

HAVE "NATIONS" ANY FUTURE?

WHAT is a nation? The dictionary definitions are familiar enough, and there are *realpolitik* answers such as the fact that, as Aldous Huxley noted years ago, Iceland could not be recognized as a nation by the League of Nations because it had no army, but whether there is any enduring reality in what we mean when we say "nation" is open to question. For long ages men lived in various sorts of communities which were not organized into nations, and the high religions, in dealing with ultimate matters of human welfare, say virtually nothing about the role or function of nationhood.

Yet, historically speaking, ennobling conceptions have been embodied in the work of nation-builders and constitution-makers. Patriotism has awakened and fostered many admirable qualities. Love of country is not necessarily a partisan emotion and the vision inspiring public-spirited men is usually much more than a collective egoism. There are indeed some things that people can do together that they cannot accomplish singly or in small groups, and the rule of synergy, applied by Ruth Benedict to the internal affairs of a society, may work for the benefit of all those who come within the influence of that society.

In these days, when feelings of alienation from the idea of nationality threaten to become the birthmark if not the birthright of every child, there may be some value in considering whether or not we have really outgrown the nation as a structure for human experience; and if we have, what other form or forms of human association might most naturally take its place; and, finally, to what extent an inevitable transition of this sort is served or hindered by the strong present reaction to the *pathology* of the nation. Quite possibly, the nation is nothing "in itself," and its ills ought to be regarded as no more than institutional expressions of the pathological condition of large numbers of

the people. But since the nation has served for many generations as a projection of both the ideals and customs, and also "morality" of the people, it was bound to acquire a measure of psychological objectivity and seeming independence.

The American nation, as conceived by its founders of 1776, was to be the instrument of great and new benefits for the American people and for all mankind. The leading revolutionists were also leading social thinkers and philosophers of their time. For clear and concise evidence of this, there is still no better book than A. O. Hansen's *Liberalism and American Education in the Eighteenth Century* (Macmillan, 1926), in which the author, after giving the intellectual background of eighteenth-century thought, provides summary of and quotation from the plans for a national education system for the United States, several of these plans being the work of Founding Fathers. The keynote of these plans was the emancipation of the minds of students from the customs and habits brought from Europe, with stress on science to encourage deliberative habits of thinking. The new country's political theory was founded on equality, and equality among the citizens required equality in education. Hansen gives the basic content of Noah Webster's ideas for American education:

His main stress was upon flexible institutions that would be democratic so that there could be a maximal development of the experiment made in democracy. He believed that the utmost of freedom should be encouraged in social experimentation. Influenced by Helvetius, Rousseau, and Thomas Paine during the period that followed the revolution, he sought to make permanent the philosophy of change and reconstruction that had dominated during the war against Great Britain. The essence of democracy lay in the change from external control to control from within, from the control motivated by fear to that motivated by a sense of values, from acceptance on authority to a scientific experimental attitude. Each

generation was to be engaged in furthering human progress through scientific procedure and not in following the obsolete laws and customs of past generations. The tyranny of opinion and custom was to be broken. The United States was peculiarly free from the venerable institutions of European nations, and here could be perfected the various institutions that were essential to human progress. Change was inevitable. In the United States the nation could work out a broad, scientific, humanitarian basis of social control. Changes would not then be the result of caprice or accident, but of scientifically controlled procedure. A mode of education must be created that would respect every human value and that would raise up a body of creatively constructive citizens. A national system of education would be the only adequate means for forming such a national character.

In the dozen or more plans for national education summarized in this book, one finds very nearly every educational and social conception of the present, including some few that seem outmoded. There is the idea of learning by doing, the recognition that institutions must be flexible and self-regenerative, and great emphasis on the practical, all with a foundation in scientific studies. In every one of these proposals there is the demand for a break with the European past and its monarchical traditions. Benjamin Rush, first surgeon-general of the army, spoke of the folly of copying British customs and social habits:

We behold our ladies panting in a heat of ninety degrees, under a hat and a cushion, which are calculated for a British summer. We behold our citizens condemned and punished by a criminal law, which was copied from a country, where maturity in corruption renders public executions a part of the amusements of the nation. It is high time to awake from this servility—to study our own character—to examine the age of our country—and to adopt manners in everything, that shall accommodate to our state of society, and to the forms of our government.

Rush wrote jocularly on the need of America for schools to teach "*the art of forgetting*." There was too much imitation of foreign errors in education, morals, and government. "I think," he said, "three-fourths of all our schoolmasters, divines, and legislators would profit very much, by

spending two or three years in such useful institutions."

But more than anything else, in reading Hansen's book, one feels the uplift and inspiration of these makers of the new nation. True, there is reliance on Bacon's philosophy for conceptions of knowledge and progress, and that ideal of the past is now the conceit of the present, but there is also great moral integrity in the writings of these men, and a vision in their highest hopes. And the elevating sense of what it means to be an American comes mainly from these sources.

