

We don't need research to convince us that the superstressed are not happy and therefore not helpful. Adduce Kitty Genovese and the 28 who coolly watched her murder (1964).

1. Why is Reagan having such frighteningly smooth sailing--frightening, i.e., for us liberals? As a speaker he's nowhere near a match for Hitler (whom I listened to regularly on shortwave beginning with his ascension to power, '33) or FDR. My conclusion: The country's anxiety-level is now so high that a leader promising its abatement has green lights all down the track, even including a Pentagon budget which gives the lie to talk of budget-balancing. Not everybody is fear-immobilized: In our home last evening [30Aug81] was a Fairfield Co. business exec who's on a bus.exec committee to sort out which Reagan-doomed social programs just must continue and to figure out how to \$ them--with \$ from America's largest tool mfg., Stanley, + other sources. Not really reverse history, returning the poor to the good graces of capitalists' charity; for these business managers are sophisticatedly self-help-oriented, knowing (1) that there will be no dignity where there is no power (i.e., autonomy), and (2) that where there is no dignity, there can be no freedom worthy of the word.

2. Added to international terrorism and the burgeoning nuclear threat are (1) "terror in the streets" and in the homes and (2) the intrapsychic terror of runaway inflation and job-obsolescence (a cartoon showing a wealthy man buying a pencil from a poor man while imagining himself in the place of the seller: I may soon be where he is). Add to that whole chaos the fear of failing intimacy --the erosion of marriage and friendship by changing roles and mores and a general social indeterminacy. As the film "Network" said last year, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore." Translate "I can't take it anymore."

3. In the home we've built on Cape Cop, my C.E. clergy group and our counselees sit in a room whose corners are joints figured out by the M.I.T. architectural computer. I call it "the hurricane joint." It's the first building to have it, though many now have copied it. Of the 11 ways a continuum-joint could be made, the computer said this is both the strongest and the most flexible. When the wind blows, the joint tightens on six rollers, three on each side along a two-foot birch spline, and on four pegs. When the wind abates, the joint relaxes--unlike so many human beings (here's the sermon!), who let the stress or tensions pile up until a little puff breaks them and fattens their shrinks.

4. Eire (the island's south) is laid back, and Ulster (its north) is uptight. In the north, stress has paranoidized both camps, virtually eliminating "give" and "give-and-take." Fear, vengeance, arrogance are runaway; and the British Army should probably withdraw--though that would be bloodbath, as when the British Army withdrew from Palestine and from India. Nations do tend to learn something through civil war: Britain did in the 17th c., USA did in the 18th c., Ulster and Iran may in the 20th c. Two other ways to go (other than divine intervention, which Jesus teaches us to live and witness toward): (1) Invasion to favor one party against the other (USSR invades Afghanistan), (2) Invasion to kill off the leadership on both sides and set up a puppet (frequently the method of the Roman Empire). And the church? "Normally useless," because captive to (a) its own interests, (b) one side's interests, (c) the other side's interests. "The peace witness" seldom amounts to more than hand-wringing and ain't-it-awful protestations and ignorant meddling, though sometimes it rises to the sophisticated level of Howard Kurtz's (War Control Planners, Inc., Box 19127 Wash.DC 20036).

5. Recent psycho-research shows that the happy tend to be altruistic-helpful, and that the super-stressed tend to oppose free speech. On the latter, hear Wm. Gordon of Kent State (100 PT Apr/81): "People resist further arousal when their level of arousal is already high. When the level of stress in society is high for a variety of pol. and ec. reasons, people desire strong, unequivocal leadership and are less tolerant of dissidence." Holocaust ahead?