

# Freethinker

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## WHEN IS A SPY?

IN THE PAST THREE WEEKS journalists and broadcasters have chewed an abnormal amount of pencils endeavouring to think of a novel appellation for the recently deceased decade. Naturally enough good old sex once again served as a starting point for most of the headline-mongers. The *Sunday Times* colour supplement however, came up with an interesting variation: "... the sixties looked like the decade of the spy". This observation stemmed from the large number of real life spies, who came to light during the sixties, and from the even vaster number of fictitious ones. Headed by the creations of Len Deighton, Ian Fleming and John Le Carre, these ranged down through 'The dolly dolly spy' to the hard core of television spies. One can infer then that us paper perusers and box gogglers have by now confronted ourselves with a large amount of popularised patriotic skulduggery.

Yet how much do we know about the real workings, both of the spies themselves and those professional bodies whose duties include spy-catching. Who can say the difference between M15 and M16 without relying principally on his imagination? And what does the special branch get up to? To know that such organisations exist and may be coming, personified, round the next corner cannot but be disturbing, particularly when one is not clear as to why they exist. It would be useful if the National Council for Civil Liberties were in a position to produce a booklet on the Security Service as a whole, on similar lines to their recent excellent publication, *The Police and the Citizen*.

The situation is worsened by the fact that no member of the government will openly admit responsibility for the Security Service. The January Bulletin of the NCCL traces the position since 1945, and shows it to have been consistently unclear. The NCCL's potted history reads like a piece of satire, but includes no exaggeration of the confusion. The present government's continued attachment to obscurity is made laughable by the following parliamentary account: "Sir Alec Douglas-Home said that if the question concerned 'the security of the State' it would be his responsibility as Prime Minister to answer it, but if it concerned 'the organisation of the Security Services' it would go to

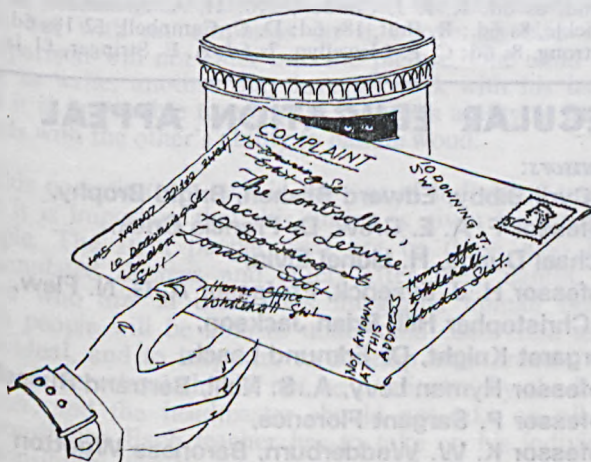
Harold Wilson interrupted the laughter to say 'I am still not clear—and I am sure that the House is not clear—where the responsibility lies between the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister'."

The House, and indeed the public, are still just as not clear as ever. Lord Denning has said that the Security Service: "must not even at the behest of a Minister or government department take part in investigating the private lives of individuals except in a matter bearing on the defence of the realm as a whole". This does nothing to make the conclusions of the NCCL any more palatable: "We remain confused, and not at all convinced that either the Special Branch or the Security Service is controlled adequately by anyone other than their own personnel". Perhaps someone can induce Len Deighton to make an informed guess at the identity of the controller of the Security Service.

## SHABBY LOOK

IN A RECENT editorial I stressed my shock at the Pope's having been "shocked" by Rome's slums. A number of Italians have criticised the Pope, not only showing their surprise that he was hitherto unaware of the problem, but stressing that rather than telling other people that they should act to reach "a human and Christian solution", the Pope is in an excellent position to do something himself. A reader's letter in the Rome newspaper *Paese Sera* suggests that the Pope should set an example by making available to the slum dwellers the "thousands and thousands of flats which the Vatican possesses in Rome through the property companies which it controls, many of which are empty". The writer specifies the Societa Generale Immobiliare which is owned by the Vatican, and which could provide hundreds of apartments which it "is building or has built but keeps empty". The company is further accused of speculating with housing and making costs and rents "ridiculously prohibitive".

A Rome periodical *Il Mondo* quotes an inquiry which it conducted in 1957 which revealed that 300 religious institutions owned 51 million square metres of land in and around Rome. The conclusion of the writer is that the interest of Vatican officials and other ecclesiastics in property speculation gives the Pope's Christmas appeal "a shabby look".



the Home Secretary, which is splendid, but then Henry Brooke, as Home Secretary, said that 'the number of parliamentary questions which could be put to me with any hope of an answer being properly given is very limited'.



# Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

The views expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

## BBFC

BBFC MAY SOUND like a vulgar allusion to a certain national aunt, but in fact it is the British Board of Film Censors, who announced last week that from next July there will be four categories of film certificates. Eighteen instead of sixteen will be the new age limit for 'X' films. The new category 'AA' will be screened for anyone over fourteen. Children will be able to see 'A' films in their own company, the certificate merely serving as a warning to parents that they might prefer their children not to see such a film. And boring old 'U' will continue to signal a complete lack of undesirability.

That this complex hierarchy is necessary is a sad reflection on the anachronistic guardians of public morals. Surely by now the system should be being simplified. Even if the cinema cannot follow the theatre into a relative form of freedom, it seems ludicrous to increase the number of regulations, whose existence only causes boys

to go to great lengths to break them. One would readily admit that there is more need for children to be insulated against the real world when in the cinema than in a theatre, but can this not be done with one simple category, whose demise can be planned alongside that of the irrational taboos. To attempt to bar 17-year-olds from anything is to continue to maleducate. After all cannot a girl whom society has the goodness to permit to sleep with a man, be allowed to see how the film stars do it?

