VOLUME XXXIX, NO. 7
FEBRUARY 12, 1986

THE REAL PROBLEM

A BATCH of books that came in for review during a recent week claims particular attention because they all—three books and a pamphlet—deal with heart-rending thoroughness with the present agony in many parts of the world. One is titled *The Deadly Connection—Nuclear War and U.S. Intervention,* edited by Joseph Gerson of the New England Office of the American Friends Service Committee (issued by New Society Publishers in paperback, 1986, $8.95). There are twenty-one contributors, among them Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, Randall Forsberg, and Paul F. Walker, who write about the nuclear armaments of the nations, mostly our own, and the plans for their use. The "deadly connection" is identified by the editor, Joseph Gerson, as "the extraordinarily close relationship between U.S. nuclear war policy and U.S. foreign intervention." This includes the actual use of nuclear blackmail, plans for a first strike in nuclear war, and the likelihood of conventional war turning into nuclear war. "Like all other aspects of militarism and the arms race," Gerson says, "the connection has demanded a heavy price from our civil society and from our economy." The contributors to this book are not only expert in what they write about but intensely concerned and committed individuals. Reading them leaves you somewhat aghast.

Another of the books, *Bearing Witness, Building Bridges* (also issued in paperback by New Society Publishers, edited by Melissa Everett, $8.95), is a series of interviews with North Americans living and working in Nicaragua. The interviews with seventeen people reveal various differences of opinion, but they all think the Sandinista revolution is honest and worth helping. The accounts of what the contras do is uniformly horrifying. The reports are personal, intimate, and devoted to the helping activities of the persons interviewed. A number of the latter are Catholics, and what they say earns the reader's respect. One of these ladies, Mary Hartmann, was a teacher in a town on the Rio Coco, who later taught at Managua in the university. She says:

> The earthquake in 1972 was a turning point. Not only did the earth open, but a lot of people's minds opened when they saw that all the aid from around the world never reached them. Canned vegetables with labels from the relief agencies were sold on the shelves of Somoza's supermarkets. There were huge donations for rebuilding Managua, but the people had to scrounge their own cement and carry their own stones. There was absolutely no help.
>
> Managua used to be a cosmopolitan city filled with skyscrapers. Now it's fields and shanties. Even basic services like water and electricity were not restored for years. Somoza just pocketed it all. So, working in a barrio where people were experiencing this hardship, I was faced with the question of how to help them organize to get what was theirs. And you can't do that without moving into the realm of politics. Now, what I'm telling you in a matter of seconds represents years of work, just trying to get the bare essentials of life.

The people interviewed include educators, an ecologist, a music teacher, an engineer, an agriculturalist, and a forester. They all tell intensely interesting stories and have reached the conclusion that, as revolutions go, the Nicaraguan is one of the best. The common people fear neither the Sandinista police nor the military, and the poor are really being helped.

A third book we received is *Sanctuary* (Harper & Row paperback, $7.95) edited by Gary MacEoin. The Preface by Herb Schmidt begins:

> Because of the Civil War in El Salvador, more than one million refugees have been created. More than fifty-one thousand civilians—women, children, and men not involved in the military or with the guerillas—have been murdered or disappeared. Thirty-five priests, nuns and pastors have been assassinated in the last five years. Since President

> Duarte's election in April 1984, the situation in the cities has changed. The death squads remain intact, but they are being to a considerable extent restrained. Only two hundred fifty death squad assassinations were recorded in 1984, and there were only somewhat more than twelve hundred other killings of non-combatants recorded. But what does not appear in the official lists is the unknown but enormous number of non-combatant old people and children killed by aerial bombardment and in ground sweeps by the Salvadoran army in areas controlled by the popular forces. Such is the basic situation that has forced refugees to flee to "safe haven" in this country. Many of those deported back to their homeland have faced rape, imprisonment, torture, even death. Those are the facts and events that have prompted religious communities to respond by providing sanctuary, as part of the movement that is the subject of this book.

