VOLUME XXXVI, NO. 37
SEPTEMBER 14, 1983

THE VICTIMS OF DEVELOPMENT

TWO things, it now seems clear, the world or its decision-makers must learn before changes that are right and sensible can begin to take place on a significant scale. First to be realized is that the acquisition of wealth is not an activity that serves the long-term good of anyone, not even for the people who get the wealth. The other thing to learn is that living without wealth and the numerous conveniences we have come to regard as necessities would not be so bad, and that we might be both healthier and happier in doing without. The latter idea, of course, is one of the "unthinkables" of our time, mainly because learning how to think has not been a major human project for centuries, possibly millennia.

The facts are plain enough. The facts are there but we ignore them. Not everyone ignores them, but the acquisitive portion of the population ignores them because it is both easy and convenient to do so. The facts that need attention have various orders, some objective, some moral in substance and effect. Tough-minded reformers have no difficulty in deciding what facts should have attention first. Evident, material facts, they say, should be used to build the case for change, since what is obvious cannot be denied. Yet is this really so? It took two hundred years for the Copernican theory and Galileo's proofs to be removed from the Catholic *Index* of condemned and prohibited books, illustrating a rather sturdy resistance of what had become obvious ever since, in 1611, Galileo's crude telescope revealed the phases of Venus.

The modern world is still good at this kind of resistance. Writing in 1909 (in *Hind Swaraj*) Gandhi said:

> Formerly, men worked in open air. . . . Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at risk of their lives, at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires. . . This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.

Then, in 1925 (in *Young India*) he voiced a longing:

> What may be hoped for is that Europe on account of her fine and scientific intellect will realize the obvious and retrace her steps, and from the demoralizing industrialism she will find a way out. It will not necessarily be a return to the old absolute simplicity. But it will have to be a reorganization in which village life will predominate, and in which brute and material force will be subordinated to the spiritual force.

Year after year, decade after decade, the facts of experience go on confirming Gandhi's prediction. For example, in the *Christian Science Monitor* for last March 18 a reporter told the story of Cubatao, a city of 85,000 in Brazil, not far from Sao Paulo. Ten miles from the major seaport of Santos, Cubatao was eventually recognized as "an ideal spot for industry," and in less than forty years "grew to be South America's largest industrial park, today producing some 15 million tons of vital products and $480 million in exports annually." What is Cubatao like? Approaching it, the first thing a visitor sees is smoke—hovering clouds "of fluoride gas, sulfur dioxide, ammonia, and carbon monoxide." Days pass when no one sees the sun. According to a local environmental agency, the twenty-three industries of Cubatao pump some 750 tons of toxins into the air every day, this figure being determined "after a reportedly vigorous cleanup drive." A physicist of Sao Paulo University told the reporter:

> There was no thought given to environmental concerns or to preservation of the Atlantic forest, or to human beings. All of a sudden, people have waked up to the fact that Cubatao has become one of the

worst pollution problems in Brazil, possibly in the world.

Concern over this condition began a few years ago when the people of the city noticed "what appeared to be alarming numbers of infants being born with serious defects." The area had unusually high infant mortality last year, and the birth defect rate is among the highest in the Americas. The defects are traced to the environment, not to heredity. The industrialists of the city, however, maintain that "there is no hard proof that pollution is causing Cubatao's afflictions," suggesting that malnutrition and lack of sanitation are responsible. While officials claim that progress is being made in reducing air and water pollution, residents recall that local industries were warned or fined more than 180 times in the period from 1979 to 1982.

A horror story of another sort was portrayed on a larger canvas by Henry Beston close to forty years ago. Writing in *Human Events* for Aug. 21, 1946, he pointed out that the peasant civilization of Europe, made up of resilient bands of agriculture—in the Mediterranean region, and in middle Europe from France to the margins of the Slavs—had been able to survive "fifteen patchwork centuries of invasions, massacres, burnings, pillage, and shifts of sovereignty," but was now succumbing to the inroads of "a social revolution whose intellectual origins are entirely urban." The city people who make industrial plans and who regard war as an occasionally unpleasant necessity claim the support of "hard facts" for their schemes and policies. Beston said:

> To this new order ancient customs are so much ignorant nonsense; and a brutal and "efficient" mechanizing of all farm life is the answer of the planners to all farm problems. The protagonists of this mechanized and industrialized agriculture apparently do not see that the old farming could face almost anything and carry on, while gasoline agriculture must live or die with the machine age.

Looking back to the time when "ancient customs" ruled, Ivan Illich (writing in *Democracy* for January, 1989) declared that "Peace" and "Development" are incompatible.