The understanding of this moral quality is essential to any consideration of whether the idea of a "nation" has any real future in human affairs. It may be helpful, then, to look now at Henry Steele Commager's article, "The Defeat of America," in the *New York Review of Books* for Oct. 5. This article is in some measure a review of Richard Garnet's book, *Roots of War*, but the part we call attention to is Mr. Commager's contribution. He believes that the extraordinary sense of freedom from the past that attended the early years of life in the American Republic generated a myth which at the beginning had some truth in it, but which, in the passage of nearly two hundred years, has become the instrument of extraordinary blindness and self-deception. This is the myth of "American innocence," so much celebrated by eighteenth-century writers who saw a great destiny opening up for the American people. With it is combined another myth—the myth of moral superiority. Mr. Commager believes that American politicians have been trading on these myths for a long time, and that they are still believed in by a great many people. He compares their quality at their genesis with what they have become:

It was Jefferson who elaborated this philosophy most consciously: because we were a chosen people it was up to us to show what man was capable of when truly free, up to us to raise the standards to which all peoples and nations might ultimately aspire. Thus the sense (or the myth) of mission was inextricably fused with the sense of innocence. But how different

the sense of mission and of destiny in Jefferson were from that which we find in our current leaders. Never for a moment did Jefferson allow his pride in America to betray him into the demented notion that Providence had somehow made it our responsibility to impose the American pattern of life on less fortunate peoples.

No, to Jefferson and his generation American power was to reveal itself in the moral sphere, not in the political or the military. Our duty was not to impose our way of life on others but to present to the world the spectacle of peace and prosperity, freedom and justice, virtue and happiness, confident that eventually all other nations would rally to the American standard.

In a letter he wrote a few days before he died, Jefferson said that America "will be a signal to the world for arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government." And it has been true that all through the nineteenth century, immigrants flocked to our shores to participate in what seemed the dramatic success of the "experiment in democracy." With beginnings of this sort, and evidence through the years, "most Americans," Mr. Commager says, "assumed that their government was more just, their society more enlightened, their morals more elevated than any others." The ugly reality of slavery did little to blur this image, and we still speak of ourselves as being a "peace-loving people." So, as Commager continues:

Consciousness of moral superiority led inevitably to a double standard, for if our hearts were pure, our motives disinterested, and our purposes noble, what we did (however it might look to the uninitiated observer) could not be judged by the standards that history applies to the misdeeds of the corrupt nations of the Old World or—now—of Asia. . . .

When China equips the armies of North Vietnam, that is a dangerous intervention in a foreign war, but when we provide South Vietnam with the largest active air force, the largest active fleet, the best equipment and weaponry in the world, and half a million soldiers besides, that is living up to our commitments. When North Vietnam refuses to

surrender her POWs—something *we* have never done during a war—that is a sign of barbarism, but when we stand by while our puppet armies torture and cage and kill prisoners, that is a nice refusal to interfere in the conduct of a sovereign state. . . .

In the past, Mr. Commager observes, the wars we made seemed to make at least *some* sense—

The Vietnam war alone seems to be the product of willful folly, hysteria, and paranoia, lacking in logic, purpose, or objective, and waged with insensate fury against victims with whom we had no quarrel and who are incapable of doing us any physical or even any philosophical harm, waged for its own sake, or for the sake of "honor" which we have already forfeited or of "victory" forever elusive. What dramatizes and magnifies the demented quality of the war is that it is even now being fought with mounting fury after whatever rationale it pretended to have—that of containing China—has been officially abandoned.

In a useful book of 123 pages, *Credibility Gap—a Digest of the Pentagon Papers*, compiled by Len Ackland and published by the National Peace Literature Service (a division of the American Friends Service Committee) at \$1.25, the editor says:

Reading the history of the United States involvement in Vietnam leads to an inevitable question: why was this course followed? The Pentagon Papers give only a partial answer, because in the Executive Branch the reasons underlying decisions and actions are often so calculated and political that they are never written in documents. . . . The Papers do stress U.S. economic interests in Southeast Asia and the sub-goal of keeping the area free for Japanese exploitation. . . . The Papers show that the rhetoric of anti-communism, used primarily to scare the public into supporting Executive Branch policies seeped unchallenged into the inner circles of government. . . . As U.S. involvement in Indo-China deepened, American officials became obsessed with the notion of preventing loss of prestige—they confused their own with our country's. . . . The Papers reveal that American officials dismissed withdrawal as an option beginning in December 1954—long before the public knew we were even in Vietnam. Withdrawal was seriously proposed only one time during the history of American intervention according to the Papers. This occurred during a

high-level policy meeting on August 30, 1963, during the Diem crisis.

