VOLUME XXVIII, NO. 48
NOVEMBER 26, 1975

DREAMS OF THE FUTURE

DURING this time of natural interest in the issues and dreams of the American Revolution, it is especially appropriate to call attention to three books published recently by the Library of Congress—recording symposia sponsored by the Library—*The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* ($3.50), *Fundamental Testaments of the American Revolution* ($3.50), and *Leadership in the American Revolution* ($4.50). These books of essays by the country's leading historians provide valuable background for thinking about the human situation in the twentieth century. We commonly assume that history tells us what has happened in the past. We say this, taking for granted that we know something about the meaning of human life, and what, therefore, in the past deserves remembering. Only when we are no longer sure about the significance of past action do we begin to ask what it really meant, and then another sort of history begins to be written. For then the study of history takes on the color and depth of an inquiry into meaning.

Present-day history-writing is increasingly an inquiry into meaning. We might say that this is the philosophical study of history—of history come to maturity—for what indeed is the use of history except to illuminate meaning? But this sort of history proves disturbing, since to ask about meaning implies that we understand neither ourselves nor our history. It is a confession of doubt, of uncertainty. Even when such inquiries are masked by the tact and minor confidences of scholarship, the disturbance is still there, emerging ever more candidly with the progress of self-consciousness. For reasons not altogether clear, whenever a scholarly or scientific discipline is illuminated by self-consciousness, it turns deeply philosophical and inquires into timeless questions such as the nature of man, the issues of good and evil, and the intrinsic possibilities and limitations of human development.

What general statement can we make about the human situation as a result of what we know about history? To begin with, it seems undeniable that historical epochs are born from an exhilarating sense of discovery. The founders feel that they *know* certain things, and what should be done with their knowledge. They act on what they feel and know, and this brings about a cycle of what we call "progress." Then comes a middle period of complacency, and then, after a time, the knowledge people have seems to grow ineffectual. They no longer feel that they are coping well with their problems, or making the advances they had expected to make. Finally comes a time of disillusionment, of self-reproach or search for scapegoats. With some, the feelings of inadequacy and failure lead to the search for new inspiration.

What form does self-consciousness take in the study of history? We have historical self-consciousness, we might say, when what we think and affirm is no longer merely the result of where we are on the curve of the cultural cycle that makes an epoch—when we use the capacity to stand outside or above the cycle and to recognize and correct for its influence on impartial reflection about the meaning of life.

Can American history illustrate this sort of liberated thinking? In *Leadership in the American Revolution,* Alfred H. Kelly discusses the optimism of the Founding Fathers, finding it distinctively *American.* He takes from Albert Schweitzer the expression, "optimistic ethical world view," as an apt characterization of the American outlook, which he shows to have been typical of the great majority of the leaders of the American Revolution. Even the conservative George

Washington, in his Farewell address, gave voice to beliefs that seem, as Prof. Kelly says, "almost a prescription for a golden age, based upon harmony, religion, morality, and political stability." In 1783, Washington wrote:

> The foundation of our Empire was not laid in the gloomy age of Ignorance and Superstition, but at an Epocha when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined, than at any former period, the researches of the human mind, after social happiness, have been carried to a great extent, the Treasures of knowledge, acquired by the labours of Philosophers, Sages and Legislatures, through a long succession of years, are laid open for our use, and their collected wisdom may be happily applied in the Establishment of our forms of Government.

Prof. Kelly regards this general theme of high expectations, variously expressed, but surprisingly uniform in its implications, as the major link between eighteenth-century and twentieth-century America:

> Briefly the optimistic ethical view of reality as entertained by American society and as formulated in one fashion or another by successive generations of American political leaders has held that this life—above all, life in America—is both fundamentally good and endowed with a self-sustaining ethical significance. It has held also that human nature, far from being depraved, irrational, or irredeemable is in fact rational, ethically oriented, and committed fundamentally to the good. Or where, as in the more conservative American political tradition, it has considered after Augustinian theory that man is indeed to some considerable degree selfish, irrational, and even wicked, it has asserted nonetheless that man is sufficiently rational and good that he can, through the supremacy of law and the practice of limited government, control his impulses to depravity.
>
> The American optimistic ethical view has as a consequence entertained a profound faith in man's ability to attack and solve systematically both social problems and those which impinge upon society and the state from a hostile physical environment. It has been suspicious of formal philosophical systems but at the same time deeply committed to a pragmatic empiricism in its approach to the public problem-solving process. Indeed, its political leaders since the 18th century may be characterized generally as assuming that the basic purpose for which political power is held and exercised is the solution of the problems confronting organized society. And with very few exceptions it has assumed that the dynamics of social development depend far more upon an overarching harmony of interest than upon any reality of class conflict.

