

Gandhi's Disciple in the West

James Young and Marjorie Hope

In the closing pages of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904) Max Weber mused on the shape of things to come:

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might be said: "Specialists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."

A decade later, a loin-clothed prophet arose in the East, articulating a philosophy that "truth-force" could move men and events. Astutely blending new concepts (like the abolition of caste) with a rebirth of old ideas (such as self-sufficiency, simplicity, and communal living), he formed a national movement that eventually achieved the political independence of India.

The question of Gandhi's relevance in the West has haunted many social scientists, political leaders, and social activists. Quite aside from the basic issue of the efficacy of nonviolence in a violent world, significant questions have been raised concerning the applicability in the West of fasting, asceticism, rejecting modern technology, and creating self-sufficient communities.

Nineteen forty-eight, the year of Gandhi's death at the hands of a Hindu assassin, saw the birth in the West of an ashram modeled upon the Mahatma's ideas: the Community of the Ark. Created by Lanza del Vasto, a "new prophet" who lived and studied with Gandhi at Wardha, the Ark now comprises two com-

munities in southwestern France, another in Grenoble, and forty affiliated groups in Europe, Africa, and both the Americas. Moreover, Vasto (whom Gandhi renamed Shantidas, "Servant of Peace") has published twenty-five books on the religious and tactical aspects of nonviolence. One of them, *Return to the Source*, an account of his experiences in India, has sold over a million copies in France.

Looking at the modern world, Shantidas views "this nullity" as an absurdity that cannot survive. He predicts another destruction. The Ark is an ecumenical community of people who believe that small groups of individuals must remain afloat to survive the deluge, offer help to all who need it, and provide an example for a saner life in a new world they will construct.

Parallel with this emphasis on the Gandhian community, the Ark has also been a spawning ground for social action. Some satyagrahas have been led by Shantidas himself; in other cases leadership has been shared, or even delegated to disciples working through an offspring organization, *Action Civique Non-violente*.

Lanza del Vasto was born in 1901 in southern Italy. His father was a nobleman, and he traces his origins back to the tenth century, counting emperors, kings, and, reputedly, a sister of Thomas Aquinas among his ancestors.

The future apostle of poverty and service spent a privileged childhood in the circle of a warm, protective family. By the age of nine he had traveled to most of the cultural capitals of Europe and learned to speak English and French. Even as a young child he displayed an independent spirit and artistic and poetic gifts. During adolescence he developed a passion for speculation. At the University of Florence and the University of Pisa he spent most of his time not in class, but writing poetry, painting, walking in the crowds to study the faces, and plunging into the metaphysical questions that fascinated him. After a

JAMES YOUNG and MARJORIE HOPE both teach sociology at East Stroudsburg College in Pennsylvania. They are authors of *Youth Against the Wind* (reissued in paperback as *The New Revolutionaries*).



Schocken Books

period of profound religious skepticism he experienced a "conversion" which culminated in reading St. Thomas's *De Trinitate*: "Actually God is a Relation, but a Relation that is not relative because it is unchangeable."

Propelled by his new vision of the interrelatedness of all things, Vasto left the cities and roamed through the countryside as a "tramp." On foot and on bicycle he crossed France, Italy, and Greece "to question the world straight in the eyes."

His yearning for some all-embracing truth remained unsatisfied, however. While a student at Florence a girl had slipped into his pocket a small volume, Romain Rolland's biography of Gandhi. Perhaps that Great Soul had something to teach him, Vasto reflected. Perhaps in India he would find "the distance that sharpens sight and makes one see clearly...this clarity whose name is Detachment." In December, 1936, he took a ship for Ceylon.

