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THE TREES, NOT THE FOREST

ONE thing we can be sure of: even the best thinking of our time is not going to give us an over-all plan, a comprehensive program, and a clear vision of the Good Society, or even of the Good Individual. We have the habit of supposing that if we are not thinking Big, we are not thinking at all. But Big Thinking, in our time, has an uncontrollable tendency to collapse of its own weight.

Of course, Big Thinking is always a possibility, in the abstract. You can do it if you have the imagination. But if it is to be understood by a considerable number of people, the thinking has to have enough familiar reference-points to acquire a sense of reality for the reader. This is virtually impossible, these days, for we live in a time when the familiar reference-points are dissolving. So, it is a time of criticism and analysis. The effective writers are the men who show us how the reference-points are dissolving.

The popularity, among intellectuals, of the Existentialist point of view is explained by the fact that the Existentialists keep on taking inventory of the reference-points which are left. *These*, they say, are all you can rely upon. That's what all men want—something they can be sure of. The disillusionment of an age always hits the intellectuals first, and while they are explaining how they feel to the rest, they are called various names—"decadent," "immoral," or, simply, "sick." Even though these adjectives sometimes apply, the fact is that the intellectuals get blamed for articulating what is the matter with everybody, or very nearly everybody. Other people are affected by the disappearance of the reference-points, but they react emotionally instead of intellectually. Fearing for their identity, they join some well-established "crowd"; or, unwilling to relate to a quick-sands culture, they become "beatniks," or cleave to some less familiar set of symbols of an alienated identity.

Somewhat more difficult is the description of the new reference-points which are emerging to take the place of those we have lost. One fairly successful effort in this direction is conducted by the people who are writing about Zen Buddhism. This interest is obviously some kind of connection between the past and the future. It has no sharp outline, and can hardly acquire a sharp outline, and this is a good thing, since one of the troubles with our reference-points was that they had far too much "objectivity" to survive the periodic storms of human experience.

The next ten or fifteen years, it seems certain, will be occupied in the clarification of new reference-points in human life. When this has been done, we may be ready to have another try at some Big Thinking, since people cannot live without Big Thinking any more than they can live without reference-points. But meanwhile, serious communications had better be limited to smaller matters—matters which we have some hope of understanding in the terms of our present experience.

To get some practical focus in this discussion, we borrow a paragraph from an article by C. Wright Mills, "The Decline of the Left," in *Contact*, No. 3 (a new magazine published in San Francisco). Mr. Mills is considering what has happened to education in the United States:

> In their classic period, liberal observers expected and assumed that universal education would, no doubt, replace ignorance with knowledge, and so indifference with public alertness. But educational matters have not turned out this way. Nowadays, precisely the most "liberal" educators feel that something has gone wrong.
>
> Like religion, education in the United States competes with and takes its place alongside, the other

> mass means of distraction, entertainment and communication. These fabulous media do not often truly communicate; they do not connect public issues with private troubles; they seldom make clear the human meaning of impersonal, atrocious events and historical decisions. They trivialize issues, they convert publics into mere "media markets."

The key sentence, here, is, "they do not connect public issues with private troubles." When the public channels of communication and the basic cultural institutions of a society fail in this way, they are doomed to lose their authority. Of course, the break-down takes time, and this is fortunate, since it gives us time to figure out what is going on and makes occasional opportunities for us to direct, if only a little, the processes of change.

The arts, to some degree the popular arts, mirror these processes. Take for example two moving pictures whose excellence has been widely acknowledged in recent months—*Separate Tables* and *The Defiant Ones.* There is no big Message in either of these pictures, yet they represent an unmistakable abandonment of old reference-points. *Separate Tables* throws away some of the old ideas of morality and guilt. It reveals an unexpected compassion in a number of ordinary people for a man who has done something unforgivable by past standards of morality. The people, no doubt, are idealized to fulfill the writer's intent. The scene is a second-class seaside hotel in England where some would-be "gentlefolk" and others are wearing out their tired lives in slow decay. The story concerns the backwash of life. Great things are hardly to be expected of these people. A successful mediocrity is all they are after, and even this seems too difficult for most of them. But an *everyman* quality emerges in the discovery by the poor wretch who has done the unforgivable thing that the crisis which his public exposure brings makes him at last able to face himself. He throws away pretense, and this act of integrity, in the bleakest of circumstances, enables him to be born again.

Suppose the story and its denouement are obviously contrived; suppose that the Freudian apologetic for the straw-man hero's behavior is shallow and inadequate; suppose all the criticisms you wish, on whatever grounds you choose—the fact still remains that this is a film about the dignity of a man who has lost almost all his dignity; a film, therefore, which speaks to the condition of man in the twentieth century. We are, as a collective image, with all our institutional hypocrisies and theatrical gestures, no less degraded than the poor fellow portrayed by David Niven in *Separate Tables.* The question is rather, Do we have the courage he is able to muster, at the very end?

