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THE TWILIGHT OF CHRISTIANITY

"LET IT DIE" SAYS N.S.S. PRESIDENT

The Nationwide Festival of Light, organisers of the 'London Festival for Jesus', are the targets of another hard-hitting leaflet, *Festival of Twilight*, which has just been published by the National Secular Society. The author is Miss Barbara Smoker, President of the N.S.S. and an ex-Catholic. The Festival of Light, she says, is at most "a Festival of Twilight—the twilight of the Christian god"; a revivalist movement trying vainly to halt the continuing decline in Christian belief, and an attempt "to return to the darkness of ignorance, repression and guilt that characterised the Dark Ages." At the same time, the Festival of Light is trying to present the current Jesus cult on the 'pop' scene as though it was a Christian revival instead of a passing fashion. "It is true, of course," says Miss Smoker, "that many young people, sickened by our corrupt consumer society, have seriously adopted Jesus as a revolutionary hero. But their revolutionary heroes in the past few years have ranged from Buddha to Blake, from Gandhi to Che Guevara, and there are others awaiting their turn. So the orthodox Christians who think that the Jesus craze is a sign that Christianity is not dying after all are living in a fools' paradise."

Misery, tyranny and repression

"Christianity," says the leaflet, "has caused incalculable misery down the centuries, with its wars and persecutions, its support for political tyrants, and its repression of knowledge. Following in this tradition, the Festival of Lighters generally support, for instance, the American carnage in Vietnam on behalf of Christian capitalism. They are also very keen on censorship—especially where young people are concerned."

After commenting on the Festival of Light's "Public Decency" petitions and efforts made by its sympathisers to suppress *The Little Red Schoolbook*, Miss Smoker concludes: "In spite of all the religious indoctrination at school, and on the radio and TV, most people grow out of Christian superstitions once they are old enough to think for themselves. . . Christianity is now on its deathbed. We say: let it die!"

"Unctuous display"

At the time of going to press members of the National Secular Society were planning to distribute copies of *Festival of Twilight* and the Society's other recent leaflet, *Jesus Christ Supersham*, at the so-called "Dunkirk Miracle '72" rally last Thursday. This particular 'London Festival for Jesus' event was described by the Secretary of the N.S.S. in a press statement as "an unctuous display which may possibly appeal to the more smug and unthinking Christians." It would make little impact on Londoners, accustomed as they are to "odd and zany happenings in the capital."

The statement describes the evacuation of allied troops from the Dunkirk beaches as a truly heroic feat, and pays tribute to the courage of the troops and of the civilians who sailed small boats across the Channel to rescue them. However, according to the Festival of Light, "The English

Channel became as calm as a millpond, enabling an armada of vessals of all shapes and sizes to sail from British shores and engage in the rescue work. God answered prayer."

Commenting on his claim, the National Secular Society observed: "We should be more impressed if God had caused the waters to divide (as he is reported to have done on another occasion) and allowed all the men to return safely. Those who took part in the exercise did so in conditions of great peril, and many did not survive."

Absurd claims for divine intervention

"Those who make preposterous claims about God's intervention seem to forget that before Dunkirk millions of prayers had been offered up for peace; war was declared. And after Dunkirk God appears to have gone off duty, allowing British cities to be bombed and millions of his Chosen People to be murdered in concentration camps."

Talking of concentration camps, the following apt quotation appears on the cover of *Festival of Twilight*:

The fight against pollution of the mind must be waged simultaneously with the training of the body. Today the whole of our public life may be compared to a hot-house for the forced growth of sexual notions and incitements . . . Anyone who has not altogether lost contact with adolescent yearnings will realise that all this must have very grave consequences. This seductive and sensuous atmosphere puts notions into the heads of our youth which, at their age, ought still to be unknown to them . . . But if for reasons of indolence or cowardice this fight is not fought to a finish we may imagine what conditions will be like 500 years hence. Little of God's image will be left in human nature except to mock the Creator.

—They are James Murphy's translation of the words of Adolf Hitler (*Mein Kampf*)! Is humanity so naïve as to forget the hideous "solution" that this venomous petty disciplinarian meted out to anyone and anything that offended his tiny, uptight mind?

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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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 1NL. Telephone: 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

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 Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Humanist Holidays, 29 September—1 October, "Brighton for Freethinkers" (leader: William McIlroy). Details and booking forms 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.

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 3 September, 7.30 p.m.: discussion on Apartheid.

National Secular Society. Sunday, 3 September: a day in the Chilterns. Coach leaves London at 9.30 a.m. Cost £2.25. Details from the General Secretary, N.S.S., telephone 01-407 2717.

NEWS

"I advocate the abolition of all religions, without setting up anything new of the kind."

—Richard Carlile, republican publisher (1821).

AMIN: "BRAZENLY RACIALIST"

The National Secular Society has welcomed H.M. Government's decision to extend full protection of British citizenship to British passport holders liable to expulsion from Uganda. N.S.S. President, Barbara Smoker, said that it was to be hoped that old policy of erecting a barrier—"euphemistically called a queue"—against British passport holders from East Africa would now be revised, and that the small number stranded in Europe, or held in detention here, would be restored to full citizenship.

