

FOCUS IN ASIA

IT seems possible to obtain a fairly clear understanding of the issues of the struggle in Indochina by reading a few current magazine articles and adding a book for historical background. Two general articles set the scene—Chester Bowles' "A Bipartisan Policy for Asia" in the May *Harper's*, and "The Future of Red China" by Ron G. Whitehead, in *World* for May. Mr. Whitehead shows that the Communist government of China is firmly established and already busy with a vast program of industrialization aimed at economic independence of the West. ("In 1953 China's heavy industry increased its output by 65%.") Viewing this trend, Whitehead and other Asian experts concluded that China has no plans for military adventures, but wants peace and time to strengthen her domestic economy.

The former American ambassador to India also discusses the future of Red China. American reluctance to recognize the Communist regime of China is regarded in non-Communist Asia with puzzlement and distrust. As Mr. Bowles explains:

Throughout non-Communist Asia our position is poorly understood. When we point out that the source of the Communist world conspiracy is the Kremlin, most Asians agree. And yet they see us recognize Russia and negotiate with her in the UN and in international conferences, while refusing to deal with Russia's junior partner, China. So when Communist propagandists say that our refusal to accept the Communist government of China as an accomplished fact is solely because it is Asian and colored, many millions of non-Communist Asians accept their explanation.

The Bowles article is especially valuable for a "speech" which the writer would like to see President Eisenhower make—a speech designed to win understanding for America and to provide the United States with the initiative in working for stable international relations and a permanent peace for the world. This speech begins by

recalling the American revolutionary tradition—the tradition which began 175 years ago when the thirteen colonies rejected colonialism. Opening in this spirit, the speech then greets "the people of free Asia who for so long suffered foreign domination but who now stand straight and independent."

Regretting that the normal technological development of free Asia has been hampered by armed conflicts and civil wars, the speech pledges American support for a "fresh start" for Asia, so that its peoples may "freely and peacefully decide their future." Becoming specific, Mr. Bowles now offers a practical peacemaking program:

It is our hope that the Communist government of China is now prepared to join with us in establishing the peace and stability which Communist action has so long prevented. If so, the United States proposes the following basis for an all-Asia settlement:

In Korea, a settlement must be reached that will unite the people, North and South. It must also eliminate any legitimate fears, by the Soviet Union and Communist China on the one hand, and Japan and the United States on the other, that Korea may be used as a jumping-off point for attack in either direction. We believe that under United Nations supervision guarantees can also be worked out that would lead to the prompt removal of all foreign troops, the repairing of war damage, and the restoration of the Korean economy.

In Indochina we will support a solution—again preferably under the supervision of the United Nations—that will guarantee the complete independence of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, and protect the peoples of these new states from colonial domination, or from conquest or subversion from any source.

This is enough to indicate the character of Mr. Bowles' proposals. He admits that the invitation to the Peking Government to become a member of the UN, once peace has been

established along these lines, might not be accepted by China in her present mood, yet points out that such an offer would be certain to set up differences of opinion within China, since it would no longer be possible for the Russians to claim that America is dead against any sort of peaceful relationship with Red China. Further:

The two thirds of Asia which is not Communist would be convinced that America has made a sober, honest, effort to create stability in Asia and to bring about a relaxation of tensions. Regardless of the response of Communist China, this bold forward step would go far to restore free Asia's confidence in the United States.

We turn, now, to the crisis in the eight-year-old war in Indochina between the now frankly Communist forces of Ho Chih-minh and the French. This is the war which, in the opinion of some Americans, should become the occasion for another intervention by American forces, possibly on the same scale as the recent Korean conflict. Who, in the first place, is Ho Chih-minh?

According to Robert Payne's *The Revolt of Asia*—which we find an indispensable book for understanding current history—Ho Chih-minh is "a bearded, scholarly descendant of minor Annamese princes" who became the practical ruler of Indochina on August 1, 1945. He once served in the Soviet consulate in Boston and in 1923 he visited Moscow as a delegate of the French Communist Party. He assisted Borodin when the latter was technical revolutionary adviser to the Kuomintang. When, after the abdication of Bao Dai, he was proclaimed the first president of the Viet-Nam Republic, he explained: "It was because I had nothing—no family, no house, no fortune, and only one suit of clothes, the one I am wearing."