A month later Gandhi gave Vasto a warm welcome in his ashram at Wardha. The new disciple participated in every aspect of life at the ashram. He learned carpentry, a little Sanskrit and Hindi, the arts of spinning and carding cotton, and the skill of cleaning latrines. In all these community functions he observed an intermingling of castes and religions that was truly revolutionary in pre-independence India. Vasto (now renamed Shantidas) also perceived that Gandhi had made visible progress toward the achievement of communal self-sufficiency within a decentralized economy by encouraging spinning, weav-

ing, village industries, and vegetarian diets based on food any Indian peasant could afford. "Let us get rid of squalor and cultivate poverty," he noted in the journal that was to form the basis of *Return to the Source*.

Although Shantidas had no sympathy for Marxism, many of his observations at Wardha read like passages from Engels. For example: "But the worker enslaved in serial production, who from one second to another repeats the same movement at the speed dictated by the machine, fritters himself away in work which has no purpose for him, no end, no taste, no sense."

While many social critics have strongly indicted industrialism, Shantidas evolved a far more sweeping and absolute denunciation of the Machine, that "idol" of the West. Like his preceptor, Shantidas came to believe that one could very well use machines—providing that one could do without them. But almost everywhere in the West, Shantidas concluded: "Man has become a machine; he functions and no longer lives....His tastes and his opinions, the education of his children, his productive capacity, his sport and entertainment, the application of law, the police and administration, the army and the government all tend towards the inhuman perfection of the machine." In contrast, Gandhi conceived of a government based on the greatest possible administrative autonomy, which would strengthen economic self-rule.

Gandhi was the first great leader in the East to prescribe work as a duty for every man and a road to salvation, Shantidas concluded. "But for him the sole interest of economy is what the great economists have

never taken into consideration (and Karl Marx in this respect is just as oblivious as the others); the sole interest of the economy is not to develop economy but to develop the human being, give him peace, raise him and set him free."

Although he did not use the term "non-violent aggression," Shantidas began to understand Gandhi's policy in that light. To call it "passive resistance" was, he thought, to invite misunderstanding. "This nonviolent resistance that Gandhi exemplifies shows itself to be more active than violent resistance. It requires more daring, a greater spirit of sacrifice, more discipline and more hope.... This non-violent person does not always wait to be attacked with weapons. It is often he who takes the first step and goes forward to meet violence. Not only does he bear blows, he provokes them."

Genuine nonviolence, Shantidas believed, was based on the twin premises of courage and power. Only those who knew how to die could learn nonviolence. Gandhi told him: "If the choice were only between violence and cowardice, I should not hesitate to recommend violence.... Nonviolence is conscious and deliberate restraint of the desire for revenge.... One must possess power in order to renounce it. One must possess courage in order to renounce violence."

Shantidas believed that traditional Ahimsa (refraining from harming) was a negative virtue. Genuine pity was perhaps weaker in India than in "our carnivorous and bloodthirsty West." Indifference and even fear of killing sometimes led to greater cruelties. Gandhi's practice of Ahimsa, however, was tantamount to the Christian value of charity. When Shantidas returned to Europe in April, 1938—after an adventurous pilgrimage on foot through India, and a return visit to Gandhi—he had become even more deeply committed to the Christian faith and its cardinal principle, charity. Gandhi had taught him how to be a better Christian.

Only in 1948, five years after the publication of *Return to the Source*, had enough people shown an interest in a community for Shantidas to feel that the time was ripe to move ahead. With his new bride, a talented musician whom he had met in Marseilles and later renamed "Chanterelle," he founded an ashram near Tournier.

It was a failure. A systematic analysis of that community has never been written, but Shantidas himself ascribes its demise to the lack of discipline and rules for admission. In 1954, after returning from a march through India with Vinoba Bhave, Gandhi's successor, he moved the community to a larger tract of land at Bollène, in the Rhone Valley. Here a stricter discipline was imposed: to be a "companion," as the members were called, one had to be a novice for three years, and then one had to be admitted by unanimous vote.

In 1963 the Companions acquired 2,000 acres in the hills of Languedoc, a domain large enough to accom-

modate several communities. By 1974 some one hundred Companions and novices occupied two communities, La Borie Noble and Nogaret.

