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The FREETHINKER

The Secular
and Humanist
Weekly

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OH, LORD LONGFORD: GET STUFFED!

The Longford Report: should one laugh at it; just yawn; or blow a bugle to summon lovers of liberty to defend the barricades? At risk of being thought naïve—of underestimating the enemy, we are inclined to yawn, but as the media, in their collective wisdom, consider this document worthy of front-page headlines, who are we to dissent? Perhaps the most inept comment was that of the *Daily Mirror*: "Lord Porn's Verdict!" It was nothing of the kind. It was the one hundred per cent predictable decision of a hanging jury loaded with Christian pornophobes and led by a militant Catholic whose church has failed miserably in its anti-social opposition to the birth control movement in Britain, and is desperately searching for another avenue of attack. Pornography, and its dreary, overrated, hypocritical and money-grubbing promoters and camp-followers had about as much chance of being acquitted by Lord Longford's inquisitors as Karl Marx would have had if brought before a Nazi people's court. In the words of Barbara Smoker, the President of the National Secular Society: "The very suggestion from the outset that the committee might come out against censorship was enough to raise a laugh." The only charitable description of this report would be as a prosecutor's brief.

The illiberal suburban backlash

David Tribe, a former editor of this paper and author of *Nucleoethics* (just published), described Lord Longford's 100,000 word report as having "a bad smell" to it. "Not only in a physical but in a social sense. It is the best-thundered, best-promoted and most illiberal manifestation of the suburban backlash to the so-called permissive society. In the short term it will give even more free publicity to the 'porn' merchants than did the commissioners themselves as they sniffed about Europe scavenging their evidence; and I must say that it had an erotic effect on me. If it is taken seriously it will, in the long term, set back creative freedom more than a century.

"Having failed to establish that obscenity depraves or corrupts, the commission does not frankly admit this as did recent official committees in Denmark, Britain, West Germany and America. It merely by-passes this definition in favour of one which would immediately outlaw most of Shakespeare's tragedies, namely that they 'outrage contemporary standards of decency and humanity'; and, while claiming to be directed solely against hardcore 'porn' it removes the defence of 'public good' allowed to literary or scholarly material. Into this restrictive net it seeks to sweep literature, the theatre, the cinema, radio and television, and even sex education.

A "phantasy panacea"

"It is true that today much trash gets by under libertarian colours; and that violence, heroin-addiction and the reification of people disturb all serious citizens. These are, however, tangible problems needing tangible solutions outside the scope of phantasy escapism and phantasy panaceas."

Similar sentiments were voiced by the National Secular Society, which pointed out that one man's obscenity was another man's sociology. "Whenever laws have been introduced to repress things that are a matter of taste they have

been used, sooner or later, for political ends. One of the most ardent campaigners against pornography was Adolf Hitler. The whole idea of obscenity is tied up with an unhealthy belief in sin which most ordinary people in this country have now rejected along with the other superstitions of past centuries."

Out of touch with the general public

The N.S.S. says that the proposed abolition of the legal plea of 'public good' would also stifle the writing of original work and reprinting of the classics. "It would also create a black market in pornography with all the blackmail and fear that that would entail." The Society is equally critical of definitions of obscenity involving "outraging contemporary standards . . . accepted by the public at large": in fact, says the N.S.S., Lord Longford's Committee is obviously out of touch with the said public. "Concern about the obscenity allegedly rife today is actually confined to a minority. Anyway, if the law had rested on this definition in Victorian England, it would presumably have been a criminal offence to display uncovered piano legs."

"We do agree with the committee's recommendation to make illegal the sending of certain kinds of unsolicited 'mail order' material. However we feel that this law should perhaps apply to a wider range of material than the term 'obscene' would cover."

