

## "AS IF"—AND WHAT MIGHT BE

MARK TWAIN pointed out long ago that the most durable, dangerous, all-encompassing and cowardly lie of all is "the lie of silent assertion"—the maintenance by the mass of people that all is well even when obvious facts make it clear that all is not well. The lies of silent assertion are those men live by and indeed the ones for which they die. Perhaps they pass beyond the point of being pure lies and become fantasies in which the nation, or alliance of nations, lives in the Never-Never Land of *as if*. "As if," for example, the H-Bombs were an instrument for good in our hands and a weapon of evil intent in the hands of others.

It seems not far-fetched to say that the morality of men of our time and place is conditioned by our lies of silent assertion and our *as if* propositions. Certainly the individual who questions the lie his silence helps assert, and yet continues to make that assertion, has begun to decompensate morally. When an *as if* fantasy, that has become a national act of faith, is repugnant to him, and he continues to give lip-service to it, further moral decompensation has taken place. While a light-hearted cynicism, shared with a few close friends, may bring momentary solace, it, too, will add to the degenerative process.

In an article in the *Nation* (March 8), "A Pagan Sermon to the Christian Clergy," C. Wright Mills hit to the heart of the matter. After charging the Christian clergy with a failure to even consider or debate upon the Pacifism which is the essence of the teachings of Christ, he speaks of moral failure and says:

By moral insensibility I refer to the mute acceptance—or even the unawareness—of moral atrocity. I mean the lack of imagination when confronted with moral horror. I mean the turning of this atrocity and this horror into morally approved conventions of feeling. I mean, in short, the incapacity for *moral* reaction to event and character, to high decision and the drift of human circumstance.

The lead editorial in a great, metropolitan newspaper, published on the day this is written, is titled, "Big Truth Meets Big Lie." The gist of this editorial is that the United States has come off second best in what is called "an ideological battle." Russia's renunciation of nuclear tests is "the big lie." Our "big truth," apparently, is that as the Christian leader of the "free world" we have a God-given right to spread Strontium-90 with *ad lib* blessings to the heathen who don't understand. Of course, it is understood that H-Bombs exploded under Christian auspices are cleaner than atheistic-communistic devices of a similar nature.

The mute acceptance of the *as if* fantasy that our bombs are cleaner, more blessed, and dedicated to saving the world from the forces of the Godless, will enable our government to jeopardize pagans and Christians by releasing a force that is hostile to all life. In such an act, and in the rationalizations behind the act, the coming tests will demonstrate a degenerating morality much more successfully than they will demonstrate the power of our new weapons. Worse yet, rather than face the consequence of what we are doing, we'll probably enter into an *as if* orgy that will convince us that nuclear fall-out is not only harmless but is in effect a sort of a cosmic vitamin. Stranger things have happened. At such a juncture we could accuse Russia of withholding health from the world.

There has been a general assent that Russia played a dirty trick by taking the play away from us and announcing that it would forego all future testing of nuclear devices. Probably, aside from propaganda value, or a scientific checkmate, the real reason was that the tests were proving to be too dangerous to the Russian people. If any morality entered into the decision at all, it was of the most practical sort—fear of an abundance of bone cancer in this generation, or of a biological cancellation of future generations. If Russia could spare itself internal loss and create an atmosphere of external gain, all to the good.

In the post-World War II era we have been suffering from a sort of self-induced muscular dystrophy of the moral system by basing our virtues on Russia's vices, or the reverse. Never has a nation taken so negative a moral stand. The epitome of morality was to be on, or cleared by, a McCarthy-type committee. A loyalty oath was more virtuous than a hundred acts of charity; loud patriotism was applauded where humility was suspect. Scholars and scientists who held academic freedom to be more precious than tenure gained by a loyalty oath became pariahs, known as eggheads, and thus made the common man more secure in his commonness. The industrialist (capitalist), being the demonstrable opposite of the Communist, won a retroactive sainthood. Compassion and pity were attacked by the derogatory phrase, "a bleeding heart," and charity not deductible from income tax was a vice and a weakness. The term "liberal" could be used only in tandem with "left."