In 1971 and 1972 we visited La Borie Noble in order to observe the community and to meet Shantidas, a tall, white-bearded, charismatic figure with the bearing of a biblical prophet.

The goal of the Ark is to apply nonviolence to all levels of life—economy, agriculture, diet, medicine, justice, authority. Since the Companions believe, in the words of the Ark's constitution, that "the aim of manual labor is not only to obtain daily bread by pure means, but to bring about an inner harmonization between body and soul," all work is done by hand or horse-drawn plough. The only electricity is that used to grind flour for home-baked bread. All clothing is homespun, handwoven, and sewn by hand or with a treadle machine. Such work is considered a craft to be enjoyed as much as art. Great emphasis, too, is placed on carving, painting, singing, and folk dancing—on varied ways of bringing beauty into everyday life.

Since the members strive for maximum feasible independence of motorized vehicles, none of the Companions possesses a private automobile. There is no sanction against the use of buses, trains, or airplanes, however. Although the Community possesses a small truck to transport supplies that must be purchased outside, and also to accommodate some visitors, members themselves descend to the tiny train station on foot.

The Community produces most of its own wheat, vegetables, fruit, and dairy products. To pay for certain necessities, such as rice, transportation, occasional hospital bills, and some kinds of skilled labor, surplus agricultural products and handcrafts are sold. The Community does pay taxes, in order to receive the children's allowances provided by French law. At the end of the year any surplus funds are sent to projects in the Third World, especially an affiliated community of "Allies" in Morocco. This custom not only "concretizes" the Companions' feeling of brotherhood with less fortunate people, but also provides a safety valve against the temptations that have beset many poverty orders, including the Franciscans.

To use Durkheim's terms, the division of labor at the Ark fosters an "organic solidarity." (Unlike the theorists of the late nineteenth century, who saw civilization evolving in a slow, orderly, continuous way toward a certain goal, Shantidas is more existential, concentrating on the interaction of individual human beings.) Everyone has prescribed tasks, and to a certain extent these correspond to sex roles: men work in the fields and engage in carpentry, masonry, and the like, while women cook, make cheese, care for children, and so forth. However, both men and women wash their own dishes, and on Sundays men do the cooking. Moreover, there is a certain rotation of tasks so that no one gets "stuck" in a job he dislikes and no one maintains a "cushy" job he prefers. Thus, unlike

medieval communities maintained by mechanical solidarity and in which individuals were ascribed certain positions by birth, roles are largely interchangeable. Unlike industrial society, the social structure of the Ark is not task-oriented; the individual is valued for what he is more than for what he produces.

"Nonviolent agriculture" means living in harmony with nature rather than exploiting it, a principle which includes organic farming. This aim has become attainable partly because members of the Community have learned to reduce their needs. The diet, simple but varied, is vegetarian, consonant with the philosophy of nonviolence toward all living things. Like Gandhi, the Companions eschew stimulants, in the belief that they do violence to the body. In practice, however, there is no rigid adherence to this rule. In the privacy of their own rooms or apartments many members drink tea or coffee. Moreover, the singing and folk dancing on Sundays and feast days are accompanied by moderate imbibing of Noah's favorite beverage, wine.

In the practice of "nonviolent medicine" the most frequent therapy for internal ailments is fasting (a method which has begun to enjoy favor among increasing numbers of medical doctors in industrial societies). Antibiotics and other drugs are not prescribed, however, and complicated cases are sent to the local hospital for treatment.

The "gem" of the rule undergirding the concept of nonviolent justice is the idea that the free man is he who knows how to acknowledge his fault and punishes himself. Hence, anyone who observes a wrongdoing in someone else is expected to seek him out in secret, and then, if the latter is not prepared to atone for his fault, do penance in his stead.

Authority rests primarily with the Council of Companions, which makes decisions on all matters concerning the community and must reach its decisions unanimously. If consensus does not come quickly, the Companions fast and remain silent until it is achieved. Thus, unlike democratic theory, which assumes a plurality of interests and recognizes compromise in policy-making, the Companions maintain that right decision holds for the entire community. In practice this means that important decisions are often delayed or constantly postponed. On the other hand, an actual stalemate has never endured indefinitely, perhaps because in such highly cohesive groups pressures to conform reduce the potential power of individual dissent.

