

THE ISSUE OF "REVOLUTION"

REVOLUTION is a word which now embodies the higher longings of many members of the human race, especially the longings of those who have reached some awareness that the confining predicament of great masses of people is largely man-made. This feeling of interdependence and common responsibility is not essentially political, although it tends to assume exclusively political expression among peoples who regard power as the only significant means. The idea that human good is not worth pursuing—is not really "good"—unless it is for the benefit of all is a very ancient conception, typified in the distinction between the selfish Buddha who withdraws to Nirvana and the *Bodhisattva* who rejects private, individual salvation because it denies his identity with other men. Today the Bodhisattvic ideal has increasingly impressive confirmation from ecologists and social scientists who present evidence to show that the individual cannot possibly isolate himself from the common lot—that he inevitably affects and is affected by other men, for good or ill—which is to say that the good life *must* be a common enterprise. So, whether from spontaneous ethical insight or from inductive scientific studies, the conclusion is inescapable: there is no worthy human aspiration which is not an aspiration for the good of all. This is the feeling which is in the air, becoming the moral emotion behind the cry for revolution. The theologies which promise salvation for a chosen few are either dead or dying. The social systems which organize the energies of the many for the service and glorification of the few are no longer defended by anyone—not even by those who covertly believe in them.

The question, then, of what ought to be done is no longer obscure. The good of all must be sought and achieved. There is no acceptable ethic which has not this goal as its foundation. There is

no other access to moral emotion. Even the practical tasks of daily life remain dull and uninteresting unless they imply or at least symbolize movement toward this goal and help to clear away some of the barriers to its realization. Every thoughtful professional, whatever his calling, seeks to relate the knowledge disclosed by his specialty to a holistic conception of meaning. For example, in *Science* for Jan. 27, 1967, on the question, "Where is Biology Taking Us?", Robert S. Morison reaches this conclusion:

Now we seem to face unprecedented needs for mobilizing all possible aids to help the individual perceive the needs of society at large and to identify himself with them. Not only have the social and economic developments of the last few centuries made everyone more dependent on everyone else for the means of subsistence but as I have tried to show, the responsibility for development of the individual personality, even at the very early stages, is shifting from the family to society at large. Conversely, an increasing number of individuals must seek emotional security and a sense of significance in roles which greatly transcend the classic limits of family or village.

Where does the main obstacle lie, as shown by this recommendation? It is not hidden. The problem is the individual's comparative incapacity to "perceive the needs of society at large and to identify himself with them." In Western society, the customary procedure for overcoming such obstacles is for some men, who become known as "leaders," to declare a definition of needs, then to outline a scheme of socio-economic organization designed to satisfy them, and, finally, to institute a program of persuasion and coercion intended to make the work of the organization efficient and effective. That is how we have done things, up to now.

This simple description of past "customary procedure" is enough to exhibit the poles of our present trouble—represented by questions for

which we can no longer find workable answers: To what extent should persuasion be relied upon? How much coercion is necessary or inevitable? What sort of claims to certainty should leaders allow themselves, or the people be expected to accept? To what extent should emerging errors in the plan be concealed by its champions in order to preserve public confidence?

Most of the problems implicit in the idea of "revolution" are covered by these questions.

A solution for some of them, proposed by Mohandas K. Gandhi, has wide acceptance. No man has the right to harm another man, even in the name of the common good, Gandhi declared. It is wrong and it will not work. For many men, this Gandhian conception of non-violence as the means of overcoming the obstacles to social good has become axiomatic. It gives conceptual structure to immediate ethical feelings and is verified by an extensive calculus of the wrongs in the name of revolutionary justice wrongs from Robespierre to Stalin.

The calculus of wrong is of course weak as the sole support for non-violence. It is easily abandoned by morally impatient men with short memories and indifference to history. There is an enormous difference, for human behavior, between positive ethical inspiration and the merely restraining effect of historical information. History, for moral man, is mainly valuable for showing, after the fact, how righteous emotion is transformed into slack-jawed guilt. Emotion is by nature indifferent to all accounting procedures. The wickedness of the innocent will never be understood until there is an end to righteous emotion.

But what of non-violent revolution? First, what *is* revolution? It is either seizure of political power or it is something else. What must a man seeking power believe? He must believe that he knows what other people *ought* to do. And he must believe that it is possible to compel them to do it. Why would he want power, except to gain

the means of persuading or compelling them to do what they ought to do?

Concerning non-violent revolution, it must be asked: Is non-violent compulsion a contradiction in terms? Or would it be harmless in the sense that the social pressure of a New England town meeting was harmless? The question is at least fuzzy at this stage. There is the matter of the distance between the persuasive purity of the non-violent doctrine at the theoretical level and its perhaps grossly erring applications at the practical political level. And there is the natural tendency of moral emotion to blur this distinction. Can a high moral principle of action be converted into a technique which itself moralizes every one of its applications?

