

## RESISTANCE TO PEACE

WHETHER or not Senator Millard F. Tydings' Resolution for total world disarmament, as he says, "*all the way down the line to rifles,*" will work, and whether or not the various plans for world government or world federation are really "practical," there can be no doubt about the fact that the present policy of drift is the least intelligent course that the great nations of the world could follow. It must be admitted that an international political crisis does exist, although this need not involve submission to the crisis hysteria; and admitted, also, that whatever a man thinks *ought to be done*, he has a serious obligation to try to figure out why practically nothing is *being done* about it.

Mr. Tydings sets the problem quite simply for citizens of the United States in an article in the *May Progressive*:

. . . shall we be like dumb driven cattle waiting for the butcher's knife? Or shall we take firm, aggressive action in good faith backed up by the logic of the situation, with an appeal to all mankind to come forward and act in an effort to put an end to what now causes so much fear, a fear which will darken and still further darken the atmosphere with the passing of the hours and the days ?

The Russians have today 200 divisions under arms; probably three or four million men. Under such a plan as I suggest those men, or most of them, could return to their homes, help to develop the rivers, help to turn the great timber resources of Russia into materials for home and factories, help to dam her great rivers for electric power; and all the wealth which Russia is now pouring into her military machine on land, on sea, and in the air, could be used to better the lot of the Russian people.

Likewise, in these United States, the same thing would apply. Here we are spending for our national defense almost \$30,000,000,000. Out of a budget of \$42,000,000,000, we are spending practically \$30,000,000,000 of the wealth of the American people, of their energies, of their resources—and necessarily spending it, in my opinion, by reason of wars, past, present, or future, in the present international situation.

But we ought not to throw away \$30,000,000,000 every year and be content to say, "Oh, well, we will do it so long as that fellow does." . . . I assume that the people of Russia, very much like the people of the United States are anxious to survive, to try to make an end to warfare. I assume they would rather have the resources of Russia not turned into tanks, ships, guns, and bombs but into those very things which raise the standards of living of the people of Russia.

This sounds like obvious common sense, and acknowledging it to be such, the question becomes one of trying to understand what we and the Russians are waiting for.

On the side of the United States, the obstacles to any such agreement are probably more complex than in any previous problem of peace-making in our history. First of all, there is the psychological resistance on the part of many Americans to meeting and treating on the basis of equality with what seems to them to be an "upstart" nation which has risen to sudden and extraordinary power, almost, so far as we are concerned, within the past thirty years. In this same thirty years, the United States became the strongest economic and military power in the world, and it is hard, now, to reconcile ourselves to the fact that nuclear weapons constitute an entire new deal in military potentials—creating a power so incalculably destructive as to render "victory" an almost meaningless goal. Americans have been spoiled by victories and don't like the idea of not being able to win a "real" victory whenever they want it.

Second, the great majority of the American people have been taught to distrust the Russians because they have adopted another "way of life." Everyone who was old enough in the 1920's to notice newspaper cartoons remembers the bewhiskered Bolsheviks that haunted the editorial page, lighted bombs in hand. Then, throughout the Depression, the American Communists became identified with the forces of turbulence and disorder. Finally, there has been the second post-war agitation against

Communism, involving a blend of die-hard capitalist dogma, the cry of "atheist materialism," and fear of world-encirclement by red totalitarianism.

But there is a fourth reason, perhaps the most basic of all, for the deep suspicion of the Soviets by the people of the United States. It is that the Communist has rejected the common ground of a common morality, so that there seems to be no region of intellectual and political interchange between the two cultures. When accused of this, the Communist retorts, "But you have perverted your so-called 'morality,' until it is no more than the cloak for continued exploitation and defense of the status quo." This point of view has been put very simply by Trotsky, who, although hardly a spokesman for the Soviet Union, was certainly a lucid exponent of the Marxist-Leninist position. In his pamphlet, *Their Morals and Ours* (1938), he wrote:

A revolutionary Marxist cannot begin to approach his historical mission without having broken morally from bourgeois public opinion and its agencies in the proletariat. For this, moral courage of a different calibre is required from that of opening wide one's mouth at meetings and yelling, "Down with Hitler!" "Down with Franco!" It is precisely this resolute, completely-thought-out, inflexible rupture of the Bolsheviks from conservative moral philosophy not only of the big but of the petty bourgeoisie which mortally terrorizes democratic phrase-mongers, drawing-room prophets and lobbying heroes. From this derive their complaints about the "amoralism" of the Bolsheviks. . . .

