Harvard Business Review

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ISBN 0-86735-036-9 (soft cover)
0-86735-037-7 (hard cover)

Editor's note

Many of the articles we include in this series were written before women started to play an important role in management in impressive numbers. For this reason, the authors of certain pieces assumed all readers were men and that the typical manager was a "he" instead of a "he or she." In planning this series, we wanted to correct our older articles but found that the expense of resetting them would increase the price of the series and thus limit its distribution.

The editors ask that whenever you read the words "he," "him," or "his" in an article, you take it to mean "she," "her," or "hers" as well. Whenever you see "man" either alone or as part of a word, think of a person of either gender. We hope that the archaic use of the masculine gender does not undermine the effectiveness of the articles.

Summary of contents

Issues related to the role of the manager and the role of management in society are discussed in this collection of 16 articles reprinted from HBR. Articles reflect concern with the issues of the responsible use of power by business for the betterment of society, the responsibility incurred by a company to attend to the human needs of its employees, and establishing a balance between government and business responsibility for social change. Other topics explored in this volume include management as a profession, managerial philosophy, intellectuals and business, and business leadership.

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March-April 1964

DEMOCRACY IS INEVITABLE

. . . because it is the only system which can successfully cope with the changing demands of contemporary civilization, in business as well as in government.

By Philip E. Slater and Warren G. Bennis

Cynical observers have always been fond of pointing out that business leaders who extol the virtues of democracy on ceremonial occasions would be the last to think of applying them to their own organizations. To the extent that this is true, however, it reflects a state of mind which by no means is peculiar to businessmen, but characterizes all Americans, if not perhaps all citizens of democracies.

This attitude, briefly, is that democracy is a nice way of life for nice people, despite its manifold inconveniences — a kind of expensive and inefficient luxury, like owning a large medieval castle. Feelings about it are for the most part affectionate, even respectful, but a little impatient. There are probably few men of affairs in America who have not at some time nourished in their hearts the blasphemous thought that life would go much more smoothly if democracy could be relegated to some kind of Sunday morning devotion.

The bluff practicality of the "nice-but-inefficient" stereotype masks a hidden idealism, however, for it implies that institutions can survive in a competitive environment through the sheer goodheartedness of those who maintain them. We would like to challenge this notion, and suggest that even if all of those benign sentiments were eradicated today, we would awaken tomorrow to find democracy still firmly entrenched, buttressed by a set of economic, social, and political forces as practical as they are uncontrollable.

We will argue that democracy has been so widely embraced, not because of some vague yearning for human rights, but because *under certain conditions* it is a more "efficient" form of social organization. (Our concept of efficiency includes the ability to survive and prosper.) We do not regard it as accidental that those nations of the world which have endured longest under conditions of relative wealth and stability are democratic, while authoritarian regimes have, with few exceptions, either crumbled or eked out a precarious and backward existence.

Despite this evidence, even so acute a statesman as Adlai Stevenson argued in a *New York Times* article on November 4, 1962, that the goals of the Communists are different from ours. "They are interested in power," he said; "we in community. With such fundamentally different aims, how is it possible to compare communism and democracy in terms of efficiency? You might as well ask whether a locomotive is more efficient than a symphony orchestra."

Isn't this simply the speech of an articulate man who believes that democracy is inefficient and doesn't like to say so? Actually we are concerned with locomotives *and* symphony orchestras, with power *and* community. The challenge for communism and democracy is, in fact, identical: to compete successfully for the world's resources and imagination.

Our position is, in brief, that democracy (whether capitalistic or socialistic is not at issue here) is the only system which can successfully cope with the changing demands of contemporary civilization. We are not necessarily endorsing democracy as such; one might reasonably argue that industrial civilization is pernicious and should be abolished. We suggest merely that given a desire to survive in this civilization, democracy is the most effective means to achieve this end.

Democracy Takes Over

There are signs, in fact, that our business community is becoming aware of this law. Several of the newest and most rapidly blooming companies in the United States boast unusually democratic organizations. Even more surprising is the fact that some of the largest of the established corporations have been moving steadily, if accidentally, toward democratization. Frequently they began by feeling that administrative vitality and creativity were lacking in the older systems of organization. In increasing numbers, therefore, they enlisted the support of social scientists and of outside programs, the net *effect* of which has been to democratize their organization. Executives and even entire management staffs have been sent to participate in human relations and organizational laboratories to learn skills and attitudes which ten years ago would have been denounced as anarchic and revolutionary. At these meetings, status prerogatives and traditional concepts of authority are severely challenged.

