic system that can't produce jobs for people ready to work....

Last week I sold my bed to pay for the insurance on my car, which, in the absence of mass transportation, I need to go job hunting. I sleep on a piece of rubber foam somebody gave me. So this is the great American dream my parents came to this country for: Work hard, get a good education, follow the rules, and you will be rich. I don't want to be rich. I just want to be able to feed my children and live with some semblance of dignity..."

The Reagan administration, with the help of Democrats in Congress, lowered the tax rate on the very rich to 50 percent and in 1986 a coalition of Republicans and Democrats sponsored another "tax reform" bill that lowered the top rate to 28 percent. Barlett and Steele noted that a school teacher, a factory worker, and a billionaire could all pay 28 percent. The idea of a "progressive" income in which the rich paid at higher rates than everyone else was now almost dead.

As a result of all the tax bills from 1978 to 1990, the net worth of the "Forbes 400," chosen as the richest in the country by Forbes Magazine (advertising itself as "capitalist tool"), was tripled. About \$70 billion a year was lost in government revenue, so that in those thirteen years the wealthiest 1 percent of the country gained a trillion dollars.

As William Greider pointed out, in his remarkable book *Who Will Tell The People? The Betrayal of American Democracy*:

For those who blame Republicans for what has happened and believe that equitable

taxation will be restored if only the Democrats can win back the White House, there is this disquieting fact: The turning point on tax politics, when the monied elites first began to win big, occurred in 1978 with the Democratic party fully in power and well before Ronald Reagan came to Washington. Democratic majorities have supported this great shift in tax burden every step of the way.

Not only did the income tax become less progressive during the last decades of the century, but the Social Security tax became more regressive. That is, more and more was deducted from the salary checks of the poor and middle classes, but when salaries reached \$42,000 no more was deducted, By the early 1990s, a middle-income family earning \$37,800 a year paid 7.65 percent of its income in Social Security taxes. A family earning ten times as much, \$378,000 paid 1.46 percent of its income in Social Security taxes.

The result of these higher payroll taxes was that three-fourths of all wage earners paid more each year through the Social Security tax than through the income tax. Embarrassingly for the Democratic Party, which was supposed to be the party of the working class, those higher payroll taxes had been put in motion under the administration of Jimmy Carter.

By the end of the Reagan years, the gap between rich and poor in United States had grown dramatically. Where in 1980, the chief executive officers (CEOs) of corporations made forty times as much in salary as the average factory worker, by 1989 they were making ninety-three times as much. In the dozen years from 1977 to 1989, the before-tax income of the richest 1 percent rose 77 percent; meanwhile, for the poorest two fifths of the population, there was no gain at all, indeed a small decline.

And because of favorable changes for the rich in the tax structure, the richest 1 percent, in the decade ending in 1990, saw their after-tax income increase 87 percent. In the same period, the after-tax income of the lower four-fifths of the population either went down 5 percent (at the poorest level) or went up no more than 8.6 percent.

While everybody at the lower levels was doing worse, there were especially heavy losses for blacks, Hispanics, women, and the young The general impoverishment of the lowest-income groups that took place in the Reagan-Bush years hit black families hardest, with their lack of resources to start with and with racial discrimination facing them in jobs. The victories of the civil rights movement had opened up spaces for some African-Americans, but left others far behind.

All of the huge military budgets of the post-World War II period, from Truman to Reagan and Bush, were approved overwhelmingly by both Democrats and Republicans. The spending of trillions of dollars to build up nuclear and non-nuclear forces was justified by fears that the Soviet Union, also building up its military forces, would invade Western Europe. But George Kennan, the former ambassador to the Soviet Union and one of the theoreticians of the cold war, said this fear had no basis in reality. And Harry Rositzke, who worked for the CIA for twenty-five years and was at one time CIA director of espionage operations against the Soviet Union, wrote in the 1980s: "In all of my years in government and since I have never seen an intelligence estimate that shows how it would be profitable to Soviet interests to invade Western Europe or to attack the United States."

However, the creation of such a fear in the public mind was useful in arguing for the building of frightful and superfluous weapons. For instance, the Trident submarine, which was capable of firing hundreds of nuclear warheads, cost \$1.5 billion. It was totally useless except in a nuclear war, in which case it would only add several hundred warheads to the tens of thousands already available. That \$1.5 billion was enough to finance a five-year program of child immunization around the world against deadly diseases, and prevent five million deaths (Ruth Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1987-1988*).

In the mid-1980s, an analyst with the Rand Corporation, which did research for the Defense Department, told an interviewer in an unusually candid statement, that the enormous number of weapons was unnecessary from a military point of view, but were useful to convey a certain image at home and abroad:

If you had a strong president, a strong secretary of defense they could temporarily go to Congress and say, "We're only going to build what we need.... And if the Russians build twice as many, tough." But it would be unstable politically.... And it is therefore better for our own domestic stability as well as international perceptions to insist that we remain good competitors even though the objective significance of the competition is . . . dubious.

In 1984, the CIA admitted that it had exaggerated Soviet military expenditures, that since 1975 it had claimed Soviet military spending was growing by 4 to 5 percent each year when the actual figure was 2 percent. Thus, by misinformation, even deception, the result was to inflate military expenditures.

When the Soviet Union began to disintegrate in 1989, and there was no longer the familiar "Soviet threat," the military budget was reduced somewhat, but still remained

huge, with support from both Democrats and Republicans. In 1992, the head of the House Armed Services Committee, Les Aspin, a Democrat, proposed, in view of the new international situation, that the military budget be cut by 2%, from \$281 billion to 275 billion.

That same year, as Democrats and Republicans both supported minor cuts in the military budget, a public opinion survey done for the National Press Club showed that 59 percent of American voters wanted a 50 percent cut in defense spending over the next five years. It seemed that both parties had failed in persuading the citizenry that the military budget should continue at its high level. But they continued to ignore the public they were supposed to represent. In the summer of 1992, Congressional Democrats and Republicans joined to vote against a transfer of funds from the military budget to human needs, and voted to spend \$120 billion dollars to "defend" Europe, which everyone acknowledged was no longer in danger-if it ever had been-from Soviet attack.

Democrats and Republicans had long been joined in a "bipartisan foreign policy," but in the Reagan-Bush years the United States government showed a special aggressiveness in the use of military force abroad. This was done either directly in invasions, or through both overt and covert support of right-wing tyrannies that cooperated with the United States.

Reagan came into office just after a revolution had taken place in Nicaragua, in which a popular Sandinista movement (named after the 1920s revolutionary hero Augusto Sandino) overthrew the corrupt Somoza dynasty (long supported by the United States). The Sandinistas, a coalition of Marxists, left-wing priests, and assorted nationalists, set about to give more land to the peasants and to spread education and health care among the poor.

The Reagan administration, seeing in this a "Communist" threat, but even more important, a challenge to the long U.S. control over governments in Central America, began immediately to work to overthrow the Sandinista government. It waged a secret war by having the CIA organize a counterrevolutionary force (the "contras"), many of whose leaders were former leaders of the hated National Guard under Somoza.

The contras seemed to have no popular support inside Nicaragua and so were based next door in Honduras, a very poor country dominated by the United States. From Honduras they moved across the border, raiding farms and villages, killing men, women and children, committing atrocities. A former colonel with the contras, Edgar Chamorro, testified before the World Court:

We were told that the only way to defeat the Sandinistas was to use the tactics the agency [the CIA] attributed to Communist insurgencies elsewhere: kill, kidnap, rob, and torture.... Many civilians were killed in cold blood. Many others were tortured, mutilated,

raped, robbed, or otherwise abused.... When I agreed to join ... I had hoped that it would be an organization of Nicaraguans.... [It] turned out to be an instrument of the U.S. government...

There was a reason for the secrecy of the U.S. actions in Nicaragua; public opinion surveys showed that the American public was opposed to military involvement there. In 1984, the C.I.A., using Latin American agents to conceal its involvement, put mines in the harbors of Nicaragua to blow up ships. When information leaked out, Secretary of Defense Weinberger told ABC news: "The United States is not mining the harbors of Nicaragua."

Later that year Congress, responding perhaps to public opinion and the memory of Vietnam, made it illegal for the United States to support "directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua." The Reagan administration decided to ignore this law and to find ways to fund the contras secretly, looking for "third-party support." Reagan himself solicited funds from Saudi Arabia, at least \$32 million. The friendly dictatorship in Guatemala was used to get arms surreptitiously to the contras. Israel, dependent on U.S. aid and always dependable for support, was also used.

In 1986, a story appearing in a Beirut magazine created a sensation: that weapons had been sold by the United States to Iran (supposedly an enemy), that in return Iran had promised to release hostages being held by extremist Moslems in Lebanon, and that profits from the sale were being given to the contras to buy arms.

When asked about this at a press conference in November 1986, President Reagan told four lies: that the shipment to Iran consisted of a few token antitank missiles (in fact, 2000), that the United States didn't condone shipments by third parties, that weapons had not been traded for hostages, and that the purpose of the operation was to promote a dialogue with Iranian moderates. In reality, the purpose was a double one: to free hostages and get credit for that, and to help the contras.

The previous month, when a transport plane that had carried arms to the contras was downed by Nicaraguan gunfire and the American pilot captured, the lies had multiplied. Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams lied. Secretary of State Shultz lied ("no connection with the U.S. government at all"). Evidence mounted that the captured pilot was working for the CIA.

The whole Iran-contra affair became a perfect example of the double line of defense of the American Establishment. The first defense is to deny the truth. If exposed, the second defense is to investigate, but not too much; the press will publicize, but they will not get to the heart of the matter.

The Iran-contra affair was only one of the many instances in which the government of the United States violated its own laws in pursuit of some desired goal in foreign policy. Toward the end of the Vietnam war, in 1973, Congress, seeking to limit the presidential power that had been used so ruthlessly in Indochina, passed the War Powers Act, which said,

"The President, in every possible instance, shall consult with Congress before introducing United States Armed Forces into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances."

Almost immediately, President Gerald Ford violated the act when he ordered the invasion of a Cambodian island and the bombing of a Cambodian town in retaliation for the temporary detention of American merchant seamen on the ship Mayaguez. He did not consult Congress before he gave the attack orders.

In the fall of 1982, President Reagan sent American marines into a dangerous situation in Lebanon, where a civil war was raging, again ignoring the requirements of the War Powers Act. The following year, over two hundred of those marines were killed when a bomb was exploded in their barracks by terrorists.

Shortly after that, in October 1983 (with some analysts concluding this was done to take attention away from the Lebanon disaster), Reagan sent U.S. forces to invade the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada. Again, Congress was notified, but not consulted. The reasons given to the American people for this invasion (officially called Operation Urgent Fury) were that a recent coup that had taken place in Grenada put American citizens (students at a medical school on the island) in danger; and that the United States had received an urgent request from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to intervene.

An unusually pointed article in the New York Times on October 29, 1983, by correspondent Bernard Gwertzman demolished those reasons:

The formal request that the U.S. and other friendly countries provide military help was made by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States last Sunday at the request of the United States, which wanted to show proof that it had been requested to act under terms of that group's treaty. The wording of the formal request, however, was drafted in Washington and conveyed to the Caribbean leaders by special American emissaries.

Both Cuba and Grenada, when they saw that American ships were heading for Grenada, sent urgent messages promising that American students were safe and urging that an

invasion not occur.... There is no indication that the Administration made a determined effort to evacuate the Americans peacefully.... Officials have acknowledged that there was no inclination to try to negotiate with the Grenadian authorities.... "We got there just in time," the President said.... A major point in the dispute is whether in fact the Americans on the island were in such danger as to warrant an invasion No official has produced firm evidence that the Americans were being mistreated or that they would not be able to leave if they wanted.

The real reason for the invasion, one high American official told Gwertzman, was that the United States should show (determined to overcome the sense of defeat in Vietnam) that it was a truly powerful nation:

"What good are maneuvers and shows of force, if you never use it?"

The connection between U.S. military intervention and the promotion of capitalist enterprise had always been especially crass in the Caribbean. As for Grenada, an article in the Wall Street Journal eight years after the military invasion (October 29, 1991) spoke of "an invasion of banks" and noted that St. George's, the capital of Grenada, with 7500 people, had 118 offshore banks, one for every 64 residents. "St. George's has become the Casablanca of the Caribbean, a fast-growing haven for money laundering, tax evasion and assorted financial fraud...."

After a study of various U.S. military interventions, political scientist Stephen Shalom (Imperial Alibis) concluded that people in the invaded countries died "not to save U.S. nationals, who would have been far safer without U.S. intervention, but so that Washington might make clear that it ruled the Caribbean and that it was prepared to engage in a paroxysm of violence to enforce its will." He continued:

There have been some cases where American citizens were truly in danger: for example, the four churchwomen who were killed by government-sponsored death squads in El Salvador in 1980. but there was no U.S. intervention there, no Marine landings, no protective bombing raids. Instead Washington backed the death squad regime with military and economic aid, military training, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic support.

The historic role of the United States in El Salvador, where 2 percent of the population owned 60 percent of the land, was to make sure governments were in power there that would support U.S. business interests, no matter how this impoverished the great majority of people. Popular rebel lions that would threaten these business arrangements were to be opposed. When a popular uprising in 1932 threatened the military government, the United States sent a cruiser and two destroyers to stand by while the government massacred thirty thousand Salvadorans.

The administration of Jimmy Carter did nothing to reverse this history. It wanted reform

in Latin America, but not revolution that would threaten U.S. corporate interests. In 1980, Richard Cooper, a State Department expert on economic affairs, told Congress that a more equitable distribution of wealth was desirable. "However, we also have an enormous stake in the continuing smooth functioning in the economic system.... Major changes in the system can ... have important implications for our own welfare."

In February 1980 El Salvador Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero sent a personal letter to President Carter, asking him to stop military aid to El Salvador. Not long before that, the National Guard and National Police had opened fire on a crowd of protesters in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral and killed twenty-four people. But the Carter administration continued the aid. The following month Archbishop Romero was assassinated.

There was mounting evidence that the assassination had been ordered by Roberto D'Aubuisson, a leader of the right wing. But D'Aubuisson had the protection of Nicolas Carranza, a deputy minister of defense, who at the time was receiving \$90,000 a year from the CIA. And Elliot Abrams, ironically Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, declared that D'Aubuisson "was not involved in murder." When Reagan became President, military aid to the El Salvador government rose steeply. From 1946 to 1979, total military aid to El Salvador was \$16.7 million. In Reagan's first year in office, the figure rose to \$82 million.

Congress was sufficiently embarrassed by the killings in El Salvador to require that before any more aid was given the President must certify that progress in human rights was taking place. Reagan did not take this seriously. On January 28, 1982, there were reports of a government massacre of peasants in several villages. The following day, Reagan certified that the Salvadoran government was making progress in human rights. Three days after certification, soldiers stormed the homes of poor people in San Salvador, dragged out twenty people, and killed them.