The flavor of this confidence and optimism felt by Americans at the time of their Revolution is the concentrate of Henry Steele Commager's contribution to *The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality.* The Old World invented the Enlightenment, but America, he says, "absorbed it, reflected it, and institutionalized it." What remained for long only a dream in Europe was in America a practical realization. Everywhere in the Old World were barriers to the progress which in America proceeded as a matter of course.

The credo of the Enlightenment was faith in Nature and Reason. The spirit of the age is announced in Pope's couplet:

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
> God said, Let Newton be! and all was light.

Now, at last, men were to have real knowledge concerning the world and its inhabitants! A veritable passion for learning animated the men of the Enlightenment. There was a strongly confident sense of laying the foundations in knowledge for a better age:

> From Newtonian premises there followed, logically, a passion for order that regulated almost every form of expression. "Order," their most representative poet had told them, "is Heav'n's First Law," and they made it theirs (at least when not too inconvenient), for they yearned to be in harmony with the will of Heaven. How they organize how they codify, how they systematize and classify, and ail Nature falls into order at their bidding. Thus Linnaeus imposed a *System of Nature* on all flora and fauna and Buffon on almost everything else in his prodigious *Histoire Naturelle;* thus the Encyclopédistes, not content with organizing knowledge in the greatest of literary enterprises, ultimately reorganized it all in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* (eventually in 201 volumes). René Réaumur devoted six volumes to classification of insects; Albrecht von Haller gave five volumes to

> *Flora Helvitica* and eight to human anatomy: and the Baron Holbach organized everything into an ambitious *Système de la Nature.* Bentham tried to codify the laws of England; Americans for the first time systematized not only laws but rights in their constitutions. . . .

Prof. Commager recites the unhappy fate of dozens of European reformers, moved by the vision of the Enlightenment, who suffered either death or imprisonment, while in America the obstacles omnipresent in the Old World hardly existed:

> Americans had no kings, not after they toppled George III anyway. No kings, no aristocracy, no church in the Old World sense of the term, no bishops, no inquisition, no army, no navy, no colonies, no peasantry, no proletariat. But they certainly had philosophers in plenty. Every town had its Solon, its Cato, and certainly—as John Trumbull made clear in *M'Fingal*—its Honorius. And if the philosophers were not kings they were something better—they were the elected representatives of the sovereign people. In America, and America alone, the people had deliberately chosen to be ruled by philosophers: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison in the presidential chair; a Bowdoin, a Jay, a Jonathan Trumbull, a Franklin, a Clinton, a Pinckney, a Livingston in the gubernatorial—and you can go on and on. Now that we are busy celebrating the traditions of the Revolutionary era, this is one tradition we would do well to revive—philosophers as kings.
>
> Not many of them, to be sure, could devote all their energies to statecraft or philosophy, for they were more like Cincinnatus than like Caesar, busy with farming or the law, and in any event they lacked the courts, the churches, the academies, the universities, which provided so much of the patronage, the nurture, and the security for philosophes in the Old World. Yet politics and "universal reformation" were not an avocation with them, a game, as one so often senses they were in the Old World. They were a serious matter, a lifelong consecration—just what Jefferson meant when he wrote, for the Congress, that "we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

It becomes apparent that, for a great many reasons, the eighteenth century was a time of new beginnings, and that America, a rich and unspoiled land, was a place where men of intelligence and resolve could actually do what others dreamed of and talked about. As a result, "progress," in America, as Prof. Commager says, "was not a matter of cultural refinement but of material welfare and of freedom, a matter of health, wealth, education, and freedom to worship, to marry, to move about from region to region, from profession to profession." And for the common man it was—"and long remained—a matter of milk for the children, meat on the table, a well-built house and a well-filled woodshed, cattle and sheep in the pastures and hay in the barn." Prof. Commager finds it fascinating that America should be the place where, "from a society of three million, with a body politic of perhaps half a million, spread thin over an immense territory, with no populous cities, no great centers of learning, and no tradition of high politics, should come in one generation the most distinguished galaxy of statesmen to be found anywhere in that century or, perhaps, since."

From Gordon Wood's essay in *Leadership in the American Revolution,* on "The Democratization of Mind," we take what seems a just estimate of these men:

> The awe that we feel when we look back at them is . . . mingled with an acute sense of loss. Somehow for a brief moment ideas and power, intellectualism and politics, came together—indeed were one with each other—in a way never again duplicated in American history. . . . Yet of course they were neither "intellectuals" nor "politicians," for the modern meaning of these terms suggests the very separation between them that the Revolutionaries avoided. They were intellectuals without being alienated and political leaders without being obsessed with votes. They lived mutually in the world of ideas and politics, shared equally in both in a happy combination that fills us with envy and wonder.

