

## THE ISSUE IS DISARMAMENT

THE great issue before the peoples of today is disarmament—for today, tomorrow, next year, the next ten years, or until they disarm. A noticeable change in the intellectual and moral atmosphere has made this unmistakable during the past couple of months. Some of the thoughtful—perhaps the best—men of our time can't talk or write about anything else.

In the eighteenth century, the best men couldn't write or talk about anything but freedom, and they kept on writing and talking until they got help from other men and went into action for freedom. The result was that the world was set free—that is, principles of freedom became the foundation of the social order. The principles may work imperfectly, but we have them in our constitutions, and new nations, as their peoples become free, put the same principles in their constitutions. If you read a book like Allen Hansen's *Liberalism and American Education in the Eighteenth Century*, which is an extraordinary distillation of the practical ideals of the leaders of two centuries ago, and then look back on the course of history which followed these expressions, you admit the force of Thomas Paine's declaration that an army of principles is unconquerable. Paine was right.

There are probably a number of scholarly studies of how the liberal and revolutionary ideas of the eighteenth century spread throughout the Western world. We mention Hansen because his work is familiar. Suffice it that the basic process of this sort of change was quite familiar to historians of a century ago, enabling Buckle to generalize:

Owing to circumstances still unknown, there appear, from time to time, great thinkers who, devoting their lives to a single purpose, are able to anticipate the progress of mankind, and to produce a religion or a philosophy by which important effects

are eventually brought about. But if we look into history, we shall clearly see that, although the origin of an opinion may be thus due to a single man, the result which the new opinion produces will depend on the condition of the people among whom it is propagated. If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation, it can do no present service, but must bide its time, until the minds of men are ripe for its inception.

The pioneer philosophers of disarmament were Leo Tolstoy and M. K. Gandhi. Gandhi was more fortunate than Tolstoy in finding people whose condition made them "ripe" for the new opinion of disarmament (or, more properly, the doctrine of nonviolence). Buckle implies that the readiness for new ideas depends upon a people's "advancement," but with disarmament the proposition has worked in reverse, since it was the underprivileged Indians of South Africa who first rallied to Gandhi's program, and after that, the (industrially) undeveloped people of his native India. It is probably not unfair to say that the Indians were willing to be disarmed with Gandhi partly because they could not arm, and that they thus made a virtue out of what in those days was universally regarded as a weakness.

Meanwhile, the reverse logic of the proposition continues to be verified by current events. Britain, which has little hope of competing in the armaments race of the more powerful nations, is rapidly showing itself "ripe" for the disarmament idea. In the *Nation* for Jan. 7, Stephen Hugh-Jones, a staff writer of the *Manchester Guardian*, begins an article on the British Peace Drive with a bit of autobiography:

On Good Friday, 1958, more out of curiosity than conviction, I joined the 4,000 people leaving London on the first march organized by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) to the British Atomic Weapons Research at Aldermaston. After fifteen miles and a morning of sneers and

smears of the British press, there were 600—and I was a member of the CND.

A year later, 4,000 marchers left Aldermaston and the final rally in London was 15,000 strong. By now the editorial writers' ridicule had changed to a pitying respect: our motives, of course, were fine, and our proposals, of course, ill thought out and impractical. Last April, 40,000 marchers joined a crowd as large in Trafalgar Square to make the greatest political demonstration in Britain since the war; and in October their policy became (in theory) that of Britain's second largest party. Respect turned to real fear.

Mr. Hugh-Jones says that the leaders of the first march to Aldermaston "did not understand the nature of the forces they had unleashed." They planned on fewer public demonstrations and attempting "the slow persuasion of those who make opinion," but for reasons Hugh-Jones does not make clear this conception of the campaign was never worked out. Instead, "the CND has been carried forward by a program of marches, demonstrations and innumerable public meetings," and by activity in the universities, bringing "astonishing student support." This writer believes that the growth of CND has a quite simple explanation:

Those of my age and younger had spent our entire lives in the shadow of actual or impending war. I happened to believe there are sound practical reasons for Britain to quit the arms race, but what basically stirred me was a feeling of profound solidarity with those who were actually trying to do something about it. The CND has always played, with tremendous success, on young people's horror of war and the sheer immorality of nuclear weapons. Far more supporters have joined it for this than any other reason.

Mr. Hugh-Jones makes plain the difference between the "ripeness" of the British and the Americans for acceptance of nuclear disarmament. The British are increasingly able to see that participation in a nuclear war would for them be simple suicide, and the London *Times* two years ago pointed out that "a threat of suicide is not a defense policy." Speaking to the American readers of the *Nation*, Hugh-Jones says:

The British deterrent *was* only a threat of suicide. Yours is in addition an undeniably effective threat of murder. Would any but pacifists support unilateral disarmament by the United States? Even the moral-minded CND does not advocate it.

