

# RESURGENCE

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bleeding." Some days later I heard in the pub how he had been saying he had been accosted by a religious maniac.

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Death seems to feature large in these notes but the general tenor of life is so tranquil as to make the terminal points stand out more sharply. Even so they do seem to achieve bigger peaks in the mind than is usual. A neighbouring cottage housed a married couple, four or five young children and a most uncommon variety of household pets, including a tortoise, several birds in cages, mice, cats galore and two fragile looking whippets. When I expostulated at the starved looking condition of the dogs the good lady, a very pious Catholic, replied, "They gets their cornflakes and milk regular every mornin'." The husband was a semi-invalid on public assistance and there was no other money coming in. One by one the local trade people, mostly with itinerant vans from Stroud, gave up supplying as the debts mounted up, until the family and some of the pets moved away. I had become very fond of three of their cats who got to know me and waited for me to arrive on Fridays. In the depths of winter I might reach the hamlet after midnight and they would be bunched up on an old fuel bunker outside my scullery window waiting for some supper. They were half wild at first and would spit and scratch if I tried to stroke them, but gradually they grew to accept me and even got to entering the cottage to drink milk whilst I stroked them. I found it hard when I learnt the good lady had had them put down when she moved. Their cottage was taken over by a retired farmer whose brother, with whom he had shared a roof for years, was found drowned in a well. For some reason George, who liked company very much, tended to drive it

resolutely away by always conversing insistently at the top of his voice. He was a lonely man subject to headaches from a Worldwarone head wound. One evening he wrote a little note for his sister explaining how she should feed his chickens and then took his life by holding his head in a bucket of water.

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One of the most likeable men in the village was Old Hanks, at least I always found him so although he had a reputation for cantankerousness. He had left the village in his youth and worked for many years in Canada, lumbering, foreman on dam construction sites and so on. At the height of the depression he returned and, being unmarried, lived with his sister and her husband. I recall vividly being invited to tea there one Sunday and the meal was a kind of monument to modern working class culture. There was both white and brown bread, tinned salmon, boiled eggs, salad, currant cake, tinned fruit, cream and, of course, endless cups of strong tan coloured tea. During the meal, and this point has nothing to do with the monument, I was aware without actually getting it into focus, of an atmosphere of constraint around the table. I learnt later that Old Hanks and his brother-in-law had not spoken a word to each other for over twenty years.

He had picked up a salty turn of phrase in those lumber camps and perhaps this was part of the undoing of some of his friendships. We were discussing a mutual acquaintance in the village and Old Hanks declared he had a reputation for meanness. I demurred at this, pointing out that I had always found him of a generous disposition. "Oh, he's tight all right," observed Hanks with mordant emphasis, "He's so damned tight you'd need a ton of gunpowder to blow a pea up his ass."

## THE MOVEMENT—continued

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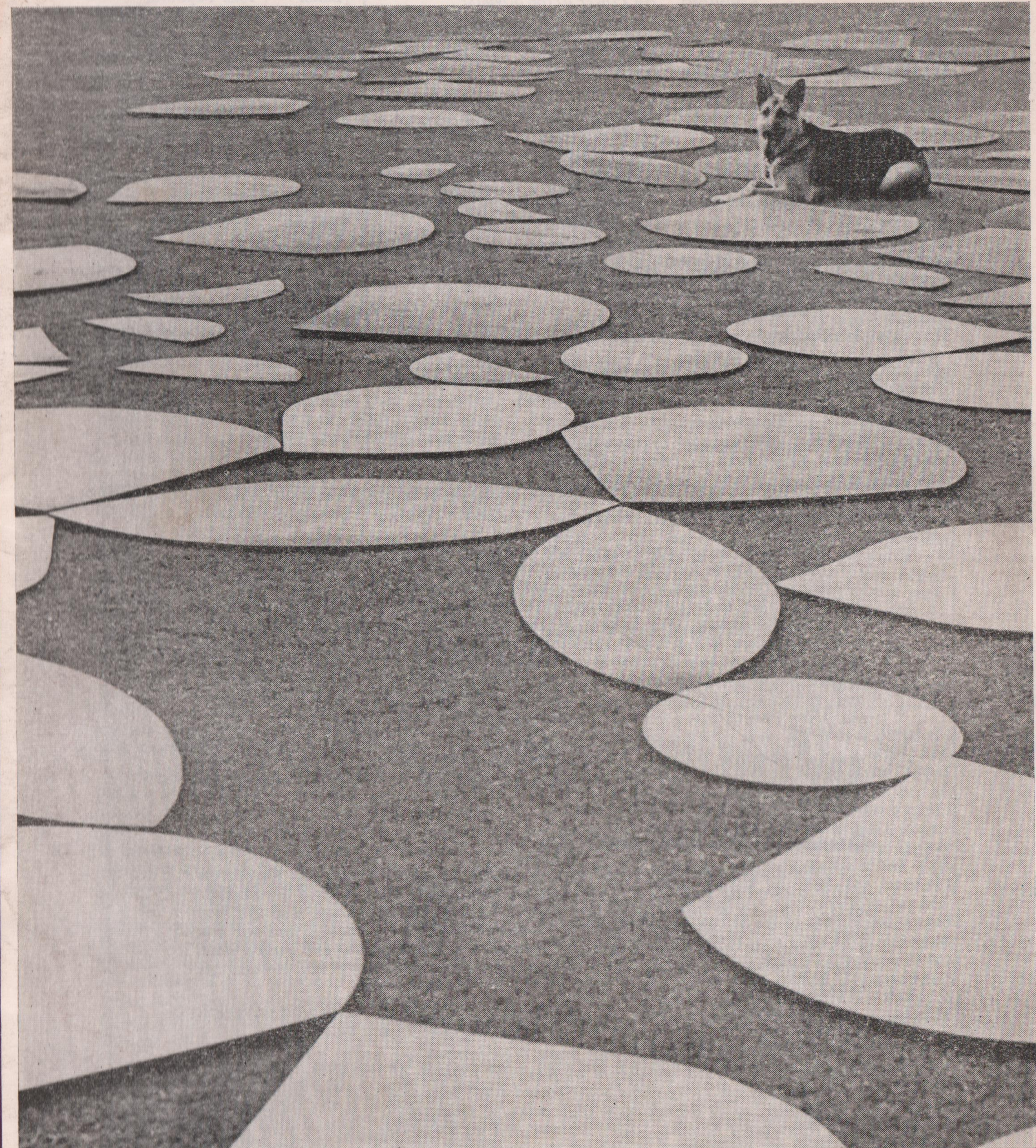
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Five Shillings

Vol. 2, No. 8/9, July-October 1969



Herbert Read, 'The Limits of Permissiveness'

E. F. Schumacher, 'Healthy Development'

Leopold Kohr on the Maud Fraud

Bhave and Sen on Gramdan



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*Resurgence is concerned to promote a new debate on the direction of civilisation. It is opposed to the fashionable sophistry which argues that such things as a growth of scale of organisation, or of science and technology are in themselves beneficial, and urges that these and other factors when not strictly subordinated to human purposes and human value judgements invariably abort them and undermine them. It believes there is a pressing need for a wide ranging and continuous discussion on just how large human political units should be if they are to serve the real needs of their members, and precisely what moral and material goals the forces of science and technology, of industry, agriculture and much else should serve if the dangers that these Promethean forces are promoting are not to overwhelm us.*

*When they are organised on a large scale it is opposed to capitalism, communism, socialism, Trotskyism, Fabianism, Anarchism, Henry Georgism, and other current orthodoxies; when they are organised on a small scale it is prepared to give qualified support to all of them.*

### Current Subscribers Begin Here :

*This double issue covering the four month period from July to October is partly to catch up with our lagging production schedule and partly to accommodate holiday absence of members of the editorial group. We anticipate that the next issue, Vol. 2, No. 10 (Nov./Dec. 1969) will appear in early October, and our aim is to bring out subsequent issues one month in advance of the publication date. Please remember we need your letters for our correspondence columns—and the sooner (and shorter) the better.*

*Our Fourth World Newsletter has run into a number of production problems, but we hope to re-start this service on a regular basis in the autumn.*

*We hear from the U.S.A. that peace organisations are having a bad time with pillaging of their mail, vandalism of files and robbery of records in their offices and so on. Our cash ledger and some record cards have been pinched from a motor cycle pannier, so we do not know quite who has paid subs or sent donations to our funds over recent months. So if you have had no acknowledgment of your money bear with us; many subscriptions are renewable in May, so will you please accept this reminder and send us yours now if you think it is due, or overdue.*

## EDITORIALS

# 1. All Power to the Soviets ?

**F**EW people realise quite what has gone wrong with our practice of democracy but everybody seems to agree that something *has* gone very badly wrong indeed.

Nearly a century and a half ago the Reform Bill was passed through Parliament because even at that time it was accepted that if freedom meant having a share in the making of corporate community decisions it meant that we should all have a say in the composition of Parliament. This was a big step forward, but since then a lot has happened to reduce its importance. Many new forms of power have developed over which the citizen has no real control and in which he has no real say. Our lives are dominated today by car corporations, computers, television, chemicals, vast oil concerns, construction companies, unit trusts, banks and insurance companies, chain stores and chains of supermarkets, and, of course, advertising agencies. Nearly all these things are in so-called private hands (actually they are mostly public companies), most of them spend more money each year than did the British Government in 1832, yet there is scarcely any discussion today on how the power they wield (which again in some ways is greater and more far-reaching than that which the Government exercised in 1832) should be made democratic.

On these grounds alone there might be scope for thinking we badly need a whole range of new Reform Acts which would enable democracy to keep pace with modern developments, but it is when we look at Westminster that we realise just how urgent this need has become. Arnold Toynbee wrote recently that when Parliament began it had less work to do than a village council has now. Today Westminster has become a number of monster departments over which no-one at all is able to exercise any real control.

It might be thought, for example, if democracy means anything, that with the setting up of a special department of education great care would have been taken to ensure that the citizen power of decision making and control would have been extended to cover this new and important form of power so that at every stage the citizen voice was the touchstone of the policies that salaried officials were called on to execute. It would follow from this, since ideas about education are bound to differ considerably from district to district, to say nothing of from person to person, there could be no such thing as a 'national education policy,' only a policy of a given locality. The same holds true for many other aspects of public affairs.

It is argued that this is unnecessary because we elect M.P.'s to Parliament, but one of the extraordinary aspects of public life is that as the power and extent of government activity has grown (the budget for education alone is many times greater than was *all* the Government expenditure in 1832) so the power as well as the status of individual M.P.'s has declined. The reason for this is simple,

the decline in the power exercised by M.P.'s is a reflection of the decline in the power of individual voters to influence the conduct of affairs; the real power today is lodged only in the most extreme instances in Parliament, for the most part it is lodged in the corporate expertise of teams of top bureaucrats who largely conceive, fashion, and administer the *continuous* processes of administration. Parliament, and even Ministers are today very largely appendages of this process and given the way the process works they could scarcely be otherwise. The main function of the citizen in consequence is conceived to be one of passive acquiescence, the main function of an M.P. is to keep in line, the main function of a Cabinet Minister to keep the right side of his permanent officials and to avoid decisions that might jeopardise the electoral prospects of his party.

In these conditions Parliament is not the determinant voice in the conduct of public affairs, it is for the most part trailing continually behind events and seeking with increasing desperation to adjust itself to events it has not itself initiated. The development of cars is one instance of this. Parliament played almost no part in deciding how cars should impinge on our transport arrangements, but car production today is the major index of our industrial fortunes, road building and maintenance a principal form of public expenditure and cars themselves the main reason why urban areas are becoming slums and in many other ways showing themselves to be quite incompatible with tolerable urban life.

### Total Sense of Powerlessness

It is in this context that the Maud proposals need to be viewed, the context of a weak and largely ineffective Parliament which is no longer an adequate expression of the popular will, and a swollen national and local Government bureaucracy which dominates local affairs within a framework of reference and regulations very largely determined by its counterparts in Whitehall. One must be myopic indeed to miss the ominous groundswell of frustration this situation is promoting. Some of it is evident in the unprecedented degree of student unrest at a time when, in terms of creature comforts and welfare, they have never had less cause to complain, and in this case what students are doing today the general body of industrial workers may well be doing tomorrow.

But the most obvious signs of disaffection may not be the most dangerous; the real cause for alarm is surely to be found in the almost total sense of powerlessness which people commonly feel in relation to the conduct and management of public affairs. Perhaps the most serious consequence of this is the way in which people tend to reduce the area of their moral commitment to the well-being of society. No civilisation can



possibly survive a shrinking of such commitment, as is evidently rampant today, and yet no civilisation which alienates and isolates its members as effectively as does ours stands any chance of avoiding such a contraction.

Faced with this prospect, there is a need of life-saving urgency for the numerous forms of government operation to be reconstructed so that the principal policy decisions and the day-to-day management of affairs stem directly from the towns, villages and city wards of the country, rather than from the overloaded central government machine. In New York there is now a move to hand over the running of schools to locally elected ward committees and this stems from a clear recognition that the present administrative machine is breaking apart.

The people most concerned with education are by and large the parents of minors, and if they were given the chance to act they would rescue the entire educational service from its morass of value confusion and the phenomenal degree of waste embedded in the present undemocratic structure. Anyone who thinks that elected education committees of such localities could not handle the wider problems of teacher recruitment and training, examination syllabus, determination of school catchment areas, school building programmes and so on without the stringent overall control of a central bureaucracy as it is now exercised ought at least to ask himself what he thinks would happen if these bodies had to do the job? Does wartime experience when central government has broken down and even fled the country suggest that ordinary people are unable to manage? The evidence is all to the contrary and points to the fairly obvious conclusion that much of this highly centralised control is not only wasteful and inefficient, but superfluous.

In this context the ponderous machinery of a Royal Commission to enquire into the whole structure and function of local government might well be expected to come to one brief conclusion, abolish central control of local government. Not a bit of it.

It sometimes seems there is a curious perversity in the minds of those who help to run government machines that leads them to reach conclusions about any problem which are exactly the reverse of what common sense might seem to indicate as desirable. The members of the Maud Commission are fully aware, in fact they say so, that few people in Britain trouble—or feel able—to keep in touch with what is done for them and in their name in local government matters. There are a number of quite obvious reasons for this. Primarily there is a sharp awareness in the public mind that the local government system is largely a charade which conceals the fact that nearly all local decisions are taken within a framework of Westminster statutes and subsidiary provisions so minutely detailed as to reduce the average local council meeting to a tedious exercise in formality.

This is not to say that individuals cannot, if they have the time, the patience, the energy, the stamina and the singlemindedness, exercise some influence on local affairs, they can and sometimes do. But they do so in the knowledge that the die is heavily weighted against any initiative they may wish to exert from the outset and that the whole machine is designed to give effect not to their purposes but to those of the central administration in Whitehall,

and that the real definers of these purposes are not the elected local councillors but the local salaried officials.

The Maud proposals will not improve this situation, they will in fact make it very much worse. They envisage a number of enlarged regional authorities each of which will consolidate a great many of the functions exercised at present by smaller local authorities. It would be a mistake to assume because it is proposed that the central government will unload some of its functions onto the new regional authorities that this will somehow amount to a decentralisation of power. In politics power is either exercised directly by the citizen (which does not mean that he does not delegate that power to elected persons although it does mean that he retains his grip on the decision making process and has the right to recall of any elected person at any time), or it is exercised on his behalf by others. Who today are these 'others'?

As we have seen they are not his elected representatives, for at both the local and the national levels they are peripheral to a governing process operated and controlled from Whitehall. In theory some Members of Parliament form a government whose members, either from within or without the cabinet, run the great departments of state. Cabinet members are not chosen for their expertise, the Postmaster General is not a postman and the Minister of Health is not a doctor; the experts, theory asserted, should be there to advise, they should be 'on tap not on top'.

Is this true in practice? What would happen to a Cabinet Minister who fell foul of his "experts"? Would he prevail, or would they? These questions are not posed in relation to exceptional issues, often perhaps of limited import in themselves, which may excite a great deal of public attention and compel a Cabinet Minister to make a public stand his permanent officials may find unpalatable, but to the whole corpus of multitudinous and largely silent decision making that goes on behind the scenes and which sets its stamp on the general drift of affairs in our society.

#### More Power to the Mandarins

And when one notes how firm is this grip of the permanent anonymous and highly paid Whitehall mandarins on the framework of local government it is easy to see that the Maud proposals to consolidate the functions of small local authorities into the hands of a small number of larger units is basically a device to make the power of the mandarins more absolute. As a gesture of 'decentralisation' it is a joke, for the ordinary citizen will not have more power to decide, but, if less be possible, less.

It was precisely this farce which General de Gaulle sought to inflict on the French people last May, and it was precisely this danger against which Anthony Jay warned the readers of *The Spectator* earlier this year.\* His opening paragraph is worth quoting in full:

"Regionalism, administrative reorganisation, constitutional reform: they are all in the air at the moment, and the air is a lot fresher for it. But there is a terrible danger that, when the revolution comes, it will be a bureaucrats' revolution: aimed at making it easier for officials to run our lives for

\*'Keep Britain Small', *Spectator*, 21 Feb. 1969

us: a danger that we will then find the irritations caused by inept bureaucratic interference replaced by the deeper frustration caused by strong and efficient bureaucratic control. It will not be done from malice or lust for power, merely for convenience and organisational logic. But the logic of the administrator rests on different premises from the logic of the ordinary citizen. What is tantalising is that they do not have to clash: there is, if only we can grasp it, an opportunity to let the necessary bureaucratic revolution take place and at

the same time give back to the ordinary citizen the involvement, the influence and the importance which have been gradually stripped from him over the past fifty years and more."

We would say 'Amen' to that except to urge it is scarcely possible to 'give' the ordinary citizen involvement, influence and importance, and that if he does not stand up to assert these things for himself, he may, however unwittingly, be ensuring he has no future worth talking about.

## 2. Race and Population

SOME readers have not been slow to spot what would appear to be an awkward point in the views expressed editorially and otherwise in these columns and their relatedness to the growing disquiet about race relations in Britain.

We have repeatedly argued that the *scale* of organisation of nearly everything in politics and economics is too big to be manageable, hence we argue for smaller units and argue further that only in such units can people achieve a full sense of identity. For this reason we fully support the struggle of the Welsh and Scottish Nationalists and indeed pretty nearly any group that is seeking to express its group identity on a smaller scale than that which now prevails. Do we then, the racists ask, support the idea of unlimited immigration or do we support Mr. Enoch Powell in his arguments that the racial 'purity' (whatever that may be) of the English should be preserved by sending all non-white people back whence they came? Mr. Powell's morally reprehensible plea is of course a non-starter and if attempts were made to put it into practice could easily lead to a state of acute civil strife and would be economically ruinous as well.

Nevertheless there is one valid assumption behind Powellite reasoning on race which liberal critics are all too disposed to ignore. Men are not simply 'men' in a vacuum; they are members of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious and artistic groups of the most diverse kinds. It is this diversity which gives life much of its colour, its brilliance, its interest and its stimulus, and the desire to preserve cultural differences is not only perfectly valid but one which we fully and unhesitatingly support. There are occasions when members of one group feel driven by economic or other forces, to invade or to migrate to the territory of others; this has happened, even in transcontinental terms, over a long period of history, but what is new today is the speed and the magnitude at which transcontinental migrations can be effected and the extent to which the printing press has helped to rigidify language and literature, which in turn slows down the rate at which integration can be accomplished. Indeed integration may not only be

more difficult, it may even be regarded as undesirable by the immigrants or the host country or by both. A large proportion of Jews, for example, have never wanted to lose their Jewish identity in the countries to which they have migrated, a sense of exclusiveness often forced upon them by the most sustained persecution to which any race in history has been subjected. (It may be worth noting in this context that this has not prevented the Jews from enriching the host countries prodigiously in almost every field of endeavour, not least in that of the arts).

Well meaning officers of the Race Relations Board are prone to extol that: a) there is a net emigration rate from Britain and b) that the numbers of coloured (for which read non-white) immigrants is still only a very small proportion of the total population. These facts are really beside the point; in the next two decades the English countryside and much else in the way of ordinary amenities will disappear under the corrosive blight of proliferating urbanism unless something drastic is done to check it. Modern transport not only makes masses of people more mobile, in doing so it has the effect, as Leopold Kohr has pointed out, of multiplying existing numbers\* since a man who visits four cities by car during the course of a single day can be regarded statistically as four people. It was this, among other reasons, which led us to urge (*Resurgence* Vol. 2, No. 1) that the real demographic need for Britain was to lower its numbers to a point where masses of people were not almost wholly dependent on imports of basic foodstuffs, and where there was a sensible relation between numbers and food producing capacity. This need is partly a result of the fact that, despite much bovine complacency on the subject, there is a tendency for world food surpluses to diminish (in those few countries that produce them) and that before the end of this century they might well disappear altogether into the bellies of the producing countries.

\*Kohr's analogy, readers may recall, was with the doors of a theatre, perfectly adequate for ordinary purposes but apt to prove much less so for a panic stampede during a fire.



It is ordinary commonsense that numbers of immigrants should not exceed a country's absorptive capacity, and on this measure Britain, as one of the most densely populated areas of the world, ought not to be talking of accepting more immigrants but of considering how it can encourage millions of its present population to emigrate to other and less populous territories. Few people today seem to be aware of the dangers resulting from inaction here, but in another couple of decades what we are saying now, far from being regarded as outrageous, will appear to be the mere statement of the obvious. It may also be too late, for it cannot be supposed that governments which are now welcoming British immigrants (Australia? Canada?) will do so when the terrible lessons of current demographic trends are more blatantly obvious.