There are other essays and books which would help to fill out the picture for understanding the high hopes and expectations of the people of the new nation. Best of all, perhaps, would be Arthur M. Schlesinger's contribution to the January 1943 *American Historical Review,* "What Then Is

the American, This New Man?", which captures better than any other brief reading the spirit of those times. Then, for quotation from the leading men of the day, Allen Hansen's *Liberalism and American Education in the Eighteenth Century* (Macmillan, 1996) is a source of unparalleled richness. The grain of American arts is explored by Constance Rourke in *Roots of American Culture,* showing how, in the early days, the æsthetic was blended with the human concerns and activities of daily life. Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Great Meadow* (Viking) is a much more than fictional account of life on the frontier, telling the story of the settling of Kentucky after the explorations of Daniel Boone.

What then happened, during the two hundred years that followed, to so change the spirit of American life from the manifest eagerness and optimism of the "fresh start" on a new continent—"as if," Paine wrote, "we had lived in the beginning of time"—to the discouraged and apprehensive feelings of the present? "Optimism," Robert Heilbroner fifteen years ago remarked in *The Future as History,* "has become a dangerous national delusion," and in *The Human Prospect,* published last year, he summarized the views of many Americans by saying that the human prospect is now one of "runaway population, obliterative war, and potential environmental collapse."

There are not one or two but a number of answers to this question. Gordon Wood proposes that the democratization of thought and leadership in America destroyed the distinctive excellences which were characteristic of the undeniably aristocratic Founding Fathers. "As the common man rose to power in the decades following the Revolution, the inevitable consequence was the displacement from power of the uncommon man, the man of ideas." Prof. Commager notes the extraordinary emphasis by the Founding Fathers on the goal of "happiness." Adams declared that all "speculative politicians" agree that "the happiness of society is the end of government." The Virginia Bill of Rights "guaranteed the right not only to pursue but to obtain happiness." Jefferson said that education was the only "sure foundation" for the reservation of "freedom and happiness." Washington stressed this theme in his Circular to the States of 1783. A century and a half later, reflecting on the rootlessness and mobility of Americans, Arthur Schlesinger remarked, The pursuit of happiness was transformed into the happiness of pursuit." He also pointed out:

> In the absence of hereditary distinctions of birth and rank the accumulation of wealth constituted the most obvious badge of social superiority, and once the process had begun, the inbred urge to keep on working made it difficult to stop. "The poor struggle to be rich, the rich to be richer," remarked an onlooker in the mid-nineteenth century. Thanks to equality of opportunity with plenty for all, the class struggle in America has consisted in this struggle of Americans to climb out of one class into a higher one. The zest of competition frequently led to sharp trading, fraud and chicanery, but in the public mind guilt attached less to the practices than to the ineptitude of being caught at them. Financial success was popularly accepted as the highest success, and not till the twentieth century did a religious leader venture to advance the un-American doctrine that ill-gotten wealth was "tainted money" even when devoted to benevolent uses.

This is one version of the vulgarization of Liberalism, in which the benefits of freedom, conceived as the acquisition of property, became the practical meaning of the ideal. For the story of how this vulgarization took place, there is probably no better book than *The Rise of Liberal*ism (Harper, 1936), by Harold Laski. Acquisitive goals, as Max Weber and R. H. Tawney have shown, absorbed and perverted the moral energies of the Reformation, just as the eighteenth-century liberals had converted the Humanist ideals of the Renaissance into economic doctrine. While the ideals survived in attenuated form, they were always subordinated to the sacredness of property. For most Americans, the deep moral contradictions in the national credo did not become apparent until after the first World

War, and even then the diagnosis was almost never philosophical, but limited to the terms of social justice. Only in the past ten years or so has there been any questioning of the this-world goals of economic liberalism, of the Enlightenment theory of knowledge through which economic ends were pursued, and of the general idea of "scientific certainty" on which the expectations of the modern world have been so confidently based.

Today we are confronted by practical breakdown of all these closely related conceptions. The limits of the planet have made an end of the goal of endless acquisition. The "always more" dynamic of technological activity has been exposed as wholly lacking in rational control. The built-in contradictions of statecraft based upon the liberal "philosophy" were made apparent by two world wars, as literally hundreds of books—from Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* (1913) to Everett Dean Martin's *Farewell to Revolution* (1935) to Sondra Herman's *Eleven Against War* (1969)—have pointed out, and as David Edwards shows in the *Nation* for May 10 of this year ("The Real Lessons of Vietnam").

