

FREETHINKER

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VIETNAM

Hopes are high that America's new "peace offensive" will lead to permanent cessation of military operations in Vietnam. With a mixture of hope and impatience the world looks forward to peace and free elections in this long-troubled land.

To set the scene it will be helpful to recall briefly recent history:

1954. After eight years of fighting between the French and Viet Minh rebels under General Ho Chi Minh, a cease-fire came with the Geneva Agreements of July 20. Under the influence of Secretary John Foster Dulles, who had a "conception of diplomacy as a sub-branch of theology" (Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr), President Eisenhower said the USA was not a party and not therefore bound. The same was said by Prime Minister Ngo Dinh-Diem of Vietnam. The Geneva Conference specifically drew up an eight-nation declaration prohibiting the introduction into Vietnam of troops and military personnel, making a temporary division into North (Ho) and South (Diem), but promising general elections in July 1956 under the supervision of an International Commission (India, Canada, Poland). On October 24 the USA began aid to South Vietnam.
1955. On February 12 America took over the organization and training of South Vietnamese troops. North Vietnam was ordered not to obstruct the flow of refugees, mainly Roman Catholic, to the south. On June 6 the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister proposed, and on July 6 Diem refused, talks on the promised elections. Guerrilla fighting in South Vietnam grew significant. On July 20 Government-incited mobs attacked members of the International Commission in Saigon. Emperor Bao Dai (himself a former French puppet and Japanese collaborator) on October 18 dismissed Diem as "a man who will drag you into ruin, famine and war". On October 23 he was deposed by a Government-controlled referendum and three days later a Republic was declared with Diem as President.
1960. A National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) was formed in the south and received aid from the north.
1961. On June 16 the USA made a decision to "escalate" the war in Vietnam.
1963. On May 5 the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of Mgr Ngo Dinh Thue, Archbishop of Hué and the President's brother, were held with Vatican flags flying, though Catholics were less than 10% of the population. Because the Buddhist leader, representing 70% of the population, refused to send a congratulatory message, the flying of Buddhist flags and Buddhist broadcasts on May 8, traditional birthday of Gautama, were forbidden. A crowd of 20,000 staged a peaceful demonstration and were shot at, nine dying. On June 11 occurred the first self-burning of a Buddhist monk. Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu, wife of another brother of Diem's and most Catholic of all the family, observed: "I would clap my hands at seeing another monk barbecue show". Anxious lest the Church become as unpopular as the Government, the Vatican expressed "disapproval". On November 1 the Diem régime was overthrown and the President murdered in captivity. A succession of less fanatical "revolutionary" governments under American influence began.

Both the USA and the Vatican saw — and perhaps still see — the struggle in Vietnam as part of their policy of

containment of Communism. According to the "domino" theory, if this area in South-East Asia collapses — as seems likely if and when free elections are held throughout the country — the whole region will slip away from the West. To keep the people "free" the Pentagon is prepared to blow them all into kingdom-come. The Vatican has additional short-term interests in that old colonial acts giving privileged status to her missions are still in force, while, especially under the Diem régime, all important jobs in the country were given to Catholics.

It now seems likely that American Red-scare psychology is at last giving way to maternal concern for "our boys" in Vietnam. "Better dead than Red" is a good slogan for somebody else's children. Not daring to defy world opinion by a military commitment of bombs and missiles that could blast Hanoi off the face of the earth, the USA is having doubts about the efficacy of a war of attrition. For a people said to be oppressed by President Ho Chi Minh, the North Vietnamese are showing a surprising willingness to carry on the struggle. Realising that negotiation will at some time or other be inevitable, President Johnson is anxious not to lose further prestige by needlessly prolonging a campaign that is both costly and cowardly. The face lost by pulling out now is perhaps seeming less than that of battling on inconclusively. On the home front the President has done remarkable things in his anti-poverty and civil rights programmes, and all this may be jeopardised if he has to raise his military budget yet again.

Messages from the Pope

One of the most hopeful barometers of a Vietnamese settlement is the intervention of Pope Paul VI. Not that Chairman Mao Tse-Tung or President Ho is likely to give much thought to his appeal. These seasoned warriors are less likely to mellow at honeyed ultramontanism than non-Catholics in the West. The overture is encouraging simply in terms of Vatican diplomacy.

Throughout its history there have been two approaches, not unique to itself but here brought to rare perfection: secret and open diplomacy. The former is concerned with promoting its real ambitions, which it is probably no exaggeration to say have for 1,600 years been unfailingly reactionary. It involves setting up figures like Hitler and Diem and then finding reasons for not excommunicating them as world opinion grows hostile. The second is the moral leadership of a Duke of Plaza-Toro: "He leads his regiment from behind, he finds it less exciting."

When secret diplomacy or simple observation shows that certain political changes are coming, usually in the teeth of

its intrigues, the Vatican then makes a great show of supporting them. In this category were the censures of Hitler from 1943 on — when it was wellnigh certain that he was about to lose the war. No doubt the Pope will be personally pleased to see peace in Vietnam, but he has given

every indication hitherto of being an international diplomat in the Pius XII tradition, where words speak louder than actions. The world hopes this will be true in Vietnam, and that the New Year cessation of hostilities will not be indefinitely prolonged.

