VOLUME XXII, NO. 46
NOVEMBER 12, 1969

A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

[This article by E. F. Schumacher, a comprehensive statement of the needs of underdeveloped countries, is reprinted from the May 1969 issue of *Crucible*, published in England. Born in Germany, Dr. Schumacher was educated in Bonn and Berlin, as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, and at Columbia University. He emigrated to England in 1937. After some years in business, farming, and journalism, he became (in 1950) economic adviser of the National Coal Board in London, a post he now holds. He has served as an economic adviser to the Government of Burma and was consultant to the Indian Planning Commission on problems of Indian development. He is best known, today, for his advocacy of intermediate technology development.]

THE Dutch manager of the textile plant in East Africa received me with the greatest courtesy and not at all with the suspicion and irritated resentment I had half expected.

"This plant, as you will see, is highly automated," he said.

"Before you go on," I interrupted, "could you just explain one thing to me. As I was coming in I noticed some hundred or so young African men at the factory gates, and armed guards keeping them out. Is this a riot or something?"

The Dutchman laughed: "Oh no! They are always there. They hope that I might sack someone and they could step into his job."

"So you have quite a bit of unemployment in this town?"

"Yes, terrible."

"Thank you; excuse the interruption. Please carry on."

"This plant, as you will see," said the Dutchman, "is one of the most modern in East Africa, highly automated. We employ about 500 people, but this is much too much. We hope to get the number down quite considerably as our automated equipment becomes fully operative."

"So there is not much hope for the chaps outside?"

"No, I am afraid, there isn't."

"Tell me, what would be the total capital value of a plant like this?"

"About £1½ million."

"For 500 jobs," I calculated aloud, "this means about £3,000 per workplace. That's a lot of money for a poor country, the sort of 'capital intensity' we have in Western Europe or the United States."

"Yes indeed," said my Dutch friend, "my plant is as modern as you would find anywhere in the world."

He must have noticed my astonishment.

"You see," he continued, "we have to be competitive. The quality demanded is very high. I cannot afford to send out faulty material. It is terribly difficult to train these people here to work faultlessly; they have no tradition of industrial discipline. Machines make no mistakes; human beings do. To get a high quality product we must eliminate the human factor."

"I quite understand," I said, "but tell me this: why has this factory been placed in this small town? Surely, you would be better off, marketwise and in every other respect, in the capital city."

"Indeed we would. We did not want to come here. This was a planning decision of the Government."

"What was their reasoning?"

"Very simple," he said: "There is a lot of unemployment in this region. So we had to come here."

"I see. And your aim is to eliminate the human factor?"

"Yes," said the Dutchman. "I can see there is a conflict here. But I have to make this investment pay. What can I do?"

The problem is two-fold: how to obtain faster development and how to obtain healthy development. On a superficial view, the two parts of the problem are in conflict; on a deeper view,

they are complementary, except in the very short term.

Evidence of unhealthy development exists all over the world, including some of the richest countries. It leads to a degradation of people and a ruination of the environment. Development is healthy only if it leads to an up-grading of people on the widest possible scale and an up-grading of their environment also on the widest possible scale.

What is the main cause of "development" going wrong? It is the neglect of the geographical (locational) factor. While all development work is difficult, it is much easier in the big city—normally the capital city—than in the secondary towns; in the bigger towns, than in the little towns; and it is most difficult in the rural areas.

The free play of economic forces invariably favours the urban as against the rural areas, the big towns as against the small. It tends to produce the triple disease of *mass migration into cities, mass unemployment, and the danger of famine.*

Mushrooming cities, surrounded by ever-growing misery-belts, infested by a largely unemployed proletariat without nourishment for body or soul, can be found all over the world. For a rich minority, they offer the high life of extravagant luxury, albeit under the shadow of personal insecurity owing to the prevalence of crime and the symptoms of political instability. For the destitute majority they offer nothing but degradation.

The rural areas, meanwhile, tend to sink into ever deeper decay. Every gifted person tries to migrate into the city, to escape from rural misery, and this irresistible "brain drain" makes the problems of the rural hinterland ever more intractable. At the end of this kind of "development" lies social chaos, the degradation of man and of his environment.

Most developing countries are overwhelmingly agricultural and must obviously give primary emphasis and attention to the development and up-grading of their agriculture. As agriculture cannot be practiced in towns, it is the rural areas that must receive the main emphasis and attention.

