



**DEAR SON,  
DO YOU REALLY  
WANT TO BE AN  
AMERICAN?**

**STEPHEN G. ESRATI**

# Dear Son,

## Do you really want to be an American?

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# Dear Son: Do You Really Want to be an American

Memo to an expatriate American, to be read in 1980

## Preface

Written after Sept. 11, 2001

What follows was written in the depths of despair. Four students had just been killed at Kent State University near our home in Cleveland by the Ohio National Guard.

I needed to tell my son, then about eight years old, an American living in Toronto, what I felt. It may have been good therapy for me. In July 1971, my wife and I took David home, to Cleveland. When we got to the Immigration and Naturalization Service checkpoint at the bridge to Lewiston, N.Y., an agent looked at our U.S. passports and said, “Welcome home!”

The tears welled up in me. We had given up on living with strangers, hospitable though they may have been. We were homesick. All through our stay in Toronto, we listened to the news not from the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. in Toronto but from the CBS affiliate in Buffalo.

David was accepted in the third grade at the Fairfax School in Cleveland Heights. I bought an International Style house that I fixed up and got placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Since the house hinted of the design of an ocean liner, I put up a holder for a flagstaff on the “fantail,” and flew Old Glory on holidays—and on the great day when Richard Milhouse Nixon resigned as President. That night, David and I set off fireworks we had left over from a Fourth of July.

My wife became a Democratic precinct committeewoman at the Fairfax School polling station and started a group of potters, painters, and other artists.

We settled in. In junior high school, David took up the saxophone. In high school, he got active as the manager of a hockey team, something that may have been caused by the brief stay in Canada.

And when he got out of high school, he joined the Army, choosing the same outfit I had been in, Special Forces.

David got active in Dayton politics, trying to follow the American Creed and all the other patriotic beliefs I had instilled in him—some of them from reading this letter.

But in returning to this long epistle just after the disasters at the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, I am mindful that throughout my letter to David I indicate the loss of civil rights by Americans during periods of stress, whether they were Wobblies after World War I or “Comsymps” after World War II. Civil liberties such as the right of *habeas corpus*, were suspended during the Civil War by President Abraham Lincoln and were totally ignored after World War I during the “Palmer Raid” deportations to Russia of native American radicals. We are in for more of that sort of thing, plus wire-tapping, mail surveillance, and heaven only knows what else.

Dear Son,

I am writing this in 1969–1970 for you to read in 1980. You will be 17 years old and although you will be aware of forces and events across the whole of North America you might be disturbed by reading this because it amounts to an attack on your native land. You should, however, read it and then ask yourself if things are still the way I have described them: for this is the year you are supposed to decide whether you want to be a citizen of the United States of America or not. (But even that law may have changed by 1980, so don't take my word for it. Go to the U.S. consulate on University Avenue and ask.) If the United States is still somewhat like what I have attempted to show here, my advice to you is to forget it. Things do change, however, and I have no powers that allow me to predict the future, and so I hope sincerely that the United States will have turned back to the goals that I ascribe to it.

I should really have begun writing this in 1968, the year we left the United States. Had I begun to write then, I would still have been under the spell of the events that made me want to leave. Had I begun in 1968, I would have started this memo with a flat statement that you should forsake your U.S. citizenship. Now, after more than a year of contemplation, I leave the choice to you.

I do not apologize because what I have to say is subjective. As a political scientist by training and a journalist by trade, I could have attempted objectivity. I realize, however, that objectivity is neither attainable nor desired here. I will write the truth to the best of my ability, but I cannot guarantee that. Some things that have affected me may not be true even though I believe them to be and have reacted to them accordingly. Anyway, I am not trying to write a textbook that you could have just as easily borrowed from the library. I am trying to answer your question "Who am I?" and I'll try not to make it dull.

Stephen G. Esrati

1968-1969

Toronto, Canada



## Your Native Land

You were born in the city of Celina, County of Mercer, State of Ohio, on Sept. 14, 1962. You were the first Esrati to be a native-born American. I was naturalized from my naturalized Palestinian citizenship; your mother gave up her British citizenship in the vain hope that by becoming an American she would make it possible to me to find a job in the U.S. government which had—and presumably still has—doubts about my loyalty.

When you were born, the United States was officially at peace. But even then Americans were fighting abroad. Congress had not declared war and the public was hardly aware of the fact that there was a place called Vietnam. At that time I thought it would be a splendid idea to start a scrapbook for you using only the eight-column headlines of *The New York Times*, headlines that are reserved only for the most important news happenings. No sooner had you arrived than I glued the first headline into the book:

### U.S. IMPOSES BLOCKADE ON CUBA ON FINDING OFFENSIVE-MISSILE SITES; KENNEDY READY FOR SOVIET SHOWDOWN

Six more headlines followed in daily succession, the only time in my memory that there were seven such banners on the *Times*, all in one week. **[It happened again, for almost three weeks, during the disputed presidential election of 2000. It is happening again now after the terror attack on America.]** Thus, when you were only one month old, the United States had stood on the brink of nuclear war. If the Soviet Union had not backed down, I would not be writing this.

Your native city has no scenic beauty except shallow, stump-filled Grand Lake St. Marys (which you, as a Celinan, would call only Grand Lake on principle; people in St. Marys call it Lake St. Marys). The most splendid building in town is the courthouse, still beautiful, but vastly overcrowded. Nearby, the insurance company (and you as a Celinan need not be told its name) had built a fancy new headquarters that was intended to show the company's strength by the lavishness of the structure. The previous insurance building has been converted into a community college, then called the Western Ohio Educational Foundation. **[WOEF eventually became the Celina branch of Wright State University, from which you were graduated.]** Celina has lots of churches, but lacks a park. It does have a city swimming pool, a nice one, in the country fairgrounds. Its new high school was built with money from a bond issue that I helped to sell to the voters (to my lasting shame because the architects altered the plans to build a cheaper building after the bond issue was approved, thus giving the school board more money for extras it wanted to incorporate into the building but had been afraid to ask the voters).

Celina is a nice town. It has one of the best newspapers in the United States, and I am proud to have worked for it. Its main street, on which we lived, is lovely and very impressive between the public library and the Presbyterian Church—wide, tree-lined, clean. The people are friendly. But though Celina is your hometown, you have no roots there. We merely lived there, made friends there, saw you come into the world. We left when you were one year old. Aside from visits we have made to friends, I cannot expect you to remember it.

Celina could be called a typical American town. The homemade pie at Connie's, the pizza at Vic's, the gossip at the barbershop make one like the place. And, in the good old American tradition, Celina has even had its share of violence. On Feb. 24, 1933, R. Bert Morrison parked his car on Market St. east of the entrance to the Mercer County Courthouse. He had a 16-gauge shotgun in his arms. As the three county commissioners came out of the courthouse, Morrison got out of his car and began shooting. The first shot struck Commissioner Charles Fryinger in the head. Morrison then shot Commissioner Fred Goettemoeller and also hit him in the head. Commissioner Dan Moeller jumped behind another man and yelled: "Don't shoot me." Morrison got into his car and drove home. He then killed himself by sticking a .22-caliber rifle in his mouth and blowing his brains out.

Bert Morrison, I want you to know, is as typical of the United States as Connie's apple pie. Just a few weeks before Morrison's spree, the mayor of Chicago was mortally wounded by a man who had intended to shoot President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In your own time, violence has continued to be part of the American scene, but more of that later.

I believe that if we had stayed in Celina, there would have been no need to write this. I think you could have grown up there and been happy.

We did not go far, only 22 miles north of Celina. I became editor of the *Van Wert Times-Bulletin*. Everything that is good about Celina is bad about Van Wert. I will give you only one example: On the day that President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas, I asked Carol Murray, one of my reporters, to call leading clergymen to ask what memorial services they would arrange. The first man of God whom she called answered rather brusquely, and I have to trust her quotation: "Haven't you called the wrong church? Call the Catholic Church. He was *their* President." That night, the Van Wert High School basketball team played its scheduled game and the bars were open and not one flag in the city was flown at half staff, not even on the post office.

You may not understand the significance of Van Wert's reaction to the death of President Kennedy. It was hate. They were glad to be rid of him.

And, just for the record, it was not like that in Celina.

I must tell you more about Van Wert. In its way, it is as typical of America as Celina is. In Celina my columns occasionally drew a letter from a reader. Later, when I sent out my column from Cleveland, I also got mail. Only in Van Wert did I get poison-pen letters. I got the first one only three or four days after I became editor. A church in Birmingham, Alabama, had been blown up. Four little girls at Sunday school were killed. My first Van Wert column attacked that violence. This, in part, is what I said:

We in Northwest Ohio can feel smugly complacent about events in Alabama and Louisiana. Gov. Wallace and Rev. Martin Luther King are newsmakers of a far, distant land, as remote from us as the king of Malaya or the exiled imam of Yemen.

But are we not involved in the titanic upheaval that is sweeping every corner of our country? Ohio has not been spared. In Dayton, integration leaders have long been picketing downtown department stores. Gov. Rhodes' office has been the scene of sit-ins. Demonstrators have chained themselves to their seats in the gallery of our Statehouse.

And even if those things had not taken place in Ohio, are we not touched by the deaths of the Sunday school pupils? Are we not ashamed that a church could be so desecrated in an American city? Are we not troubled by the fact that all over the world people are looking upon us, all of us—whether in Alabama or Wisconsin—as Americans, with mockery, with cynicism, with disgust?

I remember an incident that took place during World War II as I was traveling in Virginia. A young Negro got on a bus to Washington and chatted with the driver who took the bus half way. He stayed at the front of the bus—not because he knew the driver—but because he wore the uniform of the United States and wore a Purple Heart ribbon above his left breast pocket. At the halfway point, the driver was relieved. The soldier was looked over by the new driver. “Get to the back of the bus where you belong,” the second driver said.

That was my introduction to segregation. It has haunted me ever since, not because of the unfairness of such a system, but because of my passivity at the time.

I sat quietly. I did not protest. I did not speak out.

I can no longer do that. I cannot sit quietly by as children are sent to their Creator by dynamite.... I should not have sat quietly by as that Negro’s uniform was dishonored. For I also wore that uniform. His uniform was my uniform. The color of his skin did not matter; nor did the color of mine.

My passive acceptance of “local custom” in Virginia has shamed me ever since. Apparently other whites have also felt such feelings, for the Negro no longer marches alone in his quest for the equal protection of the laws....

I can advocate no course of action that will change things in the South. But I do ask that as you go to your church this Sunday and as you send your children to their Sunday school, you reflect on that Sunday school in Birmingham that is no longer usable as a house of God. I ask that you think of those small coffins. ...

For that column, printed Sept. 21, 1963, just after you had observed your first birthday, I received a note, unsigned of course, saying in effect: “Get out of town you nigger-loving bastard. We don’t need any of your Comsymp ideas.”

The use of “Comsymp” needs an explanation. There was at that time a group of honest-to-goodness Americans who had coined the word from “Communist sympathizer,” a term they applied with mustard and relish to the President of the United States, the Chief Justice, most newspapermen and anyone else they did not agree with. These people knew that President Eisenhower had been a “card-carrying member of the Communist Party.” They knew that an international conspiracy, dating back to the Middle Ages and fostered by the Free Masons and the Illuminati, was trying to take over the world.

There were people like this in Celina, too. And on the road to Lima from Celina one of them had put up a billboard: “Impeach Earl Warren.”

Still, I never got over the initial shock of being called a Communist sympathizer for attacking a bombing of churches. I had never realized that Communists were the protectors of churches. That this was a black church and that the four little girls were black girls might explain the letter-writer’s thinking, but not to me.

## The American Creed

When I was a kid we still had to memorize things. I don't know if schools still do this. If they do and if we had not left the United States, you might have had to commit to memory a short statement of what it means to be an American. I learned it in the sixth grade at the George G. Hamilton School in Everett, Mass. Even today, I can honestly say that I think its author, William Tyler Page, clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, did a fine job of expressing the ideals of Americanism in "The American Creed":

I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign nation of many sovereign states; a perfect union, one and inseparable, established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, and to defend it against its enemies.

Long before you were born, I had become convinced that freedom, equality, justice and humanity were not the operating principles on which the United States was run. I would not have been able to say that most Americans believed in those ideals, at least as long as it was cheap for them to say so. Every American paid some lip service to these principles every year.

To some it meant that an American had some inherent right to tell people in other countries how they should conduct their affairs. On the premise that the U.S. system of government was not only the best possible but actually perfect, Americans forced their ideas on other countries. That is why West Germany is a federal republic. That's why the Philippines has a President and a Congress. And before Fidel Castro threw out the perfect system, even Cuba had it, brought at gunpoint by the United States Marines.

Still, on the Fourth of July, the ideals were dragged out and we heard talks of freedom and liberty and justice and brotherhood and about all men being created equal. As a child, I believed it. And as I grew older your grandfather taught me that throughout what we call civilization things have always become better and better and better.

I could look back to a time when Father Charles E. Coughlin's followers stood on the corner in front of Filene's and Jordan Marsh in Boston and handed out pro-Nazi literature. I can remember when my friend Jack Hodus was viciously beaten by a Boston policeman when he attempted to stop some hoodlums from painting swastikas on a synagogue in Roxbury. Things had become better.

But I also knew that my grandmother—who died in a German crematorium's gas chamber—had been out of Germany and had refused to stay with us in Palestine because she felt that things were not going to get worse in the country of Göthe and Beethoven and Schiller. They did. And in the United States we have our own version of Ilse Koch, the Bitch of Buchenwald, who made lampshades from human skin. The American Ilse Koch was a physician, Dr. John E. Osborne, who was a participant in the lynching of George Parrott, a Wyoming badman, in Rawlins in 1881. The next day, Dr. Osborne skinned Parrott and cut away the top of his skull. The skin was tanned and made into a pair of women's shoes and an instrument bag for Dr. Osborne. The shoes were even put on display at a Rawlins bank. Later, Ilse Koch became governor of Wyoming.



You may comment: “He was just a badman.” My answer is: “And Ilse Koch’s skins came from members of the Jewish, Communist international Zionist conspiracy ... like my grandmother.”

You may comment: “But that was a long time ago.” My answer is: “And things like that still happen.” For a recent example, read on for a few pages, read about Fannie Lou Hamer.

But, I must confess, that I had bought your grandfather’s idea that things were getting better. After all, the United States had just elected its first Catholic President—an achievement that would have seemed impossible only a few short years before. *Brown vs. Board of Education* had been decided, outlawing school segregation, almost eight years before you were born. The armed forces had been desegregated (and who would complain that all stewards in the navy somehow couldn’t find any white face in their midst?) during the Korean war. Things, indeed, were getting better.

But are they really? As I write, *Brown vs. Board of Education* is fifteen years old and there is still school segregation. Think of it, a child who was entering the first grade when the Supreme Court made its ruling, would have been graduated from high school three years before this is written without ever having attended an integrated school! Do you wonder that by the time we left the United States, people had begun to lose faith in a gradual process toward the attainment of justice that would make the United States better and better? Martin Luther King had led his March on Washington and told about his dream on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. But the dream was still a dream and nonviolent protest appeared more useless all the time.

After the March on Washington, after Police Chief Bull Connors turned the fire hoses and police dogs on peaceful Birmingham protesters, after a black man, James Meredith, had walked through the doors of the University of Mississippi, I began to lose faith, too. Here is part of what I wrote on June 20, 1964, in *The Times-Bulletin*:

Law and order have disappeared in Mississippi.

Here is the sworn testimony of Fannie Lou Hamer, who says she “exists” at 626 E. Lafayette St. Ruleville, Miss. The testimony was given to a select panel studying the denial of civil rights in Mississippi on Monday, June 8, 1964....

“In 1963, I attended a voter-registration workshop and was returning home to Mississippi. At Winona, Miss., I was arrested there. Some of the folk had got off the bus. Miss Annelle Ponder, June West Johnson, Euvester Simpson, Rosemary Freeman and James West got off the bus to go into the restaurant to get food. Two of the people decided to use the restroom. I saw them come straight out of the restaurant. I got off the bus to see what had happened. Miss Ponder said, ‘They won’t let us eat.’ She said, ‘There was a chief of police and a highway patrolman inside and they ordered us out.’ I said, ‘Well, this is Mississippi.’

“I got back on the bus, and about the time I got sat down good, I looked out the window and they were getting Miss Ponder and the others into the highway patrolman’s car.

“I stepped off the bus to see what was happening, and one screamed, ‘Get that one there.’ I was picked up. The police, Earl Wayne Patric, told me I was under arrest. He opened the door, and as I started to get in, he kicked me. They carried me to this county jail.

“We were carried to the booking room ... and from the booking room to a cell.

After I was locked in a cell with Miss Euvester Simpson, I began to hear the sound of licks, and I could hear people screaming. I don't know how long it lasted before I saw Miss Ponder, the southside supervisor for SCLC, pass the cell with both her hands up. Her eyes looked like blood and her mouth was swollen. She passed my cell. Her clothes was torn. She backed, and they carried her out of my sight. ...

"I was carried out of the cell into another cell where there were two Negro prisoners. The state highway patrolman gave the first Negro a long blackjack that was heavy. It was loaded with something, and they had me lay down on the bunk with my face down, and I was beat, I was beat by the first Negro until I was exhausted.

"After I was beaten by the first Negro, the state highway patrolman ordered the other Negro to take the blackjack. The second Negro, he began to beat. The state highway patrolman ordered the first Negro that had beat me to sit on my feet. One of the white men that was in the room (my dress would work up because it had a large skirt, but I was trying to keep it down and trying to shield the licks from the left side, because I had polio when I was a child).

"During the time I was trying to work my dress down and keep the licks off my left side, one of the white men walked over and pulled my dress up.

"At this time I had to hug around the mattress to keep the sound from coming out."

I dug that testimony out of *The Congressional Record* and printed it because I thought it might help my readers in Van Wert understand what the then-pending civil rights bill was all about. Fannie Lou Hamer, who was too proud to let white men hear her scream in pain, was a founder of the Freedom Democratic Party in Mississippi.

I also told about the torture of Bessie Turner who was beaten in the most sensitive parts of her body with a brown wax strap by a policeman who had inquired while taking her to jail how she got her babies. Then I wrote:

The panel appeared most shocked when a Negro, with a bullet wound in his head, told how the bullet had been removed by a white doctor at a county hospital without anesthesia "because he was afraid to hit a nerve."

What was it I said earlier? America's Ilse Koch was a long time ago? America's Ilse Koch is alive and well. God only knows her current disguise.

These beatings, this sadism with its sexual overtones, this cruelty were suffered—and not always silently—because there was hope, hope that the suffering would bring results. Mrs. Hamer wanted to vote (she was also victimized when she had attempted to register to vote). Mrs. Hamer apparently did not realize that it takes time for American practice to catch up to the ideals of the standard Fourth of July speech. After all, the right to vote was guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment which was added to the U.S. Constitution in 1868. It says that no state shall make or enforce any law abridging the privileges of Negro citizens of the United States and that no state shall deprive Negro citizens of life, liberty or property without due process of law. Mrs. Hamer should have waited. Things are getting better all the time. What was the big hurry, anyway?

During World War II, when I worked on a farm in Virginia, I worked in the vegetable garden one day next to Leroy, the first southern Negro I ever talked to.

"I'm a Republican," he told me, causing me no end of surprise.

