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Friday,
March 8, 1968**THE WAR IN VIETNAM**

Dr. Martin A. Larson (USA)

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"The Volcano" in which this article appeared in January.

THIS country has perhaps never engaged in any conflict which occasioned more confusion both among those who support it—because they are brainwashed—and those who oppose it for reasons of their own.

Furthermore, this country has never become embroiled in a struggle in which the true motives of the warmongers were more despicable and in which their public statements were more mendacious, hypocritical, or ridiculous.

Strangely enough, even among those who oppose the war most vociferously, scarcely a single one seems to have the faintest understanding of what is actually involved.

Some say that we are in Vietnam because the Pentagon simply wants a war and desires to try out its new hardware; others that President Johnson needs a war to create "prosperity" and to increase the size of the federal bureaucracy. Some believe that the action in Vietnam is a prelude to a major war with China; others think that it is a capitalist-imperialist conflict prosecuted to obtain cheap raw materials for industry in America; many still repeat that we are there to hold the line against communism; and some say that we have a commitment which must be honoured.

There may be a small grain of truth in some of these opinions; but not one of them comes near the central fact.

We are there in order to maintain the Roman Catholic Church, together with its allied aristocracy, in the position of power that it attained during more than a century of French rule.

If the people in the United States could only understand this, it would do more to awaken our nation to the dangers facing us than anything else of which I can think.

When the French made Vietnam a colony, the Catholic priests accompanied the soldiers as an integral and even a major part of the invasion.

Only those Vietnamese who converted to this religion could obtain any advantage: education, official positions in the government, ownership of land, influence, power and wealth, went to the converts and to no one else.

This situation was supported and implemented by French bayonets and firing-squads.

The feudal society of Vietnam was transformed by placing in complete power a landed aristocracy and an all-powerful Church which oppressed the 90 per cent of the population which remained outside the fold and which continued to seethe under twin tyranny of this totalitarian power-combine. In essence, it was identical to the hierarchical structure which ruled Europe for more than a thousand years, known as the Dark or Middle Ages.

The story is terrible enough. As French power waned during its defeats, especially following World War II, the people of Vietnam rose in revolt.

Since no one would befriend the exploited Buddhists except the Communists, they established a working alliance. Before the French surrender at Dienbienphu in 1954, the United States had already (under the guise of foreign aid) poured more than \$2 million into Vietnam in support of the French and its Church.

It should be obvious to anyone that, had it not been for the latter, there would have been no Communists to contend with in Vietnam, and there would now be no involvement of the US in that land.

The Buddhist-Communist entente, strongly nationalist in character, thereupon took control of North Vietnam. The Catholic Church was not persecuted, but it was reduced to a private organisation; it was deprived of its extraordinary powers. It could no longer own feudal estates in order to exploit the peasantry; nor could it operate sectarian schools at public expense.

About half a million Catholics still remain in North Vietnam. About a million, however, fled to the South, where they established themselves as a ruling elite, now backed by American guns. *Ky is a Roman Catholic* refugee from the north; *President Thieu is a Roman convert*; all the important positions in the new government are under the control of the Church.

And so, in Vietnam, we have a civil war with a new dimension; the tyrants and exploiters are the rich Roman Catholics and the misery-ridden people consist of many Buddhist sects and others of differing ideologies.

The Catholics are thoroughly organised and entrenched; they own the land and the businesses. They alone have access to education; but they would not continue in power for one week if the Americans were withdrawn.

It is now costing the American taxpayers nearly \$30 billion a year to maintain a situation which is so unspeakable that it defies description, and which is gradually making the United States a byword and a shaking of the head to the nations as they observe our evil deeds.

After Dienbienphu, Cardinal Spellman brought the fanatical Diem to the United States (his brother was the bishop) to prepare him for rule in Vietnam.

Eisenhower was persuaded to send "advisers" to the country, of whom there were five or six hundred when Kennedy became president. Under pressure from the Catholic Church, Kennedy sent nearly 25,000 soldiers to Vietnam; but the persecutions of the Buddhists carried out by Diem were so frightful that the Washington government could scarcely object to his assassination.

When Johnson ran for the presidency in 1964, all the evidence indicates that he obtained his overwhelming Catholic vote by promising the hierarchy two things:

(Continued on page 77)

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and McRAE.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, March 10, 6.30 p.m.: Panel, Alderman E. MARSTON, Councillors T. BAGULEY, H. C. WILLIAMS, "Any Questions—Local Government".

Manchester Humanist Society, 36 George Street, Manchester 1, Wednesday, March 13, 7.30 p.m.: MARGARET LAWS-SMITH, "Humanist Attitudes".

Merseyside Humanist Group; Annual Dinner at Strand Hotel, Brunswick Street, Liverpool 2, Friday, March 22, 7.30 for 8 p.m. Tickets 30/-, from Mrs M. Clowes, 32 Caldly Road, Aintree, Liverpool 9.