Yet the idea of unilateral disarmament has a haunting if unmentioned presence in nearly every serious discussion by Americans of the prospects for peace. What must never be forgotten is that the fundamental motive which is changing peoples' minds on this question arises from the simple "horror of war" and the "sheer immorality of nuclear weapons." These feelings can perhaps be allayed for a time, but in the long run they can do nothing but grow. An emotional rejection of war is no doubt not the same as the clear-cut declaration for unilateral nuclear disarmament, and yet, were it to reach decisive proportions in the shaping of public opinion, its effects might be similar. Already American writers who try to be responsible in the weighing of alternatives in American policy are worried about the possibility of a swing from unreasoning support of a total war policy—so long as we are *right*—to an unreasoning revulsion against even a limited or "preventive" war policy. In a review of Robert W. Tucker's recent book, *The Just War*, William Lee Miller (*New Republic*, Jan. 9) summarizes a basic moral dilemma for Americans and notes a side-effect:

If we [the United States] make the justification for our use of force turn only on the conditions under which the conflict was initiated (who was the aggressor and who the defender?), then we have no restraints to exercise upon the use even of nuclear force once it is undertaken. If we can persuade ourselves that we are acting defensively against an aggressor, we are persuaded that anything goes.

. . . Mr. Tucker . . . clearly wants his readers to see the dubiety of this American doctrine. He asks, pointedly, "what is the justification for threatening to employ methods that have no discernible limits?" He questions the policy that seems to say that the literal annihilation of an aggressor may readily be justified as a defensive measure. He insists that nuclear weapons have changed the moral situation, and he speaks for the limits on the employment of force to be

observed—especially now—even in a "defensive" war.

One of the impressive threads in Mr. Tucker's argument is a careful discussion of our condemnation of "preventive" war and "pre-emptive" war. He shows that, just as we have overdone our moral approbation of defensive action, so we have overdone our moral condemnation of so-called preventive action, and that both errors spring from the same root. The point is to subordinate the use of force to genuine political and moral limitations, rather than to hold to an all-or-nothing position.

This is a nice point—the kind of point that would have a great deal of meaning in relationships where individuals have some power to choose for themselves—but when you consider the gross persuasions of propaganda that go into action when war becomes imminent, and the technological absolutes that are soon involved, it is a point that will hardly be remembered at the right time. More likely to have lasting effect is the general burden of Mr. Tucker's book, which, according to Mr. Miller, may be taken to be—

. . . an underlining of a most pertinent item (in the traditional theory of the just war), the question of the justice of the *means* employed even in an otherwise justified "defensive" war. To Vandenberg Air Force Base and all those missiles, bombers, and exploding bombs that we so far have justified to ourselves too easily, Mr. Tucker puts this query: What moral ideas permit, in the effort to insure a nation's survival, the destruction of a vast portion of humanity?

The question, thus nakedly stated, can have but one *popular* answer—away with war and all its works! The people who conscientiously ask such questions will not be able to control the answers given. And the situation may get away from them sooner than we expect. While the official and semi-official papers of the United States keep on saying, as Prof. William L. Langer did recently, in a report on National Goals, that "It is unthinkable that anything approaching complete disarmament can be achieved in the foreseeable future," such grim pronouncements turn out to be exactly what is needed to make any number of

people begin insistent arguments against the idea that disarmament is "unthinkable."

One of the ironies of this age of almost absolute military power is that effective debate concerning the restraint or elimination of war is going on almost entirely among civilians, including the atomic scientists, those who placed at the disposal of the military the modern methods of destruction which "have no discernible limits." These civilian scientists are by no means complacent about what they have done. They are civilized men with active consciences and a far more than ordinary awareness of the devastation and death which could so easily result from use of the weapons they have turned loose in the world. They are not personally averse to talking the problem of war over with men who are militantly opposed to such weapons and who advocate total disarmament for the United States. For example, two days before Roy Kepler, with three other pacifists, "invaded" the Livermore (California) Radiation Laboratory in a civil disobedience protest against the work being done there (this was Dr. Teller's laboratory), he spent two hours in conversation with Dr. Brown, director of the laboratory and protégé of Dr. Teller, discussing with the physicist the meaning of the intended protest. Then, when the San Francisco-to-Moscow Peace Walk came through Southern California around Christmas-time last year, the leader of the walk, Bradford Lyttle, was able to interview Herman Kahn, physicist consultant to the Atomic Energy Commission and top-level military strategist. While by no means "agreeing" with any important aspect of Lyttle's contentions, Kahn is quoted in a *Peace News* (Jan. 27) report of the interview as saying:

"I am convinced that more study on all phases of the use of force, including that of non-violent resistance, which is a special type of force, is absolutely essential. We are going to try and solve this problem, not by muddling through, but by an intellectual process.

"This means to me that you really must have a movement working on this thing, and understanding

it, but this also means to me that (you) have to be hard or realistic, to look the world in the face. I have been shocked by how much even professional war planners have refused to try to face their problems because they are unpleasant.

"I would say that the use of force exists. The world is like that, it is going to remain like that. The problem is to rationalize its use, make it as moral as possible, as controllable as possible."