The Viet-Nam rebels were already in possession of arms before the legal government took over from the Japanese. The French Vichyites, obeying orders from Berlin, had delivered the country to the Japanese without striking a blow, and it remained for the people of Indochina to fight for their own freedom. Ho

Chih-minh announced: "We will have independence or perish." The program for freedom drawn up in 1949 by the League for the Independence of Viet-Nam, of which Ho Chih-minh was a leader, demanded a democratic constitution, democratic rights and principles, a national army, confiscation of French, Japanese, and fascist properties (a demand later withdrawn in relation to the French), general amnesty for prisoners, equal rights for national minorities, nationalization of Japanese and French banks, and establishment of a national economy. Other requirements were an educational program, funds for scientific research, an eight-hour day, minimum wage laws, hospital facilities and social services.

Before the French landed, after the surrender of the Japanese, the Viet-Nam government existed and made declarations of these and similar intentions. Concerning the political coloration of the government, Robert Payne remarks that it was socialist in form, but, combining many groups, it was more nationalist and libertarian than anything else. He adds:

The French were to accuse Viet-Nam leaders of subscribing to communism. To a limited extent it was true, but no one had ever worked out exactly what communism meant in Indochina, and Ho Chih-minh was careful to say at the beginning of the revolution: "It is perfectly true that I was a communist. Now I am a member of Viet-Nam—nothing more."

A comment by Edgar Snow in the April 24 *Nation* is pertinent here: ". . . the communists, who in 1945 were a small minority, now firmly control the leadership of what has become Viet-Nam's war of independence and longoverdue revolution." Concerning the "police action" now contemplated against the Viet-Nam rebels, Mr. Snow observes:

. . . now at the twelfth hour the Administration is in various ways preparing us for more direct American intervention, not excluding large-scale use of combat forces. Doubtless that is no more paradoxical than certain other means of defending the free world which we have accepted with apathy or

frightened rationalizations, such as the rearming of the Iberian liberator who murdered the Spanish republic with the friendly aid of Hitler and Mussolini, the rearming of a German Reichswehr run by ex-Nazi genocide artists, and alliance with a German Foreign Office back under Ribbentrop's boys; the restitution of industrial ownership and power to Krupp and Thyssen, and other Hitler-loving munitions-makers whose products exterminated vast numbers of peaceable people, and so on.

Nevertheless, it is as yet only in Indochina that we are really making war against people who never attacked us—to preserve their sovereign rights as free men of a free world.

Mr. Snow sounds a little bitter, but to read the history of Indochina under the French, as reported by Robert Payne, may easily make the average reader bitterer:

No labor unions were allowed. The poverty of the peasants in the overcrowded Red River delta was greater than that of any other colony in the East with the possible exception of India. Ninety per cent of the population lived in crude thatched huts and earned less than a thousand piasters a year. An Annamite coal miner could get fifteen cents a day, but the general level of income was considerably less than ten U.S. dollars a year. . . .

This is the country to which the French returned, after the Japanese defeat, to claim "their own." Concerning the early years of this renewal of imperialist war, Payne remarks: "One disturbing factor seems not to have been noticed by the French—so many of the Viet-Nam troops kill themselves rather than surrender."

These are but brief notes concerning a complex situation which only experts can clearly describe. Yet we think the force and validity of Mr. Bowles' proposal for the settlement of the conflict in Indochina are plain enough, in the light of the reading we have suggested. Ethically, there can be no question at all, we think, concerning the right course of action. Yet "practically," too, the course seems unmistakable. Every intervention in Asia in behalf of an old imperialism—even if righteously directed to suppress the "communist menace"—will have the effect of turning the East still more irrevocably against the Western idea of

civilization. Is it so difficult to understand that, in order to appreciate the "free way of life" of the democratic countries, the millions of Asia will first have to have at least a small chance to experience it, making some choices for themselves?

Letter from **CENTRAL EUROPE**

INNSBRUCK.—In the Tyrolean winter of 1951, during January, it snowed incessantly for three nights and three days. This would not have been a sensational event, except for some rain which followed the warm Föhn winds from Italy ["Föhn" winds are like the "Santa Anas" of Southern California]. With warmth and rain, however, the snow became a soft and sliding mass, lying loose on the mountainsides.

Staying at an Alpine chalet and trying to open a path (through nine feet of snow) to the main road, I heard for the first time in my life the roaring of the avalanches. Although occurring two or three miles from where I stood, the raging sound was like the noise of a thunderstorm in the tropics. Some days later I learned that a total of sixty buildings (mostly stables) had been destroyed on the abysses of the opposite mountains and that eleven persons had been killed. In the Tyrol, as a whole, the death-toll was high. Public mourning was ordered by the Governor, and the papers were full of details. One report mentioned that a mountain house was entirely blasted to pieces. This building was erected in 1667 and there had never been any sign of an avalanche thereabouts. An old farmer wrote that he could well remember a winter, long ago, where the snow had piled up from eighteen to twenty-four feet on the mountainsides, and still there had been no disaster. Others noted that certain climatic conditions which very rarely come together brought the disaster—which should be regarded as an event which probably will not repeat for another century or so.