"Although the Asians who are Ugandan citizens will no longer be under threat of expulsion," Miss Smoker added, "Amin's decision to subject each individual's citizenship to re-examination, leaving the rejects stateless, is hardly reassuring. Such brazenly racist proposals demand the strongest protest by the international community and the British Government should do its best to internationalise the issue. The United Nations' response so far to Amin's God-inspired action—concerning itself merely with aid to refugees—is totally inadequate."

General Amin, readers will remember, announced that his treatment of Uganda's Asians was willed by God, who appeared to him in a dream. This, said the N.S.S. President, was reminiscent of Yahya Khan's claim last year that God was on West Pakistan's side in war against East Pakistan—now Bangladesh!

GOD'S PRIVATE GENERAL

Pentagon officials in Washington are, we hear, a little troubled about 58-year-old General Ralph Haines, a new convert to the Pentecostal faith, and who has acquired glossolalia (the 'gift of tongues'). The General, needless to add, regards his new faith as an asset to both his heavenly and earthly careers: "Say I'm a fanatic, you ain't seen nothing yet!"

"The General," says *Daily Telegraph* correspondent Richard Beeston, "believes that Washington is the centre of 'God's power' and that America and its allies must do everything possible to keep God's hand 'upon the helm of the free world. Praise the Lord.'"

Yes, well, we have all heard about God and the big battalions, but perhaps the *Washington Evening Star* should be consulted:

With all due respect to a man who seems to have experienced a spiritual awakening, we're still obliged to say, in these touch-and-go times, that we'd sleep better knowing that our continent is being guarded by a general who acknowledges his Commander-in-Chief to be the President of the United States . . .

General Haines has said that he would 'rather be a private in the army of Jesus Christ than a General in the American Army.' Careful consideration should be given to granting this wish.

'Nixon or Jehovah' is a pretty appalling choice for any human being to have to make (surely even the legendary Hobson had a better deal), but in all seriousness, in an age of press-button nuclear strike missiles, the whole business has a slightly horrific tinge to it. It is quite bad enough that the world should already be at the nuclear mercy of Nixon, Mao, Brezhnev and Edward Heath!

AND NOTES

DEMAND FOR MUSLIM "GHETTO SCHOOLS"

The *Times Educational Supplement* for 4 August carried a letter from Mr. Iftikhar Ahmad of the Muslim Welfare Association. Pointing out, rightly, that Britain has become "a multi-cultural society" the letter then went on to call a halt to the usual practice of absorption of minorities in this country. "If the policy of integration continues," said Mr. Ahmad, it would create in Muslim children "inferiority complexes which are not only harmful to them but to the society in which they are living." The letter then called for Muslim religious teachers to be "appointed on the same lines as Christian religious teachers;" for more Muslim teachers to be "employed in schools where Muslim children are in the majority;" and for Muslim youth clubs.

The freethought movement has, of course, been warning against this sort of development unless education were secularised, and a reply to Mr. Ahmad was duly sent by the Secretary of the National Secular Society to the *Times Educational Supplement*; it was not printed. Since this is an issue of critical importance to our movement, and one which may be exacerbated in the immediate future by further immigration and sectarian intransigence, we are therefore publishing the text of the N.S.S. Secretary's letter:

I suppose it was only a matter of time before the demands listed by Iftikhar Ahmad, of the Muslim Welfare Association, were put forward. Christians have a privileged position in the nation's education system, so inevitably adherents to non-Christian faiths are seeking to turn classrooms into part-time mosques and temples. Indeed, such groups are positively encouraged to set up their own schools with the State thoughtfully subsidising the segregation of children on religious lines.

Iftikhar Ahmad seeks respect for the rights of Muslims, but Muslim religionists have little respect for the rights and feelings of children. This was highlighted by a scandal in Dewsbury when a Muslim religious leader caned twelve young children for having "missed mosque" when they went on a school visit to the zoo. It was also revealed that Muslim girls at secondary schools were prevented from attending swimming and P.T. lessons because of Islamic dress customs. The chief education officer said that there had been complaints that the mosques were pulling in the opposite direction to the educational system. Iftikhar Ahmad's letter confirms this . . .

Evidently some Muslims would prefer to see "Ghetto Schools" rather than integration. The upsurge of sectarian hatred in Northern Ireland and elsewhere should be a timely warning of the danger of religious indoctrination.

WILLIAM McILROY,

General Secretary, National Secular Society.

REVOLTED CATHOLIC

"I think it is absolutely revolting for the Family Planning Association to set up their stall among children—for that is what they are . . . It is disgraceful commercialism under the guise of social welfare. I would call it corrupting children."

These were the words of Father Michael Nugent, of St. Giles, Reading, commenting upon a contraceptive and sex information stall at the recent three-day 'Rock Festival' at Caversham, Berkshire, which at one point attracted some 25,000 people.

According to the *Daily Telegraph* (15 August), however, Fr. Nugent's opposite number, the Anglican curate of St. Giles, was "favourably impressed" with the F.P.A. stall. "I found it a very responsible stand," said the Rev. Mr.

Flatman, "It was interesting to see the young people coming up; most were taking leaflets. A very few were buying contraceptives . . . Some [young couples] are going to have sex whatever we say. Let them take precautions."

F.P.A. Press Secretary, Mrs. Wendy Smith, commented afterwards: "Three thousand leaflets on venereal disease were given away. We ran out of them, and could have got rid of a lot more. There was a tremendous interest in our education leaflets, but we only sold 174 condoms all told."