The moral certainties in some extreme social situations seem beyond dispute, but much uncertainty remains in others, even for men of non-violence. The applications of non-violence worked out by Gandhi—the dramatic ones, the ones we know about and talk about and use as models for social action—were usually in a context of comparative moral simplicity. His campaign for *Swaraj*, for the self-rule of India, was against a conquering and invading and colonizing power. The British were *wrong*—no subtlety, no two ways about it, no argument. But what about the less obvious applications? First of all, we know that Gandhi relentlessly examined his own conscience and estimated as well as he could the moral readiness of himself and his followers, before undertaking any program of civil disobedience. And he wrote in 1942:

My resistance to war does not carry me to the point of thwarting those who wish to take part in it. I reason with them. I put before them the better way and leave them to make the choice.

In 1928 he had said:

If there was a national government, whilst I should not take part in any war I can conceive occasions when it would be my duty to vote for military training of those who wish to take it. For I know that all its members do not believe in non-violence to the extent that I do. It is not possible to

make a person or a society non-violent by compulsion.

Non-violence works in a most mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of non-violence; equally often his actions may wear the appearance of violence when he is absolutely non-violent in the highest sense of the term and is subsequently found so to be.

Since this expression is one man's opinion, was so meant, and has to do, also, with the difficulty in: judging the non-violence of other individuals, it is cited here only to suggest the importance of preserving this moral freedom of individuals, without prejudice. It goes without saying that Gandhi would not have passively endured the immorality of an unjust war undertaken by his own country. What we may be sure of, however, is a certain inner consistency, even though he wrote in 1939:

My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth; I have saved my memory from undue strain; and what is more, whenever I have been obliged to compare my writing of even fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two.

So what we are trying to get at, here, is not the "true" dictates of the leader, Gandhi, but the difficulty of deciding easily on any programmatic application of non-violence as a part of revolutionary theory. Perhaps it is permissible to take his principle and neglect his thought, or some parts of it; this, certainly, is being done; but no serious inquirer can do this without even *inspecting* the variety of considerations that shaped Gandhi's decisions.

The revolutionary tradition of Western history grows out of the circumstances of extreme economic injustice and deprivation, and political tyranny. Its objectives are defined by the social and economic relationships which are to be enacted through the revolutionary constitution. The problem, as we know, is not to draft glowing accounts of the conditions of an ideal society, nor

to formulate implementing laws, but to make these enactments actually *result* in ideal conditions. The truth of the matter, we are beginning to suspect, is that the good life cannot be enacted; it can only be rationalized in law after its emerging shape and fruitful practice declare its necessities. We may still say, however, that the obstacles to even a beginning at living the good life must be removed: hence the necessity for revolution. And for any revolution to succeed, there must be followers and supporters who believe in it, will sacrifice for it, and give it their energies.

This is the analysis which finds a revolutionary program necessary. What, at the minimum, will a revolutionary program propose? It has to say something about what must be done for the common good to result. And it will almost certainly seek to engage attention by appealing (1) to the moral emotions, and (2) to some model conception of social cause and effect, or science. It will appeal to both the heart and the head. The balance between these two aspects of the appeal is crucial—crucial in two ways. Both its integrity and its effect depend upon this balance.

We know the power of what has been called "revolutionary love." It is the fraternal spirit felt by men from whom all self-interest has departed while fighting on the barricades. It is a wonderful, prophetic emotion, drawing the undivided energy of unrealized dreams into the present. We may not know all, but we know *that*, we say to ourselves. We would hardly be men without the promise of this feeling. And yet . . .

The tremendous subjective problem of today's would-be revolutionaries is the dialectical relationship between moral emotion, which is the source of all resolve, and what is actually *known* concerning the processes of change that lead to common social good. It has to be admitted, at the outset, that this relationship lies concealed in a wilderness of double ignorance. Take for example Noam Chomsky's searching observations (in *American Power and the New Mandarins*) concerning the issues which excite the moral

emotion and depress the self-respect of a great many Americans:

