

GANDHI ON VIOLENT STRUGGLES

GANDHI'S name is now being used in connection with the renunciation of nonviolent strategy in situations of massive repression and injustice. A few quotations from his writings are repeatedly used to justify violent struggles. Two of the most often quoted phrases are: "Violence is better than cowardice"; "The Polish struggle against the Nazis was almost nonviolent." Recently I came across an article saying Gandhi did not think that nonviolence would have worked against Hitler. In another it was claimed that Gandhi would have supported the Sandinistas of Nicaragua. It is true that sometimes Gandhi seems to be inconsistent to a casual reader of his writings. When asked about his "inconsistencies," he replied:

At the time of writing, I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth, as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth, I have saved my memory an undue strain; and what is more, whenever I have been obliged to compare my writing even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency, will do well to take the meaning that my latest writing may yield, unless they prefer the old. But before making the choice, they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies (*Mahatma*, D. G. Tendulkar, Vol. 5, p. 168.)

Gandhi's writings, though decades old, are a rich source of response to such misimpressions. His insights and analyses are as fresh today as they were when first published. Although he lived in a situation very different from ours, his basic approach still challenges the social and political structures of our society. He asserts that power does not come from the barrel of the gun, but from the will and preparedness of the people to be their own masters, and that the use of weapons,

even by the oppressed, does not bring real freedom.

On the 1st September, 1939—sixteen days before Soviet troops attacked from the east—the armies of Hitler entered Poland. The Poles had no hope of successful military resistance against such powerful invaders. Nonetheless, they offered whatever resistance they could. Mahatma Gandhi referred to this action on the part of the Poles in a note he wrote in response to a broadcast made by the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in India, in which he had declared India a military country (25th September, 1939). Gandhi wrote:

How has the undoubted military valour of Poland served her against the superior forces of Germany and Russia? Would Poland unarmed have fared any worse if it had met the challenge of these combined forces with the resolution to face death without retaliation? Would the invading forces have taken a heavier toll from an infinitely more valorous Poland? It is highly probable that their essential nature would have made them desist from a wholesale slaughter of the innocent. . .

The same day a Congressman asked Gandhi: What is your concrete plan based on nonviolence to oppose and prevent this war? The question was in the context of the decision of the Congress Working Committee to abandon nonviolence in case of an invasion. Gandhi started his reply by honestly admitting that he had no ready-made plan, and that for him, too, this was a new field. He continued:

Only I have no choice as to the means. It must always be purely nonviolent, whether I am closeted with members of the Working Committee or with the Viceroy. . . . But assuming that God had endowed me with full powers, which He never does, I would at once ask the Englishmen to lay down arms, free all their vassals, take pride in being called "little Englander's" and defy all the totalitarians of the world to do their worst. . . . I would further invite the Indians to cooperate with Englishmen in this Godly

martyrdom. . . . It will be an indissoluble partnership drawn up in letters of the blood of their own bodies, not of their so-called enemies. But I have no such general power. Nonviolence is a plant of slow growth. It grows imperceptibly, but surely. And even at the risk of being misunderstood, I must act in obedience to "the still small voice." (*Harijan*, 30.9.1939.)

In 1939, again in the context of the World War, he wrote an editorial to make his position clear:

Even now, as then, I would not gain independence at the cost of nonviolence. The critic might retort that, if the British Government made the required declaration (independence for India), I would be helping the allies and, thereby, taking part in violence. The retort would be reasonable but for the fact that the additional help that Britain would gain from the Congress would be purely moral. The Congress would contribute neither men nor money. The moral influence would be used on the side of peace. I have already said in these columns that my nonviolence does recognise different species of violence, defensive and offensive. It is true that, in the long run, the difference is obliterated, but the initial merit persists. A nonviolent person is bound, when the occasion arises, to say which side is just. Thus I wished success to the Abyssinians, the Spaniards, the Czechs, the Chinese and the Poles, although, in each case, I wished that they could have offered nonviolent resistance. . . .(Tendulkar, Vol. 5, p. 213.)