Redbridge Humanist Group, 32 Tavistock Road, South Woodford, London, E.18, Sunday, March 10, 7.30 p.m.: Coffee Evening.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 10, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "The Marginal Observers of Society"; Tuesday, March 12, 6.45 p.m.: NICHOLAS OULTON, "Political and Economic Development in China".

South Place Sunday Concerts, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 10, 6.30 p.m.: English String Quartet. Mozart, Shostakovitch, Beethoven.

DINNER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS YEAR AND DISARMAMENT

HUMAN RIGHTS YEAR and disarmament were the joint themes of the dinner arranged by that indefatigable worker for peace, Kathleen Tacchi-Morris, Organiser of Women for Disarmament in co-operation with the United Nations Association, at the Strand Palace Hotel, London, on February 23. The Guest of Honour was the Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker, MP, distinguished Nobel Peace Prize winner. Other speakers were Mr Samir Ahmed, Counsellor at the Embassy of the United Arab Republic and former representative at the United Nations; Mr Vaseley Ivanovich Pronin, Third Secretary at the Soviet Embassy; Mrs Myriell Davies, Secretary of the London branch of UNA; Mrs Hilary Edwards, Vice-Chairman of the Women's Advisory Committee of Women for Disarmament; Mrs Peggy Crane, Secretary of UNA Policy and Disarmament Committee; David Tribe, President of the NSS.

Mr Ahmed described how persistent negotiation and ironing out of technical problems led what seemed to be a deadlocked conference in 1962 to the successful Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963; and was confident the same steady application could solve the problems of disarmament. The UNA speakers continued the note of modest optimism, stressing that emotive calls for complete immediate disarmament would not be listened to by serious negotiators. A step-by-step approach was essential. Some early objectives worthy of pressing on the governments of the world were (1) a neutrality of air space agreement so that incidents were not provoked by free-ranging nuclear and reconnaissance aircraft, (2) complete nuclear test ban treaty, (3) control of military chemical and bacteriological experimentation.

David Tribe spoke in a similar vein of caution, stressing that reaction to the British withdrawal from east of Suez emphasised how many economic interests of ordinary people were represented by disarmament so that to blame big vested interests and ideologies was inadequate as an explanation of world problems. He advocated (1) steady education towards the ideal of one world (with eventual world government), (2) percentage reduction of all armaments budgets across the board and diversion of the money to economic aid to poorer countries, (3) strengthening of GATT and other UN agencies breaking down the idea of national tariff barriers and balance of payments, whose problems were frustrating the aid programme, (4) research into the whole subject of aggression in society, so that the idea of solving problems by negotiation becomes commoner at all levels.

Mr Pronin brought his greetings to the meeting but said he had come to observe rather than comment.

Mr Noel-Baker said that cautious optimism was not enough. In the present state of the world he was profoundly pessimistic. After a scathing indictment of the United States for the war in Vietnam and her nuclear bomber command, he said that what was needed was a complete revolution in world thinking on the questions of peace and war. Mrs Tacchi-Morris led a discussion in which it was proposed that 1970 should be declared World Disarmament Year. She said that this Human Rights Year, with its emphasis on the status of women (with racial equality), should encourage all women to be active in the struggle for peace.

THE WORLDLY-WISDOM OF THE POPE

F. H. Snow

THE Pope is well. His spiritual children are the happier for that because the wings of death beat near him a little while back. The Dark Angel passed, or, in commonsense language, surgical skill extended his lease of life. We rationalists think it strange that God's Representative should need an operation, in view of his celestial master's power to obviate such a necessity. He must have wished the Pope to live, or he would have died, and his condoning of his exalted servant's ordeal is, to our minds, bizarre. It should seem so even to the devout.

His Holiness demonstrated that he was just like other people, despite the supreme sacredness of his office. He had to have medical aid, though, unlike most other people, he did not have to depend for it on one doctor. Unlike the great majority of those who crowded the Vatican square, and hailed him like a god, Christ's proxy had a number of doctors to exert their skill on his behalf. Those who had the ordering of matters affecting his health weren't taking chances, and, had fifty doctors been though needful, they would have been at his palace.

Now, it occurs to me that the divinely-appointed ambassador of he who spurned the privileges of the rich, ought not to have availed himself of those privileges, but should have sought the same standard of medical aid as that permitted the poorest of his Master's subjects. He who is the symbol of faith for the 'faithful', ought to have had trust in his Lord to do for him, through ordinary means, that which he would do for the neediest Catholic. Did he fear that the father of his Christ (or Christ himself, as Son and Father), would effect nothing for him unless he had the benefit of the best medical brains? Did he, in his heart of hearts, have no belief that the supernatural would play any part in the proceedings for his welfare? Did he, in fact, feel that his health and life were dependent solely on mortal skill? His sanction of a plurality of eminent doctors implies that.