A new book by Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (Simon and Schuster, \$2.95), is especially instructive on the confused motivations behind the war. In the long, key section in this book, "The Quagmire Myth and the Stalemate Machine," the author, who is the man who caused the Pentagon Papers to be made public, and is now on trial for doing it, presents evidence to show that the dragging out of the war cannot be blamed on military advisers who gave the several presidents involved falsely optimistic information. The country was not drawn into the "quagmire" in this way, but apparently by an executive political reluctance to be known as the first president who "lost" a war. These Executives sought at least a stalemate to delay decision to a more opportune time for ending the war—which of course never came. Ellsberg says:

Contrary to the quagmire model, they did know at the moment of their escalating decisions that new crises or challenges to larger efforts would *probably* return. But each of them undoubtedly believed—like Truman and Eisenhower before them—that at some stage long before the actual 1968-72 levels of violence were reached he, or his successor, would have chosen *either* to Win or to Leave: i.e., would have finally accepted one of the two alternatives both of which he was postponing in favor of Staying: avoiding defeat, regaining a stalemate. What none probably imagined was that he himself, and his successors, would go on making the same conceptual choice again and again—Winning always looking too risky or infeasible, the other side never cracking; but it seeming the wrong time to Leave. None may have guessed that "buying time," postponing a defeat, would *always* look like a lesser evil to an American President than ending the war as a failure, despite escalation of the stalemate and of the human costs to awful levels.

So we need not infer of any of our five Presidents who have made this war that he acted in full knowledge or acceptance of what it would finally mean to America and Indochina; just that at each juncture in the quarter-century, each chose knowingly to *prolong* the war, and in most cases to expand it. Each always paid the price—in lives and resources of others—to "stay in the game," always preserving the

options to go Up while making it more costly and unlikely for himself and his successors to go Out. That pattern covers a generation of Presidents; all the Presidents within the lifetime of a recent college graduate.

If we turn away from thinking of the war in Vietnam as the act of a "nation," to consider its impact on the human beings who fight it—on the Americans, since trying to describe its impact on the Vietnamese would be a complex task—we begin to see in terms of concrete particulars what Lionel Rubinoff meant (in *The Pornography of Power*) when he said: "The evil which serves politics ceases to be evil and becomes good, and the *autonomy of morality* is replaced by the *morality of power*."

In the November *Atlantic*, Robert Jay Lifton, a psychiatrist, reports on eighteen months of conversations with Vietnam veterans. "Beyond just being young and having been asked to fight a war," Dr. Lifton says, "these men have a sense of violated personal and social order, of fundamental break in human connection, which they relate to conditions imposed upon them by the war in Vietnam." The war is characterized by Dr. Lifton as "an *atrocious-producing situation*." These men, he says, are reluctant to judge other veterans like Lieutenant Calley. "It could have been any of us," one said. They suffer from guilt and a rage that is only a little beneath the surface. They reserved a very special tone for the chaplains and the "shrinks" they encountered in Vietnam, giving endless examples of "chaplains blessing the troops, their mission, their guns, their killing." One of them said: "Whatever we were doing . . . murder . . . atrocities . . . God was *always* on our side." Dr. Lifton comments:

The veterans were trying to say that the only thing worse than being ordered by military authorities to participate in absurd evil is to have that evil rationalized and justified by "guardians of the spirit." Chaplains and psychiatrists thus fulfill the function of helping men to adjust to committing war crimes, while lending their spiritual authority to the overall project. . . . Chaplains and psychiatrists then formed "unholy alliances" not only with the military

command but with the more corruptible elements of the soldier's individual psyche. We may then speak of a *counterfeit universe, in which all-pervasive, spiritually reinforced inner corruption becomes the price of survival*. In such an inverted moral universe, whatever residual ethical sensitivity impels the individual against adjusting to evil is under constant external *and internal* assault.

Dr. Lifton concludes:

It would be too much to suggest that the whole of America has become a "counterfeit universe." But one can say that with the Vietnam War, a vast, previously hidden American potential for the counterfeit has become manifest. From the atrocity-producing situation in Vietnam; to the military arrangements responsible for it; to the system of law confronted by militant opponents of the war; to the pre-existing but war-exacerbated antagonisms around race, class, ethnicity, and age; to the war-linked economic recession; to collusion in the war's corruption by virtually all of the professions and occupations—what is there left that we can call authentic?

This counterfeiting process did not begin in Southeast Asia, and our public communication processes seem as polluted by it as the air is tainted by smog. Meanwhile, trying to tell "the truth" becomes very difficult. Dr. Lifton quotes a young writer who is also a veteran who said that the war in Vietnam was "*everything*." He added: "I am a lie. What I have to say is a lie. But it is the most true lie you will ever hear about a war." And Dr. Lifton comments:

If the counterfeit universe is not to remain *everything*, one must explore its manifestations everywhere, even if the counterfeit manifestations seem to render those very explorations "a lie." War veterans and commentators alike can at least begin with such "true lies" as a way of initiating the difficult climb out of the abyss.

