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AN OUTGROWN INSTITUTION

A QUARTER of a century ago, a scholar in one of our California colleges remarked sardonically that "the purpose of the American nation-state today is to become obsolete." In explanation he added:

> A modern nation is a large group of people who have forgotten the purpose of life. Insofar as these people can share in a *national* purpose, it is nefarious, involving massive retaliation and public hatred and tribal religion. National leaders behave like juvenile delinquents.

If we go back much further in our history, to 1798, we find a Philadelphian, Samuel H. Smith, in an essay on education, declaring that, with the right sort of education Americans would develop virtues that would cause them to view "the whole world as a single family," without thinking of other peoples as connected with "any particular time, person or place," and would lift "the mind to an elevation infinitely superior to the sensation of individual regard, superior to the ardent feelings of patriotism." Smith said this in his proposal of a national system of education for the United States. In it he looked beyond the limitations of all creeds and sects, and approval of the plan by the American Philosophical Society may be taken as evidence of the liberal spirit of its members and the serious thinkers of the time. Smith was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, the editor of a magazine called *New World,* and he later founded *The National Intelligencer.* His opinions, according to Allen O. Hansen, author of *Liberalism and American Education in the Eighteenth Century* (Macmillan, 1926), and his theme were "not born of one mind thinking in isolation, but of the minds of the leading statesmen and scholars comprehended in the American Philosophical Society." It seems worth while to note in particular that in a sense he looked beyond the nation to the development of a world community, and regarded the nation as an instrument that would serve in bringing about that ideal.

In these days of fierce and hideously militarized nationalism, it seems well to remember that there have been moments in our history when such vision was clearly and widely expressed, and was sometimes even embodied in law, as in the treaties concluded by George Washington as President.

Thoreau's "patriotism" hardly extended beyond the domain of Walden. He could regard as his "country" only the region he lived in, loved, and understood. He regarded the nation's government as something of an annoyance, with which one had to be patient much of the time and on occasion rebel against. He was, you could say, a wholehearted bioregionalist more than a century before a substantial number of his countrymen saw the essential point of this outlook. He said in *Civil Disobedience:*

> If one were to tell me that this was a bad government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make an ado about it, for I can do without them. All machines have their friction; and possibly this does enough good to counterbalance the evil to make a stir about it. But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army. . . .
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> If injustice is a part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth,—certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

> As for adopting the ways which the state has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to.

Here, fully conscious and developed, is what present-day scholars call the post-national consciousness, which seems to be possible, as one commentator has said, only for "an amateur and person of no importance." It seems clear that those who achieve political eminence do so only by lashing themselves to the clichés of the institutionalized past, and repeating with the false rhetoric of new discoveries the enthusiasms of yesterday's innovators. The very processes of institutionalization—of conventionalization—as they work in a mass society, assure the loss of the fire of original inspiration. As Harold Rosenberg put it in *The Tradition of the New* (Horizon, 1959):

> The popularizers find their natural allies in the rank and file of each profession, to whom the latest discoveries are as alien and disturbing as to the public itself. The union of salesmen, publicizers and distributors with the applied technicians is enough to give them control over any new idea or work. In no case does the founder of a method determine the use to which it shall be put by the profession nor what the public shall be told it means—as against the practitioner chiefs who head the university departments and professional associations, the influence of the actual practice of a Freud or an Einstein has been negligible, and the same is the case, of course, with the innovator in the arts. He is doomed to isolation by the very processes through which his work reaches society. The larger the part played by his creation in the profession the less need there is to understand it, and the greater grows the distance between his idea and the influence exerted by his work. The more widely he is known to the public the greater the misinterpretation and fantasy built upon his name and the greater the distance between himself and his social existence. The famous "alienation of the artist" is the result not of the absence of interest of society in the artist's work but of the potential interest of *all* of society in it. A work not made for but "sold" to the totality of the public would be a work totally taken away from its creator and totally falsified.

What is wrong with this picture? The deliberate organization of our prejudices, weaknesses, appetites, and passions into a spuriously coherent fabric of "public opinion," which becomes the access to the "mass market," is what is wrong with it. The moral solution for such a problem is the growth to maturity of the people at large, resulting in their rejection of the public pandering to the weaknesses they have overcome. But this will take time—a great deal of time, it may be. Eastern philosophers have said it will take *at least* seven lives or incarnations, and growth to maturity at this rate does not seem of much value to alienated Western thinkers who have not been brought up to regard the evolutionary problems of mankind with patience of this sort. But there is also another approach that has a more immediate effect, although the philosopher, who might approve it, would also say that moral growth is needed to give it support. This approach is the designer's solution, in contrast to the moralist's.