If Paul believed that God could save him, if he thought fit, one may ask why he engaged physicians. Religious apologists would answer that God works through natural means, when such are available. It is an old answer—the only one, indeed, to explain the non-occurrence of the palpably miraculous. Pope Paul should have seen the irrationality of employing the medical elite, as an ordinary practitioner would suit God as well. He could not have believed it would work out that way; that God would see to it that a humble doctor made no slip. His Holiness surely knew that surgical skill was unessential to the performance of a divinely-willed operation, and that Heaven could empower the least able of practitioners to successfully accomplish it. He knew, or believed, that the surgeon's knife, in the most expert hands, could not save him if God wished otherwise. He believed that God saved or extinguished life at will, be it that of prince, bishop, priest or peasant. He should have believed that not to accept a higher standard of treatment than that available to the generality of his flock, would be in true accord with the precepts of the lowly Jesus whose earthly representative he claimed to be. Perhaps he did, but he made no mention of it, and had the treatment of a royal patient.

What a gesture he would have made to the world—what an example of saintly trust he would have set his people, had he refused the ministrations of the great for those of the humble! Maybe he would not now be wearing the triple-crowned mitre. Maybe his worldly-wisdom ensured

for the faithful many more blessings from his holy hand. Seas of upturned faces in his palace courtyard would justify his reliance upon science. Those who had prayed for his survival—and how it had been prayed for!—would see in it God's answer to their petitions. The reasoning mind asks what God was expected to do, with science in charge of Paul's welfare. If the scalpel was needed to save the Holy Father, God wasn't; if God had need to take a hand, he wouldn't want the scalpel. Nonetheless, if the scalpel got the Holy Father through, it would be God that did it, in the view of all good Catholics.

And it was so, for hadn't the Pope recovered? He had evinced his trust in God's preserving power by braving the cold and rain to pray at a religious monument in Rome, on his first egress from the Vatican since the operation. The millions that believed their prayers had weighed in his favour, would not wonder whether they would have been effective without the knife. They would not ask why His Holiness did not betake himself to God's favourite healing place, Loudres, and rest there upon almighty grace. The idea probably didn't occur to the Pope; it couldn't have commended itself to his physicians. What if God or Our Lady took no more notice of the most eminent of Catholics than they did of the piteous hosts that were dipped in the waters of the Grotto, amid fervid incantations? It would look bad if the Supreme Pontiff came away uncured. The faith of many would be jarred; the traffic to Loudres might be greatly lessened; the Holy Father's holiness would not be so patent; his chance of survival could even be jeopardised.

Yes, the right thing was done, and the Pope is well again. Respect for the dictates of commonsense, behind a facade of pious trust, has enabled him to resume the unpriestly role he plays at his desk in the Vatican, when not bedizened for the adulatory gaze of the faithful. The director-in-chief of the most powerful materialistic organisation under the sun, has gained a postponement of his flight to the ethereal abode of his inept God. Under Paul's aegis, worldly-wisdom will continue to guide the Barque of Peter, and, through its medium, pope after pope will keep the hoary ark from foundering, maybe for centuries, if humanism remains undynamic.

100 YEARS OF FREETHOUGHT

By DAVID TRIBE

"The book contains very much interesting information culled from many sources and leaves the reader both with a sense of respect for the moral integrity and enthusiasm of the secularists and with a feeling that their excellencies bear no inevitable relation to the anti-religious dogma which they have espoused and which is the distinctive characteristic of their movement."

—*Contemporary Review*.

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JEAN STRAKER IN CYRIL BLACK-LAND

A "Freedom of Vision" report

SPEAKING on the subject of censorship to Diploma Students at a Union meeting at the Wimbledon School of Art on Friday, February 16, Jean Straker, the photographer, said that it gave him a special pleasure in coming because he had certain connections with Wimbledon.

"Some ten years ago Charles Skilton (of Alexandra Road), who has published some of the most superb art books ever to be distributed in England," said Jean Straker, "approached me and said that he wanted to publish a book of my photographs." That book, *Nudes of Jean Straker*, had been published in 1958 and some 8,000 copies of it had since been distributed.

"The second connection which I have with Wimbledon," he said, "is, of course, that connection—or disconnection—if one might slightly twist the word—with your Member of Parliament, Sir Cyril Black—and it may not surprise you to learn that he disagrees with me in almost everything I say.

"One of the problems with which one finds oneself confronted is that if a man with the power and importance and ideas of Sir Cyril Black disagrees with one, he can use his power to make it very difficult for people, who disagree with him, to express their thoughts."

Under those Obscene Publications Acts, which Sir Cyril Black had supported in the House of Commons, some of Jean Straker's photographs had been found to be obscene only the day before, when his appeals against previous convictions had been refused by the Inner London Sessions Appeals Committee. He continued:

"It seems to me that all of us in art, whether graphic artists, photographic artists, sculptors, or even poets, producers of films and television programmes, are concerned with a balance between the ideal and the reality—and it is not my belief that it is the purpose of art only to concern itself with the presentation of a formalised or stylised ideal."