When, at the end of 1983, Congress passed a law to continue the requirement of certification, Reagan vetoed it.

The press was especially timid and obsequious during the Reagan years, as Mark Hertsgaard documents in his book *On Bended Knee*. When journalist Raymond Bonner continued to report on the atrocities in El Salvador, and on the U.S. role, the New York Times removed him from his assignment. Back in 1981 Bonner had reported on the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the town of El Mozote, by a battalion of soldiers trained by the United States. The Reagan administration scoffed at the account, but in 1992, a team of forensic anthropologists began unearthing skeletons from the site of the massacre, most of them children; the following year a UN commission confirmed the story of the massacre at El Mozote.

The Reagan administration, which did not appear at all offended by military juntas governing in Latin America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile) if they were "friendly" to the United States, became very upset when a tyranny was hostile. as was the government of Muammar Khadafi in Libya. In 1986, when unknown terrorists bombed a discotheque in West Berlin, killing a U.S. serviceman, the White House immediately decided to retaliate. Khadafi was probably responsible for various acts of terrorism over the years, but there was no real evidence that in this case he was to blame. Reagan was determined to make a point. Planes were sent over the capital city of Tripoli with specific instructions to aim at Khadafi's house. The bombs fell on a crowded city; perhaps a hundred people were killed, it was estimated by foreign diplomats in Tripoli. Khadafi was not injured, but an adopted daughter of his was killed.

Professor Stephen Shalom, analyzing this incident, writes (Imperial Alibis): "If terrorism is defined as politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets, then one of the most serious incidents of international terrorism of the year was precisely this U.S. raid on Libya."

It became clearer now, although it had been suspected, that United States foreign policy was not simply based on the existence of the Soviet Union, but was motivated by fear of revolution in various parts of the world. The radical social critic Noam Chomsky had long maintained that "the appeal to security was largely fraudulent, the Cold War framework having been employed as a device to justify the suppression of independent nationalism-whether in Europe, Japan, or the Third World" (World Orders Old And New)

The fear of "independent nationalism" was that this would jeopardize powerful American economic interests. Revolutions in Nicaragua or Cuba or El Salvador or Chile were threats to United Fruit, Anaconda Copper, International Telephone and Telegraph, and others. Thus, foreign interventions presented to the public as "in the national interest" were really undertaken for special interests, for which the American people were asked to sacrifice their sons and their tax dollars. ~: The CIA now had to prove it was still needed. The New York Times (February 4, 1992) declared that "in a world where the postwar enemy has ceased to exist, the C.I.A. and its handful of sister agencies, with their billion-dollar satellites and mountains of classified documents, must somehow remain relevant in the minds of Americans."

The military budget remained huge. The cold war budget of \$300 billion was reduced by 7 percent to \$280 billion. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, said: "I want to scare the hell out of the rest of the world. I don't say that in a bellicose way." As if to prove that the gigantic military establishment was still necessary, the Bush administration, in its four-year term, launched two wars: a "small" one against Panama and a massive one against Iraq.

Although in the course of the war Saddam Hussein had been depicted by U.S. officials and the press as another Hitler, the war ended short of a march into Baghdad, leaving Hussein in power. It seemed that the United States had wanted to weaken him, but not to eliminate him, in order to keep him as a balance against Iran. In the years before the Gulf War, the United States had sold arms to both Iran and Iraq, at different times favoring one or the other as part of the traditional "balance of power" strategy.

Therefore, as the war ended, the United States did not support Iraqi dissidents who wanted to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein. A New York Times dispatch from Washington, datelined March 26, 1991, reported: "President Bush has decided to let President Saddam Hussein put down rebellions in his country without American intervention rather than risk the splintering of Iraq, according to official statements and private briefings today."

This left the Kurdish minority, which was rebelling against Saddam Hussein, helpless. And anti-Hussein elements among the Iraqi majority were also left hanging. The Washington Post reported (May 3, 1991): "Major defections from the Iraqi military were in the offing in March at the height of the Kurdish rebellion, but never materialized because the officers concluded the U.S. would not back the uprising...."

The man who had been Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, a month after the end of the Gulf War, gave a cold assessment of the pluses and minuses of the event. "The benefits are undeniably impressive. First, a blatant act of aggression was rebuffed and punished.... Second, U.S military power is henceforth likely to be taken more seriously.... Third, the Middle East and Persian Gulf region is now clearly an American sphere of preponderance."

Brzezinski however, was concerned about "some negative consequences." One of them was that "the very intensity of the air assault on Iraq gives rise to concern that the conduct of the war may come to be seen as evidence that Americans view Arab lives as worthless.... And that raises the moral question of the proportionality of response."

His point about Arab lives being seen as "worthless" was underlined by the fact that the war provoked an ugly wave of anti-Arab racism in the United States, with Arab-Americans insulted or beaten or threatened with death. There were bumper stickers that said "I don't brake for Iraqis." An Arab-American businessman was beaten in Toledo, Ohio.

Brzezinski's measured assessment of the Gulf War could be taken as close to

representing the view of the Democratic Party. It went along with the Bush administration. It was pleased with the results. It had some misgivings about civilian casualties. But it did not constitute an opposition. President George Bush was satisfied. As the war ended, he declared on a radio broadcast: "The specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian peninsula."

The Establishment press very much agreed. The two leading news magazines, Time and Newsweek, had special editions hailing the victory in the war, noting there had been only a few hundred American casualties, without any mention of Iraqi casualties. A New York Times editorial (March 30, 1991) said: "America's victory in the Persian Gulf war . . . provided special vindication for the U.S. Army, which brilliantly exploited its firepower and mobility and in the process erased memories of its grievous difficulties in Vietnam."...

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Seventies: Under Control?

excerpted from a

People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn



In the early seventies, the system seemed out of control-it could not hold the loyalty of the public. As early as 1970, according to the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, "trust in government" was low in every section of the population. And there was a significant difference by class. Of professional people, 40 percent had "low" political trust in the government; of unskilled blue-collar workers, 66 percent had "low" trust.

More voters than ever before refused to identify themselves as either Democrats or Republicans. Back in 1940, 20 percent of those polled called themselves "independents." In 1974, 34 percent called themselves "independents. "

The courts, the juries, and even judges were not behaving as usual. Juries were acquitting radicals: Angela Davis, an acknowledged Communist, was acquitted by an all-

white jury on the West Coast. Black Panthers, whom the government had tried in every way to malign and destroy, were freed by juries in several trials. A judge in western Massachusetts threw out a case against a young activist, Sam Lovejoy, who had toppled a 500-foot tower erected by a utility company trying to set up a nuclear plant. In Washington, D.C., in August 1973, a Superior Court judge refused to sentence six men charged with unlawful entry who had stepped from a White House tour line to protest the bombing of Cambodia.

Undoubtedly, much of this national mood of hostility to government and business came out of the Vietnam war, its 55,000 casualties, its moral shame, its exposure of government lies and atrocities. On top of this came the political disgrace of the Nixon administration in the scandals that came to be known by the one-word label "Watergate," and which led to the historic resignation from the presidency-the first in American history-of Richard Nixon in August 1974.

In the charges brought by the House Committee on Impeachment against Nixon, it seemed clear that the committee did not want to emphasize those elements in his behavior which were found in other Presidents and which might be repeated in the future. It stayed clear of Nixon's dealings with powerful corporations; it did not mention the bombing of Cambodia. It concentrated on things peculiar to Nixon, not on fundamental policies continuous among American Presidents, at home and abroad.

The word was out: get rid of Nixon, but keep the system. Theodore Sorensen, who had been an adviser to President Kennedy, wrote at the time of Watergate: "The underlying causes of the gross misconduct in our law-enforcement system now being revealed are largely personal, not institutional. Some structural changes are needed. All the rotten apples should be thrown out. But save the barrel."

Indeed, the barrel was saved. Nixon's foreign policy remained. The government's connections to corporate interests remained. Ford's closest friends in Washington were corporate lobbyists. Alexander Haig, who had been one of Nixon's closest advisers, who had helped in "processing" the tapes before turning them over to the public, and who gave the public misinformation about the tapes, was appointed by President Ford to be head of the armed forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. One of Ford's first acts was to pardon Nixon, thus saving him from possible criminal proceedings and allowing him to retire with a huge pension in California.

The Establishment had cleansed itself of members of the club who had broken the rules-but it took some pains not to treat them too harshly. Those few who received jail sentences got short terms, were sent to the most easygoing federal institutions

available, and were given special privileges not given to ordinary prisoners. Richard Kleindienst pleaded guilty; he got a \$100 fine and one month in jail, which was suspended.

That Nixon would go, but that the power of the President to do anything he wanted in the name of "national security" would stay- this was underscored by a Supreme Court decision in July 1974. The Court said Nixon had to turn over his White House tapes to the special Watergate prosecutor. But at the same time it affirmed "the confidentiality of Presidential communications," which it could not uphold in Nixon's case, but which remained as a general principle when the President made a "claim of need to protect military, diplomatic or sensitive national security secrets."

The televised Senate Committee hearings on Watergate stopped suddenly before the subject of corporate connections was reached. It was typical of the selective coverage of important events by the television industry: bizarre shenanigans like the Watergate burglary were given full treatment, while instances of ongoing practice-the My Lai massacre, the secret bombing of Cambodia, the work of the FBI and CIA- were given the most fleeting attention. Dirty tricks against the Socialist Workers party, the Black Panthers, other radical groups, had to be searched for in a few newspapers. The whole nation heard the details of the quick break-in at the Watergate apartment; there was never a similar television hearing on the long-term break-in in Vietnam.

It was a complex process of consolidation that the system undertook in 1975. It included old-type military actions, like the Mayaguez affair, to assert authority in the world and at home. There was also a need to satisfy a disillusioned public that the system was criticizing and correcting itself. The standard way was to conduct publicized investigations that found specific culprits but left the system intact. Watergate had made both the FBI and the CIA look bad-breaking the laws they were sworn to uphold, cooperating with Nixon in his burglary jobs and illegal wiretapping. In 1975, congressional committees in the House and Senate began investigations of the FBI and CIA.

The CIA inquiry disclosed that the CIA had gone beyond its original mission of gathering intelligence and was conducting secret operations of all kinds. For instance, back in the 1950s, it had administered the drug LSD to unsuspecting Americans to test its effects: one American scientist, given such a dose by a CIA agent, leaped from a New York hotel window to his death in the 1950s.

The CIA had also been involved in assassination plots against Castro of Cuba and other heads of state. It had introduced African swine fever virus into Cuba in 1971, bringing

disease and then slaughter to 500,000 pigs. A CIA operative told a reporter he delivered the virus from an army base in the Canal Zone to anti-Castro Cubans.

It was also learned from the investigation that the CIA-with the collusion of a secret Committee of Forty headed by Henry Kissinger-had worked to "destabilize" the Chilean government headed by Salvadore Allende, a Marxist who had been elected president in one of the rare free elections in Latin America. ITT, with large interests in Cuba, played a part in this operation. When in 1974 the American ambassador to Chile, David Popper, suggested to the Chilean junta (which, with U.S. aid, had overthrown Allende) that they were violating human rights, he was rebuked by Kissinger, who sent word: "Tell Pop per to cut out the political science lectures."

The investigation of the FBI disclosed many years of illegal actions to disrupt and destroy radical groups and left-wing groups of all kinds. The FBI had sent forged letters, engaged in burglaries (it admitted to ninety-two between 1960 and 1966), opened mail illegally, and, in the case of Black Panther leader Fred Hampton, seems to have conspired in murder.

Valuable information came out of the investigations, but it was just enough, and in just the right way-moderate press coverage, little television coverage, thick books of reports with limited readership- to give the impression of an honest society correcting itself.

The investigations themselves revealed the limits of government willingness to probe into such activities. The Church Committee, set up by the Senate, conducted its investigations with the cooperation of the agencies being investigated and, indeed, submitted its findings on the CIA to the CIA to see if there was material that the Agency wanted omitted. Thus, while there was much valuable material in the report, there is no way of knowing how much more there was-the final report was a compromise between committee diligence and CIA caution.

The Pike Committee, set up in the House of Representatives, made no such agreement with the CIA or FBI, and when it issued its final report, the same House that had authorized its investigation voted to keep the report secret. When the report was leaked via a CBS newscaster, Daniel Schorr, to the Village Voice in New York, it was never printed by the important newspapers in the country-the Times, the Washington Post, or others. Schorr was suspended by CBS. It was another instance of cooperation between the mass media and the government in instances of "national security."

The Church Committee, in its report of CIA attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro and other foreign leaders, revealed an interesting point of view. The committee seemed to look on the killing of a head of state as an unpardonable violation of some gentlemen's agreement among statesmen, much more deplorable than military interventions that

killed ordinary people. The Committee wrote, in the introduction to its assassination report:

Once methods of coercion and violence are chosen, the probability of loss of life is always present. There is, however, a significant difference between a cold-blooded, targeted, intentional killing of an individual foreign leader and other forms of intervening in the affairs of foreign nations.

The Church Committee uncovered CIA operations to secretly influence the minds of Americans:

"The CIA is now using several hundred American academics (administrators, faculty members, graduate students engaged in teaching) who, in addition to providing leads and, on occasion, making introductions for intelligence purposes, write books and other material to be used for propaganda purposes abroad.... These academics are located in over 100 American colleges, universities and related institutions. At the majority of institutions, no one other than the individual concerned is aware of the CIA link. At the others, at least one university official is aware of the operational use of academics on his campus.... The CIA considers these operational relationships within the U.S. academic community as perhaps its most sensitive domestic area and has strict controls governing these operations...."

In 1961 the chief of the CIA's Covert Action Staff wrote that books were "the most important weapon of strategic propaganda." The Church Committee found that more than a thousand books were produced, subsidized, or sponsored by the CIA before the end of 1967.

When Kissinger testified before the Church Committee about the bombing of Laos, orchestrated by the CIA as a secret activity, he said: "I do not believe in retrospect that it was a good national policy to have the CIA conduct the war in Laos. I think we should have found some other way of doing it." There was no indication that anyone on the Committee challenged this idea-that what was done should have been done, but by another method.

Thus, in 1974-1975, the system was acting to purge the country of its rascals and restore it to a healthy, or at least to an acceptable, state. The resignation of Nixon, the succession of Ford, the exposure of bad deeds by the FBI and CIA-all aimed to regain the badly damaged confidence of the American people. However, even with these strenuous efforts, there were still many signs in the American public of suspicion, even hostility, to the leaders of government, military, big business.