As for "disgraceful commercialism" well, people in glass houses . . . Mind you, not so long ago good Catholics regarded *all* the F.P.A.'s activities as "revolting"; and before that so did the Anglicans. Slowly but surely we seem to be civilising these Christians!

SOUTH PLACE OUTING

South Place Ethical Society* is arranging an outing to Guildford and Wisley on Sunday, 17 September. A coach will leave Conway Hall at 10 a.m., returning at 7 p.m.

The party will visit Guildford and its cathedral, then, after a break for lunch, continue to the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley, where tea will be available at the restaurant.

The outing will cost £1.50 per person, including entrance fee to Wisley, but not tea. Bring a packed lunch.

* Further details from the Socials Secretary, S.P.E.S., Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL (Telephone: 01-242 8032).

HAIR TODAY

For nastiness, *The Guardian's* correspondence columns are beginning to rival those of the *Daily Telegraph*. "Men with long hair," writes one, A. J. Jackson (*Guardian*, 15 August), "are a sign of feminism [*sic*] . . . Further to this should be added contempt for any discipline; and from a sixth former would mean no employment from me."

Some people's minds seem to be as narrow as their short backs and sides. Mind you, we have all seen long tresses hiding even woolier grey matter underneath, in some cases.

NOTHING NEW UNDER HEAVEN

Blasphemy is being performed under the very nose of the Pope. At the Costanzi Theatre, Rome, a play has been produced entitled "Maria di Magdala." It represents Mary Magdalene and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity as lovers. The Church has taken too many liberties with the Christian legend itself to relish this revised version on the stage.

—From *The Freethinker*, 3 September 1882.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

Mr. J. W. Gott is now out of prison [after serving a sentence for blasphemy] and called at our office the other day. We were quite shocked at his appearance . . . The bigots have done their best to prevent him carrying on his propaganda by breaking his health, and they appear to have succeeded only too well in that . . . Just before his release the Deputy Chaplain came into his cell and said, "Well, Gott, you are going out and I do not think that you will live long. You will not be able to carry on your evil work much longer."*

—From *The Freethinker*, 3 September 1922.

* Gott died on 4 November 1922 (see "God and Gott." *Freethinker*, 18 December 1971).

LENIN VERSUS MARX

R. STUART MONTAGUE

It is truly said that G. V. Plekhanov was the founder and father of Russian Marxism for if ever a movement owed its origin to the brilliant intellect of one man it was he. Plekhanov took no part in the Russian revolution of 1917 as he was a sick man and died on 30 May 1918.

V. I. Lenin, his celebrated pupil, was fourteen years his junior and Plekhanov himself was the pupil of Frederick Engels. In a letter to Engels (25 March 1893), he writes: "All that I should like to be is your pupil, not quite unworthy of such teachers as Marx and you."

It may be difficult these days for the Russian workers to study the writings of Plekhanov except those selected by their government. This is quite understandable for Plekhanov was an outstanding Marxist theoretician of great literary talent, originality and many-sided erudition. He opposed Lenin on many issues relating to Marxism in Russia. Subsequent economic and political development in the Soviet Union has proved Plekhanov right in practice and Lenin wrong.

Lenin became the great statesman and man of action and had no time for theory. R. H. Bruce Lockhart in his book *The Two Revolutions* states that "Plekhanov, an anti-terrorist, was the philosopher of Marxism. Lenin was the man of action." and Joseph Stalin once said: "it is well known that Plekhanov loved to chaff Lenin for his 'lack of concern' for matters of philosophy."

A bourgeois revolution

For years prior to the revolution of 1917 Lenin and all the old Bolsheviks including Stalin were in agreement with Marx and Engels on the fundamental basic principles of socialist theory, namely: socialism is impossible in a backward agrarian or feudal country such as Czarist Russia in 1917; socialism must be world wide and is impossible in one country alone; in Russia it would be a bourgeois revolution (i.e. the end of an ancient feudal agrarian régime and the beginning of capitalist industrialisation).

After the Russian bourgeois revolution of 1917 the whole Bolshevik ruling group did a complete Marxian somersault. Though it is true a number of them continued to express Marxist statements for some time after they were all well entrenched in the new Russian state. Marx had written in 1882: "If the Russian revolution sounds the signal for a workers' revolution in the West so that each becomes the compliment of the other, then the prevailing form of land ownership in Russia may serve as the starting point for a communist course of development." But the revolutionary attempts of the workers in the industrial West were suppressed.

Lenin had agreed that: "Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution say we who are Marxists." And Lenin was still in agreement with Engels when he stated that the Russian revolution "is a bourgeois revolution without the bourgeoisie." Engels had written in 1890: "... and then, where to find officers for so many in a country without a bourgeoisie."

During the next few years the new rulers of Russia formulated their own unorthodox Marxist theory for

historical progress in Russia. This became known as Marxist-Leninism and if only it had been named Anti-Marxist-Leninism it would have been a perfect and correct definition.

Speaking at a mass gathering of workers and peasants at the Congress of Soviets on the evening of 26 October 1917 Lenin exclaimed: "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order." No doubt on such an occasion his emotion had overruled his reason. Lenin was soon to construct the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) and not socialism but he still believed socialism could be established in Russia from above downwards. "If we wait for the people to understand socialism," said Lenin, "we shall wait a hundred years." And that, of course, is an Hegelian and not a Marxian concept.