In practice Shantidas acts as the patriarch of an extended family. In our conversations with him Shantidas left no doubt that he functions as patriarch at the Ark. History and his own unfortunate experience at Tournier had convinced him, he said, that every community needs a chief, a man with vision who can teach and build, lead the initiates into freedom. Thus the role includes administering discipline and working on any community tensions to avoid quarrels. Yet he can give

no order that is not rooted in the Rule. When sometimes his views have not coincided with those of the Companions, he has gone along with "the sense of the meeting."

His authority is shared by two *responsables* (temporary leaders) at La Borie Noble, and one at Nogaret, through a rotating system by which every male serves for a period of one to three years. "No, women do not become *responsables*, said Shantidas. "It is not a fitting role for a woman. But there is no rule against it."

At the Ark the nuclear family is functional, and monogamous marriage is strongly supported through separate residence. Divorce is not sanctioned. Nevertheless, children are considered a responsibility of the entire community, and unmarried women share in the supervision and education of the young.

Daily life is a careful balance of sedentary work and physical labor, individual and group activity. Perhaps the high points of the day are luncheon and supper. The members gather not only to share a meal but to sing, pray, discuss current events in the outside world, and plan support for nonviolent action.

Shantidas confesses that he perceives only limited uses for nonviolent force by government leaders. "Depending on great numbers means that you are pushed and pulled, tied to the masses. This is an age of massification. You can challenge established power by nonviolent means as Gandhi, King, and Chavez have done. But maintaining power in a violent world is based on violence. The only real change I can envision for the present is the kind accomplished by small groups working in the darkness.

"We are strictly forbidden to engage in politics or occupy official positions. We feel that our retreat is necessary to search for solutions which will help turn as many people as possible from the foolish philosophies of today. But we are *not* outside the world. We receive many visitors and trainees every year, and carry on a great deal of correspondence. Some Companions live outside the Community to perform a service to which they feel called, such as the founding of a community for conscientious objectors. One of our most devoted companions, Joseph Pyronnet, recently founded the first urban Community of the Ark in Grenoble. The forty groups called Friends of the Ark are people who heed our teaching and often train here or take part in civic actions. Some are bound by a promise to observe the teachings of the Ark, and are called Allies."

Although he rejects the arena of politics, Shantidas has engaged in many quasi-political satyagrahas or helped to direct them. These actions have not been as numerous as those of some other nonviolent leaders, such as Danilo Dolci in Sicily. His methods have also been more limited than Dolci's. In general, Shantidas has concentrated on petitioning, protest demonstrations, nonviolent invasions of Establishment strongholds, pamphleting, fasting,

and sociodrama. The last two are his favorite methods.

Among his many precepts is the fundamental postulate of nonviolence: "the spirit of justice dwells in my enemy as it dwells in me." Hence, like Gandhi, he asks every follower to love people he dislikes, even those who do him harm. The real objective is to *change* the enemy into a friend. If a nonviolent militant succeeds in converting himself and then in using nonviolence with his neighbor, he may be prepared to move into group action. Like Gandhi, Shantidas sees fasting principally as a means of self-purification. But he also considers it to be a way of *forcing* the "enemy" to *think* it over.

In 1953 Shantidas plunged into his first social action, when he returned to India to accompany Vinoba Bhave on the latter's land-gift campaigns. During the 1953 marches through India millions of acres were donated by rich landowners to the landless through the appeals of Vinoba.

In December, 1956, Shantidas and a group of Companions went to Sicily to join Danilo Dolci in a collective hunger strike to protest against the abject conditions there. The following year Shantidas and two Companions launched appeals to both the French and the religious leaders of Islam to do all in their power to stop the torture of political prisoners in the Algerian War. The two appeals, followed by a twenty-day fast, acted as a catalyst: newspapers, students, and other groups began to voice opposition to the torture, and even a general resigned rather than follow his superiors' orders in Algeria. There are indications that the torture diminished, and relations between the Christian and Moslem communities in Algeria gradually improved.

