VOLUME XXXIV, NO. 22
JUNE 3, 1981

BEHIND THE WEB

IN these days of easy judgments about the character and intentions of other peoples—when, indeed, has it been otherwise?—the sources we rely on for information take on particular importance. What, after all, do we really know about the Iranians, the Chinese, the Afghans, the Russians, or the people who live in El Salvador or Guatemala? "Islam," a *Harper's* writer remarked recently, "is only what holds the West's oil reserves; little else counts, little else deserves attention." No more than one or two out of thousands have ever been to any of these places, and those who have, and would like to instruct their countrymen, are seldom able to gain attention. Quite evidently, in relation to a great many things, and most of the time, we are dependent on or victims of the printed word. In addition, the circumstances of our lives—involving national policies in relation to regions, governments, and peoples all over the world—require us to form judgments concerning which first-hand knowledge is practically out of the question—on the face of it, ridiculous. All that we are able to contribute is a vague sense or feeling of where our "interests" lie, and sometimes the moral emotion of what seems right or wrong in what other people do, or are said to be doing.

In short, for the raw material we use for making up our minds, we depend on "writers"—people who either write what they are told to write, or what they think, which may be only a little more accurate. But then, what is "accuracy" in writing about other people? Even with good intentions, a writer may be guilty of gross distortions. He may be blind to the inadequacy of his sources concerning the character of other peoples, and his conception of "interest" or his narrow righteousness may make him unaware of the partisanship in what he says. Further, like his readers, the writer may find it stylistically necessary or convenient to personify large populations, describing them as if they were individuals all acting together like a single morally accountable person. Yet if there is anything to be learned from history, it is that nations—and only nations, not peoples, oblige us to make decisions about them—behave not as moral agents at all, but according to the politically generalized reflexes of self-interest. In his introduction to Henri Alleg's *The Question*, Jean-Paul Sartre showed this to be the case with respect to his own country, France. During World War II, Frenchmen were aghast at the cruelty of the Nazis, who tortured French Resistance fighters to obtain information they wanted, but only fifteen years later, during Algeria's struggle to be free of French colonialism, French officials were torturing Algerians to extract the same sort of information. "The French," Sartre declared, "have uncovered a terrible fact."

> If nothing protects a nation against itself, neither its past, its integrity, nor its laws—if fifteen years are enough to change victims into executioners—it means the occasion alone will decide. According to circumstances, anyone, anytime, will become either a victim or an executioner.

If the "occasion" always decides, and not a moral agent, then mere reflexes are really in charge of the conduct of nations, and what point can the "appeal to reason" or to "morality" have when the behavior of "nations" is involved?

But the United States would never be guilty of anything like that! one might say. Yet the guilt exists. The respected American journalist, William Worthy, visiting Iran, wrote in his journal on February 10, 1980:

> Two months ago, Kurt Waldheim was badly shaken when introduced in Tehran to five-year-old Abolfazi Safayi, who at the age of three, had been tortured by SAVAK in the presence of his father, to

make the father reveal who had given him a tape-recording of a Khomeini speech. Both the boy's arms were cut off. The father still wouldn't talk. Two of Abolfazi's brothers, one six months old, were then tortured to death in the father's presence. He still refused to talk.

On January 9, 1979, the *New York Times* reported: "Jesse J. Leaf . . . had been chief CIA analyst on Iran before resigning from the agency in 1973. . . . Mr. Leaf said a senior CIA official was involved in instructing officials in SAVAK on torture techniques. . . . The CIA torture seminars, Mr. Leaf said, 'were based on German torture techniques from World War II. . . . I know that the torture rooms were toured (by Americans) and it was all paid for by the USA'." (*Tell the American People—Perspectives on the Iranian Revolution,* David Albert, ed., published by Movement for a New Society.)

But *we,* it will be exclaimed, had nothing to do with that! This will be true—almost wholly true, that is—and a similar innocence will be true of the people living in other countries. The conclusion must be that it is folly to expect "nations" to exhibit or develop moral qualities. We have the considered judgment of Liddell Hart, a military historian of note, to confirm this view. He wrote in 1944:

> . . . collective growth is possible only through the freedom and enlargement of individual minds. . . . Once the collective importance of each individual in helping or hindering progress is appreciated, the experience contained in history is seen to have a personal, not merely a political significance. What can the individual learn from history—as a guide to living? Not what to do, but what to strive for. And what to avoid in striving. The importance and intrinsic value of behaving decently. The importance of seeing clearly—not least of seeing himself clearly.

This might be made into a strong argument for preferring biography to history, when it comes to reading material about other people. Biography offers insight into at least the possibility of change, whereas history seems to be largely the account of obstacles and failures—except in the terms discussed by Liddell Hart. There is a sense in which we ought to insist upon having relationships only with individuals and people, never with national organizations.

