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PRINCIPLES OF THE POLIS

THERE is a view of human affairs which seldom achieves clear expression in modern times. It is that we think too much, and much too precisely, about the practical problems of government. Since these problems are difficult, if not by nature insoluble, and since their solution always comes, finally, by attrition, accident, inadequate compromise, or simple displacement by other issues, a great deal of this "practical" thinking proves to have been wasted; meanwhile, we have given only brief symbolic attention to what we believe is good and right.

There is a hard irony here. The good government, we say, is the one which preserves freedom. And then we think so intensively and devise so ingeniously ways to preserve what we believe to be freedom that we not only tangle up the freedom with regulations and limitations, but also forget how to think freely because of the insistence on being "practical." In time, in such an environment, ideas which have no political application tend to lose all reality. Something like this has happened to us. Tired of being a wallflower, the spirit of true freedom has simply left the scene. And we try to recreate her image with only our hard logics, our anger, and our frustrations.

Men have always been able to make a utopian case for no government, but the case for poor or even bad government may turn out to have a more practical appeal. There is a book by a conscientious British colonial administrator, first published in 1898, which in some ways amounts to a wise brief for bad government. This author is Fielding Hall, who was a district magistrate in rural Burma after the third Burmese war, when the British took over the problems of local administration. His book is *The Soul of a People*, and since it went through many editions it can probably be found in a second-hand book store.

In his chapter on the government of Burma—the government the British were replacing—Mr. Hall first sketches its extreme shortcomings. It was powerless, ignorant, and corrupt. The Burmese had ample experience to support their proverb that "officials are one of the five great enemies of mankind." In what follows Mr. Hall does not exactly praise weakness and corruption, but he finds them, at last, small matters to contend with. He writes:

> It may be asked why the Burmese people remained quiet under such a rule as this; why they did not rise and destroy it, raising a new one in its place; how it was that such a state of corruption lasted for a year, let alone for many years.
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> And the answer is this: However bad the government may have been, it had the qualities of its defects. If it did not do much to help the people, it did little to hinder them. To a great extent it left them alone to manage their own affairs in their own way. Burma in those days was like a great untended garden, full of weeds, full of flowers too, each plant striving after its own way, gradually evolving into higher forms. . . . The Burmese government left its people alone; that was one great virtue. And, again, any government, however good, however bad, is but a small factor in the life of a people; it comes far below many other things in importance. A short rainfall for a year is more disastrous than a mad king; a plague is worse than fifty grasping governors; social rottenness is incomparably more dangerous than the rottenest government.

Now this is a romantic view, one may say, which no longer has any validity. But we started out by suggesting that it may be more important to decide what is good and right than to confine our thinking to what is practical. Note that the chief reason why people read Henry David Thoreau, today, is his wholly uncompromising embodiment of this view. People who simply go on managing "their own affairs in their own way," not bothering to argue about whether it is practical or not—these are still the people whose

lives give substance to our dreams. And whatever you may think of the General Welfare clause, it was surely one of the original purposes of the Constitution of the United States to keep government "but a small factor in the life of a people." Of course, for this to be possible, other factors must remain or grow large, since government power fills vacuums just as surely as germs invade and dominate unhealthy organisms. Mr. Hall continues:

> . . . in Burma it was only the supreme government, the high officials, that were very bad. It was only the management of state affairs that was feeble and corrupt; all the rest was very good. The land laws, the self-government, the social condition of the people were admirable. It was so good that the rotten central government made but little difference to the people, and it would probably have lasted for a long while if not attacked from the outside. A greater power came and upset the government of the king, and established itself in his place and I may here say that the idea that the feebleness or wrongdoing of the Burmese government was the cause of the downfall is a mistake. If the Burmese government had been the best that ever existed, the annexation would have happened just the same. It was a political necessity for us.
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> The central government of a country is, as I have said, not a matter of much importance. It has very little influence in the evolution of the soul of a people. It is always a great deal worse than the people themselves—a hundred years behind them in civilization, a thousand years behind them in morality. Men will do in the name of government acts which, if performed in a private capacity, would cover them with shame before men, and would land them in gaol or worse. The name of government is a cloak for the worst passions of manhood. It is not an interesting study, the government of mankind.