The history of art had shown us that there has been a constant struggle between the ideal of the period and the creative perception of the artist; the artist endeavouring to be true to his medium was often in conflict with those ideas and that ideal which authority and the patrons of art often wanted him to define and express.

"We know that this struggle between the ideal and the reality came to a head in the Renaissance, when, with the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, you find that they start painting clothes on the Michelangelo nudes on the Sistine ceiling. Well, they are painting clothes on the nudes in 20th century England—and they are painting out the pubic details, destroying the natural anatomical structure of men and women—and they are trying to get pictures, photographs, drawings to comply with a kind of stylised de-sexed ideal.

"What all this is in aid of I do not know."

His book had been the beginning of the challenge, for the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, which Roy Jenkins then, as a Private Member had piloted through the House of Commons, gave the artist a right of defence. This had been an important step, for, since 1929, when the Lawrence drawings were the subject of successful prosecutions, it had been a principle in law that the representation of pubic hair in pictures was obscene—and there was no right of

defence, much in the same way that there was now no right of defence when the word 'indecent' was used in prosecutions brought under the Vagrancy Act and the Post Office Act.

It had been the object of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act to provide all possible safeguards to the serious artist in whatever medium, and for this reason the definition of obscenity was so drawn as to take account of the people or audience to which a publication was addressed. What might be obscene if directed, say, to the general public, might well not be so if directed to, say, serious students.

But as some people thought it wrong to give sex instruction, and particularly to young people, any of his pictures which could be obtained and used for that purpose would be regarded by those people as obscene. He did not believe that it was wrong for people to know about their own sexuality; he did not believe that any one of us could take charge of ourselves without knowing about our organic nature. He said:

"So we have a fundamental difference of attitude. One stems from a fact of, possibly, Christian morality that sex and the knowledge of sex is sin—and the other stems from a secular humanist attitude that sex is part of human nature and that the better you understand it the better a person you are going to be.

"You can see then that my battle with your MP is not only a battle on artistic intent, but also a battle between a certain concept of Christian morality which Sir Cyril seems to uphold, and the attitude of mind of the secular-humanist-freethinker who rejects completely any concept that sex or knowledge of sex is sin.

"I take the attitude that it is wrong to falsify pictures of the human body, that it is wrong for a photographer to issue visual statements which are fraudulent, that it is wrong for an artist to be compelled by law to evade any part of his emotional or expressive desire and present pictures which are not true to his feeling and understanding of the subject."

It was said that the Danes had abolished their censorship laws, and that the Swedes never had any. People in England had their eyes permanently blinkered and were kept in ignorance of things that were common knowledge in other countries. This was a bad thing because it produced neuroses as a result of frustrated curiosity, and many people's lives were made unhappy in this way. He said:

"I am proposing that we too in England abolish from the Criminal Law all offences which use the words 'obscene' and 'indecent' to prosecute people for publishing information which deals with the human body or with the sexual involvements of the human body or with artistic interpretations of those sexual involvements."

In these proposals he was supported by the members of Freedom of Vision and Cosmo, both anti-censorship associations. He felt that members of the public—and particularly the residents of Wimbledon—could help to bring about such a change by making their feelings known. This was our society and we were entitled to mould it in the way we wanted, provided we harmed no one; it was not the province of the law to exercise artistic discretion or evaluation; it was up to each individual member of the public to buy or reject at whim. Trash would soon find its own level and would not command high prices because

it dealt with taboo subjects at risk. One had to get rid of the ideas that sex was obscene and that obscenity was a crime. He said:

"The BBC put Sir Cyril and me together in a mock television ding-dong. The producer told us to go for each other without holds barred. I said to him, 'Do you honestly believe you were conceived in obscenity?' He answered, 'I'm sorry you think like that.' I couldn't get him to rise at all; it was a dead loss. I don't dislike Sir Cyril, and I respect his right to possess his own opinions. What I object to is that he uses his parliamentary power to make criminals of people who disagree with him. I believe that there is an element of tyranny in this—and unless we can feel that there is no tyranny in authority I don't think we can have a good society."

THE IMMIGRATION BILL

David Tribe

THE National Secular Society adds its voice to those who are protesting against the proposed Immigration Bill directed against Kenyan Asians.

There can be no question but that the Bill is racially inspired, and represents a victory for those politicians who are cashing in on the anxiety and prejudice which exist in certain industrial cities. Insofar as this anxiety is rational and not irrational, it is based on issues of housing, employment and education. As more people emigrate from than immigrate to Britain every year, failure to solve these problems is clearly not created by an overwhelming influx but by Government ineptitude. There are certain areas where temporary difficulties are caused in schools when substantial numbers of Asian children arrive because most of them do not understand English. This problem does not arise here as the Kenyan Asians all speak English.