Yet here there are also difficulties. Individuals are not only individuals. They are embedded in the culture of their times. No one is a wholly unattached moral agent who may be held accountable to abstract ethical ideals. This becomes clear from cultural history. W. E. H. Lecky, dealing with the period from Constantine to Charlemagne in his *History of European Morals*—after an account of the strange piety of St. Simeon Stylites, who spent the better part of his life "in prayer" on top of a column sixty feet high—takes time out to remark:

> There is, if I mistake not, no department of literature the importance of which is more inadequately realized than the lives of the saints. Even where they have no direct historical value they have a moral value of the very highest order. They may not tell us with accuracy what men did at particular epochs; but they display with the utmost vividness what they thought and felt, their measure of probability, and their ideal of excellence. Decrees of councils, elaborate treatises of theologians, creeds, liturgies and canons, are all but the husks of religious history. They reveal what was professed and argued before the world, but not that which was realised in the imagination or enshrined in the heart. The history of art, which in its ruder day reflected with delicate fidelity the fleeting images of an anthropomorphic age, is in this respect invaluable; but still more important is that vast Christian mythology which grew up spontaneously from the intellectual condition of the time, including all its dearest hopes, wishes, ideals, and imaginings, and constituted, during many centuries, the popular literature of Christendom. In the case of the saints of the deserts, there can be no question that the picture—which is drawn chiefly by eyewitnesses—however grotesque may be some of its details, is in its leading features historically true. It is true that self-torture was for some centuries regarded as the chief measure of human excellence, that tens of thousands of the most devoted men fled to the desert to reduce themselves by maceration nearly to the condition of the brute, and that this odious superstition had acquired an almost absolute ascendancy in the ethics of the age.

What sort of judgment seems in order here? Lecky does rather well. While acknowledging "heroism" of a sort in ascetic extremes, he asks what was the motive for such sacrifice.

> It is this last consideration which renders it impossible for us to place the heroism of the ascetic on the same level with that of the great patriots of Greece or Rome. A man may be as truly selfish about the next world as about this. Where an overpowering dread of future torments, or an intense realisation of future happiness, is the leading motive of action, the theological view of faith may be present, but the ennobling quality of disinterestedness is assuredly absent.

We have this sort of help in making up our minds from reflective writers. It was the *motives* of human beings which made the Dark Ages and, despite all our modern progress, one sometimes wonders if we are not still in them, when the motives and resulting acts of nations are inspected. Simeon Stylites, at least, did no one else much harm, except by his perverse example. Meanwhile, for the study of motives, novelists and writers may be more valuable than historians. In *The Bar of Shadow,* Laurens van der Post devotes the whole of an engrossing novel to uncovering the motives of a Japanese sergeant who had charge of a prisoner-of-war camp of captured British soldiers—a man whose cruelties seemed impossible to understand. And Henry Miller has a passage in *The Colossus of Maroussi* which, for all its exaggeration, may tell us more about the Greeks, the modern Greeks—or some of them—than dozens of sociological studies.

> When the poor Greek leaves a place he leaves a hole. The American leaves behind him a litter of junk—shoe laces, collar buttons, razor blades, petroleum tins, vaseline jars and so on. . . . The poor Greek walks around in the remnants dropped by rich visitors from all parts of the world; he is a true internationalist, disdaining nothing which is made by human hands, not even the leaky tubs discarded by the British merchant marine. To try to instill in him a sense of national pride, to ask him to become chauvinistic about national industries, fisheries and so forth seems to be a piece of absurdity. What difference does it make to a man whose heart is filled with light whose clothes he is wearing . . . ? I have seen Greeks walking about in the most ludicrous and abominable garb imaginable—straw hat from the year 1900, billiard cloth vest with pearl buttons, discarded British ulster, pale dungarees, hair shirt, bare feet, hair matted and twisted—a make-up even a Kaffir would disdain, and yet I say it sincerely and deliberately, I would a thousand times rather be that poor Greek than an American millionaire. I remember the old keeper of the ancient fortress at Nauplia. He had done twenty years in the same prison for murder. He was one of the most aristocratic beings I ever met. His face was positively radiant. The pittance on which he was trying to live would not keep a dog, his clothes were in tatters, his prospects were nil.

Miller is offering the reader a momentary, glancing insight into motives—impressionistic, casual, yet profound enough in the fact that the qualities he finds in that old Greek are among the important things to discover, wherever they appear.