CONFIRMED ANGLICANS AND CONFIRMED CRIMINALS—SUBMISSIONS

TO ROYAL COMMISSION ON PENAL SYSTEM

David Tribe

For the hundred years of its existence the National Secular Society has taken the profoundest interest in the related fields of ethics and penology. While recognising the great progress which has been made in recent years in achieving a more humane and rational penal system, we consider that there is room for enormous improvement, and welcome this opportunity of making submissions.

In the absence of any generally accepted theory of the cause of crime — save in broad terms that poverty, slums, limited education and low intelligence are predisposing factors in some cases, and broken homes and lovelessness in others — it is very difficult to make convincing statements about its prevention or cure. Some individuals rise above the most adverse of circumstances; others are stimulated by easy circumstances and indulgent parents to further greed and self-indulgence. This much only can be said: in view of the frequent inhumanity, not to say cost, of dealing with offenders in the traditional way, it is most regrettable that so little knowledge exists of the effect such action is really having, and so little research is under way to increase this knowledge.

It may well be asked if present methods are either deterrent or reformatory. Perhaps there are still some responsible for the prison service who regard neither as important as retribution: the Biblical injunction of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Happily this attitude seems rarer today than in the past among public and Parliament, police and judiciary; so that transportation and capital punishment have both been abandoned as solutions of the problem by ridding oneself forever of the offender. We are all today more inclined to accept the fact that the causes of crime are never simple and that it is very difficult to recognise — if such there should be — the born and incurable criminal. In similar circumstances members of the jury might themselves have been in the dock. It is true that there are some crimes so disgusting and repellent that all ordinary citizens are convinced that they could never in any circumstances have committed them. This is almost certainly true. But it only indicates that, whether or not the offenders are “mad” in the conventional sense, there is in them a degree of abnormality that needs psychiatric attention. We are most concerned at the generally deficient recognition of the need for and provision of such attention throughout the penal system.

This is not to go “soft” on criminals and overlook the need to protect law-abiding members of society. Psychiatric treatment is more demanding of patient response than ordinary confinement. Indeed it may involve longer confinement in our present state of medical knowledge. No doubt it would be premature to advocate the immediate disappearance of ordinary prisons, which would be too unsettling to both police and public. But it seems highly desirable that more attention than hitherto should be paid

to considering just what is gained by immurement in every case. Without necessarily believing every detail of *Inside Story* and subsequent statements of the Prison Reform Council (who indicate, it should be noted, that considerable improvements have been made since the first publication), we are inclined to think that, although interested parties, these “political” prisoners painted a picture of prison life which had a ring of truth, which was never satisfactorily answered though it was repudiated by the Prison Commissioners, and which suggested a state of degradation which could not possibly assist in the process of “going straight” afterwards. To take people who have in many cases committed minor crimes or may even be on remand and never found guilty, away from jobs, homes, spouses, children, friends, and throw them into the company of their own sex and a certain proportion of hardened criminals without, in most cases, adequate or even any attention from psychiatrists, welfare workers or vocational guidance experts, cannot assist such men to reform or society to reabsorb them. For this must always be regarded as the long-term objective: to try to ensure that on release such men will not be so corrupted or demoralised or institutionalised that they cannot take a proper place in society again. Too many enter prison as delinquents and leave as gangsters, neither deterred nor reformed, but further committed to criminal associates and activities.

For too long the penal system has worked on the assumption, common to established institutions in our national life, that crime results from a breakdown of religious belief, and that all that is necessary to rehabilitate the criminal is to provide religion for a captive audience. So we have prison chaplains rather than lay counsellors and social workers to deal with the emotional and moral problems of detainees, and the virtually compulsory institution of chapel in H.M. prisons and borstals. For those who genuinely want them and are prevented by their present position from going to an ordinary church, chapel services should be available. In view of the fact that religion did not in these cases prevent criminality, such services must be regarded as emotional rather than ethical for those who attend. Those who do not want them will be unlikely to benefit from forced attendance. Besides conducting services, some prison chaplains are deeply and humanely conscious of their obligations to minister to those consigned to their care in other ways, but many, perhaps most, of them have no expertise in these secular skills. Some do positive harm. It is, we maintain, worse than useless to “preach at” and try to “convert” men in circumstances of *de facto* duress, and to seek to erect a reformed life on religious propositions which the community outside has by and large itself rejected. The

(Continued on page 16)

SIMPLE REASONING

F. H. Snow

THE frequently-raised controversy as to whether agnosticism or atheism is the sounder sceptical position, prompts me to offer my views on the subject.

To begin with, I am an atheist because the most exhaustive examination of religion's claims has failed to provide me with any evidence of a supernatural deity. I say, therefore, that I know there is no God. "But you can't know that," is the agnostic rejoinder, "since you can't prove that there isn't one."

How does this onus of proof argument work out?

