

THE FREETHINKER

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 5p stamp to Kit Mout, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

EVENTS

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone: Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

Humanist Holidays, Whitby, Yorkshire, 19 August-2 September: Summer Centre. Details from Marjorie Mephram (see "Announcements" above).

NEWS

B.H.A. RESOLUTIONS

The British Humanist Association, at its Annual General Meeting at Leicester on 23 July, passed resolutions on religion in schools, the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, the Rhodesian situation, and the utilisation of natural resources.

On Northern Ireland, the A.G.M. passed an emergency motion proposed by the B.H.A. Executive Committee:

This A.G.M. deplores the end of the Provisional I.R.A.'s ceasefire in Northern Ireland. Further, it deplores both the recent creation of Protestant 'no-go' areas and the expansion of Catholic 'no-go' areas. It regrets the increasing militancy of the U.V.F. and reaffirms its opposition to the use of force as a means of settlement of the Northern Ireland dispute.

Aware that religious intolerance and sectarianism have already caused over four hundred deaths in Northern Ireland during the present emergency and that reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant cannot come about whilst sectarianism continues in the schools and in public life, this A.G.M. views with amazement the failure of church and government leaders both in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain to give a clear lead on this issue. It calls upon them as a first step to declare their unequivocal acceptance of the need to end sectarian schooling and then to take positive steps to bring this about.

The meeting also passed a resolution, "that schools and other institutions in Northern Ireland be desegregated, and that a secular education system and secular constitution in Eire be established as an essential prerequisite of any plans for unification of North and South."

Another resolution, calling for the conversion of Church Schools to County Schools, was "not put." However, the meeting did pass motions criticising the "social divisiveness" of the Voluntary School system (especially in areas of high immigrant population), and reaffirming the B.H.A.'s support for comprehensive education, and its opposition to segregation of schoolchildren on grounds of sex or colour, or their parents' wealth or religion.

The A.G.M. particularly deplored the Labour Party National Executive's rejection of its own advisory committee's recommendation to replace the present "opting out" from school religion by "opting in." A resolution called upon the B.H.A. "vigorously to continue its campaign for the complete abolition of religious assemblies and the abolition of compulsory religious instruction in County Schools."

The "Study Group on Organisation of the B.H.A." submitted a successful motion on the subject of co-operation with religious bodies:

This A.G.M. recognises that it may sometimes be useful for humanists to co-operate with religious organisations on certain issues, but emphasises that such co-operation should not stifle, inhibit or negate the implementation of the Association's policies.

On Rhodesia the A.G.M. called upon H.M. Government to maintain and strengthen sanctions against the Smith régime, and noted with satisfaction the rejection of the terms of the provisional settlement between the British and rebel governments. Admiration was expressed "for the courageous stand being taken by the African National Council in Rhodesia."

S AND NOTES

The A.G.M. condemned the proposals of the Criminal Law Revision Committee to reduce instances of inadmissible evidence in criminal trials. Another emergency motion deplored the prosecution of the publishers of *IT*, "whose 'crime' consisted in facilitating the introduction of parties desirous of pursuing activities within the law of the land," and called for the quashing of the sentences imposed. The meeting also called upon the Government to give priority to a population policy and a policy of zero economic growth, and a standard of living "related to the quality of life rather than to per capita consumption."

THE OTHER "HOLY WAR" AND ITS CASUALTIES

We are all familiar with the current sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, with its burnt-out houses and dispossessed families. But in terms of human numbers one of the most seriously threatened minorities at present are the casualties of Yahya Khan's "Holy War" against the Bengalis and the Indians, namely the Bihari Moslems of Bangladesh.

Little more than a year ago world opinion was horrified by reports of the treatment meted out to the Bengalis by the Pakistani army and their Razakars (largely Biharis). Now, with the military defeat of Pakistan at the hands of India, and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state, the pendulum has swung the other way. Some 730,000 Bihari refugees, many of them innocent women and children, are herded into encampments in Bangladesh where they are eking out their existence in appalling conditions and, in many cases, in fear of their lives because of the blanket charge of their having been Pakistani collaborators. Also, they have nowhere else to go because neither India nor Pakistan will accept more than a handful of them.

The plight of these refugees is the subject of the Minority Rights Group's latest report, *The Biharis in Bangladesh*.^{*} The report is illustrated with a number of maps and photographs and is written by the M.R.G.'s director, Ben Whitaker, who visited Bangladesh in April and May of this year.