"How come a working stiff like you is a Republican?" I asked.

"Because Mr. Lincoln freed the slaves for one. But also because the white South is Democrat," he said. "Would you want me to vote for the Byrd machine?"

I did not understand. A few weeks later, on a Saturday night, I met Leroy as I was going to the movies. He bought his ticket at a different box office and sat in the balcony. I sat in the orchestra. After the movie I invited him to have a Coke with me.

"You're crazy, Steve," he said. "Whatcha trying to do, make trouble? Ain't no place in this motherfucking town where you and me can have a Coke together. This ain't Boston. This is Luray. It's white and Democratic and rotten."

When I got back to English High School at the end of summer, I told this to one of my white friends. "Doesn't do him any good to be a Republican," he said. "He can't vote. They won't let him."

I didn't really believe him.

The next summer, when I was back in Luray, I asked Leroy. "Do your parents vote?"

"Sheet, no!" he said. "They won't let us vote."

Only a few years later, when I was in the Israeli underground, I talked about this with a man who had survived Hitlerism by hiding in the forests of Poland, eventually getting behind the Russian lines where he joined the Red Army.

"That's why six million Jews died," he said. "They did not resist, either."

This is one of the great mysteries. "Why didn't they resist?" I can recall the case of Emmet Till, a boy of about 15, who had whistled at a white woman. That, at least, was the allegation. A white mob came to his house and took him out to be lynched, without a murmur of protest from his family. And that was only five years before you were born. I remember that when a march on Washington was planned in 1941, President Roosevelt said: "What would happen if Irish and Jewish people were to march on Washington? It would create resentment among the American people because such a march would be considered an effort to coerce the government and make it do certain things."

A. Philip Randolph, a Negro labor leader, called off the Negro march of 1941.

That would not have happened now. Nobody gives a damn anymore about "resentment." The important thing is to act, to protest injustice. But the march on Washington that Randolph planned in 1941 took 20 years to happen.

In World War I, *The Christian Science Monitor* had a headline saying "**NEGRO AGITATION LAID TO GERMANS.**" The enemy was different 40 years later, but Americans had to place the blame on someone else, so the organizers of the march were called Communists.

Americans cannot (or at least could not then) accept the idea that Negro resentment alone could motivate that huge march. Neither lynchings, nor denial of the vote, nor job discrimination, nor Jim Crow, nor terror in the night, nor a welfare system that emasculated Negro men (by banning benefits to any woman who had a man in her household) could, in the mind of white America, result in protest. It had to be the Communists. Even more amazing was the reaction afterwards. News reports were constrained to report that there had been no violence, that all had been peaceful. Can you imagine reading a story about a World Series game in which the writer would feel himself required to report that the fans had been peaceful?

No, the March on Washington was only a way to let off steam. The real protests were elsewhere. They were in sit-ins at soda fountains, bus-ins on back-of-the-bus bus lines, wade-ins at segregated swimming pools and beaches, sleep-ins in segregated parks. All were peaceful on the part of the protesters; almost all evolved into violence from the police, the defenders of the white power structure.

The boiling point came when Bull Connors turned his police dogs loose on Negro teenagers in a Birmingham park. That was the signal that nonviolent protest was a failure. That was when the cry for black power was given birth.

Things were not getting better. They were getting worse. The law was no help. The government was no help. The protests were no help. Still the peaceful protests continued. That was why Fannie Lou Hamer got her licks for attempting to vote. That was why Robert F. Williams got kicked out of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Williams was director of the NAACP in Monroe, N.C., in 1959. The (white) Union County Superior Court had just acquitted two white men who had attacked two Negro women. That same court also gave a long prison term to a retarded Negro who had had an argument with a white woman. Said Williams:

We cannot take these people who do us injustice to the courts. It becomes necessary to punish them ourselves. If it's necessary to stop lynching with lynching, then we must be willing to resort to that method.

And with that statement, the Negro Revolution was born. Williams was a bit ahead of his times. A few years later many black people would have agreed with him.

But this also led to my own dilemma. Could I stay true to my principles when, though cheering the Negro fight for equality, I could not identify with its methods? Still, I could suggest no other course. Gradual progress had had a century—and failed. Peaceful, nonviolent protest had failed, though we were told that the Negro had been making political progress and that the number of Negro unemployed was decreasing. But these were just minor manifestations of progress. They were the wrong kind.

We had seen people running out of a Cleveland suburb as the percentage of Negroes increased. We had seen white vigilante movements grow. We had seen unexplained Negro murders (at least two of which were thought to have been committed by Cleveland's white terrorists). We had seen anger and frustration rise until one night we saw Cleveland in flames.

If you will look on the wall in my den you will see a painting of that scene. Your grandmother took artistic license, she made the sky a bit redder than it was, but it shows that night.

**[Sorry. I threw out that painting as an unwanted reminder of bad times.]**

*I remember my father holding me up to the window the night he took the picture that my grandmother used as reference. The photo appeared in the Cleveland Plain Dealer Sunday Magazine.*

## Of Laws and Not of Men

The preamble to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts sets up the goal that the state would have a government of laws and not of men. I have already tried to indicate to you that laws are not necessarily enforced and that the ideals of American democracy have yet to be attained. I can also tell you that despite what lawyers say, the government of the United States is a government of men. Laws don't mean a thing.

I am writing from personal experience. There is a law, the Taft-Hartley Act, in the United States that makes it illegal—since 1947—to use union funds for political candidates or political parties. But it is done and everyone knows that it is being done.

The theory of justice in the United States is that justice must not only be done but must be seen to have been done. That's fine. Very noble. Very meritorious. But how does one explain hundred of thousands of union members having to contribute funds to political candidacies they oppose? How does one explain why Stephen G. Esrati had to pay union dues to help the re-election campaign in 1968 of Lyndon Johnson and, when he dropped out, of Hubert Humphrey. I opposed both.

My union took my money and handed it to an outfit called the AFL–CIO Committee on Political Education. It had been set up when the law banned direct union contributions for politics, at least in federal elections. It was, needless to say, not put to use for conservative candidates. Labor, as everyone knows, is a progressive, forward-looking, people-oriented group that is for the good of the workingmen and what is good for the workingman is good for everyone. Or is it?

My union which prides itself on being a democratically run labor union, took money for years from a front for the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. spy and counterspy network, but never mentioned this to any of us. When the story came out, the union converted its “overseas program” from the CIA to the Agency for International Development, still a government organization which obviously served U.S. foreign policy. My union, the American Newspaper Guild, thought there was nothing wrong in becoming an errand boy for government. Perhaps that may explain why my union also found it perfectly all right to use my money for the Johnson and Humphrey campaigns. Unfortunately, I did not agree.

Knowing of the law and knowing of at least two U.S. Supreme Court decisions that supported my view, I tried to get the U.S. Attorney for northern Ohio to do something to enforce the law. But you may know that a U.S. attorney is an agent of the U.S. attorney general, who, in turn, is a member of the President's cabinet. He didn't want any part of me. To my dismay, I learned that there is no way that a private citizen can force the Department of Justice to act.

Eventually I went to the American Civil Liberties Union and asked it to help me and I sued my union and the AFL–CIO of Ohio and of Greater Cleveland for using my money for political purposes with which I did not agree.

Since my lawsuit is over an insignificant amount of money, a dime a month, you may wonder why I bothered. Multiply my dime a month by the 700,000 AFL–CIO members in Ohio. Is the amount still insignificant? It works out to just under a million dollars a year. And a nickel out of each dime was specially set aside for the Johnson–Humphrey campaign, according to Al Barkan, national director of COPE (the Committee on Political Education), who had the temerity to say at the special convention that approved the



political head tax that Johnson had been the victim of a “tremendous smear job.” I wonder if Barkan asked anybody in the camps of Senators Eugene McCarthy or Robert Kennedy if they approved of giving money to Johnson.

So how was the \$840,000 a year used? Let me tell you the story of Jack Gilligan.

For many years Ohio had a “Democratic” senator whose name was Frank Lausche. Mr. Lausche (he was such a father figure that it is almost inconceivable to call him just Lausche) usually voted with the reactionary southern Democrats and the Republicans. This means that Ohioans had a choice between two Republicans, one of them masquerading as a Democrat. The AFL–CIO did not like Mr. Lausche, so it approached Jack Gilligan, a liberal former Democratic congressman from Cincinnati and asked him to run. Gilligan, a man who could not afford a campaign, obtained a promise of financial support from the AFL–CIO and agreed to run. He beat Frank Lausche in the primary. The AFL–CIO was overjoyed.

Meanwhile, Gilligan had allowed as how President Johnson might not be his favorite choice as the party’s candidate for President and wondered aloud about the war in Vietnam. The AFL–CIO was shocked. Gilligan’s campaign ran out of money. It was a double-cross. But the labor bosses did not see it that way.

The game of political blackmail that ensued was a good indication that I had not sued in vain. Here is how Jim Naughton, then political reporter for *The Plain Dealer*, reported it on Aug. 16, 1968:

Ohio and Washington, D.C., buzzed yesterday with charges that Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey’s Democratic and labor backers were bargaining for Ohio presidential support with campaign cash.

Party and labor leaders denied knowledge of a \$250,000 “voter registration” fund which figured prominently in the charges.

But normally reliable sources within the party hierarchy, the labor movement and the opposing camp of U.S. Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy offered similar accounts. They include these elements:

- \$250,000 pledged to U.S. Senate nominee John J. Gilligan by the AFL–CIO Committee on Political Education was withheld when he refused openly to endorse Humphrey.
- Instead the money was made available before a caucus Monday of Ohio delegates to the Democratic National Convention to county chairman delivering Humphrey support.
- Three separate versions had Albert S. Porter, Cuyahoga County Democratic chairman, delivering Humphrey votes in return for a pledge of \$75,000 in campaign cash; Jack Sullivan, Mahoning County party leader, receiving \$10,000 in campaign money, and U.S. Rep. Wayne L. Hays, D–18, delivering 10 Humphrey votes in return for “consideration” for the vice presidential nomination. Humphrey won 60 of Ohio’s 115 convention votes at the caucus. ...

This brought a comment from syndicated columnists Robert Novak and Rowland Evans that “Humphrey showed in Ohio he is willing to cooperate with labor’s meat grinder at the risk of devaluing his own nomination.”

Those of us who opposed the war in Vietnam and were either backing Sen. McCarthy or Sen. Kennedy

not only provided the funds being used for Humphrey (who had taken over the Johnson mantle after Johnson decided not to seek election) but also provided the funds that were being denied our boy, Gilligan. Gilligan lost, Ohio's convention votes went to Humphrey and Hays made the most repugnant speech heard during the Democratic convention. And it was all done with my dimes.

If the government of the United States were of laws and not of men, all this could have been stopped. Labor's answer is that big business kicks in to the campaigns of right-wing candidates and COPE is there to balance the scales.

What hope is there for a decent future for America's workingman if his leaders seek to further his cause by emulating his enemies? Who will demand enforcement of the law? Who will demand justice for working people?

The attorney general under Johnson couldn't be expected to act since the money being collected was for his boss. A Republican president wouldn't want to do it, either, because that would seem too partisan. And that's why your father sued.

But lawsuits are tricky. Justice and jurisprudence are not the same thing. Jurisprudence is supposed to produce justice. Often it does not. Laws can be unjust, judges can be unfair, lawyers can be incompetent. One seeks justice in the courts, but one often gets something else. The whole system of justice in the United States is open to the charge that it operates without showing justice to have been done.

The world saw Jack Ruby shoot Lee Harvey Oswald (the alleged killer of President Kennedy) in the basement of the Dallas police station. It saw it live, then saw it played back in a slow-motion instant replay that was the most bizarre ballet ever broadcast. Jack Ruby was convicted of slaying Oswald. Then jurisprudence took over. The conviction was overturned on a technicality.

One is supposed to have faith in the system of justice. How can one believe in justice with such results? I could get involved here with the intricacies of the adversary procedure, but I'll spare you. The point I want you to note is that most legal proceedings cost money and primarily benefit the lawyers. The clients may or may not benefit, but the legal system serves the legal profession and it is in part the fact that lawyers run the whole show that makes it almost certain that jurisprudence and justice don't necessarily go hand in hand.

Justice is not only slow, it also has a definite view. Don't let anybody tell you that it is blind. The statue in front of the U.S. Supreme Court is peeking to the right under that blindfold.

Here is another example. A few years ago a lot of electrical manufacturers got caught fixing prices. That's a no-no. The big wheels in these companies went on trial and were fined. Nice, big, juicy fines. Justice had at last been done, we all thought. The courts had acted against big business. But the courts are only one part of the system. The Internal Revenue Service ruled that the fines were legitimate business expenses and allowed the fines to be deducted from income tax returns. See what I mean?

Where does Fannie Lou Hamer go for justice? Where do I go for justice? Where would you go for justice?

My suit may still come to trial one day. But it is a bit too late to do anything about the use of the money for Hubert Humphrey. **[The suit never came to trial.]**

By the time you read this, ten years from now, I hope that the spirit of justice will have made at least a partial return in the United States. I doubt it, though.

The men who sit in Congress and the state legislatures are mostly lawyers. You cannot expect them to

reform a system out of which they reap such a bountiful harvest.

Nor does justice exist in the federal or state regulatory agencies that are supposed to protect the public from the industries they supposedly regulate. Most of the time the regulatory agencies simply put their stamp of approval on the actions of the industries they deal with. They even become spokesmen for the industries.

Issues become clouded in fancy technical language that the ordinary person is not supposed to understand and a whole new crop of special lawyers make a living at this sort of special pleading on behalf of rates of return, oil allowables, depletion allowances, special tax loopholes, amortization, depreciation, or you name it.

When we lived in Van Wert, the City Council, a group of earnest but not particularly quick-witted men, was asked to raise the rates charged by the gas company. Gas company lawyers presented a fully drafted city ordinance to the councilmen and the council passed it without study or discussion. Under Ohio law, this rate hike also applied to rural areas served by the company in Van Wert County, whose residents were not represented in the City Council and whose interests were protected by no one. What had the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio ruled? It had ruled against the gas company, but it had given the gas company an out. If the company could get approval from local government, PUCO would allow the rate hike to stand. Again I must compare Van Wert with your native city only 22 miles away. The same gas company got turned down cold in Celina.

The tale of two cities in this little anecdote is interesting. Celina operates under the same rules. The rules require three readings. Three readings can be dispensed with if an emergency is declared. Every blessed ordinance I ever saw come up in Van Wert was passed as an emergency.

The result of this is that the citizens of Van Wert wake up the next day and find that such and such a law has been passed and is now law. In Celina it takes a little longer and the public can make its wishes felt.

This, too, is part of a system of justice though it has nothing to do with the courts. It does, however, have something to do with the essence of the idea that the United States is a government of the people. There is really no mechanism for response to the popular will. Elections are the closest thing to it, but 1968 demonstrated conclusively that American elections are about as meaningful as a witch doctor's chant.

In primary after primary Kennedy and McCarthy beat the bushes for votes. Humphrey was not yet in the running and Johnson got out after the first primary, where McCarthy rolled up a huge antiwar vote. It didn't mean a thing and the people had no say about who was to run in the elections. To top it off, the young people who were being sent off to be butchered in Vietnam were not allowed to vote in more than 45 states. So, you see, it isn't the government of the people, by the people, for the people at all. It's a government of those who can afford to run for office and of those who can make deals for the financial backing from the captains of industry or the big labor bosses. The people have nothing to do with it. They merely get a choice between tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum and it doesn't mean a thing.

I am already too old to be of the generation that really has the complaints in American society but am not yet old enough to be of the generation that holds power. That is why I am writing now. Had I waited (and bet against the mortality tables of my insurance company), my point of view would be more like that of the generation that holds power. I would probably have less sympathy for those whose protests I still support.

For this you must know: The problems of America do not just divide neatly into black and white, and rich and poor. They also can be split between the old and the young. The young are in the majority, but they don't count. **[Sadly, I now find, that even when they can, the young do not bother to vote.]**

Children obviously cannot vote. Yet who speaks for the rights of America's children? They suffer the highest infant mortality rate in the civilized world. They have no parks or playgrounds where they are most needed. Forty years after their universal adoption in the Soviet Union, there are still no free day-care centers for children whose mothers work.

The surviving children, already scarred by these deprivations, reach adulthood to face a draft, nuclear war, unemployment and the certainty that they will not attain political power for yet another generation.

When they become parents themselves and start to concern themselves with playgrounds, schools, recreational facilities, their standard solution is to move out into the suburbs if they can afford to. There isn't any use fighting to improve things here in this city, is there? After all, you can't fight city hall.

I fear that I am generalizing too much, so let me illustrate with concrete examples. When I was a court reporter for the Celina *Daily Standard*, we had a judge in Celina Municipal Court with a singular view of the relation of law to religion. He also thought of himself as a teacher of law observance. Every Friday night the good judge held court for the workingmen who could not attend court on weekday mornings. This was a fine response to a need, but the judge couldn't leave well enough alone. It wasn't enough to make safe-driving speeches from the bench and to give little homilies about our mutual responsibility to each other as citizens of a democracy. No! The judge had to open with a ceremony paying homage to the flag by having all in the courtroom recite the Pledge of Allegiance. He also had one Protestant clergyman in attendance each week to lead the court in prayer.

I often wondered whether the prayer was for the judge, for justice, or for mercy on behalf of the defendants. Since all this was happening just as the Supreme Court was taking prescribed prayers out of the classroom and while a Roman Catholic sat in the White House, the prayer service was strange enough. Even more peculiar was that Father Fortman, whose parish constituted almost half the people of Celina, was never asked to lead the prayers.

The confrontation came one Friday night when a young man stage whispered an obscene expletive in the middle of the prayer. The judge looked up and stared at the young man. When his case was called, the judge reprimanded the young man for his lack of respect. Said the defendant: "Your Honor, I don't know what my lack of respect has to do with my running a stop sign."

The judge then tried to begin his homily. The standard opening was: "Have you served in the armed forces?" (to let him continue with: "Then you know that the safety of each man is dependent on mutual defense and our highways are much the same ...") but this young man did not answer.

"Judge," he said, "I don't mind you turning a court of law into a Sunday school, but I have no idea what my military service has to do with my case. Aren't you going to ask me how I plead?"

The judge did not get the message. He had never heard of the generation gap; he did not believe that anyone except the occasional Quaker might have view opposing the ideals of all those red-blooded Americans who believe that the army makes a man out of a boy. And so the judge continued his standard set of irrelevant questions, a line most Mercer Countians would never have spoken out against because they knew that the size of their fine depended on the impression they made on the judge. This young man apparently felt that a court was there for only one thing and acted according to his ideals even when it was not cheap to do so. He had learned his lessons in the army during the Berlin mobilization that followed the erection of the Wall. He was no pacifist; he was a member of the Army Reserve and had served his country when it needed him. But he did

not think it was any of the judge's business.

"The future of America depends on young men like you," Judge Carleton Reiser said.

"What's that got to do with me running a stop sign?" Gerald Knoth countered.

Eventually Judge Reiser fined him, telling Knoth he was the most impertinent defendant he had ever seen and that he did not like Knoth's attitude.

"Are you fining me for my attitude or for running a stop sign?"

"I'm fining you on your violation. But I want to hear nothing else out of you or I'll fine you for contempt of court. Now, do you have anything else to say?"

