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VARIOUS WARNINGS

IN the last October 1 *Washington Spectator*, Tristram Coffin reports on some of the warning systems the nation has established. They are of various sorts. The one that gets the most immediate response is the system which claims to tell us about the preparations of other nations for war. The ones which are commonly ignored tell what is happening to the American people, at various levels and in various ways. War seems the main concern of the Congress. Mr. Coffin says:

> After only an hour's debate, the House voted 218 to 156 to commit the U.S., in effect, to at least $6.5 billion for a nuclear aircraft carrier and escort ships which the President and Secretary of Defense said were not needed, which the prestigious Appropriations Committee chairman pleaded against, and on which the Navy is divided.
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> This is a symbol of a great moral dilemma that hangs over America like a great storm cloud and is avoided by the political establishment. This is the Congress that voted overwhelmingly—the House vote was 339 to 60—for the largest military spending program in history: $119.2 billion.

A few years ago Robert M. Hutchins provided another sort of warning. He said:

> My point is that unless a society can develop and maintain intellectual communities devoted to understanding and wisdom, unless it has centers of independent thought and criticism, it is bound to make some sad mistakes. A country with great knowledge factories, but without independent thought, systematic criticism, understanding, and wisdom, may be the richest and most powerful, but it will also be the most dangerous in the world.

Dr. Hutchins was a one-man warning system, but his influence has been slight at the national level. The prophesiers of war, at any rate, seem able to monopolize the ear of our elected representatives. What can our elected representatives do besides spend our money? Not much, it seems. And what they spend most of the money for is appalling to those who have other needs in mind. Mr. Coffin gives an example:

> Last summer a New York police officer described conditions in the city ghetto: "We are conditioning people to fail. We are conditioning people to become alcoholics. We are conditioning them to be violent. And we give them no other mechanisms with which to cope. . . . The levels of rage and frustration have created an emotional gorge that people are permanently endowed with in the ghetto. . . . America attacks the problems it sees. It doesn't see these problems. They're under the rug. The fact is that we have ignored them. They are being ignored now more than they ever have been. They're poorer now than they ever have been. .
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> "And the longer the discovery is deferred—as in Vietnam—the greater the moral dilemma, the greater the moral problem when it is ultimately discovered. . . . I am very well paid, almost to be the commander of an army of occupation in the ghetto. And that is a great tragedy, I think, and I don't know that anyone's useful life should be employed in that kind of pursuit no matter how well paid one is."
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> This was spoken by Anthony V. Bonza, Bronx borough commander of the New York Police Department, in a Public Broadcasting Service television program, *The Police Tapes.*

Obviously, we have good enough warning systems, but people don't pay much attention to them. And when they do, they can't think of anything that will really help.

We have examples of warnings of another sort. One was given by Lewis Mumford a quarter of a century ago in *In the Name of Sanity.* Writing about the art and the artists of the time (1954) he said:

> The artists who produce these paintings, or the sculptures that correspond to them, are often people of serious talent: sometimes their early work discloses the fact that they were people of original ability, perfectly able as far as technical command of the means goes, to express whatever human thought or feeling the artist of any age might express. But now

> all their talent, all their energy, is concentrated on only one end: a retreat, not only from the surface world of visible buildings and bodies, but a retreat from any kind of symbol that could, by its very organization, be interpreted as having a connection with organized form: a retreat into the formless, the lifeless, the disorganized, the dehumanized: the world of nonsignificance, as close as possible to blank nonexistence. . . .
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> Paintings that we must, in all critical honesty, reject as esthetic expressions, we must yet accept as despairing confessions of the soul, or as savage political commentary on our present condition arising from the depths of the unconscious. For there is one special quality in these paintings that lowers their standing as works of art: they are too factual, too realistic, they are too faithful reflections of the world we actually live in, the world we are so energetically preparing to suffer death in. These symbols of nothingness, true revelations of our purposeless mechanisms and our mechanized purposes, this constant fixation on what is violent, dehumanized, infernal—all this is not pure esthetic invention, the work of men who have no contact with the life about them. Just the contrary: their ultimate negation of form and meaning should remind us of the goal of all our irrational plans and mechanisms. What they say should awaken us as no fuller and saner images might. These men, these paintings, these symbols, have a terrible message to communicate: their visual nihilism is truer to reality than all the conventional paintings that assure us so smoothly that our familiar world is still there—will always be there.

Well, the artists—but who pays any attention to artists? —gave their warnings in the form of mutilating self-sacrifice, and practical people around the world either ignored all this "non-art" or ridiculed the artists as alienated peter-do-wells who ought to get a job somewhere and develop a little common sense. Actually, a lot of them did just that, becoming fine craftsmen instead of fine-arts practitioners—but their warning stands with the content Mumford saw in it.