> This is my main thesis: under the cover of "development," a worldwide war has been waged against people's peace. I believe that limits to economic developments, originating at the grass roots, are the principal condition for people to recover their peace. . . . Historians of elite cultures, of wars waged by armies, write about the centers of cultural areas. For their documentation they have monuments, decrees engraved in stone, commercial correspondence, the autobiographies of kings and the firm trails made by marching armies. Historians from the losing camp have no evidence of this kind. They report on subjects that often have been erased from the earth, on people whose remains have been stamped out by their enemies, or blown away by the wind. The historians of peasants and nomads, of village culture and home life, of women and infants, have few traces to examine. They must reconstruct the past from hunches, must be attentive to hints they find in proverbs, riddles, and songs.
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> . . .
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> Since the establishment of the United Nations, peace has been progressively linked with development. . . . Anyone who opposed economic growth, not this kind or that, but economic growth as such, could be denounced as an enemy of peace. Even Gandhi was cast into the role of the fool, the romantic or the psychopath. And worse, his teachings were perverted into so-called nonviolent strategies for development. His peace, too, was linked to growth. Khadi was redefined as a "commodity," and nonviolence as an economic weapon. The assumption of the economist that values are not worth protecting unless they are scarce has turned *pax economica* into a threat to people's peace. . . . To expose the violence against subsistence that is implicit in all further growth and that is veiled by *pax economica*, seems to me a prime task of radical peace research.

In medieval times the "peace of the land" protected the peasants during the quarrels of the lords. This subsistence-oriented peace was lost with the Renaissance.

> With the rise of the nation-state, an entirely new world began to emerge. This world ushered in a new kind of peace and a new kind of violence. Both its peace and its violence were equally distant from all the forms of peace and violence that had previously

> existed. . . . Subsistence became the prey of expanding markets in services and goods. . . . Popular peace had protected precarious but real communities from total extinction. But the new peace was built around an abstraction. The new peace was cut to the measure of *homo economics*, universal man, made by nature to live on the consumption of commodities produced elsewhere by others. . . . People's peace had protected the commons. It guarded the poor man's access to pastures and woods; it safeguarded the use of the road and the river by people, it reserved to widows and beggars exceptional rights for utilizing the environment. *Pax economica* defines the environment as a scarce resource that it reserves for optimal use in the production of goods and the provision of professional care. Historically this is what development has meant: starting from enclosure of the lord's sheep and reaching to the enclosure of streets for use of cars and to the restriction of desirable jobs to those with more than twelve years of schooling. Development has always signified a violent exclusion of those who wanted to survive without dependence on consumption from the environment's utilization values. *Pax economica* bespeaks war against the commons.

Another aspect of "development" is its elimination of individual character and capacity. Reporting on a new book about Eric Gill, the English sculptor and typographic designer, the reviewer, Brian Keeble (in *Temenos* 3), gives Gill's view of industrialism:

> He saw that in the case of the tool-user the workman is responsible to himself and is aided in his task by the tool. In the case of the machine-user the workman is responsible to the machine which he aids in the production of whatever it is designed to do. . . . The difference is absolute. The machine is not a sort of superior tool. The burden of distinction falls clearly not upon the instrumental nature of the productive means but upon the degree of responsibility the workman possesses in determining how he shall use his skill in the making of what, by the light of his art, he is especially fitted to accomplish.
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> What Gill would not allow as being in any way inevitable and unavoidable was that final and passive capitulation, that complete denial of free-will which assumes that man has no choice but to accept his position as servant to the mechanization he has created. This last transposition, accomplished at the behest of profit, whereby man becomes the product of his own technology, Gill by his life and work overturned.

To whatever quarter we turn, we find diagnostic elucidation of the "facts" of our time, in most cases both subjective and objective facts. In 1957, Jayaprakash Narayan, the Indian leader, composed a long essay to explain to his friends and associates why he had given up Socialist politics to work with Vinoba Bhave and the Gramdan movement. He said that after the Moscow Trials of the 1930s in Russia, after John Dewey's probe into the murder of Trotsky, and after, finally, the revelations of Khruschev following Stalin's death, he began to see that in Russia there was not only denial of "formal" freedom, "but also denial of social justice, of equality," and "the growth of a new class of bureaucratic rulers, of new forms of exploitation." This, he said, was not only "the absence of socialism but also its negation."