Socialism was out of the question in an agrarian country where over 80 per cent of the population were peasants who wanted land not socialism. Michael Bakunin, the Russian anarchist, was just as wrong as Lenin when he made the absurd statement that the Russian peasants were "born socialists." Again, Plekhanov has been proved historically correct. He wrote:

The advantages of a socialist way of life are so apparent that they would seem easy to understand for everybody. But only the socialists of the utopian period could fail to know that understanding of socialism can exist only combined with actual economic necessity. And in a peasant state such a necessity can be present only as a rare coincidence.

The missing postscript

Volume 1 of the English edition of selected philosophical works of G. V. Plekhanov contains his article or pamphlet "Socialism and the Political Struggle." He wrote a postscript to this and it is worthy of note that this postscript has been omitted and not reprinted in this edition. In it Plekhanov accused Lenin of reviving an old Narodnik heresy by supposing that the introduction of socialism could be made to coincide with the overthrow of the old régime and predicted "fearful harm" from the attempt to telescope the bourgeois and socialist revolutions.

Plekhanov had foretold with remarkable accuracy how the Stalin dictatorship would arise and the Russian people would pay dearly for Lenin's Bolshevik policy. The Bolshevik ruling group having captured state power were destined to act the rôle of the absent bourgeoisie on the stage of world history. To remain in power they could not tell the people that socialism was impossible and a hard, long road lay before them of state capitalist industrialisation based upon a wage-labour and a capital economy.

The new rulers of Russia overcame this dilemma by dividing Marxist scientific socialism into two different concepts. The development of state capitalism they called the period of socialism and the future world of socialism is called communism.

Today state-capitalist Russia is one of the world's super-powers in the death struggle with private-capitalist America for the conquest of the earth, its raw materials, its markets and its trade. In Russia the state bourgeoisie own the

(Continued on page 287)

REVIEW

BOOK

DIASPORA: THE POST-BIBLICAL HISTORY OF THE JEWS by Werner Keller. Pitman, £3.75.

Unencumbered by footnotes or scholarly references, Dr. Keller has written a highly readable account of Jewish history that to many will seem a superior kind of journalism, rather than a work of serious historical analysis. For despite the breadth of his knowledge, Dr. Keller does not attempt to explain the reasons for the persecution the Jews have suffered throughout their history. Whether they are to be defined as a class, a race, a religion, a culture or a way of life is dismissed as irrelevant to this study; and so the extraordinary tenacity of the Jews can only be described by him as the "greatest of miracles." Their endurance and fortitude attests Yahweh's providence, for he has revealed himself to this people. By implication, the longevity of the Jewish faith is thus made to testify to its truth—a point to ponder by those tempted to use similar arguments to defend Christianity, for the older faith has the advantage of three thousand years' start.

Nearly a quarter of this long book outlines the impact of Rome on Jewish life and faith. The Jewish national state, set up in triumph after the heroic wars of Judas Maccabeus, lasted a mere forty years after 104 B.C. In 63 B.C., Pompey put an end to the dynastic intrigues of the ruling Hasmoneans by annexing Judaea for Rome. To the Senate, this was merely another extension of the writ of S.P.Q.R., one more land and people to submit to Rome's civilising mission; but to the Jews, it was a traumatic experience that was to transform their entire faith.

Initially, relations between Jews and Romans were good. Julius Caesar saw to it that Judaea was exempt from the Roman tribute, and he gave the Jews complete religious freedom. The Romans customarily gave subject provinces, such as Judaea, considerable autonomy in their domestic affairs, and religious toleration was an important part of this freedom. Yet the Jews could not accept the yoke of Rome without protest. They hated the Romans for their pollution of the Jewish way of life, in particular their defiling the Holy City of Jerusalem with the bloody games of Rome in the circuses and amphitheatres built by client-kings such as Herod the Great. Jewish antagonism to Rome derived from a fanatical belief in the sanctity of the Jewish Law, the Torah, and a devotion to the Holy Land as the domain of God. It was this that made the stationing of foreign troops in Jerusalem, symbols of a hated alien culture, intolerable. And in return, the Romans found their Jewish subjects incomprehensible: their religious rituals, their painstaking attention to every jot and tittle of the Law, their outrage at the least violation of their customs.

Judaism, and later Christianity, were regarded by the Romans as "oriental", and therefore un-Roman, practices. The first recorded persecution of the Jews in Rome took place under the emperor Tiberius, whose minions concocted a series of spurious tales of ritual murder that in this case, as so often in the middle ages, formed a pretext for persecution. Yet the anti-Jewish edicts of Tiberius and Claudius did not survive the reign of the next emperor, Nero; for as Tacitus caustically remarks, Rome had by this time become a "common sewer" into which the reli-

gious effluents of the east remorselessly flowed. The dislike of "oriental" practices felt by the Senate and aristocracy did not, in the end, withstand the spread of the religions of the orient all over the empire.

The Romans assumed direct control of Judaea in A.D. 6. Their first task was to put down an uprising led by Judas of Galilee, the founder of the Zealots, and thousands of Jewish insurgents met an ignominious death on the cross. Matters were worsened beyond repair by the rapacious procurators with which Judaea was saddled, of whom Pontius Pilate (26-36) was a typically brutal specimen. War was thus inevitable, and broke out in May 66 when the Temple priests refused any longer to offer up the daily sacrifices for the Roman emperor and people.

