THE LAUCKS FOUNDATION —

from time to time calls attention to published material that might contribute toward clarification or understanding of critical issues affecting world peace. The accompanying reprints constitute Mailing No. 18.

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EDITORIAL

National Catholic Reporter
January 9, 1981

New Year hope

IT'S TIME TO WISH each other a Happy New Year, although more and more would add, "Good luck, friend," suggesting that we're going to need all we can get to make 1981 — and all the 1980s — anything approaching happy.

Slowly we are coming to realize the world turned during the 1970s. Despite the warm reassurances of President-elect Ronald Reagan, the world won't ever be the same again for U.S. citizens. The tide of affluence that came in has gone out. So we're going to have to reflect on our expectations, and on our responsibility toward the expectations of others. Those of us who are better off are going to have to settle for less — and try to learn how less can be more.

Ten years ago, John Kenneth Galbraith in *Who Needs the Democrats?* wrote:

> "The economic system does not work. And the reforms required to make it work — to make it work uniformly and for individuals, not the corporations — are far more fundamental than anything contemplated by the cheap and easygoing liberalism of these last years."

He was right then. He is right now as the nation gears up to employ another set of reforms — conservative this time. All will be challenged this time around to see whether we can prevent the poor from getting poorer, and most of us from getting angrier and more frustrated.

This year someone could write a book entitled *Who Needs the Catholics?* and 10 years from now we could be looking back, wondering if we, as individuals, and all of us as church, had done anything to demonstrate that yes, the nation does need the Catholics. Not just Catholic people, of course, but Catholic traditions: of social justice, liturgy, community and, yes, tolerant pluralism.

The 1980s could be one of our finest hours. Or one of our worst if we fail to meet the task. This includes reforming our own house. We went into the 1970s with an outdated church. In fact, Father James Kavanaugh called his 1968 book *A Modern Priest Looks at His Outdated Church* (Pocket Books). Kavanaugh stated the problem, in part, and provided through the words of the man he described, the answer — in part.

Kavanaugh writes of a "fortyish" man who rang his office bell one summer night. The man was the father of four children and the usher in our church, he wrote, going on to describe the man who had a "sad" face. He came to say he was leaving the church, saying it wasn't "personal" but that he was tired of a church that "wouldn't treat him as a man." The author recalled the man said he was "tired . . . of overcrowded schools, tired of living in a world that only spoke of varieties of sin, tired of empty confessions and rites grown meaningless and cold."

Kavanaugh wrote that the man said he was taking his children from the school, "where they studied law when he wanted them to learn love." The author said the man wanted his children to escape the "fears that depressed his wife and him" and "to learn of God in words that told them they were loved, to grow in confidence and tolerance, to enjoy the world and treat it as a home."

What an indictment for an institution gathered under the label "Christian community." What was the fortyish man looking for? He said quietly he was looking for "a home, a touch of wisdom to see him through the week, a word of mercy that made it all worthwhile, an understanding church that reminded him of God."

Although parishes where the "rites have grown meaningless and cold" still exist, the U.S. Catholic church today has moved along the road toward becoming a home that offers "a touch of wisdom, a word of mercy." Most fortyish men and women want to be treated as adult Christians in the church. It still is more possible for men than women, but the awareness is changing even if the institution has not. Yet.

There is less preoccupation with varieties of sin, and more emphasis on love. We're not there yet. But millions of U.S. Roman Catholics — often through their own efforts in an institution grown more benign, slightly more tolerant, and certainly more aware of its mission of love — are on a new pilgrimage.

We will need to offer everyone "a touch of wisdom, a word of mercy" to see her and him through the week, and the decade. We know because we know how much we need these things ourselves.

Peace, and wisdom, and mercy, and love in 1981!

SUNDAY FORUM

Santa Barbara, Calif., News-Press, Sunday, January 4, 1981

Taking inventory on 1980, gains and losses

By Walter H. Capps

It is inventory time, when we come to that period in the year when we must take stock of our gains and losses, when we measure our achievements against some inviolable standards.

What stands out as the year closes are some related scenes. More than one thousand persons murdered in Los Angeles alone, the highest number in the city's history. A gifted child kidnapped and killed on her way home from school. John Lennon shot to death at close range by a stranger who, hours before, had asked for his autograph. The life of four American nuns, dedicated simply to helping the poorest of the poor, eliminated in a crude violent act. Blatant acts of seizure and terror as means of provoking and settling international disputes. Continued resistance at home toward enacting effective gun-control legislation. A growing eagerness to commit many more billions of dollars to the nation's defense budget. Public schools relying increasingly on bake sales to sustain abbreviated and bare-minimal programs in music and the arts. Eight hundred million people on the globe continuing to starve.