But why? Blaming what happened in Russia on a paranoid dictator was not sufficient explanation. Narayan found the answer to be twofold:

> One. Marx conceived of the socialist revolution as a historic process to be brought about by the proletariat which would naturally constitute the great majority of the population of a fully industrialized bourgeois nation. Lenin, on the other hand, sought to engineer a socialist revolution in an industrially backward country through a seizure of power by a determined band of revolutionaries, organized in a highly centralized and semi-militarily disciplined party. As John Kautsky puts it . . . "Marx believed that socialism would grow out of existing material conditions, and that the working class itself would be the revolutionary agent introducing socialism at a time when the economy had reached the necessary maturity. At the root of Lenin's thought, on the other hand, as at that of all the important pre-Marxian socialists from Babeuf to Bakunin, lay the notion that the realization of socialism was a matter not of historically conditioned prerequisites, but merely of insight, will, and above all, of the conquest of political power."
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> Two. Stalin, following Lenin's direction, carried through a highly pressurized and forced process of industrialization of a backward country.

> This, in the very nature of things, could not be accomplished without regimentation, compulsion, and suppression of freedom. As Prof. Paul A. Baran, perhaps the only Marxist teaching at a major American University (Stanford), writes . . . "It is merely the cult of personality in reverse to ascribe all the crimes and errors committed in the Soviet Union before the Second World War and in all of Eastern and Southeastern Europe after it to the evil personalities of Stalin, Beria, and their associates. Matters are not so simple; and the general feeling is wholly understandable that it is indeed the 'entire system' that must be held responsible for what was perpetrated by the leadership. Yet it is a grievous fallacy to conclude from this that *Socialism* is the entire 'System' that needs to be repudiated. For it is not *Socialism* that can be fairly charged with the misdeeds of Stalin and his puppets—*it is the political system that evolved from the drive to develop at a breakneck speed a backward country threatened by foreign aggression and in face of internal resistance."* (Italics mine.)
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> These two social processes together explain the politico-economic forms that ultimately came to be established in Russia and have since been copied in every communist country This, incidentally, has a great lesson for India and, indeed, for all the industrially backward countries of Asia. Every Asian country is eager to force the pace towards industrialization. Russia and the other communist countries warn us of what happens when that pace is forced too hard. Asia, therefore, must find its own road to socialism and its own pattern of industrialization.

Later in this paper Jayaprakash Narayan asks, "What will be the form of that society in which it will be possible for the people to run their affairs directly and develop all those values of life that characterize a socialist society: cooperation, self-discipline, sense of responsibility?" He replies:

> This is a question to which socialists have paid the least attention so far. Human society has so grown that we have the complex industrial civilizations of today, with great human forests that are called cities, with economic and social relationships that are utterly impersonal and non-life-giving, with modes of work that are irksome and bereft of joy and opportunities of creativity and that have the sole criterion of productivity and efficiency to recommend them. Science has shrunk the whole world into a neighborhood, but man has created a civilization that has turned even neighbors into strangers. Such a complex and top heavy society cannot but be a heaven for bureaucrats, managers, technocrats, statists. Such a society cannot be a home for brothers to live together as brothers. Socialists, in the name of science, production, efficiency, standard of living and other hallowed shibboleths have accepted this whole Frankenstein of a society—lock, stock and barrel—and hope, by adding public ownership to it, to make it socialist. I submit that in such a society the very breath of socialism would be hard to draw. Self-government, self-management, mutual cooperation and sharing, equality, freedom, brotherhood—all could be practiced and developed far better if man lived in small communities.

This is the reason why Jayaprakash Narayan joined with Vinoba Bhave to help salvage India's small communities or villages, where most of the people live. The rest of his paper is devoted to an account of the dynamics of Sarvodaya, meaning the Good of All, Gandhi's grand conception.

Gandhi, as we know, gave another meaning to "mass production." For him it meant production by the masses. He also redefined "development." A writer in *Gandhi Marg* for December, 1982, Hans Bakker (of the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada), uses twenty pages for an account of Gandhi's idea of development, saying that Gandhi's path "may be an extremely valuable one for all nations (industrialized as well as non-industrialized) to follow, as E. F. Schumacher and others have argued." He begins with what sounds like a personal discovery:

> One of the first things one learns after spending some time in a non-technologized country is that many of the consumer goods which are considered indispensable in industrialized and mass consumer countries are not really that necessary. The consumer durables which represent indices of economic development in the economist's GNP figures have a different kind of meaning in a country where, for example, people do not ordinarily consume packaged, sliced bread, or large quantities of meat. In rural areas, life even goes on quite well without electricity, running water, soap, manufactured cooking implements or bandaids, although now there will be a few watches, bicycles and transistor radios in even the remotest village. It takes some time to realize that the absence of mass consumption goods is not the major

> component of "under-development." A country which lacks even flush toilets is not necessarily an underdeveloped country.