A society without social contradictions will naturally be a society without lies and violence. However there is no way of building a bridge to that society save by revolutionary, that is, violent means. The revolution itself is a product of class society and of necessity bears its traits. From the point of view of "eternal truths" revolution is of course "anti-moral." But this merely means that idealist morality is counter-revolutionary, that is, in the service of the exploiters. . . .

Through their press, agents, and spies the capitalists labor to frighten and demoralize the strikers. From their side, the workers' pickets, where persuasion does not avail, are compelled to resort to force. Thus "lying and worse" are an inseparable part of the class struggle even in its most elementary form.

It remains to be added that the very conception of *truth* and *lie* was born of social contradictions.

In this pamphlet, Trotsky quotes the counsel of Lenin on the importance of communist penetration of the trade unions, in which Lenin advocated "resort to all sorts of devices, maneuvers, and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuge. . . ," and explains: "Lenin refused to recognize moral norms established by slave-owners for their slaves and never observed by the slave-owners themselves. . . . Whoever fawns before precepts established by the enemy will never vanquish that enemy!"

While it would be foolish to suggest that very many people in the United States have a clear grasp of this doctrinaire attitude of the communist toward what he terms "bourgeois morality," it remains a fact that the record of communist activities in this country and the aggressive militance of communist spokesmen, growing out of this attitude, have been an important factor in confirming the vague suspicions and distrusts of the great majority. Meanwhile, some political analysts claim to be able to explain the succeeding moves of Soviet foreign policy more or less in terms of the motivations that Trotsky assigns to the true "revolutionary Marxist"—that is, they say that whatever the public claims of the Soviet Government, its actions have been guided by the policy of death-struggle against Capitalism.

Is there, then, *no* solution? Finding solutions is really not a problem. Mr. Tydings has one, Garry Davis has one, Gandhi left us one, and there are probably scores more of them, published and unpublished, any one of which would work if it could be made acceptable—and that is the problem, to make it acceptable. The first step toward creating a common ground of acceptability is for those who are in a position to do so to make a deliberate effort to understand the "other side." But this would mean, first, understanding the genesis of revolutionary communism, and of suppressing the tendency, however strong, to condemn an interest in the historical origins of communism as some kind of betrayal of democratic principles. Robert Payne's book, *Zero*, makes one beginning in this direction, and Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* is another volume which ought to be studied in order to

comprehend the historical situation which led so many humanitarian men and women to reject the common ground of a universal morality.

Then, for further investigation, the testimony of six ex-communists or ex-near-communists in *The God that Failed* (published last year by Harper & Brothers) should be read. Two things about this book make it worth reading and discussing. What the reader is compelled to recognize at the outset is the high motives which led these men to affiliate with the communist movement. Second, he will see that, in every case, it was the quality of personal integrity which caused them, finally, to break away from communism and to declare publicly their reasons for doing so. Reflective reading of a few important books is all that is necessary to grasp the essential issues of the Russian Revolution and the moral debacle of the Soviet State. Those who make an honest inquiry out of this investigation will find themselves driven to the conclusion that a choice between Communism and the status quo is an almost intolerable dilemma, and that the defeat of Communism will never result from another war, however bloody and heroic, but only from an attack on the conditions which drive intelligent people into the desperate alienation that Communism represents.

*The God that Failed*, unfortunately, can hardly be expected to be a popular book among the people who most need to know what it has to say. While the rejection of communism by the contributors to this book—Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Richard Wright, Louis Fischer, André Gide and Stephen Spender—is final and absolute, for good and sufficient reason, they have not given up their dynamic opposition to social injustice, which was what attracted them to communism in the first place. The major difficulty of the democracies in the struggle against the communist ideology is the moral weakness which fails to recognize the social injustices that the communists talk about, on the ground that, because the communists point to them, they cannot possibly exist. This policy can only strengthen the communist position—is strengthening it, all over the world.

*The God that Failed* will also instruct its readers in the enormous moral catastrophe that

communism has inflicted on the world, through the fear it inspires and the corruption it leads to in the communists themselves. Men are betrayed by their best impulses into joining the communist movement, and then forced by fear—fear for their lives, for their families—to remain communists, until their very souls are corroded into cynical compliance. But the best impulses of the authors of *The God that Failed* were also the means of their awakening and release from ideological bondage, and it is these impulses that we need to understand and to honor.