The designer will say, Break up the structure of the mass audience, the mass "market," by forming human communities of manageable dimensions—communities in which people's problems do not grow overwhelming by reason of the large numbers of those who have them. If people cannot suddenly attain to maturity, they can at least *cope,* on this smaller, human scale. E.F. Schumacher, while not neglecting the moral solution, proposed for immediate application a designer's solution. He said (in *Resurgence* for May-June 1975):

> . . . let us have [social units] on a *human* scale, so that the need for rules and regulations is minimized and all difficult cases can be resolved, as it were, on the spot, face to face, without creating precedents—for where there is no rule there cannot be a precedent.
>
> The problem of administration is thus reduced to a problem of size. Small units are self-administrating in the sense that they do not require full-time administrators of exceptional ability; almost anybody can see to it that things are kept in reasonable order and everything that needs to be done is done by the right person at the right time.
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> I should add that, as Aristotle observed, things must be neither too big nor too small. I have no doubt that for every organization, as for other things, there is a "critical size" which must be attained before the organization can have any effectiveness at all. But this is hardly a thought that needs to be specially emphasized, since everybody understands it

instinctively. What does need to be emphasized is that "critical size" is likely to be very much smaller than most people in our society are inclined to believe.

Excessive size not only produces the dilemma of administration, it also makes many problems virtually insoluble. To illustrate what I mean, imagine an island of 2000 inhabitants—I have in mind an island of this size which a little while ago demanded total sovereignty and independence. Crime on such an island is a rarity; maybe there is one single full-time policeman, maybe there is none. Assume, however, that some crimes do occur, that some people are sent to jail, and that they return from jail at the rate of one person a year. There is no difficulty in re-integrating this one ex-prisoner into the island's society. Someone, somewhere will find this person a room to live in and some kind of work. No problem. . . .

The problem of re-integrating 25,000 ex-prisoners into a society 25,000 times as large as that of the little island is quite a different problem, not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, a problem the solution of which escapes the devoted efforts of Home Office, Probation Service and countless other organizations. Is it a matter of proportionately too little effort and money being devoted to this task of re-integration and rehabilitation? Could we solve the problem by having bigger prisoners' aid organizations, more people and more money? Maybe we can; maybe we cannot. I personally think we cannot. But the point is that the small island does not have the problem.

This is another sort of post-national thinking, obviously sound, obviously necessary for any sort of future worth having. It introduces, of course, what may seem another problem of large dimensions—how can we transform a mass society with the dimensions of the United States into a federated society of "bioregions"? It may come as a surprise to some readers to know that there are dozens of enterprising individuals who are working quite seriously on this problem, and who have been able to introduce, in a few areas, some modest initial changes and inquiring attitudes of mind. The first step is to begin to think in these terms, to understand the logic of life in a bioregion, and the vast number of problems that it will reduce or actually eliminate. We will continue to have moral problems, to be sure, so long as we remain human beings, but they will be reduced in size so that we are competent to deal with them. Common decencies will no longer require that individuals become virtual heroes in order to practice them. Life in properly sized communities will not necessarily produce marked changes in the moral qualities of human beings, but it will at least stop suppressing the moral attitudes and impulses they already possess. There will no longer be the marked contrast between social and individual behavior, leading thoughtful writers to do books on moral man and immoral society. Living in small communities will remove most of the pressure put together by demagogues and "marketing experts" who make their living and attain their power through the manipulation of the grossest impulses of human beings. These people will no longer have available to them the support of vulgarized public opinion—what Max Eastman called "organized self-interest." Their excellences and human qualities will have opportunity to come to the surface and perhaps predominate.

In his recent book, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Fision* (Sierra Club, 1985), Kirkpatrick Sale gives this account of the meaning of Bioregion:

There is nothing so mysterious about the elements of the word, after all—*bio* is from the Greek word for forms of life, as in *biology* and *biography*, and *region* is from the Latin *regere*, territory to be ruled—and there is nothing, after a moment's thought, so terribly difficult in what they convey together: a life-territory, a place defined by its life forms, its topography and its biota, rather than by human dictates; a region governed by nature, not legislature. And if the concept initially strikes us as strange, that may perhaps only be a measure of how distant we have become from the wisdom it conveys—and how badly we need that wisdom now.

