

# Freethinker

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## NOT SO MUCH A REVOLT AS A REVULSION

LAST Sunday, September 29, South Place Ethical Society held their Annual Reunion at Conway Hall. After the traditional addresses, Lord Willis, the Guest of Honour, taking as his brief 'Youth: Protest or Promise', delivered a masterly and convincing speech. Without a doubt, he made his audience appreciate the full value of Britain's students and young people. While not condoning the use of violence he showed that there are extremely valid reasons for the revolutionary attitude of students. The best way to put his message across must be to quote his own words:

*"We have been told that students are arrogant, but I am bound to say that the most arrogant of the students looks like a blushing violet in comparison with the high table arrogance of some of our educational bigwigs, who absolutely refuse to learn.*

*I have never been to a university. I have never been educated in that sense, so I speak as a layman and outside observer. But it seems to me that there must be something in the atmosphere of our colleges—or maybe something in the Madeira or the sherry—that turns men into oysters. They seem to have forgotten what it is all about. For some reason they firmly believe that the college exists for them, and not for the students. There was a report in a Sunday newspaper some time ago about the head of a college in one of our older universities who said he was seriously considering if the students got out of hand, sending them all down, dismissing the entire student body. Perhaps that was a sign of desperation, but the kick was in the tail, because he then added: "Then the dons could really get on with their work . . ."*

*"It is not so much a revolt as a revulsion. They do not like the look of the world which their fathers have made and which they are expected to join. They see their time as students as their last chance to dream. They have no deep responsibilities, no families. They are afraid that once they enter our world they will become, like us, ideologically impotent compromisers all.*

*This young generation has been accused of immorality. I believe this to be profoundly untrue. I believe that behind this surging unrest there lies a deep hunger for a society which is motivated by moral principles and not expediency . . ."*

*"It is this background of political frustration, this feeling that they are helpless to change the political situation by any conventional means, that leads to violence—a violence which I personally deplore, as most of us do, because this is the most dangerous aspect of the revolt. Violence in the long term can be self-defeating; it can achieve short-term breakthroughs, but it can also provoke a reactionary opposition and lead to a situation in which dialogue, debate and, eventually, democracy are destroyed . . ."*



Lord Willis

*"It seems to me that it does not matter whether a man is 18, or 22, 62 or 82, when he expresses an opinion; it does not matter a damn. It does not matter whether his hair is long or short, brown or grey; whether his clothes come from Carnaby Street or from Savile Row; whether he has been in politics or business for fifty years or in college for five minutes. He is, quite simply, entitled to be heard, without condescension, prejudice, exaggerated respect or mockery. He is entitled, in short, to be treated as we ourselves would wish to be treated—as a human being with whom we should have a dialogue."*

## BATTING AGAINST A BRICK WALL

THE MCC have called off a South African tour. At first sight this affair would seem to be a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. It seems ludicrous that they have had to wait until there is actually a coloured man, whose presence in the English team has provoked the expected response from the South African government, before they took this action. At Conway Hall Lord Willis decried the way in which expediency comes before principle in anything of political importance, and thus one's immediate reaction is that the MCC should never have contemplated going to South Africa as long as apartheid

(Continued on next page)

# Freethinker

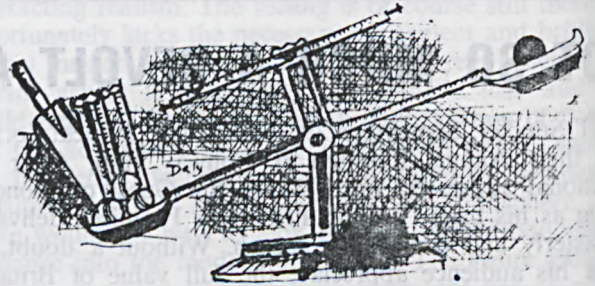
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Editor: David Reynolds

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was practised there. Such a policy would undoubtedly have spared d'Oliveira, another innocent victim of international politics. However, would it help South Africa see the error of her ways? To cut out all sporting relations with South Africa would surely only make Vorster and his henchmen angry and more certain that their policy is right, in the same way as to tell a young boy not to smoke cigarettes is liable to make him a life-long smoker. Thus, the MCC would seem, albeit unwittingly, to have done the right thing, by maintaining sporting relations with these people. A test case, such as this, in which the South Africans by their own rejection of a team which included a man, who was undoubtedly chosen to play on account of his cricketing abilities (he was only chosen after another player had dropped out through injury), must have more effect on South African policy than a complete sporting boycott, which would only serve to consolidate them in their isolation. By now, they must be wondering what is going to

happen next time? Whether d'Oliveira or any other coloured player is in the team, will the MCC go to South Africa again? This thought is bound to make Vorster think twice and fertilise to some small extent the seed of doubt in his mind, not only as to whether he should permit a coloured man to play against his gleaming white cricketers, but also as to whether his whole policy is not wrong, as we all know it is wrong.