Christopher Lasch observed more than a year ago that the society has become narcissistic. Instead of remaining dedicated to collective goals and the quest of the common good, we have turned more and more, he noted, to individual pursuits like psychic self-improvement, exercise classes, getting in touch with our inner feelings, jogging, or meditating. Lasch believed that this tendency would contribute to a progressive atomizing of human life. Each person would come to regard himself as a single entity, a self-contained unit, committed to strategic survival measures. And the society would find itself, more and more, in retreat from what really matters.

As 1980 comes to a close, Lasch's thesis seems perceptive but too benign. What it misses is the extent to which a world made up of single entitites and self-contained units is a world of ever-increasing conflict. When individual pursuits rule, anyone's designs are as worthy as any other's. When energies are infused by survival strategies, all must find their own security and protection, whether this be higher fences, thicker walls of division, mad dashes for greater buying power, or even the possession of one's own weapondry. For good or ill, one is obliged to take cover by taking matters into one's own hands.

It is a dangerous tendency, especially so because it can easily be transposed into the prevailing collective posture. And 1980 was also marked by an intensifying of an insulating, self-protective nationalistic zeal. One can only ponder what it portends, coming at a time when the compelling voice of still another who had given us lyrics "to give peace a chance" was silenced.

Clearly, rugged individualism no longer serves us well. What we urgently need instead is to make the creation of a global society the primary measure of the right and wrong that we do. We must identify, then strenghten, the bases of our common humanity.

For in a season which forces us to examine prospects for peace and good will on our still wondrous but fragile planet, it should be more apparent than ever, as John Donne said, that no man is an island. Each one's life belongs to the fabric of the whole.

(Mr. Capps is the director of the Hutchins Center at UCSB).

MANAS

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AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN

WE live in an age of despondency. Our lives, both corporate and individual, are going awry. Our faiths have lost their substance, our theories their promise. The remedies proposed for our economic and ecological ills are either manifestly inadequate or require revolutionary changes which seem beyond our collective capacity or inclination. Wars, impoverishment, powerlessness, violence, nihilistic rage, and suicide, are increasing year by year. The modes of thought in both literature and social science are grimly pessimistic.

All that can be said to relieve this dark picture of the human present and future is that we are increasingly aware of our situation, and that there are those, with an air of calm desperation, who are trying to understand it. Dostoevsky was one who, a century ago, sounded the keynote of this effort. His *Brothers Karamazov* was a spontaneous expression that may be compared, in some ways, with the *Bhagavad-Gita,* which contains perhaps the greatest of all allegories concerning the meaning of human despondency. Both works raise a fundamental question: Is this despondency a natural part of human life? Is it part—a significant part—of the drama of our existence? If so, what meaning has such virtual despair for human beings? Can something be made out of it? Is that what we are meant to do?

The question turns on our hunger to understand the meaning of tragedy. We know, we have been taught, that tragedy depends upon consciousness. Great misfortune without consciousness is mere disaster. No catharsis follows. It is the search for meaning that brings the purifying result of pain. Well, that, at least, is going on.

In her introduction to the publication series, Perspectives in Humanism, Ruth Nanda Anshen asks:

> Can humanism become aware of itself and significant to man only in those moments of despair, at a time of the dissipation of its own energies, of isolation, alienation, loss of identity, dissociation, and descent; only when pain opens man's eyes and he sees and finds his burden unendurable? Human, all too human! Does this lead to the proliferation of that atomic anarchy of which Nietzsche has spoken and which Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor offers us as a picture of a threatening fate, the nihilism of our time? Is there a humanism conscious of itself, which is indeed transcendent because here human suffering and consciousness of responsibility open man's eyes?

We dare not deal lightly with this inquiry. We may have to cultivate our garden, but to do so without thinking would be abdication. Camus turned various furrows in the sterile soil of Europe—he had his difficult and desperate work to do—but like Ivan in the *Brothers,* he *thought.* Camus had as much reason as any man who has lived to suffer despondency, and he did, but he also said: "I know that something in this world has a meaning and this is man; because he is the only being that demands to have a meaning." The quality of Camus' demands—which remained unsatisfied—has been enriching to us all. He, like Tolstoy, showed how a man of mind could make a rich fabric of thought out of his despondency and pain. In both cases some transcendence was achieved.

