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ULSTER—A REPEAT PERFORMANCE?

THE WIDENING SPLIT in the Unionist party in Stormont threatens a repetition of last year's unseating of Ulster's Prime Minister by the extreme right wing element of his parliamentary party. Major Chichester-Clark has, in effect, issued an ultimatum to the extremist dissidents, who are led by Mr William Craig, Mr Harry West and Dr Norman Laird, by threatening them with expulsion from the party if they do not vote in support of a motion of confidence in the government's policies. The immediate consequences of this ultimatum should be known when this edition of the FREETHINKER is published. But even if Chichester-Clark succeeds in bringing the dissidents to heel, his success can only be temporary. Ulster's fanatical Protestants seem once again to be gathering sufficient support to hinder Major Chichester-Clark, as they previously hindered his predecessor, in his efforts to redress the legitimate grievances of the Catholic minority. As John D. Stewart, the Ulsterman, journalist and broadcaster, said in his speech at the First Annual Conference for Humanists in Ireland on October 25 last year: "Christianity in Ulster, as the world now knows, is a malignant cancer in the human breast, deep-seated, agonising and ultimately fatal."

In such circumstances one can only look to the short-term. If Chichester-Clark can weather the storm within his own parliamentary party, he still has to face his electorate, an increasing number of whom may well come under the influence of both the extreme Protestants in Stormont and their clerical ally, the Reverend Ian Paisley, who has announced that he will contest a by-election in the constituency vacated by the former premier, O'Neill, on his elevation to the peerage. The narrow margin by which O'Neill defeated the so-called man of God just over a year ago, might well be whittled away. Defeat of his sponsored candidate by the obnoxious Paisley would put Chichester-Clark in an extremely awkward position.

The fact that Craig and his henchmen use Chichester-Clark's alleged failure to maintain law and order as one of their chief arguments against his policies, perhaps indicates more than anything the unreason and prejudice which motivates these men. They have built up their own position largely with the use of a campaign of deliberate civil disturbance. It was Craig, who as Minister of Home Affairs in October 1968 allowed and subsequently defended the assault on Civil Rights marchers by the Royal Ulster Constabulary—the incident which can be said to have triggered off the seventeen months of civil unrest. It was Craig's 'B' Specials who initiated violence on several occasions as is proven and well-documented in the booklet, *Burntollet*, by Bowes Egan and Vincent McCormack, which was published last year. It was and is Paisley, who with his inflammatory speeches indirectly rouses people to violence. And if the ultra right wing Unionists were to have their way, there can be no doubt that the present breakdown of law and order would be exacerbated beyond measure. There would not only be a likelihood of civil war within Ulster, but a strong possibility of interference from the Irish Republic.

Even the moderate Unionists, the supporters of Chichester-Clark in Stormont, are about sixty years behind the thinking of their British Tory counterparts. The British government is thus suffering considerable embarrassment at its support of such a regime, which has created

what is, in effect, a police state. If the Protestant fanatics were to gain control, there is a very strong probability that whatever government was in power at Westminster, they could no longer prolong a union with a country run on religious prejudice, in much the same way as South Africa is run on race prejudice.



George Melly (left) and David Tribe at the meeting on March 5 on 'Broadcasting in the Seventies', organised by the National Secular Society.

Freethinker

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

LAW AND ORDER

MR CALLAGHAN, the Home Secretary's defence last week of the recent police actions against the progressive art world, might well be construed as a scruple acquired in the face of the oncoming election and the Conservative campaign on 'Law and Order', with its bizarre slogan announced last week by Mr Quintin Hogg, "Build more prisons". In answer to questions on the recent seizure of pictures from a London shop and Andy Warhol's film, *Flesh*, from the Open Space Theatre, in the House of Commons on March 12, Mr Callaghan said that he would support the police when they investigated complaints about pornography from the public.

Several MPs pointed out that there are innumerable bookshops whose influence on the general public is far more acute than that of the progressive art bodies. It was in answer to a question from Mr Norman St John Stevas, the Conservative MP for Chelmsford, who asked if the police would not be better employed checking on the disgusting hard core of pornography . . . rather than pouncing upon an experimental art theatre, that Mr Callaghan in effect renounced the control which he could exercise over the police in these matters. He said: "I am not drawing a distinction between the two because it is not my place to comment upon individual cases that are, may be or have been in front of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This is a social matter."

Thus, we have the Home Secretary handing over social matters to the police. A recent letter-writer to the FREETHINKER suggested that I suffered from "liberal blindness" because I suggested that the police should deal with the rising number of 'pornographic book shops' rather than harry a small minority of experimental artists. I did not suggest that in fact the book shops were any more reprehensible than the progressive theatres, cinemas and art galleries, nor indeed that any of these institutions were reprehensible. I merely suggested that since as the law stands at the moment, the police are bound to take action in some direction under the obscenity laws, they would surely do better to attack the bookshops. The Home Secretary is the only man qualified to instruct the police in such a matter. That he has waived his sovereignty is likely to make progressives as concerned about law and order as their reactionary counterparts.

RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

In *The Times* on March 7 and in *The Observer Colour Supplement* on March 8, considerable space was given to the setting up by Sir Alister Hardy, FRS, of a Religious Research Unit in Oxford, under the auspices of the Unitarian run Manchester College. This unit, Sir Alister says in a lengthy article in *The Times* will conduct an ecological survey into religious experience.

He points out that: "in the past religion has been one of the most powerful influences moulding human behaviour in the course of human history". Religion has indeed been a powerful influence, but can this influence be entirely dissociated from the fact that man is on the brink of exterminating himself? And what grounds are there for Sir Alister's assertion that civilisation may not survive without religion. Could it not equally well be the other way about? Religion has had thousands of years to prove its worth as a force for human survival. Yet the butchery, the religious massacres, and the irrational prejudices and bigotry of religious people have rolled on regardless through the centuries. Does this not suggest that there is some possibility that humanity might in fact be better off without religion? A world influenced more by science than by religion has yet to come about. Is it not therefore somewhat unscientific of Sir Alister to condemn it in advance?

To uncover the true value of religion to our society, an ecological inquiry would be extremely useful. But would the inquiry not be more worthwhile if it were extended into

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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. Humanist Holidays. Details from the Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Mephams, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (Tel.: 01-642 8796).

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

Humanist Teachers' Association: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Saturday, March 21, 3 p.m.: "School Assemblies—Inspiration or Waste of Time", A Free Discussion to be opened by Elaine Dunford (Headmistress, Central Foundation Girls' School, London, E1) and Richard Neal (Headmaster, Phoenix School, Dawley, Shropshire). All welcome.

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, March 22, 6.30 p.m.: "Problems in Education", Dr E. A. Seeley (Progressive League).

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, March 22, 11 a.m.: "'U' and Non 'U' Reconsidered", Professor T. H. Pear. Admission free. Sunday, March 22, 3 p.m.: Humanist Forum—"Must Man Destroy Himself", Dr John Davoll and others. Admission free. Tuesday, March 24, 7 p.m.: Discussion—"Nursing and Ethics", W. H. Brown, SRN. Admission 2s (including refreshments), members free.

Sutton Humanist Group: Friends House, Worcester Gardens (near station), Sutton: Saturday, April 25, 11 a.m.: Book sale—Details from Mrs Mephams, telephone 01-642 8796.

West Ham and District Secular Group: The Community Centre, Wanstead (near Wanstead Underground): Thursday, March 26, 8 p.m.: Meeting.

Worthing Humanist Group: Morelands Hotel (opposite the pier): Sunday, March 22, 5.30 p.m.: "A Humanist Symposium", Members express their personal views.

SHOULD I BEQUEATH MY CORPSE TO A TEACHING HOSPITAL?

PAUL ROM

SPENDING SOME TIME at a health resort, it happened that I talked to a number of interested guests on Adlerian dream interpretation.¹ Whilst I gave numerous illustrations from my practice and from novels, I declined to interpret any dreams of those present; the heterogeneous gathering was not the right place for such an exercise.

The next day, a lady who had shown great interest in my talk, approached me in private and asked if I would be interested in a dream of hers. Assuming I should not say no, she had even come prepared with a written report, which we then discussed.

She was in her late forties and told me she had been living alone since her divorce. She had this extraordinary dream eight years ago, when she was a medical secretary.

She told the dream to a friend who recommended her to undergo psychoanalysis; but not thinking much of psychiatrists and such like people, she declined this advice and soon forgot the dream. Due to my talk she recollected it again.

Here is what she had written down: "One night I awoke and noticed with astonishment that my pillow-case was quite wet. I realised that I must have been weeping. Suddenly I remembered my dream which I re-lived, now being fully awake.

I had died. Something had to be done. As I live alone and it being rather warm, I was afraid that, as nobody knew about my death, I should decay and stink. So I wrapped myself in a bedcloth, added my knitting things and put myself over my shoulder as though it were a sack of potatoes. I went to my brother who does not live far from my house.

My sister-in-law opened the door, was astonished but did not say anything. I asked her where my brother was. She said he had gone out. I was very much excited and asked her to fetch him as he would have to bury me. Thereupon I put 'the thing', as I called it, in the kitchen, and when I got out my knitting things I was frightened when noticing how cold 'the thing' was. I went into the drawing room and sitting on the sofa I began knitting. I was alone; no sound was to be heard; I only thought 'they must bury me!'

Suddenly I looked up and saw in the door 'the thing'! Standing upright and looking at me sadly and reproachfully, it said: 'Ann, why are you so bad to yourself?' Whereupon I awoke."

I told her that the dream revealed how over anxious she was to do something: her eagerness to be useful was expressed by the fact of knitting even in so strange circumstances.

She said that she was indeed a hard-working and serious person; perhaps a little pedantic, and not tender at all. It now occurred to her that people had sometimes criticised her exaggerated helpfulness; indeed, she had often rendered services which were not asked for and may even have been resented. Was not her love of neighbour perhaps an obsession?—smiling, I left her to find the answer by herself.