The MCC have, unknowingly, played this series the best way they could. They have tipped the scales minutely towards the black man. In future years to play it the same way would be the best thing possible. They must choose the next touring party to South Africa, on cricketing merit. If it does not include a coloured man, then it can and should go and play cricket. If in a subsequent year a coloured British player again cancels the tour, the South Africans will again be deprived and be forced to think why. Why cannot a coloured man play cricket with a white man? Why cannot a coloured man do anything with a white man?

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

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### 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.

### INDOORS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group: Regency House, Oriental Place, Brighton: Sunday, October 6, 5.30 p.m.: "Humanism and the Open Society", GEORGE MEFHAM (Chairman, Sutton Humanist Group).  
Leicester Secular Society, 73 Humberstone Gate, Sunday, October 6, 6.30 p.m.: "Searching for God", F. J. CORINA (Bradford).  
South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1, October 6, 11.30 a.m.: "Bertrand Russell, Philosopher and Humanist", Dr JOHN LEWIS, Admission free; Tuesday, October 8, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion, "The Pope or The Pill?", G. N. DEODHEKAR. Admission 2s (including refreshments), members free.  
Glasgow Humanist Group, George Service House, Wednesday, October 9, 7.30 p.m.: Discussion, "Mental Health", M. MCKENDRICK.  
Luton Humanist Group, Carnegie Room, Central Library, Luton, Thursday, October 10, 8 p.m.: "What is Humanism", Michael Lines (General Secretary of the British Humanist Association).  
The Pierre Teilhard de Chardin Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, St Pancras Assembly Rooms, Euston Road, Camden Town Hall, London, NW1, Friday, October 18, 5.30 p.m.—10 p.m., and Saturday, October 19, 9.30 a.m.—7 p.m.: Third Annual Conference, "Mankind Evolving: China and the West". Talks by Dr BERNARD TOWERS, Dr JOSEPH NEEDHAM, Dr ROBERT JUNGK, Professor WILLIAM G. SEWELL, Professor JOAN ROBINSON, Professor STUART R. SCHRAM, plus discussions. For tickets (only obtainable in advance) or further information write 3 Cromwell Place, London, SW7, or telephone 01-584 7734.

## REVEALING CONFUSION

ON September 24, the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales made a statement after their meeting under the chairmanship of Cardinal Heenan. As is to be expected the same faith-ridden near-sightedness came out, in the form of contraception "is against the plan of God". However, they did stress that the encyclical is "not infallible" and went on to say "it must be stressed that the primacy of conscience is not in dispute . . . Neither this encyclical nor any other document of the Church takes away from us our right and duty to follow our conscience". This, one would have thought, means that they can disagree with the encyclical if they like, though unlike the Belgian and German bishops, they don't say so in stronger terms than these. They then say that an individual who feels that he cannot conform to the encyclical must believe in humility that his conscience is not fully informed. One would expect the bishops to advise someone who believes this of his own conscience, which amounts to admitting that he has no personal responsibility, to follow the Pope as a guide anyway. But they are told not to be penitent, but to be humble. The paradox is extended even further, for in another passage dealing with these heretics who cannot conform, they reiterate the Pope's words from the encyclical, "if sin should still keep its hold over them, let them not be discouraged, but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God, which is poured forth in the sacrament of penance".

And so beyond saying that blind obedience to the Pope is not necessary, the bishops proceed through a maze of ambiguity, and double-think, indicative only of the ambiguity of their faith, and the ambiguity of the Pope's own position within that faith.

# VIETNAM AND LAW

G. L. SIMONS

AT a time when the Paris talks on Vietnam look like dragging on indefinitely it is worthwhile examining the legal position of the parties. Civilised countries profess to believe in the "rule of law", and the extent to which they ignore this principle betrays their hypocrisy.

About a year ago I came across *American Policy vis-a-vis Vietnam*, a 'Memorandum of Law' prepared by the American Lawyers' Committee on American Policy Towards Vietnam. The Memorandum has been inserted into the Congressional Record by Senators Morse and Gruening, and has been endorsed by a considerable number of distinguished law professors. If FREETHINKER readers are not familiar with this publication I recommend that they obtain a copy, at a small nominal charge, from The Society, 10 King's Bench Walk, Temple, EC4.

Consideration is given to the legal position of the United States in the context of the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Accords (1954), the treaty of the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation, and the American Constitution. The conclusion is that in all these respects the United States government is acting illegally. In the space available I will try to summarise the reasons for this conclusion.

## UN Charter

The UN Charter is legally binding on the US government since Article VI, Clause 2 of the US Constitution states that all treaties entered into are part of the "Supreme Law of the Land".

Chapter VII, 30 of the UN Charter states that nations shall not threaten or use force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, and that the Security Council alone "shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression". Thus member states are prohibited from the unilateral use of force. No Security Council decision has sanctioned the American action. Article 51 of the Charter permits unilateral action only if a member state is attacked and there is no time for recourse to the Security Council. Clearly, America has not been attacked. Chapter VII cannot be used to censor North Vietnam since it is not a member of the UN, and Article 51 cannot sanction military action by South Vietnam since it is not a member either. Moreover, in law (see Geneva Accords) neither South nor North Vietnam are independent states: the conflict between North and South is an instance of "civil strife", not aggression. The aggression, in law, is American.