The 'percentage' argument about immigration is equally unsound. Any group of immigrants will tend to congregate; the Australians do so in Earl's Court (known locally as Kangaroo Valley), the Jews in Hampstead and Bethnal Green, the Poles in Kensington and the Chinese in Limehouse. The British who once administered India also lived in their own ghettos. Not surprisingly therefore, the more recent immigrants from India and the West Indies tend to do the same. It really is no use the Race Relations Board piously harping on how small the percentage of immigrants to the total population is when that percentage is concentrated in a very few areas. There is no problem of race relations in the Outer Hebrides, simply because there is no concentration of immigrants there, but an Englishman living, shall we say in Southall or Wolverhampton, who sees large areas of his

### POPULATION DENSITIES\*

	Area (Thousands of square miles)	Pop. in Mil- lions	Persons per sq. mile
<b>ASIA</b>			
People's Rep. of China	3,691	786	213
India	1,262	499	396
U.S.S.R.	8,650	233	27
(Ukraine)	231	45	195
Pakistan	366	105	287
(E. Pakistan)	55	51	925
Japan	143	99	692
Turkey	301	33	110
Thailand	198	31	156
Burma	262	25	95
Iran	635	24	38
Taiwan	14	13	921
Ceylon	25	11	440
Nepal	55	10	180
Hong Kong	0.4	4	9,800
Israel	8	2.6	329
<b>AFRICA</b>			
Nigeria (unreliable)	357	58	161
Egypt	386	30	77
Ethiopia	395	23	58
South Africa	473	18	38
Congo	905	16	18
Sudan	968	14	14
Tanzania	363	10.5	29
Kenya	225	9.5	43
Mozambique	303	7	23
Zimbabwe	150	4	28
Malawi	36	4	110
Zambia	290	4	13
<b>AMERICAS</b>			
United States	3,549	197	55
(Massachusetts)	8	5	653
(New York)	48	17	350
(California)	157	16	100
(Colorado)	104	1.7	17
(Nevada)	110	0.3	3
Brazil	3,286	85	26
Mexico	762	44	58
Argentina	1,084	23	21
Canada	3,846	20	5
Chile	286	8.5	30
<b>EUROPE</b>			
Fed. Rep. of Germany	96	57	592
United Kingdom	95	55	582
(England)	50	45	900
(Scotland)	30	5	168
(Wales)	8	2.7	337
(N. Ireland)	5	1.5	280
Italy	116	52	444
France	213	49	229
Spain	195	32	164
Poland	120	32	262
Yugoslavia	99	20	200
Rumania	92	19	208
East Germany	42	17	408
Netherlands	12	12.5	1,060
Belgium	12	9.5	878
Greece	51	8.5	169
Austria	32	7	224
Sweden	174	8	44
Switzerland	16	6	373
Denmark	16	4.5	287
Norway	125	3.5	30
Irish Republic	27	3	108
<b>OCEANIA</b>			
Indonesia	575	105	183
(Java)	49	63	1,290
(Sumatra)	183	15	86
Philippines	116	33	289
Australia	2,968	11.5	4
New Zealand	104	2.7	26
<b>ISLANDS</b>			
Haiti	11	4.5	418
Jamaica	4.5	1.8	418
Trinidad & Tobago	2	1	492
Mauritius	0.72	0.76	1,050
Hawaii	6.4	0.63	990
Cyprus	3.5	0.6	169
Crete	3.2	0.5	155
Fiji	7.0	0.5	680
Malta	0.12	0.3	2,600
Bermuda	0.02	0.05	2,300

\*Times Atlas of the World, 1967.

### POPULATION PER HUNDRED HECTARES CULTIVATED LAND

(from Gunnar Myrdal's *Asian Drama*—data for 1955)

South Asia (Av.)	275	China	560
India	240	Japan	1,620
West Pakistan	230	Europe	275
East Pakistan	510	U.S.S.R.	90
Ceylon	570	U.S.A.	90
Burma	225	England & Wales (approx.)	500*
Thailand	260	Scotland (approx.)	300*
Java	585		
Philippines	370		

\*Computed from a recent year-book

neighbourhood occupied by people from another continent, whose dress, speech, habits of mind, food, marriage customs, social groupings, religion, political assumptions and nearly all other aspects of whose culture are sharply differentiated from his own would not be human if he did not feel his sense of identity, his inner sense of security threatened.

Superficially he might not, for is not the basic defect of technologically oriented societies that the human significance of its members is reduced to a point where they lack a real sense of identity and an awareness of their own cultural and social roots? But might it not be that a large part of the hostile feelings towards immigrants comes from an attempt to blame immigrants for the threat to human identity and significance which is a basic factor of life in Western societies anyway? And might it not be that it is this threat which really disrupts racial harmony at moments of stress and when questions of housing and jobs become acute?

Even if this is granted it does not follow that a rapid process of cultural assimilation is desirable. There is no virtue in the English, the Irish, the Scots and the Welsh sinking their separate and valuable cultural identities into something called 'the British way of life' and the same holds for the immigrant communities. One need only contemplate the abysmal greyness, sameness and falsity of so much of life in the United States, itself a product of a diversity and richness of human groupings such as few countries have been blessed with, to see where assimilation to some kind of phoney 'norm' leads.

To summarise:

1. All immigration into Britain (barring hardship cases and refugees from political persecution) should cease.
2. A policy of maximum *emigration* should be adopted.
3. All residents now in Britain are full and equal citizens and no discrimination on any

grounds should be practised or accepted.

4. The Powellite prescription of 'repatriation' should be unequivocally repudiated.
5. We should respect, welcome and help to strengthen the cultural identity of groups from other lands who have settled here.

These remarks have not touched on the wider problem of what it is that prompts so many people from other countries to travel to Britain and settle. The answer can be put in one word, poverty. Clearly such settlement, in overcrowded Britain at least, is shifting the problem rather than solving it.

In terms of population density Britain stands high in the world tables. These tables ought to be read in the light of the available food producing area rather than the total land surface area of the country, and even then they should be compared with the annual total of basic food imports and exports. It is this latter factor which even today is of pressing importance, and which in the coming decades seems bound to become the crucial vital statistic of every country in the world.

There is much evidence to suggest that the only generally effective solution to world poverty lies in the development of the food producing potential of the poorer nations and in abandoning the subservience of local food production potential to world markets. India's food problems will be solved, not by exporting food in exchange for, shall we say, mining equipment, but by a quite mercantilist concern to ensure that a localised, regional self-sufficiency of *basic* foodstuffs is achieved.

This problem stares mankind in the face more implacably than perhaps any other, and of all the possible solutions that of transferring large numbers of people from potentially rich agricultural areas to potentially poor ones, for little more reason than that a travel operator may be bent on making a fast buck with the aid of modern methods of transport, seems one of the least likely to succeed. ●



### 3. An Open Letter to Ernest Bader

Dear Ernest,

You ask me to help you to enlarge the work of 'Deminty,'\* and I want to make it clear why, although I fully support its objects, I cannot respond in quite the way perhaps you would wish.

As you know, I have visited Wollaston several times, and each time I have left full of enthusiasm for what you have achieved and for what you are doing. It seems to me that anyone who can make the kind of sacrifice that anyone who can make to inspire the establishment of even the rudiments of a real commonwealth and at the same time ensure the commercial viability of an enormous industrial complex such as the Scott-Bader Commonwealth now represents has no cause to regret the energy and devoted idealism he has given it. I know you have your share of detractors, many of whom seem to me largely the victims of their own sectarian passions and I suppose few original and creative workers have known what it is to be without such opposition. But it seems to me in the work you have done, because of its positive success, you have no cause to worry on this score and that you have securely established a niche in history which anyone who seeks to emulate what you have achieved will find it impossible to ignore.

What then is wrong? Why does not this Commonwealth idea catch on? Why are there not hundreds of new Commonwealths where yours still stands as the highest peak of a minor range of foothills in the vastness of our industrial and commercial Himalayas? If your workers were dissatisfied, if their earnings were low, if production was badly organised and if the Scott Bader Commonwealth was financially in the doldrums it might be easy to point to any one of these things as the reason. On the contrary however, the Commonwealth workers seem to me to be an exceptionally happy and industrious team, their earnings compare very favourably with what is being paid in comparable jobs elsewhere, production methods are praised for their efficiency in the technical and commercial journals, and this efficiency is reflected in the almost unbroken record of increasing profits and trading surpluses over recent years. What then is wrong?

One answer of course is that in a capitalist world the directors of capitalist firms tend to behave like capitalists and not give a damn about the overall drift of things. Even if this were true, and I don't think either of us would agree it is entirely, it leaves out of account that for almost a quarter of a century we have been going through a process of rapid capital expansion and one which, if the will and drive were present, could have resulted in the creation of many wholly new firms based on the Commonwealth principles as practised at Wollaston. You may recall that after World War One there was such a drive—largely in the Guild Socialist Movement and that most of the many separate efforts made then crashed in the

\*Deminty is an organisation sponsored largely by Ernest Bader to promote 'democratic integration in industry,' and consists of firms which operate on a basis of co-partnership or workers' control.

first post-war recession of 1921, a failure many thought could have been avoided even then if the Trades Unions had used some of the substantial funds for a rescue operation in the form of interest bearing loans. Where is the drive and idealism today for such an effort? Where has it been anyway for the past quarter of a century?

I think you are not 'striking oil,' not getting any real response from your Deminty work because for one thing people today shy away like startled colts from any idea that there is any single simple answer to our problems. Just think how an entire generation of progressives supported the Russian Revolution in the Thirties, and compromised themselves so grotesquely into believing that the horrible reports that came out of Russia were capitalist propaganda, when all the time the most unspeakable and barbarous cruelties were being practised against the finest, the noblest and the most creative people in Russian life. Think of the millions who died wretchedly, needlessly and cruelly whilst their fellow intellectuals in other countries remained silent. The man who has killed the prospects of the kind of response you are looking for is Joseph Stalin. Even if you are right in your ideas, intellectuals will not allow themselves to be compromised twice in a generation by again adopting a simple attitude of enthusiastic affirmation for a simple wholesale solution to the complexities of our political and economic life such as you are seeking.

But the big question is, are you right? I feel there is something in Deminty which can be part of the answer, but I do not think in itself it is enough and surely your approach indicates that you are not viewing the scene in sufficient breadth or depth. Your approach, forgive me saying so, is a kind of Fabian hangover from the Thirties; I find little interest among young people about questions of factory ownership, and today they would tend, unlike Tony Smythe and others, not to accuse you at Wollaston of paternalism, but to question whether your factory and the stuff it is producing should exist at all.

You may feel I am being somewhat equivocal when I say in one breath I am in favour of workers' control in industry and that I am against large scale capitalism, and in the next declare that I do not think capitalism as such is the main enemy of progress and that it is quite possible to have 'workers' control' and nearly all the evils plus a few more that now afflict us. But it is the lesson of the failure of the modern left progressive cause that there are no simple total solutions to our problems and that when we try to apply one either we are defeated by the inherent absurdity of our assumptions (which yield no worthwhile response) or we 'succeed' by methods which are totalitarian and repressive.

In the past capitalism has shown itself not incompatible with a high standard of consumption, a high standard of living, and even of civilisation, but that was only when it was a subordinate component of the apparatus of society; today it is a monster which dominates society, and in consequence, as you yourself are so much aware, its values, the

values of predatory acquisitiveness, have come to invade whole fields of activity which in former times were activated by quite other considerations. Hence in part at least, the debasement of art, the corruption of institutionalised religion, the perversion of science, the destructiveness of applied technology, the dissolution of community, and inevitably perhaps, the disintegration of personality so evident today.

You have laboured prodigiously to achieve what you believe to be 'workers' control' at Wollaston, but a careful reading of your 'Commonwealth Charter' makes it clear that it is a very qualified form of workers' control and one in fact which few of its more militant advocates would accept as genuine. It may be none the worse for that; in fact I think it likely under today's conditions that if the Wollaston complex were under full and direct workers' control it would collapse inside a twelve-month; and that until there is a really massive move towards this concept of ownership and control of industry, you have gone as far in the matter of a formal redefinition of industrial relationships as it is possible to go.

I say this for another reason: I do not think it is possible to solve the problems of industrial relationships in isolation and that even if, for example, you have the most thoroughgoing changes in ownership and control, the thing will soon become hollow and unreal and quite devoid of the substance of your original intentions unless there is a move to establish similar values in other spheres of the lives of the members of your commonwealth.

#### Underlying Fallacy

One has to face the fact that much of the talk of workers' control at Wollaston is academic (as it is elsewhere) for the quite simple reason that most of the workers are not interested in the subject. (And, if they were, and if they and other workers really wanted it, there is no real reason why it could not be the *modus operandi* of industry tomorrow. One must also raise the question here whether any general body of workers will ever be sufficiently interested in the problems of such a highly specialised technical complex as the one you have at Wollaston to the point of involving themselves with running it. I wonder incidentally if this points to an underlying fallacy in your assumptions?).

But the real question is, why should they be interested? Do they really decide any of the matters relating to the houses they live in, the schools their children attend, the libraries they use, the medical and hospital services that care for them in sickness, the cultural and information media available, the transport and other public utilities that serve their needs, the sewers, the parks, the cemeteries, law courts and so on and so on? Of course not, and when the question is directed to wider spheres of concern, to matters of national policy in foreign affairs, trade, taxation, currency management, immigration, postal services, war preparations and so forth the answer is even more emphatically negative.

Why then, it must be asked, should one expect people who are conditioned to a state of near passive acquiescence in practically all the major concerns of their lives to suddenly become articulate, participatory, involved, committed and all the rest of it in one sphere only, namely that of their work? And why indeed when nearly all the factors that once made work one of the major sources of human self-fulfilment have been obliterated by the forces of bureaucracy and capitalist inspired tech-

nology? Why single out work?

Your answer may doubtless be that we have to start making change somewhere, and that is fair enough. But is it not evident that wherever we make a start either the values we are seeking to make operative will come to prevail not only in our starting point but in all the other spheres, or the values that now prevail will re-establish themselves in our starting point and thus defeat our intentions?

This, it seems to me is your real problem at Wollaston, and why the real index of your success there must be measured not in terms of the industrial and commercial efficiency of your plant, important as these things are, but in the extent to which Wollaston becomes an effective centre for radical (and of course non-violent) revolution in other spheres of our lives in society.

#### What is to be Produced?

Few people who go on about 'workers' control' appear to grasp how incompatible such an objective may be with the morality or wisdom of so much that is being produced anyway, or with the underlying consumption values that help to sustain our present patterns of industrial production. Do we want workers' control of Polaris submarines? To be more explicit, it is impossible to separate the question of 'workers' control' of industrial production from the question of what is to be produced. I find it incredible to suppose that much of what is produced today would be produced at all under a genuine system of industrial democracy, and if I thought the case was otherwise I would not budge from my doorstep to change the present system.

What should we eat? What should we put on? How should we find shelter? We are apt to overlook that modern advertising conditions us to fly in the face of the wisdom of two thousand years at least when it spoonfeeds us with false answers to these basic questions, and in consequence not only are our standards and our morals corrupted, our physical environment pillaged and polluted, in some cases irredeemably, at a cost to our posterity that is beyond compute, but man's inner life is becoming a howling wilderness of insecurity and despair.

On a visit to your Commonwealth I was perplexed to find the catering in the canteen was done

“... the management of any industrial business has to maintain a balance between four main conflicting factors: the shareholders, the employees, the customers and the community. The tension between these factors can be fruitful, but one of them has been a source of bitterness and misery from the beginning of the industrial revolution—namely, the conflict between the owners of the business and the employees as a group. The interests of these two groups always have been, and still are in some measure, opposed. Strikes and other forms of violence in industry—and not only in Britain—show how serious this problem still is. Moreover, it is no longer a straight quarrel about money. In a generation come of age the problem is acquiring an additional dimension. Ever-increasing numbers of employees are asking for a share in the decisions made by the business. They are not content just to work, take their pay and go home. They want to have their share in responsible living at work. . . .”



"On the surface, Scott Bader is a small, but highly profitable, chemical firm employing about 350 and having a turnover of about £4 million a year in plastics and allied chemical products. But it is far more than that. In the first place, the organisation is now entirely in the hands of those who work in it. For this purpose they are incorporated as a company called the 'Scott Bader Commonwealth' which holds virtually all the nominal capital. The whole scheme was made possible only because Ernest Bader handed over his business—and thus virtually his entire fortune—to his employees.

"The day-to-day business is carried on by a separate company called 'Scott Bader and Co. Ltd.', whose directors are answerable to the Commonwealth. Within the company there is a complex set of checks and balances to ensure democratic operation and maximum participation by everybody.

"The profits are allocated by the Commonwealth. After a large proportion has been ploughed back, the residue is distributed partly as a bonus for the members and partly for charitable purposes chosen by them in general meeting. They do much work in the local community.

"But profit-making is not the sole, or even the primary, motive. The organisation is free from any pressure from outside shareholders to make profits regardless of other considerations. From the start, its founder was moved by a Christian and Quaker concern to find a solution to the conflict of interest between employers and employed—and to achieve that aim without destroying the framework of economic organisation which has gradually been built up in the West over the past three centuries. . . . Ernest Bader, who is now in his eightieth year. . . . plays no part in the management of the organisation, but it is going on from strength to strength under its own power. Visitors to the factory cannot fail to sense the relaxed but purposeful atmosphere. The high security of employment—which includes six months' sick leave on full pay—has its effect, but the regard for human dignity within the organisation is what really counts. It shows what responsible living means in practical terms.

"Scott Bader may prove to be a significant new departure in social and industrial life and organisation—or it may not. It certainly is ONE solution in one set of conditions. But however that may be, it is a practical example of Quaker concern in action. . . ."

from a statement by Richard Allen, Chairman of Interest and Concerns Group at a Conference of European & Near East Friends, Birmingham, July 1969.

on the basis of normal commercial contracting, so that in consequence the health of the workers is being undermined by consuming the same well advertised junk that workers in any other industrial canteen are consuming. Is this revolution? You know as well as I do, that white bread (especially the modern factory version) is not genuine nourishment at all and that other refined starches and sugars are responsible for the niagara of medicines

and the Himalayan avalanche of pills going into people's gullets, that such things as soup powders, custard powders, chemically grown vegetables and animal products from Belsen style farming systems are not so much food as a sustained assault on physical well-being and moral sensibility. Why not then take a lead by using some of the profits of the factory to grow and produce real food? Is there nobody in Wollaston who would enjoy growing quality vegetables for Wollaston workers? Or making decent bread for them? Where is your bake-house? Your carpentry shop for making furniture locally? Do we really need the elaborate mass produced suitings to which the media have conditioned us? Our forbears frequently wore simple smocks; are there not simple garments that people bent on the revolution could design, make and wear?

#### Huckster's Merry-Go-Round

Your answer to this might well be that the workers of Wollaston don't want such changes in their lives, and that they prefer to be conned into eating the expensively advertised and debased foodstuffs of the mass market in all their meretricious and superfluous variety, that they prefer the huckster's merry-go-round of conspicuous consumption rather than to explore freedom with a way of life that may be simpler but would be much more rewarding.

You may be right too, for the advertisers have been at us now for generations, and there is no way of measuring how far they have got us and themselves from reality. But we can't overlook, can we, the cost of the abandonment of traditional methods of husbandry in environmental pollution which may yet bring the merry-go-round to a halt. Nor can we ignore all the other factors in the equation that stem from technology and science going out of control and calling the process 'progress,' not even if the general level of awareness of these things is so low that those who do have their sights clear are considered to be sentimental fuddy-duddies.

Again and again would-be progressives come up against this barrier of nihilistic unreality in the values that pervade our society when they seek to push their particular reforms; this, it seems to me, is what Gandhi and Tolstoi saw so clearly and which led them to conclude that the way out of the morass was a near total repudiation of those values of production, of exchange and of consumption.

This is why it seems to me that however convenient it may be to take a particular sphere as our starting point, we dare not confine ourselves to it if we want to avoid being merely ineffectual, and why I think the real area of your concern is not so much with persuading other industrial leaders and workers to emulate the Wollaston example, encouraging and helpful though that may be (for we must surely trust people to see the wisdom of their situation and to apply it in their own way), as to apply your insights to the total Wollaston situation.

You are one of the very few people who have sought to translate into working reality at least one of the elements on which a good society needs to be built. I hope that by seeking to widen the discussion on what Wollaston is doing that we may use the firm foundation you have established there for a new advance which may yet elicit the response we seek.

With warm greetings, Sincerely yours,  
JOHN PAPWORTH

Herbert Read

# The Limits of Permissiveness

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HERE are few people in our time who have reached so great a distinction in so many fields, and been accorded so much honour in each, as Sir Herbert Read. As Director of Routledge and Kegan Paul, he has been the guiding spirit of this well-known English publishing house for thirty years. In Spain he is known for preparing, with the help of Federico and Harriet de Onís, the Cambridge edition of the work of Unamuno. In Latin America, he was responsible for organizing the first great exhibition of South American modern art in Sao Paulo in 1957. And as author of more than fifty books (one of his last being a volume of autobiographical essays: "The Contrary Experience"), he has been an eminent contributor to the cultural texture of our time as a sensitive poet, a lucid political philosopher and, above all, as the most influential art critic of the Twentieth Century.