Or, as Solzbenitsyn said, we have to conquer the lie, for only when this has been accomplished can there be an end to violence.

The material we have been quoting this week shows the nation *in extremis*. We did not quote the most terrible parts of any of it, but only the more general statements. Whether or not the war

is now about to end, it becomes clear that the nation must be reconceived and reborn, if it is to survive into a worthy future. For the story of modern nations shows quite clearly that they hardly deserve survival as forms for human experience and development, unless their authority and "prestige" can be wholly separated from the usages of might and violence.

REVIEW

AMID THE ENCIRCLING GLOOM

IN a melancholy address to the Eskimo inhabitants of a village on Nunivak Island, off the west coast of Alaska, an American professor of political science from an Alaskan university warned his audience against looking forward too eagerly to the "conveniences" and advantages of modern industrial society. The editors of *Living Wilderness*, in which this talk was printed (Summer, 1972), wondered what happened to what he said by translation into Eskimo, but whatever the Eskimos understood, his remarks have meaning for the people in the forty-eight states "below." In one place he asked:

If you can't get the "things" without the problems, should you make the change? Of what use are the "things" economic development brings if you are then but partial men and women, no longer knowing who you are, where you stand, or where you belong—and if you are poisoning the land, the sky and the waters in the process? Is this what you want? Unfortunately, that is what accompanies "growth and progress" as we know it. That is what development in the modern sense brings with it, along with the conveniences and the so-called luxuries of "civilized" life.

But, does it *have* to be that way? Many wise men have been asking this question. As yet we do not know. We do not yet know how to develop a society economically so that its social purposes are properly served, its environment protected or its human values preserved. Remember that's what it really means to say "You can't stop progress."

What I am trying to say to you is that we are finally beginning to realize that trading a people's dependence on nature for dependence on modern technology is a very bad bargain. It is true that nature is very demanding and she can be very unforgiving—a man can pay with his life for his mistake—but as you know, nature can be understood. All that she asks is that we live in harmony, in balance, with her, recognizing her limits, and thus ours too. If we do, things always seem to work out.

As for modern technology and the type of society it fashions, thus far it recognizes no limits. It is never satisfied. And most often, what it does has

nothing to do with human needs and aims only at creating new artificial wants, thus producing more and more waste and destruction. It is but a complex system for converting resources into garbage. It feeds on itself. One *thing*, one product, always leads to another. It never seems to slow down. It never even rests.

This is, we suppose, an "extremist" sort of criticism. But it does define the behavior of technology as a rampant, autonomous force. And we have a book for review which studies the dominant and most popular achievement of technology in the United States—the automobile—documenting rather completely what the Alaskan professor said to the Eskimos. The book is a new Schocken paperback (\$2.95), *Autokind vs. Mankind*, by Kenneth R. Schneider.

Back in the first ten years of the century, the automobile was greeted with loud cheers and lyrical praise. It was seen as the great liberator and refresher of human life. Driving could build character, develop the meditative capacities of the individual, open "a royal road to health and contentment." Mr. Schneider tells the story of the dramatic growth of the automobile industry up to the present, as reflected in car production, highway construction, and the encroachments of parking facilities, and then says:

What Mankind has experienced in the past seventy years is a new natural law of society: the *Iron Law of Automotive Expansion*. Sooner or later automobility will affect all societies, but its development in America has taken place in an unusually fertile environment. Operation of the Law is as precise as the genetic code, revealing an organic, really super-organic, force that rises above man. A new citizenship has been claimed by the car. The voting power of that citizenship is the lobby. Its broader social power is expressed through interest groups.

However, there is a power of the automobile in society which is fully its own, beyond normal social decision. This is what justifies the term *super-organic*. That power arises through varied conditions and developments (like mechanical improvements and highway expansion, or parking facilities and annual style changes) which coalesce for automotive expansion, and then ramify and radiate into a new set

of conditions and developments (like highway congestion, parking shortages, and the decline of transit) leading to a new round of automotive expansion.

Cycles follow cycles. Each is progressive, not repetitive. Each carries automobility to a new frontier. Nor does it very much matter whether the specific developments are beneficial or socially destructive. For as the automobile makes itself a more absolute necessity, it thrives on the problems it creates just as smoothly as upon the benefits it brings. Both the problems created by the automobile and society's responses to them have the same general effect of alienating man from his environment, from his society, even from his body and his social responsibilities.