Mr. Kahn is in the awkward position of being a rational proponent of what is increasingly regarded as an irrational means of national defense. On his side in the debate is the heavy weight of tradition in favor of the use of military force, the moral emotions which attach to the idea of righteous prosecution of a just war, and the common fear of so "radical" a proposal as unilateral disarmament. While the fear of the consequences of disarmament is not likely to diminish of itself, it might be displaced by an overwhelming repugnance for the evil of nuclear war. Unlike rational proceedings, by which men change their minds little by little, adding and subtracting, admitting new facts and allowing the force of compelling arguments, emotional changes take place by polarization. The emotions *are* the all-or-nothing side of human nature. And the issues of war and peace are profoundly rooted in the emotions. When the major factors in those issues can no longer be reasonably expected to submit to rational control, the emotions will assert themselves and begin to make sweeping decisions.

The intellectual honesty of men like Mr. Kahn—of war-supporting scientists in general—may prove the ultimate downfall of their position. They will not make propaganda or, when cornered, misrepresent the facts. Mr. Kahn is eager to see the United States launch a massive shelter program in order to protect its people from the worst effects of nuclear attack. The reasoning is this: An enemy, in order to be "deterred" by the American retaliation potential, must believe that this country is willing to *risk* a nuclear war. Failure to establish shelters against the effects of nuclear weapons will be taken by others as

evidence that Americans have given up hope of surviving a nuclear war. If they are without hope, their threats need not be taken seriously, and the deterrent will not deter.

With logistic calm, Mr. Kahn might argue further, as an admiring reviewer of *On Thermonuclear War*, Kahn's recent book, did argue, that "an effective shelter program could greatly reduce the damage, so that we could wake up in the morning with only 40,000,000 to bury instead of 80,000,000.

One must admit that the demand for a shelter program is a kind of propaganda, after all. Its role is to keep the idea of nuclear war on a rational basis. Cutting your casualties in half is a rational notion. But what most people who hear this argument will remember is the 40,000,000 people who will still have to be buried, with or without shelters.

Or, you could say that the shelter program is primarily intended as a demonstration to the Russians that we do intend, if necessary, to *fight*. For Mr. Kahn, however, this may be a minor point. Another reviewer (in the *Nation*, Jan. 14), George Kirstein, says of *On Thermonuclear War*:

The author is prepared to stake his reputation on the proposition that a thermonuclear war will destroy neither of the warring nations. Under the worst circumstances, he envisages 160 million American dead and calculates that the economy would require a mere 100 years to recover its current productivity as measured by Gross National Product. A war that killed 20 million Americans would cause only a ten-year interruption to our progress and with 40 million deaths we should need twenty years to regain our present economic levels.

Arguing from these hopeful assumptions, Mr. Kahn urges in the strongest terms at least a minimal shelter program. He believes that \$500 million spread over a few years would greatly decrease the destructive effects of a thermonuclear war.

If the mood of rationality is to be preserved for the various branches of preparations for thermonuclear struggle, it will probably be well to see that as few as possible of Mr. Kahn's books

are circulated among American readers. While he may take comfort in the idea of halving casualties of 80 or more million, for many of the rest of us the shelter program will seem about as attractive as a fifty per cent improvement in the odds for survival in a game of Russian roulette.

The recent address of Sir C. P. Snow before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, while hardly a "pacifist" document, has in it statements which cannot fail to add to the strength of the emotional rejection of any sort of war. The special responsibility of the scientist, Sir Charles said, is to communicate his knowledge in behalf of clarity in public decision. To illustrate, he makes the following communication:

All physical scientists know that it is relatively easy to make plutonium. We know this, not as a journalistic fact at secondhand, but as a fact in our own experience. We can work out the number of scientific and engineering personnel it needs for a nation-state to equip itself with fission and fusion bombs. We know that for a dozen or more states, it will only take perhaps six years, perhaps fewer. Even the best-informed of us always exaggerate these periods.

This we know, with the certainty of—what shall I call it?—engineering truth. We also know most of us are familiar with statistics and the nature of odds. We know, with the certainty of statistical truth, that if enough of these patterns are made—by enough different states—some of them are going to blow up. Through accident, or folly, or madness—but the motives don't matter.

All this we know. . . . we genuinely know the risks. We are faced with an "either-or," and we haven't much time. Either we accept a restriction of nuclear armaments. This is going to begin, just as a token, with an agreement on the stopping of nuclear tests. The United States is not going to get the 99.9 per cent "security" that it has been asking for. It is unobtainable, though there are other bargains that the United States could probably secure. . . .

That is the "either." The "or" is not a risk but a certainty. It is this. There is no agreement on tests. The nuclear arms race between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. not only continues but accelerates. Other countries join in. Within, at most six years, China and several other states will have a stock of nuclear

bombs. Within, at the most, ten years, some of these bombs are going to go off.

I am saying this as responsibly as I can. That is the certainty. On the one side, therefore, we have a definite risk. On the other side we have a certainty of disaster. Between a risk and a certainty, a sane man does not hesitate.