> He showed us a tiny patch of earth he had cleared near the rampart where he hoped next year to grow a few stalks of corn. If the government would give him about three cents a day he would just about be able to pull through. He begged us, if we had any influence, to speak to one of the officials for him. He wasn't bitter, he wasn't melancholy, he wasn't morbid. He had killed a man in anger and he had done twenty years for it; he would do it again, he said, if the same situation arose. He had no remorse, no guilt. He was a marvellous old fellow, stout as an oak gay, hearty, insouciant. Just three cents a day and everything would be jake. That was all that was on his mind. I envy him. If I had my choice between being president of a rubber tire company in America or the prison keeper of an old fortress at Nauplia I would prefer to be the prison keeper, even without the additional three cents. I would take the twenty years in jail too, as part of the bargain. I would prefer to be a murderer with a clear conscience, walking about in tatters and waiting for next year's crop of corn, than the president of the most successful corporation in America. No business magnate ever wore such a benign and radiant expression as this miserable Greek. Of course there is this to remember—the Greek only killed one man, and that in righteous anger, whereas the successful business man is murdering thousands of innocent men, women and children in his sleep every day of his life. Here nobody can have a clear conscience: we are all part of a vast interlocking murdering machine. There a murderer can look noble and saintly, even though he live like a dog.

Well, however you discount the surface prejudice, the raw polemic intent, in what Miller

says, truth can be found in it. Often truth is neglected, and rather willingly, by over-reacting to extreme literary exaggeration. Yet there are Greeks like that, and Americans like that, too. They are, you could say, powerless people, and they have the rather wonderful virtues which the powerless sometimes display. It is well to remember that the great majority of people in the nations around the world are more or less powerless, too. Judgments formed on the basis of "national" behavior have little or no application to them, yet they bear much of the burden of what nations do.

We could do with more writers like Miller. Speaking of himself, he tells what a substantial number of usually voiceless people of the world are like, whatever the overlays of culture and the crimes of their nations. Miller's dreams are sometimes worth more than casual attention. Here he seems a sort of self-indulgent Thoreau:

> To be silent the whole day long, see no newspaper, hear no radio, listen to no gossip, be thoroughly and completely indifferent to the fate of the world is the finest medicine a man can give himself. The book-learning gradually dribbles away; problems melt and dissolve, ties are gently severed thinking, when you deign to indulge in it, becomes very primitive; the body becomes a new and wonderful instrument; you look at plants or stones or fish with different eyes; you wonder what people are struggling to accomplish by their frenzied activities; you know there is a war on but you haven't the faintest idea what it's about or why people should enjoy killing each other; you look at a place like Albania—it was constantly staring me in the eyes—and you say to yourself, yesterday it was Greek, today it's Italian, tomorrow it may be German or Japanese, and you let it be anything it chooses to be. When you're right with yourself it doesn't matter what flag is flying over your head or who owns what or whether you speak English or Monongahela. The absence of newspapers, the absence of news about what men are doing in different parts of the world to make life more livable or unlivable is the greatest single boon. If we could just eliminate the newspapers a great advance would be made, I am sure of it. Newspapers engender lies, hatred, greed, envy, suspicion, fear, malice. We don't need the truth as it is dished up to us in the daily papers. We need peace, solitude and idleness. If we could all go on strike and honestly disavow all interest in what our neighbor is doing we might get a new lease of life. We might learn to do without telephones and radios and newspapers, without machines of any kind, without factories, without mills, without mines, without explosives, without battleships, without politicians, without lawyers, without canned goods, without gadgets, without razor blades even or cellophane or cigarettes or money. This is a pipe dream, I know. People only go on strike for better working conditions, better wages, better opportunities to become something other than they are.

Fair enough. Miller is dreaming and he tells you so. But if you read enough, not about wars but about the people made to fight in them—not about what the cartels are doing, but about the people who feel obliged to work for them—not about unions but about the decent men who hope that something decent can be accomplished through them—you become slower in making up your mind. This, you could say, is folk wisdom, and it needs more attention. It may be low-level wisdom—with more important things to be known—but without it our feelings may be drawn to support a large range of mythic distortions.

Writers like Miller—or practically all writers except the very great—suffer blindnesses, are fallible humans, do not know how to get rid of their biases, and much of the time don't even try. But some of them maintain currents of integrity and responsibility in what they say. To act on what some writer says about the Germans, the Russians, the Japanese, or the Iranians may have incalculable cost, to them and to us. It is better to read Miller, warts and all, than journalists or even essayists who would have us forget the realities in which he deals, however romantically. The ideal would be a society in which we wouldn't find it necessary to make up our minds about anyone we don't know personally—have not seen in life for both better and worse, either free and easy or under the pressure of deadly circumstance. This is one of the meanings of community, still far away for us and for most other people. Community is the only social situation in which we might be able

to handle the decisions we need to make about others with intelligence and integrity.