"A two-day wonder"

Kenneth Furness, General Secretary of the British Humanist Association, told *The Freethinker* that he thought the pornography report was "a two-day wonder—and the sooner it is forgotten the better." He described the Longford committee as "just a bunch of silly old men and women who have got so worked up by their experiences in Swedish sex-clubs and the back rooms of Soho 'porn-shops' that they are scared stiff that the rest of the com-

(Continued on next page)

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

The *Freethinker* is obtainable at the following addresses. **London:** Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1; Freethinker Bookshop, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. **Glasgow:** Clyde Books, 292 High Street. **Manchester:** Grass Roots Bookshop, 271 Upper Brook Street, 13. **Brighton:** Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road, (near Brighton Station).

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.

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.

EXHIBITION: "Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man." Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Until 10 October. (Monday-Friday, 4-9 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.) Admission free.

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 1 October, 5.30 p.m.: George Melly, "Reality is the Mystery."

Freethought History and Bibliography Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Saturday, 30 September, 2.45 p.m.: Christopher Brunel, "Thomas Paine, the Collector's Friend."

Havering Humanist Society, 10 Glamis House, Cameron Close, Brentwood. Saturday, 30 September, 8 p.m.: coffee and beer evening c/o Roy and Pam Mason.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday 1 October, 6.30 p.m.: Dr. A. J. Meadows, "Science and Controversy."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 1 October, 11 a.m.: T. F. Evans, "The James Brothers—William and Henry." Tuesday, 3 October, 7 p.m.: Glyn Seaborn Jones, "Schools and Psychology: the Integration of Insight and Methods."

(Continued from front page)

munity will be similarly affected." "We won't be," he added, "We can't afford such expensive pastimes."

It would be fatuous to suggest that pornography *never* does any harm, but as Tony Smythe of the National Council for Civil Liberties said recently, "Censorship is more depraving and corrupting than anything pornography can produce." This report has underlined these words in no uncertain terms. Immolating themselves on the altar of 'research' Lord Longford's unofficial 'porn' commission have wallowed through more filth than the Gadarene swine might have managed to do in two lifetimes. In consequence, have they assaulted schoolgirls, masturbated in public, or run screaming and *déshabillé* down Oxford Street? No, the sole effect of pornography has been this report, and to screw their weird and assorted prejudices down by about another turn.

In conclusion, the verdict of this paper, and the general consensus of the freethought movement, is that Lord Longford and his report should be handed over—"to be treated as leniently as possible, and without effusion of blood"—to a qualified taxidermist.

NO QUARTER ?

One of the few redeeming features of old-fashioned wars was that the parties concerned exercised (at least in theory) a certain restraint in respect of prisoners and civilians, and that the persons of diplomats, heralds and messengers were inviolate. The recent murder of Dr. Ami Shachory at the Israeli embassy in London by means of a letter bomb indicates that the Black September movement has no time for these out-dated conventions. In effect then, these Arab extremists are saying: no quarter given or asked, and no negotiations. A grim prospect for all concerned, not least for the Arabs. If it is a total war, without restraint or mercy, that they want they have surely picked an unfortunate choice of opponent. The Jews have a habit of surviving attempts to wipe them off the surface of the earth.

Let us hope, however, that total war will not come to pass. Two things are required to prevent this: Arab government must put pressure to bear on Palestinian and allied guerilla movements, and secondly, and as important, it is essential that Israel and the international Jewish community ensure that their own lunatic fringe, especially in the United States, does not retaliate by posting letter bombs to Arab embassies and consulates. We can but hope.

THE USTASHI MENACE

For some months, thanks to the generosity of a correspondent, we have been perusing the Australian press and following, with growing apprehension, news of the Ustashi movement in exile there. The recent hijacking of a Scandinavian airliner to Spain has now brought the existence of this unutterably loathsome movement to the attention of all Europe.

The Ustashi movement came into its own as a gruesome mixture of racialism, pseudo-nationalism, fascism and militant Catholicism when Yugoslavia was overrun by the Axis powers in 1941, and a puppet state of Croatia was established under Ante Pavelich and Cardinal Stepinac. The Croatian fascists were able to match most of the atrocities of the Nazis, their specialities being torture, massacre, and Serb-baiting. As they had a penchant for being photographed cutting their victims' throats or holding severed human hearts, they left plenty of evidence. After 1945

NEWS AND NOTES

some twenty or so Ustashi war criminals escaped to Australia and, aided by right-wing émigré Croatian priests, kept the Ustashi movement going strong with the connivance of "anti-Communist" Australian politicians.

