VOLUME XVIII, NO. 26
JUNE 30, 1965

THE CRISIS OF THE AGE

THERE are numerous valid reasons for refusing to submit to the psychology of crisis. In the first place, a crisis is a time of abnormal tension. What capacities men have for impartial judgment tend to be suspended during its excitement.

There is a marshalling of resources for a *specific* encounter, and other demands on our attention are pushed aside. Men begin to live on their nerves in a state of adrenalin-supported high jinks. If, however, the crisis is "real," and the stimulus to readiness for emergency action appropriate, then all these responses are natural and necessary. But if, on the other hand, the atmosphere of crisis has been artificially produced by propaganda and psychological manipulation, then the restoration to normal life by means of swift action cannot take place. And since the crisis was a fabricated one, the creation of an emotional state in people for ulterior purposes, it is likely to be followed by others which have a similar origin. In time, of course, a general nervous exhaustion will dull the effects of such manipulation, and then even dramatic evidence of authentic crisis may have little effect. Eventually, this becomes the normal response, you could say, to abnormal stimulation.

The foregoing, however, is only the simplest case of the problem of crisis, more or less covered by the story of the boy who cried, "Wolf, Wolf!" In the complex societies of the present, where even ordinary questions of the common good are subject to continual dispute, and where accurate knowledge of the workings of the social organization's many parts and layers is divided among large corps of experts, each with a different professional interest and corresponding value judgments, an *individual* basis for deciding what constitutes a genuine crisis becomes practically inaccessible, except in the case of the grossest happenings. In the United States, for example, we have developed institutional techniques for bringing out into the open what evidence there is of a crisis situation—in the making or already in full bloom. We have Congressional investigating committees to tell us about the poisons in our food and the outrageous prices charged for drugs. A certain "management," therefore, enters into the public encounter with the idea of crisis. Today, save for the actual outbreak of war, as in the attack on Pearl Harbor, or natural disasters such as hurricanes or floods, our experience of crisis is brought to us by mass communication systems, and there are times when we are at a loss to know whether the alarm we are invited to feel is only an instance of exploitation of the facilities of communication, or is indeed an important and legitimate response to some objective happening in the world. It was difficult to tell, for example, whether the Cuban missile crisis was a Machiavellian move by Khrushchev, intended to create a certain psychological atmosphere favorable to his political purposes, or a serious attempt to arm the Cubans with nuclear weapons.

In any event, it seems clear that, under these circumstances, the identification of crisis is a task performed for us by observers other than ourselves. The signs are read by various kinds of experts, and some of these experts are under instruction from enormous institutional bodies like the government, while others represent private interest groups of varying size and influence. Theoretically, the "people" make their own decisions after they are supplied with "objective" information by the press, but actually the information which reaches the people is filtered in countless ways by hundreds of mediating agencies, so that there is hardly any direct contact with what we commonly call "reality." Indeed, it

is even a serious question how "reality" ought to be spoken of, if at all.

One practical effect of this almost complete dependence on the information agencies which surround and pervade our lives is a radical diminution of the importance of facts, and an increase in the importance of moral intention. Since the meaning of facts is largely a matter of interested interpretation, the fact itself becomes a kind of neutral "stuff" in human communication, with the purpose of the communicator the controlling element in the content of his communication. In short, most of a man's encounters with experience, these days, are with the motives of other men, not with the world at large. We are compelled, you could say, to read our experience in this way, simply because of the complexity of the modern world and its elaborate social organization, with endless possibilities of both intentional and accidental equivocation in the reports we receive of what is going on.

We suffer, then, from a surfeit of facts and a fatigue of excitement through the reports of crisis after crisis, whether or not they are real, imagined, or fabricated by paternalistic managers or manipulating enemies.

Now this situation is in itself a kind of continuing emergency, but it is hardly one for which we can prepare or cope with in a familiar way. Stiffening our resolve and setting our reflexes doesn't help. Instead, in a somewhat defenseless mood, you look around for people whom you think you can *trust.* You find yourself responding far more to "sincerity" than to "facts." An honest man with a transparently genuine concern for the public good seems more real than the most impressively compiled surveys or reports from the frontiers of action where "history" is being made.

Of course, feelings of this sort are nothing new. The life of the social community has always been governed by the interplay of the forces of fact and value, as understood by its members; what is notable in the present is the extraordinary distance that separates the individual from the "facts," out there, the intervening curtains imposed by the mechanisms of a heavily institutionalized industrial society, and the difficulty of direct contact with knowledgeable individuals whom we feel we can trust. The quantitative blowing-up of this situation to its present proportions in a mass society makes these mechanisms appear as independent realities, increasingly lacking in the connection with human decision which once made us feel that we played a genuine part in the life and government of our community. This is not to suggest that there has been no awareness of these changes. The "fireside chats" of President Roosevelt were a direct attempt to restore authentic communications to political life in the United States. The breezy, conclusion-loaded style of *Time* is a journalistic effort to make its readers at least *feel* that they know "what is going on."