In the year 1976, with a presidential election approaching, there was worry in the Establishment about the public's faith in the system. William Simon, Secretary of the Treasury under both Nixon and Ford (before then an investment banker earning over \$2 million a year), spoke in the fall of 1976 to a Business Council meeting in Hot Springs, Virginia. He said that when "so much of the world is lurching towards socialism or totalitarianism" it was urgent to make the American business system understood, because "private enterprise is losing by default-in many of our schools, in much of the communications media, and in a growing portion of the public consciousness." His speech could well be taken to represent the thinking of the American corporate elite:

Vietnam, Watergate, student unrest, shifting moral codes, the worst recession in a generation, and a number of other jarring cultural shocks have all combined to create a new climate of questions and doubt.... It all adds up to a general malaise, a society-wide crisis of institutional confidence....

Too often, Simon said, Americans "have been taught to distrust the very word profit and the profit motive that makes our prosperity possible, to somehow feel this system, that has done more to alleviate human suffering and privation than any other, is somehow cynical, selfish, and amoral." We must, Simon said, "get across the human side of capitalism."

As the United States prepared in 1976 to celebrate the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence, a group of intellectuals and political leaders from Japan, the United States, and Western Europe, organized into "The Trilateral Commission," issued a report. It was entitled "The Governability of Democracies." Samuel Huntington, a political science professor at Harvard University and long-time consultant to the White House on the war in Vietnam, wrote the part of the report that dealt with the United States. He called it "The Democratic Distemper" and identified the problem he was about to discuss: "The 1960's witnessed a dramatic upsurge of democratic fervor in America." In the sixties, Huntington wrote, there was a huge growth of citizen participation "in the forms of marches, demonstrations, protest movements, and 'cause' organizations." There were also "markedly higher levels of self consciousness on the part of blacks, Indians, Chicanos, white ethnic groups, students and women, all of whom became mobilized and organized in new ways...." There was a "marked expansion of white collar unionism," and all this added up to "a reassertion of equality as a goal in social, economic and political life."

Huntington pointed to the signs of decreasing government authority: The great demands in the sixties for equality had transformed the federal budget. In 1960 foreign affairs spending was 53.7 percent of the budget, and social spending was 22.3 percent. By 1974 foreign affairs took 33 percent and social spending 31 percent. This seemed to reflect a change in public mood: In 1960 only 18 percent of the public said the government was

spending too much on defense, but in 1969 this jumped to 52 percent.

Huntington was troubled by what he saw:

"The essence of the democratic surge of the 1960's was a general challenge to existing systems of

authority, public and private. In one form or another, this challenge manifested itself in the family, the university, business, public and private associations, politics, the governmental bureaucracy, and the military services. People no longer felt the same obligation to obey those whom they had previously considered superior to themselves in age, rank, status, expertise, character, or talents."

All this, he said, "produced problems for the governability of democracy in the 1970's...."

Critical in all this was the decline in the authority of the President. And:

"To the extent that the United States was governed by anyone during the decades after World War II, it was governed by the President acting with the support and cooperation of key individuals and groups in the executive office, the federal bureaucracy, Congress, and the more important businesses, banks, law firms, foundations, and media, which constitute the private sector's 'Establishment'."

This was probably the frankest statement ever made by an Establishment adviser.

Huntington further said that the President, to win the election, needed the support of a broad coalition of people. However: "The day after his election, the size of his majority is almost-if not entirely- irrelevant to his ability to govern the country. What counts then is his ability to mobilize support from the leaders of key institutions in a society and government.... This coalition must include key people in Congress, the executive branch, and the private-sector 'Establishment.'" He gave examples:

"Truman made a point of bringing a substantial number of non-partisan soldiers, Republican bankers, and Wall Street lawyers into his Administration. He went to the existing sources of power in the country to get help he needed in ruling the country. Eisenhower in part inherited this coalition and was in part almost its creation.... Kennedy attempted to recreate a somewhat similar structure of alliances."

What worried Huntington was the loss in governmental authority. For instance, the opposition to Vietnam had brought the abolition of the draft. "The question necessarily arises, however, whether if a new threat to security should materialize in the future (as it inevitably will at some point), the government will possess the authority to command the

resources, as well as the sacrifices, which are necessary to meet that threat."

Huntington saw the possible end of that quarter century when "the United States was the hegemonic power in a system of world order." His conclusion was that there had developed "an excess of democracy," and he suggested "desirable limits to the extension of political democracy."

... The Trilateral Commission was organized in early 1973 by David Rockefeller and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Rockefeller was an official of the Chase Manhattan Bank and a powerful financial figure in the United States and the world; Brzezinski, a Columbia University professor, specialized in international relations and was a consultant to the State Department. As reported in the Far Eastern Economic Review (March 25, 1977) by Robert Manning:

The initiative for the Commission came entirely from Rockefeller. According to George Franklin, the Commission's executive secretary, Rockefeller "was getting worried about the deteriorating relations between the United States, Europe and Japan." Franklin explained that Rockefeller began to present his ideas to another elite fraternity: . . . at the Bilderberg Group—a very distinguished Anglo-American group which has been meeting for a long time—Mike Blumenthal said he thought things were in a very serious condition in the world and couldn't some kind of private group do more about it? . . . So then David again made his proposal . . . Then Brzezinski, a close friend of Rockefeller's, carried the Rockefeller-funded ball and organized the Commission.

It seems probable that the "very serious condition" mentioned as the reason for the Trilateral Commission was the need for greater unity among Japan, Western Europe, and the United States in the face of a much more complicated threat to tri-continental capitalism than a monolithic Communism: revolutionary movements in the Third World. These movements had directions of their own.

The Trilateral Commission wanted also to deal with another situation. Back in 1967, George Ball, who had been Undersecretary of State for economic affairs in the Kennedy administration and who was director of Lehman Brothers, a large investment banking firm, told members of the International Chamber of Commerce:

"In these twenty postwar years, we have come to recognize in action, though not always in words, that the political boundaries of nation-states are too narrow and constricted to define the scope and activities of modern business."

To show the growth of international economics for United States corporations, one would only have to note the situation in banking. In 1960 there were eight United States banks with foreign branches; in 1974 there were 129. The assets of these overseas

branches amounted to \$3.5 billion in 1960, \$155 billion in 1974.

The Trilateral Commission apparently saw itself as helping to create the necessary international links for the new multinational economy. Its members came from the highest circles of politics, business, and the media in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States. They were from Chase Manhattan, Lehman Brothers, Bank of America, Banque de Paris, Lloyd's of London, Bank of Tokyo, etc. Oil, steel, auto, aeronautic, and electric industries were represented. Other members were from Time magazine, the Washington Post, the Columbia Broadcasting System, Die Zeit, the Japan Times, The Economist of London, and more.

 People's History of the United States

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Self-help in Hard Times

excerpted from a

People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn



The war was hardly over, it was February 1919, the IWW leadership was in jail, but the IWW idea of the general strike became reality for five days in Seattle, Washington, when a walkout of 100,000 working people brought the city to a halt.

It began with 35,000 shipyard workers striking for a wage increase. They appealed for support to the Seattle Central Labor Council, which recommended a city-wide strike, and in two weeks 110 locals—mostly American Federation of Labor, only a few IWW—voted to strike. The rank and file of each striking local elected three members to a General Strike Committee, and on February 6, 1919, at 10:00 A.M., the strike began.

Unity was not easy to achieve. The IWW locals were in tension with the AFL locals. Japanese locals were admitted to the General Strike Committee but were not given a vote. Still, sixty thousand union members were out, and forty thousand other workers joined in sympathy. Seattle workers had a radical tradition. During the war, the president

of the Seattle AFL, a socialist, was imprisoned for opposing the draft, was tortured, and there were great labor rallies in the streets to protest.

The city now stopped functioning, except for activities organized by the strikers to provide essential needs. Firemen agreed to stay on the job. Laundry workers handled only hospital laundry. Vehicles authorized to move carried signs "Exempted by the General Strike Committee." Thirty-five neighborhood milk stations were set up. Every day thirty thousand meals were prepared in large kitchens, then transported to halls all over the city and served cafeteria style, with strikers paying twenty-five cents a meal, the general public thirty-five cents. People were allowed to eat as much as they wanted of the beef stew, spaghetti, bread, and coffee.

A Labor War Veteran's Guard was organized to keep the peace. On the blackboard at one of its headquarters was written: "The purpose of this organization is to preserve law and order without the use of force. No volunteer will have any police power or be allowed to carry weapons of any sort, but to use persuasion only." During the strike, crime in the city decreased. The commander of the U.S. army detachment sent into the area told the strikers' committee that in forty years of military experience he hadn't seen so quiet and orderly a city.

The mayor swore in 2,400 special deputies, many of them students at the University of Washington. Almost a thousand sailors and marines were brought into the city by the U.S. government. The general strike ended after five days, according to the General Strike Committee because of pressure from the international officers of the various unions, as well as the difficulties of living in a shut-down city.

The strike had been peaceful. But when it was over, there were raids and arrests: on the Socialist party headquarters, on a printing plant. Thirty-nine members of the IWW were jailed as "ring-leaders of anarchy."

In Centralia, Washington, where the IWW had been organizing lumber workers, the lumber interests made plans to get rid of the IWW. On November 11, 1919, Armistice Day, the Legion paraded through town with rubber hoses and gas pipes, and the IWW prepared for an attack. When the Legion passed the IWW hall, shots were fired-it is unclear who fired first. They stormed the hall, there was more firing, and three Legion men were killed.

Inside the headquarters was an IWW member, a lumberjack named Wesley Everest, who was serving in the army in Washington while the IWW national leaders were on trial for obstructing the war effort. Everest was in army uniform and carried a pistol. He emptied

it into the crowd, dropped it, and ran for the woods, followed by a mob. He started to wade across the river, found the current too strong, turned, shot the leading man dead, threw his gun into the river, and fought the mob with his fists. They dragged him back to town, suspended him from a telegraph pole, took him down, locked him in jail. That night, his jailhouse door was broken down, he was dragged out, put on the floor of a car, taken to a bridge, and hanged. According to a police report, there was one bullet hole in his body.

No one was ever arrested for Everest's murder, but eleven Wobblies were put on trial for killing an American Legion leader during the parade, and six of them spent ten to sixteen years in prison.

Why such a reaction to the general strike, to the organizing of the Wobblies? A statement by the mayor of Seattle suggests that the Establishment feared not just the strike itself but what it symbolized. He said:

The so-called sympathetic Seattle strike was an attempted revolution. That there was no violence does not alter the fact.... The intent, openly and covertly announced, was for the overthrow of the industrial system; here first, then everywhere . . . True, there were no flashing guns, no bombs, no killings. Revolution, I repeat, doesn't need violence. The general strike, as practiced in Seattle, is of itself the weapon of revolution, all the more dangerous because quiet. To succeed, it must suspend everything; stop the entire life stream of a community.... That is to say, it puts the government out of operation. And that is all there is to revolt-no matter how achieved.

Furthermore, the Seattle general strike took place in the midst of a wave of postwar rebellions all over the world. A writer in *The Nation* commented that year:

"The most extraordinary phenomenon of the present time . . . is the unprecedented revolt of the rank and file...."

In Russia it has dethroned the Czar.... In Korea and India and Egypt and Ireland it keeps up an unyielding resistance to political tyranny. In England it brought about the railway strike, against the judgment of the men's own executives. In Seattle and San Francisco it has resulted in the stevedores' recent refusal to handle arms or supplies destined for the overthrow of the Soviet Government. In one district of Illinois it manifested itself in a resolution of striking miners, unanimously requesting their state executive "to go to Hell".

In Pittsburgh, according to Mr. Gompers, it compelled the reluctant American Federation officers to call the steel strike, lest the control pass into the hands of the I.W.W.'s and other "radicals". In New York, it brought about the longshoremen's strike and kept the

men out in defiance of union officials, and caused the upheaval in the printing trade, which the international officers, even though the employers worked hand in glove with them, were completely unable to control.

The common man . . . losing faith in the old leadership, has experienced a new access of self-confidence, or at least a new recklessness, a readiness to take chances on his own account . . . authority cannot any longer be imposed from above; it comes automatically from below.

In the steel mills of western Pennsylvania later in 1919, where men worked twelve hours a day, six days a week, doing exhausting work under intense heat, 100,000 steel workers were signed up in twenty different AFL craft unions. A National Committee attempting to tie them together in their organizing drive found in the summer of 1919 "the men are letting it be known that if we do not do something for them they will take the matter into their own hands."

The National Council was getting telegrams like the one from the Johnstown Steel Workers Council: "Unless the National Committee authorizes a national strike vote to be taken this week we will be compelled to go on strike here alone." William Z. Foster (later a Communist leader, at this time secretary-treasurer to the National Committee in charge of organizing) received a telegram from organizers in the Youngstown district: "We cannot be expected to meet the enraged workers, who will consider us traitors if strike is postponed."

There was pressure from President Woodrow Wilson and Samuel Gompers, AFL president, to postpone the strike. But the steelworkers were too insistent, and in September 1919, not only the 100,000 union men but 250,000 others went out on strike. The sheriff of Allegheny County swore in as deputies five thousand employees of U.S. Steel who had not gone on strike, and announced that outdoor meetings would be forbidden. A report of the Interchurch World Movement made at the time said:

In Monessen . . . the policy of the State Police was simply to club men off the streets and drive them into their homes.... In Braddock ... when a striker was clubbed in the street he would be taken to jail, kept there over night.... Many of those arrested in Newcastle ... were ordered not to be released until the strike was over.

The Department of Justice moved in, carrying out raids on workers who were aliens, holding them for deportation. At Gary, Indiana, federal troops were sent in.

Other factors operated against the strikers. Most were recent immigrants, of many nationalities, many languages. Sherman Service, Inc., hired by the steel corporations to break the strike, instructed its men in South Chicago: "We want you to stir up as much

bad feeling as you possibly can between the Serbians and the Italians. Spread data among the Serbians that the Italians are going back to work. . . Urge them to go back to work or the Italians will get their jobs. More than thirty thousand black workers were brought into the area as strikebreakers-they had been excluded from AFL unions and so felt no loyalty to unionism.

As the strike dragged on, the mood of defeat spread, and workers began to drift back to work. After ten weeks, the number of strikers was down to 110,000, and then the National Committee called the strike off.

In the year following the war, 120,000 textile workers struck in New England and New Jersey, and 30,000 silk workers struck in Paterson, New Jersey. In Boston the police went out on strike, and in New York City cigarmakers, shirtmakers, carpenters, bakers, teamsters, and barbers were out on strike. In Chicago, the press reported, "More strikes and lockouts accompany the mid-summer heat than ever known before at any one time." Five thousand workers at International Harvester and five thousand city workers were in the streets.

When the twenties began, however, the situation seemed under control. The IWW was destroyed, the Socialist party falling apart. The strikes were beaten down by force, and the economy was doing just well enough for just enough people to prevent mass rebellion.

