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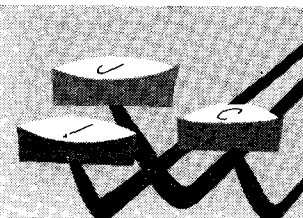
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Manner of Speaking



PREJUDICES AND DAMNATIONS: America is a youth-centered nation. The future has always been our mystique, and since the young will be around, by and large, for more of the future than we dotards can expect to see, we are forever ready to put our hope in the young and to cut down the trees that the light may fall upon the saplings.

Not only do Americans honor youth out of all fit proportion, but it has become every citizen's duty to stay young no matter what his age. Who praises Gramps for having acquired experience, perspective, and wisdom? The eulogist at his funeral, maybe; but while Gramps still lives, our highest praise is that he can still ride a bike or toss a baseball with the kids. Who praises Gramma for her maturity and understanding? The minister, maybe, in the course of his Mother's Day sermon. But in all the rest of the year her first glory is that she has kept her youthful figure.

The true, functioning priesthood of America is that arcane and holy order of scholars and magicians whose abbey is Madison Avenue and whose duty it is to create for us the image in which we shall live. Who does more than Saint Media to order our lives, set our goals, and technicolor our dreams? Who more than Saint Persuasion, whose ritual is Motivational Research, knows the truth of our souls? And to what have these blessed commanded us if not to eternal youth? Mother's one glory has been laid upon her as the duty to avoid sags, bumps, spreads, and wrinkles; father's to think young, live modern, and stay on the go.

We shall manage to love them, perhaps, when they lose character and begin to let age mark them, but we can love them only with a touch of shame; we cannot honor them, for they have failed themselves and us, and they have failed in their duty as Americans.

There is much to be said, in fact, in favor of legal euthanasia for any citizen over forty who loses his figure, cannot keep up with at least moderately fast doubles, and who cannot, after dancing all night, put in a hard-driving day at the office. Why should we withhold from him the kindness we dispatch to stray dogs by putting them away painlessly? As things are, any citizen over forty who loses his job is more than half dead at the employment office. Putting him out of the way is only one further step—and less than a

half-step at that—to letting the young have it all. Once folly has become the national passion why quibble about degrees of folly?

The fact is that every nation that has made youth its idol has marched to folly and ended in disaster. When muscle, stamina, agility, and all the athletic a-mentalities become the religion of a people, the following sacrament is always to go to war. Russia, Hitler's Germany, Franco's Spain, Mussolini's Italy, Tojo's Japan, and now Red China have all made a religion of their youth groups—and of war. The only real point of all that muscle, after all, is to flex it. And certainly it follows that the more muscle a nation commits itself to flexing, the less mind it will care to entertain. Youth is muscle and age is thought. Why let thought get in the way of our canonization of the young? Better to do away with the aged and the aging and let us get to our follies without interference from carping intellect.

AS for the young oafs of our national dream—and of every youth-bound national dream—they are not only willing to have it so; they take it for granted that it will be so. Parents have been serving them since birth; why change things now? Besides, the parents are, by now, well trained to obey. Maybe you haven't noticed it in your neighborhood, probably because all the other parents have been as well trained as you are; but speaking for my own family, I can report of our last year in Rome that we had not been in residence more than two months before the word all over the quarter in which we had our apartment was: "Isn't it wonderful how American parents obey their children!"

The Ciardi kids are, of course, special and should be—or in any case will be—obeyed. But what is there to prize in the rest of their dreary, pampered, overinflated, and underpowered generation? They have no values but their silly group. They were born and live in a mental uniform. They live in a patois far to one side of the mother tongue of mankind. The word "sir" has all but disappeared from the vocabulary of citizens under ninety. To ask of these young clods the discipline of study is to insult their arrogance. They have no legs to walk on, and if they do go on a pilgrimage around the

block, they cannot make it without holding a battery-powered radio to their ears. Nor can they so much as fall asleep without at least two radios and one TV set blaring in their rooms.

And *this* is the gold-plated generation to which we pass the all-but-gutted torch! Never fear their holding it high. They will mount it on top of a sports car and manage to fire it yet in some highway pile-up.