Early in January of this year, however, after blizzards, snow and rain, the mountainsides again began to be set in motion. This time the destructive elements came even nearer to the chalet in which I stayed. A neighbour on one side of the mountain was carried off by the rolling snow-dust and was suffocated under the deadly burden, while a man on the other side lost two stables, some sheep, and most of his primitive machinery.

More serious accidents happened, however, in Voralberg. An entire mountain village of this region was nearly erased. During a blizzard, one of the dangerous ground-avalanches—bearing, besides snow and ice, uprooted trees, gigantic rocks, metals and

other refuse—came down from the peaks, shattering everything in its path. The surviving members of the community collected thirty-seven badly wounded persons on the surface, while the dead were dug out later on by the Red Cross and other organisations. The schoolhouse, which had been spared, was turned into a hospital. But a few hours later the schoolhouse also went down, depositing the injured as well as the rescuers in an icy grave.

Then a terrible accident happened at Dalaas. A luxury train which had sought shelter in this little railway stop (avalanches had interrupted its progress) was lifted high by the dangerous waves of rolling snow and thrown down an abyss. Many of the passengers, officials, and those who lived in the station were killed or hurt.

This year the population became more alarmed than in 1951. The events in 1951 were regarded as extraordinary and as not likely to recur for some generations. A sub-governor, announcing public mourning on the radio, spoke of this when he mentioned that in the course of all Tyrolean history no similar disaster was recorded. But now these deadly avalanches—against which no precautions can be practically taken—seem to return every few years!

It is true that the weather has been extraordinary in both cases. But the destruction would have been much less had not so many trees been cut down in recent years. The "killing of the forests" started after World War I, when no export was left to Austria but some raw materials, mainly wood. It culminated, however, when (after 1945) the Allied occupation authorities ordered the cutting of trees in a rapacious manner, to collect "reparations" from Austria.

Forests hold back the snow. The denudation of the forest is responsible not only for soil-erosion, but for avalanches as well. Thus a tiny, weightless, filigrane snow flake, taken by the million, is able not only to smash heavy engines, destroy villages, and dismantle electric power stations out of work, but also exposes the errors of nations avid for war reparations.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

AMBUSH WITH WORDS

COMMENTING on bills now before Congress, ostensibly to provide the American Indian with "liberty" and "equality," a Pueblo Indian leader remarked: "The white man used to ambush us with bullets; now he is trying to ambush us with words."

Why, today, should an Indian say this? At least some word has filtered down to the general public concerning the enlightened Indian Reorganization Act of 1933, under which an honest effort was made by the Government of the United States to repair the damage of centuries of injustice to the American Indians. How, then, with all this progress, can it be said that the white man now threatens to ambush the Indian with words? The answer is simply put in an article by Solon T. Kimball in the Spring 1954 issue of *The American Indian*:

The Congress of the United States is under pressure to enact legislation which may constitute the greatest and, in this case, final legal annihilation of the American Indian. The proposed congressional acts will, of course, be accompanied by rationalizations of the highest moral order. They will be explained to the American people as measures which will restore to the Indian his full freedom and citizenship. By implication, the public may be led to believe that the Indian problem will thus be solved and such guilt as Americans may feel for past treatment of Indian citizens may be erased.

What is the mechanism of this pious betrayal? House Concurrent Resolution 108, 83rd Congress, 1st Session, states that:

It is the policy of Congress, as rapidly as possible to make the Indians within the territorial limits of the United States subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States, and end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all of the rights and prerogatives pertaining to the American citizenship.

Many years ago, in ruling on a case involving the Indians' rights to their lands, John Marshall

laid down the principle that the Indians enjoyed a natural title to their land. This was, be it noted, a *moral* conception of the rights of the Indians. Richard Schifter, Counsel of the Association on Indian Affairs, remarks: "If we agree that we are here dealing with a moral rather than a legal principle, we must recognize that Congress can neither repeal nor amend it. It is there for us to obey or to violate."

Plainly, the bills now before Congress propose to violate it. In this way: Since Indian lands are corporately held by the tribes, there is no way to get Indian lands away from the Indians so long as the tribal titles prevail. But if Congress will legislate out of existence the Federal responsibility to preserve tribal ownership, it will be easy, by measures like the abortive General Allotment Act of 1887, to subdivide the land among the members of the tribe, who may then sell it as individuals. The General Allotment Act, before friends of the Indians managed to frustrate its operation, enabled two thirds of the lands of the Indians to pass into non-Indian ownership. The practical working of the present bills designed to implement House Concurrent Resolution 108 is described by Oliver La Farge in the same issue of *The American Indian*:

There are two principal ends to be reached: Destroy tribal corporate existence, and, with that, corporate ownership of property, and terminate the trust status of property. The organized tribes are not only becoming annoyingly able competitors in the exploitation of their own assets, but they are too effective in defending themselves and in making themselves heard. The Indians are even developing intertribal organizations, both within several states and nationally. Everything will go better if they can be broken up.