It should be noted that Gandhi did not say that he wished they *would* have offered nonviolent resistance. He is absolutely clear that it is a matter of being *able to* or to be *properly equipped* to use nonviolence. When a Chinese friend asked him for a message to the people of China, he pleaded to be excused, saying: "If I merely said I sympathised with the Chinese in their struggle, it would be not of much value as coming from me. I should love to be able to say to the Chinese definitely that their salvation lay only through nonviolent technique. But then it is not for a person like me, who is outside the fight, to say to the people who are engaged in a life and death struggle, 'not this way, but that.' They would not be ready to take up the new method, and they

would be unsettled in the old. My interference would only shake them and confuse their minds." (*Harijan*, 28.1.1939.) This will also help in understanding his statement given in 1940 that the Polish resistance to the German invasion was almost nonviolent. He argued:

If a man fights with his sword single-handed against a horde of dacoits, armed to the teeth, I should say he is fighting almost nonviolently. Have I not said to our women that if, in defence of their honour, they used their nails and teeth and even dagger, I should regard their conduct nonviolent? She does not know the distinction between *himsa* and *ahimsa*. She acts spontaneously. Supposing a mouse, in fighting a cat, tried to resist the cat with his sharp beak, would you call that mouse violent? In the same way, for the Poles to stand violently against the German hordes, vastly superior in number and military equipment and strength, was almost nonviolence. I should not mind repeating that statement over and over again. You must give its full value to the word "almost."

Referring to the abandonment of nonviolence by the Congress in case of any invasion, he continued:

But we are four hundred million here. If we were to organise a big army and prepare ourselves to fight foreign aggression, how could we by any stretch of imagination call ourselves almost nonviolent, let alone nonviolent? The Poles were unprepared for the way in which the enemy swooped down upon them. When we talk of war preparations, we contemplate preparation to meet any violent combination with our superior violence. If India ever prepared herself that way, she would constitute the greatest menace to world peace. For, if we take that path, we will also have to choose the path of exploitation like the European nations. (Tendulkar, Vol. 5, pp. 312-313)

Gandhi had radical differences with the Congress Working Committee on the issue of defending the country from foreign invasion. On October 10, 1939, he wrote in *Harijan*:

I myself used to say, in answer to the question, that when we had actually acquired independence, we would know whether we could defend ourselves nonviolently or not. But, today, the question is no longer hypothetical. For, whether there is on the part of the British Government a favourable declaration or not, the Congress has to decide upon the course it

would adopt in the event of an invasion of India. For though there may be no settlement with the Government, the Congress has to declare its policy and say whether it would fight the invading host violently or nonviolently. So far as I can read the Working Committee's mind, after a fairly full discussion the members think that congressmen are unprepared for nonviolent defence against armed invasion. This is tragic. Surely, the means adopted for driving an enemy from one's house must, more or less, coincide with those to be adopted for keeping him out of the house. If anything, the later process must be easier. The fact however is that our fight has not been one of nonviolent resistance of the strong. It has been of passive resistance of the weak. . . . (Tendulkar, Vol. 5, p. 177.)

One of the things that should be duly emphasised is that Gandhi had always felt deep sympathy for the victims of oppression, no matter with what sort of means they were able to fight against their oppressors. And he never reproached them for not using the *weapons* which he thought could have been more effective than swords and guns, i.e. nonviolent resistance. The accusation (even appreciation) that Gandhi's position was solely moralistic is totally baseless. More and more scholars of Gandhian thought are recognising that Gandhi's approach was based on his direct experiences with the social and political conditions in which he lived and worked. He had realised that the orthodox approach could not have liberated the people of India from the bondages which prevented them from growing as free individuals as well as a free community. He pleaded that the gap created by oppressors and rulers throughout the history of civilisation, and which is constantly being perpetuated by power-oriented politicians and their accessories, between politics and morality, must be removed. People should take upon themselves the task of building a sane pattern of human relations. Gandhi challenged India to make a choice between sanity—human dignity and well-being—and the slavery of power and materialism.

When his eldest son asked him what should he have done, had he been present when he (Gandhi) was almost fatally assaulted in 1908—

whether he should have run away and seen his father killed or whether he should have used physical force, which he wanted to use, to defend him—Gandhi told him that it was his duty to defend him even if he had to use violence. "I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. . . . But I believe that nonviolence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. Forgiveness adorns a soldier. But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse hardly forgives a cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces by her." (*Young India*, 11.8.1920.)

His son had only two options, according to his own question: using violence or running away. Naturally, Gandhi, a fearless person himself, could not have advised his son to be a coward. However, if the son had seen more than two options open to him, the matter would have been different. Gandhi did not plead for India to practice nonviolence because she was weak. "I want her to practice nonviolence being conscious of her strength and power. No training in arms is required for realization of her strength. We seem to need it because we seem to think that we are but a lump of flesh. I want India to recognize that she has a soul that cannot perish, and that can rise triumphant above every physical combination of a whole world." (*Young India*, 11.8.1920.)