The reaction to the suffering of oppressed minorities at home is not very different from the brutal apathy towards the misery we have imposed elsewhere in the world. Opposition to the war in Vietnam is based very largely on its cost, and on the failure of American power to crush Vietnamese resistance. It is sad, but nonetheless true, that the tiny steps to bring freedom to black Americans have been taken, for the most part, out of fear. We must recognize these facts and regret them deeply, but not be paralyzed by this recognition. Anger, outrage, confessions of overwhelming guilt may be good therapy; they can also become a barrier to effective action, which can always be made to seem incommensurable with the enormity of the crime. Nothing is easier than to adopt a new form of self-indulgence, no less debilitating than the old apathy. The danger is substantial. It is hardly a novel insight that confession of guilt can be institutionalized as a technique for evading what must be done. It is even possible to achieve a feeling of satisfaction by contemplating one's evil nature. No less insidious is the cry for "revolution," at a time when not even the germs of new institutions exist, let alone the moral and political consciousness that could lead to a basic modification of social life. If there will be a "revolution" in America today, it will no doubt be a move towards some variety of fascism. We must guard against the kind of revolutionary rhetoric that would have had Karl Marx burn down the British Museum because it was merely part of a repressive society. It would be criminal to overlook the serious flaws and inadequacies in our institutions, or to fail to utilize the substantial degree of freedom that most of us enjoy, within the framework of these flawed institutions, to modify them or even replace them by a better social order. One who pays some attention to history will not be surprised if those who cry most loudly that we must smash and destroy are later found among the administrators of some new system of repression.

Well, it may be asked, what *does* Prof. Chomsky want us to do? He seems to leave revolutionary program-builders without a guide. Gandhi must have similarly puzzled labor leaders in India when, in 1927, he spoke of the needs of the Indian labor movement:

Labour in India is still extremely unorganized. The labourers have no mind of their own when it

comes to national policy or even the general welfare of labour itself. . . . In these circumstances an All-India Union can exist only on paper. . . . One word as to policy. It is not anti-capitalistic. The idea is to take from capital labour's due share and no more than this, not by paralyzing capital, but by reform among labourers and by their own self-consciousness; not again through the cleverness and manoeuvring of non-labour leaders, but by educating labour to evolve its own leadership and its own self-reliant, self-existing organization. Its direct aim is not in the least degree political. Its direct aim is internal reform and evolution of internal strength. The indirect result of this evolution, when and if it ever becomes complete, will naturally be tremendously political.

I have not, therefore, the remotest idea of exploiting labour or organizing it for any direct political power of first-class importance when it becomes a self-existing unit. Labour, in my opinion, must not become a pawn in the hands of the politician on the political chessboard. It must, by its sheer strength, dominate the chessboard. This is my dream.

What did Gandhi have in the back of his head? Obviously, or not so obviously, he envisioned some kind of free yet organic community, united by a consensus of common ideals, with everyone avoiding political power like the plague.

You can't write a *political* program for developing a society like that. You have to *grow* such a society, and it will not grow under coercion; the development must indeed be free, every step of the way. Without the infra-structure of self-determining people living by common ideals, throughout every level of society, it cannot come into being; and, Gandhi believed, there is no other way to get it.

Question: Could there be a revolutionary program which doesn't tell other people what they ought to do, but presents options? Could there be a revolutionary program which rejects political power and has no interest in achieving it? Finally, could such a program, if it is imaginable, be recognized as "revolutionary"?

Yet Gandhi probably wrote and published more than any other leading "revolutionary" figure of the twentieth-century. But no ideologist can

claim him. Whatever familiar political position he took, he transformed its meaning. Socialism was for him a mandate of antique religion, with no power or statist implications. Capitalism for him meant "trusteeship": You don't really own the money you make; you are its steward and use it in behalf of the people, yet you will not be compelled to do this. He was a total disbeliever in specialists and technicians when their services tend to reduce the self-reliant competence of the people.

Apparently, Gandhi wished to discourage one kind of rallying cry:

Though you have emphasized the necessity of a clear statement of the goal, but having once determined it, I have never attached importance to its repetition. The clearest definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there if we do not know and utilize the means of achieving it. I have, therefore, concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. I know if we can take care of them attainment of the goal is assured. I feel too that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means.

This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced that it is the shortest.

But Gandhi did have a program—the "Constructive Programme." Formulated in the 1930's, it involved the services of 700,000 workers who would go out into the equal number of villages throughout India, teach the people how to improve their lives, and ignore power politics. After this constructive program had gained many volunteers and was organized within the National Congress, the Congress leaders insisted that Gandhi dissolve the organization—Gandhi Seva Sangha—because it was "distracting" the minds of the people from the chief political objective of independence. Gandhi did so, but urged the young workers to keep on with their activities in the villages, without organization. Many did. As Anadi Naik relates in a MANAS article (July 6, 1966):

They [the constructive workers] carried on their activities in their ashrams. The masses of India could not see the meaning of this occurrence in those days.