## SEATO Treaty

Article 1 of the SEATO treaty recognises the supremacy of the UN Charter in accordance with Article 103 of the Charter. This means that any action inconsistent with the UN Charter is inconsistent with the SEATO treaty, and the points made above apply. In addition, under the terms of the SEATO treaty no military action can be taken without a unanimous vote of the member states. France is a member state and has never voted for American intervention.

## Geneva Accords

In 1954 a temporary demarcation line was drawn across Vietnam to facilitate the disengagement of the French and Vietnamese forces, and to create two "administrative

zones". Article 6 of the Geneva Declaration states that the demarcation line "is provisional and shall not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary", and that nation-wide elections should take place in 1956 to unify the country. Despite Article 6, America prevented the elections and tried to turn Vietnam into two countries. America is not a signatory to the Accords, but declared it would "refrain from threat or the use of force to disturb" them, in accordance with Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter. In addition, America stated "that it will not join in any arrangement which will hinder" the reunification of Vietnam.

## US Constitution

According to Article 1, Section 8, Clause 11 of the Constitution, the US Congress shall have the *exclusive* power to declare war. The US government has never given Congress the option to declare war in Vietnam. The President has no legal right to declare war or to promote war, therefore the present war-making is unconstitutional. The Tonkin Bay Resolution, under which President Johnson claims sanction for his action, is not a declaration of war, and the circumstances of the Resolution have been repeatedly discredited in the American press.

Clearly none of the above strictures can apply to North Vietnam. It is not a member of the UN, and international war has little to say about recognised cases of civil war. In law and fact, the Vietnam war is a *civil* conflict with intervention by America and other countries. It is clear also that the vast majority of Vietnamese are hostile to American intentions: this is the only reasonable explanation of the fact that the Vietnamese supporters of American policy are unable to subdue the Vietnamese opponents of American policy, despite the assistance of over half a million American troops, and tens of thousands of Thais, South Koreans, Australians, and New Zealanders.

The central fact is that *all the foreigners in Vietnam are fighting against Vietnamese*. There are no foreign troops fighting on the side of the Vietnamese opponents of American policy. The aggressors are the foreign interventionists, without whom a civil war—caused by the American frustration of the Geneva Accords—would quickly be over.

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## A DREADFUL HERITAGE

F. H. SNOW

IN my view, one of the most repulsive survivals, in this scientific age, is that of graveyard masonry. As one goes about, fields of it obtrude upon the vision—in the case of many people, offensively. In the bad old days of “Merrie England”, the intensely religious climate fostered relish for the atmosphere and trappings of the tomb. Cemeteries have now few frequenters, save the newly-bereaved, but one cannot go far without optical acquaintance with gleaming monuments to the recent dead and corrupted monuments to the long corrupt. In many a town and district, funereal slabs and an occasional stone or granite angel, cherub and cross, confront one above all-too-low walls or through thinly-screened palings. Those in authority over interment grounds appear resolved to preserve the centuries-old custom of keeping the grave in people’s minds.

The foisting on the general view of gruesomely reminiscent statuary has to be put up with because there has been no public protest against it. Probably it doesn’t constitute a sufficient annoyance to a sufficient number of persons to organise opinion in favour of its prohibition. To agitate for the concealment from unwilling viewers of even the most disgusting graveyard objects would incur obloquy as a crank. We are not secularised enough to regard such exhibitions of belief in a celestial hereafter as impositions. The average person may have no appetite for these spectacles, yet harbours no grievance against them. And so displays of what, in this day of reason, should be considered barbarous monuments, not only exist but expand, despite the spread of crematoriums, with their embargo on such things.

In youth I had often to proceed along a footpath running the length of Nunhead Cemetery. I had a dread of what I saw through the railings—a dread that sometimes pursued me in dreams. The forest of stone that loomed in the great necropolis fronting One Tree Hill, spoke to me of death and corruption. Its tarnished state told of untended and almost obliterated graves. There was a part where the dead lay beneath flowers, the angelic guardians of the privileged had unsoiled wings, and the set-up immaculately indicated late interments. That vast field of sepulchral masonry was an obscenity to me.

Such sights can only unwholesomely impress juvenility. “The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts”, in Longfellow’s words, and the furniture of burial grounds ought not to be thrust upon it, as is the case throughout this tradition-haunted country. Few youngsters may be so affected as was I, brought up very religiously, and early acquainted with departures to the Land of Shades, but the macabre suggestiveness of cemetery appointments must find expression in many a child mind, perhaps even nocturnally.

My boyhood dreams were often distressed by visions of the dead; of graveyard scenes where, in a ghastly light, shadowy figures moved, ushering the defunct into their clammy beds. These events almost always presented themselves as taking place at night. My father with fearful mien, used to describe death-bed scenes, usually of pious relatives, and I pictured emaciated faces and pale corpses, and heard, in horrified fancy, solemn voices singing around the expired or expiring:

“Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillow’s head . . .”