There were enough well-off people to push the others into the background. And with the rich controlling the means of dispensing information, who would tell? Historian Merle Curti observed about the twenties:

It was, in fact, only the upper ten percent of the population that enjoyed a marked increase in real income. But the protests which such facts normally have evoked could not make themselves widely or effectively felt. This was in part the result of the grand strategy of the major political parties. In part it was the result of the fact that almost all the chief avenues to mass opinion were now controlled by large-scale publishing industries.

Some writers tried to break through: Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Lewis Mumford. F. Scott Fitzgerald, in an article, "Echoes of the Jazz Age," said: "It was borrowed time anyway-the whole upper tenth of a nation living with the insouciance of a grand duc and the casualness of chorus girls." He saw ominous signs amid that prosperity: drunkenness, unhappiness, violence:

A classmate killed his wife and himself on Long Island, another tumbled "accidentally" from a skyscraper in Philadelphia, another purposely from a skyscraper in New York. One was killed in a speak-easy in Chicago; another was beaten to death in a speak-easy in New York and crawled home to the Princeton Club to die; still another had his skull crushed by a maniac's ax in an insane asylum where he was confined.

Sinclair Lewis captured the false sense of prosperity, the shallow pleasure of the new gadgets for the middle classes, in his novel *Babbitt*:

"It was the best of nationally advertised and quantitatively produced alarm clocks, with all modern attachments, including cathedral chime, intermittent alarm, and a phosphorescent dial. *Babbitt* was proud of being awakened by such a rich device. Socially it was almost as creditable as buying expensive cord tires.

He sulkily admitted now that there was no more escape, but he lay and detested the grind of the real-estate business, and disliked his family, and disliked himself for disliking them."

Women had finally, after long agitation, won the right to vote in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, but voting was still a middle-class and upper-class activity. Eleanor Flexner, recounting the history of the movement, says the effect of female suffrage was that "women have shown the same tendency to divide along orthodox party lines as male voters." Few political figures spoke out for the poor of the twenties. One was Fiorello La Guardia, a Congressman from a district of poor immigrants in East Harlem (who ran, oddly, on both Socialist and Republican tickets). In the mid-twenties he was made aware by people in his district of the high price of meat. When La Guardia asked Secretary of Agriculture William Jardine to investigate the high price of meat, the Secretary sent him a pamphlet on how to use meat economically. La Guardia wrote back:

"I asked for help and you send me a bulletin. The people of New York City cannot feed their children on Department bulletins.... Your bulletins . . . are of no use to the tenement dwellers of this great city. The housewives of New York have been trained by hard experience on the economical use of meat. What we want is the help of your department on the meat profiteers who are keeping the hard-working people of this city from obtaining proper nourishment."

During the presidencies of Harding and Coolidge in the twenties, the Secretary of the Treasury was Andrew Mellon, one of the richest men in America. In 1923, Congress was presented with the "Mellon Plan," calling for what looked like a general reduction of income taxes, except that the top income brackets would have their tax rates lowered from 50 percent to 25 percent, while the lowest-income group would have theirs lowered

from 4 percent to 3 percent. A few Congressmen from working-class districts spoke against the bill, like William P. Connery of Massachusetts:

I am not going to have my people who work in the shoe factories of Lynn and in the mills in Lawrence and the leather industry of Peabody, in these days of so-called Republican prosperity when they are working but three days in the week think that I am in accord with the provisions of this bill. . . . When I see a provision in this Mellon tax bill which is going to save Mr. Mellon himself \$800,000 on his income tax and his brother \$600,000 on his, I cannot give it my support.

The Mellon Plan passed. In 1928, La Guardia toured the poorer districts of New York and said: "I confess I was not prepared for what I actually saw. It seemed almost incredible that such conditions of poverty could really exist."

The stock market crash of 1929, which marked the beginning of the Great Depression of the United States, came directly from wild speculation which collapsed and brought the whole economy down with it. But, as John Galbraith says in his study of that event (The Great Crash), behind that speculation was the fact that "the economy was fundamentally unsound." He points to very unhealthy corporate and banking structures, an unsound foreign trade, much economic misinformation, and the "bad distribution of income" (the highest 5 percent of the population received about one-third of all personal income).

A socialist critic would go further and say that the capitalist system was by its nature unsound: a system driven by the one overriding motive of corporate profit and therefore unstable, unpredictable, and blind to human needs. The result of all that: permanent depression for many of its people, and periodic crises for almost everybody. Capitalism, despite its attempts at self-reform, its organization for better control, was still in 1929 a sick and undependable system.

After the crash, the economy was stunned, barely moving. Over five thousand banks closed and huge numbers of businesses, unable to get money, closed too. Those that continued laid off employees and cut the wages of those who remained, again and again. Industrial production fell by 50 percent, and by 1933 perhaps 15 million (no one knew exactly)-one-fourth or one-third of the labor force-were out of work. The Ford Motor Company, which in the spring of 1929 had employed 128,000 workers, was down to 37,000 by August of 1931. By the end of 1930, almost half the 280,000 textile mill workers in New England were out of work. Former President Calvin Coolidge, commented with his customary wisdom: "When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results." He spoke again in early 1931, "This country is not in good condition."

Clearly, those responsible for organizing the economy did not know what had happened, were baffled by it, refused to recognize it, and found reasons other than the failure of the system. Herbert Hoover had said, not long before the crash: "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land." Henry Ford, in March 1931, said the crisis was here because "the average man won't really do a day's work unless he is caught and cannot get out of it. There is plenty of work to do if people would do it." A few weeks later he laid off 75,000 workers.

The anger of the veteran of the First World War, now without work, his family hungry, led to the march of the Bonus Army to Washington in the spring and summer of 1932. War veterans, holding government bonus certificates which were due years in the future, demanded that Congress pay off on them now, when the money was desperately needed. And so they began to move to Washington from all over the country, with wives and children or alone. They came in broken-down old autos, stealing rides on freight trains, or hitchhiking. They were miners from West Virginia, sheet metal workers from Columbus, Georgia, and unemployed Polish veterans from Chicago. One family-husband, wife, three-year-old boy-spent three months on freight trains coming from California. Chief Running Wolf, a jobless Mescalero Indian from New Mexico, showed up in full Indian dress, with bow and arrow.

More than twenty thousand came. Most camped across the Potomac River from the Capitol on Anacostia Flats where, as John Dos Passos wrote, "the men are sleeping in little lean-tos built out of old newspapers, cardboard boxes, packing crates, bits of tin or tarpaper roofing, every kind of cockeyed makeshift shelter from the rain scraped together out of the city dump." The bill to pay off on the bonus passed the House, but was defeated in the Senate, and some veterans, discouraged, left. Most stayed-some encamped in government buildings near the Capitol, the rest on Anacostia Flats, and President Hoover ordered the army to evict them.

Four troops of cavalry, four companies of infantry, a machine gun squadron, and six tanks assembled near the White House. General Douglas MacArthur was in charge of the operation, Major Dwight Eisenhower his aide. George S. Patton was one of the officers. MacArthur led his troops down Pennsylvania Avenue, used tear gas to clear veterans out of the old buildings, and set the buildings on fire. Then the army moved across the bridge to Anacostia. Thousands of veterans, wives, children, began to run as the tear gas spread. The soldiers set fire to some of the huts, and soon the whole encampment was ablaze. When it was all over, two veterans had been shot to death, an eleven week-old baby had died, an eight-year-old boy was partially blinded by gas, two police had fractured skulls, and a thousand veterans were injured by gas.

In 1934 and 1935 hundreds of thousands of workers, left out of the tightly controlled, exclusive unions of the American Federation of Labor, began organizing in the new mass production industries- auto, rubber, packinghouse. The AFL could not ignore them, it set up a Committee for Industrial Organization to organize these workers outside of craft lines, by industry, all workers in a plant belonging to one union. This Committee, headed by John Lewis, then broke away and became the CIO-the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

But it was rank-and-file strikes and insurgencies that pushed the union leadership, AFL and CIO, into action. Jeremy Brecher tells the story in his book *Strike!* A new kind of tactic began among rubber workers in Akron, Ohio, in the early thirties-the sit-down strike. The workers stayed in the plant instead of walking out, and this had clear advantages: they were directly blocking the use of strikebreakers- they did not have to act through union officials but were in direct control of the situation themselves; they did not have to walk outside in the cold and rain, but had shelter; they were not isolated, as in their work, or on the picket line; they were thousands under one roof, free to talk to one another, to form a community of struggle. Louis Adamic labor writer, describes one of the early sit-downs:

Sitting by their machines, cauldrons, boilers and work benches, they talked. Some realized for the first time how important they were in the process of rubber production. Twelve men had practically stopped the works! . . . Superintendents, foremen, and straw bosses were dashing about.... In less than an hour the dispute was settled, full victory for the men.

In early 1936, at the Firestone rubber plant in Akron, makers of truck tires, their wages already too low to pay for food and rent, were faced with a wage cut. When several union men were fired, others began to stop work, to sit down on the job. In one day the whole of plant # 1 was sitting down. In two days, plant #2 was sitting down and management gave in. In the next ten days there was a sit-down at Goodyear. A court issued an injunction against mass picketing. It was ignored, and 150 deputies were sworn in. But they soon faced ten thousand workers from all over Akron. In a month the strike was won.

The idea spread through 1936. In December of that year began the longest sit-down strike of all, at Fisher Body plant # 1 in Flint, Michigan. It started when two brothers were fired, and it lasted until February 1937. For forty days there was a community of two thousand strikers. "It was like war," one said. "The guys with me became my buddies."

Sidney Fine in Sit-Down describes what happened. Committees organized recreation, information, classes, a postal service, sanitation. Courts were set up to deal with those who didn't take their turn washing dishes or who threw rubbish or smoked where it was prohibited or brought in liquor. The "punishment" consisted of extra duties; the ultimate punishment was expulsion from the plant. A restaurant owner across the street prepared three meals a day for two thousand strikers. There were classes in parliamentary procedure, public speaking, history of the labor movement. Graduate students at the University of Michigan gave courses in journalism and creative writing.

There were injunctions, but a procession of five thousand armed workers encircled the plant and there was no attempt to enforce the injunction. Police attacked with tear gas and the workers fought back with firehoses. Thirteen strikers were wounded by gunfire, but the police were driven back. The governor called out the National Guard. By this time the strike had spread to other General Motors plants. Finally there was a settlement, a six-month contract, leaving many questions unsettled but recognizing that from now on, the company would have to deal not with individuals but with a union.

In 1936 there were forty-eight sitdown strikes. In 1937 there were 477: electrical workers in St. Louis; shirt workers in Pulaski, Tennessee; broom workers in Pueblo, Colorado; trash collectors in Bridgeport, Connecticut; gravediggers in New Jersey; seventeen blind workers at the New York Guild for the Jewish Blind; prisoners in an Illinois penitentiary; and even thirty members of a National Guard Company who had served in the Fisher Body sit-down, and now sat down themselves because they had not been paid.

The sit-downs were especially dangerous to the system because they were not controlled by the regular union leadership. An AFL business agent for the Hotel and Restaurant Employees said:

You'd be sitting in the office any March day of 1937, and the phone would ring and the voice at the other end would say: "My name is Mary Jones; I'm a soda clerk at Liggett's; we've thrown the manager out and we've got the keys. What do we do now?" And you'd hurry over to the company to negotiate and over there they'd say, "I think it's the height of irresponsibility to call a strike before you've ever asked for a contract" and all you could answer was, "You're so right."

It was to stabilize the system in the face of labor unrest that the L Wagner Act of 1935, setting up a National Labor Relations Board, had been passed. The wave of strikes in 1936, 1937, 1938, made the need even more pressing. In Chicago, on Memorial Day, 1937, a strike at Republic Steel brought the police out, firing at a mass picket line of strikers, killing ten of them. Autopsies showed the bullets had hit the workers in the back as they were running away: this was the Memorial Day Massacre. But Republic Steel was organized, and so was Ford Motor Company, and the other huge plants in steel, auto, rubber, meat packing, the electrical industry.

The Wagner Act was challenged by a steel corporation in the courts, but the Supreme Court found it constitutional-that the government could regulate interstate commerce, and that strikes hurt interstate commerce. From the trade unions' point of view, the new law was an aid to union organizing. From the government's point of view it was an aid to the stability of commerce. Unions were not wanted by employers, but they were more controllable-more stabilizing for the system than the wildcat strikes, the factory occupations of the rank and file. In the spring of 1937, a New York Times article carried the headline "Unauthorized Sit-Downs Fought by CIO Unions." The story read: "Strict orders have been issued to all organizers and representatives that they will be dismissed if they authorize any stoppages of work without the consent of the international officers...." The Times quoted John L. Lewis, dynamic leader of the CIO: "A CIO contract is adequate protection against sit-downs, lie-downs, or any other kind of strike."

The Communist party, some of whose members played critical roles in organizing CIO unions, seemed to take the same position. One Communist leader in Akron was reported to have said at a party strategy meeting after the sit-downs: "Now we must work for regular relations between the union and the employers-and strict observance of union procedure on the part of the workers." Thus, two sophisticated ways of controlling direct labor action developed in the mid-thirties. First, the National Labor Relations Board would give unions legal status, listen to them, settling certain of their grievances. Thus it could moderate labor rebellion by channeling energy into elections-just as the constitutional system channeled possibly troublesome energy into voting. The NLRB would set limits in economic conflict as voting did in political conflict. And second, the workers' organization itself, the union, even a militant and aggressive union like the CIO, would channel the workers' insurrectionary energy into contracts, negotiations, union meetings, and try to minimize strikes, in order to build large, influential, even respectable organizations.

The history of those years seems to support the argument of Richard Cloward and Frances Piven, in their book *Poor People's Movements*, that labor won most during its spontaneous uprisings, before the unions were recognized or well organized: "Factory workers had their greatest influence, and were able to exact their most substantial concessions from government, during the Great Depression, in the years before they were organized into unions. Their power during the Depression was not rooted in organization, but in disruption."

Piven and Cloward point out that union membership rose enormously in the forties, during the Second World War (the CIO and AFL had over 6 million members each by 1945), but its power was less than before-its gains from the use of strikes kept getting whittled down. The members appointed to the NLRB were less sympathetic to labor, the Supreme Court declared sit-downs to be illegal, and state governments were passing laws to hamper strikes, picketing, boycotts.

The coming of World War II weakened the old labor militancy of the thirties because the war economy created millions of new jobs at higher wages. The New Deal had succeeded only in reducing unemployment from 13 million to 9 million. It was the war that put almost everyone to work, and the war did something else: patriotism, the push for unity of all classes against enemies overseas, made it harder to mobilize anger against the corporations. During the war, the CIO and AFL pledged to call no strikes.

Still, the grievances of workers were such-wartime "controls" meant their wages were being controlled better than prices-that they felt impelled to engage in many wildcat strikes: there were more strikes in 1944 than in any previous year in American history, says Jeremy Brecher.