In February, 1958, the Companions established a separate organization called Action Civique Non-violente. In April the group opened an encampment at Senos for the study of nonviolence, which was climaxed by a nonviolent "invasion" of a neighboring atom bomb plant. The action achieved a fruitful dialogue with the administrators, roused local farmers to protest, and stimulated sympathetic articles in the press. It was followed by several fasts, including one at the Palace of Nations in Geneva.

In 1959 Jo Pyronnet, a Companion who eventually became "Captain" of the Action Civique, directed an ingenious struggle against the French concentration camps where Algerians were being detained as "suspicious persons." A group of activists presented themselves to the camp authorities with the request that they too be interned. "We are also suspect," they declared.

Their request was of course denied. The protestors, however, demonstrated before police headquarters, engaged gendarmes in dialogue, fasted for nine days, and joined other volunteers in more demonstrations. The volunteers were hauled off in paddy wagons, but instead of being imprisoned, they were, in Shantidas's words, "inflicted with the most total freedom"—they

were scattered in the country after midnight.

The next day they approached the camp again, and joking with their captors, dutifully entered jail. That night another paddy wagon liberated them in the Jura Mountains, and the next day, says Shantidas, "they endured, among other penitences, a press conference."

The group then headed for Paris, where they made a nonviolent attack on another internment camp, engaged in several "adventures" with the police, fasted in the Algerian quarter, and drew many sympathetic accounts in the press. The campaign was finally suspended because, while many citizens had been educated about the issue, the situation of the prisoners had changed very little.

Action Civique turned to a campaign to support the right of conscientious objection, which in 1960 had still not been recognized by French law. Work sites were set up where any youth refusing to serve in Algeria could come with pick and shovel to perform some community service. At the moment of arrest the objector would be supported by volunteers. When the police came to look for Pierre Boisgontier, for example, three youths declared, "I am Pierre Boisgontier!" Then four more appeared, each claiming in turn that he was the sought-after person.

For this action Pyronnet and three others were arraigned a year later on charges of "inciting servicemen to disobedience." All were found guilty, but each received only a suspended sentence. To the astonishment of the courtroom spectators, even the government prosecutor declared at the end: "Let us hope that some day humanity will recognize its true vocation and go beyond the problems that have detained us today." Eventually the pacifists' campaign culminated in victory, for in 1963 the French Parliament finally passed a bill establishing the right of conscientious objection. Shantidas and many Companions have also undertaken fasts in Rome, motivated by the hope of "audacious" pronouncements from the Pope and the Vatican Council on the subject of total war and spiritual resistance. Shantidas believes that the first of these fasts, undertaken in 1963, influenced certain passages of *Pacem in Terris*. Two years later a fast of nineteen women led by Chanterelle resulted in the inclusion of "their" phrase concerning nonviolence in the *Pastoral Declaration on the Church in the World of Today*.

In recent years the aging Shantidas has had to limit his nonviolent action. Yet in December, 1971, while visiting a new Ark community in Montreal, Canada, the seventy-year-old "pilgrim" fasted for ten days to highlight the suffering in Bangladesh. Private donors contributed several thousand dollars to the cause, and after Chanterelle had approached Canadian authorities, the government finally voted \$28 million in aid.

A year later Shantidas launched a satyagraha in Larzac, a pastoral mountain plateau in Languedoc, not far

from the Community, shortly after the government had announced its intention to extend the Army training ground by expropriating over forty thousand acres there. Protests arose from artists, Roquefort cheese-makers, tourists, shepherders, and peasants. To demonstrate both his solidarity with those who were refusing to give up their land and his hope that "the Battle of Larzac" would remain strictly nonviolent Shantidas fasted for fifteen days. Following his example, forty peasants, fifteen citizens of the town of Millau, and two Catholic bishops fasted for twenty-four hours. The action gained momentum as eighty peasants chained themselves together and effectively blocked a military vehicle; trade union representatives agreed to support the resistance. Shantidas attacked the government's proposal in two well-publicized letters to the Defense Minister, and over two thousand people from all over France converged on Millau to celebrate "Operation Open Farms."

