

THE MASS SOCIETY

TO the *American Journal of Sociology* for January, 1941, Harold D. Lasswell contributed an article which has become a minor classic among analyses of the modern "mass" society. This article, "The Garrison State," deals with the structure and attributes which are likely to prevail in a society which is no longer under "the dominance of the businessman," but ruled by the soldier. Since it seemed in 1941 to Dr. Lasswell that the world might be moving into a period in which "the specialists on violence are the most powerful group in society," he wrote this article to consider what sort of society would result from their rule.

Although far from a fiery diatribe against the trend the writer examines (social psychologists are seldom "fiery"), the article contains ample evidence of suppressed repugnance for the Garrison State and the dynamics of the government it would impose. The quivering remains of humane civilization drop away from every paragraph of analysis, until one wonders how Dr. Lasswell contained himself so well.

The point of recalling this study is to show how closely certain of the developments Lasswell anticipated have more recently been found realized in our society by another writer—C. Wright Mills, who a year ago wrote a pamphlet, *Mass Society and Liberal Education* (published by the New York Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults), in which other forces besides the military are shown to contribute to a psychological parallel of the Garrison State.

First, however, let us recall something of what Lasswell had to say, not bothering to note how recent totalitarian societies have fulfilled his predictions. The first problem confronting the rulers of the Garrison State is that of "morale," in which the role of fear has great importance:

With the socialization of danger as a permanent characteristic of modern violence, the nation becomes one unified technical enterprise. Those who direct the violence operations are compelled to consider the entire gamut of problems that arise in living together under modern conditions.

There will be an energetic struggle to incorporate young and old into the destiny and mission of the state. . . . In the garrison state there must be work—and the duty to work—for all. Since all work becomes public work, all who do not accept employment flout military discipline. For those who do not fit within the structure of the state there is but one alternative—to obey or die. Compulsion, therefore, is to be expected as a potent instrument for internal control of the garrison state. . . .

In addition to the adjustment of symbols, goods, and violence, the political elite of the garrison state will find it necessary to make certain adaptations in the fundamental practices of the state. Decisions will be more dictatorial than democratic, and institutional practices long connected with modern democracy will disappear. . . . instrumental democracy will be in abeyance, although the symbols of "mystic" democracy will doubtless continue. Instrumental democracy is found wherever authority and control are widely dispersed among the members of a state. Mystic "democracy" is not, strictly speaking, democracy at all, because it may be found where authority and control are highly concentrated yet where part of the established practice is to speak in the name of the people as a whole. . . .

In the garrison state all organized social activity will be governmentalized; hence, the role of independent associations will disappear, with the exception of secret societies (specifically, there will be no organized economic, religious, or cultural life outside of the duly constituted agencies of government).

The garrison state imagined by Dr. Lasswell has numerous other attributes, some of them differing more radically from present democratic institutions than those described above, but the foregoing account will serve as a basis for

comparison with C. Wright Mills' examination of contemporary "mass society."

Mills regards the emergence of "mass" characteristics as a broad development in which the rise of military bureaucracy is only one of a number of contributing causes. He finds the development of the mass society primarily a result of the decline of the *public*, as the primary source of democratic decision. Mills' definition of *public* is of obvious importance to his analysis. He writes:

In a *public* as I understand the term, virtually as many people express opinions as receive them; public communications are so organized that there is a chance immediately and effectively to answer back to any opinion expressed in public. Opinion formed by such discussion readily finds an outlet in effective action against, if necessary, prevailing systems and agents of authority, and authoritative institutions do not interpenetrate the public, which is thus more or less autonomous in its operations. When these conditions prevail, we have the working model of a community of publics, and this model . . . fits pretty closely the several assumptions of classic democratic theory.

The term *mass* has a contrasting meaning:

At the opposite extreme, in a *mass*, far fewer people express opinions than receive them; for the community of publics becomes an abstracted collectivity of individuals who receive impressions from the mass media. The communications that prevail are so organized that it is difficult or impossible for the individual to answer back immediately or with any effect. The realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities who organize channels for such action. The mass has no autonomy from institutions; on the contrary, agents of authorized institutions interpenetrate this mass, reducing any autonomy it may have in the formation of opinion by discussion.

Here, briefly, are the poles or extremes of social organization established by Mills as the basis for discussion. It is at once plain that the garrison state described by Lasswell closely resembles in important ways the mass society described by Mills. In the garrison state, "the nation becomes one unified technical enterprise."

And the published blueprints of how the United States is to be organized under the conditions of total war leave no doubt as to the accuracy of what Lasswell says. The "agents of authorized institutions" will interpenetrate the mass at practically every point, controlling every phase of economic existence. Already, the tendency to incorporate religious themes in our political institutions is causing widespread comment, and in the case of specified individuals (doing "classified" work), social activities, reading matter, and even casual conversation are carefully scrutinized by agents entrusted with safeguarding the security of the State.