Camus was not unmanned by his despondency. Surely this is the first requirement of the humanist. He put his trial in these universalizing words:

> I hold certain facts from which I cannot separate. What I know, what is certain, what I cannot deny, what I cannot reject—this is what counts. I can negate everything of that part of me that lives on vague nostalgias, except this desire for unity, this longing to solve, this need for clarity and cohesion. I can refute everything in this world surrounding me that offends or enraptures me, except this chaos, this sovereign chance and this divine equivalence which springs from anarchy. I don't know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it. But I know that I do not know that meaning and that it is impossible for me just now to know it. What can a meaning outside my condition mean to me? I can understand only in human terms. What I touch, what resists me—that is what I understand. And these two certainties—my appetite for the absolute and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle—I also know that I cannot reconcile them. What other truth can I admit without lying, without bringing in a hope I lack and which means nothing within the limits of my condition?

What was the best that Camus could do? The brief paragraph which ends his "Myth of Sisyphus" may serve as an answer:

> I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.

Camus made a bleak, stoic peace with the Sisyphusian

plight. In *Literature and Western Man*, J. B. Priestley finds its origins a hundred years earlier:

> There can now be discovered—and it is writers of genius who first call attention to it—that curious *malaise* of modern Western Man. Too many things are going wrong at the same time. Any last pretense of society having a religious foundation and framework, being contained at all by religion, has vanished. Industry creates a new urban "mass" people, outside the old social structure. Patterns of living that had existed for thousands of years are destroyed within a generation. Deep dissatisfactions, really belonging to Man's inner world, are projected on to the outer world, except by a few profoundly intuitive men of genius, who now begin to prophesy disaster.

Somewhere in this age—from 1835 to 1895—Priestley says, "can be found almost all the ideas that have shaped men's lives during this present century." The confused and angry inner world of the nineteenth century is now the "catastrophic outer world of our age."

> The modern age shows us how helpless the individual is when he is at the mercy of his unconscious drives and, at the same time, is beginning to lose individuality because he is in the power of huge political and social collectives. It is an age of deepening inner despair and of appalling catastrophes, an age when society says one thing and then does something entirely different, when everybody talks about peace and prepares for more and worse wars. Western Man is now schizophrenic. Literature, which is further removed from the center than ever before, does what it can. . . . But literature itself now becomes one-sided, inevitably because it is overintroverted, often so deeply concerned with the inner world, with the most mysterious recesses of personality, and so little concerned with the outer world, that it cannot really fulfil the task it set itself. . . .
>
> Religion alone can carry the load, defend us against the dehumanising collectives, restore true personality. And it is doubtful if our society can last much longer without religion, for either it will destroy itself by some final idiot war or, at peace but hurrying in the wrong direction, it will soon largely cease to be composed of persons. All this, of course, has often been said, but generally it has been said by men who imagine that the particular religion they profess, their Church greatly magnified, could save the situation. I think they are wrong, though I would not for a moment attempt to argue them out of their private faith. If such a faith, a Church, a religion, works for them, well and good. But I have no religion, most of my friends have no religion, very few of the major modern writers we have been considering have had any religion; and what is certain is that our society has none. No matter what it professes, it is now not merely irreligious but powerfully anti-religious. . . .
>
> No matter what is willed by consciousness, that which belongs to the depths can only be restored in the depths: the *numinons* lies outside the power of the collectives, cannot be subject to state decree, created by a final resolution at an international conference, offered to all shareholders and employees by the board of Standard Oil or General Motors. So we have no religion and, inside or outside literature, man feels homeless, helpless, and in despair.

Priestley wrote this in 1960, or a little earlier—close enough to our time to capture its spirit.

These generalizations are accurate enough, but the grainy touch and color of individual experience is needed to make us *feel* what was happening. For this we go to Walker Winslow's *If a Man Be Mad* (1947), the personal story of a man struggling against alcoholism, a man who was also a fine writer and a poet. In several of the later chapters he tells of his experiences working as an attendant in a Veterans Administration Facility for the mentally disturbed. The problem of drink no longer harassed him. As he said, "I was beginning to realize that perhaps my seeming wellness came from the knowledge that the world, and particularly this institution, was far more mixed up and sick than I; far more fear-ridden."