What kind of emphasis and attention? It is of little use to go to semi-illiterate peasants engaged in primitive subsistence farming and expect them to adopt and successfully to practice modern farming methods. Poverty is a vicious circle; it feeds upon itself. The vicious circle of rural poverty can be broken only by introducing non-agricultural activities into the rural areas. These activities may be summed up in two words: industry and culture.

Agriculture alone, at the level of poverty, consisting as it does of scraping the ground and living with cattle, cannot develop the mind. Agricultural populations need the stimulus of non-agricultural activities, or they will stay at the subsistence level and increasingly tend to desert the land in the hope of finding a "better life" in the cities.

Without culture, agricultural practices cannot be upgraded and industry cannot be established. Culture is primary; it leads by itself to industrial development which, in turn, helps to stimulate culture.

If this is accepted, the strategy of development becomes clear: first and foremost, bring culture into the villages; at the same time, bring industry. (By "villages" I mean communities with at least a few hundred, but preferably a few thousand inhabitants. Widely scattered hamlets cannot be helped at this stage.)

To put this in another way: Everything needs a certain "structure." Culture needs a consciously evolved structure just as industry needs a consciously evolved structure. In both cases, the "structure" must be qualitative *and at the same time geographical,* if it is to be a healthy one.

An ideal cultural structure would look like this: a number of cultural "units" make up the

country, each of them containing at least one million and at the most, say, three million inhabitants. Each cultural "unit" is a pyramid, as follows: primary schools at the village level; a number of villages headed by a market town with a secondary school; a number of market towns headed by a regional centre with an institution of higher learning.

An ideal industrial structure would be essentially similar: small-scale industries in the villages; medium-scale industries in the market towns; large-scale industries in the regional centres; and perhaps a few exceptional and unique industrial activities in the capital city (although this is by no means essential, since the capital city provides in any case certain non-industrial services to the country, which are themselves "exceptional and unique").

I am not suggesting that such ideal structures are attainable in every case; but they do provide guidelines. It is also obvious that "industry" is more closely tied to location factors than culture, so that the industrial structure will have to tolerate more "deviations from the ideal" than the cultural structure.

It must be emphasized that there are no master-key solutions to the problem of healthy development. Gigantic schemes, whether in agriculture, industry, communications, or even in education, may seem attractive in theory but are invariably disastrous in practice. The key to success is not mass production but production by the masses. Any purely economic assessment of a proposed new activity is bound to be misleading, unless the political, sociological, and geographical requirements and prevailing conditions are clearly stated and accepted as terms of reference. The economic calculus by itself always tends to favour the large project as against the small; the urban project as against the rural; the capital-intensive project as against the labour-intensive, because the task of managing machines is always easier than that of managing people. But this simply means that the economy calculus is applicable only *after* the basic policy decisions have been taken. These basic policy decisions should favour the small project as against the large; the rural project as against the urban; the labour-using project as against the capital-using—until labour becomes the effective bottleneck.

Three lines of effort have to be pursued simultaneously:

(*a*) to bring culture into the rural areas;

(*b*) to bring industrial activities into the rural areas; and

(*c*) to up-grade agricultural methods and practices.

(*a*) The elements of culture are visual matter, music, reading matter, industrial skills (which will be dealt with separately), and body culture, i.e. hygiene and sport. In all these respects the rural areas are poverty-stricken. To mend this state of affairs demands a great deal of leadership and only a relatively small amount of money.

If Government offices look dilapidated, dirty, and drab, then Government will not be convincing when it calls upon the people to make their houses and villages look smart, clean, and colourful. Self-reliance presupposes a certain pride, and pride grows on the basis of cleanliness and smartness. Whitewashed houses are an asset only if they are kept whitewashed. Wherever possible, bring paint into the villages.

Local art is a major instrument of development. It stimulates the mind, and that is the starting point of everything.

Self-made music, which is better than radio, is both a stimulus and an attraction.

Most important of all: reading matter. After literacy—what? For every 20 shillings spent on education in literacy, it is worth while, and indeed necessary, to spend at least one shilling on the preparation, production, and distribution of reading matter. This must not be confined to utilitarian, instructional material, but must include

material of wider scope—political, historical, artistic—a systematic "Feed-the-Minds Programme."

Hygiene and sport are equally essential instruments of development.

In all these matters, not only the men but also the women need to get involved. If anything, the women are more important than the men, as the next generation is in their care.

How can all this be accomplished? It cannot be done by a few education or community development officers, but only by the systematic involvement of the entire educated population of the developing country.

These few remarks about culture had to be made because it is too often overlooked that culture, and not money, is the primary motive power of development.