The thirties and forties showed more clearly than before the dilemma of working people in the United States. The system responded to workers' rebellions by finding new forms of control-internal control by their own organizations as well as outside control by law and force. But along with the new controls came new concessions. These concessions didn't solve basic problems; for many people they solved nothing. But they helped enough people to create an atmosphere of progress and improvement, to restore some faith in the system.

The minimum wage of 1938, which established the forty-hour week and outlawed child labor, left many people out of its provisions and set very low minimum wages (twenty-five cents an hour the first year). But it was enough to dull the edge of resentment. Housing was built for only a small percentage of the people who needed it. "A modest, even parsimonious, beginning," Paul Conkin says (F.D.R. and the Origins of the Welfare State), but the sight of federally subsidized housing projects, playgrounds, vermin-free apartments, replacing dilapidated tenements, was refreshing. The TVA suggested exciting possibilities for regional planning to give jobs, improve areas, and provide cheap power, with local instead of national control. The Social Security Act gave retirement benefits and unemployment insurance, and matched state funds for mothers and dependent children-but it excluded farmers, domestic workers, and old people, and offered no health insurance. As Conkin says: "The meager benefits of Social Security were insignificant in comparison to the building of security for large, established businesses."

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



War Is the Health of the State

excerpted from a

People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn



"War is the health of the state," the radical writer Randolph Bourne said, in the midst of the First World War. Indeed, as the nations of Europe went to war in 1914, the governments flourished, patriotism bloomed, class struggle was stilled, and young men died in frightful numbers on the battlefields-often for a hundred yards of land, a line of trenches.

In the United States, not yet in the war, there was worry about the health of the state. Socialism was growing. The IWW seemed to be everywhere. Class conflict was intense. In the summer of 1916, during a Preparedness Day parade in San Francisco, a bomb exploded, killing nine people, two local radicals, Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, were arrested and would spend twenty years in prison. Shortly after that Senator James Wadsworth of New York suggested compulsory military training for all males to avert the danger that "these people of ours shall be divided into classes." Rather: "We must let our young men know that they owe some responsibility to this country."

The supreme fulfillment of that responsibility was taking place in Europe. Ten million were to die on the battlefield; 20 million were to die of hunger and disease related to the war. And no one since that day has been able to show that the war brought any gain for humanity that would be worth one human life. The rhetoric of the socialists, that it was an "imperialist war," now seems moderate and hardly arguable. The advanced capitalist countries of Europe were fighting over boundaries, colonies, spheres of influence; they were competing for Alsace-Lorraine, the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East.

The war came shortly after the opening of the twentieth century, in the midst of exultation (perhaps only among the elite in the Western world) about progress and modernization. One day after the English declared war, Henry James wrote to a friend: "The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness . . . is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be . . . gradually bettering." In the first Battle of the Marne, the British and French succeeded in blocking the German advance on Paris. Each side had 500,000 casualties. The killing started very fast, and on a large scale. In August 1914, a volunteer for the British army had to be 5 feet 8 inches to enlist. By October, the requirement was lowered to 5 feet 5 inches. That month there were thirty thousand casualties, and then one could be 5 feet 3. In the first three months of war, almost the entire original British army was wiped out. For three years the battle lines remained virtually stationary in France. Each side would push forward, then back, then forward again- for a few yards, a few miles, while the corpses piled up. In 1916 the Germans tried to break through at Verdun; the British and French counterattacked along the Seine, moved forward a few miles, and lost 600,000 men. One day, the 9th Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry launched an attack with eight hundred men. Twenty four hours later, there were eighty-four left.

Back home, the British were not told of the slaughter. One English writer recalled: "The most bloody defeat in the history of Britain . . . might occur . . . and our Press come out bland and copious and graphic with nothing to show that we had not had quite a good day-a victory really...." The same thing was happening on the German side; as Erich Maria Remarque wrote in his great novel, on days when men by the thousands were being blown apart by machine guns and shells, the official dispatches announced "All Quiet on the Western Front."

In July 1916, British General Douglas Haig ordered eleven divisions of English soldiers to climb out of their trenches and move toward the German lines. The six German divisions opened up with their machine guns. Of the 110,000 who attacked, 20,000 were killed, 40,000 more wounded-all those bodies strewn on no man's land, the ghostly territory between the contending trenches. On January 1, 1917, Haig was promoted to field marshal. What happened that summer is described tersely in William Langer's *An Encyclopedia of World History*:

Despite the opposition of Lloyd George and the skepticism of some of his subordinates, Haig proceeded hopefully to the main offensive. The third battle of Ypres was a series of 8 heavy attacks, carried through in driving rain and fought over ground water-logged and muddy. No break-through was effected, and the total gain was about 5 miles of territory, which made the Ypres salient more inconvenient than ever and cost the British about 400,000 men.

The people of France and Britain were not told the extent of the casualties. When, in the last year of the war, the Germans attacked ferociously on the Somme, and left 300,000 British soldiers dead or wounded, London newspapers printed the following, we learn from Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*:

WHAT CAN I DO?

How the Civilian May Help in this Crisis.

Be cheerful....

Write encouragingly to friends at the front....

Don't repeat foolish gossip.

Don't listen to idle rumors.

Don't think you know better than Haig.

Into this pit of death and deception came the United States, in the spring of 1917. Mutinies were beginning to occur in the French army. Soon, out of 112 divisions, 68 would have mutinies; 629 men would be tried and condemned, 50 shot by firing squads. American troops were badly needed.

President Woodrow Wilson had promised that the United States would stay neutral in the war: "There is such a thing as a nation being too proud to fight." But in April of 1917, the Germans had announced they would have their submarines sink any ship bringing supplies to their enemies; and they had sunk a number of merchant vessels. Wilson now said he must stand by the right of Americans to travel on merchant ships in the war zone. "I cannot consent to any abridgement of the rights of American citizens in any respect...."

As Richard Hofstadter points out (*The American Political Tradition*): "This was rationalization of the flimsiest sort...." The British had also been intruding on the rights of American citizens on the high seas, but Wilson was not suggesting we go to war with them. Hofstadter says Wilson "was forced to find legal reasons for policies that were based not upon law but upon the balance of power and economic necessities."

It was unrealistic to expect that the Germans should treat the United States as neutral in

the war when the U.S. had been shipping great amounts of war materials to Germany's enemies. In early 1915, the British liner Lusitania was torpedoed and sunk t,; a German submarine. She sank in eighteen minutes, and 1,198 people died, including 124 Americans. The United States claimed the Lusitania carried an innocent cargo, and therefore the torpedoing was a monstrous German atrocity. Actually, the Lusitania was heavily armed: it carried 1,248 cases of 3-inch shells, 4,927 boxes of cartridges (1,000 rounds in each box), and 2,000 more cases of small-arms ammunition. Her manifests were falsified to hide this fact, and the British and American governments lied about the cargo.

Hofstadter wrote of "economic necessities" behind Wilson's war policy. In 1914 a serious recession had begun in the United States. J. P. Morgan later testified: "The war opened during a period of hard times.... Business throughout the country was depressed, farm prices were deflated, unemployment was serious, the heavy industries were working far below capacity and bank clearings were off." But by 1915, war orders for the Allies (mostly England) had stimulated the economy, and by April 1917 more than \$2 billion worth of goods had been sold to the Allies. As Hofstadter says: "America became bound up with the Allies in a fateful union of war and prosperity."

Prosperity depended much on foreign markets, it was believed by the leaders of the country. In 1897, the private foreign investments of the United States amounted to \$700 million dollars. By 1914 they were \$3~ billion. Wilson's Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, while a believer in neutrality in the war, also believed that the United States needed overseas markets; in May of 1914 he praised the President as one who had "opened the doors of all the weaker countries to an invasion of American capital and American enterprise."

Back in 1907, Woodrow Wilson had said in a lecture at Columbia University: "Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process.... the doors of the nations which are closed must be battered down." In his 1912 campaign he said: "Our domestic markets no longer suffice, we need foreign markets." In a memo to Bryan he described his aim as "an open door to the world," and in 1914 he said he supported "the righteous conquest of foreign markets."

With World War I, England became more and more a market for American goods and for loans at interest. J. P. Morgan and Company acted as agents for the Allies, and when, in 1915, Wilson lifted the ban on private bank loans to the Allies, Morgan could now begin lending money in such great amounts as to both make great profit and tie American finance closely to the interest of a British victory in the war against Germany. The industrialists and the political leaders talked of prosperity as if it were classless, as if everyone gained from Morgan's loans. True, the war meant more production, more employment, but did the workers in the steel plants gain as much as U.S. Steel, which

made \$348 million in profit in 1916 alone? When the United States entered the war, it was the rich who took even more direct charge of the economy. Financier Bernard Baruch headed the War Industries Board, the most powerful of the wartime government agencies. Bankers, railroad men, and industrialists dominated these agencies.

A remarkably perceptive article on the nature of the First World War appeared in May 1915 in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Written by W. E. B. Du Bois, it was titled "The African Roots of War." It was a war for empire, of which the struggle between Germany and the Allies over Africa was both symbol and reality: ". . . in a very real sense Africa is a prime cause of this terrible overturning of civilization which we have lived to see." Africa, Du Bois said, is "the Land of the Twentieth Century," because of the gold and diamonds of South Africa, the cocoa of Angola and Nigeria, the rubber and ivory of the Congo, the palm oil of the West Coast.

Du Bois saw more than that. He was writing several years before Lenin's *Imperialism*, which noted the new possibility of giving the working class of the imperial country a share of the loot. He pointed to the paradox of greater "democracy" in America alongside "increased aristocracy and hatred toward darker races." He explained the paradox by the fact that "the white workingman has been asked to share the spoil of exploiting 'chinks and niggers.'" Yes, the average citizen of England, France, Germany, the United States, had a higher standard of living than before. But: "Whence comes this new wealth? . . . It comes primarily from the darker nations of the world-Asia and Africa, South and Central America, the West Indies, and the islands of the South Seas."

Du Bois saw the ingenuity of capitalism in uniting exploiter and exploited-creating a safety valve for explosive class conflict. "It is no longer simply the merchant prince, or the aristocratic monopoly, or even the employing class, that is exploiting the world: it is the nation, a new democratic nation composed of united capital and labor."

The United States fitted that idea of Du Bois. American capitalism needed international rivalry-and periodic war-to create an artificial community of interest between rich and poor, supplanting the genuine community of interest among the poor that showed itself in sporadic movements. How conscious of this were individual entrepreneurs and statesmen? That is hard to know. But their actions, even if half-conscious, instinctive drives to survive, matched such a scheme. And in 1917 this demanded a national consensus for war.

The government quickly succeeded in creating such a consensus, according to the traditional histories. Woodrow Wilson's biographer Arthur Link wrote: "In the final analysis American policy was deter mined by the President and public opinion." In fact, there is no way of measuring public opinion at that time, and there is no persuasive evidence that the public wanted war. The government had to work hard to create its

consensus. That there was no spontaneous urge to fight is suggested by the strong measures taken: a draft of young men, an elaborate propaganda campaign throughout the country, and harsh punishment for those who refused to get in line. Despite the rousing words of Wilson about a war "to end all wars" and "to make the world safe for democracy," Americans did not rush to enlist. A million men were needed, but in the first six weeks after the declaration of war only 73,000 volunteered. Congress voted overwhelmingly for a draft. George Creel, a veteran newspaperman, became the government's official propagandist for the war; he set up a Committee on Public Information to persuade Americans the war was right. It sponsored 75,000 speakers, who gave 750,000 four-minute speeches in five thousand American cities and towns. It was a massive effort to excite a reluctant public.

Congress passed, and Wilson signed, in June of 1917, the Espionage Act. From its title one would suppose it was an act against spying. However, it had a clause that provided penalties up to twenty years in prison for "Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty in the military or naval forces of the United States, or shall willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the U.S...." Unless one had a theory about the nature of governments, it was not clear how the Espionage Act would be used. It even had a clause that said "nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or restrict . . . any discussion, comment, or criticism of the acts or policies of the Government...." But its double-talk concealed a singleness of purpose. The Espionage Act was used to imprison Americans who spoke or wrote against the war.

Two months after the law passed, a Socialist named Charles Schenck was arrested in Philadelphia for printing and distributing fifteen thousand leaflets that denounced the draft law and the war. The leaflet recited the Thirteenth Amendment provision against "involuntary servitude" and said the Conscription Act violated this. Conscription, it said, was "a monstrous deed against humanity in the interests of the financiers of Wall Street." And: "Do not submit to intimidation." Schenck was indicted, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to six months in jail for violating the Espionage Act. (It turned out to be one of the shortest sentences given in such cases.) Schenck appealed, arguing that the Act, by prosecuting speech and writing, violated the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...."

The Supreme Court's decision was unanimous and was written by its most famous liberal, Oliver Wendell Holmes. He summarized the contents of the leaflet and said it was undoubtedly intended to "obstruct" the carrying out of the draft law. Was Schenck protected by the First Amendment? Holmes said:

"The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic.... The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent."

Holmes's analogy was clever and attractive. Few people would think free speech should be conferred on someone shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic. But did that example fit criticism of the war? Zechariah Chafee, a Harvard law school professor, wrote later (Free Speech in the United States) that a more apt analogy for Schenck was someone getting up between the acts at a theater and declaring that there were not enough fire exits. To play further with the example: was not Schenck's act more like someone shouting, not falsely, but truly, to people about to buy tickets and enter a theater, that there was a fire raging inside?

Perhaps free speech could not be tolerated by any reasonable person if it constituted a "clear and present danger" to life and liberty; after all, free speech must compete with other vital rights. But was not the war itself a "clear and present danger," indeed, more clear and more present and more dangerous to life than any argument against it? Did citizens not have a right to object to war, a right to be a danger to dangerous policies?

(The Espionage Act, thus approved by the Supreme Court, has remained on the books all these years since World War I, and although it is supposed to apply only in wartime, it has been constantly in force since 1950, because the United States has legally been in a "state of emergency" since the Korean war. In 1963, the Kennedy administration pushed a bill [unsuccessfully] to apply the Espionage Act to statements uttered by Americans abroad, it was concerned in the words of a cable from Secretary of State Rusk to Ambassador Lodge in Vietnam, about journalists in Vietnam writing "critical articles ... on Diem and his government" that were "likely to impede the war effort.")

The case of Eugene Debs soon came before the Supreme Court. In June of 1918, Debs visited three Socialists who were in prison for opposing the draft, and then spoke, across the street from the jail, to an audience he kept enthralled for two hours. He was one of the country's great orators, and was interrupted again and again by laughter and applause. "Why, the other day, by a vote of five-to-four-a kind of craps game, come seven, come eleven-they declared the child labor law unconstitutional." He spoke of his comrades in jail. He dealt with the charges that Socialists were pro-German. "I hate, I loathe, I despise Junkers and Junkerdom. I have no earthly use for the Junkers of Germany, and not one particle more use for the Junkers in the United States." (Thunderous applause and cheers.)

