VOLUME XIII, NO. 25
JUNE 22, 1960

CHANGING SYMBOLS OF FULFILLMENT

IN his April *Foreign Affairs* article, Nelson Rockefeller said that the tendency of men in a revolutionary period is to regard its happenings as "a series of seemingly unrelated crises." He added that the real challenge of such a time is "to discern the meaning of the period and its implication for the future, and to shape the emerging forces in the light of its purposes."

We could not have better advice. Certain questions, however, need to be investigated at the outset, if our response to the "challenge" is to prove fruitful.

For example, who is revolting against what? Are the ends of the revolution at all clear? Are the means chosen by the revolutionists, whoever they are, appropriate to the ends, whatever they are? Is it really correct to call the present an age of revolution, or should it be identified rather as an age of rebellion—a time when the feelings of men are more "against" well-defined evils than they are "for" well-conceived goods?

Do these questions, important as they may be, have the effect of flattening out the issue into a many-layered mystery, turning honest interest into frustration, and an eagerness to be up and doing into an all-too-familiar impotence?

One thing is certain: The stakes in this challenge are high enough to pursue every question we can ask as far as we can. And since we may be sure that the truth and the facts of the matter will be very difficult to determine, the obvious obstacles to the inquiry should not be a deterrent.

For one set of answers, let us start with certain stipulations. Let us say that the people who are revolting in this period of revolution are people like ourselves; that they entertain the classic longings of men who have arrived at a degree of political self-consciousness; that these longings are for freedom, for education for themselves and their children, for health and reasonable material well-being, and that their hopes for such things are internally connected with ideals to which all men give expression—peace, human solidarity, justice, equality, opportunity.

It goes without saying that when these longings become explicit enough to support revolutionary undertakings, there is already in existence a variety of theories of how to fulfill them. We call these theories "ideologies." At present there are three great ideologies or bodies of doctrine distinct enough from one another to be considered as separate theories of human fulfillment. These three are Capitalism, Communism, and Democratic Socialism.

Having named the competitors in the ideological struggle, we have reached some sort of "brink" which makes the reader ask himself, "What next? Is the writer going to attempt an evaluation of these ideologies on their *merits?"*

A prospect of this sort brings almost automatic responses such as, "That argument has been settled," or, "Who can be impartial in *that* kind of an evaluation?" or, "Anyhow, it's *too late* to return to asking which is the best System'."

In a sense, we agree. That is, there seems little point in rehearsing all the old arguments for and against these systems. It *is* too late.

But it is *not* too late to try to point out that no one of these three systems has been notably successful in satisfying the classic longings that they were instituted to satisfy. Why don't more people point out this common failure? Mainly, because of the Cold War. When you are arguing that your own ideology is so good that you are ready to sacrifice close to half of your own population in nuclear war, rather than change to

another ideology, you tend to argue, also, that your own ideology is practically flawless by comparison with any other. You may admit that "there is always room for improvement," but the improvement is never allowed to be in the direction of compromise with some other system. We are, in short, the psychological prisoners of our own defense mechanisms. Intellectuals may play around at the edges of the controversy, conceding this, proposing that, but the massive reality of the situation is that we identify all our classic longings with our ideological system, and we are emotionally convinced that to do anything else would throw us into a chaos of broken intentions and ignominious defeat.

There are compelling reasons, then, why the peoples of the world are not likely to agree on the question of ideology. But is it really necessary that we should? This question is a stickler. Suppose, for the sake of argument, we say that all men don't have to agree on the ideological issue. After all, efforts to *make* people agree have not been very successful. Why not approach the problem closer to its root in the basic longings of men? If it should be shown that none of the ideologies we are fighting about are *good enough*, then why fight for them to the death?

A New Republic reviewer (discussing Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology, NR* for May 23) speaks to this point:

> Granted, that democracy and socialism have both promised optimum human fulfillment, and that both have in important ways failed to attain it, then the dialogue between them, which has dwelled obsessively upon the alternatives of individualism and collectivism must be regarded as irrelevant to the objective. The answers which we gave with such intense ideological conviction were, in a sense, responses to the wrong question, for the problem was not how to attain equality, but how to attain fulfillment. . . .
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> The long-standing over-arching, ideological controversy between right and left, conservative and liberal, have and have-not, has led us to assume that these present the polar extremities of all possible social thought. Because of this assumption we sometimes fail to note how many social questions there are on which the traditional opposing positions fail to offer any solution at all, much less alternative solutions. Both left-wing and right-wing thought accept the idea of a rationalized society, which is to say the depersonalized system in which man tends to become an interchangeable part of a link in the chain. Both accept maximum productivity as an economic goal without any attention to what economic abundance implies for the imperative of productivity. Both treat work as a necessary evil to be borne for the sake of compensation rather than of fulfillment. . . .