When you come down to it, on a broad scale, the 100 per cent, red-blooded, patriotic, red-hating, free enterprising, Church-going, against-too-much-foreign-aid American, should have had "Made In Russia" stamped across his back. All that he was came from a reaction to what he thought the Russian was. Even his prosperity and the dozen credit books, representing his monthly payments for his way of life, were a rebuke to the Russian's alleged poverty and lack of initiative. To this clabbered and makeshift morality was added the idea that the man who has met a payroll was especially blessed. In fact, one of our outstanding conservative papers editorialized to the effect that no man who hadn't had to meet a payroll should be admitted to the cabinet or any other high governmental post. Technological "know-how" was something that stood in the wings waiting to be hired.

Perhaps it was the often-repeated claim to our being a Christian nation that brought about the pseudo-religious renaissance that reached its peak in Billy Graham's efforts—this and a deep sense of guilt that made many people feel that negative morality was not enough. But even this renaissance got crossed up with a mass production of disposable redemption. New sects liberalized the scripture or

adapted it to the sort of psychology that is inspirational on a broad base—making the average Joe feel that if he had been responsible for the Last Supper he could have seated twenty-four and gotten a cover charge without vulgarizing the occasion.

In the sense that some Eastern countries have spiritual leaders, we try to elect to the office of presidency the man who has the qualities of a moral leader. At times we have succeeded, at others we have failed badly, and with good reason, since party delegates are more concerned with political usefulness and adaptability than they are with moral qualities. A Lincoln, or even a Wilson, may smuggle in certain morality that isn't suspected by the delegates. An Ike Eisenhower, being more sought after than seeking, is less put upon to smuggle his special moral qualities into office. Quite aside from being a person or even a representative of a party, he is a figure our time demanded and in some measure created. Just how much our time needed him, or thought it did, can be measured by the reaction of the stock market to his heart attack. Indeed you would have thought that the nation's economy needed his blood as badly as did the infarcted—starved—area of his heart.

Any country or person, who is deeply uncertain and lacks belief in the character and purpose of his own acts, needs a "father figure"—an ideal figure, preferably. Since Ike seemingly won a war there is the assumption that he would know the nature of the peace that was supposed to come from such a victory. Being used to command, it would appear that he could bring order out of our political and personal chaos, while at the same time his charm would take the edge off the orders he must necessarily give us. With his accomplishments, moral superiority was taken for granted. This was improved on by the fact that he is an apparently simple man—a good but not spectacular golfer, a slightly impatient fisherman, a fair hand with a skillet, and probably a conservative poker player. To balance this off, he is a good husband, a devoted father and an enthusiastic grandfather, fairly regular at church attendance, even though he is equally at home with either army profanity or the prayer book. In short, he is a man many can identify with, up to a

point, and from there on they grant him the mystical status of greatness.

It is significant that President Eisenhower can paint without seeming odd or less than manly. This makes the common man feel comfortable, since it puts odd-ball artists in their place.

Nothing that I say is meant to deal with Eisenhower as a personality. The man I'm talking about was created out of the moral insecurity and need of our time. No press agent or campaign manager could have brought forth a creation attuned to this need. He has now proved that the country couldn't extend its own morality by electing a moral leader in its own image. As a nation, we were far too befuddled to seek a man who could inspire us morally.

It was inevitable that the man who would please us would eventually become a mirror of our own confusion. In a press interview of March 26, 1958, I found this query and answer:

Sarah McClendon, *E1 Paso Times*: "Mr. President, Sir . . . There are people out in New Mexico right now who can't even get beans because they can't get them out of surplus food stocks. They are going hungry.

"There are some unemployed in this country who can't get anything but starches to eat, and that has been going on for months. Can't something be done to give better distribution of surplus food or get meat into the surplus pile so that we can give these people a balanced diet?"

Pres. Eisenhower: "Well, right now, if you can take beef at over 30 cents and pork, over 20 cents, you'll be doing something. I don't see how you can do it.

"I don't see how meat can be in surplus.

"Now as to methods there may be for feeding the hungry, after all, one of the things that I'm attempting to do by this extension of benefits of unemployment insurance is so as to take the burden off the states for what they have to do in assistance within the states and, therefore, give them more opportunity to take care of people who are not taken care of by an extension of this kind.

"But I agree with you something should be said—done for people that are hungry, but we must

not just always say that it had got to be right square here from Washington. We are going to send this and that. We must do our part, respecting and—the other responsibilities the rights of states and that we do our things in that formula. I think we won't go too badly wrong."

Hungry families are a responsibility in the same sense that families subjected to unusually strong fall-out are a responsibility. Perhaps more so. No one has ever pretended that a nuclear test wouldn't create fall-out—people are warned away from the vicinity of such tests. There have, however, been direct statements to the effect that our economic system provides for all and that there are safeguards against poverty and hunger. In our catalog of comparative morality, constantly run by the press, we have been assured that Americans are fed on a standard unknown to Russians.