You do not, of course, introduce a bill to break up tribal organizations. What you do is enact a bill enabling any state to extend civil and criminal jurisdiction over the Indians within its borders any time it chooses. Where that occurs most of the authorities of the tribal governments are automatically terminated, since they are based upon Indian and federal jurisdiction. . . .

You allege that this bill will give the Indians "equality," and thus you get the well-intentioned to go along with it. Thus the President was bamboozled into signing it, despite "grave doubts." In California, where state jurisdiction became effective immediately, the authorities promptly started arresting the Indians for exercising their ancient right of hunting and fishing on their own land. (It happens that these Indians control some very fine hunting and fishing areas, which they reserve for their own use. But they are equal now, and they will shortly learn better.)

You follow this up by a double-barrelled attack upon the Indian trust. You introduce a series of bills to "free" specific tribes from the Indian Bureau, and these bills carefully provide that the very first thing that happens shall be the termination of the Indian Reorganization Act for that tribe, thus wiping out the tribal government and tribal or group business corporations. These bills, of course, end the trust. They terminate all Indian rights. In fact, if enacted, then the members of the tribe concerned will no longer be Indians! The powers of Congress are truly remarkable. . . .

The Indians—most of them, that is—do not want their tribal existence abolished. They do not want to own land as individuals. The recent respect of these wishes has been the one decent thing in respect to the Indians that Americans can claim to have accomplished. Now, in the name of another tradition of "rights," the Indians are to be forced to become "equal"—which means, in fact, *vulnerable* to the onslaughts of avaricious men who rejoice that federal protection of Indian lands has been at last removed.

COMMENTARY

GATHERING GLOOM

THIS is clearly a view-with-alarm issue, reflecting what happens when Americans indulge their "lesser-breeds-without-the-law" theory of international and social relations. First, there is the question of Indochina. Here is a country whose people, of ancient oriental culture, have been apolitical for many centuries, and who quite evidently have accepted communist leadership only because no other leadership was available. Robert Payne maintains that the people of Viet-Nam regard loyalty as a quality of great importance, and were even prepared to be loyal to the French, if, after the defeat of the Japanese, the French had not returned with a blustering, imperial attitude, obviously intending to restore the conditions which prevailed before the war.

The revolution is thus a result of incredible mismanagement. At the outset, the Viet-Nameese were no more communist than the Indonesians, whose drive for freedom from the Dutch was attended by success. The Viet-Nameese, however, were not so fortunate, and have been fighting for eight years to achieve independence. Under the circumstances, it might even be regarded as an act of broadminded generosity if the Viet-Nameese were to give attention to a proposal such as that advocated by Chester Bowles (see lead article). Yet the U.S. Senate Majority leader two weeks ago declared that he was prepared to urge that America send its armed forces to Indochina to help the French.

The plight of the American Indians presents another aspect of colonial mismanagement and disregard of the rights of other races. We hope that readers will find the time to write to the Association of American Indian Affairs, 48 East 86th Street, New York 28, N.Y., for a copy of the Spring 1954 issue of *The American Indian*, quoted in Review.

Meanwhile, as a lonely note of encouragement, there is the recent Supreme Court

ruling that Americans of Mexican descent may not be barred from juries in the United States. The decision was rendered in an opinion read by Supreme Court Justice Warren, formerly governor of California. In the past, in many parts of Texas and other states of the South and West, Americans of Mexican origin have been excluded from jury service and otherwise denied their civil rights as citizens. There are more than three million Americans in this minority group.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

STILL on the track of institutional education: What is it, really, that makes a "subject" come alive in the mind of a child? And what is a "subject," anyway? If it be defined as a collection of information, we side with those who say that everybody has too many facts already, even children—the great difficulty always being how to make them attractive. If a "subject" be defined simply as a focus for attention and reflection, it is impossible for the process of education to proceed without them. These two definitions, however, are not only different; they are often conflicting and exclusive of one another. Reflection is a highly individual matter, while an observable "fact" may become part of a group experience. If we omit the need for individual reflection, more and more do groups of people see the same things and see them in the same way. At this stage, conditioning has taken the place of reflection, and our concern in teaching is simply with the amount of material adequately "impressed," and with the rate of this conditioning.

