

## ON THE ARTIST

ONE of the values of attention to the arts, and to artists—perhaps its greatest value—lies in the fact that thoughtful consideration of what is meant by art and becoming an artist, while it compels serious reflection, never settles anything. There may be steps toward understanding various things of importance, but no finalities are reached. And the best writing on art is done with full understanding of this.

It is for this reason that we take considerable pleasure in receiving from Saskatoon, Canada, the annual copy of the journal called *The Structurist*, edited by Eli Bornstein, who is on the faculty of the University of Saskatchewan. While this journal is named after a particular school of art, its content is universal, and it seems to offer, each year, a rich selection of fine writers on the subject. The present issue is a combination of Numbers 25 and 26, for two years, 1985 and 1986.

Fittingly, one of the opening contributions is an interview with Lewis Mumford made in 1963, by Leif Sjöberg, who was then teaching Swedish at Columbia University. It was published in *Horisont*, a Swedish journal, and Mumford, now in his nineties, was pleased that it should appear in English. To Sjöberg, it did not seem at all dated. He is, we think, right in this.

We take Mumford's concluding comment in this interview as an example of his insight:

Conceivably, the threat of universal extermination might, even at this late date, produce the type of international political organization and the type of universal personality capable of delivering us from this evil. The great falsification today is to judge either past history or future possibilities in the light of man's low present condition. People who are living through a Dark Age are usually ignorant of that fact: that ignorance is part of their darkness! Though most of my contemporaries regard the present period as a marvel of human felicity, I regard our age as one of the darkest the world has encountered, and I think it is likely to get worse

before a creative reaction takes place. Most of our contemporaries are ready to embrace its disintegration as a new manifestation of life: this is like pressing on an aching tooth in order to control the pain by causing more pain. But I do not despair: because man has within his own history and his own self the forces necessary to replenish his own life, so long as he does not accept his own annihilation as fated.

The next article in the *Structurist* is by Donald Miller, a professor of history at Lafayette College, titled "Lewis Mumford, The Creative Artist as Revolutionary." The first two pages present portraits of Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, and Patrick Geddes, all germane to thinking of Mumford as a revolutionary. After the first World War, the modern world was in a daze, without direction. Miller gives what was then Mumford's view:

The current crisis of the spirit demanded a new "idea of nature and of life," demanded something with greater draw and weight than the timid liberal idea of patching the machinery of government, or the misguided socialist notion of redistributing the fruits of a mechanistic civilization. Underneath their fashionable disillusionment, the young were yearning for something better to live for than the social dreams of either Marx or John Dewey.

To Mumford, the artist, it seemed quite clear that unless the reformers looked high enough, they would fail.

Both liberalism and socialism, he insisted, looked to technology, social engineering and mass production to bring about a new age of human solidarity and cooperation. Starting on the "assumption that modern industrial society possessed all the materials essential to the good social order," they demanded merely a change in "power and control"—an expansion and redistribution of the comforts and conveniences of the bourgeoisie. They both saw economic growth as the *sine qua non* of human progress, they merely differed on the question of how to distribute the fruits of such expansion. It was this very ideal of ever-increasing material growth, the modern idea of "progress," that Mumford assailed, calling instead for a human ethic committed

to the ancient Greek ideals of measure, balance and economic sufficiency, not to achievement of limitless economic abundance. With Plato and Emerson, moreover, he held strongly to the notion that the good life involved more than a reordering of economic and political institutions. This, while essential, would have to be preceded by a transformation of the mechanistic mode of life—the psychological submission to the machine process and the power state—that had created a new personality type—bureaucratic man—in capitalist *and* socialist societies. Mumford called for nothing less than a transformation of the consciousness of industrial man, the creation of a new humanism, an organic, related mode of thinking and acting that recognized "the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective, the world known to personal intuition and that described by science (as) a single experience." While some radicals looked for such a value change to occur after the revolution, for Mumford this value change *was* the revolution.

Mumford urged his fellow reconstructionists to start out by thinking small. Never mind sweeping national crusades, but work on the reorganization of local regions, following the lines of research developed by the Scottish sociologist, Patrick Geddes, whose approach was founded on first-hand observation of the city and its surrounding region. For Mumford, Miller says, "the survey method—detailed first-hand diagnosis of the region's natural and human resources—was the starting point and foundation for all regional and civil planning efforts."