Destruction of the Jewish national state

The initial success of the insurgents in Jerusalem proved a delusion, for the rebel Jews were no match for the professional armies despatched against them by Rome, headed by Nero's most able general, Vespasian. The war of 66-70 was certainly the most terrible yet recorded in Jewish history, for in addition to the unbelievable carnage in Judaea wrought by the Roman armies there were mass killings of the Jews in the Hellenised cities of the empire. Yet still the Jews fought on, in their faith that Yahweh would intervene to blast the impious Romans from the Holy Land. The bloody conclusion of the struggle was Titus's siege of Jerusalem in the summer of A.D. 70. The relentless Romans ran up their siege-works, crucified five hundred Jewish prisoners a day, and eventually burnt the Temple to the ground. The fate of the survivors was appalling: tens of thousands died on the cross, or in the Roman amphitheatres, or in the mines of Egypt, whilst thousands more were sold into slavery.

Incredibly, the loss of the Holy City and its Temple did not destroy Judaism. For it was now that the rabbis—the teachers of the Law—began to assume responsibility for the continuation of their faith. To preserve the traditions of Judaism for the rootless mass of refugees streaming out of Judaea to be dispersed all over the vast Roman empire, the rabbis undertook the systematic codification of the body of oral doctrine, and embodied it in the first part of the Talmud, the Mishnah. Emphasis was now placed on both the home and the local synagogue for the worship of Yahweh. Judaism ceased to be a vigorous, proselytising faith. Instead of political messianism, the cultivation of the Torah was seen as the path to moral perfection. The ideas of Hillel, a Pharisee scholar who had been virtually ignored in the heyday of Zealotism, began to win slow acceptance. Yet the Jews did not finally acknowledge their impotence in the face of Rome until a second disastrous convulsion shook their nation in the years 132-135. Half a million Jews were slaughtered by the Romans in their ferocious war against the messianic pretender, Bar Kochbar. Exulting in their victory, the Romans built a pagan city, Aelia Capitolina, on the site of the ruined Jerusalem, with an enormous statue of Hadrian. This second cataclysm finally put an end to the Jewish national state.

The punitive restrictions on the practice of the Jewish faith imposed by Hadrian were gradually relaxed by subsequent emperors. But soon after the accession of Constantine to the throne of Rome in 313, the Jews had to contend with a new threat: the triumph of Christianity. The Christians denounced the Jews as the murderers of

(Continued overleaf)

Christ, and subjected them to attacks that in harshness and duration have no parallel in history other than the Nazis. That the persecutions did not stem from simple Christian cruelty is clear, for the Christian church deserves great credit for its successful campaign against the gladiatorial games that had disfigured pagan Rome for centuries. But none the less the Jews had to suffer the pillaging and destruction of their synagogues, and stringent restrictions on the practice of their faith. As the fourth century wore on, these attacks worsened despite the courageous attempts of the emperor Theodosius I (379-395) to prevent Christian excesses. Learned Church Fathers such as Jerome, John Chryostom and Ambrose ignited the fires of anti-Semitism and their incendiary writings incited both kings and rabble against the Jews for hundreds of years.

The western Roman empire disintegrated rapidly following the death of Theodosius, but still the Christian emperors continued to harass their Jewish subjects. Palestine was by now fully Christianised, and the centre of Judaism moved to Babylonia, where around the year 500 the vast structure of the Babylonian Talmud was finally completed. Despite vicious persecution in the eastern Roman empire, the great Jewish academies laboured to produce this written account of the oral teaching, and its interpretation, for the benefit of the now widely scattered Jewry. With the triumph of the Catholic Church over Arianism, and the launching of a fresh series of persecutions, the Talmud became the great unifying force of Judaism.

In contrast to the cruelty of the Byzantine emperors and Christian Europe, Islam treated the Jews mercifully. An intellectual and spiritual flowering of Jewry took place under the tolerant rule of the Moslems. Encouraged by the increased freedom of travel in North Africa, a tremendous intermingling of oriental and occidental Jews led to the growth of a successful Jewish commercial class as well as an intellectual élite. The Jews now became vital to the welfare of the Christian West, for the Moslem empire's conquest of Africa, Egypt and the middle east had cut off Europe from the rest of the world; the Jews, who lived everywhere in the domain of Islam as well as Europe, were the sole intermediaries between the two. They carried the bulk of Europe's trade. Accordingly, under the emperor Charlemagne and his immediate successors, persecution slowed and stopped. Relative peace for the Jews endured until the turn of the eleventh century, when in 1095 Pope Urban II called up the kings of Christian Europe to liberate Jerusalem—the city of Christ—from the Moslems.

The Crusades caused mass hysteria among the peoples of western Europe, and a great deal of the religious xenophobia they aroused was directed against the Jews. Pierre Abelard, a French monk writing in 1135, has compassionately described the plight of the Jews amidst the religious bigotry of crusading Europe. To mistreat the Jews was thought of as work pleasing God. Heavy taxation coupled with economic discrimination served to force them out of industry and agriculture, so that their only remaining livelihood was usury, which excited still more hatred. For three centuries, whilst the frenzy induced by the Crusades gripped Europe, the Jews sank lower and lower until they became a pariah class. Occasional Popes, such as the mighty Innocent III, inveighed against the worst outbursts of hatred, but to no avail; and it was in fact Innocent himself, in his papal bull of 1215, that compelled Jews to wear an identification badge so that devout Christians would save themselves from unwitting association with Jewish "unbelievers."