The Iron Law is fundamental in city planning. It is very simple: *The scale and form of the city expand to serve the city's predominant citizens.*

Today this law means that the automobile is master of the metropolis, having clearly governed urban growth and change for a half-century. Encirclement by freeways and penetration by parking are not the only direct influences. These are abetted by the disjointed suburbs, endless commercial boulevards, and the scattered industries. Auto requirements were wrought into all urban existence. The auto created the motel, the trailer camp, and the drive-in. It multiplied the demand for virgin land outside the city and prompted people to want to escape from the old inner city, strengthening class and race divisions along the way. Stop-and-go commuting, courtship and sex, and the long weekend reveal how the car profoundly affected economics, family life and recreation. The consequence is that the urban anatomy is designed for wheeled citizenship.

This is only the skeleton of Mr. Schneider's analysis. The stability and atmosphere of place have given way to the mobility of a life of transients. As a result—

Automobility—particularly in cities—entrenches itself in concrete, monopolizes movement, then congeals it, makes every roadway a barricade, reduces choice, hogs resources, increases costs, ravages the landscape, endangers and oppresses the pedestrian, boxes and deforms the body, contaminates the breath of life, enrages the ears, insults the eyes, makes an automaton of the nervous system, puts every citizen near the clutches of the law, denies

casual association, rigorizes organization, distorts public purpose, and dulls the human sensibilities. Oh, yes, and it kills half a million people each decade and maims millions more. Known by its effects, the automobile is tyrannous. Its power has become autocratic.

It should also be noted that in 1968 nearly fifteen million people—one fifth of all the wage-earners in the country—were working in industries related to or dependent upon the automobile.

When a reader puts down Mr. Schneider's book, having studied his careful report on how secure is the grip of the automotive industry not only on the economy of the country and its legislators, but also on the American psyche, the author's concluding chapters, with his proposal for rebellion and a plan for reconstruction, while well thought-out, do not make much of an impression. More hope seems to lie in one of those rather sudden and inexplicable changes of *taste* that come over an entire generation, altering their habits and values in a comparatively short time. Taste isn't really a strong enough word, but it will do as a suggestion. A book like Jacob Needleman's *The New Religions* indicates the kind of change that could break the social, economic, cultural, and psychological monopoly now held by the automobile. It isn't that cars ought to be abolished, but their needs ought not to be made the foundation of our lives.

The problems presented in *Who Runs Congress?* (Bantam and Grossman, \$1.95) are more complicated. This is an early fruit of the Ralph Nader Congress Project, written by Mark J. Green, James M. Fallows, and David R. Zwick. The book is a civics text for the man-in-the-street. Its main effect on some readers will be to make them wonder how on earth the country gets governed at all. The answer can only be that the system, although misused, is a pretty good one, and that there are still some exceptionally good men who are elected to office and who work hard.

The early part of the book is about the power of money and its effect on Congress. In a long section on lobbying there is the following:

If a non-profit group takes up active and significant lobbying, the donations members make are no longer tax-deductible. The Sierra Club was stripped of its tax-deductible status in 1968, while lobbying against Grand Canyon dams. But profit-making businesses can deduct their lobbying costs as a business expense—in effect, subsidizing private lobbies.

The business lobbies have found another way of making the victims bear the cost of their anticonsumer political efforts: by passing it along in the form of higher prices. And finally, when the lobbies for the economics interests succeed, they are further enriched, enabling them to send a bigger lobby back for an even bigger piece of the pie. (This vicious cycle is the modern form of taxation without representation.) The public lobbies receive nothing, even though they may save the taxpayer billions or clean up the poisoned environment or protect the consumer from a food or price increase.

Circumstances like these which are undeniable—make one question the validity of parliamentary democracy. It may be better than anything else, but still not good enough. The real solution is probably nothing less than a de-professionalizing of the art of government—which would mean enormous decentralization and a whole lot of other changes difficult for us to imagine. Perhaps the significant question to ask is simply: Can an acquisitive society hope for anything but an acquisitive sort of government, manned by acquisitive people? Mr. Nader does us a service if he compels self-questioning of this sort.

COMMENTARY

UNHOPEFUL PREDICTION

BOTH radio and press news reports on election day and the day after told of large weapons and ammunitions deliveries to Saigon by "giant C-5 transport planes" hurrying to beat "a projected cease-fire agreement which would prohibit such deliveries." Despite claims that "peace" is imminent, these reports were a depressing reminder of the prediction by Daniel Ellsberg (in *Papers on the War*) that the war in Vietnam would be made practically "invisible," so far as most Americans are concerned. Ellsberg said that American policy-makers in Washington were told by the Pentagon as long ago as February, 1969, that transfer of total responsibility for the conduct of the war to the South Vietnamese government would *never* become possible, and he concluded that "withdrawal" has really meant change in the conduct of the war rather than its end. The plan, he said, was to reduce "those dimensions of the war that were most salient to U.S. media and the public—U.S. casualties, U.S. ground presence, draft calls, and costs—and transfer the greater part of the combat to the Indochinese and to areas where reporters could less easily follow—to the air, and to Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam."

