

Treasure House of New York's Past

***The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*, by Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes (Arno Press McGraw-Hill. Facsimile edition. 6 vols., 5,000 pp. Set, \$795), reprints a remarkable collection of annotated prints, drawings, and maps of old New York. Allan Nevins's many books on American history include "Herbert H. Lehman and His Era."**

By ALLAN NEVINS

THE APPEARANCE of this new edition of a classic work, which stands as the cornerstone of studies in the history of Manhattan Island and New York City, will be gratefully hailed by scholars of geography, history, and all the arts. Indeed, it is a piece of civic good fortune that a work long restricted in circulation and use is now available for general public reference.

When Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes brought out his great set in 1915-1928, issuing it privately, it was at once recognized as a unique feat in the graphic presentation of the growth of a metropolis. Nothing of the sort had been done, or could be done, for London, Paris, Rome, or any other of the large cities of the world. Only the collaboration of three remarkable men—Mr. Stokes, a devoted and wealthy collector of materials who was at the same time a meticulous scholar; Walter H. Gillies, a truly distinguished master-printer, and Robert H. Dodd, an expert and public-spirited publisher—could have prepared and presented this treasure house. They enlisted the aid of such unusual and devoted scholars as Victor H. Paltsitz, State Historian of New York, and Professor Herbert L. Osgood of Columbia, who levied in turn upon all the city's public libraries and private collections.

No one can write the history of America's politics and government, of her commerce, mercantile activity, and finance, or her arts and letters without making frequent references to the streets, squares, and other place-names of Manhattan Island, its buildings and institutions. Even the waters, like Spuytenduyvil or Hell Gate, and historic trees, like Peter Stuyvesant's pear tree, find a place in the story.

Fortunately, some of the geographical features of Manhattan have endured the vicissitudes of time. A few of the shorelines traced in the first figurative map of

New Netherlands by Adrian Block are still visible. The little bay where British troops landed to attack Fort Washington remained nearly intact until the construction of the George Washington Bridge and the West Shore Highway destroyed it. So did the terrain of Inwood Park.

Buildings, of course, have fared badly. One of the best-known pictures of old New York, made into a Currier & Ives print, shows the Great Fire of 1835 consuming many of the landmarks of the city. Such important structures as Castle Garden and the Astor House perished long ago; yet our beautiful old City Hall, Trinity Church, and Federal Hall (this last accurately reconstructed) survive.

No other city in the world, old or new, has quite so rich a body of old maps, prints, and drawings to mirror its past as does New York City, beginning with the Manatus Map and the Costello Plan, two accurate topographical documents which take us back to early colonial days. The number of such records in the collections of the New York Historical Society and the New York Public Library is tremendous. The most important of these are reproduced with meticulous annotations in Mr. Stokes's great work. Anyone who possesses these six volumes, and has in addition the Columbia University *Historical Portrait of New York*, edited by John Kouwenhoven in 1953 to help mark the tricentennial of New York City and the bicentennial of the university, can inform himself upon nearly every detail pertaining to old streets, squares, and buildings. Indeed, he can form a truer impression of the city, dec-

ade after decade, than could the men and women who walked its streets in those days.

The republication of *The Iconography of Manhattan Island* is a public service. Mr. Stokes, whose noble ambition was first aroused by the purchase in the summer of 1908 of a fine impression of the Carolus Allard View of New York with ships, set an example which public-spirited citizens of other important cities from Charleston to San Francisco might well imitate. He also raised a monument to himself that will not perish.

Stokes was a true New Yorker, born in his grandfather's brownstone house, which had forty-five marble fireplaces and was located at the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and 37th Street. It is now commonly known as the J. Pierpont Morgan mansion. But long after the house has crumbled into dust Stokes's impressive iconography will remain in daily use.

Alternatives to Apathy

***Like a Conquered Province: The Moral Ambiguity of America*, by Paul Goodman (Random House. 142 pp. \$4.95), suggests, among other things, attacking the problems of urbanization by moving slum families into underpopulated rural areas. C. Michael Curtis's essays have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *National Review*, and other publications.**

By C. MICHAEL CURTIS

IT MAY be unfair, to the participants as well as to Paul Goodman, to argue that the recent riots in American cities are a precise extension of the political and social malaise he has been outlining so tirelessly for so long. But it is surely more comforting in the long run to view those destructive outbursts within the Goodman context than it is to explain them as simply the dismal products of the indulgences of liberalism, or as spontaneous acts of irrational violence and lawlessness. These last alternatives leave us either ideologically rigid, or numb with horror at the indecencies we are helplessly perpetrating. The attraction of the Goodman position is that it assumes we possess the power—if only we had the will—to create a society in which there is no need, therapeutic or otherwise, for the emotional release of waging warfare in the streets.

Goodman holds that American society produces its own pathologies. As touched on in this book, consisting of talks originally presented by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in its Massey lecture series, Goodman's specific targets are



—Plate 28, from Vol. 1.
New Dutch Church, from an engraving by William Burgis, c. 1731.

the way technology multiplies its processes mindlessly and uselessly, and how it drifts further and further away from the human race, in whose name it has commandeered our intellectual resources and our sense of proportion.

