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In a dark time the eye begins to see.
—Theodore Roethke

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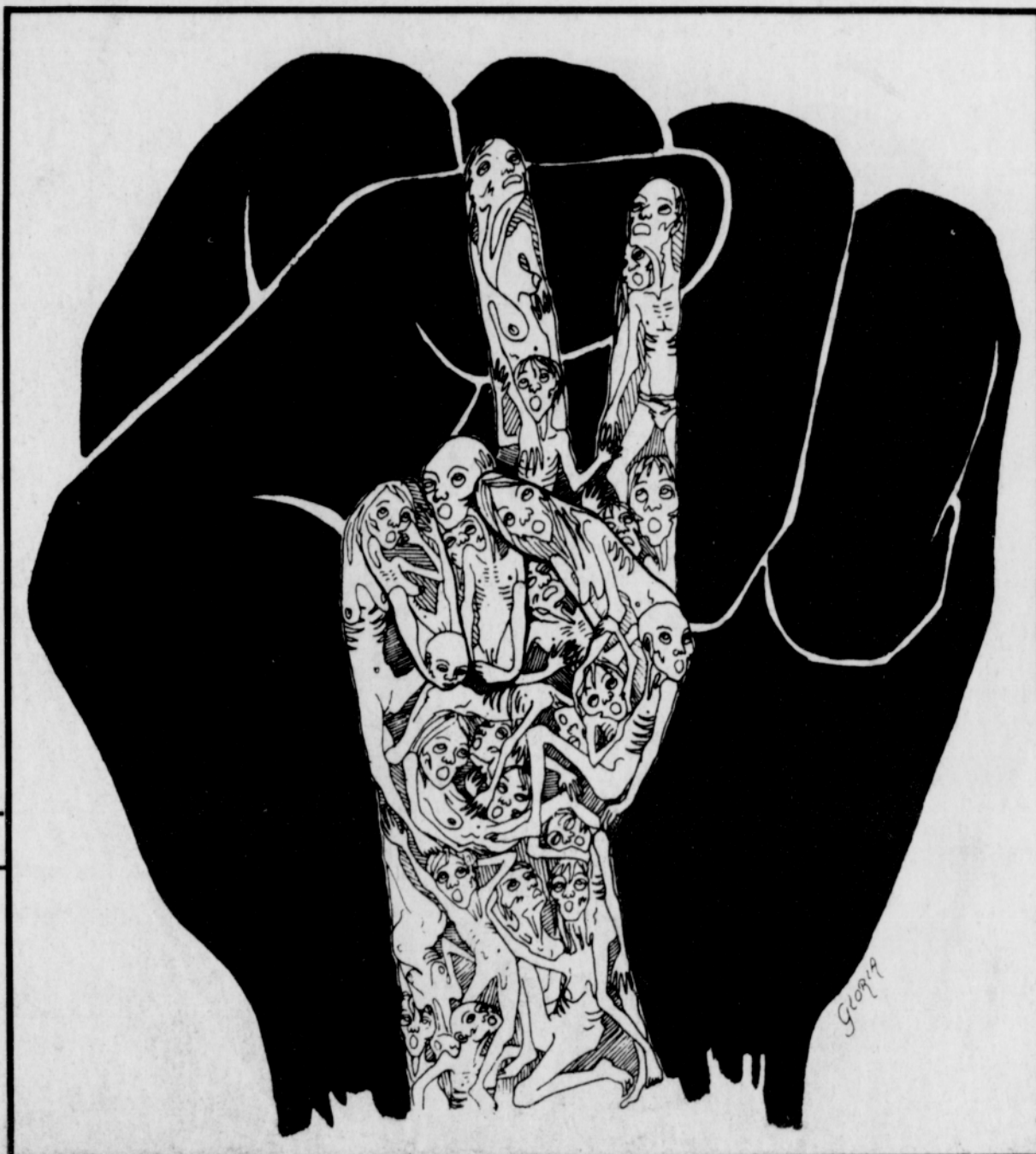
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OF ART AND OPINION

Gloria Huston



MAY

DAY

A call for rebellion. A call for change. A call for help. May Day. The ancient celebration of Spring. The festival of rebirth.

May Day is celebrated all over the world, in every culture and kitchen. For many it is Labor Day in honor of the anonymous billions who break their backs or wear out their nerves for their daily bread. It is the symbol of seeding the Earth in hopes of a good harvest to ease the terrible hunger that stalks the human race.

May Day is celebrated also as a day of revolution, a charge against history that demands sweeping changes among the world's societies. This claim usually originates from compassion and from the perception that there is no excuse that a single human should be hungry or without shelter or be denied adequate health and medical care. It is the demand for freedom and respect for all of the world's people.

The world situation continually eludes the idealists and optimists. The global economy plummets. The balance of wealth and resources is increasingly unequal. Millions are out of work. Millions more die from famine and epidemics. The old especially suffer: they are too often abandoned to starve or freeze. Children are malnourished. Their hungry pleading faces stare at us from everywhere.

It is not a good season for optimism. Oppression and tyranny infect the world's governments. Hatred and intolerance are legitimized into rule. World leaders move pitilessly against their own peoples and against each other. The nations spoil for war. Nuclear obliteration is probable. Despite worldwide opposition to the nuclear arms race, it races on. If humanity survives into the twenty-first century half at least will be starving unless vital resources are more equably distributed. And at the rate we use them, few of those resources may be available by then.

But optimism persists.

Perhaps because in even the worst of times our predecessors always raised a Maypole for themselves and their children to dance around on May Day. Perhaps especially in the worst times it is necessary to hope against reality.

—Michael Paul McCusker