But what about Mumford the artist? Miller's study presents an excellent answer to this question:

But what specific role would *he* plan in the coming struggle for change? "What *am* I?" Mumford asked himself in the self-conscious record he kept of his inner life, "a journalist? a novelist? a literary critic? an Art critic? a scholar? a sociologist? *Must I take a definitive line?*" By 1925 he had become convinced, mostly by the example of Patrick Geddes's many-sided life, that he did not, in fact, have to take up any one profession. He would instead assume his master's coat of many colors, becoming a "generalist," one who is more interested, as he once said, "in putting the fragments together in an ordered and significant pattern than in minutely investigating the separate parts." In making this decision, Mumford shaped for himself an independent and original place in the history of American letters

The one thing that is most important about the artist is that he does not work for money. Artists are therefore a rare breed who are proving something about human potentiality. The issue of the *Structurist* we have been quoting has 168 pages (8½ inches wide, 11 inches deep) telling about artists and illustrating their work, with portraits of many of them. These are men and women whose work is more important to them than anything else. Could we have a society made up of just such people? Well, they have something in common with the great humans of history, who apparently got themselves born in order to do something instead of to get something. There is therefore something of the Promethean in the artist, as with the great. They are all animated by a sense of mission, a work they must do.

This is the ideal way of considering the artist and his work. Unfortunately, there are businessmen who have learned how to treat the work of the artist as a commodity and to chain the artist to the commercial world. George Woodcock speaks of this in the first article in the *Structurist*. He quotes from a letter which Edmund Wilson wrote to H. L. Mencken many years ago:

I sometimes think . . . of your campaign of the 1910s and '20s, and wonder whether the literary situation is worse or better now than then. It was harder to get an honest book published in the early years of the century than it is at the present time; but, on the other hand, Hollywood, Henry Luce, *The Reader's Digest*, and the government propaganda service are today eating up all the talent. During 1910-1930, the writers had to have the courage to swim against the current and had to have something of their own to offer. The younger generations of the post-Depression period have been much less sure of themselves and much more susceptible to being swallowed by the big businesses mentioned above.

Woodcock comments:

What Wilson saw 40 years ago is even more evident today. Writers and visual artists alike have been increasingly maneuvered into situations where the very *names* that once declared their independence are used to trap them into serving the interests of politics or commerce. By now we are all well aware of the situation in Communist countries, where a writer's or a painter's *name* is really a fabrication of

the Party, since nobody who does not follow its line is ever allowed to gain celebrity; to be famous as an artist in such countries is almost the label of a *vendu*. The odd exceptions, like Pasternak, have been due to very exceptional circumstances and have not happened recently.

But we have no reason to congratulate ourselves in the West. Names are created and then ruthlessly exploited by the electronic and print media, by publishers, by art dealers, and often have very little relation to the creative ability of the individual involved. Exploitability as a personality, and a willingness to adapt to the requirements of the "cultural industry," are all that is required. Thus, instead of the independent journals of even recent years, where brilliant freelancers had the opportunity to develop their ideas at will, we now have journals—*Saturday Night* and *Macleans* are typical examples of good magazines ruined by the process—, in which most of the material is written by staffers or by carefully schooled younger writers who are willing to accept editorial standards that eliminate controversy and level the tone to a universal blandness, the style to a kind of journalistic mandarin. . . . Whether we think of an established journalist, or a best-selling novelist, or a currently modish painter, he or she probably earns more than a predecessor would have done twenty years ago and is certainly more in the public eye. His *name* is elevated, but also captured. To be known as an individual was in the past a badge of independence; it means a kind of servitude today to commercial or political interests.

A number of paragraphs, which he calls "Meditations on the Artist," are the contribution of Eli Bornstein, editor of the volume. Here is one of them:

The artist, when deeply aware of the poverty and human misery in the world, inevitably must confront the question: "Is what I am doing mere self-indulgence?" He recognizes that toiling at his art, however difficult, is a privilege, a trust that he can only hope to repay. It is not by being successful and achieving fame and fortune that his debt may be abrogated, but by the work touching other human beings in some special way—enriching, enlightening them and bringing the human community somehow closer. This surely is what Cézanne meant by his plea for a public wall. One recalls Cézanne's very last public paintings—those brooding oil portraits and the water color—of his old peasant gardener. And there is something in this akin to Tolstoy who came to

reject wealth and worldly pleasures in his search for moral redemption and brotherly union among men.

The artist, it seems clear, is one who is continually attempting to reach beyond himself, who knows that, however great his art, it can never be more than a finite symbol of what he strives for, yet in striving to use the power of setting finite limits, which is his, to overcome the earthly quality of his work, he may be able to generate the promise of what he longs for—as, for example, seems evident in Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyrie*.