Meanwhile, there are a few thinkers and writers we may find it useful to consult. Martin Buber is one of them. In *Between Man and Man* Buber has a critical essay on Max Stirner, the German champion of Egoism (who was, incidentally, the translator into German of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*). The human quality that Buber finds missing in Stirner is a sense of responsibility. Buber says:

> Responsibility presupposes one who addresses me primarily, that is, from a realm independent of myself, and to whom I am answerable. . . . Where no primary address and claim can touch me, for everything is my property, responsibility is a phantom. At the same time life's character of mutuality is dissipated. He who ceases to make a response ceases to hear the Word.
>
> But this reality of responsibility is not what is questioned by Stirner; it is unknown to him. He simply does not know what of elemental reality happens between life and life. . . . What Stirner with his destructive power successfully attacks is the substitute for a reality that is no longer believed: the fictitious responsibility in the face of reason, of an idea, a nature, an institution, of all manner of illustrious ghosts. . . .He wished to show the nothingness of the word which has decayed into a phrase; he has never known the living word, he unveils what he knows. Ignorant of the reality whose appearance is appearance, he proves its nature to be appearance. Stirner dissolves the dissolution. "What you call responsibility is a lie!" He cries, and he is right. But there is a truth. And the way to it lies freer after the lie has been seen through.

Buber has defined the jungle of ideas and words in which we live—the web of lies which surrounds us all. Yet behind the web the truth exists. It is actually there.

REVIEW
THE IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

THE Intermediate or Appropriate Technology movement of the present was conceived and developed in the mind of E. F. ("Fritz") Schumacher, starting in the mid-1950s as a result of time spent in Burma as Economic Adviser to the Burmese Government. He saw what the people there needed but were not receiving. Later, he spent time in India, in the same role, and his thinking about the economic requirements of the so-called "under-developed" countries was matured. He went back to England, where his job was Economic Adviser to the National Coal Board—England's largest industry—and in 1965 formed the Intermediate Technology Development Group. With him as an associate and friend was George McRobie, who also worked for the Coal Board. The founders of ITDG were Schumacher, McRobie, and Julia Porter. What they did, how their work developed, and the almost immeasurable influence it eventually exercised is now a matter of recent history. The inspiration and thinking of this movement was recorded by Schumacher in his famous book, *Small Is Beautiful.*

There is now another book, *Small Is Possible* (Harper & Row, 1981, cloth, $14.95, paper, $5.95), by George McRobie, which tells what the Intermediate Technology Development Group does, how it works, and what it has accomplished. This takes the reader around the world—to India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka in Asia; to Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania in Africa, and to some countries in Latin America. Also described are intermediate or alternate technologies being adopted in England, and a long report on diverse applications developing in the United States. The jacket quotes from Hazel Henderson who says that "George McRobie gives us a down-to-earth, flesh-and-blood account of Schumacher's unique philosophy in action and the fruits of their long-term collaboration." That seems exactly right. Fritz Schumacher was a missionary who spent much time on the road, explaining as no one else could the relevance, power, and attractiveness of the intermediate technology idea. George McRobie was his right-hand-man who stayed home and minded the store. No one else could have written this informing and engrossing book. It has three parts, and one of them is devoted to how the "rich" or over-developed countries like the United States could ameliorate their economic troubles, slow their disastrous trends, and enrich the common life of the people by adopting intermediate technology wherever it fits. This chapter shows the many places where it fits or might fit, and gives the logic of its advantages over the way things are being done now. In her Foreword, Mrs. Verena Schumacher says:

> There is now clear evidence that the need for more appropriate technologies is every bit as great in the materially richer countries. In 1975, for example, Fritz visited Prince Edward Island in Canada and found that although the main activity, agriculture, was tremendously advanced in its techniques and efficiency, many of the basic skills needed by the community had been lost: there was no one near at hand able to carry out simple building repairs and mend equipment. People had lost skills which used to be part of everyday life to their ancestors.
>
> Unemployment is rising again in the highly industrialized countries, partly because of economic recession but also as a result of the success of technology in reducing the number of people needed to supply the demands of shrinking markets. Alternative technology practiced in small groups can make a major contribution to the solution of the appalling problems caused when human beings are denied the essential dignity of worthwhile work.