But the over-all judgment to be made is that the really critical relations of human beings, today, lie in the area of the methods they use in dealing with one another, and not in the supposed "facts" of life, however formidably defined.

Now the difficulty with this diagnosis—for which much more might be said—is that it is too subjective to be generally acceptable. It would be silly to suggest that we should turn away from our efforts to arrange in some order of importance the happenings in the world, merely for the reason that impartial knowledge of those happenings has become extremely difficult if not impossible. We are still constrained to act by the pressure of events. We still have to make up our minds about the "crises" we read about and are expected to respond to. And since we feel obliged to do this, we need to find some criterion for judging what we read and hear, in order to give our energies the best possible direction. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to look for help among those who describe what is going on in the world at least *partly* in terms of the psychological conditions under which modern man labors, and whose

thinking takes the resulting problems and complications into account.

This brings us to the most recent expression of Dr. Jerome D. Frank, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, a man whose warm concern for general human good cannot be questioned, and whose area of work seems to have fitted him to discuss the human situation in terms that relate directly to urgent present problems. In an address in New York in May, Dr. Frank spoke on the topic: "New Threats to Man: The Challenge to Ethics." In this talk Dr. Frank gives almost equal attention to the factual situation and the psychological situation, and for this reason it might be claimed that if he finds reason to speak of any kind of "crisis," what he says deserves close attention.

Dr. Frank starts out with a summary of recent far-reaching changes in the conditions of human life. We have at least potentially an unlimited source of energy available, he says, through atomic fission. Automation promises to reduce to a minimum the need for human work. Application of industrial techniques to agriculture has made food production no longer a problem, and we shall soon be able to distill all the fresh water we need from the sea. Modern communication brings the world to our living room and modern transport allows us to go anywhere on earth in a few hours. As a result of technological progress, we are now confronted by the need to accommodate our lives to an economy of abundance instead of one of scarcity. Meanwhile, nuclear armament has changed the meaning of nationalism. "When nations could protect their citizens," Dr. Frank observes, "nationalism was a virtue." Today it is a menace. "We must," says Dr. Frank, "become world-minded or perish." He next turns his attention to unforeseen results of all this progress:

> As these examples suggest, a major consequence of our progressive conquest of nature is that natural forces no longer present the main threats to human life and welfare. Instead these now come from man himself.
>
> Many dangers created by man are undesired consequences of our success in improving human welfare—they are, as it were, the unfortunate by-products of our good intentions. In many ways we are contaminating the biosphere—the living environment. The automobile, which has added so much efficiency and enjoyment of life, besides ranking seventh as a cause of death, is dangerously polluting the atmosphere of our cities. The varied and abundant foodstuffs under which our tables groan could not be produced without tons of pesticides herbicides and fungicides, which are defiling our soil and streams. Even the detergents that have so enormously lightened the housewife's tasks may become a menace to health, as anyone is reminded who has seen water coming foaming out of the faucet.
>
> These threats to health are closely interwoven with the whole structure of society, creating huge psychological obstacles to their alleviation. . . . For example, the city of Memphis is reluctant to admit that the pesticide plant, which contributes heavily to the city's economy, may have been mainly responsible for the recent huge Mississippi River fishkill. On a national scale the tobacco industry is waging a tenacious fight against the overwhelming evidence that cigarettes are detrimental to health. To overcome air pollution might require, as one expert has claimed, that all cars be powered by electricity rather than gasoline. Oil and motor companies are America's largest corporations. The dislocation of our economy resulting from such a conversion is almost inconceivable, and the forces opposing it are immensely strong.
>
> One cannot claim that the motives opposing such changes are unworthy, since they are concerned also with the maintenance of human welfare, notably preservation of the standards of living of large segments of the population. The basic problem is that psychologically immediate rewards and punishments outweigh distant ones. The prospect of a small loss in income today outweighs the prospect of a much greater gain in human welfare tomorrow.

Dr. Frank now looks at the extraordinary increase in the human capacity to destroy. As an index of this sort of "progress," he points out that the second world war was the first which killed more people directly than the accompanying toll taken by disease and wound infection. During this conflict, the weapons of war killed fifteen million

people. It took, however, all of six years. Dr. Frank comments:

> Now, at last, after about half a million years of persistent and ingenious effort to perfect instruments for destroying each other, we have triumphed beyond our wildest dreams. Nations are now able to loose a barrage of nuclear weapons that will kill not tens but hundreds of millions, and do it in minutes. Furthermore, there exist enough of these weapons to destroy all life on earth, if used skillfully. Our generation really has something to be proud of.