He, quite rightly, called himself a practical idealist, and fully recognized and appreciated "the sentiment of those who cry out for the condign punishment of General Dyer and his like." He said, "They would tear him to pieces, if they could." At the same time he knew that it was the cry of the helpless. The facts are that Dyer's orders to shoot an unarmed crowd in Amritsar in 1919, killing nearly sixteen hundred people in a few minutes, could not have been undone by such a revengeful act, and that the real enemy was not the wretched General, but the British rule, the

throwing away of which will require a more sophisticated strategy rather than a spontaneous sentimental response. Gandhi recognized and appreciated the spontaneous violent response to the violence of the oppressor, but he wanted to grow out of it by using his knowledge and experience, so that his response would be well thought out and have a sharper edge. He did not want to allow his adversary to provoke him to react emotionally. As an accomplished "general," he chose his own battleground and did not allow himself to be trapped.

While appreciating the plight of the Jews fully and with all his sympathies, he did not hesitate to declare his views. "Can the Jews resist this organized and shameless persecution? Is there a way to preserve their self-respect, and not to feel helpless, neglected and forlorn? I submit there is. No person who has faith in a living God need feel helpless or forlorn. . . . If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German might, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminatory treatment. . . ." He drew a parallel between the Jews in Germany and the handful of Indians in Transvaal in South Africa, who resorted to satyagraha without any backing from the world outside or the Indian Government.

But the Jews of Germany can offer satyagraha under infinitely better auspices than the Indians of South Africa. The Jews are a compact, homogeneous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians of South Africa. And they have organised world opinion behind them. I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can rise among them to lead them in nonviolent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading manhunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. . . . The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the

latter to an appreciation of human dignity. (*Harijan*, 26.11.1938.)

It is often argued that the Jews had been practicing nonviolence for the past two thousand years; that suggesting nonviolence to them had nothing new in it; and that nonviolence had been totally ineffective in their case. To this Gandhi's reply was: "The Jews, so far as I know, have never practiced nonviolence as an article of faith or even as a deliberate policy. . . . Have they no violence in their heart for their oppressors? Do they not want the so-called democratic powers to punish Germany for her persecution and deliver them from oppression? If they do there is no nonviolence in their heart. Their nonviolence, if it may be so called, is of the helpless and the weak. . . ." (*Harijan*, 17.12.1938)

In 1940 Gandhi repeatedly said that Hitlerism will never be defeated by counter Hitlerism. It can only breed superior Hitlerism raised to the nth degree. The European situation in 1939 and '40 had a clear lesson for him. "It fills me with the utmost nonviolence. I cannot think of a better thing to offer to Great Britain and the defeated nations than nonviolence. It is impossible for me to enthuse over the deeds of Hitler or of those who fought or failed to fight him. There is nothing to choose between the victory of Herr Hitler and the defeat of the others. But I have no doubts in my mind that even a patched up nonviolent army would take the winds out of Hitler's sails. . . !" (Tendulkar, Vol. 5, p. 285.)

On June 21, 1940, the Congress Working Committee felt unable to enforce such a faith in action when the time for it came.

I pleaded hard with the Committee: "If you have faith in nonviolence of the strong, now is the time to act upon it. It does not matter that many parties do not believe in nonviolence, whether of the strong or of the weak. Probably that is all the greater reason for congressmen to meet the emergency by nonviolent action. . . . But the members of the Working Committee felt that congressmen would not be able to act up to it. . . . But this argument and doubt are based upon the assumption that the members of the Congress Working Committee represent the feeling of

the vast majority of congressmen. They would wish and I hope that the vast majority of congressmen had in them the nonviolence of the strong. . . . The probability, however, is that there is no majority but a good minority which represent the nonviolence of the strong. It should be remembered that the matter does not lend itself to argument. The members of the Working Committee had all the argument before them. But nonviolence, which is a quality of the heart, cannot come by an appeal to the brain. (Tendulkar, Vol. 5, pp. 287-288.)

