

## BOOKS ABOUT MARXISM

SINCE MANAS is in substance and by reputation a review, it seems well to examine the meaning of this term. The task of the reviewer, it is commonly said, is to determine what a writer has set out to do and to judge how well he (or she) does it. In contrast, a review-essay adds the consideration of whether what the writer sets out to do is worth doing, and then may go on to consider what else could have been done to better purpose.

We might illustrate the essay approach by attention to a book that came in for review several months ago. The title is *Vico and Marx—Affinities and Contrasts* (Humanities Press, 1983), a collection of papers by scholars familiar with the work of both thinkers, edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo, director of the Institute for Vico Studies, and author or editor of a number of books relating to the work of the extraordinary Italian thinker. Other figures, inevitably, come into the discussions provided, among them Heidegger, Nietzsche, Sorel, Croce, and Gramsci. Since all the contributors are serious and well-informed scholars, the papers are filled with nuggets of information, perspectives that seem fresh, and judgments that will not have occurred to most readers. But why, remains the haunting thought, compare Vico and Marx?

Since in these pages MANAS contributors have reviewed several books with material on Vico (1668-1744), we are able from memory to say what seems important about him. Three ideas are foremost. Vico is first of all distinguished by the fact that he declared that the social world is the work of men. We make the societies we live in. This means that we are able to change them—in his time a new idea. Second, humans are able to *know* only what they themselves make. What we make we can know from the inside as well as the outside, subjectively as well as objectively.

What we can't and don't know how to make we can only describe as it appears. This is not really knowing, but an exploitation of our capacity to abstract; we often apply to our abstractions the manipulations of mathematics, and since mathematics is something we created and know, we get in this way some feeling of knowing, but not the full substance of what is described.

These are seminal and fertile ideas. People will continue to use them for an unlimited future. They are the reason why Vico studies will go on. They are the reason why distinguished thinkers, when they read Vico, felt that they had made a real discovery. That feeling, experienced by Michelet, the French historian, and reported by Edmund Wilson in *To the Finland Station*, led the MANAS editors to keep some track of books about Vico, a neglected genius. But he is no longer neglected, as the present book, which has twenty-five contributors, makes plain.

Why compare Vico with Marx? Marx, born 150 years after Vico, also honored as a genius, one who founded his work on the idea that the social world is the work of men—and that they can change it—was not, however, neglected. The modern world of learning is populated by numerous Marxists of one or another sort, and their influence will probably last at least another fifty years.

Why not forever, or almost forever, as with Vico? Because, as Rudolf Bahro, a leader of the West Germany Green Party, said last year, "Marxism is finished." But Bahro immediately added, "For me, Marx's hope for the emancipation of man still obtains, but I believe that the notions of 'proletariat' and 'dictatorship of the proletariat' are now hollow and without meaning." Why is Marxism finished? Because Marx attempted collectivist answers to the human problem—

answers in terms of conceptions of human nature which are now plainly on the way out. The moral motivation felt by Marx goes on, as it does for Bahro, inspiring respect—but respect for the man, not for his program. Yet apart from the lessons of history, which seem sufficiently decisive, that Marxism is finished as a social philosophy has been made plain by such critics as Dwight Macdonald (in *The Root Is Man*), Simone Weil (in *Oppression and Liberty*), Michael Polanyi (in *The Tacit Dimension*), and Jayaprakash Narayan (in *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*).

Again, why is Marxism finished? The words of Narayan make the best summary answer. He broke with Marxism, he explained, after it "became clear that materialism as a philosophical outlook could not provide any basis for ethical conduct and any incentive for goodness." He spells this out in a paragraph which concludes: "I am not suggesting that among philosophical materialists there have not been examples of great sacrifices for noble causes. What I am suggesting is that their action was not consistent with their philosophy."

Narayan's rejection of Marxism as "materialism" leads directly to an essay in *Vico and Marx*, "The Question of Materialism in Vico and Marx," by George Kline, who teaches philosophy at Bryn Mawr College. Prof. Kline, while noting that Engels, Plekhanov, Lenin, "and all contemporary Marxist-Leninists—were and are philosophical materialists," he denies that "Marx, even the youngest Marx, was a philosophical materialist, i.e., a thinker who develops or defends a materialistic ontology, asserting the ontological primacy of matter and explaining whatever appears to be nonmaterial (thoughts, feelings, values, ideals, structures, laws) as manifestations, functions, or relational properties of 'matter in motion'." Producing a technical argument, Prof. Kline points out that Marx seldom used the word "matter," preferring the adjective "material" for which the writer educes from Marxist texts six different meanings, claiming that five of the

meanings do not flow from the basic materialist assumption. He claims that the economic institutions to which Marx assigns primary causation of the structure and thinking of human society are no more materialistic in implication than "universities, churches, professional societies, symphony orchestras" and their buildings and other requirements. Prof. Kline adds that Marx was guilty of "economic reductionism," but that this entails or affords no support for "a materialist ontology." (An ontology declares a system of becoming, involving a theory of causation.)