A profound dislocation of Jewry resulted. Hounded from agriculture, industry and commerce, the Jews were reduced to small peddlers and pawnbrokers, to the detriment of the economic life of Europe. Their property could be, and was, taken at will. During the most savage economic persecutions, such as that of Henry III in England from 1216 to 1272, the Jews were brought to complete economic ruin. As well as exorbitant, rapacious taxation, the Jews had to face absurd charges of ritual murder, which dated back to pagan Rome and were originally designed to harray the early Christians. Now Christian Europe revived the terrible charges and fabrications, turning them against the Jews. A further twist to anti-semitism was afforded by the Black Death of 1348, for the Jews were accused of spreading the plague throughout Europe. What Dr. Keller describes as a "medieval inferno" hit the Jews at this time. In city after city, the Jews were quite literally wiped out. Eighty pages of Dr. Keller's book are taken with chronicling, in horrific detail, the diabolic persecutions that raged without respite. It is hard to imagine a more appalling indictment of Christian Europe than its merciless butchering of the Jews over the centuries.

Fate of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews

For the first time, around 1400, the Jews broke ranks in the face of Christian violence. Large numbers of Jews in Spain submitted to forced baptism to stop the massacres. This did not, however, save them for long, for the Christians suspected them—often rightly—of secretly practising their old faith. The converted Jews became known as "marranos," a word meaning "damned." The simple act of accepting Christian baptism suddenly opened all the doors of society to the marranos. They rose, many of them, into high positions in commerce, agriculture, the army and even the Church. Unable to suppress their envy and hatred, and unwilling to harbour a Jewish fifth column in their ranks, the Christians renewed their attacks with even greater fury. The number of marranos burnt alive by the Spanish Inquisition, under de Torquemada, was thirty thousand. Papal protests, which were mute and ineffectual, were confined to the arbitrariness of the inquisitorial tribunals, not the slaughter itself.

Inevitably, the ferocity of these pogroms spilled over into violence against the orthodox Jews themselves. There were mass expulsions of Jews from both Spain and Portugal. By the decrees of 1492 and 1496, over one hundred thousand people were made homeless, condemned to drift around the Mediterranean seafloor in search of a haven. Apart from Poland, traditionally a home for Jewish refugees fleeing from mass murder, only the Ottoman Empire offered a resting-place. Under the benevolent umbrella of the Turks, life prospered mightily, and, as in Poland, the Jews made significant contributions to industry and commerce. By contrast, the forced departure of the Jews was a severe blow to the economies of Spain and Portugal, though I cannot accept that the decay of both these countries was caused simply by their expulsion of their Jewish subjects, as Dr. Keller suggests; for this is to neglect entirely the rise of England and Holland to naval power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the consequent growth in their economic strength.

The long arm of the Inquisition reached even to the New World, where mass burnings of Jewish heretics and unbelievers took place, despite the fact that the voyages of exploration had all been financed by Jewish money. Outside Spain and Portugal, however, persecution of the Jews

diminished in seventeenth-century Europe. Thriving Jewish communities established themselves in Amsterdam, where the synagogue was so intolerant of unorthodoxy that it expelled the great philosopher Spinoza from its ranks in 1656. In England, the rise of Oliver Cromwell led to greater tolerance for the Jews, who had been expelled in 1290, and the Restoration continued to recognise the economic benefits of Jewish immigration.

Emancipation and modern anti-Semitism

Even though mass killings of Jews became progressively rarer in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jewish economic life was still severely disrupted. Expulsions of Jews from the cities still took place, and most productive occupations were barred to them. Why, then, did movement towards Jewish emancipation in the nineteenth century accelerate? Dr. Keller affords no real explanation of this phenomenon, other than the awakening of the conscience of civilised Europe. But he does point out that the great catalytic influence was the decree of the French National Assembly, on 27 September 1791, giving all Jews in France full civic rights, the first time in modern history that this had been done. The ideals of the French Revolution also inspired the edicts of toleration that were issued throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. But progress was slow; in Prussia, for instance, tolerance of the Jews was long thought incompatible with the "Christian principles of government" of the Holy Alliance, not to mention the Hegelian absolutism of the Prussian State.

There was a great flowering of Jewish talent, in all fields of human endeavour, as the nineteenth century wore on. The accelerating growth of capitalism required vast injections of capital, which the Jews were able to supply. As industrialists and merchants, the Jews thrived on the lifting of restrictions; and the freer intellectual atmosphere in most of Europe proved an ideal background to the assimilation of the Jews into European culture. Yet, just as before, the success of the Jews stimulated outbursts of hatred, especially in Germany where scurrilous anti-Semitic propaganda took on a new, racist slant. Denunciation of the Jews, formerly based on religion, now took root in the allegedly "scientific" findings of biology about race. Anti-Jewish fanaticism was also rife in Vienna, where a flood of racist attacks on the Jews were published in the late nineteenth century and were to form heady reading for an Austrian named Hitler.

The struggle for the full emancipation of the German Jews had lasted for nearly a century. Three years of the Hitler régime, from 1933 to 1936, wiped out all the gains of that struggle. Over one hundred thousand Jews were driven from Germany in the 1930s, yet there was no outcry of protest from the German people as a whole. With the onset of the Second World War, the Nazis instituted anti-Jewish pogroms that had not been known in Europe since the darkest days of the middle ages, culminating in the decision of March 1941 that the Jews of Europe were to be racially annihilated. Once the land of Goethe, Bach, Beethoven and Kant, Germany is now, and will remain for a long time, the land of Hitler, Himmler and the death camps, the most monstrous crime ever perpetrated by human beings on defenceless fellow men.