After the Congress Working Committee, Gandhi met the Gandhi Seva Sangh and the Spinners Association, two of the constructive program bodies. He addressed them: "Now is the testing time for you. The Congress Working Committee, let us say, were weighed and found wanting. Can the Gandhi Seva Sangh do anything to repair their failure?" One very significant thing he said in the concluding part of his address at this meeting was: "In placing civil disobedience before the constructive work I was wrong, and I feared that I should estrange my co-workers and so I carried on with imperfect ahimsa. . . ." Evidently, he must have realized that he had failed to convince the Congress leadership that the work for the swaraj he was trying to attain did not end with the driving away of the British, but that it was a swaraj which will also be defended and maintained with nonviolent means, and that unless India continued to develop nonviolently all the aspects of its life, internal as well as external, the freedom won by nonviolent methods would be of little significance. He said to the constructive workers:

The Working Committee's decision was simply an echo of the atmosphere around them. My decision could not be its echo. For, ahimsa is my special *sadhana*, not that of the Congress. I congratulate the members for their honesty and their courage, although I am sorry for myself that I could not inspire them with confidence in our creed and in my leadership. We have now to show that we have faith in the nonviolence of the brave. It does not mean the development of the capacity to go to jail. It means increasing faith in the potency of constructive work to bring about swaraj, and in constructive work being

the vital part of the programme of ahimsa (Tendulkar, Vol. 5, p. 289-91.)

At that moment in the history of India there were two major issues before Gandhi and his companions: Independence from the British rule, which had declared India a belligerent country without even consulting the Indian leadership, and a real danger of invasion of the country by the Japanese. On the one hand Gandhi was contemplating on the Quit India mass struggle, and on the other he was preparing the country for nonviolent defence in case of an invasion.

We shall end with some quotations to show how determined he was to face the Japanese Fascist forces nonviolently. Mira Behn (Miss Madeline Slade) has given an interesting and full account of how she was instructed and asked by Gandhi to "go to Orissa and help to prepare the masses for nonviolent noncooperation resistance to the expected Japanese invasion of the east coast." Mira Behn toured the coastal area with some local leaders and found that the atmosphere there was panicky. There was no sign anywhere of the British forces, which she later understood had retired into the wooded hills which lay inland. The provincial government objected to organising even an unarmed volunteer body for self-defense and internal order unless it was under their direct control. She had an interview with the Chief Secretary in which she explained Gandhi's plans. After the interview Mira Behn sent a full report to Gandhi, to which he replied on May 5, 1942:

I have your very complete and illuminating letter. The report of the interview is perfect, your answers were straight, unequivocal and courageous. I have no criticism to make. I can only say, "go on as you are doing." I can quite clearly see that you have gone to the right place at the right time. I therefore need do nothing more than to come straight to your questions. . . . Remember that our attitude is that of complete noncooperation with the Japanese army, therefore we may not help them in any way, nor may we profit by any dealings with them. Therefore we cannot sell anything to them. If people are not able to face the Japanese army, they will do as armed soldiers do, i.e., retire when they are overwhelmed. And if they do so the question of having any dealings with

Japanese does not and should not arise. If, however, the people have not the courage to resist Japanese unto death and not the courage and capacity to evacuate the portion invaded by the Japanese, they will do the best they can in the light of instructions. One thing they should never do—yield willing submission to the Japanese. That will be a cowardly act, and unworthy of freedom-loving people. They must not escape from one fire only to fall into another, and probably more terrible. Their attitude therefore must always be of resisting to the Japanese. No question, therefore, arises of accepting British currency notes or Japanese coins. They will handle nothing from Japanese hands. (*The Spirit's Pilgrimage*, Mira Behn.)

Here I have only tried to show that although Gandhi sympathized with and admired those who fought bravely for justice and liberation, even with violent means, if those were the only means at their disposal, he upheld nonviolence as the only desirable force to achieve liberation worthy of the human race. His mission was to demonstrate the supremacy of nonviolence as the weapon of the brave.

London

DEVI PRASAD

REVIEW

A SERIOUS BUSINESS

IN what sort of book will you find Plato rubbing shoulders with Corliss Lamont? Would you want to read a book like that? Well, why not? Plato was a hot-gospelling advocate of immortality, while Lamont rejects the idea of survival after death as "supernatural," and therefore unacceptable. We have to look at both sides, don't we? Well, yes. But good writers always give attention to both sides, and it may be better to spend what reading time we have with them. Still, people argue about such questions, and they argue about which ones are the best writers. So it seems a good idea to look at them all.

But who could do that? People need help. If you were to walk into the enormous public library at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street in New York, where would you begin? All those hundreds of thousands of books, waiting to be read! Probably, you'd ask a librarian for help, but then, from that moment, the inquiry is biased. You follow the direction of someone else. But again, why not? People help people. We are all dependent on others in some way or other. Think of the dependencies involved in buying a bottle of milk. Listing them all would take pages. But there are some areas of human decision where we need to be completely independent—religion and philosophy, for example. Still, we need and accept help. This problem is perhaps solved by accepting help only from those philosophers or teachers whose aim is to make their readers self-reliant and free. Which ones succeed in that? We have to decide for ourselves.