She said that the sister-in-law who occurred in her dream was alien to her.

Did your brother know something of which his wife was ignorant?

Oh yes, she said, he was the only one who knew that in

my last Will I have bequeathed my corpse for study purposes to a training hospital—have you changed your mind during the last eight years? No, not at all, she said.

Considering the corpse's question we understood the meaning of this dream: the dreamer had some doubt about her uncommon decision to consider her dead body only as useful matter for medical students. Should she not rather wish to be buried like other people?

In our present culture this doubt is perfectly normal. The objective quality of the dream suggests that the doubt was passing and not serious. The purpose of this dream was to strengthen her decision and to decline the imagined possibility of a change, for the dream was forgotten and the problem never bothered her again.

What people think and say about the possibility of bequeathing their corpse, as this dreamer had done, indicates the degree of their social interest, which in Adlerian conception is identical with that of their mental health.

¹ *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler. A Systematic Presentation in Selections from his Writings.* Edited and annotated by Heinz L. Ansbacher, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, University of Vermont and Rowens R. Ansbacher, Ph.D. New York: Basic Books, 1956, Chapter 14.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY COMING EVENTS

EASTBOURNE : EASTER

(in association with the Humanist Teachers' Association and Eastbourne Humanist Group)

Saturday, March 28th, 1.30 p.m.

Distribution of leaflets to delegates attending the annual conference of the National Union of Teachers, Congress Theatre.

Sunday, March 29th, 3 p.m.

CENTRAL LIBRARY, GROVE ROAD
Public Meeting

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOL

Speakers:

EDWARD BLISHEN
WILLIAM HAMLING, MP
DAVID TRIBE
DAVID PURDON, *Chairman*

Offers of assistance (including cars) during Easter weekend will be appreciated.

THE PAVIOURS ARMS, PAGE STREET,
LONDON, SW1

Saturday, April 4th, 6 p.m. for 6.30 p.m.

64th ANNUAL DINNER

J. S. L. GILMOUR (*Guest of Honour*)
RICHARD CLEMENTS
FANNY COCKERELL
NIGEL SINNOTT
DAVID TRIBE (*Chairman*)

Evening Dress Optional—Vegetarians Catered for
Tickets **28/6** each from the NSS

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1
Telephone: 01-407 2717

'THE MOST DISTRESSFUL COUNTRY'

WILLIAM McILROY

The Year of Liberty: The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798
by Thomas Pakenham (Hodder & Stoughton, 63s).

IN CENTRAL COUNTY DOWN the town of Ballynahinch lies between two ranges of hills, and as a boy I often walked on the hill where the ruins of an old windmill stood, and on whose slopes great ash and sycamore trees grew. According to a local legend, each tree marked the burial place of someone who died on June 13, 1798, for it was on this hill that one of the decisive battles of the 1798 rebellion was fought. After the battle one of the rebel leaders was hanged from the windmill sails, the town was left a smoking ruin, and unburied bodies in the streets provided food for the local pigs. Over 30,000 people died during that tragic summer, and recent events indicate only too clearly that the legacy of violence and hatred persists to this day.

Thomas Pakenham's *The Year of Liberty* is the first full-scale history of the rebellion for nearly 100 years. It is not only a gripping narrative of events in Ireland in 1798; the author also presents an interesting account of contemporary England, her political and military leaders, unsettled economy and discontented masses. England was still smarting from the loss of her American colonies, alarmed by naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, and fearful of a French invasion. Most people were convinced that if the French came they would land in Ireland, where they would have been welcomed as liberators by the peasantry. If Napoleon had not gone to Egypt but to Ireland instead, the history of that country and of Europe might have been very different. But the French attempts at invasion—like almost everything connected with the uprising in Ireland that year—were mistimed, bungled and dogged by sheer bad luck.

Long before 1798 there was widespread rebelliousness among the Irish people. It was always open season for the killing of repressive landlords and their agents, but outrages increased in number and ferocity, and the manufacture of pikes and other weapons became the chief occupation of many. Ever since the Pope had granted King Henry II authorisation to make himself Lord of Ireland there had been an endless struggle to subdue the country. Broadly, the campaign of conquest was in four phases: Norman, Tudor, Cromwellian and Williamite. The defeat of King James II by William of Orange at the battle of the Boyne (1690) could have led to a final settlement but for the bigotry and stupidity of those in authority who treated the Catholic peasantry with less humanity than the farm animals.