What is the value of emphasizing this two-hundred-year passage from optimism to extreme pessimism in American life? First, it raises compellingly the question: What essentials were missing, overlooked, or ignored in the Enlightenment vision? Second, were there qualities in the Founding Fathers—qualities obviously lacking today—which might, if they had not died out of American life, have protected us from the multiple disasters of the present?

Taking the second question first, we might say that unless there is concerted resistance by a substantial number of the citizens of a democratic society, the continuing course from optimism to pessimism, from success to failure, is inevitable. There was a quality of *noblesse oblige* in the Founding Fathers that seems virtually nonexistent today. Gordon Wood writes:

> Members of the elite debated endlessly over what constituted the proper character for a gentleman—John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were still going at it in their correspondence at the end of their lives—but they never questioned the leadership of the society by an aristocracy of some sort. Because gentlemen saw themselves as part of an organic social community linked through strong personal connections to those below them, for all their feelings of superiority and elevation they had no sense of isolation from the society no sense of standing in an adversary relationship to the populace. They were individuals undoubtedly, sometimes assuming a classic pose of heroic and noble pre-eminence, but they were not individualists, men worried about their social identities. They were civic-minded by necessity: they thought they ought to lead the society both politically and intellectually—indeed, they could not help but lead society—by the sheer force of their position and character.

Forgetting the language terms like "gentlemen" and "aristocrats"—we might say that these men were Maslovian self-actualizers, not "perfect" of course, and limited by the ideas of their times, but nonetheless extraordinary individuals. What way have we of avoiding future Watergates except by finding such leaders in the present?

As for the first question—What was missing in Enlightenment thinking?—the answer must be at least twofold. First, the new science had no ground for understanding human beings in themselves, but delivered the study of man into the hands of biologists, who relied on animalist theories. Second, in the war against established religion, the "philosophes" stamped out not only belief in dogma, but also reverence for the unknown. Unnecessary mystery is indeed obscurantism, but the pursuit of self-knowledge inevitably makes human beings aware of indefinable realities in both themselves and nature, and respect for those realities may be the foundation of all the higher virtues.

There are areas where certainty is desirable, reasonable, and necessary, but there are other regions of experience where definition is blighting, and certainty either ignorance or pretense. We are now coming to realize that a balance between these two sides of life is called Wisdom, that man

is somehow a combination of the finite and the infinite, and that the rules for one part of his nature have no meaning or application for the other, yet that unless a synthesis between them is reached there can be no worthy human life.

This, or something like this, seems the lesson of American history as it is now beginning to be written. For a guiding text—until we can deepen it or get a better one—we might choose Jefferson's outlook. Concluding his essay on America and the Enlightenment, Prof. Commager says of Jefferson:

> On the central issue of the applicability of the historical past to America, he challenged almost the whole of Enlightenment historical thought, and his challenge was but another example of that fascinating blend of the romantic with the classical which makes him the most interesting man of his age. "I like dreams of the future," he said, "better than the history of the past."

REVIEW

THE WORDS OF THE GREEKS

HAVING read through, for the first time, three plays of Sophocles—*Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonos,* and *Antigone*—we have some questions to consider. It may be wondered if *anyone* now reads Sophocles—or Aeschylus—from choice, not having to do it to satisfy some scholarly requirement. The language seems stilted and elaborate, the speeches long and ceremonial, the action ponderous. That the old Greeks sat for hours on stone benches listening to these plays is certainly impressive—a Greek crowd could not have been much like an American crowd of today.

Why should one take on these plays? Well, if you read a lot you keep coming across references to personages such as Oedipus and Antigone and Teiresias, and the little articles in classical dictionaries are not much help. They don't convey any *feeling*. That's one reason for reading the plays. Another would be that Western civilization grew from Hellenic roots, and even if we decide that we ought to make it into something else, there is value in knowing our cultural origins at first hand.

But if you are going to read the Greek dramatists, you have to give yourself willingly to Greek thought, feeling, and forms of expression. This may not be easy. In his introduction to the Viking *Portable Greek Reader* W. H. Auden quoted some dialogue from *Medea* (Euripedes):

> *Medea:* Why didst thou fare to earth's prophetic navel?
>
> *Aegeus:* To ask how seed of children might by mine.
>
> *Medea:* 'Fore Heaven!—aye childless is thy life till now?
>
> *Aegeas:* Childless I am, by chance of some god's will.
>
> *Medea:* This with a wife, or knowing not the couch??
>
> *Aegeus:* Nay, not unyoked to wedlock's bed am I.

Really too much, says Auden. But see what happens when the last two lines are "modernized":

> *Medea:* Are you married or single?
>
> *Aegeus:* Married.

Obviously, while the modern idiom seems right for us, it would destroy Greek drama. Could there be, one wonders, some sort of half-way rendition that would make a Greek play more acceptable to a modern audience? It might be interesting to try doing a short scene over, preserving the essential stateliness of the dialogue, but making it travel a bit faster. (This must have been done.)