## FAMILY PLANNING ADVERTISING

FOLLOWING ON its ban of advertising for a serial publication, entitled *The Bible*, the ITA has once again angered a number of churchmen by recommending that advertisements for family planning clinics and centres should be permitted on commercial television. The recommendation comes in a report sent by the ITA to Mr Stonehouse, the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications. An ITA official has said that all relevant factors, including argument on medical, ethical and religious grounds had been carefully considered before the decision was reached.

The advantages of such advertising would be felt in innumerable directions, not least among which would be the restraining effect it would inevitably have on the population growth. It is therefore much to be hoped that Mr Stonehouse finds the ITA's considerations to have been sufficiently careful, and remains unswayed by the predictable objections of the prejudiced, religious or otherwise.

## 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.

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

Humanitas Stamps: Help 5 Humanist charities. Buy stamps from/ or send them to Mrs A. C. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, RM7 8QX, Essex. British and African speciality. Send for list.

## COMING EVENTS

### 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.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, January 25th, 11 a.m.: "Is there a morality of economics?" Dr D. B. Halpern. Admission free: 3 p.m.: Humanist Forum—"Keeping Marriage Sacred", Connaire Kensit. Tuesday, January 27, 7 p.m.: Discussion—"Rights of Children", John Barter (Assistant Children's Officer): Admission 2s (including refreshments). Members free.

Worthing Humanist Group: Morelands Hotel (opposite the pier): Sunday, January 25, 5.30 p.m.: "L.S.E., 1966-1970", Professor C. Grunfeld (London School of Economics).

## FREETHINKER FUND

We are most grateful for the following donations received between October 1 and December 31:

W. Aithenhead, 5s; Charles Byass, £2; Charles Cullen, 14s; Sydney Clowes, 4s; E. R. Willoughby, £1 1s; S. C. Merryfield, 4s 6d; W. R. Price, £1; James Hudson, £1 3s; Charles C. Coombs, 8s 6d; H. R. Scobell, 2s; Constance N. Airey, 3s 6d; D. Wright, 8s 6d; Robert Brownlee, 19s; T. H. Grimley, £1; A. Elmsmere, 10s; W. H. Naylor, 10s 6d; J. Myles-Hill, 10s; J. P. Tuck, £3; W. R. Grant, 18s 6d; Michael Gray, 2s 6d; S. J. Barker, £7 18s 6d; C. S. Niles, 9s; J. Arkell, £1; G. D. Rodgers, 8s 6d; Truthseeker, Barnet, £1; A. Maclaren, 10s; Norman Leveritt, £1 1s; A. J. Lowry, 9s; D. Ferrier, £3 7s 6d; E. M. Hay, 10s; E. A. Napper, £1 18s 6d; W. Parry, 7s 6d; R. Ansary, 15s; S. Ellis, 10s; G. T. Hughes, 18s 6d; J. Dwyer, £1 3s 6d; E. Scholl, 4s 4d; L. F. Stupart, £1 18s 6d; R. C. Mason, £2; P. Stoddard, 8s 6d; S. Marshall, 8s 6d; W. Holland, 8s 6d; R. J. J. Condon, £10; H. A. Alexander, 9s 6d; W. Bickle, 8s 6d.; R. Bott, 18s 6d; D. C. Campbell, £2 18s 6d; W. Armstrong, 8s 6d; C. P. Llewellyn, 7s 6d; A. E. Stringer, £1 1s 6d.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1



# TO LEARN OR TO BE CRAMMED WITH FACTS?

DEBORAH DODD

CHILDHOOD IS A TIME of wounding and healing, according to a well-known psychiatrist, and today the wounding exceeds the healing. It is this that has brought about the violence of our society, for the seeds of this violence are fear, exploitation, patriotism and comparison—all of which take root in childhood.

At present our educational system is based on fear. The fear of not passing exams, the fear of not getting good marks, the fear of expressing an unorthodox view in case it is not acceptable. We conform to the norm, we rely on authority, we follow, we don't try and find out anything for ourselves. For centuries we have been wounded but we have not been healed, and that is why so much enmity and stupidity exist in the world today.

So obviously it is urgently necessary that a radical change in education should be brought about. The aim of education should not be to teach the child how to earn a living (although of course this must play a part), but to teach him how to live. It should help him to develop an enquiring, attentive, open mind; it should teach him how to learn. For learning is not merely a matter of acquiring knowledge to be applied at some later date, it is a vital, dynamic discovery. True education is not a process of comparing, grading, punishing, and cramming with facts: it is a process of assisting each individual to develop freely and completely, of helping him how to understand himself, of teaching him how to think, not what to think.

For a really radical reform to take place we must have small schools. In this way each individual can be taken into account instead of being a mere blur in form six at the back of classroom three. Each teacher must be truly concerned with the welfare of every child in his care, and the child must feel this concern. From the very first he should feel secure in his relationship, free to express himself without fear. In order that this freedom from fear may come into being, there must be no comparison, for comparison merely serves to breed fear. This rules out exams. But there are other ways to assess a child's capabilities, ways in which there is no suggestion of comparison. If each child is helped to find out what he really loves to do, and is encouraged to do this—not to the exclusion of all else, but with an emphasis on it above all else—then comparison will not enter into the picture. One child may love to write, another may love to work with his hands, and it is impossible to compare the one's ability to handle words with the other's ability to handle wood.