We didn't want what is known as "a bleeding heart"—a person of compassion—when we sought out our father figure, and we didn't get one. As a matter of fact, the *E1 Paso* reporter didn't even get an answer that is susceptible to translation into anything resembling sense.

I think it was Eugene Debs who said, "So long as one man is in prison, I am not free." It would be easy, and rational, to change this to, "So long as one man is hungry I am not fed," but such epigrams belong to the morality of another day.

There was a moral indifference to human suffering long before there were H-Bombs, but I doubt if even in the so-called dark ages the indifference was as malignant and mass-produced as it is today. When the first two A-Bombs were dropped, two cities and nearly all their inhabitants were destroyed. This wasn't war; it was a means of frightening a nation into ending a war. As it turns out now, there was an alternative to this destruction. Some scientists wanted to explode an A-Bomb in a place where human life wouldn't be endangered but where Japanese officials could witness the destructiveness of the device and surrender rather than jeopardize their own people. It was finally decided that a practical example, costing over 100,000 lives, would be more effective and impressive as a deterrent to future wars. If this is true, the surviving citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in perpetuity.

The greatest price, it would now seem, is not the cost of human lives in Japan, but the moral insensibility that has been inflicted on the citizens of nations who have the Bomb and specify circumstances under which it will be used again. "Massive retaliation" could snuff out a hundred million lives and spread havoc around the earth. While we as a nation silently assert that there could be an acceptable reason for such a measure, how can we have sensitivity to a few million of our own people who may be suffering from hardship and hunger through unemployment? Or if we are among the unemployed, how can we expect sympathy? In truth, we may starve because of our fantasies or be killed as the result of our silence.

To blame President Eisenhower for his inability to cope with the economic depression we weren't supposed to have is to fetch ourselves along as scapegoats. The pretense that our economy was invulnerable, and that our natural creativity at inventing and marketing would absorb an ever-increasing work-force and lead to an ever-higher standard of living, was an *as if* fantasy that defied fiscal gravity. The Eisenhower morality was something we designed to give us national prestige and status when all was going well. And who would have thought that the Russians would spontaneously stop nuclear testing? That was the sort of gesture we expected of Ike in a moment of practical magnanimity.

The role the president finds himself in is not the one for which we elected him. The lies of silent assertion became outmoded and the very fear we had created kept us from mouthing dissent in time, or at all. As the first sputnik went into orbit, doubts began to cloud the *as if* world we had fantasied. Perhaps, in spite of the enjoyable ridicule aimed at them by that old payroll-meeter, Charlie Wilson, the "eggheaded" scientists were important people. A most disturbing thought to a nation that prided itself on a carefully cultivated facade of ignorance. A man frightened into thought could at last see how frangible was the morality based on being anti-communist, anti-liberal, anti-egghead, or anti-"bleeding heart"—a morality that could find its total expression only in the figure of a well liked and personable General who read himself to sleep on Western stories.

Fortunately, the American character, while not introspective, develops its insights through action. The

man who helps an unemployed neighbor can emerge from this experience with more compassion for a neighborly nation that is being jeopardized by our tests of nuclear weapons. The man who conformed with the lies of silent assertion out of fear of losing his job may have lost his job anyway, and found his voice. The concern he expresses will be as much for his country as for himself. The dangerous nonsense that has dominated the post-war years of our national life cannot survive in the face of open discussion. Perhaps at last we have learned that the survival of an industrial democracy depends on the creative morality of all of its citizens. So long as each of us understands his own role in bringing about the national emergency that is in the making, a base of responsibility will be established. Only from such a base can personal morality flourish. The lie of silent assertion, elected moral status, and *as if* presumptions as to the inferiority of others and our own superiority will, it is hoped, disappear into history without exacting too great a toll.

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## *REVIEW*

### PROTEST AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTS

[It is now more than high time for MANAS to report on the campaign against nuclear weapons testing spearheaded by Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review*, and by Clarence Pickett of the American Friends Service Committee. Much work of this sort has been done by constructively aroused groups, and the practice of purchasing full-page newspaper advertisements against H- and A-bomb tests has been employed by other groups. But the continued attempts at education carried out by the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy seem to embody the most universally appealing synthesis. MANAS readers may be interested to know that, along with Mr. Cousins, who is frequently quoted in MANAS, the signers of the appeal include Dr. Erich Fromm, Lewis Mumford, Dr. Paul J. Tillich, Norman Thomas, James Jones, the Reverend Harry E. Fosdick, and David Riesman. This particular advertisement appeared in the New York *Herald Tribune* for Monday, March 24, and is headed "The World's Peoples Have a Right to demand No Contamination without Representation." The text appears below.—Editors.]