Another of Eli Bornstein's paragraphs draws attention to the struggle, inevitable for the true artist, which must come to him when he realizes that he must forget himself, lose his personal awareness of self in order to do his best work. Bornstein says:

An artist is like a miner who excavates himself. He is the mine in which resides the inexhaustible riches for which he must dig ever more deeply throughout the brief limits of one lifespan. This is not to say that art does not transcend the artist. On the contrary, it must if it is to be of larger or enduring interest. Neither does this refer to narcissism or the preoccupation with self: to mere self-love or self-expression. Perhaps narcissism in the artist can be a starting point, but it must then surely be transcended and put into the service of his art. When art fails to go beyond narcissism it can hardly be expected to develop or communicate profoundly as art. Artists are frequently portrayed as narcissists, and while some of them are, so are some art critics, scientists, and businessmen. Narcissism like megalomania, paranoia, or schizophrenia, is not found exclusively among artists. These pathologies are to be found among all human professions.

And he adds:

The laborious mining in which the artist is engaged is to find ever anew the resources—the strength and vision—through which his perception of nature and the world can be transformed/translated into significant new art. Thus the artist gets buried deeply within himself in order to draw out and filter a fuller awareness and expression of his existence, which includes the perceivable and knowable world of his existence, a world in which he lives, including nature, society, culture, technology, philosophy and the whole spectrum of interconnected knowledge. It represents a mining of the self as the most intimate bit of nature one has direct access to. This is akin to

Emersonian *self-reliance* and represents the maximum use or exploitation of self as our most immediate portion of the cosmos we inhabit.

So it is, perhaps, that in the art where the individual artist has the most to overcome in the way of vanity and self-preoccupation—the theater and acting—when he or she is successful in this, the most exquisite art results. For as all the true philosophers have said, self-conquest is the most difficult battle of all. And, paradoxically, as psychologists have noted, those who have overcome themselves and washed away all petty egotisms have the strongest individualities. Eli Bornstein seems quite aware of this, since he says:

What William James said of the individual might well be said of the artist: "The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The individual dies away without the sympathy of the community." For the artist exemplifies the individual in pursuit of a vision, of an idea or conception through a medium of art with the necessary rugged individualism of the independent, isolated, pioneering frontiersman. Yet whatever new discoveries or creations may result, without the recognition, the appreciation, the "sympathy" of the community, the artist and the art "dies away" or is lost in oblivion. If "sympathy" becomes mere tokenism or the fickle gesture of momentary fad, it has, if any, only temporary effect on preventing the stagnation of the community.

There is a co-conspirator who inevitably contributes to this stagnation, making it extremely difficult for the genuine innovator, artist or social thinker or inventor to avoid. This is the popularizer, who has a devastating role in the mass society. Harold Rosenberg, in *The Tradition of the New* (McGraw Hill paperback, 1965), characterizes his function:

Popularization, which acts as journalistic or educational intercessor between the isolated mind of the theorist-technician and the fragmented psyche of the public, is the most powerful profession of our time and gaining daily in numbers, importance and finesse. It is the intellectual reflection of modern industry itself, which brings to mankind the physical products of an invention and technology which it does not understand. Neither the benefits of the arts and sciences, nor the secrets, are any longer restricted to the rulers of society. As total war guarantees to each

citizen that he will be an equal target of any new development in armament, so the recruiting of audiences for art, psychotherapy, political action, accepts as its goal nothing short of the entire population. Mass media, institutional and agitational middlemen package modern painting as new design and better living; literature as morality, religion, politics, information; electronics as hi-fi; radicalism as join-the-party; total war as total security. Through mastery of the inversions of meaning that constitute "mass education," the intellectual go-betweens insure their own growth and predominance. . . .

In no case does the founder of a method determine the use to which it shall be put by the profession nor what the public shall be told it means—as against the practitioner chiefs who head the university departments and professional associations, the influence of the actual practice of a Freud or an Einstein has been negligible, and the same is the case, of course, with the innovator in the arts. He is doomed to isolation by the very processes through which his work reaches society. The larger the part played by his creation in the profession, the greater grows the distance between his idea and the influence exerted by his work. The more widely he is known to the public, the greater the misinterpretation and fantasy built upon his name and the greater the distance between himself and his social existence. The famous "alienation of the artist" is the result not of the absence of interest of society in the artist's work but of the potential interest of *all* of society in it. A work not made for but "sold" to the totality of the public would be a work totally taken away from its creator and totally falsified.