If an agnostic were asked to disprove the existence of the gods of ancient Greece, he would laugh at the suggestion. The mere idea that he wasn't sure that Zeus and company didn't exist — that he didn't know they were figments of the imagination, would offend him. Proof or disproof wouldn't enter into the matter. Let us reverse the case and suppose that the God imagined by the ancient Jews had long been relegated to the limbo where the Greek deities reside. Proof of his non-existence would be considered as foolishly inessential as proof of theirs now is. Those who are now agnostics would assert as firmly as atheists that he was a figment of the imagination. They would not insist that unless proof of it could be furnished he couldn't be known not to exist. They would, in fact, be atheists.

What, however — as Jehovah hasn't been generally placed in the category of Homer's celestials — do agnostics mean by "proving"? Were we so scientifically advanced as to be able to explore the whole of the visible universe, would they contend that we were still unable to prove God's non-existence because we hadn't explored the rest of endless space? How do they think we should go about proving the unreality of something which has never been more than a postulation — which, indeed, is so imperfect a conception as to be indefinable, save in such terms as leave us nothing to envisage intelligently?

Non-evidence, they say, is no proof of non-existence, and cite electricity, viruses and remote stars as having been realities before they were discovered. The inexistence of these, however, was due to their inability to reveal themselves, whereas a real Almighty would remain invident solely through such a being's intention to let escape no comprehensible sign of himself. Reason rebels against acceptance of such a proposition. No feasible motive can suggest itself for a complete blotting out by God of identifiable evidence of himself from the senses of the humanity he was at pains to create and wishes to believe in him.

But we can't even consider the possibility of so reason-insulting a course without having some ground, discerned through objective study of everything within the scope of our observation, on which to postulate God's existence. There is none.

We are asked to disprove the reality of something which is a palpable invention of primitive unintelligence, before we can claim to know that it is what it is. What more proof of God's non-existence can agnosticism require than his identification with pure myth? After all, it is the biblical God that is in question. One cannot deify a Life Force, as Bernard Shaw designated his replacement for Christendom's Almighty, and it is the existence of a grotesque literal divinity that agnostics fear to deny categorically. Can they conceive him as hiding beyond the bright blue sky, this PERSON, equipped with wings,

presumably to carry him anywhere — that is, except within range of mortal sight?

Agnostics accuse atheists of dogmatism. If to maintain that an all-comprehending Creator would be perceptible by some act or sign within reasonable human expectation, and that absence of anything such rules out his actuality, is to be dogmatic, the charge is justified. Surely the earth has orbited the sun long enough without sign of its Master Mechanic, to satisfy any honest critic that this hypothetical God is nothing more than hypothetical? Apparently not, as our agnostic friends must be credited with honesty, and Jehovah will need to be almost legend before their cult becomes obsolete. Then, indeed, those who, if living today, would call themselves agnostics, will be as dogmatic as atheists are accused of being in their conviction of the non-existence of the Christian God.

We are just too near the good old days of faith. The semitic conception worshipped by our forefathers is still too powerfully imaged for agnostics to divest it of personality. That is very unfair to the pagan immortals, who have as much right as the biblical one to be suspected of lurking somewhere in default of being proved non-existent. There are quite a few other supernaturals who have as legitimate a grievance, such as pixies, leprechauns and goblins.

The adjudication of commonsense is essential in this matter. Simple reasoning establishes that proof or disproof is entirely irrelevant to it. Let us be our age.

FORUM

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOL

Alliance Hall, Caxton Street, London, S.W.1, Tuesday, January 18th, 1966 7.45 p.m. Speakers include Ernest Armstrong MP, R. Gresham Cooke MP, Stephen Jakobi (Parl. can.), David Tribe.

Written questions to the organisers: National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

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THIS WORLD

Simple Man in Vietnam

AN interesting sidelight on Britain's attitude to Vietnam (front page today) appeared in a letter to the *New Statesman* (December 31) by Paul Jones of the Manfred Mann Group. While the Archbishop of Canterbury was telling his Christmas television audience of British freedom compared with Moscovites' subservience, the young British pop singer was refused permission to sing about a simple man in Vietnam dreaming about American withdrawal. Whereupon he composed the following stanza:—

How nice to be an Archbishop,
And not just a beat-groupish youth!
I'd say just what I liked, claiming "God wants it so".
And no one would say "How uncouth!".

The First Five Years

The Freedom from Hunger Campaign, of which the National Secular Society is one of 76 national affiliated organizations in the United Kingdom, has just issued an attractive brochure to mark the first five years of the campaign. Based upon the old Chinese verb, "If you give a man a fish you feed him for one day; if you teach him how to fish you feed him for many days", the campaign has done much to rouse world conscience over the fact that half its population is mal- or undernourished. Important research and development projects have been initiated and attention is now increasingly being drawn to the dangers of the world population explosion. An encouraging aspect of the campaign is the success of "Youth against Hunger", a feature of which is a "Ten Talent Scheme" whereby authorised youth leaders or teachers may apply for a 10s loan on behalf of a young person who undertakes to build it up to £5. Work such as this has encouraged the National Secular Society to recommend to the Committee on the Age of Majority the lowering of the voting age to 18 (proposals to appear in a forthcoming FREE-THINKER).