Shantidas withdrew from active involvement in the movement, but helped direct two "sociodrama" campaigns from behind the scenes. In October, 1972, sixty sheep were led to graze on the Champ de Mars ("the field of the God of War") under the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Laconically, the Larzac farmers explained to onlookers: "If the Army wants to occupy our lands, what can we do but seek grazing land here?" Three months later Larzac farmers set out on twenty-six tractors for Paris to inform fellow Frenchmen and national authorities that "we are not for sale."

The movement has become a coalition of various pacifist and political groups, and has gained considerable strength. In an unusual act of civil disobedience over fifty Larzac peasants have returned their military papers to the government. Fifteen hundred people joined a protest march from Millau to La Cavalerie; later, six thousand demonstrated at Millau, and twenty thousand gathered at Rodez. While Shantidas no longer participates in these actions, he has helped stimulate the interest of American and European mass media in the struggle. Largely because of his work, and that of two Companions who have remained in Larzac to engage in a prolonged informational campaign against the expropriation, the battle has remained nonviolent.

The government has been using the terrain as a training ground for troops from NATO countries, and there are reports that the army wants the space to test military hardware to sell to regimes throughout the world. These factors have added another dimension to the protestors' contention that the struggle involves the rights of small peasant landowners against the arbitrary power of the military-industrial complex.

In 1975 Pierre Parodi, the medical doctor who now heads the community of Allies in Morocco, will become the new Patriarch. Many people believe that after his long experience with Moslems he will bring an even stronger spirit of ecumenism into

the community. The doctor is firmly convinced that Westerners must transform their attitudes toward the Third World. The most important cause of misery, he believes, is not the lack of land or of modern technology, but the exploitation of man by man. Modest programs using hydraulic works, animal power, and natural fertilizers are more appropriate, he contends, than modern technology.

Jo Pyronnet will probably continue as "captain" of Action Civique Non-violente as well as leader of the urban community in Grenoble. Like Pierre Parodi, he feels a special concern for the Third World, and has given a great deal of thought to ecological problems, nonviolent defense, decentralization, and the reorganization of society to give life deeper satisfaction and meaning.

**WORKS BY LANZA DEL VASTO
AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH**

Return to the Source (Schocken, 1972; Simon & Schuster paperback).

Principles and Precepts of the Return to the Obvious (Schocken, 1974).

Gandhi to Vinoba: The New Pilgrimage (Schocken, 1974).

Warriors of Peace: Writings on the Techniques of Non-violence (Knopf, 1974).

Make Straight the Way of the Lord (Knopf, 1974).

Because he will be relinquishing active leadership of the Ark in 1975, the "pilgrim" now spends an increasing amount of time traveling through the United States, South America, Canada, and Europe to visit new communities and talk before Friends of the Ark, university students, and other groups.

"How can we work against oppression?" Shantidas asks rhetorically. "Today there is much talk about the big business interests, the polluters, the war machines. But when *you* buy something, do you ask, 'How was it made?' or 'How does it have such a small price?' or 'Does this represent the work of an oppressed people—the oppressed of an entire class or a country?' Don't blame the exploiters—blame yourself. Without you they cannot go on. Then they'll say, 'Well! Make it yourself!' And you'll discover that you *can* make it yourself—or do without."

Shantidas's approach has many elements in common with Weber's view that social systems distribute most of the benefits to the few—the "positively privileged"—and distribute the remainder among the majority—the "negatively privileged." The ways the system maldistributes benefits are what Weber called societal secrets. To hide them societies develop a public set of beliefs and values called

societal myths, which are the opposite of societal secrets. The population is conditioned to believe so strongly in the rightness of the myths that when societal secrets are revealed citizens will change the injustice. Hence a key to change is to reveal societal secrets and their myths.