Then there's Viktor Frankl's quite recent warning in *The Unheard Cry for Meaning* (Simon and Schuster) published last year. His title was based on the appalling suicide rate among American college students. Most of these students who took their own lives were getting good marks, "were actively engaged socially," and friendly with their families. Why did they do it? They couldn't bear the "meaninglessness" of their existence.

Could a warning be more urgent? Why are the really important warnings not heard?

This is not a difficult question. The warnings are not heard because human community is in fragments and people—even people of good character—live isolated lives of what seems enforced self-interest. The tradition of living with and to some degree for others has died away. So the pain experienced by others does not involve us. Dr. Frankl has a simple illustration of what is wrong:

> In a well-known experiment, reported by Carolyn Wood Sherif, group aggressions were built up in a group of young people. However, once they were united in the common task of dragging a carriage out of the mud, they simply "forgot" to live out their aggressions. Their will to meaning, one may say, had taken over. And I think that peace research, rather than confining itself to the rehash of cliches about aggressive potentials and the like, should zero in on the will to meaning, and take into account that what is true of individual men holds equally for mankind. Shouldn't the survival of humanity too be contingent on whether or not people, and peoples, find a common meaning, become united in a common *will* to a common meaning?

The sense of this should be evident. But it is sense that one has to hold on to with might and main in our society. The transmitting mechanisms, or rather the living arteries for the flow of common feeling, mutual understanding and concern are blocked by the play of adversary processes. The situation has been exactly described by Richard Goodwin in *The American Condition:*

> A society of any complexity cannot be regulated by the fragmented will of isolated individuals. If individuals are not controlled by one another, as subjects and objects of a reciprocal authority that is derived from common values and from participation in the structures of a common life, they must be ruled from without—not simply by others but by insensate process, by the necessities of material institutions.

> The united will that is required to regulate the social process is necessarily transferred (alienated) to an external authority.

What governs the decisions of that external authority? Material clout, economic power—familiar tools of the organized self-interest of those who already have the most money and are determined to increase their wealth and power. This is the only meaning they see in life. If they don't have the skills of manipulating public opinion, they find and hire people who do. We don't need to make any study to see that this is why the Congress voted to buy that nuclear aircraft carrier (vetoed by the President), and why other, more veracious warning systems have so little effect. Mr. Goodwin puts the underlying realities of this problem in a historical context:

> As money took on independent value, personal obligations could be fulfilled through payment—cash instead of services, gold instead of horses and bowmen. Deeply personal ties, which had extruded the consciousness of the age, a mode of thought, and a structure of values and perceptions, metamorphosed into commercial bonds. You no longer owed yourself; you owed money. . . . The earth was transmuted into capital, its produce into income, and income into goods—not only to maintain life but to bring comfort, pleasure, luxury, beauty. The powerful sought ownership in addition to power and, finally, as a source of added power.

What has happened is all there, in a much condensed paragraph. Our "way of life" is now so constructed that it shuts out the voices we need to hear, the things we need to know; and if an echo or two should reach us, the forms of cooperative action have to be reinvented because they have been replaced by the mechanisms of the cash nexus. If you go to a doctor, nowadays, its almost like walking into a bank. First you fill out forms, and then you talk to a bookkeeping nurse; and finally you talk to a very busy doctor who may do something to you without asking permission—give you a "shot"—whether or not you want it or understand its purpose. You are only some kind of product of his for the time being. Human relations? Well, the doctor may have a nice, old-fashioned picture on the wall.

The artists paint their pictures for the possessive rich. Their work often seems deliberately neurotic, while all "popular" art is mass-produced and deliberately vulgar. There is no comprehensive communications structure to provide men like Mumford the voice they need to be heard throughout society. Effective reporters like Tristram Coffin write carefully for intelligent citizens, but the machine is deaf to intelligence and moving in another direction. Psychologists like Viktor Frankl compose wise and compassionate books that are read by a small segment of the population, but when their thinking reaches the general public it has been so stepped down into headlines and catchlines, so predigested by interpreters and commentators, that the effect is almost nil. Why does this happen? Because the style, technique, and know-how of the media were evolved to sell people goods, not to transmit the truth about life. The truth has to go the way of all flesh in order to get a hearing, and then it isn't truth any more, but shiny pretense.

Meanwhile the warnings go on and on. Some of them, having reached a very practical level, are at last making headlines. On October 8 of last year a *Los Angeles Times* writer, Roger Smith, described the heated controversy that has developed between entomologists of the University of California and the cotton growers of the Imperial Valley (in the southern end of the state). The reliance of monocrop farmers on more and more chemical pesticides, the scientists say, is a project in self-defeat. They point to the example of northeastern Mexico, where "massive doses of chemicals quickly produced pesticide-resistant strains of bollworm, which ate every cotton boll in sight." It took only four years for these insects to destroy a multi-million-dollar cotton industry.