Other Ustashi thugs, to evade war crimes courts, took the usual fascist escape route to Spain. Generalissimo Franco must find it bitterly ironic that these men are now threatening reprisals against the Spanish authorities unless the Croatian hijackers are released. Twenty-seven years after the Second World War ended Europe still falls under the shadow of the three fingered salute: cross, knife, and gun!

WAR CLOUDS OVER UGANDA

*Is it so, that the sword is broken,
Our sword, that was halfway drawn?
Is it so, that the light was a spark
That the bird we hailed as the lark
Sang in her sleep in the dark,
And the song we took for a token
Bore false witness of dawn?*

We were reminded of these words as we went to press last week and news came in of an apparently unsuccessful rising against Ugandan Führer, Sergeant Amin. They are, of course, the words of Swinburne, written in honour of another abortive rising—one which, at the time, seemed singularly futile—the attempt by Garibaldi's redshirts to redeem the honour of Italy by marching against the last bastion of the Papal States. It is heartening to hear that someone has drawn the sword against this modern tyrant, and tried to redeem the honour of Uganda. As Dr. Nyerere has said of Amin, "Lunatics are fortunate in being able to do evil without anything being done to them; but there comes a time when even a lunatic must be tied up with rope."

"Any human being can make a mistake," commented Amin recently, "except God." And since Idi Amin has the big battalions, God will be on his side—for the present; the God of Battles, as the founder of this paper so rightly remarked, "never fights for honest men and people struggling against oppression." But God failed to protect the Papal States once the battalions of France were withdrawn. Amin has won a battle, but not the war. One thing is certain: the sooner Uganda's Asians, and any other minorities that this god-fearing despot has taken a dislike to, are safely removed from his clutches, the better.

*From the dark height of time there sounds a word
Crying, Comfort: though death ride on this red hour
Hope waits with eyes that make the morning dim
Till liberty, re clothed with love and power
Shall pass and know not if she tread on him.*

(A. C. SWINBURNE).

CAPRERA O MORTE!

On the subject of Garibaldi: since construction work on a NATO submarine base began on the island of Maddalena, off Sardinia, the neighbouring island of Caprera has been declared off-limits to the general public—an act of secular sacrilege which has provided Italy's Communist press (hardly enamoured of NATO to begin with) with a propagandist field day!

Caprera, of course, is the rocky island where Garibaldi died in 1882. The Liberator of Italy bought it in 1854, built a house there and tended his goats whilst plotting

various expeditions against Pope Pius IX in Rome and the Bourbon régime in Naples. The island was given to the State as a national shrine by the Garibaldi family in 1907. George Armstrong of *The Guardian* has commented:

Even though not many Italians can visit the distant and inaccessible island to see the home and tomb of 'the hero of two world,' they like to know that it is there, that it is theirs, and that it was all once his. In the little more than 100 years of Italy's history as a nation Giuseppe Garibaldi is the country's only undisputed hero.

Yes indeed, and he was also a lifelong militant atheist and president of the Società Atea. We hope that Italy's freethinkers will join with us in suggesting that NATO plays with its Poseidon submarines somewhere else.

RELIGIOUS FOOD TABOOS

Britain, to her credit, has finally lived down the Commonwealth Immigration Act and accepted her responsibility to Asians holding British passports in Uganda. The assimilation of such a large influx *en masse* will not be easy, but this country has coped with Flemings, Huguenots, Eastern European Jews, and Polish and Hungarian refugees in the past, and can doubtless deal with the present situation given time and goodwill. The good-natured stoicism and cheerfulness of the first batches of Asians to arrive, despite the anxieties they have been suffering, augurs well for the future.

