

Alternative

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... AND THE BAND PLAYED ON

(The author enlisted in the Navy, served three years, half of this in combat on the battleship U.S.S. Maryland; participated in the battles of Saipan, Palau, Philippines and Okinawa. This time he refused to register for the draft and is out on bail awaiting trial.)

The flare of flames and then the smoke. The bombing planes were invisible to the men on the ship. From it, we could see only the blackened Island lying inert like a gutted carcass in the ocean until the eruption of a fuel or ammunition dump gave proof that the destruction was as yet incomplete.

On the quarterdeck the ship's band was playing "Stars and Stripes Forever."

Wadding from anti-aircraft guns and the main batteries also littered the deck. Men lounged in the hot sun, cursing its heat. A few desultorily listened to the band. Groups formed at the rail entertained by the explosions of the Island.

"Jesus! Look at that one!"

"God damn!" (In the foxholes there are no atheists.)

A body floated by. The corpse attracted more men to the rail. After it came a destroyer, its bow blown off. Its movement was sluggish, the gaping, jagged hole showed like the decayed mouth of a drunken bum.

"Like us after Saipan."

The band sounded its fifth consecutive march, cheered on by the comments of the bystanders:

"Jesus why don't they give up."

"Give it a rest."

The bomb of the suicide plane had not been partial to musicians. Ken, our lead trumpet, was no longer with us. If one was not concerned with degrees, it was possible to say that the rest of the band had survived. Most of us had dysentery and heat rash, were finely worn from lack of sleep and exhausted with the heat.

According to the official records, those of us in the band were entertaining the sailors on the U.S.S. Maryland, a Battleship, the same sailors who off the record paid no attention to our sounds other than to curse them for being an additional source of irritation.

The Navy has a ruling which makes a twenty-four piece military band part of the complement for large ships and so there we were. According to the rules we played marches and the men listened and enjoyed them.

Our primary purpose was to keep the morale of the men high. After listening to our marches, men would supposedly throw back their shoulders and stare out into the sky promising the empty spaces before them that to kill the Japanese was the one consuming desire of their lives.

Inasmuch as marches without marching are extremely limited rhythmic pieces with remarkably banal melodies, the men on the ship came much nearer to throwing us into the sea than to straightening their own shoulders. When men are too tired even to scratch their heat rash, marches sound like the cackle of a malicious muse.

If the band wasn't *playing* marches for concerts it *practised* marches. It didn't make any difference that we had memorized the marches after playing them for nearly three years. And it made less difference that repetition after a certain point made our playing all the duller. There was another ruling which made practise as well as playing compulsory. Everything is worked out very neatly in the Navy. Not a chance for a slip up.

The Chief in charge of the band knew that no one enjoyed marches — and so did our division officer and the First Lieutenant and perhaps even the Captain. But some intelligent soul with a great deal of "gold braid" had long ago decided in the chambers of his Washington office that marches were the epitome of music and so we epitomized.

We had a dance band also, and so we played *dance* music on a Navy ship. But believe it or
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Sandy Katz, an editor of ALTERNATIVE, was conditionally released from Lewisburg Penitentiary on August 24th after serving a year and a day sentence for refusing to register for the current peace-time draft. He was allotted time off for good behavior but was denied parole. Asked by reporters what his plans were, on arrival in New York, he replied: "I plan not be afraid. I hope other young men will do as I have done. I will counsel and abet them. I will never be silent."

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V. SHEEAN'S WAY TO PEACE

Vincent Sheean, the rather prominent journalist whose *Not Peace But a Sword* helped win liberals and intellectuals over to support the recent war is now a convert to Gandhian pacifism. This conversion brings two comparisons to mind. One is the discouraging comparison with former Communists like Louis Budenz, one-time editor of the *Daily Worker* and Elizabeth Bentley, former Communist spy, who renounced the violence and deceit of Communism, joined the Catholic Church, and are now acting as informers and propagandists for the violence and deceit of American jingoism.

The other comparison is with the intellectuals and writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who were converted to Marxism. Their conversion foreshadowed the growth of Marxism into a powerful world force.

I read Sheean's account of his new attitude partly at least in an attempt to see which comparison is more accurate. Is this just another thrashing about of a frustrated intellectual in his search for external authority? Or has another able mind renounced war and turned soberly to Gandhian truth-force as the solution to the military impasse?

As nearly as I could tell, both elements are present in such a hodgepodge that it is hard to tell where Sheean's uncritical need for a Holy Father leaves off and where his rather careful appraisal of the powers of Gandhian non-violent truth-force begin. The book is also weakened by the fact that Sheean has not yet been able to discard fully either the tricks or the self-conscious style of the professional journalist. Like the Christian who takes great pride in his humility, Sheean writes very artificially about the natural way in which he is recording his experiences.

Still Sheean appears to have been deeply moved by the hopelessness of the methods of both the Western Democracies and the Russian Communists (as well as the United Nations, which he says is "either insincere (i.e. not intended to succeed) or hopelessly inept, or possibly a combination of both"). And he is also impressed by the contrasting hope to be seen in the methods of Gandhi, as an alternative to the policies of the governments of the world, all of which, whatever their differences may be, hold to war as a last-resort method of self-defense.