Q. What is one of the fundamental arguments against the testing of hydrogen bombs and nuclear explosives?

A. The main point is a simple one. Whenever a nuclear bomb is exploded, dangerous radioactive poisons get into the atmosphere and circle the globe. There is no way of knowing how much will fall on any given place on earth. Nor is there any way of controlling the fallout even if we did know.

This means that a nuclear explosion affects all peoples and not merely the people of the nation which exploded the bomb. A profound moral question is therefore involved in the explosion of nuclear bombs:

Does any nation—whether the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain or the other nations which will test in the future—have the right to contaminate the air and soil and water and food that belong to other peoples?

We have every right to take such risks to ourselves as we wish in the pursuit of our own security. But we do not have the right—nor does any nation—to take risks, large or small, for other people without their consent.

The American people fought a revolution because vital decisions were made at a distance without our consent. The issue today is even more basic so far as the world's peoples are concerned. They have every right to demand: No contamination without representation!

If we persist in an act that is actually or potentially hazardous to other peoples, we have the obligation to give them the complete right to participate in the processes of government and public debate inside our own nation.

Q. Haven't other nations given their permission to the testing countries to set off nuclear explosions?

A. This is the heart of the matter. They haven't even been asked. In fact, many nations have been protesting vigorously—inside and outside the United Nations. Their protests have been directed against the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain.

Q. Has any evidence been advanced by these countries that nuclear testing represents a hazard to their people?

A. Yes, Japan, for example, has presented evidence to show that detectable quantities of radioactive strontium have turned up in the populous Tokyo area. Japanese scientists estimate that if not another nuclear bomb is exploded, the additional fallout from past nuclear explosions that will continue to fall to earth will bring the rate up to levels far beyond reasonable estimates of safety.

Q. Is there any evidence of actual or potential contamination in the U.S.?

A. In February of this year, a survey under the auspices of the United States Atomic Energy Commission revealed that the amount of

poisonous radioactive strontium now in the bones of adults has increased 33% over the 1955-56 level. There was a 50% increase in the bones of children. For children up to age four, the increase went as high as 60%. These amounts are but a very small fraction of the total "permissible dose" of strontium. But the increase percentagewise, is cause for concern, especially since it is not known with precision how much strontium the body can tolerate without harm.

Q. Why have the tests resulted in a greater increase in radioactive strontium in the bones of children?

A. The growth process in children makes heavy demands on the body to assimilate calcium. Since strontium is chemically similar to calcium, the growing body mistakes the strontium for calcium.

Q. Have there been any other official surveys which give proof of radioactive fallout?

A. Yes. In 1954, studies made for the Atomic Energy Commission definitely established the fact that farmlands in the Mid-West and milk in the nation showed traces of radioactive strontium.

Q. Did these figures indicate any real or imminent danger?

A. The figures show that the amounts of poisonous radioactive strontium in our soil and milk were at that time (1954) well under what the Atomic Energy Commission believes to be the danger limits. But the radioactive materials in the air have multiplied since that time because of the many bombs that have been exploded—not only by the United States but by the Soviet Union and Great Britain.

Q. Exactly what is the danger now?

A. This is where the debate begins. Some scientists say that the body can absorb radioactive poison up to a certain point without ill effect. But the large majority of scientists who have spoken out on this question say it is dangerous to assume

that there is such a thing as a "safe" dosage of radioactive strontium, especially for children. In any event, they believe that the health of our people and the world's peoples—is too vital a matter to be left to guesswork. That is why they earnestly call upon all nations now testing nuclear explosives to suspend their testing until these questions can be scientifically answered. They point out, further, that as new scientific evidence on the effects of radiation comes in, it becomes necessary to lower the safety limits.

For example, only a few years ago it was generally believed that people could have X-ray examinations at frequent intervals without ill effects. But these estimates have been sharply revised in recent months. Today, the safety margin is known to be only a fraction of what it was believed to be three years ago.

