

CHANGING ALLEGIANCES

WHAT men write about and contend for is so plainly an expression of deep conviction concerning what is "real," it can be said with confidence that when the content of writing and contention changes, the change reflects a fundamental alteration in the idea of reality. It is clear enough that we are experiencing such a change today.

The change to be witnessed in the present is the loss of interest in *power*. The best men of our time no longer have any faith in it. They do not want it. Their only interest in power lies in how to get along without it, in how *little* power a society needs to survive, and in how to avoid its evil effects.

This is a radical change. It has come, no doubt, from many causes, but two causes can be singled out as having been major in effect. We have seen the hideous consequences of the misuse of power by the fascist governments of our time. This has weaned many radicals of their longing for power. The other cause of the change is represented by the name of a single man: M. K. Gandhi. While much has been written concerning Gandhi's espousal of the "power" of non-violence, a popular intuition recognizes that moral power in the coercive sense was for Gandhi no more than a tool of resistance to the sort of power he eschewed. The constructive side of Gandhi's thinking had very little room for power, violent or non-violent. He was interested in other things. Power, in other words, we are beginning to suspect, is irrelevant to the good life.

Another obvious reason for the rejection of power as an object worth pursuing lies in the growing awareness that nuclear weapons have turned the struggle for power into an arena that can be entered only by fools and conscienceless brutes. No sane man can want power, or want to retain it, at the cost of atomic war. Since the means to power have become intolerable, power as an end is becoming undesirable. As a result, serious thinkers are devoting themselves to avenues of investigation in which power is irrelevant.

No doubt half a century or so will be needed for this insight to filter into popular attitudes, and thus complete the revolution in thinking about "reality"; and meanwhile a lot of nonsense in the name of political and social thought will be printed about the "regulation" of power. But no man of intelligence can concern himself with such matters. The futility of power, from any point of view, is much too plain.

It is not unreasonable to predict for the immediate future an almost deliberate neglect of the problem of power on the part of utopian writers. While the utopians of a generation ago found no difficulty in explaining that the "Government" would assure many of the ideal conditions planned for the ideal society, no illusions of this sort are possible today. The thing that fascinates modern utopians is the hope of a society which knows nothing of violence or coercion. Not only radicals and do-gooders have rallied to the cause of the Hopi Indians; cultural anthropologists share this interest; for the Hopis are people who have practically eliminated violence from their way of life and have worked out an orderly existence without much attention to the external being of a "sovereign" government. Representing another level of interest, the *Saturday Evening Post* recently completed a series of articles about the Nazi invasion of Greenland during World War II ("Secrets of the Unknown War," by David Howarth, *Post*, Aug. 3-31). Titled to imply a conventional "war story," and subtitled as "the never-before-told account of a handful of brave men in desperate combat," this series is really about something quite different—the inward and to some extent outward rejection of the conventions of war by the German commander, and the complete pacifism of the Eskimos, who are totally unable to understand the killing of human beings. It is as though the *Post* editors in printing these articles let their subconscious respond to the new utopian hungers of our time. The labels in these articles satisfy the rules of editorial conformity, but the content belies the

labels. In this way, the *Post* seems to be flirting with the ideological—or non-ideological—future!

The uselessness of planning for the future in a way that allows Power to have a central or important role is certain to affect the writers who cast their hopes in the form and vocabulary of political economy. MANAS has received for review a book, *Citadel, Market, and Altar*, by Spencer Heath (Science of Society Foundation, \$6.00), which reserves little more than suspicion and contempt for the role of government. Mr. Heath returns to the socio-economic relationships of pre-Norman England for the foundation of an ideal society which will combine freedom and justice. This is a serious book with carefully worked-out plans and precise definitions. Mr. Heath's notion of ownership is very like Gandhi's conception of the stewardship of wealth:

In its Anglo-Saxon meaning, now only dimly realized, to *own* was to *owe*. Ownership was inclusive of others, not exclusive. What was owned, chiefly land, was held in trust, as it were.

The author of *Citadel, Market, and Altar* endeavors to chart the natural and spontaneous relationships among men and to show how they may be made the basis of a socio-economic system. He is of course hailed as a champion of "free enterprise," and will probably be regarded by socialists as an amiable and naïve apologist for capitalistic dogma. The Foreword by John Chamberlain briefly describes the contents of the book:

From his principles and from his studies in the social organization of Anglo-Saxon England, Mr. Heath goes on to forecast a Model System for the future. He predicts that property owners will some day pool their titles and take over the administration of such community services as water supply, garbage removal, highways, parks, tennis courts and the policing of local areas. Community life thus administered would soon rise to the cleanliness, order and pleasantness associated with a vacation period in a good resort hotel.