What wonder that the sight of cemetery furniture conjured up dreadful imaginings in my sensitive young mind? Like the Apostle, I have put away childhood aversions, but not my revulsion at the thrusting of beastliness at one through the medium of nauseously-tarnished tombstones—quite frequently sloping like rotten teeth—and the whole gamut of decaying memorials, speaking their underlying foulness and the sure and certain *post obit* state of all. Christians will assert that such monuments far rather inspire thought of the everlasting peace awaiting slumberers in the sacred plots, and those of the living who die in God’s grace. That everyone of the commemorated will rise to heaven at the last trumpet’s blast is taken for granted—whatever the deeds of some—by their particular sympathisers.

My religious friends may be prompted to observe that my aversion to being visually reminded of the mortifying, is prompted by dread of the prospect of faring similarly, unless consumed by crematorial flames. My atheistic views, debarring me from eternal bliss, have darkened my life, they will sadly feel. The yellow primrose, to me, is but a yellow primrose. Unlike them, I do not see God in its fragrant bloom. My soul is aridly materialistic.

Would it astonish them greatly that I am unafraid of death? I confess that I don’t like the idea of losing consciousness for ever. I shall resent having to part company with multitudinous interests. Obliteration involving imperviousness to the enjoyments of cricket, football, tennis, boxing, travel, politics, music, poetry and floral and feminine beauty, disquiets me. Most of all will I regret having to cease working for the Best of all Causes, and, through it, for the betterment of human conditions.

It would certainly surprise believers to learn that I have attained a peace rivalling that which they experience through communings with God. Ruthless regard for the arbitrament of Reason, and passionless principles, have afforded me a comfort equalling that of my religious days. I do not shudder at the thought of dissolution. I have found the surest enjoyment to be in extending the olive branch, and a genial though indomitable atheism to confer the greatest satisfactions. I do not sing: “The Hand that made me is Divine”, but I have a song in my heart—many songs, in fact, expressing the joy of living in a world which, for all its discomforts, contains much that I love, yet which I have the capacity to bear losing, thanks to my atheistic altruism.

Wandering in Folkestone Cemetery, whose great space is now so occupied that local candidates for burial are elsewhere interred, I was amazed by the riot of monuments to the departed, though I had glimpsed it when passing, through gaps in the brickwork. What a spectacle it made, seen from the main thoroughfare, through a wide gap right opposite a sports field. To decently screen it from public view was the last thing its governors would think of. And so that great graveyard, its accommodation exhausted, would remain for the visible delectation of many generations.

I lingered, conceiving the stir that would wreck its sombre serenity on Resurrection Morn. I saw the graves heave, at the fateful note, and a host of figures tumble from them.

Lacking information as to the probable habiliments of the risen, they appeared to me—the old, the young, the fat, the thin—in nature's garb. A brief righting of their startled selves, and my optical fancy pictured the immortalised flying upwards, en route for their heavenly bourne beyond the farthest star. I was conscious of regret that no ascension day would dawn for those who mouldered there, and in the multitude of burial grounds all over our fair Isle, their

macabre furniture flaunting death and decay before the young, the sensitive, the wholesome-minded.

Ours, as atheists, rationalists, humanists, is the urgent task of destroying belief in the shy god and a blissful eternity after the frets and trials of life—of creating a common sense society that will send the graveyard ogres scurrying, like hunted witches, from England's green and pleasant land.

## MARTIN LUTHER AND THE BIRTH OF PROTESTANTISM

F. A. RIDLEY

"IT is certain that a single man must err if he stand against the opinion of all Christendom, or Christendom itself would have erred for a thousand years."

With these sharp words of rebuke, Charles V (1500-1558) then the master of Europe, the most powerful ruler of his day, King of Spain and Holy Roman German Emperor, scornfully rejected the claim of the young Martin Luther to have inducted a genuine Reformation in 16th century Europe. Luther however, unabashed by this scathing imperial rebuke, made his historic retort to the Emperor and to the Imperial Diet at Worms (1517): "Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me, Amen". It was one of the great sayings of universal history and it was destined to inaugurate one of the most momentous revolutionary movements in human annals, the Protestant Reformation which was destined to split effectively "the seamless robe of Christ", the unity of Christendom, incidentally introducing in the process a new epoch in human evolution and in European history.

### LUTHER AND THE REFORMATION

In this book<sup>1</sup> an Anglican theologian attempts to present the historic personality of Luther himself and also his specific theological contributions to the making of the Reformation. It must, however, be stated that despite his undeniable technical competence as an analyst of Lutheran doctrine, he does not appear (at least to the present reviewer), to have succeeded in this ambitious task. Martin Luther was actually himself far more the creature than the creator of current circumstances. As Mr Atkinson himself admits, the German Reformer was no theological revolutionary; quite the contrary. In actuality he harked back, so to speak, over the head of the Middle Ages with its numerous compromises with the world, the flesh and the devil, to the grim predestination theology of St. Augustine of Hippo, a reversion later developed with a much more systematic Gallic logic by Calvin in his *Institutes* (1536). It would actually be very instructive to trace the present vogue of "Christian Atheism" to Luther, since Predestination logically excludes the anthropomorphic gods of popular religion. *Lex orandi Lex credendi* (Belief and prayer go together) and how is it even possible to pray to a god who has already predestined everything by his unalterable decisions?