It is admitted that pesticides work for a while:

> Crops could be grown in vast tracts in successive seasons facilitating planting and harvesting, because the bug population could be kept under control.

> Without pesticides perhaps 70% of the crops produced in the United States could not be successfully grown, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates.
>
> "But it is like being hooked on dope," says Robert Luck, an entomologist at UC Riverside. Over the years the amount of insecticides had to be increased to achieve the same control. The massive doses in turn made crops more vulnerable to secondary pests which had been controlled by predators.

Reducing pesticide use, however, means reduced crops at least for a while, and the cotton farmers say they'll go broke. They need, they claim, a long season with very high yields in order to make money. Fruit-growers have similar arguments. Citrus with rinds scarred by thrips—which don't penetrate the fruit and therefore do no real harm—won't sell in the supermarkets, they say. But meanwhile the Environmental Protection Agency is clamping down on new pesticide development. And the entomologists point out that excessive spraying also kills the natural enemies of the cotton bollworm and other pests. The scientists are arguing for what they call "integrated pest management" and hope to prove by demonstration that reduced and more selective spraying along with other methods will be adequate in the long run. "I believe," one of the entomologists said, "we have an ecological nightmare which will eventually mandate change." In 1977, 161,000 acres of cotton were planted in the Imperial Valley. In 1978 only 61,000 acres were planted. An official said that unless the pests could be controlled, cotton crops might disappear in Southern California.

The reformers, unfortunately, are competing with record crops produced in recent years under conditions of abnormal stimulation. How can the scientists persuade the farmers to take losses for perhaps several years? But the nightmare and the warnings will go on.

In somewhat apocryphal language, a writer called "Peter Coyote" describes the general psychological status quo (Fall 1978 *CoEvolution Quarterly*):

> The term "spaceship earth" illuminates our ambiguous relationship to the high-tech present. On the one hand it alludes to mystery, power, and the promise of untapped frontiers. On the other hand, it connotes the module adrift in a sub-zero vacuum—the puny astronaut connected to lifesupport systems by only a slender umbilicus. . . .
>
> Attempts at imposing monocultural solutions to diverse problems can only be deflected by attention to detail. It is through details that we see actual differences. Economies are collective agreements for survival. Add the words "in place" to that definition, and place and economics could be married by defining useful tasks as those which support the beauty health, diversity, and productivity of a place. The next step is the design of positive, participatory roles to accomplish these ends. . . .
>
> Humans have effectively blocked or damped external restraints to growth and power. We have created machines to stretch the perimeters of the possible in the physical world and free us of the labors to feed and clothe ourselves, as if the spirit was humiliated in submitting to laws established for sentient life. The flesh has triumphed and the spirit is chilled in the mouths of our parents, dead and abandoned in the antiseptic corridors where we warehouse tottering bodies. Deprived of meaningful labors and unsure whether or not we could survive outside of our mechanical bassinet, the quest for spiritual freedom and refinement has been consigned to a host of "new-age" specialists and hedonistic future mongers.

Now comes the basic common sense:

> Discussions of social rearrangements and forms that don't include individual responsibilities like self-restraint and qualities like character, are hopelessly off the mark. . . . Dismantling [the present arrangements] will manifest itself through personal choice. To choose to care for an old car another ten years obviates two new ones being built for you. Fewer clothes, more repairable, less disposable stuff is less time in thrall, less Planet transformed. Government won't do *this* for you.

People who begin to live the way Peter Coyote suggests may find that their minds work differently. They may begin to hear and listen to the warnings that regard man in a right-side-up

position, no longer grovelling in the gutters of a threadbare prosperity. For those who work together with others, moral sensibility will begin to come back. It was never altogether lost, but had grown impotent from lack of use. In a current survey of the progress in alternative energy development—wind machines and solar energy collecting devices—Lee Johnson speaks of the urgent need to think in terms of community effort and welfare. His discussion, contribution to the new *Rain* volume, *Stepping Stones,* traces the transition from lone-wolf pioneering in alternative energy sources to block (neighborhood) and town arrangements. He informs us that just one windmill in Clayton, New Mexico, now provides all the electricity needed by 750 homes, and that about ten similar windmills (200 kw) would take care of the whole town of three thousand people.

"One can easily imagine," he says, with a "highly visible, community-scale solar plant, an increase in all those subtle and direct peer group pressures to conserve energy." It would be something that all the people have together:

> For if it can be seen from the picture windows of most homes that the town's windmill is not turning in the breeze, then there will be much greater personal attention to what electrical energy needs are really vital and which can be shifted to another windier day. It will be a continuing reminder not to flick that switch so blithely—a constant environmental education based on reality.