It is a temptation to go on quoting from Mr. Hall, especially on the religion of the Burmese people, which is a form of Buddism, but this would mean turning the present discussion into a Buddhist tract, which is not our purpose. Yet it is pertinent to say that the Buddhist priests seem to have shared Mr. Hall's view that government has nothing to do with the souls of the people. At any rate, they would have nothing to do with government. They would not even help the British magistrate, Mr. Hall, when he asked for friendly advice on some village dispute he had to settle. "These are not our affairs," they said to him. "Go to the people; they will tell you what you want." Apparently, the Buddhist priests understood well in some prior, uncodified form the principle of separation of Church and State:

> Their influence is by example and precept, by teaching the laws of the great teacher, by living a life blameless before men, by preparing their souls for rest. It is a general influence, never a particular one. If anyone came to the monk for counsel, the monk would only repeat to him the sacred teaching, and leave him to apply it.
>
> So each village managed its own affairs, untroubled by squire or priest, very little troubled by the state. That within their little means they did it well, no one can doubt. They taxed themselves without friction, they built their own monastery schools by voluntary effort. They maintained a very high, a very simple, code of morals, entirely of their own initiative.

There may be some basic and indispensable truth about man locked up in Fielding Hall's brief account of Burmese society before the British came to improve it with the efficiencies of Western civilization. Of course, in order to find out this truth, we might have to believe in our "souls"—even if only in some skeptical Buddhist fashion—and this could prove more difficult for us than fighting our endless battles for "good government" and for "justice."

One hardly expects to come upon ideas of this sort in the works of contemporary Western thinkers. There are, however, interesting resemblances to them in the present conceptions of Ignazio Silone, an Italian writer who has worked his way through the whole gamut of modern social theory and revolutionary action, and who now, when the question of "justice" comes up, is fond of quoting Simone Weil's definition of justice as "that fugitive from the victor's camp." We last gave attention to Silone's ideas in the Aug. 10, 1966, MANAS, the occasion being his latest book. A more intimate

portrait of the man and his thought appears in the March *Atlantic,* by his close friend, Iris Origo.

Silone became a communist as a young man in 1921. The break with the Party came in 1932; he was finally expelled for his questions and dissident views, the pretext being that he was "politically abnormal"—a charge which for him was only an admission of a larger interest. Silone's deep allegiance, which has never changed, the *Atlantic* writer finds expressed in *Luca's Secret:*

> "Everything I have written," he says, "and probably everything I may still write, is only concerned with the small piece of land that can be seen at a glance from the house where I was born." But he also claims that his picture of this little world—that of the peasants of the Marsica—has a universal validity. All the world over, men such as these—fellahin coolies, muzhiks, *peones, cafoni*, "men who cause the earth to bear fruit and go hungry themselves"—are alike. "They are a nation, a race, a church of their own." It is these men whom, in all his books, Silone describes and defends.
>
> One of the dominant themes of his writings is that of the need for brotherhood, the destruction of human loneliness. "Revolution," says his young student, Murica, "is the need to cease to be alone. It is an attempt to remain together, and not to be afraid any more."

In his great trilogy, *Fontamara, Bread and Wine,* and *The Seed Beneath the Snow,* Silone explores the breakdown of his political illusions. He did with his art what he said men who found out their own mistakes and follies ought to do—tell the truth. "It is our duty to testify," he said. There was the duty toward the impressionable young: "What should we tell them? Simply the truth."

There is value in taking particular note of the *kind* of illusions Silone embraced for a while, as distinguished from some others. Spina, Silone's protagonist, treads a long and painful path to the conclusion of *The Seed Beneath the Snow*—to the final and unshakeable discovery that there is nothing left for a man who loves his fellows to do, now, except to restore the simplest kind of faith of human beings in one another, by unexpecting acts of kindness. This growth in Spina's character—from complex ideological commitment to primitive human affection—reveals undying truth, and reveals it *all the way*. You read about his "mistakes" without any sense of wasted time. Some basic process of awakening is illustrated. The art of the novelist involves the reader in this process and it would never occur to anyone to reject the first parts of the story of Spina because then he was in the grip of political illusion. There was also something wonderfully right about this man.

But we would have a very different view of a writer who insisted that we become familiar with all the epicycles of the Ptolemaic astronomy as some kind of preliminary to mastering the Copernican Theory. Ptolemy was *wrong,* we would say. What is the sense of studying him.?

Obviously, we are quite content to let astronomers correct the mistakes of other astronomers; we'll concede Ptolemy A for effort, but little more. The flat certainties of science require no history of preceding errors to be properly understood. On the other hand, we value Silone not because he is finally "right," but because he has a way of showing us the terrible mistakes men make when they imagine that *human* truths can be had, ready-made, and at second-hand, as though they were the same as scientific truths about the sun and the planets. Silone's truths are concerned with openness and uncertainty, not closed issues.

Silone is a man who, as Miss Origo says, "has suffered a double ideological bankruptcy." Silone was one of those who returned to Italy after the war and helped to draw up a new Italian constitution. Yet dissensions soon drove him from party politics and in 1949 he said:

> "We had the illusion that we would be able to renew the traditional parties from within, that we would succeed in preventing the division of Italian politics into two camps, one under the protection of

> the United States, and one under that of Russia. Our hopes have failed."