But in drawing this parallel, what seems of particular interest is the fact that the decline of genuine communication systems (in which "there is a chance immediately and effectively to answer back") has not been due so much to military influence or machiavellian political manipulation as to the vast development of the techniques of "selling." This is the point: Regardless of whether military men intending total social control or businessmen seeking only larger markets appropriate the available systems of communication, the use of those systems for non-liberal ends produces the same result: *a mass Society*.

The commercial domination of communications is described by Mills:

Entire brackets of professions and industries are in the "opinion business," impersonally manipulating the public for hire. In *the primary public*, the competition of opinions goes on between people holding views in the service of their interests and their reasoning. *But in the mass society* of media markets, competition, if any, goes on between the crowd of manipulators with their mass media on the one hand, and the people receiving their propaganda on the other.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that a conception of public opinion as a mere impressment or as a reaction—we cannot say "response"—to the content of the mass media should arise. In this view, the public is merely the collectivity of individuals each rather passively exposed to the mass media and

rather helplessly opened up to the suggestions and manipulations that flow from these media.

Mills recalls that some observers had hoped that mass means of communication such as radio and television would restore public participation in the judgment of issues; instead, he points out, "it has helped kill it off." The reasons he gives for this result are worth examining in detail. First, Mills notes, television in particular has encroached on time formerly given to discussion and conversation—"upon the leisurely human interchange of opinion." Second, mass media seldom provide intelligent analysis of issues:

They do not increase rational insight into tensions, neither those in the individual nor those of the society which are reflected in the individual. On the contrary, they distract attention from such tension. They carry a general tone of animated distraction, a suspended agitation, but it is going nowhere and has nowhere to go: the chief distracting tension of the media is between the wanting and the not having of commodities or of women held to be good looking. As they now generally prevail, the media not only fail as an educational force; they are a malign force—in that they do not reveal to the viewer the sources of his tension and anxiety, his inarticulate resentments and half-formed hopes.

Both Lasswell and Mills give attention to the effect of technology in subdividing the activities and interests of the members of modern society, while living in close physical proximity in an enlarging metropolis. Lasswell wrote in "The Garrison State":

Thousands of technical operations have sprung into existence where a few hundred were found before. To complicate the material environment in this way is to multiply the foci of attention of those who live in our society. Diversified foci of attention breed differences in outlook, preference, and loyalty. The labyrinth of specialized "material" environments generates profound ideological divergencies that cannot be abolished, though they can be mitigated, by the methods now available to leaders in our society. As long as modern technology prevails, society is honeycombed with cells of separate experience, or individuality, of partial freedom. Concerted action under such conditions depends upon skilfully guiding

the minds of men; hence the enormous importance of symbolic manipulation in modern society.

Mills studies the same situation:

The members of a metropolitan society of masses know one another only fractionally as the man who fixes the car, or as that girl who serves your lunch, or as the woman who takes care of your child at school during the day. Pre-judgment and stereotype flourish when people meet people only in this segmental manner. The humanist reality of others does not, cannot, come through.

There are two implications of this I would mention. (1) Just as people tend to select those mass media that confirm what they already believe and enjoy, so do they tend, by the mere fact of segregated milieux and routines, to come into touch with those people whose opinions are similar to theirs. Others they tend to treat unseriously. In such a situation as the metropolitan society, they develop, in their defense, a blase manner that reaches deeper than a manner. They do not, accordingly, experience genuine clash of viewpoint or issue. And when they do, they tend to consider it unpleasant. (2) They are so sunk in the routines of their milieux that they do not transcend, even in discussion, much less by action, these more or less narrow milieux. They do not gain a view of the structure of their society and of their role within it. The city is a structure composed of milieux; the people in the milieux tend to be rather detached from one another; being more or less confined to their own rather narrow ranges, they do not understand the structure of their society. As they reach for each other, they do so by stereotype and through prejudiced images of the creatures of other milieux. Each is trapped by his confining circle; each is split from easily identifiable groups. It is for people in such narrow milieux that the mass media can create a pseudo-world beyond, and a pseudo-world within themselves as well.