Luther began the movement of which such recent books as *Honest to God* represent the logical outcome. In the current circumstances of his day, Luther's historic import-

ance lay in the moral field rather than in that of speculative theology. With a dynamic force, an incomparable eloquence and an extraordinary moral heroism in an age when the stake was always ready lighted for the heretic, Luther launched his protest against the decadent Catholicism of the Renaissance. He was not the first to do so since John Huss in the world of reality and William of Occam (of "Occam Razor" fame), had preceded him. But the circumstances were currently ready for a revolt against the shameless Papal exploitation of Trans-Alpine Europe which marked the epoch of the Renaissance. As the English envoy wrote to Wolsey, a million Germans were prepared to die for Luther. Luther's importance actually lay in his initial role as the alarmbell (so to speak) that gave the signal for the revolt, rather than as its constructive organiser. A modern Rationalist (Georges Clemenceau), has aptly commented that men can only be as great as current circumstances permit them. This was pre-eminently true of Luther.

It was, I suppose inevitable that the current ecumenical movement should direct a "new look" at the great theological figures of the past of whom Luther was certainly one of the most practically influential and morally courageous. Mr Atkinson himself has tried to do just this, but despite his obvious technical capacity for the task, he does not appear really to have succeeded. It is true that he does make some effective restatements of the traditional estimates. Thus, he admits that the time has come for some revision of the harsh verdict that conventional history has passed upon the martyred reformer, Thomas Munzer, a far more daring and thorough-going reformer than was even Luther himself. But he still respects the old clichés about the "barbarous fanaticism" of the Anabaptists, a movement now only known to us in the accounts of its enemies and persecutors! One cannot in fact really treat the Reformation as Mr Atkinson tries to do, as primarily a theological revolution. It was actually a social revolution with theological overtones and spokesmen of whom Luther was the most eloquent and publicised figure. In order to grasp the real historical significance of this major event, one must combine technical theology, of which Mr Atkinson's book represents an outstanding example, with the broader sociological outlook of, say, writers like Karl Kaùtsky, Belfort Bax and Archibald Robertson: then one might get a really balanced history of the Reformation. But the book under review should certainly be read as a contribution towards such a balanced view.

<sup>1</sup> *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism* by James Atkinson (Pelican 7/6).

## "BORN CLEAN"

KHAMIS A. BUSAIDY

THAT rock of English poetry, William Shakespeare once said: "Of all base passions, fear is most accursed". Indeed it is. But evidently Christians don't think so. The church of Christ, if Christ is the true founder of it, has always exploited this human passion from the days of its inception in St Paul's time.

One of the favourite strategies of the Gospel preachers has always been the instillation of fear of sin into the minds of the people. By this device a large part of humanity has been led to believe that if they want their sins forgiven, they should have faith in the mythical Son of God, who came to redeem humanity and appease the wrath of his Father. Surely, such a Father is by any yardstick unworthy of any worship.

But what exactly is sin? Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines it: moral offence or shortcoming, especially from the point of view of religion: condition of so offending: an offence generally. If such is sin, why then cannot everybody bear the responsibility for their own sins. Everyone has the inherent ability to correct his own mistakes. We do not need a Son of God to do it for us.

The progress of Human Civilisation has shown up this false doctrine. Nature too has derided it. Every cause must have an effect. If you put your finger in the fire, you get burnt. It is up to you to go to the hospital. If you steal something you are liable to go to prison. It is for your own good, when you come out, to mend your ways. Murder someone, and you will get a life sentence. In this way the law of self-responsibility operates in every sphere of life. The debtor must pay the debt. Nobody really bears, willingly or unwillingly, the responsibility of another.

The church, and those who run it, base its doctrine regarding sin on the story of the fall of Adam and Eve. They ate, it is said, the forbidden fruit. Yet even in their case they bore the responsibility and were ejected from the garden of Eden. Why should the rest of humanity be guilty of a sin for which the penalty has already been paid by those who committed it? Such a doctrine is ridiculous.

Notwithstanding this falsity, the religion of the Son of God has gone even further in its insult to human dignity. It has declared every baby that is born as being covered in black sin. It has branded the children of the world guilty of a crime they have not committed. And at this juncture another pagan relic is used to cleanse them—Baptism. In reality it is just another method of instilling fear and gaining more sheep for the flock.

My belief that when I came into this world I came clean, is unshakable. I was without a taint of sin. My children and those of the rest of the world are also born clean. They are innocent and pure as snow. And they know nothing of the crimes of those who lived before them. When they attain the age of puberty and are grown up they will be responsible for their own actions.

It is interesting to note that Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, condemned these false doctrines and gave them their real worth. He is reported to have said: "Every child, when it is born, enters the world with a pure nature". He recorded in the Koran: "And no bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another". I echo my respect for that great teacher of the world, by maintaining that I am born clean.