Prosecution by the Immigration and Naturalization Service in January 1985 of sixteen sanctuary workers and 53 Central American refugees, thoroughly covered by the press, apparently led to a strengthening and expansion of the movement to help the refugees. The book tells the story of the beginning, the growth, and the spread of this work. Also overflowing in this book is the passion and enthusiasm of a vast ferment going on in the United States. In one chapter William Sloane Coffin says:

> What is so sad in all this is that so many North American have forgotten so much of their recent history. It was sixty three years ago that Charles Evans Hughes announced that we are seeking to establish a "pax Americana." He was secretary of state, serving President Coolidge, who—as he dispatched the Marines into Nicaragua for the fourteenth time in Nicaraguan history—explained, "We are saving Nicaragua from the Bolsheviks."
>
> Ten years later, in 1933, Cordell Hull proclaimed Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy, which signaled a shift from unilateral action to collective action and resulted fifteen years later (in 1948) in the formation of the Organization of American States. But alas, just over the horizon was the cold war, bringing with it a fresh onslaught of blind anti-communism. In. 1954 the CIA overthrew the duly elected government of Arbenz in Guatemala. In 1960, the CIA sponsored an invasion of Cuba. In 1965, the Marines landed once again in the Dominican Republic. In 1973, Nixon and Kissinger tried to destabilize the Allende government of Chile, and today in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, the North American Eagle is once again fastening its talons on lands not its own. In a figure of speech used by a former president of Guatemala "The North American shark is eating Latin American sardines."

We have saved for the last the pamphlet, because it is so good. The title is *For Those Who Share a Will To Live—Perspectives on a Just Peace in the Middle East* (published by the Resource Center for Nonviolence, P.O. Box 2324, Santa Cruz, Calif. 95063, $3 postpaid). The author of these eight essays is Rami G. Khouri, a Palestinian born in New York City and educated in this country. He is a journalist who has spent most of his life in the Middle East, much of the time as an editor on the *Jordan Times* in Amman. He is the Jordan correspondent for the *Washington Post,* the *Boston Globe,* and the *International Herald Tribune.* He writes with virtually equal understanding of the problems of both the Israelis and the Palestinians. He finds aspects of the present situation encouraging:

> In Israel, public opinion polls since 1967 have shown a consistent trend toward more and more Israelis who are willing to make peace with the Palestinians and other Arab states on the basis of an Israeli withdrawal from parts or all of the occupied West Bank and Gaza. A small but growing number of Israeli politicians and peace groups have accepted the principle of mutual and simultaneous self-determination of Israelis and Palestinians. The Israelis have realized most recently in Lebanon that military force can never resolve political disputes. . . .
>
> An international consensus has emerged in recent years that envisages the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict through the satisfaction of Israeli demands for recognition and security, and of Palestinian demands for self-determination and security. . . . The people and their many supporters in the West must soon decide: Is their objective the false security that comes from occupying Arab lands and denying Palestinian rights? Or is their objective the genuine security that can only emanate from a peace that satisfies Palestinian as well as Israeli demands?

Khouri's theme is that both Arabs and Jews are the children of Abraham: "The Jewish people

have secured their state, and fortified it militarily. But they have not secured that which should be more dear to them than anything else in this world—the acceptance of their Arab brothers and sisters, their Semitic cousins, their Abrahamic family."

These books and the pamphlet are all efforts at persuasion. They are strong but not strident. Mainly they share information, which is probably the best way to persuade. Yet no one can give *all* the information, and, this being the case, the writer must know or learn the secret of inspiring trust, and also hope that his readers or listeners will become sufficiently concerned to convert their trust into first-hand knowledge. Yet there is so *much* information, so many things going wrong, and around the world what seem countless situations of injustice that have prevailed for centuries and cry out for correction. The writers are people like those described by Ram Dass in *How Can I Help?—*

> We look around, see injustice, oppression, the threat of war, war itself, and something inside grabs us: we've got to do something, it's time to act. But what is the spirit of that resolve? The initial state of mind we bring to any social action can go a long way to determining its character and consequences, especially if we're looking to move others to act.
>
> . . . concerned as we are with results, we call on tactics of persuasion, appealing to states of mind that get people going. We begin to manipulate consciousness. Play to anger. Go for fear. There's always guilt. These basic states of mind are always lurking about, looking to be fed. . . . History is filled with examples of how these attitudes, which initially may have stirred people to action, went on to poison and destroy well-intentioned movements for social change. These are powerful states of mind we're playing with. Intentionally set in motion, their effect is usually incendiary. . . . We're communicating the spirit behind the initiative. That's usually the message people react to first of all, if not most of all. *What spirit will it be?*

That, indeed, is the question. What is the spirit behind the initiative? Consider, for example, the spirit behind the Russian Revolution. In the preface to his book, *Leon Trotsky*, written in 1924, Max Eastman says:

> Remember that in 1918—untrained even in the contemplation of military affairs—Trotsky organized an army out of the hunger- and panic-stricken remnants of a nation and fought off on seven fronts an invasion, backed up by ail the great powers of the world. Remember that he is considered by many who have heard him the greatest orator of our times. And remember that his books of literary criticism, as well as his political and economic studies, are read by every lively-minded man in Russia, and his prose type is a thing of intense individual beauty and power.