*We cannot afford to make the same wrong guesses about radioactive fallout that we did with X-rays.* After the poisonous radioactive materials get into the air, there is no way of washing the sky. Indeed, a nuclear bomb explosion will have its fallout effects for many years after a bomb goes off.

Q. How long will the danger last?

A. Radioactive strontium, for example, loses its power very slowly. After 28 years, it still retains half its strength. Therefore, each nuclear explosion adds to the long-term killing power of the radioactive material in the air.

While it is correct to say that the radiation danger from a nuclear explosion is comparatively small at any given time, we must remember that it does its harm over a long period.

Q. What happens when other countries—France and Germany, for example—insist on their right to test nuclear weapons?

A. Here most of the debate among scientists disappears. For whatever the difference of opinion among scientists may be on the degree of danger today, most agree that testing cannot go

on indefinitely. Even the most conservative scientists foresee a period of serious danger within the near future if there is unlimited testing.

Q. What about the "clean" bomb?

A. The use of the word "clean" to describe a hydrogen bomb is a moral outrage. There is nothing "clean" about a bomb that can incinerate millions of people at a time. The word "clean" is intended to describe a nuclear bomb that is supposed to be free of radioactive fallout. No such bomb now exists. Even its proponents admit that it may take years to produce it. But we can't afford that kind of time.

Three or four years from now we may be able to point to a stockpile with a lowered radioactive yield. But overhead the sky may have become a canopy of radioactive poisons. In any event, the absurdity of "clean bomb" speculation becomes apparent when we reflect that the Soviet may have no interest in dropping "clean" bombs on its enemies.

And even if the nuclear stockpiles were to consist exclusively of "clean" bombs it would still be important to seek a ban on H-bombs because of the cataclysmic power of such weapons.

Q. How powerful is a hydrogen bomb?

A. A hydrogen bomb has already been tested that is 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945. One 20-megaton hydrogen bomb carries more explosive power than all the bombs put together that were dropped during the entire Second World War.

Q. Would hydrogen bombs be used in a major war?

A. Both the United States and the Soviet Union have served notice on each other that hydrogen bombs would be used in another war. With the development of the intercontinental ballistic missile the war strategies of the major nations are being built around their ability to

deliver bombs on enemy cities within the shortest possible time.

Q. Is there any effective civilian defense against attack by missiles carrying hydrogen bombs?

A. It takes a missile less than eighteen minutes to complete its journey across the ocean. There would not be enough warning for people to take shelter, even assuming we could develop the kind of radar that would locate the missiles near the start of their journey.

Q. How, then, can we stop the runaway race towards annihilation?

A. Doing away with nuclear tests will not by itself bring peace. But it at least represents a vital start.

We recognize that other things must be done. A way must be found to reduce and control stockpiles of nuclear and conventional weapons. The arms race itself cannot be separated from the problem of world security and the larger problem of world justice. The United Nations must be strengthened to provide for just settlement of political problems and human needs.

But unless we are to remain caught on dead center a start must be made somewhere.

Q. How can we make this start?

A. We can and should disentangle the nuclear test issue from the larger disarmament "packages" of the West and the USSR.

We should propose a ban on nuclear testing for an extended period, say two or three years, under a reciprocal inspection system to be supervised by the United Nations.

Both Harold Stassen, former Disarmament Advisor to the President, and Senator Hubert Humphrey, Chairman of the Senate Disarmament Sub-committee, say this is possible now.

The ban on testing should be universal, applying both to countries already in possession of

nuclear weapons and those countries about to embark on nuclear armament.

Q. How do we know what the Russians will do?

A. We don't. We *do* know that the Russians have agreed to a test ban under a rigorous inspection system. We don't know whether they will finally accept the necessary conditions, but we have yet to meet their challenge with a clear and determined voice.

When we do this, we may attract to us such massed support in the world as may render it difficult for any one nation to obstruct the already expressed demands of the world's peoples.

*How Citizens Can Help:*

1. Make your opinion felt in Washington. Write your Representative in the House and Senate. Write to the President.
2. Distribute this statement throughout your community.
3. Discuss the issue in your church, synagogue, union and school. Work with your neighbor and with organizations.
4. Fill out the coupon below; please give what you can to forward this work.

[The National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy has its headquarters at 202 East 44th Street, New York 17. Protest groups throughout the country are doubtless in touch with the-National Committee, and a letter of inquiry will, we are sure, bring prompt response in respect to whatever protest activity is occurring in one's own city or region.]