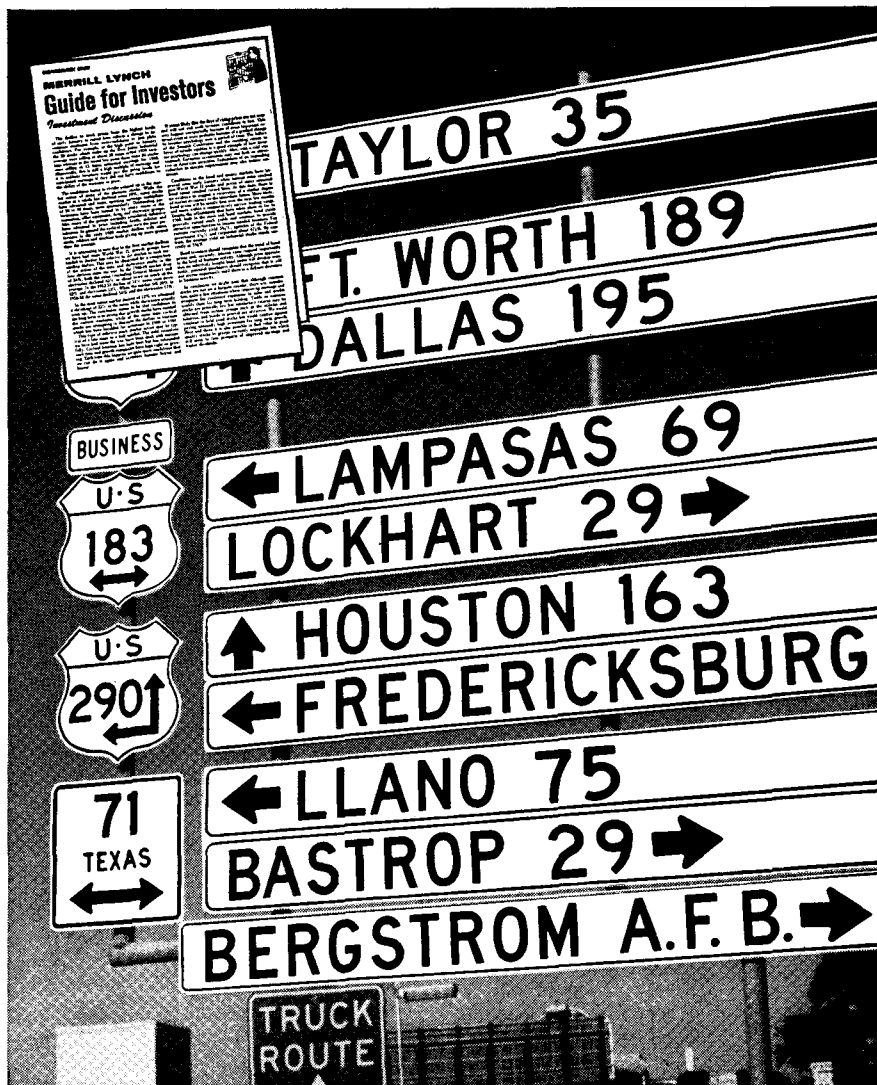
We have gone so far in our permissiveness that the idea of accepting the guidance of their elders seems an affront to these young. Several times after lectures I have run into college students who were flatly indignant at faculty regulations. "What right," one such oaf asked me last year at Duke, "has the college to make me take a language course." He actually suggested picketing the administration building.

I told him he was a sick and puny product of progressive education, permissive parents, and his own coddled ignorance, and that the university would probably do well to kick him out. It simply had never occurred to him that in applying for admission he had submitted himself to the standards set by the faculty and that it was not his job to remake those standards but to meet them as set. What I see as symptomatic in him was his assured assumption that his own ignorance was sufficient to define the educational standards of a great university. Nowhere in him could I find any recognition that his elders might know more than he or that they might be worth taking half-seriously, if only in sufferance.