Unfortunately the FFH picture is not roses all the way. Dr B. R. Sen, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, admits the failure of practice to keep up with goodwill. "These five years have shown little advance in the world food situation. Production has indeed risen, but so has population, and in some areas people are eating even less than they did five years ago, when they were already eating very poorly." And still the Pope's private study group on contraception deliberates.

Humanist Teachers' Association

Established in May 1965, the HTA has already held a number of private and public meetings on matters of concern to Humanist teachers, notably religion and ethics in schools. The association wishes to publicise the following ventures:

- (1) Is anyone willing to start teacher groups in Sheffield/Leeds or Nottingham/Leicester, where there are a large number of enquiries?
- (2) A member, Mr S. Owen of Gavan, Plymouth Road, Totnes, Devon, would like to hear of anyone interested in the formation of a Humanist school as an industrial and provident society to be run by staff and parents.
- (3) Well-known Humanist Mr Richard Hauser would be glad to impart his ideas and techniques for teaching lower stream pupils in secondary modern schools. The course would take about 15 hours' teaching time. Information from Miss Dorothy Roberts, 213 Pennymead, Harlow, Essex.
- (4) A member, Mr T. Barfield of 103 Kingsway, Chandlers Ford, near Southampton, is collecting inspirational material for use at assembly or in class.

Persuasive Holy Women

Warning is given to readers of the American *Liberal* (December 1965) not to let their doctors send them to Catholic hospitals. Pressure from nuns is brought on the dying to make wills in favour of the Church. Whatever other doctrines may be renounced by the now "liberal" Vatican, hell and purgatory are not likely to be easily abandoned.

Prayers with Everything

Councillor James Mackenzie of Stornoway is writing to the Lewis and Harris Hospital Board of Management complaining about his eight days in Lewis Hospital. He was subjected to 128 prayers in Gaelic by "pseudo-missionaries" who were fellow-patients. There was also a chapter from the Bible twice a day. While God got the glory the nurses had to stop work and food became cold.

Birth Control Centres

Influenced by the Marie Stopes Memorial Clinic in Euston, London, Brook Advisory Centres Ltd is launching an appeal for funds to set up 18 regional clinics to provide contraceptive and social advice for all over sixteen, whether married or not. On the committee of this registered charity is distinguished Humanist and physician Lord Brain.

Golden Future

Next March will be published a sequel to *Objections to Roman Catholicism, The Future of Catholic Christianity*, also edited by Michael de la Bedoyère. There will be more from Archbishop Roberts, and a piece on the Church's antifeminism. But most interesting will be an essay by Ronald Brech on the finances of the RC Church in England. These he estimates at £21 million annually. Not bad for a "missionary" church whose hierarchy was re-established only in the middle of the last century. The Catholic Church today may be intellectually bankrupt, but any organization with such an income has good survival value.

A Wreath for the Days of Reith

In *Let's Make Britain Great Again* Noel Armstrong felt moved to "stop the rot" in our national life in the following terms:—

Unfortunately, the so-called New Morality gains support from the corrupting influence of the BBC and the Independent Television, who place entertainment value and the number of viewers obtained as the sole criterion of their duties — we need today another Lord Reith with a realisation of the responsibility to uplift instead of degrade. Far too many of the plays put out suffer from a warped mentality and sneer at all those things once thought worthwhile in life — love, marriage, religion, decency — all the things that lead to true happiness.

Needless to say, Mesdames Norah Buckland and Mary Whitehouse were moved to eulogise: "Your excellent address has been widely appreciated and used by supporters of the Clean Up TV Campaign. Nothing but good can come from the re-affirmation of the Christian truths in such a way that young people will respond to their challenge, and older people make amends for their failure to live them out."

Mr Armstrong was encouraged enough to produce a sequel, *Britain — What of Thy Future?*, where he quotes from the Reith inscription in Broadcasting House. This is placed high up among the angels in the lobby, but just over a year ago a copy was thoughtfully installed at eye level:

This Temple of the Arts and Muses is dedicated to Almighty God by the first Governors of Broadcasting. It is their prayer that all things hostile to peace and purity be banished from this house and that the people inclining their ear to whatsoever things are beautiful and honest and of good report may tread the paths of righteousness and goodness.

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LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 16th, 6.30 p.m.: JEREMY TAYLOR, "Morals Without Religion".

Manchester Branch NSS (The Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, January 16th, 7.30 p.m.: E. GRUNDY, "An Appreciation of Ingersoll".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, January 16th, 7.30 p.m.: GILLIAN HAWTIN, "Roman Catholicism — A Menace Still With Us".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 16th, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "The Letter of G.B.S."; Tuesday, January 18th, 7.30 p.m.: A. W. MARSDEN, "The Money Fraud".