It is the plain duty of scientists to explain this "either-or." It is a duty which seems to me to come from the moral nature of the scientific activity itself. (*Progressives* February, 1961.)

Sir Charles asks for little enough at the beginning—"token" cessation of tests. Yet his argument is loaded for much more, and may, in time, get much more. Perhaps, if the actual managers of national policy were to respond in some measurable way to such appeals, the man in the street could feel able to agree with Mr. Kahn that we are going to solve the problem "by an intellectual process." But when we find that the realistic objective of American policy is not arms reduction at all, but a "stable military environment," in the form of what is called "arms control," the hope for rationality goes out the window. As Seymour Melman (editor, *Inspection for Disarmament*, Columbia University Press, 1958) says in the *Nation* for Feb. 11:

Proponents of the arms race are willing to risk the destruction of civilized society in the name of defending it. The development of the arms control doctrine may be regarded as the partial response of conservative theorists to the growing strength of the disarmament idea. The weaknesses and dangers of the doctrine are the weaknesses of the arms race—and of conservative thinking in the West.

This much is clear: arms control is a theory of armament, not of disarmament.

There is risk and uncertainty attached to every political policy. For each person in a free society, the choice of where to take one's chances is determined by one's values. . . . if one's values place human life at low worth and include a preference for man's destructive potential and for authoritarian relations in political life, then some variant of conservative military theory, such as arms control, is preferable.

The pity is that so many of us make our choices without awareness of the ends, or values, that are being served.

None of the people quoted thus far in this brief survey can be called "pacifists." None of them advocate unilateral disarmament. Yet all of them, in one way or another, add to the case for unilateral disarmament by reason of the fact that the national governments of our time seem impervious to the rational appeal in the arguments presented. Slowly but surely these arguments are becoming all-or-nothing arguments, simply because they are ignored. Daily the rationalists unintentionally add to the luster of the vision of Tolstoy and Gandhi. Eventually, one suspects, they will convert even themselves.

**REVIEW**  
**CHAMALES' SECOND—AND LAST—**  
**NOVEL**

WE still consider Tom Chamales' *Never So Few* a remarkable book—not in terms of literary construction, but in its amazing range of sensitivity concerning both issues of war and issues of philosophy. Mr. Chamales entered World War II as a very young man, fought in Burma behind the Japanese lines for almost two years, and ended by commanding a battalion. The pace of his life was furious, the pace of his thinking no less so, and from the Burmese he began to discover something of the psychological meaning in oriental mysticism.

Chamales died suddenly in 1960 when fire struck a home in Hollywood. From occasional reports of his activities in recent years, it seemed that another man of promise had been unable to come to terms with what seemed the comparatively petty issues of civilian life. However, he did work, and apparently worked hard, on a second novel, *Go Naked in the World*, recently issued by Signet. The title is significant, for Chamales had once been "pared down" to what were for him essentials of human experience—courage and philosophy—and he became incapable of wearing any second-hand clothing. A paragraph in *Go Naked in the World* serves as an appropriate requiem for its author:

Now, even though it was over, the momentum of the war was omnipresent, it seemed there was never, not since the beginning, any slowing down to the whole process of it. It was ingrained in them, like the names stencilled on the dufflebags. And you didn't get the machine of this entire world up to such a pace, then abruptly brake it down. It wouldn't brake. It started out abruptly this way, Nick thought, and this way it would end. They pulled out of wherever you were abruptly, and they kept it up abruptly, and then when you had gotten used to the abruptness, so much that it had become a part of you, become second nature to you really, then they just as abruptly threw you back.

*Go Naked* is neither a great book nor a particularly good one, but for readers who cannot forget their admiration for the author of *Never So Few*, there are passages which echo the lucidity of Chamales' first book. There are passages which skirt the realm of philosophy and religion and passages which show that although Chamales lived out several lives in his war years, he had too much integrity to wish that the world would make up another war for him. In the following paragraphs are the musings of a brilliant alcoholic:

Raul's father, who had been half drunk for the past seventeen years, looked around at them, thinking for a moment how very young they were to be so old. How very dispossessed and deprived they felt now when they were just beginning.

Each war, it seemed, took some of the youth, the innocence, the old-fashioned peacefulness out of America. It wasn't that wickedness was now more prevalent in the individual, Raul's father knew; the amount of that had not varied since the beginning of man. It was in the national ideal. The group approach. . . .

They were all so much older for their years than was his generation. Christ, they were even older statistically. And I am an expert on statistics, am I not? Can't I tell you how many bars of Lifebuoy Soap were sold in Indiana in 1943? I sure as hell can. And how many packages of Chesterfields were sold in Detroit in 1942. Well then, figure out on a purely statistical basis how much of the youth had gone out of America!