This necessitates a certain amount of individual tuition, and it is important that this tuition is given by the right people. The right people need not be those who have accumulated degrees and letters after their names, but those who are in themselves integrated human beings. Such people will be able to understand each child as an individual, and to help him to develop in awareness. The staff of the school should not be dominated by the headmaster, and the headmaster should not take on all the responsibility. Each teacher has to take on his individual responsibility, but there must necessarily be co-operation, friendship and understanding among the staff.

Although each child may be concentrating on his own subject, the curriculum of the school should be as wide as possible, inviting all aspects of life into discussion, enquiry

and study: from sex to science, from politics to religion. But it is the discussion and enquiry that should hold more importance than the study. Study is usually based on blind acceptance of somebody's else's ideas, and the student should find out for himself what is true instead of relying on the authority of another. This is why it is a good idea for meditation to form a part of the school's curriculum, too. The child has to learn what it is to be alone, for in the final analysis he is always alone. He can be led, he can be taught, but until he finds out something for and by himself it will have no meaning for him. The process of sitting down by yourself, with no outward distraction, in order to think things out is of great value.

Such a reform in education is, in fact, slowly coming about. Krishnamurti, the Indian speaker and writer, has founded several schools all over the world based on freedom, total development and individuality. "There must be the development of the totality of the mind, and not merely the giving of information", he says. "In the process of imparting knowledge, the educator has to invite discussion and require the students to enquire and think independently. Authority as 'the one who knows' has no place in learning. The educator and the student are both learning through their special relationship with one another."

There have been many reforms in education in the past: there was Montessori, there was Froebel, there was Pestalozzi. In themselves these reforms were good, but they collapsed with the death of their originators: they became a method to be followed, always with the teacher's finger in the book to make sure he was doing the right thing. Dr Montessori said: "Look to the child, not the method": now the teacher looks to the method, not to the child. For, whereas Montessori was a true teacher, the majority of her followers are merely relying on authority.

Unless every teacher is a true educator, any reform must necessarily fail. So Krishnamurti is tremendously concerned that each teacher in his schools should be a real teacher. He says: "It is essential that we work together, and it is as if we are building a house. If some of us are building and others are tearing down, the house will obviously never be built. So we must individually be very clear that we really see and understand the necessity of bringing about the kind of education that will produce a generation capable of dealing with life as a whole, and not as isolated parts unrelated to the whole. . . . To understand life is to understand ourselves, and that is both the beginning and the end of education."

If we can bring about this new education—an education which looks to no 'method' but only to the individual—then maybe a new society will be born. A society based on true morality which can only spring out of freedom from fear.

## VISION AND REALISM

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## END OF A TRAGIC WAR

DAVID TRIBE

LET ME STRESS at the beginning that this article is written in a personal capacity. From recent experience I am well aware that NSS members will be the first to denounce me as a bigot, Paisleyite, fanatic and fascist warmonger. They may be reassured I don't write in their name.

All men of good will will rejoice that the Nigerian civil war is at an end and that offers of food and medicine from all over the world have been almost embarrassingly generous. In what is described as a cynical age there is no lack of human feeling; while modern communications, often ghoulish in their appetite for 'trouble spots', do at least provide immediate information about areas of need and prompt transportation to satisfy them.

In this case, many have said, not prompt enough. One of the most dubious statements of the British Prime Minister at any time in the Nigerian tragedy was his assurance that contingency plans were laid well in advance. This hardly squared with the actuality of midnight Cabinet meetings and the British failure to sort out in advance with Lagos diplomatic niceties about the type of aircraft to be used and the placement of suitable transport lorries. Supporters of Biafra will assert that the raising of diplomatic niceties by Nigeria at such a time was a further indication that it put its own status before the well-being of millions of innocent, starving Ibos. On the face of it, a plausible charge. Like so much other pro-Biafra propaganda. But will it stand up to investigation?

Some spokesmen for the relief agencies have suggested that the country should be invaded, if necessary, to take in urgently needed supplies. In this they have displayed the same sort of insensitivity as did so much to prolong the war. Acidly the Nigerian Government has reminded them that the nation is a sovereign power recognised by the United Nations, and that there was never any doubt which side they supported while the war was in progress. Indeed, it is pretty clear that many of the 'mercy flights'—whether or not with the knowledge of their European backers, I cannot say—were, in whole or part, gun-running operations for Ojukwu. Even after Biafra had formally sued for peace, independent operators might still be desperate enough to try to prolong the war. No wonder Lagos opposed an unregulated airlift from Portuguese Sao Thomé and other 'friendly' places.

Now, it is axiomatic that in any war anxieties haunt, and atrocities are committed by, both sides. There are always at least two versions of every issue. Yet we usually feel entitled to pass overall judgments apportioning blame. Hitler, Goebels and Haw-Haw claimed that Nazi Germany was only trying to preserve European civilisation from the machinations of Jewish finance, Russian bolshevism and British decadence. That isn't the version generally accepted, even in Germany, today. So what explanation—simplified, unmetaphysical, vulnerable to dialectical attack—can we give of the Nigerian civil war?

The Ibos are a tightly-knit and ambitious tribe centred in the densely populated East Central State. They are said to be the most able and commercially aware of the tribes. It may be so. They are also the most Christianised; and under the old colonial system, with educational and financial opportunities for natives severely restricted, preference tended to be given to the most 'deserving' cases—in other words, those whose loyalty to the Empire was vouched for by the district commissioner and the local missionary. At

any rate, whatever the explanation the Ibos were, by colonial standards, well-entrenched throughout the country's business and industry.