We believe the proposed action is wrong because it is

(1) *morally objectionable* in discriminating among British subjects and citizens solely on the grounds of colour;

(2) *self-defeating* in raising anxieties about citizenship status and provoking migration which might otherwise not have occurred. The Kenyan Government is not anxious to lose all the Asians within its territory as they represent one of the best-educated, commercially minded and capital owning sections of the community. Both before and after the passing of the proposed Bill loop-holes that have already been detected will be used to bring in immigrants. As their entry will be precipitated and unplanned, any difficulties in their new surroundings will be immeasurably greater than if they could have made proper financial and other arrangements beforehand. Many are now eroding their savings to get tickets at blackmarket prices;

(3) *illegal*. It isn't just that the measure is contrary to the spirit of the United Nations, the International Declaration of Human Rights and Human Rights Year. The people concerned have British passports identical with those of citizens of the United Kingdom, under an agreement entered into when Kenya gained independence in 1963.

We know that the present Government has often repudiated its own pledges, let alone those of its predecessors. But the issue is not one of promise or privilege that can be revoked. It is a question of private international law, an attempt to create stateless persons, every bit as illegal as the initial action of Hitler over German gypsies and Jews. It should be at once referred to the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

THE WAR IN VIETNAM

(Continued from front page)

(1) that he would channel billions of federal funds into the Catholic schools; and (2) that he would do anything, literally ANYTHING necessary to maintain and re-establish the Catholic Church and its feudal aristocracy in Vietnam, even though it might cost the American taxpayers \$500 billion or more, take twenty years, and require the murder or killing of 10 million people.

The fact that the Roman Catholic Church is entirely and unquestionably the cause of this war no one dares to mention: for that would be bigotry!

One of the most revealing articles which has come to my attention was published in the November 1967 issue of the Michigan *Alumnus*. It was written by a correspondent who, after three years in Vietnam, describes himself no longer a "hawk". He states that in the predominantly Catholic province of Buichu, the two principal landlords were the Catholic bishop and the father of the country's Minister of the Interior (another Catholic). In the neighbouring areas, the Communists were confiscating the large estates and dividing the land among the peasants.

In order to win the support of the people, the government decreed that rents should be reduced from 50 to 15 per cent of the crops produced. This, however, could not be done without the co-operation of the bishop, who immediately refused, with the declaration: "How can I feed 3,000 priests, nuns, seminarians, and coolies on 15 per cent of the crop?"

And there, in brief, you have the crux of the problem, the cause of this bitter civil war. The Church is sitting on top, protected by American bombs; and it intends to stay there. But this is impossible without keeping the Buddhists population in slavery.

The exploited people must, therefore, work out their lives to maintain masters who are not only parasitical overlords, but also of another, and deeply-hated, foreign religion.

The author of the *Alumnus* article states succinctly that the ruling class represented by Ky and Thieu have no thought except to maintain all their present privileges; and, in addition regain those which have been lost since the days of French imperialism.

Like the Bourbons, they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

And now, as the supporters of the hated feudal landlords, and the even more hated Catholic Church, the Americans in Vietnam have inherited the hostility once concentrated upon the French and their indigenous allies.

Almost the whole world, less brainwashed than our own people, understands all this very well indeed.

Because of the horror in Vietnam, I, as an American, today hang my head in shame.

How long must this butchery continue?

How long shall we and the Roman Catholic Church escape the wrath to come?

The AGNOSTICS ADOPTION SOCIETY are holding their ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on March 16, 1968, at 2.30 p.m. at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1. Chairman: Professor A. J. Ayer. Speaker: Miss Jane Rowe whose talk will be on "New Developments in Adoption". All those interested in the work of the Society are welcome.

CORRESPONDENCE: HUMANISM AND SECULARISM

An objection: The NSS President

I SHOULD like to comment on two subjects you raise in the FREETHINKER of February 9.

(1) I shouldn't like a debate on the difference, if any, between 'Secularism' and 'Humanism' to become as "tireless and tiresome" as the agnostic-atheist controversy. (On this, by the way, I think everyone who knows anything about science, whether or not he is personally mystical, is 'agnostic' in the philosophical sense, so the only meaningful label in theological controversy is 'atheist'.) But I should like to point out one or two things you seem to have overlooked. 'Humanism' is an ancient word, for most of its history associated with narrow matters of scholarship. Though it has been casually used in a freethought context from the time of Comte, I believe that future historians of ideas—in Britain at any rate—will look back on the decade 1955-1965 as the only time when 'Humanism' automatically suggested 'the modern, naturalistic sense'. For some years before that period, owing to external ostracism and internal failure to promote effectively, the words 'secularism', 'rationalism' and 'ethicism' had slipped out of public sight and with them general knowledge that there was an organised freethought movement. Dating largely from Margaret Knight's broadcasts on *Morals without Religion*, this knowledge surged back under the banner of what seemed a new, and therefore newsworthy, word 'humanism' and emphasised the positive role which the freethought movement had