But Chamberlain is obliged to wonder about the reduced role of the State, or "Citadel":

I don't know just how far Mr. Heath's ideal system could be pushed—maybe he doesn't allow

enough for Original Sin. It seems likely that until men are angels the State must stand ready to pursue a murderer from one privately owned community to another, and to restrain violent madmen in some extra-community institution. Then, too, there is the problem of the jet planes needed to keep the Messrs. Khrushchev and Bulganin at their proper distance.

It seems to us that Mr. Heath may show better sense in ignoring the problem of power than Mr. Chamberlain in calling attention to it. In short, there may be more health in the vision of a society which has no place for power than in the demand of the "practical man" for provision for adequate military defense. If we were to question Mr. Heath, it would rather be concerning the differences among human beings and how they are to be explained. He seems to take them as "given" by nature, which they undoubtedly are, yet the question of why some men gravitate to the role of property-owners and others to possessors of no more than their labor is one that cannot be settled by a conventional reference to "heredity and environment."

The point is not that the book has serious defects, but that while the author has refused to attach reality or importance to Power, he does regard the economic relationships of man as being of primary importance. In these relationships, he sees "proprietary authority," as distinguished from "political authority," as embodying the ideal. "A proprietary authority, unlike the political, does not have to force and rule in order to protect and serve." For Mr. Heath, the virtue of "proprietary authority" lies in its lack of coercive power. This is the key value.

It remains to be seen whether a utopia which conceives the essential relationships of the good life as economic can escape the problem of power. That Mr. Heath wants to escape it is plain enough, but it may be that ideal economic relationships are possible only among a people who have come to regard them as having only a slight importance. That is, among a people who regard those relationships as a consequence, and not a cause, of the Good Life.

What we are really suggesting, here, is that, to avoid the problem of power, it may be necessary to define as the highest human values those things

which can never be obtained by power. So long as there seems to be a connection between Power and the Good Life, so long will men feel obligated to seek for power, and bring upon themselves all the disasters and dilemmas which the contest for power creates.

What are the things which, today, we are ready to acknowledge have no relation to power? Literature, the arts, philosophy and religion. What we are trying to say, we suppose, was put very simply by Jesus: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all things shall be added unto you." But for practical purposes, the Kingdom of Heaven needs redefinition. Actually, it includes all those things which are pursued for themselves, and not as means for obtaining something else. This is true of literature, the arts, philosophy, and religion. It is also true of love. The act of love is complete in itself, is an end in itself.

Objects which are ends in themselves are the antithesis of power. Power is never an end in itself, but always a means. Power without an object is power divorced from meaning—the man who lusts for power itself is said to be *power-mad*.

An inevitable comment on an analysis of this sort is that devotion to literature, the arts, philosophy and religion is fine for the elite of a civilization, but what about the great majority? There are two answers to this comment. First, the assumption that "ordinary people" have no interest in the higher things will not stand examination. The fact that *our* civilization has made knowledge of the arts and literature a monopoly of the *coteries* and allowed philosophy to be a special preserve of university professors, is by no means evidence that this is a natural or necessary state of affairs. Art and philosophy which touch the vital qualities of human life can be enjoyed and participated in by all—this much, at least, of Tolstoy's view of art makes complete sense.

Then there are the great institutions of the past, such as the Mystery Schools of antiquity, and in more recent times, Freemasonry, which have had the function of bringing philosophic meaning to daily occupations. Every act in life may gain symbolic

significance. As Krishna, who may be taken to typify the highest reality, says in the ninth discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me.

In our time, the artist may serve to represent this sort of life, not because he is an ideal exemplar of activity which is its own end, but because the arts are least afflicted by the heavy weight of theological or intellectual tradition. Children who grow to maturity in an environment of devotion to beauty and meaning have a better chance to recognize the futility of the struggle for power, which, in itself, adds *nothing* to a human being, but, instead, binds him by its requirements and blinds him with its delusions.

This is possibly the most interesting time of all in which to be alive, for who can tell what sort of society men will make, in order to free themselves of the incubus of power? For that sort of society is certainly in the making. Men created the Power States of the present by dreaming about them, and then translating their dreams into practice. But the men of today with the capacity to dream *do not dream of power*. The men in the seats of power, today, did not create their power. They inherited it; furthermore, it is too much for them; they do not know how to handle it. Power, unless reinforced by the creative imagination of human beings, will die away. The future, meanwhile, will be shaped by other dreams. Now is the time to give those dreams form and direction.