After federation in 1960, the Ibos feared power would pass out of their hands. They were, after all, a relatively small minority in the country at large and by no means an overwhelming majority in what they called Biafra. A secessionist move by the old Eastern Region (roughly equivalent to 'Biafra') was averted by diplomacy in 1963. But plans were not abandoned and there were bigger fish to fry. In January 1966 the federal and regional prime ministers were assassinated in an Ibo coup. Its nominal leader was Major-General Aguiyi-Oronsi, but the brains behind it was thought to be Lieutenant-Colonel Ojukwu, who became military governor in the east. After a decent interval he was expected to assume supreme authority, just as Colonel Nasser took over from General Neguib in Egypt. But no decent interval occurred.

In July there was another coup and Lieutenant-Colonel (later General) Gowon took over the Federal Government. He was also a Christian, but he came from a minority tribe in the Northern Region. Here the majority tribe (and the biggest in the country) was the Hausas, predominantly Muslim. They 'celebrated' the second coup by killing many Ibos living among them. Most of the rest fled to the east.

Now Ojukwu, a political adventurer on the Tshombe pattern, brought in his contingency plan. Like Milton's Lucifer, he would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven. So he declared Biafran independence. His story for the outside world was that he was forced into this to save his tribe from genocide by the federals and to give them, like the Jews, a homeland where they could be safe. A Geneva public relations firm added some touches of colour, and the great liberal press of the Western world and Auntie BBC accepted it at its face value. No mention of the earlier coup or the anxious efforts of the Lagos authorities to restore calm throughout the country.

And there were other reasons for outside support. One of the eastern states, the Rivers State, had, as well as Port Harcourt, valuable oil supplies. The indigenous people were not, by the way, Ibos but Ijaws, but this was a small matter to Ojukwu. There was more oil in the Benin Mid-West State, which had never been Ibo territory or even part of the Eastern Region, and this was invaded and annexed. These oil concessions Ojukwu sold to the French.

Just as Britain would promptly take steps if the Free Wales Army were to declare Welsh independence, especially if Wales had resources necessary for British economic independence, the Federal Government called on the Biafrans to return to the fold and offered to negotiate new federal terms. Not on, said the colonel. So the civil war broke out.

Almost immediately there were outside calls to end it. One hopes there will always be calls to end war. But these cries took on a somewhat special tone. Mostly they were vituperative attacks on Harold Wilson for supplying arms to the Nigerian Government. Statesmanlike calls were made to stop official arms supplies to both sides. But Biafra wasn't getting official supplies, rather unofficial supplies brought in by the usual mixture of mercenaries, gun-pedlars, undercover men (here French) and other interested parties. Ojukwu came of a wealthy family and was lavish with his promises. The PR firm was among



supporters of his who extended credit and—quell your tears, if you can—is facing ruinous losses. Federal Nigeria was dependent on official arms supplies, and if these were cut off it would almost certainly lose the war.

“What would that matter?” many Westerners innocently asked. Merely that the French would get the oil and not the British. Was that worth the sacrifice of millions of Ibo lives? (Other people were dying in Nigeria too, but we never heard of them.) Certainly not. But this was never the real issue. The great scourge of Africa is tribalism. If it is encouraged it could, almost literally, blow the continent to bits. From north to south, east to west, the huge land mass could explode with tribal wars. Yet all Biafra wanted, said the blurbs, was to be left alone. Surely peaceful tribal secession should be allowed. But was it peaceful? The Ibos wanted a port—Harcourt—and a cash commodity—oil—to make their country viable. What about the Ijaws and the Benins in whose territory these were situated? What about the other minority tribes in Biafra? Should they not be independent too? Many of them wanted to be. Others preferred Lagos to the Enugu régime. Whatever may be said against Federal Nigeria, Biafra was a police state. Even Ibos who wanted to leave the country were forcibly prevented. When it became necessary to rouse world opinion with starving babies—always more appealing than bleeding soldiers—there were plenty of these to photograph. It now seems to be established that these came from non-Ibo concentration camps set up by Ojukwu, partly to control their inmates' movements, partly to house specimens to show the world's press. Who, still befuddled from a night out at the Olde Cheshire Cheese, could detect an Ibo from a non-Ibo during a flying visit to Biafra?

In the frenzy of world diplomatic activity there was a great toing and froing of monsignors. Caritas was prominent in relief flights. These were, naturally, only for the supply of food. An independent observer might have thought this could come better by road or in daytime flights, supervised by the International Red Cross. Instead, night flights—unsupervised—were used. The reason was obvious. Ojukwu wanted guns to carry on the struggle. To hell with the starving babies, Ibo or non-Ibo. But what

about these monsignors? Why, Ojukwu was a staunch Catholic, and no doubt willing to sign a concordat with the Vatican for its missions in Biafra. (Plus no divorce, no pill and the rest.) In Africa at large there was almost no support for his breakaway regime. Except, that is, from co-religionists like President Nyerere of Tanzania. Next, the cynic might ask, why did Caritas not make mercy flights to the National Liberation Front in Vietnam? Was it because this was communist and Catholics were already installed in Saigon? Of course there were non-Catholics who supported Biafra in the West. The area was rich in Christian missions of all kinds. And, inevitably, before long certain ecumenical humanists joined the chorus, and were soon saying that anyone who supported Wilson was as evil as those who helped Hitler to wipe out the Jews.