Briefly, the report advances three remedies for the present situation. Firstly, Pakistan should recognise her obligation to help those who were loyal to her "and who were deliberately encouraged by Pakistan's military rulers to remain as a separate community in East Pakistan;" and some of the Biharis could be exchanged for the 400,000 Bengalis still in Pakistan. Secondly, India should at least accept some of the refugees, particularly those who still have families in Bihar. Finally, since only a small part of the problem can be solved by migration, the report recommends that the mass of the Biharis should be given every facility to integrate with Bangladesh society, for "it would be the best possible augury for the future of Bangladesh if the nation's birth could be accompanied by a magnanimous concept of reconciliation . . . The present situation benefits nobody on the subcontinent, and could at any time develop into a far more terrible human disaster."

^{*}The *Biharis in Bangladesh* is obtainable, price 45p plus 7p postage (10p overseas) from the Minorities Rights Group, 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG.

THE CHURCH MILITANT

"The prison chaplain came on several occasions but I didn't trust him. Rhodesian prison chaplains wear a prison service-type uniform which includes boots and a swagger-stick. Since they are paid by the Government I considered their motives suspect."

—Miss Judith Todd, writing of her detention in Rhodesia, in the *Sunday Times* (16 July).

PROPAGANDA COCKTAIL

We recently received the May number of the Rationalist Society of St. Louis's monthly newsletter, *Secular Subjects*. It carried a short article on the United States Postal Service's new family planning stamp, one of which had also been used to mail the copy. However, the stamp had been cancelled with the slogan: "National Salvation Army Week . . ." We wonder if copies of the *War Cry* are post-marked with advertisements for contraceptives or free-thought?

NINETY YEARS AGO

"The cry of blasphemy has been raised against nearly everybody who has dared to differ from the priests . . . But the power of the priests is broken, although not yet destroyed . . . They dare not touch the Darwins, the Mills, and the Huxleys. Oh no. The theological cat will even purr when they stroke her the wrong way. But let a common sceptic approach and she will spit and scratch and bite like mad.

"It is the 'lower orders' that must be preserved from blasphemy, just as it is the 'lower orders' that must be preserved from immorality. Meddling with the religion or the morals of the upper classes would be resented as an insult. They may buy as much expensive heresy or lechery as they please. But the poor man is watched . . . These prosecutions are always kept for the editors, publishers and vendors of cheap newspapers. It is the everlasting old game; straining at the poor man's gnat, and swallowing the rich man's camel . . .

"We are charged with blasphemy, and so was Jesus Christ. What a grim joke it will be if *The Freethinker* is found guilty and punished for the same crime as the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount! Truly adversity makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows.

"Yet whatever happens we will not quail . . . We will not pray that the cup may pass from us, nor cry out that we are forsaken . . . We have a sense of truth, a conviction of right, and a spirit of courage caught from the gallant men who fought before. Let the bigots do their worst."

—G. W. Foote in *The Freethinker*. "Prosecuted for Blasphemy," 6 August 1882.

Sunday, 3 September 1972

A DAY IN THE CHILTERNs

Jordans - Beaconsfield - Marlow - West Wycombe - Bray - Cookham - Windsor

Coach leaves Northumberland Avenue (Trafalgar Square end) 9.30 a.m. Cost: £2.25 (includes fare, lunch, admission to Model Village and Hellfire Club caves).

Book in advance

Organisers: THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL
Telephone: 01-407 2717

CHARLES KEGAN PAUL: AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

ERIC GLASGOW

Charles Kegan Paul (1828-1902) had conventional and exalted beginnings: born in Somerset, where his father was a curate, he was educated at Eton and Exeter College, Oxford. Whilst he was at Oxford he came under the influence of Charles Kingsley and the "Broad Church" interpretation of theology. Nevertheless, despite a controversial initial stance, he was duly ordained in the Church of England (1851), and was curate of Great Tew, in the Diocese of Oxford (1851-52), moving from there to Bloxham (1852-53). He continued, even so, to cultivate his "Broad Church" garden, emerging as an associate of F. D. Maurice, Tom Hughes, and J. M. Ludlow, as well as of Charles Kingsley, and radical in politics as well as theology.