Many social scientists have played an important role in this development toward humanizing and democratizing large-scale bureaucracies. The contemporary theories of McGregor, Likert, Argyris, and Blake have paved the way to a new social architecture. Research and training centers at the National Training Laboratories, Tavistock Institute, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard Business School, Boston University, University of California at Los Angeles, Case Institute of Technology, and others have pioneered in the application of social science knowledge to the improvement of organizational effectiveness. So far, the data are not all in; conclusive evidence is missing, but the forecast seems to hold genuine promise: that it is possible to bring about greater organizational effectiveness through the utilization of valid social knowledge.[1]

System of Values

What we have in mind when we use the term "democracy" is not "permissiveness" or "laissez faire," but a system of values — a "climate of beliefs" governing behavior — which people are internally compelled to affirm by deeds as well as words. These values include:

1. Full and free *communication*, regardless of rank and power.
2. A reliance on *consensus*, rather than the more customary forms of coercion or compromise to manage conflict.
3. The idea that *influence* is based on technical competence and knowledge rather than on the vagaries of personal whims or prerogatives of power.
4. An atmosphere that permits and even encourages emotional *expression* as well as task-oriented acts.
5. A basically *human* bias, one that accepts the inevitability of conflict between the organization and the individual, but which is willing to cope with and mediate this conflict on rational grounds.

Changes along these dimensions are being promoted widely in American industry. Most important, for our analysis, is what we believe to be the reason for these changes: *democracy*

[1] For a complete review of this work, see W. G. Bennis, "Effecting Organizational Change: A New Role for the Behavioral Scientist," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, September 1963. (See also Chris Argyris, "T-Groups for Organizational Effectiveness," HBR March–April 1964, p. 60. — *The Editors*)

becomes a functional necessity whenever a social system is competing for survival under conditions of chronic change.

Adaptability to Change

The most familiar variety of such change to the inhabitants of the modern world is technological innovation. This has been characterized most dramatically by J. Robert Oppenheimer:

"One thing that is new is the prevalence of newness, the changing scale and scope of change itself, so that the world alters as we walk on it, so that the years of a man's life measure not some small growth or rearrangement or moderation of what he learned in childhood but a great upheaval." [2]

But if change has now become a permanent and accelerating factor in American life, then adaptability to change becomes increasingly the most important single determinant of survival. The profit, the saving, the efficiency, the morale of the moment become secondary to keeping the door open for rapid readjustment to changing conditions.

Organization and communication research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology reveals quite dramatically what type of organization is best suited for which kind of environment. Specifically:

▼ For simple tasks under static conditions, an autocratic centralized structure, such as has characterized most industrial organizations in the past, is quicker, neater, and more efficient.

▲ But for adaptability to changing conditions, for "rapid acceptance of a new idea," for "flexibility in dealing with novel problems, generally high morale and loyalty . . . the more egalitarian or decentralized type seems to work better." One of the reasons for this is that the centralized decision-maker is "apt to discard an idea on the grounds that he is too busy or the idea too impractical." [3]

Our argument for democracy rests on an additional factor, one that is fairly complicated but profoundly important in shaping our ideas. First of all, it is interesting to note that modern industrial organization has been based roughly on the antiquated system of the military. Relics of the military system of thought can still be found in the clumsy terminology used, such as "line and staff," "standard operating procedure," "table of organization," and so on. Other remnants can be seen in the emotional and mental assumptions regarding work and motivation held today by some managers and industrial consultants. By and large these conceptions are changing, and even the military is moving away from the oversimplified and questionable assumptions on which its organization was originally based. Even more striking, as we have mentioned, are developments taking place in industry, no less profound than a fundamental change away from the autocratic and arbitrary vagaries of the past and toward democratic decision making.

This change has been coming about because of the palpable inadequacy of the military-bureaucratic model, particularly its response to rapid change; and also because the institution of science is now emerging as a more suitable model.

Scientific Attitude

But why is science gaining acceptance as a model? Most certainly *not* because we teach and conduct research within research-oriented universities. Curiously enough, universities have been stubbornly resistant to democratization, far more so than most other institutions.

We believe that science is winning out because the challenges facing modern enterprises are, at base, *knowledge*-gathering, *truth*-requiring dilemmas. Managers are not scientists, nor do we expect them to be. But the processes of problem solving, conflict resolution, and recognition of dilemmas have great kinship with the academic pursuit of truth. The institution of science is the only institution based on and geared for change. It is built not only to adapt to change, but to overthrow and create change. So it is — and will be — with modern industrial enterprises.

And here we come to the point. In order for the "spirit of inquiry," the foundation of science, to grow and flourish, there is a necessity for a democratic environment. Science encourages a political view which is egalitarian, pluralistic, liberal. It accentuates freedom of opinion and dissent. It is against all forms of totalitarianism, dogma, mechanization, and blind obedience. As a prominent social psychologist has pointed out, "Men have asked for freedom, justice and respect precisely as science has spread

[2] "Prospects in the Arts and Sciences," *Perspectives USA*, Spring 1955, pp. 10–11.

[3] W. G. Bennis, "Towards a 'Truly' Scientific Management: The Concept of Organization Health," *General Systems Yearbook*, December 1962, p. 273.

among them." [4] In short, we believe that the only way in which organizations can ensure a scientific *attitude* is by providing conditions where it can flourish. Very simply, this means democratic social conditions.