What Ojukwu badly needed was time. If he could hold out, political pressures might force Nigeria's foreign friends to abandon their help. Then he could make his own demands. All he had to do was to prolong the war while his overseas supporters—some with axes to grind, others well-meaning do-gooders who knew nothing about the problems of Africa—kept up their campaigning. When time at last ran out on him there was the usual story: the getaway plane with the three tons of luggage and the white Mercedes, the Swiss bank accounts, and the overseas friends for as long as the money or the piety lasts.

I outline this story not in any 'I told you so' mood, but as an object lesson in the dangers of idealistic emotionalism. Had it been made clear to Ojukwu from the start that his use of the starving as a weapon in international blackmail was not going to get him what he wanted, that a federal solution was the only one for Nigeria, I have little doubt he would have flown (or even sued for peace himself) earlier. Through foreign encouragement of his intransigence and aid which made it possible for him to prolong the war, thousands of lives have been needlessly lost. This is the real tragedy of Biafra.

We have now had the Congolese crisis and the Biafran crisis. They could, alas, be repeated elsewhere in Africa at any time. I hope in future reason will prevail over hysteria.

## EVIDENCE OF THE FIRST WITNESS

H. RICH

MOST PEOPLE who hold religious beliefs feel offended when they are asked to explain them, or will at best give some evasive answer. They regard any inquiry into their thoughts and feelings about such matters as a personal insult. They do not realise that they have already offended against their own conscience by failing to utilise the faculties of the mind for the purpose of examining the basic reasons for their belief. Should they be prepared to submit their mental processes to self-examination they would find that the reasons they give themselves for holding their beliefs fail to comply with the standards they normally use for the acceptance of propositions in other respects. The propositions which introduce religious belief produce a psychological conditioned reflex to a concept of punishment or reward in association with belief or disbelief—a form of brain-washing. The difference between them and other propositions is that they are unaccompanied by any tangible evidence of their validity but rely on fear to achieve their purpose, fear which becomes manifested as worship, supplication, propitiation and penance.

This brain-washing is accomplished by representatives of establishments held in esteem by society at large, not

because of any particular ability or high intellect, but because they have made themselves acquainted with the existing remains of writings hundreds of years old. Theologians have spent a lifetime on the study of these writings without shedding any further light to reinforce their religious content. On the contrary independent authorities have long arrived at the conclusion that the claims made by the Church for them are in the main completely unfounded. They are obviously the product of people whose ideas on other subjects demonstrate the degree of ignorance prevailing in that era of human history. No person of intelligence would expect to find in them more accurate judgments concerning matters worthy of research than those of the present day. The Bible, comprising the Old and New Testaments, is the book in which these writings are contained. It is said to be divinely inspired. God made his revelations to whoever was responsible for putting them into words and God is infallible. Everything in the Bible must on this showing be based on absolute truth and knowledge, and the grass roots of the Christian religion spring from an avowal of its authenticity. A vital test

(Continued overleaf)



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of the Bible, and therefore of Christianity, must be the validity of any information in it which is capable of being verified.

It would not help to find reasons, good or bad, for the beliefs concerning supernatural powers in the past. We must look at ourselves as we are today and the knowledge available to us in order to deal with what affects us. The Gods of yore have long departed from our midst, but belief in the God of modern religion still persists. Paradoxically this is because the God presented has never been seen. A God who is not visible but exists in the mind only is a much more powerful concept than one who is represented as a sun, a bull, a stone or any of the many other forms he took in the past. A God who is there to be seen can be tested for any claims made on his behalf, a God who is elusive, and may be anywhere, makes things rather more difficult. The God of the Christian religion is said to have appeared in various guises but never to have shown himself as he really is. Indeed, a true Christian would consider it blasphemous to expect God to disclose himself; as a fire, a cloud, a voice, even as a human being, yes, but we really cannot suggest that God should appear in his true form. Due to this reticence, God must perforce to be described as a collection of qualities and attributes rather than as an entity. It must also be remembered that the God of Christianity is the same equally invisible God who makes his debut in the Old Testament, i.e. the God of the Jewish religion. The image of this God is, however, debased in the very writings upon which these religious rely for their acceptance.

There is nothing fundamentally wrong with a belief that some supernatural agency was responsible for the universe as an alternative to a scientific explanation for which knowledge is at present inadequate. Such a belief would be totally incompatible with identification of such an agency, describing him or it, his activities, qualities, motives and desires. Information of this kind could only be passed on by a supernatural being personally so that if he inadvertently overlooks a few billion or so and selects only a favoured few for his confidences, he can hardly complain of the consequences. If he required us all to do something which was important to him, a being capable of creating us should not find it too difficult to let each and every one of us know in some unmistakable manner what it was. When we refer to the Old Testament we find that far from this being the intention of the God described there, he favoured only a small section of his creatures for this purpose and treated the rest with disdain. Far from being a God of love he appears to be motivated by malice, jealousy and revenge. Far from being a God of truth, his alleged revelations contain numerous terminological inexactitudes for which there can be no excuse.

The story of the "chosen people" starts to all intents and purposes with their freedom from bondage and exodus from Egypt through the intervention of God. Why this minority should have received God's particular solicitude is never satisfactorily explained. Slavery was then prevalent all over the world and there was nothing which could justify God's concern for only a handful of the multitudes. In order to compel Pharaoh to release them, God inflicted upon him and upon the whole nation of Egypt (who not all have been held responsible) calamities which today would deserve the award of a Nobel prize for the best horror story ever. The disasters God devised were the plagues of the flowing of the waters with blood, pestilence, the slaughter of the first-born, etc.