What is essential to a materialist ontology? For answer we go to Chapman Cohen's *Materialism Restated* (1927):

The one thing that would be fatal to materialism would be the necessity for assuming a controlling or directing intelligence in any part of the cosmic process. . . . The essential issue is whether it is possible to account for the whole range of natural phenomena in terms of the composition of forces. That is the principle for which Materialism has always stood. By that principle it stands or falls.

This is the outlook which Prof. Kline claims Marx did not have, yet surely he said nothing to demonstrate that it was not his. He said little to suggest that humans are able to shape their own destiny, although the *deus ex machina* of the revolutionary proletariat was intended to do just that. Yet Marx was certainly animated by compassion, by feelings of concern for human pain that his admired contemporary, Charles Darwin, offered nothing to explain, although by implication recognizing the presence of such qualities. We might say that Prof. Kline's endeavor to free Marx of the charge of being a "philosophical materialist" springs from respect for his motives, although he, like the other contributors to this book, prefers Vico's thinking to that of Marx. Kline's defense of Marx in technical terms seems very like Bruno Bettelheim's defense of Freud as a Renaissance man, despite the mechanization of his doctrines by American psychologists and analysts (in *Freud and Man's Soul*, 1982).

Of both Freud and Marx, we might say, with Jayaprakash Narayan, "that their action was not consistent with their philosophy." But the ideas of both now seem "finished," having been replaced by other and more constructive conceptions of the roots of human nature and the processes of social change. Why, then, go back to comparisons and criticisms of their philosophies when we have far better material to work with?

What was Vico's idea of the potentialities of human beings? As the writers of the concluding paper in *Vico and Marx* put it, it was "of man as a self-creator in history."

Another book we have for review—this one from England—is concerned with the fortunes of the British Labour Party, at low ebb these days. The title is *The Forward March of Labour Halted*; the authors are listed as Eric Hobsbawn, Ken Gill, and others, who include fifteen writers having various connections with the Party and labor unions in Britain. The publisher is named NLB—which is nowhere spelled out—and the price is £8.50.

The first paragraph of the Preface by the editors, Martin Jacques and Francis Mulhern, gives the background of the economic and political emergencies with which the contributors are concerned:

The depth of Britain's crisis is now almost universally recognized and felt. It is not only that we face the worst recession since the thirties, with some three million unemployed. Today, in contrast with that earlier period, the economy has no empire to depend upon and no centres of new industrial growth holding out the hope of overall regeneration in the future. At the same time, the crisis has created new social tensions, most vividly manifested in the rioting of the summer of 1981. And it has led to the breakup of the basic political consensus that dominated Britain for most of the post-war period, right into the late seventies. Seldom has Britain's political future been less predictable.

The discussions focus on the title essay by Eric Hobsbawn, first published in 1978 in *Marxism Today*. The editors say:

The book thus presents a record of continuous debate across three of the most critical years since the war. The debate is notable also for the diversity of its contributors. Politically, it embraces members of the Labor, Communist and Socialist Workers' parties, and also representatives of other socialist currents to the left of Labour. More important, perhaps, the book bridges the divisions of labour characteristic of most discussion on the left. It includes not only political actors but also representatives of the industrial, white-collar and public-sector unions, officials and workplace militants alike; not only those directly engaged in the struggles of the labour movement but also socialist academics and writers—all participants in a common discussion.

The first thing the reader is likely to notice is the facile intelligence of the writers of this book. From academics to union officials, they express themselves with clarity and strength. The second thing one may notice, however, is what seems a total neglect of the underlying causes of what Hobsbawn calls "a period of world crisis for capitalism, and, more specifically, of the crisis—one might almost say the breakdown—of the British capitalist society, at a moment when the working class and its movement should be in a position to provide a clear alternative and to lead the British peoples towards it."