The book begins with another sort of "foreword"—Schumacher's last word—a talk given in Switzerland the day before his death by a heart attack on Sept. 3, 1977. In that address—as in nearly everything he said about intermediate technology anywhere, anytime—there is the wholeness and symmetry of what he had to teach. He got through to people with a combination of common sense and humanity. He had all the heavy "learning" of his profession—he had worked with both Keynes and Beveridge—but he

spoke with simplicity and effective illustration so that he could be understood. In this address at Caux, he told his audience what he had seen in Burma—"that overseas development aid really was a process where you collect money from the poor people in the rich countries to give it to the rich people in the poor countries." While this was not exactly intentional, the supervising economists were ignoring the ingenious subsistence patterns by which the poor in the under-developed countries survived at all. And so, he pointed out, "we offered our goods which of course only people already rich and powerful could take." Elsewhere, all this is carefully spelled out. Here, in his speech, he tells a joke:

> There used to be a story about a country that unduly indulged in central planning. They had developed the finest boot the world had ever seen and they ordered 500 million pairs of this boot, all of the same size. Well, that is what we tend to do, because we don't really think of the poor being real: we think we have the answer.
>
> When I had asked myself this question: "What would be the appropriate technology for rural India or rural Latin America or maybe the city slums?" I came to a very simple provisional answer. That technology would indeed be really much more intelligent, efficient, scientific if you like, than the very low level technology employed there, which kept them very poor. But it should be very, very much simpler, very much cheaper, very much easier to maintain, than the highly sophisticated technology of the modern West. In other words, it would be an *intermediate technology*, somewhere in between. And then I asked myself another question, "Why do they not use an intermediate technology? Why do they not use boots that fit their feet?" And then I realized that intermediate technology was not to be found. I realized that in terms of available technology, it was either very very low or it was very very high; but *the middle had disappeared.* I therefore came to the conclusion that there was a tendency in technological development which I called "the law of the disappearing middle."

He goes on, illustrating, explaining, giving reason and body to the idea of "technology assessment," listing questions that need to be asked, and showing what happens when they are ignored. Out of all this common sense themes emerge in which ethical considerations become paramount. For Schumacher they were paramount from 1955 on, since he saw what was happening to the hungry and the poor of the world—happening to them by the million.

George McRobie's book grows out of this talk given by Schumacher in Switzerland as a fully developed organism grows from a seed. The author and Fritz planned the book together during the summer of 1977: It should, they decided, "be factual and informative about who was doing what, where, to carry into practice the ideas expressed in *Small Is Beautiful."* And that is what the book does.

MANAS began reviewing and quoting from Schumacher in 1963, and reprinting his papers in 1966. The first part of George McRobie's book, on the formation of ITDG, fills out the picture of those early years for the MANAS reviewer. The author says:

> The genesis of the Intermediate Technology Development Group was in May 1965, when some twenty of us who were sympathetic to putting the idea into practice met. . . . The starting of the group was very much an act of faith. In Schumacher's words:
>
> "We had no money, there were just a couple of friends of mine, like myself professional people with full-time work and families to support. But when you feel something is necessary, you can't simply go on talking about it—you have to talk for a certain while, but then the moment comes—I tell you, a frightening moment—when you have to take the existential jump from talking to doing, even if you have no money."
>
> No money at all was exactly what we had for the first few months; and therefore no real way of establishing contact with the outside world. We did not even know with any certainty whether we would be supported by people working in developing countries, or indeed how long we could keep the working group going.
>
> The problem was solved for the Group in a dramatic and unexpected way. At the end of August 1965, the *Observer* [a London newspaper] published, in their Weekend Review, an article they had commissioned Schumacher to write several months earlier but had not used until then.

This article, addressed to the general public, not to economists, launched the Group. (It was reviewed in MANAS for March 23, 1966.) As a historic statement as well as an effective argument for intermediate technology, Mr. McRobie reprints it entire, going on to tell how the Group undertook to fill in the "knowledge gap" concerning that middle area—the intermediate area—of technology. They formed panels on a number of fields—agricultural tools, health and water supply, building materials and methods, energy, transport, small manufacturing—drawing in numerous voluntary consultants.

> These voluntary panels rapidly became an integral part of the Group's structure, and by the end of the 1970s there were more than three hundred professional people—scientists, engineers, doctors, economists, men and women from industry, government, academia and the professions—helping us in this way. . . . The first panel to get going, in 1968, was on building. It started not, as might be expected, with hardware development, but with "software": with a training programme to upgrade the management skills of small building contractors in Africa.
>
> The next subject to be tackled was small-scale water supply, and the water panel was soon into a series of field projects on rainwater collection and storage. By the end of 1969 we had added similar panels on agriculture, health, and cooperatives. . . .
>
> By the early 1970s the Group had fifteen technical staff, of whom seven were in Zambia, Nigeria, Jamaica and Tanzama, running projects in agriculture, rural workshops, small-scale water supply and food technology. We had also started to publish the results of our first investigations and field projects, and were setting up another subsidiary company, Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd, to handle publications, and to produce a new quarterly journal, *Appropriate Technology.*

One chapter tells what the Group is doing today, and another proves that industry does have choices in what technology to use. A closing passage of this discussion sounds an appropriate keynote for the present:

> Fortunately for us, not everyone is prepared to join in the process of keeping alive a system which is already in widespread disarray. In all the industrialized countries there are more and more people with courage and vision enough to work on alternatives, to give practical expression to the principles of smallness, simplicity, capital-saving and nonviolence.