Indeed, such is the power of his word in this field, in which he has been rivalled only by Ruskin and Baudelaire, that his plea for the understanding of new forms of artistic expression has contributed more to making modern art acceptable than the efforts of any other contemporary critic. And no one has equalled him in elevating the criticism of art into a high form of art in its own right by combining a masterful prose style both with enthusiasm and a perceptive realization of the forces shaping the human condition.

Any new work by Sir Herbert Read will therefore invariably be met with interest. In this case, however, the interest should be even greater than usual if we consider that here the man who, four decades ago, first opened the door to the recognition of modern art by pleading for the removal of the conventional barriers to new forms of expression, should now himself raise the question whether our time has not gone too far; whether there must not be a limit to artistic permissiveness as there is a limit to everything.

LEOPOLD KOHR

Four months after delivering this lecture at the University of Puerto Rico, Sir Herbert Read, then 74, died on June 12, 1968. This lecture, presented on February 1, 1968, is therefore one of the last statements on modern art made by the eminent English critic.

**T**HIS lecture will be concerned with very recent developments in modern art (including literature, but excluding music which I do not feel competent to deal with)—developments that in my opinion are excessive, developments that exceed the limits that define the very concept of art. My intention is not in any sense reactionary. The great experimental artists of the modern epoch—Picasso, Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian in painting; Brancusi, Arp, Moore and Lipchitz in sculpture; Proust, Pound, Joyce and Eliot in literature—these remain our exemplars, pioneers who have established a new basis for the fine arts.

Modernism in art is a very complex phenomenon and our generalizations are more likely to

obscure than to illuminate it. But it can be affirmed that one principle, common to all the exemplary artists I have mentioned and to artists everywhere who are distinctively "modern", is fundamental and cannot be sacrificed without calling into question the whole movement. This is the principle of symbolism as distinct from the principle of realism. The modern artist claims that there is not one level of experience to be presented or re-presented in the work of art, but several, and that some of these levels are even more important than the imitation of phenomena from the outer world.

Subjectivism is, of course, a common feature of the whole romantic tradition in art, but what has been discovered or re-affirmed in our time is



that subjective images have their own laws of being, and can be adequately re-presented only by symbols. The word "symbol", as an American philosopher of art, Richard Bernheimer, has remarked, "is admittedly one of the most protean in the language. But however it is defined (he continues) . . . it clearly suggests a mode of functioning different from that which we attribute to simple likenesses. Transcending the realm of mere visual similarities, all symbols tend to bring us into contact with realities otherwise partly or totally inaccessible".\*

A further refinement of this process of symbolization peculiar to the modern epoch is the discovery that abstract forms (by which we mean non-figurative forms) function as effective symbols, a discovery that has been confirmed by modern psychology.

Such is the philosophic bedrock upon which the modern movement in art rests, and nothing I am going to say will in any way call into question this basic principle.

Movements in modern art, such as the Cubist movement, the Surrealist movement, or the Constructivist movement, are usually regarded as attempts by a group of artists to organize themselves to further their common interests. Since the aims of a movement are not always formulated in words, the bond may be no more than the practice of a certain style. Sometimes the movement is first defined and made conscious of itself by critics; sometimes, as in the Futurist and Surrealist movements, a manifesto is drawn up by the leaders of the movement, and adherents are invited to sign the manifesto and follow its precepts. In the case of the Surrealist movement the discipline was strict, resignations and excommunications were the order of the day. Edicts were issued whenever the social or political situation seemed to demand an expression of the group's solidarity.

Movements in this strict sense did not survive the Second World War. In 1947 an attempt was made to reassemble the forces of Surrealism, but after one more manifestation it finally expired. The so-called movements that have followed—Action Painting in the United States, Pop Art and Op Art—have been pseudo-movements, without stylistic unity, without manifestos, without common action or association of any kind—the creation of journalists, anxious to find a label for phenomena they do not understand, even anxious to create an order where only confusion seems to exist.

If one looks at a survey of the present scene, such as *The Art of Our Time*, a comprehensive volume edited by the distinguished German art critic Will Grohmann in 1966, one notices in the first place that there is no attempt to classify contemporary art according to stylistic categories: the survey is made country by country, and within each country, artist by artist. If one then turns to the numerous and excellent illustrations in the volume, though these are again classified by country, no national characteristics can be detected. Instead there is a multiplicity of styles which cuts across all frontiers, so that an extreme geometrical abstraction may be found in Great Britain, Venezuela, Italy or Japan and an extreme expressionistic abstraction in the United States, Spain, Germany or Argentina. But even these categories are meaningless, for there is nothing in common between the

\* Richard Bernheimer, *The Nature of Representation: A Phenomenological Enquiry*, New York University Press, N. Y., 1961, p. 4.

paintings in each category except a tendency towards one or other extreme of the formal spectrum.

We must next observe that the extremes are, like the North and South Poles, sparsely inhabited: a Ben Nicholson, a Jesús Soto at one extreme, a Karel Appel or a Vedova at the other extreme. I do not imply that there is any identity of style even between Nicholson and Soto; much less between Appel and Vedova. They merely represent extremes in a spectrum that consists of an infinite gradation of individualistic style. Even the "pop" artists, Rauschenberg or Jasper Johns, Lichtenstein or Andy Warhol, when seen in a survey of this kind, cease to have any distinctive style—they merge imperceptibly into styles we have been accustomed to call surrealist or dadaist.

The only quality all these painters of our time have in common is eccentricity, their apparently deliberate avoidance of stylistic unity. Each is an individual speaking a private language, and the total effect is a Babel. But the Babel is not cacophonous: the separate sounds merge into an overall harmony. Since this harmony is not stylistic we must seek some other definition of its total effect.

### Instinctive Gestures

The only common quality left in contemporary art is perceptual coherence. That is to say, however extreme the permissive freedom enjoyed by the artist, an instinctive visual balance seems to assert itself in his work: the muscular action of the painter's hand as it moves over the canvas automatically conforms to laws of perception. The automatic nature of this control is confirmed by the paintings executed by a chimpanzee some years ago under the direction of Dr. Desmond Morris at the London Zoo. I possess two of these paintings and they do not differ in essential characteristics from typical examples of American action painting. This does not imply that the American painters are comparable in their general abilities to chimpanzees, but when they allow their brushes to be guided by instinctive gestures (and they proudly admit that this is what they do) then in that moment they gesticulate in the same manner as the chimpanzee. Of course, the chimpanzee cannot stretch and frame the canvas that has been presented to him: he cannot perform any of the ancillary activities that lead up to and follow the action of human painting. He cannot, for example, enter a contract with an art dealer. But he can perform the gestures necessary to paint a picture of a certain kind, and the perceptual process ensures that this picture is organized into a significant pattern.

A significant pattern—there we have a phrase that may give us a clue to the unity underlying the diversity of the art of our time. That every work of art possesses a pattern—even in spite of the desperate efforts of some painters to avoid anything so commonplace—is evident from the illustrations in Professor Grohmann's book, or from any international exhibition of art such as the Venice Biennale. If we take two extremes illustrated in the same page of *The Art of Our Time*, such as those by Philip Guston and Barnett Newman or those by Obregón and Soto, the extreme contrast of free and disciplined forms cannot disguise the fact that all four paintings are visually coherent—and this is true of colour as well as spatial values. It was long ago demonstrated by the Dada artists that the more deliberately the painter sets out to destroy the traditional conventions of art the more mark-

edly he reveals his innate aesthetic sensibility. The work of Kurt Schwitters is the best demonstration of that paradox.

Is the good Gestalt (as the psychologists call it) good enough to constitute a work of art? I think it is, if by a work of art we mean what Matisse meant by a work of art—"an art of balance, of purity and serenity devoid of troubling or depressing subject-matter, an art which might be for every mental worker. . . like an appeasing influence, like a mental soother, something like a good armchair in which to rest from physical fatigue". Matisse's statement has never been very popular with critics of art: it seems to deprive them of their function, which is to reveal spiritual or social or psychological profundities in art. No doubt such profundities exist, or have existed in the past. But the modern artist has proved that the artist can dispense with them. For him the good Gestalt is good enough, and though this looks suspiciously like the old doctrine of art for art's sake, the Gestalt psychologist will tell you that the intelligence itself, and our whole ability to order experience for conceptual apprehension and assessment, depends on this fundamental perceptual process. From this point of view the work of art becomes, not a reflection of experience, but the foundation of experience, the mental event from which all intellection proceeds. From infinite possibilities of form and colour the eye selects images that have visual significance, and though these images may not be matched in the world of appearance, nevertheless they become part of the world of appearance, in so far as man is given the power to create a visual order out of the confused material presented to his organs of perception.

### Aesthetic Nakedness

The task of the critic remains, unaffected and perhaps clarified by this reduction of the work of art to its aesthetic nakedness. His duty is simply to assess the aesthetic effectiveness of any particular work of art, in relation to human faculties of feeling, emotion and prudence. This last word may cause you some surprise, but the work of art is always created in a social context, and it is legitimate to distinguish between aesthetic permissiveness, which in principle should be total and unrestricted, and a social permissiveness whose limits are determined by reason or direction or consideration for the innocence and well-being of other people. There are many manifestations in the art of today that are vulgar and moronic, and there is no reason why, in the sacred name of liberty, we should condone them.

Perhaps I am only repeating the most important conclusion reached by Albert Camus in *L'homme révolté*, an idea which I emphasized in my introduction to the English translation of this book. It is the idea that excess either kills, or it creates its own "measure" or moderation. To quote Camus: "Moderation is not the opposite of rebellion. Rebellion in itself is moderation, and it demands, defends, and re-creates it throughout history and its eternal disturbances. The very origin of this value guarantees us that it can only be partially destroyed. Moderation, born of rebellion, can only live by rebellion. It is a perpetual conflict, continually created and mastered by the intelligence. It does not triumph either in the impossible or in the abyss. It finds its equilibrium through them. Whatever we may do, excess will always keep

its place in the heart of man, in the place where solitude is found. We all carry within us our places of exile, our crimes and our ravages. But our task is not to unleash them on the world; it is to fight them in ourselves and in others."<sup>1</sup>

Camus is writing of rebellion in its social or political context, but his words are equally true in a cultural context. Here, too, we are in the presence of a paradox: the necessity, in order to establish an equilibrium, of constant revolt. But as Camus indicates, the problem is essentially one for the individual. We should not expose our private paranoia to the world, but seek to master it in art and through art. The alternative is an unrestrained exposure of mental conflicts or mental confusion that in terms of visual or poetic form is aesthetic nihilism.

### Perceptual Coherence

I have already, in a book entitled *The Origins of Form in Art*,<sup>2</sup> dealt with the disintegration of form in modern art, but I would now like to be a little more specific, both in relation to literature and to the visual arts. Accepting perceptual coherence as the universal requirement in a work of art, at what point, in the history of modern art and literature, do we find this requirement set aside?

I will begin with literature and will briefly examine the later work of James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and Ezra Pound.

Joyce claimed that both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were composed on a structural principle: *Ulysses* has strict correspondences with Homer's *Odyssey*: each incident is a reflection of a similar incident in Homer's epic poem. Ezra Pound, writing in French for the *Mercure de France* when *Ulysses* was first published, asserted that as a book it was more formal than the carefully wrought novels of Flaubert: "Not a line, not half-a-line, that does not have an intellectual intensity unparalleled in a book of such length." It has never seemed to me that *Ulysses* needed this kind of justification, and I suspect that Joyce used the *Odyssey*, not so much as a source of inspiration but rather as a structural prop for the images that welled up from his unconscious—a clothes-horse for his unwashed linen. At the same time a painter such as Giorgio di Chirico was using the classical structures of academic painting as a prop for the incoherent visual images that welled up from his unconscious. Any writer or painter knows that inspiration flows more freely if a ready-made channel is available.

At this point I should perhaps ask you to distinguish between the aesthetic and the social aspects of permissiveness in literature. *Ulysses* is a decisive document in this great debate, and as you know in 1934 an American court allowed the plea of aesthetic merit to prevail over the charge of obscenity. That such a distinction can be sustained is obvious to anyone with sufficient knowledge of the history of literature: literature, in this respect, is simply a faithful reflection of the behaviour of "the naked ape", as it is now fashionable to call man. If we want our literature to be decent, we must clothe the ape, that is to say, falsify the reality. What we are discussing now is not the nature of the reality reflected by art, but the manner in which the mirror distorts reflected images.

<sup>1</sup> *The Rebel*, translation by Anthony Bower, London (Hamish Hamilton), 1953, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> *The Origins of Form in Art*. London and New York, 1965, pp. 174-87.



If Joyce's *Ulysses* had not been succeeded by *Finnegans Wake* we might exempt Joyce from the charge of formal incoherence, of lack of *measure*. But in Joyce's own view, and obviously from any serious critical point of view, *Finnegans Wake* is a "logical" sequence to *Ulysses*. *Finnegans Wake*, too, has its prototype—*La Scienza Nuova* of Giambattista Vico, with its cyclical theory of history and its new conception of the relationship between history and imagination. Joyce, we are told, read this book in Trieste and "used it centrally in *Finnegans Wake*".<sup>3</sup> But the structural parallel between these two works is not so close as it is in the case of *Ulysses* and the *Odyssey*. Joyce was inspired by Vico's structural ideas in relation to history, not in relation to the structure of the book he was writing. He took over a cyclical theory of history and applied it very loosely to the art of fiction.

Joyce's brother, Stanislaus, was a fearless and perceptive critic of both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. James owed a lot to his brother—perhaps the very notion of using structural prototypes (Stanislaus had pointed out to him the resemblance between the "Bachanals" of Euripides and Ibsen's "Ghosts").<sup>4</sup> Stanislaus was critical of many aspects of *Ulysses*, but accepted it for its realism, its stylistic energy and beauty. He took the talent for granted: "Dublin lies stretched out before the reader, the minute living incidents start out of the pages. Anybody who reads can hear the people talk and feel himself among them". But he went on to complain that at every turn of this, the longest day on record, there are things to give him pause. "There is many a laugh, but hardly one happy impression. Everything is undeniably as it is represented, yet the 'cumulative effect' as Grant Richards would say, makes him (the reader) doubt truth to be a liar. You try to shift the burden of your melancholy to the reader's shoulders without being yourself relieved. To me you seem to have escaped from the toils of the priest and the king only to fall under the oppression of a monstrous vision of life itself. There is no serenity or happiness anywhere in the whole book".<sup>5</sup>

#### "Witless Wandering"

These are shrewd thrusts, but for the most part they belong to the moralistic criticism I have put on one side. It is far otherwise, however, with Stanislaus' criticism of *Finnegans Wake*. The first instalment he read seemed to him to be "drivelling rigmarole", "or perhaps—a sadder supposition—it is the beginning of softening of the brain". He found it all "unspeakably wearisome", "the witless wandering of literature before its final extinction". These expressions are found in a letter to his brother, and there is no reason to suppose that they were inspired by jealousy; as he was later to show in an autobiographical work *My Brother's Keeper*, Stanislaus was, in spite of latent antagonisms natural in the family situation, full of affection and admiration for James, and for this very reason he criticised his brother with "a startling lucidity of vision".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Richard Ellman. *Letters of James Joyce* (1966), Vol. III, p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Ellman, *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

At any rate, the witless wandering of literature before its final extinction is the phenomenon we are investigating. Though the wandering in *Finnegans Wake* may not be witless, it is certainly "inconsequent, desultory, heterogeneous"—words Stanislaus used to describe *Ulysses*. Thought, he added, "might be anything you like; but it must never be obscure to the thinker. . . . Bloom's woolgatherings as often as not leave the reader guessing."<sup>7</sup> But if this can be said "as often as not" about *Ulysses*, it must be said without qualification about *Finnegans Wake*. The whole work is designed on the principle of the Anglo-Saxon riddle, the more difficult to guess the meaning the better it is. I do not altogether discount the continuous musical phrasing of the writing, the humour, the latent fire of the embedded images. *Finnegans Wake* will survive as a curiosity of literature, the obsessive spinning of a wordmaster. It should rest at that. It is its influence that has been disastrous.

What in Joyce was a masterpiece of sick humour became in his imitators a simple failure to communicate any meaning but the meaninglessness of all forms of communication, and therefore the meaninglessness of social existence, indeed, the meaninglessness of life itself, individual or communal. Samuel Beckett has been the chief instigator in this permissive process—again a process with its moments of tragic or comic vision, but from a stylistic point of view leading to an apotheosis of futility. As one of his characters says: "At no moment do I know what I am talking about, nor of whom, nor of where, nor how, nor why, but I could employ fifty wretches for this sinister operation and still be short of a fifty-first, to close the circuit, that I know, without knowing what it means. The essential is never to arrive anywhere, neither where Manhood is, nor where Worm is, nor where I am, it little matters to what dispensation. The essential is to go on squirming forever at the end of the line, as long as there are water and banks and ravening in heaven or sporting God to plague his creature. . . . I've swallowed three hooks and am still hungry. Hence the howls. What a joy to know where one is, and where one will stay, without being there. Nothing to do but stretch out comfortably on the rack, in the blissful knowledge you are nobody for all eternity".

#### Permissive Logorrhoea

This comes from page 341 of the Molloy trilogy,<sup>8</sup> but it might have come from any of the 418 pages of this book, or any other book of the same author. Again I am teetering on the edge of a moral judgment, but a moral judgment is not my intention. A writer may express a philosophy of futility and still be a great writer: what I criticize in Beckett is a permissive logorrhoea that compels the reader to plunge into a sea of words with so little aesthetic reward. The trouble with works like *Finnegans Wake* and the Molloy trilogy (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*) is that they are superficially exciting but fundamentally boring. The underlying reason is a simple one: literature, from Homer to Henry James, has been essentially a dialogue, a dialogue between the author and the "dear reader". With the invention of the "interior monologue", literature became an undirected stream of consciousness, uncontrolled by any intention or desire

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> Calder, London, 1959.

to communicate to an auditor. Now the undirected stream of consciousness, whether in the related dream or in simulated narrative, is inevitably boring, simply because it lacks dialogic structure, which is a device evolved by the tradition of art for the effective exchange of meaning. Without this dialogic structure, the reader's attention wanders: he becomes indifferent to what is being said.

A distinction must be made here between the interior monologue as developed by Joyce and Beckett, and those various methods of representing the inner consciousness of characters in fiction which are common devices in the literature of the past. Erich Auerbach, in the last chapter of *Mimesis*, distinguishes between the unipersonal and the multipersonal representation of consciousness, and he shows how both methods, separated or combined, have been used by authors such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf to create an illusion of realism. Auerbach does not discuss Joyce at length, but he suggests that the technique of "a multiple reflection of consciousness and of multiple time strata would seem to be employed (in *Ulysses*) more radically than anywhere else, and yet the book unmistakably aims at a symbolic synthesis of the theme of 'Everyman' ". Auerbach admits that the book can produce a very strong immediate impression on sensitive readers, but really to understand it, he suggests, is not an easy matter, "for it makes severe demands on the reader's patience and learning by its dizzying whirl of motifs, wealth of words and concepts, perpetual playing upon their countless associations, and the ever rearoused but never satisfied doubt as to what is ultimately hidden behind so much apparent arbitrariness".<sup>9</sup>

If so much doubt can be expressed about the method of representing consciousness in Joyce's *Ulysses* we may legitimately suppose that Auerbach would have found the technique as it developed to its extreme disintegration of external realities in *Finnegans Wake* totally unacceptable. It may be argued that we have no right to assume that "the representation of reality" is the exclusive aim of literature and art, and indeed I have already admitted, at the beginning of this lecture, that the representation of a superreality may be the legitimate aim of the artist. It is not the nature or extent of reality that is in question, but the method of communicating reality of any kind to an audience. Both Joyce and Beckett are obviously concerned with the nature of reality—concerned to the point of desperation and paranoia—but they dissolve the action, the continuum of events, until the medium they use, words, no longer communicates a meaning, symbolic or objective.

I would like to suggest that from this point of view an interesting comparison may be made between the style and structure of Beckett's prose and those linear designs which decorate the great Celtic illuminated manuscripts and jewellery of the seventh to ninth centuries in Ireland—the Book of Kells, for example, or the Gospel at St. Gall. The same phenomenon is found in early Nordic art generally. Here is a description of it by a German art historian (Lamprecht):

"There are certain simple motives whose interweaving and commingling determines the character of this ornament. At first there is only the dot, the line, the ribbon; later the

curve, the circle, the spiral, the zigzag, and an S-shaped decoration are employed. Truly, no great wealth of motives! But what variety is attained by the manner of their employment! Here they run parallel, then entwined, now latticed, now knotted, now plaited, then again brought through one another in a symmetrical checker of knotting and plaiting. Fantastically confused patterns are thus evolved, whose puzzle asks to be unravelled, whose convolutions seem alternately to seek and avoid each other, whose component parts, endowed as it were with sensibility, captivate sight and sense in passionately vital movement."