That this general condition has come about, not from the consummate wickedness of a master-planner of human exploitation, but from, so to say, the common consent of indifference and preoccupation with acquisitive drives, is evidence that the Mass Society can easily arrive without being sponsored by a military dictatorship, although it seems clear that the human end-product of an acquisitive society is a malleable mass of anxious and unhappy people who are

likely to welcome a military dictatorship as a solution for their problems. "Mass media," Mills remarks, "can create a pseudo-world beyond." This, surely, is an appropriate definition of the alien world of "Communism," as this term is understood by many Americans. And the fear of this alien world—a tangible enough threat in some ways—operates as a constantly exploited "distraction" over the mass media, with the result that the pseudo-world within remains unexamined. The pity of this, of course, is that the actual evils of communism are largely the result of the consolidation and "official" institutionalization of evils which already exist in the non-communist mass society. The primary social reality is made up of the attributes of the mass society and is not changed into its opposite by calling it "democracy." As E. H. Carr observes in *The New Society* (quoted by Mills):

To speak today of the defense of democracy as if we were defending something which we know and had possessed for many decades or many centuries is self-deception and sham. Mass democracy is a new phenomenon—a creation of the last half-century—which it is inappropriate and misleading to consider in terms of the philosophy of Locke or of the liberal democracy of the nineteenth century. We should be nearer the mark, and should have a far more convincing slogan, if we spoke of the need, not to defend democracy, but to create it.

As for what can be done to reverse the trend toward a mass society, Lasswell, since he is writing about the Garrison State, considers briefly those "several elements in the pattern of the garrison state" which "are compatible with democratic respect for human dignity." Mills, however, addressing himself to the role of a school for adults, proposes educational activity which will "help produce the disciplined and informed *mind* that cannot be overwhelmed."

The project of education of this sort, then, is the recreation of a genuine *public*:

Publics live in milieux, but they can transcend them—individually, by intellect and education; socially, by discussion and public action. By reflection and debate, and by organized action, a

community of publics comes to feel itself, and comes in fact to be, active at points of structural relevance. But members of a mass exist in milieux and they cannot get out of them, either by mind or by activity—except—in the extreme case—under "the organized spontaneity" of the bureaucrat on a motorcycle. We have not reached the extreme case, but observing metropolitan man in the mass we can surely see the psychological preparations for it.

The over-all point made by Mills is that through liberal education people can be helped to recognize the measure of their captivity by the mass society, and begin to break out of their bondage. For this, they need understanding of what has happened; they need to recognize how their lives have been sealed off from the lives of others; how their minds have been confined to ever-narrowing circles of significant communication.

People will have to learn to diagnose their own lives, to determine in what measure they have capitulated without knowing it to the conditions of mass society:

The man in the mass is sunk into stereotyped experience, or even sunk by it; he cannot detach himself in order to observe it, much less to evaluate it. Rather than the internal discussion of reflection, he is often accompanied through his life with only a half-conscious monologue. He has no projects of his own; he fulfills the routines that exist. He does not transcend whatever he is at any moment, he does not, he cannot, transcend his daily milieux.

He tries to look ahead, a year or two perhaps, or even longer if he has children or a mortgage, but he does not seriously ask, What do I want? How can I get it? A vague optimism sustains him, broken occasionally by little miseries and disappointments that are soon buried. He is smug, from the standpoint of those who think something might be the matter with the mass style of life in the metropolitan frenzy where self-making is an externally busy branch of industry. By what standards does he judge himself and his efforts? Where are the models of excellence for this man? In the mass, he tends to lose such self-confidence as he ever had, for life in such a society of masses both implants and implements insecurity and impotence.

As we read such analyses of modern society, the impression grows of the vast irrelevance of talk about the "communist" threat. The thing that threatens our lives is only remotely a political force. It is initially a kind of total lethargy of the mind, an unrecognized depression of the spirit, which dilutes, adulterates, weakens, poisons, and finally betrays the good in man.

We have had many warnings of this creeping paralysis from many sources. Years ago, Oswald Garrison Villard pointed out in *The Disappearing Daily* that the newspapers of the country have lost their character of being vigorous organs of individual opinion, having become mere vehicles for merchandising propaganda. Two or three months ago, Edgar Ansel Mowrer wrote in the *Saturday Review* about the "homogenization" of culture, the tepidly commonplace ends pursued by most men, and the cult of "adjustment" supported in some measure even by intellectuals. Macdonald and others wrote effectively in *Politics* about the onset of "mass" or "popular" culture, showing, in effect, how mass production and promotional methods have invaded the realm of art and literature, emasculating, devitalizing, and corrupting even the standards of excellence from which judgment proceeds.

Some kind of crisis, one hopes, is on the way. But this is no "revolution," since the revolutionist, however wrong or misguided, seeks a crisis with enthusiasm, whereas the victim of the mass society fears disturbance and challenge most of all. Perhaps the crisis will come in the emotional area of religion—but not institutional religion, for the churches are far too much involved in the pseudo-world of the mass society to offer an avenue to the new self-consciousness that is needed. If there is to be a revolution, it will have to be, first, a revolution in philosophy, and a revolution which champions the view that change must begin with man's idea of himself, and what he wants or ought to do with his life. Mills, although he speaks of the necessity of political action, writes of the need for "therapy in the ancient sense of clarifying one's

knowledge of one's self"—a therapy which "includes the imparting of all those skills of controversy with oneself which we call thinking; and with others which we call debate." He continues:

We must begin with what concerns the student most deeply. We must proceed in such a way and with such materials as to enable him to gain increasingly rational insight into these concerns. We must try to end with a man or a woman who can and will by themselves continue what we have begun: the end-product of liberal education . . . is simply the self-cultivating man and woman.