Today, the world "out there"—the jungle, the wilderness, or whatever typifies the outside forces with which men have to cope—is increasingly the world of conventional institutions. The art forms which touch our minds and hearts affirmatively find no values in the big institutions. The search is for primary values in human relations—simple relations, such as Ignazio Silone portrayed in *Bread and Wine* and *The Seed Beneath the Snow.* Our writers are twice- disenchanted Rousseaus with the betrayals of two hundred years of political failures between the French utopian writer and the present.

The Defiant Ones is a powerful film largely because of the rare ability of a Negro actor, Sidney Poitier, but the story is also important. The flight of a white man and a black man, manacled together, from the armed force of the State has considerable symbolism for our time. What comes out unforgettably is the discovery by each fugitive of the other's humanity. This is the touch of reality that remains—this, and the insistence of a decent sort of sheriff that the hunt is for *men,* not animals. The end of the film confirms this feeling and transforms the failure of the two men to escape into a triumph of the human spirit. It recalls insistently the finish of *Carmen Jones,* when they come to take the soldier away to punishment for his crime. They

do not touch him. They *wait,* while he absorbs, like a man, what he has done, and what has happened to him.

One more illustration: *The Mark,* a novel by Charles E. Israel (Simon & Schuster and Crest reprint). This book is something like *Separate Tables,* in that it deals with a man who is guilty of a sex crime. He has psychiatric care in prison and is finally released upon the recommendation of the prison psychiatrist and the parole board. The story is concerned with this man's attempt to find a place in society. By good fortune, the prison psychiatrist is now in private practice in the city where the released man obtains employment, and he consents to be the parole officer. The treatment continues throughout the book, which, again like *Separate Tables,* is a study of the fight of an individual to regain his self-respect and to achieve the fulfillments of a normal life. The climax of the story comes with the appearance in a gossip magazine of a malicious article which reveals the former convict's past, his present assumed name, and in general arouses the wrath of the community against him.

Deserted by the woman who wanted to marry him, out of a job, evicted from his rooming house, the unfortunate man, Jim Fuller, asks his psychiatrist to send him back to the prison hospital. The doctor says to him:

> "You're in trouble now, Jim. I don't have to tell you that.
>
> It's not your fault and that makes things harder. That's why I have to talk to you straight, as straight as I like to think I'd talk to myself. When I finish, if you want, I'll see that you're admitted to a hospital. Fair enough?"
>
> Jim hesitated, said grudgingly, "Okay."
>
> "You know," McNally went on, taking a deep breath, "you can lead a normal life. Ruth proved that to you, Ruth and her daughter. Or rather you proved it yourself with their help."
>
> "I don't want to talk about them."
>
> McNally ignored his objection. "You proved it once, you can do it again. But if you're going to live that life, you have to do it now. Once you go into a hospital, you'll give up. Slowly but surely."
>
> Jim looked around with a slow, desperate glance, blurted out, "What else can I do? Go around posing for news photos? Sex fiend visits Joe's Bar. Attacker of little girls. . . ."
>
> "Cut it out!" McNally's eyes were flinty. "You want to feel sorry for yourself, find another pigeon. I've lost enough sleep over you." He waited until Jim sank back in his chair. "It was only a fluke that vulture on the paper latched onto you."
>
> "It could happen again."
>
> "Sure. And you could get hit by a car. Or drown in the bathtub. But the chances are against it."
>
> Jim considered McNally's words. He thought about his release from the institution, his friendship with the Cartwrights, the job, Ruth, learning to trust people. To go through it all again. . . ."I'm tired, Doctor. Too tired."
>
> McNally said with gentle persistence, "You could start again. Here in L.A., if you want. But maybe it would be better in another city. The Department could arrange it."
>
> "And sit on a powder keg waiting for the next blownp? Unh-uh."
>
> "It's a chance you have to take. That, or slow deterioration in some mental ward.
>
> Jim squirmed in his chair, "I don't know. I just don't know."
>
> "I do," said McNally. "But as I told you once before, I can't solve your problems. It's up to you. Now how about it?" He paused for a long moment, then said, "Jim?"
>
> "Okay," said Jim, "you win."
>
> "You've got that a little twisted," said McNally, visibly relieved. "What you mean is *you* win." . . . He turned and they grinned at each other.

The interesting thing about this book is that the image of the hero is of an ordinary man laboring under extreme difficulties. The goal is not an external one, but is concerned with subjective order in his life. There is no attempt to excuse what Jim has done, although there is considerable explanation in psychoanalytical terms of what may have led him to do it. Again, the value of Israel's work does not depend upon approval of Freudian depth psychology. Even if you reject the explanation, or regard it as

superficial, it is the *effort* to understand extremes of human behavior which counts the most. But whatever the psychological mysteries involved, a basic humanism animates this story, since it becomes plain that many of the other characters are as twisted in their emotions as Jim Fuller, and that their comparative "innocence" is almost an accident—they might, in other circumstances, have run afoul of the law, too.