> And why did I continue in a situation where human excrement was often the medium for murals; where injury was inevitable; where heartbreaking stories poured in on me by the dozens; where a caste system oppressed me and its victims depressed me? What conceivable sense of responsibility could make a man do what I was doing? . . .
>
> For a while I burned with a constant anger. Injustice seemed to be the rule, and in a place where justice should never have been a question, it was a miracle. It seemed impossible that one man, alone, could alter the situation, except by appealing to the conscience and decency in America. I tried that by writing an article or two and sending them to magazines. The magazines consulted their medical experts, who inevitably found my view of the situation distorted or else said that the situation I depicted had now been altered. These same magazines would come out with other articles that had about as much relationship to the situation I saw as *Alice in Wonderland* had to atomic warfare.

Finally, he wrote to a leading psychiatrist for advice, telling him about what went on in the hospital and asking what he could do to improve the conditions there. This was the reply:

> You raise a difficult question which is ages long and cannot be well solved under the present conditions of our civilization. I would not presume to outline the solution in a letter. Quite naturally, I feel I ought to respond more specifically to your personal question.
>
> Apparently you had and are having a very valuable experience. You have no power political or monetary to change the deplorable situation, but you have your pen and you are a writer, and I think you ought to write, you ought to tell what you know.

But the eminent doctor couldn't understand why Winslow remained in the hospital as an attendant. Musing, Winslow comments:

> The only answer to that was that thirty-five men needed me—thirty-five out of the seven hundred thousand committed insane in America. A hell of a dent I was making.
>
> My pen! My words! My attempts at writing, and even talking, had succeeded only in dramatizing my impotence. I could scarcely write letters; I lost touch with language and am not at all sure that I have even partially regained it. I who had been a constitutional liar in regard to my personal life found that America is a constitutional liar in regard to its national life. Is one to hate one's own kind? Like me, it wanted to be comfortable; like me, it wanted only those responsibilities its lies sometimes created. It went about reform as I went about my cures. I would admit and even get desperate about its surface symptoms, but in the depths the disease was always hidden—left for a comfortable day when it could be quietly and surreptitiously cured. While I had maintained a half-dozen false continuities—personal myths—my country maintained thousands, one for almost every trade and profession. Nothing was allowed to appear as it actually was, only as what it seemed to be.

Now Winslow does what every one of us must eventually learn to do—see his society in himself, in that hologram of the social totality that each one of us is, and know it to the core.

> There is a theory that men arise to the created myths, that

(Turn to page 7)

nations arise to them. Perhaps that is true, but what great myth, symbol, or event could ever unite all of those tangential myths: the myth of justice when innocent men are beaten in third degrees; the myth of reward for honesty in business when business often could not offer employment to honest men, much less reward them; the myth of education which Veblen aptly termed "trained unfitness"; the dozens of myths in the arts and sciences; the multifarious justifications of politicians that scarcely masked a wish for power; the myth of patriotism, when what most often was meant was that it was profitable to identify one's own sense of destiny with that of the nation, and on and on?

Only a naive man, an extremely neurotic person, could write this, could have the guts to look at the nation through the distortions of his own pathology. Surely the nation wouldn't view me through the miasma of its own ailments and whisper, "Brother, I understand." No, there'd be an unspoken agreement between us: "You protect my lies and I will protect yours." That, in our time, is the agreement upon which most friendships are based; upon which our national life is *stabilized*. That was the agreement that kept this institution going. . . .

Now I was in some ways more insecure than ever. What could I say to a doctor, for instance, who delivered a lecture to a club on "The Therapeutic Value of Kindness" while he knew men were being throttled and beaten on his ward? Knowing the magnitude of his pretentiousness didn't make me an iota more secure; socially I was still his inferior, which implied that I was incapable of understanding him because of the limitations of my intellect. He was secure within the accepted lies of a group; I was isolated because of my guilt as an individual. . . . When I read the headlines it seemed to me at times that my own and my nation's plight were one. America considered itself a keeper in a world that had become very much like a disturbed ward. At times it was difficult to tell the keeper from the kept, especially when the keeper felt called upon to explain each improvisation in terms of morality and often got clouted while doing so.

Everywhere, we should add, there are intervals of peace and decency, even in mental hospitals, and nurses and attendants and doctors of the quality of Walker Winslow —but not enough of them. They exist and help to make life more bearable, but there are not enough of them to give the institution the profile that Winslow longed to experience and believed was not impossible. Our institutions, alas, are not the creations of eager men who evolve instruments to make themselves more effective as human beings; instead they are havens for the incompetent and the unimaginative, and protective barriers against the terrible chaos "out there," that we dare not try to understand. When the failure of institutions becomes noticeable, the despondency, once known only to sensitive anticipators of psycho-social trends, begins to be universal.