With these impulses, all over the world, lies the only hope for the world's peace. It is not the power of communist bureaucracy that we must fear, but our own moral apathy; and it is the inspiration which raised communism to power, but long since has left it, that we must understand and increase. Only this inspiration can throw down what it has built. But no inspiration of any sort can arise in a world everywhere and ceaselessly agitated by the fear of all-destroying war.

That is why proposals like that of Senator Tydings need to be taken seriously, why the moral purposes of the world government must be honored for the human hopes—world-wide hopes—they represent, and why every honest declaration of human brotherhood should find, not just an echo, but a reinforcing resonance, in every man that hears it. The one undeniable fact of current history is that unless and until the unqualified feeling of human brotherhood becomes manifest, throughout the world, neither we nor anyone else shall be able to prove that there is a common morality for all people and all nations.

## *Letter from* **South Africa**

JOHANNESBURG.—*Apartheid*, the Afrikaans word meaning separation, provides the core of much heated debate among all races in South Africa. The word stands for racial segregation, and, as a vote-catching phrase, did much to return the present Nationalist government to power in 1948. At that time the exact policy which the term represented was confused, but it had considerable appeal to all those white people who felt the future of the white races in South Africa to be directly threatened by the far out-numbering black population. The strength of the appeal lay in the emotional intensity of a fear which, deeper than the reach of any rational argument, would appear to have its roots in the primeval instinct for survival. The wish for segregation in order that racial purity and culture may be preserved is not, however, the prerogative of the white races. It is the wish of black as well as white.

It must be remembered that the intermingling of black and white on a large scale is comparatively recent. For many generations after white settlement began only a small percentage of the African population lived in close contact with white civilization, and these were mostly employed as farm labourers or domestic servants.

It was the discovery of South Africa's vast mineral wealth in the second half of the last century and the industrial development of the first half of the present century which have created a large-scale demand for labour and decoyed the black man from his native lands to work in white areas, thus inextricably weaving together the economy of black and white.

Two sorts of *apartheid* have been proposed, described as "horizontal" and "vertical" *apartheid*. An April conference of the Dutch Reformed Churches which met to consider race relations at Bloemfontein showed an uncompromising adherence to total vertical *apartheid*. Clearly backed by a strong and sincere religious motive to

be just to all races, this policy was decided upon by the conference with some realization, it would seem, of the huge sacrifices it would demand of the white people of South Africa if it were ever to be applied. Vertical *apartheid* would eventually result in the formation of a number of separate states for black and white: Bantustan, and a white South Africa. For its implementation vast tracts of land would have to be taken from the whites and handed over to the black people; industries would have to be established on the fringes of the African reserves in order to absorb such labour as was not required for the production of food; the present black labour in white areas would have to be replaced by white. While the African might be allowed a large measure of control within his own areas, there is little doubt but that reins of ultimate control would still be held by the whites.

Horizontal *apartheid*, whereby the economies of the two races would be mixed, with the black man in subservient position without reference to comparative abilities, would involve the perpetuation of the present system with all that it means of frustration and denial of human rights for the African. It would mean increased measures to prevent the black man forever from sharing in the benefits and responsibilities of the land of his birth.

Of the two policies, vertical *apartheid* would obviously measure up the better to those principles of human rights which now receive universal lip service. But this policy has already been repudiated by the Prime Minister on behalf of his government and declared by him to be impracticable. Vertical *apartheid* could not work, and the government knows it, although as yet the Dutch Reformed Churches refuse to recognise the fact. It could not work because the two races are already woven together in the same economic pattern, and to tear them apart would spell the ruin of all. The scheme for increasing the areas of the reserves is hopelessly behind schedule owing to the difficulty of allocating sufficient sums for the purchase of land from white owners, and of

forcing them to sell land which, in many cases, their forebears have farmed for generations and developed from waste into reasonable agricultural land. Further, the whole economy of South Africa is geared to the gold mining industry with its dependence on both black and white labour. Any move to persuade white men to take over the hard manual labour at present supplied by black men would be doomed to failure from the start. The white man in South Africa does not take kindly to manual labour, which, to the impoverishment of his own soul, he regards as "nigger's work."