This book looks realistically at human nature in individuals, and at its larger manifestations in organized society. The setting of the problem gives Mr. Israel's story its contemporary quality. Following is a portion of one of the sessions Jim has with his analyst:

> "I forgot to tell you. It's probably not important, but a few weeks ago I went to a burlesque show with my landlady's husband."
>
> "Did you?" McNally's cigarette bobbed up and down between his lips as he talked. "How'd you like it?"
>
> "Bored to death."
>
> "Honestly? Or were you just trying to convince yourself?"
>
> "Always probing, aren't you?"
>
> "Sorry. Occupational disease. Anyhow, it's neither here nor there as far as you're concerned." The coffeepot gave a first tentative chug. He glanced at it, then asked, "How are things working out with you and Ruth?"
>
> "I think we'll be married before long."
>
> McNally's voice was warm, jubilant. "Jim, that's wonderful."
>
> Jim, glowing pleasantly, said, "We want to wait just a little while longer. Till we're both absolutely sure."
>
> The doctor took the cigarette out of his mouth and asked evenly, "Whose idea was that?"
>
> "It was mutual."
>
> "Sensible." Ashes dropped onto the desk. McNally grimaced, let them lie. "You know, it's an amazing thing. When someone's been sick—mentally ill—and begins to get better, he's almost a more balanced, more sensible person than people who have never been ill."
>
> "Immunity?"
>
> "Maybe. I never thought of it like that. More likely it's insight. Understanding. The knowledge that you've been there, right down at the bottom of the barrel. And no matter what happens you can never be worse off than you once were."
>
> "Kind of a negative way of looking at things, isn't it?"
>
> "I don't know." McNally craned his neck, peering at the spot of cleaning fluid drying on his lapel. "Before I came into the Department I used to work with emotionally disturbed kids. I remember one little boy, about twelve. Beautiful child. Olive skin, great big long eyelashes. And bright as a button. For a long time, though, he couldn't talk. All fouled up. Stupid, bastardly parents had been rejecting him for years. Poor little guy couldn't talk and he used to go around with a heavy leather jacket buttoned right up to the neck. Even in summer. Stupid bastards." He spat out a flake of tobacco. "Anyhow, one day after the kid had started to make progress he looked up at me and fluttered those long eyelashes over those great big brown eyes and said, 'Doctor, when I get well, really well, I'll be better off than most other people, won't I, Doctor?' Christ, it was enough to tear your heart out. But it was true. The kid got well. . . ."
>
> "I got the message," said Jim.

Another session explores the meaning of being "well" McNally tells Jim:

> "When you . . . did what you did you were acting out a conflict that had been bugging you all your life. We know now what the conflict was. It came out pretty well in therapy and generally speaking you should be able to manage—"
>
> "That's just what I mean. If I'm supposed to be cured—"
>
> "Who ever said you were cured?"
>
> "You did."
>
> "I said you were well."
>
> "What's the difference?"
>
> "A great deal. The conflicts that precipitated your crime are still there. Maybe you'll get rid of them. Probably you won't. But you understand them now. You can deal with them. You don't feel compelled to act them out."
>
> "I might."
>
> "You might. Listen some more. We don't cure people. I've told you that, and anyone who says different is a liar or a quack. What we do is turn an

> uncontrolled acting-out neurotic into an ordinary neurotic like the rest of us." He smiled. "I'm delighted that you're interested in this woman. Even if it doesn't work out." His smile faded and the blue eyes were momentarily cloudy, "And God knows every love affair doesn't. But even if it falls on its face, you've still won your first victory."

Israel is careful not to make the psychiatrist sound like an all-wise Paraclete. McNally is extremely human, but devoted to his work, and this is what is needed.

Someone may say that the problems of the world are much more complex than the troubles of sex deviants and refugees from chain gangs, and that is all too true. But the problems of the world are essentially problems of human nature, and until guilt and self-righteousness and hypocrisy are reduced, if not eliminated entirely, the world will go on having the same sort of problems. Such works of literature deal only with the grosser ills of human beings, yet it is at this coarse level of human relations that we enter into wars and harbor angry suspicions of other peoples. While it may be admitted that men need some larger vision of the good to awaken the moral strength that lies in their hearts, so long as the false morality of ancient codes of external behavior pervades the slogans which lead men to war, so long will there be no space available in their hearts to a fresh and untainted conception of the brotherhood of man. Certain scavenger operations are necessary, while we are finding new reference-points to base our philosophies upon.

It is the psychologists, more than anyone else, who are beginning to "connect public issues with private troubles." They are helping modern man to look at himself without either false pride or false humility. The vision of human greatness is not lost, it is only beginning to be understood.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—Khrushchev's visit to the United States suggests an analogy. It is that between a branch of medical science and the problem of world disarmament. The medical science of etiology seeks for the sum of the causes of a given disease. But it seldom achieves completeness. For a causative factor may be masked, or, if apparent, escape recognition and consequent evaluation. The same limitation is inherent in national policies when motives as causative factors are involved.