Silone is now a man who has consumed his illusions, who seems to regard such worn-out certainties as never more than the raw materials of another order of truth. He is, as Miss Origo says, "a solitary and questioning man, and yet no pessimist." She continues:

> Beneath the mistrust which life has taught him of political frameworks and clichés, of human hypocrisy, cruelty, and opportunism, there is still a stubborn, unquenchable spring of hope. He no longer believes in the possibility of a perfect political order or of any perfect institutional authority, and when asked, "Do you believe in a Christian society," he dryly replied that there seems to be a certain incompatibility between these two terms. Yet to the more general question whether he still had faith in mankind, he answered: "I feel a certain trust. I feel confidence in the men who accept the inevitable suffering of existence and find some certainties within it. And in the same way I believe that out of the forced camps and the prisons of the totalitarian countries, some men may yet come forth, who will cause the blind to see."

Silone's resilient faith is based "on the inner assurance that we are free and responsible beings, that each man has an absolute need to open his heart to another man's realities, and that it is possible for souls to communicate with each other." And he asks: "Isn't that an irrefutable proof of man's brotherhood?"

These are the principles, not of politics, but of the *polis.* Once a man grasps them, he can never let them go.

REVIEW
BUBER'S HIGH STATION

MARTIN BUBER was a man whose calm presence grew throughout the most agonizing years of modern history. He spoke to his times with an understanding peculiarly his own, one which stubbornly resists classification, yet addressed the age with sharp particularity. The reader looking for a way to identify Buber in intellectual terms will find himself able to make little progress, yet is likely to recognize that he is having an encounter with *wisdom.* Now this or any wisdom is not the result of choosing the right abstractions, and pressing out all the juices of their implication. Wisdom is spontaneous sight into value and meaning, after which, sometimes, some useful abstractions may be made. What a wise man says is like the songs a great singer sings—both choose what they do, and they might have done something else. A wise man's sayings do not exhaust or define his wisdom; he speaks from his own altitude, and the attempt to climb to that height by using what he says as some kind of intellectual ladder is on the whole a vain undertaking.

We have for review Buber's latest book, *The Knowledge of Man* (Harper Torchbook, $1.45), edited and with an introduction by Maurice Friedman. The selected essays here offered are said by Prof. Friedman to comprise the "most systematic and explicit presentation" of Buber's philosophy, and this well may be. Yet one feels a certain resistance to this identification of what Buber is about. It seems better to say that a disciplined and compassionate intelligence chose certain directions of investigation and reflection, and then spoke to other men what he believed they needed to hear. He made, in short, a magnificent tract for the times, far more than a collection of apposite aphorisms. It is as though a man, far on a great journey along with other men, knew he had reached a point which gave him a perspective systematically neglected by the others, and at great cost to themselves. So he would stand for a while at that point, seeing and seeing and seeing, and then would make a precise and coherent exposition of what he had seen. By this means a deep moral vitality flowed into perceptions which, if presented only casually, would gain only casual assent.

This is a way of saying that one ought not to try to make a "system" out of Buber's thought. It is better to savor him. He writes for men at work in the world, depending upon the intuitive acceptance of the reader. He does not reach after abstract philosophical symmetries. Final resolutions seem to him to have a distracting role, and he turns away from them. So the best use that can be made of Martin Buber is to ignore the matter of whether he "agrees" with other philosophers one admires, and to see what *he* means and why he thinks it important.

For example, in the essay, "What Is Common to All," Buber prefers the waking word of speech, which makes possible the conscious dialogue between men, to mystic access to primeval unity. He wants no precocious flight to the One, no "annihilation of the human person," so long as there is work to do in the world. So his text is taken from Heracleitus: "The waking have a single cosmos in common." The subjectivity of sleep—even the high union in deep sleep of which the Upanishad speaks—is for Buber an escape from responsibility. Now this, we might argue, constitutes a misunderstanding of the Upanishadic intent, and later of Plato's intent (Plato's philosopher *returns* to the Cave), but instead of pressing this point, let us try to grasp Buber's:

> If I appeal to the philosophy of Heracleitus, shot through with contradictions as it appears, against the uniformly soaring wisdom of the Orient, it is for the sake of a specific need of our time. I mean by this the confrontation of two points of view, the first of which values the collectivity above all else, whereas the second believes the meaning of existence to be disclosed or disclosable in the relation of the individual to his self. The first, which is usually called the Eastern because it is today especially at home in Eastern Europe, appears to be a travesty of the ancient idea of the common way; the second,

> represented by Western philosophy, psychology, and literature, readily invokes the ancient Indian teaching and its offshoots. This latter I am discussing, and the reasons for this choice are weighty ones. The modern collectivism does, in fact, place the collectivity above all, but it does not ascribe to it the character of an absolute; it treats the absolute in general as an inadmissible fiction. The modern variety of individualism, in contrast, is inclined to understand the individual self, which the I finds in its depth, as the self simply and as the absolute. Despite all stress on the interest in the "outer world" or even a kind of cosmic sympathy, despite all reference to the all-soul as the one that is really meant, what unmistakably rules here is the tendency toward the primacy of the individual existence and toward its self-glorification. And this individualism is still more dangerous than collectivism, for the pretension of the false absolute is more dangerous than the denial of the absolute.