For the villagers, those who wore handspun and hand-woven clothes were workers in the "Congress Party." But after Gandhi's death, the difference between the people in power and the people who lived in the ashrams became obvious. It was realized that the National Congress, in spite of its historic background, no longer had revolutionary zeal and no longer represented the true voice of the nation. It had become "the organization of a power-loving group," *i.e.*, a party.

A few years later, the original intentions of Gandhi were revived by Vinoba, who was later joined by Jayaprakash Narayan, through the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements. Gramdan workers also stay out of politics.

This is a fragment of current history, but possibly a very important one. It deserves a place with all the other instructive bits of history which throw light on the actual processes of human growth in community, and on possible modes of the return of both responsibility and power to the people. Perhaps the most important lesson of twentieth-century revolutions is that responsibility grows and power degrades with use. Such a principle might be one of the foundation stones of a voluntaristic, decentralized counter-society.

REVIEW

ANCIENT AMERICANS

RECENTLY a vacationer returned from two weeks in the jungles of Yucatan spoke of his excitement at seeing suddenly through the leaves the massive stone features of the feathered serpent, Quetzalcoatl; and then, upon coming closer, finding a man's head emerging from its wide-open jaws! This is one way of feeling the reality of the peoples who inhabited the Americas before the coming of Columbus, and in terms of intensity it may be the best. Yet for those of us not able to take such trips, there are some wonderful books. We have for review *Aztec Thought and Culture* (1963, \$5.75) and *Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico* (1969, \$5.95), both by Miguel León-Portilla, director of Historical Research in the National University of Mexico, both published by the University of Oklahoma Press. These are books for the general reader, and the first, perhaps, to suggest the full depth and dimensions of the civilization of ancient Mexico. Travelers, of course, have written of the monuments left by the Mayas and other peoples. Works by Humboldt, Stephens, and that wonderful explorer and romantic, Augustus Le Plongeon, informed nineteenth-century readers of architectural splendors; then, in the twentieth century, archaeologists following the curious pioneering of Edward Thompson have made us aware of the astronomical knowledge of the Mayas, while Herbert Spinden began appreciative interpretation of their art. The unique contribution of León-Portilla (and of the scholars on whom he draws) is that through these books the peoples of ancient Mexico speak to us in something like their own voices; it is at last possible to know what they said, and something of what they meant.

A paragraph from the Preface to *Aztec Thought* will indicate its scope:

The concepts presented and examined in this book are based on the literal translation of more than ninety native documents. They include conjectures

on the origin of the universe and of life, the mystery of God, the possibility of comprehending what is beyond the realm of experience, free will, life after death, and the meaning of education, history, and art. The philosophy of the Nahuatl wise men, which probably stemmed from the ancient doctrines of the Teotihuacans and Toltecs, quite often reveals profound intuition and in some instances is remarkably "modern." Nahuatl philosophy offers the present-day philosopher a unique opportunity to observe man—removed from all contact with ancient civilizations of Africa, Asia, and Europe—in the role of creator of a way of thinking and of living.

The author does not exaggerate. Like the Greeks, the Nahuatl peoples sang their cosmological myths; and again like the Greeks, their philosophers sought behind mythic imagery for specific meanings. Like the wise men of other high civilizations, Nahuatl sages embodied their wisdom in poetic allegory and suggestive metaphor. Their searching skeptics questioned the familiar forms of what the people "knew," even as it was transmitted through education. The deposit of wisdom in Nahuatl culture seems to have been embodied in a group of men who were outside the caste structure of the society, who were not priests. It was these men, the *tlamatinime*, who engaged in debate the first twelve missionary friars brought by the Spanish, defending Mexican conceptions of knowledge, truth, and education.

Quoting and interpreting philosophical poems, the author shows that the apparent polytheism of the people masked a dynamic pantheism. There was a primal, hidden source for the male-female duality of manifested existence. The highest deity is invisible and intangible, inaccessible, yet somehow close and near. One of the titles of manifesting divinity is a word which means "Lord who mentally conceives or creates himself," of whom it was said, "no one gave him form or existence." Thus the active deity "existed by self-invention, and continued to exist by virtue of his perpetual creative activity."

Why or how have we been kept for so long in ignorance of the philosophic subtlety of pre-

Columbian culture in Mexico? The explanation goes back to what happened to the work of the humanistic friar, Bernardino de Sahagún, who began in 1547 to collect from the older Indians what they had learned in their schools before Cortés arrived (1519). Sahagun trained young Indians as scribes who wrote down in Spanish characters the Nahuatl songs, poems, and other literature of the people. He checked all this traditional material with many informants, so that there can be no doubt as to its authenticity. So well done was Sahagún's compilation of Indian beliefs and attitudes that other friars protested to Madrid, claiming it might lead to a pagan revival. Their warning brought an order from Philip II to confiscate all such works and "not to allow any person to write concerning the superstitions and ways of life of these Indians in any language, for this is not proper to God's service and to Ours." Copies, however, were preserved from destruction and finally, in the twentieth century, scholars gained access to facsimile reproductions of Sahagún's work, so that careful translation could begin. Thus deliberate suppression, effective for centuries, in addition to the notorious destruction of priceless codices by Fray Diego de Landa, hid from the world the beauty and profundity of pre-Columbian thought.