In other words, democracy in industry is not an idealistic conception but a hard necessity in those areas in which change is ever-present and in which creative scientific enterprise must be nourished. For democracy is the only system of organization which is compatible with perpetual change.

Retarding Factors

It might be objected here that we have been living in an era of rapid technological change for a hundred years, without any noticeable change in the nature of the average industrial firm. True there are many restrictions on the power of the executive over his subordinates now compared with those prevailing at the end of the nineteenth century. But this hardly constitutes industrial democracy — the decision-making function is still an exclusive and jealously guarded prerogative of the top echelons. If democracy is an inevitable consequence of perpetual change, why then have we not seen more dramatic changes in the structure of industrial organizations? The answer is twofold.

Obsolete Individuals

First, the rate of technological change is a rapidly accelerating one. Take advance in scientific knowledge as one criterion: it shows a doubling every ten years. Casamir calculated that if the *Physical Review* continued to grow as rapidly as it had between 1945 and 1960, it would weigh more than the earth during the next century.[5] Prior to World War I a businessman might live a productive and successful life and find himself outmoded at the end of it. By the end of World War II a similar man could find that his training, skills, outlook, and ways of thinking were obsolescent in the middle of his career. James R. Killian, Jr., Chairman of the Corporation of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, estimates that already several hundred thousands of engineers are obsolete.[6] This is undoubtedly matched by an equal number of managers.

We are now beginning an era when a man's knowledge and approach can become obsolete before he has even begun the career for which he was trained. The value of what one learns is always slipping away, like the value of money in runaway inflation. We are living in an era which could be characterized as a runaway inflation of knowledge and skill, and it is this which is perhaps responsible for the feelings of futility, alienation, and lack of individual worth which are said to characterize our time.

Under such conditions, the individual *is* of relatively little significance. No matter how imaginative, energetic, and brilliant he may be, time will soon catch up with him to the point where he can profitably be replaced by someone equally imaginative, energetic, and brilliant, but with a more up-to-date viewpoint and fewer obsolete preconceptions. As Martin Gardner says, with regard to the difficulty some physicists have in grasping Einstein's theory of relativity: "If you are young, you have a great advantage over these scientists. Your mind has not yet developed those deep furrows along which thoughts so often are forced to travel." [7] This situation is just beginning to be felt as an immediate reality in American industry, and it is this kind of uncontrollably rapid change which generates democratization.

Powers of Resistance

The second reason is that the mere existence of a dysfunctional tendency, such as the relatively slow adaptability of authoritarian structures, does not automatically bring about its disappearance. This drawback must first either be recognized for what it is or become so severe as to destroy the structures in which it is embedded. Both of these conditions are only now beginning to make themselves felt, primarily through the peculiar nature of modern technological competition.

The crucial change has been that the threat of technological defeat no longer comes necessarily from rivals within the industry, who usually can be imitated quickly without too great a loss, but often from outside — from new industries using new materials in new ways. One can

[4] N. Sanford, "Social Science and Social Reform," Presidential Address for the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues at Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., August 28, 1958.

[5] Cited by J. Robert Oppenheimer in "On Science and Culture," *Encounter*, October 1962, p. 5.

[6] "The Crisis in Research," *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1963, p. 71.

[7] *Relativity for the Million* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 11.

therefore make no intelligent prediction about "what the next likely development in our industry will be." The blow may come from anywhere. Correspondingly, a viable corporation cannot merely develop and advance in the usual ways. In order to survive and grow it must be prepared to *go* anywhere — to develop new products or techniques even if they are irrelevant to the present activities of the organization.[8] It is perhaps for this reason that the beginnings of democratization have appeared most often in industries (such as electronics) which depend heavily on invention. It is undoubtedly for this reason that more and more sprawling behemoths are planning consequential changes in their organizational structures and climates toward releasing democratic potentiality.

Farewell to "Great Men"

The passing of years has also given the *coup de grâce* to another force that retarded democratization — the "great man" who with brilliance and farsightedness could preside with dictatorial powers at the head of a growing organization and keep it at the vanguard of American business. In the past he was usually a man with a single idea, or a constellation of related ideas, which he developed brilliantly. This is no longer enough.

Today, just as he begins to reap the harvest of his imagination, he finds that someone else (even perhaps one of his stodgier competitors, aroused by desperation) has suddenly carried the innovation a step further, or found an entirely new and superior approach to it, and he is suddenly outmoded. How easily can he abandon his idea, which contains all his hopes, his ambitions, his very heart? His aggressiveness now begins to turn in on his own organization; and the absolutism of his position begins to be a liability, a dead hand, an iron shackle, upon the flexibility and growth of the company. But he cannot be removed — in the short run the firm would even be hurt by his loss, since its prestige derives to such an extent from his reputation. And by the time he has left, the organization will have receded into a secondary position within the industry. It may even decay further when his personal touch is lost.

The "cult of personality" still exists, of course, but it is rapidly fading. More and more large corporations (General Motors, for one) predicate their growth not on "heroes" but on solid management teams.