The policy of *apartheid* shows its true bankruptcy more clearly every day. What then is the alternative? Last July the English Protestant Churches which constitute the Christian Council of South Africa also held a conference on race relations. In their findings for *apartheid* they substituted the word "*eendrag*," which stands for team work and co-operation. They affirmed that by its very nature the Church of God must be interracial. Their view is the view of many liberal-minded people in South Africa. But in the meantime the sands of African patience are running out. A mass meeting among African workers has just been held on the Rand to consider a strike on May 1 to mark a "Freedom Day." This suggestion would appear to emanate from agitators rather than responsible African leadership, but once African patience is finally exhausted there is no more effective instrument whereby the black people can bring South Africa to her knees than by withholding their labour. The life-blood of the country's economy lies in her black labour as much as in any of her vast mineral resources.

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## *REVIEW*

### THE ROOTS OF CULTURE

THE reader of the late Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's small volume, *The Bugbear of Literacy*, first published during the war, is likely to be impressed by two things. First, he will probably admire very much the skill and penetration of the author's scholarly indictment of Western civilization. Anyone can point to the wars of the twentieth century, assemble the obvious evidences of Western "materialism," and point a moral, but Coomaraswamy does much more. Among other things, he explores the psychological attitudes which function intermediately between the primary beliefs of the West and the overt forms of Western destructiveness which everyone deplores—and by doing this, he offers a diagnosis which is extremely valuable because it uncovers facts we had not noticed about ourselves, and because it is not merely moralistic.

The second thing the reader may notice is Coomaraswamy's neglect, in comparing the cultures of East and West, of the strange vulnerability of the East to Western influence. It is easy to agree with his strictures—to admit that when the modern traveler, planning to visit some distant Arcady of the Orient, such as Bali, asks whether or not it has yet been "spoiled," he is really making "a naive, and even tragic confession." His question means, literally, "whether or not the sources of equilibrium and grace in other civilizations have yet been poisoned by contact with men like himself and the culture of which he is a product." But after we acknowledge that Western culture transmits an infection which is usually fatal to the simplicity and beauty of lives of people like the Balinese, there still remains the problem of *why*—if these people have such extraordinary virtues—they allow themselves to be beguiled by Western fascinations.

In the case of the Balinese, however, there is an excellent answer. The people of this happy

island resisted the power of foreign imperialism with every weapon at their disposal. Finally, in 1908, when they saw that their cause was hopeless, they robed themselves in gold and silk, painted their faces according to high festival custom; and, to the rhythms of their ancient instruments, marched straight at the Dutch troops, asking to be killed. It would have been a mercy, perhaps, if the Dutch had obliged, for the life of the Balinese as a "subject" people became very different from their illustrious past. As Miguel Covarrubias says in his *Island of Bali*:

The Balinese have lived well enough under a self-sufficient co-operative system, the foundation of which is reciprocal assistance, with money used only as a secondary commodity. Being extremely limited in means to obtain the cash—scarcer every day—to pay taxes and satisfy new needs, it is to be feared that the gradual breaking down of their institutions, together with the drain on their national wealth, will make coolies, thieves, beggars and prostitutes of the proud and honorable Balinese of this generation, and will, in the long run, bring a social and moral catastrophe.... It would be futile to recommend measures to prevent the relentless march of Westernization; tourists cannot be kept out, the needs of trade will not be restricted for sentimental reasons, and missionary societies are often powerful.

The simple explanation of this decline—an explanation that is also used to justify the "righteous" wars of the West—is that moral integrity cannot survive loss of political power. But the problem has many more subtleties than this explanation will allow, involving the unknown relationship between morality as culture and morality as self-conscious decision, and the effect of various undetermined cycles of cultural rise and fall. One could say that this problem is really behind the crisis through which the entire East is passing, today. Can India, China, Indonesia, become self-conscious in the Western sense without destroying the precious roots of their ancient civilizations? In what sense should they endeavor to become "modern"?

In *Peaks and Lamas*, writing of the region of Tibet which borders on India, and has, therefore,

been most subject to European influence, Marco Pallis tells of finding an empty "Flit" can in the sanctuary of a temple, and in another place, a "ginger-beer" bottle on the altar of an abbot's private chapel. "Any worthless trinket from abroad," he says, "is apt to attract a man's fancy, so that he will set it up in a place of honor, next to the most supreme works of genius, without noticing the least incongruity." The traditional designs of the carpet-weavers are being corrupted by mechanical techniques, and for the delicate vegetable dyes that have been used for centuries, ugly aniline hues are being substituted. Mr. Pallis wonders if it might not be a good idea for the Tibetans to pass a law prohibiting the use of any machine-made or chemical-dyed objects for religious purposes, in the hope that the high prestige of religion in Tibet would then discourage their manufacture for any purpose. But suppose the Tibetan religion also gives way to Western standards—what then?