The underlying theme of this book is the role of the wise teachers, the *tlamatinime*, in Nahuatl culture, and the philosophic content of their teaching. Education was rigorous and effective. Sahagun, realizing what had been lost to the Indians, concluded an account of Indian methods of education by saying:

All of this ended with the arrival of the Spaniards, because they destroyed and abolished all of the customs and disciplined ways that the Indians had. The Spaniards considered the Indians idolaters and savages and wanted to convert them to the Spanish way of life, both religious and social, and so all of their order and disciplined organization was destroyed.

Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico presents selections from the great wealth of

myths, lyrical poetry, drama, history, prose, and native chronicles of the Mayas and Nabuas. In one of the many versions of the story of the god, Quetzalcoatl, there is an account of the four great ages of life which preceded the present cycle. León-Portilla writes in introduction:

Perhaps the oldest of the Nahuas is the one which tells about cosmic origin. They believed that the earth was founded many thousands of years ago and that four suns or ages have existed before the present era. During these ages there has been an evolution in spiral form, and each successive age has brought better elements, plants, and human beings.

The first men were made of ashes, water washed them away and they became fish. In the second age the earth was inhabited by giants, but in spite of their size they were weak and tigers devoured them. The men of the third age also came to a tragic end; they were changed into turkeys. Those who lived in the fourth era or sun were eventually carried away by the wind and became what the ancient texts call monkey-men. The fifth or present age originated in Teotihuacan. This is the age of Quetzalcoatl, the priest and prince of Tula.

In his character of a god, Quetzalcoatl restored the human race into being; then, as hero, inventor of the arts, and spiritual teacher, he established the civilization of the Toltecs, who for the later Nahuatls were the synonym of everything good:

The Toltecs, the people of Quetzalcoatl,
were very skillful.
Nothing was difficult for them to do.
They cut precious stones,
wrought gold,
and made many works of art
and marvelous ornaments of feathers.
Truly they were skillful.

All the arts of the Toltecs,
their knowledge, everything came from
Quetzalcoatl. . . .

And those Toltecs were very rich
they were very happy;
there was no poverty or sadness.
Nothing was lacking in their houses,
there was no hunger among them. . . .

They say that when Quetzalcoatl lived there,
often wizards tried to trick him

into offering human sacrifices,
 into sacrificing men.
 But he never did, because he loved his people
 who were the Toltecs. . . .

The wizards finally succeeded in tricking Quetzalcoatl, causing him to die, and the golden age he had inaugurated passed away. It was said that his heart rose from his funeral pyre and "was converted into the morning star."

Portions quoted from the *Popol Vuh* give insight into the more delicate, mystical feeling of the Mayas. Especially moving among Nabuatl extracts are the prophecies of the coming of the Spanish and the native chronicles of the conquest. The writer of one of these, after describing the gifts of gold made by Moctecuhzoma to the men of Castile, remarks:

And when they had given them these, the faces [of the Spaniards] smiled, they were very happy, they were delighted. As if they were monkeys, they lifted up the gold, as if it gave them a great feeling of satisfaction, as if their hearts were revived.

What is certain is that they had a great thirst for gold. Their bodies took on an air of importance because of it, they had a frantic hunger for it. Like hungry pigs they craved that gold. They snatched up greedily the banners of gold, they swung them from side to side, they examined them from top to bottom. They were like people who speak a barbarous language; everything they said was in a barbarous tongue.

What of the human sacrifice practiced by the Aztecs, which Quetzalcoatl rejected but later became common? It was a way, León-Portilla shows, of trying to avert the death of the age, which could be prevented, they believed, by supplying the sun with nourishment of blood. This was the martial-mystical cult of the Aztec public religion, to be distinguished from the *tlamatinime's* "search for a new form of knowledge which might embody the truth." Conceivably, this cruel perversion of an ancient feeling of unity with the source of all life lay behind the weakness and confusion of the Aztecs at the time of the coming of the white barbarians.