How long will the despondency last? In the case of Arjuna, it lasted until he decided to do what he had to do. So, if this is the case, it is the despondency which clears our eyes. It is the despondency which destroys our stake in the status quo. For Tolstoy, his despondency was the beginning of his real life. He still had all his quirks and his puritan conscience, but he took a new direction, giving foundation for another kind of thinking in the world. His genius made this possible.

No one has understood the importance of being "smashed" by the way the world and oneself are going, better than Ortega. In *The Revolt of the Masses* he wrote:

> For life is at the start a chaos in which one is lost. The individual suspects this, but he is frightened at finding himself face to face with this terrible reality, and tries to cover it over with a curtain of fantasy, where everything is clear. It does not worry him that his "ideas" are not true, he uses them as trenches for the defense of his existence, as scarecrows to frighten away reality.
>
> The man with the clear head is the man who frees himself from those fantastic "ideas" and looks life in the face, realizes that everything in it is problematic, and feels himself lost. As this is the simple truth—that to live is to feel oneself lost—he who accepts it has already begun to find himself, to be on firm ground. Instinctively, as do the shipwrecked, he will look around for something to which to cling, and that tragic, ruthless glance, absolutely sincere, because it is a question of his salvation, will cause him to bring order into the chaos of his life. These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest rhetoric, posturing, farce. He who does not really feel himself lost, is lost without remission; that is to say, he never finds himself, never comes up against his own reality.

This is our text for the week, and perhaps for a lifetime or two. For there are various sorts of shipwreck and being lost, and degrees of having a clear head.

Do the blows of fate have meaning? The Greeks believed that they did. If they do not, then life itself can have little meaning, for in a time like the present we experience little else but blows. Can we play out the drama with the stone-ground courage of a Sisyphus? Can we bear our woes with the calm defiance of a Prometheus? Is it possible to add the warming faith of a Gandhi to the stoic determination of a Camus?

Fortunately, there are those intervals of peace and quiet allowing time to think about such things. Glowing successes are not called for and probably will not be forthcoming. A Walker Winslow racked up no famous records either as writer or as reformer in his uneven, bottle-haunted life, but he had moments when he saw clearly and set it down in a common language. He died alone in a furnished room and was not found for days. But his words on paper have had the power to instruct and illuminate, helping people—who knows how many?—to get up and try again. Without the despondency this could not have happened. A deep despondency was the starting point of the work of Edward Bellamy, and of Henry George. Today it is the ill of an age. What common vision may dawn for a deeply despondent people? There are a few suggestive signs, but the vision is far from coherent as yet.

National Catholic Reporter
January 9, 1981

Tyranny unrestrained by religion

By THOMAS E. BLACKBURN

THE LAST TIME I occupied this space (*NCR*, Nov. 21), I said that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's jeremiads on U.S.-Soviet relations are political dead ends but must be reckoned as prophetic utterances. To leave it there would be a cop-out.

You have to do something about prophecy. Solzhenitsyn sees the whole communist bloc as a Gulag, a concentration camp in which free thought is ruthlessly stamped out and brother is turned against sister in a system of spying and informing to serve the brutalities of the state. That is a giant portion of the world and its peoples he is trying to force on our attention.

It is not as if we didn't have plenty to occupy our attention already. From the freon in the ozone to the PCBs in groundwater, and from Belfast to Santiago, there are causes for the concern of sensitized Christians.

We can pray for the oppressed. But more seems to be called for. I am not talking about a new organization or crusade against the dark forces. We have more than enough of those, and too often they are part of another problem, not a solution.

But we do need to get Solzhenitsyn's vision into focus. We are too willing to let the East deal with the atrocities of the East, while we try to root out our own atrocities. We picket the Pentagon because we perceive — despite plenty of evidence to the contrary — that as Americans we have some moral leverage with that particular Moloch. The Kremlin, on the other hand, would be unimpressed with our signs or our bodies, and there is no philosophical leverage we in the West could bring to bear against it.

That is the rationale. But there is no reason we should buy other people's East-West split. Jesus died to make us all one. What happens in Siberia affects us as much as what happens in this country or in Belfast or in Santiago — or Cape Town, San Salvador or Phnom Penh.

Our leverage in each case may be different, but the problem is the same. And that, I think, is the place to begin dealing with Solzhenitsyn's message: where the problem is the same.

The West has put up a divided response to communism. One line of thought concentrates on dialectical materialism, engaging in scholastic exercises with the communists' own agenda. Dead end.