Knoth mumbled: "No, Sir."

This is not an earth-shaking example of the difference in attitude between the old and the young, but it has important overtones. First there is Knoth's belligerent defiance of the judge's assumption that a courtroom was a proper place for a prayer meeting. All Americans are taught that the separation of church and state is one of the great accomplishments of the Founding Dads. The principle is given lip service. It is not observed. Some of the most valuable pieces of real estate in America, profit-making places like banks and department stores, don't pay taxes because the property belongs to churches.

Score: Knoth 1; Reiser 0.

The second point is that justice is pictured in the Fourth of July speech as blind. If that is so, the judge's questions should have been limited to the specifics of the alleged offense. By asking about military service and making observations about the future of America, the judge was overstepping the line. Knoth rightly objected.

Score: Knoth 2; Reiser 0.

But when the fine was announced, \$25 and costs, the judge won the ball game. The usual fine for a stop-sign violation was \$10 and costs. His principles had cost Knoth an extra \$15. From where I sat, the \$15 was well spent. It helped, in a little way, to get Judge Reiser defeated in the next election. Another break came when the ministers decided that they had no business in the jury box and turned down Reiser's invitation.

## **Violence**

Americans, and probably most other people, have a way of forgetting the unpleasant chapters in their history. When I went to high school in Boston, our history book based itself on the theme that things-are-getting-better-and-better. Somehow, it even managed to make us believe it, though we had just lived through the Great Depression. All around us there was labor strife, including the sit-in strike. Our history book hardly mentioned industrial relations and did not spell out the gory details of the use of private armies, Pinkertons, the National Guard and the U.S. Army against strikers. I never heard of the Molly Maguires or Gene Debs or the Wobblies in school. What little labor history was mentioned concerned itself with the career of Samuel Gompers, founder of the A. F. of L.

Though we were studying in Boston, there was nothing about Shays's Rebellion, nothing about the big strike in Lawrence, only a few miles away. Instead, we were fed on presidential elections, the price of gold and silver, dates, more dates and still more dates. Every once in a while, there was a war to break up the monotony of the elections, but all wars ended in victory and all wars found the United States in the right, fighting as an ally of God. We were not told about Abe Lincoln's moral opposition to the Mexican War or how William



Randolph Hearst started the Spanish-American War. We were not even given a true picture of the Civil War, though it really started only a block from our school where William Lloyd Garrison published his abolitionist paper. Every meaning was drowned in a sea of dates and obscure names.

If one read our history book more carefully, one would think that the people of the United States were mainly “stout” Scotch and Irish mountain people in the Appalachians, Scandinavian and German farmers around Meen-eh-sow-tah, Englishmen in commerce and industry, and a bunch of poor Jews on the Lower East Side of New York City. The Negro after emancipation deserved only one mention in that some guy named George Washington Carver invented the peanut.

This was preparation for citizenship, preparation for tomorrow. That tomorrow is my yesterday. The instruction failed miserably in making us come to terms with the problems that have now torn the United States into two societies, those who hold power and those who work for them ... if they are lucky enough to work at all.

But we also learned foreign history. I can remember—vaguely—that we learned about the rise of nationalism (that was good) and the decline of mercantilism (that was good, too) and the balance of power (that was evil) and the rise of German nationalism (very evil because, they told us, that led to World War I). We were told about a triangle trade (good) in which rum and molasses and slaves were traded around three sides of a triangle (good) and that led to the rise of the United States. Through all this garbage, not once did anyone tell us what it was like to be a man who was suddenly caught in a net or sold into slavery by his chief, packed into a ship’s hold in a space that did not allow him to sit up or move, without latrine facilities or provision for any other human need, and then be sold to a man with a whip, away from one’s family, away from one’s people, away from all that was familiar and dear. Not one word was ever said about the inhumanity of it all. But they made up for it, we were all supposed to have read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Slave ships were just slave ships. We were not told that less than a quarter of the men and women survived some of the voyages.

Nor did we learn about the way white indentured servants worked off their servitude, how men lived in sod huts in Nebraska or in log cabins in Illinois, how they massacred the Indians (we were told how the Indians massacred whites), how they worked in the coal mines and in Mr. Carnegie’s steel mills and what life was like for them. People did not count. But we were told about the disputed election between Hayes and Tilden, all about the 16-to-1 ratio for silver.

Everything was kept colorless, bland. The whole process by which one group of Americans after another clawed its way from steerage to status was left out. History had nothing to do with people.

Thus it was that Americans were surprised in the 1960s when the country acted as it had always acted, violently.

Southerners were not reacting to peaceful protest in the bus-ins and the sit-ins. Children had to run that gantlet to get into a school. Nonviolence ran smack into violence and eventually nonviolence became a joke. Violence followed. Note that violence by the protesters came as a reaction to violence from the power structure. Note that nonviolence was tried first and failed.

Southerners did not tar and feather children who wanted to go to school where the law of the land said they could go to school. They were blown up in Sunday school.

Add to this protest on behalf of civil rights the protest against the war in Vietnam. Then add the protest of

college students and high school students who were protesting not only against the war in Vietnam but also the inane crap they were being fed in class. (In my public high school in Boston I was not a student; I was a cadet. I wore a uniform to school that cost me two weeks' pay. Then I marched up and down with a wooden rifle. This was "education in good citizenship.")

What should really have been surprising was that all these protests did not engender more violence directed against the protesters. It started slowly. The police got rough at Columbia University. But the March on the Pentagon was almost peaceful.

More rough stuff followed at a few campuses. But then came Chicago and the 1968 Democratic National Convention. America clucked its collective tongue: Imagine! Those children don't want to serve their country in time of war! For shame! But those children knew that their battlefield lay not in some jungle or on some dramatically named hill in Vietnam, but right there in the streets of Chicago. Why fight in Vietnam on behalf of freedom and liberty and humanity and equality when these did not exist at home?

The battle of Chicago was in the tradition of America. It was once common for strikers to be repulsed by violence. America has had draft riots from as far back as the Civil War. Brutality has been practiced all over the country, not only in the South. One of my heroes has always been Wesley Everest, a war veteran who was lynched as a Wobbly by the American Legion in Centralia, Wash. Before killing him, the Legionnaires cut off his balls—with a spoon.

So it should have come as no surprise that when all these protesters for civil rights and for peace amalgamated with the students into one force in Chicago that they would be met by brutality and suppression that is as American as the Mayflower. What was surprising was the lack of understanding.

This was dramatically illustrated to us when Dr. Benjamin Spock returned to Cleveland after his conviction for conspiracy to undermine the draft. Dr. Spock is a pediatrician whose guide to mothers has been one of the greatest best-sellers of all time; but Dr. Spock was also concerned for the welfare of "his children" and sending them to die in Vietnam ran against his grain. As he walked into the faculty dining room at Case Western Reserve University, where he taught, his colleagues gave him the silent treatment and icy stares.

Dr. Spock had spoken out for the need to order America's priorities and had warned that the cost of the war was to be measured not only in lives but also in delay for domestic programs. He was, of course, right. Only two years later, Dr. Spock's prediction was to be seen not only in generalities, but in specific reductions of government grants to Dr. Spock's colleagues at CWRU. The fight against cancer and rickets and the common cold had to wait until Uncle Sam had taught Uncle Ho a lesson in democracy, at the point of a gun. I wonder how those grant-less doctors feel now about Dr. Spock's vision.

The lack of understanding was everywhere. I was then working on *The Plain Dealer* and two incidents come to mind.

The first happened on a hot summer night in 1965 when a bunch of children stood on a corner of Superior Avenue. A convertible drove past and a man in the car shot a pistol at the children. The bullet he fired went into the scrotum of a young boy. The boy was black; the man was white.

I was working the late shift on the copy desk and was told to write a four-column, 36-point headline for page one about the incident. It would have been for the Sunday paper, but the story was ordered off the front page by a senior editor and eventually ended up at the back of the paper, near the obituaries.

Judged only on the basis of news value, that story belonged on the front page. Had it occurred in Bombay,

nobody would have thought twice about running it there. But it happened in Cleveland and there wasn't any point in upsetting people, was there?

(You may want to know why stories often seem to be "buried" near the obituaries. Editors have no way of knowing who will die and so leave space for late obituaries. Late-breaking stories often go into that space. It is not an editorial judgment.)

The incident led to the Hough riot a few weeks later. The shooting was something that upset people, despite *The Plain Dealer*.

The follow-up was also upsetting. A man showed up at a police station and handed the cops a gun, saying he was doing so because he understood that he was a suspect in the shooting of the boy and wanted the gun tested ballistically. The cops duly tested the gun, not knowing if it was the man's only gun, and reported that this absolved the man from suspicion because the volunteered gun did not match the gun that had shot the boy. No charges were ever laid in the case though there had been witnesses, a description of the car, a description of the man.

It should not have come as a surprise to Cleveland that when the Hough riot took place, this man's considerable properties were fire-bombed.

I use the word "riot" only because that is how we have come to think of the Hough disturbance. It was not mobs of people coursing through the city. It was merely an intensification of what was happening all the time. Now it was merely happening in many places at the same time instead of the usual scattering in time and place, and now it was punctuated by the plop of the Molotov cocktails.

I inspected the riot area carefully afterward. What I found surprised me. "Riots" are caused by mob action. They are uncontrolled and unthinking. This, however, showed every indication of self-control and of very close attention to human life. It was not dwellings that were put to the torch, it was the dilapidated empty hulks that had been marked for urban renewal but that had not been torn down. Occasionally such fires touched an inhabited dwelling, but this was rare. Another target for the gasoline bombs were the shops of whites whose usury had milked every penny possible from the poor blacks of the area. A black militant told me proudly that this had been "instant urban renewal."

And it all began with an incident that did not rate the front page of Cleveland's morning newspaper.

The other incident was the death of the Rev. Bruce Klunder, a white civil rights leader who was run over by a bulldozer during a protest at the site of a new segregated school. Bruce Klunder's death was accidental, and it had happened just before we moved back to Cleveland. What surprised me was the reaction of white Clevelanders to his death. On many faces I believe I saw the traces of a gleeful smirk when his name was mentioned. Some told me that Klunder had been a damned fool.

Yet Klunder was a symbol of the ever-fewer number of whites who could cross the racial divide and work for the betterment of those of the other race. Their number has been shrinking. At the same time, the number of those who want to widen the gap has been increasing. In Little Italy, an area on Murray Hill, there is a vigilante movement. During the Hough riot, a Negro was slain there. Two men charged with the death were acquitted.

During the Glenville shoot-out in 1968, another Negro died on Murray Hill. No arrests were made. The death is not even mentioned in the official report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence about the incident in Glenville. Glenville starts across the street from Murray Hill.

All this will be forgotten. The history books may refer to it, but it will be couched in blandness and homogenization to read somewhat like this: "During the late 1960s, racial unrest erupted in many cities with some loss of life and great damage to property."

The last part of that sentence is more likely to be remembered than the first. In a society that measures things in terms of dollars, property ranks high on the scale of values. I am not certain where lives belong on that scale. I would place life uppermost, but I must be mistaken.

After Glenville, Mayor Carl Stokes tried to restore order in the city's black community by ordering white policemen and the National Guard to leave the area. Every black policeman in Cleveland and hundreds of black leaders took over police functions in the cordoned-off area. The mayor acted like that because he feared that white faces in that black area would only incite more violence. He was severely criticized for his action, most violently by the white police. (If you're wondering how I know this, I must tell you that at the time of Glenville I was an assistant city editor of *The Plain Dealer* and the city desk had speakers mounted on it that broadcast the police radio. We could hear every message from every police car and heard many obscenities directed at the mayor.) That night, no one died in the area, but there were more fire bombings and there was more looting. The next day, the mayor backed down and ordered the white police back. (He was under tremendous pressure from the white business and banking establishment, to whom the fire bombings and the looting represented tangible losses.)

The conclusion that was drawn was that the mayor had failed: There had been more property damage. The conclusion I drew was that the mayor had scored a brilliant success because no more life had been lost. I guess it depends on your values.

It also depends on your values whether violence is good-clean-fun violence or evil, destructive, pernicious violence. When the American Legion holds a convention in a city, Legionnaires like to give electric shocks to pretty girls. That's good clean fun. When a football team wins, its fans destroy the stadium. That's good clean fun, too. So is the annual rampage on Halloween, where tires are slashed and windows are broken.

All these are good because they have no purpose, because they are an end in themselves. Americans become suspicious only when they detect ideology behind something. Americans do not trust ideology, any ideology, not even their own.

(Roger Baldwin was once arrested in front of the city hall in Paterson, New Jersey, for reading the Declaration of Independence. He was later convicted of holding an unlawful assembly. That was a right he had under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Dozens of Wobblies chained themselves to lampposts to read the Declaration and were arrested under the sedition or anti-syndicalism laws.)

Issues are not important in American politics and men who raise real issues (as opposed to politicians who make phony charges against their opponents) are suspect.

Thus, Americans cannot understand college ruckuses. Don't the kids want to go to school to learn? How dare they try to tell those respected educators how they, the students, should be treated?

But the students cannot afford to be so philosophical about it. They are in an age in which they live at the pleasure of people they cannot control. Most of them are too young to vote but old enough to be killed in war. The men who control their destiny have the power to kill every human being on Earth half a dozen times, with nukes, with germs and with gases. If the students lose their academic standing, the students face the draft **[having lost their draft deferments]**. If they survive the academic process, they face a good likelihood of unemployment. Yet their protests are suspect.

The students know that tomorrow may bring the ultimate escalation. In Albert Einstein's phrase, they knew that tomorrow may bring World War IV, the one in which men fight with clubs and stone axes. Why should the kids concern themselves with tomorrow? Today is here and the time to change the system is now. Tomorrow may be too late. If the kids' actions result in violence, why is anyone surprised? At least they control that violence; that's more than can be said for the violence they face in the world.

This is not to say that I favor violence. I abhor it. Violence is not constructive and I prefer human energy to be put to beneficial purposes. Nor do I condone violence, but, unlike many Americans, I try to understand the factors and the social forces that result in violence.

America is a land of violence and always has been. Anyone can buy and anyone can own a weapon in the United States. Peaceful solution of disputes may be the ideal, but it is not the American way. Assassination, like those of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, and Wesley Everest, are part of the American tradition. Of 35 American presidents, four were slain by assassins, three others were fortunate to survive attempts on their lives. **[That number rose when Lyndon Johnson was shot at and Ronald Reagan was shot.]** That is indeed a very high assassination statistic: 20 per cent. And there is that other statistic: 3,000 known victims of lynching, including Wesley Everest.

Human life? Gun-control laws? No, sir! When Robert Kennedy pleaded for gun-control legislation after his brother's death, he got nowhere. When his brother, Sen. Edward Kennedy, pleaded for gun-control legislation after Robert's death, he didn't get much further. I must have my values wrong. Mayor Stokes must have been wrong. Property is important; lives are not.

But American violence is not only directed against Americans. It also makes itself felt abroad. America has brought the blessings of democracy at the point of a bayonet to Cuba, to Nicaragua, to the Philippines, to Guatemala, to Mexico and to Vietnam.

This is not to say that other countries have not been aggressors, too. They have. Britain once fought a war over the opium trade and Britain was on the side of the pushers. Morality in international relations is practically unheard of, but at least other countries don't attempt to moralize their aggressions the way Americans do. No American has ever fought a war of conquest, Americans say. That's how Texas, New Mexico and Arizona were given to the United States by Mexico. And behind those peaceful U.S. Marines, one never finds American industrialists. That's why the United States did not break relations with Fidel Castro until he committed the unspeakable sin, he tried to take over Esso **[that's the old name for Exxon]**. The nerve of him! But America is a friendly giant and that's why there was something called the Good Neighbor Policy and pledges not to intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Somehow, however, President Johnson forgot all about that stuff and nonsense when the Dominican Republic looked like it might follow Fidel Castro's example and boot U.S. companies out. So Johnson sent in the Marines. And nobody complained; nobody thought it was wrong.

**[Since then, the United States has fought wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador and pulled off a putsch in Chile, assassinating the duly elected president of the country.]**

What you have to realize is that what morality can be mustered for or against foreign-policy decisions depends on whose policy it is. When Tito wants to move his border with Italy westward, that's atheistic, godless, Communist imperialism. When the United States tries to move that same border to the east, that's an extension of democracy, good plumbing and the right to sell Coca-Cola to the Slovenian natives.



Thus it was when John Steinbeck toured Russia after the 1945 war, he reported that a Russian asked him how Americans would feel if Russia were to set up military bases in Mexico. Of course nobody in America questioned the fact that we had ringed the Soviet Union with bases nor our right to do so. When we do something, that's good; when they do something, that's bad.

And since Americans don't like to get involved with ideology, all these problems must be discussed in terms that are simplistic: good guys against bad guys. Obviously, Americans are the good guys. Well, aren't they?

As this is written, the war in Vietnam is continuing. I have read that the first Americans entered the war in 1961. I don't believe it. When I was in Special Forces of the United States Army Reserve in 1958 and 1959, I recall hearing talk that guys from Special Forces in Okinawa were committed in Indochina. But it doesn't make any difference when Americans got involved, what counts is the way it happened.

According to the Constitution, Congress declares war. Congress has never done so in Vietnam. Congress never declared war in the Korean war, either. Perhaps I'm nuts, but I seem to recall that the oath taken by the president of the United States requires him to protect and defend the Constitution. I know that when I was sworn into the army, that's the oath I was required to take.

But that's not all that was unusual about the war in Vietnam. America could win that war only by genocide, by capturing an area and then killing all the gooks found in it on the premise that the only good gook is a dead gook. After all, that's the system that was used against the injuns. America, however, chose to win the war in Vietnam differently. It would capture territory and then teach the gooks about democracy. This was a bit hard to do in view of the fact that the gooks who were running the government in Saigon didn't have the foggiest notion of what democracy is all about. So America said the idea was to have "free elections." Anybody who did not agree with America was not allowed to vote or to run. Anybody who wanted the war to stop, including the man who finished second in the election, was put in jail. But it was America that prevented the holding of free elections under the Geneva Accord to let the people of Vietnam decide the future of their country. President Eisenhower, in his memoirs, admitted that if such elections had been held, 80 per cent of the Vietnamese would have voted for Ho Chi Minh. Obviously, the people of South Vietnam (we could no longer reach those in the North) had to be taught that there was a better alternative. There was no election; there was war.

By the time we left the United States, the war had been lost. It had been lost militarily and it had also been lost in our ability to win the hearts of the people to Coca-Cola democracy. I hope that my use of the word "gook" has offended you. It is like nigger and kike and wop and injun. It is supposed to offend you. But it is used in the speech of Americans in their discussions on Vietnam as it was used in their discussions of Korea. In Korea, there were good gooks and bad gooks—just as there are in Vietnam. It is the United States that decided which gooks are the good ones. Underlying this arrogance is the belief that Americans are endowed by their Creator with the inalienable right to decide for others how they are to conduct their affairs—or kill them.

And kill they did. Here is an example:

It was a notorious area and the men of Task Force Barker had several special names for it. They called it Pinkville. One morning in the later part of March, Task Force Barker moved out from its firebase headed for Pinkville. Its mission: Destroy the trouble spot and all of its inhabitants.