What has to be asked, in the humble view of your correspondent, is this: To what extent does the reaction of the United States to the Russian proposal for total world disarmament result from a factor powerfully dynamic in the United States, but totally absent from the Soviet system? It is this: The economy of the U.S.S.R. has nothing to lose, but all to gain by the disbanding of all its armed forces and the dismantling of all munition and weapon-making plants. The burden of armaments is a general tax on the Russian people, yielding to no section of the community any profits. In the United States, and in a lesser degree elsewhere, where the profit motive is the dynamic, a vast industry pouring forth the instruments of wholesale death and destruction, fights the threat of ruin by the creation of pressure groupings, by poisoning the minds of the people by playing upon their fears, by exerting a baleful influence on the Press. And among the loudest barkers for these manufacturers of armaments are the service chiefs, the recent utterances of some of whom make one wonder whether the spirit of militarism, that world-wandering *böse Geist*, has not perhaps shifted on from the France of Napoleon, via the Germany of Bismarck and Hitler, to the United States.

Here, for the first time, a leading world statesman, clothed with the necessary power to implement his policy in his own country, unencumbered by the self-interested intrigues of great profit-making groups, offers the ultimate remedy of total world disarmament, only to be met with cynical suspicion, ridicule or open hostility.

In England where every organisation aiming at the outlawing of nuclear war has been written off in the popular Press as a movement no more to be taken seriously than the window smashing of some Carrie Nation, there are the same sinister influences at work.

It has been said—by Goethe, perhaps?—that one should follow Truth, as one sees it, wherever it may lead. And so one is brought just now by current events to the disturbing thought that the profit motive may be the crux of the problem of world war or world peace.

And where does that thought point if not to some form of human society—call it what you will—that will eliminate profit as the end object of all endeavour, and put in its place the ideal of co-operative effort for the common good?

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
"MIRAGE OF HEALTH"

DESPITE the comments of critics who see too Olympian a stance in the World Perspective series, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen, these are books both provocative and important. The latest WP volume is *Mirage of Health,* by Rene Dubos, Rockefeller Institute's noted authority. Following the pattern of other WP volumes, Dr. Dubos develops the philosophical implications of findings in his own particular field.

In general, Dr. Dubos holds that the dream of perfect health, a chief preoccupation of the scientific era, ignores a basic fact of human existence which is that change, unrest, and both psychological and physiological maladjustment are spurs to growth of understanding. To hope for the *absence* of disease is not to become scientific, but to revert to the medieval anticipation of "heaven"—which means cessation of all effort and complexities.

Dr. Dubos sees a serious distortion in the belief that research by specialists will shortly find a cure for everything. The "wonder drugs," which symbolize an unrealizable medical Utopia, often only change the context of disease. The sulfa drugs and penicillin, for instance, like many inoculations, have caused a statistical decrease in specific infections, but little-known ailments have increased in astronomical proportions to nearly balance the scale. Here Dr. Dubos sounds like Sigmund Freud in rejection of the "miracle" of hypno-therapy. Treatment of symptoms, he suggests, has very little to do with the treatment of disease. "Drugs cannot be effective in the long run," Dr. Dubos says, "because the hidden causes are now revealed to be principally psychosomatic, and only secondarily a matter of chemistry." He writes in a later chapter of *Mirage of Health:*

> It is a remarkable fact that the greatest strides in health improvement have been achieved in the field of diseases that responded to social and economic reforms after industrialization. The nutritional deficiencies that were so frequent in the nineteenth century have all but disappeared in the Western world, not through the administration of pure vitamins but as a result of over-all better nutrition. The great microbial epidemics were brought under control not by treatment with drugs but largely by sanitation and by the general raising of living standards. In contrast, the cancers, the vascular disorders, the mental diseases, which were not affected by the sanitary movement, have remained great health problems and their solution is not yet in sight.
>
> The accounts of miraculous cures rarely make clear that arresting an acute episode does not solve the problem of disease in the social body—nor even in the individual concerned.

The characteristic diseases of our time are directly related to hypertension, "silent despair," or acute paranoia. Health, in other words, seems to be governed from within, and, as a medical corollary, Dr. Dubos observes that it is precisely in areas suffering the highest mortality from disease that the birth rate exceeds that of other portions of the globe. The fact that disease is fundamentally unpredictable—no medical authority can guarantee immunity from degenerative ailments, no matter what the regimen followed by a given individual—indicates that it is more important to live *with* illness than to believe that one can enjoy immunity.