COMMENTARY
ALL TOO FAMILIAR . . .

THE East African country of Somalia, with a long coast on the Indian Ocean, bordered on the West by Ethiopia and Kenya, has a population of three and a half million, two million of whom are ravaged by drought, the result of five years of almost rainless weather. In addition, Somalia is now host to a million and a half refugees from Ethiopia, ethnically Somalis, who have been driven from their homes in the Ogaden region by war. A report in the Direct Relief Foundation Newsletter for March-April relates:

> It is a story that has become all too familiar in other areas of the world. Once self-sufficient nomads, their lives have been disrupted by years of internal conflict, the past five years of punishing drought has killed their livestock and left them destitute. They have made their way across hundreds of miles of desert to Somalia.
>
> In the Somalis' age-old tradition of caring for their kinsmen, they have been welcomed. Approximately a half million of the refugees have been absorbed into Somali households; the other million, 90% of them women and children, have been settled in 37 government-established refugee camps. The effect on the country has been devastating. Somalia ranks as one of the poorest nations in the world (average annual per-capita income $130), and still the refugees keep coming—at the rate of 4000-5000 every day. . . . a Somali official writes: "Whatever the spirit of our people, there are today literally no more resources with which to be generous."

One of the refugee camps houses 76,000 people. The women and children live on a barren hillside in small huts made of thorn bush branches and animal skins. Visitors from the Hunger Project (see Frontiers) report that the entire water supply for the camp "consists of two shallow, hand-dug wells." The water is contaminated and many of the children have measles. More serious diseases are made worse by malnutrition. "Yet in the midst of horrifying circumstances, we found people of dignity and stature, pride and courage. . . ." There were only two medical doctors and few medications.

Close to two hundred thousand dollars' worth of medications and supplies have already been sent to Somalia by the Direct Relief Foundation (P.O. Box 1319, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93100) with the help of an air-lift by Operation California. Additional help is being prepared in conjunction with other voluntary organizations. A visit to the Santa Barbara warehouse of the Direct Relief Foundation, filled with needed supplies of every sort, generates confidence in the work of this agency.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
GOD AND GOVERNMENT

THE reflections of Norman Cousins (in a *Saturday Review* editorial) on the relation between religion and government—the fundamentalist Moral Majority, he said, wants government authority to take guidance from religious beliefs—brought to mind what happens, historically, when sectarian authority is given the force of law. This was illustrated, nearly a hundred years ago, in South Africa, when Paul Kruger, president of the Transvaal Republic, told a group of Indian merchants and traders what they could expect in the way of justice and impartial treatment from his government. By their skill and intelligence as businessmen, the Indians had proved more successful than the European traders, and when the latter campaigned against the Indians, seeking a law that would curtail their activity, some Indian leaders went to see President Kruger. In an account of Gandhi's ultimately victorious struggle to obtain fair treatment for Indians in South Africa, Devi Prasad relates:

> Kruger not only did not admit them into his house, but made them stand in the courtyard, and after some time addressed them with the following words: "You are the descendants of Ishmael and therefore from your very birth bound to slave for the descendants of Esau. As descendants of Esau we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must rest content with what rights we grant you."

By an appeal to reason, to the ethics of Christianity, and by refusing to permit retaliation by the Indians against the Boers and the English, Gandhi accomplished what he set out to do, although it took years.

> The Indian struggle in South Africa ended with complete success. The Indians' demands were accepted and their rights restored. Giving due consideration to some hypothetical questions, Gandhi said:
>
> "The Satyagrahees never used physical force . . . although there were occasions when they were in a position to use it effectively. Again, although the Indians had no franchise and were weak, these considerations had nothing to do with the organisation of Satyagraha [non-violent resistance]. This is not to say that the Indians would have taken to Satyagraha even if they had possessed arms or the franchise. Probably there would not have been any scope for Satyagraha if they had the franchise. If they had arms, the opposite party would have thought twice before antagonizing them. One can therefore understand that people who possess arms would have fewer occasions for offering Satyagraha. My point is that I can definitely assert that in planning the Indian movement there was never the slightest thought given to the possibility of offering armed resistance. Satyagraha is soul force pure and simple, and whenever and to whatever extent there is room for the use of arms or physical force or brute force, there and to that extent is there so much less possibility of soul force. These are purely antagonistic forces in my view, and I had full realization of this antagonism even at the time of the advent of Satyagraha."