The sense of isolation in the rural areas and small towns is intensified by the lack of newspapers and other reading material. The newspapers produced in the capital city normally reach the hinterland only irregularly and often with considerable delay. They are also too expensive.

With a bit of local initiative and central support, small local news-sheets could be produced very cheaply.

A successful scheme practiced in one developing country is as follows: A number of fairly well educated people from small towns and large villages in the hinterland—mainly school teachers—were given a short training course in the capital. After training, they were supplied with a "Do-it-yourself kit," consisting of a transistor radio (if they did not possess one already), a typewriter, a simple hand-duplicator, and a fair stock of suitable paper. It was arranged that the central radio station would broadcast, three times a week, a News Bulletin at dictation speed. The people trained for this purpose went back to their towns and villages, tuned in at the arranged times, and produced a duplicated news-sheet at minimal expense three times a week. The scheme turned out to be financially self-supporting. In some cases, the local news-sheet producer found it possible to add local news and even editorial matter.

Reading matter is one of the main instruments of culture and, in fact, an indispensable one. Without it, all education is abortive. It can be very cheaply produced. But the contents must be appropriate to the actual conditions of people living in poverty. (People no longer living in poverty have the means to look after themselves.) Apart from news, the poor need "simple messages," that is, small pamphlets with printed matter and visual supports which describe down-to-earth possibilities of self-help and self-improvement—how to build a small feeder road; how to improve one's house; how to feed oneself and the children; how to practice elementary hygiene; also how to paint, make music, and so forth.

To produce such "simple messages" is not easy. Indigenous academics and other intellectuals should organize themselves in small spare-time study groups to prepare them. No one else can do it. But they have to be conscious of the three great gulfs that separate them from the poor in the hinterland and that have to be bridged by compassionate care—the gulf between the rich and the poor; the gulf between the educated and the uneducated; and the gulf between the townsman and the countryman.

(*b*) Opportunities for industrial development exist wherever people live together in hundreds or thousands. They also exist wherever valuable raw materials can be found or produced.

Assuming there is an established population of several hundred thousand people, inhabiting a district or region in a not-too-scattered fashion, industrial development depends on the following factors: (1) Local initiative and will to work along new lines; (2) Technical know-how, including the knowledge of local natural resources; (3) Commercial know-how; (4) Money.

In the rural areas and small towns, all these factors are scarce, and industrial development depends not only on their fullest mobilization but also on their *systematic, planned supplementation from outside.*

As I have said before, poverty is a vicious circle, and all beginnings are difficult. To look for opportunities for industrial activities means therefore, initially at least, to look for activities in which a beginning has already been made, and to build on them.

The first task is to study what people are already doing—and they must be doing something, otherwise they could not exist—and to help them to do it better, which often means to help them to advance from raw material production into the successive stages of processing.

The second task is to study what people need and to investigate the possibility of helping them to cover more of their needs out of their own productive efforts.

It is only when these two tasks have been successfully accomplished that one can safely advance to a third task, that is, to produce new articles destined for markets outside.

Local initiatives for self-help and self-improvement are the most precious asset of all, because without them no organic growth can take place. A population without such initiatives is almost impossible to help. It follows that all such initiatives, wherever they arise, deserve the most careful sympathetic nurturing and the maximum of outside support.

Appropriate industries in the hinterland will rarely need large amounts of capital, because they will be modest in size and will rarely require more than a few hundred pounds of capital investment per person employed. The lower the average amount of capital to be found for each industrial workplace, the more workplaces can be created by the investment of a given amount of money. Only by creating a large number of low-cost work places can the problem of mounting unemployment be solved.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that this is a matter of conscious political choice and not one to be decided by the calculations of economists or businessmen. A country's development policy may be geared primarily to the production of goods or it may be geared primarily to the development of people. The former aims at mass production; the latter, at production by the masses. The former is the inevitable result, if private enterprise is given a free hand, because it is the natural, i.e. rational, desire of the private enterprise employer "to eliminate the human factor" (as one of them put it to me), for the simple reason that automated machinery works faster and more reliably than any human being can possibly do. Feasibility studies undertaken by politically "neutral" economists will always support this tendency, particularly in a developing country where labour, being unused to industrial work, has yet to be trained. It is then argued that mass production, once successfully established, will benefit the masses by the provision of cheap consumers' goods. But since mass production at the level of high capital intensity "eliminates the human factor," the masses find themselves unemployed and unable to buy even the cheapest goods. It is claimed that mass production, if it does find a market, is the most effective instrument for the rapid accumulation of surplus wealth, and that this surplus will then "percolate" to the unemployed masses. Yet it is a fact of universal experience that no such "percolation" takes place; a "dual economy" emerges in which the rich get richer while the poor stagnate or get poorer. Under such auspices, "self-reliance," "involvement of the people," and "development" must remain ineffectual aspirations.