Perhaps for that reason, he quickly deserted parish work for education, teaching at Eton from 1854 until 1862; although after 1862 he was, for thirteen years, the vicar of Sturminster Marshall, in Dorset. He was still radical, however, for he flirted with Unitarians, and supported Joseph Arch's Agricultural Labourers' Union (1872) even whilst he still remained, ostensibly, an Anglican vicar: his record thus illustrates, quite usefully, the oddities of belief and conduct which were evidently permitted, at least within the rural ramifications of the Church of England, during the nineteenth century. He even began to publish, beginning with an oddly religious journal, called the *New Quarterly Magazine*, in 1873. That was almost the last straw, however; for in 1874 he gave up his living and came to London, to devote himself to the twin tasks of authorship and publishing.

Biographical Sketches

His first achievement, in that new and less restricted guise, was the preparation and the publication, in 1876, of his largest work: *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, in two volumes, with portraits and illustrations. For it Paul utilised many original documents, placed at his disposal by Sir Percy Shelley, Godwin's grandson. Its subject clearly illustrated the measure of Paul's divergence from his earlier Anglican orthodoxies. Nevertheless, the work covered much new ground, and enlarged the ambit of English thought and experience. It was widely praised: "Such a work as that which Mr. Paul has well done was needed. . . . It is not too much to say that not one of his pages is without interest; and to this we may add that he has shown a rare skill and discretion in dealing with his materials."¹

So encouraged, in his excursions into the more original and challenging avenues of English thought and inquiry, Paul went on to compile and to publish a new and detailed study of *Mary Wollstonecraft* (1878), which Sir Edmund Gosse called a "successful rehabilitation of a maligned and unfortunate woman of genius."² That was high praise, and it also came to be applied to Paul's later works; such as his *Biographical Sketches* (1883)—they included Edward Irving, John Keble, Maria Hare, Rowland Williams, Charles Kingsley, George Eliot, and John Henry Newman; his *Faith and Unfaith and Other Essays* (1891)—one of the essays, on "The Production and Life of Books," dealt with the ethics and the business of publishing; and his *On the Wayside. Verses and Translations* (1899).

These were all good books, memorable, even today, for their honesty, thoughtfulness and durability, and they vindicated Paul's claim to be an author of merit and note. The publishing side of his busy activities he took over from H. S. King, of Cornhill, in 1877. Then he began that prestigious publication, *The Nineteenth Century*, and took over works by Tennyson, Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, and R. L. Stevenson. Paul proved to be an adventurous and courageous publisher; for after the disaster at Khartoum in 1885, it was he who bought General Gordon's "Last Journals," for the large sum of 5,000 guineas: ultimately, they cost his firm £7,000 "before a single copy was ready."³

By that time, however, Paul had enlarged the basis of his firm to become "Kegan Paul, Trench and Company" (1881), by the addition of Alfred Trench, son of Richard C. Trench (1807-1886), Archbishop of Dublin in the Protestant Church of Ireland. After the setback of a severe fire in 1883, the firm was enlarged yet further, in 1889; so that it became "Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner and Company Limited." In 1891 it moved from Paternoster Square into much larger premises in Charing Cross Road, and for some years it prospered, even under Charles Kegan Paul's brilliant but somewhat erratic guidance. But in 1895, chiefly in consequence of ambitious ventures, unsupported by market-conditions, the business fell badly, and although there was some later recovery it never regained sufficiently to avert its absorption into that of George Routledge (1812-1888), which had previously specialised in more popular and productive sorts of publishing.

Nevertheless, despite its ultimate absorption, the publishing work of Charles Kegan Paul is still very memorable and noteworthy: more so, probably, than that of his fellow-runner, George Routledge, because Paul never essayed to make money, as such, and always produced more solid and enduring literature, and never ceased to dare to put on projects which he liked as good literature, even if the capital-risks were great. Paul also fostered sound learning in his own somewhat desultory and devious fashion; for his firm, quite early in its long history issued an English-Arabic Lexicon, and he himself translated and published editions of Goethe's *Faust* (1873), and *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal* (1884), as well as (with E. D. Stone) *A Philological Introduction to Greek and Latin, for Students* (1876)—from the original German.

Conversion to Catholicism

Of course, one can never suggest that Charles Kegan Paul was either a stable or a systematic thinker: his interests were too wide, diverse and undisciplined for that to happen. So it came about that the enthusiast for William Godwin, and the apologist for Mary Wollstonecraft, after leaving the Anglican Ministry in 1874, turned up again, disconcertingly, as a Catholic, from the year 1890. That "conversion"—jarring as it may well be to the notions of the publisher as the enlightened and enlightening freethinker and pioneer—provided us, even his removed and ultimate readers, with some more and altered literature from his agile and fluent pen; and that is the episode—seemingly final, unquestionable, and silent like the grave—which ends his published *Memories* (1899).