In one place, however, Mr. Pallis discusses the question in broader terms:

Some people have put forward the criticism that if the Tibetans—or for that matter the Indians or the Chinese or others who find themselves in a similar predicament—do not appreciate the good things that they own, they deserve to lose them, for they show that they have mislaid the key to their understanding—indeed everything is virtually lost already. This accusation is a specious one or, at best, a half-truth. A man may have a genuine appreciation of his own things and yet may not possess the knowledge which will enable him to transfer his standards of criticism to the appraisal of entire novelties. Even the most highly-trained and flexible mind has a circle within which it functions efficiently. The circle may be wide; but if its limits are overstepped, some degree of bewilderment is to be expected. Even in the Athens of the Periclean age, if suddenly one cinema, one chain-store and one radio station had been opened, I wonder whether the whole edifice of Hellenic civilization would not have come toppling about the ears of its creators, as surely as one machine-gun would have mown down the victorious hoplites of Marathon. Even a Phidias might have been momentarily taken in and a Zeuxis have exchanged his brush for a camera. One somehow

suspects that Socrates would have seen through it all and stood firm; but he could always have been given his overdose of hemlock a few years earlier.

There is no answer to such difficulties, apparently, except in a wise paternalism, yet for those who see and care about the problems created by the intermingling of a new with an old culture, paternalism is instinctively condemned as an attitude of presumed superiority, which may not, in fact, exist; and this attitude is doubly suspect when adopted by a conquering race or culture. When Lycurgus advocated that the Spartans avoid contact with the people of other Grecian cities, lest their simple virtues be corrupted by sophisticated visitors, he was at least a Spartan himself; and when Lao Tze proposed to isolate the Chinese villages from one another, so that the lives of the people would be free of alien contact, he had no ulterior motive, however much his thought runs counter to modern theories of cosmopolitan democracy.

A recent letter to MANAS from a French resident of Tahiti illustrates the dilemmas which arise in a community where alien cultures are in close proximity. The Tahitians, our correspondent says, want the right to purchase and consume alcoholic drinks. The French, they argue, enjoy this right, and if the pretension of the French to providing "democratic" government for the Tahitians is anything more than a sham, the Tahitians should be allowed their drinking, too. But, mourns our correspondent, when we sell them the liquor, they accuse us of poisoning them! What are the unhappy French to do? They could, of course, stop drinking themselves, or go back to France, and short of these "impossible" measures, it is difficult to imagine any solution at all.

The Europeans and Americans, it seems, in relation to so-called "primitive" peoples, are like the African witch-doctors described by du Chaillu in the tales of his travels. These astute individuals accustomed their bodies to poison by taking it daily in small doses, so that when an "undesirable" member of the tribe needed to be removed, the

witch-doctor could challenge him to a poison-drinking ordeal, and come out unaffected, while his enemy died.

There is one thing, however, that Westerners can do for their Eastern brothers, without even the slightest indulgence of paternalist tendencies. Mr. Coomaraswamy proposes, in his title essay, that we make a beginning at overcoming the delusion that literacy is necessarily connected with knowledge or understanding. The worship of the printed page, he points out, has had the effect of destroying the great oral literatures which once gave the lives of millions of people their essential quality, delicacy and refinement. He adds:

Mark, too, that this oral literature once belonged "to the whole people . . . the community whose intellectual interests are the same from the top of the social structure to the bottom," while in the reading society it is accessible only to antiquaries, and no longer bound up with everyday life. A point of further importance is this: that the traditional oral literatures interested not only all *classes*, but also all *ages* of the population; while the books that are nowadays written expressly "for children" are such as no mature mind could tolerate; it is now only the comic strips that appeal alike to children who have been given nothing better and at the same time to "adults" who have never grown up.

It is in just the same way that music is thrown away; folk songs are lost to the people at the same time that they are collected and "put in a bag"; and in the same way that the "preservation" of a people's art in folk museums is a funeral rite, for preservatives are only necessary when the patient has already died. . . .