There is another reason for using this word. Since it was first propagated by writer Peter Berg and ecologist Raymond Dasmann more than a decade ago—it is not quite clear who originated the term, but it was those two, working through an organization called Planet Drum and a newspaper irreverently called *Raise the Stakes*, who brought the concept to a wider audience—it has inspired what can fairly be called a movement, albeit still a modest one. As of 1985 there were some sixty groups in North America specifically defining themselves as bioregional, and a nascent continental organization, the North American Bio-regional Congress, formed to advance bioregional

> consciousness and to nurture and link bioregional organizations. These developments give the word a sufficient lineage, a sufficient currency, to justify its being honored by further usage.

This book by Sale is a good one to read for realizing the extent to which this positive conception of post-national consciousness is now in the air. There is an excellent bibliography of primary sources for further reading. For those who share the view of the contemporary professor that "nationality today is almost a synonym for moral purposelessness," the following by Sale will be of interest:

> The bioregional project also takes force from the fact that it can be begun locally, with just a few people willing to study a little, talk a little, imagine a little, organize a little. As its perceptions are regional, so is its canvas, and thus the energies for its launching do not have to be very exhaustive and the resources to keep it moving do not have to be very extensive.
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> All too many contemporary political schemes try to take aim at the national government—running people for Congress, or nominating one of their own for the Presidency, or creating caucuses in a national party, or setting up lobbies in Washington, or organizing constituencies on a national scale. The efforts are not always useless, but they are far more often symbolic than substantive, and they always entail a great expenditure of money and energy for no very certain or enduring return. Or worse: they discover that it is impossible finally to change the entrenched Federal bureaucracy or the unresponsive Federal administration. . . .
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> What makes the bioregional effort different—in any foreseeable future, anyway—is that it asks nothing of the Federal government and needs no national legislation, no governmental regulation, no Presidential dispensation. What commends it especially to its age is that it does not need any Federal presence to promote it, only a Federal obliviousness to permit it. In that respect it is very much in tune with that basic American spirit once described by Thoreau:
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> "The government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of the way. *It* does not keep the country free. *It* does not settle the West. *It* does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way."

To Thoreau Kirkpatrick Sale adds:

> Take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves. Take care of the communities, develop in regions, tap the local manifestations of "the character inherent in the American people," and the Federal structure can become quite irrelevant.

It is time, in short, to take seriously Shelley's declaration, in his *Defense of Poetry* (1821), that poets are "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." While, politically, Thoreau was "a person of no public importance," his conception of what the loyalties of a human being should be are only now coming into maturity among the makers of future public opinion. Thoreau simply knew what was right. It is given to poets—we speak of those who are most distinguished—to see clearly, past the confusions of contemporary debate, as John Muir saw, as Emerson saw, and as many more are able to see today. It is folly, as Thoreau suggested, to complicate one's life with the deviously false motivations of nationhood. The poet has no interest in power, he has no concern with acquisition, and usually neglects even the idol of security. He has the identity which many people long for, in the abstract, but for which they are not ready to pay the price in altering their lives.

Would life in regional communities lead to a narrow sectarianism, like, say, some of the old New England towns of recent years, where there was as much decay of character as in agriculture and normal daily life? Not in community life that is *chosen* as a natural form for awakening maturity. But such people, while they will have less "national character," will be more like others of a similar persuasion across cultural lines. See the chapter on "Health as Transcendence" in Maslow's *Toward a Psychology of Being.*

REVIEW
WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT HISTORY

MEN of imagination, when they are driven to reflection about history by the ugly circumstances of the present, sometimes produce vistas of recollection which may be hard to follow yet spur their readers to similar adventures of the mind. The fall and winter (1985-86) *Salmagundi* has an essay by Carlos Fuentes, "Remember the Future," which is an example of this sort of writing. What, he asks in effect, is a Latin American?

This distinguished novelist, who served for several years as Mexico's ambassador to France, begins his discussion by recalling his days as a law student in Mexico City. To go to the School of Law of the University he would walk every morning across the Zócalo, the central plaza of the City, into the narrow colonial quarter to the location of the School. He saw the scene as it then was, in the early 1950s, but his imagination showed him something else:

> Every day, as I crossed the Zócalo, another scene hurried, violent, in flight, across my eyes. I could see, to the south, men and women in white tunics riding on flat-bottomed canoes in a flowing dark canal. On the north, there was a corner where stone broke into shapes of flaming shafts and red skulls and still butterflies: a wall of snakes beneath the twin roofs of the temples of rain and fire.
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> Both images, that of the ancient city and that of the modern city, dissolved back and forth in my eyes, each the mirror without background for the reappearance of the other. The palace of the Spanish viceroys had been erected on the very site of the temple to the god of war, Huitzilpochtli, and in the same plaza that had been the seat of Aztec power. A vast Catholic cathedral had grown upon the ruins of the *coatepantli*, the wall of serpents. The house of the conquistadores had been built on the emplacement of the *tzompantli*, the walls of skulls. And the foundations of the municipal palace had been laid upon the vanquished palace of the emperor Montezuma, with its courtyards of birds and beasts, its chambers for albinos, hunchbacks and dwarfs, and its rooms filled with silver and gold.
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> Today, the Zócalo is a cracked shell covering the slime of a dead lagoon. As I walked over the enormous square of broken stone, I knew my feet were trampling on the graveyard of a civilization. I knew that all these things that I imagined had existed there and existed no more. I was walking on the ashes of the capital city of Tenochtitlan, never to be seen again. That was in 1951.

But the past has a way of being reborn. After thirty years the excavations for a subway in the city brought to light the Templo Mayor of the Aztec metropolis, "practically intact, with its temples to water and fire, its stones of sacrifices, its red angry gods. . . . And the platform of serpents and the altar of frogs serving as the stage for the centerpiece of this underground museum: the gigantic disc of Loyolxauqui, the moon-goddess."

> And so we found out that what had been dead had come alive; that what I had imagined was really there; that the things I thought belonged to a past synonymous with death were things of a living present; or, rather, they had become, surprisingly, a part of my future.

Carlos Fuentes writes an informed diatribe against the propaganda of a glorious future, which becomes possible only by forgetting the past—the past of which the future has to be made, there being no other material.

> I know few phrases as ominous as those of Lincoln Steffens on his return from Russia in the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution, "I have seen the future and it works." My friend the writer Fletcher Knebel, who every year sends me a happy conception-day card—remembering that I was one day a distant future—visited East Germany recently and came back saying: "I have seen the future, and it looks like Perth Amboy."

The vision and elaborately fabricated hope of the future has melted into dust. Our optimism has turned into an unrelieved pessimism. Vision is still possible, but it must be based on an honest merger of the past with the present, not on a continuation of our ignorance of the past.

> But the reaction against futuristic beatitude is inevitable in a world where the screen of the future-as-happiness has vainly hidden the scenery of the

> present as terror, violence and madness, more cruel than ever, because less expected than ever. How could the Holocaust of the Innocent be unleashed by the armed children of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms? How could the marvelous dream of socialist liberation end in the Stalinist Gulag? How could the democracy of Thomas Jefferson exterminate whole Vietnamese villages and its own fighting men with Agent Orange and napalm? How, indeed, finally, have we managed not only to demonstrate over and over that behind the mask of progress the future wears the face of death, but that we are for the first time capable not only of exterminating ourselves, while at least leaving nature to contemplate our folly, but that, now, we are capable of exterminating nature herself, so that there shall be no further witnesses: no further future?

How shall we learn to cope with our past, in order to make a better future? We must first learn the past, accept it as part of ourselves, take its good to our hearts and discover how to correct its mistakes. To illustrate, Fuentes, a Latin American, goes back to Aztec history, starting in the fateful year of 1519, a time of dark signs and wonders for the Aztec people. But he must go back farther than that, to the departure of the legendary Aztec savior, Quetzalcoatl, who left a prophecy of his return—"in peace, if his children had peacefully cared for the earth; and in war, if they had devastated the land and oppressed other human beings." But what had they done?

> Tragically at war with themselves, the Aztec people had to choose their future by choosing either the face of Quetzalcoatl, which was the face of the Toltec moral heritage they required in order to achieve ethical and political legitimation, or the mask of the ferocious war-god, Huitzilopochtli, which they needed in order to conquer and subdue the other Indian nations.
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> In other words, the Aztecs had to conciliate the need for identity (they had no face) with the need for legitimation (they had no past). They had to live both in the time of morality (the past) and in the time of necessity (the present) in order to have an imperial future.
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> They solved their dilemma by burning all the ancient writings of the older people that they defeated, because in them the Aztecs appeared as barbarians of no consequence. "History was burnt—the informants told Sahagun—because the Aztec lords said it was not convenient for all the people to know the papers"—that is, to know the truth about the past.
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> Through this bit of Orwellian travesty, the Aztecs believed they could have a future by denying a past. This was to prove impossible. They needed the past if they were to be seen as heirs to the prestigious Toltec tradition; but their actions in the present flaunted this same heritage. They created a schizophrenic society, divided between the demands of the past and the demands of the future, a world divided between the Pyramid and the Raft: the pyramid of the God of War his death squadrons and his ritual sacrifices; or the raft of the plumed serpent, its humane values and its appeal, once more, to the face, this time the true face, of men and women. . . .