Here, surely, is a platform wide enough to include all those who are beginning to recognize the symptoms of human disaster in the mass society of the present.

REVIEW

"AN ALMANAC OF LIBERTY"

AN ALMANAC OF LIBERTY by William O. Douglas is a book with universal appeal which should provide ideal home reading—for both parents and older adolescents. Further, every secondary school teacher whose schedule includes instruction in American institutions and principles of government will find this easy-to-read, 400-page volume the proverbial "gold mine" of inspiration and information.

Book of the Month Club summarizes *An Almanac of Liberty* as "a day-to-day record illustrating the hundreds of historic events, great and small, out of which Anglo-American concepts of liberty have developed in a separate essay for each calendar day of the year." While adopting this novel format, however, which allows only one page for each crucial event or Supreme Court decision, Douglas has not strained to keep within the rigid confines of the pattern. Space belonging to some of the calendar days is borrowed for short essays upon those "principles of liberty" which underlie the concepts of an ideal democracy. This is, then, an intimate rather than a scholarly work, and the language chosen is as simple and direct as anyone could desire. The best sort of reading would be to undertake only one page per day, and it is in no sense a formidable undertaking to study American history in this fashion.

An excellent summary of Douglas' theme is provided in an essay entitled, "What Un-American Means":

Ideas are indeed the most dangerous weapons in the world. Our ideas of freedom are the most powerful political weapons man has ever forged. If we remember that, we will never have much to fear from communism. The force we generate with our ideas of liberty can give powerful impetus to freedom on other continents, as well as at home; in another century, as well as today.

We have not always remembered that, and forgetting, have given the words un-American strange meanings. Communism is, of course, un-American, because it is a way of life that denies man his

unalienable rights. But un-American has other meanings equally important, but commonly forgotten by the proponents of un-American investigations. Un-American means:

- discrimination against racial, religious, or other minorities
- denial to anyone of the right of free speech
- denial to a person under investigation of the benefit of counsel
- making the accusation the substitute for proof
- using guilt by association as the standard of proof
- using faceless informers as witnesses against men
- using communism as the label to denounce any opponent
- condemning a person for all work because he may not be fit for some

These too are un-American activities. The failure to recognize them as such leads to humorous as well as tragic results. I heard a speech on the *Bill of Rights* at a meeting of lawyers in the Far West. There was little more in it than a description of some of the roots of our civil liberties. As the speaker was leaving, I heard one lawyer say to another,

"There goes a communist if I ever saw one."

We do not mean to imply that the volume is chiefly composed of generalities such as the above, though they alone would make it a very fine book. One of the most impressive features of *Almanac of Liberty* is its presentation of a continuity of significant events which illustrate in detail the *philosophy* of responsible freedom. The Preface, at the outset, emphasizes the necessity for reflection on the main "articles of faith" to which Americans are presumably committed. The right to speak and to write freely, the right to worship as one chooses, respect for the sanctity of conscience—these are keys to the true American dream.

Progressive recognition of racial equality, marked by a steady succession of Court decisions, is seen to be but the progressive embodiment of a lofty American metaphysic—not religion in the conventional sense, to be sure, but a religion in pursuit of which each is enjoined to become his own priest and revealer on matters both secular

and theological. The concept of rule by external authority is antithetical to religion of this sort, and thus government can neither abase itself before an anthropomorphic God, nor itself assume "godly" prerogatives through excessive compulsion. Consent of the governed must always be obtained.

Because discussion throughout this book is concerned with a few basic principles, matters such as religious and philosophical objection to war receive a measure of consideration often denied by constitutional historians. Douglas sees a genuine maturation of American legal conscience in the 1946 Supreme Court decision to accord conscientious objectors full respect, which noted that "even in time of war one may truly support and defend our institutions though he stops short of using weapons of war."

Since some of our readers have shown an interest in the issues of pacifism and conscientious objection, other of Justice Douglas' remarks on this subject may be quoted. Even the recalcitrance of Jehovah's Witnesses appears in a new light when one reads his approving account of the Supreme Court's final decision to allow members of the J.W. sect to forgo "saluting the flag." In 1940, legal opinion was not this far advanced, and the "Witnesses" were commanded to participate in the flag ritual. Later, due largely to the persistence of Justice Harlan Stone, deeper dimensions of the question were grasped:

The first decision was rendered June 3, 1940. Harlan F. Stone was the sole dissenter. But his dissent—that no government can compel a person "to bear false witness to his religion"—was soon to win over a majority of the Court.