A Ceylonese correspondent recently asked me: "If God appeared on earth, and inquired for the Aztecs, Incas, Red Indians, Australian aborigines, and other slowly disappearing races, would the civilized nations take him to your great museum?"

It is difficult to stop quoting Coomaraswamy, for he has a way of touching the nerve of the East-West conflict of culture. But perhaps this passage will illustrate the excellence to be found all through *The Bugbear of Literacy*.

## COMMENTARY THE NATURE OF MAN

THE one subject to which MANAS articles and reviews are forever returning is the nature of man. This central editorial interest will also explain the frequent references in MANAS to individuals who plainly regard the problem of human nature as the most important subject to which the mind may be applied. Elsewhere in this issue, Ortega y Gasset—certainly such a thinker—is quoted on the status of "culture" in modern life; we find, however, that two other passages in this article of Ortega's are so pertinent to our central theme that they ought also to be reproduced. Writing of Goethe, Ortega says:

He is the man in whom for the first time there dawned the consciousness that human life is man's struggle with his intimate and individual destiny—that is, that human life is made up of the problem of itself, that its substance consists not in something that already is—like the substance of the Greek philosopher . . . but in something which has to make itself, which, therefore, is not a *thing* but an absolute and problematic *task*.

As though to confirm our view that this conception of human life was rather voiced first by the Renaissance Humanist, Pico della Mirandola, it seems that almost the very language of Pico (in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*) is used by Ortega:

For plant, animal or star, to live is to have no doubts concerning its own being. None of them has to decide what it will be the next instant. Thus their life is not drama but . . . evolution. But man's life is exactly the opposite: it is having to decide every moment what he must do the next moment, and, therefore, having to discover the very plan, the very design of his being.

This necessity of choosing, of being *self-conscious*, is surely the very essence of human life—both the means to and the substance of our salvation.

One of the encouraging signs of the times—few enough, in all—is the increasing focus of scholars upon the problem of the nature of man.

A recent study of the political heritage of the West endeavors to show that there are "two constants" throughout all political theorizing, which turn out to be "irreconcilable concepts of human nature." They are, as a reviewer puts it, the concepts "of man as the helpless creature of his environment, and of man possessed of a will that permits him to reshape his political environment according to his own notion of justice." This may not settle any political issues with finality, but it does suggest that there can be no exercise of political intelligence without a prior philosophical decision as to the nature of man.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

DURING their earliest years, children acquire from their elders certain grooves or stereotypes of thinking about the sexes which unconsciously condition their behavior through maturity. Achieving healthy relationships and a healthy society necessitates helping our children to view members of the opposite sex first as *persons*, and only secondarily as having sex characteristics.

It is a common criticism that women habitually spend too much time on nothing but home-making, and men too little. This division of labor, when extreme, often results in a separative psychological effect, working against a balanced perspective for husband and wife. In the "turnabout" plan once described here (July 21, 1948), the husband took care of the home and children for a stipulated period, while Mrs. kept the family supplied with income. Though some may disagree, our own opinion is that it might be very advantageous to many children to have parents who have worked along the lines of such a system. When children are allowed to feel that the function of a man in society is *entirely* different from that of a woman, they tend to be conditioned by the notion of exclusive specialization—and to develop rigid ideas about the "nature of men" or the "nature of women." And this, we shall argue, is detrimental to the psychological health of both child and society.

Considering first what might be called the sociological effects of excessive male-female specialization, we come upon many types of distorted adolescent psychology encouraged by the "double standard." For instance, an article by Arnold W. Green (quoted in *Modern American Society* by Davis, Bredemeier and Levy) clearly demonstrates that the psychological atmosphere of "lower class" homes is dominantly conditioned by the apparently hopelessly divergent ambitions of the sexes. Based on observations conducted in a small town populated chiefly by low-income

Polish immigrants, Green asserts the existence of a deeply rooted and universally accepted embattlement of one sex against the other, in which little real mental or emotional communication takes place between husband and wife, and their behavior towards each other is clearly predatory. The men seek companionship with men, and the women with women, presumably because there is practically no hope that women may have a career, or the men a career in which women can assist. The only common ground is in the uninteresting mechanics of a poorly constructed home, and in the physical experiences of sex.