It seems to me that the present book is muddled and of little value in itself. Its greatest usefulness probably is that, however confused and poorly organized it is, it may represent the first groping attempt of a man who has tried war, and seen it fail, to find a substitute.

Sheean thinks that the non-violent method supplies the answer to Willam James' famous statement:

What we need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible.

One of the main things that Gandhi said to Sheean, just before his assassination, was:

"A man must at all times be ready to give his life for his truth. It involves a great decision, which, once made, can never be retracted."

"The principal thing he communicated to me was the necessity of the renunciation of the world. He was at great pains to show that the fruits of action are not forbidden and that the world could be enjoyed, providing it is first renounced."

There are many who think that Sheean will never make his renunciation. They point to his personal history which is full of conversions to noble "causes", each conversion leading to the publication of a profitable book. Now he has capitalized shrewdly on the fact that he was in the midst of a series of interviews with Gandhi at the time of the assassination and was actually present at the prayer meeting when Gandhi was killed.

On the other hand it appears likely that Sheean, like most persons who are accused of hypocrisy, actually feels the idealistic emotions of which he writes. It is not that he pretends an idealism which he does not feel, but rather that he also feels other, contradictory motives which it is hard to renounce. Apparently he writes sincerely when he says:

"Morally, intellectually and spiritually there is no difference between the national powers, since all who can do so are working on the techniques of these (atomic) explosions and all would use them . . ."

and

"If we do not learn to translate conflicts into non-violent terms there may soon be no conflicts left because there will be no persons left to engage in them."

It will be interesting to see therefore whether Sheean actually withdraws his support from American militarism, as Gandhi would have done. Will he, for instance, use his journalistic contacts and abilities to publicize the present imprisonment of American youths for refusing to register under the draft? Will he translate Gandhism into terms which will help it grow in the western world?

—DAVID DELLINGER

THE BAND PLAYED ON

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not, never in the sixteen months at sea did anyone feel inspired to dance. Popular tunes were nicely corroded with age by the time they reached us. We played "Sentimental Journey" for sixteen months, although no one felt sentimental about it at the time. And "Rum and Coca Cola" while the sugar plant at Saipan burned merrily after our ship had shelled it.

The official theory, and Navy theoreticians are among the best (Halsey's wild hair during the Philippine campaign is a good example), was that our playing had something to do with the myth known as morale.

Morale is the nonexistent, the dream of officers, according to which enlisted men become satisfied with their dissatisfaction in their best of all possible Navy worlds.

To maintain morale might, under certain conditions, have been humanly possible, but to create morale was work for the gods not the godless.

When our ship was torpedoed at Saipan the crew became almost hysterical with joy because we thought we were going back to the States. That was our morale, hoping we would get hit quick and light so we could return for repairs. It was our understanding that the Japs didn't keep us at sea so much as a "glory happy" Captain who was rumored to have said, "I would be proud to die on the bridge of my ship."

An equally enthusiastic sailor had responded to this noble sentiment by saying, "And I would be proud to make sure that he does."

We lived in the past and in the future, not the present. The past of where we had been, what we had done, the future of returning to the States that we might live again.

We played a Strauss waltz the night before the sea battle with the Japanese Fleet. But nobody, not even the Captain danced.

Sometimes the dance band would jam. The playing was flabby most of the time, but occasionally we could steal enough benzedrine or alki to get a buzz on and then our rancor would disguise itself as music. The crew was more attentive when this happened. They would shout encouragement and clap their hands together and beat their feet upon the deck.

A trumpet would scream like a dying man burning. The trombone would blurb as though digestion had been successfully completed. And the drummer would go mad. The crew would sit half dazed until the final last chorus. Then with grunts of excitement we'd come through. For a moment we felt alive again.

After it was over everyone felt let down, more exhausted than ever. This was our "morale" building.

We knew that for the most part we were playing to the winds. The crew knew, and accused us of "fucking off." The officers knew it. But there was a Navy ruling which ordained that we should be there and so we were.

Most of the musicians existed thusly for three years or more. When there were a few measures in which one section of the band did not play,

IMPRISONED FOR \$4.50 TAX

On September 1st Jim Otsuka was sentenced in Federal Court in Indianapolis to 90 days in jail and a \$100 fine for refusing to pay \$4.50 in federal taxes, the bulk of which would have gone for war.

Jim Otsuka could have rationalized that after all \$4.50 is too petty to make an issue about, that his Japanese ancestry would guarantee that his motives and intentions would be misunderstood and misinterpreted, that he was not the "discreet" person to raise this issue. He *could* have so rationalized; he *did* not.

It is for us to act in this same spirit of determined steadfastness and dogged grit, to look not for the ways to rationalize and compromise. If we must seek excuses, let these be for the committing of ourselves to making a stand; let us find the excuses not for inaction, but for action.