But the Aztecs, by neglect of the Toltec heritage, brought on themselves the future designed for them by Cortés. Yet, ironically, Cortés availed himself of a captive Princess, Malintzin—La Malinche—who "defeated the Indian monarch; she also defeated the Spanish conquistadore by giving birth to his child, the first Mestizo, the first Latin American, who would speak Spanish with an Indian accent and cover his brown face with the mask of Christ and his white face with the mask of Quetzalcoatl."

How, then, shall we understand the making of history? Fuentes attacks this question by going to that remarkable eighteenth-century scholar, Gianbattista Vico, who declared in *La Scienza Nuova* (1744) that "the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are, therefore, to be found within the modifications of our own human mind." Those modifications can be understood by the study of literature, in myth, epic, and tragedy. One must add the modern form, the novel, which "first felt the need to criticize the epic form from which it emerged and on which it supported itself, denying it."

> Don Quixote looks for the arms of myth in the depths of the Cave of Montsesinos; Dostoyevsky for the seeds of tragedy in the sediment of Holy Russia; and Kafka for both myth and tragedy in the basements of the Germanic and Hebrew fables. But Dostoyevsky, Kafka, Faulkner and Beckett also break

> the futurizing line of succession: the destinies of Ivan Karamazov, K and Land Surveyor, Miss Rosa Coldfield or Malone are not, like those of Julien Sorel, David Copperfield or Eugene de Rastignac, shot toward the future. Their destiny now has simultaneous times. . . . But a plurality of times means a plurality of truth, a plurality of points of view, a plurality of groupings and, with all of this, a plurality of cultures, a plurality of politics.
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> If this is true, then no time—past, present or future—belongs to any one man, any one nation or any one culture. We have all suffered from a futurization which is only an abstraction, cut off from the cultural plurality of the faces of mankind and arrogantly believing it can impose its version of the future on others who do not share it.
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> Nations that kidnap the future for themselves refuse others both a future and a past. The future can only be a creative community if it belongs to a shared past: remember the future, it happened once. It is happening all the time, your future is in the rediscovery of an Aztec temple, in the persistence of a Hebrew legend, in the sound of the rain on the uneven pavements of Venice: you cannot have a future without these.

This is the reading of history by a poet and novelist. When it is learned by diplomats and presidents, there will be hope of a good and peaceful life.

COMMENTARY
AN EDITORIAL OPINION

IT so happens that, in the hurry and bustle of preparing fresh copy every week for the printer, we soon forget the contents of an issue while working to get together the papers for the next one. Then, when the galley proofs and later page proofs are supplied, we sometimes have the delightful experience of thinking well of the material presented, and feeling that we have produced a really good issue. This issue is one of those that had this effect.

The lead article, for example, deals with a major social necessity of our time—figuring how to get rid of the ominous threat to us all: the wholly outdated but immeasurably dangerous national state. What we in America have made of the dream of the Founding Fathers is by comparison an unspeakable disgrace, in contrast with what those great men hoped for and worked toward with devotion and self-sacrifice. Thoreau saw the disgrace in its initial development and made articulate protest. His present-day readers no longer remark that he was a "dreamer," since history has itself spelled out both his implicit and explicit predictions. "Let your life," he said, "be a counter friction to stop the machine." There are now dozens of growing grassroots movements of people who are trying to decide what is the best way to make friction, and taking the consequences of whatever they do. And some of the best writers of the time are managing to generate a cultural atmosphere which gives moral reinforcement to the activists.

The character of the opposition—how its attitudes are shaped, and where responsibility lies for the stubborn blocks of mass opinion, made up of people who won't or can't think for themselves—is characterized by Harold Rosenberg. And each year since his death, the power of Schumacher's lucid analysis becomes stronger and stronger. And so is the influence of those who have already taken steps to alter the direction of their lives, and who have joined with others to prove by their own example the irrelevance of national states and the totally obsolete character of "national" motives. And showing the equal irrelevance of the resort to armed revolt as a remedy.

This week's Review reveals the fundamental approach to history that we all need to undertake. How, asks Fuentes, has our unlovely present grown out of our past? Where were the worst wrong-turnings that we made, and how, in these days of massive trends to self-destruction, can we start making moves in a better direction? It is all very simple, some say, while others declare it to be extremely complicated. The resolution of this contradiction lies in the level of our thinking—changing our minds is indeed a simple thing, but deciding how to apply the change in action may be a real problem—such as changing one's job, going back to the land, or simply taking your children out of conventional schools, for a start.