The marriages discussed by Mr. Green possess one dubious advantage; they seldom "fail," in conventional terms—but only because prospective wives do not expect any real understanding or sympathy. The man resigns himself to the fact that he will be "caught" in marriage some day as a result of his escapades, whereas the woman accepts the necessity for marriage with a certain indifference as to who the marital partner shall be. Such women, incidentally, may live emotionally in a romantic dream world which they keep entirely divorced from the actual marriage. Since they have seen no indication that any people they have known may find a sympathetic, harmonious rapport with one of the opposite sex, they are not always disturbed by emotional inadequacies in their "practical" alliance.

Mr. Green's studies were limited to a particular sort of family experience. Yet, in a modified form, the same psychological conditions obtain throughout most social groups. Even among the presumably more cultured, the bad heritage of the double standard is apparent. Most boys and girls tend to gang together with their own sex, and intermingle only in sporadic battles of wits and conflicting ambitions. Few middle-class women hope to achieve lasting success through independent advancement, while few men think it possible to find a woman who can

understand and assist in a chosen field of economic endeavor. It is questionable, too, whether the "career" woman who achieves success only under protest from her husband helps to improve the problem, for she may be expressing more of a competitive reaction to the man's arbitrary dominance than a creative instinct—and the idea of mutual helpfulness will then be as far from realization as ever. It seems to us that parents and educators might well expend their best efforts to establish an entirely untraditional sort of relationship between boys and girls, from their earliest years on. Adult attempts to segregate boys and girls are particularly destructive. There is a great need for encouraging mutual appreciation of personality between the sexes during the years when chosen forms of play tend to separate the sexes. Even this separation does not need to be so extreme. The argument that boys are the physical superiors of the girls, and that therefore the games involving physical prowess must necessarily exclude the female, can be met by pointing out that in any group of a dozen ten-year-olds, a few of the girls will have a greater physical prowess than some of the boys. And when it comes to those "first jobs" undertaken by adolescents, it need not be assumed that *only* boys can undertake garden tending and lawn cutting, whereas *only* girls can officiate properly as baby sitters. The mixed group of any neighborhood would benefit immeasurably by interpretation of functions during the initial period of earning, the important factor being not so much proficiency in unusual jobs, but chiefly in the psychological balance which may be encouraged.

Many "sex problems" of adolescents are aggravated—or even caused—by a failure to conceive of members of the opposite sex as *persons*. In compliance with the formula described by Mr. Green, most boys regard a girl as a "mouse," or a "rabbit"—terms vaguely conveying a biological connotation and focussing a boy's interest almost entirely upon the sexual aspect of young womanhood. Girls often develop their own terms: as equivalents, with the same

result. With this sort of social background it is very easy, too, for innumerable, incredible myths to be generated about the nature of "boys" or "girls"—a phenomenon which, at the level of world politics, is represented by the misunderstandings and antagonisms of Nationalism. In the neighborhood group, as in the "Nationalist Party," the general *atmosphere of suspicion of those different from ourselves* often results in allowing those who are most prejudiced and know the least about the matter to rise to positions of power. When we are suspicious of or hate the Russians, we are in constant danger of submitting to the man who hates or fears the Russians the most. And the boys especially sisterless boys—who have had no opportunity for early contact with the opposite sex may develop the most fantastic and destructive ideas about the nature of the female.

So, whether or not you encourage your boys and girls to know each other as persons, and to associate with each other throughout their school careers, may have a great deal to do with the kind of world society we are daily creating. But it is impossible for parents to improve understanding among their children unless they consciously seek an equality of relationship with their own marital partners. From the standpoint of philosophy, there *are no men and women*, but only *persons*, the attachment of sex to personality being very truly a matter of secondary importance.

## *FRONTIERS* Life As a Venture

IT is possible to make out a considerable case against the economic reformers, the drafters of plans for material utopias, and against even the impassioned advocates of economic plenty, whether they sit in Downing Street, in the Kremlin, or on Capitol Hill. It is possible to charge them with mistaking the nature of human life for something it is not, and can never be, and with spreading about the world great clouds of misconception on the subject.

The case against the reformers is not, of course, a case *for laissez faire* economics and the Free Enterprise System Forever. It is rather a way of questioning the understanding of the reformer with regard to the people he wants to "help," and his understanding with regard to himself. What makes a reformer, anyhow?