Then, in the body of the book, speaking of when Trotsky had determined to organize the masses in behalf of an uprising and revolution, Eastman wrote:

> Trotsky was a shining example of that atrocious creature familiar to all readers of American editorials, the "Outside Agitator." That is to say, he was a man with an extreme social ideal and enough mechanical instinct to know that the only force capable of achieving such an ideal is the organized self-interest of the oppressed classes. He himself possessed no thread of connection with those classes.

The other great leader of the Bolshevik Revolution was Nicolai Lenin, who trusted Trotsky and worked with him and used him. In 1914 Lenin told an admiring youth (in Switzerland) that his inclination to pacifism was "utterly false." He read to the young man what he had just written:

> An oppressed class which does not strive to learn the use of weapons, to own weapons, deserves only to be mistreated. . . . The demand for disarmament in the presentday world is nothing but an expression of despair.

Lenin wanted the war that was then about to begin. It would, he believed, release mighty forces of which the revolutionists must gain control. What will explain Lenin's extraordinary influence over his colleagues? In the 1972 edition of *To the Finland Station*, Edmund Wilson quotes N. Valentinov's testimony:

> "No one was able as he was to so infect with enthusiasm for his projects, so to impose his will, so

> to make people docile, as this man who at first sight seemed so blunt and rather rude, who apparently had no gift to charm. Neither Plekhanov nor Martov nor anybody else had mastered the secret of direct hypnotic influence on people that emanated from Lenin; I should say even his mastery over them. Only after Lenin did they indisputably follow as after a uniquely unquestioned leader, since it was only Lenin who presented himself—especially in Russia—as that very rare phenomenon, a man of iron will, of indomitable energy, uniting a fanatical belief in action, in practical activity, with an unchanging faith in himself. . . . "

The young man spoken of above, Valeriu Marcu, told years later in *Foreign Affairs* (April, 1943) how Lenin influenced him in 1914:

> To be treated as an equal, despite all the sharp criticism, was a new experience for me. The other Russians . . . contented themselves with expounding their own ideas. They never said: go home, open your mind, try to understand things for yourself, learn. With Lenin I had the impression that I was an important ally, and that I had to pass the real test of revolution. I did not know then that Lenin spoke seriously to everyone who was interested in serious questions.

From such reading we begin to understand the psychological power behind the Bolshevik Revolution. Those radicals were cultivated men and women, deeply convinced of their Enlightenment philosophy, committed to violence for a high social cause, impersonal, and self-sacrificing. Writing in 1924, Max Eastman conveys the spirit of their lives in a paragraph:

> A wonderful generation of men and women was born to fulfill this revolution in Russia. You may be traveling in any remote part of that country, and you will see some quiet, strong, exquisite face in your omnibus or your railroad car—a middle-aged man with white, philosophic forehead and soft brown beard, or an elderly woman with sharply arching eyebrows and a stern motherliness about her mouth, or perhaps a middle-aged man, or a younger woman who is still sensuously beautiful, but carries herself as though she had walked up to a cannon—you will inquire, and you will find out that they are the "old party workers." Reared in the tradition of the Terrorist movement, a stern and sublime heritage of martyr-faith, taught in infancy to love mankind, and to think without sentimentality, and to be masters of themselves, and to admit death to their company, they learned in youth a new thing—to think practically; and they were tempered in the fires of jail and exile. They became almost a noble order, a selected stock of men and women who could be relied upon to be heroic, like a Knight of the Round Table or the Samurai, but with the patents of their nobility in the future, not in the past.

In 1924, who among these remarkable men and women could foresee what would happen to them at the hands of the inheritor of their achievement—Stalin, and his Moscow Trials in the 1930s? Not the vision but the method of violence survived, and the moral paralysis of all Russia, save for a handful of heroic souls, made to waste their lives in camps and prisons, or exile in the West.