Another line deals with the economics of the communist system. The proposition that planning can substitute for a market remains to be proven after all this time, but what the economic objection usually boils down to is a fear that someone will take something away from someone who has something. I wouldn't fear. Like the German industrialists under Hitler who became honorary gauleiters, today's big businessmen would keep what they have as honorary commissars. I'm not going to lose sleep over that issue.

A third line of thought has been to write off communism as a Russian phenomenon. The Gulag is something potato-eaters do to each other when the vodka no longer warms them. A brutal lot, that. (This is the thought that Solzhenitsyn has turned his heaviest artillery on.)

Look, the issue is this: Somebody has taken control of the lives of everybody, including their thoughts, for "their own good." Is that really so different from what the English say has been "forced upon" them in Northern Ireland or what the Chilean government is doing — in the name, incidentally, of an economic system that claims to be communism's polar opposite? Isn't uninhibited power over people's lives, sugar-coated with talk about the good of the majority, the root of our domestic problems? We are told, now, that we all, including the unemployed, must accept high unemployment awhile longer for the good of everyone's economy. Hmm.

Aren't we talking about the kind of power that has created refugees and hungry children, the two sins of the 20th century that cry to heaven for justice?

Solzhenitsyn is a prophet who has gone through one particular forest and examined every tree. From his special perspective, he sees his forest as unique. But from a longer view, we can see forests everywhere. What he has contributed, in the three volumes of *Gulag Archipelago* particularly, is an ecology of the forest system.

Somebody always will make most political decisions for everybody. Not everyone is equally interested and, anyway, it is the age of specialization. Tyrants and oligarchs are not a new phenomenon.

What is new in the West, though, is that this is the first full century in which the tyrant and the oligarch are unrestrained by a religious consensus.

Western kings paraded as absolute rulers by divine right. But their divine right presupposes a divinity above kings to grant the right. Take away the divinity, and you take away the restraint on the ruler and have to look for checks elsewhere.

Marxist atheism took away divinity in the communist bloc, but secular liberalism and the Chicago school of economics — left and right in domestic politics — do the same service in the West. All posit something to replace God: the dictatorship of the proletariat the voice of the people, the free market. As restraints, not one is worth a bucket of warm spit.

Meanwhile, science and technology have given the tyrants and oligarchs the ability to project their will farther, wider and more effectively. The machinery of Hitler's "final solution" is what makes it stand out from previous genocides. Hitler had the tools to do what he wanted to do. But he was not an aberration; he was the prototype of the 20th century ruler; we shall see — are seeing — his like again.

Solzhenitsyn's impatience with the West pays us the compliment of assuming we have solved the problem of restraints. We have not. The battle of Riga and the battle of Belfast are part of the same war.

The modern state can do anything except control itself. If the dictator is the typical ruler of the 20th century, the effort to find controls must be the typical Christian work of the era.

My estimate is that controls will not be found without God re-emerging in them. This is not a vote for the "Moral" Majority; going backward with them would only provide an excuse for the crypto-tyrants to replace the ones we have. People, as the foregoing argues, must not be tyrannized for "their own good." We must go forward.

Solzhenitsyn has not marked the way. He is as confused about that as the rest of us. The real value of his prophecy lies in the guide he has provided to enemy territory. We kiss him off as a political atavist to the peril of the work at hand.

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CHILDREN ...and Ourselves

DECEMBER 3, 1980

PREFACES TO HISTORY

AT some point in the study of history—teachers would doubtless best know when—it becomes obligatory to make sure that children recognize the difference between a chronicle of past events and the serious investigation of what the events *mean*. For the understanding of any subject, the critical faculties eventually need to come into play, and to assist in the birth of this activity requires the perceptive art of the teacher. It is a question of maintaining balance. One might for example ask: If the historian's work is of necessity oriented by subjective judgments—more simply, *opinion*—why should it be worth reading? (Descartes asked this question!) One answer might be that *all* human work, even the higher reaches of mathematics, has in it a decisive subjective factor, and that a measured trust in good scholarship is indispensable in studying the works of the human mind.

Another question needing attention would be: On what should such trust be based?

The candor of the historian may be instructive here. It would be difficult to find a better example than the prefaces of Barbara Tuchman. History may be one of the social "sciences," but Mrs. Tuchman makes plain how much "art" is involved in the investigation of the meaning of human events. In her Preface to *The Proud Tower*, subtitled "A Portrait of the World Before the War: 1890-1914," she begins by declaring her purpose:

> The Great War of 1914-18 lies like a band of scorched earth dividing that time from ours. In wiping out so many lives which would have been operative on the years that followed, in destroying beliefs, changing ideas, and leaving incurable wounds of disillusion, it created a physical as well as psychological gulf between two epochs. This book is an attempt to discover the quality of the world from which the Great War came.