## *COMMENTARY*

### WHAT WE NEED MOST

IT should be noted, to bring up-to-date the advertisement of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, that Russia has announced suspension of nuclear weapons tests (reserving the right to start them again!), and the United States has said something about the possibility of stopping the tests, too.

Having added these facts, for what they are worth, we may look at the advertisement. The text seems sober, sensible, and unexaggerated in its account of the threat to human health from fall-out. Yet while you are reading the ad and appreciating the force of its appeal, a certain zany sense of futility may creep over you. The writers of the ad did their best to be "rational," hoping to strike the hundreds of thousands of readers of a metropolitan newspaper with the common sense of what they had to say. This is plain enough, but what keeps haunting you is the insane context for all this studied "sanity." It is not unimaginable to think that a really sane man might lay the paper down, after getting halfway through the text, and rush from the room in hysterical laughter, or go flying up in the air to roost in the eaves and caw madly at a world where sanity takes its cues from the Larger Lunacy.

It is a serious question whether one ought to be "patient" with these people who believed in nuclear testing. It is a serious question whether the issue should be dignified by careful argument and the marshalling of scientific facts.

What if you should lose the argument, on a "sane" basis? Will you be willing to go down to defeat on that verbal battleground?

Here, in these pages, we have frequently reported and repeated the arguments of the scientists who are against nuclear testing. They make enough sense for us. But we, of course, were against the tests without any scientific facts, and would be against them even if no such facts existed or were available. We take the view that it is terribly wrong to gut the earth and rip open the sea with these incalculable explosions—with implicit willingness to do the same in the world of men. The whole idea is a ravishing of nature. It is despicable in intent and a blasphemy before high

heaven. Compared to nuclear explosions, the Tower of Babel was the Holy of Holies.

We have a letter from a scientist who has done some work in the field of radiation. He says the scientists who claim that the hazard of fall-out has created an emergency are over-stating the case. All we can do to answer this man is quote a lot of "authorities." This seems a rather weak answer—an answer to which we are condemned by having quoted the authorities in the first place. It was, we suppose, a sort of expediency which made us quote them. The facts—or presumed facts—about fall-out are the scientist's way of saying, "Don't do this terrible thing." And it seems important to say "Don't do this terrible thing" in as many ways as possible. While you are doing this, Blessed Consistency in ethical argument may suffer somewhat, and it is best to admit it.

The facts, no doubt, are useful in some ways, but the really effective argument against nuclear testing is the moral revulsion which it ought to generate in us all. What is a life, what is security, which depends on such things? What sort of people can pretend to make their future and their Way of Life "safe" by preparations to blow half the world to Hell—and we say "Hell" because only this incommensurable theological notion is wild enough to encompass the possible results of nuclear destruction.

It is a kind of damnation before the fact that we suffer from—a slick, streamlined, technologized damnation which hides its unspeakable ugliness and cruelty in smooth, chromium-plated packets and covers over the spasmodic twitching of broken, burned, and dying bodies with a cloud of mathematical terms and equations. Yet a feeling of horror alone will not help us. Dr. Schweitzer has probably said it best. What we need most is *reverence* for Life. How shall we get it?

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves AN UNUSUAL ESSAY

IT is a privilege to print in this space a paper on "Civil Disobedience" by a sixteen-year-old girl, a student at Menlo-Atherton High School in Menlo Park. The course for which the paper fulfilled a requirement was "American Institutions," and its inspiration stemmed in part from a meeting by the writer with Mr. Roy Kepler, of Menlo Park, Calif. Mr. Kepler will be remembered by readers as a contributor to MANAS. His interest is in exploring avenues of thought and action which will embody the right of the individual citizen to oppose national policies which are likely to lead to war. And now for the essay—marked, we are happy to say, "A" by the professor who teaches the course.