## BOOK REVIEWS

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

WESTERN CAPITALISM SINCE THE WAR, Michael Kidron (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968, pp. 165, 36/-).

MICHAEL KIDRON is an economist teaching at Hull university and a leading member of the group "International Socialism", a self-styled revolutionary socialist movement that inhabits the Trotskyist fringe of British politics. This book is an elaboration of the thesis for which IS is famed in left-wing circles: the theory that the stability of Western capitalism since 1945 is attributable to the "permanent arms economy" that has developed as a by-product of the cold war. On this view, fashionable notions that the absence of large-scale unemployment in the western countries since the war is the result of "planning", more sensible economic management, the international spread of innovation, reconstruction following the war damage, the high—and growing—level of government expenditure—all miss the point. Planning, technological innovation and the like are not autonomous, according to Kidron, but derivative from the workings of the arms economy.

What can be said, first of all, is that from a Keynesian standpoint—which Kidron and other marxists reject—the level of expenditure needed to maintain full employment, i.e. that which will absorb the total output of goods and services produced over a given time at given prices, is made up of three components: private spending, government spending and investment. Kidron's argument thus commits him to saying that the factor needed to maintain stability is not some combination of these components, nor even one of them (government spending), but rather one item of government spending—namely, military expenditure. *A priori*, therefore, the argument seems untenable. When one considers, for example, that defence spending in Britain takes only 24 per cent of total government expenditure, and only 6 per cent of gross national product, the argument takes on mystical overtones. Nor will the argument stand up at the international level. The United States—the home of modern militarism and private enterprise, the economy dominated by the military-industrial machine—spends only 8.3 per cent of its national income on defence. The average for almost all the advanced capitalisms of Western Europe is about 4 per cent. Of course, defence spending is usually the biggest individual sector in government expenditure in these economies; but that is a point strictly irrelevant to Kidron's case, and anyway it is hard to see why £1 spent on military procurements should have so much more stabilising effect on the economy than £1 spent on (say) education.

Naturally, Kidron is aware of these objections. He admits on page 45 that "any academic economist should be able to construct a model in which savings and investment are exactly matched, and demand set at the point of full employment. The technique presents no difficulty. Non-academics have been at pains to point out more pragmatically that 'defence spending could be replaced by other forms of government spending' . . . and there is no reason in logic to doubt them".

It's nice to know that. But the crunch comes in the next sentence, which tells us that "capitalist reality is more intractable than planners' pens and paper" and moves on the argument from economics to politics. We now reach the guts of the case. The central requirement of capitalism, at all times and places, is to maintain the rate of profit in order to guarantee an investible surplus. Capital accumulation is thus the outstanding feature of capitalism and yet the inherent contradictions of the system constantly present a threat to accumulation. Marx tried to demonstrate that there was under capitalism a continual threat of over-production, of a surplus of goods and services generated by the system and a problem of realising the "surplus value" yielded by the exploitation of the labour force. If goods could not be sold, the profit margin of the capitalist would be eroded to a degree where accumulation itself would be jeopardised. Lenin postulated an outflow of private capital to the colonial territories which would utilise their cheap labour to maintain the rate of profit. For Kidron, at one moment (p. 47) "arms production is the key, and seemingly permanent, offset to the tendency of the rate of profits to fall" and at the next moment (p. 39) "arms production has no effect on profit rates overall".

What is the source of this contradiction? Kidron points out that the sheer scale of arms spending is enormous (it corresponds to nearly 50 per cent of gross capital formation throughout the world); that major industries like aircraft, chemicals, electronics,

telecommunications, computers and so on depend to a great, sometimes overwhelming, amount on military rather than commercial orders; that arms expenditure is heavily concentrated in the capital goods industries which are responsible for the major swings of the business cycle (hence fluctuations in the level of arms spending vitally affect the stability of the economy); that military outlays accounts for a huge part of all spending on research and development, with a high "spin-off" effect to the benefit of civilian technology; and that military demands account for a significant part of world demand for industrial raw materials, so stimulating international trade. All this, besides giving a frightening portrayal of the world military madness since the second world war, is meant to show that arms expenditure cannot be interpreted quantitatively, as so many pounds or dollars spent. It has a qualitatively important role, as an integral part of the world capitalist economy (Kidron regards the communist economies as state capitalist and lumps them together with the western nations for the purpose of his analysis).

Thus we see that arms spending has a vital part to play in bolstering up the rate of profit. At the same time, however, in a section of the book whose lack of clarity is inexcusable for a professional economist, Kidron argues that arms production does not affect the rate of profit. Defining "luxury" goods as those consumed by capitalists (in maverick defiance of the accustomed usage), Kidron appears to be saying that the production of luxury goods, including arms, does not bear on the overall rate of profit. This is because arms production does not enter into the production of other commodities; it forms a sector by itself, isolated from the rest of the economy, and thus is unable to influence the price patterns, and hence profit margins, in the rest of the economy. Since the production of tanks and missiles does not contribute to future production, the money spent on arms is a convenient way of getting rid of the capitalist surplus without aggravating the problem of overproduction. And since arms production is quickly wasted, it cannot affect the remainder of the economy and cannot disturb the profit patterns of individual capitalists to their displeasure.