This loving God made quite sure that the Egyptians would not escape the fate he had prescribed for them. Exodus ch. 4 v. 21: "And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return unto Egypt see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thy hand, but I will harden his heart that he shall not let my people go". After each plague the Old Testament repeats that God hardened Pharaoh's heart "not to let my people go" so that he could inflict the next one to show how mighty he was. This is the God the Christian religion took over and converted to suit its own creed, though for the Jewish religion the Old Testament God is still the one and only. "Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord thy God the Lord is one" is its most important declaration of faith. Some of the main exhortations in the Old Testament concern God's uniqueness and oneness.

It is a sacrilegious offence to fashion or worship any image, idol or other representation of himself or any other God. The Christian religion, whilst professing to worship the same God, defies this specific prohibition. Representations of Christ, the Madonna, saints and their relics are worshipped all over the Christian world and to add insult to injury the one and only God has become transformed into a Trinity. Notwithstanding his personal protection and the promises and covenants made by God, the pages of the history of his chosen people are stained with their blood—blood shed by their successors in the name of their own God. The Spanish Inquisition was Christian, the Crusades were Christian, the pogroms were Christian, Hitler and his henchmen were Christian yet Jesus the very first Christian was a Jew who was God. Can we really accept the indisputable facts and at the same time retain both faith and sanity?

God made himself known to the favoured few in the Old Testament through commands and conversations, but there is some confusion as to his proper nomenclature. Either there were several writers who considered themselves worthy of recording their own version or they failed to stick to the same name. The Hebrew text gives (phonetically) Elohim, Yehovah, El Shadai and Adonai. Elohim is translated into English as God, Yehovah as Jehovah, God or Lord, El Shadai as God Almighty, and Adonai as Lord. In the first chapter of Genesis Elohim was the creator of the universe until we come to chapter 2 verse 4 in which the name of God in the Hebrew text is given as Yehovah Elohim, translated into English as Lord God. A different author then gives a different account of the creation of man from the one previously rendered. Either two Gods subsequently amalgamated to make a joint revelation or the same God gave differing accounts in different names, the intention being no doubt to simplify matters for everybody concerned. Further on in Genesis chapter 15 verse 2, Abraham addresses God as "Adonai Yehovah", translated into English as "Lord God", but Exodus chapter 6 verse 3 reads (God speaking) "And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the name of El Shadai" (translated into English as God Almighty) "but by the name of Yehovah" (translated into English as Jehovah) "was I not known to them". Apparently Yehovah had not read Genesis chapter 15 verse 2.

When we come to matters which are today capable of being corroborated, we find that God's revelations were consistent with the lack of knowledge prevailing in those times. Research into the structure and evolution of the universe proves conclusively that the Bible story of the creation is an impossibility and makes it obvious that this account can only be a reflection of the mind of the author



and not of the mind of the only witness who could have been present at the time—God. The sun and the moon are not two separate lights—the moon reflects the light of the sun. The earth could not exist and bring forth vegetation independently of the sun and therefore could not have been made first. Day and night are the consequence of the 24-hourly rotation of the earth on its axis, each part receiving the light rays of the sun in turn, these rays being emitted continuously, so that there is no actual separation of light and darkness. These are but a few of the more blatant fallacies and no reasonable person can accept them as the word of God.

We cannot have the slightest conception of a being to whom we give the name of "God" if the best we can do is to impute to him the kind of characteristics we see in ourselves. Any God worthy of the name would be beyond the range of our comprehension. Let us devote our attention to the affairs we know require dealing with and thereby guarantee better results than hitherto. Any God who is displeased when we honestly set about putting our house in order is a fraud, just as much as we are if we do not and yet insist on invoking his name.

## Film Review

LUCY DANSIE

'Z': Curzon Cinema, Curzon Street, London, W1.

THIS is a dramatised and at times highly satirical account of an incident in Greece which led up to the government of the colonels. Based on a book of the same title by Vassilis Vassilikos,<sup>1</sup> it tells of the assassination of the Greek Member of Parliament, Gregory Lambrakis. A French film, shown here with sub-titles, but soon to be released in a dubbed version, the story is told with a combination of suspense, pathos and satire, which make it, but for the fact that it is true, excellent entertainment.

Lambrakis was murdered by a pair of boozey Greek workers who one gradually discovers have been put up to it by an ascending hierarchy of individuals, which is eventually revealed to be headed by the chief of police, under whose protection Lambrakis was supposed to have been at the time of his death. The truth is discovered only because the examining magistrate, who in Greece apparently conducts his own investigations into crimes independently of the police, happened to be young and dedicated. Despite remonstrations from the government he pressed ahead and committed to trial the ascending hierarchy of soldier-policemen including the Colonel, who was also Chief of Police. The scene in which the young magistrate, played with cool straight-faced dedication by Jean-Louis Trintignant, informs the pompous top-brass that they are to be tried as accessories to murder is one of utter Brechtian satire. One doesn't know whether to laugh at the stupid men, weep because of what they did then, or join the next protest because of what these same men are doing now. And so it is throughout the film. The conscience-arousing technique of making the audience laugh at incidents, which are the precise opposite of laughable, is used intermittently and with supreme effect.

When satire is not the medium, suspense and pathos take its place. The assassination is led up to very cleverly. Crowds gather. We glimpse the criminals. We see the politician speaking to his wife on the telephone. We see the man hit on the head on his way to make a speech. We see him rise from his knees, walk on clutching his head, deliver his speech, elbow his way from the hall, down the steps, into the road, halting, straightening his coat, walking on . . . Or again, we see the agony of Lambrakis' wife, as she arrives unexpectedly as a doctor is explaining to assembled officials with the aid of X-ray photographs of her husband's skull, what is wrong with him; the pain she endures as she listens, is recognised, accorded murmured condolences, shown to a seat and told by the doctor that her husband will pull through, with a false smile.