Here, however, I do not try to emphasise the illogicality and the inconsistency of much of Charles Kegan Paul's life and thought. I do not seek to skate over it: equally, though, I do not think that it destroys the significance of the lost Victorian personality. Charles Kegan Paul illustrates, quite readily, the winds of change as these operated within the tangled web of the Victorian ideas and thought. His life's work may well be summarised as the dissemination of a philosophy which was, ultimately, based upon tolerance, thought and an abiding concern for truth. At least he never permitted the mere passage of the years to prevent him—as it does for so many lesser mortals—from “pursuing the argument, whithersoever it might lead.” If he had done so, then his record, beginning with the strangely robust Anglicanism of Charles Kingsley, would never have curled back, towards its close, into the ample

and convoluted embraces of the Church of Rome, and even the tractarian propaganda of the Catholic Truth Society. It was indeed a strange and unexpected end, but surely not one for which to remove Charles Kegan Paul from the category of those who, by their apparent devotions to the principles of freedom of thought and publication, honesty and responsibility of purpose, kept alight in England the torch which is still cherished and brandished by the rationalists of our own, less theologically-based times.

NOTES.

¹ *The Saturday Review*, 41: p. 241.

² *The Academy*, 14: p. 573.

³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, Second Supplement, 1912, 3: p. 81.

EDUCATION, IDEOLOGY AND ETHICS

G. F. WESTCOTT

It seems to me (and I am 79 years old) that most human beings are highly suggestible and have also inherited strong tendencies to believe, even without good evidence, in supernatural beings and forces; for these reasons it has been easy, in the past, to indoctrinate children with almost any particular religion. Also, with the limited communications of past times, it has not been difficult to ensure that the groups surrounding the child should all hold similar views and that conflicting evidence should be kept hidden. The penalties for nonconformity were very severe so that very few had the strength to think independently for themselves.

Personally I regard religious myths, like fairy tales, as of value to mature adults mainly to the extent that they help us to understand human psychology. Works of fiction and poetry, and stories of myths, magic and fairies, are, I think, useful for helping to organise the subconscious part of our minds, but care should be taken not to confuse these tales with reality. Art may be practised not only for its own sake and for pleasure, but also because it probably has a stabilising and therapeutic influence in society.

Human suggestibility, when properly used, is of great importance in the early education of the young, but, unfortunately, continues throughout life, even after the acquisition of the ability to reason. Adult suggestibility and gullibility are often misused, for example in advertising and propaganda, and for prolonging the period of uncertainty and stress before the individual is able to decide for himself what basic ideology to adopt.

In this country, it is obligatory to teach Christianity in state (and in most other) schools. This, I think, is unethical, because as the child's mind develops he becomes more closely involved with today's cosmopolitan society and thus, by actual contact and through the communications media, with people holding many different and conflicting basic ideologies; and this process is occurring at increasingly earlier age. Consequently he will usually, at some time, tend to criticise his inculcated religion and question its dogmas. This may lead to a period or periods of doubt, sometimes lasting for many years or even for his whole life, interfering with his education and natural mental development, and causing much unhappiness. Some may lose their indoctrinated faiths and be left stranded with no acceptable basic ideology or ethic.

Lack of tolerance

While I think that Christianity is based mainly on myths, it does provide one of the best formulations of the ethical “Golden Rule”, namely, “Love thy neighbour as thyself”, while some of its “Ten Commandments” contain commonsense laws to be observed in a community, such as do not kill, steal or commit perjury, which are generally in line with modern ethics. However, if considered as a basic ideology for our present-day society Christianity seems to me to be too restrictive, too dogmatic and too slow to change, so that it is out of touch with modern life and too insecurely supported by objective scientific evidence. Again, the interpretations of its sacred books are so varied and conflicting, and its lack of tolerance and understanding of other people's points of view are so great as to cause not only ideological wars, but also real wars with enormous suffering and death. The insistence on the worship of an all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing God seems to be more in keeping with a tyranny or dictatorship than with a democracy.