University of Manchester Union (Oxford Road, Manchester 13), Friday January 14th, 12.45 p.m.: MARGHANITA LASKI, DR. PETER DRAPER, DAVID TRIBE, "What Humanism Means to Me".

THIS WORLD *Continued*

Penal Reform

This week appears (page 11) the full text of the submissions of the National Secular Society to the Royal Commission on the Penal System. Readers may be particularly interested to see this in view of the widespread quotation from it recently. Good reports appeared, *inter alia*, in *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Daily Worker*, *Manchester Evening News*, and on *Three After Six*.

Bread Alone

The Food Education Society (160 Piccadilly, London, W.1) in its latest bulletin (December 1965) asks this pertinent and topical question: "Does the majority of this predominantly urban population really know or care how its food is produced, so long as it is cheap?" Those concerned about animal welfare or synthetic chemicals will have much to think about. A useful suggestion in the same bulletin is that immigrants be given nutrition lessons for a changed climate, notably one short of ultraviolet radiation.

Time to Stop the Rot

This was the title of an article in the *Glasgow Sunday Post* (December 26) referring to the "alarming" decline of church attendance throughout the land and relating this to divorce and criminal statistics and Anglo-Saxon on TV. The figures given are curious. The current ones quoted may be right, but wherever they were acquired they have not yet been audited. At the time of writing the latest official figures in the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* show a divorce rate in England and Wales of 29,000 in 1953 and 32,000 in 1963. The "murder" figures quoted are presumably of what some police spokesman (? the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, Chairman of the Viewers' and Listeners' Association) has regarded as murder. The official figures relate to convictions and fluctuate widely: 1953, 26; 1961, 51; 1962, 31; 1963, 46. Breaking and entering has admittedly shown an alarming and consistent rise: 1953, 18,633; 1963, 47,249.

Some comment must be made on these figures. It would be possible to go back to the Middle Ages and find no divorces at all, because only the wealthy could terminate a marriage and then it was called an "annulment". The rise in crime *could* be related to a fall in religious belief, but it could instead — and Secular Humanists would say should — be related to (1) increase of Catholic population by natural increase and immigration; (2) emphasis on the status value of possessions, where Church organizations lead the way in practice, whatever they may say in theory; (3) insistence of educational and broadcasting authorities that ethics must be linked to religious propositions that ordinary people find it increasingly difficult to believe; (4) selfishness, cynicism and greed encouraged by modern advertising.

After a tribute to the warm-hot gossellers Mary Slessor, Charles Wesley, David Livingstone and William Booth, the article gives the following interesting assessment of the Humanist movement in Britain:

On top of all this there is a growing army of people who openly make war on Christianity. Their front-line troops are the secularists. The National Secular Society has branches all over the country — London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh. The members, and they run into many thousands, declare this life is the only life of which we have any knowledge — and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement. They believe religion is based on ignorance and they assail it as an enemy of progress. Every week they circulate a mass of propaganda. "Is God out of date?" and "Morals without religion" are their most widely-read booklets. If the secularists are the front-line troops, the humanists are the "fifth column". They claim they are not hostile to Christianity. They say they just don't need it. They're getting on fine without it. They accept the principles of Christianity. But they reject Christ. They've a strong following in universities and teachers' colleges. They claim 1,000 members at Oxford and 600 at Cambridge. They get wide publicity from the BBC. In these ways, thousands of young people are being led to believe that, if you've brains, you don't need Christ.

In conclusion, "We must return to the old faith that ennoble man and makes a nation truly great".

NO COMMENT

"He is a very religious man and is very worried about the religious side of this" — policeman to Marylebone magistrate (*South London Press*, December 31).

"The next step is to build the presbytery next door when the new sewage scheme for the town is completed" — *Leicester Mercury*, December 21.

Stephen Jakobi (Parl. can.),

WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Otto Wolfgang

IN 1911 a German priest, Father Otto Schwab, published his experiences as the father confessor of RC priests. In particular he painted a moving picture of the unnecessary suffering of young clerics because of celibacy. In the seminary the candidate is being brainwashed into believing that sex is the dirtiest of sins and woman its despicable vessel. And then, later, he sits in the confessional-box with his ear to a young and beautiful girl revealing him all the secrets of her innermost sex life. This experience shakes the foundations of his learning and nature works on him with a vengeance. Are priests pure, can they remain chaste? The confessor must know and his verdict is, no. Fifty per cent are hypocrites and live a normal sex life; of the rest one half revert to masturbation and the remainder are even worse off: they are driven to homosexuality, perversion and sodomy — only half a dozen are frigid enough to keep their vow of celibacy!

No wonder that more and more often this question of Pope-made cruelty cropped up in the deliberations of the Vatican Council. Despite the frantic efforts of Pope Paul to clamp down on its becoming public, the liberal French newspaper *Le Monde* brought this topic into the open. The claim for drastic change came, once again, from the Dutch clergy, with the suggestion that the ordination of married priests was a necessity or the Church — particularly in Latin America — would soon find itself without clerics. In fact, several backsliders, after a period of civic life, had been re-admitted to full orders despite their marriage. The first married priest, Dr. Rudolf Goethe (who died last May), had been ordained as long ago as 1951.