However, integration of Asians, or any other group in the general community, will most certainly not be helped by the case at Worthing, where a magistrate requested a young couple not to cook beef because this offended the religious susceptibilities of their landlord's devout Sikh wife. If this is to become a legal precedent then it means that Jewish landlords can stop their tenants eating pork, Moslems object to tenants keeping whisky in their sideboards, and Pythagoreans restrain theirs from eating beans. The whole idea offends both common sense and common law, not to mention providing a weapon for every jingo and racist crackpot for miles. The law here should either be clarified or amended.

THE CASE OF CHENG TSU-TSAI

Readers have doubtless read of the case of Mr. Cheng Tsu-tsai, who is accused of conspiring to assassinate, in New York, Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo (elder son of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek). Mr. Cheng may be appealing to the House of Lords against efforts to extradite him from Britain back to the United States.

The case has an interesting precedent. In the 1890s it was found out that the Imperial Chinese legation in London was holding prisoner a young revolutionary doctor whom it was proposed to return to China and to certain execution. The radical press of the day raised a furore; questions were asked in the Houses of Parliament; pressure was brought to bear, and the young Chinese was released. His name, of course, was Dr. Sun Yat-sen, and he became first president of the Chinese Republic.

Dr. Sun, who died in 1925, now has two aspiring successors: a *de facto* one in Peking, Comrade Mao Tse-tung; and a *de jure* one in Taipei, Marshal Chiang Kai-shek. Were he alive today, Dr. Sun Yat-sen would appreciate the irony of Mr. Cheng's predicament.

HELLO, YOUNG CHRISTIANS, WHEREVER YOU ARE

A word of comfort for anyone inclined to take seriously Christian claims of a mass return to Jesus by the young. In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* (13 September) Mrs. Brenda Strang relates how she visited the University of Essex Bookshop only to find "one whole section consisting of several whole shelves devoted to Marxism and another to Russia." Looking for something on Christianity, she eventually found two titles under "Philosophy": *Why I am Not a Christian* by Bertrand Russell, and *The Misery of Christianity* by Joachim Kahl!

Apart from "Bolshevik conspiracy" it is just possible that every available Christian work in the shop had been eagerly snapped up by devout students, but we doubt it; any bookseller will tell you that theology rarely falls into the bestseller category nowadays.

UNITARIAN TERCENTENARY

We are reminded by "Peterborough" of the *Daily Telegraph* that this year marks the three hundredth anniversary of Birmingham's old New Meeting House (now the Unitarian Church of the Messiah). It is famous for its associations with, among other notable figures, Joseph Priestley, the famous chemist, who was minister to its Unitarian congregation from 1780 to 1891. As readers of *The Freethinker* probably know, Priestley was eventually driven from Birmingham by a church-and-king mob who destroyed his home, laboratory, and the Old and New Meeting Houses.

RELIGIOUS SURVIVALS IN RUSSIA

The Soviet authorities are just beginning to perceive that their own version of the "Methodone of the People" is not wholly efficacious in weaning them off the old Czarist "Opium." *Pravda's* editorial of 15 September called for the complete liquidation of "one of the most tenacious survivals of the past"—religion.

Every Communist must be a militant atheist and we cannot tolerate it when members of the party and young Komsomol members themselves take part in religious ceremonies . . .

The *Daily Telegraph's* Moscow correspondent (16 September) called this an "astonishing admission," though old hands who read *The Freethinker* will, we suspect, think otherwise.

The same editorial also says that it is very important to expose the connexion between religion and "nationalist survivals." In other words, Lithuania and the Ukraine are still straining at the centralised leash. We suppose that it would be treasonable in Moscow to suggest that nationalism might, occasionally, be justifiable—even atheistical, too.

BOLSHEVIKS UNDER THE BLACKBOARD?

"I have been in unpermissive schools for 25 years . . . The violence we are seeing today . . . stems from infiltration into key posts in universities, colleges and schools of men and women whose political views are of the extreme Left, and whose loyalties (if they have any) are not to the preservation of law, order, and the best of our British traditions . . . What our society needs is an awareness of the activities of this Fifth Column, a rooting out of these destructive elements, and a return to sanity based upon Christian precepts."