The burden of meaning here is that Buber will have no transfiguration which leaves the world and its woes behind. No private settlements, no mystical escape, no avoidance of the dialogue of man with man—the path of the selfish Buddha attracts Buber not at all.

Turning to the more mechanical escape devices of the contemporary scene, Buber finds it especially significant that, at the time of taking mescalin, Aldous Huxley "must avoid the eyes of those present in the room, people who are otherwise especially dear to him; they belong, indeed, to the 'world of selfhood' that he has left." But this world is the common world of dialogue between human beings:

> When he [Huxley] speaks of the mescalin trance as one of the different kinds of "flight out of selfhood and environment," to which flight the urge is "present in almost every man at almost every time," then he means again the common world from which the enjoyer of mescalin flees for the duration of his trance. Huxley calls it, to be sure, the "urge to go beyond the self," by which he means that here man escapes the entanglement in the net of his utilitarian aims. But in reality the consumer of mescalin does not emerge from this net into some sort of free participation in common being; rather merely into a strictly private special sphere given to him as his own for several hours. The "chemical holidays" of which Huxley speaks are holidays not only from the petty I, enmeshed in the machinery of its aims, but also from the person participating in the community of logos and cosmos—holidays from the very uncomfortable reminder to verify oneself as such a person.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Buber to our times is his profound insight into the issues of the age of psychoanalysis. Several of the essays in this volume were originally lectures given in Washington, D.C., in 1957, under the sponsorship of the Washington School of Psychiatry. Buber was brought to the United States to give these lectures, primarily at the initiative of Dr. Leslie H. Farber, who was then chairman of the faculty of the Washington School of Psychiatry. In the essay, "Guilt and Guilt Feelings," Buber explores the complex problems which result when the psychiatric patient suffers from both socially imposed guilt feelings and those deeper pangs which Buber calls ontic or existential. "Existential guilt," he says, "occurs when someone injures an order of the human world whose foundations he knows and recognizes as those of his own existence and of all common human existence." What is the role of the therapist here?

Buber dismisses this question with great subtlety, laying bare nuance after nuance in the problem. He quotes von Weizsaecker's admonition: "treatment of the essential in man" is simply excluded from the realm of psychotherapy. "Just the final destiny of man," he writes, "must not be the subject of therapy." Agreeing, Buber asks what would happen to the disciplines of psychotherapy if they are to be invaded by "a pseudo-intuitive dilettantism that dissolves all fixed norms"? Yet Buber adds:

> But there is an exceptional case—the case where the glance of the doctor, the perceiving glance which makes him a doctor and to whom all his methods stand in a serving relation extends into the sphere of essence, where he perceives essential lapse and essential need. There, to be sure, it is still denied him to treat "the essential" in his patients, but he may and should guide it to where an essential help of the self, a help till now neither willed nor anticipated, can begin. It is neither given to the therapist nor allowed to him to indicate a way that leads onward from here.

> But from the watchtower to which the patient has been conducted, he can manage to see a way that is right for him and that he can walk, a way that is not granted the doctor to see. For at this high station all becomes personal in the strictest sense. . . . But in order that the therapist be able to do this, he must recognize just one thing steadfastly and recognize it ever again: there exists real guilt, fundamentally different from all the anxiety-produced bugbears that are generated in the cavern of the unconscious. Personal guilt, whose reality some schools of psychoanalysis contest and others ignore, does not permit itself to be reduced to the trespass against a powerful taboo.

Here, philosophy, with the aid and consent of distinguished psychotherapeutic practitioners, returns to her place as queen of the sciences. The wonderful thing about Martin Buber is the fact that the authority in his thought is self-generating. His wisdom is needed, and it is understood. Not least important in this volume is the final section, an appendix containing the taped report of a dialogue between Martin Buber and Carl R. Rogers. Here, again, the fruitfulness of Buber's intensively introspective thought becomes manifest.