But at long last, after the war, Israel was to come into its own, with the establishment of the new State in 1948 and the repossession of its Holy City of Jerusalem in 1967. And after two thousand years, the history of the Jews had come full circle. They had suffered atrocious persecution

for religious, economic and racist reasons. They had been the scapegoat for the wars, famines, plagues and disasters of Europe over the centuries. In the end, the story told by Dr. Keller is not just an indictment of the savagery of man; it is also a moving tribute to the faith and courage of that amazing people, the Jews.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

LENIN versus MARX

(Continued from page 284)

means of production collectively and the national surplus value created by the exploitation of the workers and peasants is distributed among the rulers, officials and others.

Gulf between rich and poor

The standard of living of the workers is rising but the gulf between the rich and poor is widening. Mrs. Golda Meir visited Russia in 1970. A representative of the *Observer* asked her: "How did Russia strike you as a Socialist?" "It was my greatest disillusionment. A classless society? I can see them now, women digging ditches at 40 below zero, poorly dressed with rags on their feet, and other women stepping out of motor-cars in fur coats and high heels."

How different will conditions be in the socialist society? Men and women may have to dig ditches if it cannot possibly be done by machinery. Women may wear fur coats and perhaps high heels and fly their own aeroplanes. The fundamental difference is that they will all be the same women and men. When dirty work is unavoidable will be done by all those people capable of working. In a moneyless, socialist society there could not be one class of women in rags and another class in fur coats.

LETTERS

Optimism and Progress

I have been following the debate on Marxism, and I notice that Philip Hinchliff (letters, 12 August) says that Marxism, like Christianity, "allows us to retain our optimism about the future, for without this basic optimism no progress is possible."

If Mr. Hinchliff does not accept Marxism or Christianity I should be interested to know what he does accept which provides him with basic optimism about the future. Or does he not believe in progress at all?

M. A. FORSYTH (Mrs.).

No Absolutes

Peter Crommelin (letters, 19 August) asks me to explain what I mean by "I accept no absolutes." I can answer only in metaphorical language; in words that are chips of social history and which refer to separate chips of an interrelated reality we also call existence.

I see myself as near the tail end of a growing evolutionary queue, staggering along under a growing burden of knowledge gathered from a relatively limited region of time, space and human experience. Just ahead of me I see the man I asked, as a boy, "Why do you use the word 'God' if you can't show me the thing you are talking about—as a thing?" Just behind me is Peter Crommelin, in effect saying to me, "No absolutes? Why do you use the word 'absolute'? Merely to negate it?"—I am afraid so; it was bad language. That is why I accept no absolutes.

HYMAN LEVY.

Necessity, Chance and Freewill

I should like to enter the lists against Trevor Morgan ("The Necessity of Chance," 19 August) in defence of my favourite philosopher, Hume. There is no reason why a consistent materialist must recognise objective reality. Hume held that we have certain knowledge of only our sensations: we know nothing of what lies beyond them, if indeed there is a beyond. The only difference between waking and dream sensations is that the former can be corroborated by other people, but not the latter. We call a particular sequence of sensations a scientific law when it is corroborated by a sufficient number of people judged to be competent. If Marx defended objective reality, this must be added to the already long list of the mistakes of Marx.

The existence of chance was formerly a speculation; but today the Quantum Theory teaches that about ten per cent of atomic reactions are, in however small a degree, quite unpredictable, and may be due to chance. Of course there exists the possibility that today's "chances" may tomorrow prove to have a sufficient cause; but on the other hand they may not. Freewill rests on the acceptance of chance; no chance, no freewill. HENRY MEULEN.

"[Chance] is merely a modern term used by Monod, whose precursors when attempting to describe that which lay beyond the limits of their knowledge, used the word God."—Trevor Morgan ("The Necessity of Chance!" 19 August).

Good God Almighty! I never thought I would read such rubbish in *The Freethinker*! The idea of God has always been associated with design, and Trevor Morgan's linking the concept of chance with the concept of God demonstrates his ability for grasping the wrong end of the stick firmly in both hands. Most of Morgan's article seems to me irrelevant to his criticism of Monod—the concept of chance.

As an atheist/materialist I would argue that (1) all things (events) are caused—the Universe is not a thing but a collection of things, the highest category; (2) all things (events) outside of volitional action and its products are a matter of chance. *Chance refers to the absence of design not the absence of causation.*

Since Trevor Morgan fails to see that to argue against chance is to argue for design, it is he and not Jacques Monod who is lumbered with a "ghost of a god." If not "the free play of physical forces," what should we expect to find if and when we get beyond the limitations of the microscope? BRIAN KHAN.

Trevor Morgan seems to base his refutation of Monod's *Chance and Necessity* on the fallacious belief that determinism must eliminate chance. Whenever separate chains of causation converge and the convergence causes something else, this is surely what we mean by chance.

For example: all the biochemical compounds which, coming together, produced D.N.A., presumably came to be in the same place at the same time as a result of separate chains of causation, their final meeting being a chance meeting, in the everyday sense. Even if there were enough of all the required chemicals around at the same time to make contact between them a statistical certainty, the particular contacts were still determined by chance; and so with every event in the universe. BARBARA SMOKER.