While these tragedies were proceeding in Russia, another sort of power was slowly rising in the East, the power of nonviolence and of truth not as an instrument but an end. Today, when the fruits of violence are all about, and the reflexes of violent action have become the policies of nations everywhere, Gandhi's gospel is slowly spreading. Although its ideas make a fragile plant, almost a babe in arms compared to the well-armed and angry man of military solutions, yet there is a living essence in the message of Gandhi that can do nothing but grow, however slowly.

Can we make it grow a bit faster? We can at least try, trying hard to remember how Gandhi survived almost endless discouragements and betrayals, and remembering, too, how he called himself to account at the end of his life for what he regarded as his misjudgments and mistakes. He wrote: "In placing civil disobedience before constructive work I was wrong. I feared that I should estrange coworkers and so carried on with imperfect ahimsa."

We are ready, perhaps, to consider once again the settled conviction of one who was perhaps America's greatest prophet and counselor, who wrote more than a century ago, yet who now has the ear of an ever-increasing number—Henry

David Thoreau. The following was distilled from his experience as a school teacher:

> "How vain to try to teach youth, or anybody, truths! They can only learn them after their own fashion, and when they get ready. I do not mean this to condemn our system of education, but to show what it amounts to."

Commenting in *The Simple Life,* David Shi says:

> How much better than the standardized curriculum was a constant intercourse with nature and the contemplation of natural phenomena." His own intuitive experience in the huckleberry-field was some of the best schooling I got, and paid for itself."

The books we have been considering in this discussion are all intent upon conveying "truths" to the readers. They are stirring work which presents a great many appalling facts. Such facts are meant to lead to acts, and no doubt will in some cases. But their most valuable contribution lies in the possibility of leading to a mood of understanding, the slow but sure taking of a position which means that one will never go back to the old way of doing things, the old righteousness which alienates instead of winning or opening hearts. Thoreau was right. People learn only after their own fashion, and in their own time. Can we be patient enough to learn how to help them? The real problem, then, is learning self-education.

REVIEW
A MIND THAT LOVED THE LAND

BEING overtaken by some sort of famine in good reading, we turned to an old book—one published in 1949 by the Oxford University Press, and since reprinted in paperback by Ballantine—for relief and pleasure. The book is *A Sand County Almanac* (with some other essays added in the Ballantine edition) by Aldo Leopold, who died of a heart attack in 1948 while fighting a brush fire on a neighbor's farm. He was born in 1887 in Iowa, worked for the Forest Service throughout his life, and taught game management at the University of Wisconsin. He was one of the founders of the Wilderness Society. He said in the preface to this book:

> Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the esthetic harvest it is capable, under science, of contributing to culture.
>
> That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.

Aldo Leopold was a conventional youth of his time who, unlike most others of his generation, grew to human maturity and at the same time gained a mastery of language which put his sage feelings into words capable of arousing both wonder and awe in the reader. As we go to him now, for both surcease and hope, he seems to inhabit a world different from ours in which all living things are his friends and companions, in which time is measured by great planetary cycles, our centuries becoming mere moments, with values determined by the constants of Nature. He is indeed a man of the future, perhaps, alas, of the distant future, born among us as a prophet and friendly instructor. All can learn from him if they will. Reading him is the first step in submitting to the magic of his persuasion.

In the section devoted to his Wisconsin farm—an old, wornout farm he was able to buy by paying back taxes—he records his fidelity to the sand cranes of the region who come there because of the marshes. History, for Leopold, is more the history of the cranes than of human arrivals on the scene.

> A sense of time lies thick and heavy on such a place. Yearly since the ice age it has awakened each spring to the clangor of cranes. The peat layers that comprise the bog are laid down in the basin of an ancient lake. The cranes stand, as it were, upon the sodden pages of their own history. These peats are the compressed remains of the mosses that clogged the pools, of the tamaracks that spread over the moss, of the cranes that bugled over the tamaracks since the retreat of the ice sheet. An endless caravan of generations has built of its own bones this bridge into the future, this habitat where the oncoming host again may live and breed and die.
>
> To what end? Out on the bog a crane, gulping some luckless frog, springs his ungainly bulk into the air and flails the morning sun with mighty wings. The tamaracks re-echo with his bugled certitude. He seems to know.

Aldo Leopold now turns to our instruction in history, the story not of men but of the web of life. His concerns lie here, the vitality of his being here, and compelled as he was to deal with humans as they are, he showed by his example what they might be, saying:

> Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. The quality of cranes lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words.
>
> This much, though, can be said: our appreciation of the crane grows with the slow unraveling of earthly history. His tribe, as we now know, stems out of the remote Eocene. The other members of the fauna in which he originated are long since entombed within the hills. When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. He is the symbol of our untamable past of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the daily affairs of birds and men.