If the political decision is in favour of production by the masses—rather than mass production which "eliminates the human factor"—it follows automatically that the difficult task of developing industrial activities in the hinterland

must receive top priority, simply because the mass of the people happen to live in the hinterland and it would be a disaster if they (or even a sizeable proportion of them) were drawn into the capital city. It also follows that industrial developments in the capital city should be strictly confined to two categories, "national plants" (in certain cases) and small production units serving the local market.

By "national plants" I mean unique enterprises at a high level of sophistication and capital intensity which for one reason or another would be a plant concerned with the servicing of international airliners, but there are no doubt other legitimate cases. Industries in the capital city should be capital-intensive and labour-saving, because it is not desirable to draw people into the capital city by creating large numbers of industrial workplaces there. Industries in the hinterland should be labour-intensive and capital-saving, because it is desirable to hold the population in the hinterland and give them the chance of acquiring industrial skills.

(*c*) It is now widely accepted that in the generality of cases farming in a poor country cannot straightaway move from the hoe to the tractor, or from the panga to the combine harvester. An "intermediate" stage must first be reached and consolidated, utilizing equipment that is very much more efficient than hoe or panga and very much cheaper and easier to maintain and utilize than tractor or combine.

The question is: how is the farmer or the farming community to choose the equipment appropriate to their specific needs; how are they to obtain supplies, including spare parts; and how are they to pay for them? The farmer's basic implements are plough, harrow, planter, cultivator, and cart. Some of these can be made by local carpenters, to appropriate specifications, e.g. the harrow and the cart. The others have to be obtained from merchants, who may have to import them. Normally the merchants are unable to offer the farmer a wide enough choice of implements, for instance, of ploughs. Nor is the farmer always in a position to judge which type of plough is suitable for his soil and other circumstances. If he has only two oxen, a plough needing four or six oxen to pull it is a disaster for him. The wrong depth of ploughing may be equally fatal.

In every developing country arrangements along the following lines are required: First, agricultural extension officers need to have at their disposal a whole range of appropriate equipment, such as ploughs, so that, going from farm to farm, they can determine—and demonstrate—which particular type of plough is appropriate to the given conditions. Second, there must be an organization capable of manufacturing or importing the appropriate equipment, including spare parts, and organizing its distribution. There is often no alternative to a governmental organization's undertaking this very urgent task. Third, these is generally a need to increase and intensify the education of farmers in the training of draught animals and the use and maintenance of animal-drawn equipment.

If a healthy development requires a strategy as outlined above—a strategy in which the governments of the developing country have to take all the decisive initiatives—what kind of help can and should be given by the rich countries? It is obvious that it is easy to produce or promote *unhealthy* development—just provide some funds and let things happen as they will. Most of the so-called development will then continue to go into the capital cities; the rich will get richer; the poor, poorer. There will be mass production, instead of production by the masses. The ablest, most progressive, most dynamic and up-to-date business men will "eliminate the human factor" and the economists and statisticians will celebrate splendid "rates of growth." All this is relatively easy—and it is the road to a sickness which even the richest societies may find it hard to survive.

But healthy development, with production by the masses instead of mass production, with the

cultivation, instead of the elimination, of the human factor, with only modest urbanization and an organic agro-industrial structure in the hinterland, based on self-reliance and the involvement of the people—that is a different matter. Are we fit to help? Or are we so much caught up in our own system of "eliminating the human factor" that ours will inevitably and inescapably be the withering touch of which there is so much evidence already?

What is needed is a supreme effort of the imagination. How can people who are rich, educated, and city-based help people who are poor, uneducated country folk? They can do nothing but damage unless they make this effort of the imagination, an effort that will make them conscious of the actual "feel" of poverty—not only its degradation but also its dignity. We cannot help them unless we respect them and listen to them. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways."

This is to say that we can help them with our knowledge, but not with the ways in which we ourselves have utilized and exploited our knowledge. We can help them to solve *their* problems; if we merely offer them the solutions of *our* problems, we ruin them.