What prevents the nations from taking radical steps to change their methods of national defense, in the face of this development? Habit, says Dr. Frank. We meet most situations through the resources of habit. "We form these habits," he says, "during the plastic years of childhood and then operate on the implicit assumption that the world will remain sufficiently unchanged so that our habitual ways of behaving will continue to work." However—"If the world has changed so much that they no longer work, we become confused, and confusion is probably the strongest source of anxiety." This anxiety, Dr. Frank adds, makes us "try very hard to make new problems look like old ones and to cope with them in familiar ways"—which, he says, "can be very dangerous."

The transition from a stable to an unstable society has profoundly unsettling effects on individuals. Our feelings of personal significance, security, and continuity from the past into the future are largely based on adherence to the values and traditions of the groups to which we belong. The patterns of observance of long-established religions contribute here, and also the work we do. Trades and professions frame peoples' lives and give them a sense of identity. Family tradition plays a similar part.

Group loyalties and traditions are today losing their cohesive power from a wide variety of causes. Families are breaking up, professional demarcations shift rapidly, and means of livelihood are being subjected to revolutionary change as a result of cybernation. Population growth is altering the composition of society in terms of age groups and the continuing movement of people toward the great cities is having a disastrous crowding effect. Urban life diminishes the influence of the family and not only makes the individual feel isolated, but also undermines traditional and internal controls over his behavior. Meanwhile the demoralization of technological unemployment is increasing, heightening self-centered feelings and leading to substitute activities—TV watching, spectator sports, and do-it-yourself hobbies which involve no commitment to a group. There is also boredom and hunger for excitement, which often leads to anti-social behavior.

Under conditions of the weakening of group ties and the concomitant sense of isolation, the principal goal becomes satisfaction of personal desires, regardless of its effect on others. Nihilistic currents of thought bring social anarchy and individual unrest. The student drop-outs are in some measure due, Dr. Frank thinks, to such omnipresent influences. The students sometimes turn their feelings into group resistance, as in the recent student revolt at Berkeley, but the larger picture is one of multiplying crime and widespread feelings of deprivation. At the same time, the population is constantly bombarded by appeals to enjoy the countless material goods and pleasures marketed by industry, and this can only stir envy and resentment in people without money. Along with the din of the commercials and visual reminders of desirable merchandise is the continual pressure of ideological propaganda, with dramatic stress on the differences between ideological systems. This, says Dr. Frank, is an especially serious source of intergroup strife. He offers the following explanation:

> Each of us is born into a chaotic world. The stimuli impinging on our senses do not carry labels as to which are good and which bad, which are important and which unimportant. We learn to order our world through the value system or ideology of our

culture as transmitted to us by our parents. Ideologies, furthermore, give meaning to life by enabling their adherents to view their personal existence as in the service of something enduring and supremely important, such as God, freedom, Communism, or science. The existence of a rival ideology is threatening on two counts. It introduces confusion where we long for certainty by calling certain of our value judgments into question. More disturbingly, it threatens to deprive us of our sense of significance, so for some persons loss of their ideology represents a kind of psychological death which is harder to bear than the thought of physical extinction. The threat is heightened when the rival ideology is perceived as having no room for our own. Thus, ideological differences lead to bitter and protracted wars that characteristically end through mutual exhaustion with the battered survivors still clinging to their respective beliefs.

Dr. Frank makes this general comment:

In the past bad motives and evil behavior could and did cause much suffering, but the damage humans could do to each other was insignificant compared with that caused by the forces of nature. Today the situation is reversed. We have mastered natural dangers to an extraordinary degree. But we can well destroy ourselves. We can no longer afford to be unethical.

While Dr. Frank has a number of suggestions concerning how to go about restoring peoples' feelings of security and identity through new activities that may be expected to contribute to the unity of mankind, instead of reinforcing their differences in terms of nation and race, his chief and concluding appeal is for fuller awareness of the threat of nuclear war. While he concedes that probably "all mankind" would not be wiped out in such a war, the devastation and long-term damage caused by nuclear weapons, he says, would be incalculable. In his opinion, willingness to use these weapons is "the ultimate denial of one's connectedness with the human race." To the claim that preservation of freedom should be worth any price, Dr. Frank replies:

Unfortunately, certain prices are incompatible with the continuance of freedom, and a nuclear exchange is one. Patrick Henry could say, "Give me liberty or give me death," because his death in war could promote the ultimate triumph of liberty. There are still ways of dying for Liberty, but death in a nuclear war is not among them.

The familiar argument used to justify wars throughout the ages—that some wars have promoted human progress more than they set it back—cannot be used to justify a nuclear war, because no possible good could equal the harm it would inflict, and no social system, even Nazism, would do more harm to humanity.