> And so they live and have their being—these cranes—not in the constricted present, but in the wider reaches of evolutionary time. Their annual return is the ticking of the geologic clock. Upon the place of their return they confer a peculiar distinction. Amid the endless mediocrity of the commonplace, a crane marsh holds a paleontological patent of nobility, won in the march of eons, and revocable only by shotgun. The sadness discernible in some marshes arises, perhaps, from their once having habored cranes. Now they stand humbled, adrift in history.

Leopold's prose is pervaded by an authentic sanity, helping us to recover from the desperations of the hour. Not long ago, our southern California coastal canyon—three days past, in fact—was swept in a brush and forest fire, destroying some homes, nearly all outbuildings, and leaving only a lunar landscape on the surrounding mountains, gray and charred, with surviving pines scarred by fire, their needles dulled, the duff on the ground naught but white ashes. From a window it is a sight that longs for a cleansing rain, but new growth will be slow during the chill of winter months and only in spring will the landscape begin to recover with the sudden profusion of wild mustard. It is all very depressing, with the promise of endless expense, hardly covered by insurance, to replace the destruction at present-day building costs. Yet somehow it will all be done, although the grimness of the disaster will be long in dissipating. Yet if you are reading Leopold, disaster is turned into mere incident, and you are reminded that the cranes have no insurance against the intrusions of the species Man. Cranes may be loved by the few, but they are hunted by the many.

> Upon such quarry as this the Holy Roman Emperor loosed his gyrfalcons. Upon such quarry as this once swooped the hawks of Kublai Khan. Marco Polo tells us: "He derives the highest amusement from sporting with gyrfalcons and hawks. At Changanor the Khan has a great Palace surrounded by a fine plain where are found cranes in great numbers. He causes millet and other grains to be sown in order that the birds may not want."
>
> The ornithologist Bengt Berg, seeing cranes as a boy upon the Swedish heaths, forthwith made them his life work. He followed them to Africa and discovered their winter retreat on the White Nile. He says of his first encounter: "It was a spectacle which eclipsed the flight of the roc in the Thousand and One Nights."

Leopold worked and lived for a time in the Southwest. He and some friends were eating lunch high on a rimrock when a wolf—which at first they mistook for a deer—climbed out of the river, followed by half-grown pups.

> In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks.
>
> We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing that green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.

Since then he watched state after state slaughter its wolves, only to discover that the deer multiplied so fast they ate every edible bush and stripped the lower branches of the trees until they had no more to eat.

> I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades.
>
> So also with cows. The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea.

In his last chapter, "The Land Ethic," Leopold shows how such a cowman thinks about

the problem of man—which is, fundamentally, to be filled with self-interest:

> Land-use ethics are still governed wholly by economic self-interest, just as social ethics were a century ago.
>
> To sum up: we asked the farmer to do what he conveniently could to save his soil, and he has done just that, and only that. The farmer who clears the woods off a 75 per cent slope, turns his cows into the clearing, and dumps its rainfall, rocks, and soil into the community creek is still (if otherwise decent) a respected member of society. If he puts lime on his fields and plants his crops on contour, he is still entitled to all the privileges and emoluments of his Soil Conservation District. The District is a beautiful piece of social machinery, but it is coughing along on two cylinders because we have been too timid, and too anxious for quick success, to tell the farmer the true magnitude of his obligations. Obligations have no meaning without conscience, and the problem we face is the extension of the social conscience from people to land.
>
> No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it. In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial.

It is necessary, Aldo Leopold declared, to understand the land, but, he went on, understanding is not possible without love. Loving the land was natural for him, and so it must be for the rest of us, if we are to have a life worth living.

COMMENTARY
WHERE DECISIONS COUNT

BEFORE drawing attention to what seems the most valuable material in this issue, we should deal, however briefly, with a fairly explicit contradiction—the appearance in the lead article of three books and a pamphlet, which are discussed in review, when the article in Review proper begins by saying that we were suffering from a "famine" of good books! The explanation is that the lead and Review were written at different times. We did not have the material used in the lead when the decision to go back to Aldo Leopold's classic was made. We sometimes move material around a little, for one or another reason, and did not catch the impression given that our right hand does not know what our left hand does . . . until it was a bit too late. It is true that sometimes weeks go by before a book comes in from the publisher that seems to really deserve attention. And also true that occasionally what does come in seems of sufficient importance to be used in the lead. We could, of course, have said that we need no excuse for returning to *A Sand County Almanac,* a book that deserves attention more than just once in a while.