Devi Prasad comments:

> In the fight of the Indians for their rights and dignity in South Africa, it was shown, perhaps for the first time in history, that a minority can win its self-respect and civil rights without hurting the rights or persons of the members of the majority community, and that it can achieve its goal without using violence, secrecy, diplomacy and the like. As has been seen time and again, civil resistance is an effective weapon for the people to free themselves from fear and fight with courage.

Circumstances, as Gandhi pointed out, conspired to help him demonstrate the power of non-violence. Lack of arms taught courage and self-reliance.

This lesson, apparently, must be taught and learned again and again, and especially, perhaps, in South Africa. Last fall the *Christian Science Monitor* asked the present South African government for its views on conscientious objection. For reply the government furnished a statement by Gen. J. A. van Zyl, chaplain-general of the South African Defense Force. The *Monitor* (for Sept. 4, 1980) printed the following questions, taken from his statement:

> "Is the word of God ambiguous, in other words, does it lead to conscientious objection for one person,

while for another it is a call to responsibility—a God-given assignment to defend his country, his nation, his church, women and children, and Christian civilization?

"If the citizens of a country put a government into power according to democratic procedures, to rule and govern that country, and those citizens are Christians, does that government not hold office by the will of God?" (The South African government is, of course, elected by the 18 per cent white minority there.)

War resisters of draft age in South Africa are now subjected to peculiarly severe treatment. While members of the "peace churches" may apply for noncombatant service, if they refuse to enter the armed forces as medics they can be confined to detention barracks for three years. All other refusers are threatened with $6,400 fine, six years' imprisonment, or both, according to the *Monitor* report. South Africa feels great need of troops, these days, because of guerilla attacks and border trouble. Each year some 27,000 young men become available for military service at age eighteen. But, the *Monitor* says, about three thousand fail to report, and the number ignoring the call-up is increasing. (Last Oct. 31 a *Peace News* report estimated that 5,200 young men would evade service in 1980.)

In 1978, a total of 284 were prosecuted, and 1,250 were excused for medical or educational reasons, leaving close to 1600 refusers unaccounted for. What happened to them? Some, it is suggested, left the country, while others went underground. A minister who counsels conscientious objectors called this result a "tremendous loss to the country, because it's mostly highly intelligent and socially sensitive young men who leave for this reason—people who work for, and would like to see, a peaceful resolution of the country's problems."

Two of the young resisters who, while not pacifists, are objectors to fighting for *apartheid* (the South African system of racial discrimination), are serving sentences for rejecting the draft. "Conscientious objection," the Monitor writer says, "is simply not an option open to most young South Africans." He continues:

Peter Moll is finding that out first-hand. His refusal to report for military duty led to a court-martial and a one-year sentence to detention barracks. . . . His further refusal to wear the rust-colored overalls of a soldier being punished—on grounds that it is a military uniform—has led to continuous 14-day periods of solitary confinement.

Mr. Moll spent a total of 118 days in solitary confinement before the South African Defense Force officially recognized him as a conscientious objector.

Moll, along with Richard Steele, also imprisoned, *Peace News* says, are the first non-members of the peace-churches to be allowed C.O. status in South Africa. The government, however, declared that there would be no change in the basic conscription system. Since these two men oppose the draft on grounds of conscientious objection in relation to *apartheid,* they are regarded as "political," although they are Baptists. "There is no such thing as political objection, not in a democratic country such as ours," a spokesman said. And despite their technical recognition, Moll and Steele must finish their sentences, with no assurance that they will not be called up again and made to face the same punishment for refusal to serve. "Theoretically," according to the *Monitor* correspondent in Johannesburg, "the cycle of punishment, refusal, and punishment could have continued until Mr. Moll reached the age of 65." The objector explained his position by saying that "the conflict in which South Africa is engaged does not constitute a 'just' war, but a civil war in which whites are involved in an ultimately futile effort to defend economic and political privilege." Yet while recognized as a C.O., he must serve out his time.

However, observers who are sympathetic to these young men and all other conscientious objectors regard the nominal recognition of Moll and Steele as "a moral victory of sorts for those who demand the right not to fight," calling the cases "a de facto widening of the grounds for conscientious objection in South Africa."

FRONTIERS

Currents of Change

MANAS gets a lot of second-class mail—mostly of the new magazines—and while these publications are not part of the "mass media," the vitality and scope of the innovations they report, in both thought and action, seem to increase continually. This is happening around the world. However frothy and superficial some of the changes may appear on the surface, new thinking, little by little, is taking hold.