always played. The immediate reaction of the churches was to equate humanism with human arrogance and self-indulgence, in contrast with supposed Christian humility and self-sacrifice, and traces of this attitude survive. But their propaganda was unsuccessful and the most astute churchmen are now calling themselves humanists and asserting that their humanism derives from Christian teachings and traditions. The early freethinkers had recognised an inherent vagueness about the word and their caution seems justified. 'Secularism', on the other hand, was a neologism elaborated by G. J. Holyoake in 1851 and exemplified in the work of the secular movement to mean precisely what you define as 'Humanism'. There are two related words which have a narrower meaning: 'secularity' (the separation of church and state) and 'secularisation' (the gradual transition from a theocratic to a technological society).

(2) What the NSS intends by its statement on *Universal Affirmation* is that there should be one form of words and procedure, and that the courts should not supply anything other than this official card; but we have not thought any great harm would be done if people were able to adopt a special attitude or hold a religious book they had brought along. Perhaps we have been too permissive in this proposal. I don't know. Personally, I don't imagine too many witnesses or jurors would turn up in court with their own scriptures.

DAVID TRIBE.

A response: The Editor

ON February 9 I gave my view that there was some difference between present-day Humanism and Secularism and suggested that it "rests on the breadth of concerns and the degree of emphasis given to opposing supernaturalism". In the previous line, I wrote: "Those who consider themselves Secularists and those who consider themselves Humanists, or as both, will decide this matter for themselves"—as they surely should and inevitably will.

I take the point of your letter to be that you consider Humanism and Secularism are not different and that my own conclusion rests on oversights which the readers should have pointed out to them. The evidence you produce appears to be concerned with the age of the terms, definitions, recent history and your personal prognostication on the observations of future historians. As one whose knowledge I respect, I am happy you have enabled our various conclusions to be tested. I honestly don't feel I have overlooked the relevant facts to which you point, but it is clear we have drawn different conclusions from them.

Is 'Humanism' really an "ancient word"? 'Humanist' and the German *Humanismus* (from which the English 'Humanism' derives) are early words, of course, as is 'Litterae Humaniores' which recalls the Renaissance—but 'Humanism'? This surely dates back only to 1812 when Coleridge used it in his *Omniana* (published 1836). 'Secularism' was a neologism when, as you write, Holyoake elaborated it in 1851 (though he wrote elsewhere that he had been advocating its use "from about 1846"). So the

English word 'Humanism' is only a decade or so more "ancient" than 'Secularism'.

'Humanist', of course, is much earlier; but then so is 'Secularist'. We can trace 'Humanist' back to the sixteenth century, 'Secularist' back to 1716 and 'Secular' back to c1290 (*O.E.D.*).

If Humanism has an "inherent vagueness" due to a plurality of meanings, then most terms suffer this defect, not least 'Secularism', 'Secularist' and 'Secular'. As a second definition, rather than part of the system with which we are most familiar and which comprises the first definition, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'Secularism' as 'the view that national education should be purely secular' (the former meaning traceable to 1851 and the latter to 1872). 'Secularist', like the substantive 'Secular' may mean 'one of the secular clergy', while the substantive 'Secular' may also mean 'a Jesuit lay brother'. I am sure I am not telling you anything you don't already know; these details are only mentioned because, in this light, it is difficult to see how the secular family of words are less ambiguous than the humanist.

Humanism has a variety of definitions, certainly, but it is no more vague for that reason. Nor should we be misled by the various terms used to qualify 'Humanism'; they don't point to different Humanisms but to different aspects of the one. (I see you found no difficulty in taking the term Scientific Humanism, as used throughout Margaret Knight's broadcasts, to mean, simply, Humanism.)

Whether contemporary naturalistic Secularism means the

same thing as contemporary naturalistic Humanism is quite another matter. If Humanism (as I defined it) equates precisely with Holyoake's term 'Secularism', which I cannot quite accept, it still remains to be shown that contemporary Secularism equates with Holyoake's Secularism. Would present-day Secularists agree with Holyoake that *Atheism cannot be a Secular tenet*? Would they agree that Secularism "takes as its axiom that what is best for humanity will command the approval of *the author of humanity*"? Or does our present-day Secularism derive more from the *rather different* Secularism of such men as Bradlaugh and Foote?

From what evidence do you conclude that "future historians of ideas—in Britain at any rate—will look back on the decade 1955-1965 as the only time when 'Humanism' automatically suggested the 'modern, naturalistic sense'?" Surely, their main guides will be the content and abundance of literature relevant to the times and the activities of the

period. I would wager there has been as much or more literature concerned with naturalistic Humanism in the last two years as in any two years before 1965, and activities under the humanist banner have certainly increased. In fact, of course, the time may not yet have been reached when Humanism and Secularism of the current period will automatically suggest to all future historians—"in Britain at any rate"—a naturalistic system, and this I would attribute to semantic confusions alone. But I would contend that the chances for this are greatly increasing rather than diminishing.