Wholly missing is any reference to the Club of Rome study, *Limits to Growth* (1972). There is no mention of *Blueprint for Survival*, published in Britain as the January, 1972, issue of the *Ecologist*. No contributor saw fit to speak of *Small Is Beautiful* (1973), and Schumacher, who may eventually be recognized as the most perceptive economist of the century, is ignored. One contributor, a Communist labour organizer, speaks in passing of the conservationist organization, the Friends of the Earth, and similar groups, suggesting that British workers are broadening their horizons by showing an interest in such movements; and another writer, a Labour MP, notes the effect on the British economy of the shortage and high price of oil and other raw materials; but a reading of this book—or an attempt to read it—leaves the impression that there is only one objective of any importance for

the British people—a victory at the polls for the Labour Party. It is as though the writers, so preoccupied with Marxist formulas, predictions and prescriptions for regaining political office and power, are wholly unaware that not only economic resources and conditions are vastly changed since Marx's time, but that human attitudes have also altered—altered radically—during the past thirty years. Whether the falling off of membership in the British Labour Party during that time is a result of a new spirit taking hold in many parts of the world is a conclusion that may be left to the better informed readers and contributors to the British magazine, *Resurgence*, a publication filled with a kind of social and moral awareness apparently unknown to the Socialist Establishment in England.

Yet one writer in *The Forward March*, Royden Harrison, a professor of social history, puts his finger on the basic difficulty. "The tragedy of our time," he says at the end of his essay, "is that Marxism has become an ideology in the strict Marxist sense of the term." It is "the necessarily false consciousness of the industrial revolution of the twentieth century: a revolution which has to be brought about upon the basis of an international transfer of an achieved technology and under the conditions of imperialism." While the meaning of the second part of this statement—concerning "an international transfer"—is not obvious, the claim that "Marxism has become an ideology" seems clear enough, save for the wide range of meaning assigned to ideology. One dictionary says that ideology, for economic determinists, means "ineffectual thoughts as opposed to causally efficacious behavior." That may be the Marxist sense of the term. Here we adopt the meaning chosen by Louis Halle in *The Ideological Imagination* (1972), in which he says:

. . . I confine it to bodies of doctrine that present themselves as affording systems of belief so complete that whole populations may live by them alone, that are made known and interpreted by leaders ostensibly possessed of special genius or by organized elites not unlike priesthoods that claim exclusive authority as

representing something like revealed truth, and that consequently require the suppression of whatever does not conform. Perhaps I should put it that I am concerned here only with systems of belief that are implicitly totalitarian.

It will be seen that "ideology," so defined, not only excludes liberal democracy but is its opposite. For liberal democracy is based in the assumption that none of us mortals have a privileged knowledge of truth, that equally honest and intelligent men will disagree in their identification of it. Therefore, instead of undertaking to abolish diversity it seeks to accommodate it, providing an open marketplace in which men of varying beliefs may compete in offering their intellectual wares to the public. Such a marketplace, in order to accommodate diversity, requires freedom of speech and mutual tolerance.

If British Marxists have become ideologists, they are certainly not now guilty of opposing free speech and mutual tolerance. Rather, the application of the term is justified by their unwillingness or incapacity to give attention to other ways of thinking. Accordingly, we shorten the definition of ideology to the two sentences provided by a MANAS article in the 1950s:

An ideology is a systematic account of the nature of things which is believed in, campaigned for, but not ultimately known to be true. Politically, an ideology claims to define the way to the good life; religiously, it charts the path to salvation.

Marxism certainly qualifies as an ideology under this definition, not only now but from its beginning. A musing comment by Prof. Halle throws a further light:

It is not easy to define what gives a body of doctrine power over the minds of men in the mass. Especially for those who are unlearned and have intellectual pretensions, a vague immensity of conception, a high level of abstraction, and obscurity of language seem to be essential. The clarity, the specificity, and the unequivocal language found in the writings of Hobbes or a de Tocqueville can never move the world like the abstractions and obscurities of a Hegel, which permit a range of application and interpretation so wide that they can never be proved wrong. Hobbes required no exegesis, but the writers who have swayed the people have required whole libraries of it. Without the mystery that a Delphic ambiguity imparts, the limited minds of us poor

mortals, forever seeking magic, cannot be satisfied. The unreadability of Marxist literature in general has contributed to its sway.

One thing is certain: Marx's concern for the sufferings of mankind under the oppressive conditions of nineteenth-century capitalism—his passionate appeal to men of intelligence to set about changing those conditions, and the brilliance of his generalizations have been responsible for the multiplication of Marxists around the world. While there has been no intellectual Marxist "establishment" since the days of the Moscow Trials, which made Stalin's brutality and perfidy evident to all thinking people, Marx's vision has survived what seems an enormous variety in conceptions of the means to turn it into historical reality. The vision still has a kind of coherence, capable of attracting the learned as well as the unlearned referred to by Halle, as writers like Hobsbawn make evident. But why, again, is Marxism finished? It is finished because history, that final artificer in which Marx had so great a faith, has left the fundamental conceptions of Marxism behind. Yet the power of his vision is such that Marxists are unable to recognize this historic change.