I suggest, therefore, that compulsory religious education should be abandoned and that instead, to the extent that pupils can understand them, generally accepted scientific theories (e.g. biological evolution) should be taught. In addition instruction in the well-authenticated facts of the history of social development should be given. Here information about at least some of the major religions should be included, but the dogmas of no particular religion should be inculcated as unquestionably true. The subjects taught should be supported objectively by visits to museums, geological and archaeological sites, and by practical experiments and research. I think that this kind of education would enable young minds and their basic ideologies to develop more naturally and gradually without serious disturbance.

Understanding and self-control

A minimum number of enforceable rules is needed to run any group effectively, but in general, I think, morals should not be indoctrinated or forced, but rather be allowed to develop naturally through the individual's experience in surroundings of love, understanding and help in school

(Continued overleaf)

EDUCATION, IDEOLOGY AND ETHICS

(Continued from previous page)

(and if possible at home also) and later in the general community. Self-control rather than imposed discipline should be the aim.

Human beings, I think, differ greatly in their psychological natures and cannot be expected to think alike, so that the basic ideology of every individual should be his own choice and not that of his parents. Those who spontaneously feel the need to postulate supernatural powers should, of course, be free to join some chosen religious or similar community, or to develop their own metaphysics.

When I first read the works of the dynamic psychologists, such as Freud, I felt that this new science would soon solve

all the major problems of human happiness and of the peaceful and harmonious co-operation of the peoples of the world; but instead we find a confused muddle of conflicting schools and psychologies. I suspect that this slow progress may have been due to the fact that many people, before studying psychology, have already accepted a basic ideology. For example, a Christian can only develop a psychology which is compatible with his preconception of man as a spiritual being in relation to a supernatural God. If, as it seems to me, human "spirituality", intuition, artistic abilities, happiness and pleasure are mainly derived from, or at least greatly influenced by man's unconscious mind, it is most important that this part of human nature should be studied, and without presumption, by the most reliable means known to man, namely the methods of science.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

ELEANOR MARX. Vol. 1. FAMILY LIFE, 1855-1883

by Yvonne Kapp. Lawrence and Wishart, £4.50.

This book spans the period from 1855, the year of Eleanor's birth in London, up to 1883, the year of Karl Marx's death and the formation of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation and the anti-Marxist Fabian Society in Britain, and, incidentally, the imprisonment of G. W. Foote for blasphemy, Eleanor Marx was at this stage contributing articles to one of Foote's papers, *Progress*.

This period was one of great importance in Marx's life for during it he published, among other works, his magnum opus *Capital*, which was to be translated by Edward Aveling, a former secularist and editor for a time of *The Freethinker*. The famous *Communist Manifesto* had appeared for the first time in English in the *Red Republican* a mere five years before Eleanor's birth and the equally famous Marxist political organisation, the International Working Men's Association, was founded some nine years after in 1864. This period also saw the Paris Commune which shook to the core many of the undemocratic régimes that littered the map of Europe at that time, and with which Marx was deeply involved, although he was to gain more fame from his work for the Communard refugees than for any part, from a distance, he played politically in the actual Commune.

Marx was a pioneer socialist who placed the subject on a scientific basis, but he viewed his theories as highly flexible and subject to change, as was pointed out by Engels in his preface to the 1888 edition of the *Communist Manifesto* (referring in fact to the joint preface he and Marx wrote for the German edition of 1872). This recognition, that change in economic and political factors might date aspects of Marxism, seems to have been lost on certain so-called Marxists who have made the system into a form of changeless dogma which in turn has caused some of its critics to equate it with religion, and in doing so displaying their own superficial grasp of Marxism.

Eleanor Marx, then, covers a period of crucial importance in the development of the Socialist movement in

Europe, and while it would be good Marxist theory to ignore or play down the rôle of the individual in this development, in practice it is impossible to do so. A study of the events of the period and the pressures upon Marx, his family and associates (many of whom played a leading rôle in European politics) can illuminate some of the reasons why he wrote and acted as he did, and why his daughter Eleanor was to develop into the political activist she did. To do this adequately calls for considerable research in several languages and into many rare or obscure sources, which from their very nature tend to be scattered about all over the world. It is not an easy task and one which many a very fine writer could fail to carry through. Miss Kapp, however, has done the job admirably, and has produced a study which is the model of what a good biography should be, a work that can be read with ease by the general reader but which does not sacrifice scholarship in the process. For the scholar it presents a mass of detailed material which frequently gives a new insight into many a familiar tale.