The more people work together, depending upon each other, the more they will be *able* to depend on each other. They will get into the habit of being dependable, and become better able to select reliable individuals to represent them in government or serve as specialists. Then the warnings that are now neglected will be both heard and understood. There will of course be fewer warnings needed by a society of self-reliant and cooperative people. And the human environment such people make will be on the side of life.

REVIEW
ADVENTURE STORY

IN *The Human Cougar* Lloyd Morain celebrated the qualities of men he came across in his youth—adventurous, self-reliant souls who did exactly what they wanted to, and what they thought was right, no matter in what direction the world was going at the time. These are men who can be measured only by their human qualities. Their possessions don't count, having been made uninteresting by their lives.

We have a book about a man who could be taken as an archetype of Mr. Morain's Cougars—the life-story of Fred Meyer Schroder, put together and told in the first person by Robert Easton. The title is *Gans, Gold, and Caravans,* the publisher, Capra Press, in Santa Barbara, Calif., the price $11.95. This book is a source of continuous delight, with one small irritation. Mr. Easton doesn't tell us when Schroder was born, or when he died, and he must have known at least one of these dates. Schroder was apparently around and active, at least as a growing boy, in the 1870s, so unless he is a rare centenarian and then some, he isn't alive now. But no matter. Not having the vital statistics helps to make him more of a mythic character.

It takes some nerve to use "I" in behalf of another person, and while Mr. Easton was probably as conscientious as he could be in attempting to reflect Schroder's thinking and speech, you wonder now and then if this finely chiseled prose was the way he put his ideas together. Again, no matter. The life he lived seems reported accurately enough.

Fred Schroder grew up on his uncle's ranch—a horse ranch—fifty miles from San Diego, near the Mexican border. He killed his first mountain lion at the age of eleven or twelve. After irritating the lion with buckshot, he went home for his rifle, found the lion again and shot him in the neck. He learned to rope horses and cattle with a cow-hide reata sixty feet long, a braid of strips from one or two steers. The reatas were made by an old Mexican who also made saddles with saddle-trees of oak and alder, each carefully fitted to the horse that would wear it.

Fred's first real teacher was a Yaqui Indian his uncle brought home with him one day:

> The Old Man claimed he bought Tom from some Mexican soldiers who were about to shoot him. The Mexicans were in fact trying to exterminate the Yaquis, who'd long refused to submit to their rule, and they kept trying for years with varying degrees of success but in this instance, as was not uncommon, they allowed cash to prevail over policy. The Old Man claimed he gave thirty dollars for Tom and that was why Tom dogged his heels so closely. Whatever the fact of the matter, Tom learned to wear clothes but he never became what you would call civilized. He hated sleeping between four walls, so the Old Man let him build a grass shack on the rocky point overlooking the grove and ranch buildings, and there he lived as a free American citizen.
>
> I suppose few boys have had such a mentor as Tom and none will again. He taught me trailing, how to walk, how to trot, how to look for things, how to be still. I never became the master he was but I learned the rudiments. He taught me how to sit down when attacked by dogs, a trick as old as Homer; how to tell from the angle of a bent grass blade, rising slowly back to meet the sun, how many minutes had elapsed since the deer stepped on it, how to bake the *amole* root; how to drink from a barrel cactus. Together we roamed one of the most inhospitable stretches of landscape on earth, the Colorado Desert, and I acquired knowledge that stood me in good stead later in Alaska and Mongolia.
>
> We ate the eighteen-inch-long chuckwalla lizards that have tasty white meat, shot wild sheep in the cliffs overlooking what is now Imperial Valley—and was then called the Overflow Desert—and camped with the Indians at a place where palm trees grew and warm water ran, a place since famous as Palm Springs.

An interesting note:

> All the Indians had remarkably good teeth. I think the reason was because they ate nothing but natural food. Acorn mush, corn, wild roots, herbs, and game were their staples. They never brushed their teeth but sometimes cleaned them by rubbing

them with charcoal daubed on the ends of their fingers.

When Schroder had grown up he and a friend took off for Alaska to look for gold. This was in 1894, years before Klondike Gold Rush, in which he took part. In those days people used sleds to get around in Alaska:

> They told us at Dyea we would need about a ton of grub and gear for our journey into the interior. We bought it—flour, bacon, tea, sugar, rolled oats, dried fruits, axes, saws, picks, shovels—and two sleds made of hardwood in Juneau—and sledded our stuff by hand and backbone up to the Sheep Camp, the headquarters of wild sheep hunters, at the foot of Chilkoot Pass, and there in the lee of the Sawtooth, everything frozen white, not another living soul in sight, we broke it up into small lots and backpacked it to the top of the pass. Then we packed the sleds up, crosswise on our backs, along with our war bags and camp kit.