Wilhelm Worringer, who quotes this passage in his *Form in Gothic*<sup>10</sup> notes that Lamprecht's words expressly bear witness to the impression of passionate movement and vitality, a questing, restless tumult in this confused medley of lines. "Since line is lacking in all organic timbre, its expression of life must, as an expression, be divorced from organic life. . . . The pathos of movement which lies in this vitalised geometry. . . . forces our sensibility to an effort unnatural to it. When once the natural barriers of organic movement have been overthrown, there is no more holding back; again and again the line is broken, again and again checked in the natural direction of its movement, again and again it is forcibly prevented from peacefully ending its course, again and again diverted into fresh complications of expression, so that, tempered by all these restraints, it exerts its energy of expression to the uttermost until at last, bereft of all possibilities of natural pacification, it ends in confused, spasmodic movements, breaks off unappeared into the void or flows senselessly back upon itself".<sup>11</sup>

#### Verbal Ornament

These sentences, which eloquently and exactly describe the character of early northern ornament, seem to me to serve as an equally eloquent and exact description of Beckett's prose style in *Molloy* and later works—and both Joyce and Beckett are Celtic writers. But while we can follow this linear movement with pleasure and even excitement when the medium is visual, the same method used verbally demands a concentration and tolerance to which we are not accustomed in literature, and in my opinion never can become accustomed. Celtic ornament was used to decorate the Gospels—a very simple narrative. In *Finnegans Wake*, *Molloy*, *How it is* and other works of this kind, the ornament invades the narrative, and the line of this fused expression "breaks off unappeared into the void or flows senselessly back upon itself".

I should perhaps at this point say something about "the new French school" of novelists that acknowledges the decisive influence of Beckett—the anti-novel of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute and Marguerite Duras—but I shall refrain, partly because I have always found it difficult to read their works, but mainly because the criticisms I have made of Joyce and Beckett apply to them equally. Always a vital word-play, a glimmering imagery, a sense of despair or loneliness or futility, but no forward movement, no organic growth, no

<sup>9</sup> *Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Trans Willard Task, New York, Doubleday Anchor Books (1957), p. 481.

<sup>10</sup> English translation, London, 1927, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 42.



dramatic tension, no resolution of a tragic destiny such as we find in the great literature of the past. The creative imagination of the poet sinks in a sea of words.

I shall not deal with other examples of logorrhoea that have followed Joyce and Beckett as inevitably as the little fishes follow a receding tide, but instead say a few words about Ezra Pound in this same connection. Again I would not like to be misunderstood. Pound is a great poet, perhaps the greatest of our time. But his work, as Yeats already per-

*The concept of the extreme avant-garde in literature is one which in spite (or because) of its minority appeal and propagation periodically receives attention in disproportion to its significance. We all know what language means when transmitted in comprehensible terms. What we don't incontrovertibly know is how language works; and it's this aspect of language that seems to concern the most avant of our present supposed avant-garde.*

*A hypothetical representative of this breed would argue his case something like this: 'I reject the meaningful for the meaningless simply because I assume that anything possessing meaning is facile and irrelevant to my concept of language.' Proof for statements of this order is easy to find. Here is William Burroughs writing on Jeff Nuttall's new novel, Pig: 'The writer does not yet know what words are and deals only in abstracts from the source points of words . . . Jeff Nuttall is one of the few writers today who actually handles his medium.' He concludes: '[he] touches his words.' With statements like this, we are already bordering on the meaningless.*

*It is difficult to quarrel with any writer's attempt to present through meaninglessness just what he finds meaningful (presuming this does not beg meaningless questions). But writers such as Nuttall and Burroughs are like the Macluhanite who advocates the redundancy of the printed word by publishing a book. What they want to say cannot be conveyed in words, however 'touched'. They know it and we know it, but they go on publishing: 'I arched my raw pork satin vast ethereal pearl thighs flesh rolled in tusk moons a dark scribble round head week old baby unpretentious schoolgirl mumbling skinned rat SO NEAR angel drill pig little . . .' And so on. Words have meanings only when they accompany other words in a particular order. Chaos in itself is neither good nor bad. . . .*

from a review by Barry Cole in  
*The Spectator* 26 July, 1969.

ceived in his Introduction to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, in spite of its nobility—"at moments more style, more deliberate nobility and the means to convey it than in any contemporary poet known to me. . . is constantly interrupted, broken, twisted into nothing by its direct opposite,

nervous obsession, nightmare, stammering confusion. . ." The words were written by Yeats in September, 1936, at which time only the first 41 Cantos of Pound's major work had been published. Since that year the stammering confusion has grown worse with every successive batch of cantos, until in the latest cantos the incoherence is absolute.

Stanislaus Joyce's "sadder supposition", a softening of the brain, is almost inescapable in Pound's as in Joyce's case, and one can only contemplate the spectacle with awe and compassion. But this stammering confusion is the characteristic of Pound's work that is now imitated by young poets who wish to be considered of his school. Of Pound's great qualities—his acute sense of musical cadence, his vivid imagery, his poetic vision and skill, these later poets show no trace. They mirror a great confusion and call it the modern style.

I must now turn all too late in this lecture to the visual arts, for the process of progressive disintegration is even more evident in painting and sculpture than in literature. Again we have a number of artists whose greatness cannot be questioned—at least, not by me. But their greatness lies in the past: either they are dead or they have reached an advanced age in which their work has become repetitive. The great creative period lasted from about 1905 to about 1955. In those fifty years all the major painters and sculptors of the modern movement had completed their characteristic work. I do not imply that the work done by artists such as Picasso, Miró or Henry Moore since 1955 is in any sense necessarily inferior to their earlier work: I am merely asserting that the peak of their creative achievement had been reached before mid-century and that what follows is an expansion or necessary development of their established styles.

#### Arbitrary Deviation

The artists who have come to maturity since the end of the Second World War (1945) are desperately striving to escape from the influence of the masters of the modern movement, but the more original they try to be, the more they are compelled to deviate arbitrarily from the prototypes. There is no stylistic element in action-painting, in pop-art or in op-art, that was not present in some phase of cubism, dadaism, surrealism or expressionism. I must emphasize the word "stylistic", for it is easy to be original if one abandons the sensibility and discipline that constitute the essence of art. Art, in any meaningful sense of the word, must have three essential qualities: a formal correspondence to emotion or feeling, clarity (what that great contemporary critic Wilson Knight calls "a swift forward-flowing transparency"),<sup>12</sup> and a vital imagination, which Coleridge defined as the struggle "to idealize and to unify". The visual arts especially must exemplify this last quality, but it is the quality singularly lacking in the fragmented painting and sculpture of recent years.

Again we must discriminate. Kandinsky, who occupies in relation to modern painting an initiatory influence comparable to Joyce's in modern writing, has been grossly misunderstood. His principle that the work of art is an abstract expression of internal necessity has been applied without its

<sup>12</sup> In describing Swift's prose style: *Poets of Action*, London (Methuen), 1967, p. 164.

corollary, which is, that what is necessary must also be significant to the spectator, must therefore be composed in a form that can be assimilated by the spectator. Kandinsky's final insistence is on composition—melodic composition and symphonic composition. Composition is defined as "an expression of a slowly formed inner feeling, tested and worked over repeatedly and almost pedantically", and he looks forward, in the final paragraph of his pioneer work, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, to "a time of reasoned and conscious composition, in which the painter will be proud to declare his work constructional—this in contrast to the claim of the impressionists that they could explain nothing, that their art came by inspiration".<sup>13</sup>

#### Tough or Ambiguous

No convincing classification of the painting and sculpture that has proliferated in Western Europe, the United States and Japan since the end of the Second World War is possible. Terms such as abstract impressionism or abstract expressionism are not distinctive enough; terms such as "pop-art" or "op-art" are inexact and unhistorical. It is a confused situation in which one is conscious of new sources of imagery and content, and of an almost desperate attempt to be tough or ambiguous. An English critic whom I greatly respect, David Thompson, writing in 1964 of the "new generation" of British painters, uses these two words to explain the aesthetic aims and style of these artists, and defines toughness as "a desire to play it cool, be objective, un sentimental, detached and at the same time to pull no punches, be firm, decisive, hard". Ambiguity is defined as "a common enough element in all modern art, though not with the new value set on puns, puzzles, and double meanings. . . The ambiguity goes beyond the sort of vision that anthropomorphized landscapes. It is not the metaphor that equates two known images, so much as a central uncertainty that leaves interpretation open. And beyond that, it suggests wit, or a puzzle, or a game, as the only terms on which interpretation can rest".<sup>14</sup>

The parallel with the confused, spasmodic character of early Nordic art to which I have already compared the later writings of Joyce and Beckett will again be obvious. The same ambiguity prevails in both kinds of contemporary art. One of the English artists in the New Generation exhibition to which I have just referred, Paul Huxley, is quoted as saying that "Paintings today should be about question-making, not story-telling ('it happened like this'), or recording ('I was there and it looked like this')". The sermon and the conducted tour have been dealt with and painting can only be enlightened by posing questions and making reconnaissance trips rather than supplying answers. We become more wise by not knowing".

#### A Gesture of Nescience

As a paradoxical, even a mystical saying, this is very interesting, but the alternatives implied—

<sup>13</sup> *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. New York (Wittenborn), 1967, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> David Thompson in the catalogue of "The New Generation" Exhibition, London, Whitechapel Gallery, March-May, 1964, p. 8.

question-making or story-telling—evade the central issue in art, which is the creation of a symbolic form, the ability "to idealize and to unify" the confusion of the world. Clarity, which I suggested as another essential quality in the work of art, is deliberately sacrificed. Again it is not a question of upholding traditional values against revolutionary values: it is a question of communication, of a dialogue between artist and spectator. If instead of a symbol of feeling the spectator is offered a gesture of nescience, of "not knowing", then he can only turn away in indifference.

In conclusion I return to my beginning, to Camus' plea for "measure" or moderation, for the moderation created throughout history by rebellion. "Moderation, born of rebellion, can only live by rebellion". The artist, like any other citizen, must protest when political liberty is threatened or a censorship imposed on the freedom of thought. His moral behaviour is determined by the ancient precept: beauty is truth, truth beauty, though for "beauty" we might now substitute another concept, such as unity. Beauty is not necessarily the aim of the contemporary artist. But if he substitutes another principle, such as vitality, he must still accept this other necessity, which I have called unity, the community that makes dialogue possible. Contemporary nihilism in art is simply a denial of art itself, a rejection of its social function. The refusal to recognize the limits of art is the reason why as critics we must withhold our approval from all those manifestations of permissiveness characterized by incoherence, insensibility, brutality and ironic detachment. The exercise of such judgement calls for the utmost critical rectitude—for the maintenance of the supremacy of aesthetic criteria—if we are not to fall into the old errors of judging art according to values that belong to another sphere of life—religious, moral, hedonistic or technological. What we seek is "a renaissance beyond the limits of nihilism". We cannot yet determine the outlines of such a renaissance, but we know that they must remain within the limits of art as I have defined them. ●

#### SARVA SEVA SANGH MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

(Editor: Radhakrishnan)

Contains latest news of the Sarvodaya Movement in India—Bhoodan-Gramdan and Shanti Sena Movements; with articles by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan and other Bhoodan workers.

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"There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwelling, with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But alas! we do like cowbirds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built."

Henry David Thoreau, "Walden", 1854

"Thousands of slaves were sacrificed in the building of the pyramids of Egypt. Today we are our own task-masters, dedicating our lives to erecting pyramids of material achievement. Immersed, as we are, in heaping Pelion on Ossa we pay heed to the latent antagonisms between the demands of an advanced technological civilisation and the demands of man's instinctual nature. In the ruthless transformation of our planet home—the only planet, incidentally, we can comfortably live on—we are concurrently destroying much that man's nature doted on in the past: a sense of intimately belonging, of being part of a community in which each man had his place; a sense of being close to nature, of being close to the soil and to the beasts of the field that served him; a sense of being a part of the eternal and unhurried rhythm of life.

"It would be as untrue to assert that in all past civilisations a feeling of security and contentment were experienced by all families as it would be idle to deny that many suffered from hardship, disease, and poverty. But wherever people lived comfortably, whether in town or village, or farm, their satisfactions were rooted ultimately in their closeness to each other and to the natural order of their lives."

E. J. Mishan,  
"The Costs of Economic Growth", 1967

## Quotes

"The life of man is apt to appear minuscule and ephemeral beside the vast span of mankind, just as the conception of mankind as a whole is apt to appear an empty abstraction in the eyes of the individual man. Thus it is essential to build a bridge between these two extremes: to create and sustain some intermediate machinery—groups and groups within groups—which is accessible to all and can exert its influence on man and mankind alike."

Danilo Dolci,  
"A New World in the Making", 1964

"If the individual does not feel himself 'his own man' in the petty affairs of everyday life or in planning his own immediate future, how is he to feel himself master of the great issues of peace and war? Enormous numbers of people still lack faith in their own ability to solve their fundamental problems. They have no means of knowing that their development depends on themselves. Any form of activity, therefore, that will give them experience of their own potential creative capacity becomes a veritable school for leaders in any world which aims at its own healthy development.

"It is not enough to rely for such a result on the good-will of those in power; whether they be political, religious or cultural leaders. By themselves, such heads can achieve nothing: they have neither the knowledge nor the capacity. The man in command, even when he is doing his very utmost to see that the individual enjoys the best chances in life, cannot escape two dangers: to think he knows what he does not know, and to see as uniform things which are not, in reality, uniform at all."

Danilo Dolci,  
"A New World in the Making", 1964



"Men like Jefferson and Lincoln believed that every great development or change in history begins with advocacy. The change may not come about overnight; it may be stonily resisted. But there is also a natural human response to the essentials of purposeful survival. The individual who speaks to this response will be speaking the most important language on earth. He may not be able by himself to create a consensus, but he can communicate his concern. He can draw encouragement from the knowledge that the great ideas of history were originally dependent on individual advocacy and individual response."

Norman Cousins,  
"In Place of Folly", 1961

"Mankind has worked for ages with hand implements. Machine tools are a novelty, recently introduced into the realm of human experience. There can be no question but that machines have more power than humans. Also there can be no question but that they have watered down or annihilated many of the most ancient, most fascinating and creative human skills, broken up established institutions, pushed masses of 'hands' into factories and herded droves of anonymous footloose wanderers from urban slum to urban slum. Only the historian of the future will be able to assess the net effect of the machine age on human character and on man's joy in being and his will to live."

Helen and Scott Nearing,  
"Living the Good Life", 1954

"What is the good of life if its chief element, and that which must always be its chief element, is odious? No, the only true economy is to arrange so that your daily labour shall be itself a joy."

Edward Carpenter,  
"Non-Governmental Society", 1911

"... the scientist will seldom question the effects, immediate or remote, of his contribution to human welfare. He may assert that increased knowledge of any sort is its own justification. But he is more likely to accept as a self-evident proposition that any addition to knowledge entails an extension of man's power over the universe, an extension of choice and, therefore, an improvement of his lot on earth. And should man not be made happier thereby, should he destroy himself in a nuclear war or corrupt himself utterly, then this surely is the fault of society, not of the scientists—a rather forlorn dichotomy since the scientist no less than the layman is the victim of the misuse of science. Indeed, the response of the scientist to any failure or misapplication of science is the by-now familiar one of urging the application of yet more science. If the use in agriculture of certain chemical discoveries is found to have wiped out several species of beings, or to have caused some significant upset in the ecological equilibrium of a region, the scientist can be counted on to remark that more research is imperative. If men and women become increasingly maladjusted in this rapidly changing world of ours, this again calls for more research. Psychologists, neurologists, sociologists, sexologists, will be eager to diagnose these new and fascinating infirmities, themselves the product of technology that threatens to stifle society. The more calamitous the consequences, the greater the challenge. An uncertain picture emerges of applied science carefully sewing us up in some places while accidentally ripping us apart in others."

E. J. Mishan,  
"The Costs of Economic Growth", 1967



## Good Ford! Good Maud!

COMMENTING in the *Guardian* on the Maud Report, Professor D. V. Donnison of the London School of Economics recalled the bitter night of January, 1953, when a tidal wave swept over the Essex coast devastating the homes of 20,000 people and drowning more than 100. Within hours, local authorities aided by local citizens had set up emergency facilities, arranged for sleeping accommodation in schools, organized medical and information services to attend the injured and to notify parents of the safety of their children, "commandeered food, set up control centers and waived all the usual formalities for approval of expenditure." (italics mine).

But when it came to the distribution of compliments during the days following the disaster, what was the order in which the Home Secretary bestowed his praise for the work performed? "Let me begin with the Government," he said. Then, in proper hierarchical descent, he cited the Ministers and their departments "for co-ordinating the plans"; the armed forces and sundry statutory bodies for unspecified "valuable services"; and finally, as an afterthought, while the eyes of the higher echelons were already transfixed by heavenly visions of knighthood—the local authorities, the only people who had really done anything!

The reason why local authorities figured last in the list of ministerial acknowledgements and in the same way were put first in the Maud Report's list of fusion, integration, and outright abolition is the general conviction that, if something comes out right at the bottom, it is because of the co-ordinating genius at the top, and if something comes out wrong, it is because of inefficiency at the bottom. And since for a long time a great deal has come out wrong at the bottom, it is not surprising that the Maud Commission should have arrived at the seemingly logical conclusion that the ground level of Britain's power structure must be revised in the direction of fewer and larger government units if the mounting problems of modern mass existence are to be solved.

There can be no doubt that the present local authorities are not equipped with the facilities for dealing with the mass problems of our age. But considering that mass problems arise by their very nature from the excessive scale of modern integrated social existence, it would seem that the answer is not to put them further beyond the reach of local governments by gathering up their constituencies into still larger units. This would merely increase their scale to the point where even central authorities can no longer cope with them. The answer lies in the reduction of both the number of intercommunal involvements and the size of governmental units to levels where local government can once again effectively deal with them. This alone can solve the one problem that overpowers our age: The problem of mass and scale.

Thus, what enabled Essex authorities to cope with their tidal disaster was not the ministries of Whitehall placing the nation's facilities at their disposal. It was the fact that, for once, "all the usual formalities" tying them to superior orders and bureaucratic co-ordinating plans were "waived." For once, left to themselves as a result of the chains of command having been broken by catastrophe, the local authorities discovered that their small unit had enough resources to cope with almost any local situation, however cataclysmic. For what makes problems soluble is, in the last analysis, not co-operation, supervision, or assistance from great centres of power; what solves them is the smallness of their scale which brings them down to the capabilities of ordinary mortals. And since the scale of social problems takes its measure from the size of the political unit they afflict, it follows that the answer to ineffective government is not fusion or integration, but the very opposite: division, (as the Romans discovered in their day), and contraction to manageable proportions.

### Nonproblematic Dimensions

Indeed, when contraction is carried far enough, social problems tend to vanish altogether, as the *Guardian* reported of the tiny Yorkshire community of Markenfield. Though that parish has a council, it "never meets because there is nothing to discuss." And though it has provided for an 8d. parish rate, this "goes unlevied because there is nothing to spend it on." With an electorate of 7 and an area of 600 acres, its nonproblematic dimensions yielded so much leisure that Markenfield became in fact, the first local authority to read and digest the lengthy Maud Report, as well as to reject unanimously its proposal to give the parish 'greatness' by submerging it in the much larger unitary authority of Leeds, which would be set up on 495 square miles, and have a population of 840,000 plus problems worthy of inclusion in textbooks galore.

This does not mean that Markenfield is the ideal size for a government unit. Nor does it mean that the present local government structure of England functions satisfactorily. It does nothing of the sort. What it means is that its inefficiency is due to the failing not of small local authorities but of the bundled-up hugeness of central government machinery which ties the hands of the local authorities—who have familiarity with their problems but no power over their own resources—by multiplying as well as lengthening the command channels linking them with distant central bodies; these have power over the resources but are prevented from gaining familiarity by the enormity of scale and distances that they have built up around them through the widening involvements of integration. No computer, educa-

tion, or good will can compensate for this loss of familiarity which results from the disintegrating effect of the dense atmospheric bubble surrounding an overextended society on the swarm of guidelines issuing from the center like brilliant shooting stars incandescently passing through press and television, which burn out long before they reach the local authorities waiting in darkness for their arrival on the ground.

So what is wrong is not that local government units are too little, but that central government is too big and too far away from the ground level of action. What is in need of reform is therefore the top, not the bottom of Britain's government structure—something that would not readily occur to study commissions called into existence by authorities sitting at the top. Sensing nevertheless that something is wrong with the centralized rather than the local structure of power, most of the recently advanced reform plans, including the Maud Report, actually do make provision for a measure of devolution or decentralization by proposing the setting up of a number of regional authorities intermediate in both size and function, or of city-regions to whose authorities a great number of central powers could be delegated.

### Signals from the Top

But again, delegation of power serves not decentralized but centralized authority. Indeed, this kind of decentralization has always been the most ingenious trick of centralization. The decentralization of the French duchies—Brittany, Burgundy, Alsace—did not diffuse French power among the newly created departments but concentrated it in the fearful hands of Napoleon. The decentralization of England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland into counties was the device that located the bulk of power not in the counties but in London. And Hitler's decentralization did not make the *Gaue* more efficient in the discharge of their local tasks but more responsive to the signals received from the top. This was the reason why the genuine regionalists voted against De Gaulle in the recent plebiscite that seemed to offer them a degree of autonomy. They rightly felt that centrally inspired regionalism would increase the power of De Gaulle, not of the regions.