Roughly ten million men in the service. Averaging say about two and a half years. Anywhere from, say, seventeen to thirty years old, with the vast majority being around nineteen or twenty. Say an average of twenty-two years old. And figure (Oh you're good at figures tonight), figure three months after to get acclimated. That's six months added to the actual two and a half years in service, which makes a grand total of three years. So you have 10,000,000 x 3. Of course you must concede that twenty-two years, the average age, is youth; and therefore the common denominator in this case. 10,000,000 x 3 = 30,000,000. That's thirty million years of youth. Of innocence, in a sense. Of peacefulness, in a sense. Thirty million years of youth wiped out in this country alone in one stinking war.

As we read him, Chamales is concerned with a basic psychological question, though he hardly claims to know the answer. Is it possible to turn passion into compassion? Is this a way of stating the transcendent goal which all men, even if unconsciously, or only intermittently, seek? Since Chamales has no interest in theology, he looks for clues in the evidence that some men, unaccountably, have become "self-governed sages." These are men like other men, save that at some mysterious point they have "crossed to the other shore," to borrow a Buddhist phrase. Not only do they have compassion for men, but they see sky and water, earth, trees and animals, with an eye which identifies rather than separates. In *Go Naked*, a young Greek-American home from the war—probably Chamales himself—introduces a character possessed of wise simplicity:

Nick was thinking what Pierro had said about a civilized man being one who could control his emotions. That Pierro had learned to control his, there was no doubt. Nick had known Pierro ever since he could first recollect, and up until the time that Pierro was in high school he was as emotional as any Stratton. More so in fact, in lots of ways. For a second Nick wondered if that was the secret (controlling your emotions) of getting what you wanted. And if it was, was it worth it? was it worth the feeling you had to give up? the living you had to give up? Maybe, though, Pierro hadn't really learned to control his emotions. Maybe he had just learned to direct them. Sure, that was what he did. And what was difficult about directing your emotions if you had a ready-made place in which to direct them? But what are you going to do with your emotions if you don't know where to direct them? What are you going to do with the sensitivity if you can't direct that? Kill it. Just kill it off and go around acting *civilized*. . . .

And then suddenly Nick was thinking of Greece again. Not the Greece of this war but when he was there as a small boy and had become friends with another boy who was considerably older than himself, a distant cousin actually, and how they had wandered in the hills together watching the sheep flock in the spring in the sun and begged bread from the monks in a monastery that was high on a hill, and walked barefoot down into the valley where there was a stream that came cold out of the hills and they swam

there. The boy, Nick remembered, was named Dimitri, and he spoke long and reverently of Nick's cousin Old Gus and of the wise things Gus had spoken and of the peaceful way he was—so peaceful, Dimitri had said in Greek, that when you were with him you felt all the peace and calm of him yourself. Just as you felt it rarely when you sat alone on the hillside at night and looked at the stars and the moon was so bright that you could see the outline of the other rocky barren hills and the reflection of the moon on the rocks. As peaceful as that. And as peaceful Dimitri said, as you felt when the sun was warm again on your face after the damp and chill of winter and you went away alone with the goat flock and there was no one to bother you.

Like his friend James Jones, Chamales will be considered both an odd man and an odd writer. But both have some elements of greatness. They have reached forward with both passion and compassion. And if, as they both believed, all men live again and again on earth to continue the struggle for self-knowledge, both have already made some long strides upon a journey which men of timid and tepid lives have yet to begin.



## COMMENTARY

### THE NUCLEAR PACIFISTS

ROBERT W. TUCKER, author of the recent book, *The Just War*, has an article in the *New Republic* for Feb. 6 which provides interesting if somewhat oblique confirmation of the main point of our lead article for this week. Mr. Tucker's discussion, titled "Nuclear Pacifism," starts out as a review of the pamphlet, *Community of Fear*, by Harrison Brown and James Real, then launches into a careful examination of the position of those whom he calls "nuclear pacifists." The nuclear pacifist, Mr. Tucker suggests, takes his stand on quantitative instead of qualitative grounds. He has become a pacifist because nuclear war goes beyond the point of human toleration. His argument has moral overtones, but he makes the argument with facts. Since he does not want to be mistaken for an absolute pacifist, he tends to leave the question of what ought to be done somewhat open. Mostly, he gives reasons for insisting that *something* must be done.

This doesn't seem especially objectionable. When it comes to what a nation of 180 million people ought to do, a lot depends upon what all these people are willing to do. A moralist may feel able to say what they ought to do without considering the question of practical possibilities. But another sort of man, fully as responsible a human as the moralist, may believe that more good is accomplished by setting out the issues as clearly as he can. No doubt we need both sorts.

Mr. Tucker has some perceptive comments on *Community of Fear*:

Reinhold Niebuhr has written in a foreword to the pamphlet that the implication "is confined to the simple conviction that we are involved in a race which neither we nor the Russians can win," a race which must eventually lead to disaster "even if neither side consciously desires the ultimate war.