When Butch (Gruver) told me this, I didn't quite believe that what he was telling me was true, but he assured me that it was and went on to describe what had happened.

The other two companies that made up the task force cordoned off the village so that Charlie Company could move through to destroy the structures and kill the inhabitants. Any villagers who ran from Charlie Company were stopped by the encircling companies.

I asked Butch several times if all the people were killed. He said that he thought they were—men, women, and children. He recalled seeing a small boy, about three or four years old, standing by the trail with a gunshot wound in one arm.

The boy was clutching his wounded arm with his other hand, while blood trickled between his fingers. He was staring around himself in shock and disbelief at what he saw. He just stood there with his big eyes staring around like he didn't understand. He didn't believe what was happening. Then the captain's radio operator put a burst of M-16 fire into him.

It was so bad, Gruver said, that one of the men in his squad shot himself in the foot in order to be medivacked out of the area so that he would not have to participate in the slaughter.

**[I regret now that I made no notes in 1970 when I quoted this as to its source.]**

In Lidice, Czechoslovakia, the Germans also wiped out a village. In Lidice, the women and children were spared. In My Lai, everyone was Americanized forever.

But not all Americans believe in this sort of thing. Some Americans did not assert for America the God-given right to rule the world. And in Celina, your hometown, one American lowered the Stars and Stripes to half staff on the day that Uncle Ho died. That, too, is America.

## Thought Control

I have mentioned Dr. Spock. He was tried for his beliefs in a country that espouses the principle of freedom of ideas.

Americans will tell you that the place to settle disputes is at the ballot box; "ballots not bullets," they say. That, at least, is the theory. How then can one explain the case of Victor Berger, the Milwaukee Socialist who was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and was denied his seat? Not once, but twice. Only after winning three elections was Victor Berger allowed to take his seat. Seven New York State Assemblymen who were elected to seats in Albany never did get their seats. And these things happened in a country that claims to believe in the ultimate judgment of the voters.

But the voters cannot always be trusted. There are all sorts of procedures for keeping parties and candidates off the ballot. The system is afraid to be challenged by those who won't play the game according to the rules laid down by those who run the system. This fear of challenge breeds thought control. This, too, is something I have experienced.

As a former Palestinian, I was especially involved when the war of liberation began in Palestine in 1946. I

did not consider myself a Zionist. I reserved that term for a Jew who collected money from other Jews to send a third Jew to Palestine. I was, however, a Jewish nationalist. I belonged to Irgun Zvai Leumi, an organization that many called terrorist. (Some still call it a fascist movement.) I responded to the call to come and fight in the homeland and was captured by the Arabs. I spent more than a month in a Lebanese prison camp. Throughout this time, I was a member of the 307th Military Police Battalion, U.S. Army Reserve. According to the Articles of War, my attempt to volunteer to fight in Palestine made me a deserter.

While I was in Baalbek camp, John B. Faust, the U.S. consul—who made anti-Jewish remarks when he visited us—arranged to have us leave on condition that we agreed to make no attempt to reach Israel until the war was over and the U.S. Neutrality Act was lifted. I jumped ship in the Azores to join an Irgun gun-running ship, the *Ruth Wang*, I had been instructed to meet. The Portuguese police caught me and turned me over to U.S. authorities. I was returned to the United States in custody and was relieved of my passport by an FBI man in New York. That, in brief, is the background for my loyalty problem.

**[At least until much later, when I received my whole security file under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) all, that is, except the portion that belonged to the Central Intelligence Agency, which said: “We have no files on you.”]**

Throughout that time, I considered myself an American. Like other Americans I had taken sides in affairs of the old country. Unlike most American Jews, to whom Palestine/Israel has now become an adopted homeland, Tel Aviv was the city in which I had grown up. I saw no loyalty problem.

But the U.S. government did. I took many civil service examinations after I was graduated from Boston University, but never got a job, though I had been told that my score had put me among the top three applicants. I was dismissed from ROTC at Boston University—on my birthday—because the army had doubts. In the Korean war, I was recalled to active duty and then kept in a half-in, half-out condition called “pipeline.” The army never did decide what it wanted to do with me. All through this time, agents were checking on me, inquiring of neighbors, even old girl friends. When I mentioned this to my parents, they told me I was being paranoid. My mail was opened, my phone was tapped. Paranoia. I asked the State Department to give me back my passport and was turned down. Paranoia.

I had not been charged with a crime, but I knew what was going on. During my time in pipeline, I asked my congressman, Rep. Christian Herter, to help me get in or get out, and he wrote that the army had told him “that there is some doubt about your loyalty in general and your loyalty to the United States in particular.”

**[To this day, I have no idea what that meant. But my FOI files showed that the FBI, the Army’s Counter Intelligence Corps, and the State Department thought me a Communist.]**

Eventually I had my day in court. It was a questionnaire from a functionary in the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Kimbell Johnson, chief of the investigative division.

Here are some of his questions and my answers:

The Commission has the following information which indicates that you have at various times exhibited a preference of loyalty to the Government of Israel that equaled or exceeded your loyalty to the Government of the United States:

a. That in the year 1948 you attempted to proceed to Israel after obtaining a passport on the basis of a declaration that you desired to travel to another country,

and that you subsequently stated that you wished to offer your assistance to the Government of Israel for military service.

I answered this:

All the information in this paragraph is true and correct. In 1948 I left the United States for Palestine. I did obtain a passport upon asking for one and having stated that I desired to travel to the Union of South Africa. If I had not been detained illegally by the Government of the Lebanon, I would have borne arms for Israel.

May I remind the Commission that Lafayette, Kosciusko and others bore arms for the fledgling Colonies in the time of their revolt against tyranny? To my knowledge, at least, no one has stated that Kosciusko was less loyal to Poland, Lafayette less loyal to France because of their activity.

Americans in great number volunteered to serve in the armed forces of the United Kingdom from September 1939 until the United States entered the war after Pearl Harbor. Was the Eagle Squadron less loyal to the United States and loyal to the United Kingdom? Were the Flying Tigers considered less loyal to the United States and more loyal to the Republic of China? ...

In the case of my volunteering for military duty in Palestine, this does not require loyalty to Israel, but to the principles for which Israel was fighting. I subscribe to those principles to this day. ...

I must remind the Commission that I volunteered to go on active duty in the United States Army during the hostilities in Korea. The events which transpired at that time will demonstrate my willingness to bear arms for the United States. ...

c. That you displayed an interest in the Government of Israel and its affairs in a manner and to a degree that caused some of your associates to question the completeness of your loyalty to the United States.

I have a great many interests. I play around with a short-wave radio. I listen to a hi-fi set incessantly. I take color photographs. I collect stamps. I write articles on stamps. I read voraciously. I am willing at any time, in front of any interested listener, to discuss my views on any subject. For the sake of argument, I am liable to argue viewpoints which I do not share. ...

My interest in Israel is great. It is not uncritical. It does not in any way indicate that I have loyalty to the Government of Israel, whatsoever. ...

Surely being interested in something cannot be a measure of loyalty. ... I am interested in pretty girls; but I am loyal to my wife. ...

How can I answer the charge of loyalty to something because I am interested in it?...

This answer went on for thirteen pages and I indicated all sorts of contests in which I had a champion, including Joe Louis over Max Schmelling. But it was to no avail. I could not be hired. Eventually I was even kicked out of Special Forces because the army couldn't clear me. At the end of the reply, I said this:

I would not live in a place where I would be in a position of violent or peaceful opposition to the basic fibers of the organization of government and state. I would have joined the levee in Budapest and Berlin. ... I would have used illegal means there, for the government and state were not constituted according to law. In the United States, as long as it retains its liberty and its freedom, I oppose only in the manner of law. And I wouldn't leave it if I had a bayonet pushing me. I don't expect that bayonet soon.

That last line may make you wonder. There was no bayonet pushing us, and yet we left. Your mother did not want us to leave. She said my place was in the States to fight for my ideals. She said I was running away from the fight. But that bayonet was, in fact pushing me. It pushed me when it pushed war protesters in Chicago. It pushed me when it cleared the streets of Cleveland during the Glenville curfew.

Has it occurred to you that the whole business of loyalty reviews is silly? After all, if I were a Russian spy, I would join the John Birch Society and try to appear more Catholic than the Pope. My conduct would be scrupulously correct. I would do everything in my power to prevent the faintest glimmer of suspicion from falling on me.

Had I enlisted in the Flying Tigers to fight for a bald dictator, or in the Eagle Squadron to fight for a stuttering king, everything would have been fine. But if I had fought in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade against Franco, I would still be on a blacklist—and I am. For all I know, if you choose to retain your U.S. citizenship in 1980, you will be, too, just for knowing me.

There are all sorts of blacklists. A Nobel Prize winner is on a blacklist of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare; there is a blacklist of television and movie stars who simply do not get a chance to work—and you will probably never hear a Paul Robeson song on U.S. radio. Even the Consumer's Union was blacklisted until 1954 by being listed as "subversive" by the infamous House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Blacklists exist outside the law. They are the worst possible kind of thought control even though effective thought control cannot be set up in an open society. Real spies, like Rudolph Abel, can melt into the society with no trouble at all. All that thought control can do is to silence criticism and dissent; for it should be obvious that anyone who really wants to blow up the system can easily hide by keeping all opinions to himself, by joining nothing, by staying aloof. That way one can win a perfect record and a spotless reputation. But such silence does not guarantee loyalty to the status quo; it could just as well indicate a total lack of interest in the issues of the day. Are people who don't give a damn really better employment risks than those who do?

Among the many people who have been blacklisted were Hollywood stars and writers, playwrights, novelists, singers, journalists, radio news reporters, commentators. It had nothing to do with government service. Some idiot could print a private blacklist and the hapless people who were on the list suddenly found that they could no longer work. For many of these people, the only way to keep working was to turn stool pigeon against their husbands, wives, friends, and acquaintances. This was done in front of a congressional witch-hunting committee and the catechism sounded somewhat like this (and, so help me, I am not exaggerating):

Q. Are you now or have you ever been a member of any organization, group, or party that advocated the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force and violence?



A. Yes, sir. I humbly and repentantly confess that in 1936 I supported a fund drive for Haile Selassie against the invasion by Italy; I signed a letter in 1937 urging sanctions against Spain by the League of Nations because I was a dupe of the Communist conspiracy; in 1941, I attended a meeting in Madison Square Garden that sought to extend Lend-Lease to the Russians, and in 1947 I was a member of Henry Wallace's Progressive Party. I am not now a member of any such group and sincerely regret that in my ignorance I allowed myself to be duped into taking part in these activities, which were fostered by and organized on behalf of the international Communist conspiracy.

Q. Can you supply the committee with the names of other persons who, in your knowledge, were engaged in the activities you have just described?

A. Yes, sir. I can ...

That would have led to a job. But qualms of conscience or even the belief that at the time specified those activities were in the interest of freedom and liberty, or any reticence in pointing the finger at others, not only barred employment but very often led to jail. The reason for this is in the contempt laws.

If one stands in front of one of these inquisitions and answers one single solitary question other than name and address and then refuses to answer other questions, one has lost the right to ask for the protection of the Fifth Amendment's guarantees against self-incrimination. One either answers all questions or none. Of course, if one answered none, one was immediately labeled a "Fifth Amendment Communist" and lost one's job or prospects for jobs.

This sort of witch hunt did not affect me personally, although Chief Kimbell Johnson did ask me this:

The Commission has information that while you were a student at Boston University you were a member of the Tom Paine Club, which has been described as being a Marxist organization.

You are being given this opportunity to submit your comments or explanation concerning the following:

- a) The period of your membership in the Tom Paine Club.
- b) The nature and extent of your activities in the Club, including meeting attended and offices held.
- c) Your knowledge of Communist control or influence in the Club.
- d) Your reason for joining the Club and your reason for disassociating yourself from it.

The funny part of this is that I never belonged to the club and, therefore, had no reason to dissociate myself from it. This kept me from being able to turn stoolie under Section c) so that I could ingratiate myself with the commission. Of course it would never occur to anyone in the ideological thought police that it would have been sort of absurd for me to be loyal to Israel and a Communist, too. This was at a time when my old comrades of the Irgun Zvai Leumi were blowing up the Soviet Embassy in Tel Aviv as a protest against anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

**[Stalin was insanely anti-Semitic. But for geopolitical reasons, he recognized Israel only hours after Harry Truman did. But then the tables turned. First, Jews were called "cosmopolitans" and were subject**

**to various sorts of social discrimination. Then Stalin uncovered an alleged plot by a group of Jewish doctors against the Soviet state. Jews were barred from leaving the country. The Soviet ambassador to the United Nations made hour-long speeches in condemnation of Israel.]**

The outcome of Chief Kimbell Johnson's endeavors was in his reply: "After careful consideration of all the facts, including your explanation, the Commission has decided to accept your application." But I never got a job.

**[Many years later, after the Freedom of Information Act became law, I asked for my security files. I was sent a reply by the Central Intelligence Agency that it had no file on me. But the FBI, the army and the State Department sent piles and piles of blacked-out documents. The most interesting of these was an FBI report at about the time of your birth when I covered the arrest and preliminary hearing in Celina of a black man driving through town from Detroit to Cincinnati. On the front seat of his car in plain view he had a loaded revolver. He was, he said, afraid for his life in some of the lily-white towns he had to drive through. He was arrested for carrying a "concealed" weapon, brought into Municipal Court in handcuffs, and remanded to Common Pleas Court. I wrote that he was being treated more harshly than white defendants and protested against his appearance in court in handcuffs. The Ohio Highway Patrol asked the FBI to do a background check on me for my "anti-police" attitude.]**

Other people lost their jobs through similar questionnaires. Boston University fired a professor who had been named by someone who thereby bought his own employability. Sometimes the finger of accusation came from FBI agents and FBI informers who had been so good at playing their roles as atheistic, godless, Communists, that it had been the agents and informers who had recruited the people they lately fingered for the thought-control committees.

This thought-control process was called McCarthyism, after Sen. Joe McCarthy. But it did not start with him or end with his death. There have been witch hunts in America almost as long as white men have been in North America, starting in Salem. All sorts of thought-control laws, including the Alien and Sedition Acts, the anti-syndicalism laws of many states, the loyalty-oath requirements of state and federal governments and the establishment of state and federal committees to investigate subversion all acted to undermine the right of dissent.

McCarthyism was not even the worst example of Gestapo-like actions by the U.S. government. That honor belongs to the Palmer raids right after the First World War when Americans were simply deported because they were "subversive." They were shipped off to the Soviet Union without trial. All this was done under a law giving Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer the right to deport alien radicals, but many were—like you—native-born citizens of the United States.

Also citizens of the United States were thousands of Americans of Japanese ancestry who, in the months following Pearl Harbor, were sent off to "relocation camps" because the only good Jap was a dead Jap and they could not be trusted. The only way these Nisei could get out of the concentration camp was by proving their loyalty through enlistment in segregated units of the U.S. Army. Their 442nd Regimental Combat Team and their 100th (Century) Battalion were the most-decorated units in the army, but the medals could not buy back the farms and homes they were forced to sell at bargain-basement prices.

One of those relocation camps is still there, ready to receive another influx of dangerous people, one of several concentration camps that exist under the requirements of the Internal Security Act, which was passed

over the veto of President Truman.

The strange thing about these camps is that it took me until 1968 to learn of their existence, although I should have known all along from Truman's veto. But the fact that they existed, ever ready to receive more people, came not from newspapers, magazines, television, or even the good old *Congressional Record*. It came from Jimmy Ruffin, a black copy boy at *The Plain Dealer*, who asked me one day if it was true, as he had heard in his neighborhood, that the federal government had set up concentration camps all over the place into which it would herd Negroes.

When I heard Jimmy's question, it sounded absurd. It was the sort of question one would normally dismiss out of hand, but I knew Jimmy well and realized he had come to me because he was deeply concerned about the implication of the rumor, which had apparently been spreading like wildfire around Cleveland's East Side. I promised to find out.

One night, as I was driving home from work, I heard Father Malcolm Boyd tell the host of a radio talk show that he had just read a novel, *The Man Who Cried I am*, which he termed the most important novel of our time. The next day, I asked your mother to order the book from the library.

The novel, about the racial crisis in the United States, is thinly disguised fact. I can recognize real people in it—but above all, I found in it a fictionalized version of the Internal Security Act, complete with concentration camps. A little checking at *The Plain Dealer* confirmed the fact that the law ordered the attorney general to set up such camps and to keep them in readiness.

I apologized to Jimmy for keeping him waiting. It had been no rumor. The camps exist and are proof that the United States still reserves for itself the power to put American citizens in protective custody without due process of law. I am certain that if these camps are put in use, when it counts most for those who are locked up, the courts will rule again (as they did with the Nisei) that the doctrine of emergency powers makes the process legal.

## Shootout in Cleveland

That painting by your grandmother in my den was made from a photo I took for publication in *The Plain Dealer*. I made the picture from our window on July 23, 1968. (I did not have to look up that date; it is etched in my mind.)

Many Clevelanders had the illusion that by electing Carl Stokes, a black man, to be mayor they had bought racial peace. They thought of it as a form of insurance, as if the election of Stokes would suddenly turn frustration into hope, eradicate slums, kill all the rats, give everybody jobs, open up the lily-white construction unions to black journeymen, provide decent housing, stop the war in Vietnam, and end the induction of blacks as cannon fodder (though many blacks enlist because the army is the only job they can get), stop segregation in the Cleveland schools (over which the mayor has no say whatsoever), and reduce racial tensions between the white police and the black community.

When Cleveland was peaceful in the days following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., whites quickly assumed that they had been right in electing Stokes. The blacks wouldn't cause any trouble to damage the reputation of Stokes. The blacks would mourn quietly. Few knew that Stokes and a committee of black leaders, including black militants, worked through the period of tension by walking through the ghetto to urge people to "keep it cool." While machine guns were mounted on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, Cleveland

kept it cool.

But nobody can cure all the ills of a city that has been allowed to decay gradually into two communities, one white and one black. The police force was overwhelmingly white despite a black population that was more than 40 per cent of the city's total. The building trades were white and the new Federal Office Building had been built by white workmen, despite repeated executive orders of the president dating back to President Roosevelt for equal employment opportunities in federal projects. There was also the highest murder rate per capita of any city in the United States.

Late at night, when I drove home from work, the streets were empty. People were afraid. Blacks were just as afraid as whites for they knew that it had been blacks who died in the Hough riot of 1965. They had read that most of the reports of "snipers" in the more recent Detroit riots had been false, that it had been the police and national guardsmen shooting at each other—and hitting blacks. They had heard of the Algiers Hotel in Detroit where white policemen lined up Negroes and executed them as in the Valentine Day's Massacre. Cleveland blacks knew it could happen in Cleveland, too.

While Cleveland stayed peacefully tense, the cry of "law and order" was heard throughout the land. It could be heard in Cleveland, too. We had a group calling itself the National Association for the Advancement of White People. We had a local branch of the Ku Klux Klan. Blacks interpreted the "lawnorder" slogan correctly. It meant "Keep the niggers in their place."

