

**The modern world and its effect on the mental health of children**, by Dr. H. Feldmann, *Médecine et Hygiène*, Geneva No. 775, 1967.

. . . The more developed, complex and better organized society becomes, the less tolerant is it of the maladjusted, the backward, the unstable, of children suffering from physical disorders from sensory or motive insufficiency, who are no longer accepted in the large towns. The amount of toleration shown by society of the maladjusted decreases in proportion to the rate of technical and scientific advance. Material progress and the exigencies of life force the individual to become more exposed to moral and physical suffering which he is less capable of accepting. This results in an increase in disorders which require help from psychiatrists, psychologists or social workers with a view to rehabilitation.

However, the increasing number of mental disorders in our own civilized societies can also be accounted for by the fact that more psychical anomalies are discovered than ever before. This is also explained by the present rapid march of events which contributes to greatly increasing anxiety at the same time as progress continues to advance. The speed of scientific and technical progress, the rapidity with which news is spread by radio and television, create a climate of anxiety far greater than hitherto known whenever some disaster is reported.

Sociologists insist on the fact that social and present conflicts are of equal importance as infantile quarrels in causing neuroses. Margaret Mead, after having studied populations in the South Seas, comes to the conclusion that it is the existence of homogeneous communities which brings to the fore a whole series of human values to the detriment of all others. "Homogeneous societies", she says, "do not know of the conflicts and confusions of heterogeneous communities". In other words, sociologists regard neuroses as being the result less of instinctive frustration than of difficulties of identification and integration existing at present.

Today, instability in all spheres is the rule. That populations move from one place to another is considered to be normal. This also applies to the permutability of ideas and scientific progress is so rapid that what was valid in the past is no longer so today. How then can one offer real security to a child ?

It is not therefore the child who is maladjusted, it is our modern society which is no longer adjusted to the child. Whether it is a question of vast modern cities, of housing blocks leaving no room for phantasy or verdure, of over-crowded classrooms where the teacher no longer

knows his pupils, of cramped lodgings at exorbitant rents forcing children on to the street, there is no longer any place for the child.

In all countries, physical health is improving, living conditions are more favourable, the number of births is increasing, the physical health of children is better than it used to be and their intellectual and cultural level is of a higher standard. However, the affective development itself of the child has not changed through the centuries, rather has it diminished. There therefore exists a real cleavage between these two sets of facts which causes an ever greater lack of balance in the child leading to anxiety which often results in a delinquent attitude to life in adolescence or on becoming adult.

The best antidote for troubles of behaviour, neuroses and psychoses amongst children is a healthy-minded family life.

Better organization should be made of the child's psychological integration in the new conditions of life to avoid ever-increasing insecurity which is less and less accepted by the child today.

In this connection, youth community centres are indispensable factors in the socio-psychological structure of the modern world. These centres act as catalysers which channel the child's aberrant tendencies, thereby preventing maladjustment. If they are properly run these can detect children heading towards delinquency and send them to medical, psychological, sociological and educational teams capable of taking them in charge with a view to their reintegration.

Thus community centres and medico-psycho-sociological teams are mediating factors between the perturbed child and his surroundings enabling him to find his place again in society. These teams, however, also have a fundamental rôle to play with the family as regards improving the child's situation. . .

**Prisoners of war and their doctors**, by J. Mathieu, *Annales de droit international médical, Monaco, No. 13*

. . . The question of relations between doctors of opposing powers comprises legal, technical and ethical aspects. These aspects are all dependent on each other, thus forming a whole inherent in the medical profession.

The legal expert defines rights and has an important rôle in settling points of litigation. One can pull to pieces the Conventions which are not respected. The law has not only the objective of passively recording statements of fact, but from the positive point of view can create fresh thinking on a subject. It draws up, at all events, theories to which one can refer, each theory being an engagement of future action.