They found some gold, but only enough for a grubstake. Schroder made more money hauling in food and supplies for the other miners than he did at mining. He brought goods in on packhorses—"a horse could earn you fifty dollars or more per day." The strike at Dawson in 1896 attracted him and he and his partner staked a claim. Some of the men in the area made their living chopping firewood, and Tex Rickard, later a famous fight promoter in New York, was one of them. He sold wood to steamboats (which in summer came up the Yukon River). Various other celebrities were among the thirty thousand people who came to Dawson to look for gold—one, a partner of Buffalo Bill, could shoot through and out the bottom of a bottle without breaking the neck. Jack London and Joaquin Miller were there, and Joe Boyle, who years later organized the Princess Pat regiment of Klondikers that fought in World War I. Schroder met Fred Selous, the white hunter who had been the model for Rider Haggard's *Alan Quartermain.* "Selous told me he'd known African native hunters who could smell a white man at half a mile when the wind was right. I later found much the same to be true of Manchurian hunters. They could smell a white man at about the same distance they could smell a bear."

By 1907 Schroder has used up Alaska as a place of interest. "I'd spent twelve busy years in the North, attended every major strike, built more than three dozen claim cabins, made a little money, had a lot of fun, but now the fun and the money were coming to an end." So he went on "West"—to China.

He had some friends among the foreigners in Shanghai and letters to others. Nominally he went to work for the trading empire of the British-American Tobacco Company, but he was mostly trading on his own account. B.A.T. was a business started by J. A. Thomas, who had sold James Duke of the American Tobacco Company on the idea of peddling a packet of five cigarettes to the Chinese for two cents. The result was a vast trading business in the Far East, second only to Standard Oil's. The Chinese gave up their pipes for cigarettes.

Schroder wanted to work in the field, generating business for B.A.T. and himself:

> I wanted freedom to act on my own and see the country and I liked Thomas and the far-flung nature of his operations, which were bound to take me to the frontiers and the outdoor life I was used to; and with Cobbs at hand I would be starting among friends. But first I wanted to acquaint myself with the language and customs of China. I told this to Thomas. I said I wanted to immerse myself completely in native surroundings without any foreign influence.

That's what he did, starting next day with a boy as servant who began teaching him to speak Chinese. Camels were still the principal means of transport in China, and Schroder became an expert driver. The B.A.T. had offices or depots around the country, and Schroder learned the routes:

> I was soon conducting camel caravans along the border and into the interior, meeting native leaders, dealing for livestock and merchandise, feeling in many respects as though I'd come full circle and was back to the life I'd known on the ranch. Even the

countryside reminded me of Southern California with its vast deserts, barren mountains, and fertile grassland.

The Chinese Revolution of 1911 made travel dangerous, since the warlords were asserting their arbitrary power and the Mongols were revolting against Chinese rule. Schroder was asked to take a train with an armed force—a squad with a machine gun on a flatcar—and bring to bank the silver money that had been accumulating in the B.A.T. posts. For security on this mission, Schroder contacted the Queen of the Beggars, who guaranteed him immunity to theft of the silver specie he was collecting. It worked. No one dared interfere with property under the protection of the beggars. Bits of red rag on their mules—the beggar symbol—brought them an armed ragamuffin escort when required. He paid the Queen for these services.

Schroder did some private gun-running for the Mongols, who needed arms for their revolt. A high Mongolian lama told him that if the Tashi Lama could be persuaded to assent to the Revolution, all Mongolia would unite against the Chinese regime. The Lama asked Schroder if he would go to see the Tashi Lama and ask his approval of the uprising. Kumbum in Tibet, where the Lama resided, was a thousand miles from Urga, where Schroder was, but he organized a troop and made the trip. On the way he saw the great pyramids of Shensi, so old even the Chinese and Mongolians don't know who built them, but call them simply "man-made mountains." They are flat-topped, and one has a base 1,500 feet wide and is 600 feet high. The surface, then badly eroded, was a mixture of clay and lime, hardened into something like concrete. At Kumbum Schroder met the Tashi Lama, who "was a man in early middle age with a quiet, friendly manner." After several interviews the Lama offered support for the revolt from the lamaseries directly in the path of the fighting.

While at Kumbum, Schroder absorbed the lore of the famous Kumbum tree, witnessed the clairvoyant reports of the monks in the Lama's "Intelligence Service," who informed him of current events in the region, and on the way home saw a solitary lama floating along a few inches above the ground. Things of this sort convinced Schroder "that there is another world around us."

The adventures go on and on. Finally, Schroder came back to California and settled in the San Francisco area. Robert Easton eventually met him on a writing assignment from a magazine. The last date mentioned is the "1950s."

What does one get out of such a book besides enjoyment? We don't quite know. But if we had a growing youngster, we'd rather have him know a man like Schroder than almost anyone else.