The back of my hand to him—and the front of my doubt to his measly generation. The one hope I see is that there really are no young anymore. Youth is venture, and the clods of this generation are taking no chances—not an emotional chance, not an intellectual chance, not even a financial chance. They are too afraid of going broke to go for broke. Freshmen nowadays look and act like junior bank clerks. And the job-hunting seniors look and act like would-be master sergeants, their lives aimed at nothing better than thirty secure years followed by a pension. They come in to see the personnel manager, but they don't want to know about the job. What they ask about first is retirement pay. There isn't a flicker of a gambler's gleam in their eyes. They are in fact older than their parents.

This last fact probably explains our national confusion. It really is age we venerate after all, but we have to go to this dismal and smug generation to find it. We gave it up ourselves when we put all our psychic energy into staying young forever.

—JOHN CIARDI.



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ORDER AND CHANGE IN A WARLESS WORLD

By Walter Millis

TO IMAGINE a warless world is to imagine a special kind of world order—a system of “law and order” which must nevertheless allow for the disorder, conflict, and change essential to the development of human institutions. An idea must be formed of how such change, which throughout history has been so often and so deeply associated with war, can come about with a minimum of physical violence.

That change through conflict will continue to come about, regardless, is scarcely arguable. The complicated struggles among individuals, groups, classes, communities, or nations for wealth, position, and power is inherent in human nature. No system of world law and order can eliminate these power struggles; it would be primarily a means of regulating or structuring them.

The relative “justice” of such regulation is highly important from the standpoint of support for the system, but it seems essentially secondary—a by-product, as it were—to the “order” which the system would impose. There have, of course, been highly unjust orders which have survived over long periods and others comparatively just which have suffered early collapse. The essential of any order, just or unjust, is that it force the competitive struggles among those subject to it into other than lethal or violent channels.

In any system of law and order one finds three elements, which are the mechanisms through which it achieves its purpose: (1) a sovereign “monopoly” of legal force to forbid resort to violence; (2) a system of general rules

(law) defining in generalized terms the rights, duties, and, therefore, the power positions of all involved; (3) a judicial system to apply the general rules in specific conflicts and to provide in its decisions a generally accepted alternative to trial by combat or violence.

No system of this kind, of course, is ever perfectly successful. An irreducible minimum of violent crime, usually a certain amount of rioting and group violence, remains under the most developed systems of law and order. Nor has any such system ever completely inhibited change; even the most static and somnolent of social orders has never been “frozen” into a coma. It is true that a developed system of law and order has the effect, at any given time, of defining—crystallizing—the power relations of the individuals, groups, and classes subject to it, and that this crystallized legal structure of power may survive after the actual power relationships in the community have changed. But when the actual power structure tends to get out of line with the legal definition, it is, sooner or later, the legal definition which is altered, not the newly emerging structure of power.

WHEN the discrepancy between the fact and the form grows too great, such changes may be violent, reflected in great wars on the international stage or bloody revolutions within. But war and violent revolution are by no means the only or the necessary means of adjusting the system of law and order to changes in the underlying power structure. The modern world has recorded immense adjustments of this kind large-

ly, if not wholly, effected by nonviolent means.

Nor is it true that these can occur only in those systems which, as in the Western democracies, include formal provision for popular participation in institutional change. Toynbee, in the opening article in this series, cites the abdication of the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan—at the time anything but a democratic society—and the accompanying political and social revolution, all accomplished with very little violence. Since the death of Stalin, if not before, considerable shifts have plainly been occurring in the power structure both of the Soviet Union itself and among the constituent states of the Communist empire. But the Communist system of law and order (which is no less a system of law and order because it seems to us an unjust one) has accommodated itself to these changes in general without war or revolution. The one violent revolution of importance—that in Hungary—was suppressed by the Soviet police power, thus leaving Communist law and order outwardly intact. But the ruthlessness with which “order” was reimposed in Hungary does not mean that the system is perpetually unchangeable. The Hungarian revolt will still make its contribution toward those changes—hopefully nonviolent, but changes in any event—which shifts in the underlying Communist power structure are certain to bring about.

Even the existing international order, “anarchic” as it is commonly assumed to be, has since 1945 adjusted itself to very great changes in the basic