[8] For a fuller discussion of this trend, see Theodore Levitt, "Marketing Myopia," HBR July–August 1960, p. 45.

"Organization Men"

Taking the place of the "great man," we are often told, is the "organization man." A good many tears have been shed over this transition by liberals and conservatives alike. The liberals, of course, have in mind, as "the individual," some sort of creative deviant — an intellectual, artist, or radical politician. The conservatives are thinking of the old captains of industry and perhaps some great generals. (In the Soviet Union they think of Stalin.)

Neither is at all unhappy to lose the "individuals" mourned by the other, dismissing them contemptuously as Communists and rabble-rousers, on the one hand, and criminals and Fascists, on the other. What is particularly confusing in terms of the present issue is a tendency to equate conformity with autocracy — to see the new industrial organization as one in which all individualism is lost except for a few villainous individualistic manipulators at the top.

But this, of course, is absurd in the long run. The trend toward the "organization man" is also a trend toward a looser and more flexible organization in which the roles are to some extent interchangeable and no one is indispensable. To many people this trend is a monstrous nightmare, but one should at least not confuse it with the nightmares of the past. It may mean anonymity and homogeneity, but it does not and cannot mean authoritarianism, in the long run, despite the bizarre anomalies and hybrids that may arise in a period of transition.

The reason it cannot is that it arises out of a need for flexibility and adaptability. Democracy and the dubious trend toward the "organization man" alike (for this trend *is* a part of democratization, whether we like this aspect of democracy or not) arise from the need to maximize the availability of appropriate knowledge, skill, and insight under conditions of great variability.

Rise of the Professional

While the "organization man" idea has titillated the imagination of the American public, it has masked a far more fundamental change now taking place: the rise of the "professional

man." Professional specialists, holding advanced degrees in such abstruse sciences as cryogenics or computer logic as well as the more mundane business disciplines, are entering all types of organizations at a higher rate than any other sector of the labor market.

And these men can hardly be called "organization men." They seemingly derive their rewards from inward standards of excellence, from their professional societies, from the intrinsic satisfaction of their task. In fact, they are committed to the *task*, not the job; to their standards, not their boss. And because they have degrees, they travel. They are not good "company men"; they are uncommitted except to the challenging environments where they can "play with problems."

These new "professional men" are remarkably compatible with our conception of a democratic system. For like these "new men," democracy seeks no new stability, no end point; it is purposeless, save that it purports to ensure perpetual transition, constant alteration, ceaseless instability. It attempts to upset nothing, but only to facilitate the potential upset of anything. Democracy and our new professional men identify primarily with the adaptive process, not the "establishment."

Yet it must also be remembered that all democratic systems are not entirely so — there are always limits to the degree of fluidity which can be borne. Thus, it is not a contradiction to the theory of democracy to find that a particular democratic society or organization may be more "conservative" than some autocratic one. Indeed, the most dramatic, violent, and drastic changes have always taken place under autocratic regimes, for such changes usually require prolonged self-denial, while democracy rarely lends itself to such voluntary asceticism. But these changes have been viewed as finite and temporary, aimed at a specific set of reforms, and moving toward a new state of nonchange. It is only when the society reaches a level of technological development in which survival is dependent on the institutionalization of perpetual change that democracy becomes necessary.

Reinforcing Factors

The Soviet Union is rapidly approaching this level and is beginning to show the effects, as we shall see. The United States has already reached it. Yet democratic institutions existed in the United States when it was still an agrarian nation. Indeed, democracy has existed in many places and at many times, long before the advent of modern technology. How can we account for these facts?

Expanding Conditions

In the first place, it must be remembered that modern technology is not the only factor which could give rise to conditions of necessary perpetual change. Any situation involving rapid and unplanned expansion, sustained over a sufficient period of time, will tend to produce great pressure for democratization. Secondly, when we speak of democracy, we are referring not only or even primarily to a particular political format. Indeed, American egalitarianism has perhaps its most important manifestation, not in the Constitution, but in the family.

Historians are fond of pointing out that Americans have always lived under expanding conditions — first the frontier, then the successive waves of immigration, now a runaway technology. The social effects of these kinds of expansion are of course profoundly different in many ways, but they share one impact in common: all have made it impossible for an authoritarian family system to develop on a large scale. Every foreign observer of American mores since the seventeenth century has commented that American children "have no respect for their parents," and every generation of Americans since 1650 has produced forgetful native moralists complaining about the decline in filial obedience and deference.

Descriptions of family life in colonial times make it quite clear that American parents were as easy-going, permissive, and child-oriented then as now, and the children as independent and "disrespectful." This "lack of respect" is, of course, not for the "parents" as individuals, but for the concept of parental authority as such.

The basis for this loss of respect has been outlined quite dramatically by historian Oscar Handlin, who points out that in each generation of early settlers, the children were more at home in their new environment than their parents — had less fear of the wilderness, fewer inhibiting European preconceptions and habits.[9] Furthermore, their parents were heavily dependent on them physically and economically. This was less true of the older families after the East

[9] *The Uprooted*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1951.

became settled. But as one moved nearer to the frontier, the conditions for familial democracy became again strikingly marked, so that the cultural norm was ever protected from serious decay.