It was not the intention of William III that Catholics should be subjected to discrimination and humiliation. But the country was ruled by a weak British viceroy and staff, who were dominated by an arrogant oligarchy of Protestant settlers, and from 1692 the Dublin Parliament passed a number of Acts which deprived Catholics of practically all their rights. Despite the repression and discrimination, a Catholic middle class gradually emerged, and their frustration, together with the social and economic grievances of the peasantry, turned the country into a powder keg. However, it was a group of mainly non-Catholic lawyers and businessmen—some of them early converts to the philosophical ideas of Thomas Paine—who lit the fuse, and the resulting conflagration engulfed all classes and religions, Irish and English. The conspirators included Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Dublin barrister who had helped to found the United Irishmen, the reckless Lord Edward Fitzgerald,



Theobald Wolfe Tone

Arthur O'Connor (an uncle of Feargus O'Connor the Chartist leader whom he outlived by a few months being 97 when he died), Henry Joy McCracken, commander of the northern forces, John and Henry Sheares, James Napper Tandy and Henry Monroe. They were sincere, idealistic men, but (with the possible exception of Tone and McCracken) hardly of the calibre which makes successful revolutionary leaders. They inspired and armed the peasants, but could not control them. There were countless acts of bravery and heroism on both sides, but lacking organisation and firm leadership the rebels were usually scattered like chaff when confronted by a disciplined military force. And the authorities were always a step ahead because of the activities of spies and informers in the highest rebel councils.

It was a glorious summer, and the insurgents had little difficulty in living off the land and by plundering wealthy families. But there were so many severe blows to their morale that even the most determined were soon in a state of apprehension. Disaster struck before the uprising was under way; acting on information from a spy the authorities arrested sixteen of the leaders during one night. The army, described by its own commander as "being in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to everyone but the enemy" conducted a reign of terror against the peasants, and committed atrocities on a scale which was appalling even by the standards of the time. English and French ships were engaged in skirmishes off the coast, but no invasion took place. The rebellion ended with the summer, although there were sporadic outbreaks of violence during the last months of 1798 and the following year.

The reckoning was grim. It is known that over 30,000

died, although some authorities claim it was nearly twice that number. Large numbers were transported to the colonies or escaped to France and America. Ireland was more disunited than before, and the Act of Union (1800) that followed was condemned on all sides.

More than forty years after the rising of '98, Daniel O'Connell—who probably did more than anyone to make Irish nationalism and Catholicism inseparable—made a speech in which he described the rebels as “weak and wicked men who considered force and sanguinary violence as part of their resources for ameliorating our institutions”. Although this was an insult characteristic of a man whose chief loyalty was to the Catholic hierarchy, it must be conceded that those who led the rebellion were rash and foolhardy. It needed more than courage and pitchforks to defeat an army, and the rebel's confidence in French intervention was seriously misplaced. The Irish peasants were probably the most wretched in all Europe, thirsting for revenge on their oppressors, foreign and native. In such a situation, and with so much at stake, organisation and encouragement of rebellion was a dreadful responsibility.

The role of the Catholic church in the struggle for Irish independence is neither as sinister as its opponents, nor as honourable as its adherents, claim. The majority of priests supported the 1798 rebellion, and many led their parishioners into battle. They had nothing to lose. Materially and intellectually they were scarcely superior to the peasants, so their affinity was inevitable. Their activities were so restricted by the Government that they were virtually prisoners in their own parishes, so their hostility to the English and the Protestant settlers was understandable. They were, as Tone said, “men of low birth, low feelings, low habits and no education”, and did not see the rebellion in its wider, European context. But the position of the hierarchy was different. They were mainly unsympathetic to the rebels, an attitude which was prompted by expediency and realism. They knew Tone was an ardent Paineite, and that other leading rebels were deists, and worse. It was a time of revolution and growing defiance of church and king; Louis XVI had been beheaded only five years before. These considerations alone were sufficient to make them oppose a movement of illiterate and vengeful peasants whose leaders spoke of “a revolution founded on the rights of man, in the natural and imprescriptible right of all Irish citizens to all the land”. The motives of the hierarchy were not entirely discreditable; being more shrewd and cool-headed than their followers they realised the futility and probable outcome of the rebellion, and may have been genuinely concerned for the lives of their countrymen.

Thomas Pakenham has been extremely thorough in his research, and, despite the lack of material on the rebel side, has succeeded in being fair to all. His non-partisan approach to the subject makes the book of greater worth than nearly all previous writings on the 1798 rebellion. Although the book is packed with detail, Pakenham writes with such style and pace—and this is complemented by a number of excellent illustrations—that the reader's interest never flags. *The Year of Liberty* is an immensely rewarding book.

RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

(Continued from page 90)

the sociological field as well? For to establish the effect of an experience on an individual is of little worth unless one also discovers the effect on a society when a number of its

members indulge in a similar activity. It might well do an individual good to commit a murder, but clearly the effect of a murder craze on society as a whole would not be beneficial.

Further, if such research is to be credible, should it not be conducted by someone who has no bias, either religious or anti-religious. It seems unlikely that Sir Alister will collect much data from those who have had unpleasant religious experience, for he is already anticipating the possible results of his research: “People who had hitherto been sceptical on materialistic grounds might be induced to try the experiment of approaching this power in a particular way, not by prayer for the alteration of physical events . . . , but for spiritual strength and guidance for a better way of life or perhaps, more specifically, how best to deal with some difficulty or to achieve some worthwhile purpose.