However, if devolution, decentralization, city-regions would actually improve the efficiency of centralized authority, why should one not make use of them as tools for solving the problems of states such as Great Britain which are centralized anyway? The reason for this lies in the law of diminishing administrative productivity, according to which a device can be exploited only up to a certain point. It worked well in Britain at the time of Sir Francis Bacon, who was the first to propose this sort of centralization in the guise of decentralization when he elaborated the country's county structure. But since then, the population has grown from 5 to 55 million, thereby widening the administrative distance between governors and governed both through the lengthening effect the growth of intervening multitudes has on channels of communication and control, and the jamming effect their increased mobility has on the facilities of transport. At the enormously enlarged scale of modern social involvements, any further centralization-through-decentralization will therefore no longer solve the problems of centralized government as it did at earlier times, but aggravate them,

just as more cars will no longer speed up traffic in a highly motorized society, but slow it down even if further roads are added. (As a U.S. Senate subcommittee discovered: in 1907, the average speed of horse-drawn vehicles in Chicago was 11.5 miles per hour. In 1966, the average speed of motor vehicles was 8.5 miles per hour).

Now if the modern problem is less one of the inefficiency of government than of the inefficiency of scale which increases in proportion to the size of the integrated political unit over which government rules, and if it is due not to faults in the process of centralization but the blurred vision resulting from the excessive lengthening of administrative distances, the answer lies obviously not in the now no longer possible further improvement of communication channels but in the contraction of political units, and the shortening of the administrative distance separating top from bottom authorities.

But how can this be brought about? The simplest way would be through the transfer to the Maud Report's prospective regions not of delegated but of sovereign power, or through the transubstantiation of soul-less city-regions, bathed in the pallor of reflected light, into city-states radiating their own luminosity and vitality. In other words, the power structure most suitable to cope with the mounting size complexities of overcrowded, overextended modern mass societies would seem to come very close to what Gwnfor Evans, the leader of Welsh Nationalism, had in mind when he suggested for Great Britain: not a decentralized unitary state as envisioned by Maud, but a loose *Britannic Confederation* in which the main powers are vested not at the top, which is too distant, nor at the bottom which is too small, but in a number of sovereign states in the middle, following their own path in most respects, while amiably co-operating under a confederal umbrella when it rains.

Now, I hear of course the chorus of objections. One cannot turn back the clock. Have you ever tried? Nothing seems easier than that. *Smallness is inefficient*. Professor Donnison recalled the Essex disaster to prove the opposite. *Bigness is the thing*. Maud and Ford are juxtaposed in the title of this article to illustrate that bigness is indeed the thing—the thing that paralyzes the effectiveness not only of large governments but also of large corporations. In both cases the power concentration at the top tends to become socially, though not politically or profitwise, largely useless because, as a result of the failure of communication through media so extended that they no longer transmit the message, it cannot be properly recycled to the groundlevel authorities.

### From Maud to Ford

But let me come from the general to the concrete; from Maud to Ford; from political theory to personal experience, by way of a practical example.

Persuaded by Her Majesty's most engaging consul in Puerto Rico, and anxious to contribute my modest share to the solution of the grievous balance-of-payments problem of a Britain which I love in all its aspects—Welsh, English, Scottish, Irish—I acquired a Ford *Escort Super* when I arrived in London in August, 1968, on the assurance that the company had the most marvellous network of the equivalent of local government



units—garages and service stations. So, what could be safer?

As it turned out, everything must have been safer than my Ford *Escort Super*. Maybe they thought I would be out of the country in two weeks instead of 12 months. The motor was lovely. But a car does not live by its motor alone. Everything else seemed to get haywire almost from the beginning, and has stayed haywire to this day, 11 months later, two weeks before I am supposed to take it to Puerto Rico.

First the heater heated up when switched off, not exactly a boon in the tropical delights of Puerto Rico; then the speedometer broke down (the only item for which I have actually had a replacement installed); next the undercarriage showed signs of excessive rust, to say nothing of an unaccountable bump, and then the rust caused the Ford identification badges to drop off.

These were mere preliminaries. Above cruising speed the car would wobble and vibrate alarmingly, and then begin to pitch and roll as though in an Atlantic gale; the tyres were worn out after a mere 6,000 miles, and mysterious screeches began to emanate from the gear box, which, with the 'malice of inanimate things' always subsided when tested in the garage. The only bright spot in all this was the warm comradeship of despair that developed between Mr. Dye, the local service manager, and myself, as a result of the frequency of our contacts.

Be that as it may, no inspector has examined my car to this day, two weeks before my departure in spite of the pressure put on the company by Mr. Dye and, since March, at last also by myself; and in spite of the testimony of the West Wales Garage transmitted orally, and of the Ford Garage in Oberndorf, Bavaria, which examined the car in May, 1969, with electronic equipment and reported on its unsatisfactory condition and road behaviour in writing. To this day no one has bothered to inspect the car even though I brought it specially to the majestic centre of the Ford Government in Regent Street, London, where I had acquired it. All it was given was a one hundred-second sighting by H. E. (His Excellency, I presume) Bedford, Ford's Minister of Export Services, who appeared to be thoroughly satisfied, to judge by his subsequent letter of June 23, 1969, and who declared it safe on the strength of the *Escort's* splendid performance while it was parked.

However, this was not all. I lost my patience at last when, returning from my call on Mr. Bedford, Mr. Dye told me after another test run, just as I was beginning to think I was imagining these things: "You know, your right front wheel is coming off." Seeing the blood draining from my face, my old friend immediately assured me that it was "not quite as bad as that: the wheel has become loose," and demonstrated it by moving the wheel a good three inches in either direction while the rest of the car, including the steering and other front wheel remained completely still. Assuming with my layman's logic that a wheel that becomes loose by driving, will become more loose by more driving, I calculated that disaster would have struck this Ford-approved "safety" car in another 1,000 miles. When I thereupon asked an Aberystwyth policeman whether his office could determine the dangerous condition of my *Escort Super* (to remind you once more of the name), so that I might at last find redress, he advised me that they were authorized to do this only after an accident, not before. I thought

enough was enough and I would rather donate it to the blow-up activities of the Free Wales Army than endanger mine and other peoples' lives by exporting it to Puerto Rico.

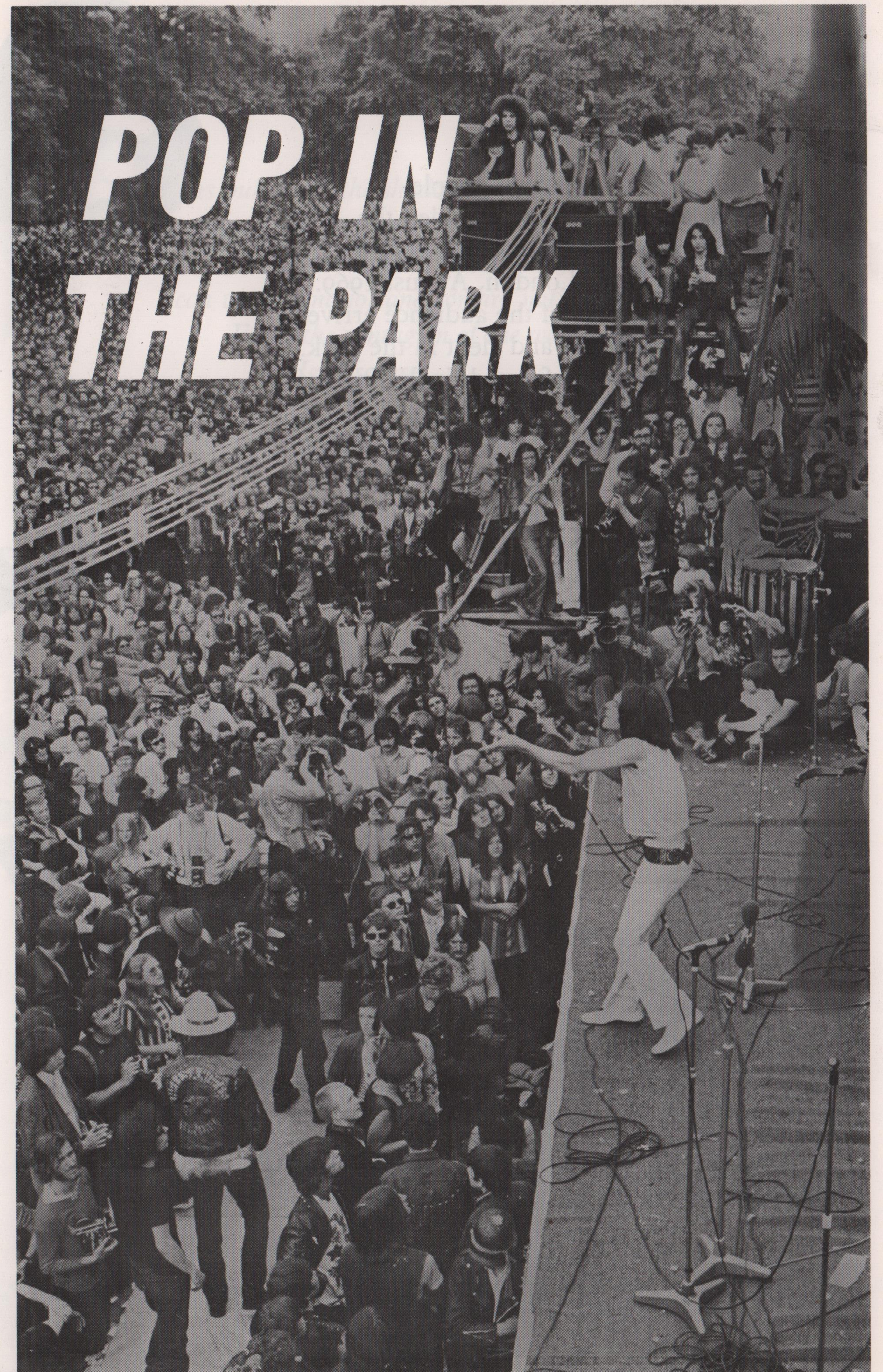
At this point, the story of Ford begins to blend with the story of Maud. In neither case is there any incompetence at the level of local authorities, not in the case of government, nor in the case of big corporations. The local policeman could have determined the safety or unsafety of my *Escort Super* within minutes, as Mr. Dye could have returned the car to the factory as unmendable, or repaired its defects in a day. But neither had the authority. Nor is there any malevolence at the top. Mr. Bedford, in fact, amiably invited me to a cup of tea, and even arranged for a refund on my Bavarian bill (£4), and sundry other things. What they lack is information for applying their authority to intelligent action. For though communication is still physically operating, messages received under conditions of so overextended a scale become so garbled up that matters of urgency such as tidal waves or dangerous cars simply can no longer be dealt with.

### Stylized Generalities

This is the point when things begin to turn upside down; when individual despair is wiped out by stylized generalities; when the Home Secretary arranges for the co-ordination of plans rather than authorizing their translations into deed; when a local garage reporting on an unsatisfactory car is hushed up by the declaration from the top that "no unsatisfactory car leaves a Ford factory"; or when I, after 11 months of nerve-wrecking experience with wobbling, swaying, vibration, and wheel-alignment trouble requiring monthly intervention (at all times rendered free of charge by Mr. Dye) stand sternly corrected not by deed but by letter in which Mr. Bedford informs me of the "true situation" as collected from the very man who informed me of the opposite.

"Your front wheel bearings," the letter says, "require adjustment, which is routine maintenance (*once a month?*) and for your account (*I was not charged*). It does not in any way indicate poor maintenance or a manufacturing or material defect with your car. . . My own inspection (*of a duration of less than two minutes during which two threadbare tyres were viewed along with some oversprayed rust spots while the car was neither touched, moved, nor driven*) and the dealer's subsequent report on it after our service representative (*who did not show up once in my 11 months of ceaseless complaints*) examined it confirms that there is no reason to suppose that your car (*my only unsatisfactory vehicle in 40 years of accident-free driving*) is unsafe. We consider your fears in this respect completely unfounded (*Thanks*). Indeed, we would fail in our responsibilities to the motoring public as a whole, if we were to allow you to use an unsafe vehicle." (*Trumpets*).

After this, I presume, Mr. Bedford will be accorded a decoration from Ford's Home Secretary or Prime Minister; Mr. Dye of the local authority will be reprimanded; but what am I supposed to do in the face of such a resounding declaration of responsibility "to the motoring public as a whole" but not to me individually, other than propose to both Maud and Ford that what must be reformed in all over-extended establishments is the inefficiency at the top not at the bottom? Sing: God save our gracious Ford? ●

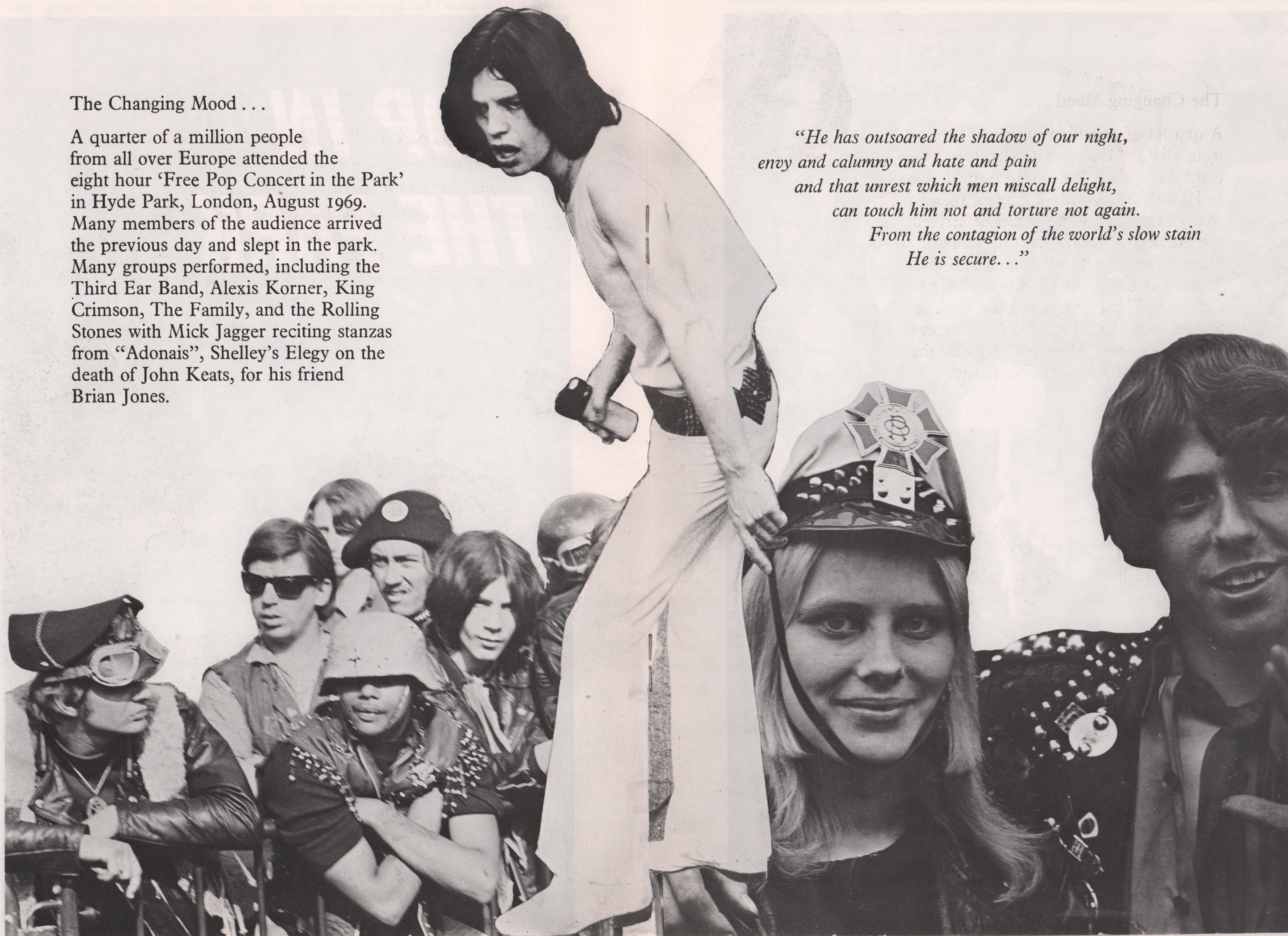




The Changing Mood . . .

A quarter of a million people from all over Europe attended the eight hour 'Free Pop Concert in the Park' in Hyde Park, London, August 1969. Many members of the audience arrived the previous day and slept in the park. Many groups performed, including the Third Ear Band, Alexis Korner, King Crimson, The Family, and the Rolling Stones with Mick Jagger reciting stanzas from "Adonais", Shelley's Elegy on the death of John Keats, for his friend Brian Jones.

*"He has outsoared the shadow of our night,  
envy and calumny and hate and pain  
and that unrest which men miscall delight,  
can touch him not and torture not again.  
From the contagion of the world's slow stain  
He is secure. . ."*







# Healthy Development

BY way of introduction, a short report from East Africa:—

The Dutch manager of the textile plant received me with the greatest courtesy and not at all with the suspicion and irritated resentment I had half expected. "Another official visitor," he might well have thought, "to steal my time and ask more or less irrelevant questions." And, of course, I was going to ask plenty of questions.

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

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

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

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

"Yes, terrible".

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

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

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

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

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

"About £1½ million".

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

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

He must have noticed my astonishment.

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

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

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

"What was their reasoning?"

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

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

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

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

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

## The Geographical Factor

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

The free play of economic forces invariably favours the urban as against the rural areas, the big towns as against the small. It tends to produce the triple disease of

mass migration into cities,  
mass unemployment, and  
the danger of famine.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

### Ideal Structures

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

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

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

It must be emphasized that there are no master-key solutions to the problem of healthy development. Gigantic schemes, whether in agriculture, industry, communications, or even in education, may seem attractive in theory but are invariably disastrous in practice. The key to success is not mass production but production by the masses. Any purely economic assessment of a proposed new activity is bound to be misleading, unless the poli-

tical, sociological, and geographical requirements and prevailing conditions are clearly stated and accepted as terms of reference. The economic calculus by itself always tends to favour the large project as against the small; the urban project as against the rural; the capital-intensive project as against the labour-intensive, because the task of managing machines is always easier than that of managing people. But this simply means that the economic calculus is applicable only after the basic policy decisions have been taken. These basic policy decisions should favour the small project as against the large; the rural project as against the urban; the labour-using project as against the capital-using—until labour becomes the effective bottleneck.

Three lines of effort have to be pursued simultaneously in a strategy of healthy development:

- (a) bring culture into the rural areas;
- (b) bring industrial activities into the rural areas; and
- (c) up-grade agricultural methods and practices.

### (a) Culture

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

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

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

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

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

Hygiene and sport are equally essential instruments of development.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### (b) Industry

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

Assuming there is an established population of several hundred thousand people, inhabiting a district or region in a not-too-scattered fashion, industrial development depends on the following factors:

- (1) Local initiative and will to work along new lines;
- (2) Technical know-how, including the knowledge of local natural resources;
- (3) Commercial know-how;
- (4) Money.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that this is a matter of conscious political choice and not one to be decided by the calculations of economists or businessmen. A country's development policy may be geared primarily to the production of goods or it may be geared primarily to the development of people. The former aims at mass production; the latter, at production by the masses. The former is the inevitable result, if private enterprise is given a free hand, because it is the natural, i.e. rational, desire of the private enterprise employer "to eliminate the human factor," for the simple reason that automated machinery works faster and more reliably than any human being. Feasibility studies

#### A RESURGENCE REPRINT

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undertaken by politically "neutral" economists will always support this tendency, particularly in a developing country where labour, being unused to industrial work, has yet to be trained. It is then argued that mass production, once successfully established, will benefit the masses by the provision of cheap consumer goods. But since mass production at the level of high capital intensity "eliminates the human factor", the masses find themselves unemployed and unable to buy even the cheapest goods. It is claimed that mass production, if it does find a market, is the most effective instrument for the rapid accumulation of surplus wealth, and that this surplus will then "percolate" to the unemployed masses. Yet it is a fact of universal experience that no such "percolation" takes place; a "dual economy" emerges in which the rich get richer while the poor stagnate or get poorer. Under such auspices, "self-reliance," "involvement of the people," and "development" must remain ineffectual aspirations.

If the political decision is in favour of production by the masses—rather than mass production which "eliminates the human factor"—it follows automatically that the difficult task of developing industrial activities in the hinterland must receive top priority, simply because the mass of the people happen to live in the hinterland and it would be a disaster if they (or even a sizeable proportion of them) were drawn into the capital city. It also follows that industrial developments in the capital city should be strictly confined to two categories, "national plants" (in certain cases) and small production units serving the local market.

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

### (c) Agriculture

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

The question is: how is the farmer or the farming community to choose the equipment appropriate to their specific needs; how are they to obtain supplies, including spare parts; and how are they to pay for them? The farmer's basic implements are plough, harrow, planter, cultivator, and cart. Some of these can be made by local carpenters, to appropriate specifications, e.g. the harrow and the cart. The others have to be obtained from merchants, who may have to import them. Normally the merchants are unable to offer the farmer a wide enough choice of implements, for instance, of ploughs. Nor is the farmer always

in a position to judge which type of plough is suitable for his soil and other circumstances. If he has only two oxen, a plough needing four to six oxen to pull it is a disaster for him. The wrong depth of ploughing may be equally fatal.