This notion is similar to Gandhi's concept of "truth-force." When people see the truth of an unjust situation they will try to change it. Nonviolent movements such as Shantidas's attempt to put the public spotlight on societal secrets and myths through the use of "sociodrama," real life dramatization of the problem.

An ever present danger in any intentional community is excessive preoccupation with its own function and problems. A number of visitors to the Ark have criticized members for becoming too "inward-turned" and "complacent" in recent years. This trend may have served as a deterrent to social action, for only a minority of the members of the Ark have joined in the work of Action Civique Non-violente.

Other observers have questioned why so many people have eventually left the Community. While no study of such émigrés has ever been made and Shantidas is very vague about figures, there are indications that the number of those who have left is several times that of those who have remained. On the other hand, informants inside and outside the Community indicate that a majority of the émigrés elect to continue the work of the Ark by founding other communities, joining groups of Allies, or engaging in social service in Third World countries. Moreover, a majority of the children who have grown up in the community and left it for the required "testing period" in the world outside have opted to return to the Ark or to extend its work abroad.

Another criticism of the Ark is that women occupy a subordinate position. Shantidas's attitude can probably be explained by the factors of his age, social background, Thomistic philosophy, and contact with Gandhi (who was no egalitarian when it came to women). In any case, the question will probably be subjected to frequent debate in the coming years.

The common criticism that Shantidas presides over the Community with too patriarchal a sway raises the question of whether it is true that only communities with strong leadership have ever endured. Benjamin Zablocki and other students of communitarianism have concluded that the most successful communes have been those with a strong ideological base and that anarchistic communes have rarely succeeded.

With population growing at so rapid a rate the world may well be too small to become a network of communities. Shantidas never really deals with the ques-

tion of how to realize his ideal on a worldwide basis. However, E.F. Schumacher and a few other economists have worked out concrete plans for decentralized production, based on methods of intermediate technology that are eminently suited to Third World countries.

Although Shantidas has made no truly original contributions to Gandhi's thought, he has adapted that framework to the West. His emphasis on the experiential component of nonviolence is characteristically Gandhian. Yet with his marriage and his pursuit of carving, painting, poetry, and other sensuous elements of life, he has also demonstrated that nonviolence can be practiced without Gandhi's asceticism. Child of the West and heir to the problems of a technological age, he has had a deeper perception than Gandhi of the interrelations of the military-industrial complex. Indeed, the problems he is attacking represent the gamut of those that beset Western man today: alienation, inequality, genocide, squalor, and the exploitation of man and nature. More than Gandhi, Shantidas has perceived the functional relationship of the West to the Third World. He consistently emphasizes that as long as the present gross inequality exists, people of the industrialized countries have a responsibility for their "brothers" in the rest of the world. The most notable example of this commitment is the continuing support of the community of Allies in Morocco.

Among Western leaders in nonviolent action Shantidas stands out for his emphasis on the experiential component—on the necessity of changing one's whole lifestyle. He has given concrete meaning to the Thomistic doctrine concerning the relatedness of all things: If you buy gasoline that has been produced by exploited South American labor, you are "in the chain." Thus, in the original sense of the term, Shantidas is more radical than most other Western nonviolent activists; he reaches toward the *radices*, the roots of phenomena.

He also offers a positive alternative: "Make it yourself—or do without." Such action has a social function—opting out of the chain; a psychic function—satisfaction of the "whole man"; and a political function (if only in a symbolic sense)—it spotlights the industrialized countries' relationship to the Third World and calls for a renunciation of exploitation.

In a sense Shantidas has taken on a deeper challenge than Gandhi. For the most part the Mahatma was building on traditions in the Indian culture (Ahimsa, a pre-technological economic organization, decentralized political structures, and so forth). Shantidas asks his followers not only to confront the Establishment, but to give up generally accepted values and "the Western way of life."