Yet it is fulfillment that we are after!

What are men likely to say, a couple of hundred years from now, about the Communist ideology? (We push this hypothetical judgment ahead two hundred years in the hope that by that time it will be possible to divorce the evaluation from the obsessive fears of the present.) We are bound to say, at least, that it sprang from the same classic longings that gave birth to other ideologies; that it gained support and power from the desire of men for freedom from want, for opportunity, for health, for education. We might even add that Communism was in many cases the midwife which gave currency among men to the idea of human solidarity and international brotherhood—an ideal which, once established, could not die, no matter what happened to the political instruments which brought it to birth.

But whatever we might say about Communism—going on to detail its delusions, its ruthlessness, its fall into bureaucratic tyranny and its suppression of all serious criticism—we would almost certainly give the bulk of our comment to the circumstances of the ideological struggle of the present. We would look back upon this epoch as a period in which men were obliged to discover, almost *en masse*, certain basic truths about their own nature and about all human striving—truths heretofore known only to a few philosophers, mystics, and religious teachers.

How do those truths emerge?

It is a commonplace of human experience that men tend to project their inner, psychological

longings, representing them by some objective, circumstantial goal. This tendency is the origin of every utopian romance. It is the habit of men who are filled with revolutionary ardor to present their oppressors with a Charter which declares: *"This Is What We Want."* So long as the framework of human experience was a combination of the natural and the political, these charters remained fairly simple. Men wanted land, freedom to work it, and the right to form their own opinions and express them. The conditions providing the satisfaction of these wants are not difficult to define. A kind of stereotype of human longings along these lines appeared in the social literature of the nineteen-thirties in the United States. The strength of John Steinbeck's novels comes from the generalized hunger of men for the conditions of this stereotype. Steinbeck wrote with great power and simplicity of the material symbols which stood for the classic human longings during the first half of the twentieth century—symbols which came into focus with the image of the *home*, a house and lot in a somewhat rural setting, with a school not far away, a business or a job for the father, and the simple pleasures of a sturdy American family which enjoys itself and its rights and freedom in a mediumsize community made up of similar people. This image and its correlates are endlessly exploited in advertising and entertainment, with variations up and down the social scale. It is this image which men feel is threatened by the ideological war.

In other parts of the world, no doubt, men have corresponding images. The Africans of South Africa must be slowly formulating their conception of the good life they want the right to enjoy; the Indian agriculturalist, as he joins what has been called "the revolution of rising expectations," will develop similar symbols of the good; and so on, throughout the world.

But what, at the same time, is happening, especially in the United States, is the withdrawal of the *savor* from the realized forms of the symbol, in areas of life where material progress has been rapid. In the cultures where the types of the external symbol of the good are replaced in rapid succession, due to the accelerated "progress" of technology, there is hardly time for them to acquire a stable reality. The advertising pages of the national magazines of the United States provide a picture of the continually changing symbols of the good life. Already the experts of Madison Avenue have realized that they are not "selling" products, but fulfillment, so that there is an artful association of psychological and even philosophical values with the things you can buy for money. The idea is that if you buy this typewriter, your letters will give both you and your stenographer an æsthetic "lift." The product is only the lever which raises you to a higher level of existence. The big companies with money to do a lot of "institutional" advertising (the Container Corporation, for example) often spend millions to make you believe that they and what they make are somehow essential to the high culture of Western civilization. Meanwhile, a new cartridge for your record-player will place you in the same category of human beings as Bach and Beethoven. And that, of course, is where you want to be.

The point is that we no longer have stable external symbols of the good. This discovery leads to dissatisfaction with external symbols and drives us back to the question of fulfillment itself. What is the nature of fulfillment? Can fulfillment be understood apart from its external symbols?

If we are able to say that it can, then we are suddenly involved in metaphysics and mysticism. We are like the old alchemist who declared that the transmutation of base metals into gold was only the external symbol of an inner process of transmutation which was the *real* work of his life.

This brings into play all the old metaphysical questions raised by Platonic idealism. It makes us inquire what, precisely, a man is accomplishing in his life. It raises the issue of the immortality of the soul and whether the soul has an evolutionary program of its own, connected with, but also

distinguishable from, the affairs, ends, and goods of embodied existence.