The book we have been considering is sufficient evidence of this. Once more we turn to Prof. Halle for the critical analysis:

The basic fault, surely, was in Marx's conception. Specifically, it was in his belief that men, rather than constituting one species with a common human nature, are divided into two species quite different from each other. His original view of mankind as one "species being," the individual members of which are torn by inner conflict, represented true understanding that has been the basis of our greatest humanitarian literature from the ancient Greeks through Shakespeare to Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. In the end, however, his Manichean disposition overbore his philosophical insight. His departure from the reality of one human nature is summed up in the single sentence of his *Manifesto* in which he attacked the German socialists for taking pride in the thought that they were "representing, . . . not the interest of the proletariat, but the interests of Human Nature, of Man in general, who belongs to no

class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical phantasy." The basis of the difference between the philosophical Marxism in the manuscripts of 1844 and the Marxism of the *Manifesto* is in the conception of social classes as constituting distinct species. In the society that he saw as divided between "two great classes directly facing each other" there was no such thing as "human nature." Instead, there was bourgeois nature on the one hand, proletarian nature on the other.

The Manichean disposition of Marx's nature—and, if I may put it that way, of our common human nature—led him and his followers to distinguish his two classes as the demons and the angels. The popular appeal that this gave to the Marxism of the *Manifesto* was paid for by the sacrifice of truth.

The slow recovery of the truth thus lost is now writing "finis" to the ideology of Marxism. The ideologists themselves, however, will probably be the last to know what has happened to their faith.

## *REVIEW*

### TRUTH IN MYTH

THE first paragraph of a new book by Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History* (Harvest House, Montreal, Canada, \$8.50 paper, \$14.95 cloth), set going reflections in two directions. The author begins:

Myths of origin enable people to locate themselves in time and space. They offer an explanation of the unknown and hallowed traditions by linking them to heroic events and personages of the distant past. In addition, they form the ground for belief systems or ideologies which, providing a moral validation for attitudes and activities, bind men together into a society.

"Myths of origin," it seems clear from recent European history, become the chief inspirers and support of racism, and so may be condemned as bad things from which human beings should do all they can to free themselves. That is one line of reflection, with much to support it, both from common sense and the content of this book. The other line asks the question: Can human beings do without myths of origin? If not, what shall we do about our uncertainties concerning who we are and where we come from?

Mr. MacDougall's book should help to bring both these questions into focus and to provoke wondering about the answers. His case study is English history. The reader is likely to be amazed at the ease with which the English accepted the claim of Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century book, *History of the Kings of Britain*—that the original Britons were colonists led by and descended from Brutus, grandson of Aeneas of Troy. The heroic annals of these kingly ancestors are given in detail—made apparently out of whole cloth, since Geoffrey said he copied them out of an ancient book which no one else ever saw—and were calculated to please the Norman conquerors, who themselves had a tradition of being of Trojan origin. MacDougall says:

His [Geoffrey's] writing, appearing about 1136, was destined to become "the most famous work of

nationalistic historiography in the Middle Ages." It had a marked influence in subduing the social animosities of the Bretons, Anglo-Saxons, and Normans and drawing them together into a single nation. Geoffrey's fanciful account was used by early Plantagenet monarchs to support their regal claims and for both Tudors and Stuarts it came to constitute a useful prop to their dynastic ones. Though confidence in its historical reliability had almost evaporated by the eighteenth century, as the chief source of the Arthurian legend its influence carried on into the nineteenth century and as a spur to Celtic imagination continues into our own day.

It becomes clear from this book that believers in such myths and legends give them up only with great reluctance, since the feelings of identity, worth, and promise are fed by them. Continuity is indeed the heart of identity making origins of primary importance. Yet one may think that myths as influence are at their best when not taken literally. A great many children were brought up in the twentieth century on the tales of King Arthur, and while they soon learned that supporting historical facts were dim if not non-existent, the inspiration of knightly chivalry was not seriously diminished by this sophistication. One thinks, too, on a smaller scale, of the Scottish grandmother who said to the young descendant in her care, "Ian MacGregor, never forget that you are a MacGregor!"