He continued:

With the human burden of the war falling almost exclusively on the Vietnamese, statements that "we are getting out of the war" or "the war is ending" would meet no challenge, even while U.S. bombings continued and expanded in area coverage, and Indochinese died in combat or became homeless at increasing rates. If the strategy were successful in these terms . . . Orwell's slogan "War Is Peace" would be political currency in the U.S. a dozen years ahead of 1984.

The figures on the bombing of Vietnam are appalling:

The cumulative total tonnage dropped in Indochina is now three times that dropped in all theaters of World War II. In four years under Lyndon Johnson the U.S. dropped more bombs (three million tons) than in World War II and Korea combined; in a

little more than three years, President Nixon, while "winding down the war," has dropped more bombs than Johnson: more than any other ruler in history.

As this issue goes to press, we are given the impression from day to day that the war is on the verge of being over. But often the optimism of the headlines is qualified in the body of the newspaper story, and after so many years of being told that we were moving toward "peace" (while the war was actually accelerating according to Mr. Ellsberg's formula), only some kind of final settlement will be convincing. Even then, the event, while welcome, can hardly make a joyous occasion, since there is so little to indicate an official understanding of what peace is and how it is made.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves TWO BOOKS

NOW and then we come across a book which makes us wish that MANAS was the kind of a magazine in which pictures could be reproduced—not only because that would be the best way to tell about the book, but mostly for the sheer delight of the pictures. We have a book like that now—*Children Make Murals and Sculpture*, in which the ideas are owed to children and Lilli Ann Killen Rosenberg, and the illustrations are owed to children and a photographer, Ken Wittenberg. The photographs are simply incredible, and so is the children's art they show. The book was published by Reinhold in 1968.

The art is by the children, but the teacher's guidance was crucial. All that is shown in the book is the result of cooperative effort—some large murals and impressive group undertakings of play sculpture. The author worked as Art Consultant for the New York Housing Authority when the sculpture was produced, her job being to review plans and make suggestions "which would add color and individual character to public areas such as Community Centers, Health Centers, and Day-Care Centers used by large numbers of people living in public housing projects." The idea was to "break away from the institutional atmosphere then so prevalent in these large housing developments." As everyone who has only passed by a public housing development will know, *any* sort of break-away would be a major achievement.

In this case the area used was an open place in front of a large development on the lower east side of Manhattan—then "drab and depressing." A group of teenagers from the Henry Street Settlement's pottery classes volunteered to work on the project. The children decided to make large concrete animals for the "play sculpture garden" and during a six-week summer period, working two days a week, they made three

elephants, two cats, four kittens, a fish, an owl, a mouse, and nine poured-concrete seats. These large animals were finished in gay colors and ingeniously decorated. The concrete forms for the seats were an "overnight inspiration" which came when one of the group noticed that the ready-mix trucks delivering wet concrete to a near-by construction job always seemed to have some concrete left over at the end of the day. They had to get rid of the extra concrete somewhere, and the drivers said that if the children would make forms, they would pour in the concrete. So the children used kegs and barrels, preparing them with mosaic inlays and designs on the bottoms and insides of the barrels, so that when the staves were peeled off, the mosaics would be embedded in the concrete. The keg shapes became permanent seats in the sculpture garden after being pasted to the asphalt surface of the area with a layer of fresh concrete. The text of this part of the book gives directions for shaping concrete sculpture around armatures. A wildly hilarious collection of beasts was the result.

Mrs. Rosenberg also worked with a fifth-grade class of children in a public school. This was a cooperative project in which all twenty-two participated in making a mural for an eight-foot square space on the school lunchroom wall. Since the children were working on "The Westward Movement" of people in American history, they decided to use this theme for their mural. These ten- and eleven-year-olds had a hard time getting their sketches started. It helped when the teacher said: "Pretend that I do not understand English. Tell me through your drawings what you are studying in school." Eventually, there were enough drawings for two murals. The mural was to be a mosaic, and the children began collecting odd materials that could be worked into the illustrations—beads, tiles, buttons, sand, gravel, stones, and various oddities. The space to be covered was divided into four 4' x 4' units for preparation, the four panels to be mounted together on the wall. All the drawings selected for use were pinned on the wall and grouped by

subject-matter for transfer to the mural. The groupings of scenes were decided through discussion by the children. Some parts were modeled in clay, cookie-like, for firing before being glued to the masonite panels. A terrazo plant gave the children some glass terrazo, greatly extending their resources. It made wonderful sky. They began with the sky and mountains, gluing the colored bits on the panels. Of this part of the work Mrs. Rosenberg says:

They could have started anywhere, but these areas were the clearest parts to see; the rest of the mural would emerge as they continued. In the preceding weeks, the drawings had been necessary to help translate the reading material and discussion periods into visual images. Now the drawings were like a cocoon, a beautiful butterfly unfolding which does not resemble anything that had preceded its birth. The moment was thrilling. It had been difficult for anyone else witnessing this project to understand how all of those many drawings could turn into one mural! The whole school has passed through our workroom examining, muttering, doubting. We just kept saying, "Wait and see . . . wait and see . . ."