In July 1968, on the anniversary of the Hough riot, there was to be a parade in Hough. I assigned a reporter and a photographer to attend. They said they did not want to go. They were afraid. I believe they never got out of their car on Hough Avenue and this may explain why the next morning's *Plain Dealer* ran the picture of Mayor Stokes marching at the head of the parade amidst an honor guard of black militants. (It was the only photo they could get before high-tailing it out of there.) There was nothing wrong with running the picture, but the reporter who wrote the caption did not explain the weapons that all Cleveland could see in the picture. The next morning, I was bombarded by calls demanding explanations. The paper was even being charged with news suppression (for not explaining the weapons). No one thought of complimenting us for covering a news story in Hough, a practice that was anything but common then.

White Cleveland did not know that main avenues were sometimes blocked while militants practiced close-order drill. It knew nothing of violence by blacks against blacks because the prevailing idea—against which I protested—was that this did not constitute news. Nor did it know that black political leaders had been keeping the news desk informed of incidents of violence that we had not seen fit to print. There was, however, a scare series run in the Cleveland Press, right after the Hough riot, indicating that the Glenville section would be next. And, on July 23, 1968, it became the turn of Glenville.

(As long as I mentioned the opposition newspaper, I might add that there was a Cuyahoga County Grand Jury investigation of the Hough riot. The chairman of the grand jury was Louis Seltzer, editor of the Press. The jury duly reported that the Hough riot had been caused by "Communists." Honest!)

Glenville was something new in American racial unrest. It was the first incident in which white casualties were greater than those among blacks. It was also the first battle in which the commander of the white forces was a black mayor. The emotional forces that came into being as a result only widened the chasm between the two communities.

At least three of the blacks who died in the Glenville incident were murdered. One was an AWOL black

marine who was gunned down miles from the shooting incident when a car with a man and two boys drew alongside him at a bus stop. “I’m through running,” said the marine. He died.

Tedd Browne, a nationally known black singer and a prominent Catholic layman, was coming from a church function. He stopped at a red light on top of Cedar Hill, just to the rear of Murray Hill. His body was found at the wheel of his car the next morning, shot through the head.

A black man who was later said to be a hero because he was helping the police to recover one of their wounded comrades in Glenville also died in the shootings. The report to the National Commission on Violence indicates that he was probably killed by a white policeman who was shooting at anyone with a black face.

The law director of Cleveland, the man who acts as deputy mayor, also was shot at by the police. He, too, is black.

I cannot tell you if the shootout was a militant plot to kill cops. I cannot believe that it was. I do not believe the stories we printed about Glenville. I do know that our reporters wrote yet another report about what happened but that it was never printed in *The Plain Dealer*.

(Why it was never printed became known later. The story was written by Jim Naughton, Bill Barnard and Joe Eszterhas. They turned it in to Managing Editor Ted Princiotto for the following Sunday’s paper. Princiotto said, “Shit, no. I’ve got a terrific story about a multiple murder in Michigan by Doris O’Donnell scheduled for Sunday.” The three reporters all quit. Two later rescinded their resignations; Naughton went to *The New York Times*. But the *Times* printed their story in full a couple of days after Glenville, under the byline of Anthony Ripley. I was not informed how Ripley worked this out with the three *Plain Dealer* writers.)

I do know that many of our reporters believed what they were told by the cops, forgetting that the cops were a party to this dispute and that it was necessary to get other views, too. They did not.

And the cops were not concealing their feelings. We had police radios on the city desk and could hear the cops broadcasting “Fuck the nigger mayor” and complain that they did not have armored cars and tanks and high-powered rifles with which to defend themselves.

A few days later, it was reported to me that two white NBC television newsmen had been beaten by cops in the Fifth District. My city hall reporter that day was Robert McGruder, a black man. When I told him to go after the story, he said: “Why bother? This paper won’t print it.”

He got the story and we did print it—at least in part. What struck me most was not the brutality of the beating, for I expected that. One of the NBC men was taken to one of the University Hospitals—where you were taken when you fell off the slide—and was discharged because “there is nothing wrong.” Was the hospital trying to cover up for the cops? I don’t know. (The hospital is two blocks from the police station where it happened and depends on that station for protection.) I do know that when NBC took that newsman to another hospital, they found that he had broken ribs, fractured vertebrae, and a ruptured spleen. “Nothing wrong?”

Any wonder blacks are afraid of the police? They know that those concentration camps are standing there empty and waiting, waiting for them. And they know that on the day when Martin Luther King Jr. was buried, all flags were at half staff and many car lights were on. But over the Fifth District, the police fortress in which the NBC men got theirs, the flag was at the top of the pole.



Martin Luther King Jr., Cleveland knew from its previous mayor, was a “troublemaker” with whom the mayor would not meet. Yet that troublemaker won a Nobel Peace Prize, and the Fifth District is in the middle of the neighborhood in which his people mourned Dr. King, my classmate at Boston University.

## **Brutality**

I don’t want you to think brutality is characteristic of any people—at least not more than of any other people. Throughout history, one can find dreadful tortures condoned by respectable folks. The church practiced it against “heretics”; New England goody-goodies practiced it against “witches”; Communists practiced it against “capitalist wreckers,” and capitalists practiced it against “Communist revolutionaries.”

What happened to the NBC newsmen in the Fifth District of Cleveland is not as unusual as it sounds. We have had reports of such torture and violence out of Marine brigades and army stockades, and I have seen soldiers in the U.S. Army “fall down a flight of stairs,” a euphemism for a vicious attack by a platoon or company on someone who was responsible for the punishment of the entire outfit. Usually, the “fall” is suggested by a noncommissioned or commissioned officer.

I have also been inside a DTC—the most despicable institution I have ever seen. **[Before I went to Buchenwald in 1998]**

A DTC is a disciplinary training center. The one I saw was on the outskirts of Pisa, Italy. Soldiers who had been convicted by courts-martial were sent there and were required to live by the most minute comma and period in army regulations. They shined their brass buttons with pins and sewed creases into their fatigue uniforms with an intricate cross-stitch. Each morning they collapsed the pup tents they slept in and prepared for a full-field inspection in which they had to roll packs, including all their belongings, only to unroll the packs, spread them on the ground for inspection and roll them again. The most tiny demerit brought immediate punishment, running a specified distance with that full field pack, sometimes in front of a jeep. I do not know if anyone was ever run over by those jeeps, but I do know that former prisoners told me it happened regularly.

Prisoners could work their way out of a DTC. By being exemplary “soldiers,” meaning that they received no demerits and were able to pass the incessant inspections by extra polishing, extra shining, extra sewing, and extra everything else, they could be promoted to the “cadre” detachments. The cadre then made life miserable for the prisoners in the pup tents. If they did the job well enough, the cadre would win promotion to the auxiliary guard detachment, which manned the watch towers to prevent escape, knowing that if anyone escaped while they were on duty they would go back to the pup tents and start the process all over again, not to mention the possibility of an added court-martial and an added term.

From the guard detachment, the prisoner could again win a promotion, back to the army. It was possible to “work off” a life term for murder or rape in a few months as well as to make a one-year sentence into a life behind barbed wire.

A handful of MPs ran the show. One of them once told me (I was also an MP and was there to deliver prisoners) that he was having a ball because the prisoners, all currying favor for a promotion, treated him like a king.

**[During the research for my novel COMRADES, AVENGE US, I read much about the German death and construction camp at the Ljubelj Pass between Austria and Yugoslavia. The prisoners there also were forced by their guards, German SS men and Ukrainian Askaris, to curry favor—not for promotion but**

**for enough food to survive the bitter cold. Many prisoners won a piece of bread with their rectums.**

**It was at the Pisa DTC that the American poet Ezra Pound, who had broadcast Axis propaganda for Mussolini, was housed in an elevated cage open to the elements until he was transferred to a Washington, D.C., mental hospital.]**

The outcry after the end of World War II against such abuses does not seem to have changed things. Only recently, men have died in the stockade in Fort Dix under unusual circumstances. Marines have died in basic training from “drowning,” though they were known to be strong swimmers. A special diet for prisoners who break stockade rules in Fort Dix lets them eat starchy foods and water and nothing else.

If the U.S. Army had treated foreign prisoners of war that way, it would have been a violation of the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War. But no such convention protects Americans from other Americans.

Therefore, you should not be shocked that a man’s ribs and spleen were broken in the Fifth District. Nor should you be shocked at the mistreatment of Fannie Lou Hamer. You can expect brutality in the United States.

What you can watch for in 1980 is whether civilian review bodies have become prevalent, not only over police departments, but also over the armed forces and the correctional institutions of the nation. From some former prisoners I have heard personal descriptions of the conditions in American prisons. They smack of the Dark Ages. Only if a system of complaint procedures assures all persons who are deprived of their liberty, either by a court or by induction or enlistment in the armed forces, of some way of having their gripes heard, will America be a fit place in which to live.

*Since the “Patriot act” has passed, and our country holds people as “enemy combatants” in Cuba, all under the same guise of protection of Freedom- while in fact it is a reversal of Freedom, I cannot stand idly by, and let this opportunity to talk about the principles of our founding fathers- and how these witch hunts must end. Terrorism has become the new communism- all while our freedoms have been systematically stripped: The Americans I know, can’t afford to buy their way into political favor, because they are too busy struggling to pay for health insurance, usurious credit card penalties- and face losing their homes due to unregulated predatory lending. The real terrorists are running our economy for personal gain, so billions can be siphoned out of our economy to China, where it will come back to bite us. It’s one of the reasons my father and I have shared this very personal book with you- for a donation. We believe that liberty and justice will exist when you don’t have to buy the politicians anymore. If you agree, pledge what you can, if you can’t- urge someone else to read this book.*

The police now think that civilian review boards are but another symptom of the conspiracy to deprive policemen of their powers. They deny that such a thing as police brutality exists. They complain that the courts have handcuffed them by rulings that require a man to be told of his constitutional rights before he is interrogated, to have a lawyer present when he is questioned, not to allow confessions to be used in evidence against a suspect that are given without a warning about the right to remain silent. These are all handcuffs, the police say. In fact, these are guarantees of freedom, all too long neglected in a society that is so dominated by lawyers who belong to law firms specializing in juicy cases for corporate clients that they have no interest in simple constitutional rights for the scum of society, even murderers and kidnappers and rapists.

But brutality is not just beatings in prisons and police stations. It is as brutal to put a mother and her children out of her house for nonpayment of rent. It is as brutal to force fathers to desert their families because the family can only receive welfare benefits if there is no man in the house.

The fancy law firms are not interested in these cases. Most lawyers prefer to ignore such things. Nobody gives a damn. The standard answer is that these people can solve their problems by going to work. Society's responsibility toward all its members is something that is talked of in church and during the unceasing charitable campaigns for the United Fund or other outfits, but concern for the poor and downtrodden usually stops after Christmas baskets have been distributed.

When you see public defenders opposing prosecuting attorneys in all American jurisdictions, when you see publicly paid lawyers defending the poor against eviction and before welfare agencies, when you see lawyers for the public fight against rate increases at state and federal regulatory agencies, only then will you know that the United States has finally become conscious of its ideals as a government dedicated to the proposition that all men deserve equal treatment, not only in law but also in practice.

This is not just a question of ombudsmanism run rampant. It is a provision that justice shall prevail at all levels of society without regard to ability to pay. It will mean that the large corporations will have to defend their pollution practices against the lawsuits filed by and for the people by lawyers paid by all the people, including those very corporations. It will provide for an effective way to let the people control their airwaves because radio and TV stations holding the right from the people to use those airwaves will be held accountable for their behavior.

On an old-time radio show, a district attorney used to take an oath weekly that "it is the duty of the district attorney, not only to prosecute, but to defend with equal vigor, the rights and privileges of all its citizens." When that happens, I would urge you to claim your birthright. Unfortunately, I cannot say that it will ever happen.

*If I didn't have the chance to access people via the Internet- there is no way I could run this campaign. It levels the playing field- it gives me the opportunity to share my ideas- without filter or constraint- and most of all, it lets me be held accountable- via feedback through comments.*

*I don't need millions to buy air time- what I need is thousands of you to contact your friends- and pass the word.*

## **The Right to Vote**

For all I know, as you read this, the United States may again be fighting for what it terms democracy. In Vietnam, this has been going on since about 1958 when the Special Forces, whose uniform I then wore, began sending "advisers" to Vietnam. Slowly, ever so slowly, the war mounted until it was a full-scale war with Americans on one side alongside its freedom-loving allies of South Vietnam.

What were we fighting for? Here is an excerpt from my column of Oct. 15, 1963, in *The Van Wert Times-Bulletin*.

I recall how the Buddhist oppression started, just a few days before the birthday of the Buddha.

The archbishop of Hue, a brother of President Ngo Dinh Diem, and the military governor of Hue, another brother of Diem, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the archbishop's elevation to the priesthood. Hue was covered with the flags of the Vatican and pictures of Ngo Dinh Diem's priestly brother ...

But when the Buddhists attempted to fly the many-colored flag of Buddhism, President Diem suddenly recalled that this was contrary to the laws of the land.

So the Buddha's birthday was celebrated illegally.

Twelve persons died in the ensuing clash as baton-wielding police rushed into the holy day ceremonies of the Buddhists. It could be equated to a raid on St. Patrick's Cathedral on Christmas Day by New York's mounted police.

On April 15, 1964, I added these comments:

The secretary general of SEATO says the war in Vietnam is a civil war between the South Vietnamese. That kind of war, he says, is not the proper type of war for SEATO to interest itself in. ...

To be honest with ourselves, we should realize that the war in Vietnam is what SEATO's secretary general says it is. There has been no proof at any time that any foreign Communist power has troops in Vietnam. There has been no proof that there have been any foreign troops in Vietnam except ours. ...

I suggest we start thinking of a way to neutralize Vietnam before we lose it altogether. It's all we can salvage from the ruins we have made by supporting such tyrants. ...

Then came the 1964 elections. The Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater, promised to win the war by going all out, by defoliating the jungle, by using the full arsenal of U.S. might, including nukes. In revulsion, voters turned to the "peace candidate," Lyndon Baines Johnson. No sooner had the war at the polls ended than Johnson intensified the war in Vietnam.

The American people should have known better. Johnson, after all, had already been president since he was "elected" in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald's gun. The war was no longer Eisenhower's war, or Kennedy's war. It had, for more than a year, been Johnson's war.

So the American people had a choice in 1964 between a hawk who wanted more war openly and a hawk who kept his views to himself. There was no dove in the running.

The way Barry Goldwater came to be the GOP candidate was a lesson for 1968 to which, alas, nobody paid attention. For years before the Republican Convention of 1964, hard-working precinct and county workers who supported the ultra-conservative position of Goldwater had been quietly taking over the Republican party at the grassroots. In Ohio the process was visible. The less-committed Republicans of the near right and the center simply stood by as the ultras took over. Here, after all, were people with money and willingness to work and win the great GOP victory. **By the time of the 1964 convention, it had become clear that in states where there were no primaries, where the precinct officers choose the county officers and the county officers choose the state officers and the state officers choose the delegates, all the delegates were for Goldwater. We even had a primary in Ohio, with one choice, a native son. By using the device of the native son, Ohio Republicans sold Ohio down the river into the Goldwater camp.**

*The more things change- the more they stay the same.*

I knew in 1964 that it was hopeless, but I was one of the few newspaper editors in the United States who supported the candidacy of Sen. Margaret Chase Smith of Maine for the Republican presidential nomination. Anybody for a choice. Mrs. Smith had shown throughout her career that she had guts and that her rank of general in the Air Force was no fluke. Maggie's trial balloon never left the ground.

In 1967 it began to look as though the same system that had chosen Goldwater was going to be used by

the Democrats to re-elect LBJ. Michigan's convention delegates had been chosen as far back as 1964 and the search for other states' delegates was moving into full force. Everyone knew that no incumbent president who wanted to run again had ever been barred from the right to run if he so chose.

By then **Johnson could no longer pose as the peace candidate, so he told Americans that they could have war in Vietnam and still meet all their commitments at home. He said he could continue the war on poverty, urban renewal, increased welfare, aid to education, all the things we needed to correct the mess at home; America was rich enough for guns and butter, too.**

*Again- the more things change, the more they remain the same. While we build schools in Iraq, we can't pass school levies in Dayton.*

The ball began to roll. LBJ was picking up more delegates in states without primaries or where the primaries would mean nothing anyway. The AFL-CIO endorsed him and began collecting money for his re-election. On TV, Johnson told the American people: "I don't want to tell you that you've never had it so good, but ain't that the truth?"

Sen. Eugene McCarthy isn't the type of guy one expects to go forth and slay dragons. He even writes poetry and what kind of red-blooded American boy would do that?

McCarthy looked around to see if anyone would run against Johnson. Nobody said boo. Johnson had the field to himself. People told McCarthy that nobody had ever denied a second term to an American President who wanted it and it could not be done. So McCarthy plodded through the snows of New Hampshire with an army of children, children who would soon be old enough to go to war to fight for the dictators and tyrants of Saigon and children who were already old enough but had managed to win deferments from the draft.

In New Hampshire, where the voters seem to be the sort who believe in such democratic claptrap as town meetings and government of the people, by the people, and for the people, Gene McCarthy denied LBJ a second term (even though Johnson won the primary by a hair).

But New Hampshire is peculiar. It is not typical of America. **That's why they have open primaries, in which any damned fool can run.** But it means nothing. In 1952 a good guy in a coonskin hat, Estes Kefauver, won in New Hampshire but was not even nominated at the convention. So it did not really matter that Gene McCarthy won a lot of votes in New Hampshire. What mattered was that he had shown that it could be done. This brought a former hatchet man for Joe McCarthy, Bobby Kennedy, into the race. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, Bobby went off to fight McCarthyism 10 years too late and against the wrong McCarthy. But it didn't make any difference, either. The convention had already been fixed. It made not one tinker's damn what the people were saying at the polls. We would still end up with a choice between a hawk (Hubert Humphrey, who had stepped in when LBJ stepped out) and a hawk (whoever the Republicans picked, and by then it looked as if it would be Richard Nixon).



Disregarding the preordained, Gene and Bobby kept fighting in the primaries. In our precinct in Cleveland, we were actually lucky enough to be able to choose among delegates pledged to McCarthy, Kennedy, or Humphrey. The man running for Kennedy was on the ballot as a delegate for his own favorite son, who turned out to be the young man's mother, because it was already too late to get Kennedy's name on the Ohio ballot. We thought it mattered. We voted. But it didn't matter. The convention was a sham. Humphrey won. He won before New Hampshire. But that's democracy—government of, by, and for the people—what American soldiers are bringing to Vietnam.

The votes of the people are an exercise in futility. The votes of the people don't count. What counts is power and money. The party machinery has the money to control it but delegates choose the nominees who carry their soiled standards into the living rooms of the nation on time purchased from the networks with dirty money.

Anyway, people in America aren't supposed to vote on issues. They vote for people. People who raise issues are suspect. **(In most campaigns I have seen, candidates brag of their large families, their veteran status, and their membership in organizations. They show pictures of themselves with their children. They never say what they are for or what they are against.)** You vote for good old Joe, the dogcatcher, to be your delegate to the convention because Joe needs a trip to Chicago as a reward for his loyal service to the party. But it doesn't mean a thing. Chicago was a foregone conclusion. We were to have a choice between Huby-hawk and Dicky-hawk.

Despite the primaries, despite the army of children, the people would be asked to elect a hawk. Government of, by, and for the people? Are you kidding? That's some sort of Comsymp idea, ain't it?