They tell us that we live in a great free republic; that our institutions are democratic; that

we are a free and self-governing people. That is too much, even for a joke....

Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder.... And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles....

Debs was arrested for violating the Espionage Act. There were draft-age youths in his audience, and his words would "obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service."

His words were intended to do much more than that:

"Yes, in good time we are going to sweep into power in this nation and throughout the world. We are going to destroy all enslaving and degrading capitalist institutions and re-create them as free and humanizing institutions. The world is daily changing before our eyes. The sun of capitalism is setting; the sun of Socialism is rising.... In due time the hour will strike and this great cause triumphant . . . will proclaim the emancipation of the working class and the brotherhood of all mankind. " (Thunderous and prolonged applause.)

Debs refused at his trial to take the stand in his defense, or to call a witness on his behalf. He denied nothing about what he said. But before the jury began its deliberations, he spoke to them:

I have been accused of obstructing the war. I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war. I would oppose war if I stood alone.... I have sympathy with the suffering, struggling people everywhere. It does not make any difference under what flag they were born, or where they live....

The jury found him guilty of violating the Espionage Act. Debs addressed the judge before sentencing:

Your honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

The judge denounced those "who would strike the sword from the hand of this nation while she is engaged in defending herself against a foreign and brutal power." He sentenced Debs to ten years in prison.

Debs's appeal was not heard by the Supreme Court until 1919. The war was over. Oliver Wendell Holmes, for a unanimous court, affirmed Debs's guilt. Holmes discussed Debs's

speech: "He then expressed opposition to Prussian militarism in a way that naturally might have been thought to be intended to include the mode of proceeding in the United States." Holmes said Debs made "the usual contrasts between capitalists and laboring men . . . with the implication running through it all that the working men are not concerned in the war." Thus, Holmes said, the "natural and intended effect" of Debs's speech would be to obstruct recruiting.

Debs was locked up in the West Virginia state penitentiary, and then in the Atlanta federal penitentiary, where he spent thirty-two months until, at the age of sixty-six, he was released by President Harding in 1921.

The war ended in November 1918. Fifty thousand American soldiers had died, and it did not take long, even in the case of patriots, for bitterness and disillusionment to spread through the country.

With all the wartime jailings, the intimidation, the drive for national unity, when the war was over, the Establishment still feared socialism. There seemed to be a need again for the twin tactics of control in the face of revolutionary challenge: reform and repression. The first was suggested by George L. Record, one of Wilson's friends, who wrote to him in early 1919 that something would have to be done for economic democracy, "to meet this menace of socialism." He said: "You should become the real leader of the radical forces in America, and present to the country a constructive program of fundamental reform, which shall be an alternative to the program presented by the socialists, and the Bolsheviki...."

That summer of 1919, Wilson's adviser Joseph Tumulty reminded him that the conflict between the Republicans and Democrats was unimportant compared with that which threatened them both:

What happened in Washington last night in the attempt upon the Attorney General's life is but a symptom of the terrible unrest that is stalking about the country.... As a Democrat I would be disappointed to see the Republican Party regain power. That is not what depresses one so much as to see growing steadily from day to day, under our very eyes, a movement that, if it is not checked, is bound to express itself in attack upon everything we hold dear. In this era of industrial and social unrest both parties are in disrepute with the average man....

"What happened in Washington last night" was the explosion of a bomb in front of the

home of Wilson's Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. Six months after that bomb exploded, Palmer carried out the first of his mass raids on aliens-immigrants who were not citizens. A law passed by Congress near the end of the war provided for the deportation of aliens who opposed organized government or advocated the destruction of property. Palmer's men, on December 21, 1919, picked up 249 aliens of Russian birth (including Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman), put them on a transport, and deported them to what had become Soviet Russia. The Constitution gave no right to Congress to deport aliens, but the Supreme Court had said, back in 1892, in affirming the right of Congress to exclude Chinese, that as a matter of self-preservation, this was a natural right of the government.

In January 1920, four thousand persons were rounded up all over the country, held in seclusion for long periods of time, brought into secret hearings, and ordered deported. In Boston, Department of Justice agents, aided by local police, arrested six hundred people by raiding meeting halls or by invading their homes in the early morning. A troubled federal judge described the process:

"Pains were taken to give spectacular publicity to the raid, and to make it appear that there was great and imminent public danger.... The arrested aliens, in most instances perfectly quiet and harmless working people, many of them not long ago Russian peasants, were handcuffed in pairs, and then, for the purposes of transfer on trains and through the streets of Boston, chained together... "

In the spring of 1920, a typesetter and anarchist named Andrea Salsedo was arrested in New York by FBI agents and held for eight weeks in the FBI offices on the fourteenth floor of the Park Row Building, not allowed to contact family or friends or lawyers. Then his crushed body was found on the pavement below the building and the FBI said he had committed suicide by jumping from the fourteenth floor window.

Two friends of Salsedo, anarchists and workingmen in the Boston area, having just learned of his death, began carrying guns. They were arrested on a streetcar in Brockton, Massachusetts, and charged with a holdup and murder that had taken place two weeks before at a shoe factory. These were Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. They went on trial, were found guilty, and spent seven years in jail while appeals went on, and while all over the country and the world, people became involved in their case. The trial record and the surrounding circumstances suggested that Sacco and Vanzetti were sentenced to death because they were anarchists and foreigners. In August 1927, as police broke up marches and picket lines with arrests and beatings, and troops surrounded the prison, they were electrocuted.

Sacco's last message to his son Dante, in his painfully learned English was a message to millions of others in the years to come:

"So, Son, instead of crying, be strong, so as to be able to comfort your mother . . . take her for a long walk in the quiet country, gathering wild flowers here and there.... But remember always, Dante, in the play of happiness, don't you use all for yourself only.... help the persecuted and the victim because they are your better friends.... In this struggle of life you will find more and love and you will be loved."

There had been reforms. The patriotic fervor of war had been invoked. The courts and jails had been used to reinforce the idea that certain ideas, certain kinds of resistance, could not be tolerated. And still, even from the cells of the condemned, the message was going out: the class war was still on in that supposedly classless society, the United States. Through the twenties and the thirties, it was still on.

 **People's History of the United States**

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



The Empire and the People

excerpted from a

People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn



Theodore Roosevelt wrote to a friend in the year 1897: "In strict confidence . . . I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one."

The year of the massacre at Wounded Knee, 1890, it was officially declared by the Bureau of the Census that the internal frontier was closed. The profit system, with its natural tendency for expansion, had already begun to look overseas. The severe depression that began in 1893 strengthened an idea developing within the political and financial elite of the country: that overseas markets for American goods might relieve the problem of underconsumption at home and prevent the economic crises that in the 1890s brought class war.

And would not a foreign adventure deflect some of the rebellious energy that went into strikes and protest movements toward an external enemy? Would it not unite people with government, with the armed forces, instead of against them? This was probably not

a conscious plan among most of the elite-but a natural development from the twin drives of capitalism and nationalism.

Expansion overseas was not a new idea. Even before the war against Mexico carried the United States to the Pacific, the Monroe Doctrine looked southward into and beyond the Caribbean. Issued in 1823 when the countries of Latin America were winning independence from Spanish control, it made plain to European nations that the United States considered Latin America its sphere of influence. Not long after, some Americans began thinking into the Pacific: of Hawaii, Japan, and the great markets of China.

There was more than thinking; the American armed forces had made forays overseas. A State Department list, "Instances of the Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad 1798-1945" (presented by Secretary of State Dean Rusk to a Senate committee in 1962 to cite precedents for the use of armed force against Cuba), shows 103 interventions in the affairs of other countries between 1798 and 1895. A sampling from the list, with the exact description given by the State Department:

1852-53 -- Argentina. Marines were landed and maintained in Buenos Aires to protect American interests during a revolution.

**1853 -- Nicaragua-to protect American lives and interests during political disturbances.
1853-54 -- Japan-The "Opening of Japan" and the Perry Expedition. [The State Department does not give more details, but this involved the use of warships to force Japan to open its ports to the United States.]**

1853-54 -- Ryukyu and Bonin Islands-Commodore Perry on three visits before going to Japan and while waiting for a reply from Japan made a naval demonstration, landing marines twice, and secured a coaling concession from the ruler of Naha on Okinawa. He also demonstrated in the Bonin Islands. All to secure facilities for commerce.

1854 -- Nicaragua-San Juan del Norte [Greytown was destroyed to avenge an insult to the American Minister to Nicaragua.]

1855 -- Uruguay-U.S. and European naval forces landed to protect American interests during an attempted revolution in Montevideo.

1859 -- China-For the protection of American interests in Shanghai.

1860 -- Angola, Portuguese West Africa-To protect American lives and property at Kissemba when the natives became troublesome.

1893 -- Hawaii-Ostensibly to protect American lives and property; actually to promote a

provisional government under Sanford B. Dole. This action was disavowed by the United States.

1894 -- Nicaragua-To protect American interests at Bluefields following a revolution. Thus, by the 1890s, there had been much experience in overseas probes and interventions. The ideology of expansion was widespread in the upper circles of military men, politicians, businessmen -- and even among some of the leaders of farmers' movements who thought foreign markets would help them.

Captain A. T. Mahan of the U.S. navy, a popular propagandist for expansion, greatly influenced Theodore Roosevelt and other American leaders. The countries with the biggest navies would inherit the earth, he said. "Americans must now begin to look outward." Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts wrote in a magazine article:

In the interests of our commerce . . . we should build the Nicaragua canal, and for the protection of that canal and for the sake of our commercial supremacy in the Pacific we should control the Hawaiian islands and maintain our influence in Samoa.... and when the Nicaraguan canal is built, the island of Cuba ... will become a necessity.... The great nations are rapidly absorbing for their future expansion and their present defense all the waste places of the earth. It is a movement which makes for civilization and the advancement of the race. As one of the great nations of the world the United States must not fall out of the line of march.

A Washington Post editorial on the eve of the Spanish-American war:

"A new consciousness seems to have come upon us-the consciousness of strength-and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength.... Ambition, interest, land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it may be, we are animated by a new sensation. We are face to face with a strange destiny. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle...."

Was that taste in the mouth of the people through some instinctive lust for aggression or some urgent self-interest? Or was it a taste (if indeed it existed) created, encouraged, advertised, and exaggerated by the millionaire press, the military, the government, the eager-to-please scholars of the time? Political scientist John Burgess of Columbia University said the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon races were "particularly endowed with the capacity for establishing national states . . . they are entrusted . . . with the mission of conducting the political civilization of the modern world." Several years before his election to the presidency, William McKinley said: "We want a foreign market for our surplus products." Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana in early 1897 declared: "American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade

of the world must and shall be ours." The Department of State explained in 1898:

It seems to be conceded that every year we shall be confronted with an increasing surplus of manufactured goods for sale in foreign markets if American operatives and artisans are to be kept employed the year around. The enlargement of foreign consumption of the products of our mills and workshops has, therefore, become a serious problem of statesmanship as well as of commerce.

These expansionist military men and politicians were in touch with one another. One of Theodore Roosevelt's biographers tells us: "By 1890, Lodge, Roosevelt, and Mahan had begun exchanging views," and that they tried to get Mahan off sea duty "so that he could continue full-time his propaganda for expansion." Roosevelt once sent Henry Cabot Lodge a copy of a poem by Rudyard Kipling, saying it was "poor poetry, but good sense from the expansionist standpoint."

When the United States did not annex Hawaii in 1893 after some Americans (the combined missionary and pineapple interests of the Dole family) set up their own government, Roosevelt called this hesitancy "a crime against white civilization." And he told the Naval War College: "All the great masterful races have been fighting races.... No triumph of peace is quite so great as the supreme triumph of war." '

Roosevelt was contemptuous of races and nations he considered inferior. When a mob in New Orleans lynched a number of Italian immigrants, Roosevelt thought the United States should offer the Italian government some remuneration, but privately he wrote his sister that he thought the lynching was "rather a good thing" and told her he had said as much at a dinner with "various dago diplomats . . . all wrought up by the lynching."

William James, the philosopher, who became one of the leading anti-imperialists of his time, wrote about Roosevelt that he "gushes over war as the ideal condition of human society, for the manly strenuousness which it involves, and treats peace as a condition of blubberlike and swollen ignobility, fit only for huckstering weaklings, dwelling in gray twilight and heedless of the higher life...."

While it was true that in 1898, 90 percent of American products were sold at home, the 10 percent sold abroad amounted to a billion dollars. Walter Lafeber writes (The New Empire): "By 1893, American trade exceeded that of every country in the world except England. Farm products, of course, especially in the key tobacco, cotton, and wheat areas, had long depended heavily on international markets for their prosperity." And in the twenty years up to 1895, new investments by American capitalists overseas reached a billion dollars. In 1885, the steel industry's publication Age of Steel wrote that the

internal markets were insufficient and the overproduction of industrial products "should be relieved and prevented in the future by increased foreign trade."

Oil became a big export in the 1880s and 1890s: by 1891, the Rockefeller family's Standard Oil Company accounted for 90 percent of American exports of kerosene and controlled 70 percent of the world market. Oil was now second to cotton as the leading product sent overseas.

Businessmen had been interested, from the start of the Cuban revolt against Spain, in the effect on commercial possibilities there. There already was a substantial economic interest in the island, which President Grover Cleveland summarized in 1896:

It is reasonably estimated that at least from \$30,000,000 to \$50,000,000 of American capital are invested in the plantations and in railroad, mining, and other business enterprises on the island. The volume of trade between the United States and Cuba, which in 1889 amounted to about \$64,000,000, rose in 1893 to about \$103,000,000.

Popular support of the Cuban revolution was based on the thought that they, like the Americans of 1776, were fighting a war for their own liberation. The United States government, however, the conservative product of another revolutionary war, had power and profit in mind as it observed the events in Cuba. Neither Cleveland, President during the first years of the Cuban revolt, nor McKinley, who followed, recognized the insurgents officially as belligerents; such legal recognition would have enabled the United States to give aid to the rebels without sending an army. But there may have been fear that the rebels would win on their own and keep the United States out.

There seems also to have been another kind of fear. The Cleveland administration said a Cuban victory might lead to "the establishment of a white and a black republic," since Cuba had a mixture of the two races. And the black republic might be dominant. This idea was expressed in 1896 in an article in *The Saturday Review* by a young and eloquent imperialist, whose mother was American and whose father was English-Winston Churchill. He wrote that while Spanish rule was bad and the rebels had the support of the people, it would be better for Spain to keep control:

"A grave danger represents itself. Two-fifths of the insurgents in the field are negroes. These men . . . would, in the event of success, demand a predominant share in the government of the country . . . the result being, after years of fighting, another black republic."