Suppose, for example, the Gnostic, Hindu, or Buddhist account of meaning is in general the true one. Suppose the ultimate values of life lie in how a man has loved, and how he has striven, and not in what he has accumulated and how he has excelled over others. Someone will say that that is what our religion has taught all along. The reply must be, "Perhaps our religion has taught it, but have we ever really believed it? Have we believed it with a conviction sufficient to found our decisions on this idea of human life?" A religion which has only the role of being betrayed over many centuries is either a bad religion or a religion which must declare that the human situation is quite hopeless.

The fact of the matter is, to return to Mr. Rockefeller's formulation, that the popular interpretation of the present series of crises has only one meaning: That our present political, economic, and material arrangements, including our physical lives, are the supreme values to be defended.

That this interpretation makes a failure of every martyr does not seem to disturb us. The reflex which identifies fulfillment with our present set of external symbols is too powerful. That a similar identification of fulfillment with another set of external symbols on the part of our opponents has literally "created" the ideological impasse, barely interests us. We seem too set in our ways of thinking, too frightened by the threat of physical destruction, to stand away from the conflict and make a fresh evaluation of our circumstances.

Yet that is unquestionably what we must do. It is fulfillment, after all, that we wish to defend. And fulfillment, we are at least beginning to understand, is not irrevocably locked in a given set of material circumstances. Nor is it, we are constrained to add, the captive value of a particular set of political arrangements.

What seems to be the case is that the value of fulfillment is a continuing contrapuntal theme which moves back and forth from man's inner life to temporary embodiments in man's external environment. It is a constantly changing theme. Without a symbolic embodiment in social institutions it has no practical existence, and yet, without continuous renewal from the fountain of inner growth or realization, it lapses into a mechanical monotony and talk about it becomes only a kind of "noise."

This need of fulfillment to seek new embodiments, to recognize new symbols, never to be condemned to static forms, is what makes freedom precious to human beings. Freedom gives access to innovation, and innovation is the first stage of the alchemy of fulfillment. Yesterday's form of fulfillment is today's stale repetition.

Every child instructs us in the inwardness of fulfillment. Every child goes through the same basic experiences, yet every child enjoys the thrill of fresh discovery in each experience. Somehow, it is both the same and different. It is the experience of everyman and at the same time uniquely the experience of that child. Some miracle of consciousness is at work in this process. At the end of his life, the man who was a child has grown to maturity. He is one who carries with him the entire harvest of human experience. What shall we say of a man who is justly ready to die? What will he be like? How can we justify his readiness? What is the fulfillment of his life, that we do not protest his death as a hideous blight and condemnation of all that he is? Where does the *value* reside? Or does it just go out of existence with the physical embodiment?

Can we answer these questions only at the cost of becoming sentimental, or do we demand some sort of moral economy in our explanation and our answer? Human beings with nuclear weapons in their hands need to consider these things.

REVIEW
"FACE OF MY ASSASSIN"

DAN WAKEFIELD'S "Report from the South," in the May 7 *Nation*, provides clear factual support for an excellent first novel, *Face of my Assassin*, by Jan Huckins and Carolyn Weston (Random House, 1959), This story concerns the predicament of a northern journalist sent by his newspaper into the deep South for a story on "integration." When the reporter's sympathies become known he is a marked man, and a psychotic sheriff manages to have him indicted for the murder of a Negro girl, convicted, and sentenced to death.

In like manner, when Dan Wakefield attended a meeting of the White Citizens Council in Montgomery, Alabama, sitting quietly and taking notes while resistance to integration was being preached by one of the high officials of that city, he aroused so much ire by his failure to cheer that he was later accosted by a gang of young white toughs who sought to drag him from his car.

In this meeting, Montgomery's Safety Commissioner, L. B. Sullivan, who heads the police and fire departments, spoke to his appreciative audience as follows:

> Since the infamous Supreme Court decision rendered in 1954, we in Montgomery and the South have been put to a severe test by those who seek to destroy our time-honored customs. . . . I think I speak for all the law-enforcement agencies when I say we will use all the peaceful means at our disposal to maintain our cherished traditions.
>
> Not since Reconstruction have our customs been in such jeopardy. . . . We can, will and must resist outside forces hell-bent on our destruction. . . . We want these outside meddlers to leave us alone. If they do otherwise, we'll do our best to "accommodate" them here in Montgomery.

While the Huckins-Weston novel is good melodrama with a happy ending, one may hope that it is also true prophecy. But as the above quotations from Mr. Sullivan make clear, any such consummation will be delayed considerably in Montgomery and other cities controlled by similar men. Both law-enforcing agencies and the local press may easily inflame the populace, proclaiming that the drive for integration is a "Communist-Jew" conspiracy.