Next, the writer takes her reader behind the scenes of the historian's task, showing what happens—what *must* happen—as the work proceeds. Changes in outlook are inevitable, and for at least some readers this may come as a disturbing surprise. The idea that "certainty" in social science barely exists—that it changes in the course of research, becoming, in some cases, more and more tentative—gives the reader almost as much responsibility as the writer. But for the reader who recognizes this and accepts it, the historian who explains his (her!) own uncertainties becomes a "reliable source."

Study of Barbara Tuchman's prefaces illuminates the reason for confidence in her work. Speaking of *The Proud Tower*, she says:

> It is not the book I intended to write when I began. Preconceptions dropped off one by one as I investigated. The period [1890-1914] was not a Golden Age or *Belle Epoque* except to a thin crust of the privileged class. It was not a time exclusively of confidence, innocence, comfort, stability, security and peace. All these qualities were certainly present. People were more confident of values and standards, more innocent in the sense of retaining more hope of mankind than they are today, although they were not more peaceful nor, except for the upper few, more comfortable. Our misconception lies in assuming that doubt and fear, ferment, protest, violence and hate were not equally present. We have been misled by the people of the time themselves who, in looking back across the gulf of the War, see that earlier half of their lives misted over by a lovely sunset haze of peace and security. It did not seem so golden when they were in the midst of it. Their memories and their nostalgia have conditioned our view of the pre-war era but I can offer the reader a rule based on adequate research: all statements of how lovely it was in that era made by persons contemporary with it will be found to have been made after 1914.

What is Barbara Tuchman doing here? She is instructing us in the patterns of human feeling, throwing light on how opinions are formed, and making history into the tool of self-correction for the reader. Her aim is not to "teach us" about the past, but to equip us with the tools of better judgment. She has, in short, basic respect for the reader. She assumes that the reader will want to think, and *will* think. (While, actually, no other viewpoint is acceptable in a historian, not all of them give evidence of it.)

Another passage in this preface shows how much "free-wheeling" the historian practices, and why it is inevitable.

> In attempting to portray what the world before the war was like my process has been admittedly highly selective. I am conscious on finishing this book that it could be written all over again under the same title with entirely other subject matter; and then a third time, still without repeating. There could be chapters on the literature of the period, on its wars —the Sino-Japanese, Spanish-American, Boer, Russo-Japanese, Balkan—on imperialism, on science and technology, on business and trade, on women, on royalty, on medicine, on painting, on as many different subjects as might appeal to the individual historian. There could have been chapters on Leopold II, King of the Belgians, Chekov, Sargent, The Horse, or U.S. Steel, all of which figured in my original plan. There should have been a chapter on some ordinary everyday shopkeeper or clerk representing the mute inglorious anonymous middle class but I never found him.

(Continued)

"I know," Mrs. Tuchman says in conclusion, "that what follows is far from the whole picture." This may be obvious, but it is a fact that needs frequent repetition. Happily, there is nothing monotonous about this historian's way of repeating it. Finally, she says:

> It is not false modesty which prompts me to say so but simply an acute awareness of what I have not included. The faces and voices of all that I have left out crowd around me as I reach the end.

This seems to make doubly important what she does select for conveying the quality and some of the meaning of the period.

Another of her books, *A Distant Mirror,* published by Knopf in 1978, is entirely devoted to the fourteenth century, written, she says, "to find out what were the effects on society of the most lethal disaster of recorded history—that is to say, of the Black Death of 1348-50, which killed an estimated one third of the population living between India and Iceland." Such a period seemed to her of importance to understand since our own time might be on the brink of a similar or worse disaster. For this [illegible]

has relied largely on the contemporary chroniclers of the time, saying that they are indispensable for "a sense of the period and its attitudes," and that—"Furthermore, their form is narrative and so is mine." This open defense of the narrative form of history is welcome. Humans naturally think in narrative terms—we think of our lives in this way, and probably learn more from narratives than from anything else. But narratives written in the distant past, Mrs. Tuchman says, have "empty spaces" in them, so that supplying historical continuity becomes difficult. She offers another valuable warning:

> A greater hazard, built into the very nature of recorded history, is overload of the negative: the disproportionate survival of the bad side—of evil, misery, contention, and harm. In history this is exactly the same as in the daily newspaper. The normal does not make news. History is made by the documents that survive, and these lean heavily on crisis and calamity, crime and misbehavior, because such things are the subject matter of the documentary process—of lawsuits, treaties, moralists' denunciations, literary satire, papal Bulls. No Pope ever issued a Bull to approve of something. Negative overload can be seen at work in the religious reformer Nicolas de Clamanges, who, in denouncing unfit and worldly prelates in 1401, said that in his anxiety for reform he would not discuss the good clerics because "they do not count beside the perverse men."
>
> Disaster is rarely as pervasive as it seems from recorded accounts. The fact of being on the record makes it appear continuous and ubiquitous whereas it is more likely to have been sporadic both in time and place. Besides, persistence of the normal is usually greater than the effect of disturbance, as we know from our own times. After absorbing the news of today, one expects to face a world consisting entirely of strikes, crimes, power failures, broken water mains, stalled trains, school shutdowns, muggers, drug addicts, neo-Nazis, and rapists. The fact is that one can come home in the evening—on a lucky day—without having encountered more than one or two of these phenomena.

What could be more valuable to the student of history than the little "essays" which make Barbara Tuchman's prefaces?

JEROME D. FRANK

'If you win, you lose.'

Technological advances, by changing conditions of life in significant ways, produce psychological and social stresses. Persons and societies struggle to change ingrained, habitual patterns of behavior and long-established institutions to adapt to the new conditions.

Of all the products of our age of *galloping technology*, to use the apt phrase of the *Bulletin* editor, the most jolting has been the sudden huge leap from non-nuclear to nuclear weapons. General Douglas MacArthur, having lived through the process, described the breakneck pace of weapons development vividly:

"At the turn of the century, when I entered the Army, the target was one enemy casualty at the end of a rifle or bayonet or sword. Then came the machine gun, designed to kill by the dozen. After that—the heavy artillery, raining death by the hundreds. Then the aerial bomb, to strike by the thousands, followed by the atom explosion to reach the hundreds of thousands. Now, electronics and other processes of science have raised the destructive potential to encompass millions. And with restless hands we work feverishly in dark laboratories to find the means to destroy all at one blow."

It is a truism that humans react to their perceptions of events rather than to the events themselves. From the days of spears and clubs, weapons have conferred strength upon their possessors, both in appearance and in actual fact. The image of strength projected by a large stockpile of non-nuclear weapons was based on real strength; therefore, it was realistic for national leaders to rely on them to reassure themselves, intimidate their actual or potential enemies and hold the loyalty of their allies.

Nuclear weapons have abruptly and permanently broken the connection between weaponry and strength in one respect, but not in another. Perceived and actual reality still coincide, in that strategic nuclear weapons in the hands of one adversary gravely menace the other. They differ sharply, however, in that beyond a certain point the more a nation possesses, the stronger and more secure it and other nations perceive it to be, whereas in actuality the reverse is true.

Beyond a level long since passed by the United States and the Soviet Union, accumulating more powerful and sophisticated strategic nuclear weapons increases the danger to all nations, including the possessor. It stimulates the spread of these weapons to nations that do not now have them, thereby increasing the probability of their being launched by accident or malice, and also assures that they will eventually fall into the hands of terrorists.

When one considers the level of fear caused by a minor leak of radioactivity from a crippled nuclear reactor, one can imagine the panic that would be created by the explosion of even a small, primitive nuclear bomb by terrorists.

Yet the nuclear race between the major powers continues at a furious pace. The non-nuclear nations seek frantically to lay their hands on nuclear weapons of their own.

Leaders of the nuclear nations climbed to power before nuclear weapons burst upon us, so they try to deal with these weapons as if they were conventional ones, despite an intellectual awareness that they are not. Intellectually, they may be in the nuclear age but emotionally they are still back in the days of spears and clubs. They are experts at the old international game of deterrence and war—lethal games in a nuclear world, but the only games they know how to play.

The most ominous development resulting from psychologically equating nuclear with pre-nuclear weapons is the delusion that a nuclear war can be won, with a concomitant shift to a policy of waging war with them. To this end, arms experts have produced elaborate scenarios of civil defense and the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

General MacArthur went on to say:

"The very triumph of scientific annihilation has destroyed the possibility of war being a medium of practical settlement of international differences. No longer is war the weapon of adventure whereby a short-cut to international power and wealth can be gained. If you lose, you are annihilated. If you win, you stand only to lose. War contains the germs of double suicide."□

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