Further reinforcement came later from new immigrants, who similarly found their children better adapted to the world than themselves, because of their better command of the language, better knowledge of the culture, better occupational opportunities, and so forth. It was the children who were expected to improve the social position of the family, and who through their exposure to peer groups and the school system could act as intermediaries between their parents and the new world. It was not so much "American ways" that shook up the old family patterns, but the demands and requirements of a new situation. How could the young look to the old as the ultimate fount of wisdom and knowledge when, in fact, that knowledge was irrelevant — when indeed the children had a better practical grasp of the realities of American life than did their elders?

The New Generation

These sources of reinforcement have now disappeared. But a third has only begun. Rapid technological change again means that the wisdom of elders is largely obsolete, and that the young are better adapted to their culture than are their parents. How many of the latter can keep up with their children in knowledge of the sciences, for example? Santayana put it beautifully when he said: "No specific hope about distant issues is ever likely to be realized. The ground shifts, the will of mankind deviates, and what the father dreamt of the children neither fulfill nor desire." [10]

It is this fact that reveals the basis for the association between democracy and change. The old, the learned, the powerful, the wealthy, those in authority — these are the ones who are committed. They have learned a pattern and succeeded in it. But when change comes, it is often the *uncommitted* who can best realize it, take advantage of it. This is why primogeniture has always lent itself so easily to social change in general and industrialization in particular. The uncommitted younger sons, barred from success in the older system, are always ready to exploit new opportunities. In Japan, these younger sons were treated more indulgently by the parents, and given more freedom to choose an occupation, since "in Japanese folk wisdom, it is the younger sons who are the innovators." [11]

Democracy is a superior technique for making more available the uncommitted. The price it extracts is the price of uninvolvement, alienation, and skepticism. The benefit that it gives is flexibility and the joy of confronting new dilemmas.

Doubt & Fears

Indeed, we may even in this way account for the poor opinion which democracy has of itself. We underrate the strength of democracy because democracy creates a general attitude of doubt, of skepticism, of modesty. It is only among the authoritarian that we find the dogmatic confidence, the self-righteousness, the intolerance and cruelty that permit one never to doubt oneself and one's beliefs. The looseness, the sloppiness, and the untidiness of democratic structures express the feeling that what has been arrived at today is probably only a partial solution and may well have to be changed tomorrow.

In other words, one cannot believe that change is in itself a good thing and still believe implicitly in the rightness of the present. Judging from the report of history, democracy has always underrated itself — one cannot find a democracy anywhere without also discovering (side-by-side with expressions of outrageous chauvinism) an endless pile of contemptuous and exasperated denunciations of it. (One of the key issues in our national politics today, as in the Presidential campaign in 1960, is our "national prestige.") And perhaps this is only appropriate. For when a democracy ceases finding fault with itself, it has probably ceased to be a democracy.

Overestimating Autocracy

But feeling doubt about our own social system need not lead us to overestimate the virtues and efficiency of others. We can find this kind of overestimation in the exaggerated fear of the "Red Menace" — mere exposure to which is seen as leading to automatic conversion. Few authoritarians can conceive of the possibility

[10] *The Philosophy of Santayana*, edited by Irwin Edman (New York, Modern Library, Random House, 1936).

[11] W. J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns* (New York, The Free Press, 1963), p. 355.

that an individual could encounter an authoritarian ideology and not be swept away by it.

Of a similar nature, but more widespread, is the "better dead than Red" mode of thinking. Here again we find an underlying assumption that communism is socially, economically, and ideologically inevitable — that once the military struggle is lost, all is lost. It is interesting that in all of our gloomy war speculations, there is never any mention of an American underground movement. It is everywhere assumed that if a war were fought in which anyone survived and the Soviet Union won, then:

- All Americans would immediately become Communists.
- The Soviet Union would set up an exact replica of itself in this country.
- It would work.
- The Soviet system would remain unchanged.
- The Soviets in America would be uninfluenced by what they found here.

Not only are these assumptions patently ridiculous; they also reveal a profound misconception about the nature of social systems. The structure of a society is not determined merely by a belief. It cannot be maintained if it does not work — that is, if no one, not even of those in power, is benefiting from it. How many times in history have less civilized nations conquered more civilized ones only to be entirely transformed by the cultural influence of their victims? Do we then feel ourselves to be less civilized than the Soviet Union? Is our system so brittle and theirs so enduring?

Actually, quite the contrary seems to be the case. For while democracy seems to be on a fairly sturdy basis in the United States (despite the efforts of self-appointed vigilantes to subvert it), there is considerable evidence that autocracy is beginning to decay in the Soviet Union.

Soviet Drift

Most Americans have great difficulty in evaluating the facts when they are confronted with evidence of decentralization in the Soviet Union, of relaxation of repressive controls, or of greater tolerance for criticism. We seem bewildered. And we do not seem to sense the contradiction when we say that these changes were made in response to public discontent. For have we not also believed deeply that an authoritarian regime, if efficiently run, can get away with ignoring the public's clamor?