“I believe they would find that it gave results: ‘Ask and ye shall receive’.”

Surely a scientist in his professional capacity should not “believe” anything until it has been proven. After all, elsewhere in his article Sir Alister maintains: “true science by its very nature cannot be dogmatic”. Sir Alister's tabulated data will doubtless be very interesting, but I fear his confessed partiality will not further his intentions of bringing sceptics to their knees.

Theatre

LUCY DANSIE

The Apple Cart by Bernard Shaw. The Mermaid Theatre, Puddle Dock, Blackfriars, London, EC4.

FOR THE PAST fifteen years serious playwrights have been writing plays which require the audience to think imaginatively. *The Apple Cart* requires the audience to think and there's an end to it. Shaw, as represented by *The Apple Cart*, could be said to be to Backett, Osborne, Storey or Bond, as a game of chess is to a surrealist painting. The one is logical and solely requires thought, the other is open to differing interpretation and requires thought plus. Thus to those taken up with the modern theatre, *The Apple Cart* will fall flat and perhaps approach the tedium, from which it is rescued by a brilliant performance from John Neville as King Magnus. Like a man explaining why a joke is funny, Shaw's satire suffers from detailed obviousness.

However, to devout Shavians or those interested in the theatre or politics this play, which was written in 1929, offers a good deal. Shaw is shown for the shrewd leftist he was. He predicts the abdication crisis, Britain's increasing obeisance to America, and the galloping impotence suffered by our politicians after exposure to bureaucracy, all at the same time as exposing social democrats and trade unionists for the fools and hypocrites they were then, and to a great extent still are, Act 1, Scene 1, and Act 2 at least are devoted to this. Act 1, Scene 2 is given over to a strange meeting between the king and a seemingly platonic mistress, Orinthia. This episode has little relevance to the theme. It merely illustrates the impotence of the prime minister, Proteus and his cabinet, who can be kept in check by a king, who can't even control a scheming woman. The scene is purported to be a reconstruction of an encounter between Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, which perhaps explains its incongruity, though in this production Mrs Campbell is taken to an extreme and played with exquisite boudoir sense by a negress, Carmen Munroe.

Light relief is provided by John Sharp, as a particularly big and empty headed, traded unionist cabinet minister, Gillian Raine, as a Postmistress-General with a gift for “variety”, and in the closing stages by Patrick Tull, the American ambassador strongly reminiscent of Dickie Roosevelt. It is however, a supreme tribute to John Neville as King Magnus that this production comes off as well as it does. His upper-class smooth is maintained throughout with superb judgement and timing. He demands attention throughout even the most obscure and long-winded Shavian polemic, and most of the time he has to do it sitting down. If nothing else this production must enhance the already considerable reputation of Mr Neville, without whom I feel sure this stretch of Shaw's immortality would be short-lived.

VIETNAM

G. L. SIMONS

(A reply to Mr Claud Watson and others)

THE QUESTION of atrocity in Vietnam is not settled by a simplistic listing of American and Vietnamese barbarities in the hope that in some convenient way they will cancel each other out. The moral assessment of behaviour in war must to some extent depend upon an estimate as to which party—if any—is more responsible for the overall war situation, in which the atrocities inevitably occur.

In this, Mr Watson would not disagree with me. If the Free French, in fighting to rid their land of foreign conquerors, blew up a group of Nazis and their collaborators, Mr Watson would judge this act differently to one in which the Nazis, in seeking to consolidate their conquest, blew up a group of French people. Thus the moral reaction to individual acts of barbarity cannot be divorced from the motivation and intentions of the parties to the conflict.

We arrive therefore at the basic moral question about Vietnam—who started the war? And it is here that Mr Watson and I part company. He would say that the responsibility was that of the North Vietnamese; I would say that the blame clearly attaches to the Americans. What are the facts?

For pretty well the whole of this century the Vietnamese people have fought a succession of colonialist powers—first the French, then the Japanese during the Second World War, and then the French again. In 1954 the French were finally defeated by the Vietnamese People's Army, and at this time—as for the previous nine hundred years—there was only one Vietnam. The Geneva Accords on Vietnam in 1954 declared that the country should be partitioned into zones of authority to enable the French and Vietnamese forces, interlocked throughout the whole country, to disengage. It was only at the Geneva Accords that the question of partition was raised, and *it is vital to anyone who wants to understand the Vietnam issue to appreciate the nature of the proposed partition.*

Article 1 of the Accords states that “A provisional military demarcation line shall be fixed, on either side of which the forces of the two parties shall be regrouped after their withdrawal, the forces of the People's Army of Vietnam to the north of the line and the forces of the French Union to the south . . .”. Paragraph 6 of the Final Declaration stresses that “the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any case be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary” (my italics). Paragraph 7 states that “general elections shall be held in July 1956” to unite the country.