The New Educationists are fond of claiming that the older methods of learning were chiefly methods of indoctrination—a passing on, intact, of the formal disciplines and cultural experiences to which all proper youngsters should adjust. Children were indoctrinated, moreover, as to how to interpret the significance of the disciplines and cultural experiences made available to them. This amounts to saying that they were "rationalized" into acceptance of the *status quo*. Let the child, it is now recommended, experience for himself, let him discover his own facts, "scientifically," through personal involvement, so that indoctrination may be replaced by "learning through doing." If, however, it is believed that facts somehow interpret themselves, as certain nineteenth-century science-enthusiasts liked to believe, we are right back where we started—placing confidence in the conditioning process as an adequate method of learning. But when a

teacher set out consciously to indoctrinate by means of rationalizing experience for the child, the child had at least a chance of discovering that facts didn't interpret themselves, that *people* did the interpreting, and they did it through manipulation, however peculiarly, of the canons of reason. While not every youngster made this discovery, and most adopted the prevailing prejudices of their parents and forebears, the sufficiently individualistic among their number sometimes turned the weapons of reason around on their instructors, disagreed, and ploughed some new furrows with the tools of logic. They were able to do this because they had learned that logic existed, since the people who taught them did attempt to gain acceptance of what they believed by a display of reason. So, while indoctrination by supposed rational means is far from an ideal method of education, supposed education via mere exposure to scientific "facts" has crucial disadvantages. The worst thing about medieval philosophizing was certainly not its grandiose abstractions, but the dogma—never actually accepted by everyone—that man's reason could never quite understand "the language of God." The grandiose, in other words, mostly failed by not being grandiose enough.

This is not to imply that reason plays no part in modern education. Reason plays a part in everything. But since educators spend most of their time on mundane subjects, the sort of reasoning done about them is really elementary. It is when reason is encouraged to explore all manner of improbable matters, as well as matters of practical importance, that it has the best chance of reaching full scope. The medieval theologians who passed along the rationalizations of the Church *did* reason about improbable subjects. Their primary assumptions were questionable, both philosophically and psychologically, and thought was supposed to lead one to certain pre-established conclusions about ultimate questions, but, however faultily, and however much by indirection, a speculative—or at the very least fanciful—life of the mind was encouraged. We

submit that here is revealed a hidden reason for the preference of many, today, for the older school and university. While some of those who show a fondness for the past are simply religious factionalists, others instinctively prefer a time in education when everything was not made so scientifically "simple," and when the idea of intellectual discipline was at least a part of educational thinking.

In order to find one's way in the field of thought in any age, it is necessary to know how to compare and evaluate, on the ground of reason alone, the current religious and political theories. Today the world is still full of theories and abstract arguments, but our culture has fallen victim to a strange delusion—that theoretical arguments are *passé*, and that "facts"—nice indisputable facts—will be served up by scientists and sociologists for our consumption. Thus many adopt what amounts to philosophical or metaphysical assumptions without being in the least aware that they are doing so, so that truly independent inquiry has not really advanced as far from medieval times as we like to imagine.

Every "subject" contains both elements that are generally tested and known and others which are unknown and mysterious. Modern physicists and biologists are becoming increasingly aware that this is true, that there are huge areas in their own fields which are yet relatively unexplored. A good teacher, we submit, should find ways of calling the attention of even the youngest children to these areas of mystery. Thus the child is presented, however vaguely, with something to wonder about, as well as to think about and to learn. A subject becomes dynamic instead of static, and beckons to philosophic curiosity, with which most children seem to be inherently endowed.

Maxwell Anderson once expressed the opinion that no play could stir the imagination of the public unless the writer ventured into the familiar deeps of moral opinion. "No audience," he wrote, "is satisfied with a play which doesn't

take an attitude toward the world." Why? In part because "each man and woman among us, with a short and harried life to live, must decide for himself what attitudes he will take toward the shifting patterns of government, justice, religion, business, morals, and personal conduct." Also, we might say, because everyone has at least intermittent flashes of the desire to expand or improve his current "world view," because he at times believes, as did Plato, that true education and philosophical speculation are one and the same. The old education, which we do not and need not generally mourn, did introduce young people to philosophy and ethical theory, even if chiefly by back and side doors. Exposure to classics of literature, often unsuited for the age groups compelled to struggle through them, nevertheless fulfilled some of the conditions which Anderson insists must be met by the playwright if he is to hold his audience. And if all this is true, we miss a lot when we neglect "the classics," not because all the classics deserve to live as they stand, but because, until better classics are available, they bring us into touch with deep and sometimes passionate thinking about abstract values.