There is a secret belief among us that Khrushchev must have been mad to relax his grip in this way, or a contradictory suspicion that it is all part of a secret plot to throw the West off guard: a plot which is too clever for naive Americans to fathom. It is seldom suggested that "de-Stalinization" took place because the rigid, repressive authoritarianism of the Stalin era was inefficient, and that many additional relaxations will be forced upon the Soviet Union by the necessity of remaining amenable to technological innovation.

But the inevitable Soviet drift toward a more democratic structure is not dependent on the realism of leaders. Leaders come from communities and families, and their patterns of thought are shaped by their experiences with authority in early life, as well as by their sense of what the traffic will bear. We saw that the roots of American democracy were to be found in the nature of the American family. What does the Russian family tell us in this respect?

Pessimism regarding the ultimate destiny of Soviet political life has always been based on the seemingly fathomless capacity of the Russian people for authoritarian submission. Their tolerance for autocratic rulers was only matched by their autocratic family system which was equal to the German, the Chinese, or that of many Latin countries in its demand for filial obedience. On this early experience in the family the acceptance of authoritarian rule was based.

Role of the Family

But modern revolutionary movements, both Fascist and Communist, have tended to regard the family with some suspicion, as the preserver of old ways and as a possible refuge from the State. Fascist dictators have extolled its conservatism but tended at times to set up competitive loyalties for the young. Communist revolutionaries, on the other hand, have more unambivalently attacked family loyalty as reactionary, and deliberately undermined familial allegiances, partly to increase loyalty to the state, and partly to facilitate industrialization and modernization by discrediting traditional mores.

Such destruction of authoritarian family patterns is a two-edged sword, which eventually cuts away political autocracy as well as the

familial variety. The state may attempt to train submission in its own youth organizations, but so long as the family remains as an institution, this earlier and more enduring experience will outweigh all others. And if the family has been forced by the state to be less authoritarian, the result is obvious.

In creating a youth which has a knowledge, a familiarity, and a set of attitudes more appropriate for successful living in the changing culture than those of its parents, the autocratic state has created a Frankensteinian monster which will eventually sweep away the authoritarianism in which it is founded. Russian attempts during the late 1930's to reverse their stand on the family perhaps reflect some realization of this fact. Khrushchev's denunciations of certain Soviet artists and intellectuals also reflect fear of a process going beyond what was originally intended.

A similar ambivalence has appeared in Communist China, where the unforeseen consequences of the slogan "all for the children" recently produced a rash of articles stressing filial obligations. As Goode points out, "the propaganda campaign against the power of the elders may lead to misunderstanding on the part of the young, who may at times abandon their filial responsibilities to the State." [12]

Further, what the derogation of parental wisdom and authority has begun, the fierce drive for technological modernization will finish. Each generation of youth will be better adapted to the changing society than its parents are. And each generation of parents will feel increasingly modest and doubtful about overvaluing its wisdom and superiority as it recognizes the brevity of its usefulness.[13]

Conclusion

We cannot, of course, predict what forms democratization might take in any nation of the world, nor should we become unduly optimistic about its impact on international relations. Although our thesis predicts the ultimate democratization of the entire globe, this is a view so long-range as to be academic. There are infinite opportunities for global extermination before any such stage of development can be achieved.

We should expect that, in the earlier stages of industrialization, dictatorial regimes will prevail in all of the less developed nations, and as we well know, autocracy is still highly compatible with a lethal if short-run military efficiency. We may expect many political grotesques, some of them dangerous in the extreme, to emerge during this long period of transition, as one society after another attempts to crowd the most momentous social changes into a generation or two, working from the most varied structural base lines.

But barring some sudden decline in the rate of technological change, and on the (outrageous) assumption that war will somehow be eliminated during the next half century, it is possible to predict that after this time democracy will be universal. Each revolutionary autocracy, as it reshuffles the family structure and pushes toward industrialization, will sow the seeds of its own destruction, and democratization will gradually engulf it. Lord Acton once remarked about Christianity that it isn't that people have tried it and found it wanting. It is that they have been afraid to try it and found it impossible. The same comment may have once applied to democracy, but the outlook has changed to the point where people may *have* to try it.

We may, of course, rue the day. A world of mass democracies may well prove homogenized and ugly. It is perhaps beyond human social capacity to maximize both equality and understanding, on the one hand, and diversity, on the other. Faced with this dilemma, however, many people are willing to sacrifice quaintness to social justice, and we might conclude by remarking that just as Marx, in proclaiming the inevitability of communism, did not hesitate to give some assistance to the wheels of fate, so our thesis that democracy represents the social system of the electronic era should not bar these persons from giving a little push here and there to the inevitable.

[12] Ibid., pp. 313–315.