As Professor Myrdal has emphasized in his stupendous work, *Asian Drama, an Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations,* the technological advance in the West is very detrimental to the development prospects of the Third World, and there is little hope unless "its unfortunate impact could be counteracted by deliberately increasing research activity and directing it towards problems the solution of which would be in the interest of the under-developed countries."

But who will support those who are struggling to work along such lines? Increasing numbers of people realize that such work is necessary but they do nothing to help it along.

The poor cannot be helped by our giving them methods and equipment which *presuppose* a highly developed industrialism. They need an "intermediate technology"; they need *the stepping stones of self-help.*

The Intermediate Technology Development Group in London (9 King Street, Covent Garden, London WC2) is organizing this kind of "help to help them help themselves." It is a group of scientists, administrators and businessmen, who believe that the scientific knowledge and worldly competence of the affluent West can be organized to help the poor countries without destroying their identity and self-respect.

E. F. SCHUMACHER

London

REVIEW
ERIKSON ON GANDHI

THE conceptual language of Freud affords little help to a man who finds himself confronted by the task of describing human greatness. If, therefore, a writer of psychoanalytical background succeeds in doing this in spite of a language evolved mainly in accounts of pathology, he may be said to have transcended common Freudian horizons by an extraordinary use of his tools. Here, perhaps, lies the difference between a genuine artist and a good craftsman. A craftsman impresses you by the expert use of his tools, but an artist makes you forget them. In these terms, Erik Erikson's latest book, *Gandhi's Truth* (Norton, 1969, $10.00), is the work of a artist. You do not, of course, lose sight of the fact that Erikson is a psychoanalyst. His conscientious attention to professional values may even be a little irritating to some readers. And one could also predict that this book may be more important for its liberalizing effect on psychoanalysis than for better understanding of Gandhi. Yet this is not meant critically; it doesn't seem to matter. People who respect psychoanalysis may be astonished to discover what heights can be reached through this discipline by a man like Erik Erikson, and people who respect Gandhi may be similarly astonished by the penetration Dr. Erikson now and then shows. On any and all such counts, the book deserves careful reading.

Here we shall attempt to indicate why by considering only the early, almost prefatory section of the book. We can speak of its general excellence for the reason that the most important part—that devoted to Gandhi's leadership of the strike of the mill workers in Ahmedabad in 1918—has already appeared in print and was reviewed in MANAS nearly four years ago (Dec. 8, 1965). Gandhi was fifty years old in 1918, but in Prof. Erikson's view then on the eve of his full greatness. In this paper (published in the September 1965 issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*) Prof. Erikson explained that he saw in Gandhi an older counterpart to *Young Man Luther* and that he was attracted by "the way in which this 50-year-old man staked out his sphere of generativity not only to the trusteeship of his emerging nation, but also to that of a mankind which had begun to debase itself with the mechanized heritage and organized mass slaughter of world wars and totalitarian revolutions."

With such an introduction, the reader has the feeling that this author is not going to explain Gandhi away in terms of id and super-ego influences. Erikson may have his troubles in accommodating his language to Gandhi's achievements, but he will not sacrifice their splendor to a method. If anything has to go, it will be customary limitations in the method, not the man.

The early pages of the book confirm this confidence. They are devoted without hurry to both the historical and the personal setting in which-Erikson pursued his researches. There seems a quite intentional leisureliness in his approach to the meaning of Gandhi. He deliberately soaks himself in the religious philosophy of the Indian people, sharing with his readers the psychotherapeutic values that keep turning up. Erikson, incidentally, has spent much of his life in the treatment of children, so that for him there is not much difference between therapeutic values and growth needs. He is also more interested in how an idea—on, say, cosmological origins—affects the psychological balances and health of people than in the objective "truth content" assigned to it by current science. He is impressed, for example, by the "fit" of the Hindu doctrine of the origin of meaning with the psychological needs of the people:

> The Hindu scriptures are "platonic" in the sense that they outline the eternal meaning of the pre-ordained stages which pervade the variety of mortal lives and local customs. "Eternal meaning" can, of course, become righteous tyranny at the height of priestly power, and something of a hoax in an era of cultural disintegration; but since today we know so much more systematically and attend so much more

> passionately to the distortion and perversion of all meaning than the values always to be restored or regained, it may be well to try to recognize, even in glaring deviations, the order suggested by the way in which human beings strive to grow.