We claim to be opposed to immorality. If the word has any meaning at all, it is certainly immoral to plan to kill millions of people immediately, to condemn millions of others to a lingering death infinitely worse than death in a Nazi gas chamber, and to blight future generations for millennia. Tamerlane and Hitler could exterminate whole peoples without violating their own moral standards, but a society that values the worth of the individual cannot defend itself by these tactics without destroying its own moral basis, even if some remnant should survive. If we really have a superior way of life, it will prevail in a disarmed world, if we do not nuclear war will not save it.

Dr. Frank's final evaluation is this:

Our age is characterized by widespread spiritual unrest springing from rapid and far-reaching changes in the conditions of life. These changes, brought about by fabulous advances in science and technology, are unsettling by virtue of their very magnitude and speed. They have weakened the individual's sense of continuity with the past and future and his ties with the groups to which he belongs, thereby undercutting his sense of personal security and significance. At the same time, they have stimulated drives toward individual self-indulgence and self-aggrandizement and have dangerously intensified pressures toward psychological wars.

To forestall the irretrievable disaster that these trends foreshadow in a nuclear world, and to enable humanity to attain new heights of fulfillment now within reach, the first aim must be toward strengthening the individual's sense of connectedness with all his groups, including the family, the nation, and the human race itself. This is the over-riding task of ethics, today.

Well, have we here justification for pointing to a "crisis"? On any hypothesis, it seems fair to say that Dr. Frank is not an "alarmist." His

diagnosis and analysis are measured, but his prognosis is grim, and his hope almost forlorn. Yet how, on the facts submitted, can anyone seriously disagree with him?

As we see it, not one, but two crises are made clear by Dr. Frank. First—and most important, since it crucially affects all that we do—is the loss of a feeling of authentic identity, and a decline in the reality of a cause that is enduring, and progressively ideal, to identify ourselves with. This has to do with the idea of the self. Can we learn to take pride and find deep meaning in the simple fact of being human? Can we identify with the human race? Nothing less, ultimately, will work, in the circumstances of the present and of the future that rushes toward us at accelerated rate. Can there be an ethical religion of all mankind? Can we find in the Stoics, the mystics, the Existentialists, the Humanistic psychologists, the great scriptures (not in the divided religions which claim to cherish them), the ground of a brotherhood of *Man?* Can the idea of the self, in these terms, gain the tangible reality we need to feel before it can become a basis of commitment and action? This, it seems to us, is the fundamental question, and our lagging avoidance of it, our more or less desperate improvisations to "make do" with partisan conceptions of the self, constitute the true crisis of the times.

The other crisis is legitimately seen, we think, in the threat of nuclear war. But this crisis, as Dr. Frank makes plain, cannot be met, save on the same basis that we meet the primary crisis in our thinking about ourselves.

REVIEW
THE EXISTENTIALIST ETHOS

AN article in Harper's for May, "Why Existentialism Is Capturing the Students," by J. Glenn Gray, is a remarkably useful supplement to discussions in three MANAS articles by Dr. Frederick Mayer (Jan. 15, Sept. 9, Dec. 2, 1964). Dr. Gray attempts to make understandable the complex route by which an increasing number of philosophically-minded students and young instructors are seeking affirmative values. The much-publicized "student revolts" at Yale, Berkeley, and the University of Colorado were all initially led by philosophy majors who were concerned with turning the implications of existentialist thought from a negative to a positive orientation. Though campus revolts may, especially at the fringes, involve some posturing and a good deal of the ridiculous or disagreeable, behind all this some genuine philosophic promptings can be seen. Dr. Gray endeavors to explain:

On the campus Existentialism—which is both a mood and a metaphysics—is compounded of anxiety about being lost in the crowd and the lack of closeness or intimacy with fellow students. The underlying mood is quite different from the perennial depressions of late adolescence. These students are anxiously concerned with the problem of being themselves. Authenticity is the element of Existentialism that strikes the deepest note for them. The highest virtue is honesty with themselves and others while phoniness in whatever form is the greatest vice. "The thing that's wrong with this class," a senior burst out recently, "is that none of us is spontaneous. We're all trying to be so clever and to impress each other. I think we are simply afraid to be ourselves. I'm sick of my own pretending."

To be a genuine or authentic person is not primarily a moral matter, in the sense that older Americans think of morality. For Existentialists authenticity means freely choosing what is one's own behavior, attitude, and mode of living, however singular these may appear to others. The kind of society we are building—or that is being built around us—is, for them a major obstacle to the attainment of authentic individuality.

It is Dr. Gray's argument, then, that existentialist influence leads beyond brash demands for personal freedom to desire for a new way of understanding freedom:

> The desire for self-definition often goes hand in hand with an inner need—more or less conscious—for a compelling authority to make freedom meaningful. In the 'thirties, economic pressures for existence and our opposition to the fascist menace rescued us from this dilemma. In the 'forties there was the war and, afterward, the threat of the Bomb to distract attention from inner conflicts. For some students in the 'sixties the civil-rights struggle has become a Cause—a clear-cut issue on which to act and to argue. But as yet this movement has not reached anything like the numbers nor hit with anything like the impact that we experienced with fascism, communism, the war, and the Bomb.