This may seem a harsh rule, and there is perhaps some exaggeration in its statement, but not very much. For it remains a fact that the tellers of the truth—who include the real artists—cannot be made popular in an age like ours. Yet always some are affected by the visionaries and by those few reformers who have a grasp of human nature and make provision for its weaknesses as well as its strengths. And there is truth in art for all those who have some susceptibility to recognizing it. Journals like the *Structurist* help to increase that susceptibility. The current issue may be purchased for \$18.50—a double issue—from The *Structurist*, Box 378, University of Saskatchewan Saskatoon, Canada, S7N0W0.

## *REVIEW*

### INNOVATORS IN HISTORY

CLOSE to ten years ago we began our review of the first edition of *The Power of the People*, by Robert Cooney and Helen Michalowski, by saying:

It may be a poor start for notice of *The Power of the People* . . . to say that it would make a fine coffee-table book, but having this pictorial story of the American struggle to end war around where people will see and look at it might be its best possible use. In the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, the writer of the entry under Conscientious Objection said that the list of conscientious objectors "includes most of the intellectual and moral innovators in history." If you look through the pages of *The Power of the People*, verification of this claim becomes vivid.

This still seems about the right thing to say about this book's second edition by New Society Publishers, issued this year at \$16.95 in paperback. Unhappily, it is still possible to go through life without ever knowing anything about the peace movement and its often heroic protagonists. *The Power of the People*, well produced and brought up to date, has the impact its editors intended, revealing the continuous labors of a comparatively small group of people who are committed to doing all they can to put an end to war. Here one sees for the first time the strong, committed features of the men and women who, although few, have left their mark upon history. The book, the publishers say, "includes sections on the roots of American nonviolence, the original peace churches, the first secular peace organizations, the women's rights movement, the struggle against slavery, the labor movement, conscientious objection, nuclear pacifism, the Civil Rights movement, nonviolent actions against the Vietnam War, ecological struggles, women's peace encampments and much, much more." . . . Biographical sketches include Jane Addams, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Roger Baldwin, Emma Goldman, Jeannette Rankin, A.J. Muste, Martin Luther King, Jr.,

Barbara Deming, Dorothy Day, Bayard Rustin, and Cesar Chavez. There are more than 300 photographs and many rare illustrations, a fine bibliography and an index. The book is large, having 270 8½", X 11" pages. The pages are packed with human drama, filled with action scenes, but what may impress the reader most is the strength in the faces of these people. Some day the heroes of the war-making activity will be more or less forgotten, but no one who has looked upon these faces will ever forget them.

The authors say in their preface:

In this book, we have concentrated on radical pacifists as the clearest exponents of nonviolence because they took the lead in developing nonviolent techniques and strategies, in addition to consistently opposing war and militarism and trying to lead nonviolent lives. . . . By 1930, Devere Allen, a Socialist Party leader, was calling for mass action and "non-violent attack to hasten the transformation of evil and unjust social situations." With such obvious connections between mass organizations and pacifists, and such clear acknowledgement of the need for non-violent action to change unjust social situations, it came as a surprise to us to realize that it was not until the 1940s that pacifists in the U.S. began to challenge the prevailing social system by means of organized nonviolent action. The Congress of Racial Equality was founded in 1942; World War II conscientious objectors committed to aggressive nonviolence assumed control of the War Resisters League in 1948, and the same year Peacemakers was founded after radical war resisters issued a call for a "more disciplined and revolutionary pacifism." . . .

Nonviolence is a natural element which relies on the power of truth rather than force of arms and flows from a sense of the underlying unity of all human beings. There can be no sustained nonviolent struggle on a massive scale until social institutions based on nonviolent principles are built up. While nonviolent resistance and direct action are extremely important, at the core of nonviolence is unity based on love and the desire for justice and voluntary constructive work which will build up the structure of a new society. These beliefs and values will provide the foundation for our common future, fulfilling a tradition where conscience is stronger than custom, where personal risks are taken to better the common lot, and where the contradictions of the times are so

grasped and reformulated as to suggest new and effective means to achieve a free and equal life for all.

The body of the text begins with a history of the religious groups opposed to war and the gradual evolution of secular opposition to all war during the days before America's entry into the first world war.