It is hard to know what the influences are that shape up one's philosophy of life. Some are in the genes of the bloodstream. Some go back to happenings too distant to remember. Some come raw from experience. Perhaps Stone's tolerance for the religious scruples of an unpopular minority went back to World War I, when he served on a board of inquiry to review cases of conscientious objectors who had refused to perform military service. I knew from what he told me that it was for him a moving experience. Perhaps he learned from the quiet

Quakers, or from those who are more impassioned, the full meaning of religious freedom. Perhaps he saw in the deep, burning eyes of some of the 2,000 drafted men whom he interviewed the message that there are some who will die rather than bear false witness to their religious beliefs.

We have space for only the vitally important passage on the next to the last page of the book, which must suffice to round out our version of Douglas' perspective. In these two paragraphs is ample explanation for the extensive writing the eminent jurist has done on "the Asia question." Here, we submit, is a man whose temperament, faith and logic find him a place with men like Gandhi, Schweitzer and Nehru. He says:

Faith of people in each other has suffered greatly since World War II. At home, the campaigns of hate and suspicion have taken a devastating toll. The illicit methods of the witch hunt tore communities apart, and set faction against faction, until at times any but the orthodox was suspect. What we did at home had powerful repercussions abroad. We became in Europe and Asia more and more the symbol of intolerance. Our emphasis on guns and dollars, rather than on fraternity and democracy, alienated us more and more from the peoples of the world. The deterioration has been alarming. An Asian friend, who hates communism with all his being, had tears in his eyes as he said farewell in 1954 after a year's visit here. "All of us in Asia will be solidly aligned against America in a few years."

Our faith in Asia would generate Asia's faith in us. Without faith, there is nothing but the bomb. And the bomb leads only to the crucible.

COMMENTARY

BORROWING FROM SOCRATES

A SENTENCE from C. Wright Mills' paper (see lead article), where he discusses the need for self-knowledge, is of interest for the light it throws on the way in which modern thinkers are beginning to revive ancient verities. Socrates, as is well known, was an advocate of "Self-knowledge," and the injunction, "Man, Know Thyself," was inscribed over the temple of the Oracle at Delphi. It is to this Mills refers when he writes:

Not the epistemology of, but the therapy resulting from, the Socratic maxim is perfectly sound, and especially so for the liberal education in the adult school.

In other words, Mills would like to borrow the instrumental value of the Socratic maxim, while leaving behind its mystical overtones. What Mills means by self-knowledge is this:

Whether he knows it or not, the man in the mass is gripped by personal troubles, and he is not able to turn them into social issues, or to see their relevance for his community nor his community's relevance for them.

The knowledgeable man in the genuine public is able to do just that; he understands that what he thinks and feels to be personal troubles are very often not only that but problems shared by others and indeed not subject to solution by any one individual but only by modifications of the structure of the groups in which he lives and sometimes in the structure of the entire society.

Men in masses have troubles although they are not always aware of their true meaning and source. Men in publics confront issues, and they are aware of their terms. It is the task of the liberal institution, as of the liberally educated man, continually to translate troubles into issues and issues into the terms of their human meaning for the individual.

Now when Mills decries the "epistemology" of the Socratic maxim, he is saying: Let us not acquire a preoccupation with some metaphysical entity known as the "Self," which, as so often happened in the past, will result in elaborate

theories remote from concrete action and responsibility. Mills, like John Dewey, dislikes the "purity" of speculation which remains only speculation.

There is ample historical explanation of Mills' distaste for metaphysics, but, how, in general, is anyone to mark off the "personal" troubles from those which require "a modification of the structure of the groups"—which are in fact *social* troubles—unless there exists some fairly clear notion of the self, its capacities and potentialities?

Epistemological reflection on the idea of human beings as "selves" may not be the vain and foolish undertaking it sometimes seems. If, for example, we decide to take to heart the rule proposed by Edgar Ansel Mowrer in the *Saturday Review*, "Never urge people to do together what the self-reliant among them can do better alone," the nature of the Self assumes considerable importance. Quite conceivably one of the basic mistakes of modern society is that it has turned into social troubles what ought to have been left alone as personal troubles; just as surely as society has in certain obvious respects held individuals responsible for troubles which have a social origin. The equation works both ways and thinking about these relationships is bound to remain obscure unless we arrive at some working definitions, however tentative, of what man is.