In terms of world history, the plans of many leaders have been upset by the spread of serious illness. Dr. Dubos reminds his readers:

> Disease has continued to interfere with the master plans of strategists during modern times. The terrific losses that Napoleon's army suffered as a result of typhus, dysentery, and leptospirosis contracted during the march through Poland and Russia contributed to the disasters of the 1812 campaign as much as did Russian resistance and the hardships of the winter. Similarly, typhus in Serbia, dysentery in Gallipoli, trench fever and influenza on the western front, played their role in the military campaigns of World War I. During World War II, likewise, dysentery and typhoid paralyzed at a critical time the Italian army in Libya, and infectious hepatitis played havoc with the German army. . . .

Applying these facts to the individual, it is easy to see why the wisdom of certain

philosophers of the past may be preferred to the "scientific" optimism of believers in wonder drugs. These philosophers maintained that each man should seek an inward balance, and live beyond the level of fear regarding what might happen to him. When a person is mainly concerned with *protection* against disease—just as when society is mainly concerned with protection against the aggression of an enemy power—the result is an increase of the hypertensions which cause dangerous psychosomatic results. True health, then, involves a bold rather than a protective view for the individual.

There is, of course, a sensibly "protective" view on the part of society, involving measures preventive of illness. The idea of protection is destructive only when it becomes an obsessive concern.

On the broader philosophical dimensions raised by his analysis of the subject, Dr. Dubos writes:

> Life is an adventure in a world where nothing is static; where unpredictable and ill-understood events constitute dangers that must be overcome, often blindly and at great cost; where man himself, like the sorcerer's apprentice, has set in motion forces that are potentially destructive and may someday escape his control. Every manifestation of existence is a response to stimuli and challenges, each of which constitutes a threat if not adequately dealt with. The very process of living is a continual interplay between the individual and his environment, often taking the form of a struggle resulting in injury or disease. The more creative the individual the less he can hope to avoid danger, for the stuff of creation is made up of responses to the forces that impinge on his body and soul. Complete and lasting freedom from disease is but a dream remembered from imaginings of a Garden of Eden designed for the welfare of man.

It is easy to see why *Mirage of Health* was selected as a World Perspectives volume. The editor, Ruth Nanda Anshen, speaks in her foreword of a suggested "wholeness" uniting the physical and the psychological sciences with philosophical evaluation:

> Man is that unique organism in terms of matter and energy, space and time, which is urged to conscious purpose through reason, his distinguishing principle. In this way the parochial society of the past may be ultimately transformed into the universal society of the future. In this way man may be unlocked from systems of thought which imprison and destroy. And this may be achieved only if the human heart and the human mind remember that principle of life, that law of the universe, that dynamic process and structure affording man a rocklike foundation while nourishing the maximum elasticity of his intellect. And this principle, this law, remains now as ever before: Hold to the truth, to the unity of man and the unity of knowledge, to the unmeditated wholeness of feeling and thought, the unity of the knower and the known, of the outer and inner, of subject and object, particle and wave, form and matter, self and not-self. As to the fragmented remainder, let us be totally uncommitted while at the same time we explore enrich and advance the unfolding of the life process which relentlessly presses forward to actualize new forms.

The World Perspectives series seems well-named. The authors of these volumes embody a maturity of outlook equal to the confusions of the age, while the editorial view of Mrs. Anshen provides a heartening synthesis for widely varying approaches to the problems of the modern world.

COMMENTARY
ECONOMICS OF ARMAMENTS

FACTS presented in a *Nation* (Oct. 10) editorial provide useful background material for considering the question raised by our English correspondent. The *Nation* reports:

> Federal spending amounts to only about 15 per cent of the gross national product, but that 15 per cent is the balance wheel of the economy. Armament-spending constitutes two-thirds of the balance-wheel.

It is also of interest that Premier Khrushchev, after a conference with American industrialists at the home of Averell Harriman, during his visit to the United States, told the press he was confident that American prosperity does not depend upon armaments production. The *Nation* notes that in making this judgment—

> His [Khrushchev's] principal mentors were Frank Pace, head of General Dynamics Corporation, which doesn't manufacture a single machine screw for anyone but the government, and William C. Foster of Olin Mathieson.

"This is the same William C. Foster," the *Nation* adds, "who has represented the United States in top-level negotiations with the Soviet Union, and who only a few months ago proposed an increase of U.S. armament expenditures to double the present level."

The *Nation's* general comment is to the point:

> Mr. Khrushchev is probably less credulous than he pretends to be. Nevertheless, as the San Francisco *Chronicle* says, "if he intends to put Western capitalism to the test of going along without arms expenditure, Western capitalism must to ready to face it." Truer words were never spoken, but the *Chronicle* expresses doubts which, in Averell Harriman's parlor, Messrs. Pace and Foster so airily dismissed. "We can't help wondering if any official of the United States Government has sat down to plan for this extraordinary event," it writes. "Disarmament *à la* Khrushchev would directly disemploy three million men in the armed forces and no one can say how many indirectly; it would cause cut-backs in orders to every big industry, and would leave countless institutions and establishments now bustling with self-importance, without an excuse for existing." This vacuum can be filled—but it will take a bit of planning, and it is not too early to begin.