The first organized opposition to the war came in the spring of 1915 when Jessie Wallace Hughan, Tracy D. Mygatt, Evelyn West Hughan and Frances Witherspoon formed the Anti-Enlistment League. In two years, the League enrolled 3,500 young men who pledged:

*I, being over eighteen years of age, hereby pledge myself against enlistment as a volunteer for any military or naval service in international war, either offensive or defensive, and against giving my approval to such enlistment on the part of others.*

Frances Witherspoon, who headed the League, sought support in the colleges. She sent a letter to students which said: "Each day this country approaches one step nearer the 'armed camp' once denounced, now urged, by President Wilson." . . . With the beginning of conscription in 1917 following America's entry into the war, the Anti-Enlistment League ceased to function, though in terms of structure and the people involved, it may be considered the forerunner of the War Resisters League. Also in 1915 the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was formed.

Leading American feminists and peace advocates founded the Women's Peace Party in January 1915 and immediately joined their European comrades in a call for an international convention of neutral nations in the interests of early peace. . . . The second Women's Peace Congress in 1919 voted to continue the organization permanently as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Its goal has remained to unite women in all countries who are opposed to any kind of war, exploitation, and oppression. League members work for universal disarmament and for the solution of conflicts by the recognition of human solidarity, by conciliation and arbitration, by world cooperation and by the establishment of social, political, and economic justice for all, without distinction of sex, race, class, or creed. The U.S. section of the WILPF now

includes over 140 branches in cities across the country and is one of the most powerful and vigorous of the 30 sections of the International, headquartered in Geneva.

As you turn the pages of this book you see the faces of men and women you may have heard about for years. There is for example Roger Baldwin (1884-1981), a Harvard graduate, who declared himself a conscientious objector to World War I and then became largely responsible for the organization of the American Civil Liberties Union. He did a year in prison for refusing to fight for the military. Then there is Emma Goldman, born in Russia, who came to the U.S. at 17. In 1917 with Alexander Berkman she organized the No-Conscription League. For conspiring against the draft she was fined \$10,000 and did two years in prison, and deported to Russia with Berkman upon her release. But in Russia she was depressed to find the repressive measures of the Bolshevik State and reproached Lenin for his methods. Then there was Eugene V. Debs, who campaigned against the draft and was sentenced to ten years in prison for violation of the Espionage Act in 1918. He ran for President on the Socialist ticket while in prison, and got 915,490 votes. On the day of his sentencing he told the court:

Your honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, I say now that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; and while there is a soul in prison, I am not a free man.

Debs was pardoned by Warren Harding on Christmas Day, 1921.

There is a fine portrait of Jeanette Rankin in the book. She was the Congresswoman who voted against both wars of the twentieth century, and at 88 she led 5,000 women in the Jeanette Rankin Brigade in a march to Washington to protest the war in Vietnam. Others pictured are Frederick J. Libby, head of the National Council for the Prevention of War for over 20 years, and

Dorothy Detzer, active in Washington in behalf of the International League for Peace and Freedom.

There is ample attention in this book to Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement.

The War Resisters League, founded in 1923, to support non-religious conscientious objectors, has served for over 50 years to unite political, humanitarian, and philosophical objectors to war.

The League helped to move pacifism from its traditional emphasis on individual resistance to war towards an organized and active revolutionary movement against the complex causes of war. After the second World War, the War Resisters took the lead in advocating fundamental political, economic, and social change by nonviolent means and was of major importance in the peace, civil rights, student and personal liberation movements of the Sixties and Seventies. The League began largely through the efforts of Jessie Wallace Hughan, Tracy Mygatt, and Frances Witherspoon and with the help of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Evelyn Hughan and Abraham Kaufman worked in the early years to establish the League as a national organization and Dr. Evan Thomas and Rev. John Haynes Holmes were also important figures in the movement. During its first decade, the League lobbied for peace and secured signatures to its pledge: "War is a crime against humanity. We therefore are determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war." By the mid-Thirties, over 12,000 Americans, many of them socialists, anarchists, and independent radicals, had signed the War Resisters League pledge.

There is much more in this book, but we have told enough to show that it contains the story of some remarkable people who are trying to bring into being another kind of world. Young men and women especially ought to be exposed to its pages.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **BUILDING WITH STONE**

WE have two reasons for calling attention to "Stone by Stone," by Asher Shadmon, in the double issue of *Kidma*, the Israel Journal of Development (Nos. 34-35, 1986). One is the value of this quarterly journal published in Jerusalem (P.O. Box 13130, Jerusalem 91131, Israel), which reveals the character of Israeli efforts to develop agriculture and technology appropriate to conditions in the country, and provides reports on the aid given to Third World countries along the lines that Israeli research has shown. Too often we form our ideas of the people of other countries almost entirely from journalistic reports of current political events, ignoring the achievements such as *Kidma* reports with regularity. Then, the article by Asher Shadmon, who is a specialist in the development of quarry materials, having conducted numerous workshops in stone technology, is richly informing on the subject of low-cost home construction.