The doves knew what would happen in Chicago. Gene McCarthy knew it. Bobby Kennedy must have known it, too, but a gun ended his career as it had ended his brother's. Meanwhile, the cry for law and order was heard, but this had absolutely nothing to do with gun control. Nor did it affect the cops who were supposed to provide order under law. But it was the cops who rioted in Chicago.

(That sentence was written before the U.S. Commission on the Causes of Violence wrote a report calling the events in Chicago a "police riot.")

War opponents had sought permission for a parade in Chicago. They got the run-around for weeks and were never granted the permit. They sought the use of Soldier's Field for a McCarthy rally, but Soldier's Field was needed for parking armored cars and other army equipment, and use of the field was denied. By the time the convention opened, the stay-at-homes wished the travelers a safe return, knowing they were headed for the battlefield.

The battle that took place in Chicago was to be expected. In the feudal fief of Mayor Richard Daley, no provision could be made for dissent's right to express itself. The army of children was met by tear gas and truncheons.

Not all the children were for McCarthy. Many were simply against the system that refuses to listen to youth, the system that refers to the soldiers in Vietnam as "our boys." (If Mozart had been an American, he would have been constitutionally barred from seeking the presidency because he died at the age of 35. And you famous namesake, King David, would have been ineligible to rule had he been an American. Too young!)

I have often been rankled by this word game of calling men boys. In a column in the Port Clinton (Ohio) *Daily News*, I told this anecdote.

In my unit we had a fellow we all called Pop. Pop was 38. He had a wife and three children in Brooklyn, N.Y., and had enlisted because his younger brother had been killed at Pearl Harbor. When I met Pop he wore only the Combat Infantryman's blue badge, without campaign ribbon or medals ...

When we had enough replacements so that Pop could be sure his squad and platoon were able to take care of themselves, ... Pop finally was willing to go home. They held a parade for him in our regiment.

The theater commander himself came up to say good-bye to Pop. Out he marched as the band played "The Sidewalks of New York." I could see his chest clearly. He had three rows of campaign ribbons on that day, the first time he had ever worn them. Gen. John C. H. Lee added another ribbon to the pile, the Distinguished Service Cross. The citation was read. Pop had done some fantastically heroic thing to win it.

The next day, or maybe a few days later, the division newspaper reported on Pop. It called him "one of our noblest boys." Dammit!

But why not call men boys? College men are boys. Soldiers are boys. The guys hanging around on the corner watching all the girls go by are also boys. It's part of the language. But it is also a state of mind. To govern is the role of the old; to be governed is the role of the young. It's as simple as that. The economic system guarantees repression of adulthood by keeping the young out of the job market until they are "grown up" at 25 or so by requiring ever more education for jobs. The system of justice condemns destruction by the young if it is politically motivated—can't have revolution, you know—but looks the other way when it is on behalf of a fraternity rush week or for a football team. Rush week and football riots are approved because they are indicative of the need to keep these young people in a belated state of juvenilism. At an age where they are old enough to die, they are still supposed to act like children, and this is encouraged. When they get sick of dying and march on Chicago, they are met by Daley's police. Serves them right, doesn't it? They don't understand. They're not supposed to think, not supposed to be concerned about issues. Issues are not what voting and elections and democracy are all about.

I don't expect that this will continue. There are moves to lower the voting age and there are efforts by the young to influence the course of national policy. The movement against the war in Vietnam has become the successor to the movement for civil rights. There is no appreciable difference in the makeup of the groups who marched for freedom in the South and those who have been staging demonstrations against the war. And it was these same young people who were clubbed in Chicago.

But age is not the only criterion for judging the political system's sensitivity to demands from the people. Twenty per cent of the people in the United States have an annual income that would place them in the officially defined group of the poor. **How many poor men are elected to public office? How many poor men can afford to run?**

These questions are not rhetorical. The theory is that government if "of" the people, and if 20 per cent of the people are poor, should they not have political say? The system, however, does not work that way. It costs a fortune to seek public office. It requires an organization and funds to run a campaign.

The need for funds results in corruption. Candidates get funds, ostensibly with no strings attached. I have yet to meet an American, however, who is not cynical about this no-strings business. The payoff may never

be public, but everybody expects it to take place, whether it is in hiring of staff or in voting to confirm the nomination of a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Such wheeling and dealing effectively shuts out an entire class of people. Government of, by, and for the people is government of the middle class and of the rich. It is government of special tax concessions, favoritism, and special interest. It is this sort of thing that accounts for all manner of strange things that have happened in the United States.

When radio was in its infancy, the airwaves were apportioned not to the public but to commercial operators. The same thing happened with TV. But the process also explains why the Manned Flight Center of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration is in Houston (President Johnson's home), and why the United States is now engaged in building a supersonic plane that cannot fly over land and that will cost the taxpayers billions of dollars that they will never get back.

It even explains why the United States is spending billions on going to the moon—and maybe farther—when the money is so urgently needed for domestic and terrestrial needs.

The point I am trying to make—albeit badly—is that you cannot expect a government that represents only the interest of one class to order its priorities in such a way that it shows concern for those who do not have political power. In the United States, political and economic power are synonyms. The guy with the campaign funds can call the tune of the politician. There ought to be a law under which all campaign contributions come from the public purse—equally distributed to all legitimate candidates. As long as votes can be bought, voting is not really what it seems.

Anyway, the process has one obvious flaw that can be seen: With 22 million blacks in the United States, there are but a handful of black men and women in Congress and only a handful in state and local offices.

Even where there are no legal bars to voting, the system makes it extremely difficult to elect black people to office unless the percentage of blacks in the population approaches the halfway mark. Only in the case of one black senator from Massachusetts has it been possible to elect a Negro without a large black vote. But that was an anomaly.

The blacks of the United States are the governed, not the governing. And don't you believe that poor men can win elections, either. They are fed that illusion, but I'll bet that the Congress elected in 1978 does not have one working man in it. Then as now, they'll all be lawyers, insurance agents, businessmen and others from the middle and upper reaches of the income range.

(Once, many years ago, I had to do a demographic study of the Great and General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. That's the legislature. And I found a disproportionate number of undertakers among the members of the House. I never found out why.)

*Oddly enough, the black woman who beat Mike Turner for Mayor of Dayton happens to be an undertaker- and the daughter of an undertaker.*

If the system of justice has been reformed by your eighteenth birthday, perhaps there will also be reform in making the United States more democratic in that all sections of the population share in the political process. I am sure that a nation that can send men to the moon can solve such problems, but I hardly think it wants to or will.

This brings me full circle into agreement with the John Birch Society. It says the United States is a republic and not a democracy. I agree. The difference between the Birchers and me is that they say it should not be a democracy; I say it should.

## Free Enterprise

The United States may become more democratic, may establish a better system of justice, may cure its problems of want, and may even pass effective gun-control laws to reduce the murder rate and prevent “elections” by the Sirhan Sirhans (the known killer of Bobby Kennedy) and the Lee Harvey Oswalds (the suspected killer of President Kennedy). It is, however, unlikely that political power in the United States will shift from the corporations to the people.

The point that should concern you is that the system takes from the poor and gives to the rich. There are billionaires in the United States who pay no taxes. There are billion-dollar corporations with huge profits that pay taxes at a lower rate than a Boston cab driver. In 1968, for example, Standard Oil Co. (New Jersey) (now known as Exxon) earned \$2.5 billion in net income. It paid \$224 million in income taxes. That is 9.7 per cent. In 1968, on income of about \$10,000, I paid about \$2,000 in taxes, about 20 per cent, or more than twice the rate for Esso.

When I drove a taxi in Boston, my effective tax rate on salary and tips was about 22 per cent.

Everybody apparently knows about tax inequities. The best example of these can be found in the treatment of unearned income: dividends, interest, and capital gains.

If you are a workingman and fall under the sway of the sirens who constantly advise you to put part of your money in U.S. Savings Bonds to help your government, you pay taxes on the interest. In my pay bracket, interest on savings bonds would be taxed at 20 per cent. It does not work that way for people who own stocks and are granted \$50 (\$100 for husband and wife) in free, untaxed dividends. If stocks were to pay an average of 5 per cent, that means that ownership of \$2,000 in stock would not be taxed. (I took a yield of 5 per cent because it is higher than the actual average yield of stocks at the time I write. Five per cent minimizes the wealth needed to earn such dividends. In fact, most stocks pay much less and, therefore, a much larger portfolio is needed to earn that untaxed \$100.)

You are bound to comment that \$2,000 isn't such a lot of money. You are right, but the majority of Americans do not have \$2,000. The usual breakdown shows that 20 per cent of the people earn 5 per cent of the income and 5 per cent of the people earn 20 per cent. Even this does not take into account that most Americans live in eternal debt. Even if they can own stock, they also own a mortgage, a note on the car, a note on the color TV set, a bunch of small notes on charge accounts and, perhaps, have an overdue bill at a doctor's or at a hospital. (It took me three months to pay Gibbons Hospital in Celina for your birth. After the third payment, I said to your mother: “Now he belongs to us.”)

Yet the poor people at the bottom of the economic heap cannot finagle with their tax returns the way the rich can. Their taxes are taken out of their pay and none of the gimmicks available to the rich applies to them.

The rich, on the other hand, can hire tax lawyers who can tell them how to chisel legally for next year and how to reduce their tax obligations on previous years. It's all legal, too.

If someone cheats the tax collectors, then a deal is made. The result usually is that the tax cheat pays less after he has fought his way through the tax courts. Athletes, entertainers, and business moguls “settle” their tax cases.

But let me refer back to my taxicab days. I paid taxes on my salary and my tips. Then I went into hospital for an operation and while I was in the hospital there was no income at all. To an American that sounds

perfectly normal. Unemployment compensation goes only to those who are willing and able to work. But is it right? What if I had a family to feed while I was in the hospital? Oh well, there's always welfare.

Had I been an executive of General Motors or Esso—or even an employee of a company that provides sick leave—I would have drawn my pay while I was off work and that sick pay would have been tax free. As a cab driver, I got nothing. There are hundreds of thousands of Americans who are always in mortal fear of being sick even a single day. They cannot afford to lose a day's pay.

Even this is only part of the story of free enterprise. In October 1953, I was again driving a cab in Boston. I had a master's degree in political science but no prospect of a job in any branch of government. Sen. Joe McCarthy was then at the peak of his power and to get a job as a ward attendant in a Massachusetts mental hospital one had to take an oath to support the constitutions of Massachusetts and the United States. In addition, one had to swear that one did not belong to any group or party attempting to overthrow the government by force and violence. (If you could do all that, they allowed you to spoon feed imbeciles and clean their rear ends when they went to the toilet. I did all that.)

One night, I was stabbed in the back in front of a Boston nightclub. Some people took me to the emergency ward of Beth Israel Hospital (which was the closest hospital to my furnished room). I was bleeding badly. An intern examined me briefly and sent for a resident. The resident inserted a drain in the wound and had me placed on a gurney on which I spent the night. I was still waiting for a staff physician to visit me next morning. From 2 a.m. to 7 a.m., not a soul had come in to look at me.

I should explain here that I was dirty when I was brought in. Also, I was a cab driver. They asked me if I had hospital or medical insurance and, when I said I did not, that's how I earned a stretcher instead of a bed.

In the morning, I realized that I was being sloughed off as a charity case and was not being attended to. Somehow, I had the wits to call a nurse and utter the magic words: "I am a disabled veteran. Please contact the Veterans Administration and have them pick me up."

What I had done, Son, was to ask for socialized medicine, the vilest of all forms of Red, atheistic, communistic plots to undo the free-enterprise system and to topple the sacred doctor-patient relationship. When I got to the VA Hospital in Jamaica Plain, a team of neurosurgeons found that the knife had gone through my spinal column and that I had lost all my spinal fluid. In short, I was almost dead.

Under the laws of Massachusetts I could not sue the Beth Israel for malpractice or anything else. As a voluntary, nonprofit hospital, it could do as it pleased. Free enterprise, you see, means that charity cases have no right to squawk.

The man who saved my life at the VA was Dr. Thomas Matthew, a Negro neurosurgeon. When my parents came to the hospital, Dr. Matthew told them that he was going to leave the VA because his own people needed his help. Fifteen years later you could read about Dr. Matthew's help to his people. He was running a free bus line in the Watts area of Los Angeles, an integrated nonprofit hospital in Queens, and a nationwide Negro self-help organization for black economic growth. That, too, is free enterprise, but when Dr. Matthew began a free bus service in New York City, he had to run it outside the law because his buses violated the transit authority's monopoly. It did not make any difference that his "customers" were not being provided with adequate transportation, it was simply wrong to compete with the monopoly and that, too, is free enterprise. Public service has nothing to do with it.

As this is being written, President Nixon has given a pardon to Dr. Matthew, who had refused to pay



income taxes because he thought he could do more for his people by distributing his money to them directly instead of paying taxes to kill a Commie for Christ in Vietnam. But Dr. Matthew spent two months in a federal pen because his order of priorities starts at home, not on the moon, not in a defense plant, not in bringing to others a “democracy” we don’t have ourselves.

I have had many jobs since I began working at the age of 12 at Stoller’s Pharmacy in Brookline (illegally, because I was not yet 14). In several of these jobs there was some sort of pension plan, but by changing jobs I lost all claim to those pensions. **[When I eventually retired from The Plain Dealer in 1984, my pension for 20 years of service was a grand \$131 a month, and my union, the Newspaper Guild, would not lift a finger to do anything about it.]**

At the Boston *Herald-Traveler*, for example, the guild decided to forgo part of a wage increase to obtain a pension plan. Thus, the pension plan was worth cash to me, my cash. But I got nothing. At other jobs, pension plans had been set up before I worked there, but my work still had something to do with the worth of the plan. I got nothing back, and when I am too old to work, I still get nothing. **[Actually, \$131 a month.]**

A system that worries about the profitability of multimillion-dollar corporations but cannot concern itself about the 20 per cent of its people that earns only 5 per cent of its pay cannot be expected to set up a system of transferable pensions. Unions that are more concerned about keeping professional union bosses in high-paying office cannot worry about such things. And so, nothing is done.

The same thing applies to a system of guaranteed income that would see a workingman through illness or disaster. Free enterprise is against that sort of thing because it would mean governmental interference with the free marketplace—and that would be a transgression against the holy of holies.

Nevertheless (and it’s nasty of me to mention it) the theory has long been circumvented. The Social Security System, which was violently opposed by the defenders of 100 per cent free enterprise, shows that the United States is willing to temper doctrine with economic justice. The same thing applies to the child-labor laws, building codes, regulation of drugs and narcotics, almost all safety requirements, and a host of other intrusions into cut-throat free enterprise. It was because of the child-labor laws, for example, that my first job was illegal. But I worked just the same because we needed the \$4 a week I earned by working after school every day from 3:30 to 9 and all day Saturday and Sunday. When the school inspector came around, I picked up a comic book and pretended that I was just another browsing customer.

It is cheaper for the Stollers of the United States to hire little boys who may not legally work elsewhere. They’ve got those boys by the balls. If the boys ask for more money, they are told they can find another job. (And, of course, Stoller paid no Social Security taxes for me, nor did he deduct them from my pay.)

Free enterprise is a myth that is recalled each time some new social legislation is proposed. What surprises me is that so many Americans, even the poor nomadic tomato pickers in Celina, believe that the system works to their advantage. Nothing in America, however, is free. There is a price tag on everything and it usually carries added charges for interest on the unpaid balance, and the unpaid balance in the United States is immense: the highest infant mortality rate among industrialized nations of the world; children who do not get enough to eat and who suffer from malnutrition; slums and more slums; pollution of the environment; destruction by flood, and a host of other correctable shames.

(You may well wonder why I include floods, since these are natural occurrences. It should be apparent that a rich country like the United States can afford to solve unemployment and flood damage while at the same

time creating an abundance of cheap hydroelectric power and water by simply going to work and regulating all its river systems as it has in the Tennessee Valley. This, too, would violate the rights of free enterprisers who now sell power made from expensive fuels that also pollute the air. Even TVA was fought tooth and nail as one of President Roosevelt's "socialist" pipedreams.)

By the time you read this, the United States may well have adopted a national health insurance plan and comparable social programs to make some of the advantages of living in the world's richest nation available to all the people. But by that time, new problems will have arisen.

It is estimated that by the year 2000, Americans will need to work only 28 hours in a four-day week. Unless something is done to make the environment pleasant, to afford people the use of beaches and parks and recreational facilities, the extra free time will not do any good. There must be planning even for the use of leisure time. Americans, who are masters at planning complex technical and mechanical things, have not shown themselves to be equally competent at planning the environment. Their cities have become daytime employment centers and frightening places where only the brave may roam at night. Do you think that men will be able to use all that extra time just in doing chores around their suburban homes?

What I am suggesting, of course, is that America must cope with its internal problems, to make America a place in which life is not only pleasant but worthwhile, in which all share the bounties of their marvelous technological achievement. I am not advocating elimination of the rich by the creation of an egalitarian society, I just want to have the wealth spread around more equitably. And I want the government to limit its foreign-aid programs to economic and social good instead of what is now euphemistically called military assistance.

What the gun traffic really accomplishes is to keep the rest of the world buying U.S. arms—at the cost of other, socially useful spending—while at the same time keeping the U. S. arms industry going at full blast.

There is an irony in all the free-enterprise, doctor-patient relationship business that has always made me see red (lower case!). Here's a for-instance in which I shall mention no names.

On the floor of the House they are arguing about medicare. A Republican gets up and talks about the need to guarantee the patient's right to choose his own doctor and the threat to freedom that any encroachment on the doctor-patient relationship would be another blow against American freedom and democracy. He finishes his speech and feels ill. He had had a heart attack. And where is he taken? Not to a private hospital where they charge \$80 a day for a semiprivate room plus extras. Not to the office of his doctor, who will bill him \$25 for taking an electrocardiogram. No. He's a congressman. He gets taken to Walter Reed, a military hospital, where the army doctor, of course, was chosen by our Republican friend merely because of those shiny eagles on his collar, and his inability to send a bill!

This sort of socialized medicine is available to all members of Congress and all occupants of the White House. The taxpayers saw to it, for example, that President Eisenhower recovered from all manner of ailments, including two heart attacks, at the taxpayers' expense.

P.S. Eisenhower was against socialized medicine.

## **The Diploma Mill**

There is no universal standard of education in the United States, and there never will be. The United States is a federal republic. Each state has its own standards and in each state local school boards decide on the basis of economic, not social, factors whether they can afford to exceed those standards. Perhaps this is as it should be, but I doubt it. Yet I have no doubt that every school in every state should meet the same standards. They do not do so now.

The reason for the disparity is quite simple. Each school board runs its schools according to its own standards. Among the factors that must be considered are the tax base, density of population, economic activity of the area, proximity to a university, and a host of other.

Had you grown up in Celina, you would have received an adequate education, but not a good one. Still, you would have been fortunate to go to school in Celina where the schools are modern and bright and in which the pupil population is large enough to justify a choice of courses and activities. Celina schools would have done better than to give you 12 years of compulsory education meeting the requirements of Ohio. You might have been less lucky if we had lived in Maria Stein, a few miles to the south, where the schools do not have either the tax base or the denser population of Celina to draw from. There you would have received an education meeting the Ohio standards, but no more. Still, that would have been superb compared to Mendon, a few miles north of Celina. The Mendon schools have an annual graduating class of a dozen, and it is absolutely impossible to provide anything approaching an adequate education.