THE meaninglessness of our technological society begins to appear, says Goodman, "when the immensely productive economy overmatures and lives by creating demand instead of meeting it; when the check of the free market gives way to monopolies, subsidies, and captive consumers; when the sense of community vanishes and public goods are neglected and resources despoiled; when there is made-work (or war) to reduce unemployment; and when the measure of economic health is not increasing well-being but abstractions like the Gross National Product and the rate of growth."

What has economic arrogance to do with rioting in the streets? In Goodman's view, urbanization—the compulsive crowding of most Americans into dense metropolitan areas—is symptomatic of what he calls the present "style" of technology in America. Urbanization is not, says Goodman, a technical necessity. "On the contrary, the thrust of modern technology, *e.g.*, electricity, power tools, automobiles, distant communication, and automation would seem to be toward disurbanization, dispersal of population and industry." Urbanization, Goodman insists, "is mainly due not to natural or social-psychological causes, but to political policy and an economic style careless of social costs and even money costs."

Nor are its consequences simply a matter of wasted resources and gratuitous crowding. Cities pollute their rivers and their air, jam their highways, crowd their indigents into deteriorating slums. These are familiar complaints, and Goodman is too perceptive to pretend that city dwellers do not strive to deal with them. But this struggle, he says, is "characteristically confused." New Yorkers, for example, "vote a billion dollars to clean up the pollution of the Hudson; they cooperate without grumbling with every gimmick to speed up traffic . . . ; they are willing to pay bigger bills than any other city for public housing and schools. As people they are decent. But they are entirely lacking in determination to prevent the causes and to solve the conditions; they do not believe that anything will be done, and they accept this state of things. As citizens they are washouts."

Here is the nub of the argument. The "moral ambiguity of America," in Goodman's view, is the way we allow the assumption of our own decency to blind us to the responsibilities we necessarily assume as participants in a democratic political system. Who, in a society that methodically brutalizes so many of its

members, can say he is a good citizen? And, in a complex technological society, does not good citizenship mean a willingness to share the blame for the consequences of that technology, including dehumanizing slums, rioting Negroes, and burning cities? To seek solutions out of a feeling of shame rather than as a display of magnanimity? This kind of moralism is familiar, however, and Goodman moves well beyond it. To suggest that the aberrations of industrial society need not be "accepted," even though we are generous in redressing the injuries they periodically produce, is to



suggest that alternatives are available, that there is a way to avoid the nightmare of city slums. And Goodman, more creatively than most critics of American society, has suggested to offer.

ONE way, for example, of relieving the pressures of crowded cities is to find another place for city dwellers to live. The obvious locale, says Goodman, is the country, where rural communities have been systematically depopulated, marginal farmers forced off the land, and beautiful acreage lies unused and ignored. A plan for "rural reconstruction," he argues, might involve a reassignment to the country of urban services that can be better performed there, such as the care of families who depend upon city or state funds. "In New York City or Chicago \$2,500 a year of welfare money buys a family destitution and undernourishment. In beautiful depopulating areas of Vermont, Maine, or upper New York State, or southern Iowa and northern Wisconsin, it is sufficient for a decent life and even owning a house and land." Similarly, says Goodman, "many old people would certainly choose to while away the years in a small village or on a farm, where they would be more part of life

and might be useful, instead of in an institution with occupational therapy."

To the immediate objection that New York State funds could hardly be used to subsidize retirement communities in northern Wisconsin, Goodman suggests a radical redefinition of "regional" jurisdiction, taking into account contrasting conditions (rather than the conventional homogeneity) so that, for example, "Vermont, northern New Hampshire, upstate New York, and central Pennsylvania" might be regarded as part of the New York "region," in order to exploit the differences in these areas, make them "socially important," and render feasible the allocation of welfare and other funds on a rational basis. Goodman would tackle the economic problems involved in reconstructing the rural areas by applying the resources of our technology to the revival of small-scale agricultural production. "Specialty and gourmet foods," for example; specialized crops that require intensive cultivation, skilled handling, scattered distribution points. He would also restore the vitality of "country culture" by subsidizing rural radio and television broadcasting, possibly as a source of apprenticeship opportunities for bright kids who aren't interested in conventional education and "now waste their time and the public money in formal schools."

THE chief difficulty implicit in these suggestions is that they could be realized only through coercion—an unhappy way to restore the purity of liberal democracy—or through a system of incentives that would make them irresistible. How many slum families would willingly move to a modest, welfare-supported home in the hills of New Hampshire? What big-city mayor would be first to demand that they do? If incentives are the answer, how attractive must these settlements be in order to fulfill their promise? And where does welfare end and bribery begin?

Paul Goodman would admit these as legitimate questions, but would surely maintain that they pose no greater problems than the ones now faced by the mayors (and citizens) of Detroit, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, New York, and Chicago. The novelty and "radicalism" of the Goodman approach lies in his insistence that we consider alternative ways of managing traditional difficulties, not refinements of old themes but new approaches that challenge the workings of our society at its critical core. And this core—the interlocking institutions and political or administrative assumptions which have simply evolved and become increasingly obsolete—we must reconsider in the light of an estimation of whether and to what extent the society it fortifies is gradually destroying its own promise and grandeur.