COMMENTARY
FREEDOM QUILTING BEE

WE have a letter from a San Francisco reader which speaks for itself:

> In the issue of Feb. 8, I was most interested to read the article on the tutoring movement, and would like to add a few comments. For several years, I have done tutoring in a YMCA, a church basement, and for some time now, in my own home. By no means is it necessary to be a "student" to do this; many people in San Francisco who have done tutoring have not set foot in an institution of higher learning for many years. The children I work with (only two at a time) all have reading difficulties, a widespread problem for those attending black ghetto schools.
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> Tutoring is not a one-way process of giving; I find the children very enjoyable and learn a great deal from the way they perceive things. In short, tutoring gives meaning to my spare time; to say the least, it is much more rewarding than spending free time drinking or constantly watching television, as too many employed people do.
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> Also, I was delighted to see the article on the expansion of Liberty House of Jackson, Miss. Since MANAS writes so well about the grassroots, cooperative type of effort, maybe you would be interested in the enclosed brochure and newspaper clipping about the quilt-making cooperative of Alabama. It is a beautiful example of people using skills they already have to avoid destitution. I myself have one of their quilts, in a bold, geometric design, and it is really a work of art.

The co-op here spoken of is called the Freedom Quilting Bee. It was started last year with the help of an Episcopal minister, Francis X. Walter, who saw some quilts hanging on a line in Possum Bend. He found that this craft had been practiced in the Alabama Black Belt for 140 years, and that the quilts made by the Negro women were being sold at too low a price. Obtaining $300 from the Episcopal Society's Daniels Memorial Fund, he bought thirty quilts and took them to New York. They sold well at auction, and with income from another lot, also auctioned, he accumulated $3,200, which financed the establishment of the coop, Freedom Quilting Bee. With the help of a production expert from New Orleans, the quilts were brought to uniform excellence and may now be purchased at standard prices. Quilts from stock are $20 and $25, depending on size and design. Baby quilts, $12. Sun bonnets are $3, pot-holders, $1.

The co-op welcomes direct orders, which may be sent (with check) to the Quilting Bee, care of The Rev. Francis X. Walter, 810 28th Ave., Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401.

Each quilt is individual. The quilts are either black and white, ,or two solid colors, vari-colored prints, or mixtures of solids and prints. Special orders can also be filled. It is a help to the Quilting Bee to send scraps and remnants of fabrics by parcel post.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE NEXT GENERATION OF STUDENTS

AN English teacher we know in one of the local-state colleges started out last fall with a class of students who were so rigid in their attitudes that he felt he couldn't teach them anything. So he invited them to use the class time for play. It took a week or so for them to remember how, and then they got around to things like leap frog and had a great time. Eventually, after they had recovered a little natural joy, he read them some Yeats.

Here was a teacher who just couldn't bring himself to go through educational motions. In a situation like that, it is hard to know what to do. When a teacher finds that the youngsters who come to him are all tied up in conventional teacher-pleasing and other knots, what should he do?

A. S. Neill has some plain opinions on this subject. He wrote in *The Free Child:*

> My own opinion is that a sane civilisation would not ask children to work until the age of eighteen at least. Most boys and girls would do a lot of work before that age was reached, but it would be play work, uneconomical work from the parents' point of view. When I had my school in Hellerau, Dresden, the headmaster of the German Division at every parents' meeting began his speech with the words: *"Hier in dieser Schule ist es gearbeitet* (Here in this school *work* is done)." I feel depressed when I think of the gigantic amount of work students have to do to prepare for exams in most Continental countries. Someone once told me that nearly fifty per cent of students broke down physically or psychologically after their matriculation exam in pre-war Budapest. . . .

Of course, the question that haunts all such discussions is—How do you get to be an A. S. Neill?—and we have no answer to that. Neither, we suspect, has he. What seems certain is that only loosened-up people, people who break out of conventional confinements as the natural thing to do, will be the ones able to start schools in which the free imagination will have play. Here, for example, is the beginning of a short essay by Mark Goldes which tells about the rise and fall of Emerson College:

> In 1951 while attending San Francisco State, my home, along with two-and-a-half dozen other students of widely varying ages, was the converted orphanage that served as the college dormitory. Gradually I realized that the endless coffeepot discussions thus engendered were infinitely more stimulating and relevant to my education than the often sterile rituals of the formal classroom. Two years later, when I became a "graduate" student, I decided to see if I could find evidence of schools based on such insights. There were a few. Black Mountain College, soon to go under, was the most exciting. During early 1956, I enjoyed a few days at Oxford and Cambridge while on leave from the Air Force in Germany, where a casual friendship had developed with a don studying at nearby Gottingen. A copy of *The Idea of a University* purchased second-hand in London had been my first exposure to the fact that both of these weighty institutions were started by students as boarding houses. The English notion of the teacher as merely an older student, and of the University as a loose federation of small, independent colleges suggested an experiment. After two years in the graduate program in the history of ideas at Brandeis, I became a Ph.D. dropout and returned to California to build a small cabin in the Carmel Highlands, develop the Exploratory Seminars at Monterey Peninsula College, and in 1960 to begin a tiny liberal arts college called Emerson. One other man abandoned his doctoral studies at Stanford to join me. We rented a large victorian house in Pacific Grove, added two part-time "fellows" to the faculty, and with eleven students opened what the local *Herald* erroneously suggested was potentially the Harvard of the West. Six weeks later some of the students joined the historic "Black Friday" protest in San Francisco against the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Overnight the same newspaper decided this was somewhat sinister and began a campaign of innuendo that alienated the local population, turning the college inward upon itself. Instead of a community concerned with the world, Emerson became increasingly an island. In this vital regard, both the college and I had not succeeded. Under the leadership of others the school continued until the middle of 1963. The following year the friendly old house was torn down to make way for a large apartment building.