Without such inquiry, the way is left clear for excesses in either direction—the complete politicalization of human problems, on the one hand, or, on the other, the sterility of complete withdrawal from the wicked world.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

EDITOR, "Children . . . and Ourselves"

Your comments concerning the family contract have caused me to do considerable thinking about the problem of difficult family situations, particularly when involving divorce.

Divorce is generally accepted as the failure of the marriage enterprise. Because of this, the relinquishing of love and the foregoing of possessive relationships may be extremely painful to one or both parties—especially to children, and also to in-laws, and friends. But I really believe that divorce seldom needs to mean all this. Rather, it could mean a rearrangement, an extension, a change in the focus of responsibility between original partners to the marriage contract. If such an attitude could be adopted by those involved in the experience, there would not need be a tug-of-war over children, or between friends and relations. All that was unwholesome in the relationship or uselessly constricting to either party could be discarded. "Love" may even be thought of as continuing between the former husband and wife—at least the important aspect of love which involves respect and mutual help; it should certainly continue between parents and children. In such case the word "custody" loses its unsavory overtones. When each person, parent or child, realizes that he is not losing another completely, he is not so likely to resort to hostile activities, or become distraught.

Two illustrations of this possibility come to mind, by way of a news item and an informal public school survey. The news item, appearing several months ago, told of a man and wife who were divorced. The man married again. Shortly after, his first wife became paralyzed. The second wife, a nurse, offered to care for the first wife. Thus the three lived together in a mutually helpful relationship. The survey, taken in a large school district, indicated that, in the opinion of the teachers, children from "broken" homes were *not* characteristically emotionally disturbed and "problem" children—unless hostile attitudes between the former partners had prevailed.

These two items indicate to me that "love," and *regard*, can persist after possessiveness is gone. When an attempt is made to effect this transition, hostility is clearly lessened. Children are harmed in their emotional and intellectual growth chiefly by

environments of anger, violent dissension, and unpleasant emotions—much less by external changes in circumstances.

Children are remarkably capable of giving love to all who will recognize it. They freely "identify" with anyone who arouses their respect and concern. Therefore, how puzzling it must be to them to observe adults who cling and hold, with envy and jealousy, others whom they claim to love!

I realize that I have only been looking at a small corner of the problem. No doubt you will enlarge upon the picture with further discussion.

Elbert Hubbard, like many another writer who has taken a certain delight in shocking people, said that marriages should be difficult to obtain, and divorces easy to procure. What he probably meant was that, insofar as marriage is regarded as a socio-legal contract to protect the interest of the community or state, the courts might best show concern for public welfare by requiring that certain conditions be met before children are brought into the world. On the other hand, the logic of his sentiment in regard to divorce rests upon the simple premise—a sound one—that human affairs are never improved by external compulsion. People should be and stay together because *they* feel the desire, need, or obligation to do so—not because a contract makes it disadvantageous to terminate the relationship.

What our correspondent seems to be arguing is that it is possible to have successful divorces, just as it is possible to have successful marriages. We endorse the viewpoint. This is not to affirm that divorce is "as good" as marriage, or that the altering of a home relationship, particularly when children are involved, can be taken as a casual or lighthearted matter. But one must face the fact that thousands of homes *are* undergoing such radical alterations every day in the year, and that the attitudes of the two former marital partners, in regard to the relationship, have a profound influence upon children—who remain, whatever a man and his former wife choose to do with the remainder of their lives.

Very few separated couples, so far as we are able to determine, have known how to build the structure of a "successful divorce." The usual pattern is for each partner to the marriage to blame

the other for its failure, and to pass on something of the hostility felt to the children. But this is both sad and unnecessary. The children do not live with society's ideas in respect to marriage so much as they live with their own thoughts about their parents. And there is no *a priori* reason why feelings of strain and blame *must* accompany a child's attitude toward either divorced parent.

Sociologists have called attention to the crying need for revision of divorce statutes, arguing that it is unrealistic and psychologically unsound for state laws to require that, when a divorce is desired, husband or wife must "accuse" the other of wrongdoing in order to obtain legal separation. Margaret Mead, noted anthropologist, spoke to this point in her well-known book *Male and Female*, pointing out that we must develop an understanding tolerance for divorce—if only to help those who have been divorced to avoid feeling that they have been involved in a major failure.

As a matter of fact, everything we know of psychology suggests that whenever people fear, they are likely to succumb to what they fear; in this case the man or woman who fears the possibility of divorce will be under considerable strain, and this strain can engender further attitudes which may precipitate a separation otherwise unnecessary. As our correspondent suggests, when separation of parents seems to be the only solution to interpersonal problems, there is no reason why fair-minded cooperation between those who have agreed to separate cannot prevail. Every "successful divorce," to our way of thinking, is a milestone along the road of psychological progress. Whenever a man and a woman are able to terminate living together in fairness, and with the best of basic intentions toward one another, they blaze an important trail—one which may eventually even lead away from divorce itself.