It is the function of art to transport men from the world of everyday opinion and behavior to new and puzzling realms, in which they must find themselves anew. Though our present schools spend more time with art classes, this larger experience of art is seldom available. Friendly acquaintance with current techniques of living is the keynote, and while this emphasis allows children to become socially sophisticated, it does not familiarize them with currents of opinion and conviction sharply set off from those their parents reflect. We have reached conformity again, not the dangerous conformity of imposed religious beliefs, but the enervating conformity of the commonplace. "Subjects" do not fully "come alive" for either teachers or pupils in this atmosphere.

FRONTIERS

The Recession and the Auto Industry

[While the fortunes of the automobile industry are not ordinarily thought of as a "philosophical" subject, the relations of this enormous corporate enterprise are so widespread, affecting so high a proportion of the extremely mobile American population, the editors felt that a discussion of cars, of the policies of those who make them and the interests of those who use them, might prove intensely interesting. Accordingly, we asked Phil Mac Dougal to revise his recent KPFA broadcast on the auto industry for publication here. What he says does, we think, raise questions which may never have occurred at all to many car owners and drivers. Since, along with many other Americans, a MANAS staff writer happens to have a lifelong interest in cars, and also a modicum of knowledge in this field, we have added his comments at the close of Mr. Mac Dougal's article.—Eds.]

THERE is good economic reason to believe that the American economy has long existed in a state of "permanent depression," which means its absolute inability to maintain itself on civilian goods production, and its absolute need for enormous and continuing production of war materials. Just the current reduction in the budget for arms contains a grave recession; when we consider that it is a modest fraction of the total arms budget, the true situation shows up glaringly.

I want to explore one field of civilian production, the auto industry. Its peculiarity is that it puts out a necessary commodity which has nevertheless many of the features of a luxury item. Autos have a key place among consumer durables, and a vital one in production, but their sale has the instability seen with luxuries; like these, they are the first to be affected by economic fluctuations. In 1930, when the nation's income declined by only 11 per cent, its spending on cars declined by 37 per cent. By 1932, income had fallen to 58 per cent of 1929, but spending on cars had dropped to 25 per cent of that year.

In this manner the auto business tends to lead in all declines (and rises), and that may offer some explanation of its present stickiness. Yet even holding this in mind, its present sensitivity and

quickness to react seem extraordinary. I submit that there is another element in the explanation, which has to do with the *quality* of the goods, a phase of the modern retrogression and decline in living standards which despite all that is written, from the national census of industries to the Kinsey reports, seldom comes in for attention. The one thing that could have cushioned the present crisis in auto would have been the production of 1954 models genuinely superior in quality to those of the past. But, the new cars are now out, and prove, with insufficiently weighty exceptions, to be only the models of 1953 (and on back) with "stylistic changes"—the cheapest changes possible—more horsepower, and some problematical new features in the form of "extra equipment," at extra prices.

Let alone since 1953, the cold truth is that the American stock auto has not been substantially improved for about eighteen years in basic design, and in some respects has actually deteriorated. Everything essential it had over the car of 1935 was in the Chrysler "Airflow" of that year, meaning two things: an overdrive and "streamlined" body. But this is trivial. "Streamlining," particularly as it suffers the sea-change of the "aesthetic" notions of the stylizers, has quite limited meaning for the normal uses of a passenger car. The recent popularity of the jeep and its derivatives is evidence: as unstreamlined and angular as a matchbox, but just the same the one really decent, practical piece of overall design to come out of America (under military stimulus) in the whole period.

The beginning of the nearly two decades of stagnation coincides roughly with the time of the extinction of the smaller independent manufacturers. Thus, standardization must be regarded as the responsibility of the virtually *pure* system of mass-production by a small number of corporate giants, which has ruled the field. Each separate feature shows it. Engines were about the strongest point in the complex, as might be expected in view of the general features of technological evolution. By contrast with the more recent tendency which concentrates in the problems of control, fine structure, integration, and quality generally, the classic industrial system centered above all on