Thus far we have been trying to make a case for an anthology of philosophy, a smorgasbord of different versions of the truth. There is plenty of "healthy" disagreement. But we'd prefer to read the closing passages of Plato's *Phaedo* without running into Corliss Lamont on the next page. Nothing against Lamont, of course; he just belongs in another neighborhood. The museum of ideas needs separate halls—separate buildings, maybe—for philosophers like Plato. Who says so? Why shouldn't Corliss Lamont have equal time?

Well, that's the case for a book we have, *Coming of Age in Philosophy*, edited by Roger Eastman, and published in a big paperback of 600 pages by Canfield Press, the San Francisco branch of Harper & Row. It is, you could say, a fine anthology, with material arranged according to "problems" such as "The Enigma of Being" and "The Examined Life." A lot of the writers MANAS quotes are in this book—Maslow, Tolstoy, Carl Becker, Roszak, Paul Goodman, Plato, Dostoevsky, and William James. Why do we use so much from these people, and from certain others? The reason is probably that when you start reading them they seem to fill your mind. You don't want to go elsewhere while deep in their pages. The nourishment is real. You even forget you found them in an anthology, which is a modest victory in the defense of anthologies.

A good book, in short, is one which overcomes itself. Whenever you pick up a book, you leave on the shelf—the shelf of the world—countless other volumes. How can you justify this favoritism? Well, you don't have to justify it because picking up just one book is part of the basic human situation, just as having a certain father and mother is, too. The *book* has to justify the favoritism. A reviewer gives you a second-hand justification, which may be better than nothing in a world with so many books.

In a really good society there would be books but no reviewers. There would be only a few books—survivors of the evolving taste of an evolving society. Think of it!—how it would be to need only a few books, and only a little of everything else! Life would be pure, with all encounters, or nearly all of them, direct. "Representative" people would no longer be necessary. We'd have direct democracy, as in Athens—better than in Athens—and in old New England. There wouldn't be any specialists in the arts—we'd all be practicing artists, and do our own bricklaying and plumbing as well. (Schumacher, who was one of the best of modern philosophers, ought to be in this book.)

But taking little sips of the different philosophers is a way of insulting them. (Just as it is insulting to Brahms and Mozart to play bits of what they composed, when you feel like it, just because

you have hi-fi equipment.) Philosophy is the direction and commitment of one's life, and reading philosophers is a serious business. As Epictetus, who is in this volume, put it:

What is the first business of him who philosophizes? To throw away self-conceit. For it is impossible for a man to begin to learn that which he thinks that he knows. . . .

Does a philosopher invite people to hear him? As the sun himself draws men to him, or as food does, does not the philosopher also draw to him those who will receive benefit? What physician invites a man to be treated by him? Indeed I now hear that even the physicians in Rome do invite patients, but when I lived there, the physicians were invited. I invite you to come and hear that things are in a bad way for you, and that you are taking care of everything except that of which you ought to take care, and that you are ignorant of the good and the bad and are unfortunate and unhappy. A fine kind of invitation: and yet if the words of the philosopher do not produce this effect on you, he is dead, and so is the speaker. Rufus was used to say: If you have leisure to praise me, I am speaking to no purpose. Accordingly he used to speak in such a way that every one of us who were sitting there supposed that some one had accused him before Rufus: he so touched on what was doing, he so placed before the eyes every man's faults.

The philosopher's school, ye men, is a surgery: you ought not to go out of it with pleasure, but with pain. For you are not in sound health when you enter.

The editor, too, seems persuaded of this view, since he ends the book with Dostoevsky's Legend of the Grand Inquisitor. The health that Ivan Karamazov sought is the rarest of things rare, achieved only by men like Jesus and Buddha. One is obliged to ask, after reading this formidable tale, what would happen to "philosophy" if people could establish truth by vote. How many, of them all, would side with the Grand Inquisitor? It seems that we are far from ready for that sort of democracy.