Sane and valid development means the progressive meeting of the needs of the people. After description of the Gandhian programs for the villages, to accomplish this end, Prof. Bakker says:

> If Gandhi's path is followed then true development will be slow. . . . A small group of dedicated workers continues to attempt to carry on the Gandhian tradition. . . . they come sufficiently close to Gandhian ideals to give one need to pause and consider. If nothing else, it can be said that the continued existence of a core of Gandhian workers helps a large number of people to live better lives than they otherwise probably could. But, more than that, it must be added that the Gandhians represent a living example of *a militant yet nonviolent* approach to social change, a path towards the utopia of development that is at least as realistic in human terms—all things considered—as any other.

These, too, are facts which need recognition. One longs for a world in which such facts begin to have currency in the reporting of the news.

REVIEW
KEEPING THE COUNTRY VIRTUOUS

BOOKS keep coming in from publishers for review, with titles meant to intrigue, jackets splashed with color, chapters headed in out-size type, making it seem that the author is grabbing at you. No peace for the reader, seems the rule. You are to be aroused, shocked, perhaps appalled. While all these tricks have their place, the trouble is, they are being worked without restraint. The publishers are after a mass audience. Nothing else will meet their requirements. They, too, want to survive. So the books, some of them, seem like projects in generating nervous tension. We pile them on the table, not even opening some of them. Soon they are covered up, becoming just piles. From time to time we look them over, hoping to separate the real books from the fakes.

One wants a book for slow and thoughtful reading, not to contract a fever. Now and then we find one in the piles, discovering a book we ought to have read when it came in, and painfully realize that reviewing it after the passage of months or even years will do the publisher no good. But after all, we don't review books for the publishers. We do it for the readers, or for the pleasure of telling about them.

Lately we came across a book like that. It is a story book, a collection of tales assembled by Diane Wolkstein in Haiti, the island where most of the people are poor, hungry a lot of the time, and where the religion is known as Voodoo. *The Magic Orange Tree and Other Haitian Tales* (Schocken, 1980) is a labor of love, and the love is infectious. It gives the substance of what common folk in Haiti do to amuse themselves of an evening. It makes you sort of ashamed—these penniless people have resources we no longer possess.

> Communal storytelling in Haiti takes place outside the capital city of Port-au-Prince, in the plains, mountains, and country-side. In these rural areas the men work in the fields and the women take care of the household. Once a week the women sell the family produce in the marketplace. The houses are small thatched room huts, without electricity. In the evenings the families create their own entertainment. When the adults are not too tired, and especially when the moon is full or on a Saturday evening, they gather outside on their steps and talk and gossip. Soon a story may be thought of. *Cric?*

Cric, in Creole, means, "I have a story to tell!" If you want to hear it, you say *Crac!"* and then the story begins. The audience is attentive but critical.

> They listen to hear that the story is told correctly. Embellishments are accepted, confusion or losses of memory are not. The listeners comment on the events and characters of the stories. They comment on the storyteller's talents. And as soon as a song begins within a story, the audience joins in. I have heard groups joyously sing the chorus ten and twenty times.

There used to be master (professional) storytellers in Haiti, but they are gone now—gone to cut cane in Cuba about sixty years ago. How were they paid? Bed and board. Who needs more? "In the eighteenth century, they traveled from one plantation to another and were most often called upon to perform at festivals and wakes. If a child died, they would tell simple stories; if an important man died, long romances." The stories told in the book are illustrated by delightful "folk" drawings by Elsa Henriques, and a photograph at the front shows the writer, Diane Wolkstein, sitting with some Haitians during a storytelling session—she, white and blonde (and young), the others black, smiling, with gleaming eyes and teeth.

What do we know about Haiti? Little enough. Diane Wolkstein has a paragraph or two of background:

> The history of Haiti has long been one of oppression, deprivation, and suffering. Twenty-five years after Columbus landed in Haiti, only a handful of the native Indian population remained. The Spanish brought slaves from Africa to work their sugar-cane and cotton plantations. When the French took control of the western part of the island in 1697, they continued to import slaves. Although Haiti has been independently governed since 1804, the majority

> of the people today still do not have enough to eat. Farmers are taxed on their produce to and from market. Infractions of government regulations are met with by severe punishments. . . .
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> In the 1970s, two thousand people inhabit each square mile of tillable soil, and over eighty-five per cent of the populace cannot read or write. Education became free in 1816, but for more than a century only the rich could afford to pay for the supplies and books needed for schooling. The supplies have been free since 1946, but half the teachers have had no formal training and the books are in French. Since the peasant children grow up speaking Creole, which sounds similar to French but is structurally a different language, the illiteracy rate has not changed significantly. The farmers continue to be tied to the land, and the land is eroded and insufficient to provide for the children.