Lacking an embracing cause and a fervent ideology, the student's search for a durable purpose is likely to become aggressive, extremist, at times despairing. It can easily turn into preoccupation with subjective feelings and plain egotism. As Andre Gide has put it, "Each human being who has only himself for aim suffers from a horrible void." Paradoxical as it sounds, the real problem of our college youth is to discover some authority, both private and public, that will make possible authentic individuality.

From Professor Mayer's three discussions of Existentialism, the following related passages seem appropriate to recall here:

> Existentialism in a sense is an extremely moral philosophy. It calls for commitment, for a way of life. Merely to theorize is inadequate. Merely to describe the universe is a superficial occupation. Just to use the method of analysis is to remain an outsider, alien to the realities of life. Existentialism calls for action through which we become pilgrims of inwardness and through which we realize a new significance.

> Marcel uses the term testimony to indicate man's need for commitment. When we give testimony we reveal the innermost foundations of our subjectivity and, at the same time, are conscious of an order which exists beyond us. Testimony means that we live by the realities in which we believe, it implies that knowledge has become an urgent necessity to us and has been appropriated by us and that truth is a sacred profession rather than an abstraction to be dissected.

And again:

> Moral ideals can never be excluded in an existential scheme. . . . Existentialism points to a *new* morality, to a transvaluation of values. The immoral man is the Pharisee who is smug and self-satisfied, whose benevolence is only a mask for lethargy. Morality in existentialism implies a recognition of finiteness. The existentialist says in effect: I do not want to become an object. I do not want to be a machine. I do not want to live a conventional life. I realize that this experience, this moment is unique and hence I want to exploit it to the fullest. I have a sense of guilt which is ontological in its nature, for I will never explore completely my own potentialities and the possibilities of life. I am conscious that I must make awesome choices which involve my total being and that the end may not give me greater certainty but more awesome and agonizing uncertainty.

This attitude has important implications in education, religion, and philosophy. Real education is not concerned with formulas and standards; real religion implies a personal relationship with the principle of reality; real philosophy is wisdom applied to the turmoil of experience.

Dr. Gray's article seems an excellent basis for looking at the dynamics of existentialist influence today. Such a study, increasingly demanded by questioners at public lectures and in student requests for courses, involves far more than a "historical" approach to the works of Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, Camus and Marcel; the aspect of existentialism which Gray explores is a moving quest that is very much a part of our time. He makes a clear distinction between a young existentialist's protests against the "absurdities of life" in the contemporary context and a genuine concern with self-discovery and commitment:

> I doubt that Existentialist philosophy can ultimately satisfy the search for authority. So far, few of these thinkers have provided guide-lines for social or political action, though all of them stress the necessity for individual commitment. However, for students who are not yet able or ready to act Existentialism offers a great deal. At the least it presents an escape from the morass of conformity, *la dolce vita*, boredom, and the meaningless competitiveness in which they see so many of their elders caught.
>
> Furthermore, those who go behind Sartre to the Danish and German originators of this movement discover a choice between an absurd or tragic view of human destiny. The absurd view is that existence is finally meaningless and futile, a defiant if admirable gesture in a void. The tragic conviction acknowledges the fragile and exposed character of individuality but discovers meaning and purpose in the individual's struggle to locate himself in nature and society. Though his personal life is of short duration, and subject to chance and misfortune while it lasts, his actions are of great importance in the moral sum of things. Tragedy links us to what has been in the history of our species and binds us in faith to the living and dying for, ideas, ancestors, and descendants.
>
> Existentialism appeals because its deepest conviction is that through his choices each individual makes himself.

COMMENTARY
THE MOVE TOWARD SANITY

IN MANAS for April 7, the lead article spoke of the deep need of all men for a sense of "belonging" which does not depend upon righteous nationalism, but seeks a broad ground of unity among human beings. "We must," as Dr. Frank says, "become world-minded or perish." The crucial character of this quest led to the following statement:

> . . . we assert that any deliberate policy save that of nonviolence, [in connection with decisions at times of crisis], will be sheer insanity. These decisions cannot be made wisely in a context of killing and obsessing fear. If we want a world laid in ruins, not merely by nuclear weapons, but most of all by the collapse of the human capacity to reflect impartially, then violence is the way to get it.

