

**T**HE READINESS TO RESORT to violence is mankind's greatest curse. As individuals, under certain provocations, human beings inflict unspeakable tortures on each other and even seem to enjoy it. At the group level, history is a series of wars between tribes, religious groups, nations and the like, punctuated by periods during which a victor enforces peace or the combatants pause to recover from their injuries. Up to now, despite a few protesting voices, mankind in general has become reconciled to this state of affairs or even welcomed it, for at least two reasons. Since there was not the remotest hope that violent combat could be abolished, protest seemed futile. At the same time, victory in war promised sufficient gains to make it attractive as a way of seeking solutions to conflict.

Now, suddenly, two new developments have changed the picture. The first is the invention of weapons so enormously destructive that they preclude victory by either side—the most likely effect of their use would be to destroy civilization, if not the human race. This will eventually force nations to rely on nonviolent forms of power to protect their security and promote their interests as the price of survival. The second new phenomenon is the emergence of nonviolent group methods of waging conflict, notably in India and the United States. These campaigns hold out at least a glimmer of hope that under certain circumstances nonviolent tactics may more effectively achieve certain ends than violent ones. Nonviolence has stepped down from the pulpit into the battlefield, creating the prospect that nonviolent methods of conflict resolution may eventually be developed that would serve as a partial substitute for war.

Wars are supported by, and have afforded expression for, noble as well as base emotions, and have enormously stimulated advances in medicine, science, technology and social organization. Furthermore, all nations today are based on a war system of international behavior, so war is interwoven with many aspects of mod-

ern society. Hence the elimination of war requires far-reaching changes in many aspects of life.

The human inclination toward violence, however, makes war appear inviting in prospect and probably helps prolong wars after they start; hence it is important to consider what is known about this impulse and what means of inhibiting it, counteracting it, or substituting for it might be developed.

Any analysis of human violence must begin with the recognition that men, like males of other species, fight to defend themselves, to eliminate sexual rivals, to protect their young and to protect their territory, which for humans usually means land and personal property. Perhaps underlying all these is a drive toward aggrandizement of oneself and the groups with which one identifies. Although the primary aim in human combat may be to make the opponent submit to one's will, threatening him with bodily harm is a very effective way of doing this, and killing him is even better.

In contrast to males of all other animals, men are not strongly inhibited from killing their own kind. Males of other species seldom kill each other even in a single combat, and only men murder each other wholesale. The main factor that inhibits males of nonhuman species from mutual murder is probably that most species have fighting rituals or displays which indicate to each other that they are members of the same group and which avert actual bloodshed. Men are free of this restraint because they kill at a distance enemies whom they never see, so that the inhibitory mechanisms which might, and perhaps do, operate sometimes in face-to-face combat do not come into play.

However, the main attribute that frees men from the inhibition against killing their own kind is the very one that makes us uniquely human—the capacity to think abstractly and to symbolize. In contrast to all other creatures, humans are motivated chiefly not by biological needs but by values. They attach such importance to abstractions like freedom, communism and

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God that they are ready to kill and die for them. In this lies man's greatest danger and his greatest hope.

The power to symbolize enables men to view the identical experience in an endless variety of ways, depending on the values they attach to it. The danger is that men can freely kill fellow humans by picturing the group they wish to kill as nonhuman, that is, as lacking a sense of right and wrong. The enemy is either supremely wicked or too low to have any morality. The enemy is typically viewed as utterly unscrupulous, deceitful and cruel. Christians could righteously kill the infidel; Moslems had a holy duty to exterminate "Christian dogs"; and Nazis, with clear consciences, could wipe out Jews, who were alleged to indulge in ritual murder of children. Today Americans are told that the Communists, because they are atheists, have no moral scruples, and they view us as Capitalist-Imperialist oppressors whose only god is money.

The other way of dehumanizing an opponent is to see him as too primitive to have any morality; thus Kipling characterized the Indians as "lesser breeds without the law," and today the Afrikaners refer to the Blacks as "things." They do not even count the Blacks in their census figures.

**T**HE PROPENSITY TO VIOLENCE, though very deep-seated and easily aroused, is fortunately modifiable. For example, rats and other species can be trained through early life experiences to be killers or non-killers. An increasing body of experimental human studies shows that witnessing violence tends to predispose the child or the young adult to resort to violence in situations similar to the one pictured—that is, we learn violence by imitation. A particularly strong source of violent behavior may be the learned link between it and courage or masculinity—a major motive for threatening violence seems to be to show one's enemy and oneself that one cannot be intimidated by his

threats. This may be an important psychological motive for the insensate accumulation of weaponry today.