> The essential problem, I felt, was similar to what Rice concluded really destroyed Black Mountain—the lack of a federated group of such tiny colleges that could reinforce one another and avoid the tendency of isolated communities to become ingrown. . . .

Mr. Goldes has other plans on which we may be able to report, later on, but what is evident from the foregoing is that some daring and determination can lead to the start of a small college. What are the chances of "success"? This question can hardly be answered. And "survival" is not, after all, the only or even the important criterion. *Some* survival, of course, is important. They say that when the Americans first came West and settled in Nebraska—a great agricultural state, today—two farmers had to fail before the soil was worked up to a point where the third could make a go of it. A law of this sort may apply to efforts like Mr. Goldes', which can be expected to succeed in the conventional sense only after enough general momentum has been established by a few pioneers.

The other side of the picture has to do with the readiness of students for the kind of education such teachers would like to provide. What are the college-age young of the next few years going to be like? Nobody knows. You get a few impressions from the friends of your teen-age children, but most of them seem to be still in the ugly duckling stage; yet it is clear that there are a lot of stupidities of the older generation they will absolutely refuse to repeat. They are not going to spend their lives doing what their parents have done. And underneath their "revolt" is a kind of integrity that is neither harsh nor angry. About all we can say, now, is that they will be quite different from the students Neill spoke of encountering:

> When I lecture to training colleges and university students I am very often surprised, shocked at their ungrownupness. They know a lot; they shine in dialectics; they can quote the classics in debate, but many of them are infants in their outlook on life. They have been taught to know but not to feel. I recall one young man, who, after listening to me for an hour, asked: "Do you believe in corporal punishment?" Students are friendly, pleasant, eager, but something is lacking—the emotional factor, the power to subordinate their thinking to their feeling. I can make an audience of students enthusiastic, partly, I think, because I can make them laugh, but mainly because, as one man put it, I talk to their guts; I talk to them of really important things, things that their schools and universities never touch. The truth is that I talk to them of a world they missed and go on missing. Their textbooks do not deal with human character, with love and freedom, with self-determination. And even in the realm of learning they fall short. . . .

If little colleges are started where "really important things" are examined there will be plenty of students wanting to go to them. There will also be the problem of getting books and enough for people to eat. But teachers and students filled with longing can solve these problems. They always have.

FRONTIERS

Toward World-wide Rural Renaissance

THE International Foundation for Independence is a private lending agency which came into being during the past year as part of a plan to bring help to the neglected populations of the underdeveloped countries. The IFI now seeks the initial capital and experienced personnel that will be needed to offer loans of various kinds to farmers in countries like India, Brazil, Mexico, and Vietnam, where the underlying economic problem is agricultural. The great majority of the people in underdeveloped countries live in villages and depend directly or indirectly for their living on agriculture. Because, as E. F. Schumacher and others have pointed out, governmental aid programs are preoccupied with the prestigious achievements of high technology, leading to disproportionate urban development and politically impressive industrial projects, the needs of the vast agricultural majority are being ignored. These people are not simply standing still, in economic terms, but are falling back, in relation to the rest of the world. As the first issue of the IFI *Bulletin* observes:

> In India, ever since independence in 1947, there has been a gradual decrease of income per capita, despite the vast American aid and the several five-year plans devoted mainly to developing heavy industry. Every day the poverty of the masses in India and other undeveloped nations worsens while the prosperity of America and the developed nations improves. With the gap widening between the have and have-not nations, the world is living on the brink of a dozen Vietnamese revolutions.