This minor editorial slip disposed of, we want to call special attention to the major importance of what is quoted from Alton Harrison, Jr., in his contribution to *Contemporary Education* in this week's "Children." If the validity in what he says were taken seriously, this would put out of business a lot of so-called "serious" publishing which takes conscious or unconscious part in the general self-deception of carefully avoiding exposure of the fact that while we all want constructive change, we want other things a lot more. There is no other way of explaining why "The major school reforms related to humanism that were espoused by Emerson in 1850 are in essence the same as those called for by every succeeding generation of critics up to the present time."

We are, in short, of divided mind. Yet we think it shameful to be of divided mind, so we do not publish openly the factors of division and argue righteously for what we contend is "right." There are of course a few writers—very few—who have the maturity and alertness to be wholly aware of this weakness, and they are the only writers or critics who deserve really serious attention.

What do these few writers write about? Two whom we often quote are Arthur Morgan and Ortega y Gasset. Both draw attention to what we can do about ourselves and our performance in life, although they do it in quite different ways. Both were teachers, and both knew how difficult it is to get across ideas which actually play a part in the shaping of human character, which is all they write about, however indirectly or directly they speak of what they are trying to do. And both wrote in ways that they hoped would lead their readers to make some discoveries themselves—the only discoveries that have a chance to lead to significant action.

Both were cheerful realists. They wrote little about "bad people" or enemies, although they knew the extent of mistaken or selfish human action. From his youth to his death, Ortega wrote about the puzzles and contradictions of human nature, proposing only the remedy, be a good example to others. He spoke of high human possibilities but did not label them as such. He was not a moralist but a teacher. So also with Morgan. His book, *The Long Road,* is a distillation of all that he wanted most to say. It is almost impossible to read this book without being inspired. Ortega's best short book is *Meditations on Quixote,* although all his works are so good it is hard to choose among them. If one studies Morgan and Ortega, one begins to see how best to use one's energies—not by trying to "persuade" other people, but by musings with which others may persuade themselves.

Norton publishes most of Ortega in paperback, and Community Service, Inc., has a stock of many of Morgan's works, including *The Long Road.* The address is P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387. It may be a long, long time before we have writers of comparable excellence—writers who know how to pass the issues which keep us engaged in the self-deception Mr. Harrison discusses so deftly and revealingly, and to deal with matters of importance at a level where decisions may count for something.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE GREATEST OBSTACLE

FOR years MANAS has exchanged with *Contemporary Education,* a journal issued by the School of Education in Indiana State University in Terre Haute. From time to time very good material appears in this journal, as for example the article, "Why Educational Reform Eludes Us," by Alton Harrison, Jr., in the Summer 1985 issue. The author, who teaches in the education department of Northern Illinois University, speaks in one place of his efforts to alter his own mode of teaching.

> Since I taught at the university level, I enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom in terms of my own personal approach to teaching. I began to make changes designed to give the students more choices and thus, I hoped, to increase involvements in formulating course requirements related to their own individual needs and interests. . . . In the role of the teacher, I emphasized nonauthoritarianism and stressed the dimensions of advising, facilitating, participating, guiding, and consulting. The course was designed as a cooperative learning endeavor—not just for the students but also for me as the teacher. Each person had a significant contribution to make and a responsibility for making it. In order to free students from the threat and control of evaluation, they were permitted to assign their own grades at the end of the semester.
>
> Without going into more detail, let me say simply that the experiment was a failure. It was disappointing and frustrating for both me and the students. But it was very revealing in this respect: Authoritarian, structured education creates a classroom environment that provides much greater security and ease of job performance for both teachers and students—this is not to say that teachers and students do not value humanism and freedom in education; they do. But there is something they value even more—security and job ease.

His conclusion:

> We delude ourselves into believing that the false commitment we have to ideals is genuine. And it is this self-deception that constitutes the greatest impediment to educational reform. For, you see, despite our protestations to the contrary, the kind of schools we have at any given time are essentially the kind of schools we want.

This is law number one for would-be educational reformers, an indication of where actual changes must really begin. It was the discovery of John Holt, who thereupon undertook the home-schooling program as the only real remedy, to be applied, family by family, by individual parents.