Meanwhile this week's "Children" instructs us in what has been happening in the rest of the world, partly as a result of the sort of "economy" our part of the world has created, for which the women and children of the third world are paying the price. When will we begin to see that the children in Africa, Asia, and South America are our children, too?

And then in Frontiers, there are quotations from Berry's pamphlet on the kind of war we are invited to get ready for and eventually to make. Berry makes us see it as it actually is, not in the least as it is described in the shopworn political rhetoric of today, to which there can be no more than a mechanical response. What does Berry do? First he restores our human dignity, then he speaks to us in human terms. At the level from which he speaks, his argument is unanswerable. Is any other level decent enough for us to take part in?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

HUNGRY CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

HUNGER, malnutrition, disease and death make the life-story of a vast number of children throughout the world. In 66 pages, Worldwatch Paper No. 64, *Investing in Children* ($4 from the Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036), tells what international and other agencies are doing to relieve and diminish so much suffering and premature death. The author of this pamphlet, William U. Chandler, says early in his text:

> Hunger's victims are always disproportionately children. The horror of famine in Ethiopia has been escalating since 1958, with the infant mortality rate recently reaching 60 per cent in some villages. Ethiopia is not alone in its misery. Mozambique, where over 100,000 have died of starvation, continues to face an emergency. Mali, Chad, Sudan, and Niger are among a score of African countries that face severe food shortages. Malawi shows signs of epidemics and increasing mortality. Afghanistan faces famine, and Bangladesh, where diets have been substandard for 20 years, faces a worsening food situation.

What are the causes? Bad weather, multiplying population, war, and ignorance are prominent among them. Chandler says:

> More children die because they are improperly weaned than because of famine. More children die because their parents do not know how to manage diarrhea than because of epidemics. More children die because their parents have no wells, hoes, or purchasing power than because of war. They die because their mothers are exhausted from excessive childbirth, work, and infection. And when children are stunted and retarded from disease and malnutrition, when overburdened parents cannot generate wealth for education and development, then burgeoning populations inadequately prepared for life add to the degradation of natural systems. These stresses perpetuate drought, disease, and famine.

Immediate aid in the form of food is of course needed, but equally important is assistance in helping these people to find their way to ecological stability and simple economic development. Chandler says:

> The United Nations Children's Fund, (UNICEF), noted for promoting child survival measures such as oral rehydration, does just that when it assists women in the Sahel to plant gardens. The village women grow these gardens with water they draw by hand from open wells, one bucket at a time. The gardens yield food for the children. They generate communal income for building a community maternity center or school. And they revegetate barren land, providing ground cover to conserve soil, trees that can provide nitrogen and soil nutrients, and microclimatic change that, with thousands of other gardens, can help halt the spread of deserts. UNICEF's strategy is often as simple as providing the buckets the women use to draw water.

While statistical reports from Third World countries are not always reliable, some things are certain. As Chandler says:

> Analysts generally agree, however, that about 17 million children die each year from the combined effects of poor nutrition, diarrhea, malaria, pneumonia, measles, whooping cough and tetanus. Virtually all these deaths occur in the Third World. Half to two-thirds could be prevented with relatively simple measures. The cause of death may be ascribed to pneumonia, measles, or malaria, though the "initiating" cause may have been simple diarrhea. To save a child's life from measles may be to lose it to whooping cough. Nevertheless, regional studies and case histories do suggest that the combination of primary education and primary health care has led to rapid progress.

Throughout this pamphlet the achievement of China in showing the way to primary health care that really works is referred to again and again.

> China has reduced its national infant mortality rate to a level close to those in some U.S. cities, and despite income levels among the lowest in the world. It apparently has already achieved the World Health Organization (WHO) goal for all countries by the year 2000: infant mortality below five per cent. Food shortages are no longer a serious problem in China, and since the economic reforms that began in 1978, agricultural production has grown 6-8 per cent per year, further assuring nutritional sufficiency. China in the last 15 years has achieved the most dramatic, and possibly the most important, reduction of fertility in history.

Worldwide, however, malnutrition continues.