Subliminal flashbacks, extended flashbacks, and repeated flashbacks (this last in particular of the assassination sequence), are utilised legitimately and effectively. Comic humour arrives with the figure of a key volunteer witness, who is bumped on the head

on his way to testify and tucked in a vast hospital ward, which is empty but for his person, which has a pain-relieving apparatus somewhat resembling a football bladder half-filled with water, on its head.

The whole creates a devastating indictment of the police-cum-soldiers, and the government of the time. Names of people and places are left out till the end, when the subsequent slice of Grecian history is told in a few sentences. Lambrakis was a socialist and strongly-fancied contender for the prime-ministership in the forthcoming general election in May 1967. His murder and the accusations against the upholders of martial law heightened the chances of the right-wing fanatics losing popularity and power. A month before the May elections they seized power and established themselves by force of arms, initiating the position which remains today. The accused soldiers now hold positions in the government. Lambrakis' sympathisers, who would have been witnesses for their prosecution, have either died mysteriously, been imprisoned, or have fled the country.

This film is powerful and brilliantly made. I was handed a leaflet at the entrance to the cinema. It was distributed by the Greek Committee Against Dictatorship. It appealed for help, stating, "Your help can be more valuable than you think". It invited the reader to write for details of the Committee's work. The Committee's address is 60 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1. The headline of their leaflet read: "This Film is History . . . it is part of the history of modern Greece". It therefore *must* be seen by all who interest themselves in the future of humanity.

<sup>1</sup> Obtainable at 30s from the Greek Committee Against Dictatorship, 60 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1.

## Review

L. B. HALSTEAD

*The Creed of the Celtic Revolution*: P. Berresford Ellis (Medusa Press).

HAVING recently returned from Nigeria, Rhodesia and South Africa, I found Berresford Ellis's little book rather sinister. The notion of uniting the six Celtic countries (the socialist democratic republics of Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Eire, Isle of Man and Scotland) in Celtica seemed far fetched. F. A. Ridley in his Introduction even speaks of the Celtic *race*. At least the author of the book has not fallen for this ludicrous concept. The aim is to establish a kind of Union on the lines of the Nordic co-operation in Scandinavia. The immediate object is to restore the Celtic languages. This latter was attempted in the Irish Republic with scant success—one wonders how it would fare in Cornwall never mind Scotland. The hope that Celtica would, once established be able to exert pressure to prevent the 'cultural genocide' of the Welsh-speaking Celts of Patagonia (only 7,000 survive at present) does seem a reasonable item that of course need not wait upon the establishment of Celtica. Such a remote outpost of the Celts is an historical lacuna of which I had never previously heard.

The emotive language, the strain of Celtic nationalism, "re-Celticisation", all seem to me reminiscent of the Ojukwu's propaganda machine aimed at fanning the flames of fanatical tribalism. Then there is South Africa, perhaps Berresford Ellis's spiritual home? There the population is divided into European, Coloured, Asian and at the bottom of the heap Bantu. Even the Bantu are segregated into Xhosa, Zulu and other tribes. *The Creed of the Celtic Revolution* is part of this same ethos. There may be talk of socialist democracy but there is a strong racist thread. Perhaps I am over-sensitive but there is something nasty at the back of it all. To my relief and presumably the author's chagrin, his programme seems to leave the majority of Celts unmoved.

I find such thoughts of unscrambling omelettes not without pathos. In the words of the current his record 'what we want is a great big melting pot', not a renewal of tribalism. By all means strive to retain one's cultural identity but let us be clear as to who the Celts are and whence they came. Let it not be forgotten that in their time they were invaders of these islands who subjugated the original inhabitants. If Berresford Ellis's argument is followed to its logical conclusion, we can imagine Celtica established together with a resistance movement of the survivors of the earlier peoples (yes, they do still exist in Ireland and Scotland) demanding their independence from the Celtic oppressors, and so on *ad infinitum*. Still it is a fascinating book if only for the idea that history can be reversed—again something with which many a South African would agree.



# LETTERS

## Joseph McCabe

MR D. M. CHAPMAN has read McCabe's autobiography (as I have), and he has apparently swallowed McCabe's version of events without bothering to ascertain and check the facts. Such is Mr Chapman's "beatification" of McCabe! Mr Chapman conspicuously fails to mention that McCabe's autobiography contains an impressive number of nasty and spiteful attacks on various prominent freethinkers, including J. M. Robertson, who, being dead was unable to defend himself. I challenge Mr Chapman to answer the following questions: where have you read, outside McCabe's autobiography, that Robertson headed the attack on McCabe for a fee? If McCabe's autobiography is your sole source on this point, why is it that corroborating evidence appears to be non-existent, that McCabe's "facts" were not publicly presented by him at the time of his quarrel with the RPA, and that he waited some twenty years before publishing in America an attack on a then dead British freethinker for his part in the affair? Can you produce evidence that Robertson ever attacked anyone *because he was bribed to do so*?