In its issue of April 19, *Le Monde* printed a report by its Vietnam expert, G. Chaffard, from inside Vietcong territory (translated in the American Bulletin *Viet-Report* of July, 1965, 133 West 72nd St., New York, 10023). Dealing with the sufferings of the guerrillas, he writes:

"In this virtuous army, sexual relations with 'comrades of the women's organizations' are forbidden. Married men, nevertheless, have sometimes been separated from their wives for years. Some guerrillas who were already fighting in the jungles with the Vietminh before 1954, have never had enough time to marry, and now in their forties, have never been with a woman. One begins to appreciate the amount of self-denial — or fanaticism — that these men have to have in order to stick to the life of a resistance fighter."

This definitely is a quite different sort of celibacy, self-imposed by idealists who do not stomach the degradation of brothels.

New Christian (London) reports of Christian fanatics in Hungary who are using the "thaw" to creep into every possible cleft and cranny for their insidious agitation against the atheistic state.

"Fr. Halasz was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, but must also now serve a further four years of a suspended sentence from which he has been amnestied in 1963. . . . Over half of those sentenced are active in the *Regnum Marianum* youth movement which has never been outlawed. To preach the primacy of the Spirit over against the things of the world can be an indictable offence" (November 18).

Only "nearly 20 priests" have been convicted leniently and many of them were simply removed "where there will be less scope for their abilities".

During discussions on Schema 13 (The Church in the Modern World) many Vatican fathers were rather embarrassed by an asinine outburst of the new Jesuit General

who saw an Atheist under every bed. That atheistic conspiracy now "invades TV and international organization, financial circles, nay, it even enters the very territory of the City of God and poisoning laymen and priests alike with its natural fruits: distrust, naturalism and rebellion!" (*Newsweek*, October 8).

The same issue of *Newsweek* shows a picture of a Jewish Rabbi signing away to Sheikh Abdullah thousands of acres of Israel in a ritual sham to observe *Shemittah*, the sabbatical "year of release". Because in a primitive farming community it was necessary to allow land to lie fallow in a rota and because this was codified in the Old Testament, Orthodox Jews transfer their property through the chief rabbinate to an accommodating Arab in return for a promissory note of 500,000 Israeli pounds. In exchange for a deposit of 17 US dollars, the rabbis hand over legal ownership of the property to the Sheikh who, after the end of *Shemittah*, will be handed a revised bill of sale to the tune of several million pounds. The Sheikh then will gracefully protest his inability to pay, demand his release from the deal and return the deeds of ownership. He then will receive back his deposit and everybody will be happy.

Summing up the results of the Vatican Council, the November issue of *La Raison* states that the tone of polemic has radically changed: no more threats, anathemas or excommunications, but polite invitations to exchange arguments in a climate of pretended tolerance. "Dialogue has become the fashion." However, the main issue is to gain time for the cementing of an all-religious block against unbelief.

In a summary, the Rev. Dr Sean O'Riordan explains the meaning of "Ecumenical": incorporating the inhabited world, embracing all believers. However, the movement to bring together all Christians of whatever denomination began not as a Roman Catholic initiative: —

"It began in the early years of this century as an inter-Protestant movement" (*Irish News*, Belfast, December 4), and the RC Church stayed away for fear it might lead to a "general watering-down" of their solely true dogmas. Now, being on the defensive, they have taken the initiative and for the first time invited non-Catholics as observers.

In a very interesting article showing the currents and counter-currents in the Congo (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, Number 49), some light is shed on the now deposed President Kasavubu as perhaps the shadiest of the many shady characters in that unfortunate country. He was educated at the Grand Seminary until he was found to be instigating the blacks against a religion where God, the Virgin and all the Saints are white. The originator of a Black Lord was Simon Kimbangu, who for this subversive blasphemy was condemned to death in 1921. This was later commuted to 30 years' penal servitude, which he served, thus becoming a national hero and martyr. Today there are a million Kimbanguists with their own schools and hospitals. Kasavubu — the "Roi Kasa" — after his expulsion from the Seminary became a preacher and eventually the president of the sect of the *Abako* (Alliance of the Ba-Kongo). He used the Kimbangu movement when it suited him and dispensed with it when he found it compromising. Underhandedly he played Lumumba, the "Pierrot Lunair", into the hands of Tshombe and Munungo for the purpose of finishing him off.

The issue also carries an investigation of sex life in

Sweden, which is well organized. Everybody is kept informed by brochures on the subject, there are Information Centres and the Ministry of Education issues handbooks for schools. Everything is frankly explained, from the anatomy of the body and its functions to perversions and abortion. The fear created about masturbation is reduced to proper dimensions. Woman is free to decide what to do with her body.

Contraception has separated the problem of conception from that of sex. More and more sex comes into its own, even as a way of communication, of play . . . Modern city life has destroyed . . . the social control existing in small communities and has facilitated a certain degree of anonymity, aided by the diminishing influence of the Church and her religious prohibitions . . . It is necessary to take away from sex the stigma of sin and guilt in order to combat neuroses and frustration.