> A crude estimate of global trends in malnutrition in children under age 5 indicates no change in relative terms but a growing malnutrition problem in absolute numbers. (Malnourishment here is defined as below 70 per cent body weight for age, using U.S. means. The number of children malnourished in the sixties and early seventies totaled about 125 million compared to 145 million in the seventies and early eighties. Africa experienced an increase of 2 million malnourished children, and Asian malnourished children, excluding China and Japan, increased from 95 million to 115 million. Altogether, an estimated 25 per cent of the world's children under age 5 can be described as malnourished. Improvements in Latin America have been offset by deterioration in Asia and Africa, where high birth rates have added to the absolute number of deprived children.
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> Bangladesh, with 95 million people, has suffered a serious decline in food supply per person since the mid-sixties—even though it was already food deficient then. Between 1963 and 1982, per capita calorie consumption declined 14 per cent. Three-fourths of the population now lacks a sufficient diet. Vitamin A intake meets only one-third of requirements. Riboflavin intakes meets half of requirements. Yet, possibly because of better hygiene or antibiotics, malnutrition afflicted a lower percentage of children in 1982 than in 1976: 75 per cent versus 85 per cent. Average height and weight for children under age 5 increased, although for over-fives, the trend has been negative. Malnutrition is especially acute for women and small children, who more often receive insufficient diets compared with men in many Third World countries. . . .
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> As fighting creates refugees, it also creates the most acute child health problems in the world. Nine million people worldwide live in refugee camps, with 3.5 million Afghanis, 2 million Palestinians, and 1.2 million Ethiopians leading the list. The camps incubate measles, typhoid, and cholera. In addition, more than 9 million Africans have been uprooted by drought and economic deprivation during the last decade and forced to relocate, often in slums utterly unprepared to handle them.

On the positive side, there seems to be a wave of recognition of the importance of women's needs and capabilities. Chandler tells about a woman in Senegal, with seven children, confronted by a drought that has cut her harvest in half, a firewood shortage, and an income of less than $400 a year.

> But with her vegetables, watered from a 30-meter hand-dug well, one bucket at a time, she feeds her family. During the worst drought of the century in the Sahel, she and her female colleagues have created a large green garden on parched and barren earth.
>
> Across the Sahel one sees this new phenomenon: women's cooperative gardens. Sometimes organized by an "animatrice," usually a young college-trained African, they more often are begun by the women themselves who decide that something must be done. The hardest part is finding water. Without abundant water supplies, progress in hygiene and agriculture is impossible. Before UNICEF assisted some gardens in Senegal, in fact, the women did not even have enough buckets.to hand-irrigate the fields. . . .
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> Women must receive much higher priority in water, health, and agricultural development. Women do over half the work involved in food production in non-muslim parts of India and in Nepal, and up to 80 per cent in Africa. Yet, extension agents, loans, fertilizer subsidies, and most other productivity improvement projects are aimed at men. But with simple devices that can be produced locally, such as hoes, buckets, fertilizer, and efficient wood stoves, women's workloads can be eased and some buying power generated, particularly if they control the marketing of their products.
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> Some women have found a way to improve their situation. They persuade their husbands to dig several open wells, erect a fence, and prepare the soil, and they do the rest. They plant tomatoes, lettuce, beans, bananas, and other fruits. The gardeners usually keep half the money from their individual plots and give half to a community fund. Some groups have built new maternities and schools, and with some help, have equipped and operated them.

The work of the Worldwatch Institute has great importance, since its net effect is to redefine the role of the human being in our time. Two centuries ago either all these problems did not exist, or were manageable, or we did not hear about them. But now we know, and have ways of knowing more. We also know that the prosperity we enjoy, our facilities and conveniences, are

partly due to the exploitation of the peoples of the Third World, although we hardly realized this at the time of our development. But now we know, and, slowly, some of us are learning what to do. The role of the human being is *not* to enjoy himself at someone else's expense, but to learn the right ways of sharing with others. This will take time; meanwhile children are dying in large numbers.

FRONTIERS

Unpleasant Realities

IN our stack of unused "Frontiers" material we found a clipping from the July-August 1984 *Not Man Apart* that would not submit to our desk-cleaning program. The item is quite indigestible but "choice" in some reverse sense. It takes from a column by Jack Anderson the news of a possible use of trained dolphins, as revealed by a "secret directive" sent out earlier that year by the chief of U.S. naval operations. It spoke of expanding "Navy marine mammal capability" to include the Atlantic Ocean.

The Navy refused comment, but Anderson noted that dolphins have advantages over CIA agents planting mines from speed boats. "They're smarter than a floating mine," he said—"and if they're captured, no amount of KGB—style interrogation can make them talk."