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Civil disobedience is the refusal to comply with certain laws which one feels are his duty to disobey. "What I have to do," wrote Thoreau, "is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn." He also said, "The only obligation which I have the right to assume is to do at any time what I think right." Thoreau's particular argument was the refusal to pay taxes to a government which supported slavery. He was, however, a lone man, and though his night in prison gave him the satisfaction that he lived as his conscience ruled him, his brilliant contribution was the organization of this philosophy in an essay, "Civil Disobedience," printed in 1849. Gandhi was influenced by Thoreau's essay early in his life as a leader. Gandhi studied the essay during his own stay in prison and later called it "a masterly treatise which left a deep impression on me." He made use of the work in adapting it to his situation and resisting the injustice of the British Government in South Africa and India. What he did was to organize a civil disobedience movement and develop it into non-violent resistance by a mass of people. He expanded civil

disobedience into a method which he named "Satyagraha," which translated means Soul-Force. "Satyagraha is the vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self." It proposed that the opponent be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. When the British imposed an impossible salt law on Indians, Gandhi embarked again on a civil disobedience campaign whereby he and seventy-eight others began on a march to the sea to pick up salt which was now an outlawed act. Previous to the trip he said, "Nothing but organized non-violence can check the organized violence of the British Government. . . . This non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience. . . . My ambition is no less than to convert the British Government through nonviolence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India." After twenty-four days of walking they reached the sea with a band which had grown to a non-violent army several thousand strong. Civil disobedience was contagious. As a result of stealing the salt from the beach mass arrests were made; many were sentenced to short prison terms. Jawaharlal Nehru was sentenced to six months for infringing on the Salt Act. Open campaigns followed during which many Indians were savagely beaten and killed by the British without the Indians doing even as much as raising an arm to protect themselves or resist. India was free—not technically free but she showed that she could not be beaten or ruled over in any real sense of the word, any longer. From then on it was only a matter of time before Britain stepped out of the picture altogether.

That the world has changed drastically in the last half-century or so is an obvious and familiar fact to all of us. The scientific advancements in communication, transportation, medicine, atomic physics, and agriculture have, of course, greatly affected our way of life. This is a new world in which we live. A large amount of the world's land area and population has been swept under communism by Russia, and threatens to destroy the freedoms and fundamentals upon which our

governments are based. The world has come to know and dread the horrors of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. It is widely believed that a third World War would involve atomic warfare, and that if atomic warfare is used, that all nations involved, in fact the whole world, would quite possibly be destroyed or future generations become monsters.

The crisis may not be far in the future. We must prepare. But a greater kind of preparation is being conceived by a few, than preparation for atomic war.

We must prepare for Russian occupation of the United States by a major change of attitude of the American people. The plan must not involve violence—but non-violent organization. A strong, national, co-ordinated civil disobedience campaign would be put into effective use. All official Russian orders would be universally disobeyed. We would remain independent and invincible. Once properly launched, a civil disobedience movement needs no leaders. Each person would rely on his own strength—the strength of his inner convictions. Word, creed, and deed would be one in every individual. We would be cautious not to inflict harm on the Russian soldiers, but show to them the strength and our trust in our ways. Thus, they could never conquer us.

Unfortunately, most of our political leaders have failed to conceive this—and consequently, those citizens who are beginning to see the necessity for this preparation are joining a minority group which can conceive it. It is a growing group.

And so it seems that civil disobedience and its sister, the doctrine of non-violence, proven effective as a peaceful means of freeing a country in the past, may be integral to success in our remaining free in the future.

It requires a certain change in our social system training, and good timing. This new world demands much of us. The great problem of preparation is facing us.

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This paper represents an extraordinary native capacity to summarize the implications of a whole new world of thought. Here we may recognize the ingredients of that restless, ever searching integrity which makes the difference between those who, in later life, think, and those who merely think that they think.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Men and their Actions

PAUL GOODMAN, whose earlier letter on art and criticism was discussed in MANAS for April 16, now writes again to comment on the notice in that issue of an article by Dr. Robert E. Fitch, dean of the Pacific School of Religion. We shall not attempt to rehearse the matters there considered, but will start afresh with Mr. Goodman's suggestions. He says:

I do not think that you sufficiently grasp the force of his [Dr. Fitch's] major premise, "The fact is that the crucial conflicts of life are among several competing goods which are all to be cherished. . . ." You say "there is something disturbing in the idea of delaying synthesis of the competing goods until they meet in 'the mind of God.'" . . . Certainly Dr. Fitch is not speaking of *delaying* synthesis, he asserts the contrary "the business of balancing these values, of making the tension creative rather than destructive, is the main business of life." But you speak, do you not, as if there presently *existed* a *principle* of synthesis, a rule. There is none, I have not heard its voice. And you're damned right that it's disturbing—that we do not live in paradise. To understand Dr. Fitch's point, I think you might ponder the wonderful remark of Rabbi Tarfon: It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to leave it off.