When Negroes attempted a prayer march to the steps of the state Capitol in Alabama, they encountered a mob of 5,000 angry whites determined to stop the demonstration. Mr. Wakefield takes note of the ominous forces at work:

> One of the important groups that took an active part in controlling that explosive situation was not represented on the platform along with the city, county and state police officials feted by the Council. This was the group of armed horsemen whose appearance on the scene marked a new addition to the law-enforcement procedures of the South. The band of mounted "deputies," led by Sheriff Mac Sims Butler was composed of wealthy cattlemen from the surrounding area who now are on call for emergencies, and have several times come into town with their horses in trailer trucks for "civil defense" drills. During the prayer-march demonstration, they roughed up and threatened three press photographers, two from Alabama papers and one from Magnum of New York. One of the photographers was arrested for refusing to obey an officer (deputy) who told him to move back. These non-uniformed mounties are unknown by face or name for public record, and have been especially vigilant in preventing any pictures being taken of them.

In *Face of my Assassin*, the "Avengers" are finally broken up by the courage of two men who refuse to take part in a lynching:

> "Git that nigger up on his feet!"
>
> A beefy hand jerked Tom's shoulder.
>
> "That's a good tree ovuh theah—"
>
> "By damn, looka that boy shake rattle and roll!"
>
> "Wait a minute!" one voice protested as lightning rent the night again. "This boy ain't guilty of anythin but takin a job was offered—"
>
> Inside their forbidding hoods with the black eyeholes, the men who called themselves brothers looked at one another.

"It ain't right! The one voice tried again in spite of the sullen silence. "Y'all know it ain't right, ever one of yuh!"

The wind whined and somewhere out in the woods a child cried until a black hand must have clamped over its mouth shutting off the plaintive sound abruptly. It could have been this little human cry which gave strength to the man who had spoken before. He stepped out of the crowd and pulled off his hood. It was not a defiant gesture, but rather a weary sort of giving up. . . . as if once and for all he removed a disguise. In the wavering torchlight his round face looked curiously young. . . .

"Chalmers is right," Henry Carter said, exposing his face. "What're we doing here—any of us? What gives us the right?"

"The oath—*Vengeance is ours*. You swore it the same as everybody else," Landreau answered. "Wasn't fo us ever nigger in this county'd be strutten around dolled up fit tuh kill, taken food out a white men's mouths." He gave a token kick toward the fallen victim. "Like Bones heah."

"I gave him that job, Arch. Would you like to string me up with him?"

"You suddenly gone crazy, Henry?"

"As long as I share in his crime I should share in his punishment."

"Punishment fo what?" Allie asked bitterly. "I doan mind sayin I'm ashamed. Reckon I have been a long time but I jest wouldn't admit it. Dressen up like kids in these fool robes—paradin round half-stewed—"

"Shut up and git yo ass out a heah, fink."

"I'll go with you, Allie," Carter said.

"Yew goan be mighty sorry, Henry Carter." Landreau's voice was threatening. "Ain't nobody ever quit the Avengers."

"Chalmers and I'll be the first, then."

"Anybody else comin with us?" Allie turned to the group emboldened by Henry's support.

A few large drops began plopping in the dust, stirring it so that dryness and damp commingled. Then the sky opened and the rain came down in torrents. Seconds later they were soaked to the skin, their robes clinging, their hoods plastered to their heads. Another man stepped forward. "I quit too. Judge not lest ye be judged. We got no right—a buncha half-drunk fools—"

Face of my Assassin makes good reading and has the additional value of suggesting that the problem in segregation-integration issues is not so much that Southern people have unenlightened opinions as that many of them are too lethargic to stand up and be counted for enlightened ones. The northern reporter, Matthew Scott, is a similar case; had he not become personally involved in the events following the rape-killing of a Negro school teacher, he would simply have packed up his typewriter and gone home. It would be impossible to say how many Southerners, like the dissolute Dr. Taliaferro of this story, actually believe in equal rights for Negroes, but it seems likely that as the courageous nonviolent campaigns of enlightened Negroes gather strength, more and more whites who actually know better will begin to do better.

COMMENTARY
FAILING INSTITUTIONS

IF the proposals of this week's lead article concerning the realization of human value are on the right track, then the man who wants to contribute to the general good at this level is confronted by obvious difficulties.

On the surface, he seems to have three alternatives. There is first the utopian dream of ideal material conditions. A man can pick this field of humanitarian enterprise and go to work with a will. In time, however, he will encounter all the frustrations known to the modern philanthropist. Unless he is almost morally blind, he will see that some crucial element is missing from his formula for human realization.

He, we say, should have known better. Man does not live by bread alone. The highest values of life are not material. The quest is an inward quest, the realization spiritual. The rule of self-discovery is contemplation, as the high religions declare. The logic of the Zen program—if it can be called a program—is inescapable. Or, as Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all things shall be added unto you."