This then is the thesis. There are, however, so many holes in it that it is difficult to know where to begin. For instance, Kidron nowhere distinguishes between necessary and sufficient conditions for capitalist stability. His evidence, carefully marshalled in chapter three, on the penetration of the world capitalist economy by arms spending, is enough to show that without such expenditure there would be a major crisis. But it does not follow that arms spending (though possibly a sufficient condition for stability) is also a necessary condition. Of course, Kidron thinks it is; and says so, baldly, in the course of stating (not arguing) that "hole-filling" public works *a la* Keynes are ruled out by the pressures of international competition. Unproductive public spending, he asserts would be an unacceptable way of ensuring stability, because of the danger of inflation reacting on export prices—but unproductive arms spending apparently carries no danger of inflation and is wholly acceptable to all!

Nor is this the most glaring of a bunch of errors and muddles. Either arms production does, or does not, affect the overall rate of profit. If it does not, then the whole book falls to the ground. If it does, then it needs to be shown just how arms spending differs from other forms of government expenditure, whether in their economic or political aspects. But it is precisely this type of analysis that Kidron is not prepared to give us—and which makes his book that much less valuable.

Quite generally, what is wrong with a very absorbing and instructive book is that Kidron does not convince the critical reader (he doesn't have to convince the converted) that there is not an alternative to his permanent arms economy within the framework of capitalism. One would like to believe Kidron's thesis, but manifestoes from the Left need intellectual underpinning, as well as emotional if they are to carry conviction.

DAMIEN DOWNING

THE TRUMPET OF CONSCIENCE, Martin Luther King (Hodder and Stoughton, 5s).

ON casual examination of this book, one is inclined to ask whether Martin Luther King was a great orator, for he by no means shines as a writer of essays. The five sections of this book, originally delivered as radio lectures last autumn, are not highly notable for their literary style. No more are they egregious for the incisive intellect of their author, whose solutions to world

problems may seem to us, of more cynicism and less faith, to be little short of naive. The book cannot be said to greatly to advance the frontiers of knowledge, or to complement the tools at our disposal for interpretation of our environment. An unquestioning Christianity, with no analytical thought, is manifest throughout.

But none of these detract from the real value of this book, which rests in the character it reveals of its author. Martin Luther King was a great man, great in his simple goodness and integrity; it is these attributes which allowed him to transcend the brutality of his environment, to escape the prison of being a black American—an environment well expected to harden and narrow the noblest of spirits—and gain valuable insights.

Insight into the civil rights movements, of the development of which this book provides a lucid, valid historico-psychological analysis. Insight to perhaps lesser degrees into other foci of American conscience—Vietnam, youth and its rebellion, poverty, peace. But prevalent through all this is insight into the evil that underlies the sociological upheavals of the United States. For the resonant note of the book is an awareness of the basic demographic hypocrisy that defeats American strivings after democracy, and indeed that constitutes the planetary socio-economic unbalance which is the reality, the danger and the challenge of our era.

The nobility of men such as Martin Luther King should serve as a challenge to us all, as a goad to re-examine ourselves and our dialectics; should remind us that ideology is impotent except it contain the seeds of revolution, the energy to change the world.

Such men must teach us that great intellect is but base courage without the courage to accept the inherent responsibility, without the love requisite to risk ideology against tear gas, body against rifle, and as did Martin Luther King, win.

FILM REVIEW

M. MALINCTUS

A LONG DAY'S DYING (Plaza, Lower Regent Street, London). BRILLIANT direction by Peter Collinson, a remarkable script and meaty performances from David Hemmings, Tom Bell and Tony Beckley as three English soldiers, with Alan Dobie as their German prisoner, lifts this film head and shoulders above the usual 'blood and thunder' war films that are constantly served up as 'entertainment'.

The film develops with a mixture of horrifying realism and occasional touches of brilliant comedy, examining the relationship between the three soldiers and the seemingly hopeless situation they find themselves in. Hemmings and Co. are cut off from their division and are holed up in a crumbling farmhouse (we're not told where), surrounded by dense woodland and Germans. There are some marvellous scenes where they turn the tables on the German (Alan Dobie) who manages to creep into the farmhouse unnoticed, and when Hemmings dispatches an unfortunate member of the German's unit foolish enough to come out into the open and show himself. Unscathed the Englishmen eventually leave with their prisoner and set out towards what they hope are the British lines. On their travels they encounter another farmhouse, apparently occupied by more Germans, that provides another very funny, if slightly macabre episode in the film.