Although this work, the first of two volumes, has as its central figure Marx's youngest daughter, and the only one to be born in Britain and to have lived her whole life here, the main character around which it revolves is Marx himself. Eleanor only begins to emerge as a character of any distinction in the book's latter part, and is then promptly submerged by the far more dominating figure of the greatly underrated Edward Aveling. This part of the book suggests a real gap in available biographies, one of Aveling.

Edward Aveling was one of the many children of a Congregationalist minister but while he inherited his father's oratorical gifts and a deep concern for his fellow men he became the only member of the family to lose his religious faith. A brilliant scientist, he was to be one of the few to associate publicly with the secularist movement. Not a man to mince words he described himself without qualification as an atheist. His oratorical gifts coupled with his doctorate in science, then as now a very respectable degree, ensured his rapid rise in the movement and he was soon included in the top leadership along with Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, who was to develop a close attachment to him and be deeply offended by his growing association with Marx's younger daughter. Aveling had much to his credit, however the debit side to his character involved his flirtation with many women and his habit of borrowing money which he failed to pay back. It was the latter that led to his departure from the secularist movement, although he never lost his atheism. Miss Kapp makes

no effort to play down the darker aspects of Aveling's character but at the same time she reproduces Shaw's critical appreciation of him in which he refers to Aveling's courage in maintaining his stand when others failed to. For socialism and atheism Aveling, states Shaw, "would have gone to the stake."

It was through a marginal association with secularism, as contributor to G. W. Foote's journal *Progress* (wrongly described here as a "new monthly" in 1883—it had actually been founded in 1879), that Eleanor was brought into contact with the man whose common-law wife she was eventually to become, but for the particulars of this marriage we shall have to await the next volume. Mrs. Besant gives an indication of the weak links Eleanor had with secularism when she described Eleanor as "a Miss Eleanor Marx" who was bent on causing a rift in the secularist movement. As it transpired Aveling was to depart from organised secularism, as was Mrs. Besant herself, while Eleanor was never really to be a part of it. In fact it just might be (and the book hints at this) that it was an antipathy towards Bradlaugh which prevented "Miss Marx" from becoming involved in what was in actual fact a mass working-class movement, which in the 1880s secularism really was. Perhaps the subject might be explored in greater depth in the next volume, one hopes it will be.

Eleanor Marx stands a fair chance of becoming the definitive work on the domestic life of the Marx family in Britain; subject to the second volume maintaining the high standard set in the first it will be the definitive work on Eleanor. It combines scholarship with humour, readability with facts. It is well illustrated, although the photographs are almost all well known from other works. It has notes, appendices (including one of importance on Frederick Demuth, the illegitimate son of Marx), bibliography and index, which, regrettably, is very poor, being restricted to people associated with Eleanor and Aveling, and even here it manages to transpose Foote's initials. In a book so valuable for reference it is to be hoped that this failure will be rectified either in the next volume or a future edition.

ROBERT MORRELL

A HISTORY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY:

1921-1949 by Jacques Guillermez. Methuen, £5.95.

"The trouble started a long time ago when Chiang, the premier of China (have I made any mistakes so far?), went over to borrow a cup of opium from Chang and exchange gossip. Now that shouldn't be hard; Chiang went to chin with Chang. This Chang is 'Young' Chang and should not be confused with 'Old' Chang, his father, the one-time ruler of Manchuria. As soon as I found this out, I started confusing them . . ."

These lines do not come from this book. They come from S. J. Perelman, the American humorist; and I thought of his essay on "the yellow peril" as I waded into this book. It is hard for anyone save a specialist to keep track of the names of Chinese men and even of places. This is not due simply to white, western prejudice (which is a fact) but to our long unfamiliarity with a different civilisation. For China is not just another foreign country. It is a civilisation in the sense that Greece and Rome were and Britain and America are a civilisation. Each of these, and others besides, has been at some stage of its history a going

concern, leaving (as Max Lerner puts it) "a deep imprint on the human consciousness, a scar on men's minds. They had a way of life and a world view that have become deeply part of human experience."

Of the events of the generation since 1945, the world historians will undoubtedly select two as outstanding. One will be the war in Indo-China, which the Americans have lost; and the other is the revolution in China. This book, running to nearly 500 pages, is a detailed narrative, by a French authority, of the course of the long struggle that reached its climax with the communists' victory in 1949. It is good to have this record translated into English. But even persistent readers will wish that the author had subdued the detail with a firmer hand; and that he had shown a keener capacity to draw inferences from his abundant material.