In general, this seems to be about all that can be honestly said in reply to the question raised by our English correspondent, except, possibly, in addition to underline the enormously strong desire of the peoples of both the U.S.S.R. and the United States for peace. Elsewhere the *Nation* points out that both Premier Khrushchev and President Eisenhower have been made to feel this longing, and that the latter, in extending the invitation to visit the United States to the Russian leader, said that governments ought to get out of the way of the people's desire for peace. The usually sagacious Walter Lippmann wrote on Sept. 29: "I can see now that I had failed to realize how mighty are the compulsions working on both the President and Mr. K."

It may well be that the visit of Mr. Khrushchev to the United States will mark the beginning of a more serious approach to the disarmament problem. Apart from all specific issues and ideological considerations, the realization by both Russians and Americans that they are dealing with *human beings*, and not wicked abstractions, is probably the first major step toward effective peace-making. Whatever their disagreements, *men* have something in common with one another. Years ago, a French journalist remarked that the American hysteria over communism was in part due to the fact that very few Americans *know* any communists, while the French, who have many communists among their countrymen, feel able to cope with them without excitement or fear. If more Americans go to Russia, and Russians come here, both parties to the cold war may be able to reach an emotional balance that will support ordinary sanity in international relations.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

AFTER reading another survey on juvenile delinquency—this in the fortnightly *Christianity Today*—it again seems clear that one factor leading to youthful violence deserves isolation from a dozen or so other contributing causes.

All of the July 6 issue of *Christianity Today* is devoted to delinquency: the esteemed Dr. Pitirim Sorokin somewhat ornately repeats his diatribe against "lewdness" in our culture; a Christian judge says that lack of vigor in the churches and lack of worship in the home are root-causes of delinquency; another judge indicts the ravages of alcohol; while still another contributor—in this case the editor—encourages breast-beating under the title, "The Delinquent Church." But since opinions as to lewdness, alcohol, and religious doctrine vary tremendously, analysis of the means by which delinquency can be lessened might better begin with more obvious considerations, such as societal condoning of violence—violence in war, in electric chair or gas chamber, on TV and in the comic books.

A letter to the New York *Herald-Tribune* for Sept. 3 states the case adequately, and with refreshing brevity. The writer contends that our youth could hardly be more conditioned to violence if we planned a program to this end:

> May I suggest that increasing the number of police on the streets is not the way to eradicate the violence which is such a blot on our society at the present time. This is merely like applying an ointment to a skin rash which is due to a chronic toxic condition of the body.
>
> The toxic condition in our society expressing itself in every kind of ugly and brutal violence is the acceptance by the public of crime as one of its favorite forms of distraction. Study, for instance, hour by hour, the fare provided by TV alone. Whether it be by criminals, by detectives or the police, by cowboys or by adventurers or spies, the formula is the same—brutal violence and death. In every medium it breathes through the whole land an atmosphere of legitimatized violence. So long as crime is thus considered to be legitimate and attractive amusement—"exciting, breath-taking, dramatic, etc." instead of being seen as it really is, revolting, repellent and something which we should be profoundly ashamed to have in our society—no number of police will ever clear up the situation.
>
> There is hardly a small child in the country who doesn't have some sort of "toy" lethal weapon with which he passes hours pretending to kill, with every assistance from his comic books to learn how to do it skillfully. What more logical than when the "pretend" age is outgrown the older child so conditioned should find his greatest "fun" in a continuation of the pattern only this time "for real"? Don't blame the young. Blame the society which so carelessly has permitted a state of things that offers violence as the last word in excitement.
>
> It is in pulling ourselves together and returning to old standards—cleaning up our ideas of what constitutes legitimate amusement, ceasing to develop in the innocent children the "old Adam" with which we used to be encouraged to strive, and giving them gentler and more childlike forms of amusement—that we shall cope with this hideous tarnish on a country that was begun with such noble and high ideals. The Statue of Liberty holds aloft a light, not a Colt .45, surprising as it may seem in these times.

Dr. Sorokin in *Christianity Today* suitably continues and enlarges upon the remarks of the *Tribune* reader:

> Murder, sadistic assault and battery, and other forms of crime are the second main topic of our popular literature press, radio, television, movies, and other means of entertainment and "education." . . . By glamorizing the best killers and creating the heroic sagas of their murderous exploits, these productions liberally contribute to the depreciation of human life and dignity, and effectively induce and habituate especially children to this sort of conduct.
>
> Besides these instrumentalities, the young generation is coercively conditioned and officially trained in the difficult art of mass murdering of innocent people, including children, women, and the old folks, and in a merciless destruction of anything and anybody that happens to be an obstacle to the realization of goals of private persons, groups, or the military and public policies of existing governments. Two world wars and innumerable small wars of this century, in which all parties carried on indiscriminate mass-killing of combatants and the noncombatants;