The children of Mendon suffer this deprivation because of a local loyalty to a high school basketball team that would stop wearing the Mendon colors if the school were merged into Celina's. It's a high price to pay for a losing basketball team.

(The Mendon schools were merged into the Celina City School District later.)

But even in Celina, all children are not guaranteed the same level of education. Running parallel to the public schools is a totally separate system of Catholic schools with Immaculate Conception High School at its apex. The nuns of the Society of the Precious Blood and their few lay assistants cannot make ends meet. The school buildings are not adequate and the teaching suffers. Education is a costly business and even the nuns have to be clothed and fed and housed.

(ICHS has been closed, and the children now attend Celina High School.)

Catholic children have an equal right to quality education. If their parents follow the teachings of their church and prefer these separate and second-rate schools for reasons of conscience, it is proper in the American system of toleration to permit them this choice. But it is improper in the American system of equality before the law that these parents should be forced to pay local school taxes while their children do not benefit from those schools.

It is too easy an answer to say that the doctrine of separation of church and state prevents the use of public funds to ensure that children in these schools receive the education that society wants them to have. And there is a perfectly legal way in which such assistance can be given—as is demonstrated in several Mercer County school districts just south of Celina where the population is 100 per cent or just less than 100 per cent Catholic. In St. Henry, for example, the schools are public schools but the children go into a separate building for religious instruction as part of their school day. In Fort Recovery, the school system rents former parochial

schools for most of the school day to provide public education to Catholic children. In other times, the school belongs to the church and is used for religious instruction.

I realize that these are evasions of the spirit of the law, but they are effective compromises to make sure that each child gets out of a school all that the school can possibly give him. That may not be legal, but it is just.

One way of equalizing the disparity from school to school is by the use of federal aid to education. When this was proposed, it was attacked as being yet another invasion of the sacred free-enterprise system that gives local nonprofessionals the say over matters of education by winning elections on such issues as the won-and-lost record of the football coach or the incidence of pregnancy among high school girls. It is up to these housewives, dentists, factory workers, and farmers to select the books to be used and the scope of the curriculum. They also decide on the bricks to be used in their schools and to which teachers to grant tenure. Most of these people are honest and mean the very best for the children; it is not their fault that they simply do not know enough about education to make good choices and decisions. In small towns, unfortunately, they cannot be professionals because teachers do not get elected to school boards and there are no university professors and other pedagogues around to run the system properly. In large cities, it becomes even more complex, and less honorable. Schools in “good” neighborhoods somehow attract the experienced, capable teachers while those in the slums must make do with substitutes and student-teachers. Color comes into this, as do factors of ethnic origin and other variables that should have nothing to do with the idea that each child should get the best possible education.

That type of education in the United States, therefore, is only available in the well-to-do suburbs of very large cities, where the houses cost \$40,000 and up [**or, in 2001 terms, about \$200,000**] and where colleges of education can employ the schools as laboratories for their future teachers. Such schools can afford to pay teachers what they deserve, and a few of them do.

These rich bedroom communities can build cathedrals of learning and provide the breadth, which allows students to obtain maximum possible preparation for life. But, I ask you, is this fair? Is it proper that one child’s education should be inferior to another’s because his parents cannot afford to live in the Newtons, Oak Parks, Scarsdales, and Shaker Heights of the United States? Aren’t children in Maria Stein and Mendon just as good as children in these Poshvilles?

The realization that perhaps they were came right after the Russians put sputnik in orbit. Suddenly the United States went on a soul-searching, self-accusatory bender by going all-out to improve the teaching of science. This was done, as it must always be done in the United States, under the label of national security. To provide test tubes to the chemistry lab in Celina High School, the U.S. Congress had to pass the National Defense Education Act. Note the “defense.” That did it. That overcame the resistance to federal meddling in the right of local school boards to put more emphasis on the color of the football uniforms or the cut of the marching band’s monkey suits than on the teaching of little kids. Suddenly, the opposition melted away. Everybody went after the money available under Title This or Title That. (The same thing happened when the United States decided that it needed decent highways to link its major centers, so it passed the National Defense Interstate Highway Act.)

Education from kindergarten through high school is only part of the process. High school diplomas are not enough to get good jobs any more. America has become a post-industrial society in which fewer and fewer people need to work less and less time to produce all that America can use or export. Keeping the kids in school longer, and giving them added training for taking their places in society, makes good economic sense. I

am not sure it makes educational sense because all institutions of higher learning are not alike any more than the primary or secondary schools are. And again, federal aid to education comes through to the universities and colleges in the form of national defense grants, or by subsidies from large corporations. There is no direct aid to colleges and universities on the basis of the students' needs, except in those few states where there are real state universities. **[I was primarily thinking in 1969 of California, where the state university system was free to all residents, and, in a smaller sense, of the College of the City of New York, which was free (along with Hunter College and Brooklyn College) to all residents of the city. They are not free any more.]**

*Dayton is lucky to have [Sinclair Community College](#): which is affordable to Montgomery County residents due to a property tax that subsidizes it.*

All state universities, of course, are not really state universities. Some are merely custodial institutions to hold back the flood of young people in the hope that economic growth will provide enough jobs by the time they are graduated to give all of them a job. Some such universities are required to accept all high school graduates who are residents of the state without exclusion for bad marks. In these “universities” there is a frightful failure rate in the first year that permanently mars the young people who are told that they are useless and should be digging ditches, repairing cars, or washing diapers instead of mooching off the generous taxpayers who underwrite some of the cost of the institutions.

The legislators who pat themselves on the back because they have provided “equal opportunity” to all children in the state—totally forgetting that they, the legislators, are responsible for the inequalities in the high schools that had not properly motivated or trained these youngsters in the first place.

Some private colleges and universities are also worthless, although others provide fine education. But something funny happens. The schools that have the least need for private generosity and tax support are the ones that get the most. They are, after all, the best schools, the Harvards, MITs, Princetons, and Yales. The money does not go to potty little community colleges in old insurance company buildings in Celina or to other schools that are desperately struggling to balance their budgets.

Yet the few fine schools cannot accept all who apply. They must be selective. Some have tried to shed their images as schools for the sons of gentlemen who are expected to get no grades higher than C by opening their doors to the poor and by granting scholarship assistance. But the fine profs, the capable instructors do not go to teach in Celinas; they try for jobs in the Ivy League and the good state universities. So the children who end up in the second- and third-rate schools are short-changed not only in terms of money, but also in terms of the kinds of education they can get there.

Most of what is wrong with American education—from kindergarten through graduate school—can be attributed to money, shortage of money. Even the best schools, despite their huge endowments and their constant begging from their alumni, have to fiddle to make ends meet. There is only limited federal aid, most of it defense-oriented. Would it not make sense that a country that puts such emphasis on university education would also give the universities—and all of the schools of the nation—money?

I do not think that by 1980 you will find schools like the old English High School in the South End of Boston that was torn down soon after I was liberated from it. But let me describe it to you so that you can picture a school for 2,500 boys, in the richest country on earth in the year 1945.



The school was built around 1865 and once housed both the English High School and the Public Latin School. Latin moved out when it was given a new building during that socialistic period called the New Deal. English then took over both halves. The place was stone and wood, unbelievably dirty, a firetrap with wooden staircases. It did not have a gym and when we took exercises and worked up a sweat, there was no place to shower. There was no place to change, either. And the bathrooms were flooded in urine and smelled so bad that neither I nor my best friend ever entered one in our three years in Boston's second-best high school.

When the old place was torn down, there were no funds to build a new English High. When we left Boston in 1960, EHS was housed in a building from which the Commercial Arts High School had simply been evicted. I don't know where Boston now sends boys who want to study business.

I did not bring this up to personalize what I am trying to say. All over America, there are school buildings like that old firetrap. Your mother taught reading in one in Cleveland. There's no money for schools. Besides, if those bastardly poor people would only curb their sexual appetites, or take the pill, or get castrated, we wouldn't need so many schools for their miserable children who can be "scientifically" proven to be inferior in intellect, worthless, stupid, inherently criminal, lazy, good for nothing. Then we wouldn't have to spend so much on theirs and could spend more on ours—the bright, well-behaved, well-motivated children of the school board members and their friends.

As this is written there is a fight on in many parts of the United States for community control of the schools. What this is all about is an attempt by the parents to have some say over the conditions in the schools to which they send their children. The demand is not being heard in the white, middle-class suburbs. It is being heard in the slums, mainly in slums filled with what are now being called minority groups. These include areas housing Mexicans, Indian reservations, and Puerto Rican and black neighborhoods. **[Of course, we cannot call them slums anymore. They are now "the inner city," where hospitals have become "health centers" and the projects have been turned into "housing estates."]**

But education is only one part of this movement. There is also pride. No parent can stand idly by while his or her children are being taught that their value systems are wrong, that the values of the white, north European culture that acquisition of property and power is all that has meaning. America, despite its own image of itself, is not yet the melting pot that also acts as a blender to make everyone think alike. Some cultural traits of some groups may even reject the foundations of the value system that the schools have been seeking to indoctrinate. It is not just a question of teaching black history to blacks but a negation of the idea that white is right and that money is king. For Americans it is a shock that there could be people who don't value money over other things. This is why America has failed so miserably with the Indians—who believe that their community, not their individual interests, is what life is all about. Maybe that's why the young rebels of this era cheer for the Indians in movies where the Indians are the victims of American genocide. These youngsters have gained the insight that the system in which they live is wrong, so they chant for Uncle Ho, cheer the Indians, burn their draft cards, and charge into Chicago cops. These militant youngsters have usually had the best education that America can offer and could easily melt into the power system of the country, to move into their fathers' jobs as chairmen of the board of big corporations or as generals of the army. They have turned their backs on all this because the system that produced them makes them vomit.

These young people believe with Thomas Jefferson (a Comsymp) and Henry Adams (another) that only a revolution can make America into a democratic society. Some of them may have read Jefferson and Adams, but that is not what made them radical. It started over civil rights (my generation of college students being that silent one that was cowed by Sen. Joe McCarthy and the witch hunt that accompanied him).

It was students who sat in at soda fountains to insist that blacks be served. It was students who rode in interstate buses to test the right of anyone to ride in any empty seat and to demand equal service at restaurants and gas stations at which the buses stopped. It was students who picketed Woolworth stores in the North to desegregate soda fountains in Woolworth stores in the South. It was students who made up the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Congress of Racial Equality, and other groups that slowly evolved from mild-mannered protest groups into militant activist organizations. It was students who manned the Mississippi Summer Project and it was students who paid with their lives in that effort.

It was students who enrolled in those citadels of white supremacy, Ole Miss, Georgia Tech, the University of Alabama. Those students, the most qualified black volunteers that could be found, would have had no trouble entering Harvard, or Yale, or Princeton. It was students who braved the screaming, spitting, cursing whites outside Central High School in Little Rock. It was children, some younger than you are as I write, who fought the fight for equality. It was they who were spit on. It was they who were assaulted in the schools. It was they who were ostracized. It was their young shoulders that had to bear that huge burden.

They grew older. The children who “integrated” Central High School soon found that they were in an all-black high school. The graduates of Ole Miss suddenly faced the draft. There was a war to be fought, a war to protect the democracy of South Vietnam. So the civil rights movement slowly turned into an antiwar movement, too. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was loudly condemned, even by black leaders, for his opposition to the war, but Dr. King knew that the war was just another facet of the rottenness that was pervading the American system. Besides, he also knew that black casualty rates in Vietnam were higher than the black percentage of the U.S. population. Dr. King never said so, but perhaps he sensed that the United States of America was finding the final solution of the Negro problem (to use Heinrich Himmler’s phrase about the eradication of the Jews) by sending black men off to be killed. Dr. King, holder of the Nobel Peace Prize, was condemned for opposing war. And, in the normal way of doing things in America, the problem of Dr. King was soon solved, too. He was killed.

Student protest about civil rights and the war, however, was bound to create protest in other areas as well. Those students who decided that being against the war was not enough, that the other side should win, were turning off the frequency on which the national message was being sent. They had to look to other sources and found Marx, Lenin, Mao, Trotsky, Stalin, and Ho, some even found American heroes like Wesley Everest, Joe Hill, and John Brown. Others turned themselves off by turning to a culture in which drugs could tune out the bad frequencies and tune in pleasant, though hazardous, euphorias. Still others left the country—and about 20,000 are now scattered across Canada, all sharing your American birthright.

**[When Sweden issued a stamp in 1980 to honor its native, Joe Hill, my Sunday stamp column in The Plain Dealer ran the entire folk song about him, emphasizing that he had been shot by a Utah firing squad for being a member of the Industrial Workers of the World. To my surprise, the local AFL-CIO paper asked permission to reprint my piece.]**

The question you will still have to answer in 1980 is what happened to these young people as they have become ten years older. Have they seized the diploma mills, have they changed them, have they made them meaningful? Are the schools still spewing out young people who hate themselves and all that they see around them because the schools taught them that they are no good? Or has there been change? Are the kids still demonstrating, or have they won their battle (and these kids are the ones who were born since you were, who have followed in the footsteps of the children who started with civil rights and went on from there)?

[It grieves me, late in 2001, to find that the generation of the '60s simply folded its tents and joined the mainstream after Nixon resigned. They got as busy as everybody else in making money, divorcing and remarrying at breakneck speed, and copping out of politics. By the 1994 election, fewer than 30 per cent of Americans even bothered to vote. Nobody, but nobody, was protesting anymore, as if all the problems of society had been solved. Americans had to look elsewhere to see popular outcry, to national strikes in France, to national flight and peaceful revolution from East Germany and to a Solidarity-led overhaul in Poland.]

As you read this, you will be approaching draft age. Even if the draft has long since disappeared, there will still be a way of getting young men like you into uniform to fight for shoddy goals. And this presents your greatest moral problem about making your choice for or against U.S. citizenship. Some wars are for freedom; some wars are against it. Under the doctrines first set out at Nürnberg, you and you alone must decide whether the war you must fight is a just war, whether you approve of your country's goals. If you disagree with the war, you should refuse to obey because only your head and your heart can sit in judgment on a war. You are a moral court. You are its sole judge and jury.

Your mother and I disagree on this. She opposed emigration by those who face the draft. In her view, they should fill the jails, argue with their sergeants and their officers, make the army itself the place to fight the battle against the war. I disagree. I think she is asking these young people to pay too high a price for America's sins. Why should they pay when the war they are asked to undermine is not their war?

For you it will be much easier. If the United States has not changed drastically, you can simply kiss it off. Why should you wear its uniform to replace an elected government somewhere with a tyrant or to protect the tyrant from the people he has oppressed?

But let me warn you most emphatically. **It is better to try to change injustice than to turn your back on it.** I realize that in my position as a voluntary exile I can hardly moralize on this; yet, if the future of the United States did not greatly concern me, I would not be writing this.

*I guess the above (bolded by David) line was my preordained mantra statement. I have refused to accept injustice (or ineptness) as Standard Operating Procedure .*

## The City

Throughout history men have predicted the death of cities. The predictions have all been wrong. The cities have not died, they have only changed—and not always for the worst. In our own times, the cities have undergone changes that have taxed man's ingenuity but have not been solved—and I doubt that they will ever be solved—because solving them means destroying the city.

In very brief outline, what has happened is that the industrial revolution concentrated more and more people into the cities, bringing several of them over the 10-million mark. Predictions for the rest of this century indicate that several cities may end the century with more than 20 million people.

Such concentration has required not only vast expansions of public services such as sewerage, waste disposal, water supply, garbage removal, health facilities, transportation, and distribution of the necessities of life, but has also resulted on new living styles in which people are crowded into housing that is stacked vertically, reducing the open land available for play and recreation.

To see how cities looked before the industrial revolution, one need only travel in the less developed parts of

the world, where streets are pedestrian passages that wind and twist and climb up steps and where the middle of the street is a ditch to carry away the wastes from the shops and houses on its sides. In Venice, each house has a pipe that simply drops the wastes outside into the natural sewers called canals.

Stacking upward doesn't permit this. You would not like your upstairs neighbor's wastes splashing on your window. Nor would you want the refuse from your neighbor up the hill flowing past your house (though this may explain why rich people in old books always seemed to find hills to live on).

The industrial revolution also brought the need to ship things and so the railroads cut swaths into the hearts of cities, and the streets were widened to allow heavier traffic to pass. The car added to the change. Parking places had to be made available where the cars could be left because leaving them at curbside only blocked the street (as has been demonstrated in city after city from Rome to Boston).

Not all cities met the challenges in the same way, and the newer cities (U.S. cities can be considered new in this context when they are compared to places like Rome, London, or Damascus) and had advantages in that the changes needed there were of far lesser magnitude. (They did not, for example, have to tear down their walls as Paris and Barcelona did.) But American cities had problems faced in few of the cities of the Old World and it is in these specifically American developments that the challenges could only be met as long as there was a will to do so. In my view, that determination to react positively has been diminished to a point where the death of the American city may appear imminent to those to whom change is something to be detested. I think the cities will continue to exist, even the U.S. cities that have had funeral orations pronounced over them.

This is not to say that those cities will be pleasant places in which to live; but one reason cities have so long been considered evil places is that cities have never really been pleasant places in which to live. They have only been marvelous for the rich who had servants to do their work and who could afford to overlook the misery that was always rampant in places where the poor lived. They have always been brutal places in which one of the entertainments was to attend a hanging, a chop of the guillotine, or the drawing and quartering or the burning at the stake of someone who did not conform to the whims and fancies of those who were top dog.

Democracy, also a fairly recent development, gave society a bit of a conscience as the vote spread from the landowners to the freedmen to all men and, finally, to women. The expansion of the suffrage brought reform.

In America, the cities also had a demographic challenge. Each new wave of people that came into the city encountered resistance from those who were already there and who feared the newcomers. Part of the fear was economic—they would take away jobs. Part of the fear was based on simple prejudice, rooted in the antagonisms that Christianity has brought in its wake. Protestant Yankees put up signs to keep the Catholic Irish out and the Catholic Irish did not want to share their churches with the still-later Italians because of cultural prejudice. None of the Christians wanted to have anything to do with the Eastern European Jews who fled the pogroms in Russia.

Each newcomer came with nothing but what he could carry. He started at the bottom of the economic structure and faced the most dreadful conditions in working his way out of what amounted to industrial slavery. Obviously, each such group banded together in an area of the city where it could live its life in its own style while mutual-aid groups could ameliorate some of the hardships.

As a group settled down in the New World and gained economic and political strength, it left its first neighborhood for finer homes, often driving another group out in the process. This was all so normal that I

grew up in Boston with the idea that it followed an immutable pattern of the human condition as found in all cities.

I knew just what sort of people lived in what parts of Boston and in which neighborhood they had lived previously. The Jews, for example, had started in the West End, at the foot of Beacon Hill, and had moved from there to either Chelsea or Roxbury-Dorchester-Mattapan. In my youth, R-D-M Jews were starting to move to Brookline while some from Chelsea filled the vacuum left in R-D-M by those who had moved out. As R-D-M could no longer draw from Chelsea, that Jewish area began to contract. (The beautiful Temple Mishkan Tefilla, facing Franklin Park, was sold to a black activist for \$1 and is now a deserted hulk.) Meanwhile, the Jewish concentration in Brookline began to spill into Newton. As this is written, R-D-M is no longer an area of Jewish settlement of any significance. It is black.