How many jurists have at times wished that agencies serving as "divorce clinics" were available to the public? Certainly there is something yet to be worked with after the family relations counselors have done their utmost, and been unsuccessful. But once the decision has been made to proceed with divorce *after* such counseling, advice from persons

of broad perspective and experience is no longer easily available. Meanwhile, literally millions of dollars are spent annually in court battles which would be unnecessary if it were possible to demonstrate the folly of this particular type of conflict especially in its bearing upon the lives of involved children.

This is far from an easy subject to discuss; what we have already written about "successful divorces" may strike some readers as "negative," or perhaps prompted by the desire to "shock." But surely men and women of all persuasions can agree that the most important parties to either marriages or divorces are the children. And, from the point of view presented, it can be cogently argued that legal obstructions to divorce nearly always work against the best interests of the children. Marital partners desiring legal separation commonly become so involved in the *contest* of divorce that it is difficult for them to cooperate on the all-important enterprise of seeing that both are encouraged to do all they can for the future welfare of the children.

Divorce is typically regarded as "final." Actually, leaving laws out of account, parents can never be divorced in any full and final sense, especially when there are children. Both parents are wedded by a sort of natural law, far more important than any statute, to their responsibility to the young. It therefore seems to us that legal obstructions to divorce, and the general impression that divorce is an ultimate rupture, make much more difficult the basic understanding which parents ought to have—which is that there will never come a time when either parent can consider that obligations and responsibilities are terminated. We should far rather see divorced parents who agree upon the one subject of the welfare of their children, though separated, than parents who live together in a state of constant undeclared warfare.

FRONTIERS

The New Asia

IT takes an event like the Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations, to which the Indonesians were host, to show how little is understood in the United States of the forces which are becoming articulate in Asia. This Conference, which came to a close on April 24, had no American representative in attendance, save for Adam Powell, a Negro Congressman who went unofficially. Mr. Dulles made no friends for the U.S. in the East by referring to the gathering as a "so-called Asian-African conference," nor did the State Department improve matters by its initially contemptuous response to Chou En-lai's dramatic peace gesture in regard to the Formosa crisis (a response which brought widespread indignation from informed Americans and was later reversed by both Mr. Dulles and President Eisenhower).

Heralded in the American press as a "Communist road show" (*Time*), the Conference turned out to be a meeting of dignity and promise of new-born Asian nations, and it might have been a favorable development for the United States, had American spokesmen shown greater appreciation of what was going on. Actually, there was so much criticism of Communism that the *Christian Century* correspondent, Winburn T. Thomas, was able to write:

It is possible that such representations as these brought home to some of the delegates for the first time the viciousness of the communist system. Yet it is to be feared that they were cabled in greater detail to the American press than to that of the Asian capitals. In the end Chou's force and prestige, plus his diplomatic handling of the situation, served to negate the effect of his accusers' charges.

Unhappily, most Western readers probably read accounts of Bandung chiefly to find out whose propaganda line seems to be winning out in Asia, instead of endeavoring to take the measure of these Asian and African statesmen as human beings. There is a tendency on the part of

Americans to conclude that people who do not eagerly accept the representations of the American State Department with regard to the significance of international affairs cannot possibly be free and independent. There is a basic fallacy in this opinion, since the nations which can be made to give rubber-stamp approval of the policies of other powers—*any* powers—are always the weakest in democratic terms.

The letters to the *Christian Century* by Winburn Thomas are a great credit to religious journalism, as, also, are the *CC's* editorial notices of the Conference. If this correspondence could have been published in every newspaper in the United States, the world might now be closer to lasting peace than it is. Bandung gave unmistakable evidence of the far-reaching moral strength and seriousness of the Asian nations, as well as final proof that the days of colonialism, imperialism, and racism are numbered in the East. Little was heard from the African delegates—perhaps, as Mr. Thomas suggests, for the reason that Africa is vulnerable to the reprisals of a listening Western world—but Africa had eloquent spokesmen among the Asian delegates.

President Sukarno of Indonesia opened the sessions with a welcoming address, noting that the first day of the Conference fell on the anniversary of Paul Revere's ride "prelude to the first successful anti-colonial war in history." He quoted the lines from Longfellow's famous poem, ending, "a word that shall echo forever more bringing from Mr. Thomas this comment:

That echo was heard in Bandung, but it did not resound from American shores. It is still not too late for America to convince Asia and Africa that she believes in the self-determination of people and is opposed to the injustices of colonialism and imperialism. She can do this, however, only when she backs up her words of sympathy for the oppressed with specific proposals for liquidation of existing colonial empires. Until that time, the "word that shall echo" will seem to many of the nations of Asia and Africa to come rather from the communist part of the world.