> expansion of drafted armed forces where youth is intensely trained, brainwashed, and conscience-washed for the business of effective murdering and remorseless destroying of whole cities and villages of "the enemy"; the pitiless wars of the gangs, of business concerns, and labor unions with their opponents; all forms of violence used by antagonistic groups (racial, political, and economic) in their incessant struggle with each other; feverish preparation for a next world war in which existing rulers unblushingly boast to wipe out millions of lives and turn the planet into "an abomination of desolation"—these and thousands of similar lessons of merciless killing, mutilating, and mistreating man by man, and of the wantonest destruction of anything, including the greatest values of mankind, for the realization of perfectly temporary, parochial, often worthless, purposes relentlessly and systematically aim to demoralize the young generation, and to eradicate from its moral conscience the eternal verities of right and wrong. They indefatigably teach the young generation the cynical rules that "might is right," and that "everything is permitted, if you can get away with it."
>
> Being born, reared, and trained in this murderous atmosphere of our age, a considerable part of the young generation is unavoidably affected by it. It would be a miracle if in these conditions juvenile (and adult) delinquency were not increasing, and if all the teenagers were to remain sound and innocent, free from cynicism, wanton violence, senseless destructiveness, mental disorders, and other defects. The really surprising fact is a comparatively modest rate of increase of the discussed diseases.

Allowing for a certain amount of Sorokin extravagance—"rulers unblushingly boast to wipe out millions of lives and turn the planet into 'an abomination of desolation' "—there is little doubt but that the rest of the world believes the United States to be more culturally addicted to the mood of violence than are other nations, large or small. Reasons for this judgment are not hard to find: We Americans have had things so easy that the seeking of thrills has seemed a logical aim of existence, and when we read about violence, or when an otherwise bored and undisciplined child plays with a gun, a vicarious contact is gained with apparent issues of "life and death." It is often the case, moreover, that those who shape American military and political policies have only a remote contact with human death. The perfect example is supplied by a recent report from the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy. According to a new AEC estimate—based on a hypothetical number of atomic missiles hitting a hypothetical number of cities—only 50,000 people would be killed outright and only 20,000 seriously injured! So, says the Committee, "we" will survive after all! An editor in the *Herald-Tribune* appropriately calls this announcement a "grotesque assurance," furnished against a prospect of "the ultimate in immorality."

But to come back to the child who plays with guns: It is likely that American children, with the "Western" tradition still strong as a model of the heroic image, would play with guns part of the time no matter in what sort of contemporary social or political atmosphere. But if children lived in an atmosphere dedicated to forbearance and peace in international relations, they would have little difficulty in knowing where play stops and reality begins. In our present society, the opportunity to realize this distinction is slight indeed. Many of the young ones who become violent delinquents are not so much playing games as they are trying to relate to the violence-neuroses of the culture into which they were born. So, we will concede a point to those who have objected to our objection to toy weapons: Let's pass a law which restricts the sale of little guns to all *parents* of pacifist background, and let the Quakers' kiddies "bang-bang"' all they want to, until they get tired of it—which would probably be reasonably soon.

FRONTIERS

A Question of Vigilance

A MANAS subscriber has taken us somewhat to task for our comments on the control of human beings by chemical means (MANAS, July 21). Our reader is not sympathetic to Aldous Huxley's ominous prognosis of human and cultural decay that may follow irresponsible use of the technological accomplishments of our times, and proposes a contrary view:

> . . . [the] idea that human beings are or can be controlled by powers outside themselves . . . is the real heart of much that troubles us today. [This is] one of the most ancient of general human ideas, underlying much religious belief and many a philosophical argument, and running like a thread of horror through all human history.

Citing the almost infinite variability of the response of living organisms to specific stimulation, our reader emphasizes the importance of the "uncertainty principle of the mind" as a powerful deterrent to those who would impose chemical or other controls upon human behavior.

We disagree but little with this general thesis, although it seems that the real issue becomes clearer from the question: Is it *possible or not* for some human beings to impose their will upon other human beings even when these others are out of sympathy with this will?

Our reader seems to say "No," since responses to any manipulative efforts may indeed, because of the nature of living organisms, result in various unpredictable actions.

We all have had some experience in resisting the efforts of others to control us, and in reviewing these cases are likely to emerge confident of our capacity to hold off the worst assaults on our personal freedom—whether the control has been attempted in personal encounters, or more subtly through propaganda or advertising. But we must at the same time concede that in a democratic society such pressures are inclined to be unprofessional, restrained, or halfhearted. Most of us are fortunate enough to have escaped some of the more competent efforts at control of human beings that have been employed in our times. Perhaps the most frightening demonstration that humans can be totally controlled by outside forces occurred in Nazi Germany during the late thirties and the forties. Even the right of martyrdom was largely abridged, if not destroyed, in the extermination camps. A close study of these modern (and successful) efforts to control the minds and the wills of entire populations should be made by every concerned adult. Only by understanding this dark period in human history can we evaluate the potentialities for evil in our time, and become alert to other trends toward human degradation.