Letter from **ENGLAND**

LONDON.—A few days ago three children were found dead in their beds. They had died by gas poisoning. Their parents had disappeared, and were, two days later, taken from the sea. They were bound together. A letter found upon the body of the man gave the reason for the triple murders and the double suicide. Since this case is unique in that this family exterminated itself for no other purpose than to escape the horrors of the atomic age, it takes on a very especial significance today.

If a simple, decent married couple can contemplate so terrible a crime as the better alternative to life under the shadow of atomic war, then it is not unreasonable to suppose that millions today now live in perpetual anxiety for the same reason; and, that being so, we get a psychological world-state in which the overriding emotional factor is fear—or, perhaps, the better word would be, stark terror. The old-style Anarchist threw his bomb to kill A, cynically indifferent as to whether the explosion also killed B,C,D, and E. Now we have a world situation in which the amorality of the old-style Anarchist is restated in terms of power politics and terror tactics by the great Powers. The parallel, morally considered, is exact. The difference is merely quantitative.

The old-time, hand-flung bomb, involving the lives of a few, has been developed into the hydrogen war-head capable of spanning the world and annihilating the populations of great cities, the destruction of vast fertile terrains. The methods of the Anarchist have been openly taken over by the governments of the great Powers. We hear no more of those laws of war which once limited hostilities to battlefields and defended cities. The enemy to be destroyed is no longer limited to army, navy or air force: the ruthless destruction of millions is openly contemplated.

This destruction of the fence of moral law lies like a cloud over the lives of ordinary people in all

lands. Fear has become the dominant emotion colouring our daily lives and poisoning the founts of happiness. The immolation of a single family unit, such as that referred to above, may seem an insignificant tragedy. Yet, surely, it comes as a warning of the reality of a fear that is now universal and moves towards the point of unendurability. In England today there are many family units that are leaving the country for no other reason than that it appears to them to be the probable central battle-ground of the threatened nuclear war. Many, on leaving, have stated this as their reason for seeking a new home. But they are deluded. There is no hide-out anywhere to-day, and those who believe that they leave a potential battlefield may, perchance, be making their way towards one. It is not easy for ordinary folk to realize that the policies of governments may be, if not endowed with wisdom, not even pledged to the rule of law, but reconciled to the grand scale use of the methods of pure Anarchy. The cry used to be "Workers of the world unite." To-day it should surely be, "Peoples of the world unite—against all governments committed to atomic war!"

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

CONVERSATION FOR DEMOCRACY

FOR years we have been encountering favorable references to the community education projects undertaken by the Workshop for Cultural Democracy, 204 East 18th Street, New York City. Under the directorship of Rachel DuBois, a social psychologist of Quaker background, the workshop has sought improvement of intercultural relations for some fifteen years. Paralleling the more intellectual approach sponsored by the Great Books Program for adult education, the Workshop has relied principally upon the "art of conversation" to achieve its educational ends. Lectures and "instruction" are held to be far inferior to spontaneous conversation. Beginning with neighborhood groups to examine non-controversial issues, the Workshop early discovered one very simple fact—that people who talk with one another, whatever their preconceptions and prejudices, eventually discover some kinship of ideas, however divergent the views they had previously held.

Dr. DuBois has produced a handbook for group-conversation leaders entitled, *Know Your Neighbors* (available on request from the Workshop). Gordon Allport, professor of psychology at Harvard, writes in the Foreword:

One session employing the group conversation technique of the Workshop for Cultural Democracy seems to me to teach more about the common ground of ethnic and religious groups than could many hours of lectures. What is more, the lesson sticks. It is learned not merely with the mind, but in the deeper strata of emotion and action. The spontaneity and participation that the method entails make the lesson vivid and permanent.

To my mind the technique seems especially valuable when viewed as a first step in various sorts of programs to improve human relations. Initial stiffness and rigidity are swiftly overcome. Then follows the realization that people we have always regarded as "different" have backgrounds, values, and hopes like our own. Without being too personal the technique then etches in rapidly the cultural framework of each life, and discloses helpful bits of

information concerning the personalities present. Probably no more efficient method has been devised for bringing about good initial group sympathy and rapport.

What this first step may lead into depends, of course, upon circumstances. It can be used to speed up a sense of solidarity in organizations newly formed, for example, PTA groups, civic unity committees, church and benevolent clubs, college groups, labour unions, and civic betterment organizations of all kinds.