The idea of the International Foundation for Independence grew out of suggestions made by Ralph Borsodi, American decentralist educator and social thinker, to the Gandhian leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, early in 1966, while Mr. Borsodi was in India on a lecture tour. As many readers know, Mr. Narayan, who had been active in Indian politics, joined the Bhoodan-Gramdan movement led by Vinoba Bhave in 1954. Feeling that Gandhi and Vinoba were right in their concentration on rural regeneration and the improvement of village life and education, Jayaprakash Narayan gave up conventional political activity to devote his life to working for a social order based on Gandhian principles. (See MANAS for March 20, 1963, for a biographical sketch of Jayaprakash Narayan.)

Basically, the Bhoodan movement has been an effort to restore land to the Indian peasants, as the foundation of rural reconstruction and self-reliant effort. But providing land, it eventually became evident, is not enough to revive Indian agriculture. The peasants need seasonal loans to enable them to buy seed, fertilizers, and improved tools in order to put in crops, and they need extended credit to buy farming equipment and for the purchase of land by families and villages. Other practical requirements for rural development include warehouses, irrigation systems, roads, and wells.

At present the bulk of both government and foreign aid capital goes to large-scale public projects, leaving the essential food-producers on the land neglected and almost forgotten. A summarizing passage in the IFI *Bulletin* describes the plight of India's numerous peasantry:

> In spite of exploitation by landlords, by money-lenders, and by middle-men, cultivators carry on amidst the most heartrending privations for young and old. In spite of the official policy of keeping down the price of food crops to provide cheap food for industrial workers and cheap fibers for industry in the big cities of India, they continue the task of trying to support themselves as they have done from time immemorial. It is to their salvation that the Gandhian movement under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, and thousands of workers in the Sarva Seva Sangh is dedicated.

In his conversations with Mr. Narayan, Mr. Borsodi pointed out that inequities and neglect of the sort suffered by the Indian farmers are now typical of rural populations in all the underdeveloped countries of the world, and that there is urgent need for the internationalization of

the Gandhian movement. In the words of the *Bulletin:*

> The time had come, Mr. Borsodi suggested, for the movement to become a "third force" in the world by offering the masses of peasants and villagers in all the underdeveloped nations a constructive alternative to the American program of A.I.D. to their governments on the one hand, and on the other the Chinese program of peasant guerilla organization for revolution. . . .
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> The idea of an autonomous village-based society in which peasants are politically free and economically independent proved, under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave in Hyderabad, that it could make the peasants and villagers give up the idea of a Communist Utopia to be achieved at some far-off date by means of immediate violence and revolution. If the idea of self-help is accompanied with enough rural credit to buy out landlords and to get money-lenders off peasant backs, revolutionary ardor would be channeled into constructive action.

At a second conference, held in New Delhi on February 27 of last year, a threefold program for grass-roots agricultural regeneration on a world-wide basis was conceived. In India of today, some twenty thousand constructive village workers are active in the movement for nonviolent social reform which was initiated many years ago by Gandhi and is now continued by the leadership of Vinoba Bhave and J. P. Narayan. At the New Delhi conference it was proposed that an attempt be made to organize an International Independence Corps of field workers who would devote themselves to rural regeneration in every underdeveloped country. This corps would involve leaders and volunteers of all races, religions, and cultures in both the vision and the practical program pioneered by Gandhi. All would be united on the idea that "the right way to deal with the critical situation in the developing nations and ensure a peaceful transition from a world of exploitation to a world of justice must begin, not with the industrialized and urbanized minorities, but with the rural masses which constitute from seventy to eighty per cent of their populations."

The International Foundation for Independence was born from the following proposal at the New Delhi conference:

> Organize an international agency with ample financial resources to provide all the credit needed to realize a program of rural renaissance and a revival of village and township prosperity in these nations. Include on the Board of Trustees not only public-spirited men and women already concerned with the problem, but also bankers and businessmen who would help insure that the funds were used as a permanent Revolving Fund instead of merely as a one-time charitable contribution for temporary relief.

An important part of the task of arousing interest in this program in the West lies in making clearly apparent the failure of conventional forms of "foreign aid." For the most part, this highly publicized aid *does not reach the people who need it most*—the rural, agricultural population which is the backbone of the economy in all the underdeveloped countries. A striking instance of this failure is found in Vietnam. The IFI *Bulletin* quotes Stanley Andrews, an economic advisor on AID problems, who says: "Perhaps no more than ten to twenty per cent of American aid trickled down to the hamlets in a way that the peasants can relate to either the United States or their own government. Most of the aid has benefited the elite and the upper middle class." Further comment in the *Bulletin* shows that this situation is typical in vast Asian areas:

> In Pakistan and India, large American foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller have gone far to perfect the seeds and fertilizers for the various climates and soil conditions. But even the Ford Foundation, in its latest report, *Roots of Change*, laments the scarcity of rural credit needed for the new technologies: "Farmers cannot get adequate low-cost credit to finance improvements; according to a study made by the Reserve Bank of India, 75 per cent of India's rural credit is provided by moneylenders, traders, and landlords, usually at usurious interest rates."