The *Christian Century* correspondent cannot be suspected of even the slightest communist sympathies, so that his report is doubly valuable. He tells of the sober behavior of the delegates, their determination to work together for the betterment of their people, and the profound alliance of all the nations represented as a result of their common fate at the hands of imperialism. The closing speech of the meeting was by General Romulo of the Philippines, who said, "We belong to the community of the hurt, the heart-broken and of deferred hopes." The final resolutions, adopted by all, condemned all forms of colonialism and declared uncompromising war on human exploitation. Mr. Thomas writes:

The delegations understood each other, for they bore on their bodies the marks of the world's stupidity and cupidity. Washington failed either to anticipate what would happen at Bandung or to accept what did happen. . . .

The coldly factual, unemotional set of resolutions uses abstractions such as "colonialism," "racial segregation and discrimination," "domination and exploitation." These abstractions in their Asian setting are charged with emotion; they are the stuff of which the Asian-African nations were conceived. The voices which spoke authoritatively at Bandung were not those of men who are primarily politicians but of men who had suffered in prisons and concentration camps for their dedication to freedom. Mrs. Indira Gandhi explained to a reporter that the Indian leaders had earned their leadership through suffering. Because of the price they have paid personally, the Indian people weave laurels for the brows of their new rulers. She said that her father, Prime Minister Nehru, refers to this suffering not to glory in it but to remind the people of how they became what they are.

United though the Asian-African Conference was in its statement to the world, healthy differences were present from the beginning. The Western world was surprised at the anticommunist expressions in the opening speeches. So, apparently, were the Asians who set up the conference. These criticisms were hushed as it became apparent that the Philippines were not defending the United States and that China was not presuming to speak for Russia. . . .

The Ceylon spokesman, who startled the delegates by taking a strong pro-West stand in the

early part of the conference, subsequently admitted that the United States' reaction to the Formosa peace proposals had made things difficult. "It is a pity that the United States should have replied to the offer without thinking," he said, obviously disappointed. The Pakistan premier, while friendly to the U.S.A. and critical at some points of India, stated at Bandung that the allegations that communism was colonial were not applicable to China. Following the exchange of messages between Washington and Peiping he commented that evidences of earnestness would be needed on both sides if the parties were to resolve their differences.

A notable feature of the conference was the willingness of the delegates to accept responsibility for their own affairs. Gen. Romulo warned against a counter-racism against the white peoples, which would, he said, make Asians victims of the same trap as that in which the West finds itself. Prime Minister Nehru pointed out that some of the problems of Asian peoples were self-created. "In the final analysis," he said, "we must direct attention to our own failings. If we are weak of heart and spirit, all the revolutions in the world will do us no good." The Turkish representative said that Asian nations must end the violence in their own countries if they are to help other nations to peace. Romulo also spoke in criticism of the assumption, made by some Asians, "that their destinies will be determined only by what America or Russia does or does not do."

Americans may find it difficult to realize that the leaders of present-day Asian nations are mature men, tried in the fire which has forged these new republics, whose understanding of political issues is fully as acute as that possessed by any Western statesmen, and who are determined to create and sustain national policies for their people which will free them from the last lingering shadow of centuries-old domination by white-skinned outsiders. More vivid than warnings of red tyranny are memories of years spent in the prisons and concentration camps of colonial powers, more impressive than present-day declarations of American diplomats are the documents of American history—the writings of

Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and Abraham Lincoln. The Asian leaders know the difference between the humanist spirit of the American Founding Fathers and the ruthless intentions of the communist revolution, but they are waiting for *their* revolution to be understood by the people of the United States.

The closing paragraphs of Winburn Thomas' first letter to the *Christian Century* (May 11) make the issues clear:

America muffed an opportunity at Bandung. Even at this late date the mistake need not prove fatal, provided the United States can act on the lessons to be learned. America must start siding with exploited peoples against their exploiters. She must take a firm stand in dealing with the European powers with respect to remaining colonies in Asia, and even more so with respect to those in Africa. . . .

America must choose men and women to represent it in Asia from among its non-Caucasian citizens. Congressman Adam Powell asserted in Bandung that there were 23 million such Americans. Not to make use of this diplomatic asset is a national tragedy.

America's foreign policy must reflect sympathy and understanding. Foreign aid, for all the good it does, is provoked not to help people in need but to combat communism, and this is immediately distrusted. A reorientation of foreign policy requires not a new secretary of state or the location of a few sensitive ambassadors in key capitals, but a recapture by the American people as a whole of the spirit of 1776. . . . America cannot succeed in her basic hopes for the world until she has demonstrated true fellow feeling for its people, their fears and their frustrations. This should have been clear all along. Bandung has writ it large.