Speaking last fall of the way good ideas spread, Amory Lovins, physicist and noted advocate of conservation and renewable energy sources, said (in an interview in *New Roots* for September-October):

> The way passive solar seems to spread is that somebody builds a passive house or puts up a greenhouse and the neighbors see that it works. Word gets around about how low the heating bill was last winter and how pleasant it is sitting out in the warm sunspace in February munching tomatoes. Pretty soon there are passive solar houses all over that community. So maybe appropriate technology people should spread themselves through the wider community rather like spreading spores, and interact with a lot of people instead of clumping together in little clusters where they are talking to each other.

Asked about the energy resources of New England, he said:

> New England is a very energy-rich region, with enough renewable feedstocks—when you count the high ratio of trees to people and all the farm and forestry wastes—to make liquid fuels for an efficient transport sector. The sun is enough, even here in this cold climate, to ultimately keep nearly all the buildings warm. Then there is wind and microhydro, which we have in abundance, and present hydro on long lines from such places as Niagara Falls. We almost certainly have a surplus supply of energy. Of course, every region has its own specific resource advantages. New England happens to be especially rich in wind, wood and microhydro.

An article in the January *Sun/Rep News* (appropriate technology newsletter of the South, published at 3110 Maple Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30505) explains that microhydro "is defined as hydro-power facilities which have a generating capacity of less than 100 kilowatts." The writer points out that before cheap fossil fuels were available, small dams and water wheels could be seen wherever there were streams, around the country. Noting that hydro power production, according to federal figures, is about 90 per cent efficient—about twice the efficiency of coal, oil, gas, or nuclear plants—the writer says that farmers and landowners are now installing run-of-stream generating turbines.

> For most individuals, five kilowatts of electrical generating capacity is plenty to supply all their needs. . . . The bottom line for the individual hydro person is self-sufficiency. This independent spirit usually means that such folks do not go off looking for government bucks, an attitude which fits very well within today's political climate.

This is a practical side of the changes going on. In the issue of *New Roots* quoted above, Gary Snyder speaks of an alteration of human attitudes:

> The biological-ecological sciences have been laying out (implicitly) a spiritual dimension. We must find our way to seeing the mineral cycles, the water cycles, air cycles, nutrient cycles, as sacramental—and we must incorporate that insight into our own spiritual quest and integrate it with all the wisdom teachings we have received from the nearer past. The expression of it is simple: gratitude to it all, taking responsibility for your own acts; keeping contact with the sources of energy that flow into your own life. . . .
>
> Is not the purpose of all this living and studying the achievement of self-knowledge, self-realization? How does knowledge of place help us to know the Self? The answer, simply put, is that we are all composite beings, not only physically but intellectually, whose sole individual identifying feature is a particular form or structure changing constantly in time. There is no "self" to be found in that, and yet, oddly enough, there is. Part of you is out there waiting to come into you, and another part of you is behind you, and the "just this" of the ever-present moment holds all the transitory little selves in its mirror.

To know your "place," much as Wendell Berry (who is quoted by Snyder) suggests, is to be an "inhabitant."

> There are many people on the planet, now, who are not "inhabitants." Far from their home villages, removed from ancestral territories; moved into town from the home; went to pan gold in California—work on the Pipeline—work for Bechtel in Iran. Actual inhabitants—peasants, paisanos, peoples of the land, have been sniffed at, laughed at, and overtaxed for centuries by the urban-based ruling elites. The intellectuals haven't the least notion of what kind of sophisticated, attentive, creative intelligence it takes to "grow food."

Amory Lovins sounded another keynote in his *New Roots* interview. He sees no real difficulty—technically—in solving the energy problem. The obstacle, you could say, is "human nature." He ends with this comment:

> The more we look at the ways of using energy efficiently, the more in the long run it seems that energy isn't a terribly interesting problem. It's not nearly as difficult as we thought. Problems like peace and social justice and food are going to be much more difficult and complicated, and we really ought to be getting on with those.

Food is the project adopted by Frances Moore Lappé, who a few years ago wrote *Diet for a Small Planet*, and then, realizing that a great many people in the world don't have enough to eat, wrote *Food First*, now a primary source for understanding why there is so much hunger and malnutrition in so many places. Her latest enterprise is a strenuous effort to bring food relief to the 1.5 million people who are "on the brink of starvation in the East African country of Somalia"—most of them ethnic Somali refugees from Ethiopia where the fighting between Somali rebels and the Ethiopian Army drove them away. One out of every four persons in Somalia is a refugee—formerly belonging to a family of self-sufficient nomads.

A writer in a recent *Hunger Project* report points out that the continuous political disturbances in Africa are largely a legacy of the colonial past, and that the conditions in Somalia are not unique, but only the worst, in East Africa. Immediate food relief and help with a long-term program for self-reliance are what Somalia needs. The Hunger Project, 1735 Franklin Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94109, is devoted to meeting these needs. It supplies information and asks for support.