After quoting a long native account of Alvarado's defeat of the Cakchiquels, a tribe in Guatemala, León-Portilla concludes:

The Cakchiquel sages who saw all this with their own eyes were the same who saved from oblivion this "vision of the conquered" and wrote it down for their children and descendants. As in the case of the Aztec and other native accounts of the Conquest, this is one of the most dramatic examples of indigenous historical prose telling about the ruin of a people who had known what it was to be great. Perhaps we can take these as the final words of the wise men who were the last participants of a civilization, the remnants of which even today are a source of amazement to anyone who seeks to understand human experience, art, feelings, and thought as they existed in the isolated context of ancient America.

COMMENTARY

GANDHI'S "POWER"

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI was born a hundred years ago this month, on October 2, 1869. A portion of Robert Payne's new book, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi* (Dutton), printed in the *Saturday Review* for Oct. 4, has a summarizing passage on Gandhi's dream for India's future, of which, Mr. Payne says, he had "a very clear conception":

He wanted a government devoid of the bureaucracy India had inherited from colonial rule. He especially wanted a government responsible to the villagers, capable of bringing the full weight of its influence to bear on rural development, for he remembered that the vast proportion of the Indians lived in villages and had been forgotten for too long. He wanted only a skeleton army, a small police force, a government of experts with no powerful political party at the helm. He wanted the Congress Party to dissolve itself because it had outlived its usefulness, and he was especially anxious that it should not perpetuate itself in the manner of political parties all over the world by the use of patronage and naked political power. He wanted to integrate the untouchables into the fabric of Indian society, to put an end to child marriage, and to ensure that there were no great inequalities of wealth. He wanted women to have the same rights as men. He wanted simple things which were long overdue, but it was one of the supreme ironies of his life that those simple things were not given to him. He had shattered British power in India and humbled the maharajas, making them pensioners of the state, but he could not change the nature of bureaucracy. The government of Nehru was not disposed to make the changes he wanted, and the nation which came into being largely because of his efforts bore little resemblance to the nation he desired. . . . He thought of himself as a social reformer ushering in a new age of human equality and brotherhood, and in this he failed. Historians will probably regard him as one of those rare men who come at the end of historical epochs and by their very presence announce the beginning of a new dispensation, though they are not permitted to see the promised land. He was one with Buddha and the ancient sages, and drew his ideas from ancient wells. He came at a time when religious feeling was already decaying, and he drew his strength from ancient gods.

Wherever he got his strength, it became very great, if Mr. Payne's measure of Gandhi's accomplishments has any accuracy. What was the nature of this strength? We cannot really tell, except perhaps to say that it was a sort of strength which permitted him to say:

Satyagraha as conceived by me is a science in the making. It may be that what I claim to be a science may prove to be no science at all and may well prove to be the musings and doings of a fool, if not a madman. It may be that *Satyagraha* is as ancient as the hills. But it has not yet been acknowledged to be of any value in the solution of world problems or rather the one supreme problem of war.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE OAKEN HEART OF ENGLAND

REREADING children's books sometimes recalls excellences forgotten too easily from submitting to preoccupation with the "new." Two fine stories originally published in the 1940's are examples: *The Door in the Wall*, Marguerite De Angeli (Doubleday), and *Adam of the Road*, Elizabeth Janet Gray (Viking Press). Both are set in medieval England.

The Door in the Wall tells the adventures of ten-year-old Robin, son of Sir John de Bureford. Left in London in the care of servants when his father joins the king at war in Scotland, and his mother becomes the queen's lady-in-waiting, Robin contracts an illness that leaves him unable to walk. The plague kills or frightens off the servants, but Robin is rescued by a wise and witty friar, Brother Luke, who sets about strengthening the boy's body, busying his hands and occupying his mind. Robin despairs of becoming a knight—how can he sit a warhorse if he is a cripple? Brother Luke asks:

"Dost remember the long wall that is about the garden of thy father's house?"

"Yes," said Robin, "of course. Why?"

"Dost remember, too, the wall about the Tower or any other wall?" Robin nodded. "Have they not all a door somewhere?"

"Yes," said Robin again.

"Always remember that," said the friar. "Thou hast only to follow the wall far enough and there will be a door in it."

Robin learns patience from whittling. In time he fashions some crutches and a harp to accompany his singing. His legs do not improve and he will, it seems, always go crooked, but gradually he learns what is expected of a knight, though only the inner things are possible for him. Meanwhile reading becomes one door in his wall.

Robin finally arrives at the house of the noble where, before his illness, he was to have been a page. He feels his inabilities.

"I shall make a sorry page, my lady," said Robin ruefully. "But I can sing and I can read a little to while away the time for your lordship," he offered, "and I can pen letters for you."

Sir Peter kept Robin's hand in his and spoke directly to him. "Each of us has his place in the world," he said. "If we cannot serve in one way, there is always another. If we do what we are able, a door always opens to something else."