Study of the nonviolent civil disobedience campaigns of recent years casts some light on the ways in which human violence may be controlled. It appears that, as with other species, violence in humans may be stimulated or inhibited by the behavior of its object. Displays of fear, anger, or counter-violence seem to stimulate the aggressor to further attack. On the other hand, an attitude of friendly courage, coupled with willingness to suffer without retaliation, if persisted in, may eventually inhibit the attacker. The posture of prayer seems to be particularly inhibitory. There are many anecdotes of British soldiers who were unable to keep on clubbing Indians, for example, and some white policemen in the South have had the same reaction. At a group level, it seems that sometimes if one group offers violence to another and the other refuses to respond in kind, the second group becomes more cohesive and the former group begins to weaken. In this connection, it may be recalled that the man who tried to assassinate the premier of South Africa a few years ago was a white man. At a more trivial level, during the non-violent campaign to desegregate a motion picture theatre in Baltimore, the only psychological casualty was a white police captain who attacked a white reporter.

The fundamental thrust of the nonviolent fighter, however, is probably at the symbolic level. He refuses to let his opponent dehumanize him. By his candor, courage, sense of responsibility, personal dignity, and by demonstrating the highest moral principles, he continually reminds both himself and his adversary that he is not only human, but a better specimen of humanity than his opponent. The nonviolent fighter tries to win by turning the opponent's values against him—by morally embarrassing him.

Some of the effectiveness of the nonviolent campaigns of the Danes and Norwegians against the Nazis may have lain in the fact that, as Nordics, the Germans

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held them in high regard. Hence they could demoralize the Nazis by treating them with contempt. Leaders of the nonviolent campaigns in India subscribed to religious principles that the British respected. Trained in England, they knew how to disconcert the English by appealing to their sense of fair play. In the United States Negroes and whites have been brought up in the same culture and indoctrinated with the same dreams. The Negro's most effective appeal is to the "American dream" of equal opportunity for all.

Although nonviolent campaigns have succeeded under special circumstances, it is important to recognize their great limitations. One is that almost all their leaders so far have been motivated by a religious philosophy, supported by transcendental sanctions, that preaches the ultimate supremacy of love and the redemptive power of suffering. Obviously this philosophy is not accepted by most people. The question is, can other value systems be equally effective? The Danish and Norwegian nonviolent resistance campaigns were sustained by patriotism. All fighters, violent or nonviolent, subscribe to the phrase in our national anthem "Conquer we must for our cause it is just." Perhaps allegiance to any powerful ideal is sufficient to sustain the nonviolent combatant, as it does the violent one. Whether religious ideals are the only ones that can sustain nonviolent tactics remains to be seen.

A second limitation of nonviolent campaigns so far is that they have been adhered to only by groups that knew they could not hope to win by violence. The question arises as to whether a group could commit itself to nonviolent methods as long as it believes it might win by violent ones. The answer is, probably not. As long as a nation believes that it can defeat its opponent by destroying or threatening to destroy it, it will be strongly tempted to do this, since warfare has been hallowed by time and supported by conscience. It would be well nigh impossible to persuade a nation like the United States which glorifies its frontier heritage of violence and has won almost every war in which it fought to put its faith in nonviolent methods of combat today. However, soon all nations will be in a position analogous to that of the Indians and Negroes. It is true that they will possess the means of violence, but they will not dare to resort to them because the risk of total annihilation will be too great. Like groups which do not have weapons, they, too, will be forced to resort to other sources of power to promote their ends.

A third limitation of nonviolent methods of conflict resolution to date lies in the fact that they have been used only when the contestants are in continual face-to-face contact. This seems to exclude current forms of nonviolence as means of settling disputes between nations, since their populations have no direct contact. A remote possibility remains that the imaginative use of modern methods of mass communication might be able to mobilize some of the same psychological forces at a distance that are activated by face-to-face inter-

action. Castro, for example, through his appearance on television sets in every village, can make a personal impact on every Cuban.

A fourth reservation concerns the ability of nonviolent fighters to remain so under prolonged exposure to severe threats and humiliations. The harrowing experiences of members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, for example, represent provocations as extreme as those met in war. How much of this can a nonviolent fighter take before he breaks out into violence? Psychiatrists believe from clinical experience that emotions blocked from direct expression tend to manifest themselves obliquely. Repressed anger may appear as a headache or high blood pressure, or the person may turn it on himself and become depressed. Groups that have high suicide rates have low homicide rates and vice versa, as if anger that cannot be directed outward may turn inward. One cannot help wondering whether the terrible massacres that accompanied the partition of India might have represented in part an explosive release of the anger that the Hindus had suppressed for years in the service of satyagraha. The ability of nonviolent fighters to control their impulses depends in part on the strength of their leadership, ideology, and group standards. The use of nonviolent methods purely as tactics in the absence of strong group discipline and a powerful ideology would therefore appear to be risky, since the temptation to abandon them if they did not succeed promptly would be very great.