It would be a very valuable task for MANAS, sympathetically and critically, but not grudgingly or defensively, to list and define in detail the paramount claims for their actions that men make, and justifiedly and irrefutably make when understood in their proper terms. To assert what is the case, like a scientist; to make a new creation, like an artist; to demand his pleasure like a lover or any organism that grows; to say like a moralist *fiat Justitia et ruat coleum*; or prudently to calculate the consequences for general welfare, like a statesman; and we must not omit the terrible seer who wants a man to be a bridge to something not like us. None of these is refutable, and the man embarked on any of these courses has not the right to set a limit to it, he cannot risk it or his god will leave him. Just as inevitably every such course has its moment of over-reaching and *hybrid* and each one is historically starred with famous tragedies. But that's how it is.

What is the value of such a program? Let me answer with a remark of Coleridge's. The question

was, ought we to act on calculation or spontaneously? and he said, Always spontaneously, for only that action will have grace and power; however, by study and reflection become such a man that your spontaneous impulse will be the good one.

Mr. Goodman's last paragraph clears the atmosphere considerably. The quotation from Coleridge puts in a few words what we have tried to say with many, perhaps too many.

There is such evident value in the rest of Mr. Goodman's communication that we might let it stand without comment, but since the present interchange grew out of criticism of Dr. Fitch, something specific should be said about this. It is true enough that he spoke of the need to balance competing values "by making the tension creative rather than destructive," but it is necessary to note that Dr. Fitch has skipped from the institutional role of the scientist in our culture to the much subtler internal resolutions to be accomplished by the individual human being. The specialties of institutions are not the same as the overriding genius of an individual man—the irrepressible determination of the scientist to find out facts, the artist's urge to create, etc. "The first business of any professional group," said Dr. Fitch, "is to know what is its business and to order its life accordingly." What we endeavored to point out is that the scientist is also a man and needs to check his role as scientist with his prior obligations as a human being.

Is there, as Goodman says, no "rule"? Well, there have been scientists who found a rule of restraint in the practice of their specialty. Otto Hahn refused to pursue the secrets of nuclear fission in behalf of the Nazi German government. Shortly before he died, Albert Einstein wrote to Max Ascoli, editor of the *Reporter*:

You have asked me what I thought about your articles concerning the situation of the scientists in America. Instead of trying to analyze the problem I may express my feeling in a short remark: If I would be a young man again and had to decide how to make my living, I would not try to become a scientist or a scholar or a teacher. I would rather choose to be a plumber or a peddler in the hope to find that modest

degree of independence still available under the present circumstances.

Princeton, N.J

ALBERT EINSTEIN

This is the application of another sort of "rule." Dr. Einstein was addressed as a scientist—the greatest living scientist, one may think—but he chose to answer as a human being. Not scientific, but human values, took priority in his reply. We doubt if his "god" left him for this reason.

One more point, and we are done. Goodman presses the *mystique* of the individual calling: "The man embarked on any of these courses has not the right to set a limit to it, he cannot risk it or his god will leave him." Well, there is another *mystique*, that of the whole man—of the scientist who tries also to find in himself the poet; or of the prudent statesman who longs and learns to understand somewhat the "terrible seer." The partisans of a single fire of being may be the authors of more pain than is necessary for themselves and for others. It is Goodman's intimation that only a sterile ambivalence can result for the man who would desert his "type" (scientist, artist, moralist, statesman, or seer). There is no doubt this danger. But it is a danger which the man of philosophical imagination will sooner or later be led to risk.

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(Readers who remember the occasion for Mr. Goodman's first letter—in part the dislike expressed by a MANAS writer for William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*—may be interested to read in the *Nation* for Feb. 15 an article on this book by Robert Cantwell. It is there revealed that Faulkner wrote *Sanctuary* in three weeks in the summer of 1929, after studying current trends in the United States in order to "fabricate a story that would make money by conforming with them." When, a year or so later, he received the proofs, Faulkner, Mr. Cantwell reports, was dismayed and disgusted and tried some last-minute rewriting to improve the book's quality. It may be admitted, as Cantwell says, that in this

book Faulkner "far surpassed the most expert hacks in the essential stuff of thrillers." In fact, he packed so such "horror" into the story that his New York publisher exclaimed, "Good God, I can't publish this—we'd both be jailed." It was only after Faulkner's critical success with other volumes that *Sanctuary* found its way into print. The comment of the MANAS writer, to which Mr. Goodman took exception, was that the book lacked a "message." The message, we now discern, was that Faulkner needed to pay his rent.)