I am not so certain this is the only implication that may reasonably be drawn. Whatever the authors' intent, the kind of future held out as increasingly probable, unless history suddenly takes an altogether

unexpected leap, will be understood by many as providing support for renouncing a deterrent strategy and undertaking to disarm unilaterally. There is admittedly no compelling logical reason why the pamphlet must have this effect. But there is a very compelling psychological reason. The possibility of resolving the nuclear dilemma through the continued pursuit of present strategies is all but discounted. The prospects held out by current schemes of arms control and disarmament, even if domestic opposition to these schemes can be overcome are similarly discounted. What then is left? Surely the implication is not seriously intended that all we can do is patiently to wait and pray for the day when the war system will finally be ended by the common consent of all the world's powers!

Obviously, Dr. Brown as a scientist, and Mr. Real as a publicist, have taken to heart the charge of Sir C. P. Snow to communicate what they know in behalf of clarity in public decision. If the people at large, becoming acquainted with such facts, can be persuaded that the national government and its policy-makers are facing up to them, then there is small chance that the public will be swept into an emotional "defeatism." But if this sense of horror spreads, then the arguments of the relative pacifists—the nuclear pacifists—will be hardly distinguishable from the arguments of the absolute pacifists. We are obliged to admit, editorially, that we do not regret this possibility.

Another phase of Mr. Tucker's article is psychologically informing. He quotes two writers who are unequivocally against nuclear war, regardless of the provocation, and then, a little plaintively, he observes that "the measure of one's moral sensitivity and humanitarian sentiment is not determined simply by the degree to which one publicly anguishes over the horrible prospects of nuclear war." This is a way of saying that not *all* the good men are nuclear pacifists, these days! He continues: "Is it not time to acknowledge . . . that equally sincere and sensitive men may disagree with the above judgments?"

No one could quarrel with this appeal, but one may at the same time point out that it is made

in a morally defensive mood. It is no longer the pacifists who are defensive, but their opponents!

But Mr. Tucker is hardly an "opponent." He is an extremely clear thinker who recognizes and in this article develops the implications of the issues before serious Americans. His concluding paragraph, while still critical, is candid in its admissions:

. . . nuclear pacifism . . . is an irrelevant political strategy because it is really not a political strategy at all. Given the circumstances in which it must be applied, nuclear pacifism represents the renunciation of politics. In its willingness to give up the only likely means of effectively "persuading" the adversary, it abandons politics. Nuclear pacifism begins by disavowing the political irresponsibility of absolute pacifism, it ends either by sacrificing its position or by embracing the irresponsibility initially rejected. The nuclear pacifist may reply that the new military technology has forced this ironic result and that when the price of politics clearly becomes morally prohibitive there is no alternative. Again, the day when this response appears persuasive has not yet come. Still, it requires some optimism to believe that this day may not [?] be far off.

The question is—how will we know when that day has come? How shall we agree upon the fact of its coming? Does the day come by reason of there being agreement that it is here? Is there some calculus of "risk" which will boil out of a massive computer to tell us that the time has come to throw down our nuclear arms?

It should be obvious that while the general feeling of desperation which Mr. Tucker and others fear is on the way has not yet arrived, there is no direct statistical relation between the complex factors that make for war and the public temper. The public temper may fall behind in its appreciation of those factors, or it may anticipate them. *No one knows, really*, what these relationships amount to. People guess, that's all. And they guess according to temperament and personal inclination. There is nothing scientific about this. We may have waited too long, already, to prevent a nuclear war; or we may have five or ten years of grace left. A psychological

uncertainty principle is involved in this equation: the more people look squarely at the possibilities of nuclear war, and the more they consider the possible effects of such a contest, the more they may feel that the "authorities" who presume to be able to tell us when the objections to nuclear war do in fact become "absolute" may be the people least qualified to offer such judgments.

Perhaps this general development does mean the end of politics, as we have known it. Perhaps the human race must learn to practice another kind of politics, if it is to survive. If this should be the case, the nuclear pacifists do all peoples a great service in setting out the compulsions to this realization, and a considerable debt is owed to men like Mr. Tucker, who spell out the practical meaning of this new view of human affairs.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### CORRESPONDENCE AND NOTES

THE following communication—actually a short article—again calls attention to the need for educating both teachers and parents in the application of philosophy in daily affairs:

Those who consider themselves liberals are usually willing to give any man a hearing. When the conversation concludes, the liberal, remembering his philosophical position, is apt to mutter something like this: "There's some truth in what you say." Furthermore, since he found an element of wisdom in the speaker's words, he is tempted to look upon the speaker with admiration. But this, it seems to me, is a serious intellectual error.

It is not enough for one speaking seriously to offer some truth in what he says—the ad men do that much. For if he offers merely some truth, it follows he also offers some error.

"Ah!" you exclaim, "who holds all truth?" True, but my point is simply this: the basic premise must first be true. This granted, we can then perhaps accommodate the variations in the extension.

This writer attended a PTA meeting wherein this remark brought forth a resounding applause: "Our whole educational system, geared as it is to a retention of our culture, demands teachers who are alert to our historical heritage. Obviously, if our teachers are unaware of our heritage they cannot pass on to our young that sense of achievement and glory without which the American way of life cannot endure."