This part of the book is salted with quotations from the *Mahabharata* and its philosophical "new testament," the *Bhagavad-Gita.* The point of the paragraph just quoted seems particularly important. Here Erikson is pointing out that Western social systems and conceptions of "truth" are largely formulated in terms of reaction to corrupt systems guilty of historic crimes and oppressive claims. Social virtue, in other words, is now defined by contrast with vicious past practice—the good is recognized by *not* being like ways and belief-systems of which we passionately disapprove. The "truth" we believe in, therefore, is a prickly sort of verity maintained by rejection of falsity and badness. But what if ancient hierarchical systems of life, conceived apart from their perversion, serve as matrix for the natural growth cycles of human beings? Erikson asks attention for this possibility:

> What we would ascribe to the beginnings of the life cycle the Hindu view projects into previous lives which determine the coordinates of a person's birth into this one: not only *where* a child was to be born (*desha*) and *when* (*kala*), but also his *innate* trends (*ganas*) and therefore the efforts (*shrama*) which can be expected of one thus endowed and growing up in his caste at his period of history. He may emerge, then, in the caste of the Brahmans and learn to be literate, or in that of the Kshatrias and learn how to fight and rule, among the Vaisyas and handle goods or hold land, or among the Sudras to toil in the sweat of his brow. Or, indeed he may miss all these honored occupations and go through life doomed to touch what others will avoid and, therefore, be untouchable himself. But the Untouchable, too, has unlimited chances ahead of him.

Since inviting attention to what is, on its face, a "reactionary" scheme amounts for many people to some kind of approval, we should recall here Gandhi's lifelong opposition to the idea of untouchability and the practical reforms he introduced to eliminate this cruel custom. As for caste, he saw it as a once natural definition of duties and regarded the claim of caste privileges as corrupt. He hoped for abolition of the present system. The spirit of Gandhi's view is doubtless embodied in the following by Vinoba: "In a *Sarvodaya* society, every individual will have to learn to combine in himself the qualities of a *brahman, a kshatria,* a *vaisya,* and a *sudra."*

Erikson's comment on the psychological role of such divisions among human callings is of particular interest:

> We in the West are proudly overcoming all ideas of predestination. But we would still insist that child training can do no more than underscore what is given—that is, in an epigenetic development fixed by evolution. And we certainly sense in any seminar—clinical or historical—how we continue to project ideas of doom and predestination either on hereditary or constitutional givers, on early experience and irreversible trauma, or on cultural and economic deprivation—that is, on a past, as dim as it is fateful. And let us face it: "deep down" nobody in his right mind *can* visualize his own existence without assuming that he has always lived and will live hereafter; and the religious world-views of old only endowed this psychological given with images and ideas which could be shared, transmitted, and ritualized.

Prof. Erikson turns next to the stages of individual life as indicated in the Laws of Manu. He describes the guiding and energizing conceptions of duty—a better word is the Indian *Dharma,* improving on the merely moralistic content of "duty" with broad connotations of natural function, role, and specific fulfillment—which characterize the four stages of life. Erikson says:

> There is much in *dharma,* then, which we have conceptualized as Ego, if understood as that which integrates the individual experience and yet is also communal in nature. If individuals depend on each other for a maximum and optimum of mutual activation, *dharma* is a consolidation of the world through the self-realization of each individual within a joint order.

The underlying rule is: "Better one's own *dharma* [though] imperfect, than another's well

performed; Better death in [doing] one's own *dharma;* Another's *dharma* brings danger." Childhood and youth form one stage; manhood and the responsibilities of family life make the next, the *Grihasta*, stage; which is followed by the third stage, *Vanaprastha,* marking relinquishment of family ties, relaxation of domestic duties, and the increase, by degrees, of freedom to search for meaning and truth—a quest which is climaxed, in some life or other, by liberation from the bonds of conditioned existence. This scheme was discussed by Dr. Erikson and compared with his own idea of "life stages" in a seminar of highly educated Indians. After he had sketched what seemed to him some correspondences, he noticed a certain confusion:

> A group of otherwise well-trained individuals when confronted with religious world images never quite knows whether to consider the existence of such remnants of magic thinking the result of meaningless habituation or an irrational systematization. And yet, a pragmatic world-view which shuns all concepts of the cycle of generations can cause widespread disorientation. In such a dilemma, one cannot help admiring the ideational and ceremonial consistency of the older world-images.
>
> For what an ingenious scheme this is: all caste, subcaste, and not-yet-caste having been predetermined, one comes into life with a curse that can be lived down if one lives up to minutely prescribed ways; and by living and dying well, one becomes deserving of ever better lives until, having exhausted the available life cycles, one is ready for release from the whole big cycle.
>
> All world-images are apt to become corrupt when left to ecclesiastic bureaucracies. But this does not make the formation of world images expendable. And I can only repeat that we deny the remnants of old-world images at our own risk, because we do not overcome them by declaring them—with all the righteousness of skepticism—something of a secret sin. They are not less powerful for being denied. In India, I found, outside the seminar at any rate, that anyone who trusts a stranger not to smile will soon confide to him the magic reaffirmations he receives from sources other than those the West calls rational—from astrology to mysticism. But it is true for us, too, that the imagery of our traditional inner resources must be transcended, rather than denied, by what we are learning to learn.