Many of the Vietnamese who withdrew to the north under the terms of the Geneva Accords were in fact southerners, and many had family ties. In *The Last Confucian* Denis Warner writes (p. 142): “All over the South before the Viet Minh evacuation late in 1954, hundreds, even thousands of weddings took place. At the worst, it seemed, the separation would be for two years. In Quang Ngai . . . more than 500 of these weddings were celebrated, and some 20,000 families there have close relatives in the North”.

Thus the Vietnamese—temporarily separated by a *provisional, non-political* demarcation line—expected to have a unified country by general election in 1956. Why did these elections never take place? *Because America, knowing the overwhelming popularity of the Communists, could not*

rely on an electoral defeat for Ho Chi Minh! Now Mr Watson will be rushing to say that I am a mouthpiece of the *Morning Star*. OK, let's tell the tale with the help of *non-communist* commentators. First, consider this quotation from Eisenhower's *Mandate for Change* (p. 372):

“I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indo-Chinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held at the time of the fighting possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader . . .”

John F. Kennedy said in the American Senate (1954): “Despite any wishful thinking to the contrary it should be apparent that the popularity and prevalence of Ho Chi Minh and his following throughout Indo-China would cause either partition or a coalition government to result in eventual domination by the Communists”. Similarly, in his *North from Malaya* (1952), Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas wrote that “there is little doubt that in a popularity contest Ho Chi Minh would still lead the field”. In *Air War—Vietnam* by Frank Harvey, an American major is quoted as saying to his pilots on the aircraft carrier *Constellation*: “If you are shot down in South Vietnam, boys, don't badmouth Uncle Ho. He's the boy who threw out the French—and they love him down here”.

Well, Mr Watson, do you see now why the Americans refused to allow the elections specified in the Geneva Accords? Or do you think that perhaps it wasn't the Americans who prevented the elections taking place? Consider the following quotations—all taken from *pro-Western* writers:

“Thus faced with an overwhelmingly popular opponent, the United States embarked a course to prevent the elections . . .”—Horowitz, *Free World Colossus* (pp. 151/152).

“It was the refusal on the part of the Diem regime and the subsequent ‘governments’ of the South, supported by the United States, to participate in such elections, that opened the door to the present conflict.”—*US Lawyers Committee on American Policy Towards Vietnam* (p. 23).

“It was the refusal of the Diem regime, supported by the United States, to agree to all-Vietnam elections in 1956, which had been provided for in the Geneva Agreements of 1954, that was largely responsible for the present conflict.”—Richard Scott, *Guardian* (2/3/66).

“The Diem government, with American support, refused to discuss with the North the free elections . . . provided for in the Geneva Agreements.”—*Observer* (6/2/66).

“1955: Diem becomes president and, with United States support, refuses to hold elections.”—*Observer* (10/11/68).

“As the deadline for elections neared, Assistant Secretary of State, Walter S. Robertson lined up the American Government fully behind Diem's decision not to hold them.”—*Vietnam* (p. 170), Gettleman (ed).

The United States was not a signatory to the Geneva Accords but, with respect to its articles, it declared that it would “refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them . . .”. Further, “In the case of nations divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to ensure that they are conducted fairly”. Now we know that these words were empty—the US, knowing that a freely elected government in Vietnam would be communist, decided to stop such elections taking place. The peaceful discussions had taken place at Geneva. It was America—by building up the military power of Diem and then intervening herself with vast forces—that prevented the peaceful fructification of the discussions.

To anyone with any sense it should be clear now that

in history and law there is one Vietnam, not two! This being so, how on earth can we seriously talk of North Vietnamese aggression? How can the Vietnamese be aggressors against themselves? In law, South Vietnam is an administrative area only and it does not have political sovereignty: the partition was always intended to be both non-political and non-territorial.

By what token, Mr Watson, is the American presence justified? Article 16 of the Geneva Accords prohibits the entry into Vietnam of "troop reinforcements and additional military personnel"; Article 17 prohibits the introduction into Vietnam "of any reinforcements in the form of all types of arms, munitions and other war material"; Article 18 prohibits "the establishment of new military bases", etc., etc.

What about the American commitments according to its membership of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO)? Both the US and the puppet South Vietnamese administration are members: is the US involvement justi-

fied according to this Treaty. Unfortunately not, Mr Watson—it is one of the provisions of the SEATO Treaty that a call from a member for military assistance can only be answered following a unanimous vote in favour: no such vote has ever been called for, and nor would it be achieved since France is a member of SEATO. Clearly, the SEATO Treaty cannot justify American intervention.

Since Vietnam is in law *one* country we cannot talk of North Vietnamese aggression, only of a civil war in which the US has decided to intervene. Further there are no legal provisions in the Geneva Accords, SEATO, or the Charter of the UN for American intervention. Quite the contrary in all instances! In view of these facts, if we support the Americans in Vietnam we are doing nothing more than supporting the (yes, Mr Watson) *obscene*, illegal onslaught of a large technological nation against a backward peasant one. Mr Watson, I await your refutation of my position, in the necessary legal and historical framework, with very great interest.