COMMENTARY
NUCLEAR PRIMER

WHAT sort of people invent, design, and build nuclear weapons—thermonuclear bombs? And then, perhaps, regret it and do what they can to stop or slow down reliance on the hope that terrorizing people will make them behave in a civilized way?

Obtaining an answer to such questions is the best reason for reading John McPhee's *The Curve of Binding Energy* (1974), which first appeared in the *New Yorker*, for which he is a staff writer. The title is a term used by physicists in connection with the fact that if atoms of a very heavy element are split, a point is reached where a nuclear reaction will release energy. The curve is a mathematical symbol of the Bomb. The book, however, is the story of a man—Theodore B. Taylor, who conceived and designed the largest-yield fission bomb ever exploded, and who also designed the lightest and smallest nuclear bomb ever made.

You hold your breath while you read this book. A leading physicist who worked with him said of Taylor:

> He is a special kind of physicist, with a feeling for something as a concrete object rather than for equations you write down about it. . . . He was like Einstein, too, in his style of thinking. Both were theoretical. Neither did physics experiments in the conventional sense. Both of them were extraordinarily unmathematical. Ted thinks of real things. Einstein, in his young days, was the same way. His thought processes were extremely concrete. Ted taught me everything I know about bombs.

Now Ted Taylor says:

> I thought I was doing my part for my country. I thought I was contributing to a permanent state of peace. I no longer feel that way. I wish I hadn't done it. The whole thing was wrong. Rationalize how you will, the bombs were designed to kill many, many people. I sometimes can't blame people if they wish all scientists were lined up and shot. If it were possible to wave a wand and make fission impossible—fission of any kind—I would quickly wave the wand. I have a total conviction—now—that nuclear weapons should not be used under any circumstances. At any time. Anywhere. Period. If I were king. If the Russians bombed New York. I would not bomb Moscow.

John McPhee has written a most useful book for people who want to know more about such matters. He shows what a layman can and ought to understand.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
CONCEALING ARRANGEMENTS

BACK in 1964 (Sept. 23), Virginia Naeve wrote for this Department about "Creativity in an Unprepared Environment." She told how her children, given a terrain which included a dump and some wild places without inhabitants, had the time of their lives and learned to do all sorts of self-reliant things. She concluded: "In our rush to be neat, clean, and sanitary, we have forgotten what fun a dump heap can be, and what dreams we can spin with a piece of rag and a few sticks."

In *Landscape* for Summer 1978 (subscription, $9.00—P.O. Box 7107, Berkeley, Calif. 94707) Clare Cooper Marcus, who teaches landscape architecture at U.C. Berkeley, provides ample confirmation of what Virginia Naeve said. In a course on the social and psychological aspects of design she asked a class of eighty to write environmental autobiographies. The assignment:

> As a starting point, I lead students on a guided fantasy tour back to a favorite childhood place. Once they have explored this place in detail with their eyes closed, I ask them to draw, sketch, or map it. Next, I ask them to describe it objectively—where it was, what it was, their age—and then subjectively: the emotions and feelings it evoked (or still evokes). From there they compile an "environmental autobiography," describing other significant environments in their lives up to and including the present.

Two things became evident: "the significance of outdoor environments and the need for hiding places."

Three student contributions establish the flavor of the response:

> Consider this account by a woman landscape architecture student from a San Francisco suburb: "I'm about four or five now, and to me this little yard isn't small at all—it's spacious and protected, sunny and warm. It's a whole wonderful world, full of endless satisfactions and learning experiences. Brilliant pink and red and coral geraniums cascade from ceramic pots on top of the fireplace and wall, fuchsias swing their bells against the long wall while coral bells nod at their feet, bending over the blue lobelia. Just in front of my kitchen door is my little bricked-in play area—stretching from the house across to the flower beds against the wall and enclosing the fireplace. I felt this was my territory, created especially for me and, secondarily, for my family. . . . Everything always seemed so bright and alive. It's funny I remember the yard more than any other part of the house. I think it's because the patio is the only place that was open and free and would allow me to get lost in fantasy, release energy, and not be bothered by adults or any structured situation.

Most students, however, remembered going beyond the "patio":

> A woman who grew up in an outer suburb in San Francisco described her need to escape to the wild unmonitored territory across the street: "The yard was landscaped in early Sunset and was divided into specific use areas: entry, adult, utility, children's play, and back entry. When I was little there was a sand box and later a very sophisticated playhouse with glass windows. When I went across the street I could be anybody I wanted to be. Most often I was another person: a princess, a pioneer crossing the plains, an explorer. We would outfit a red, metal wagon like a Conestoga wagon and "cross the plains." Sometimes we pretended we were Indians and would collect acorns. The fields were, for me, a great setting for fantasies, trying on different hats . . . working on elaborate schemes centering on the 'wilderness.' I just loved the feeling that I was a new, independent, different person."