A philosopher, if he is serious about his calling, will not fail to make this clear. Dostoevsky poured his immortal agonies into this tale, making the old inquisitor say to Jesus:

"Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!" that's what they'll write on the banner, which they will raise against Thee, and with which they will destroy Thy temple. Where Thy temple stood will rise a new building; the terrible tower of Babel will be built again, and though, like the one of old, it will not be finished, yet Thou mightest have prevented that new tower and have cut short the sufferings of men for a thousand years; for they will come back to us after a thousand years of agony with their tower. They will seek us again, hidden underground in the catacombs, for we shall be again persecuted and tortured. They will find us and cry out to us, "Feed us, for those who have promised us fire from heaven haven't given it!" And then we shall finish building their tower, for he finishes the building who feeds them. And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. Oh, never, never can they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, "Make us your slaves, but feed us." They will understand themselves, at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share between them! They will be convinced, too, that they can never be free, for they are weak, vicious, worthless and rebellious. Thou didst promise them the bread of Heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, ever sinful and ignoble race of man? And if for the sake of the bread of Heaven thousands and tens of thousands shall follow Thee, what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly? Or cost Thou care only for the tens of thousands of the great and strong, while the millions, numerous as the sands of the sea, who are weak but love Thee, must exist only for the sake of the great and strong? No, we care for the weak too. They are sinful and rebellious, but in the end they too will become obedient. They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them—so awful it will seem to them to be free. But we shall tell them that we are Thy servants and rule them in Thy name. We shall deceive them again, for we will not let Thee come to us again. That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to lie.

COMMENTARY

WHAT HAPPENS TO RELIGION

AN oblique commentary on the drama of the confrontation between Jesus and the old inquisitor (see Review) is provided in an extract from A. H. Maslow's *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*:

Much theology, much verbal religion through history and throughout the world, can be considered to be the more or less vain efforts to put into communicable words and formulae, and into symbolic rituals and ceremonies the original mystical experience of the original prophets. In a word organized religion can be thought of as an effort to communicate peak-experiences to non-peakers, to teach them, to apply them, etc. Often, to make it more difficult, this job falls into the hands of non-peakers. On the whole we now would expect that this would be a vain effort, at least so far as much of mankind is concerned. The peak-experiences and their experiential reality ordinarily are not transmissible to non-peakers, at least not by words alone, and certainly not by non-peakers. What happens to many people, especially the ignorant, the uneducated, the naive, is that they simply concretize all of the symbols, all of the words, all of the statues, all of the ceremonies, and by a process of functional autonomy make *them*, rather than the original revelation, into sacred things and sacred activities. That is to say, this is simply a form of the idolatry (or fetishism) which has been the curse of every large religion. In idolatry the essential original meaning gets so lost in concretizations that these finally become hostile to the original mystical experiences, to mystics, and to prophets in general, that is, to the very people that we might call from our present point of view the truly religious people. Most religions have wound up denying and being antagonistic to the very ground upon which they were originally based.

If you look closely at the internal history of most of the world religions, you will find that each one very soon tends to divide into a left-wing and a right-wing, that is, into the peakers, the mystics, the transcendents, or the privately religious people, on the one hand, and, on the other, those who concretize the religious symbols and metaphors . . ., forgetting the original meaning of these words, and, perhaps, most important, those who take the organization, the church, as primary and as more important than the prophet and his original revelations. These men, like

many organization men who tend to rise to the top in any complex bureaucracy, tend to be non-peakers rather than peakers. Dostoevski's famous Grand Inquisitor passage, in his *Brothers Karamazov*, says this in a classical way.

As was said, philosophy—which looks into these matters—is a serious business. Readers of *Coming of Age in Philosophy* may find this discovery difficult to avoid.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves KINDS OF AUTHORITY

IN a review-essay in *Peace News* for last Aug. 31, Michael Randle discusses April Carter's *Authority and Democracy*, and in one place gives the author's opinions concerning authority in the classroom.

She refers to Hannah Arendt's critique of certain developments in American schools. In Arendt's view the teachers have largely abandoned the attempt to exercise authority but the result, far from freeing the child, has left it subject to the tyranny of its peers. "The child cannot rebel against this tyranny, cannot reason with it. So he must either conform or take refuge in juvenile delinquency."

April compares this situation with the one at Summerhill where school democracy was established through certain formal rules and procedures. The result bore no resemblance to the situation described by Arendt because the authority of the school meeting was not anonymous, its rules were based on explicit reasons and could be amended, and the procedural rules provided some guarantee of individual rights. As Neill saw, it was important that the older and younger children participate in the school assembly, because in this way not only were the younger children initiated into the process of democratic self-management, but the tendency toward gang rule, most prevalent among this age group, could be kept in check. Finally, the participation of the teachers, and the residual authority exercised by Neill himself, meant that the staff did not evade their responsibilities.