The reference to "another" black republic meant Haiti, whose revolution against France

in 1803 had led to the first nation run by blacks in the New World. The Spanish minister to the United States wrote to the U.S. Secretary of State:

"In this revolution, the negro element has the most important part. Not only the principal leaders are colored men, but at least eight-tenths of their supporters.... and the result of the war, if the Island can be declared independent, will be a secession of the black element and a black Republic."

As Philip Foner says in his two-volume study *The Spanish-Cuban American War*, "The McKinley Administration had plans for dealing with the Cuban situation, but these did not include independence for the island." He points to the administration's instructions to its minister to Spain, Stewart Woodford, asking him to try to settle the war because it "injuriously affects the normal function of business, and tends to delay the condition of prosperity," but not mentioning freedom and justice for the Cubans. Foner explains the rush of the McKinley administration into war (its ultimatum gave Spain little time to negotiate) by the fact that "if the United States waited too long, the Cuban revolutionary forces would emerge victorious, replacing the collapsing Spanish regime."

In February 1898, the U.S. battleship *Maine*, in Havana harbor as a symbol of American interest in the Cuban events, was destroyed by a mysterious explosion and sank, with the loss of 268 men. There was no evidence ever produced on the cause of the explosion, but excitement grew swiftly in the United States, and McKinley began to move in the direction of war. Walter Lafeber says:

"The President did not want war; he had been sincere and tireless in his efforts to maintain the peace. By mid-March, however, he was beginning to discover that, although he did not want war, he did want what only a war could provide; the disappearance of the terrible uncertainty in American political and economic life, and a solid basis from which to resume the building of the new American commercial empire."

At a certain point in that spring, both McKinley and the business community began to see that their object, to get Spain out of Cuba could not be accomplished without war, and that their accompanying object, the securing of American military and economic influence in Cuba, could not be left to the Cuban rebels, but could be ensured only by U.S. intervention. The *New York Commercial Advertiser*, at first against war, by March 10 asked intervention in Cuba for "humanity and love of freedom, and above all, the desire that the commerce and industry of every part of the world shall have full freedom of development in the whole world's interest."

Before this, Congress had passed the Teller Amendment, pledging the United States not to annex Cuba. It was initiated and supported by those people who were interested in Cuban independence and opposed to American imperialism, and also by business

people who saw the "open door" as sufficient and military intervention unnecessary. But by the spring of 1898, the business community had developed a hunger for action. The Journal of Commerce said: "The Teller amendment . . . must be interpreted in a sense somewhat different from that which its author intended it to bear."

There were special interests who would benefit directly from war. In Pittsburgh, center of the iron industry, the Chamber of Commerce advocated force, and the Chattanooga Tradesman said that the possibility of war "has decidedly stimulated the iron trade." It also noted that "actual war would very decidedly enlarge the business of transportation." In Washington, it was reported that a "belligerent spirit" had infected the Navy Department, encouraged "by the contractors for projectiles, ordnance, ammunition and other supplies, who have thronged the department since the destruction of the Maine."

Russell Sage, the banker, said that if war came, "There is no question as to where the rich men stand." A survey of businessmen said that John Jacob Astor, William Rockefeller, and Thomas Fortune Ryan were "feeling militant." And J. P. Morgan believed further talk with Spain would accomplish nothing.

On March 21, 1898, Henry Cabot Lodge wrote McKinley a long letter, saying he had talked with "bankers, brokers, businessmen, editors, clergymen and others" in Boston, Lynn, and Nahant, and "everybody," including "the most conservative classes," wanted the Cuban question "solved." Lodge reported: "They said for business one shock and then an end was better than a succession of spasms such as we must have if this war in Cuba went on." On March 25, a telegram arrived at the White House from an adviser to McKinley, saying: "Big corporations here now believe we will have war. Believe all would welcome it as relief to suspense."

Two days after getting this telegram, McKinley presented an ultimatum to Spain, demanding an armistice. He said nothing about independence for Cuba. A spokesman for the Cuban rebels, part of a group of Cubans in New York, interpreted this to mean the U.S. simply wanted to replace Spain. He responded:

"In the face of the present proposal of intervention without previous recognition of independence, it is necessary for us to go a step farther and say that we must and will regard such intervention as nothing less than a declaration of war by the United States against the Cuban revolutionists...."

Indeed, when McKinley asked Congress for war on April 11, he did not recognize the rebels as belligerents or ask for Cuban independence. Nine days later, Congress, by joint resolution, gave McKinley the power to intervene. When American forces moved into Cuba, the rebels welcomed them, hoping the Teller Amendment would guarantee Cuban independence.

Many histories of the Spanish-American war have said that "public opinion" in the United States led McKinley to declare war on Spain and send forces to Cuba. True, certain influential newspapers had been pushing hard, even hysterically. And many Americans, seeing the aim of intervention as Cuban independence-and with the Teller Amendment as guarantee of this intention-supported the idea. But would McKinley have gone to war because of the press and some portion of the public (we had no public opinion surveys at that time) without the urging of the business community? Several years after the Cuban war, the chief of the Bureau of Foreign Commerce of the Department of Commerce wrote about that period:

"Underlying the popular sentiment, which might have evaporated in time, which forced the United States to take up arms against Spanish rule in Cuba, were our economic relations with the West Indies and the South American republics.... The Spanish-American War was but an incident of a general movement of expansion which had its roots in the changed environment of an industrial capacity far beyond our domestic powers of consumption. It was seen to be necessary for us not only to find foreign purchasers for our goods, but to provide the means of making access to foreign markets easy, economical and safe. "

American labor unions had sympathy for the Cuban rebels as soon as the insurrection against Spain began in 1895. But they opposed American expansionism. Both the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor spoke against the idea of annexing Hawaii, which McKinley proposed in 1897. Despite the feeling for the Cuban rebels, a resolution calling for U.S. intervention was defeated at the 1897 convention of the AFL. Samuel Gompers of the AFL wrote to a friend: "The sympathy of our movement with Cuba is genuine, earnest, and sincere, but this does not for a moment imply that we are committed to certain adventurers who are apparently suffering from Hysteria...."

When the explosion of the Maine in February led to excited calls for war in the press, the monthly journal of the International Association of Machinists agreed it was a terrible disaster, but it noted that the deaths of workers in industrial accidents drew no such national clamor. It pointed to the Lattimer Massacre of September 10, 1897, during a coal strike in Pennsylvania. Miners marching on a highway to the Lattimer mine-Austrians, Hungarians, Italians, Germans-who had originally been imported as strikebreakers but then organized themselves, refused to disperse, whereupon the sheriff and his deputies opened fire, killing nineteen of them, most shot in the back, with no outcry in the press. The labor journal said that the

"... carnival of carnage that takes place every day, month and year in the realm of industry, the thousands of useful lives that are annually sacrificed to the Moloch of greed, the blood tribute paid by labor to capitalism, brings forth no shout for vengeance and reparation.... Death comes in thousands of instances in mill and mine, claims his

victims, and no popular uproar is heard. "

The official organ of the Connecticut AFL, *The Craftsman*, also warned about the hysteria worked up by the sinking of the *Maine*:

"A gigantic . . . and cunningly-devised scheme is being worked ostensibly to place the United States in the front rank as a naval and military power. The real reason is that the capitalists will have the whole thing and, when any workingmen dare to ask for the living wage . . . they will be shot down like dogs in the streets."

Some unions, like the United Mine Workers, called for U.S. intervention after the sinking of the *Maine*. But most were against war. The treasurer of the American Longshoremen's Union, Bolton Hall, wrote "A Peace Appeal to Labor," which was widely circulated:

"If there is a war, you will furnish the corpses and the taxes, and others will get the glory. Speculators will make money out of it-that is, out of you. Men will get high prices for inferior supplies, leaky boats, for shoddy clothes and pasteboard shoes, and you will have to pay the bill, and the only satisfaction you will get is the privilege of hating your Spanish fellow-workmen, who are really your brothers and who have had as little to do with the wrongs of Cuba as you have."

Socialists opposed the war. One exception was the *Jewish Daily Forward*. The *People*, newspaper of the Socialist Labor party, called the issue of Cuban freedom "a pretext" and said the government wanted war to "distract the attention of the workers from their real interests." The *Appeal to Reason*, another Socialist newspaper, said the movement for war was "a favorite method of rulers for keeping the people from redressing domestic wrongs." In the *San Francisco Voice of Labor* a Socialist wrote: "It is a terrible thing to think that the poor workers of this country should be sent to kill and wound the poor workers of Spain merely because a few leaders may incite them to do so."

But after war was declared, Foner says, "the majority of the trade unions succumbed to the war fever." Samuel Gompers called the war "glorious and righteous" and claimed that 250,000 trade unionists had volunteered for military service. The United Mine Workers pointed to higher coal prices as a result of the war and said: "The coal and iron trades have not been so healthy for some years past as at present." The war brought more employment and higher wages, but also higher prices. Foner says: "Not only was there a startling increase in the cost of living, but, in the absence of an income tax, the poor found themselves paying almost entirely for the staggering costs of the war through increased levies on sugar, molasses, tobacco, and other taxes.

... " Gompers, publicly for the war, privately pointed out that the war had led to a 20 percent reduction of the purchasing power of workers' wages. On May Day, 1898, the

Socialist Labor party organized an antiwar parade in New York City, but the authorities would not allow it to take place, while a May Day parade called by the Jewish Daily Forward, urging Jewish workers to support the war, was permitted. The Chicago Labor World said: "This has been a poor man's war-paid for by the poor man. The rich have profited by it, as they always do...."

The Western Labor Union was founded at Salt Lake City on May 10, 1898, because the AFL had not organized unskilled workers. It wanted to bring together all workers "irrespective of occupation, nationality, creed or color" and "sound the death knell of every corporation and trust that has robbed the American laborer of the fruits of his toil...." The union's publication, noting the annexation of Hawaii during the war, said this proved that "the war which started as one of relief for the starving Cubans has suddenly changed to one of conquest."

The prediction made by longshoreman Bolton Hall, of wartime corruption and profiteering, turned out to be remarkably accurate. Richard Morris's Encyclopedia of American History gives startling figures:

"Of the more than 274,000 officers and men who served in the army during the Spanish-American War and the period of demobilization, 5,462 died in the various theaters of operation and in camps in the U.S. Only 379 of the deaths were battle casualties, the remainder being attributed to disease and other causes."

The same figures are given by Walter Millis in his book The Martial Spirit. In the Encyclopedia they are given tersely, and without mention of the "embalmed beef" (an army general's term) sold to the army by the meatpackers-meat preserved with boric acid, nitrate of potash, and artificial coloring matter.

In May of 1898, Armour and Company, the big meatpacking company of Chicago, sold the army 500,000 pounds of beef which had been sent to Liverpool a year earlier and had been returned. Two months later, an army inspector tested the Armour meat, which had been stamped and approved by an inspector of the Bureau of Animal Industry, and found 751 cases containing rotten meat. In the first sixty cases he opened, he found fourteen tins already burst, "the effervescent putrid contents of which were distributed all over the cases." (The description comes from the Report of the Commission to Investigate the Conduct of the War Department in the War with Spain, made to the Senate in 1900.) Thousands of soldiers got food poisoning. There are no figures on how many of the five thousand noncombat deaths were caused by that.

The Spanish forces were defeated in three months, in what John Hay, the American Secretary of State, later called a "splendid little war." The American military pretended that the Cuban rebel army did not exist. When the Spanish surrendered, no Cuban was

allowed to confer on the surrender, or to sign it. General William Shafter said no armed rebels could enter the capital city of Santiago, and told the Cuban rebel leader, General Calixto Garcia, that not Cubans, but the old Spanish civil authorities, would remain in charge of the municipal offices in Santiago.

American historians have generally ignored the role of the Cuban rebels in the war; Philip Foner, in his history, was the first to print Garcia's letter of protest to General Shafter:

"I have not been honored with a single word from yourself informing me about the negotiations for peace or the terms of the capitulation by the Spaniards. . . . when the question arises of appointing authorities in Santiago de Cuba . . . I cannot see but with the deepest regret that such authorities are not elected by the Cuban people, but are the same ones selected by the Queen of Spain...."

A rumor too absurd to be believed, General, describes the reason of your measures and of the orders forbidding my army to enter Santiago for fear of massacres and revenge against the Spaniards. Allow me, sir, to protest against even the shadow of such an idea. We are not savages ignoring the rules of civilized warfare. We are a poor, ragged army, as ragged and poor as was the army of your forefathers in their noble war for independence...."

Along with the American army in Cuba came American capital. Foner writes:

"Even before the Spanish flag was down in Cuba, U.S. business interests set out to make their influence felt. Merchants, real estate agents, stock speculators, reckless adventurers, and promoters of all kinds of get-rich schemes flocked to Cuba by the thousands. Seven syndicates battled each other for control of the franchises for the Havana Street Railway, which were finally won by Percival Farquhar, representing the Wall Street interests of New York. Thus, simultaneously with the military occupation began . . . commercial occupation."

The Lumbermen's Review, spokesman for the lumber industry, said in the midst of the war: "The moment Spain drops the reigns of government in Cuba . . . the moment will arrive for American lumber interests to move into the island for the products of Cuban forests. Cuba still possesses 10,000,000 acres of virgin forest abounding in valuable timber . . . nearly every foot of which would be saleable in the United States and bring high prices."

Americans began taking over railroad, mine, and sugar properties when the war ended. In a few years, \$30 million of American capital was invested. United Fruit moved into the Cuban sugar industry. It bought 1,900,000 acres of land for about twenty cents an acre.

The American Tobacco Company arrived. By the end of the occupation, in 1901, Foner estimates that at least 80 percent of the export of Cuba's minerals were in American hands, mostly Bethlehem Steel.

During the military occupation a series of strikes took place. In September 1899, a gathering of thousands of workers in Havana launched a general strike for the eight-hour day, saying, ". . . we have determined to promote the struggle between the worker and the capitalist. For the workers of Cuba will no longer tolerate remaining in total subjection." The American General William Ludlow ordered the mayor of Havana to arrest eleven strike leaders, and U.S. troops occupied railroad stations and docks. Police moved through the city breaking up meetings. But the economic activity of the city had come to a halt. Tobacco workers struck. Printers struck. Bakers went on strike. Hundreds of strikers were arrested, and some of the imprisoned leaders were intimidated into calling for an end to the strike.

The United States did not annex Cuba. But a Cuban Constitutional Convention was told that the United States army would not leave Cuba until the Platt Amendment, passed by Congress in February 1901, was incorporated into the new Cuban Constitution. This Amendment gave the United States "the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty...." It also provided for the United States to get coaling or naval stations at certain specified points.

The Teller Amendment and the talk of Cuban freedom before and during the war had led many Americans-and Cubans-to expect genuine independence. The Platt Amendment was now seen, not only by the radical and labor press, but by newspapers and groups all over the United States, as a betrayal. A mass meeting of the American Anti-Imperialist League at Faneuil Hall in Boston denounced it, ex-governor George Boutwell saying: "In disregard of our pledge of freedom and sovereignty to Cuba we are imposing on that island conditions of colonial vassalage."