The technique should also prove significant in the field of mental hygiene. It provides a painless introduction to the more strenuous processes of group therapy, role playing, retraining and re-education.

Significantly, the Workshop's program shows that the participants need not be culturally well versed or blessed with many years of formal education to benefit from neighborly discussion. With the assistance of trained leaders or experienced participants, neighbors of widely varying backgrounds are invited to gather periodically at each other's homes. When racial and religious backgrounds are thus mixed, on the basis of free hospitality, it is apparently possible for observers to note an immediate lessening of prejudices. In an article in *Adult Jewish Leadership* (October, 1956), Ira Eisenstein, a Chicago rabbi, describes this aspect of Dr. DuBois' work:

Her first presupposition is that all Americans are conscious of belonging to some culture or group, and yet of being real Americans. The sub-group need not be of the conventional religious-national-racial type. It may be a regional group, or even a minor sect with specific political or economic theories and goals. Dr. DuBois frankly recognizes the widespread character of this awareness of belonging to some sub-group, because she is well acquainted with the human need for recognition, for being affiliated with a group that reflects one's self most accurately, and for having that group possess status and prestige. This awareness on the part of Americans has impelled her to reckon with the situation less as a "problem"—for no one wants to be considered a problem—and more as a potentially creative circumstance. The stress is not on what to do about the Jewish, the "immigrant," the Catholic, or the Negro problem, but on how to create out of this happy richness and variety a more satisfying

American culture. Recognition of group awareness, plus the emphasis upon its creative possibilities, stem from her conviction that one of the vital needs of people is recognition and status.

For improving inter-racial relations, the Workshop program helps each individual member to actively desire reconstruction of his previous attitudes. If the group to which one belongs is congenial, it is natural to wish for group approval of oneself. Since attitudes hostile or prejudicial to other members of different racial origin are clearly not acceptable by the group, a *desire* for reinterpretation of attitudes may be aroused. Rabbi Eisenstein also reveals the extent to which the Workshop program has incorporated the insights provided by psychotherapy:

During more than twenty years of being a practitioner in inter-group relations, Dr. DuBois has kept pace with the findings of research in this psychological age. The theory upon which group conversation has been evolved by her and her co-workers during the last twelve years, reflects not only the sociological concepts of W. I. Thomas and others upon which her original work was based, but upon the more recent findings of the psychotherapists.

One of these is the concept that a healthy self-acceptance precedes the healthy acceptance of others. Thus, group conversation is structured to produce an atmosphere of complete acceptance. It can then increase the communication between persons whose blind spots to individuals from other groups often have roots in childhood experiences. Remembering can actually change a negative factor of the past into a positive factor in the present. The participants come away with new insights on personal motivations and reactions, and with greater tolerance and acceptance of self. This is an important step in the acceptance of variety and difference in others.

It is now time to turn to some of Rachel DuBois' own words, taken from the seventy-page pamphlet, *Know Your Neighbors*:

Group conversation differs from group discussion. The latter is needed when there is a problem to be understood, a solution to be found, or an issue about which some decision must be made by individuals and by groups. The last two decades have seen a great advance in methods of handling groups and group discussions. Forums, panels and role-

playing are only a few terms which come to mind in that inclusive term "group dynamics." But when people take positions on controversial subjects, words often divide, unless a feeling of confidence and trust has first been engendered. Life provides, of course, many ways of achieving this confidence, but the very tempo and make-up of modern communities force us to find ways to do this as quickly and widely as possible. It has been our observation that if strangers can first share their similar experiences (and childhood experiences are bound to be similar), a unifying spirit can pervade a group, and the knotty problems then can be discussed with more objectivity.

To give a few examples of the use of group conversation: There was a PTA which was fast falling apart because the parents from the many cultural and religious groups in that city tension area simply would not work together. After a few of their local leaders began using this group conversation method the PTA began to hum with all sorts of cooperative activities. Then there was the Protestant church in the area where strangers of different kinds were moving in, among them displaced persons from the Iron Curtain countries and American Negroes from the South. How could the pastor build up his church or the community if his old members moved away because they did not like the new arrivals? Could he show these old-line Protestant Americans that they not only have much in common with the newcomers but also that culturally speaking they have much to contribute to one another. Starting with a memory party around winter festivals his old-line parishioners found that they learned something interesting from their Jewish neighbors from Estonia about Chanukah, the winter home festival which Jesus participated in as a boy, and they all learned that the Ukrainian parents who could not yet speak English and hence seemed so foreign, had wanted the same kinds of Christmas gifts although they had somewhat different ways of getting them.