Perhaps to the Greeks their speech didn't seem larded with metaphors. Maybe, as Owen Barfield suggests, ancient poets thought that way spontaneously, making connections between many things, as though they were a part of their lives and not metaphors at all.

The Greeks were moved by strong compulsions, austere obligations. In *Antigone,* Haemon, the son of Creon, king of Thebes, reasons with his father, asking him not to entomb alive in a cavern his betrothed Antigone, who has violated the king's edict. Creon had ordered that the body of Antigone's brother be left unburied, for kites to pick at and dogs to mutilate. But Antigone buried him reverently, and proudly admitted it. Pleading, Haemon says:

> The Gods, my father, have bestowed on man
> His reason, noblest of all earthly gifts:
> And that thou speakest wrongly these thy words
> I cannot say, (God grant I ne'er know how
> Such things to utter!) yet another's thoughts
> May have some reason. 'Tis my lot to watch
> What each man says or does, or blames in thee,
> For dread thy face to one of low estate,
> Who speaks what thou wilt not rejoice to hear.
> But I can hear the things in darkness said
> How the whole city wails this maiden's fate
> As one "who of all women most unjustly,
> For noblest deed must die the foulest death,
> Who her own brother, fallen in the fray,
> Would neither leave unburied, nor expose
> To carrion dogs, or any bird of prey,
> May she not claim the meed of golden praise?"

Antigone's brother was not blameless. He had brought an armed host from Argos to attack Thebes, which was defended by his brother. Both

these sons of Oedipus were killed in the struggle, and Creon, who now ruled Thebes, felt justified in condemning the invader to lie unburied. No worse fate could overtake a Greek than to die without rites of passage to the other world. Against the pleading of his son—who later took his own life to be with his doomed bride—against the traditional wisdom of the people, expressed by the Chorus, and against Antigone's heroic self-justification, Creon ruled that she must die. Only after he heard the words of the blind sage, Teiresias, did he relent, and then it was too late, for Antigone had already hanged herself in the sealed-up cave, while his son Haemon, her lover, died beside her, falling on his sword. Meanwhile Creon's wife, Eurydice, killed herself in shame at the cruelty of what the king had done.

Fated to die, Antigone speaks to the people:

> Behold, O men of this my fatherland,
> I wend my last lone way,
> Seeing the last sunbeam, now and nevermore;
> He leads me yet alive,
> Hades that welcomes all,
> To Acheron's dark shore,
> With neither part nor lot
> In marriage festival,
> Nor hath the marriage hymn
> Been sung for me as bride
> But I shall be the bride of Acheron.

When the Chorus mourns a life to be cut off in the flush of youth, Antigone recalls Niobe, whose sad end was something like her own:

> I heard of old her pitiable end,
> On Sipylos' high crag
> The Phrygian stranger from a far land come,
> Whom Tantalos begat;
> Whom growth of rugged rock,
> Clinging as ivy clings,
> Subdued and made its own:
> And now, so runs the tale,
> There, as she melts in shower,
> The snow abideth aye.
> And still bedews yon cliffs that lie below
> Those brows that ever weep.

Niobe, daughter of Tantalus, and wife of Amphion, king of Thebes in a long past age, had dared to taunt the Titan goddess Latona with having only two children, Apollo and Diana, while Niobe had borne twelve. To punish her, Latona caused all her sons and daughters to die, and, inconsolable, Niobe wept herself into death as a stone. Her face became a rock from which a stream ever trickles, displaying her never-ending grief.

Upon reflection, it is this grandly mythic imagery, for the Greeks far more than poetic fancy, which stands between them and ourselves. In our old (1865) edition of Sophocles, the translator, E. H. Plumptre, speaks of the Gods, in the dramatist's conception, as suggesting "thought of an unseen, all-pervading presence, (like the Supreme Reason of Anaxagoras) rather than that of the many personal individualities of popular Greek mythology; and the great lesson which he teaches in every drama is that of reverence for this invisible power."

Two great qualities or attributes the Greeks seem to have had which we are without. First, they lived by their heroic literature and tradition, and the conceptions of virtue and excellence in this literature pervaded all their days. Second, they believed there was awesome meaning behind human existence, even though they understood it no better than we do. They certainly got into as much trouble, and made as many mistakes, but there is a splendor about the Greeks that we seldom even approach.