ON MR GRIFFIN'S WEAK GOD

MICHAEL CREGAN

AS INDICATED ABOVE, I wish to make a few comments on Mr Griffin's *God and Free Will* (FREETHINKER, February 14). For clarity's sake I will summarise his main points.

(a) Among the things one asserts when one says that a man has "free will" is that his actions are essentially unamenable to prediction by an observer. If he has free will, he has the capacity to subject a situation to scrutiny, and make an "unforced" and spontaneous—one might almost say "calm" and "leisurely"—choice, which is not the mere result of mechanical processes. Free will, to lapse into metaphor, will be master in its own house. And if it wishes to surprise the rest of the world, it will.¹

(b) To ascribe omnipotence to God is not to deny free will, nor is to assert free will a denial of that omnipotence. "It is sometimes erroneously thought the omnipotence of God means that every event in the universe is determined by him. But this is not necessarily the case. We might distinguish between two possible types of omnipotence. The first is that God is omnipotent if He is able, if He wishes, to perform any action. The second is that every action performed in and every event occurring in the universe is caused by God, and that also, God could substitute any of these events by any other, if he wished. We might ironically call these weak omnipotence and strong omnipotence respectively. Clearly only strong omnipotence . . . rules out free will." (Two points here. Firstly there is the assumption that the idea of a *Creator* as used in religious discourse is not completely incompatible with human freedom.² Secondly, the assumption that our "common sense" attitudes to time are sound, that one cannot "go into" the future, etc. Plainly, if there is the (logical?) possibility of God being "outside" time, where past, present and future are all "one", then Mr Griffin and I are wasting our time. The collapse of either of these assumptions would dissolve the problem, the first to the believer's dismay, the second to his satisfaction. However, let that pass.)

So far so good. But I am puzzled by Mr. Griffin's conclusion: "It seems impossible that a person who believes in an omnipotent God can also believe in free will without

self-contradiction. In order to maintain free will, the religious believer will have to place limits on God's omnipotence, not merely by exchanging strong omnipotence for weak, but by denying that God can have knowledge of the future."

Firstly, to exchange "strong" omnipotence for "weak" is not to place limits upon God's power; "weak" omnipotence is merely Mr Griffin's shorthand for a situation in which God has the power to "force" all human actions, but decides not to, and instead allows free human choice. "Weak" does not denote a particular type of omnipotence—(how could it? Either a being is omnipotent or he is not. He cannot possess omnipotence of a *kind*)—it merely says something about the exercise of that all-embracing power. Mr Griffin should not let his adjectives wander so freely.

More important is Mr Griffin's contention that a denial of divine foreknowledge in favour of human free will is also a denial of divine omnipotence. This simply does not follow. For it is one of the conditions for the correct ascription of "free will" that the actions of any person "possessing" it shall not be amenable to prediction. Hence if one can correctly assert that A has free will, it is *logically* necessary that A's actions be unpredictable. To demand that someone be able to predict (have foreknowledge of/foresee) those actions is to demand what is logically impossible. And omnipotence, of course, does not extend to logical absurdities.

It is true that traditionally Christians have wished to ascribe foreknowledge to God. I have no wish to be branded as a heretic, nor to be a *bête noire* of the CTS; but it does seem to me that I could give up divine foreknowledge without abandoning allegiance to the idea of divine omnipotence.

¹ Not that we do not expect, nor act upon, some regularity in others' behaviour. Conversely a man who is *completely* "unpredictable" would lead us to think that perhaps he has *lost* his ability to order his own affairs. All that is necessary for the purpose of this discussion is that *some* actions are unpredictable, while still being the fruit of a rational mind.

² For an admirable attack on this assumption, see *God and Philosophy*, by A. G. N. Flew (Ch. 2).

LETTERS

The Cultural Revolution

On JANUARY 24 you kindly printed my letter criticising your New Year editorial for the unwarranted suggestion that China had not shared in the general increase in "awareness", as you called it, that took place (you said) during 1969. The editorial suggested (without directly stating) that the Cultural Revolution involved a lessening of "awareness"—from my observations in China at the time, and from the publicly available evidence, it seems to me obvious that precisely the opposite is true. Now a letter in FREETHINKER (February 14) scolds me for 'offering no coherent definition of 'awareness''. Since I was referring directly to your use of the word in your New Year editorial, I feel it is up to you, Mr Editor, to provide the coherent definition. Personally I think you made it clear enough what you meant by it, but there's no satisfying some folk. Also I'm scolded for not indicating the real reasons for the cultural revolution; well I thought my letter was long enough already, but I'm giving a paper on the subject to the Portsmouth Historical Association on March 3, and I could always turn it into an article for FREETHINKER if you've got a page or two to spare . . .