**F**INALLY, one cannot deny that to date all nonviolent campaigns have been waged in a context of violence. The threat of violence has always lurked in the wings. The British knew that too harsh suppression of Ghandi and his followers would stimulate violent revolutionary movements, and they were fighting for their national existence against the Germans and Japanese. The Danish and Norwegian movements might have failed if the Nazis had not been defeated in war. In the United States, the federal courts can mobilize overwhelming power in defense of Negro rights, as Mississippi learned, and Martin Luther King has wondered in print whether the Montgomery bus strike could have succeeded if the Supreme Court decision had not come through in the nick of time.

Moreover, leaders of nonviolent movements constantly remind their opponents that if their demands are not met, they may not be able to keep their followers in check. Sometimes they appear to advocate provoking violence in the adversary to mobilize public opinion against him and arouse his own sense of guilt.

In short, nonviolent campaigns always include an element of brinkmanship. It is hard to imagine that they could succeed without this component. To what extent this is a serious limitation or implies that violence really cannot be eliminated from conflict remains open.

These questions concerning the limitations of nonviolent campaigns to date must not blind one to their positive achievements. Perhaps the most significant is

the simple demonstration that nonviolent tactics can succeed against an adversary who possesses superior means of violence and is prepared to use them. The mere demonstration that this is possible under certain circumstances opens new areas for thought and experimentation that up to now were foreclosed by the assumption that nonviolence was contrary to human nature.

These campaigns have shown that nonviolent techniques can be as varied as violent ones. In this respect nonviolent and military campaigns are similar. Both require not only inspired leadership and strong group discipline, but flexibility of tactics to meet different contingencies.

It is often held that nonviolent methods could not work against an enemy occupation or a ruthless dictatorship that had no regard for human life. What if, for example, the English had followed Hitler's advice to shoot Gandhi and, if this did not work, to shoot two hundred of his lieutenants and so on until the movement was broken? This probably would have succeeded against the type of campaign he waged, but could perhaps have been met by dispersal of leadership, clandestine communication methods and other "underground" tactics. These, of course, would have deprived Gandhi of one of his most effective weapons, the mobilization of public opinion through the media of mass communication, but it is conceivable that alternatives to this could also have been developed. Dictatorships, unless overthrown by an outside enemy or by assassination of the dictator, are only defeated by internal rot. While they are riding high, violent methods are as ineffective against them as nonviolent ones. Actually, the latter, with suitable modifications, might prove to be particularly effective against both dictatorships and enemy occupations. They avoid the kind of threat that keeps the dictator's or occupying power's forces cohesive and apply the types of pressure that are best calculated to weaken the oppressor's morale.

The second great achievement of nonviolent campaigns is that they have reversed the link between violence and masculine courage. This is a reminder that group standards influence human behavior much more strongly than individual motives, and this is also true of impulses to violence. The group code of an army makes normally peaceful men kill each other. The group code of the Nazi SS enabled, and in fact compelled, its members to perform atrocities such as burning children alive over open fires. The group standards of nonviolent campaigns have made refusal to be violent a sign of masculine courage and resort to violence a sign of cowardice. Studies of participants in nonviolent campaigns have shown that they gain a sense of self-worth through their behavior and have contempt for their violent opponents. If the group standard that equates masculinity with nonviolence becomes sufficiently widespread, the day may come when willingness to disarm and to rely on nonviolent forms of power to protect national interests becomes linked with courage instead of cowardice.

This would remove perhaps the major psychological block to disarmament negotiations.

Although the goal of a world without war is a long way off and may not be achievable, this analysis suggests some immediate steps toward this end.

Today we are teaching our children violent behavior through an educational system that glorifies wars and military heroes, through the excessive amount of violence displayed in our mass communication media—newspapers, television and motion pictures—and through the wide sale of war toys. We can try to combat this trend by emphasizing in our education peaceful instead of warlike achievements and dramatizing heroes of peace as we have those of war. We can continue to campaign against violence in our mass media.

At the international level, we can work to strengthen the sense of world community and of common humanity, thereby combatting the dehumanization of one's opponent, which seems to be prerequisite to destroying him. In this we are aided by the shrinkage of the world in terms of transportation and communication, which is enormously increasing possibilities for promoting those kinds of communication between people that strengthen their sense of interdependence. These include cultural, technical and scientific exchanges and, above all, cooperative efforts to achieve goals that can only be reached by international cooperation, such as studies of the earth's surface, the oceans, the weather and the phenomena of space. Working together is the best way to create mutual respect and trust, to diminish mutual suspiciousness and to promote the sense of comradeship with one's fellow workers. The Peace Corps is a shining example.