The happy balance between freedom and authority achieved by A. S. Neill in the school he founded actually depended in large measure on the character of the students. There is an invisible sort of "authority" in English cultural tradition which results in certain built-in "instincts" about what is and is not "done." Even though most of Neill's students were individualists if not rebels, this tradition contributed to the order that school democracy requires. "The American children are ruining my school," Neill once said disconsolately.

Michael Randle's further comments are of interest:

Summerhill comes close to an example of direct democracy and this in its pure form does not constitute authority but rather the libertarian alternative to it. But it is important to note, firstly, that it does require a minimum of procedural rules. Secondly, in its pure form it can only exist within small-scale and closely-knit groups and communities. Where one is dealing with the regulation of social life at national regional or city level the popular assembly in which everyone participates, or the strictly delegated assembly, has inevitably to be replaced by more representative bodies which attempt to mediate between the particular interests within the community to arrive at a notion of the common good. And if such bodies are to be effective their decisions must carry weight, or authority, even with those sections of the community whose claims have been denied or modified.

Quite evidently, people who value freedom will see to it that their society is organized in "small-scale and closelyknit groups and communities." And the same principle will apply to their schools. Once again, Schumacher is right.

Early in his article Michael Randle notes that the people of today find it difficult to recognize any authority except one whose rulings can be *enforced*. This, be it noted, is the opposite of the sort of authority which makes freedom possible. Enforcement, in short, works to the discredit of wisdom, which refuses to enforce. What, then, about small children who lack the judgment, sometimes, to protect their own lives? Isn't some compulsion necessary for their welfare? It is indeed, but even compulsion has its good and bad moods, and a father's firm "No!" to an eight-year-old who wants to use the chain saw is not the same as the snarling prohibition of a neighbor who wants no wandering children on his land. As Randle says:

It remains important that the reasons for decisions and prohibitions should be explained and that the participation of the child in decisions should be encouraged. This certainly has not normally been the case within the family setup. However, there seems to be reason in principle why the family unit,

or a small community of family units sharing responsibilities and resources, should not provide both a source of authority and a suitable context for expanding participation as the child matures.

Thinking about authority can move into all sorts of subtleties. If you try to organize the subject in definite categories, the arrangement might be something like this: First, there is, say, the authority of the law of gravity. No one argues with gravity and no one resents it. Then there is the barrel of a gun which, again, you don't argue with but will probably intensely dislike. Next there is the authority of common sense which, when you hear it, obtains acceptance easily. Our list grows. There is the authority achieved by Euclid: his proofs always work out, so why should we distrust him? The teacher with a glint in his eye and a record of lucid explanation, with subsequent confirmation, usually gets close attention. Then there is the authority of people like the Quakers, who won't be involved in any sort of enforcement, and are therefore sometimes invited by the contestants in a quarrel to help find a way to peaceful settlement. Their authority grows out of their known lack of self-interest. And so on. In education, the object is the freedom of the individual. Knowledge makes people free. If you know all the ups and downs of gravity you may be able to invent a better airplane. If you know how people behave in small groups, as contrasted with life in mass societies, you may be able to persuade others that small is beautiful, because they see that small is beautiful, because they see that you know what you are talking about in relationships familiar to them. Education is the art of showing the young—and old—how to become their own authorities. They need not only facts but the lessons of experience for this. The teacher arranges for both and practices judicious withdrawal of his authority. He is a success only when he becomes powerless. (There is, incidentally, no better case for non-violence.)

FRONTIERS

Cooperative Enterprise

THE section called Morrisania in the South Bronx of New York City is practically a disaster area. A third of the housing, built at the turn of the century, is abandoned. A quarter more of this 40-block area is only partially occupied. In *Working Papers* for March-April of last year, Judith Levine tells about a grass-roots effort to give Morrisania new life:

A community group called the People's Development Corporation (PDC) . . . is rehabilitating abandoned buildings with "sweat equity"—the unpaid labor of future residents serving as the down payment on their co-op apartments. PDC has also helped three buildings win community management contracts from the city, and has four more buildings moving in that direction.

The writer explains:

Under the community management program, the city contracts with a community organization to manage a landlord-abandoned building (or several buildings) in its area for two years. The community group establishes rents, hires and pays repair people, handles fuel and utility payments. The city funds capital repairs and gives technical assistance in management. At the end of two years, the community group is expected to buy the building—by then in better shape—at low cost. PDC's community contract differs from most in that a higher degree of autonomy is granted each building. In this way PDC hopes to avoid the role of community landlord. PDC, however, remains financially accountable to the City.