Stone is practically the only local material which can be used "as is" without complicated further processing, other than required for ornamental reasons.

*Sources* of stone include fields, outcrops, cliffs, rivers, dry river beds and *wadis*, terraces, gravel beds, glacier accumulations, beaches, lakesides—almost anything you can name. Anyone who knows Africa has seen the small rickety shanties, giving a sense of insecurity amid veritable *seas of stone*. Why are the stones not used? The answer is, "tradition"—*or rather the lack of it!* This is not only true of Africa but also of many other parts of the Third World.

No complicated processes are required to transform stone into building components. All that is required is to break and trim the stone. Mortar? In many localities lime can be burnt and used. And if lime is not readily available, saving on mortar depends on stone-working know-how and the qualifications and skills of the workers. For example: in the Philippines, volcanic tuffs cut with hand tools, with a production of fifty block-sized units per man/day, *are still 30% less costly than blocks of cement!*

Stone, Prof. Shadmon says, is found in most countries, and for low-cost use needs only to be available nearby, and the only important tool is a hammer.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves ADDRESSED TO PARENTS

LONG-TERM readers of MANAS will not be surprised that we chose to give attention here to an article in the March *Atlantic* by Bruno Bettelheim. We started noticing the works of this man back in 1948, in our first volume, and have quoted from most if not all his books over the years since. The article that first attracted our attention was Bettelheim's "Behavior in Extreme Situations," which appeared in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (October, 1943) and was later reprinted in Dwight Macdonald's *Politics* for August, 1944. The substance of the article was on what the Nazis intended to accomplish in their concentration camps (Bettelheim spent a year as an inmate in two of the camps, Dachau and Buchenwald.) This intention, as Bettelheim put it, was "to break the prisoners as individuals and to change them into docile masses from which no individual or group act of resistance could arise." Apparently, Bettelheim retained his mental health by giving all his free time to study of what was happening to the inmates and planning what should be done to help them "to resurrect within a short time as autonomous and self-reliant persons." Needless to say, one gains considerable respect for a psychiatrist and writer with this background.

The Bettelheim article in the March *Atlantic* is titled "The Importance of Play," a portion of a book, *A Good Enough Parent*, scheduled to appear in May. We should add that Bettelheim, now retired, served for many years as the head of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School for emotionally disturbed children, part of the University of Chicago. The purpose of his article is to help parents to understand what is happening in children's play, since there are times when, if they interfere through ignorance, they are actually harming instead of helping the child. Childhood is childhood, not adulthood, and play for the child is a serious matter through which many things are learned. Bettelheim says:

From a child's play we can gain understanding of how he sees and construes the world—what he would like it to be, what his concerns and problems are. Through his play he expresses what he would be hard pressed to put into words. A child does not play spontaneously only to while away the time, although he and the adults observing him may think he does. Even when he engages in play partly to fill empty moments, what he chooses to play at is motivated by inner processes, desires, problems, anxieties.

This seems a fundamental law:

When there is no immediate danger, it is usually best to approve of the child's play without interfering, just because he is so engrossed in it. Efforts to assist him in his struggles, while well intentioned, may divert him from seeking, and eventually finding, the solution that will serve him best.

He gives a striking example:

A four-year-old girl reacted to her mother's pregnancy by regressing. Although she had been well trained, she began to wet again, insisted on being fed only from a baby bottle, and reverted to crawling on the floor. All this greatly disturbed her mother, who, anticipating the demands of a new infant, had counted on her daughter's relative maturity. Fortunately, she did not try to prevent her daughter's regressions. After a few months of this behavior, the girl replaced it with much more mature play. She now played "good mother." She became extremely caring for her baby doll, ministering to it much more seriously than ever before. Having in the regressed stage identified with the coming infant, she now identified with her mother. By the time her sibling was born, the girl had done much of the work needed to cope with the change in the family and her position in it, and her adjustment to the new baby was easier than her mother had expected.

In retrospect it can be seen that the child, on learning that a new baby was to join the family, must have been afraid that the baby would deprive her of her infantile gratifications, and therefore tried to provide herself with them. She may have thought that if her mother wanted an infant, then she herself would again be an infant. There would be no need for her mother to acquire another, and she might give up on the idea.