COMMENTARY

GANDHI'S FIRST PRINCIPLE

THE more we read about Gandhi (see *Frontiers*), the more we are impressed by the fact that, all his life, Gandhi was in pursuit of results, not holiness, and that the holiness was an incidental effect of his determination to discover a way to make men free.

Gandhi, in short, was a pragmatist. From the brief paragraphs of autobiography quoted by Maganbhai Desai, it is clear that Gandhi tried various methods. Apparently, he chose non-violence because it *worked* for the ends he had in view. It is quite true that the adoption of this method was confirmed by profound religious conviction, but Gandhi saw the *practical* power of non-violence. Of prime importance, also, was his devotion to truth. It seems reasonable to say that Gandhi discovered the importance of non-violence because he was devoted to the truth, not because of an attraction to "things of the spirit." There is a lot of attitudinizing and pious posturing associated with "things of the spirit." A large number of sensible people have failed to recognize the tremendous contribution of Gandhi to the modern world because of their suspicion of anything which seems connected with or dependent upon conventional religiosity.

What Gandhi showed, if it could only be recognized, is that devotion to truth is the highest "thing of the spirit," and that this is more important than even non-violence. One could argue that love of truth leads to non-violence, as it led Gandhi to non-violence, and we happen to believe it, but to assert this is to prejudge the issue. Love of truth can place nothing higher than the truth, and confidence in the potentialities for good of human beings, once they have committed themselves to seek the truth, is what we ought to be willing to settle for. (Yet what modern nation, really convinced that truth is the highest human value, could presently undertake any kind of war?)

Gandhi's non-violence fits with everything else in his philosophy, making a self-consistent mosaic of principles, but, as he explains, the willingness to *suffer* of the nonviolent resister is a dynamic of persuasion; non-violence was a means to an end discovered by a man who sought to *win* in a struggle for freedom. What we are trying to say is that, for the world to recognize the profound validity in Gandhi's views, it is necessary for many men to go through the same processes of discovery and reasoning that Gandhi went through—to reach his conclusion, not as an act of piety, but in an independent and individual search for truth. This divorces sentimentality from the non-violent position and reveals its authentic strength.

The religious "romance" of non-violence has attracted a large segment of earnest church people in the West; but recognition of the intellectual integrity of Gandhi's search for truth, and of the revolutionary integrity of his choice of methods, might bring the support of another category of human beings who are quite possibly stronger in their potential moral resources.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

CORRESPONDENCE AND NOTES

THE following communication examines the modern parent's problem of "self-acceptance." "Self-acceptance," providing it be the right sort, seems to be something of a prerequisite for learning how to "accept" one's children.

Editor, Children . . . and Ourselves: I'd like to tell you about a graduate course in parenthood that I think I've enrolled in. It may be that the requirements include having a grown youngster going to college, but I don't think so. In fact, I'm not quite sure how you go about getting in.

A friend of mine once recommended striving to reach a second stage of parenthood. It sounded good, but was still a second-hand idea—and that's probably what this graduate course will always sound like when it is described to another. The way my friend told of her "enrollment" was like this. She had always had an ideal of what was good and right, and how she should "be" in relation to her children and her family, or to anyone else. But with this ideal before her, she felt prodded and unequal, and perhaps a little tense and frustrated—for the ideal kept several leaps ahead of her. Then, suddenly, she experienced a great release. She was not, she found, called upon to be perfect, but was called upon to accept herself as she was—imperfect, unfinished, growing.

Maybe this perception has something to do with years, and gray hairs, and growing up. No one can know what kind of experience will bring the discovery. So, at the risk of getting autobiographical, I will try to show how completely far apart the triggering can be from the final perception.

Here is A, a person whose ideal is the calm person of tranquil mind, for whom pain and pleasure are the same. Imagine having such an ideal, and having every friend and acquaintance—not to mention one's family—quite aware that whatever the ideal of A, A is actually "intense," "tense," "highly-strung," and on occasion "impatient," "fiery," not to say "volcanic." But A gets used to living in a world where one wants to be one thing, but is another thing altogether. And then A goes to a party—a neighborhood, get-acquainted affair. The event which is supposed to break the ice is handwriting analysis. Once again A hears a stranger describe the

awful truth—"deep emotions, hyper-tension, trying too hard . . ."