But please don't get the idea that this film plays for laughs. It doesn't. It's the tragic story of an English soldier (David Hemmings) who starts out with a sincere belief in his fellowmen, only to have it broken and destroyed by the hopelessness and futility of war. It's also the story of his two companions, one a pathological killer (Tony Beckley) whose sole aim in life, apart from killing, is to get possession of a Luger pistol, the other a trained killer (Tom Bell) whose apparent indifference to human life and suffering was in many ways the most inexcusable thing of all. ('Amen' is all he can say as he walks away from the bullet ridden body of one of his friends towards the end of the film.) And there's the German prisoner. A man who seemed disillusioned as much by the destruction of his unit ('It is no longer efficient' he says to his captors) as anything else he has to experience. It's these four men that the film is all about. It's with them it moves towards its inevitable and tragic climax. A disturbing film, I think, and one which is well worth a visit.

## LETTERS

### The Soviet Union and the Jews

I READ with interest the article by Otto Wolfgang (September 21) about Jews in the USSR. In fact if he was to refer to the late Dean Hewlett Johnson's *Socialist Sixth of the World* (p. 337) he would find that in the autonomous oblast of Birobidjan (on the border of Siberia and China) the Jews live in their own community and Yiddish is the official language. Hewlett Johnson has actually visited the USSR. Has Otto Wolfgang done so? Can he also deny that Nazism and Zionism are equally as racialistic, sadistic and intolerant. Israeli treatment of Palestine Arabs is the same as Nazi treatment of Jews. Also I have heard Jews boast of a future "Jewish Empire", and many English people have heard them say "Your Queen Our Country". We are always being told about persecution of Jews as if they were the only victims of persecution, what about Armenians, American Indians, Australian aborigines, African negroes, etc. Persecution of these peoples are made subjects for entertainment in films, books, etc. Finally, the aggression by the USSR towards Finland was *provoked*. The USSR made generous offers of exchange of territory which Finland under the pro-Nazi Mannerheim refused. Also Finland was working with Nazi Germany on a plot to attack the USSR from the North. Most of the hypocrisy of the world comes in fact from English-speaking nations.

A. BLOOD.

\* \* \*

### Er... Yes

ECUMENISM at last! While pagan Norsemen's bloody valours consummate in rude Valhallas, birds provide the Heavenly fun for sporting Cashman's Christian gun.

ISOBEL GRAHAME.

\* \* \*

### Intellectual desert?

RE your article "No Return" in the FREETHINKER of September 21. We would like to point out that the students mentioned in this article were already in this country when the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia took place, and in at least one instance, involving sixteen young girls, were advised by the person employing them not to return to their homes. However, a five-minute telephone conversation with a fellow Czech, who had just arrived from Prague and who had first-hand knowledge of the situation in their country, convinced them that their place was in their homeland. They have now all returned.

On September 7th a large contingent of singers, dancers and musicians visited the Isle-of-Man and have all returned to Czechoslovakia also.

This does not substantiate your claim that an intellectual desert is being created in their country.

As life-long readers of the FREETHINKER and members of the NSS, we feel that the views of anonymous writers, should not be quoted in editorial articles as facts.

JOHN and DOROTHY COLE.

\* \* \*

### 'Biafra' and Czechoslovakia

WHY support 'Biafra'? is an article worth considering; where, I think, it misses the point is in overstressing religious bias. Sympathy for the Biafran's struggle stems from their heroic stand against overwhelming odds, since this fanaticism underscores the will to exist separately from the conglomeration called Nigeria, and secession ought to be a right, not a crime. In the colonial stage, the 'Great' Powers amassed what territory they could grab and it is sad to see how the new rulers claim the arbitrary borders of colonial times as sacrosanct: thus India disputes land with China and Pakistan—Somalis in Kenya are not allowed to join Somalia, and the Arabs in the Sudan exterminate the indigenous Negroes. Thus the liberated states have become Imperialists themselves.

In his contribution *Czechs and Counterchecks* G. L. Simons mentions much that had to be said but here again it seems to me that the emphasis is wrong. That the Soviets committed the same crime as the Americans is no excuse, because two wrongs do not

make a right. However, the author is right in contending that we have no right to any righteous indignation if we accepted the many despicable US interventions by CIA and the American Fruit Company in Latin America in toppling progressive governments and installing stooges. Even before Vietnam every self-respecting government ought to have declared a general boycott of USA and its economic and cultural exports.

Illogically we refused to deliver goods to South Africa (for payment in gold), but wooed them for sports relations; we refuse to recognise *de facto* governments of a Communist hue, because they are not democratically elected, yet fully accept rightist dictatorships as in Spain, Greece and Portugal, and more and more tourists flock every year to Spain and provide Franco with badly-needed foreign currency!

On the other hand, the Scandinavian countries severed relations with the Greek usurpers whilst the Soviet Union this year sent 600 holiday-makers to Greece.

It is no argument to say, as Simons does, that Czechoslovakia has always been recognised as a Russian satellite; spheres of influence ought to be abrogated. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights gives everyone the right to life, liberty and security of person (Article 3), no one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 5), to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile (Article 9), but "everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised" (Article 28).

The main trouble is that, with all this pious verbiage, the UNO condemns only small nations, like Israel, for deeds which the Big Powers can commit without reproof.

OTTO WOLFGANG.

\* \* \*

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