We could easily stop this discussion here, but Mr. Harrison's development of his criticism—how he reached his conclusion—is too good to omit. He says at the beginning of his article:

> There is no doubt that we need educational reform, the question is why does it keep eluding us—year after year decade after decade? The primary though certainly not the only reason for this is that we do in fact prefer education as it is (unreformed) to education as we say it should be (reformed). At first glance this statement seems quite false, and it is this apparent falsity plus the psychic denial of our true personal needs and preferences which keeps us blinded to the major cause for educational reform failure. Why, you may ask, would people defeat the very changes or reforms they are trying to implement? If they do not want the change, why not simply say so and support the status quo? The answer is that they do desire the change but they have an even stronger desire for the status quo. Desires or needs are satisfied by both activities—working for change and maintaining the status quo. The condition that meets the greatest need will prevail.

Among the world's almost endless list of would-be change-agents, how many understand this law? Only the really great—the great teachers, who appeal to individuals, not to organizations or institutions. Changes take place only in individuals. Institutional attitudes and habits are results, not the causes, of changes in individuals. This is the law of effective reform.

Mr. Harrison relates that to his university classes he showed a film of life and teaching at Summerhill in England—the school founded by A. S. Neill, "the best example of a school operated on truly democratic principles." More than 90 per cent of Harrison's students reacted negatively to

the film. Research showed that those so reacting were "rather passive, shy, introverted, dependent individuals who wanted or needed much structure, supervision, and direction which was not provided at Summerhill." In short, they didn't like Summerhill because it provided no alternative to freedom.

A conflict of motivation, hidden beneath the surface of decisions, is the heart of the matter, according to Mr. Harrison:

> Take the students who profess a desire for more freedom in school. They genuinely believe they want more freedom until they get it. Then they are confronted with the tasks of thinking for themselves, assuming the initiative and responsibility, making their own decisions, and accepting the consequences of those decisions. Despite their verbalizations to the contrary, most students, and adults too, for that matter, will exchange their freedom for the comfort and security of imposed authority. . . .
>
> The major school reforms related to humanism that were espoused by Emerson in 1850 are in essence the same as those called for by every succeeding generation of critics up to the present time. Like waves, their voices swell and recede—and like beaches, the ubiquitous schools remain relatively unchanged. Despite sporadic flirtations with humanism, schools, for the most part, have been and continue to be similar to assembly line factories. In some instances, they provide custodial care with a dash of utilitarianism. But the majority of children are mass processed to fit into a limited number of molds bearing the U.S. stamp of approval. Most often individuality is either ignored or openly discouraged and conformity is richly rewarded.

Mr. Harrison's criticism is not localized:

> If the critics alone wanted humanistic reforms, the failure of those reforms would not be particularly surprising. That, however, is not the case. If one were to conduct a survey, as I have done, one would find that an impressive majority of the parents, teachers, students, and administrators (yes, even principals and superintendents!) profess to believe that schools should be more responsive to individual needs and interests. Why, then, does education continue to be predominantly rigid and traditional? The answer is starkly simple—that is the kind of educational system we want. Or to put it another way, we are not willing to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve the ideals we profess.

Mr. Harrison has given close attention to the history of education:

> We operated our schools for more than half a century on principles of expediency because we said (and validly so) there was a shortage of teachers. Then around 1975, we abruptly announced that America had a teacher surplus. This is a ludicrous assertion. We don't have too many teachers, but rather we have enough teachers now to enable us to switch the operation of schools from principles that are expedient to principles that are educationally sound. But that, of course, would require a significant increase in educational expenditures. And, when the chips are down, we prefer cheaper, expedient schools to better schools that are more expensive.

We make this writer's conclusion ours:

> The gap between goals and practice or ideals and reality is, of course, not a startling revelation. What makes this familiar paradox intriguing, however, is our blindness to the primary cause for its existence. There is a very strong cultural and psychological pressure to believe that we want the changes we are attempting to implement, but we simply do not comprehend that the greatest obstacle is ourselves.

FRONTIERS

Toward Bioregions

WHEN the word "devolution" is used, most of us think of it as meaning a vague opposite of evolution, a kind of going backward, you could say. We have an essay by a man in Canada, Colin D. Graham, of Sidney in British Columbia, which uses this word for its title, and so we looked it up, finding, as its third meaning, "the surrender of powers to local authorities by a central government," which is the meaning Mr. Graham intends. His essay is an attempt at prophecy, looking to the maturation of tendencies already in evidence around the world.