From this simple little event comes a quite unexpected result. Three or four weeks later, A very calmly looks at all those "deep" emotions and decides that, well, this is A's nature. After all, life has been very good. Everyone has been met on a very "intense" level, it is true. Yet it has all meant much. Each one can reap from life only what his particular living of it has created. To some extent, we are all chess pieces, with just certain moves allowed us. Suppose A is the kind of piece that has to move among exclamation points and mountain peaks? Well, maybe the game as a whole needs this kind of a piece. So, why not take your particular nature for what it is—if you are intense—and enjoy life that way? And if you are naturally calm and slow to react, enjoy the good in that, too.

Of course there are psychological terms to describe this earth-shaking enrollment in parent self-acceptance—and it is "old hat," until it happens !

The difficulty in this sort of philosophizing lies in being able to distinguish between compromise and synthesis. The desire to emulate a wise man or a sage, or the intent to live up to some carefully formulated ideal, has broken many psychological backs. And so we often temporize, on the ground that we are just not made of such strength and had better accept our weaknesses. But since every analyzable strength or weakness has its natural or balancing counterpart, usually in attendance, it may be that we can distil values which blend with our spontaneous ways and times of doing things. What we need to accept most of all is the fact that as long as we are truly alive, we shall be growing toward "new syntheses.?" And this is what the children will be doing, too, along with us, and also after us.

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One of Robert Frost's poems has a delicate expression of the need for each to adventure in his own way, yet in a terrain yielding experiences common to all. And as Frost once remarked, the question of learning and growing and the question of immortality are with difficulty separated. Hence Frost found that he "picks up the thread" of the immortality question again and again. After all, the urge to transmute and transform various elements of our own nature and perspectives argues that a part of ourselves is loath to

die with the demise of the physical body. The Frost poem we have here is called "Birches," and symbolizes the manner in which the individual child may "tame" nature (including his own?), and likewise find both a bit of carefree adventure and something of immortality in the doing. The birch branches can be ridden to the ground by one who has the courage. In the latter part of the poem, Frost describes the "bender of birches" as:

Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the
ground.

So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the
cobwebs

Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white
trunk

Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming
back.

One could do worse than be a swinger of
birches.

These verses came to us in a copy of the talk delivered by the poet at the twenty-eighth annual commencement of Sarah Lawrence College. As

commencement addresses go—and it's no secret that they seldom go very far—this one is exceptional. Mr. Frost sets the students a good example by making his remarks entirely extemporaneous.

The same sort of "free talk" commencement address was given last June at Atlanta University by Lillian Smith, author of *Strange Fruit*, and the August *Progressive* printed her address under the title, "The Winner Names the Age." A few short opening paragraphs indicate the difference between "talking down" to students and talking and thinking *with* them. We may be "reaching" a bit, but we find something of Frost's mood in these words, too:

Well, it is over now, isn't it? The easy part: the research, the thesis, the long hours in the library, the field work. In a sense, it was so safe and secure, hard but pleasant, this learning process; this easy, cloistered way of life when one makes a friend or two, grows a bit in mind and heart and imagination, and picks up so many useful and useless facts.

All this you have done in the front rooms of your mind.

But in the back room, somewhere inside you, in a secret corner, you have been painting a picture: a picture you began when you were a child, long before you knew words. You have not named that picture, as yet; perhaps you never will; we usually don't. Although most of us call it names—and I'm sure you, too, in your nasty moods, have plastered it with insults. But you have not decided, yet, what to name it.

But whatever it is, it is your picture of the human experience and you have painted it. And when you leave the campus, that picture will go with you, along with the facts and the theories, the methods, and all the rest of it you have learned here.

And you will keep on painting it. You may lay aside one canvas and start another but you'll keep at it, searching for a quality of truth that eludes you. Searching for the underside of meaning; searching for its poetry, its music, and its pain. Or maybe you won't. As the years go by, you may decide its colors are too harsh, its lines too broken, too jagged, and you may do that cruel thing: touch it up a little. You may finally say, I cannot bear the truth, even the small image of it I have made: I'll make it softer, prettier—and less true. I'll paint life as a paper doll, or a marshmallow. A lot of us do that, too, you know.

FRONTIERS Gandhian Thought

ALREADY there are scores of books in print by and about Gandhi, and before the century is out, there will probably be hundreds of them. There is nothing wrong with this. Gandhi was a great man and it is well that his influence enjoys this extension, through the printed word, to the far corners of the earth. In addition to these books, several periodicals devoted to phases of Gandhi's work continue to be published in India. Principal among these are *Sarvodaya* and *Bhoodan*, magazines which support and report on the activities of Vinoba Bhave.