The *NMA* story goes on:

> The idea of using dolphins in a "dirty" war isn't new. With their built-in sonar, dolphins were used in the Vietnam war. From their pens at Cam Ranh Bay, the dolphins would be released to find enemy demolition experts, whom they would inject with special hypodermic needles attached to carbon dioxide cartridges. The enemy frogmen would be literally blown up by CO_2. According to Anderson, dolphins killed about 60 North Vietnamese divers in 15 months—and two Americans who accidentally got in their way.
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> According to a CIA whistle-blower who spoke with Congressional investigators, the CIA actually tried to sell trained dolphins to Mexico, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina several years ago, but they weren't interested. The CIA is rumored to be concerned about the possibility of a U.S.-Soviet "dolphin-gap," and the Soviets have supposedly been training dolphins for 20 years.

This leads us, naturally enough, to a pamphlet by Wendell Berry, titled *Property, Patriotism and National Defense*, which has fourteen pages of content, printed by Guardian Press, Button Falls Road, West Edmeston, New York 13485. Quite possibly, this Press has copies for sale. We hope so, if anyone wants one. Berry, as usual, writes with wide appeal. One has to think a little, but if one does his conclusion is unavoidable. He begins:

> The present situation with regard to "National defense," as I believe that we citizens are now bidden to understand it, is that we, our country, and our governing principles of religion and politics are so threatened by a foreign enemy that we must prepare for a sacrifice that makes child's play of the "supreme sacrifices" of previous conflicts. We are asked, that is, not simply to "die in defense of our country," but to accept and condone the deaths of virtually the whole population of our country, of our political and religious principles, and of our land itself, as a reasonable cost of national defense.
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> That a nation should purchase at an exorbitant price, and rely upon, a form of defense inescapably fatal to itself is of course, absurd. That good citizenship should then be defined as willing acceptance of such a form of defense can only be ruinous of the political health of that nation. To ask intelligent citizens to believe an argument that in its essentials is not arguable, and to approve results that are not imaginably good, and in the strict sense are not imaginable at all, is to drive wedges of disbelief and dislike between those citizens and their government. And so the effect of such a form of defense is ruinous, whether or not it is ever used.
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> The absurdity of the argument lies in a little-noted law of the nature of technology: that, past a certain power and scale, we may choose the means, but not the ends. We may choose nuclear weaponry as a form of defense, but that is the last of our "free choices" with regard to nuclear weaponry. By that choice we largely abandon ourselves to terms and results dictated by the nature of nuclear weapons. To take up weapons has, of course, always been a limiting choice, but never before has the choice been made by so few with such fatal implications for so many and so much. Once we have chosen to rely on such weapons, the only free choice we have left is to change our minds; to choose not to rely on them. "Good" or "humane" choices short of that choice involve a logic that is merely pitiful.

How must we feel to adopt the nuclear technology of war? We must really hate our enemies—every last one of them, down to unborn babes. We must be eager to destroy not only all the people, but the very land which supports them.

Our hate must be so perfect that we are willing to destroy ourselves by taking part in nuclear war. There is no way to reduce the toll of universal slaughter and destruction. Our tools inevitably made it maximum.

One wouldn't call Berry a pacifist. He is not a joiner or an organization man. As he says:

> Since I am outlining here the ground of my own dissent, I should say that I am not by principle a passive man, or by nature a pacific one. I understand hatred and enmity very well from my own experience. Defense, moreover, is congenial to me, and I am willing and sometimes joyfully, a defender of some things—among them, the principles and practices of democracy and Christianity that nuclear weapons are said to defend. I do not want to live under a government like that of Soviet Russia and I would go to considerable trouble to avoid doing so.
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> I am not dissenting from the standing policy on national defense because I want the nation—that is, the country, its lives and its principles—to be undefended. I am dissenting because I no longer believe that the standing policy on national defense can defend the nation. And I am dissenting because the means employed, the threatened results, and the economic and moral costs have all become so extreme as to be unimaginable.
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> It is, to begin with, impossible for me to imagine that our "nuclear preparedness" is well understood or sincerely meant by its advocates in the government, much less by the nation at large. What we are proposing to ourselves and to the world is that we are prepared to die, to the last child, to the last green leaf, in defense of our dearest principles of liberty, charity and justice. It would normally be expected, I think, that people led to the brink of total annihilation by so high and sober a purpose would be living lives of great austerity, sacrifice and selfless discipline. That we are not doing so is a fact notorious even among ourselves. Our leaders are not doing so, nor are they calling upon us or preparing us to do so. As a people, we are selfish, greedy, dependent, negligent of our duties to our land and to each other.

Well, there is a lot more to this pamphlet, filled with indisputable moral logic. Berry also has a remedy of a sort—remove the profit from military industry, to begin with. We hope that this pamphlet gets a good circulation.