Permitted to act on notions like these, the girl must have realized after a while that wetting herself was not as pleasant as she might have imagined; that being able to eat a wide variety of foods had definite advantages when compared with drinking only from the bottle; and that walking and running brought

many more satisfactions than did crawling. From this experience she convinced herself that being grown up is preferable to being a baby. So she gave up pretending that she was a baby and instead decided to be like her mother: in play to be like her right now, in imagination to become at some future time a real mother. Play provided the child and her mother with a happy solution to what otherwise would have resulted in an impasse.

Bruno Bettelheim knows full well that it is natural enough for the parent to wish that one's child should behave like an adult, but his point is that in childhood the child may have more important things to learn *as a child*. Commonly, the parent keeps looking for signs of adulthood in the child, but they are not there, and shouldn't be, in the normal child. A child does not learn how to drive a nail by being lectured and "shown" how to do it. He wants to learn himself. He *will* learn, and will gain confidence and self-reliance if he does it his own way, not by being wisely instructed by his all-knowing father. This is what this article is intent upon getting across to parents.

A child at play begins to realize that he need not give up in despair if a block doesn't balance neatly on another block the first time around. Fascinated by the challenge of building a tower, he gradually learns that even if he doesn't succeed immediately, success can be his if he perseveres. He learns not to give up at the first sign of failure, or at the fifth or tenth and not to turn in dismay to something less difficult, but to try again and again. But he will not learn this if his parents are interested only in success, if they praise him only for that and not also for tenacious effort. Children are very sensitive about our inner feelings. They are not easily fooled by mere words. Thus our praise won't be effective if, deep down, we are disappointed by the length of time it takes them to achieve their goal or by the awkwardness of their efforts. Further, we must not impose *our* goals on them, either in thought or in action.

Play is the way for the child to learn self-reliance, and it will not help at all if the parents tell him how to play. The child *knows* how to play, and his knowledge is interfered with by parents who try to get him to behave like an adult.

Some parents (usually for reasons of which they are completely unaware) are not satisfied with the way their child plays. So they start telling him how he ought to use a toy, and if he continues to suit his

own fancy, they "correct" him, wanting him to use the toy in accordance with its intended purpose or the way they think it ought to be played with. If they insist on such guidance, the child's interest in the toy—and to some extent also in play in general—is apt to wane, because the project has become his parents' and is no longer his own. Such parents are likely to continue to direct and dominate the child's activities in later years, motivated by the same inner tendencies that did not allow them to enjoy his play as *he* developed it. But now everything is happening on a more complex intellectual level. The parents may try to improve the child's homework by suggesting ideas that are much too sophisticated and in any case not his own. In consequence he may lose interest in developing his own ideas, which pale by comparison with his parents'. What he wanted, in talking with his parents about his homework, was appreciation of his efforts and encouragement that his own ideas were valuable—not a demonstration that his ideas were not good enough. Such parents would be most astonished to learn that their efforts to help were the cause of the child's lack of interest in his homework.

We have been quoting a man who has spent his life working with children, observing them, healing them. This means he has been identifying with them, *understanding* them. Actually, he is really too gentle with all of us who have been parents and have done the things he is discussing to our children. The worst of this is that we were so righteous about it, supposing that we really wanted to help the children, when the fact is that we were behaving like the egotists that most of us are. Parenting a child is taking on a great responsibility, but most parents assume that they know exactly how to do it. Bettelheim knows better, and is able to get across in his writing a practical kind of wisdom about children and their needs that would really help to change the world if it were applied. He teaches the importance of recognizing and honoring the dignity of the child, as in the following brief comment:

Many adults, whether parents or teachers, tend to play with children for purposes outside the play; they may wish to distract, entertain, educate, diagnose, or guide them. But this is not what the child desires. Unless the play itself is the thing, it loses much of its meaning to the child, and the adult participation becomes offensive; the child can guess the adult's purpose and becomes annoyed at the pretense of wholehearted participation.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Russians and Americans

WHILE there is nothing really extraordinary about the Winter 1987 *In Context*—except the photographs of Russian and American youngsters, which are utterly delightful—this issue is valuable as some sixty pages of reports by both Russians and Americans on their effort to be "citizen-diplomats," that is, to understand and appreciate each other. *In Context* chose to invite Diana Glasgow, editor of *Holyearth*, to edit this issue of *In Context*. She is also active in the citizen diplomacy movement, having visited the U.S.S.R. nine times since 1984, leading trips and arranging exchanges of various sorts.