The judge probably now rests smug in the knowledge that with this one fell swoop he has throttled right at the outset any such movement. \$20 and 20 days for every dollar withheld — surely that will once and for all put a stop to these political non-entities and starry-eyed insurrectionists!

No, it is for us to disprove totally and decisively this thesis. It is for us to show that Jim Otsuka will be but one, though the honored first, in a long line of such resisters. It is for us to see that for every Jim Otsuka in jail a hundred others rise to take their places, to advise and aid to that end — and by doing that to teach the first and foremost lesson of our time, the refusal to be cowed by the might of government, police and warders; to assert this conviction and to act on it; to teach, by the example of simple courage, to resist and to say no to organized barbarism.

—SANDY KATZ

the rest of us would grab books and read as though to convince ourselves that all the world was not as mad as the one in which we were engaged. Ken was reading "*Creative Evolution*" when he was killed. We may not have learned much, but the bad light ruined our eyes.

If it's not clear what I'm working at, think of it this way.

A marching band for amputees.

And a dance band for deaf people.

Then you'll understand that THE NAVY HAS A PLACE FOR YOU!

Adventure!

Romance!

Security!

Join today!

Eh Ken?

—WILBUR RIPPY

(You mention the complaints you receive about ALTERNATIVE not being constructive. In this connection, note that the above is background material for a JOURNAL in which I try to trace my own journey from the nihilism and despair that is somewhat depicted in this Battleship scene to a regeneration of hope and a re-entering of social activity, after discovering the alternative to violence, that is, non-violent resistance.—W. R.)

NOTES ON CHILDREN

The problem of bringing up children today is chiefly one of finding a way of insulating them against the overstimulation, claptrap and false values of our society without at the same time destroying their sense of reality. Children left to the mercy of the radio, magazines, advertising, movies will grow up jittery, trivialized and moronic. The only protection they have is the ability of their parents to build some kind of a wall around them within which they can have breathing space to learn to resist these influences.

A hands-off policy will not work and if it did it would be disastrous. Parents must direct and guide — for the simple reason that if they do not, the worst influences in our culture will. Not to suggest, and in the end inculcate beliefs, and attitudes for our children only leaves them ready prey for the beliefs and attitudes of the advertisers and the comic-strip educators.

The first working principle for the parent should be to try to establish an atmosphere of calm and quiet. Everything else will conspire to provide the excitement. About this the parent does not have to worry. The merest walk in the city street or half an hour with the radio or a current magazine will get the child excited enough. Whatever framework of peace and serenity the child is ever to know the home will have to provide.

It is an all too common mistake to believe that children must be entertained all the time. It is more true that they should be entertained as little as possible. First, because they must learn to depend on themselves for entertainment and secondly because it is more important that they should feel at home with the idea of doing nothing. The hysterical adolescents who are always shrieking "But we can't do nothing!" should be met with the question "Why can't you?"

The barrage of "activities" which many parents conceive for their children is largely only a projection of their own hypertension.

An atmosphere of relaxation means also saying *yes* to the child as often as possible. *No* is like a closed fist which inevitably produces tension. There is a perpetual war running under-cover between parents and children. Children fight for more advantages and the parent if he or she is not careful often tends instinctively to deny them. When something does have to be forbidden something else can often be given in its place. By this means the feeling of affirma-

tion can be recovered, and the child's sense of relief that goes with it.

The parent's energies should be concentrated, not on sporadic carping and criticism, but on building up a framework of family habit and ritual which will give the child a sense of knowing where he stands and of being somebody. Children's "mis-deeds" are often only a questioning of what their position really is. They frequently mean only that the child has no real sense of give and take with the parents.

In counteracting the influences of commercialism and trivialization the parents must wage a continual attack on everything that beats the child into line — especially on the fear of convention and of other people's opinions, building up instead a skeptical attitude. Ridicule is a very good weapon, particularly in countering the extravagant nonsense of advertising and the radio. The child must be told not to believe what he sees and hears. At the same time the parent must resist any thought on the part of the child that he is superior to other people.

Children are good fighters and can learn to fight back against the things which would destroy them. But at the same time they must be at ease with these things. The fighting back must have ironic overtones. The parent must, therefore, play things down while criticizing them, implying that they should not be taken seriously, or that they have their humorous or pitiful side. This is the best way of avoiding the neurosis of being unhappily "agin" things — the kind of fanatical humorlessness of radicals which so often leads their children to revolt to the opposite extreme.

Children have a very strong sense of justice on which could be built a lasting conception of a decent social order if parents did not feel so concerned to justify themselves and hence the *status quo*. The fear, which advertising and business and the government assiduously promote, is the strongest conservative influence and infects the child almost from the start. The parent has to demonstrate concretely the satisfactions of independence and nonconformity. If the child learns to salute the flag at school, he should learn with at least as much care and repetition at home that the flag is also the symbol for a lot that is bad and should be changed. He should also learn that the flag is very unimportant as compared with the ideals of science, art and religion. Pictures and conversation about people like Gandhi, Tolstoy, Thoreau, Schweitzer, Kagawa and Einstein should be in the air.

—ROY FINCH

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