What will the *Britannica* add to this? A great deal, or not much, depending on what you want to know. Haiti has 28,000 square miles, is close to Cuba, and is about two thirds rugged mountains. A third of the land is the Republic of Haiti, the rest the Dominican Republic. There are about three millions of Haitians, ninety per cent pure black. They raise a lot of sugar. A heroic Haitian leader, Toussaint l'Overture, won freedom for his people in 1789, but the French (Napoleon) replaced him and he died in prison. Later there were wars, massacres, revolutions until the Americans intervened in 1915. The Marines left Haiti in 1934.

That's what you find when you look up Haiti. What you don't find is the kind of wealth the Haitians have managed to accumulate. As Diane Wolkstein puts it:

> Yet, despite the inconsistences, irrationalities, and intense problems of survival there is an order, a sense of life, and a richness of understanding among the Haitian peasants that goes beyond the daily poverty and difficulties and emerges in certain of their songs, proverbs, and stories.
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> In almost every story in this collection the background of hunger and survival exists, but there is also the humor. . . the silliness . . . the psychological insight . . . the political acumen . . . and the will to live of a people who have not only survived but have done so with a creativity in art, song, dance, and story to rival Papa God.

Some day—probably not until the Golden Age returns—these will be the only things we care and hear about concerning the people of other lands. Until then, it would perhaps be best to take Lao tse's advice:

> If a neighboring state was within sight of mine—nay, if we were close enough to hear the crowing of each other's cocks and the barking of each other's dogs—the two people should grow old and die without there ever having been any mutual intercourse.

There are no "peasants" in the European sense in the United States, but the qualities listed by Diane Wolkstein—humor, psychological insight, political acumen, some silliness now and then, and the will to live—have both presence and balance among Americans who once constituted a majority of the population. They are the people of whom Thomas Jefferson said, in 1787, that they would keep the country virtuous "as long as agriculture is our principal object," which would be the case, he added, "while there remain vacant lands in any part of America."

Today American farmers are an endangered breed, yet there are enough of them left, in out-of-the-way regions, to give character to the places where they live and work. In *A Place on Earth* (North Point Press, 1983, $15.00), a novel first published in 1967, and now revised, Wendell Berry presents the lives of some Kentucky farmers, showing what and how they feel, and how they cope with both the natural and unnatural disasters of their time. The book is about a quality of life that is almost forgotten. Call it a spontaneous sense of value, as illustrated in this musing about the funeral of a young man killed in the second world war:

> Wednesday afternoon, after the news had pretty well got around, I seen Brother Piston going in up there at Mat's. And I says to Jayber, "I know the speech he's going to make." And so would all of us. He come and said all that to me after we knew Tom was dead. And none of it quite fit. You could say he

didn't have too good of an idea who he was talking to. While he was having his say I sat there and thought my thoughts. Here in a way he'd come to say the last words over Tom. And what claim did he have to do it? He never done a day's work with us in his life, nor could have. He never did stand up in his ache and sweat and go down the row with us. He never tasted any of our sweat in the water jug. And I was thinking: Preacher, who are you to speak of Tom to me, who knew him, and knew the very smell of him . . . And I thought: Preacher, he's dead, he's not here, and you'll never know what it is that's gone.

The last words ought to say what it is that's died. The last words for Tom ain't in the letter from the government, and they won't be said by the preacher. They'll be said by you and me and the rest of us when we talk about our old times and laugh about the good happenings. They won't all be said as long as we live. I say that a man has got to *deserve* to speak of the life of another man and of the death of him. . .

We don't forget them after somebody who never knew them has said "Dead in the service of his country" and "Rest in peace." That's not the way these accounts are kept. We don't rest in peace. The life of a good man who has died belongs to the people who cared about him, and ought to and maybe itself is as much comfort as ought to be asked or offered. And surely the talk of a reunion in Heaven is thin comfort to people who need each other here as much as we do.

I ain't saying I don't believe there's a Heaven. I surely do hope there is. That surely would pay off a lot of mortgages. But I do say it ain't easy to believe. And even while I hope for it, I've got to admit I'd rather go to Port William.