During the last four sessions the three work groups were constantly rotated so that everyone could have a chance to work on each part of the mural. The two groups that were not gluing, were busy painting and shellacking the clay pieces and finishing plans for the other two sections. They were drawing their ideas directly onto the panels now, and gluing the pieces into place while the masonite was in a flat position. The white glue became transparent when it dried, it did not drip, and the pieces stayed where they had been placed. Three gallons of Elmer's glue were used in all.

When the children started to glue the mosaic to make the sky, each child concentrated on a little patch in front of him, making his own separate sky. I interceded quickly, "No, no . . . don't do just a little piece in front of you . . . do the whole sky together!" But as I heard myself demanding that they conform to my conception of how the work should be done, I checked myself and took a second look. What was happening was beautiful! The sky has a turbulent, Van Gogh-like quality. An important lesson can be drawn from this. Before you attempt to impose your values on a child's work, stop a moment and take a

more critical and objective look to recognize, perhaps, the greater value of what is really occurring.

There is practical wisdom in this teacher's counsels. In another place she says:

Leadership implies giving directions at times and letting things happen spontaneously at others. On occasion you might say, "Maybe your drawing would fit better in this space," or "Stand back and look—perhaps your sun should be bigger." You must be prepared to listen if a child answers, "But this is the way I want it!" Many leaders often fail by being completely passive, accepting anything the child does without challenging him to expand an idea or search for new ones. At the same time the leader must not impose his opinions so that the work reflects the leader and not the child.

This is a book to be treasured for its ideas, its good sense, and the wonderful illustrations.

Musicians may treasure but everyone can enjoy a book sent to us recently—*Ah Julian!* by Leonard Wibberley (Ives Washburn, 1963)—about a distinguished Russian violinist who came to the United States and who taught the author mastery of the instrument he wanted so much to play well. Wibberley, who had been playing, unsatisfactorily to himself, for twenty years, began studying with Julian Brodetsky in the house where the musician lived in Los Angeles. For Brodetsky to take a pupil meant that a mutual commitment existed between them. In his first lesson, the former concert master and solo violinist for the Bolshoi ballet, after listening to his new pupil play a scale, asked him: "Why are you trying to strangle that bow?" He added, "What do you think it is—a club?"

Then, he talked about the bow, how it is made, what it is made of. He told a story about his own bow—made by Tourte, who "was to the violin bow what Stradivarius was to the violin." An American pupil of Brodetsky's had a father who was a design engineer. He became fascinated by Brodetsky's claim that no one but Tourte could make a bow as fine as Tourte had made. After long persuasion, he let the engineer take complete measurements of the Tourte bow. Determined to

produce a perfect duplicate, he sent to Brazil for the wood, studied every centimeter of Brodetsky's bow, and after months of work completed a bow which, from its appearance, the violinist could not tell from his own. But then he played half a bar and knew immediately which was the imitation. "An artist," Brodetsky explained, "puts something of himself into his work that escapes the most careful measurements." There is another wonderful story about a Guanerius violin which a friend found in badly broken condition, being used as a toy by a child in the ghetto of a small city in the South of Russia. He bought it, paying as generously as he could, and took it to a luthier (apparently, one who makes or repairs stringed instruments), but the luthier refused to work on it. Its "belly" or top was missing, and the craftsman felt it would be a desecration to put anything but a Guanerius top on a Guanerius violin. The musician left the remains of the Guanerius with the luthier, hoping to find somewhere a damaged Guanerius with a good top. Strangely enough, he did—that is, he found a good Guanerius top which had been glued to the bottom of an inferior violin. And the piece actually fitted the wrecked instrument found years before in a ghetto! The violin parts could have belonged together. When they were finally joined, the violinist, who was not rich, had a priceless instrument.

Such true stories made some of the background of Julian Brodetsky's teaching. Writing this book about his teacher was a labor of love for Leonard Wibberley.

FRONTIERS The New China

THE most impressive thing about the reports of recent visitors to China, now that such visits are comparatively easy, is their unanimity in certain major conclusions. There still remain puzzles to be penetrated and important questions to be answered, but the fact that the Chinese people, working under Mao Tse-tung's leadership, have transformed their country and their own lives, and that nearly all of them are warmly enthusiastic about how they are doing it, is beyond dispute. Two current reports which complement each other are Neville Maxwell's article, "The China Nixon Didn't See," in the *Autumn American Scholar*, and *Experiment Without Precedent* by eleven Quakers who spent three weeks touring China in May of this year (a booklet published by the American Friends Service Committee at 75 cents). Mr. Maxwell, who does research at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at Oxford University, spent nine weeks in China at the end of 1971.