Anyone unfamiliar with Monod's book, *Chance and Necessity*, reading Trevor Morgan's "Necessity of Chance!" would no doubt gain the impression that Monod preaches some form of mysticism! Having read the book in question, may I be allowed to pick up some of Mr. Morgan's points?

It is understandable that Mr. Morgan should react violently against Monod, who so effectively demolishes his beloved "dialectical materialism," but this does not excuse his misrepresentation of Monod. He describes the materialism of Monod as an "attack upon objective reality"—he might as well accuse Ian Paisley of being a Papist! This astounding lack of comprehension can only be due to blinking by preconceptions.

To claim that a reasonably apt quotation (whether or not correctly translated is not relevant) is Monod's "fundamental support," merely because it appears on a flyleaf, is to divert attention from the fact that Monod's true "fundamental support" is the known properties of certain types of molecule (particularly nucleic acids). Considering that Monod devotes four chapters, also three appendices, to these molecules and their properties, surely even Mr. Morgan could not have missed this! Perhaps he is not prepared to admit the "objective reality" of such molecules?

For some reason, Mr. Morgan is most upset when Monod states (in effect) that, to be acceptable, a general theory must be consistent with the known general properties of the physical universe—no doubt a truism, but hardly a denial of objective reality!

Mr. Morgan dismisses the concept of "chance" as "having no scientific validity," despite the fact that the uncertainty principle is an essential part of quantum theory. Even if Mr. Morgan's assertion (unsupported by evidence) that phenomena beyond the limits of resolution of our observing apparatus are ultimately causal in nature, should ever be confirmed, this does not preclude the possibility of "chance," in the sense of "coincidence" (or "accident"), the sense in which Monod mainly uses the word. Monod deals with precisely these points; perhaps Mr. Morgan did not read thus far?

After these misrepresentations, it is no great surprise to find that Mr. Morgan closes by purporting to quote the comments of Engels (died 1895) on Monod's book (published 1970).

GEORGE D. RODGER.

Marxism: Theory and Reality

The inexcusable boob I made in my hastily concluded letter of 5 August ("so too does the study of history and sociology" re the Marxian theory of Knowledge) has been correctly alluded to by Charles Byass. Such discerning qualities must surely justify the compliment I paid to him.

I cannot help thinking, though, that his attentive reading somewhat belies the apparent sincerity of his approach, especially when the acuteness of his perception of minute details permits him to be so lax as to refer to my "knowledge of some of [his] habits," when I used the singular. Again, he "would agree with Mr. Hinchliff that philosophical sceptics would probably be unimpressed by [my] argument in favour of 'objective reality.'" I too, would most likely agree! But Mr. Hinchliff did not say that. Likewise, I think Mr. Byass has extracted from my statements something that was not intended. Surely from his "scientifically-based common sense" point of view, he would regard "the independent existence of an external world" as being equally "well-nigh irrefutable"? I would go that little bit further, and say it is. And when science verifies this by its everyday activities, I see no impropriety in calling it a "scientific fact." The additional "evidence" was merely used to counter the anticipated rejection.

Charles Byass also agrees "in general" with the argument of Mr. Hinchliff on the question of Marxian theory; but since so many of the assertions made are drawn from sources outside of Marx and Engels, I would point out that he is identifying himself with the position of the man who said, "I know it's true, because the person who told me never tells lies."

By the way, objective reality is none other than the Hegelian dialectical idea, transferred and transformed into the concrete materialism of Marx; the dialectic cannot possibly be "dropped."

A final point that may be of interest to freethinkers in general is Mr. Hinchliff's description of Hegel's philosophy as being "intellectually pernicious." Why? It is highly significant to note, that Hegel's introduction of relative truths and concepts cuts through the legs of that colossus of Church and State, the eternal giant with the eternal ideas of right and wrong, of good and evil, and the eternal way of life. In falling to earth, whose wails and shrieks do we hear as the bell tolls? TREVOR MORGAN.

Correspondence on Marxism

Further contributions to the *Marxism debate* will not be considered for publication unless received by Tuesday, 19 September. Thereafter this correspondence will be closed (Ed.).

Pornographic Productions

Mr. Holbrook's correspondence reinforces my opinion that pornography is in the eye of the beholder.

By using the indefinite "one" instead of the first person singular he tries to trick the unwary reader into believing that his own personal view is, or was two decades ago, held universally. Maybe the placing of a man's hand on a girl's hand was an experience of tremendous eroticism for him; but was it for others?

If Mr. Holbrook is so horrified at the present glut of, as he would call it, pornography, he should surely rejoice at "the last spasm of a dying culture"—and look forward to a second coming!

The odd point is that Mr. Holbrook talks about "perverted fantasy" caused by such allegedly pornographic productions as *Straw Dogs*, but he tells us about a psychotherapist's patient who had his fantasies stolen from him by *Straw Dogs*; hardly logical!

Does Mr. Holbrook hope to get away with his explanation for not experiencing what he criticises? We condemn all bullfights as he agrees, not just a particular bullfight. Using his logic: *Oh! Calcutta!* is a musical therefore we should condemn all musicals!

Mr. Holbrook's motivation seems to be purely selfish: "I do not want my own fantasies messed up." To quote him again: "Can one not draw the line at that?" LAWRENCE DUCKWORTH.