While the tales of Arthur may be mostly romance, they may be preferable to the later "myth of origin" which arose in the nineteenth century—Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, written, it is now said, under the influence of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*—and to subsequent elaborations in the "naked ape" books of about twenty years ago. For example, Henry Anderson, in a MANAS article (May 6, 1970), "The Denaturalization of Human Nature," summarized the content of five such books, saying:

All posit that man is limited, "programmed," imprisoned by his animal heritage. . . . All imply, and some state flatly, that not only is man not superior to other animals as he frequently flatters himself: he is lower than they—he is more bestial than any beast—in his sexual promiscuity, and even more particularly

in his predatoriness and pugnacity. As Ardrey has put it, he is a killer ape. . . . The only hope for man lies in abandoning his deluded efforts to be decent, rational, just, and merciful and embracing the fact he is inherently irrational and murderous. The details of how this might work in practice are understandably vague, but apparently wars and race hatreds would end if men were no longer repressed in their instinctual desires to vent their bloodlust on objects closer to hand: parents, perhaps; or wives.

So, one might say to himself that if the Welsh still stubbornly insist on believing in King Arthur, more power to them! Knightly aggression at least had limits, and the Round Table encompassed virtues that modern England might well emulate, as well as other nations.

But can't we have the virtues without believing in the romantic myths? Perhaps, but do you know any virtuous person who lacks a conception of the sources of human nobility and responsibility—who is without some kind of *faith* that gives support in hours of trial? Could science help us? To ask the question is to answer it. Science, concerned only with the objective and definable, knows nothing of the virtues, simply by definition. So it is that, as another Canadian scholar has remarked (Northrop Frye in *The Stubborn Structures*), science can enter and take part in human culture only in the form of myth.

These are some of the questions that a reading of *Racial Myth in English History* may provoke or inspire. But England went through another cycle of belief, starting, as MacDougall shows, in the sixteenth century. For foundation there was the story of the coming to England in the middle of the fifth century of Hengest and Horsa, brother chieftains who led their Saxon bands to defend the British king Vortigan against the inroads of the Picts. They settled in Kent, bringing with them solid German virtues and a heritage the English found it easy to admire on both religious and military grounds. There seemed at least some ground in history for this view, and the myth of Anglo-Saxonism, finding articulate champions, became a lasting source of English pride. William Camden (1551-1623) was

the first of these advocates. He repeated Tacitus on the excellent qualities of the Germans, calling them a "warlike, victorious, stiff, stout and vigorous nation" that contributed basic elements of the English language as well. Another writer, Richard Verstegen (who took the name of his German grandfather), published a work in 1605 in which he declared that the German nation was "the Tree from which English men, as a most stately and flourishing branch, are issued and sprung forth." The Germans were to be admired as ancestors, Verstegen said, for three reasons:

(1) no people had ever inhabited Germany save the Germans themselves; (2) they had never been subdued; (3) they had neither mixed with foreign people nor had their language ever been mixed with a foreign tongue. Given these points of "greatest National Honour," Verstegen doubted "whether any People else in the World can challenge to have equality with them."

This doctrine certainly suited the British, with their rising spirit of conquest. Their "superiority" would justify whatever they chose to do, and they were able to do a great deal. The surprising thing is that even distinguished Englishmen saw little wrong with the claim to cultural as well as manly superiority. This had its loftiest expression, MacDougall says, in the writings of Edmund Burke.

His literary magic cast its spell on unwary readers for generations to come and served to obscure the deep conservatism and class prejudice that underlay his thought. Though he avoided a form of Gothicism which narrowly identified the Anglo-Saxons as uniquely God's chosen people, his elitist philosophy, which interpreted the present order of things as of God's election, did much to maintain a climate of opinion wherein essentially racist arguments were sympathetically heard. Though the Burkean image of English society became less and less realistic as England industrialized and underwent reform, it persisted in the form of a political myth which influenced almost every major nineteenth-century historical commentator.

The mood prospered and grew. Writing of the time a century after Burke, MacDougall says:

But for sheer exuberance and bluff prejudice in favor of Anglo-Saxonism, it would be difficult to match the rhetoric of one of the most popular writers of the day, Charles Kingsley. Clergyman, novelist and poet, from 1860 to 1869 he was professor of modern history at Cambridge. No one championed the cause of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism with greater vigor than Kingsley. It was beyond dispute, in Kingsley's mind, that the English were Teutons who turned aside from the great stream of Teutonic migrations and settled in Britain, "to till the ground in comparative peace, keeping unbroken the old Teutonic laws, unstained the old Teutonic faith and virtue. . . ." Their mission was now universal for "the welfare of the Teutonic race is the welfare of the world." The realization of their high destiny was not accidental, it was clearly a part of "the strategy of providence" for "in spite of all their sins, the hosts of our forefathers were the hosts of God."

This, by the man who wrote *Water Babies* and a charming biography of Hypatia, the Neoplatonic girl philosopher of Alexandria!