In Havana, a torchlight procession of fifteen thousand Cubans marched on the Constitutional Convention, urging them to reject the Amendment. But General Leonard Wood, head of the occupation forces, assured McKinley: "The people of Cuba lend themselves readily to all sorts of demonstrations and parades, and little significance should be attached to them."

A committee was delegated by the Constitutional Convention to reply to the United States' insistence that the Platt Amendment be included in the Constitution. The committee report, *Penencia a la Convencion*, was written by a black delegate from Santiago. It said:

"For the United States to reserve to itself the power to determine when this independence was threatened, and when, therefore, it should intervene to preserve it, is equivalent to handing over the keys to our house so that they can enter it at any time, whenever the desire seizes them, day or night, whether with good or evil design."

And:

"The only Cuban governments that would live would be those which count on the support and benevolence of the United States, and the clearest result of this situation would be that we would only have feeble and miserable governments . . . condemned to live more attentive to obtaining the blessings of the United States than to serving and defending the interests of Cuba...."

The report termed the request for coaling or naval stations "a mutilation of the fatherland." It concluded:

"A people occupied militarily is being told that before consulting their own government, before being free in their own territory, they should grant the military occupants who came as friends and allies, rights and powers which would annul the sovereignty of these very people. That is the situation created for us by the method which the United States has just adopted. It could not be more obnoxious and inadmissible."

With this report, the Convention overwhelmingly rejected the Platt Amendment.

Within the next three months, however, the pressure from the United States, the military occupation, the refusal to allow the Cubans to set up their own government until they acquiesced, had its effect; the Convention, after several refusals, adopted the Platt Amendment. General Leonard Wood wrote in 1901 to Theodore Roosevelt: "There is, of course, little or no independence left Cuba under the Platt Amendment."

Cuba was thus brought into the American sphere ...

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Respecting the Holocaust

by Howard Zinn

The Progressive magazine, November 1999



Fifteen years ago, when I was teaching at Boston University, I was asked by a Jewish group to give a talk on the Holocaust. I spoke that evening, but not about the Holocaust of World War II, the genocide of six million Jews. It was the mid-eighties, and the U.S. government was supporting death squads in Central America, so I spoke of the deaths of hundreds of thousands of peasants in Guatemala and El Salvador, victims of American policy.

My point was that the memory of the Jewish Holocaust should not be circled by barbed wire, morally ghettoized, kept isolated from other atrocities in history. To remember what happened to the six million Jews, I said, served no important purpose unless it aroused indignation, anger, action against all atrocities, anywhere in the world.

A few days later, in the campus newspaper, there was a letter from a faculty member who had heard me speak. He was a Jewish refugee who had left Europe for Argentina

and then the United States. He objected strenuously to my extending the moral issue from Jews in Europe during the war to people in other parts of the world in our time. The Holocaust was a sacred memory, a unique event, he said. And he was outraged that, invited to speak on the Jewish Holocaust, I had chosen to speak about other matters.

I was reminded of this experience when I recently read a book by Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Novick's starting point is the following question: Why, fifty years after the event, does the Holocaust play a more prominent role in this country-the Holocaust Museum in Washington, hundreds of Holocaust programs in schools-than it did in the first decades after World War II?

Surely at the core of the memory of the Holocaust is a horror that should not be forgotten. But around that core, whose integrity needs no enhancement, there has grown up an industry of memorialists who have labored to keep that memory alive for purposes of their own, Novick points out.

Some Jews have used the Holocaust as a way of preserving a unique identity, which they see threatened by intermarriage and assimilation.

Zionists have used the Holocaust, since the 1967 war, to justify further Israeli expansion into Palestinian land and to build support for a beleaguered Israel (more beleaguered-as David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, predicted-once it occupied the West Bank and Gaza).

And non-Jewish politicians have used the Holocaust to curry favor with the numerically small but influential Jewish voters-note the solemn pronouncements of Presidents wearing yarmulkes to accentuate their anguished sympathy.

All who have taken seriously the admonition "Never Again" must ask ourselves-as we observe the horrors around us in the world-if we have used that phrase as a beginning or as an end to our moral concern.

I would not have become a historian if I thought that it would become my professional duty to never emerge from the past, to study long-gone events and remember them only for their uniqueness, not connecting them to events going on in my time.

If the Holocaust is to have any meaning, we must transfer our anger to today's brutalities. We must respect the memory of the Jewish Holocaust by refusing to allow atrocities to take place now.

When Jews turn inward to concentrate on their own history and look away from the ordeal of others, they are, with terrible irony, doing exactly what the rest of the world did

in allowing the genocide to happen.

There have been shameful moments, travesties of Jewish humanism, as when Jewish organizations lobbied against Congressional recognition of the Armenian Holocaust of 1915 on the ground that it diluted the memory of the Jewish Holocaust. The designers of the Holocaust Museum dropped the idea of mentioning the Armenian genocide after lobbying by the Israeli government, among others.

Another such moment came when Elie Wiesel, chair of President Carter's Commission on the Holocaust, refused to include in a description of the Holocaust Hitler's killing of millions of non-Jews. That would be, he said, to "falsify" the reality "in the name of misguided universalism," Novick quotes Wiesel as saying, "They are stealing the Holocaust from us." As a result, the Holocaust Museum gave only passing mention to the five million or more non-Jews who died in the Nazi camps.

To build a wall around the uniqueness of the Jewish Holocaust is to abandon the idea that humankind is all one, that we are all-of whatever color, nationality, religion-deserving of equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. What happened to the Jews under Hitler is unique in its details, but it shares universal characteristics with many other events in human history: the Atlantic slave trade, the genocide against Native Americans, and the injuries and deaths to millions of working people who were victims of the capitalist ethos that put profit before human life.

In recent years, while paying more and more homage to the Holocaust as a central symbol of man's cruelty to man, we have, by silence and inaction, collaborated in an endless chain of cruelties.

There have been the massacres of Rwanda, and the starvation in Somalia, with our government watching and doing nothing.

There were the death squads in Latin America and the decimation of the population of East Timor, with our government actively collaborating. Our churchgoing Christian Presidents, so pious in their references to the genocide against the Jews, kept supplying the instruments of death to the perpetrators of these atrocities.

I am reminded of the last stanza of the poem "Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song," by Countee Cullen: "Surely, I said/now will the poets sing./But they have raised no cry./I wonder why."

Then there are horrors that are not state-sponsored but still take a biblical toll, horrors that are within our power to end. Paul Farmer describes these in detail in his remarkable new book, *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues* (University of California,

1999). He notes the deaths of ten million children all over the world who die every year of malnutrition and preventable diseases. The World Health Organization estimates that three million people died last year of tuberculosis, which is preventable and curable, as Farmer has proved in his medical work in Haiti. With a small portion of our military budget we could wipe out that disease.

My point is not to diminish the experience of the Jewish Holocaust, but to enlarge upon it.

For Jews, it means to reclaim the tradition of Jewish universal humanism against an Israel-centered nationalism. Or, as Novick puts it, to go back to "that larger social consciousness that was the hallmark of the American Jewry of my youth." That larger consciousness was displayed in recent years by those Israelis who protested the beating of Palestinians in the Intifada and who demonstrated against the invasion of Lebanon.

For others, whether Armenians or Native Americans or Africans or Bosnians, it means to use their own bloody histories not to set themselves against others but to create a larger solidarity against the holders of wealth and power, the perpetrators and collaborators of the ongoing horrors of our time.

The Holocaust might serve a powerful purpose if it led us to think of the world today as wartime Germany-where millions die while the rest of the population obediently goes about its business. It is a frightening thought that the Nazis, in defeat, were victorious: today Germany, tomorrow the world. That is, until we withdraw our obedience.

Howard Zinn, author of "A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present" (HarperPerennial, 1995), is a columnist for The Progressive.

 Howard Zinn page

THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Big Government for Whom?

by Howard Zinn

The Progressive magazine, April 1999

I have seen some of my most stalwart friends flinch before the accusation that they-in asking, let us say, for a single payer health care system-were calling for "big government." So insistent has been the press and the political leadership of the country-in both parties-that "big government" is a plague to be avoided, that otherwise courageous people on the left have retreated before the attack.

It's an issue, therefore, that deserves some examination.

When Bill Clinton, in his 1996 campaign, announced happily that "the era of big government is over," he was suggesting that the United States had gone through an unfortunate phase that was now ended.

He was repeating the myth that there once was a golden past where the "free market" reigned and the nation followed Jefferson's dictum: 'that government is best which governs least.'" Big government has been with the world for at least 5000 years, and became very big in this country (Jefferson never followed his own pronouncement, as he doubled the territory of the government with the Louisiana Purchase).

It was the rise of the modern nation state in the sixteenth century that introduced big government to centralize the tax system and thus raise enough money to subsidize the new worldwide trading organizations, like the Dutch East India Company and the British East India Company. Both of these companies were granted government charters in about 1600, giving them monopoly rights to maraud around the world, trading goods and human beings, bringing wealth back to the home country.

The new nation states now had to raise armies and navies to protect the shipping trade (especially the slave trade) of these powerful companies, to invade other parts of the world, to forcibly take land, for trading and settling, from indigenous people. The state would use its power to drive out foreign competitors, to put down rebellions at home and abroad. "Big government" was needed for the benefit of the mercantile and land-owning classes.

Adam Smith, considered the apostle of the "free market," understood very well how capitalism could not survive a truly free market, if government was not big enough to protect it. He wrote in the middle of the eighteenth century: "Laws and governments may be considered in this and indeed in every case, a combination of the rich to oppress the poor, and preserve to themselves the inequality of the goods, which would otherwise be soon destroyed by the attacks of the poor, who if not hindered by the government would soon reduce the others to an equality with themselves by open violence."

The American colonists, having fought and won the war for independence from England, faced the question of what kind of government to establish. In 1786, three years after the treaty of peace was signed, there was a rebellion of farmers in western Massachusetts, led by Captain Daniel Shays, a veteran of the war. The uprising was crushed, but it put a scare into those leaders who were to become our Founding Fathers. After Shays's Rebellion, General Henry Knox warned his former commander, George Washington, about the rebels: "They see the weakness of government; they feel at once their own poverty, compared to the opulent, and their own force, and they are determined to make use of the latter in order to remedy the former. Their creed is that the property of the U.S. has been protected from the confiscations of Britain by the joint exertions of all, and therefore should be the common property of all."

The Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia for 1787 was called to deal with this problem, to set up "big government," to protect the interests of merchants, slave-

holders, land speculators, establish law and order, and avert future rebellions like that of Shays.

When the debate took place in the various states over ratification of the Constitution, the Federalist Papers appeared in the New York press to support ratification. Federalist Paper 10, written by James Madison, made clear why a strong central government was needed: to curb the potential demand of a "majority faction" for "an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked object."

And so the Constitution set up big government, big enough to protect slave-holders against slave rebellion, to catch runaway slaves if they went from one state to another, to pay off bondholders, to pass tariffs on behalf of manufacturers, to tax poor farmers to pay for armies that would then attack the farmers if they resisted payment, as was done in the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania in 1794. Much of this was embodied in the legislation of the first Congress, responding to the request of the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton.

For all of the nation's history, this legislative pattern was to continue. Government would defend the interests of the wealthy classes. It would raise tariffs higher and higher to help manufacturers, give subsidies to shipping interests, and 10() million acres of land free to the railroads. It would use the armed forces to clear Indians off their land, to put down labor uprisings, to invade countries in the Caribbean for the benefit of American growers, bankers, investors. This was very big government.

When the Great Depression produced social turmoil, with strikes and protests all over the nation, the government responded with laws for Social Security (which one angry Senator said would "take all the romance out of life"), unemployment insurance, subsidized housing, work programs, money for the arts. And in the atmosphere created by the movements of the sixties, Medicare and Medicaid were enacted. Only then did the cry arise, among politicians and the press, continuing to this day, warning of the evils of "big government."

Of course, the alarms about "big government" did not extend to the enormous subsidies to business. After World War 11, the aircraft industries, which had made enormous profits during the war (92 percent of their expansion paid for by the government), were in decline. Stuart Symington, Assistant Secretary of the War for Air, wrote to the president of Aircraft Industries: "It looks as if our airplane industry is in trouble, and it would seem to be the obligation of our little shop to do the best we can to help." The help came and has never stopped coming. Billions in subsidies poured in each year to produce fighters and bombers.

When Chrysler ran out of cash in 19~3(), the government stepped in to help. (Try this the

next time you run out of cash.) Tax benefits, like the oil-depletion allowance, added up over the years to hundreds of billions of dollars. The New York Times reported in 1984 that the twelve top military contractors paid an average tax rate of 1.5 percent while middle-class Americans were paying 15 percent and more.

So it's time to gently point out the hypocrisy as both Democrats and Republicans decry "big government." When President Clinton signed the crime bill to build more federal prisons, when recently he

called for billions more for the military budget, he did not refer to his declaration that "the era of big government is over."

Surely, with only a bit of reflection, it becomes clear that the issue is not big or little government, but government for whom? Is it the ideal expressed by Lincoln-government "for the people"-or is it the reality described by the Populist orator Mary Elizabeth Lease in 189(): "a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street"?

There is good evidence that the American people, whose common sense often resists the most energetic propaganda campaigns, understand this. Political leaders and the press have pounded away at their sensibilities with the fearful talk of "big government," and so long as it remains an abstraction, it is easy for people to go along, each listener defining it in his or her own way. But when specific questions are asked, the results are illuminating.

Again and again, public opinion surveys over the last decade have shown that people want the government to act to remedy economic injustice. Last year, the Pew Research Center asked if it is "the responsibility of the government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves?" and 61 percent said they either completely agreed or mostly agreed. When, after the Republican Congressional victory in 1994 The New York Times asked people their opinions on "welfare," the responses were evenly for and against. The Times headline read: PUBLIC SHOWS TRUST IN GOP CONGRESS, but this misled its readers, because when the question was posed more specifically: "Should the government help people in need?" more than 65 percent answered in the affirmative.

This should not surprise us. The achievements of the New Deal programs still glow warmly in the public memory: Social Security, unemployment insurance, the public works programs, the minimum wage, the subsidies for the arts. There is an initial worried reaction when people are confronted with the scare words "big government." But that falls away as soon as someone points to the G.I. Bill of Rights, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, and loans to small business.

So let's not hesitate to say: We want the government, responding to the Lincolnian definition of democracy, to organize a system that gives free medical care to everyone and pays for it out of a reformed tax system that is truly progressive. In short, we want everyone to be in the position of U.S. Senators and members of the armed forces-beneficiaries of big, benevolent government.

Because "big government" in itself is hardly the issue. That is here to stay. The only question is: Whom will it serve?.

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