But a host of practical objections attacks this resolution of our difficulties. There is first the extreme obscurity of an abstract goal. Poets, painters, and singers find something exceedingly wrong with the total denial of life. The rich display of being, they say, hides some great, transcendental mystery. The humanitarian again raises his voice, pointing to the agony of millions who have not even the bread to feed the body, nor clothes for their backs. Thus anger and indignation are born of impatience and great and passionate controversies arise.

Now come the men of prudence, sagacity, and statistical balance. They tell us that both man's inner and his outer life must have their appropriate allotment. They will design, they say, an economic institution for man's material needs, a political institution for his legal needs, and a religious institution for his spiritual needs. How just and logical! How manageable the problem has become! The correct theology will order all the other disciplines and man's life will at last be properly designed. He will need only to read the directions on the signs along the highway and practice a sensible obedience. Who of decent origin and honorable intentions could dissent from this program? Only evil men, and we know what to do with them.

So come, one after the other, the revolutions and alternations of history. So come gnostic and agnostic claims and doctrines, some with judicious compromises, some with arrogant dogmas and raging certainties, some with pluralist confessions of ignorance and high scientific hopes. Always, or almost always, there is a design for institutions in the background. Look at history, the designers say. Man cannot live without institutions. We have studied human beings. We know their problems. We comprehend their need for a balanced life. It is all very plain. Just look at our drawings and admit the insight of our program, the thoroughness of our research.

It is difficult to find fault with these drawings. They look so plausible, and the legends sound so right. But ours is an age of deep, inward suspicion. We feel that *something* is wrong with all this symmetrical certainty. The trouble is, if we knew what was wrong with it, we should be able to say what is right.

How shall we escape from *this* dilemma, since we really ought to express some sort of opinion; in fact, we ought to do a lot more than express an opinion. We ought to *act!*

Many men, confronted by this dilemma, choose an anti-metaphysical fuzziness of mind as preferable to the absolutes to which any metaphysical position seems to lead. The agnostic position permits a whole range of engagements which may be undertaken with liberal piety but without metaphysical commitment. The agnostic may be at the same time sharply critical and intellectually humble. He may practice the life of

reason without an excess of emotional risk. He can respond to the immediacies of human need with warm sympathy. He can make clear judgments of massive ills, since his heart is so plainly in the right place. He can be right in all the little things, and right, also, in some of the big things, although here his rightness is a matter of admitting default, of refusing to make dogmas or sweeping decisions.

But this, alas, turns out to be a policy of drift. It does not lead to great convictions. It does not sponsor revolutions, but watches them go by. It lacks the leverage to lift the human vision of the good. And there is still the mystery of fulfillment to be uncovered.

What we find is that every attempt to embody the elements of realization in some final institution is an almost total failure. Human beings are unpredictable. The modes of their fulfillment are unpredictable. It becomes evident that the only institutions of value are tentative, jerry-built affairs—structures we are willing to tear down at a moment's notice.

This state of affairs puts a continual strain on human beings, obliging them to acknowledge that the essence of fulfillment is always a momentary realization. There is no way to guarantee fulfillment by external devices. In fact, external devices, if regarded as guarantees, are almost certain to prevent fulfillment.

It seems that we can never trust to tradition, to rules and precedents, for the quality of fulfillment in human life. If fulfillment is to be had, it will always come under conditions affording wide latitude of behavior, and as a result of the free play of the imagination.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
YOUTH AND A HOPEFUL FUTURE

IN *Encounter* for May, writing under the title, "Inventing the Future," Dennis Gabor, newly-appointed professor of physics at the University of London, notes that few people in the world are still naïve enough to believe that "applied science" will bring about a perfectly regulated society of happy people. Commenting on the largely pessimistic mood of the times, he adds:

> I believe that it is a very significant fact that no optimistic Utopia has been written for the last thirty years. Utopian literature did not die, as one might think, in 1914; it survived the first World War by about a decade. Some of H. G. Wells' best utopian works date from this time, and I recall with particular pleasure the *Daedalus* of the young J. B. S. Haldane, sparkling with optimism, and belief in salvation by science. But after Aldous Huxley's incomparably brilliant anti-utopia *Brave New World* (1931), no more utopias were written, only dreary science fiction and George Orwell's horrible nightmare *1984.*

But there are at least a few indications of "the will to idealism" among segments of the world's youth. The New York *Herald Tribune* for March 28 reports on discussions of a World Youth Forum. For fourteen years the *Herald Tribune* has sponsored this "get together," including as many as thirty-five carefully selected students from abroad. The topic is always "The World We Want." In every country the participants are selected by the Ministry of Education, the basis of qualification being an essay contest in which as many as 17,000 students from a single country have participated. On March 25 a New York audience of 2,000 welcomed the Youth delegates and observed the strikingly similar attitudes of young speakers from faraway lands, including Malaya, Turkey, Greece, Indonesia, Nigeria and Denmark.