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

### The Human Factor

If healthy development requires a strategy as outlined above—a strategy in which the governments of the developing country have to take all the decisive initiatives—what kind of help can and should be given by the rich countries? It is

*"... the major change in national security policy brought about in the first years of the Kennedy Administration . . . was to assign an enhanced importance to American efforts to aid in the development of the so-called underdeveloped world. . . the process of development in the third world nations was largely conceived of as a process of nurturing a technologically advanced sector in the host economy to the point at which it would be able to dominate, economically, socially, politically the remainder of the society. At that 'take-off' point American efforts could presumably be relaxed for the further development of the country would be assured, along with its integration into an international economy dominated by the US."*

John McDermott,  
'Technology: The Opiate of the Intellectuals'  
(New York Review of Books, Jul. 31, 1969)

obvious that it is easy to produce or promote *unhealthy* development—just provide some funds and let things happen as they will. Most of the so-called development will then continue to go into the capital cities; the rich will get richer; the poor, poorer. There will be mass production, instead of production by the masses. The ablest, most progressive, most dynamic and up-to-date business men will "eliminate the human factor" and the economists and statisticians will celebrate splendid "rates of growth". All this is relatively easy—and it is the road to a sickness which even the richest societies may find it hard to survive.

But healthy development, with production by the masses instead of mass production, with the cultivation, instead of the elimination, of the human factor, with only modest urbanization and an organic agro-industrial structure in the hinterland,

based on self-reliance and the involvement of the people—that is a different matter. Are we fit to help? Or are we so much caught up in our own system of "eliminating the human factor" that ours will inevitably and inescapably be the withering touch of which there is so much evidence already?

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

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

solution of which would be in the interest of the under-developed countries".

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

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

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

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## From EPISODES

### I

At seven I crawl out of sleep  
leaving the dimension of Christ's peace for cherubim  
and the deceased, who no longer urge immortality daily  
into tired flesh.

Death, first cousin to my sister sleep, but governing  
with greater finality the systole and diastole of our days,  
is waking under your aegis more sweet than waking  
to this day?

The alarm has gone but day dreams on  
although uneasily the half-awakened mind betrays  
a truce with God, admits nocturnal hordes dismembered  
oddly by the dawn.

Blasting the whole cobwebbed history out of mind  
and into this day the morning trumpet sounds:  
the child's awake. Robust with in-taken air  
this small embodiment of something strange cries.  
I put on the light to dispel sleep and the supernatural,  
and then I get up.

### II

It's a fine day, and words are called for.  
No non-descriptions of the world classified  
but a general declamation of sound taken, lived in  
and said; the world shared, resounding with ourselves.  
What moves in us when spring breaks out?  
Reluctant in our faces winter concedes victory:  
in undue haste the season comes capriciously,  
making sobriety, put on at the year's end, seem daft  
as daffodils push up for March.  
An undiscovered ecstasy disturbs composure,  
conjures warmth in the old man who sells newspapers  
with his back to the wall; bill-posted in two dimensions  
he stands waiting for the third.  
A strange variety of Prometheus!

### III

What are the prospects for this year?  
Nineteen hundred and sixty-six already gone by  
and each of these—divisible first by three-hundred  
and sixty five,  
then twenty-four, then sixty twice and, no doubt,  
ad infinitum—  
proved us, despite infinity, culpable.  
Whatever the papers say, can truth edify?  
In aid of its establishment they crucify the world.  
Barabbas is always a sensation and salvation is  
inauspicious where money is concerned.  
In the underground a man reads the daily news.  
A voice inside him, which he does not hear, cries:  
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, and he dies.

No obituary will appear in the Times.

Unnamed before the foundation of the world was  
I am the record of this death, and underground we stand  
while I am crucified. I am the redemption that stares  
out of the stockbroker's eye, but next to him I stand  
again in rags.

I am the redemption that stares in the soldier's eye  
when he kills, and I am the one who dies. I am  
the redemption

that stares in the father's eye, the censor, still-born  
in the child. I am the redemption of each divided  
who stands in the other's eye.

### IV

What evidence is there of separation?

In the days of the new prosperity in eighteen fifty-one  
we ran the streets. Happily we leaped over stone posts  
on the pavement's edge, and fought with small-boned fists  
the boys from Judy Street. And then, our knees black  
and our backs bare we sat and stared as they passed by  
whose pockets bulged with gains our fathers got in pits.  
Capitalised at our expense God went into industry.  
The application of his pretexts became scientific  
and our welfare the chief end of progress.

Before our eyes vulgarly disrobed God went underground,  
evacuating slag in heaps which rose stinking to Heaven.  
The National Health Act of nineteen forty-seven  
made his exit more hygienic, and on the couch provided—  
presided over still by Freud (who did the disrobing)—  
the regal end of metamorphosis ejaculates his abdication.  
The man in the underground gives in to catastrophe;  
a voice inside him, which he does not hear, says:  
I am the redemption of each divided, who stands in  
the other's eye.

But he sees no-one, and puts a fat hand between his legs  
to ease God out in secret.

### V

It's a fine day, and words are called for. Bring down  
the sun

with ecstasy expand the lung until the world dies in  
on the breath's process. The inspiration of Golgotha  
illuminates the death of Lucifer; his body, the light  
putrefied, is evanescent in the tomb, and I emerge  
to discover myself.

From this vantage point I see the skull, the empty tomb,  
and grasping myself I see you, the beauty of God's death  
structured in your face. Inwardly a resurrection has  
taken place,

but underground we stand, afraid to speak a word, until,  
by chance, I stumble against you, or an old man falls.  
A word is called for, and innocence arrives.



# GRAMDAN

New readers may well ask why it is that reports of the Gramdan movement and other news from India feature so largely in these columns. The answer is not confined to the fact that these matters are very little reported in other Western journals, but needs to include an awareness that the Gramdan movement represents the only serious attempt in any part of the world to replace central government power with small-scale people's power based on organs of functional democracy and practical need. The attempt is being made, moreover, by a sustained and expanding non-violent campaign on the lines indicated in the second of these two features. Having regard to the issues at stake and the extent to which many young pseudo-revolutionaries are still sold on the bid for a violent take-over of centralised power à la Mao or Castro, as though this was either new or somehow constituted progress, the relevance of these themes can scarcely be overstated.

Ed. Resurgence

## 1. OBSTACLES TO PANCHAYATI RAJ\*

— A. C. Sen

THE worst misfortune that happened to Gandhi was that he became a legend during his lifetime. His ideas became part of our lore and tales, and their practical significance in the conduct of our national affairs was more often than not completely lost sight of. The Constitution that came into force in 1950 is a case in point.

The making of a Constitution for Independent India started in the last phase of Gandhi's life, but there was no Gandhian imprint on the thinking of the Constituent Assembly and it was assumed Gandhi's relevance had ended with the departure of the British. But independence was only one milestone, not even the most important possibly, of Gandhi's larger struggle for bringing into existence a non-exploitative society. His last testament called vividly for a conversion of the Indian National Congress, which was in the vanguard of the freedom struggle under his guidance, into a Lok Sevak Sangh for this very purpose and Gandhi's struggle would have continued as long as exploitation of any form—economic or social-political—continued.

The Constitution of Gandhi's India however assumed implicitly, as pointed out, that Western types of democratic institutions would bring about the desired social changes. The second revolution, which Gandhi was on the point of initiating when the assassin's bullet felled him, was not built into the Constitution by its framers, whereas the Constitution should have deliberately structured this second revolution into itself. It may sound a little paradoxical to call for a structuring of revolution into the Constitution of a nation, but given the fact that the nation had become independent, and that Gandhi's second revolution was to be peaceful, as was substantially his first, it was for the Constitution to facilitate the second revolution if it were to be true at all to Gandhi's ideas.

### Gandhi's Ideas on the Constitution

It was of course open to the authors of the draft Constitution and the Constituent Assembly to disown Gandhian ideas and they would have been justified in doing so, as in fact they effectively did, if Gandhian ideas were not relevant to the new situation.

\*Panchayat means Indian Village:  
Panchayati Raj—Village Rule.

What were Gandhi's ideas in the matter? "... there are seven hundred thousand villages in India each of which," Gandhi suggested, "would be organized according to the will of the citizens, all of them voting. Then there would be seven hundred thousand votes. Each village, in other words, would have one vote. The villagers would elect the district administration, the district administrations would elect the Provincial administration and these in turn would elect the President who is the head of the executive...". The important point here is not whether the executive head should be the President, or the Prime Minister, if the President were a symbolic head of State. This is a minor detail. But the important point here is that Gandhi wanted the basic units of our new democracy to be our villages; in other words, our already existing small communities. That was the key to the entire thinking of Gandhi on our new Constitution and to his own second revolution.

With Gandhi's aim of bringing into existence a non-exploitative society no one would disagree, not even the framers of the Constitution who rejected his modus operandi. The question to be discussed is whether or not Gandhi's suggestion that the villages be basic units of democracy was best calculated to bring about the type of society he visualized, with which everyone was in general agreement.

### The Relevance of Gandhian Ideas

The institutions that would best serve the goals of a society depend on the particular nation's history and ethos. Gandhi's commendation of village panchayats as the appropriate basic units for our democracy arose out of the long traditions of our nation. This was violently questioned by the Pilot of our present Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar, who said:

"That (the village panchayats) have survived, through all vicissitudes may be a fact. But mere survival has no value. The question is on what plane they have survived. Surely on a low, on a selfish level. I hold these village republics to have been the ruination of India. I am therefore surprised that those who condemn provincialism and communalism should come forward as champions of the villages. What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism? I am glad that the Draft Constitution has discarded the villages and adopted the individual as its units."

This is strong language but, by and large, it was typical of the sentiments of those opposed to the idea of villages as the basic units of democracy.

The first thing to be pointed out is that this is not merely a condemnation of Indian villages, but of Indian society as a whole for, as is repeated so often, India is its villages. Secondly, it is a condemnation of Gandhi who, if the quoted statement is true, had thrown his powerful weight in favour of everything that is described here as narrow-minded in society. Is it conceivable that Gandhi, who fought narrow-mindedness all his life, fell prey finally to narrow-mindedness? Would he have knowingly done so?

That there exist in villages the reprehensible characteristics which Dr. Ambedkar so vehemently decried, no one would dispute. But Gandhi emphatically was of the view that these matters should be fought at the village level, treating the village as a community, by the collective wisdom and efforts of the exploited class of the same village community.

"Collective wisdom and efforts of the exploiting class and the exploited class" because exploitation is only in one part conscious. The other part is a vestige of the past when the stratification of society, which we rightly consider an anachronism in the present day, did have some utility. Once the conscience of the exploiters is aroused, Gandhi thought that the ills of the village community would be replaced and an egalitarian village community would materialize.

*"Since the present world does not see its future as clearly as it should we are still weighed down by a confused jumble of images—of pyramids, of colosseums, of domes and sky-scrapers—and by the different rites and concepts which they represent. All these things are useful to man but other things are urgent: the basic elements of a united world composed of groups within groups.*

*"The men of the new world must acquire the consciousness of creation, in the same way as they learn to speak and write; the consciousness of belonging to groups and to groups within groups, the technique of their new and varied relationships; for these are the fundamental instruments of communication and participation. And more than instruments. For unlike the ability to talk and write, they are ways rather than means of life; the art and science of life, first and foremost."*

Danilo Dolci

"A New World in the Making", 1964

What is needed for this is not alienating the individual—whether he is an exploiter or is exploited—from the village community to which he historically belongs, but to enable him to have a greater say in the community itself in carving out its own destiny and in modernizing itself in the best sense of the term.

Would such increased decision-making power to the village community fossilize the admittedly existing exploitative relationships in the village community? This is the crucial question. Gandhi's answer was in the negative. He would have, as he did, qualified his answer with the proviso that the catalyst of leadership is also necessary for the

negative reply to be realized in practice. It was to provide this leadership that he wanted the Indian National Congress to be converted into a Lok Sevak Sangh. This leadership would have facilitated the second revolution provided the village communities themselves were not broken up into an atomized society; provided, in other words, that village communities as they had survived historically were retained as the basic units of democracy. For, the village communities might have, as they actually had, tolerated (consciously or unconsciously) exploitation but the exploited as much as the exploiters continued to have a sense of belonging to the village community with all its limitations and failings. This is the meaning of structuring the second revolution into the Constitution, which Gandhi undoubtedly wanted.

### The Constitution that Emerged

The Constitution that was finally adopted favoured the atomic society in which the individual is the base, not the communitarian society (as Jayaprakash Narayan has aptly called it) where the village communities are the basic units.

"I must confess," said Gandhi a little before his death, "that I have not been able to follow the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly... (If there is no mention or direction about village panchayats and decentralization in the foreshadowed Constitution, it is certainly an omission calling for immediate attention if our independence is to reflect the People's Voice. The greater the power of the panchayats, the better for the people..."

This omission was pointed out in sorrow by member after member during the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, but it was not found expedient to do anything since Constitution-making had reached a final stage! "It may not be easy," said the Constitutional Adviser in a note he wrote in May 1948, "to work the Panchayat idea into the draft Constitution at the present stage... decisions (already taken) will first have to be reversed if elections are to be indirect as required by the Panchayat Plan... In all the principal federations and unions of the world, the Lower House is elected by direct election... The world trend is thus strongly towards direct elections..."

It was a fundamental mistake to have assumed that we have to do away with our historic and traditional institutions to fall in line with world trends, not because of the logic of our concrete situation. The second mistake was that while implicitly recognizing that the village panchayat idea may have some merit, decisions already taken were not reversed merely because the work was at an advanced stage.

But the viewpoint of the protagonists of the village panchayat idea could not be ignored altogether. So, a Directive Principle of the State was added: "The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

### Was a Directive Principle of State Adequate?

The Directive Principle thus vested the government with the power to provide for village panchayats with such powers as the government deemed fit. The government itself was to be



ected by an atomized society. The very formation of government on the basis of the concept of atomized society struck a blow to the organic entities of village communities of which Shri Aurobindo said "At the height of its evolution and in the great days of Indian Civilization we find an admirable system, efficient in the highest degree and very perfectly combining village self-government with stability and order." Metcalf says this of the village communities: "Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down. Revolution succeeds revolution... but the village communities remain the same."

Whence came the enduring capacity of the village republics? They endured because although the changes that took place throughout Indian

*The Biafran system of government is therefore an adaptation and continuation of a traditionally democratic society. Every family (or compound) has complete autonomy within the village; every village has complete autonomy within the "village-group" (the town).*

*Hereditary authority is purely symbolic: those compound-heads whose position stems from lineage fulfil ritual functions, like priests, or the Royal Family. Each compound contains an alternative head, who is elected and who takes social or political decisions after exhaustive consultation with the people he has been chosen to represent.*

Francis Wyndham  
'Conversations in Biafra'  
(Sunday Times, 27 Jul. 69)

history were phenomenal nothing happened to alienate anyone of a village community from the village community to which he belonged. It is true, whole village communities were destroyed, but there was never any alienation. The members continued to have the sense of belonging to the community with all its iniquities and exploitation.

But what history has not succeeded in doing, Western type democratic institutions and elections on the basis of atomized society wrought with almost deadly efficacy. People no longer belonged, primarily, to their villages but to their caste which carried so much leverage in the atomized society if only all people belonging to that caste in areas encompassing a number of villages behaved in ways that the political dynamics demanded. The most important consequence of the first two general elections was to alienate our villagers from their village communities. And the irony of the situation was that those who came to power through such alienation were supposed, by the Directive Principle of the Constitution quoted above, to pass legislation to form village panchayats and endow them with power and authority to function as *units of self-government*. It is not without significance that while the first general elections took place in 1951-52, it was not until 1959, that is until after the second general elections, that governments elected by the atomized society did anything to legislate for Panchayati Raj bodies. The historic continuity of the village communities has been ruthlessly broken and this seems to be irreversible in spite of what might have been done in 1959 or may be done in future to rehabilitate the old communitarian spirit.

It is this fact that we were at a historically unique situation and at the cross-roads of our

polity, that was missed by the Prime Minister who thought at the time of Constitutional framing that trials and errors were possible under the Constitution, "...let us not," said Nehru, "trouble ourselves too much about petty details of what we do" for "we are on the eve of revolutionary changes... This House cannot bind down the next generation...". This grossly underestimated the pernicious effects of formation of an atomized society on the traditional communitarian spirit and also underestimated the importance of the need for clarity of thinking on the part of those whose destiny it was to be in the vanguard of revolution. Complete faith in the inevitability of revolution logically leads to inaction which Nehru did not subscribe to (see his "Discovery of India").

Gandhi, who was not spared us, was however clear about the second revolution he wanted. He said: "My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital needs, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity... As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community..."

These are exactly the lines on which Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan are working now. Their work has certainly not been facilitated by the fact that elections of an atomized society have already brought alienation from the village communities.

The strange thing is that following the release of forces of alienation through the new Constitution, the government started the Community Development Programme which was meant for village communities whose disintegration had been effectively provided for in the Constitution. Given the forces which were breaking the village communities, the failures of the Community Development Programme were not surprising; in a way, they were inevitable. It was following this failure that the Directive Principle of State Policy on

*"At the time of independence, with that mixture of sagacity, impishness and insight which only Mahatmas can command, Gandhi proposed that the Congress Party should be disbanded, its purpose having now been served. It was a little like some dedicated Marxist proposing to Stalin that the Soviet State should be disbanded in order to facilitate its withering away. Needless to say, Gandhi's fellow Congress bosses found his proposal little to their taste, since it would have deprived them of the fruits of victory. They wanted not only to wind up the British Raj but also to be its inheritors. What they did, in effect, was to step into the shoes of their dispossessed alien rulers. Nehru became viceroy — a viceroy in kadi instead of ermine — and the others moved into the positions according to their degrees."*

Malcolm Muggeridge  
The Observer, 11 May 1969

Panchayats was suddenly remembered and the Panchayati Raj body legislation was passed half-heartedly for making the Community Development Programme a success, by (let it be remem-

bered) governments which were elected by alienating villagers from the village communities.

This was the amazing order in which things happened: first breaking the historic village communities, second, the Community Development Programme for communities so broken up or breaking up, third when the Community Development programme failed, giving power to the communities whose communitarian spirit was rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

It was these contradictions which first accounted for the failure of the Community Development Programme and, later, of the Panchayati Raj bodies. Panchayati Raj bodies inevitably became a prey to the dynamics of atomized politics which is the basis for the Indian polity of today. The truth that power cannot be given down to Panchayati Raj bodies is seldom realized. If atomized politics continues to be the background, it can be argued that it may not even be safe to devolve power to the so-called Panchayati Raj bodies because such power would make the existing exploitation more ruthless, the communitarian spirit having vanished, Gandhiji's prescription of the sanction of non-violence and Satyagraha also not obtaining. The present critics of the Panchayati

## 2. PEOPLE'S POLITICS IN A NON-VIOLENT SOCIETY

SATISH KUMAR TALKS TO VINOBA BHAVE

**SATISH KUMAR:** For the last 15 years you have been on the march. What are you aiming at?

**VINOBA BHAVE:** At revolution. In other words I am aiming at the liberation of people from all kinds of suppression and exploitation. We need to be liberated from the institutions which exercise authority in the name of service.

**SK:** Which institutions are in your mind?

**VB:** Institutionalised religion, for example, is an oppressive obstacle to the free experience of spirituality. Similarly, institutionalised politics in the form of state, parliament and parties have killed the sense of participation and it has confused the scientific outlook.

**SK:** So we need revolution?

**VB:** We live in an age of expanding science, an age which also inherits the traditions of a thousand years of wisdom. We ought to be able to see that in such times it is right and proper for every man to take charge of his own affairs in matters of knowledge, religion and other socio-political matters.

**SK:** You want to liberate people from the government, but some good governments do a lot of good work.

**VB:** Good work which is done by government services is very far from good in its effect upon the minds of the people. When elections take place the ruling party will ask for your votes, because of all the good work they have done. If it is true that they have done good work, the people will be oppressed by the sheer weight of their charity and that is exactly what saddens me.

**SK:** Why don't you protest strongly when the government does something wrong?

Raj bodies are correct; the bodies are bound to operate to the detriment of the weaker sections as their powers do not accrue from sanctions from below but are handed from above.

## The Outlook for the Future

If, as we have gloomily pointed out, the traditional communitarian spirit has been broken and alienation taken place as a historically irreversible process, is there hope of the village panchayat idea working now in the spirit in which Gandhi advocated it?

The Gramdan work of the Sarvodaya movement and the notable results achieved so far tend one to think the alienation has not yet become irreversible, that our pessimism has to be qualified. The peaceful second revolution of Gandhi which would create a non-exploitative society of small village communities may still be possible. But we have to begin at grass-roots and not anywhere higher. And time is not on our side; it is running out fast. Tinkering with particular clauses of the Constitution would not help. Let us be clear that we have to reconstitute the entire polity according to our traditions. ●

**VB:** It is true that I do not make such protest, but I do raise my voice when the government does something good. There is no need for me to protest against the government's faults, it is against its good deeds that my protests are needed. I have to tell the people what sheep they are. Is it a matter for rejoicing if you all turn into sheep and tell me how well the shepherds look after you? What am I to say? It seems to me that it would be better if the shepherds neglected their duty. The sheep would then, at least, realise that they are sheep. They might then come to their senses and remember that they are, after all, not sheep but men, men capable of managing their own affairs. That is why my voice is raised in opposition to good government. Bad government has been condemned long ago by many people. We know very well that bad government should not be allowed but what seems to me to be wrong is that we should allow ourselves to be governed at all, even by a good government. To me the politics of government is not people's politics. We must find the courage to believe that we are capable of managing our own affairs and that no outside authority can stop us.