There it was again, Robin thought, a door. He wondered whether Sir Peter meant the same thing that Brother Luke had intended.

The story ends with Robin undertaking a difficult and dangerous errand to bring help to a besieged castle. He is reunited with his parents and has found, as Brother Luke predicted, the door in his wall.

Adam of the Road concerns eleven-year-old Adam, son of the minstrel Roger. It is the year 1994. Adam learns what is expected of a minstrel.

Adam could almost hear his father saying, "Remember, Adam, a minstrel sings what his listeners want to hear. It's not for him to ease his own sorrows or tell his own joys. He's to find out how his listeners are feeling and say it all for them."

A minstrel's place, too, is on the road, with people—not wasting in one place.

"A road's a kind of holy thing," Roger went on. "That's why it's a good work to keep a road in repair, like giving alms to the poor or tending the sick. It's open to the sun and wind and rain. It brings all kinds of people and all parts of England together. And it's home to a minstrel, even though he may happen to be sleeping in a castle."

Many lessons come to Adam. He learns to avoid braggadocio. Loneliness gives instruction when he becomes separated from his minstrel father and his beloved dog. At one point he finds himself turning his own discomfort into entertainment for another:

For the first time in his life he had played the part of an oyster. He had taken the bit of grit that was

scratching him and made something of it that was comfortable to him and pleasing to someone outside. He had made a valuable discovery, but he did not know it at the moment, he only knew that he felt happy again, and he wagged his head a little.

The book paints lively pictures of thirteenth-century England—the wayfarers, the inns, students at Oxford, life in an abbey school, the great concourse of people at fairs, pilgrims, merchants, plowmen, and life in London. There are historical notes such as a grandfather's reminiscence of the signing of the Magna Charta, and the first time the Commons went to Parliament.

Adam has opportunity to change the direction of his life—he could become a clerk or even a scholar, but he insists, "I'm a minstrel," and decides what sort of minstrel to be. He will not copy those who tell exaggerated tales and repeat rude jokes about friars and monks and rich abbots. Roger recited tales that fitted the good in people, sang about courage and danger and adventure and love. He patterned his life after Roger's, his father's, example.

* * *

There are dozens of books on children's art, many more than we have seen, but one which everyone interested in this subject should inspect is Pearl Greenberg's *Children's Experiences in Art* (Reinhold, 1966), illustrated with photographs taken by Mrs. Greenberg and her husband, Murray. The text has much good advice to teachers, but the pictures—both photographs of children at work and reproductions of their drawings—are really unforgettable. However, since words can be an irritating substitute for seeing, we quote a passage by Mrs. Greenberg on a problem experienced by every teacher:

The child who says "I can't" has been taught to believe that he really can't, and he has learned this lesson well. It will take time for children to differentiate between positive and negative learning. When he feels that he can't, when he hears adults say that he can't, when there is no counteracting force to help him try and to show him that he can, the pattern

is set. But sometimes the very smallest bit of appreciation—a sign that you care and want to help—will give such a child the courage to try once again.

Such a child cannot always be helped by following all the rules and regulations one learns about in teacher education. For example: a six-year-old, after working with clay, asked for a crayon and paper to draw a person. He held these in his left hand and followed me around, talking about how he wanted to draw, went to the table to start, and then sat and meditated, "I want to do it but I can't. It won't look real." The rest of his class finished their clay work and he joined them in clean-up activities. During the following art time the same thing happened again. He did not want any suggestions; he told me he knew what a person looked like, but he was still not willing to make a first mark on his paper. Others in the class needed some assistance, but he kept following close behind me. Then, I sat down with him and said, "Why don't you show me what you *can't* draw, and then I'll be able to help you!" He looked astonished at this suggestion. "Do you mean it? Show you what I can't draw? that sounds silly." "Well, unless you do, I won't know how to help!" Seeing that I was not fooling even though it was, admittedly, a strange request, he went to his table, sat down, and drew a man. And it was a fine drawing, using the kinds of symbols one reads about in relation to children's drawings! He was not satisfied with his picture because he could do other things far advanced for a six-year-old. But this helped to get him drawing people; he brought new drawings to me the following week and went on from there.

There is this sort of fruit of practical experience in teaching throughout Mrs. Greenberg's book.

FRONTIERS The Condition of Peace

TOWARD the end of "The Fight for the President's Mind," in the October *Harper's*, Townsend Hoopes, former Undersecretary of the Air Force, tells how a small group of advisers finally "turned the President from escalation to the seeking of peace in Vietnam." The upshot of a series of conferences which began after the Tet offensive early in 1968, Mr. Hoopes says, was that President Johnson seemed finally "to have grasped the seismic shift in public opinion and the absolute imperative of yielding to it, at least temporarily." An effect of this recognition was the President's almost simultaneous decision not to accept his party's nomination for another term.