Now comes another periodical, *Gandhi Marg* (*Marg* means "way"), a quarterly issued by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (a foundation established to memorialize and continue Gandhi's work), of Bombay. It should probably be said that we eye with a certain suspicion all printed material that is plainly labeled "Gandhian" in one way or another. There is so much "devotion" in the reverence felt in India for Gandhi that we sometimes fear for the spirit of independence and self-reliant inventiveness for which Gandhi stood. And Gandhi is, indeed, referred to as "the Master" in one of the articles in this April (the second) issue of *Gandhi Marg*. Yet the fact is that by carefully reading this journal a Western reader should get a remarkably perceptive portrait of M. K. Gandhi and what he stood for. There is much to be said for the value of a journal of this sort. A book, once printed, remains as it appears, while a magazine which comes out regularly affords an organic flow of thought, encompassing different viewpoints, with balancing and corrective analyses. There is danger, of course, in encouraging the sectarian spirit by naming a magazine after a man, however great. But in this case the editors seem to have a lively appreciation of this hazard, for they print on the cover, immediately below the journal's title, these words of Gandhi's:

"There is no such thing as 'Gandhism,' and I do not want to leave any sect after me."

Like many other great men, Gandhi was occasionally inconsistent in words. It has remained for those who understand him to recognize his magnificent consistency in motive and spirit. A compilation of Gandhi's utterances (printed in *Gandhi Marg*) collects the following statements concerning "Gandhism":

They might kill me, but cannot kill Gandhism. If truth can be killed, Gandhism can be killed. If non-violence can be killed, Gandhism can be killed.

Let Gandhism be destroyed if it stands for error. Truth and *Ahimsa* will never be destroyed, but if Gandhism is another name for sectarianism, it deserves to be destroyed.

Ahimsa [harmlessness] is a unifying force. It discovers unity in diversity. All that you may say is derivable from *Ahimsa*. To bring into being a new cult is repugnant to *Ahimsa*, to that very experiment I am making. Thus, you will, I hope, see that there is no room for Gandhism.

Let hundreds like me perish but let truth prevail. Let us not reduce the standard of truth even by a hair's breadth for judging mortals like myself.

It is not too much to say that this journal, bearing Gandhi's name, is edited in this spirit. In fact, it is to Gandhi's credit as a teacher that those who were closest to him, and who in some respects succeeded him directly in his work, while they manifestly loved and revered Gandhi, were able to think for themselves. This was evident in the work of the late K. G. Mashruwala, who took over the editing of *Harijan*, Gandhi's weekly, after Gandhi's death, and in Maganbhai P. Desai's fulfillment of the same task until *Harijan* ceased publication. Mr. Desai, incidentally, has an article in this issue of *Gandhi Marg*, reviewing a phase of the evolution of Gandhi's thinking about political ends and means. In 1930, in England, asked if he did not think that the form of protest he advocated would interfere with the "appeal to reason," Gandhi explained (as quoted by Mr. Desai):

Up to the year 1906, I simply relied on the appeal to reason. I was a very industrious reformer. I was a good draftsman, as I always had a close grasp

of facts, which in its turn was the necessary result of my meticulous regard for truth. But I found that reason failed to produce an impression when the critical moment arrived in South Africa. My people were excited—even a worm will and does sometimes turn—and there was talk of wreaking vengeance. I had then to choose between allying myself to violence or finding out some other method of meeting the crisis and stopping the riot and it came to me that we should refuse to obey legislation that was degrading and let them put us in jail if they liked. Thus, came into being the moral equivalent of war. I was then a loyalist, because, I implicitly believed that the sum total of the activities of the British was good for India and for humanity. Arriving in England soon after the outbreak of the war, I plunged into it and later when I was forced to go to India as a result of the pleurisy that I had developed, I led a recruiting campaign at the risk of my life, and to the horror of some of my friends. The disillusionment came in 1919 after the passage of the Black Rowlatt Act and the refusal of the Government to give the simple elementary redress of proved wrongs that we had asked for. And so, in 1920, I became a rebel.

Since then the conviction has been growing upon me that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone, but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings, war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle, for converting the opponent and opening his ears which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason. Nobody has probably drawn up more petitions or espoused more forlorn causes than I, and I have come to the fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head, but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man. Suffering is the badge of the human race, not the sword.