In *Preface to Plato* Eric Havelock throws light on what might be called the technical reasons for the poetic forms of Greek drama. They belonged to an oral culture, evolving modes of expression which aided the memory, and all the lore and counsel of the past was stored in their traditional literature:

> You went to see a new play, but it was at the same time an old play full of the familiar clichés rearranged in new settings, with much aphorism and proverb and prescriptive example of how to behave, and warning examples of how not to behave, with continual recapitulation of bits of tribal and civic history, of ancestral memories for which the artist serves as the unconscious vehicle of repetition and

> record. The situations were always typical, not invented; they repeated endlessly the precedents and judgments, the learning and wisdom, which the Hellenic culture had accumulated and hoarded.

To suppose that the poets and dramatists of classic Greece created metrical versions of tales known to them in prosaic form, Havelock says, is to interpret Greek or Homeric culture in terms of our own: *"there was no prose original."* The imagery and metaphor of the dramas reflected their natural speech.

With literacy—our sort of literacy—has come the almost total loss of the color and richly imaginative expression of an oral civilization. Lost, also, is the nobility of idea that is a natural part of epic literature. When once the reader succeeds in putting himself in a "Greek" frame of mind, and then reads the plays of Sophocles, and of Aeschylus, he begins to feel the grandeur of a common life that was everywhere illuminated by great tradition. It is worth the effort to achieve this feeling . . . and then to wonder what might be the obligations of the modern poet or dramatist.

COMMENTARY
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

THE material in this week's "Children" may partially explain the *anger* that sometimes bursts out in other lands where Western nations have been giving so much "help." Many of the people there are not able to understand what has gone wrong. Meanwhile, educational reformers who visit these countries find the existing systems very difficult to change, even today. It is hard for those who believe they are "doing good" to change.

Well, if "Western educational models" turn out to be about the most subversive influence that can be imposed on developing peoples, what alternatives are there? Mr. Buchanan turns to the example of China under Mao, and he quotes Castro, who said, "I want to make the young disgusted with money." Actually, the Gandhian program of education is probably the best example of a model that could have universal application. A strong recommendation for the Gandhian approach, one not sufficiently appreciated, is that it insists upon freedom from government influence. Back in 1967 (in the Nov. 30 and Dec. 6 issues) we reprinted here Vinoba Bhave's statement of the Gandhian program of education (as collated and published in a pamphlet by K. S. Acharlu of Bangalore, India). All the qualities needed in the developing countries—self-reliance, union of head and hand, cooperation, non-violence, use of the local economic activities as the vehicles of education—are central to this program. Under Craft, for example, the following is stated:

> Schools should be occupational institutions.
>
> Devotion to work should be developed in them.
>
> Work is labor; work is service; work is joy and worship.
>
> Physical labor helps to keep the mind fresh and creative and sharpens the intellect.
>
> Through crafts the scientific attitudes of thinking should be developed. . . .
>
> In the schools of the new education, how much money is earned should not be the criterion. Agriculture produces not money, but grain, vegetables, and fruit. Carpentry produces not money but useful articles for the home and the community. . . .
>
> China's educational method of half-time academic work and half-time productive work in all schools is worthy of emulation.

A fine book to read in connection with this subject would be Leopold Kohr's *Development Without Aid,* in which the economic implications of this sort of education are developed at some length. (See MANAS for Sept. 25, 1974 for a review.)

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SUBVERSIVE EDUCATION

EARLY in *Reflections on Education in the Third World* (Spokesman Paperback, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham, NG7 4ET, UK—95 pence, or $2.50, including postage), Keith Buchanan says:

> The thesis of this essay is that Western educational models are not only irrelevant to the real needs of the Third World but constitute a crippling burden, comparable to those white elephants which the Kings of Thailand were reputed to bestow on difficult courtiers and whose upkeep ruined the recipient. The thesis is that education on Western lines, like Western-inspired development policies, perpetuates and, indeed, intensifies under-development and polarizes society; that it is, moreover, a powerful agent of cultural liquidation. And in part this is because of the role it plays in the formation of new elites, the "Brown Sahibs" . . . who "imagine they could transform political freedom into economic reality by following the methods, manners and ways of thinking of the Pukka Sahibs."

This is a critical theme, first sounded in principle by Gandhi in 1909, with publication of *Hind Swaraj,* which is now turning into a chorus. Ivan Illich, who saw what Western (North American) educational thinking was doing to Latin America, shocked and then illuminated the literate world with his denunciation of "schooling," drawing attention to the work of Paolo Freire and his "conscientization" program as an alternative. Similar ideas are being given strong currency by E. F. Schumacher and Leopold Kohr.

A few years ago, Jayaprakash Narayan, the Gandhian leader, wrote:

> I think nobody could do so much harm to this country as Lord Macauley did. The system of education introduced by him had as its sole aim to produce black "sahibs" to help the handful of white "sahibs" to rule the country. This aim of education remains. We have not been able to break the legacy. . . . And now our M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s who are educated here and abroad are uprooted people. They are neither here nor there. They do not understand either Indian or Western culture, for they tend to take only superficial things and fail to go deeper into the sources of strength of a culture.