First and foremost, it is his awakening *sense* of justice that causes him to join or found a movement for making the world better. In this *sense* he finds the meaning of his life, making it not just an ordinary life, but a *venture*. The reformer goes beyond what most men regard as the normal call of duty. He is, we say, an altruist, and an altruist, as we are defining him, is one who obtains nourishment, not from the things he wants to provide to other men, but from the activity of providing to others. Now either the reformer is the same as other men, or he is different. If he is different—fundamentally different—then he had best become a Dictator or a Grand Inquisitor, and get his theory of human nature out into the open where we all can see what it means. But if he is the same, then, whatever he does for other men, he will have to be sure that he communicates to them his own primary values—the values which make him want to be a provider rather than merely a consumer—at the same time that he attempts to institute his reforms.

This is not a quarrel with the high aims of reformers, if they are really high, but with their

low estimate of the people who are to benefit from the reforms, and the low estimate which these people are helped to form of themselves, as a result. Most of the proposals and programs for making everybody happy, prosperous and healthy seem to assume that there are two kinds of people in the world—the sheep-like masses and their Christ-like teachers. At any given moment of history, this may be the appearance of things—it may be the practical fact, at that moment—but no matter how few there are who feel adventurous, a culture which sets its sights on security alone amounts to a systematic suppression of the human ideal. It would be better for people to believe absolutely and simultaneously in the Arabian Nights and Grimm's Fairy Tales, in Mary Queen of Heaven and the whole catalog of Saints and all their miracles, than for them to think that a world arranged according to the best blueprints of *Better Homes and Gardens* is all they want or require of life.

In 1932, Ortega y Gasset, writing on the occasion of the centenary of Goethe's death, gave expression to a view (translated recently in *Partisan Review*) which is something like the one we are suggesting. Ortega speaks of the European crisis of that day—a crisis not in the least averted by the war—and endeavors to describe what has happened to Europe:

Our state of mind is precisely the contrary of that which might inspire us with acts of worship. In the hour of danger, life throws off all extrescences, all its adipose tissue, and tries to strip itself, to reduce itself to pure nerve, pure muscle. Herein lies the salvation of Europe—in a narrowing down to the essential.

Life is, in itself and forever, shipwreck. To be shipwrecked is not to drown. The poor human being, feeling himself sinking into the abyss, moves his arms to keep afloat. This movement of the arms, which is his reaction against his own destruction, is culture—a swimming stroke—When culture is no more than this, it furfills its function and the human being rises above his own abyss. But ten centuries of cultural continuity brings with it—among many advantages—the great disadvantages that man believes himself safe, loses the feeling of shipwreck, and his culture

proceeds to burden itself with parasitic and lymphatic matter. Some discontinuity must therefore intervene, in order that man may renew his feeling of peril, the substance of his life. All his life-saving equipment must fail, he must find nothing to cling to. Then his arms will once again move redeemingly.

Consciousness of shipwreck, being the truth of life, constitutes salvation. Hence I no longer believe in any ideas except the ideas of shipwrecked men. . . .

Despite the gloom of Ortega's analogy, it need not produce a gloomy view of life. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, that canon of vigorous heresy in Hindu philosophy, the sage Krishna talks to Arjuna in a similarly discouraging manner, until finally Arjuna feels like a shipwrecked man, and says so. "Don't," says Krishna, "lean on your culture. The supports of culture are for the weaklings—for those who do not hunger for the truth sufficiently to want it first-hand." Krishna urges him to liberate his mind from the Vedas, and to reach a "high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught," and Arjuna, expecting some plain speaking from his teacher, feels that he has a right to be annoyed. "Thou, as at were," he replies to Krishna, "with doubtful speech, confusest my reason; wherefore choose one method amongst them by which I may obtain happiness and explain it unto me."

But this, of course, is precisely what Krishna will not do. He has no interest in Arjuna's security. He is determined to mix Arjuna up until the young man accepts the venture of life as his own, instead of relying on Krishna's "revelation." So Krishna, metaphysically speaking, "shipwrecks" Arjuna, and Arjuna learns to be a man.

Krishna, for this reason, has not been a very popular God, even in India, where he walked among men. Krishna is "worshiped," of course, in India, but in true religion, you do not worship the gods, but try to become like them. Only the *great* reformers, it seems, have understood this, for all the others try to give men security first, hoping to teach them to be like the gods, afterward. But

security, as Ortega points out, is the one thing that a man cannot accept from others—whether from his God, his State, or his Culture and remain a man. "The present crisis," he says, "is less a crisis of culture than of the position we have given to culture. We have set it before and above life, when it ought to be behind and below life because it is a reaction to life. We must now stop putting the cart before the horse."