

EIR Feature

And how we were shrunk

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

For most who served then, the World War II mobilization was a morally uplifting experience. For them, most of whom had been born somewhere between 1910 and 1924, military service was a melting-pot. Eyewitness recollections show that those who served overseas had a heightened sense of the price which might be paid for tragic blunders of national policymaking. Those who served in the area of the British Empire, such as the China-Burma-India theater, for example, saw first hand, in the visible fruits of London's arrogant cruelties, what must be changed radically if the world were not to fall into risk of something as bad as, or even much worse than the war of 1939-45.

To those returning to the United States on the shuttling troop-ships, that shared wartime experience was often taken as a sign that we were resolved never again to permit the drift of policymaking to bring us to a *casus belli* which foresight might have prevented. For certain reasons, that optimism proved to have been exaggerated.

A decade from now, most who came out of the economic depression of the 1930s to share that military service, will have passed on. Today, the survivors among those millions have a story yet to tell, the story of their generation's 1941-63 experience, from Pearl Harbor until the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and the deadly after-shocking murder of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. To date, much has been written about sundry facts of that generation's page from history, but the real story, the tragedy of that generation, has not been told. It is a story from the past; it is the story behind the most important breaking developments in today's headlines around the world. It is still breaking news.

A year or two after the veterans had returned to civilian life, most had virtually abandoned the resolute commitments they had shared with one another during the last days abroad, and on the returning troop-ships. The gloomy postwar economic recession and an inculcated, numbing fear of "The Bomb," stirred compelling anxieties among former victims of the 1930s depression. The phenomenon which



U.S. troops bring in supplies at Iwo Jima in February 1945. "To those returning to the United States on the shuttling troop-ships, that shared wartime experience was often taken as a sign that we were resolved never again to permit the drift of policymaking to bring us to a casus belli which foresight might have prevented. For certain reasons, that optimism proved to have been exaggerated."

came to be called "McCarthyism" was, for most, also a factor in this withdrawal into relative intellectual and moral smallness. Most among them became soon a shrunken parody of the commitments they had shared at the close of their term of military service.

We do not capture the essence of that returning generation's life-story, until we examine the impact of the late 1940s and the 1950s developments on the "Baby Boomers," the "Boob Tube" generation, the children of those shrunken former veterans. Look at the post-1963 mass-eruption of the radical counterculture, and ask oneself, what happened during the late 1940s and 1950s, which prepared the children of returning World War II veterans, the "Baby Boomer" generation, to be taken over so quickly, so profoundly by that radical counterculture which dominates the institutions of this nation, and much of this planet today?

Focus upon a characteristic feature of the late 1940s. The university campus population was greatly expanded by a large ration of the younger veterans who exercised their educational options under the "G.I. Bill of Rights." They were a stratum of students sobered and matured emotionally by their military experience, and generally "good students," more consistent performers than their younger peers, excepting one crucial drawback: They had lost three to five years at war, and they were in a hurry.

That haste was quickened by gloomy reflections upon the 1930s Depression. By 1946-47, "The Bomb" had made most of them anxious; that anxious eye dulled the sharpness of

In this section

The documentary material that we present here gives an unusual insight into the cultural decline of the United States since World War II. *EIR* has commented frequently on the cultural "paradigm shift" that followed the assassination of President John F. Kennedy: the onset of the "post-industrial society," pessimism about the benefits of science and technology, and the replacement of Judeo-Christian moral values with the value-free hedonism of the New Age. But the problem did not begin in 1962; the seeds were planted in the immediate postwar years, as Mr. LaRouche describes in his introduction.

As case studies, we consider, first, the famous Kinsey reports of 1948-53 on human sexuality. These influential reports are not only fraudulent, but are based upon actual sexual molestation of children for purposes of "scientific observation."

The second case study involves the fight led by a remarkable man, Fredric Wertham, against the comic-book industry. His charges are as relevant today as they were in 1954—or even more so, as the effects of comics upon children today are compounded by television, video games, and computer simulations.



Virtual Reality games at a Chicago amusement park: the 1990s offspring of the "cybernetics" cult of Norbert Wiener.

their intellects more than a little bit; one more time, fear quickened their haste. The specter of what came to be called "McCarthyism" said to many: "Don't think too much; it could land you in trouble." They lightened their intellectual baggage, and that, too, quickened their pace.

In those days, the expression would have been, "It's a funny thing." Here they were, returned from war against Nazism, and almost as conformist as any *Wendehals* of Hitler's *Reich*. It was a U.S. veteran's parody of the Hitler period's *Gleichschaltung*: looking from side to side, quickly, to ensure they were in conformity, "just another regular fella," before taking a position on any subject, classroom or otherwise.