Western economists who have devoted study to these problems are moved to outrage at the callous neglect of the basic needs of the rural populations throughout the world. E. F.

Schumacher, for example, in the London *Observer* for Aug. 29, 1965, pointed out the immeasurably destructive effects of limiting foreign aid to projects involving high technology. A similar comment comes from Dr. B. R. Shenoy, a leading Indian economist, who wrote in the *Times of India* (Feb. 22, 1966):

> When the bulk of the capital resources is drawn into public sector undertakings, someone in the economy must go short of capital. In the Indian context, that someone includes the cultivator. . . . What the situation calls for is no less than the provision of more credit to the 70,000,000 farmers to enable them to acquire better seeds, more fertilizers, better implements, and more irrigation; and to strengthen their holding power for better prices for their products.

Dramatic attention must be called to the blindness of all "aid" programs which ignore the fundamental source of economic health and growth in agricultural enterprise. The faith of Western peoples in the infallibility of big governmental institutions must be challenged, and mistaken policies must be exposed, through searching study and wide publication along the lines of Dr. Schumacher's various analyses. As people are made *to* ask questions by such factual revelations, the enormous good sense of the Gandhian economic proposals will have opportunity for wider recognition and support. The idea of the International Foundation for Independence is squarely founded on Gandhian thinking, which is given in outline in the *Bulletin:*

> Gandhi's plan . . . can be briefly described as giving priority to the development of agriculture and to the crafts and intermediate industries which process and distribute what the farmers produce—leaving heavy industry to develop naturally as a result of the demand created by the increased income of the rural masses. This is not a call for increased production of cheap food for the urban population and increased production of cash crops to supply raw materials for urban industry. It does not, therefore, aim at promoting the mechanization and commercialization of agriculture. This would be justified only if the aim were urbanization, industrialization, and the depopulation of the rural regions.

The central concern of the Gandhian constructive program is to improve the conditions of family and communal life in the villages and to contribute to and inspire an economic and cultural renaissance in rural areas. It is here that the resources of the International Foundation for Independence would be directly applied, since each family unit requires not only land to work, but also capital equipment, and instruction in "know-how" for improvements appropriate to the existing level of development. This kind of help, plus secure housing for family independence, may be expected to "end exploitation not only by landlords, moneylenders and middlemen, but also by those promoting urbanization and industrialization."

Careful thinking has gone into the plans of the IFI, based upon the experience of constructive workers who have for years been engaged in rural reconstruction. The following is from the IFI *Bulletin:*

> The four types of loans planned by the Foundation would enable farmers to increase their production and as a result achieve a decent standard of living. It would also provide them with an immense reservoir of buying power and of effective demand for the products of both intermediate and basic industry. It would enable them to hold their crops in public warehouses for peak prices, instead of as at present being forced to surrender them at low prices immediately after they are harvested. What they are now paying in rent to absentee landlords, in usurious interest to money-lenders, and in the form of exorbitant profits to middlemen could be saved, used to repay the Foundation, and ultimately make them entirely free and independent. This repayment would make it possible for the funds initially loaned to one farmer to continue the work of improving conditions for other farmers.
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> Since the whole plan of the Foundation will be based upon the integrity and the acumen, and the credit, collection, and agricultural "know-how" of the village supervisors, the selection and training of these supervisors is all-important. To provide these the Foundation will sponsor training institutions in the indigenous universities in each region of each nation in which it will operate. To organize the teaching in

these regional institutes, an International Independence Corps will be specially trained.

The initial target amount for the Revolving Fund of the IFI is $100,000,000, but operations, it is said, will begin as soon as subscriptions are received. There is now a pilot project in one Indian village.

Financial details are provided in the IFI *Bulletin*, which describes the notes and debentures involved and the "basket of commodities" that will be held as the Foundation's primary assets. Denominations of the debentures at the outset will be $7, $70, $350, and $700, and these will mature at $10, $100, $500, and $1000.

Like all large projects which require the commitment and unflagging cooperation of a great many people, application of the plan behind International Fund for Independence, if it can succeed, will probably gather momentum slowly, with numerous experimental activities and extensive preliminary use of existing grass-roots organizations such as credit unions. There is some anticipation of opposition in the form of governmental obstruction or blocks by private interests, but as advocates of the plan point out, any degree of success in even one country will prove an enormously persuasive argument for application of the plan elsewhere.

The Indian leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, is expected to visit the United States this coming fall, on a speaking tour to arouse interest and support for the Foundation. Meanwhile, persons interested in obtaining further information concerning the Foundation may write to Robert Swann, Field Director, RFD 1, Box 197B, Voluntown, Connecticut 06384.