Before the conference, the representatives visited in American communities. Of this experience a young girl from Iceland said:

> Sometimes we misunderstood and were misunderstood. We knocked against something that we had never seen before, things we were not accustomed to and perhaps not ready to accept. And the Americans became just as surprised when we did something we had used to do all our life, as the most common thing, but to them seemed very strange and not at all the right thing to do.
>
> But the tolerance was there and the will to understand, and with these two things the Americans made us feel welcome, because they were willing to accept the fact that we had ideas different from theirs and our ways were not always their ways.

This, we take it, comes close to accomplishing the ideal of the *Tribune* forum. In the February 1959 *Psychiatry*, Dr. Jerome Frank throws another sort of light on the importance of overcoming cultural biases:

> The beliefs of members of a culture as to what constitutes illness and its treatment are formed and supported by generally held cultural attitudes. A member of a particular society can regard himself as having an emotional illness—for which the proper treatment is psychotherapy—only if his society recognizes the existence of such illnesses and sanctions psychotherapy as the appropriate treatment for them.

The Manchester *Guardian Weekly* (April 25) makes editorial report on an unusual project undertaken by the Choate School of Connecticut. Apparently, the *Guardian* seeks encouragement for optimism about the future in the field of education, and in accomplishments of the pupils themselves. Of the Choate student magazine, *Ad Astra,* the *Guardian* writer says:

> School magazines do not commonly attract much attention outside their immediate circle of predestined readers. "Ad Astra," the first issue of which has just reached us, dated April, 1960, should make a broader appeal. It is published by the Choate School, of Connecticut—one of the relatively few important boys' boarding schools in the United States. But only about half the items in it are written by Choate. It commemorates visits paid by Choate to Russia and to the West Indies; many contributions come from boys and girls in West Indian schools; the story of the Russian visit is printed both in English and in Russian. There are items in French, German and Spanish, too. What matters is not so much the

> quality of the articles, though that is commendable, but the sense of international dialogue conducted with mature and friendly understanding between young people whom chance would hardly have brought together and ingrained in their memory by this record. One cannot recall a parallel here, on this age level. (At the undergraduate or immediately post-graduate level the deep-questioning, passionate, and still intermittent "Gemini" mounts heavier guns.) It will be good to see "Ad Astra" continue and thrive. It cannot hope to give and to receive light from all quarters of the globe at once, but no doubt its searchlight will turn in different directions in successive issues, with the same reciprocal illumination. We could do with more such.

Not long ago a UCLA professor suggested one way to insure prevention of war between Russia and America: Send 10,000 young Americans to Russia in exchange for 10,000 young Russians. While the Russians studied in America and the Americans studied in Russia, there would be little or no chance of any nuclear bombings. As the professor explained, carrying out his unique proposal could actually save billions of dollars through reduction of the present programs of "defense" and "preparation."

While there may be little likelihood of bringing about the mutual exchange of 10,000 youths, the idea has many promising aspects. How would these young people get along? Although youths have their own problems, these are *not*, especially in our time, the problems of their parents. Every effort to bring together the youth of noncommunist and Communist countries is a step toward world peace. Never have "international forums" for young people been so important.

FRONTIERS

"The Poisons In Your Food"

RESTING quietly on a shelf with other volumes already reviewed in these pages is a most unquiet book—*Our Daily Poison* by Leonard Wickenden, published in 1955 by Devin-Adair (reviewed in MANAS for Jan. 23, 1957). From time to time we look up at this volume and wonder what new horrors the food processors and manufacturers of pesticides have devised since Mr. Wickenden's report. Last fall's cranberry scare was no doubt a mere surface symptom of the real goings-on.

And now, from a friendly reader, has come a sequel, *The Poisons in Your Food,* by William Longgood (Simon & Schuster, 1960, $3.95), which seems just as thorough in its analysis of what is happening to the American diet and, if possible, even more frightening. It is as frightening in its moral implications as in its implications for health. The book might also be sub-titled, "The Earnest Housewife's and Loving Mother's Despair." We thought of this after reading Mr. Longgood's last chapter, "What To Do About It." Just getting rid of *some* of the poisons in our food would be practically a full-time job for any woman, and since most American wives are already quite busy, many of them on jobs to supplement their husbands' incomes, the prospects for what Mr. Longgood would regard as a fairly decent diet remain quite dim.