This statement brought comment from a reader:

> I agree in general about the superiority of non-violent policy, but I must protest vigorously at calling opposite views "sheer insanity." Whatever we may say of the U.S. course in Vietnam, the motivation cannot be condemned. The U.S. does not know any other way of opposing the unprincipled, violent course of international communism. We speak not of people engaged in the struggle, who do not comprehend for the most part the forces at work, but of those who manipulate the pawns, who are responsible for the ruthless, utterly materialistic, jesuitical attempt to subdue and control people throughout the world. Unfortunately, the U.S. sometimes fights fire with fire, but at least there is some semblance of moral principle on our side, and this is not said from bias. We must learn to appreciate the enormously difficult task of making decisions which the honest men in responsible government posts must undertake. They wish desperately to avoid a major conflict, are faced with an enemy who refuses to talk peace on any terms but his own, and feel that they must take a strong stand on principles.

These observations really lie in another context from that in which the MANAS statement was made. While a great deal of what this reader contends is plainly arguable—there is the critical, perhaps cynical, view that an important segment of American military opinion cherishes the Vietnam war as an exercise field for testing new weapons; the view that the failure of the American Government to implement the Geneva agreement of 1954 was in effect a decision for violence, as against the principle of self-determination of peoples; the view that American sponsorship of the Diem government in Vietnam weakened the unity of the Vietnamese people, virtually "breeding" support for the Communists and strengthening the Communist hold on the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong); the view that present American policy can only lead to another Dien-bien-phu, or escalate to nuclear war; and the popular view, held, according to one opinion poll, by some 50 per cent of the American people, that the present U.S. policy in Vietnam is futile, that the struggle there is a battle for minds, not territorial control—while all these views, although subject to dispute, may be taken as evidence that a bland, uncritical approval of the "principles" of the American effort to subdue the Viet Cong can hardly be defended on any rational ground—we do not enter a debate that depends upon these particulars. The basis of the MANAS statement concerning the "insanity" of violence lies rather on a foundation of the sort erected by Dr. Jerome Frank—his proposal that willingness to use nuclear weapons is "the ultimate denial of one's connectedness with the human race.

Many years ago—in the *Saturday Review* for March 2, 1942—Lewis Mumford addressed himself to this great question in an article which had the title, "Gentlemen: You Are Mad!" He began:

> We in America are living among madmen. Madmen govern our affairs in the name of order and security. The chief madmen claim the titles of general, admiral, senator, scientist, administrator, Secretary of State, even President. And the fatal symptom of their madness is this: they have been carrying through a series of acts which will lead eventually to the destruction of mankind, under the solemn conviction that they are normal responsible

people, living sane lives, and working for reasonable ends.

Soberly, day after day, the madmen continue to go through the undeviating motions of madness: motions so stereotyped, so commonplace, that they seem the motions of normal men, not the mass compulsions of people bent on total death. Without a public mandate of any kind, the madmen have taken it upon themselves to lead us by gradual stages to that final act of madness which will corrupt the face of the earth and blot out the nations of men, possibly put an end to all life on the planet itself.

Speaking of persons awakened by some glimmering of sanity, and counting himself among them, Mr. Mumford continued:

The time has come for action: the compulsive automatic motions of the madmen must be sternly halted. Let the awakened ones be ungagged, and let every one of them be placed at the elbow of every man holding high public office, to whisper the words "Humanity" and "One World" in the leader's ear, when he slips into the dead language of tribal isolation. The secret that is no secret must be laid open: the security that is no security must be yielded up: the power that is annihilation must give way to the power that is birth.

The first move toward sanity lies with us. . . .

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

NOTES IN PASSING

EDMUND FULLER'S *Wall Street Journal* (May 24) review of John Keats' *The Sheepskin Psychosis* provides provocative criticism of the "egalitarian" approach to higher learning. Mr. Keats points out the great difference between the original idea of a collegium as a place without sharp distinctions between "teachers" and "students," and today's status delineations of undergraduates, graduates, instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, department heads, etc. Mr. Fuller says in summary:

> The fetish we make of college education, the false values sometimes set upon it, the pulling down of standards so that everybody may win and all may have prizes, breed much of the confusion current in college life.

Mass higher education is often a contradiction in terms, a fact we are unwilling to admit as we defend the loosely-articulated democratic ethos. Mr. Fuller continues:

> Elementary mass literacy is an attainable goal. Great numbers of people can be educated far beyond that. Many are trainable to high degrees of technical skills. But "high" education in a meaningful sense involves an elite, a selective minority. The only relevance of democratic theory to this fact is that those qualified for such an elite may spring from anywhere, and that all those who are so qualified should have their chance.