[13] See, e.g., Handlin, op. cit., pp. 252–253; and Kent Geiger, "Changing Political Attitudes in Totalitarian Society: A Case Study of the Role of the Family," *World Politics*, January 1956, pp. 187–205.

"Now is the time for the defense to speak up."

The Case for Business Civilization

By Maurice Baum

Just how "uncivilized" is America's business civilization? Both from this country and from abroad we are constantly being scolded for being materialists, anti-intellectuals, Babbitts, organization men, and political juveniles.

In the court of world public opinion, American businessmen and American culture (which businessmen more than any other group of citizens have shaped) stand indicted. The witnesses against our society have been heard. Now is the time for the defense to speak up.

Indictment Against Business

The prosecution has leveled these two specific charges against business:

1. *The business culture causes drastic damage to individual character and conduct.* The supremacy of the profit motive, maintain the critics, has made the individual businessman in his daily commercial life blind to the aesthetic quality in life. It makes him ignorant of, or indifferent to, the independent value of pure science and pure art and willing to locate happiness in material things rather than in intellectual and spiritual matters.

2. *The business culture debases our professional and political behavior by its complete disregard for the social and cultural consequences of business decisions.* As a result of his overemphasis on the goal of wealth in life, the businessman has corrupted the motives of many in the professions of law, medicine, and architecture, as well as in political office. Insofar as the actual conduct of his business is concerned, the businessman's "short views" which disregard the social results of his activities make him, at best, merely a purveyor and not a creator of the real values of civilization.

One of the leading witnesses for the prosecution, James Truslow Adams, mournfully concluded that if the businessman came to dominate American civilization completely, there would be no room in it for the genius of pure science and free creative activity. His parting testimony asked the question, "Can a great civilization be built upon the philosophy of the countinghouse and the sole basic idea of a profit?" [1]

This is the indictment. But how many of the points on which it is based will hold up in the court of informed public opinion? A close examination of the assumptions made, but not proved, by the prosecution critics will do much to destroy the cogency of their reasoning and the soundness of the case against our business civilization.

Defense Cross-Examination

Let us question first the charge that the business culture blinds men to aesthetic appreciations. Why, I might ask, should the businessman not be blind to the "aesthetic" in his daily life, if by so doing he will achieve efficiency and success? Is he any more indifferent to aesthetic values *while at work* than the scientist is when he is in his laboratory, or the scholar when he is in his study? Where, may I inquire impertinently, is this well-rounded man, used as a standard of evaluating human character by critics, to be found anywhere in this or any other civilization based on division of labor and functional specialization? Furthermore, away from his business the businessman may well have worthy cultural interests. Max Lerner is both illuminating and emphatic on this point:

[1] James Truslow Adams, *Our Business Civilization* (New York, Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1929), p. 31.

"Throughout the history of the business spirit, the monied men have used business first as a way of making the Big Kill, then turned to philanthropy or the life of the patron, travel, or hobbies as a way of making a life.

"The business spirit, then, has not in itself been regarded as a nourishing one but as a means to bring a good life within reach. For that reason, perhaps, it has exerted an attraction for the young men of talent who in other civilizations might have gone into government, the Army, or the priesthood, into literature or the arts or the study of philosophy, into science or the profession. . . .

"[Granted that] it was possible for many of the businessmen to pursue profit and power with a meanness of spirit and impoverished intellectual and emotional resources, this was not true of the outstanding figures. Unlike the worker chained to the machine, and the small businessman embittered by his struggle with his competitors and workers, the Titan often showed himself to have a spacious and creative mind." [2]

But if the average businessman is guilty of poor taste in his cultural pursuits, he may still display considerable creative ability and aesthetic appreciation elsewhere. Thomas Griffith has put it this way:

"The businessman is deplored for his afterhours taste in theatre, for his liking of *unchallenging* entertainment: pretty girls, easy music, quick gags, cheerful plots. One can't blame a frustrated dramatist for a hostility toward this attitude: any writer worth his salt wants to challenge, wants to assault life: the theatre is *his* serious pursuit. But the writer, unwilling to take seriously what the businessman does, often describes him as a boor and a Babbitt, failing to see how subtle, anxious, engrossing, and exhausting a businessman's own life may be, requiring ingenuity, audacity, and art to anticipate the complexities of the market, and tact to handle the temperaments of those he must work with." [3]

People in Glass Houses

Even if we grant that American business prefers subsidizing applied (or technological) research rather than pure (or fundamental) research, does not the same indictment apply to the professions and vocations — with perhaps less justification? The businessman cannot afford to deplete or destroy either his own or corporate capital on projects for which there can be no very certain, or even probable, financial profit. And certainly neither the investors in a corporation nor the employees would readily approve of diverting its profits from their pockets into disinterested pure research for the general intellectual benefit of all mankind.

Nevertheless, individual businessmen and private corporations have created, or contributed to, trust funds and foundations which *do* subsidize, directly or indirectly, disinterested research.[4] The fabulous monetary gifts of business alumni to great institutions of learning such as Harvard, Yale, the University of Chicago, and the University of California have often permitted these educational leaders to engage in their own self-chosen scientific investigations of a nontechnological, noncommercial type.