Finally, where possible, we must encourage all those who are trying to solve social conflicts in nonviolent ways, at the same time that these programs are studied intensively to learn their strengths, limitations and ways in which they might be further developed.

In evaluating the potentialities of nonviolent techniques for conflict resolution, one must remember that no form of waging conflict always wins. The most one can ask of nonviolent techniques is that where they fail—and they certainly will fail sometimes—violent methods would have failed more completely and left a greater legacy of mutual hate. Perhaps the most encouraging feature about nonviolent campaigns is that they have succeeded where no one would have foreseen it. Who would have dared predict that a little man clad in a loincloth would drive the British out of India by nonviolent methods, or that Norwegian teachers could reduce the Nazis to impotence by simply not cooperating, or that Mrs. Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man could have such far-reaching effects?

With these unexpected successes in mind, it seems probable that, as nonviolence attracts more and more creative thinkers and leaders, bigger pleasant surprises may be in store for the future. One may even dare to hope that nonviolence will develop into a force strong enough to avert the suicide of mankind.

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# BOOKS

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## An End to Bravery

**FLOOD: A ROMANCE OF OUR TIME** by Robert Penn Warren. New York: Random House. 440 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by JOHN HENRY RALEIGH of the English Department of the University of California (Berkeley)

ROBERT PENN WARREN'S *Flood* is an interesting parable, by a man of intelligence and good will, on the future of the South. The parable is quite explicit: Fiddlersburg, a town in Tennessee, is literally going to disappear into an artificial lake that will be created by a government dam. By the end of the novel the flood waters are rising, and beside this growing lake is a newly constructed highway which is being traversed by new cars with safety glass and glittering chrome. The citizens are going to be re-located in a brand new community, Lake Town. There are other signs of the times. A condemned Negro spits in a white preacher's face, and another Negro knocks down the protagonist, Brad Tolliver. There is no retaliation in either case. By the end of the book, Brad Tolliver, who had returned to Fiddlersburg after many years' absence in order to find his past, realizes—an important theme in Southern literature—that he can't go home again, gives up his search for the past, for "There is no country but the heart."

As a novel, *Flood* is a failure. I see no reason for taking a lot of time and space to say so. The fault lies largely with the major char-

acters: Yasha Jones, the movie producer, who suggests Irving Thalberg; Lettice Poindexter, a rich girl from New York, and Tolliver's first and last love; Tolliver himself—seem to me prefabricated. There are exceptions, of course, but these are minor characters: Mr. Budd, the Deputy Warden of the prison is authentic, splendid; Brother Potts, the Protestant minister, is genuine too.

This is to suggest that, as his whole career attests, Warren is best at writing about simple Southern types; when he moves North or into the realm of conscious thought (the first fatal step was taken with Jack Burden in *All the King's Men* who, like all such types in Warren fiction since, must bear the "burden" of History and Thought) he fails. In this sense *Night Rider* and the Willie Stark parts of *All the King's Men* are still the best things he has ever done: clean, direct prose; authentic vernacular and dialect; spare plots; men, doomed by circumstances and self-doomed, moving inexorably to their fates; everything encased in a specific time and place. But with the character of Jack Burden Warren opened a Pandora's box full of "cosmic significances."

*Flood* is awash with wordy por-

tentousness of this kind, sometimes embarrassingly so—Lettice, who becomes a Catholic, is "goosed to God." At the other extreme it is filled with a great mass of details—the saliva gleaming on Lettice's teeth, for instance—that make one think that the new-wave French novelists with their "hot-rod" model are on the right track. The prose is ornate and often imprecise, showing the constant effort to supercharge everything. When there is any kind of action, transitive verbs are virtually absent. The protagonist's white Jaguar—a very important character in the novel—is usually personified in this manner. It does not drive down a concrete highway; it "fled whitely down the slab."

As a historical parable, however, *Flood* is of great interest. It can be read as a farewell to the Southern Renaissance itself, of which Warren has been one of the most articulate and self-conscious spokesmen. For the subject matter of the Renaissance was the Southern Past and now, clearly, that Past is disappearing. Considered historically, the Southern writers of the twentieth century from Faulkner to Peter Taylor are like Sir Walter Scott, who gave literary immortality to a society that was undergoing its death pangs.

One might ask at this date what the obsession with the Past has meant for both the content and the form of Warren's novels and the Southern novel generally. For the preoccupation of modern Southern literature has been precisely a con-