Mrs Grundy, please note.

CONTAINMENT AND CONFINEMENT SIDELIGHTS

(from DECEMBER BULLETIN)

National Council for Civil Liberties
(4 Camden High St., London, NW1)

VISITORS FROM VIETNAM

THERE seems to be an increasing number of reasons for keeping visitors and immigrants away from Britain. In the case of Bert Bensen, the American who was deported, it is because a visit here for Christmas with his family might threaten British security. In the case of Delgado it was because he had been here before without permission. In the case of Commonwealth immigrants it is because we cannot absorb too many coloured people at a time. Now we learn that four women from North Vietnam may not enter this country — because they might say something. These four women — two members of Parliament, a teacher and a journalist — were invited to Britain by the Medical Aid for Vietnam Committee, who wanted to discuss with them the problem of getting medical aid to Vietnam. They were kept waiting in Paris while the Home Secretary considered their application. Eventually, in refusing to admit them, Sir Frank Soskice said that he was bound to regard them as "active exponents" of North Vietnamese propaganda and that their proposed visit would not help towards the objective of promoting negotiations to end the war in Vietnam. This decision followed another decision earlier in the month regarding three members of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, who were invited to Britain by the Russell Peace Foundation. In their case Sir Frank refused permission because he believed that their sole purpose in wishing to come to this country was "to conduct propaganda justifying armed incursion by the North Vietnamese into South Vietnam". Of course they were going to conduct propaganda, and of course the four women would have expounded their own point of view — although in their case the question of medical supplies must have seemed more important than the ideology of the wounded civilians and children who needed them. The right to "conduct propaganda" is one of the advantages of democracy, and it is what politicians and statesmen are doing all the time. Propaganda is only dangerous when both sides cannot be heard. It is difficult to see how Sir Frank justified these decisions unless it was that he wished to promote only one side of an international discussion, for at the time of refusing entry to the four women from North Vietnam, a delegation from the Saigon government in South Vietnam was touring the country. Freedom of speech and freedom of travel are two basic concepts of democracy. It is not the job of the Home Office to distinguish between truth and propaganda: to act as a censor of our information sources, particularly when it concerns a war in which we are not a party. Our treatment of aliens and immigrants is degenerating rapidly with the increasing demands for vouchers, papers, medical

checks, and requests to report to the police. Unless something is done soon to liberalise the system visitors may soon be admitted on condition that they take the vow of silence.

PRISON DEATHS

WE are increasingly concerned about the number of deaths in prisons, and in Borstal, which do not appear to be properly investigated. A case recently brought to our attention concerned the suicide of a 16-year-old boy in Borstal. The boy was known to suffer from claustrophobia and was in fact receiving special treatment. However, on one occasion he attempted to escape and was then locked in a cell, alone. Although it was an observation cell he was able to hang himself with his tie and was not found until it was too late. The boy's father has not been able to obtain satisfactory replies to his questions to the Home Office, and the details of the Home Office description of events do not correspond to evidence given at the inquest. The case raises many questions regarding the treatment of prisoners who are ill, and it is not an isolated one. Another father is trying to raise the case of his 19-year-old son who died, he alleges, as the result of neglect in the same Borstal institution: this boy was a diabetic. We have learnt of three other deaths: two were suicides and one the death of a drug addict. All of them, it seems, could have been prevented with adequate care and precautions. It is undesirable to have people who are ill in prison, and the practice is an indication of how far away we are from a rational approach to penology. But while people are confined to prison the very least that can be done is to see that they receive proper treatment. Drug addicts may need drugs in order to remain alive and deprivation can result in agonising pain and possibly death. In such cases there is not time to wait for a prison examination and a new diagnosis: the recommendation of the prisoner's own doctor must be accepted if the prisoner is to receive treatment in time. There is room for improvement in the system of medical treatment and examination, and much more freedom should be allowed for prisoners' own doctors to enter the prisons. The number of deaths points to severe inadequacies in the present system of treatment and observation, and in whatever procedures are adopted for investigating breakdowns in the system. How many deaths take place in prison and Borstal each year? How many of those who died were on remand? (One of those referred to above was awaiting trial.) What arrangements are made for medical attention for special cases, such as diabetics, addicts, asthmatics? These are a few of the questions that should be asked in Parliament.

CONFIRMED ANGLICANS AND CONFIRMED CRIMINALS—SUBMISSIONS TO ROYAL COMMISSION ON PENAL SYSTEM

(Continued from page 10)

subsequent history of convicts shows that many leave borstals and prisons confirmed Anglicans and confirmed criminals.

Some of our members are concerned with training humanist counsellors who will be able, it is hoped, to play a ministering role in penal institutions. But our society does not regard the ministrations of "sectarian" advisers — whether religious chaplains or humanist counsellors — as important as a properly secular, national system of welfare workers, doctors and educators to cater impartially for the needs of all detainees.