While sitting around worrying about this problem and about what to say in a review of the book, we turned on the FM radio and listened to a KPFK talk by Eugene Burdick, "The Ugly American Revisited." Mr. Burdick is co-author with William Lederer of *The Ugly American,* a best-selling book about the mistakes of Americans abroad. In this talk Mr. Burdick told of ten Southeast Asian working men, chosen at random from a group, who were examined by an American doctor. They were all sick, in one way or another, by American standards of health. They had all had trachoma, and four out of the six had active cases of trachoma at the time of the examination. Three of them had worms. Six of them had had malarial fever and three of them had abnormal temperatures at the time. They were malnourished and were working with about one third of the physical strength possessed by American workers. Mr. Burdick's point was that Americans, who by comparison are rolling in health, have no idea of the prevalence of disease in the Far East, and of the intense longing of the people to be free of this burden.

Turning from this vignette of the omnipresent poverty and illness in the Orient to the indictment of the American food industry by Mr. Longgood, the irony of the comparison is inescapable. The Asians suffer from a lack of the simplest sort of science—only ten dollars, for example, will buy the drugs necessary to cure a case of trachoma—while the American people are eating food blighted by an excess of technological science in behalf of marketing interests. It almost seems silly to complain, in view of the terrible need of the Asian millions; yet the corruption and adulteration of American food products may be only the other side of the coin of indifference to and neglect of the ill and the hungry in other lands.

But the great good health of Americans, of which Mr. Burdick speaks, is more apparent than real, according to Mr. Longgood. In a chapter on this subject he quotes an official of the New York City Department of Health, who said: "Although in America today life expectancy at birth is near the best of any civilized country in the world . . . at the age of 40 life expectancy is near the bottom." The author comments:

> While longevity forecasts for today's babies are cause for great rejoicing, they may be premature. These are chemical babies. They are being born into a poisoned world. As matters stand, every day of their lives they are destined to live in an atmosphere poisoned by radioactivity; they must breathe poisoned air, drink poisoned water, eat poisoned and unnatural foods; they must contend with conditions human creatures never before in the history of the world had to contend with. . . .
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> The optimistic predictions of infant life expectancy are based on the age at which men and women are dying *now;* this older generation was raised on a diet relatively free of chemicals, and large numbers got off to a good start in the healthful

environment of a rural area rather than the polluted cities.

They also were raised in a "sink-or-swim" atmosphere that has now been so modified that it can be said no longer to exist. They were not protected by a multitude of vaccines, sanitary conditions, sterile water, hospitalization for minor ailments, wonder drugs and many other factors that shelter today's youngsters; if they were strong enough to meet the stress of life they lived, if they were weak they perished; it was a matter of survival of the fittest.

Today's children often begin their life journey with built-in weaknesses. Considerable evidence points out that today's babies are being weakened not only by environmental influences but genetic ones as well; and the child of the future may have even less inherent resistance to disease and sickness, due to the very medical and technological achievements we tout so highly.

Against the claim that a reduced death rate is proof of improved health, Mr. Longgood cites a British writer who points out that saving a man's life with drugs or surgery does not necessarily make him healthy. The latter continues:

If the reasoning, "low death rate, therefore good health" is sound, then if in an institution filled with incurables there is no death during the year, the death rate becomes nil, and consequently the institution is the healthiest place in England though there is not a single healthy person in it.

What we should like to know is the number of semi-invalids carried by the nation; why all hospitals and nursing homes, etc., are full. Why . . . the increase . . . of . . . illness? Why the enormous decline in quality of eyes and teeth?

While, as Mr. Longgood says, the melancholy tabulation of cold statistics has little relation to the misery it represents, this chapter on the nation's health is filled to the brim with figures. The writer's point, however, is most emphatically made by a quotation from Dr. D. T. Quigley, a veteran Nebraska physician who has observed: "We have been afflicted by mass disease for so many decades that the average layman and the average doctor, and quite obviously the average dentist, does not know what is normal."

Inevitably, with a book like *The Poisons in Your Food,* the question of the competence of the writer will come up. Mr. Longgood is not a medical doctor. He is not any kind of doctor but a newspaper reporter who has spent four years researching his subject. Ought such people to write such books? Our answer to that would be that *somebody* ought to write such books, in view of the facts they lay before us.

Further, there is intrinsic value in the investigation of professional fields of activity by informed laymen. Professionalism is often a source of sectarian conceit and no group of specialists is exempt from such temptations. Finally, when it comes to the food we eat, it may be best to have a layman raise issues, ask questions, and get answers which we can all understand.