Then, at the turn of the century, a British historian said:

The present ascendancy of England was directly attributable to the descent of its people "from the grand old Aryan race." The maintenance of unity and integrity of the Teutonic race was of paramount importance, for upon it depended "the progress and the freedom of the human family." In seeking to identify the genuine Teuton, Macnamara could offer no better examples than "the present Emperor of Germany, his illustrious father and grandfather, and Frederick the Great."

The book's last chapter, "The Disintegration of an Ideology," needs only four pages to point to the obvious reasons why the British no longer say much about race—two world wars with Germany and the Hitlerian doctrine of Aryan purity. The question, however, remains: Can humans do without a myth of origins? Are any suitable ones available? How can a proper myth be thought of as "true"?



**COMMENTARY**  
**THE FUENTES PAMPHLETS**

IN MANAS for last Nov. 2, we said here that we had decided to make a pamphlet out of Carlos Fuentes' Harvard Commencement address, which was printed in *Vanity Fair* for last September. His subject was the social and political troubles of Latin America; his point was that countries where people are struggling for freedom and survival need to work out their own destiny; intervention by other powers is wrong and cannot work. Mr. Fuentes is a distinguished novelist who served his country, Mexico, as ambassador to France for a number of years. The clarity and persuasiveness of his talk at Harvard gave what he said unusual importance. This was the reason for making a pamphlet of it. We decided to print it in Spanish, also, to make it easy for the growing Spanish-speaking population in the United States to understand and appreciate.

We asked for help from readers on the production costs of these pamphlets and can now report that generous and substantial contributions have been received. Meanwhile, through Mr. Fuentes' literary agent in New York, we have received the author's permission to publish the pamphlets. There has, however, been a necessary delay, since we found that Mr. Fuentes wrote his address in English, so that we had to arrange for a translation into Spanish, and then to submit it to the author for approval. We are now awaiting this approval, and have begun production on the English version. Contributors will receive their copies by mail when they are ready. The price for buying copies of both pamphlets will be announced when all the costs are in. The design will be worthy of the contents.

A passage from the address will show the quality of Mr. Fuentes' thought and the relevance of what he said at Harvard:

The United States is the only major power of the West that was born beyond the Middle Ages, modern at birth. As part of the fortress of the Counter-Reformation, Latin America has had to do constant

battle with the past. We did not acquire freedom of speech, freedom of belief, freedom of enterprise as our birthrights, as you did. We have had to fight desperately for them. The complexity of the cultural struggle underlying our political and economic struggle has to do with unresolved tensions, sometimes as old as the conflict between pantheism and monotheism, or as recent as the conflict between tradition and modernity. This is our cultural baggage, both heavy and rich.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves BEST IN OHIO

IN 1965, Tom Peters, a graduate of Notre Dame, living in Lorain, Ohio, started a halfway house for young people who had come into conflict with the law. He called it "Better Way," and later moved the undertaking to Elyria, a nearby city, where the facilities he began developed into several homes for teenagers in trouble. What they need most, he found, is a home and community environment with opportunity to see the advantage in changing their ways. In 1975 an Ohio State University study concluded that the Better Way projects had the highest rating in halfway house programs in the state of Ohio. A subscription to *betterway*, an eight-page tabloid which Peters publishes several times a year, is \$2.50, and contributions are welcome. The address is 700 Middle Ave., Elyria, Ohio 44035.

The Fall 1983 issue of *betterway* is devoted to "race at Betterway and race in the justice system: black and white races." About a million of Ohio's ten million population are black, and since the crime rate among blacks is much higher than the rate for whites, many of the young whom Betterway serves are black.

Tom Peters' personal background is of help to him in this work. He had black friends at the university and later, working as a volunteer at the Peter Maurin House in Chicago, he "found that skid row seems to take away the color differences." Black awareness, he says, "became part of my life."

My father's side of the family are southerners, so I learned their rural, slave-owning ways directly. My wife is from Louisiana and on visits to DeRidder [population about 6,000] I saw how blacks were kept in southern towns, in the shanty area called Darktown.

I have tried to integrate blacks and whites at Betterway and tried to help staff and youth understand one another. It is a struggle to know if I am emphasizing race too much or not enough.

In Betterway's Search Shop we carry an unusual assortment of children's and adult's books dealing with racial problems and books by black authors.

Martin Luther King was born in 1929, the same year I came into this world. I had a recording of his famous speech, but loaned it to someone and it is gone forever. But not the memory. I have a dream, too.

Staffs in the Betterway homes are racially mixed. A collection of "random observations" by Peters on blacks and whites at Betterway makes interesting reading:

When one of our homes is filled with mostly white boys or girls and one or two blacks, the black kids are uncomfortable and usually hang together. When the homes are mostly black, with one or two whites, the whites are even more uncomfortable and may ask to be removed or ask when more whites are coming.