First of all, these visitors saw what they wanted to see. They didn't get all their questions answered—the Quakers, for one thing, couldn't obtain figures on crime and punishment—but those who had lived in China before the Revolution recognized that a miracle of order and personal safety had been achieved. It seemed to them that China, even in the cities, was now the safest place in the world to wander about. On the question of what he was able to see, Mr. Maxwell says:

Whatever suspicions they bring, most Western visitors to China seem to become convinced that things are not staged for them—the difficulty is to convince others who have not been to China. I never felt that any attempt was being made to mislead or deceive me, and those random calls in unexpected villages confirmed that what I saw and heard in prearranged visits was no different, in content or feel, from what I would get if unannounced.

Rural China, where most of the people live and work, is a land of communes. There are now over sixty thousand of them, often with tens of thousands of people in one commune. The Quakers visited three, Mr. Maxwell sixteen. They combine "fields and paddies, irrigation locks, canals and pumping stations, stores and markets, clinics and hospitals, schools and homes, agricultural processing plants, and factories for light industrial products." Everywhere the people seemed healthy, well-fed, and happy. They were busy, all working, but not at a furiously anxious pace. The land is under systematic cultivation and even in bad harvest years there is no more starvation in China. Apparently peasants for whom private ownership of land meant only slavery to landlords and money-lenders who charged 100 per cent interest per year on loans do not feel deprived by not having their own land, although each family has a small private plot for growing food for either consumption or sale. Much of the housing seems no more than twenty years old, but the styles are traditional, which removes the impression of great change. But changes are evident in the vast activity throughout the country. Where, years ago, one man might be seen working in a field, now there are teams from a dozen to forty or fifty cultivating the land. Maxwell adds:

If the rice and cotton fields, size apart, must look much as they always have, the myriad assertion of *trees* on the landscape is wholly new. Copses, avenues, plantations, whole forests, planted, tended, endless in their numbers and variety—it is as if every Chinese has planted at least a hundred trees, and has only just begun.

What most impressed the Quaker visitors, some of whom had once lived in China and spoke Chinese, was the new cohesiveness of Chinese society, as compared with the strife and internal disorder under the Kuomintang. They say in their report:

After more than a century of humiliation and exploitation by foreigners, China has freed itself of foreign and unwanted influence, has replaced internal weakness with strength, and is again a great power,

as it was for so long in its proud past. The Chinese are quick to assert that they will never play the role of a super-power, by which they mean that they will not attempt to dominate or manipulate other nations as do the present super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. But we saw ample evidence that nearly all people share an immense new national pride in China's self-reliant accomplishments and also in China's re-won prestige. Chinese national and cultural identity is buttressed by some 4,000 years in which Chinese civilization led the world, but the present self-confidence and pride contrast sharply with the demoralization and sense of shame which were produced by the preceding century.

Of particular interest to the Quakers was the transformation of the China of the 1940's, then one of the unhealthiest countries in the world, into a land with "a notably healthy population" and impressive health and medical services. Most endemic and epidemic diseases have been wiped out, mental health is better than in most Western societies, and the spontaneous friendliness of the people was everywhere in evidence. The Chinese have trained paramedical personnel to compensate for the scarcity of fully trained doctors, and make full use of traditional Chinese medicine. The Quakers watched a portion of a cancerous lung removed from a 38-year-old steel worker, the only anesthetic used being an acupuncture needle inserted in his wrist.

The Quakers found themselves with two unanswered questions. Was the traditional group morality of the Chinese, going back to Confucius and before, under which the people expected and received direction, sufficient to explain what seemed the uniform acceptance and enthusiasm for Mao's program? They could find little evidence that the support of the directives of the government was artificial or inspired by fear. Would this conformity last? Diversity of opinion is considered to be the only healthy condition in the West, so that the phenomenon of the Chinese Revolution, perpetuated by Mao's Cultural Revolution, is difficult to understand. The other question has to do with what will happen when the material objectives of the Revolution are amply fulfilled: Will the present contempt for

"consumerism," now so much in evidence throughout China, be abandoned? Today, the contrast between an inland Chinese commune and "overcrowded, polluted Hong Kong, with its . . . blatant commercialism, . . . appalling slums, and shocking level of mindless violence and drug abuse" provides an inescapable lesson to the visitor from the West. Perhaps the thing to do is to consider the lesson and let the ideology go. But is an iron conformity necessary to this sort of human achievement? And Mr. Maxwell wonders why Lin Piao, so recently Mao's heroic "close comrade at arms," must be erased from the Chinese memory, with books referring to him rewritten, and photographs torn down, as though Lin had never existed. So, along with the wonder of China, there are these hard questions.