The focus of attention in this story is on the building at 1186 Washington Avenue, the first one renovated by PDC people, where the core of the active membership now lives:

1186 has a bright blue fire escape, five gleaming solar collectors on the roof, a new intercom, and new locks on its doors. Notices about boiler repair classes, adult education programs, and the building's finances are taped to rainbow-striped walls. . . .

In the basement of 1186 four troughs house over a million worms. Like the recycling bins on each floor of the building, the worm farm—probably PDC's best-known project—is part of a larger entity

known as the Bio-Eco-Solar-System or BESS. Worm castings will be used as fertilizer for the vegetable gardens, and some of the produce, in turn, will be used as feed for chickens and rabbits. The worms themselves will be fed to fish. . . .

On the top floor of 1186 is a common room, called Garden Terrace, flooded with sun by an enormous skylight. From there you can look out over the nine-block area that PDC is developing. A twelve-foot-high mural of PDC members clothed in overalls and waving hardhats and hammers dominates "Unity Park," a cleared-out lot at the corner of Washington Avenue and 168th Street. In the next block is the new cabinet shop. Scattered around the area are the seven community-management buildings and the five sweat-equity buildings to be rehabilitated this year.

How did this astonishing project get going? Four years ago 1186 was "just another burned out building abandoned by the city," with no heat or water, where a few squatters camped, sharing their quarters with refuse and rats.

At that time Ramon Rueda, the lanky, energetic director of PDC, was 26, on a three-year suspended sentence for draft evasion, and enrolled in New York University's Urban Affairs program. Recognizing the desperate housing needs in Morrisania, Rueda and some of his old neighborhood friends decided to pick a building to rehabilitate. In December of 1974, they began clearing out 1186.

At the same time they organized tenants on the block and two hundred of them "sat in" on an incompleting renovation project, insisting that the city finish the job. They won, and a few months later "the building was in operation, and Rueda's group had won credibility in the neighborhood." In May, 1975, Rueda and his friends obtained approval from the New York Housing Commissioner on a reconstruction loan to get his project going, and after a normal (a year and half) delay the money came through and they went to work.

There is more to this story—a lot more, including a surprise visit to the project by President Carter, which made the funds roll in—but nothing would have happened without the initial determination and action of Ramon Rueda

and his friends. Meanwhile, they hope to survive the ups and downs of fashions in funding:

The group's program for community "self-sufficiency" has two aims: the creation of enough industry, business, services, and jobs to keep money circulating within the neighborhood; and the co-op conversion of housing through sweat equity and the purchase of existing tenant-managed buildings. A community credit union—still in the planning stages—is key to the program. Its loan practices would be coordinated by a community board with an eye to long-range economic and environmental planning.

The co-op principle involves both self-help and participation. Given a fair chance in an area of real need, it usually works. In the *Nation* for last Oct. 6, Carey McWilliams tells about eleven Mexican-American farm-labor families that are getting on in an agricultural cooperative near Salinas, California.

Each of these families is given a portion of the 100 acres leased by the co-op and, at the end of the year, profits are divided among the families according to the productivity of each piece of land. . . . At the moment, the families raise strawberries and other berries and produce crops. This particular co-op is one of six in the region that have been Federally financed through the Central Coast Counties Development Corporation as a means of helping migrant farm workers "get off their endless cycle of seasonal travel and poverty." . . .

To date, the development corporation has helped 176 migrant families, a total of about 1,000 people, to participate in these co-ops. An agency official concedes that the co-ops have not made a dent in the problem—given the number of migrants and resident farm workers—but the program "has started a process" that will lead to change "and that's been important." In 1979 the eleven farm-worker families earned an average of \$12,000 each. So far this year [nine months] they have already earned \$14,000, and, with luck and good prices, should make \$18,000 to \$20,000 each.

McWilliams comments:

It is quite a jump from farm worker to farmer, costs are high and financing difficult to obtain. "What farm workers don't need," according to one official, "are direct governmental loans; it would just perpetuate the giveaways, the paternalism and the do-

goodism." They need assistance, guidance (particularly technical advice), financing and training, for there is more to successful farming than sowing seeds, weeding and harvesting.

Carey McWilliams, who wrote *Factories in the Field*, has reason to understand these things.