A second question to be raised concerns the competence of the reviewer. This is the old question of the (presumably) intelligent layman versus the qualified experts. In this case we can answer only that Mr. Longgood quotes an impressive stable of qualified experts and puts the results of his investigation together with apparent justice and obvious skill. Our view of the matter is that anyone who eats should read this book and make up his own mind about it. On the question of responsibility, it seems certain that Mr. Longgood is far more responsible in his attitude than the great majority of the manufacturers who are using small doses of poison to "condition" the foods sold to American consumers. The claim is made that these additives are "harmless." Mr. Longgood calls witnesses who present a very different view. In summary, he says:

The frankfurters are almost sure to have sodium nitrate and nitrate preservatives, and perhaps are dyed to give them their bright red color. Sunday's chicken may have traces of anti-biotics, arsenic and artificial sex hormones which add useless fat and water—that you pay for. The roasts or steaks probably have traces of hormones, antibiotics and the inevitable pesticide poisons that went into the cattle's diet.

The list is endless. Virtually every bite of food you eat has been treated with some chemical somewhere along the line; dyes, bleaches, emulsifiers, antioxidants, preservatives, flavors, buffers, noxious sprays, acidifiers, alkalizers, deodorants, moisteners,

drying agents, gases, extenders, thickeners, disinfectants, defoliants, fungicides, neutralizers, sweeteners, anticaking and antifoaming agents, conditioners, curers, hydrolizers, hydrogenators, maturers, fortifiers, and many others.

These are the tools of the food technician—a wizard who can beguile, deceive and defraud the housewife by making her think she is getting something she isn't. His alchemy can make stale products appear fresh, permit unsanitary practices, mask inferior quality, substitute nutritionally inferior or worthless chemicals for more costly natural ingredients. These chemicals, almost without exception, perform their mission at the cost of destroying valuable vitamins, minerals and enzymes, stripping food products of their natural life-giving qualities.

The food technician usually becomes the victim of his own art because he too must earn a living and must eat what he prepares. He may not set out to shortchange the consumer nutritionally or economically, but that generally is the result of his primary function: to prolong the shelf-life of food products by preventing spoilage or staleness. After the life process of a foodstuff is reduced or destroyed altogether, he must try to mask the damage; his chemicals are supposed to give an appearance of vitality where there is none, restore missing aroma, "improve" the color, give flavor to tasteless, lifeless products.

Mr. Longgood's book is devoted to assembling the evidence for such broad conclusions as the foregoing. His first chapter is about the various poisons found in food. Then come, successively, discussion of the nation's health, of the *amount* of poison that may be dangerous, of the effect of pesticides on food, of cancer-producing agents in what we eat and wear, of chemical substitutes for natural pasturage and feed consumed by meat-producing animals and fowl, of the use of emulsifiers, of the nutritional deficiencies of white bread and white sugar, and, finally, a survey of informed medical opinion on all such matters.

Although we have read such books before, each time a new one comes along these revelations seem unbelievable. Take for example the opening paragraphs on the subject of meat:

Probably no article in the American diet is as thoroughly tampered with as meat.

Beef, for example: In addition to being laced with pesticides, the average steak or roast probably comes from a cow born through artificial insemination, raised with an artificial sex-hormone implant in its ear, fed synthetic hormones, antibiotics and insecticides, and shot with tranquilizers; even its natural pasturage is contaminated with radio-active fallout. If the animal survives this chemical onslaught, it is slaughtered—generally by an inhumane method—and sold as meat, which constitutes the primary source of protein in the human diet.

Cold meats and meat products are subjected to additional chemical treatments before they go to the consumer. Agents used in this processing include preservatives and curing agents, antioxidants, flavoring materials (including some of the coal-tar dyes), emulsifiers and refining and bleaching agents.

There is more, but why go on? You may say that Mr. Longgood is determined to frighten his readers half to death, making them feel inclined to quit eating entirely—that he set out to write a "shocker," and did.

We would answer that any conscientious writer who really studies the facts of this general field is likely to come up with a shocker—he can't help himself. Having done a very modest stint of this sort of research ourselves back in the days when President Eisenhower's heart attack stirred widespread interest in atherosclerosis and cholesterol-producing foods (see MANAS for Sept. 4, 1957), we can report that it's just about impossible to avoid some excited indignation over what you find out. Then there is the further consideration of the writer's need to break through the wall of public indifference to things of this sort. There is a widespread idea to the effect that "the authorities" are looking after our welfare in all such matters. They are not, and the truth seems to be that they cannot—they cannot, that is, without the help of aroused public opinion. Mr. Longgood has done what he could to stir public opinion. The rest of us can at least read his book.