The debate on the respective meanings and identities of Humanism and Secularism has concerned readers, and others, for some time now, so I feel this correspondence will, at most, encourage it, and this I consider a good thing. While there is so much confusion, and so many valuable ideas which may be expressed, it may do us all good to have them in the open.

KARL HYDE.

EUROPEAN JEWS ARE NOT SEMITES

Tom Hill

THE widely shared belief—repeated recently by the Churchills in their book on the *Six Days War* (p. 1)—is a fallacy.

Modern science rejects the idea of human races; humans comprise a single race split into a variety of philae or animal sub-groups. The skin colour and physiognomy have little significance; what matters is the culture represented and the language spoken.

Conglomerations of ethnic groups spoke, and still speak, a certain language which belongs to the Indo-Aryan, Celtic and Semitic group of languages (the Celtic—like Romance, Teutonic, Slavonic, etc.—belongs in the Indo-European family of languages). When ancient Rome was the *caput mundi*, people of many lands became Roman citizens; Roman soldiers and colonial settlers freely mixed with natives abroad; Jews living in Arab lands or under Turkish rule found it necessary to adopt Islam and assimilate. They, the *must 'ariba* (Arabized Palestinians), are generally more fanatical Muhammedons than the genuine Arabs (*b'ne Arab*). Vice versa, in Rome and then in Europe until the 13th to 15th centuries, Jewish missionary activity succeeded in converting many 'gentiles' to Judaism. Today, in protest against American Christians, negroes in the USA adopt not only Islam but also Judaism.

European Jews brought up in English, German, etc., culture are Europeans and not Semites; unless they emigrate to Israel, they speak a European language; in the Holy Land they have to learn an alien, Semitic language.

Jews, therefore, are not a 'race' but a religious community and, as such, they are expandable. If ready, and allowed to consider themselves part and parcel of the local population, their survival as a 'ghetto apartheid' is contradictory to human progress. Hence the dictum that every country has the Jews it deserves. The southern Irish stick to Catholicism because for centuries they had been persecuted by Protestants; the Jews stick to their stone-age religion where they are segregated and persecuted. Because of this, it was necessary to find them a 'Homestead'; Biblical fairy tales tell of a Jewish population which has less connection with modern Jews than the Hellenes or Romans

have with modern Greeks or Italians. By the same token, the Gypsies could claim a homestead in India.

But Jews, you will say, are recognisable by certain facial characteristics. So are Cypriots, Maltese, Irish and others who for various reasons intermarry within a small community. With more mixed marriages (which presupposes a weakening of 'racial' and 'religious' prejudices) these characteristics will gradually disappear. Already in Israel a new 'race' has been forming and is growing into a cultural entity of nationhood. Therefore the existence of this new nation is necessary, despite the fact that the foundation of what is now Israel began on a reactionary plan. The Balfour Declaration did not envisage a Jewish state but only a British colonial foothold in Palestine, mainly—as Christopher Sykes in his study *Crossroads in Israel* showed—to counter-balance French expansion in Syria.

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Letters to the Editor

NOTE: Letters exceeding 200 words may be cut, abbreviated, digested or rewritten.

Jean Straker

IN his article *Human Happiness and Hypertension* (February 23), Jean Straker makes a crushing error of emphasis.

He says: "freethought—that is 'thought without tension', thought that does not carry with it repressions and neuroses . . .". Now there are two aspects of freethought:

- (a) freedom from dogma and judgement of situations on their merits according to evidence, and
- (b) logical control over emotion.

The former is the more important. The latter means freedom from influence of both repression and obsession, but Jean Straker seems to me to be a victim of obsession (or is it of mercenary zeal?). Typically of obsession, he magnifies the importance to the world of his nude photographs and his Department of Gynaecographic Studies.

He is on dangerous ground in listing "self-aggrandisement" among forces conspiring against advancement and even bringing death. Without exaggeration, I cannot recall ever having seen literary aggrandisement to equal Mr Straker's.

M. J. O'CARROLL.

Mormon test

A. J. LOWRY, in his article *Foundations of Mormon Belief* (February 23), mentions the interesting point of why people join the Mormon Church. One of the answers is provided in the Book of Mormon itself, *Moroni* 10:4, which states that to find out whether the Book is true the reader should pray and "God will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost"!

Clearly the only people who would apply such a test, and be taken in by this rubbish, would call themselves 'Christian' anyway.

IAN MARTIN.