In the concluding pages, the author begins to anticipate his promised second volume which will cover what has happened since the turning point in 1949. Meanwhile, readers of this journal who want to improve their understanding of contemporary China would do well to begin with more readable books such as those by Professor C. P. Fitzgerald, including his Penguin.

JOHN GILD

THEATRE

COWARDY CUSTARD by Noël Coward.

Mermaid Theatre.

Originally staged for the Festival of London, *Cowardy Custard* has proved so triumphant a success that its run has been extended; literally by public demand. No doubt among young militants Sir Noël is considered the doyen of decadence. Glamour, romance, sounds sweet and sentimental, wit that just stops short of social protest—these he has given prodigally to the delight of his bank manager and sophisticated middle-class audiences throughout the world. Tired businessmen have never been so well catered for, self-indulgence has never been so richly rewarded. And yet Coward is much more than this; well has he been called the twentieth-century Gilbert and Sullivan, the British Cole Porter. If only the young militants had the talent or inclination for his professionalism, a craftsmanship (as I first realised when playing in *Blithe Spirit* many years ago) such that you may accept or reject his work but can rarely improve it.

In this anthology of his songs all the old favourites and some gems that are rarely heard are expertly brought together. The attempt to link the material with extracts from his irritatingly superficial autobiography is somewhat half-hearted and not really successful, and some of his lyrics and melodies (especially the London sequence) have dated rather badly, but the best of his work is eternally fresh. Apart from the celebrated standards I particularly enjoyed "Bronxville Darby and Joan" and "The Coconut Girl," and new words to Cole Porter's "Let's Do It" that to anybody else would have brought the writs flying. Wendy Toye expertly whirls her singers round Tim Goodchild's set, which unbelievably transforms the Mermaid into Las Vegas. The cast is uniformly proficient and sometimes better than the Master himself.

DAVID TRIBE

LETTERS

Definitions of Pornography

The definition of pornography which Mr. David Holbrook offers (letters, 15 July) is so wide and vague that it could involve the condemnation as pornographic of some of the world's greatest works of art. The *Satyricon* of Petronius, the *Kama Sutra*, the sculptures on Hindu temples, the works of Rabelais, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Balzac's *Droll Stories*, the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley and Russell Flint, and Joyce's *Ulysses*, could all be said to "be dehumanising", "encourage voyeurism", "reduce sex to a mechanical activity" and so on. In Chaucer's celebrated "Miller's Tale," a man kisses a woman's vagina under the impression it is her mouth. Is this pornographic? I suspect that Mr. Holbrook would say it is, but if so, he surely lacks both a sense of proportion and a sense of humour!

I stick to my own definition which takes account of the creator's overall purpose, whether it be to make us think, or laugh or both. I maintain that the scenes to which Mr. Holbrook refers in *The Music Lovers* and *The Devils* were, for the most part, entirely justified within the context of these films. Moreover, his use of such phrases as "I am told" and "a psychoanalyst contact tells me", suggests that he has not himself seen many of the films he attacks so violently. If this is so, he can hardly complain if his views are treated with something short of respect by his opponents.

To argue that "the portrayal of sexual acts on stage and screen is inevitably pornographic" is fantastic. *Ryan's Daughter* does precisely this, but anyone who could seriously contend that this beautiful and tender film is pornographic must be suffering from a fearful sexual hang-up.

JOHN L. BROOM

G.B.S. in Madeira

On reaching the part in Nigel Sinnott's article "Some Irish Freethinkers" (July 8) mentioning George Bernard Shaw, I was reminded of an amusing Shaw anecdote related to me by an old acquaintance. His name is Michael Rinder, a retired professional dancer born in Monte Carlo of Caucasian Russian parents. When in Madeira in 1932 he gave Shaw dancing lessons.

Some years ago Mr. Rinder presented me with a copy of a postcard-size photograph of Bernard Shaw and Michael Rinder together in Madeira. At foot of photograph Shaw has written: "To Michael Rinder. The only man in Madeira who could teach me anything. G. Bernard Shaw."

Michael Rinder told me that one day he had given Shaw a dancing lesson and they were walking back to an hotel when they saw a religious procession; and as they followed it to the big Madeira Cathedral Shaw exclaimed: "The superstitious and gloomy gibberings of an antiquated and ghostly past."