The issue opens with a letter to Diana by a Soviet woman, Irina Mazel, who teaches English in adult evening classes in Leningrad and has befriended Diana during her trips to Russia. The Russian teacher of English wants American readers to realize how well Russian children get to know American literature. She says:

In the 8th and 9th grades, our children get acquainted with the most important historical events, public figures, and national heroes of America. American classics by Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, O. Henry, and Jack London are very popular. Particularly well liked is the poetry of Walt Whitman and Henry Longfellow (especially "The Song of Hiawatha," beautifully translated into Russian by Ivan Bunin, a fine writer).

You can hardly find a 12-year-old boy or girl who hasn't read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* or *Huckleberry Finn*, though some of them may not remember the name of the author. Every educated adult knows the names and works of Theodore Dreiser, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, J.D. Salinger, and other modern writers and dramatists. A good deal of attention is paid to the U.S.A. as the most influential country of the capitalist world. We can't help admiring the remarkable achievement of America's science and technology and respecting the enterprising spirit of the nation. The people here realize how much we can learn from each other if we maintain peaceful relations and become good friends.

She then asks in effect how Americans will learn about Russians, if we mean, the regular don't learn their language. Robert Gilman, the regular editor of *In Context*, replies somewhat in his article, saying that we really have much to unlearn about the Russians. He quotes Joel Schatz on this, who has said:

I came to realize that over the years Americans have deprived themselves of direct access to reality in the Soviet Union to the point where we have developed and reinforced impressions of that culture which are very limited. Somehow they've been portrayed as a culture oppressed to the point of not smiling, of not falling in love, not raising families, not enjoying themselves on picnics, not bicycling in the countryside, not pursuing careers that excite them. It's a different culture, totally different from ours, but the spirit of the ordinary people, their warmth and love, is as great as anywhere on the planet.

Gilman then gives, for what it is worth, a sketch of the history of the Russians, starting thousands of years B.C., then telling about the Vikings, who invaded Russia about 700 A.D. and consolidated their holdings in Novgorod and Kiev. But they fell prey to the Mongols or Asian Tartars in 1240, who ruled them until 1480 when Ivan II, grand duke of Muscovy, drove the Tartars away. The Tartars had been ruthless rulers. Pushkin called them "Arabs without Aristotle or algebra." Then the Russians were ruled for four hundred years by the Tsars—until 1917, when, finally, the Bolsheviks took over. But Lenin died in 1924, and he was succeeded by Stalin, who ruled until his death in 1953. Since that time the Russians have been trying to live a more normal life, and in some measure succeeding. As Gilman says:

Indeed, the four decades since World War II have been so much more peaceful for the Soviets than the first half of the 20th century that it has been for them like a different world. On an even longer time scale, we could say that the largely rural peasantry of the 1920s had much more in common with their forebears 400 years earlier than they do with their largely urban, industrialized, and educated grandchildren of today. . . . The Soviet past is very different from the American past. We have had one of the easiest histories of any major country, while

they have had one of the hardest. Yet when we come together—as people—in the present and look toward the future, it is amazing how much we have in common. We are like siblings, separated and orphaned at birth, raised by very different foster parents, who are now rediscovering each other and finding that we have powerful bonds that transcend our separate pasts. We have much to learn from each other, if we will but listen.

This seems a good place to quote a little more from Joel Schatz, who says toward the end of his contribution:

There's almost a transcendent quality to spending time with Russians on their own soil, as there is when we've entertained Russians in the U.S. You look at each other and you almost don't have to say anything. You know how absurd the situation is, and you know that, on a one-to-one basis, everything is OK. At a distance, Russians and Americans distrust and fear each other, but up close they tend to love each other. It's no different from the human process anywhere strangers operate at a distance, with either no knowledge or with misinformation.

In an article on "Citizen Diplomacy," the writers, Michael Shuman, Gale Warner, and Lila Forest, say:

In recent years, more and more Americans have begun taking responsibility, as private citizens, to promote healthier relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. They believe the dangers of nuclear war are simply too high for citizens to wait passively on the sidelines and merely hope for the best. They have been unsure of what they could accomplish, but absolutely certain that doing something is better than doing nothing.

In the 1960s Norman Cousins pioneered this activity as editor of the *Saturday Review*. He was able to initiate the Dartmouth Conferences involving influential Americans and Soviets in unofficial dialogues, and today hundreds, "perhaps thousands, of ordinary American citizens are traveling to the Soviet Union as more than just tourists." They focus on such questions as: "What is the Soviet Union really like? Its people? Its government? How can the United States transform its relations with the Soviet Union? What can American citizens do?" There are several discussions of this activity in *In Context*,

showing how it leads, if not to immediate peace, to human understanding.