problems of energy production, which was associated with an inchoate, ill-formed, and dominantly quantitative outward growth. This general description fits the American car, and gives it the mark of the industrially outdated. And, though there have been real improvements in engines, even so the American stock engine is inferior to existing, available types. Motors are now made sufficiently compact to fit into the rear trunk of even a very small car. Placement at the rear makes for more efficient transmission of power to the wheels, eliminates the problem of excessive heat in the passenger compartment, and so allows for air-cooling—again more efficient. As long ago as the early thirties, Dr. Ferdinand Porsche designed an aircooled engine with four horizontal opposed cylinders (once more superior to conventional arrangements) which became the powerplant of the rear-engine "Volkswagen." The "Volkswagen" design, ready for production not long after 1935, is to this day at least five years ahead technically of 1954 American cars. Similar engines have been built, such as that of the unlucky "Tucker" car. Tucker's design, which followed Dr. Porsche's on a larger scale and had other improvements, was basically excellent. Nothing prevented his getting into production but open connivance of Big Auto, Big Steel, and government agencies to suppress him. Steel would not sell to him. He could not buy parts from auto suppliers. The War Assets Administration refused to sell him a surplus foundry, then later sold it to Kaiser at a lower price. The SEC launched an investigation dragging on for months which impounded his records and destroyed his chances of attracting investors, only to be forced to exonerate him in the end. Senator Homer Ferguson of Detroit (!) prompted Congressional investigation of him. It is a classic picture of the squeezing out of a dangerous competitor by monopoly in connivance with the state. All this can be documented.

The proposed Tucker engine had an additional good feature, a fuel-injection system. Fuel injection, of which again there are good existing systems, such as the Parsons, has many advantages over conventional carburetion; yet it is nowhere used in American cars. Finally, the typical American

tendency to build engines of greater and greater horsepower is in part a compensation for unnecessary weight, and in part an expensive and dangerous absurdity, for the car's other components (let alone the roads) are not such as to allow safe use of that power.

Of these components, transmissions show the general pattern clearly: not just neglect of basic improvement, but its actual replacement by artificial, cost-raising, even ridiculous or harmful qualities. Since before the war, the makers have imposed on us a great variety of automatic transmissions designed to remove the need of shifting gears. All are expensive. All bring maintenance and service problems. And not until quite recently have any been developed which transmit power to the wheels with efficiency comparable to that of an ordinary gearbox. At best they are a minor convenience; until quite recently all have been wasteful in oil, fuel, and excess engine wear, and all have the accident-breeding fault of not allowing as sensitive control of the car as a manual box. No driver interested in high performance wants them; such a driver wants a manual shift sprouting from the floor, as nature intended, and rightly sneers at the Detroit "gluepots." In short, the whole development is as near to completely superfluous as it well could be: a product of the sales and advertising game and an economic millstone. It is the thing most dear to our monopolized industry: "extra-equipment" which does not disturb existing investments, nor make existing manufacturing setups obsolete. Here again is a synoptic picture of the "ideal" toward which the industry strives, the apex to technological progress under monopoly: a basic frame unchanged for twenty, thirty, fifty years if they could get away with it, and all innovation represented only as successive "extras," one glued on top of the other, each with a separate price-tag. Yet if the millions for this development had been spent instead on perfecting, say gas-turbines, one could now build a car in which the present engine, gear-box, and torque-converter would all alike be obsolete.

Yet again, brakes well exemplify the pattern. Several of the new cars feature power brakes as extras. Like power steering, these are mainly

desired because of the excessive size and weight of the vehicle. However, the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads recently conducted tests which proved that a *majority* do not have brakes capable of stopping them safely over 70 mph. Try it, and the brakes overheat and "fade"—*all the more quickly when power-operated*. The actual drums and shoes have become inadequate, but the better disk-type available has not been generally introduced, and instead of this *necessary* alteration, the consumer is given an *unnecessary* one plastered on top of the inadequate base, in such way even that it conceals from him the danger. If a mechanic disguised a cracked brake-rod with putty, he would be liable to criminal action, though. The inadequacy of brakes should be viewed, too, in the light of horsepowers up to 200 odd. Suspension the same. Our cars have a very soft or "featherbed" ride which causes dangerous roll on corners—at the speeds which the horsepower invites—and thus small foreign cars with far less horsepower can outperform them easily.

A great source of the trouble is size and weight. But it has been known since the twenties that an auto body of aluminum would more than pay out its additional first cost in operating savings. Then, there is body design. In addition to "streamlining," there has been a steady growth in body size. Mostly with this everlasting "bigger"—salt water—they tried to satisfy our thirst for innovation. The irrationality shows up in the fact that the increase has been only half or less in *usable* size. Cantilevering the body over the axles to avoid increased wheelbase produces much useless space because of awkward shape. Lateral expansion produces the puff-cheeked frog effect which brings doors and fenders into contact with traffic friction and promotes expensive replacements; but even the need of that does not justify doors six inches thick which have just as much function as the false-front second stories they used to put above stores to make them look important.

The foregoing are only the most prominent details, to which must be added the strict junk: the fishtail fenders and the chrome, the air-conditioner, the fog-lights that do not pierce fog, the bumpers to guard bumpers. It is true that many European cars

have the same faults, for the same reasons, but they had a far smaller economic base. The American car has to be measured against the enormous capacities of the country, the huge market, and also against the passionate interest the American takes in autos.