R. STUART MONTAGUE.

Nationalism and Uniformity

Mr. Berresford Ellis says (letters, 22 July), "Our only way forward in this world is internationalism—dialogue and co-operation between nations." May I point out we have had that already for a long time and what has been the result? Vietnam, two world wars, Korea, the Suez crisis, and the overrunning of Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

How does Mr. Ellis propose to get "co-operation between nations"? The very existence of nations prevents this. They all have different interests; and if there are nations then each has to be as strong as possible to prevent the others pushing it about. Mr. Ellis apparently wants to make this worse—by having a lot more nations.

Mr. Ellis talks about "world unity and uniformity". It is nationalism that makes for uniformity, because nationalists want Germans to write in a German style, English in the English style, and so on—not the way the individual German or English writer and artists would like to write. Under nationalism there is a tendency to uniformity and centralisation because of the necessity to

keep the nation ready for conflict. Mr. Ellis brought this matter up before in the 20 June 1970 issue (as he says) and I replied in an article "World Government, Nationalism and Culture" (25 July 1970); Mr. Ellis never replied to my points either by article or letter.

I. S. Low.

Marxism and Science

To keep the record straight, I did not say that Philip Hinchliff's article was "rubbish." This inference is a far too common practice of his, which, while detracting from himself, prohibits recognition by me of some of his more admirable talents.

However, what I called rubbish were those ideas that Philip Hinchliff has unthinkingly absorbed, the source of which can only be found in theology and philosophical idealism. An example of this is the lip service made of "reason." The idealist dares not attempt to define or explain this word—and understandably so. To the materialist, it means the ability of the human mind to analyse human experience and arrive at conclusions. He recognises it to be a functional activity of the brain, and in its turn, a part of nature. The fear of the idealist starts at this point, for he regards nature as being a part of *reason*; hence the concept of Divine Reason is propagated and perpetuated by these "secular" philosophers. That is why the religionist can declare: "Science is a belief, like any other belief," and his "secular" counterpart: "Marxism is a faith, like any other faith."

Philip Hinchliff says (letters, 22 July): "Science may accept a materialist approach as a working assumption, but that is all." Is it? When science starts using *assumptions* it will be prefixed by THE MOST HOLY, but until such times it will continue to use material facts, and to apply systematically the knowledge of those facts to its theories and activities. That is why, in reply to my statement concerning objective reality he innocently declared: "True"—completely unaware that all the writers whose material he had used to support his contention *reject* this; and that is why he contested my statement that the main body of science has always confirmed it. I repeat: science, ever since it became science has verified, confirmed, proven conclusively, by habit, practice, and by its very existence that *this world existed before man*. The simple acid test is that starting from the position of its alternative (subjectivity) man has no means whatever of ascertaining anything, for the moment the term "we" is used, the concept is violated. And that is why materialists always start building a house with the foundations and not with the roof.

Prior to the Marxian era humanity thought in much the same way as the cockerel which became convinced that the dawn and the rising sun were the direct result of its crowing. Marx's dictum: "Man's consciousness does not determine his existence, on the contrary, it is man's existence that determines his consciousness," reversed the procedure. In short: as objective reality (matter), acting upon our organs of sensation, produces images in our consciousness, so too does the study of history and sociology. *Practice* determines the correctness or otherwise of our ideas, and that is basically the dialectical materialist's position.

To the welcome interjection of Charles Byass, I must admit to not having grasped the point he was making. I know that he is not in the habit of throwing out a fragmentation bomb and asking that every sliver be accounted for.

TREVOR MORGAN.

Police Systems and Political Liberty

Claud Watson (letters, 22 July) says that I admire the Russian police system; I have said nothing of the sort. Of course, I agree that the K.G.B. is brutal, but so are its Spanish, Portuguese and South American equivalents. There is evidence that the American F.B.I. can be pretty rough when it suits them, and police brutality is not altogether a rarity—even in democratic Britain.

I agree when Dr. Watson talks about British democratic freedom; but surely he must know that our precious liberty was won only after centuries of struggle by our forefathers, and I do not doubt that the Russians will extend their freedom by the same methods—struggle.

Lastly, despite the brutality of the K.G.B. and other shortcomings, the standard of living in the Soviet Union is considerably higher today than it was fifty years ago. One cannot say the same for Spain, Portugal, or most South American republics.

J. H. MORTEN.