What sort of tendencies? Mainly those signifying the decline of the nation-state. He begins by drawing attention to the practical effect on attitudes and policies of the business community. National boundaries don't mean much to people whose market is the world. Electronic devices are playing a large part in this change. Mr. Graham says:

> By the end of this decade stock exchanges, banks, and multinationals such as Reuters and AT&T will have converted to huge data-processing technologies which, linked to satellites, will permit instant transference of money, shares and special information to most cities on the globe. The same technologies, by creating other global networks and reducing the cost of international communication, will put businessmen, scientists, scholars and administrators in day-to-day touch with colleagues around the world.

Meanwhile writers such as Alvin Toffler and John Naisbitt have discerned the beginnings of separatist tendencies in various parts of the United States, while other scholars—Seweryn Bialer and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse—report enormous cultural tensions in various parts of the Soviet Union. The latter has written *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Republics in Revolt,* and Bialer speaks of "the polarization of the Soviet people along ethnic lines . . . increasing faster than their identification with, and consciousness of, a new Soviet nationhood." Hélène Carrère declares that the Soviet Union is "not a nation so much as an empire in a world where empires are dwindling away." The Moslem areas of the Union to the South have a high birthrate and projections indicate that in thirty years these peoples will constitute a third of the USSR population. So far, however, there have been no signs of secessionist tendencies. Yet the Soviet Union, Graham says, "may become more difficult to hold together than the United States," and adds that "we may well be approaching the last decades of the nation-state as we know it." Norman Cousins has remarked that "the greatest obsolescence in the Atomic Age is national sovereignty" and the smaller countries around the world, which are no military threat to anyone, would certainly be pleased by the breakup of the two great powers which now have all others at their mercy.

There are of course obstacles to any such fulfillment, whatever the actual human advantages, yet we are hardly able to anticipate how rapidly the factors pointing toward decentralization will grow in effect. The present rate of environmental destruction has no real parallel in history and little but smaller political units can alter this course. Mr. Graham says:

> The program which best fulfills the needs for a small-state, environmentally responsible world would seem to be that put forward by the bioregional movement. In the E. F. Schumacher Society s newsletter for the autumn of 1983 Kirkpatrick Sale defined a bioregion as "a geographical area whose rough boundaries are set by Nature, not by Humankind, distinguished from other areas by characteristics of flora, fauna, water, climate, rocks and soils, landforms and the human settlement and culture those characteristics have given rise to. A Watershed . . . that is, the flows and valleys of a major river system . . . may be seen as a bioregion; or a desert, or a forest; or something larger but still coherent, such as the Rockies, say, or the Great Plains, or the Appalachians.
>
> "Bioregionalism, then, is the understanding of the ecological realities that surround us and the attempt to work out economic and political systems that recognize them." He adds that "we finally comprehend that if there is to be salvation for the

> world, it will come through the development of these bioregions into fully empowered, politically autonomous, economically self-sufficient social units in which bioregional citizens understand, and control, the decisions that affect their lives." . . . In his *Experiments in Bioregionalism* Charles H. W. Foster describes a test case in the New England river basins and comes to the conclusion that, "Far more important than technical ecological integrity would seem to be a sense of regional belonging on the part of the people living in the area. Without that essence of regional consciousness no bioregional entity has a chance of succeeding."

The common sense of such proposals is plainly evident. The obvious question is: Will the national states abdicate their authority and preside over their subdivision? The answer, as plainly, is No. Mr. Graham has some suggestions as to how they might be persuaded or pressured into helping, but the quotation he provides from an observer in Washington, D.C., is a formidable reply: "If you think the mere prospect of the end of the world is enough to change policy in Washington and Moscow, you clearly haven't spent much time there."

Yet one sort of persuasion might do the job: the occurrence of a disaster, a non-final one, but bad enough to destroy the will of the military and nuclear maniacs.

In Mr. Graham's scenario, an alliance of bioregionalists and others of like mind is our only hope. He outlines a program they might adopt, stage by stage, noting that the work of peace groups has been effective in leading to such developments as the Green party in Germany and similar bodies now being formed in other countries. His paper is closely argued and should be of use to sympathizers with this idea. *Devolution* may be purchased for $2.50 from the author, Colin Graham, 598 Meldram, RR1, Sidney, V8L 3R9 Canada.