COMMENTARY
EVEN IN AMERICA

A GREAT debate is now raging in Washington, D.C., concerning the proposal for a national Peace Academy, an institution intended to show both our friends and our enemies that we really *care* about the threat of nuclear disaster and are doing what we can to get at the root-causes of war. However, there are two ideas that are nowhere mentioned either by those who are for the Academy or by those against it.

One of these ideas is covered by Thomas a Kempis in his simple statement, "All men desire peace, but few men desire those things that make for peace." Will any of the "research" pursued in such an academy reach the conclusion suggested by Ivan Illich (see page 2), to the effect that our economic goals are far more important to us than real peace, and that pursuit of these goals leads either directly or indirectly to war? Yet as Illich says: "To expose the violence against subsistence that is implicit in all further growth, and that it is veiled by *pax economica,* seems to me a prime task of radical peace research."

What if the investigators should find—and declare, with Jayaprakash Narayan (see page 7)—that "Self-government, self-management, mutual cooperation and sharing, equality, freedom, brotherhood—all could be practiced and developed far better if man lived in small communities"?

Or suppose that the view of Stephen Arons concerning the public schools should develop at the peace academy, as a result of simple thinking far more than any "research"? (See "Children.") Would anyone working or teaching in a publicly financed institution be permitted to publish such opinions as—

> The society that utilizes the institutional power of involuntary schooling to reduce an individual's control over the development of personal conscience and consciousness threatens to make that individual politically impotent.

Mr. Arons calls for separation of state and school. Could a scholar working in the peace academy agree, and could he say so and survive?

The trouble with the peace academy idea is that it would be too much like the League of Nations or the UN: giving people around the world reason to think—for a time that we are actually *doing something* for world peace, when actually we would be distracting from what really needs to be done.

But the strongest argument—the second idea—against the academy would be the case made by A. K. Saran, of Jodpur University, who wrote in *Gandhi Marg* for October, 1979

> . . . if we want to nourish and strengthen Gandhian thinking (and the Gandhian way) as a radical and living human force, if we want to foster its growth as a new elan, the most sophisticated danger from which it has to be preserved is—the University. A sure, smooth, and "non-violent" way to kill the spirit of Gandhian thinking is to introduce it into university syllabi. If I am serious about Gandhian thinking, I would save it from the deadly hands of our universities: maybe there are some exceptions, but most of our universities are dead and deadly places—stricken areas from which all living things have to be kept at a safe distance. I would therefore strongly urge that all efforts of the Establishment to introduce Gandhian thinking into university teaching and research should be stoutly opposed. Once Gandhian thinking becomes part of university thinking and research, it is sure to wither away: the mighty, indomitable forces of co-option and suction will slowly and steadily maim and undermine the spirit, the meaning, and the potential elan of the Gandhian way.

How could a peace academy staffed by academics—who else?—resist these tendencies, even in America?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FORECLOSING THE FUTURE

IN eleven years—from 1838 to 1849—Horace Mann restructured the common public school system of Massachusetts, causing other states to do the same. He, in other words, took the schools out of the hands of religious sectarians. After this accomplishment he succeeded John Quincy Adams in the House of Representatives, where he served until 1853, when he founded Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, of which he was president until his death in 1859. Acclaimed as the father of the American system of free public education, Mann was self-educated, using a library given to the town of Franklin (Mass.) by Benjamin Franklin. When he was twenty he spent six months preparing himself for college and three years later, in 1819, he graduated from Brown University with the highest honors. All his life he was frail, by reason, it is said, of poverty in his childhood and youth and the strain of hard manual labor.

We all feel indebted to Horace Mann for his successful labors in behalf of our public schools. He helped to change them from vehicles of sectarian belief into secular institutions held to be of equal benefit "both to the individual and to the state." In the past the people of the United States have been justly proud of the country's public schools. Today, however, questions are being raised about their value, and even their "legality"! In the Spring *Towards* (which has moved from the Los Angeles area to 3948 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks, Calif, 95628, near Sacramento) John Gardner muses about the content of a new book by Stephen Arons, *Compelling Belief: The Culture of American Schooling* (McGraw-Hill, 1983, $19.95). MANAS has been quoting from Mr. Arons for more than ten years, starting in 1972 with note of his *Saturday Review* article (Jan. 15) about the refusal of the Wisconsin Amish to send their children to the ninth and tenth grades of the state's public schools. The Wisconsin Supreme Court found the Amish in the right, the state compulsory education law inapplicable, saying: "To the Amish, secondary schools not only teach an unacceptable value system, but they also seek to integrate ethnic groups into a homogenized society (and as a result) the education they receive is irrelevant to their lives . . . or will make Amish life impossible." Later, writing in the *Harvard Educational Review*, Arons, himself an attorney for years connected with the Harvard Center for Law and Education, drew this conclusion:

> Because it protects against involuntary government intrusions upon individual consciousness, the First Amendment may require changing the economic and political structure of compulsory schooling to separate school and state, just as the First Amendment requires separation of church and state. If this view is correct, compulsory education may have to be revised to eliminate its economically discriminatory nature and to preserve freedom of belief for families in search of adequate education.