Basically, the fault does not lie with particular men or particular suppressions of patents and the like. It is inherent in the system, and is concrete evidence in this one field which stands for them all, that unchecked mass-production and what goes with it in this system finally poisons itself as a positive social force. Not just that the very great capital investments that made swift progress possible, now monopolized, tend to hold back progress, nor that every one of the separate interests created in the high division of labor develops its own stake and tends to render itself autonomous without regard to the needs of the whole. More: since advances *are* withheld, and nature abhors a vacuum, the space they should occupy gets filled with the cheapest and shoddiest of substitutes: the false, artificial, and parasitic—gadeteer and stylizer plus advertising man—whose exponents develop their own techniques and increasingly poison the whole atmosphere, depriving the consuming public of the knowledge and wisdom necessary to correct the situation

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Mr. Mac Dougal rides with a heavy throttle over several crossroads we should prefer to approach with caution. National economy *is* geared to war production, to the extent that peace on earth would mean industrial dislocation and unemployment. The auto industry is in virtual monopoly control, so that the vaunted advantages of free enterprise have little scope. It is also undeniably true that each year's crop of new autos reflects the dicta of the advertising men and fashion stylists far more than the improvements our best engineers might contribute. We have neither consumer controlled production nor room for the radical innovator. Beyond these obvious points, however, it must be recognized that much of what Mac Dougal writes is debatable; the sprawling complications of a fabulous industry make it both

difficult and logically dangerous to smoothly develop a favorite theory or two. Thus Mac Dougal has neglected the recent swing toward engineering and utility value improvement occurring since 1949, and particularly notable in the Ford line for 1954. The whole picture is not, in the opinion of many experts who otherwise share Mac Dougal's views generally, completely "poisoned" for the public. For instance, to quote from Ken Purdy's *Kings of the Road* (1952):

The turning of the worm may be at hand. For the American automobile is not as beloved of its buyers as it once was. Consider, for example, a resolution adopted by the staid American Automobile Association's Executive Committee in 1948 which complains that "it is apparent that the car stylists and advertising men have greatly influenced the engineering staffs of the motor car manufacturers in the matter of car construction and design."

There is a great ferment abroad in the land. People do want individuality in their personal transport, as they want individuality in their homes, and they do try to get it. They would envy, if they knew about it, the vast selection that confronts their European cousins, who can choose from tiny seven-foot-long cars all the way to monsters bigger than anything we make, bigness or smallness being dandy if it isn't *forced* upon one. . . . The picture is brightening in Detroit, though, brightening almost week by week.

We doubt that recession in the auto industry could have been adequately "cushioned" by revolutionary engineering improvements. It seems more likely that the trouble is that too many cars are being produced—and at too high a price. Excellent used cars are everywhere available at a fraction of their initial cost, dealers are swamped with both new and used.

Mr. Mac Dougal's approach to the definition of a "good" car seems considerably one-sided, though this commentator personally shares many of his preferences. While it is true that the public isn't getting what it would like best in the way of good utility at low cost, and that the foreign sports car completely outclasses our production models in road racing, it is also true that trends since 1935 have reflected *some* of the desires of the average driver.

Stack up a 1954 Ford against a 1935 Cadillac and see for yourself.

The Ford has more utilizable room with much shorter wheelbase, better performance, far better economy, and considerably greater ease of handling. The 1935 Ford was a short-lived, unsafe, unsatisfactory road car, while the newest version will carry two more passengers, three to five times the luggage, and travel effortlessly all year at high speeds. And most people, not to mention traveling sales representatives, find plain roominess very useful. The Jeep, given such a rousing testimonial by Mac Dougal, will do none of these things, though it does perform specialized tasks well. Similarly, the Volkswagen, wonderful here-to-there car of advanced motor design, is still much too tiny for "the family." If super-performance and phenomenal car mileage were indeed the main criterion, the motorcycle would be the answer.

We even have to demur at the wholesale condemnation of automatic transmissions. The present writer is among those who wouldn't be caught dead with one, but the average uninterested or poor driver can get, through this means, better performance, comparatively equal gas mileage, and an improved chance that his motor will survive insensitive throttling. Ratios in the top automatic gear now exceed many overdrive specifications, and performance is attested by the fact that the Lincoln winners of the Mexican road race all used automatic transmissions rather than conventional gear boxes. They *are* costly, but we are a costly people.

All in all it's a big subject, interesting to most Americans, but not yet interesting enough to support really adequate consumer research so that public demand can influence the most needed improvements. The psychological aspects of the past two decades of transition in automotive production, however, are worth some further discussion which may be undertaken at a later date.