Keith Buchanan tells how this lesson was brought hom to him:

> The problem of education in the Third World is, for me, epitomized by two episodes during my period as a university teacher in Nigeria over two decades ago. In the first episode I was waiting, along with a dozen African drivers and their lorries, to cross by ferry the Kaduna River in Middle Nigeria. The delay was long and I wandered across to an intent group of drivers grouped in the shade of an acacia. One of them, I discovered, could write and was carefully outlining the letters of the alphabet in the damp sand with a piece of twig—all the others were falteringly following him for they were illiterate and only the "teacher" possessed the magic key which would open up a new world. Some months later my wife, who had been trained as a nurse, accompanied to the hospital a desperately injured man we had found in a smashed-up car. A group of white-coated African medical students went past and she sought their help in getting him from the ambulance. "Sorry, we're doctors," was the reply. "You'll find the orderlies over there." "Over there" was ten minutes' walk away—and by the time the orderlies arrived the man was dead.

These two episodes, the author says, mark the beginning and the end of the Western sort of education for the peoples of the Third World: the journey begins with the deep hunger for literacy, and ends in "status-conscious selfishness and irresponsibility."

The cultural atmosphere of Western education has this effect. Much of it, moreover, is irrelevant in content to the people of the underdeveloped countries. In some of them, primary school education is "the leading industry," absorbing at least a fifth of the national resources, yet producing very little result. A UNESCO scholar reports that "85% of children at school do not reach or do not pass beyond the primary level; 60% abandon their studies or are returned to their families; 25% finish the first cycle but are 'uprooted' by studies which do not prepare them for active life or offer any openings." The rural

areas, moreover, are neglected. Mr. Buchanan says:

> . . . in Mali [formerly French Sudan, in West Africa, pop. 4 million], for example, three per cent only of the children in the bush areas get any education, as against 75 per cent in the capital city. Such contrasts mean the creation of new gradients, new gaps, between the rural and the urban populations and *the creation of a new educationally privileged* urban elite. And, as Western-style education reaches out into the countryside, more and more children head towards school, to be trained as white-collar workers for jobs which simply do not exist at the present stage of economic development. The peasant child cannot be blamed for seizing the loudly-proclaimed advantages of education as a road towards personal advancement and, having got what education he can, he heads townwards, in most cases to join the unemployed who pile up in the shanty-towns and slums of the great cities; in Western Nigeria, for example, out of 800,000 ex-students, 650,000 were jobless.

A Senegalese writer comments on such conditions, remarking that the education introduced by colonial powers to the countries they ruled was more effective than the guns of the conquerors, because "it makes conquest permanent." He added: "The gun coerces the body but the school bewitches the mind." Gandhi, one recalls, said in *Hind Swaraj* that the British did not really take India. "We have given it to them." This was the cultural imperialism the effects of which he struggled against throughout kits life.

This helps to explain the antagonism of many peoples in other parts of the world to the spread of English as a *lingua franca.* English is the language of technology, of things and the acquisitive spirit. The American manufacturers of articles for sale in foreign markets do not export the writings of Jefferson and Lincoln, of Emerson, Melville, Whitman, and other classics, but send out printed tracts on how to operate machines—the spells of technological magic. A writer in *Transition,* published in Dar-es-Salaam, has summed up this analysis:

> Of all the manifestations of neo-colonialism, the cultural and linguistic one is the most insidious, the least visible, and, in the long run, the most effective. . . . Linguistic imperialism is the main type of colonial influence which a former great power can afford when its cultural prestige survives its political and military might.

FRONTIERS
Contrasting Trends

SPEAKING last August before a world conference against nuclear weapons, held in Tokyo, George Wald, Harvard Nobel Prize-winning biologist, said that arms and war are now only a part of the crisis. Even more threatening, he suggests, is the spectre of world hunger. The Green Revolution, he said, "has already collapsed," since its success was based on huge supplies of cheap fossil fuels used to make chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and today oil and coal are no longer cheap. He thinks that by the end of next summer famine will take the lives of twenty million people in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Then he says:

> Development, so-called, has meant mechanization. The work that used to be done by human and animal muscle is increasingly done by machines. That is true even in agriculture. It is another aspect of the Green Revolution. Farming is rapidly being replaced by agribusiness.
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> In the United States the same huge corporations that make aircraft control our oil and gas, run our transportation, also grow our food. Such agribusiness now controls 51 per cent of our vegetable production, 85 per cent of our citrus crops, 97 per cent of our chicken-raising, and 100 per cent of our sugar cane. That is happening all over the world. It means more food but fewer jobs. And only those who find work can eat—they and their families. Unemployment, that child of the Industrial Revolution, is rising throughout the world.
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> And a new phenomenon that is much worse. With the increasing mechanization, increasing numbers of persons have become not only unemployed but superfluous. There is no use for them in the free-market economy. They are wanted neither as workers nor as customers. They are not wanted at all. Their existence is a burden, an embarrassment. It would be a relief if they vanished—parents and children.
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> In his report to the World Bank in September, 1970, its president, Robert McNamara, former Ford executive and Secretary of Defense, spoke of such persons as "marginal men." He estimated that in 1970 there were 500 million of them—twice the population of the United States—that by 1980 there would be one billion, and by 1990, two billion. That would be half the world population.

Confronted by these projections, one may find it difficult to regard the future with hope. Dr. Wald calls for seizing political control to take power out of the hands of the present policy-makers. But this would surely mean war, and would probably harden all the tendencies now in evidence, making real thinking even more unlikely Seizing power by force always means winning centralized control, which is the very opposite of what is needed.

Another sort of change has already begun—the tiny molecular alterations William James spoke of. They seem insignificant indeed, compared to Dr. Wald's massive picture, but the small changes going on are so numerous that no one can keep track of them. Everywhere there is gradual penetration of new ideas—ideas which are no longer expressed only in radical journals. A reader in Minnesota, for example, has sent in a clipping from the *Minneapolis Tribune* (Sept. 7) in which a local columnist gives attention to a young Minnesota homesteader who is making a go of organically raised grain and vegetables which he sells to the food co-ops of the region. The columnist tells about interns recruited through *Mother Earth News* who learn agriculture on this organic farm during the summer months.

In the *Nation* for Sept. 13 a professor of history compares the disintegration of the Roman Empire with the tendency toward decentralization today, noting the emergence of local autonomy in both cases. Nation-states are now on trial, he says, for—

> they can no longer be administered effectively in the traditional bureaucratic fashion with a few at the center making the substantive decisions. Furthermore, the new breed of citizen is unwilling to have his future shaped by those with allegedly indispensable expertise or with inherited or acquired political or economic power. Hence the instability of elected governments—the turning away from old parties and politicos, and the worldwide experimentation with self-management institutions

> including communes in China, kibbutzim in Israel, *ujamaa* villages in Tanzania, armed resistance and nation-building in former Portuguese colonies and all the innovative manifestations of the American "exploring society," with its radical caucuses, counter-institutions, self-governing neighborhoods, and the national organizations of Ralph Nader and John Gardner. . . .

The *Progressive* for October published a fine review of Peter Barnes's new book, *The People's Land* (Rodale Press), stressing the land-trust conception of an alternative system of land tenure, pioneered by Robert Swann. The appeal of this idea is increasingly understood, and a recent newsletter from the Northern California Land Trust reports substantial progress in its projects.

The Portola Institute of Menlo Park, Calif., has issued a second edition of *Briarpatch Review,* a little paper devoted to economic enterprise—supplying needed goods and services on a non-acquisitive basis. Briarpatch people, Dick Raymond says, are "people learning to live with joy in the cracks . . . more committed to learning how the world works than to acquiring possessions and status." There is notable *esprit de corps* in this paper (published from 330 Ellis Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94109).

Then, in *Communities* for September/October, a contributor says:

> When workers begin to search for possible alternatives to the faltering system, then our own example of a system that continues to work will cause people to give special credence to the guidelines that communities begin promulgating in their local areas. . . .
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> The vision is one thing, of course, and moving toward it another. Movement toward the day when our communities will constitute a viable alternative will be no easy task. It will entail building energy-efficient basic industries, the products of which will not be competitive in the capitalist market place.
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> . . . What this means to each of us personally is that moving toward the vision will require us to alter our attitudes, life styles and work habits long before it seems to make economic sense to do so. Furthermore, we will have to do this while we continue the schizophrenic course of maintaining those businesses which are competitive in the capitalist market. They will be needed to bring in money during the transition period (and possibly long afterwards—to pay taxes, repay loans and mortgages). If those businesses are successful and expandable, it will take especially great commitment to the vision to begin phasing them out as more and more labor goes into the energy-efficient industries.

Meanwhile, magazines with substantial circulation are spreading essential information about the necessary reforms in energy production and in diet. The *Sierra Club Bulletin* is printing material based on Howard Odum's conception of net energy, and *Smithsonian* is publishing searching critiques of the American diet, calling for "less fat, sugar, refined flour and salt—and more fiber." Eating more whole grain foods, fruits, nuts, beans, vegetables, and less meat would not only improve our health but would mean "more food for the rest of the world."