That diminished concentration-span, that growing tendency for shallow-minded conformity, made possible the spread of the approved types of "post-modernist" academic novelties of that time. Key examples of those fads included Prof. Norbert Wiener's cult of "cybernetics," and such related science-fiction novelties as "systems analysis" generally and John Von Neumann's "artificial intelligence" in particular. The same fearful wont for shallow-minded conformity fostered the rapid spread of the pseudo-scientific fads in psychoanalysis and sociology generally. The link between the mathematical and social-theory fads was typified by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, where the living Wiener and deceased Freud met "Golden Dawn" satanist Aldous Huxley's role in MK-Ultra, all brought together by the radical

New Ager circles of Margaret Mead and her sometime husband, Gregory Bateson.

Not quite all their children

The experience of teaching at several college campuses in the northeastern U.S.A. during the 1966-73 interval provided this writer some crucial insights into what had been done to the bright young children of the returning World War II veterans. The writer's own qualified 1948-52 success in resisting and refuting Wiener's pathetic definition of "information," helped him greatly, as a lecturer, in recognizing the "hereditary" intellectual impact on the sons and daughters of those who had not resisted the popular campus fads of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Those students of the late 1960s were "smart," quick-witted generally; but, most of the campus radicals of the 1960s were pathetically conformist even in rebellion against their parents' conformities; like their parents, they were victims of too much "information," combined with much too little creativity. They were all too obviously the victims of such conventional babysitters as "Howdy Doody," "Romper Room," and a bit of "Bozo the Clown"; there was also a very strong influence visibly radiated, directly or through parental circles, from the household gossip's flight from reality into the mind-set of the "soap opera." They were susceptible to strong, but fleeting passions, all pursued with an "other-directed" shallow-mindedness, gripped much more by haste

to believe than regard for rigor.

The most afflicted among the campus youth of the late 1960s were those whose induced fear of being dropped into "blue collar" social status made them likely prey for the dogmas of Prof. Milton Friedman's vulgarized monetarism (or, its left-wing parodies), and the irrational belief in "post-industrial" utopianism. Since 1971-72, much helped by the rise of that generation to today's executive rank, the world has been transformed from a society oriented to agro-industrial development, into a global financial order self-doomed by the growth of a gigantic speculative bubble. Thus, today, we live under the reign of a bankrupt economic system, under which monetary and financial processes—and the calculation of "economic growth"—have been de-coupled from the physical economic realities of production and consumption.

Mass recruitment to this New Age lunacy began in the United States about 1964-66, but the seeds of self-destruction were planted among many of the academically trained strata from the wartime generation during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The influence of Wiener's and Von Neumann's fads are a key part of this earlier indoctrination, and an example of the same popularized delusions which promoted the widespread influence of psychological and sociological cult-fads during that period.

What was evil about 'cybernetics'?

The attractive and innocent feature of Prof. Norbert Wiener's 1947-48 *Cybernetics* was the description of the means by which use of hydraulic and electronic systems of automatic control was beginning to surpass by far the limitations inherent in earlier notions of mechanical design of automatic machinery.¹ The notion of "information" presented there was the objectionable feature, as also in the wilder claims for the Wiener-Shannon "information theory" dogma in other locations of that period.² At that time, very few of the war-veterans working in physical-science fields raised any objection to the transparent absurdity of the latter feature of Wiener's work: Chiefly, they were in a hurry, with no time to stop and reflect upon what they should have recognized as an absurdity.

Firstly, any person with any competent grounding in scientific work or Classical art forms knows that it is not possible to represent human ideas by means of statistical distribution. In Classical forms of poetry, dramatic tragedy, music, and painting, human creativity can never be expressed literally, but only in the form of *metaphor*. All human ideas, apart from the most naive use of simple nouns and adjectives to identify simple sense-objects, are therefore expressed only

in the form of metaphor. Every important discovery in the history of mathematical physics was also introduced in no other form than a metaphor, never deductively. Every important discovery of principle in physical science occurs in the form of that kind of change in underlying axiomatic assumptions which cannot be represented in a deductive mode.

Therefore, it is plainly absurd to claim that any formula derived from statistical gas theory, such as Boltzmann's famous H-theorem, could measure idea-content of communications in terms of "negative entropy" so defined.

The veterans on campus after the war were in a hurry. They were, for the most part, "regular guys," who knew the fear of economic depression, "The Bomb," and what came to be known as "McCarthyism." That education-in-a-hurry, combined with those fears, became the standard of culture they provided for their children.

Secondly, no modern industrial economy could function on the basis of ideas consistent with Wiener's definition of "information." All important improvements in technology are derived from the expression of a scientific discovery in the form of either a principle of machine-tool, or analogous design. The new principle embedded hereditarily in that applications design has its origin as a metaphor in scientific discovery. The origin of rises in the productive powers of labor lies in those qualities of ideas.

The only "ideas" which might be represented even approximately by Wiener's method are utterances of the utmost triviality.