We have found no noticeable difference in the kinds of crimes the young people commit if they are white or black. The crime difference seems to be between the poor kids and the middle class kids. Poor boys and girls steal to buy things for themselves whether they are white or black. Some steal cars to sell, some shoplift and keep the items they can use and sell the others.

We have noticed that poor black kids are more conscious of clothes and dance styles than poor white kids who come here. Blacks like soul disco music; whites rock and roll or country.

White kids like to take pills and drink Jack Daniels to get high. Black kids like to drink sweet wine. Both like marijuana and beer.

Occasionally we get a black boy or girl who physically wants to dominate and assault peers and staff seemingly just because they are white. This has usually been a pattern before coming to us in some institutional setting and on the streets, and even the smallness of our groups (eleven) does not break this angry pattern. . . .

There were a few other black boys here over the years who had been raised in one of two black families in white towns. They knew nothing of the black sayings, ways of dressing, dancing, and romancing like the Cleveland black boys. As time went on they picked up some of the black ways, but still retained their small town white cultures. They like rock and roll over disco.

White boys who have been brought up to hate "niggers" and come from all-white middle class suburbs have real difficulties in adjusting to life in the group homes here. It takes them several months to stop using racist names. We try to put them in a room with a black boy, and black staff take them home for a southern meal now and then. . . .

At Betterway we try to break down the stereotypes in blacks and whites and try to help them get along better in a number of ways. All activities are done in mixed groups. Sometimes they go to black events (disco music) and sometimes white (country or rock and roll).

We have discussions on the history of races and race relations. Sometimes the black kids and white kids meet separately to discuss their similarities and differences, perhaps more freely.

Usually when a boy or girl leaves Betterway they are more tolerant and understanding of the opposite race, and often have formed friendships without color considerations.

Peters speaks of activities "done in mixed groups." Another story relates:

We have had a busy summer at the Beacon Home for boys. We did a lot of swimming this really hot, dry summer. Sometimes we went to the new lake at the Betterway farm, but it is not full of water yet and we will have to wait until next year to have a diving board. Basketball took up some days, we saw some movies, had cookouts, and lifted weights at the Y in Lorain, Ohio. . . . But most of the focus was on the coming and going of boys here, trying to figure out what to do to help them get on with a life of their own. There have been 23 boys here, including those present now, since the last issue of the paper.

A group of Beacon House boys, black and white, took a trip to Niagara Falls last summer. This issue of *betterway* has fifteen photographs (and some drawings) of the young people, working and playing together.

All the articles in *betterway* are unpretentious and down-to-earth, yet the content inspires respect and sympathy. In one place Peters says:

I interviewed and accepted most of the boys and girls written about in this issue. A few surprised me in failing to make it here, and a few surprised me in making it. Most did what was expected. . .

Out at the Betterway farm things have changed a little. Tom Lucki and his brother Mike have moved in and cleared the trails and are working on many other projects with the help of Betterway kids. They made the first apple cider a few weeks ago. The Luckis are from a rural family of twelve brothers and sisters, brought with them a dog, two goats, rabbits, geese and about 59 chickens. And a lot of enthusiasm for the place.

The paper reports the failures among the young at Betterway as well as the successes. There is a limit to what a halfway house can do, but the people working there push hard right up to the limit. They are saving lives and characters.

One story reviews current literature on juvenile crime and delinquency, giving attention to several papers and a recent book by Charles Silberman, *Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice*. Young blacks are now striving directly "to gain their self-esteem and make up for the past." Some other points made by Silberman:

The homicide rate in black Africa is about the same as in western Europe; the black American homicide rate is three times higher than in Africa. Thus violence is something black Americans learned in this country, not Africa.

Every other immigrant group to the U.S. came voluntarily; blacks came in chains and violence. Violence was used to keep blacks in submission for years. . . .

What is remarkable is how little black violence there has been. Black Americans continue to be given humiliation, insult and embarrassment as a daily diet, without regard to individual merit. "To be a Negro in this country, and to be relatively conscious," James Baldwin has written, "is to be in a rage almost all the time."

## FRONTIERS

### Inflation Is Unconquerable—Unless. . .

LOOKING through the pages of *Time Running Out*—a collection of articles that appeared in the British magazine *Resurgence*, and published in paperback in 1976—a mine of excellent material for this department—we came upon an explanation of inflation by E. F. Schumacher, one of his nine contributions to *Resurgence* in this book. We now summarize what he wrote (in 1975), assuming that while other economists may pick at what he says, they will not be able to contradict it.