Arons' book, *Compelling Belief,* is an elaboration of this idea. The reviewer provides a useful summary of the three chief areas of educational conflict:

> 1. The struggle of competing *groups of parents* for control of the public school curriculum and library.
>
> 2. The struggle of *single families* to establish their right to educate their children at home.
>
> 3. The struggle of would-be *independent schools* against government efforts to control their curriculum and choices of teachers.

Obviously, great changes have taken place in American culture during the more than a century since Horace Mann's time. The values then held in common by Americans can no longer be taken for granted. As the *Towards* reviewer says:

> . . . the more modern our modern world becomes, the less can we rely for social cohesion upon such inherited values. To be modern means to be disenchanted with the practical results of old ways of thinking and behaving; to be fairly distraught by the unsolved riddles that dog us and the dangers that

> threaten; to be religiously ignorant as well as unconvinced; to be powerfully drawn by the seductions with which a materialistic culture surrounds one on every side; and withal to be obscurely, instinctively inspired—by ideals that offer new hope for which one cannot as yet find any formulation clear enough to bring peace of mind or generate consensus.

The reviewer gives the underlying ground for wanting to control the schools by prescribing the content of education:

> This premise is that social cohesion can be accomplished only through education conceived as an imposed *conditioning process.* Even as animals conditioned to behave as the trainer wants, so men must be conditioned to think and act in social ways that have been determined for them. For this purpose indeed, we have felt justified all these years in handing over the child-rearing function to "a politically controlled, majority-oriented, and bureaucratically organized system of schools."

The reviewer asks:

> What enables men to live together with respect, tolerance, goodwill, love, and mutual helpfulness? Is it behavioral conditioning; or is it a freely initiated, freely chosen kind of education based on an altogether different premise, one that accords with the original understanding and actual intent of those who formulated the First Amendment? (We must remember that when the First Amendment was written the public education system did not exist.)

Next, the reviewer goes beyond the aim of Mr. Arons' inquiry, asking a question which is nonetheless implicit in the criticisms made:

> Were the now established schools to be disestablished, with schooling to be provided by teachers teaching with professional freedom, and were parents permitted to exercise unrestricted choice for their children among the various types of schooling that would then be offered, what would happen? Would there be social chaos? Would mutual good will and common sense be shattered by an uprising of racial, social, economic, moral, ideological and religious bigotries?

One can imagine the uproar that would result from any attempt to "disestablish" the public schools. But happily, we don't need to do this, as both Ivan Illich and John Holt have pointed out. Already the schools are in so much trouble that they are disestablished for an increasing number of parents. Readers who wonder what happens for the children of these parents would do well to consult the pages of an issue or two of *Growing Without Schooling* (729 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116), which Holt edits.

Mr. Arons says:

> The society that utilizes the institutional power of involuntary schooling to reduce an individual's control over the development of personal conscience and consciousness threatens to make that individual politically impotent. Under these conditions the government becomes a kind of political perpetual-motion machine, legitimizing its longterm policies through the world view and public opinion it creates.

The reviewer comments:

> If a nation does not safeguard and encourage creative differences of outlook and methods among its people; above all, in the schools where its scientists, artists, ministers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, economists, politicians—and parents—are to discover their aptitudes, receive their discipline, and set their sights on goals worthy of the human spirit—that nation forecloses its own future.

FRONTIERS

Five Against War

WE have from the Menard Press—the British publisher that has turned from printing poetry to issuing effective essays opposing plans for nuclear war—five pamphlets (from 24 to 48 pages) appealing to whatever remains of the sanity of the human race. All except one cost a pound. Menard's address is 8 the Oaks, Woodside Avenue, London N12 8AR, U.K. One pamphlet, *Technological Madness,* by Ronald Aronson, says:

> Directly and indirectly the ordinary citizen of advanced societies today commands more power than the mightiest kings of old—and scarcely knows it. Is the power to destroy civilization, and the living threat to do so, experienced as an aberration by such a person?
>
> At the same time the technological society itself seems to enclose this individual in a remarkable psychological physical and political distance from the use of this power. Nuclear war "may be conducted in a sterile atmosphere of computers, consoles, and dimly lit launch control facilities, far from its intended victims, whose suffering cannot be perceived." To this psychic distance must be added the very incomprehensibility of the phenomenon. . . . Can we really imagine not only our own but the entire earth's destruction? The end of civilization? Of all life? Normality today, is so self-serving that only the abnormal may be able to see the madness for what it is.