I am "challenged" to provide "irrefutable proof" for my statements concerning the content of Chinese mass media, etc. To demand of a witness "proof" of what he asserts he has seen with his own eyes raises interesting philosophical questions concerning the nature of evidence. However, there are various institutions that keep files of Chinese newspapers, and the BBC has a radio-monitoring service, so there is no need to rely on mere eye-witnesses to prove that Chinese propaganda discusses possible war in terms of an invasion of China, specifically rejecting the idea of exporting revolution by Chinese armed forces. In my letter I was careful to refer to facts which can be discovered quite easily by anyone within this country who cares to take the trouble. Of course most people have other interests, but those who want to make moral judgements about other countries should be prepared to do some homework.

Your correspondent seems to assume that every fact about China mentioned in my letter was mentioned with praise. This is not so; I do think Chinese policy is generally as sensible as that of our own government, and has more honourable aims; but many of the facts I mentioned quite non-committally, leaving it to readers to make their own moral judgements. I am well aware that liberals do not approve of the Communist method of using the mass media to educate the public in Party policy, and I myself do not hold with the use of émigrés as if they are typical of the people they come from. Obviously, an increase in freedom since 1966 means there used to be less freedom, as well as meaning there is now more. Since my letter was intended simply to answer the points made in your editorial, and not to glorify every detail of the Chinese Communist record, this does not worry me. Your correspondent objects in the name of liberty to the fact that Chinese who advocate aggressive war are denied access to the mass media, and objects in the name of truth to regarding the American people as a whole as innocent of the crimes of their rulers. I have some sympathy with these objections, but I think readers will agree that this sort of freedom and truth would not help world peace.

Apart from those who dislike yellow men on principle, most "Humanist" objections to Chinese Communism are not Humanist, but liberal. Liberals have a bad habit of claiming that Humanism, freethought, and liberalism are synonyms. I don't believe our movement can survive if restricted to such a narrow range of political views. After all we socialists want freedom, democracy and a high standard of living for all, just like the liberals—the only difference is we have no moral objections to the practical steps involved in putting these ideals into practice.

Finally, a word about the "test-ban treaty". This treaty provides for the USA and USSR to retain nuclear weapons while forbidding China to develop any. No, the Chinese government has not signed it. CONNAIRE KENSIT.

When Should We Debate?

MR S. E. PARKER (February 21) has put his finger nicely on the central problem of ethical philosophy. He asks how I would convince him that my moral views are right. The nature of moral

commitment is such that *no* such proof is possible. Either we feel a certain way about certain things or we do not.

If Mr Parker doubts that this is the truth of the matter I challenge him to *prove* to me that *kindness is better than cruelty*. I declare with complete confidence that he will be unable to do so unless he introduces another (explicit or implicit) value judgement that rests in the last resort upon feeling alone.

If the firm belief that *it is more important to end existing atrocity and oppression than to debate whether they are wrong* makes a person a "moral totalitarian" then I hope that there are growing numbers of us in the world today. G. L. SIMONS.

I HAVE only just had the unfortunate experience of reading L. B. Halstead's review of *The Creed of the Celtic Revolution* by P. Berresford Ellis. For pure damned viciousness it certainly could not be bettered. It would almost seem that this reviewer had something personal against the author of this extremely readable little book.

Perhaps I am wrong, although upon reflection maybe this is just the natural reaction of the average Englishman of whatever his political shade when he is confronted with a completely un-English viewpoint emanating as it does in this book from this very island. I am sorry to say that it seems to me as a Scot who speaks his own national language Gàidhlig that the fair-minded Englishman even the one that holds advanced or far left views becomes a raging English imperialist when he is presented with the Celtic peoples' case for human and national rights. Does hypocrisy that supposedly most Anglo-Saxon of vices even permeate the ranks of English free-thought and anti-state socialism?

I doubt if L. B. Halstead has ever seriously studied the history of the British Isles far less the history of the Celtic peoples in particular who share this island with the Anglo-Saxon herrenvolk. For his information the conquest of the Celtic nations of these islands by the feudalist rulers of England established a workable power-base for the setting up of the now defunct thank goodness mis-named British Empire. The fact of the matter is of course that the contemporary agitation by the Celtic peoples (so named Mr Halstead because their national languages grew from a common linguistic root) for self-determination is part of a world-wide revolt by the dispossessed, despised, maligned and discriminated against peoples of this world against the tyranny of the massive bureaucratic multi-nation centralist states. The states that have been instrumental in making life in this century a hell on earth for many thousands of people and whose continued presence actually threaten mankind's physical future upon this planet.

L. B. Halstead accuses P. Berresford Ellis of using emotive language but it is he himself who has been guilty of this crime. He bandies the word tribalism around for instance. This is the traditional language of the aggressor of the land grabber and imperialist as he should well know. It is a trick as old as time this one—the belittling and the dehumanising of one's opponents. The terrible thing is that even decent people have been fooled by this trick. Terms such as the Ibo tribe and the Red Indian tribes are accepted on their face value. Can we now expect to hear of the Welsh and Scottish tribes from fair-minded English free-thinking reviewers?

I am more in sorrow than in anger,
SEUMAS MAC A' GHOBHAINN.

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