A latino San Franciscan escaped from domesticity in Golden Gate Park:

> "When I was younger, there were lots of conflicts and lots of reprimands. . . . I was not to mess around or play in the living room due to the large amount of breakable objects around. However, that was where the television was located. Consequently, I persisted. . . . The western portion of Golden Gate Park allowed me to explore the tadpoles and microscopic creatures to be found around the Chain of Lakes without intrusion from sightseers and tourists. It was here I could hide among the reeds and sail driftwood down Amazonian undergrowth.

Parents are often serious offenders against the needs of children:

> Occasionally a direct confrontation between the child's and the parents' environmental values was remembered poignantly: the yard that could not be dug in; the hideout that had to be removed because it spoiled the view from the family room. A young black man recalled with bitterness his parents' upwardly mobile move from the flatlands to the Berkeley hills; he was forced to take his beloved dog to the pound, because his parents were concerned that the animal might dig up their fancy new garden.

Here is something by Ralph Ellison to show what can happen among boys—in this case black—who wander free in the rackety area of a place like Oklahoma City. Ellison doesn't speak of the provocatives of place, but they must have played a part. He says in *Shadow and Act:*

> . . . our youthful sense of life, like that of many Negro children (though no one bothers to note it—especially the specialists and "friends of the Negro" who view our Negro American life as essentially non-human) was very much like that of Huckleberry Finn, who is universally praised and enjoyed for clarity and the courage of his moral vision. . . . We were seeking examples, patterns to live by, out of a freedom which for all its being ignored by the sociologists and subtle thinkers was implicit in the Negro situation. Thus we fabricated our own heroes and ideals catch-as-catch-can, and with an outrageous and irreverent sense of freedom. Yes, and in complete disregard for ideas of respectability or the surreal incongruity of some of our projections. Gamblers and scholars, jazz musicians and scientists, Negro cowboys and soldiers from the Spanish-American and First World Wars, movie stars and stunt men, figures from the Italian Renaissance and literature, both classical and popular, were combined with the special virtue of some local bootlegger, the eloquence of some Negro preacher, the strength and grace of some local athlete, the ruthlessness of some businessman-physician, the elegance in dress and manners of some headwaiter or hotel doorman. Looking back through the shadows upon this absurd activity I realize now that we were projecting archetypes, recreating folk figures, legendary heroes, monsters even, most of which violated all ideas of social hierarchy and order. . . . being boys, yet in the play-stage of our development, we were dream-serious in our efforts.

By being a poor black boy, Ellison escaped the fixed-up "niceness" of middle-class suburban life, which Clare Marcus finds so impoverishing for children. She writes:

> In comparing the childhoods of American and Third World students, I was immediately struck with how narrow is the average American—particularly suburban American—child's view of the world. Not only do they not see their own fathers and mothers at work, they frequently see no one at work but the Safeway checker. Contrast that situation with the childhood of a woman city-planning student who grew up in a small fishing village in Cyprus: "I could see the first fishing boats returning to the small marinas after a whole night's fishing trip. I could distinguish the bell tower of some church popping out from the olive groves. I could hear the ding-don" of a flock passing by on its way to the grazing fields, and see the shepherd playing his flute, followed by dogs. In the evening the same scene would be repeated with different colors in the background: the flocks coming back to their stables, the farmers returning home after a hard day's work, and the boats leaving for night fishing. At night everything was so quiet and peaceful, you could hear the noise of the boats' engines a few miles away in the sea, and also the crickets in the bushes.

Few American children of today have opportunity for such experiences, and as Clare Marcus says:

> But it is not just that suburban children lack a view of the working world of farms and the experiences of raw nature; some expressed a sadness that they rarely had been exposed to the richness of city life. Ironically, the suburban child whose parents' choice of location is often justified as "good for children," may be deprived not only of a holistic view of life/work/community, but also shielded from both True Nature and the guts of the city.

If we could begin to want for ourselves the kind of experience this writer talks about, we might then recognize what has been denied to so many children. In conclusion, she asks: "Are not 'wild preserves' in suburbia much more significant in terms of day-to-day use than the 'wilderness areas' saved for an elite band of adult backpackers?"

FRONTIERS

The Music Makers

A LINE in a *Rain* review of a book on the music and music-makers of the world—*Music of the Whole Earth*, by David Reck (Scribner's)—stirs a wondering about the music of the future. How long will the symphony orchestra remain the symbol of ultimate musical expression? Shouldn't instruments be simpler to play, and more universally used? More joyful music makers and fewer professional musicians?