**SK:** It means that you want no government at all, Vinoba?

**VB:** I want self-government.

**SK:** What is the characteristic of self-government?

**VB:** The first characteristic is not to allow any outside power in the world to exercise control over one's self and the second characteristic is not to exercise power over any other. These two things together make self-government and people's politics. No submission and no exploitation. This can be brought into being only by a revolution in



the people's conscience and mind. My programme of giving and sharing is designed to bring it about. I am continually urging that believers in non-violence should use their strength to establish a government by the people and put an end to government by the politicians.

SK: Do you mean that Indian political leaders should not have taken power and responsibility for the state from the British?

VB: We certainly had to take over power, but our purpose in doing so was to begin, from the very first, the process of dissolving power. That process may well take us 50 years, but a beginning at least must be made today. There is a false notion in the world that governments are our saviours and that without them we should be lost. People imagine that they cannot do without a government. I can understand that people cannot do without agriculture or industry, that they cannot get on without love and culture, music and literature, but governments do not come into this category. I would suggest that all our administrators and politicians should be given leave for two years, just to see what happens in their absence. Would any of the ordinary work of the world come to an end? Would the dairyman no longer make butter, or the market gardener sell vegetables? Would people stop getting married and having babies? If the government were to take leave for two years it would destroy the popular illusion that a government is indispensable.

SK: But some kind of government will always exist. Can you give some constructive suggestion to make governments better?

VB: It is difficult to make governments better, but if there is any ideal form of government then I would say that the best kind of government is the one where it is possible to doubt whether any government exists at all. We ought not to be aware of whether there is any government in New Delhi or not. We ourselves should be seeing to the affairs of our own village, or community, or town, or locality, instead of doing just the opposite and handing over all power to the centre. Any central authority ought to model itself on the Divine Government—unseen, unfelt, decentralised. How many hours a day does God have to work to run the world—none. He does not work at all. The meaning of this is that government is not an activity, it is a thought. It is thought that makes the world go around. The less the activity, the better the government. An ideal government would have no armies, no police force and no penalties. The people would manage their own affairs, listening rationally to advice and allowing themselves to be guided by moral considerations.

SK: The need for government arises when we have conflicting situations and a clash of interests between the classes.

VB: It is impossible for the real interests of any one person to clash with those of others. There is no opposition between the real interests of any one community, class or country and those of any other community, class or country. The very idea of conflicting interests is a mistaken one. One man's interests are another's, and there can be no clash. If I am intelligent and in good health, this is in your interest. If I get water when I am thirsty it benefits not only me, but you also. If

we imagine that our interests conflict, it is because we have a false notion of what constitutes our interests.

SK: You command a significant influence on the government. Why do you not insist that the government passes a law to socialise the land? Why do you have to wander so much from village to village?

VB: If an active public opinion can be created in favour of village ownership of land, a law may be passed confirming this principle. The law would be in accordance with public opinion and so would please the people. But the spreading of revolutionary ideas is no part of the government's duty. In fact, revolutions cannot be organised and brought about by the established institutions of politics. The government can only act on an idea when it has been generally accepted and then it is compelled to act on it. If it does not, it will be replaced. We say that in India we have democracy, then the government is the servant and the people are the masters. When you want to get an idea accepted do you explain it to the servant or to the master? If you put it before the master and he approves, he will instruct his clerk to prepare the deed of gift. That is why I am putting my ideas before you—it is you, the people, who are the masters.

SK: If the revolutionaries are in power they can bring revolution in the society.

VB: As I explained, the authority of the government is incapable of bringing about any revolutionary change among the people. If such a popular revolution was attainable through governmental authority, why did the Lord Buddha give up his royal power? The day revolution gets the backing of the government, it declines, becomes bureaucratic, institutionalised and conformist. A very good example is the Russian revolution. You can see how revolutionaries become power-mongers and office-seekers. Similarly, the decline of the Buddhist faith in India dates from the day when it received the backing of the governmental power. When the Christian faith was backed by the Imperial Power of Constantine, it became Christian only in name. The power of religion practised by the first disciples of Christ was seen no more and hypocrisy entered the life of the church. In our own country history shows that when the movements of revolution and religious reforms won royal favour they were joined by thousands who were not really revolutionaries at all, but merely loyal devotees of the ruling king. Therefore, do not allow yourself to imagine that revolutionary thinking can be propagated by governmental power. On the contrary, if there should be any genuine encounter between them, revolution would destroy the power of the state. The two can no more exist together than darkness and the sun. The exercise of power over others is not in accordance with revolutionary principles. It is clear from a study of history that real social progress has been due to the influence of independent revolutionaries. No king exercised the influence which Buddha exerted and still exerts on the life of India. The Lord Buddha renounced his kingdom, turned his back on it and after his enlightenment the first person he initiated was the king, his own father. Later came the emperor Ashoka and a political revolution took place in India.

SK: Should we wait until a Buddha or a Gandhi comes?

VB: You are in a hurry to harvest results, but you do not consider that the seed must first be sown. Without a seed-time how can there be a harvest?

SK: Until we achieve this utopia what should we do?

VB: We should do everything at our command so that the need for a government should progressively diminish. In the final analysis the government would give up all executive power and act in a purely advisory capacity. As the morals of the people improve, the area of the authoritarian government will be reduced and government orders will be fewer and fewer. In the end it will issue no orders at all. The ultimate goal of my movement is freedom from government. I use the words 'freedom from government' and not absence of government. Absence of government can be seen in a number of societies where no order is maintained and where anti-social elements do as they please. A society free from government does not mean a society without order. It means orderly society but one in which administrative authority rests at the grass roots level and every member of the community has active participation and involvement. For this reason the purpose of my march is to rouse the people to an awareness of their own strength, to get them to stand on their own feet. I want to see all the village lands in the hands of the village and not under private ownership and to that end I am trying to get the common people to realise their power and organise it independently.

SK: How will you go about bringing this people's power?

VB: The establishment of such a participatory non-bureaucratic self-directing society calls for a network of self-sufficient units. Production, distribution, defence, education, everything should be localised. The centre should have the least possible authority. We shall thus achieve decentralisation through regional self-sufficiency. I do not expect that every village should immediately produce all its own needs. The unit for self-sufficiency may be a group of communities. In short, all our planning will be directed towards a progressive abolition of government control by means of regional self-reliance. Our goal should be that every individual becomes as self-reliant as possible. That is God's plan after all. He has not only given each man feeling and intelligence and other finer qualities, he has also given each a number of external organs, eyes, ears, nose, etc. He has not made us specialists, given one ten eyes and another ten ears or hands. We do not need to run to one another for help in order to see and hear. God has gone in for such thorough decentralisation that he need exercise no control. Likewise, we must have a real decentralisation and self-reliance to function.

SK: That is what you call freedom?

VB: Yes. Because no real freedom exists today and we shall not get it so long as we carry on with our representative democracy. We shall not get it

until we decide to make our own plans with the use of our own brains and carry them out in our own strength. As long as a few individuals are given all the power and the rest of the people hope that the government will protect them, this is not real freedom. The present kind of democracy is a guided democracy, whereas in a free society we will have a direct democracy. We shall not hand over all the public services to the few representatives. In America all the power is in the hands of the President. If he should make an error of judgment he might set the whole world on fire. It is a terrible thing that such power should be entrusted to any representatives. That is why throughout the world today there is no real freedom, but only an illusion of freedom. To obtain this real freedom, we must form village councils, community councils, peasants' councils, workers' councils, on a small scale, and these councils should run their own affairs, settle their own quarrels, decide how their children shall be educated, undertake their own defence and manage their own markets. This way there will be a general renewal of self-confidence and common people everywhere will get experience of public affairs.

SK: The proposal you are making will turn the whole system upside down and social life will be upset. Does this fit in with your philosophy of non-violence?

VB: To many people non-violence has come to mean that society should be disturbed as little as possible. Our present set-up should continue to function without hindrance. Some people understand by non-violence merely that the changes necessary will be carried out extremely gradually. They imagine that we should go to work for revolution as cautiously as a man who has a boil or some other injury on his hand and wants to avoid making it ache by any sudden exertion. Let there be no painful sudden change and so non-violence is rendered innocuous. But this way revolutions are never carried out. Things remain pretty much as they are and people get satisfaction by adopting an ideal, paying it lip service and talking about it. This concept of non-violence is very dangerous for revolution and very convenient to the cause of lethargic society. So I beg you not to adopt any 'go slow' methods of non-violence. In non-violence you must go full steam ahead, if you want the good to come speedily you must go about it with vigour. A merely soft, spineless ineffective kind of non-violence will actually encourage the growth of the status quo and all the forces of a violent system which we deplore. A non-revolutionary non-violence is a conservative force and, therefore, it is not non-violence. Non-violence is an active and effective weapon to fight against injustice and at the same time to build an alternative society. ●



# Letters

## DEFINITIONS OF FREEDOM

The March-April Resurgence Editorial 'In Place of Strife' states that "When the classical economists wrote about the freedom of the private entrepreneur to engage in trade being a vital part of the workings of *freedom itself*, not only did they believe what they were saying but their arguments for saying it have stood the test of time and yet to be effectively refuted," and "(Adam Smith said) that because entrepreneurs needed the freedom to compete with each other they dare not tamper with *freedom itself*, without injuring their own interests."

For several years I worked as a machine operator in various factories, large and small. In none did I see or feel any signs of freedom for myself and my fellow workers. During our working hours, which were long and absorbed nearly all our vital energy, we were slaves of the management. It is true we did not have to go to work, we could have stayed at home and lived on National Assistance—if freedom to starve is freedom itself, then the mass of the people in our country have had it in abundance since the Industrial Revolution. For many the choice seems to be between starving to death and being bored to death. Most people would probably agree that the one place in which one would not expect to find freedom itself is inside a prison: one of the things about prison life which struck me very forcibly was its resemblance in many ways to life in a factory—the tea was slightly above industrial average in quality, the lavatories slightly lower—both unbelievably ghastly from a middle class point of view. One of my fellow prisoners was an old lady who had worked and lived in at a well known London hotel (until her arrest for a muddle-headed attempt to cash someone else's travellers' cheque) told me that her cell at Holloway was a great deal better than her own room at the hotel. I am not suggesting that it is nicer to be in prison than not; but I do suggest that the unfreedom of our penal system is not fundamentally different in quality from the unfreedom of society outside—it is, rather, a dose of it in concentrated form; and this unfreedom for the lower strata (i.e. unskilled workers, women, people psychologically unfit for survival in our society) is *not caused* by the bigness and bureaucracy of the modern industrial state—it started when there was no bureaucracy and industrial enterprises were still quite small: *this* unfreedom is endemic in the capitalist system itself. For this reason alone I do not accept your Editorial theory that "free enterprise is a vital part of the workings of freedom itself," because my conception of freedom itself is freedom for everybody, not excluding those people who do most of the hard and unpleasant jobs which make life so comfortable for the rest of us. But there are other reasons for rejecting it, bound up with my idea of human nature and of how it interacts with economic systems. We can agree, probably, that animals are 'free' in so far as they are living in their 'natural' state, without interference from man: when they are free to live in harmony with their instincts, the

'laws' of their being. Economists who uphold free enterprise believe that (1) it is man's nature to compete with his fellow men, to seek his own survival at their expense, (2) that the separate strivings for survival and fear of non-survival of all members of society will cause them to behave economically for the greatest good of all. I believe they are wrong (partially) on the first count, and wholly wrong on the second.

1) "It is man's nature to compete," yes, and also as Robert Ardrey has suggested, to live in mutually hostile groups and nations. His instincts, developed during millions of years of evolution, mostly at a pre-human level, enabled him to survive under primitive conditions and to develop towards greater complexity of mind—in religious terms towards a higher spiritual state. This drive towards a higher level is just as much man's nature as the pre-human instincts which he shares with lower animals; and, in some situations, it conflicts with them. I believe that the instinct to grow spiritually is present in an embryonic form in all humans, and is what they most deeply want as a lasting, long term objective, although it often gets over-ruled by the more primitive subhuman instincts concerned with individual and group survival. We know now, since Hiroshima, that our survival as a species depends on our ability to feel ourselves as members of the whole human race; and many people are dimly perceiving the need for a still wider feeling of brotherhood with animals and plants. We have suddenly understood that the ethical demands of the Perennial Philosophy are not just beautiful ideals, but practical necessity. But we are only a small minority, and the vast majority are forced, by the circumstances of their daily lives, to live by the old pre-human ethics of competition for survival.

2) Your Editorial tries to separate 'free enterprise' from what it has developed into: monopoly and state capitalism. The free play of competition has not, in historical fact, led to the greatest good of the greatest number or to freedom itself, but to increasing concentration of power and wealth in fewer hands; and the widening gap between the wealthy nations and the industrially undeveloped ones. This was foretold by Marx and Lenin, purely on economic grounds, but it could also have been foreseen in the light of Christian doctrine on original sin, confirmed, since Marx's time, by modern theories of psychology and evolution.

I may have distorted the editorial position in

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the above polemic, if so, I hope this will not engender arguments about secondary issues, because I believe that our zones of agreement are much bigger than the zone of disagreement: but, unless the basic theories of economics and human nature are clarified, all the good things said in Resurgence may not bear the fruit they deserve.

Anne Vogel.

14 The Crescent,  
London, N.11.

## EDITORIAL REPLY

I think one thing modern history indicates is the unwisdom of making simplified statements about human nature or human categories. It is here more than anywhere that Marxists and socialists have come unstuck in their predictions about the course of history, and to get even a modest degree of clarity about where we want to go involves a readiness to concede the endless complexity and confusion of ordinary human motivation.

If we envisage a modern utopia where men derive their profoundest satisfactions from a desire to serve the community we need to measure this against such basic things as food production and

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how it is carried on in practice now. We may suppose the desire to serve is sufficient but in practice that desire to serve can only be expressed freely on the basis of producing a surplus for profit (profit to obtain the goods and services one does not oneself produce). This may seem to us morally dubious, but to date history has shown no workable or acceptable alternatives. Free communities invariably fail, either from internal discord or the erosion of the ideals of their founders after a generation or less, whilst I imagine the communist alternatives where in Russia for example, a peasant cannot move from his village without a passport, would commend itself to no-one concerned with freedom. There are of course, very old celibate religious communities which work to this ideal, but celibacy is not everyone's cup of tea and it will be noted that since recruitment is based on largely self-selected chronic bachelors or spinsters, these communities are relieved of the responsibility of persuading the rising generation of their own siblings of the wisdom of their ways; children who are brought up in communities based on service frequently show a marked disposition to reject what their parents practise and believe. The Israeli Kibbutzim are really a special case born of persecution and the need to adapt to an intensely hostile

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*continued on next page*



political (and geographic) environment: even so the general drift of the Kibbutzim would seem to be away from the idealistic visions of their founders. Anne Vogel seems to suggest that the spirit of service is contradictory to the spirit of profit making, but again practice tends to confound theory if only because for hundreds of years men have used a money mechanism for their economic exchanges. In practice profit and service are both at work; four watch-menders in a town, (or barbers or bankers or newsagents) may feel they are competing to serve and they may feel this with not a shred of Rotarian humbug entering the scene, but they are all indubitably competing for profit—and how are we or they to say which is which? If their activities were controlled by the state, the result would be merely tyranny (for the argument that economic power is political power cuts both ways), and if the suggestion is that the watch-menders should be controlled by the workers—assuming of course that by some devious process of reasoning the watch-menders themselves are not 'workers'—then why don't they get on with it?

This is not a rhetorical question but one that goes to the heart of modern discussion about social progress. There is one way we can help to ensure that the spirit of service is not pushed aside by the itch for profit, and that is by living in communities which really are communities and not mere agglomerations of residents. I am not referring here to the closed 'intentional' communities referred to above, but to the wider and more open communities which were common

before the industrial revolution and which still prevail over much of Asia and Africa. In Europe such 'communities' produced the Athens of classical Antiquity and numerous astoundingly beautiful and creative city states such as Salzburg and Florence. The chief characteristics of these city states was not, as is often supposed, their capacity to make war or to hold men down in feudal bondage: rather was it their ability to preserve peace and to elevate men to superb heights of awareness of the possibilities of life, heights, it may be added, to which for all our moon journeys, our frozen peas and heart transplants we have scarcely begun to scale ourselves. I think the task of going forward to create such communities is the only practical alternative we have to a well-nigh universal collapse of civilisation, for it is only in such communities that personal, and hence moral, relationships can be a determinative force and it is only such a determinative force that can break the grip of large scale capitalism without anticipating the end result of large scale capitalism which is the destruction of freedom itself.

We can put this another way; contrary to what Anne Vogel asserts it is indeed the factor of size that is most relevant to this discussion. In small-scale communities one man's judgment of another is an important aspect of community morality. A man may be judged as good or bad and in terms of his work, whether, for example he is a good watch-mender or not. His reputation will rest not on his 'image' but on his performance, and this in turn will do much to determine his economic

fortunes. In autonomous, small-scale communities the very pervasiveness of personal relationships and the importance of personal judgments creates a continuous spur to greater and greater degrees of excellence; whereas in a large scale non-community where profit reigns supreme and where inevitably it is promoted on impersonal lines there is a continuous spur to destroy the freedom of the small entrepreneur and to use the mass media (itself a by-product of such non-communities) to debase the standards of judgment of the consumer if only by persuading him to accept an article which is itself debased. (This is one reason why, for example, all the staple articles of diet today are grossly inferior to what sustained our forbears).

To sum up, the evil of capitalism is not the mere commonplace itch for profit, an itch which can coexist quite well with other drives in our natures such as the desire to serve, or to attain economic security, it is the elevation of that itch to a point where because of the size and power of its organisations it dominates the scene and puts decent morality at a discount.

Editor, Resurgence.

#### WHERE DO WE STAND?

... My present view is that you are tending to fill something like the role of the Fabian Society in the past, each issue being a modern version of the detailed and often quite weighty Fabian Pamphlets of bygone days, presenting basic social issues in summary form. Whether a revised Fabian role is satisfactory or sufficient for you, I doubt. . . Can one be more deliberately practically constructive? . . .

I do not, of course, use 'Fabian' in any derogatory sense such as of academic discussion in order to block truly socialist progress (which I am afraid is not at all an impossible charge to bring against the actual Fabian Society). I mean by it the good side of Fabianism: careful and exhaustive discussion as the basis for any advantageous steps towards a better society. And that view of Fabianism seems to be more or less the Resurgence attitude.

I am also concerned to explore *action* programmes one stage *beyond* the best Fabian sort of discussion. Or, more precisely, to consider conceivable *policies* for you to boost — possibly more than one at a time. In this connection, the editorial 'Where Do We Stand?' in the last Resurgence surely goes back to a gentler preceding position, and makes no attempt to suggest adopting policies, beyond the basic one of denouncing size and its associated power-complex (plus the adjuncts of conservation, dealing with population-explosion, and so on). In fact it explicitly and frankly leaves open actual methods of dealing with the size-mania and associated evils. And of course it *must* do so. But may it not be that Resurgence might tackle in turn possible repair procedures for modern society, such as anarchism, 'Open Conspiracy', community (maybe above all, in conjunction with the cooperative movement), the distilled essence of hippyism and student revolt, and so on? And after discussing them, it could finally accept or reject them; then, after adopting a clear policy, seek to organise around it a practically-operative following which might be less and looser than a movement (of which one feels wary now!), but would express a populist campaign, even if dreadfully small.

Or will Resurgence always be a vital, basic discussion journal, and never be a conscious campaign-voice with a *positive* constructive mission? —a terribly justified *negative* social criticism (*against* undue size, *against* waste, etc.). I admit that, obviously in being against the negative, Resurgence is necessarily being for the opposites of the atrocities railed against. But is a concrete *path* to bring about the change never to be definitely on the agenda?

Avraham Ben-Yosef

Kibbutz Sasa,  
Doar Na Merom Hagalil,  
Israel.

What do other readers think is the role of Resurgence?—Ed.

#### COMMUNITY

On the subject of community building, I wonder whether Resurgence has heard anything about the Peckham Experiment. This was a community which was formed around the Pioneer Health Centre before the last war. I feel that it should be much better known than it is because it had several important features relevant to revolutionaries today. It was large. At its peak it was composed of about 2000 families. It was a rule that only complete families could be members. It was also a rule that there should be no rules, that is no permanent structure within the society to prevent spontaneously formed groups from appearing and dissolving as necessary.

I think it proved that a community can be formed in an industrial society, but only if you give people a good reason for joining together. In this case they joined because they were offered a cooperative medical service with regular family examinations and then a social centre with swimming pool, restaurant and bar and free space for any activities they wished to undertake. The families operated the centre and developed a nursery cum play group for young children and on the outbreak of the war were going to start a primary school to be controlled by the families to bring up the children within the community.

The experiment was written up in a series of books of which 'The Peckham Experiment' by Innes Pearce and Lucy Crocker and 'Science, Synthesis and Sanity' by G. Scott Williamson and Innes Pearce are the most important. The second is the best biological description of the operation of the family and the need for a larger community of which the family is a part that I have read.

The reason for setting up the Health Centre was that Dr. Williamson wanted to study healthy people and wanted to set up an environment in which people could become healthy. He was aware that health could only be achieved in freedom.

After the war the centre opened again but was closed when the National Health Service began. Ironically the Health Service is only interested in disease. The actual reason for the closure was that the weekly subscription to the centre included health as well as other services so that it could not be included in the 'free' health service. As a result the community could not continue to grow being killed by bureaucracy when it lost its home.