The article is informing on the political process, especially in showing how issues are translated into the pressures which affect political decision-making. The issues, you could say, are "de-moralized." This may be inevitable, or partly so, in consideration of the fact that politics must resolve a wide variety of conflicting thoughts and emotions, both responsible and irresponsible, but all of massive proportion, making the "brute fact" contribution to political decision much greater than an outsider is likely to imagine. It follows that politicians often suffer far more blame than they deserve. Most politicians accept this as a condition of life. Another conclusion would point to the need for general education in the fact that when complex moral issues are submitted to the political process, they will, in the nature of things, get all messed up. Politics *has* to convert moral questions into administrative questions in order to get any answers at all.

Notice also Mr. Hoopes' word for why the public feeling against the war finally got through to Mr. Johnson—it was *seismic*. Good! one might say. The people made themselves heard. Of course, more seismic impulses are needed, but if we work hard and study the art of producing

political tremors we may finally get peace. Maybe an *earthquake* will do it! Courage, men!

Well, it is probably possible to produce a whole lot of seismic impulses, but it might be a good idea to begin by asking some geologist if his science has any models for showing how they can be controlled or, better, *aimed*. Meanwhile, somebody—probably not Eric Hoffer—ought to write a little book on *The Seismic State of Mind*. The idea would be to show that the seismic impulse rises most naturally from feelings of fear, anger, and self-interest. The most important thing to point out would be that the seismically aroused tend to march to drums with the most barbarous beat. Question: Are such drums *ever* heard on the road to peace?

Take for example Berlin in the 1920's, as pictured by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The city was a veritable showcase for the seismic state of mind. From a reading of this book one could turn to the fourteen pages in the September *Trans-Action*, by Michael E. Brown, on "The Condemnation and Persecution of the Hippies." The hippies, this writer shows, are widely found guilty for being what they are, rather than for what they do. *Anybody* who dresses a certain way, wears a beard or long hair—well, you know! Mr. Brown's language is academic, his meaning ominous:

. . . persecution is also structured by the mentality of the persecutors. This mentality draws lines around its objects as it fits them conceptually for full-scale social action. The particular uses of the term "hippie" in the mass media—like "Jew," "Communist," "Black Muslim," or "Black Panther"—cultivates not only disapproval and rejection but a climate of opinion of excluding Hippies from the moral order altogether. This is one phase of a social process that begins by locating and isolating a group, tying it to the criminal, sinful or obscene, developing and displaying referential symbols at a high level of abstraction which depersonalize and objectify the group, defining the stigmata by which members are to be known and placing the symbols in the context of ideology and readiness for action.

Some of the "action" described in this article may chill the reader's blood. Writing vividly and impressionistically on the same subject in the October *Harper's*, Dan Wakefield reviews the current film, *Easy Rider*, finding it "*instructive* about the very real violence and hatred that runs through our society and is poisoning it right now." He reports some revealing comments by the two actors, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper, cast as the hippie motorcyclist in *Easy Rider* who are wantonly killed in the end by an angry truck driver in the South. There is also the story of what the actors encountered on rural locations while making the film. In the small Colorado town where *True Grit* had also been made, long-haired Hopper walked into a bar:

. . . immediately a guy swung at me, screaming, "Get outta here, my son's in Vietnam," and the local sheriff was right behind him screaming that *his* son was in Vietnam, and I said "now wait a minute," that I was an actor and there with the movie, whereupon the boys' high school counselor started screaming to get out, that *his* son was in Vietnam. And I thought "What if I wasn't an actor, what if I was just traveling through and was thirsty?" So I said, "Okay, I'm hitchhiking to the peace march," whereupon eight guys jumped me. Incredible, but true, I swear.

Evidently, the resources for seismic action are ample, already. Their accumulation is begun by arranging people along some guilt/innocence axis, and then, when the chips are down, it's not hard to make up your mind! If people hide their evil tendencies, you can usually provoke them into revealing their true nature, after which classification is no problem. These are the rules for generating a seismic impulse. They are quickly learned, easy to copy, and no one need feel squeamish about applying them so long as he is on the right side.

Yet curiously, the only thing that gives this analysis weight is that it is also partly false. Underneath the chaotic energy of the seismic impulse, as Blake knew, as others have suspected, are tangled moral longings, frustrated hopes, privately pure intentions—now hidden, almost throttled, made mad, even, by the corruption and

wickedness of the world. To recognize the presence of this innocence in the midst of guilt, like a child at a prostitute's breast—which still gives milk—is the final condition for making peace.