As a biological species we humans exhibit immense powers of survival, and in the broadest historical context we have shown reasonably steady progress in civilizing ourselves, and in awakening ever more marvellous creative endowments. In behalf of our species, as collective humanity, it is probably safe to assert, as our reader does, that so long as man continues to react to his environment through art, humor, philosophical writing, etc., "we can consider him safe, not only from 'control' but from the fear of it which has haunted us. . . . Freedom of reaction is the very fabric of our being, and we feel any threat to it as a threat to our being."

Well enough. But what about the six million people who were led to their deaths in the Nazi extermination camps, and the many more for whom the terror of those times became specific proof that large numbers of individuals, if not the species as a whole, were pathetically vulnerable to simple, if drastic, techniques consciously used for the single purpose of molding an entire population into a new social form? What happened to the will to react, or the freedom to react? The Nazi experiment proved that environments could be created that would so debase or drive out the human spirit, that it became in effect non-existent,

the culminating destruction of the physical body in a gas chamber being only the formality which confirmed the fact.

Before going further it might be well to re-emphasize that Huxley's *Brave New World Revisited* is the revelation, not of specific techniques for human control (chemicals, in this particular case), but of the pervading notion that the world can be made better if people can be controlled, with all the perversions this belief must bring in its wake. It doesn't matter whether control is effected by drugs (as some have proposed) or by racism, the denial of citizenship, pan-national ideologies, or concentration camps. We must rather decide, on the simple empirical level, whether these efforts at control constitute a real danger, or whether they are ineffectual because of built-in protections, such as the "uncertainty principle of the mind."

Two books may dispel too relaxed an attitude about this question: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, by Hannah Arendt, a Meridian paperback; and *Harvest of Hate*, by Leon Poliakov, Syracuse University Press. Both books are historical studies with conclusions certain to dash any Panglossian notions about human freedom.

Poliakov's account of the pathetic resistance of the Warsaw ghetto, postponed by its incredulous inhabitants until the ghetto population was nearly exterminated, illustrates the abjection to which an entire people can be reduced, even when the only choice before them was either death or a chance of life. Humans had by that time become so degraded, dehumanized, that normal—"biological," if you please—reactivity had been destroyed. People permitted themselves to be led like cattle to the slaughter, with scarcely a whisper of protest. Given the opportunity to grow to its organic completion, the Nazi system might have enslaved most of mankind, and by weakening their will to react—to behave as free human beings—have reduced men almost to blind automatons. If this seems incredible, we should consider what Hannah Arendt has to say:

> There is a great temptation to explain away the intrinsically incredible by means of liberal rationalizations. In each one of us, there lurks such a liberal, wheedling us with the voice of common sense. We attempt to understand elements in present or recollected experience that simply surpass our powers of understanding. We attempt to classify as criminal a thing which, as we all feel, no such category was even intended to cover. What meaning has the concept of murder when we are confronted with the mass production of corpses? We attempt to understand the behavior of concentration camp inmates and SS-men psychologically, when the very thing that must be realized is that the psyche *can* be destroyed even without the destruction of the physical man; that, indeed, psyche, character, and individuality seem under certain circumstances to express themselves only through the rapidity or slowness with which they disintegrate. The end result in any case is inanimate men, *i.e.*, men who can no longer be psychologically understood. . . .

Suddenly it becomes evident that things which for thousands of years the human imagination had banished to a realm beyond human competence can be manufactured right here on earth, that hell and purgatory, and even a shadow of their perpetual duration, can be established by the most modern methods of destruction and therapy. . . . the totalitarian hell proves only that the power of man is greater than [we] ever dared to think, and that man can realize hellish fantasies without making the sky fall or earth open.

Here is the other side of the coin of human reactivity: while man's defenses against manipulation and control are doubtless strong, so also is his propensity for evil. Just as art, humor, or philosophical writing may be our best protection, so these same talents are sometimes turned to our own debasement. We know that creative talent can be employed (even in a sincere desire to improve the human condition) in schemes that violate everything decent and right, for which our civilization was built. It is hardly a question of what tools we have and how they

work. By now we should know that the human spirit can be shadowed by both concentration camps and happiness pills, and that if we are to be saved from such destruction we must react powerfully and positively at every threat to our liberties. Huxley's hue and cry may seem to be about something that is pretty remote to us now, but we should be thankful that attention is focussed on a malignancy in time for us to cut it out.

It is not our intention to dispute the biological defenses of our species against unwanted controls. But when our Cassandras speak out, let us not cavil. Reactivity is not a secret matter between individual man and his environment, but an issue of public responsibility which must be studied vigorously, met artfully, and explained in the idiom of the people it involves.