For a long time we have made specific proposals, which we are glad to see are now being advocated elsewhere, or, like the abolition of capital punishment, have already been achieved. Among the most important of the former is the establishment in prisons of proper employment at trade union rates, so that with the money earned the prisoner can contribute to both the maintenance of his family and restitution to his victim. In addition to this, such employment would do much to restore or retain a sense of self-respect and obviate a prisoner's tendency to feel he is "rotting away" aimlessly, uselessly, bitterly. Allied with this is the desirability, in our opinion, of doing everything possible to continue family relations during the course of imprisonment by allowing wives and husbands to come in or go out at weekends. In the light of our general feeling about the desirability of minimising terms of imprisonment we suggest that short prison sentences — too short almost entirely replaced by fines or probation. Particularly with professional people — where being unemployed especially means becoming unemployable — it is desirable for either psychiatric or vocational attention — should be to take every step to avoid imprisonment with consequent dismissal from work. In these cases the shame of being found out and the strain of being proceeded against are often salutary in themselves, and often much heavier fines would be a tangible deterrent. The proposals in the Government White Papers *The Child, the Family, and the Young Offender* and *The Adult Offender*, with their advocacy of, respectively, emphasis on the family rather than the individual delinquent and release on licence after 12 months or one third of sentence, are what we see as steps in the right direction.

There is a further matter of difficulty under the present situation: discharge. In most cases there is nothing but a rail ticket and a negligible sum of money to help re-establish discharged prisoners. Whether eligible or not for attention under *The Adult Offender* proposals, everyone needs the help of probation or welfare workers to readjust to outside life. There are three particular problems: the attitude of spouses, accommodation if without family, employment. It is often very difficult to gain acceptance again in normal society (the same is true of coming out of mental hospital). While one does not want to advocate deceiving prospective employers, especially where the offence involved breach of trust at work, there is a strong case for stamping insurance cards to provide continuity and thus aid the process of re-employment.

WANTED

Wanted: bound copy of THE FREETHINKER, about 1900; P. Kay, 8 Greenhill, Wembley Park, Middlesex; please phone ARN 6531.

LETTERS

ALL FOR PEACE AND LOVE

IN THE CLOSING ceremony of the Vatican Council, which took place on the 8th December, His Holiness the Pope, as you know, addressed himself to several categories of mankind, such as Rulers of States, Artists, Scientists, Women, etc. Among these he also sent a message to you the Unbelievers. I think it is worthwhile for you all to know what he said to you, just at least to know the fact. The Pope said:

"This greeting goes also to you who do not know us, understand us or regard us as useful or friendly. It goes also to men who, while perhaps thinking they are doing good, are opposed to us. It is a sincere and unassuming greeting, but one filled with hope, and, please believe, that it is filled with esteem and love." (See Catholic Herald, December 10th, p. 1.)

The Church is all for peace and love. We may differ in opinions, and no one is compelled to believe if not by conscience, but we can and we should all unite in human brotherhood. That would be the way of light and salvation.

FR. G. M. PARIS, O.P.
(Malta)

TRACK AND COSMO GROUP

YOU ARE WRONG in giving the impression that a single liberal group working for the freedoms of broadcasting has been recently formed (*Notes and News*, December 17). There are, in fact, two, whose names are TRACK and the Cosmo Group.

TRACK, the Television and Radio Committee has been in formation since July of this year, when cooperation between the British Humanist Association and a group of young TV writers brought together a committee which included Professor Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University. It was publicly announced on December 9, and aims at being a "Howard League of the Air", a forum for informed opinion and a stimulus of study and dialogue among broadcasters and the general public.

It is concerned with a far wider range of problems than those posed by the Clean-up-TV people, and does not aim at arousing mass opposition to them, as this job falls within the province of Mrs. Avril Fox, whose Cosmo Group was formed later, on December 12. There is no official connection between the two groups: they are performing quite separate functions. Of TRACK's aims the most important is encouraging a better dialogue between those engaged in broadcasting and informed members of the public.

Those of your readers who are also members of the British Humanist Association will find a longer article giving more details of the two new bodies in the January issue of *Humanist News*.

TOM VERNON
Secretary, TRACK Press Officer BHA

World Peace and Esperanto

ON November 19 last we celebrated the 102nd anniversary of the Address of Abraham Lincoln made at Gettysburg. He ended his short talk with the words "... that we here highly resolve ... that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth".

As we contemplate the possibility of a third world war and the total destruction of the people of the earth, let us resolve that government of, by, and for the people shall be extended to the last person on earth.

It can be done by making Esperanto the inter-language and on that basis forming the UN into a federal union of all nations.

Yours for world peace,
GLEN P. TURNER (Wisconsin)

Unproductive Sin

REFERRING to "A Christmas Prayer" in your issue of December 24, you may be interested in a rhyme that I remember from about fifty years ago, that went as follows:—

A MAIDEN'S PRAYER

Holy Mary, we believe
Without sin thou didst conceive;
Holy Mary, still believing
Let us sin without conceiving.

Verily there is nothing new under the sun, or heaven.

S. S. A. WATKINS

Details of membership of the National Secular Society and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.