Mr Chapman's allegation that Robertson attacked McCabe for a fee betrays abysmal ignorance of JMR's character: Robertson had his failings, but corruption was not one of them. Mr Chapman does not even mention the RPA's full report of the events that McCabe so luridly "describes". That report (which was published soon after the events described, not some twenty years later) reproduces the speeches in full: it vindicates Robertson's honour and integrity and indicates that his speech on McCabe was both courteous and balanced. Mr Chapman seems to think that if I esteem Robertson (even though I give my reasons), I cannot have any criticisms of him. But this argument is fallacious: it is a false assumption as regards my own position, and it suggests that Mr Chapman has not read my articles on Robertson with any great care. It is to be regretted that Mr Chapman should make sweeping allegations without having made indisputable attempts to establish their validity. I have been researching into the life and work of Robertson for some five years, and I cannot recall a single gratuitously hostile attack by JMR on McCabe. In my forthcoming biography of Robertson, I hope to lay to rest what Mr Chapman calls "the foremost skeleton in the freethought closet"—or should I say "cloister", in view of McCabe's twelve years in a monastery?  
MARTIN PAGE.

## Communist Barbarity

MR G. L. SIMONS gruesome tirade against American conduct in Vietnam would be more convincing if he also gave us a list of the atrocities committed by the *other* side.

I am sure he is quite sincere in his evident conviction that all the goodies are on the communist side and the baddies in the American ranks. But this attitude is a trifle naive to say the least.

He is at pains to assure us that the war is "obscene" (I think he uses the word no fewer than ten times in a short article!). But he provokes the obvious question: is any war *not* obscene?

I have news for him—ALL WAR IS OBSCENE! My generation went through six and a half years of horror against Hitler and Co. It was a nightmare from beginning to end. The Germans, Japanese and the Russians were guilty of the most appalling barbarity throughout this ordeal.

The real tragedy of Vietnam is that it has become the cockpit in the struggle between communist tyranny and the free world. The North Vietnamese started it by invading the South. They show no desire to end it by conducting genuine negotiations in Paris.

As long as man insists on using violence as the means of settling disputes instead of the conference chamber, then we must endure the barbarity of war. The communist creed appears to rely on force, terror and cruelty to enforce its rule. There was the little matter of the fifty thousand North Vietnamese peasants murdered by Ho Chi Minh and his minions in 1957 for not agreeing to their terms. The massacres at Hue after the Tet offensive and numerous other communist crimes.

At least the Yanks are not trying to pretend about the Pinkville affair and are bringing the accused to trial. (Imagine the communists ever doing such a thing!)

I shall be sorry if the FREETHINKER becomes the Communist-Thinker and a mere mouthpiece of the Morning Star. If it does it is doing a great disservice to the cause of humanism and freedom. Most of us detest tyranny of any sort—and this goes for communist tyranny as much as any other form! CLAUD WATSON.

## A Happy New Year?

NOW THAT the British people are richer, freer, and better educated than at almost any time in history, the air is thick with dirges on the wickedness of our times. We hear moans and groans from rich old men like Cecil King and Melcolm Muggerridge, mourning the loss of our Spiritual Values and looking back with longing to the days when churches were full, contraceptives almost unobtainable, and when a few white men with a machine-gun could conquer and rob millions of blacks. Meanwhile Jehovah's Witnesses and the *Plain Truth* magazine gloat over disasters which, as they wishfully suppose, mankind is suffering as never before, taking these as portents of the second coming of Christ. But what the hell is the FREETHINKER doing in this chorus?

But lo! on the second page of your editorial is the reluctant admission that "as a whole, the forward steps overwhelm the backward ones". "Awareness", as you aptly describe it, has been increasing in the Western world and in the Communist countries. But for some obscure reason (to display political loyalty, perhaps?) you pick out China by name as an exception to the general rule. Have you got some special information about China or something? Apparently not, because you "only hope" that Chinese are taught only to kill Americans if Americans try to kill them. If instead of "only hoping" you enquired what actually happens, or found out what was in the Chinese press and radio, you would soon be able to reassure yourself that the Chinese Communists make the most intense efforts to convince their people that the American imperialist enemy is quite distinct from the American people. All public discussion of possible war with the United States assumes that the Americans will attack and that the fighting will take place within China. Nobody, either in a newspaper or in a school essay, is allowed to refer to the aggressors as simply "the Americans" (or, talking about history, "the Europeans" or "the Japanese"). It must be "the American Imperialists" to make quite clear that the ordinary people of the country are not included. Also, all Chinese news media constantly plug the idea that the majority of the population of America are actual or potential allies of China. This slant is always given to reports of internal struggles in the US, also the point is made by giving a hero's welcome to Americans who migrate (flee?) to China to escape their own regime: these are described as representing the American people. It is hard to pass a day in China without hearing and seeing the expression "the struggle of the people of the world, including the American people, against American imperialism".

Since 1966 China has been going through the Cultural Revolution—the biggest national effort to increase "awareness" in world history. This has involved a massive increase in freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, public discussions of controversial issues, and understanding of the concept (on which democracy depends) of loyalty to the nation and the social system combined with attacks on the policies of one's superiors. In addition, of course, there has been an increase in awareness of actual policy issues.

With all this awareness, and in spite of the fact that China spends less of its resources on armaments than any other power, and is the only nuclear power to declare that it will never use atomic weapons in reply to any attack which used merely conventional weapons, the Chinese cannot fail to notice that they are publicly threatened with bombing and invasion by the two strongest nuclear powers on earth. They should not be blamed for occasionally mentioning the fact.  
CONNAIRE KENSIT.

## Classless Sport

IN A recent issue of the FREETHINKER, under heading of "Rugger Hooliganism" you state that Rugby is "undeniably an upper class sport". There is only one reply to this—"Bunkum".

There was a time when, possibly, golf remained a class sport, but even this is no longer true and probably the only sport left which could be so characterised is Polo.

Where have you been living since 1945?

H. W. DAY.

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