Here, in relatively few words, is recounted the birth of the dynamic of all future revolutions. First, there is the refusal to suffer, not pain, but *degradation* and *indignity*. If the Germans, for example, as has been suggested, had refused to sign the Versailles Treaty, which they believed to be indescribably unjust, and had obliged the allies to take over the government of Germany until a more equitable peace was agreed upon, there

might have been no Nazi Party rise to power fifteen years later. Submission to injustice produces deformity, just as much as the imposition of injustice deforms those who impose it. There is nothing "passive" about the Gandhian program. The Gandhian will not do violence, but neither will he behave in a way that is without human dignity. On both counts, the Gandhian way is the assertion of *humanity*.

In the first issue of *Gandhi Marg*, Roy Walker, an English admirer of Gandhi, had written in criticism of the British action at Suez, and to question whether Indians had allowed "indignation" in relation to Suez "to introduce an element of violence into their decisions and judgments." Several replies to Roy Walker are printed in the April *Gandhi Marg*, among them one by Mira Behn, an Englishwoman who was Gandhi's secretary and devoted helper. Miss Behn, like others we have mentioned, reflects what seems to us the living spirit of Gandhi, as distinguished from an echo of his "views." She writes:

In responding to the Editor's request for my reactions regarding Mr. Roy Walker's article, "Our Fault," I immediately come up against a fundamental difficulty, which besets me in all contacts with "Gandhians." They talk of the Gandhian outlook, and the Gandhian method, and by so doing are developing something called Gandhism. As we know, Babu always insisted that there was no such thing, that he was a seeker after truth, that he had no disciples—and wanted none. Babu himself always said he could not tell till a problem was before him how he would deal with it. The light came to him in the moments of darkness, and his decisions at such times often took people's breath away. How then can we decide what he would have done in this world of 1957, which in ten years has gone through the evolution of centuries?

It may be argued that at least Babu's two great principles of truth and non-violence should be our guide. This is perfectly correct, if we are capable of knowing their real meaning. In that lies the whole problem. Sometimes that which looks like truth is a subtle deception, and sometimes that which looks like non-violence is a mockery.

Bearing this in mind, and opening our hearts to the great spirit which is Bapu, let us be *ourselves*, and say what *we* feel, without calling it Gandhian. In consciously endeavoring to be Gandhians there is great danger of our becoming unnatural. Our passions and prejudices are much less outgrown than Bapu's, and in our efforts to look what we are not, we run the risk of going to extremes, and in place of Bapu's instinctive burning truth and fearless non-violence we may develop artificial sentimentality and condonation of passivity at any price.

Such faithfulness to Gandhi should reinforce and enrich the heritage India has had from him.

Another writer, Bharatan Kumarappa, discusses Gandhi's conception of the State in an article, "The Roots of Gandhi's Politics." Gandhi's political ideal was *Swaraj*, or self-rule. Gandhi wrote: "Government over self is the truest *swaraj*; it is synonymous with *moksha* or salvation . . . I have therefore endeavored to show both in word and deed that political self-government is no better than individual self-government and therefore it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule." Mr. Kumarappa comments:

If such self-government is what is ultimately to be aimed at, then it is primarily the responsibility of the individual himself and cannot be achieved by the State. But the State has its responsibility. It has to see that no obstacles are placed in the way of the individual's self-development. Or to put it positively, it has to promote conditions which will help the individual to move in the direction of gaining control over himself. The State cannot make the individual moral, but it must establish conditions which will make morality possible. That at best is the function of the State, according to Gandhi.

Those who become uncomfortable from hearing that Gandhi called himself a "socialist" should recognize that this label means very different things to different people. To Gandhi, socialism did not mean the focussing of supreme authority in government. "I look," he said, "upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear. . . . Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of

government control." Gandhi's socialism looked forward to a "state of enlightened anarchy." He added: "In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no State." Manifestly, those who wished to understand what Gandhi meant by socialism will have to search for the meaning in his writings. It is doubtless a concept of sharing rather than one of bureaucratic ownership and control.

We close this survey of the new Indian quarterly, *Gandhi Marg*, with a quotation from Prof. R. C. Zaehner, who succeeded Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan as Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University. His brief comment on Marxism shows distinctively Gandhian insight:

Marxism is not dangerous because it is atheistic, for primitive Buddhism was also atheistic, yet was an immense force for good because the Buddhist ethic was one of peace, of truth, and of respect for life. Marxism is dangerous because its ethics are the ethics of a group: what is good for the group (the Communist Party) is good absolutely.