Something like this can be heard in any PTA meeting, and elsewhere. Is the speaker wholly wrong? Of course not—teachers should understand history. But is it true, precisely true, that our whole educational system is geared to a retention of our culture? If this were so, would it not lead to a national stasis? Do we really wish to continue doing that which we have forever done? If so, does this not imply perfection? If not so, is the basic premise of the speaker true? Again, one might hear a speaker commence like this: "First, let me say to you tonight: we don't want anything Russian over here! This nation has carved a place of respect for itself among the nations of the earth by means wholly foreign to the Soviet Union and I don't think we need anything

they have. Our skill, imagination, industry, and above all, our personal freedom, guarantee us the life we prefer," etc., etc.

How smug can we become? While the rafters ring again, let's examine: Is it literally true that we don't want anything Russian over here? What about the great Russian music? What about the ballet? What about Dostoyevsky? What, indeed, about the many Russian people now residing in this country?

We have spoken here not of the familiar "half truth" but of what is most accurately described as the fundamental fallacy. It is still true about a house built on sand. One can pass the hours in furious amusement by learning to spot, in both public and private oratory, this fundamental fallacy.

If we listen to the occasional psychiatrist who essays comment on international relations—and it is increasingly worth while to do so—there is corroboration in plenty for the foregoing analysis of the dangers resident in "half truths." More important, the psychiatrist is usually aware that the attitudes which underlie self-righteousness are wholly unjustified. Then, because there is an element of man's nature which is intuitively aware of this falsity and is dissatisfied with it, the tendency is to increase the tempo of the bombast, attempting to drown out the "still small voice" which nags from its lonely corner.

The following paragraphs by Sir Richard Livingstone suggest the relevance of Platonic philosophy at a time of social and family disorganization. They are taken from an article in the *Educational Forum* for November, 1958, titled "Plato and the Training of Character." We are grateful to the researcher who turned up this material, for it may provide a basis for further discussion or debate:

Is it not evident that the great obstacles to progress in ourselves, in our countries and in international relations, come from human conduct, from moral weaknesses and defects in everyday behavior, from cowardice and egoism and pride, from lack of honesty and of candor, of sympathy and of resolution? . . .

How does Plato think that character can be trained? . . . In his scheme of early upbringing both in the *Republic* and later in the *laws* where he deals

with the education not of a ruling class but of the youth of the nation as a whole, it is on the atmosphere that he lays stress. The books a child reads are designed to imbue him with the right attitude to life; the music which is chosen for him to learn has "rhythms appropriate to a life of courage and self-control," which will develop harmony and rhythm in his nature. The whole life of the young should be lived in a circumambient atmosphere of goodness, shaping the soul. . . .

Contrast this vision of the ideal surroundings for training character with the influences with which the young are surrounded in our society—"the representations of moral deformity" in which much of our radio and TV, our films, our press, our literature, abounds.

Plato continues: "Hence the decisive importance of education in poetry and music: rhythm and harmony sink deep into the recesses of the soul and take the strongest hold there, bringing that grace of body and mind which is only to be found in one who is brought up in the right way. Besides, a proper training of this kind makes a man quick to perceive any defect or ugliness in art or in nature. Such deformity will rightly disgust him. Approving all that is lovely, he will welcome it home with joy into his soul and, nourished by it, grow into a man of a noble spirit."

Mathematics and science are prominent in Plato's curriculum. He recognizes their practical value, but they are present in his higher education predominantly for another purpose—not to be used in the material world but to direct the mind to a world beyond and outside it.

It is surely a mark of the educated mind to remember that there is more in phenomena than their outward aspect. It is an antidote to the grosser forms of materialism, if we can see the material world with the eye of the mathematician, as a complex of ratios or formulae, or with the eye of the scientist, as a kingdom of law. If we cannot use our mind as well as our eyes, we are likely to have a very mistaken idea of what the universe is—or indeed of what we are ourselves. The ultimate realities are mind and spirit but we must look below the surface to see them. . . .

Where did Plato get his deep conviction that, in Sir Richard Livingstone's words, "the ultimate realities are mind and spirit"? Must we say to ourselves that Plato lived in a pre-scientific age

and was able, therefore, to believe such things, while we, alas, "know better"?

Medieval supernaturalism died hard, and only after centuries of lingering survival. Modern skeptics and rationalists were still stamping out its last remains in the 1920's. Possibly the birth of a post-scientific transcendentalism is especially difficult because of the heavy scientific bludgeons used against not only supernaturalism, but all idealistic philosophy as well. But Plato's thinking, let us note, has not died. In time, we may be able to recover the sources of Plato's inspiration.