In conclusion:

> There is a marked limit to what can be done with vast numbers of people at any level of education. That is the challenge of population to education.
>
> We think the answer lies in the truth that individuals educate themselves individually: The best schools, colleges, universities, with their teachers, libraries, and laboratories, are facilities. When determined individuals seek those facilities either knowing or experimentally finding out what they want to do, education is achieved. To herd a mass of unwilling, foot-dragging, rebelling, ill-qualified students through lower school systems and try to shunt them all into colleges under penalty of being disqualified from many channels of work otherwise, is to get what we've got in the much publicized confusion of drop-outs, campus riots, beatniks, demonstrators, sex experiments and what not. These have nothing to do, inherently, with institutions of learning or the processes thereof.

* * *

American educators habitually take pride in pointing out the distinction between "freedom of learning" in a democracy and the indoctrinating techniques of most iron curtain countries—especially China. A report on "Communist China Today," by James S. Duncan, in the April *Progressive*, examines the weaknesses and strengths of China's approach to the training of the young:

> Perhaps China's greatest asset in scientific and industrial development is the remarkable degree of intelligent and serious-minded application of her young students, their sense of mission to catch up with and surpass the achievements of other countries, and their willingness to accept the sacrifices which such dedication entails.
>
> In many respects, Chinese education has much to commend it. Chinese children are always treated with kindness. They appear happy, tidy, well-dressed. They are taught the merits of discipline and a serious approach to life. The privilege of education is impressed upon them, and respect for their leaders is fostered. They are trained to cooperate, to be prepared for sacrifice and the subordination of their own wishes to the service of their country.
>
> Yet there are aspects of Chinese education which are gravely disturbing. While in China, I visited several universities, primary and secondary schools, and nurseries and discussed educational problems with an eminent educationalist and a senior civil servant. On every occasion I returned from these visits and interviews greatly concerned and saddened by the evidence that these bright young people, so likeable, so eager, and so receptive, are being molded and influenced by an uncompromising ideological indoctrination.
>
> In every institution of learning I visited in China, I saw the young being deliberately and consciously trained not to be open-minded but to be prejudiced, trained to hate "class enemies" such as "landlords," who no longer exist in China since all

> land was taken from them more than ten years ago, but who are still denounced as the incarnation of all evil. The children are trained to hate all "reactionaries" among the Chinese—those whose independent spirits resulted in their approaching certain aspects of the party line with muffled disapproval. They are trained to hate "American imperialists," who are represented to be the acme of all things despicable.

This of course was to be expected. But note the following from a Red-White-and-Blue pamphlet (*Our American Heritage*) distributed in a Los Angeles school district:

> It is a fundamental responsibility of this school system to teach American concepts to serve American society as it exists in the United States of America.
>
> We cannot as teachers ignore our obligation to stand for America and true Americanism. We must be fully aware of the threat of Communism. We must fight this conspiracy against mankind, against God, against you and me as individuals.

A feature of this pamphlet is a comparison of "Human Rights" as regarded in a democracy with the corresponding conditions under Communism. While the individual in a democratic society has inalienable ("God-given") rights which are protected by an independent court system, with recourse to *habeas corpus* as a protection from arbitary police action, under Communism the State is said to "retain full and complete power over the individual," while the courts are completely controlled by the government and the people subjected to an all-powerful secret police. The institution of the jury trial is compared with the "purges" of the Communist political process, democratic freedom of speech and press with Communist control and censorship of press and radio, and the open criticism of government in a democracy is contrasted with the "controlled criticism" permissible in Communist countries. Similar parallels are drawn between the free practice of "any religion not offensive to human dignity" in the democratic countries, and the political condemnation and discouragement of religion under Communism.

What is entirely missing in this analysis is any hint of historical understanding of why and how these differences have come to exist. The objective of the pamphlet, quite plainly, is to convince its readers of the enormous superiority of the "democratic" way of life. But the terrible cost of this persuasion, which is by no means wrong or evil in itself, lies in the implied dehumanization of everyone who believes in or practices communism. There is no slightest hint of sympathy for people who suffer under the loss of all these freedoms, nor any questioning of why very nearly half the world has in some sense "chosen" a social order in which such conditions prevail.

Here is a use of "facts"—the facts, after all, need not be denied—which has anti-human consequences. It leads to division of the world into people who are good and right, and those who are bad and wrong, instead of inviting investigation of how these striking differences in social and political ideals originated. After all, a truly "superior" people would never fear impartial historical understanding. Rational grasp of the forces which produced the revolutionary movement of modern times and has divided the world into desperately opposed armed camps would be, on any hypothesis, a strength and not a weakness in democratic education. Indeed, such understanding is a central ideal of "Our American Heritage," but its possibility seems totally neglected in this pamphlet. It is there, one may say, that the "superiority" of the democratic approach seems tragically belied by the psychological effect sought by the pamphlet. There is no discussion of how communists might be persuaded to gain or regain the free institutions of a democratic society, but only an exhortation to "fight this conspiracy against mankind."