The *Rain* writer (Tom Bender) speaks of the provincialism of Western musicology, "projecting our accidents of our own musical history and ignorance as the whole universe of the possible." Reck's book, he says, has none of this narrow outlook, but "shows the similarities and differences of the wonderful instruments of various cultures, the different ways sounds are put together into 'music' in different societies, and what different people value and try to do through their music."

Is there any use in "writing" about such matters? Well, writing about the varying musics of the world can open the mind, if not the ears. In *India* (first published in 1903), Pierre Loti, who was a French naval officer and saw much of the world, described the concert of a group of Indian musicians. They were the orchestra of the Maharajah of Travancore, lent to him for a private performance.

At five o'clock in the evening, the musicians came, "barefooted and noiseless."

> They carry huge instruments with copper strings, like gigantic guitars or mandolines, whose curved handles end in monsters' heads. These guitars, which give out different tones, vary much amongst themselves, but they all have large bodies, whilst here and there along the neck hollow balloons, looking like fruits clustered round a stalk, are placed to increase their resonance; they are very old and precious, so withered that they have acquired great sonority; they are painted or gilt, or inlaid with ivory, and even their quaint appearance fills me with a sense of mystery, the mystery of India. The musicians smilingly show them to me; some are made to be stroked by the fingers; others to be played with a bow; others again are struck with a stick of pearl; and there is even one that is played by rolling a little ebony thing looking like a black egg over the strings. What refinements unknown to our Western musicians! There are tom-toms tuned to different pitches, and boy singers whose robes are of especial richness. A printed program is placed before me, in which the strange but melodious names of the musicians are all in twelve syllables.

Loti waited in expectation of much noise from these twenty-five players, but only silence ensued.

> Can the concert have commenced? From their grave and attentive attitudes, and the way in which they watch one another, it would appear so. But there is nothing to be heard. But yes; a hardly audible high note, like that of the prelude to "Lohengrin," which is then doubled, complicated, and transformed into a murmured rhythm, without growing any louder. . . . What a total surprise, this almost toneless music coming from such powerful instruments! One might have said the buzzing of a fly held within the hollow of one's hand, or the brushing of the wings of a night-moth against the glass, or the death agony of a dragon-fly.
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> Then a musician places a little steel thing in his mouth and rubs his cheek over it, so as to produce the murmurings of a fountain. One of the largest and most complicated guitars, that the player caresses with his hand as if he feared it, says "hou, hou" all the time on nearly the same notes, like the veiled cry of the screech owl; another instrument, which is muted, makes a sound like that of the sea breaking on the shore; and there are hardly audible drummings played by fingers on the edge of the tom-tome. Then suddenly come unexpected violences, furies that last for a couple of seconds, when the strings vibrate with full force, and the tom-toms struck in another way give out dull and heavy sounds like elephants walking over hollow ground, or mimic the rumblings of subterranean water, or a torrent that falls into an abyss. But this subsides quickly, and the nearly silent music continues.

A Brahmin youth evokes incredible sounds from a pottery jar with pebbles in it, playing on it with his fingers, and varying the tone by pressing its mouth close to his body.

> When the voice of one of the guitars rises above the whispered silence, it is always in a melody of training sounds, a passionate and full-voiced song that plunges into agony; and the tom-toms, without drowning the trembling and plaintive notes, beat an accompaniment of mysterious import which expresses the exaltation of human suffering far more poignantly than our most supreme music.

After an unplanned intermission—an interruption because the Maharajah's elephants arrived for Loti's inspection—the music is resumed.

> Human voices were only introduced towards the end. One after the other great-eyed, slender youths, clothed in gorgeous draperies, executed trills with wonderful rapidity, but their childish voices are already broken and worn. . . . It seems the words which they chant to these sad rhymes are prayers to an offended goddess whom they wish to appease.

For the ending a master-singer voices the plaint of a young girl who is no longer loved.

> Seated on the ground he seems plunged in meditation whilst his face becomes sombre. Then, all at once, the voice bursts forth with the cutting tone of Eastern bagpipes, though the upper notes are possessed by a hoarse, manly quality, and an infinity of sorrow is expressed in a poignant and, to me, novel manner. The sorrow expressed in his face and the contractions of the delicate hands, is rendered with highest art.

We may come back to music of this sort some day. For reason, if reason is needed, there is Ernest McClain's suggestion (in *The Pythagorean Plato*) that Plato regarded the Guardians of the *Republic* as a "tuning system" for the City. McClain calls Plato a "philosopher-poet" for whom music embodies the secrets of the universe. He says:

> For Plato, as for his Hindu predecessors, *sound* was the primary guide to "inferiority." . . . Music, being an art of pure relations, offers the primary examples of aesthetic "being." Despite Plato's emphasis on vision as the most important of the senses, he is actually directing attention to visual models of sound phenomena while asking us to rise above this ground of appearances and contemplate with him the invariance of the pattern.