Why does Erikson go into all this? Because he is making a study of Gandhi. He needed to look at the sources of Gandhi's deepest convictions, to grasp sympathetically the philosophy that structured Gandhi's intuitions of the meaning of life and the possibilities of human development. He could hardly do less.

COMMENTARY
HOW TO BEGIN

READING E. F. Schumacher on the needs of underdeveloped countries will doubtless lead to numerous brooding thoughts, but one with great fertility is the idea that the United States is an underdeveloped country. If you contrast Prof. Schumacher's conditions for healthy development with those now prevailing in America—as described, say, in the book discussed in this week's "Children"—hardly any other conclusion can be reached.

Healthy development relies upon and increases "the human factor," while we seem to be doing everything we can to eliminate it. Success in suppressing the human factor, according to Postman and Weingartner, is already plainly evident in the schools; and marked progress at the level of popular culture can be seen in the fact that mass media communications are now "entirely one way."

The symptoms of what Schumacher calls "unhealthy development" are of course everywhere—they dominate our lives. Hardly any of the most prized achievements of the age are put to uses which lead "to an up-grading of people on the widest possible scale and an up-grading of their environment also on the widest possible scale." Our technological structures, according to both educators and ecologists, are channelling precisely opposite effects.

We must therefore attribute our posture of elevation, and our mood of condescension when referring to the "plight" of underdeveloped peoples, to the hypnotic influence of a statistical affluence that is of absolutely no benefit to human growth, but has rather what Schumacher terms a "withering touch"—the Croesus effect, you could say.

Can it be denied that, when it comes to human values and natural relationships, we all experience "the sense of isolation" typified by life in "rural areas and small towns"? That is what books like *The Lonely Crowd* are about.

When, then, are we going to begin to live realistically, determined to satisfy the being-needs common to every underdeveloped people? For example, Schumacher says:

> . . . the poor need "simple messages," that is, small pamphlets with printed matter and visual supports which describe down-to-earth possibilities of self-help and self-improvement. . . how to improve one's house; how to feed oneself and the children; how to practice elementary hygiene, also how to paint, make music, and so forth.

One sort of "simple message" in desperate need of circulation could no more get by the commercial filters of the mass media than could Albert Schweitzer's last agonized appeal for world peace, before he died. (The media spokesmen explained that people weren't really "interested" in Schweitzer—remember?) This brings home the extensive possibilities of "a small press in one's home." (See "Children.") Ronald Sampson, a lecturer on politics in the University of Bristol, uses his to print translations of Tolstoy on the futility and immorality of war. He is spreading ideas that have an enormous potential for "development."

Suppose there were a dozen Ronald Sampsons? This cannot be impossible. However, since the molecular biologists are probably busy laying down plans for more astronauts, nature and nurture remain the means for *human* development. Mary Shelley understood this well.

Well, the lot of a really advanced underdeveloped country is not a happy one. There are so many areas ("widely scattered hamlets") that the first steps of change may not help at all. But at least we know how to begin. Schumacher calls it a "Feed-the-Minds Programme." An awakened mind, he says, "is the starting point of everything else."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
DIATRIBE PLUS

WE have another "away with all that" book on the public schools, written by teachers for the general reader. The authors are Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, the book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (Delacorte Press, 1969, $5.95). These men write with what seems staccato certainty about a great many things. People who spend years of their lives in teaching doubtless acquire legitimate certainty about a great many things, and there is surely a place for the resulting assurance in books on education. One nevertheless tires of machine-gun prose, and when barricades desperation and a do-or-die rhetoric dominate discussion of the teaching of the young, one begins to hope for at least a single chapter filled with pastoral innocence, where tenderness and the springs of an atmosphere of affection and trust are the themes. These authors do not satisfy this longing. This is not, however, to deny pertinence to their "subversion." In the Introduction, they say:

> The institution we call "school" is what it is because we have made it that way. If it is irrelevant, as Marshall McLuhan says; if it shields from reality, as Norbert Weiner says; if it educates for obsolescence, as John Gardner says; if it does not develop intelligence, as Jerome Brunner says; if it is based on fear, as John Holt says; if it avoids the promotion of significant [earnings, as Carl Rogers says; if it induces alienation, as Paul Goodman says; if it punishes creativity and independence, as Edgar Friedenberg says; if, in short, it is not doing what needs to be done, it can be changed; it *must* be changed. It can be changed, we believe, because there are so many wise men who in one way or another, have offered us clear, intelligent, and new ideas to use, and as long as these ideas and the alternatives they suggest are available, there is no reason to abandon hope. We have mentioned some of these men above. We will allude to, explicate, or otherwise use the ideas of still others throughout this book. For example, Alfred Korzybski, I. A. Richards Adelbert Ames, Earl Kelley, Alan Watts.

The book is brilliantly critical. It advocates alerting children to all the guiles and guises of cultural deception. It is filled with exposures of human fallibility, ways of detecting language-created fallacies and popularly endorsed assumptions which do not stand examination. The authors whip through the psycho-social analyses of a dozen or so modern critics, showing how both young and old are misled by value-charged symbols which no longer apply to experience as they did when they acquired their meaning. Technology's proud contribution of the mass media, after analysis, brings comment like the following:

> We cannot afford to ignore Norbert Wiener's observation of a paradox that results from our increasing technological capability in electronic communication: as the total number of messages increases, the amount of information carried decreases. We have more media to communicate fewer significant ideas.
>
> Still another way of saying this is that, while there has been an enormous increase in the media there has been, at the same time, a decrease in available and viable "democratic" channels of communication because the mass media are entirely one-way communication. For example, as a means of affecting public policy; the town meeting is dead. Significant community action (without violence) is increasingly rare. A small printing press in one's home, as an instrument of social change, is absurd. Traditional forms of dissent and protest seem impractical, e.g., letters to the editor, street-corner speeches, etc. No one can reach many people unless he has access to the mass media. As this is written, for example, there is no operational two-way communication possible with respect to United States policies and procedures in Vietnam. The communication is virtually all one way: from the top down, via the mass media especially TV. The pressure on everyone is to subscribe without question to policies formulated in the Pentagon.

And so on. Of course, these writers are busy making a case against the social ill Edgar Friedenberg has aptly called "creeping Eichmannism," which they identify as "a sort of spiritless, mechanical, abstract functioning which does not allow much room for individual thought

and action," and they pull all the stops. Yet a case could also be made for a counter-society sort of activity which might easily include having a press or a mimeo in your basement, and propose a lot of other "absurd" things which people can still do, no matter what other people do, and no matter how dominant and oppressive the mass media become. Paul Goodman's book, *The Society I Live in Is Mine,* is a good illustration of how a single man can make himself felt, in spite of all these silencing and corrupting forces. The authors are doubtless familiar with this book, since they often quote Goodman. Here, they use a passage from *Like a Conquered Province,* in which Goodman says:

> The traditional American sentiment is that a decent society cannot be built by dominant official policy anyway, but only by grassroots resistance, community cooperation, individual enterprise, and citizenry vigilance to protect liberty. . . . *The question is whether or not our beautiful libertarian, pluralist, and populist experiment is viable in modern conditions.* If it's not, I don't know any other acceptable politics, and I am a man without a country.

The authors comment:

> Is it possible that there are millions becoming men without a country? Men who are increasingly removed from the sources of power? Men who have fewer and fewer ideas available to them, and fewer and fewer ways of expressing themselves meaningfully and effectively? Might the frustration thus engendered be one of the causes of the increasing use of violence as a form of statement?

Well, this is one reading of Goodman; it supports the "creeping Eichmannism" diagnosis, but it is not the only reading of Goodman. And it is not really Goodman's, who has ample ideas available to him, and finds ways of getting a lot of exposure for them. Suppose there were ten Goodmans instead of one? The authors, while educators, don't make an *educational* interpretation of Paul Goodman, but a reading more in keeping with the doomsmanship of Jacques Ellul.

Why not consider the possibility that the mass media situation is not a teaching situation, anyway, and that the good things that can happen through constructive human influence in our society will not use or even need the mass media?

On the other side of the ledger, there are a great many pleasant tidbits in this book; the writers *are* teachers and they know how to get through effectively to the young. But their chief contribution seems a somewhat wrathful arousal of critical intelligence. The title of their book is accurate enough.