And if we wanted to be a little biting in our defense, could we not ask how much money has been raised by any profession — including organizations of educational administrators and instructors — to underwrite pure research of any type about the nature of the universe and man? When most groups are indifferent to the need for subsidizing pure research, why publicly criticize only one group for this failing? Perhaps a more sensible solution would be that of tax-supported government aid for what, in theory at least, should concern all citizens and eventually benefit all persons even if such benefit be limited to the gratification of intellectual curiosity.

In this connection, it is ironical to observe that those who loudly criticize big business for its unwillingness to support independent pure research adequately seldom fail to point out that in the past the results of such research activity often led to discoveries which, when utilized eventually for technological purposes, yielded immense profits to business, although this outcome was neither intended nor anticipated. Here indeed is a disguised appeal to the profit motive.

From the standpoint of logic and ethics, it is impossible to condemn any particular individual, group, or corporation for not wishing to invest personal savings or accumulated capital in a project for the acquisition of new disinterested, scientific, factual, and causal knowldege, unless all other individuals and organizations are likewise expected and compelled to do so according to some objectively graded scale of contribu-

[2] *America as a Civilization* (New York, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1957), pp. 315, 279.

[3] *The Waist-High Culture* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 238.

[4] See John A. Pollard, "Emerging Pattern in Corporate Giving," HBR May–June 1960, p. 103.

tions. One democratic basic right is the right to acquire, and to retain, capital and wealth for use as one pleases after all legal debts and taxes have been paid. It is always so easy for him who has no surplus funds to urge others who do have, to donate such money to the cause which he or his group favors regardless of the merits of other competing worthy causes.

What Is Happiness?

Far more important to the critics of our business civilization, however, has been the charge that businessmen identify happiness exclusively with the possession and enjoyment of material things, being guilty either of condemning nonproductive vacations or of exploiting the sales potential of such recreational periods by advocating the purchase of commercial products for use in hunting, fishing, and various other sports, or employment in forms of entertainment like photography and indoor games. Such critics would probably cite the incredible expansion of the bowling alley business today, as well as the fabulous increase in the sale of motorboats, water skis, skin diving outfits, and so on, as final proof of the degradation of leisure by business concerns which have no interest in urging people to enjoy simple hiking about the countryside, to visit art museums, to read books, or to engage in intelligent conversation.

But are not these critics guilty of a narrow interpretation of the facts and of the thoughtless acceptance of certain unproved assumptions about the nature of happiness? Because people derive pleasure from the purchase and use of athletic and sporting equipment, or surround themselves with artificial devices for amusement, it does not follow that they have necessarily identified such activity with true happiness, or regard the acquisition of material possessions as the finest goals in life.

Americans do not drink or smoke more, relative to circumstances, than do their aristocratic cultural predecessors in the courts of Europe whose rejection of business as a low and vulgar activity did not prevent them from pursuing cruel sports, inhuman warfare, and the sensual indulgences of the table and boudoir — unhindered by privately professed moral scruples or publicly celebrated religious aspirations toward spiritual salvation.

By their wartime sacrifices and record-making free contributions to foreign aid, as well as by their behavior during grave local, state, and national crises, Americans have shown, to the startled dismay of their foreign and domestic critics, that they have not become either selfish or cowardly materialists, or citizens too weak to resist the seductions of their senses.

Here or Hereafter?

In Greece, China, and India, the ancient scholarly predecessors of our present critics never hesitated to denounce the life of trade, condemning business for its diversion of potentially noble human energy into dishonorable nonspiritual channels. For example, Confucius uttered the aphorisms:

- "The superior man understands what is right; the inferior man understands what will sell."
- "The superior man loves his soul; the inferior man loves his property."

In the first statement, the ambiguity of the term "right" conceals the fact that there is no necessary logical contradiction between apprehending what is morally right and determining what it is the customer may wish to buy because of need or want, or the right (salable) kind of merchandise to display. In the second instance, the vague meaning of the phrase "loves his soul" could lead to the tart remark that in doing so the individual could well be guilty of both false pride and a selfish spiritual isolation from humanity, whereas the property owner may cherish a publicly respected, earned achievement and a potential source of social benefit.

Like the Chinese philosophic critics of business, the Hindu creators of the nationally revered "Bhagavad-Gita" declared that the businessman is constituted of the "guna" qualities of "passion" and "dullness." More freely expressed, they conceived the trader to be one whose nature is active in pursuit of deceptive and corrupting sense objects of profit and pleasure. But the Hindus and Buddhists who have advocated ultimate extinction of all desires as the necessary precondition of the attainment of the bliss of Nirvana, strongly recommending detachment from the "fruits of action," failed to abolish or control poverty, disease, ignorance, and superstition. And, in the case of the Hindus, they preserved a caste system which automatically condemned at birth literally millions of men and women to a life of starvation, degradation, disease, and ruthless social ostracism.

In brief, one can logically repudiate the ef-