Inflation, he begins, is "an upward movement of prices." This is a proper definition because we can understand it. To say, instead, that it is a downward valuation of money makes little sense by comparison. Why do prices go up? Because people who have things to sell put them up. Why do they put them up? Because both the ingredients and the processing of them are costing more, so they have to put them up. That, at any rate, is what they say.

But is it true? Maybe they have decided simply to increase their incomes, which is nothing unusual for people in business.

Another explanation might be that for various reasons they have been obliged to use inferior raw materials—poor ores or marginal land—in producing what they produce, requiring more labor, or more highly paid labor, and extra refinements, without anyone especially profiting from the change. But increases from such causes, Schumacher says, can't possibly account for the volume of price increases of inflation. The first cause given must be mainly at work. What has happened in this case? Who started the spiraling upward motion? He says:

An increasing number of groups of *essential* producers have discovered their power. Garbage collectors, airline pilots, coal miners, oil exporting countries, power station maintenance men, even nurses, railwaymen, postmen, teachers—in various

places and at various times have discovered that they can successfully insist on much higher incomes than society or the so-called market mechanism had hitherto granted them. They can insist because by withholding their goods or services they can bring the whole of society, or essential parts of it, to a standstill.

If you tell them they shouldn't do this, they have a good answer, which Schumacher gives:

Most, although not all, of these groups of essential producers have had a poor deal in the past. The "Market" does not recognize the essentiality of a service as a criterion for income distribution. It settles prices, and therewith incomes, in accordance with Supply and Demand where there is free competition, and in accordance with Power where there is organization. Free competition can be effective only in markets with a large number of small producers, in which no one has any real bargaining strength. As a Big Power system actually exists alongside the Free Competition system, the latter's incomes tend to lag behind, no matter how essential its services may be for society, including the Big Power System. Not surprisingly, the people trapped in the Free Competition system gradually grow wise to the brutal truth that they, too, can acquire power through organization, and that they must do so if they want a fair deal. As they get themselves organized, often very much against their normal inclinations, those who in fact provide the essential services discover their essentiality and therewith their bargaining power.

This seems simple enough, also understandable. Schumacher recalls the complaints by the professors of a British university who found that trash collectors were collecting a slightly higher income than the teachers. The trash collectors were not moved by the complaints of the academics. "If you do not like it," they said, "come and join us."

What about the Arabs and the other oil-exporting countries? Schumacher points out:

Until fairly recently, these countries counted for nothing in the world. Immensely rich and powerful international oil companies controlled the world's oil business with virtually no regard to the economic interests of the producer countries, which finally saw no other way of defending themselves but by setting up the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting

Countries (OPEC). OPEC's first Secretary General, Dr. Fuad Rouhani, referred to this in a speech delivered on July 1, 1963, as follows:

"There is a Persian proverb which says that if God so wills good will come out of evil. That is not a bad adage to apply to the birth of our Organization. . . What was the evil source from which it sprang? It was the exercise by the oil companies of a unilateral ability to modify, without consultation with the producing countries, the posted prices of oil. In 1960 they modified those prices downward for the second time in two years, thereby seriously cutting the per-unit revenues earned by those countries from their exports. . . . [At the same time] the prices of manufactured goods which our countries have to buy from the industrialized countries continue to increase year after year."

Again, simple and understandable. Schumacher moves to generalization:

When substantial groups of producers who had previously been considered powerless—so considered by themselves as well as by their customers—discover and use their bargaining power, they put up the prices they charge for their goods and services solely and simply in order to obtain a bigger "share of the cake." It is, technically speaking, perfectly correct to say that the resulting rise in prices, called inflation, is due to their action. From their own point of view, however, whether they be dustmen [trash collectors] or OPEC, the cause of inflation is something quite different: It is the ruthless determination by others to defend their own incomes by passing on higher costs and insisting on the maintenance of previously established relativities. Obviously, no substantial group can obtain a bigger "share of the cake" if the rest refuse to be content with a smaller "share of the cake."

So it goes. Will raising the interest rates cure inflation?

Yes, it will. It will cure it in the same way that a car can be stopped by cutting off its lubricants. What is the "meaning" of inflation? Schumacher ends by saying:

Although we all dislike and are bothered by price rises of the goods and services we have to buy, the people who actually provide essential goods and services and have discovered their bargaining power are, as a matter of fact, not unduly worried. To them, inflation is not the greatest evil: it is rather a

challenge to the rest of society to concern itself with social justice. . . .

There is no "arithmetic of justice": no one can work out what is "fair reward for fair work." But this stark fact is no excuse for pretending that the problem of social justice does not exist and the distribution of incomes can be left to so-called market forces.

Until we concern ourselves seriously with social and economic justice, we shall find it impossible to conquer the problem of inflation.