I am sure that this experiment should be much better known than it is because unlike most of the community experiments going on, and like Rising-

#### THE MOVEMENT—(continued)

**FELLOWSHIP** magazine, the largest pacifist journal now published, contains critical articles, debates, news, editorials, poetry and pictures for all interested in peace and nonviolence. Singles 40c, \$4.00 a year; Peace Information Edition on alternate months; from Box 271 Nyack, New York, 10960, U.S.A.

**GANDALF'S GARDEN** "a monthish venture published for people with love." Colourfully 'with-it.' 3/6d. (post paid) or 36/- for 12 issues, from 1 Dartrey Terr., World's End, Chelsea, London, S.W.10.

**GANDHI MARG.** International journal of Gandhian thought—contributors: Richard Gregg, Joan Bondurant, Wilfred Wellock, Gene Sharp, J. P. Narayan, Theodore Ebert. Monthly from 221 Rouse Avenue, New Delhi—1, India.

**GREEN REVOLUTION** (Monthly) supports "a world-wide effort for decentralization and rural revival." Emphasis on homesteading. Annual subs. \$3 from School of Living Center, Heathcote Road, Freeland, Md., 21053, U.S.A.

**HAWKS AND DOVES.** Free Biafra news and comment from the Secretary of the Save Biafra Campaign, 13 Goodwin St., London, N.4 (issued about once a month).

**INTERDISCIPLINE.** Quarterly journal of the Gandhian Institute of Studies, Rajghat, Varanasi, India. . . "attempts to link the Gandhian movement with science." 30s. annually.

**INTER-PAIX.** Short articles and regular 'Calendrier des Manifestations Pour La Paix'. Price F1.5 ea. or F20 per year from T. Pontzen, 12 rue Dohis, 94 Vincennes.

**JOURNAL.** Discussion and exchange of views on war/peace issues from Joan Baez's Institute for the Study of Non-Violence, Box 5535, Carmel, California, U.S.A.

**LIBERATION.** An independent journal for non-violent revolution to end war and social injustice. 339 Lafayette St., New York, 10012, U.S.A., or Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, London, N.1. 3/6 (75c) per month. One year £3 (\$7).

**MANAS.** Weekly political review with decentralist, anti-authoritarian bias. 15 cents from P.O. Box 32112, El Sereno Station, Los Angeles, California 90032, U.S.A.

**MONTHLY KIBBUTZ.** About 3/4 Japanese language, 1/4 English. Deals with the Japanese Kibbutz-Utopian Community movement, one of the largest such voluntary movements in the world. Close connections with Israel Kibbutz. 1,000 yen, (\$2.80) per year from Japan Kibbutz Assn., 5-7, Akasaka 2-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan.

**NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL.** Get yourself on the mailing list for all sorts of news & information, plus calendar of events and other peace initiatives. N.P.C., 29 Gt. James St., London, W.C.1.

**NEWS & VIEWS** Journal of the Lancaster Peace Research Centre, Editor: Robin Jenkins—10/- per year from, 7 Common Garden St., Lancaster.

**NEW CORNWALL** Postal Subscriptions 8/-, Editors:—Richard and Ann Jenkin, 'An Gernyk', Leedstown, Hayle, Cornwall, G.B.

**NEW LIFE** Experimental, communitarian living projects from 15, Camden Hill Road, London, S.E.19.

**ONE & ALL** sells well in factory & mine, town & village, because it tells things more like they are than local unfree press. It is a scurrilous and anarchist magazine for Cornwall peoples. Monthlyish, 6d. (postal subs. 10/- p.a.) from Six Chimneys, Bolenowe, Troon, Camborne, Cornwall.

**THE PACIFIST** The monthly journal of the Peace Pledge Union. Price 1/- from P.P.U., 6 Endsleigh Street, W.C.1.

**PEACE NEWS.** Independent international weekly serving all who work for peace and freedom. 1/- every Friday. 5 Caledonian Road, London, N.1.

continued on back page



hill, it was made up of ordinary people living in their own homes. I think that one thing (of many) that we need to learn from it is that people need a purpose, especially a continuing purpose before

they will form a community and that a community is a by-product of other activities.

E. George Matthews.

5 Middle Green Road,  
Slough, Bucks.

## Contributors

Resurgence has published other articles by **VINOBA BHAVE**, "India's Walking Saint," in Vol. 1, No. 12 (Mar./Apr. '69) and Vol. 2, No. 6 (Mar./Apr. '69).

The cover photo by **ALAN PALMER** is a view of **TIMOTHY DREVER'S** 'Four-colour theorem,' environmental project at Kenwood (May-June, '69). About a hundred flat geometrical shapes of different kinds are displayed, to be rearranged by the visitor in a variety of logical constellations, like endless theorems. At first they would lie at random, then, as they are re-arranged and inter-relationships discovered so areas of organisation will spread, meet, merge or clash, and dissolve again. Timothy Drever, whose "preferred territory lies between aesthetics and logic," is aiming to by-pass the art gallery situation and restore an immediate relation between the spectator and the work of art. "A range of paradoxes appear on the horizon; poetic answers to logical questions, the rational solution of problems the posing of which is an irrational act." Drever has exhibited in Vienna, Liverpool, Edinburgh and London, (most recently at the Lisson Gallery).

**LEOPOLD KOHR** was born in 1909 in Austria and studied at the Universities of Innsbruck, Paris and Vienna. He is a prolific writer, and has lectured and broadcast extensively in North America. He is Professor of Economics at the University of Puerto Rico, and he has been the economic adviser of Anguilla since that island declared its independence. His book, **The Breakdown of Nations** (1957) was reviewed in Resurgence 9 (Sept./Oct. 1967). In 1968-9 he was Visiting Professor in the Department of Extramural Studies at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, to which post he will return in 1970.

**DAVID KUHRT** teaches in a state institution for maladjusted children; he gained experience for this work in Rudolph Steiner schools here and in Germany. He started writing poetry in art school where he trained as a graphic designer. He has exhibited his paintings and drawings at the German Cultural Institute.

**SATISH KUMAR**. It is not too much to say that the arrival on the London scene of this able and

gifted young Gramdan worker has done much to quicken the tempo of peace activity. Within a few weeks, and with no everlasting committees and with a minimum of material and financial assets he launched the 'London School of Non-Violence' which looks like being one of the most successful peace initiatives of recent years. He also organised a Gramdan march through London, wrote numerous articles for the press, gave several radio and TV interviews, lectured extensively throughout Britain and Europe, interviewed numerous prominent personalities for the Gandhi Centenary, and is now writing a book. Since his recent departure for his native India, he has been heard from in Rome.

The pictures for the photo supplement 'Pop in the Park' were taken in Hyde Park by **ANGELIKA VON MUTIUS**.

'The Limits of Permissiveness' is the first printing in England of one of the last public lectures by Sir **HERBERT READ**. Resurgence has published previous articles by him in Vol. 1, No. 4 (Nov./Dec. '66), Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jul./Aug. '68) and Vol. 2, No. 5 (Jan./Feb. '69).

**DR. E. F. SCHUMACHER**, born in Germany, emigrated to England in 1937, obtained his university education in Bonn and Berlin, and as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and at Columbia University, New York. After several years in business, farming and journalism, he joined the British Control Commission for Germany in 1946 as Economic Adviser. He has been economic adviser of the National Coal Board, London, since 1950 and Director of Statistics since 1963. In 1955 he was seconded to the United Nations to serve as Economic Adviser to the Government of the Union of Burma and was invited in 1962 by the Indian Government to advise the Indian Planning Commission on problems of Indian development policy. He has travelled widely in Europe, America, Asia and Africa and has published many articles.

**A. C. SEN** is editor of Voluntary Action (see The Movement column), and is a frequent contributor to Indian journals concerned with the Gramdan movement.

**John Papworth**

## Rural Notebook

HE was a stonemason by trade and had been twice married. His first wife drowned herself in the pond of the big house, an Ophelia-like gesture which gained her passing fame years later when a local poet wrote an account of his boyhood spent in this narrow Cotswold valley around the time of World War One. His second wife out-lived several of her faculties and died only a year ago. She rarely emerged from their cottage, a simple, one-up and one-down gabled affair, with an annexe which had once been a tiny general shop. Next to it was an ivy covered house of lords with a caved in roof (which must have made squatting there a draughty business) and in front was a beautifully kept grass bank veering down to the spring by the roadside.

Before the mains water was laid on most of the inhabitants of the half dozen or so cottages in the hamlet would collect their drinking water from the spring. I used not to bother until I happened one day to raise the heavy iron cover to the rain water tank behind my cottage and noted the remains of a dead rat in the water. Fortunately, I reflected, I had always boiled the water I drank, but I took to trudging regularly down the hill to the spring with a yoke and two pails all the same.

When the old lady did emerge she was a sight to behold—hair piled up in a great matted mass, like some unbelievable toque, which dug up memories of pictures of the late Queen Mary, and a large, firm mouth containing a prominent, solitary, dark brown, lower front molar. Her speech would tumble and slither around that monument to her former dental glory like an alpine stream coursing some huge obstructive boulder, and nearly all of it would be concerned with religion of a particularly primitive and fundamentalist kind. She was in fact a Jehovah's Witness, having been converted by one of the area visitors who calls at every house in the entire valley two or three times a year. (This persistent practice is a largely unremarked feature of life up and down the country and explains a great deal the substantial number of Witness converts and the huge sales of their journal 'The Watchtower'). At great length and in graphic detail, while my buckets filled and overflowed, she would explain why and how the end of the world was at hand, although she had no inkling at all as to how our scientists, technicians, planners and experts of all kinds are working like beavers to make her ignorant predictions a reality. The last time I spoke with her I left her at her gate declaiming with hoarse and warmly insistent fanaticism, "All the people are gathering Mr. Papworth, all the people are gathering." I learnt later a Witness rally was being held, a prosaic enough explanation perhaps, but her words were the very stuff of ballad, myth and legend.

The chances are that if you find yourself admiring a Cotswold stone wall in the neighbourhood it was built by the old stonemason. He was every inch a craftsman and would proudly point out 'his' walls as he walked about. Until well

past ninety he used a rusty and battered pre-Luddite looking bicycle even on the steep hills (he would walk up and free-wheel down) to get to the pub—which was a daily ritual—and he otherwise spent his days in retirement making bird baths from the local freestone, cutting beansticks for sale, and growing the most delicious vegetables and the most exquisite flowers. He was really a high priest of the gardening cult, but since he freely used the raw contents of his lavatory bucket, the prevailing odour of his garden could scarcely be described as one of sanctity.

As he grew older he became increasingly confused about his age and also his birthday. At first this was probably deliberate when he discovered how easily people would give him half a crown, or if in the pub, a drink, on hearing that that particular day was his annual milestone. But later on I think he was genuinely muddled and towards the end he never failed to remind me of his nativity every time we met. By then I had ceased to fall for it although the trickle of unsuspecting visitors to the hamlet who stopped to chat with him by his well-tended spring rarely failed to part from him feeling they had purchased virtue and goodwill, and a much nicer opinion of themselves, very cheaply in token of a few coins to mark what they supposed was the great occasion.

The end came when Stanley the cowman at the neighbouring farm took his milk in as usual one morning and found the old man was unable to get up from his bed. He was taken to a local institution for old people but at the end of the winter he said he felt better, which he was, and that he wanted to return. But reason, logic, convenience, hygiene, progress and civilisation, to say nothing of cash and the lack of an extended network of family relationships which in less besotted times helped to guard us at both ends of life—and in the middle too if need be—were against him.

Then a new complication arose: how did he suppose the bills for his keep in the institution were paid? He wasn't a pauper was he? Didn't he have some property? Well then . . . So now, while he lingers on, his beloved cottage and garden are put up for sale and strangers poke and sniff and haggle where once a blue eyed, apple cheeked old man, whose voice and speech were peculiar and delightful fruits of Gloucestershire rural history, would make up stories about his birthday and tell artless falsehoods about his age.

\* \* \*

The road through the valley duplicates a better one between Stroud and Painswick so it is not much used except by local people and wanderers who make a detour to admire the scenery and the view from Bulls Cross. They have plenty to admire in what is surely one of the loveliest places in the world, which does not mean that some of the locals don't do what they can to spoil it. Forty years ago the main village, the other side of the valley from our hamlet, could not have had



more than two dozen or so houses, with a few scattered farms. Now their numbers have more than trebled and the newer ones are easily distinguishable by what one can only call their meanness, and the newer they are the more pronounced their meanness. What is the explanation for this? Two newish but drab looking bungalows are known respectively as 'the ladies' and 'the gents,' and one of the newest houses, built by a member of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England to boot, is a box-like structure finished in pebble dash. The poet who declared morosely that we seem to be confronted with a choice between 'slum bolsheism and democratic bungalow rash' seems to have a point—but again, why?

The old farm houses are spacious and dignified, but now that machines have supplanted so much labour in building we seem to grudge ourselves every cubic inch of space we occupy. The population increase may account for some of this in our sick cities, but in the country? At least one farmer has sold his beautiful stone house to a week-ending stockbroker and installed himself in council house pebble-dash—why? If labour was exploited isn't machine labour supposed to be so much cheaper? Isn't that the point of it all? Sometimes it seems as though exploitation of man as a worker has merely given way to exploitation of man as a consumer. All right, I am not talking about the mud hovels that many of the poor doubtless occupied and perhaps I ought to be, but if the abundance of machine power was supposed to improve things, where is the improvement?

A mud hut, taken out of context, can perhaps be held to show a low standard of consumption, but within its context it made a kind of sense, and existing as it did cheek by jowl with large farm houses and manor houses, (and in this small valley scarcely four miles in length, there are a dozen of them which predate the industrial revolution, together with a number of cottages dating back to the settlement of Huguenot weavers, which have a charm and seamliness I have seen nowhere in modern building), indicated what people could aspire to if, collectively or otherwise, they really wanted to. Since our rural forebears ate simpler and less adulterated food it is possible their bodies were more immune to chills and draughts than ours appear to be and I suspect they were correspondingly less preoccupied with creature comforts. But living in a largely unspoilt rural scene, with not too many neighbours, with a philosophy that took full account of the transcendent aspects of his life and which gave meaning to the prevailing situation and to any attempts to improve it, and with full seasonal drama of nature perpetually at the doorstep, how can one judge such a life in terms of modern suburban affluence? And if this is unreal romanticising why did they produce songs and ballads we still find worth singing, furniture and crafts whose remnants are still venerated, whilst our youngsters, in their psychic misery and hopelessness, whose parents prefer to look at television rather than trees, take increasingly to drugs and self destruction?

\* \* \*

I had never, until recently, seen a hunt at close quarters, but this is hunting country and when strangers sawed off a tree trunk blocking the

entrance to the bit of wood behind the cottage, and when the same strangers took to blocking up the holes of the badger sets with not quite empty herbicide drums, we realised something was up and that a foxhunt was in the offing.

The threat aroused the dormant sense of community in the hamlet and we discovered there was a 100% anti-hunting front among us. The evil smelling drums were pulled out of the tunnel holes of the unfortunate badgers by two sisters whose lives are devoted to dog breeding; the retired doctor's wife (a lovely woman and one of the great classical cooks of our time) hurriedly tacked a large notice to a tree saying "Nature reserve. Hunt keep out"; and a lady who is believed to run a theatrical agency in London dragged some more branches across the wood entrance.

Was it our prejudice that when the hunt arrived the men on their horses all looked so bossy and bilious, and that the women looked such a hard-faced lot, like female traffic wardens on a day trip? I rather think not, especially as the girls, like their horses, nervous and highly strung, were really rather fetching. Or is that more prejudice?

They trailed along the lane and held earnest conferences with an important looking man in a red coat on the fox's whereabouts; actually we had seen the animal disappear into our wood, but we kept mum about this and made what the Doctor's wife called 'non-violent noises' against hunting in general. Finally they descended into the valley along King Charles' Hill and spent a fruitless half hour around a fox hole in a field on Fletcher's Farm before dispersing. Forty people, forty horses and about as many dogs seems a helluvalot of organisation for one wretched fox, especially as all the fox and badger holes had been blocked in order to keep the animal above ground so as to ensure it was tired out before the hunt started.

Honesty compels one to add that the drama of the occasion is intense, it rivets the attention of the entire neighbourhood for miles around, people flock in cars, on motorbikes or on foot to follow it, and when the sound of the huntsman's horn echoes across the valley and one sees the entire body in full pursuit across an open field I defy the most ardent and penitent pacifist not to feel some quickening of his blood.

But why, we wondered later, since the ritual is so established and compelling, chase a fox? Couldn't they chase a specially trained dog? Or each other perhaps?

\* \* \*

#### RESURGENCE BACK NUMBERS

A very limited number of complete sets of Volume 1 of *Resurgence* are available, price £2 10s. 0d. post free. Single issues of the 1st volume are available at 4 shillings each, post free, except for numbers 6, 9 and 11, which are very scarce and which have been retained for readers ordering complete sets. The editor would be grateful to hear from readers who may wish to return copies of these scarce numbers to us at the above rates.

King Charles' Hill is not on the map, it is a narrow, high banked lane where badgers, squirrels, aye and foxes too, disport, and sometimes an occasional walker explores. It is really impassable to vehicles since a stream opens in the middle about half way down. During the war, which around here means the Civil War of the 1640's no less, the King was anxious to get Royalist troop reinforcements from Cirencester to capture the besieged city of Gloucester, the only city in the West which was on the side of Parliament. Problem. How to get the troops across country without being spotted so that a surprise attack on Gloucester could be launched? A local captain who knew all the byways led the way and thus this remote valley, perhaps for the only time in its history, saw a King and his army in transit, invisible as it wound its way along a lane so deep that the head of even a mounted man is scarcely visible in the surrounding beechwood. In the event, when the King arrived at Painswick Beacon and looked down on the City of Gloucester he discovered that Parliament was heavily reinforcing the garrison, so realising the game was up he withdrew. In the neighbouring valley, where he camped, he declared he had never seen a spot which resembled so much what paradise would be. The name stuck and you can now visit Paradise not by way of Jacob's ladder and Charing Cross, but by the Paddington train to Stroud, and thence by a bus which will drop you at a pub called 'The Adam and Eve.'

But 'King Charles Hill' also stuck; the old stonemason always referred to it as such and when I once asked him why, he said, "Well, it will be from the war I reckon." Oh happy land of innocents, where when they put the definite article in front of 'war' they refer to an event over three centuries ago!

\* \* \*

It is, by the way, time we had a more up to date interpretation of the events of the civil war; Clarendon and his six volumes are all very well, especially if one is more concerned with the fate of the monarch than with the real forces at play, and H. N. Brailsford's brilliant book on the Levellers, which suffers acutely from the lack of a final interpretative chapter, (a chapter which illness and death prevented him from writing), is essentially a Fabian essay of interpretation. Now that the Wilson Government, if it has done nothing else, has blown the Fabian gaff, we badly need a clearer picture of how the War helped to consolidate the centralised unitary state of Britain established by the Tudor despots, and paved the way for the over-centralised mess we are in today.

While Clarendon is in mind those friends who criticise the length of my sentences should look at the opening sentences of his history; the first runs to a whole lengthy paragraph and ends with a preposition, the second begins with a conjunction and goes on for a page of close print, the third and fourth also begin with a conjunction and extend to another page and a bit. They have the feel of the opening of Schubert's Great C Major symphony and the very opening line might have been written this morning: "That posterity may not be deceived by the prosperous wickedness of these times..."

\* \* \*

Near the top of the valley there used to live an old man who drove people off his fields, on the rare occasions they wandered there, at gunpoint. I know because he pointed the gun at me on one occasion. He achieved a certain notoriety when his wife, with whom he lived in a state of belligerency so chronic that she kept to the upper part of the house and he the lower, grew ill and died, he ignored the event until the growing rat population living off her left him no choice but to call in the undertaker. Awed local gossip asserts the undertaker had little to carry away.

A little lower down is a most exquisitely kept farmhouse which used to be run by two eccentric old ladies. I stopped to chat with them one day and rashly accepted an invitation to enter, I was shown into the front parlour, where huge stuffed chairs, bookcases and so forth were enveloped in white shrouds so that the room resembled a scale model of a winter sports scene. The thinner one with straggly hair shrieked an imprecation to her companion for daring to show the gentleman into the parlour without preparing it and rushed round the room stripping off the dustsheets, which I then solemnly helped her to fold. When the dust had settled and I had stopped choking and sneezing another row began about who had mislaid the key to the sideboard. When this subsided and the sideboard door was duly opened another altercation began as to whether the stouter of the two friends, (who seemed to live in a state of endemic bullying of each other at the tops of their voices), should yield to her companion's entreaties to 'pour the port for the gentleman,' or whether he should help himself. I eventually accepted the proffered bottle and proceeded to pour. But the bottle had been uncorked too long; a minute fruit fly emerged in an apparent daze but the bottle was otherwise quite empty. When I left them they were having a fierce row about whether or not they should obtain a television set. Not long afterwards the doctor was called by the thin one who urged her friend was violent and should be locked up. But the doctor said she was of quite sound mind and refused to certify, refused that is until the violent one on a subsequent visit attacked *him*, then the views of medical science were abruptly reversed and the poor woman was duly put away.

Nearby is a largish Georgian Manor house and farm which has changed hands several times in recent years. I was once accosted by the then owner as I was trudging across a cowfield and asked with a fair amount of heat and abuse what I thought I was doing trespassing on his land. He did not know me, but I happened to know that he was a very fervent Baptist lay preacher, so I replied, "This is not your land, it is God's land, and you are his Steward. Let us give thanks for the excellence of your stewardship and the way in which we are both able to enjoy the fruits of His

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