The same elementary absurdity permeates the underlying assumptions of John Von Neumann's influential "systems analysis," and his notion of "artificial intelligence."³

If one examines the textbook-based methods of education used generally during the post-1945 period, it is not difficult to understand why so many of the returning veterans and their progeny would have been duped by hoaxes such as these

1. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics* (New York: Wiley, 1948). Prior to the 1948 release of the regular, clothbound edition of this book, a Paris-produced paperbound edition was introduced with more limited circulation.

2. Cf. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "On LaRouche's Discovery," *Fidelio*, Vol. III, No. 1, Spring 1994.

3. John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, 3rd edition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953). See also Von Neumann's posthumously published Yale lectures on "The Computer and the Brain."

of Wiener and Von Neumann.

In Classical education, such as the program of the famous mass-producer of geniuses, the Brotherhood of the Common Life, the pupil is guided not to “learn about” a discovery, but rather to relive the original experience of that act of discovery, as reported by the original discoverer, or a suitable substitute for such a source. In that way, the pupil does not master the “formula,” as diploma-mill textbook education prescribes; the pupil takes as the object of his or her attention the successful mustering of those creative-mental processes of his or her own mind, by means of which the original act of discovery is reexperienced. The student with that sort of Classical education knows the mental processes by which a discovery is generated; the victim of diploma-mill textbook education learns the plausible authority of the result of the discovery, not the act of discovery itself.

The victim of diploma-mill education does not know the act of discovery itself. Therefore, for him the authority of the presented discovery lies not in the way in which the idea was generated, but rather in the demonstration that the result foretold is statistically “repeatable.” For this reason, that victim earns his diploma on the authority of what he esteems as “practical” plausibility, not in a scientific way. He has not become familiar with the nature of the act of discovery itself; for that reason he tends to be more readily hoodwinked by what appear to him to be the seemingly elegant deductive-mathematical architecture of hoaxes such as those of Wiener

and Von Neumann.

One must remember, that those veterans on campus back then were in a hurry. They were, for the most part, “regular guys,” who knew the fear of economic depression, “The Bomb,” and what came to be known as “McCarthyism.” That education-in-a-hurry, combined with those fears, became the standard of culture they provided for their children. That had a side-effect. The children knew that their parents were, as the mid-’60s radicals said, “faking it.” Their parents’ hurried avoidance of deeper values signified to many of the children that there were no deeper values. Life became for them a rapid succession of shallow-minded, if passionate transitions away from one banal conformity to the next. The majority of those children grew up to become culturally pessimistic existentialists. If they were literate, they moved quickly from Marx to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche by way of the Nazi Martin Heidegger and his bed-mate Hannah Arendt. Life for them became, “How I feel about my situation.”

It might be proposed, therefore, that if the victims were told the story of how this moral sickness of theirs came about, they might be empowered to free themselves from a disorder whose influence is threatening to destroy our nation and our civilization from within. It is therefore strongly suggested that the still surviving veterans of World War II tell their story at last. What happened to those veterans and their children, on the way to the late 1960s, should be reviewed.

Spreading pessimism: lies of the N.Y. Times

What blame do the American media get for fostering the cultural pessimism that we now see running rampant? Consider the record of that “newspaper of record,” the *New York Times*.

On July 20, 1994, while mankind celebrated the 25th anniversary of the first walk on the Moon, the *Times*’s front-page story was, “Earthly Worries Supplant Euphoria of Moon Shots.” It dredged up every professional pessimist from Pablo Picasso (“it means nothing to me”) to microbiologist René Dubos (space suit technology is a “dreaded portent of what could happen to our lives”).

The *Times* has a long and nasty history of such coverage. In a Jan. 6, 1880 article, it “proved” that electric light could never compete with gaslight. It took one generator to power eight light bulbs, the *Times* argued, so at least 250,000 generators would be needed to light New York. This implied a mammoth investment of \$750 million—obviously out of reach.

Ten days later, in a front-page exposé of Thomas Edison as a fraud, the *Times* cited a “noted electrician” for the conclusion that “after a few more flashes in the pan, we shall hear very little more of Edison or his electric lamp. Every claim he makes has been tested and proved impracticable.”

And so it went with the airplane, as well. After the failure of one of Samuel Langley’s experiments in powered flight, a *Times* editorial on Dec. 10, 1903 proclaimed man’s attempts to fly fruitless: “We hope that Professor Langley will not put his substantial greatness as a scientist in further peril by continuing to waste his time, and the money involved, in further airship experiments.” The *Times* blacked out the success of the Wright brothers for six years.

The *Times* attacked the successful rocket experiments of Robert Goddard in a Jan. 13, 1920 editorial: “That Professor Goddard . . . does not know the relation of action to reaction, and of the need to have something better than a vacuum against which to react—to say that would be absurd. Of course he only seems to lack the knowledge ladled out daily in our high schools. But there are such things as intentional mistakes.”—David Cherry