When I went to English High School, all of Boston's Negroes (there were fewer than 50,000) lived in that area of the South End centering on East Newton Street and Columbus Avenue. (English High was in the dilapidated fortress of a building a few blocks away that I described earlier.) The Arabs and Armenians were in other parts of the South End and were just starting to move into Watertown. The Italians were in East Boston and in the North End. The Irish were in South Boston, which they shared with the Poles and Lithuanians, and in some parts of Dorchester. The well-to-do Irish had moved into Jamaica Plain, West Roxbury, and Roslindale.

This explains why the birthplace of John F. Kennedy is now in a Jewish area. The Kennedys—and other Irish families—moved out of the Coolidge Corner section of Brookline when the Jews moved in. And now the Jews have moved out of R-D-M as the blacks moved in. But there is a difference. The Jews are white!

Despite the religious antagonisms that Christianity fostered, despite its crusades (in which Jews were slaughtered as acts of faith) and its pogroms (in which Jews were just slaughtered), despite “final solutions” and pales of settlement (by which Russia limited area in which Jews were allowed to live), despite ghettos and restrictive covenants, despite American Nazis and the German-American Bund and despite the Irish anti-Semites who followed Father Charles Coughlin, there is more in common between an anti-Semite and a Jew than there is between a white man and a black man ... and that common bond is white skin.

When I was in high school, I knew that the only professions from which Jews were absolutely barred in America were engineering and banking. I knew that these restrictions were falling. I knew that my mother was right when she said that the only thing that keeps the American system going (and kept the Jews “safe” from pogroms) was that there was always one group that everybody could turn against—the Negroes.

With only some 50,000 Negroes in Boston, the problem could hardly be detected. Elevator girls in Filene's and Jordan Marsh's deinked their hair and pretended to be Filipinos (who, for some reason that has always escaped me, were acceptable then to white America). The garbage men in Boston were white. So were the janitors. When you went to the movies, it was a white teenager such as most of the boys in my neighborhood including me and my best friend Johnny Bowles, [**whose name I later used for the hero of my novel, “Comrades Avenue Us”**] who kept the carpets clean with a shovel on the end of a stick. We even had to clean out the toilets.

But Johnny and I walked to school every day because we could not afford the nickel carfare and we walked down East Newton Street. We saw the Negro women going off in the morning to jobs in white people's homes and we realized that it was the women who were supporting their families. We did not find this strange because Johnny's father was dead and mine was away. Our mothers supported us, too.



Even after the war, as more Negroes were being automated off the farms in the South and as more of them came to Boston, I was still naïve enough to believe that as the group finds its root and gains economic and political power—as the Irish and the others had done in Boston—they would simply move upward and outward, and that would be that.

But that isn't the way it works. Negroes have black skins and the jobs that went with economic growth were not opened to them. The South End filled up with poor black people and they spread out beyond the South End, but this migration was unlike the previous ones. Although blacks sang "We Shall Overcome," poverty could not be overcome.

The sociologists and the social workers studied the problem and came away muttering. Negroes were simply not like other people, they said, and were unable to assimilate, unable to melt into that famous melting pot. They did not question themselves as to whether their white values or their white ethics may not have been irrelevant to these black people. Nor did they ask the obvious question about assimilation: How can black people melt into the environment when their skins immediately mark them? They pointed instead to the Japanese and Chinese in assimilating into the U.S. system, but overlooked the oppression of these groups on the West Coast, the tong wars in Chinatown, the oppression of their own people by Chinese oligarchs, and, most importantly, the cultural heritage that the Chinese and Japanese were permitted to carry to America as part of their baggage. Slaves had brought no baggage and were even relieved of their religions, languages, and family systems.

Then there was the welfare system, which provided relief only to women with children when no man was in the house. This resulted in the disappearance of thousands of Negro men in the 1960 census in Boston who feared that if the census found them, their wives and children would starve. I worked in that census as a crew leader; I know that black men simply ran when they saw census enumerators coming.

But the migration of Southern Negroes to the North was only part of what was happening to the cities. The Chinese Wall of Boston did as much damage as the San Francisco earthquake of 1905 and not a soul protested.

The Chinese Wall is an expressway. Before it was built, the process had already begun. Along the banks of the Charles River was a lovely park, which offered a way to walk into town from where we lived and where we often spent the evening on a hot summer night when the heat of our tenement became too oppressive. That park was removed to make room for Boston's first expressway, Storrow Drive. Soon it had to be linked to others, and so they drew their highway maps through the parks of the Fens and through the Italo-American North End. The Italian community that had settled around the Old North Church and Paul Revere's house was suddenly divided in two, separated by an elevated expressway that left people on one side and their stores and churches on the other.

The expressway brought in more cars and so more homes had to be pulled down, more parks desecrated, more trees cut down. In their place came parking lots and garages.

Soon these were not enough. The expressways became clogged. Unthinkingly, the people stood by as more expressways tore into, through, under, and over their city. More parking lots. More traffic jams.

**[Thankfully, in 1995, at huge cost, Boston began one of America's greatest public works projects. It decided to bury the Chinese Wall (the Central Expressway) in what was called the Big Dig. A new tunnel, named for Ted Williams, was begun under Boston Harbor, and some of the damage of the old**

**Chinese Wall would be repaired 40 years later. It was as courageous a move as Toronto's in 1971 that had stopped construction of the Spadina Expressway, which would have put a Chinese Wall through Toronto.]**

In 1955, I walked up to the State House to testify at a public hearing on a fare increase by what was then the Metropolitan Transit Authority. My friends laughed at me and my boss made fun of me. But even that far back I was able to make three points to the hostile senators and representatives that I would still make today: most cars on the expressways have only the driver in them while buses and streetcars carry hundreds; lowering fares could attract those lost passengers back to public transit and allow it to pay its way, but even if it were not to run in the black, raising fares would be the wrong way to meet the deficit. I suggested that better service at less cost was the way to run public transit and that if there were a deficit it should come from taxes. You should have seen the incredulity!

*And after cutting routes last year, as gas prices rise and public transit becomes more viable, RTA in Dayton raises fares. This is why giving only one kind of business incentive tax credit- for employees that can walk to work - is an idea whose day, I believe, is here.*

**[For the record, all downtown buses in Seattle run without charging fares. Seattle has built a huge bus tunnel—which may someday carry light rail, as well—through downtown so the buses can get from one end of town faster than cars can up in the cluttered streets. Seattle did in the 1980s and 1990s what I was urging the Massachusetts General Court to do in 1955.]**

What bothered me then was that I was all alone, a \$40-a-week clerk at a Boston newspaper trying to fight the battle that city council and all those goody-goody civic organizations should have been fighting. But they did not even come. (The fare went up.)

When I went back to Boston in 1962 from Celina, I was so shocked by what I found that I wrote this column for *The Daily Standard*:

There is a song in “My Fair Lady” about the street where Eliza Doolittle lives, which includes the words: “I have often walked down this street before.”

Recently, while on vacation, I walked on the street where I lived for many, many years. One side of the street is missing. Not a house remains.

The houses made way for “progress,” an extension of the Massachusetts Turnpike now being taken into the heart of downtown Boston. Everything nearby had to go.

Down went houses in which friends of mine grew up, which friends of mine gardened, which friends of mine loved and cared for.

Further along, the (Kenmore) Theater in which I ushered, a gas station in which the gang hung out, a restaurant with fast-service hamburgers, a Salvation Army shelter and the neighborhood post office all fell in the way of the bulldozers.

Along the side of Fenway Park, valuable commercial properties have disappeared. Many of the young men of the neighborhood had found their first part-time jobs in businesses that are no longer there. But, then, the neighborhood is no longer there, the homes the young men lived in are gone, and it is, alas, all on behalf of progress. ...

A neighborhood in a great city passes from view and no one except those affected

mourns its passing.

Gone are the buildings, the people, the landmarks. But the memories linger on and one wonders if it is all worth it. ...

All these factors that are changing the city can be solved with the same money that can solve the problems of the schools, the same money that can feed the hungry and house the homeless. Subsidies for public transport and total bans on downtown traffic (which exist in many cities of Europe) may seem drastic steps, but they are all that can keep the city center alive. In Boston it is too late. The city center has moved out to the suburbs and the city is a hollow shell. Almost as many people now go to work along Route 128 as come from the suburbs to work downtown. The only homes built downtown in 40 years are for the well-to-do. And the tax base is continuously reduced by tearing down more taxable property to build roads and to put up untaxable federal space research facilities and more diploma mills.

The pattern of movement from neighborhood to neighborhood has ended. The neighborhoods are being destroyed. Boston, which had 800,00 people in the 1940 census, was down to 600,000 in the 1960 census. So, instead of having more money to solve its problems, the opposite is true and Boston, like other cities in the United States, must look to the State House or the halls of Congress for aid.

And that aid is not forthcoming because the city in the middle of the megalopolis is not where the voters live. They live in their neat and not-so-neat suburbs and have their own school systems, their own police forces, their own fire departments. And they don't give a damn what happens to Boston or Cleveland or New York or any other city.

This might have been their reaction even if the black people had not moved into the vacuum left by white flight to the suburbs. When I was a kid, living in Brookline, I knew that the Town of Brookline was predicated on the idea that it was a wealthy suburb for people who did not want to live in Boston because Boston was full of Irishmen. All over Brookline there were big estates. The estates are gone now and their former occupants now live farther out. But the idea lives on. Only the cast is different. Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and the South End are parts of Boston; Brookline is not.

But the representatives of Brookline, or of any other suburb, cannot hope for re-election if money from its people is funneled to Boston. It's even worse than Cleveland where Shaker Heights at least is in the same county, and county funds can be used in Cleveland. But Brookline has it made. It is in another county, as are Cambridge, Somerville, Medford, and the cities and towns of Boston's North Shore. Boston will have to suffer alone.

The cities are suffering and will suffer more. Garbage piles up because the cities cannot meet the demands of unions seeking a living wage. Schools close because they run out of money (this is common practice in Ohio in December). Hospitals shut down vital services because the city cannot meet added payroll and the workers cannot eat on what they get. Subways grind to a stop. Telephones don't work and the power fails because the cities are taxing these utilities to capacity and old Ma Bell puts profits before service as do the money-grubbing investor-owned utilities (which Sen. Lee Metcalf simply refers to as IOUs).

These calamities do not happen all at once—but someday they will, someday the whole kit and caboodle will all stop at the same time and there will be chaos and pestilence. But even now the United States Congress cannot vote funds to the cities for rat-control programs, while babies in their cribs are bitten. Congress and the State House in Boston or the Statehouse in Columbus, Ohio, simply cannot provide funds to build low-

cost housing downtown to bring the people back into the city. They cannot afford the funds to aid transit. There is money for highways because there is a highway lobby and a gasoline tax and the gas tax is in trust to keep on building more highways and tear down more houses.

No money for schools. No money for houses. No money for hospitals. No money for anything that makes the city or the country as a whole worth living in. But there is money, there is always money, for “defense” (read this to say the war in Vietnam), for sending men to the moon or to Mars, and for building supersonic plane so the rich can fly to the Riviera in an hour from New York and won’t miss any sleep, and for feeding half a million men whose job is to destroy Vietnam. (To America’s credit, Congress scrapped the SST, the fast plane to the sunshine.)

Sallust, who lived in the century before the birth of Jesus, wrote: “The venal city soon to perish if a buyer can be found.”

I regret to say that although I love Boston, there is no coin small enough I would want to part with for the purchase of Boston. This even though Boston still has attractions for me that I do not find in other U.S. cities.

## **Breakdown**

It is easy to say that the war in Vietnam is at fault in the breakdown of the United States. Unfortunately, that is not true. The war only caused the patchwork that was holding the system together to be put off. The fascist symbol of a bunch of twigs held together used to be on the dime but was replaced by a torch of freedom.

Like the Roman Empire and the British Empire, the American Empire cannot survive forever. I do not know if Romans or Britons could tell when their ascendancy had reached its highest point or if they could detect the beginning of the skid down. I do not believe the United States of America will decline the same way the old empires did, but I am convinced that what I have sought to describe is the beginning of that process. I do not think it follows that the process cannot be stopped. As a matter of fact, I am convinced it can be stopped and am equally convinced that the United States can be a country in which humanity can achieve all that it wants.

This, however, requires such a drastic change in the way things are done in the United States that I cannot have much hope for its happening. If I were a Marxist (Chief Kimbell Johnson please note!) I would have a simple solution for all this: revolution. This would replace the dictatorship of the rich, white, ruling class with a dictatorship of the proletariat. I don’t believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat, either. I have no belief in the natural goodness of a man simply because his father was a peasant or a working stiff, and I don’t like the idea that there has to be any dictatorship at all.

If I were a Socialist, I would be able to promise the people all manner of solutions by bad-mouthing the capitalists and promising pie in the sky when I take over. But I have seen Socialists come to power in England and merrily continue the system as they found it, keeping the House of Lords in Westminster. German Socialists even voted war credits to fight World War I in France.

If I were a Communist (Russian or Chinese brand), I could offer the usual Marxist slogans but spend my energies fighting off the bourgeois Socialists while allowing Hitler to assume power, meanwhile staging intermittent purges against my old comrades because they no longer pleased me.

The left of Marx, whether “interpreted” by Mao or “pragmatized” by powerful clerks in the Kremlin, has no answers for the problems of America.

The promise has to come from something new, something inherently American, something that holds high the values of the Declaration of Independence and the American's Creed while putting the words of the Fourth of July speech into practice.

I do not think it is to be found in the Democratic party or the Republican party in the United States. I do not think it is to be found (where Marxists would think it should be found) in the pussycat American labor movement, led by a gerontocracy of old men anxious to keep its own power. But I think it exists.

It exists in the heart of Dr. Thomas Matthew who is selling bonds all over America to give black men the economic power base that will give them access to the promise of America.

It exists in the heart of those who no longer laugh when a \$40-a-week clerk gets up before a legislative committee to plead for public transit to stop the freeways.

It is in the hearts of those who march against the war and for civil rights.

It is in the heart of those who worked so hard in the campaigns of Eugene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy in the belief that they could stop the war.

It is in the hearts of the GIs who came home and told about what went on in My Lai.

So far it is only in the heart. It has to be given birth. It must unite with the young people who no longer sit back and let the system pour them into the mold that the system has ordained for them. But let me make one point very clear!: The birth may be violent because every step will be taken to abort it. I would prefer that it came about peacefully, through democratic procedures.

This brings me right back to the quandary that made me leave the United States. I don't believe that the democratic procedures are working any more. I don't think the system is open to change.

Your task in 1980 will not be easy. You must try to judge a country. When we left Cleveland, we made the judgment for you.

**[And when we returned to Cleveland after this book was written, we again made the choice for you. It wasn't that things had improved in the United States. We simply could not afford to remain in Canada, where for our first 18 months there we had to pay taxes to both countries, putting me so far in the hole, that I could never dig my way out.]**

When we left Cleveland, we cared about our choice between Tweedledee and Tweedledum (who turned out to be Tweedlehuby and Tweedledick). We cared when we saw Gene McCarthy's kids being zapped by Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago police rioters. We were revolted by the fact that while the riot raged outside, delegates to the convention continued their charade inside and, when Sen. Abe Ribicoff of Connecticut came to the rostrum and protested against the violence, looking straight at Daley, Daley said, "Fuck you." Delegates singing "We Shall Overcome" had their mikes cut off while Daley's band played the Marine Hymn and other marches. Symbolic, isn't it?

What I have said is not very complimentary to the United States. I hope that by the time you read this, or better yet, long before you read this, sanity will have returned. But the real test is within you. The decision is one only you can make. Your choice is difficult but can be simply put: If you are still proud of being an American, be one; if you are ashamed, give it up. The United States can be a good place. Would that it will be in 1980.

Dad



## David's note

*Dear Dad,*

*I was lucky, I am a first-generation-American who never had to worry about if his parents would be shipped off. I am also lucky to be white, to have a name that doesn't scream that I'm Jewish to the uninformed, and that I had parents who believed it was as important to teach me about the left and right in politics, with a particular emphasis on what our rights are as Americans.*

*You made that decision to move back to the USA as you share in your afterword, but I made the decisions to serve, following in your footsteps in Special Forces. I made the decision to stand up for the little man, first with the garage doors, then the right to be heard, and then the right to have fair and honest choices in an election.*

*I know this book took you more hours to write than it took me to read (or all the people with whom we have now shared this treatise) but, it may be the greatest gift you could give me besides life itself. I have lived my life with one goal, and that is to be able to look back at my life with few regrets and to have kept things honest, yet interesting. I hope, even with some of the frustration I've bought you and Mom, that you can be proud of how I've chosen to stick to my guns, live by my principles that you instilled (but never forced) on me.*

*It would be the happiest day of my life, if you are there when I get sworn in to serve my country again, this time by the will of those I swear to represent (as opposed to the time I swore in to serve to protect on my own quest for a test of who I was).*

*But, if none of that comes to pass, and your message to me, written in what you thought was the depths of our countries greatest crisis, helps people understand what I believe is an even greater threat— that of apathy as freedom dies— and that it encourages just one true patriot to speak up, **to stop the secret meetings behind closed doors**, the denial of basic rights to those who aren't "white" enough, or "rich" enough or "smart" enough- then, maybe the torch will be passed, and passed again, and each time, it will burn a little brighter- until the torch of freedom is once again a shining light to all— of a country that was not only founded on the ideals of "all men are created equal" but that all are finally equal— and lady of justice isn't peeking out anymore, but is truly blind, fair and accessible to all.*

*If you thought the message in this book was worthy- please consider donating to my campaign for Congress. [www.esrati.com](http://www.esrati.com) Please don't forward this e-book, it is free for the download. Please, recommend this book to your friends, send an e-mail directing them to the site, put a mention on your site or blog, or write a review and trackback to:*

*[www.esrati.com/dearson](http://www.esrati.com/dearson) or leave your comments there.*

*If you paid before you read it- thank you. If you think the message was worth more than what you paid- please come back and give more.*

*If you are a foreign national, non-citizen or a PAC, or special-interest-group that is not allowed to donate— and you want to give, we will have a charity fund set up to give in my father's name.*

*Thank you.*

*David Esrati*

*December 24, 2007*

## **Afterword**

**And now I must recall that David not only came back to America, served in its Army, and ran for public office in Dayton, but that he also landed in jail in a case that went all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court because he appeared before the Dayton City Commission in a ski mask because, he said, “they did not want to see the face of the public.”**

**It no longer matters what he was protesting against; nor does it matter that the city spent a fortune on his prosecution on what ended up as a minor misdemeanor. What matters is that he eventually was paid \$100,000 in damages for false arrest, a sum that he had to share with the lawyers who fought the good fight for him.**

**But his arrest and persecution, oops, make that prosecution, were all part of what I had tried to warn him about. They were as American as apple pie.**

**Stephen G. Esrati**

**sometime after September 11, 2001 and before David’s decision to run for Congress.**

### **Colophon:**

The text is set in Adobe Garamond Pro. Quotes from old newspaper articles are set in ITC American Typewriter. David’s updates are in Helvetica Neu italic. The document was constructed in InDesign on a Mac. The cover, was designed by David Esrati for a websized JPG. One day, he’ll find time, and high rez files to make it look better.

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