In another of the pamphlets, *The Invisible Event,* Stewart Britten says:

> Demonstrably unstable men have been kept on nuclear weapons duties by their commanding officers and against their wills. . . . Two serious dangers can be identified. Firstly there is the man on an hallucinogenic drug or who has a "flashback" after taking such a drug. Secondly, there is the individual who conceals gross psychopathology, whether paranoid schizophrenia or—for want of a better term—psychopathy. . . . It is rare, but not unknown, for a delusional and dangerous person to behave normally over an extended period. "A greater risk than the insane," Prof. Jerome Frank has said, "are the apparently normal people who delight in destruction. . . . Many of these are experts at concealing their feelings and plans, and no brief screening method can detect them." To fail to identify latently homicidal people as such is part of the unwanted experience of many psychiatrists, myself included. (This 48-page pamphlet is priced at £1 20.)

Andrew White says in a third pamphlet, *The Terror of Balance:*

> It is neither realistic nor rational to seek peace and security through the degenerate patterns of the present: the nuclear arms race. The time has come to challenge, by superior discourse and factual communication, the arrogantly guarded official monopoly on rationality and impose the logic of a disarmament *process* as the only true way to achieve security. . . . We cannot secure in a short time a new system of world governance; nor can our nuclear knowledge be excised. The stages of disarmament cannot all be predicted in advance, nor can all the risks be calculated with certainty. But none of these provides even the remotest excuse for tolerating the extraordinary perils we are creating for ourselves, and the dangerous direction in which we are drifting. If we fail to avert disaster, fault will lie, not with malevolent individuals, but in a collective failure of human insight, will, and imagination.

In *The Writing on the Sky,* Oliver Postgate muses:

> Governments may have the right to impose Compulsory National Service for purpose of defence.
>
> Does our government have the constitutional right to impose Compulsory National Suicide for a purpose that could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be called defence, if only because everything it seeks to defend would be destroyed by that action?
>
> Of course not! The government is acting far outside its powers in this.
>
> That is civil disobedience on a grand scale.
>
> We must be forgiven if we think about civil disobedience on a smaller scale.

Another passage by this author:

> The language of diplomacy and strategy has not kept pace with the progress of military technology with the result that the words and packaged concepts evoke images that are now so out of date that they bear little resemblance to the awesome realities. . . . The use of grey words like "take out" for "kill" and

> the use of deliberately convoluted euphemisms like "strategic response activation" for the burning to death of billions of innocent people, have been the commonplace of strategic language ever since we gave up publicly glorifying carnage. It is a deliberate coyness used to divert language from its proper purpose of expounding meaning into a means for delivering abstracted data while concealing its true reality. This makes it possible for us to discuss and evaluate nuances of unimaginable horror as if they were "Best Buys" in some gruesome Consumer Magazine.

The fifth pamphlet provides two essays by Lord Zuckerman, *Europe and America* and *The Nuclear Shadow*. In the second he says:

> The strategic situation between the USA and the USSR has been rationalized as one of mutually assured destruction, a term which from the early sixties was reduced to the ironic acronym, MAD. But as nuclear weapons pile up (the number of warheads now in the American arsenal is authoritatively given as more than 30,000, with some 10,000 called inter-continental), it has become necessary to assign targets to the weapons as they are produced, in a policy which has been cynically called Nuclear Utilisation Target Selections—NUTS—a policy which no doubt applies as much to the Russians as to the Americans. Both try to escape from the nuclear stalemate by chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of ABM defences; by multiplying their offensive and presumed defensive weapons; by seeking the totally unreal goal of nuclear superiority. But all of us, not just the Americans and the Russians, are victims of MAD and NUTS. . . . American policies, economic as well as military, affect us all.

As one can see from this sampling, all the pamphlets are good. Yet we, while reading them, kept thinking about the poetry which no longer sees the light in Menard publications. Andrew White speaks of the threatened failure of imagination. We consulted the best book we have on the greatest of the English poets. Using the index, we looked up all the entries on "War" in Harold Goddard's *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press, two paperback volumes) and decided there was material enough for another five or six essays. We hope Menard Press will consider this suggestion. Shakespeare, with Goddard's help, makes it plain that peace, if we ever get it, will be a work of the imagination. Publication of poetry, or poetic prose, to this end should go on.