FRONTIERS

Loss of Community

IN these days of brooding questions about the human and social future of nations whose advanced technology may in a comparatively short time, dispense with any need for millions of people, or even tens of millions, of the available labor force, it should be of value to take a long look at other epochs of history. Endless expansion of productive facilities may not be the only way to put an end to poverty, and the rationalizations of the automation engineers, while accurate enough for the goal of industrial efficiency, may be sadly lacking in their application to the good of man.

Suspending for a moment the question of whether it is really possible to "turn back the clock," let us consider the economic and social conditions of India before the British conquest. Writing on the "Beginnings of India's Poverty," in *Eastern World* for May, B. Krishna observes:

> India definitely enjoyed far greater prosperity than Europe when her people lived as independent, respectable members of village communities—the little republics which comprised the then largest Democracy in the world, "each one forming," to quote Sir Charles Metcalfe, "a separate little State in itself . . . in a high degree conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment of freedom and independence."
>
> Such republics existed at the time of the British conquest, and India was a State whose social and economic strength lay in her self-sufficient and self-reliant village communities. They symbolised, what Mahatma Gandhi later dreamed of achieving for independent India, *Sarvodaya*—as opposed to the Marxist ideal of Communism—where "men live as true human beings . . . where different classes of society respect each other and cooperate in evolving a State and society on the foundations of equality and justice in which the greatest good of everyone is attempted . . . where hatred and jealousy will be replaced by love and brotherhood."

This writer examines at some length the economic interdependence of the various members and groups in village life, showing how religion, commerce, and politics existed in harmonious relation under the *panchayat* (village elders) form of government. The *panchayats*, Mr. Krishna relates, "dispensed cheap and speedy justice, and the decisions proved far more effective than those of the later-day British courts."

The advent of technology, ironically enough, brought disaster and disintegration to Indian civilization, instead of peace and plenty. The fact that the Indian peasant today, in spite of "five-year plans," is the poorest in the world, is directly attributable to the British policy of turning India into a nation of "consumers" for the mills of Lancashire. From being, in the eighteenth century, as R. C. Dutt says, "a great manufacturing as well as a great agricultural country," with Indian handlooms supplying the markets of Asia and Europe, India was turned into a mere resource of British mercantile enterprise. Industries thousands of years old (Egyptian mummies of 2,000 B.C. were wrapped in Indian muslin) died in the process. Both the East India Company and the British Parliament worked with "unwavering resolution and fatal success" to make India serve the needs of the looms and factories of Britain. Commercial residents obtained power over villages of Indian weavers and systematically eliminated this competition; tariffs excluded Indian silks and cottons from England and English goods entered India almost duty free. Mr. Krishna comments:

> It is admitted by some British writers that "had not such heavy duties and the prohibitory decrees existed, the mills of Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped at their outset." . . . The British manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms.
>
> With her village communities shattered, India's fine economic, social and political fabric suffered almost beyond repair. And every decade that passed under British rule saw her people more and more driven to poverty and starvation.

Today, despite the efforts of Gandhi to bring about the regeneration of Indian life by a restoration of the economic and community life of

the villages, India is still in the grip of the dislocating forces which destroyed her traditional forms of socio-economic organization. Government measures, Mr. Krishna says, have "failed to achieve anything of the dimensions envisaged." To this day, therefore—

> to be saved from hunger and famine, the people are being fed on imported food grains, facing at the same time the frightening spectacle of a fast-ascending price spiral. The grimness of the situation makes many ask: Does the hope "to get into the promised land, into a more dynamic economic structure" yet not seem a far cry? That seems to have been primarily due to our failure to put back on their feet our villages, sheltering more than 80 per cent of our people; our failure to restore to them the health and prosperity they once enjoyed. And unless our villages are lifted out of their present state of economic, social and political backwardness, India will continue to grovel in poverty and hunger.

The whole question of what we call "progress" is at issue, here. The Gandhian economists point out that the equations of people who see no solution except in terms of rapid industrialization have been formulated in almost total neglect of the actual needs of the *human* community, which is far more than an economic association defined solely in terms of goods and services.

While it may be argued that the British introduction of industrialism to India gives no parallel for a country whose people are producers as well as "consumers," there remains the hard reality of cybernation with its threat of endless material plenty supplied by a few clever engineers—a surfeit of goods for people who are as unoccupied as are the Indian peasantry for many months of the year. The Indian people, you could say, were reduced to poverty because they were made into a captive market and bled as "consumers" by British imperial power; but the American people are very close to being captives of the imperialism of the acquisitive ideology which rules the nation's productive plant. Morally, there seems little difference to brag about. In neither case is there any real concern for or understanding of the good of man.

The defenders of technology are no doubt right—the clock cannot be turned back. But their critics are right, also. Obviously, it is time to throw out all the tired and failing formulas of the past and begin to think intensively and to experiment daringly to discover what are really the human uses of all those machines.