Voluntary euthanasia

WRITING as one who is merely killing time until time kills him, I would greatly welcome the introduction of lawful facilities for painless extinction. I am well aware of the fact that for me to go on living is an unnecessary luxury that the community can ill afford. I dread pain but have no fear of death. I do not share with Hamlet 'the dread of something after death'. My will to die when the time is ripe is not puzzled by any hopes or fears of immortality. I feel sure that the time will come when normal persons will accept euthanasia as the most rational way of terminating life. Now that death in the more civilised countries has ceased to be a punishment for crime, the way is open for a more rational treatment of death as the final liberation from the burden of personal existence. In an age when the Earth is in some danger of becoming overpopulated, euthanasia would provide a useful supplementary service to contraception or other methods of birth prevention.

PETER CROMMELIN.

A pamphlet?

I SUGGEST that the second and third parts of your editorial entitled *The Freethinker and its Readers* should be published (suitably modified) as a pamphlet, along with a form of subscription to the FREETHINKER. Space permitting, the pamphlet should also include a list of freethought publications.

I am sure the amount spent on such a pamphlet, if attractively designed and printed, would be a fruitful investment and would assist readers of the FREETHINKER to introduce it to their friends and increase its circulation. It could be sent to new readers, distributed at meetings, dropped in buses, etc., and bring real results! If such a pamphlet is printed, I would like 10 copies for this purpose.

I may mention that I like the three-column front page with news. I think it makes the FREETHINKER interesting and 'come alive', especially for those who are outside England and are unable to participate in freethought activities. Why not some more news about international freethought, so that the FREETHINKER also becomes a 'world humanist weekly' in addition to being "The Humanist World Weekly"?

A. SOLOMON (Belgium).

On guard

AHA! It would seem that Joe Naseby's exposure of Roman Catholic infiltration into this country has been inadvertently a fortuitous political aid to creeping Catholicism. The predictable letters disowning Mr Naseby have arrived, and the Papist Underground may well be pleased that their intrigues have effectively been discounted as nonsense. It must be exactly what they would wish. But 'we in the know' really *do* know; and are not deceived.

Papal plot? Of course there is. Those innocent 21 free booklets for example; summaries of Catholic dogma? How naive! Think! *Under plain cover*. What else but instruments of insurrection would go incognito?—the thought of Chairman Paul, razor sharp assegais, hand grenades, strategic nuclear weapons! And that 'Victoria Line' under construction; it is really that nightmare tunnel from Cardinal Heenan's coal-cellar to the Vatican?

But 'we' know. We are on a one-minute alert for the coming Catholic hordes, with a ring of land-mines, forward scouts disguised as midday supermarket shoppers, and a dedicated band of Freethinkers entrenched around Lambeth Palace and Bradlaugh House. Hourly we await the first onslaught of the cream of the Papal military machine, the dreaded Swiss Guard.

Our agents are everywhere; our strategy is watertight. So relax Mr Naseby. You are in good hands.

MICHAEL CREGAN.

Enemies of World Civilisation

THE letters from Messrs Rodger and Fairhurst are convenient proof that the former is more concerned with Scotland than with the world, and the latter—having an illusion of intellectual grandeur about himself—thinks he knows better what is good for people than they do themselves!

Thus they are *both*—whether they realise it or not—enemies of world civilisation and the personal freedoms which we associate with freethought and humanism as well as with other less restricted or megalomaniac ways of thinking than Rodger and Fairhurst personify.

Mr Rodger should reflect that it is unreasonable to expect a purpose of promoting *Scottish* Nationalism to appeal to persons all over the world, whereas a purpose of promoting *World* Nationalism is psychologically appropriate to world peace and world civilisation.

Mr Fairhurst must have a mental blind-spot if he cannot see that capitalists and financiers are continually proving that they are less averse to risking their interests at the ballot-box than the Marxists are. Why, after 50 years of Communist Party dictatorship in Russia, is there *still* no personal freedom and political party opposition?

Yours for Human Unity in Freedom.

E. G. MACFARLANE.

RELIGION IN RUSSIA

Radio 4 (Home): Sundays, March 10 and 17

"RELIGION," said Lenin, "is opium for the people . . . its escapist dreams distract men from establishing a just and reasonable earthly society." This quotation gives the title, *OPIUM FOR THE PEOPLE*, to two Sunday evening programmes in Radio 4, on March 10 and 17, whose aim is to clarify the relationship between the Soviet Government and the Christian communities under its rule.

In the first programme, Dr John Lewis, a Marxist scholar, analyses communist thought on religion, while Sergei Hackel, of Sussex University (himself in Orthodox orders), explains the Orthodox attitude to the state. The second programme attempts to discover what is actually happening in Russia, with a discussion between Michael Bourdeaux (whose book on the troubles of the Baptists recently appeared), Peter Reddaway (Lecturer in Russian history and institutions at London School of Economics), and John Lawrence (editor of *Frontier*). Geoffrey Stern, lecturer in International Relations at London School of Economics, conducts the inquiry.

Information supplied by Jean Straker.