## *FRONTIERS* Concerning "The Facts"

THE January issue of *Gadfly*, published by the Great Books Foundation, presents an extract from Jacques Barzun's *Teacher in America* (Little, Brown, 1945) which is tempting in a variety of ways. It deals, first of all, with the American mania for "facts," showing the impoverishment of minds which have no appetite for ideas, preferring facts as substitutes for thinking. As always, there is a pithy humor in Mr. Barzun's prose, and while he is a man whose patience is often tried, he has evidence of sore provocation. But this leads only to sharpened characterization, as in the following:

Always beware of a man who begins: "I'm only a lowbrow, of course, but I want to tell you that—." Nine times out of ten, what he will tell you is fact, or prejudice passing for fact, of which he is intensely proud and for which he claims your admiration. . . . There is no snob under heaven equal to this type, and its characteristics are by no means new. "Who does not know fellows," asks Holmes the Autocrat, "that always have an ill-conditioned fact or two which they lead after them into decent company like so many bulldogs . . .?"

Of this devotee of facts, Mr. Barzun says:

Now I contend that he and his kind are a drag on the nation's intelligence, that his view of things and men is part of a false ideal mistaken for practical wisdom, and that its corrupting influence in our culture argues a recurrent fault in our scheme of instruction, from the primary grades to the highest reaches of scholarship.

Not long ago, we heard somewhat shudderingly of an undeniably brilliant man—one to whom the nation's planners turn for the most sophisticated counsels on military strategy—who said during a discussion, "Don't ask me about *morals!* I'm not trained in that field." This, you could say, is the *reductio ad absurdum* of a situation which prevails, as Mr. Barzun says, at "the highest reaches of scholarship," and which he illustrates from his own experience:

A number of times I have attended informal discussion groups made up of university men; always

I have found manners apologetic, susceptibilities raw, and discussion scurrying to take refuge in the shelter of a specialty. In fact, such groups do not long hold together, for there is no common ground and too much common restraint. Discrepancies of age and rank add further obstacles, and one wonders whether there ever was literal meaning in the phrase "a *company* of scholars."

Another illustration is more pointed:

A reporter from a large news agency—an entire stranger—once rang me up for the favor of a brief consultation. He came, bringing with him a large roll of pictures to be syndicated throughout the country. They showed important events and figures in European history, for which he had written the captions. Were they correct? Of the fifteen or twenty sizeable blocks of print, perhaps three or four were right enough to pass. The others all contained one or more serious errors, not of incidental fact, but of major significance. I suggested changes, but as I half expected, my visitor argued. Was it so very wrong, he wondered, to represent Bismarck as always seeking war? The important thing, he felt, was to have the dates right. I pointed out the relative values of fact and truth and reminded him that he was the one who came to ask my opinion. Whereupon he shifted his ground and maintained that what he had written came from a good encyclopedia. Why was I questioning it? I could not tell him that he had misread and misinterpreted, and he went away, as disgruntled, no doubt, as I was discouraged.

In such an instance we come close to the root of the whole cultural problem, the inherent weakness of all modern literacy: it is half-baked and arrogant. It trifles solemnly with the externals of things, neglecting even the surfaces or the handles by which a truth may be seized: it goes like a child for the false glint or striking triviality of detail.

It is years since we read Mr. Barzun's book, but we recall that its affirmative qualities are fully as strong as the critical content such as the foregoing. Such books deserve a long life and one hopes that *Gadfly's* extract from *Teacher in America* will direct many readers to this volume. Here, we should like to use our remaining space to call attention to an article by Colin Clark in *Fortune* for last December.

This writer shows how an entire mythology of "scarcity" may be created by an over-emphasis on one set of facts to the neglect of others.

Mr. Clark, according to a *Fortune* note, as "an economist concerned with productivity rates, . . . holds that farm and factory production can keep pace with any prospective population increase." He is not at all upset by the "population explosion" which has caused so much alarm in other quarters, proposing, instead, that "the 'Malthusian' notion that resources must expand less rapidly than population is a reactionary idea, leading to statism and stagnation." The neo-Malthusians, Mr. Clark maintains, ignore the enormous increase in the productivity of the land under intensive cultivation. He writes:

Today the best agriculturalists in Europe—the Dutch—produce a very good and varied diet on the equivalent of two-thirds of an acre of land per person. If all the land suitable for agriculture throughout the world were cultivated in this manner, assuming at the same time that the whole world eats as well as the most prosperous countries do now, provision could be made for 28 billion people, or ten times the world's 1960 population. If we took Japanese instead of Dutch standards of cultivation and diet—after all, the Japanese are quite a healthy people—the world could provide for three or four times as many again. And even these standards are being constantly improved as the application of science to agriculture continues. The work now going on in agricultural laboratories shows that a man's food for the year could be grown in twenty-five square meters of land, if we really needed to do it.

At least one population expert has declared that the population explosion is a more serious development for the world than atomic fission. In the light of Mr. Clark's analysis of the facts, any such claim seems a really desperate exaggeration. Proposing that population limitation "is bad economics and bad politics," Mr. Clark goes on to suggest that "peoples who courageously and intelligently face the challenge of population increase, will be rewarded by economic, political, and cultural progress to an extent beyond any limits that we can now foresee." His article,

"Population and Freedom," is long and substantial, and should be read in full.