—Reader's letter in the *Daily Telegraph* (4 September).

WITHOUT COMMENT

Cardinal Angelo Dell'Acqua, 68, died of a heart attack on 27 August just *after* taking part in a procession to the grotto of St. Bernadette at Lourdes.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

. . . The funeral of Dr. Ludwig Feuerbach, on the afternoon of the 15th inst., caused great excitement in Nuremburg, as might have been expected from the great respect entertained for this distinguished scholar and philosopher by all classes . . . At four o'clock a numerous procession of Social Democrats, belonging to Nuremburg and Fürth, with two red flags, bordered with black crape, and headed by a band, proceeded to the churchyard, where an immense crowd had assembled . . . Herr Carl Scholl delivered a funeral oration as the representative of the family. After him the preacher of the Free Religionist Society, Dr. Mook, spoke . . . Herr Memminger, leader of the Nuremburg and Fürth Social Democratic Working Men's party, then dwelt on the services rendered by the deceased . . . The last addresses were delivered by a representative of the Free German Hochstift in Frankfurt-on-the-Main, and by Prince Kanikow, who spoke in the name of the Freethinkers and Socialists of Italy.

—From the *National Reformer*, 29 September 1872.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

Even since the [Graeco-Turkish] war started there has been a very influential section of the church party in this country that has been clamouring for the return of the Mosque of Constantinople to the Christians because it was a Christian church many centuries ago . . . And as the driving of the Turk from Constantinople is essential to this end the clamour is kept up . . . The stories of massacres also need to be viewed in their proper perspective . . . It is well known that the massacres of Mohammedans by our protégés the Greeks in the earlier period of the campaign were carefully suppressed in the British press, although in the French and American papers, as well as papers published in Ceylon and India, accounts appeared . . . And whether the greater blame is to be attached to the religion of the Turk or to the religion of the Greek, the fact remains that the religion of both is an intolerable nuisance and prolific cause of enmity and bloodshed . . . Religion and decivilisation are always and everywhere convertible terms.

Finally, it looks as though the League of Nations might as well disband and be done with it . . . Thomas Paine might well weep were he alive today and saw what a poor thing his League of States is a century after his death . . . We laughed at [President] Wilson's idea of Peace without Victory. And we are paying for our laughter the price of Victory without Peace.

—From *The Freethinker*, 1 October 1922.

PUBLIC MEETING

to protest against

THE LONGFORD THREAT TO FREEDOM

CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1
(Holborn Underground)

TUESDAY, 3 OCTOBER, 7.30 p.m.

Speakers:

Brigid Brophy, John Calder, Charles Osborne,
George Melly, Gerald Sanctuary, David Tribe,
Barbara Smoker

Organised by THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

INCEST IN THE OPERA

I. S. LOW

The plot of Rossini's opera *Semiramide* has a suspicious resemblance to *Hamlet*. Imagine a Hamlet in which Queen Gertrude is in love with Hamlet without realising he is her son; in which Hamlet receives help and encouragement from the ecclesiastical authorities and is crowned king after slaying his father's murderer; in which the ghost appears, not at midnight on a lonely battlement, but in broad daylight before all the people; in which it is not clear what happens to Ophelia but she seems to marry someone other than Hamlet.

The libretto was written by a man called Gaetano Rossi and is based on Voltaire's tragedy *Semiramis*. Rossini composed the music in thirty-three days!

The action takes place in ancient Assyria. Assur, a powerful nobleman and a descendant of Baal, has murdered the great king Ninus with a view to getting the throne himself. By lies he has persuaded Ninus's wife, Queen Semiramide, to help him. Oroë, the high priest, has learnt the truth (somehow) and he summons a young warrior Arsaces to the capital. Arsaces is really the son of Ninus and Semiramide and is in love with a girl called Azema who is descended from Baal too and whose life he has saved (most heroes of Rossini's more serious operas save the heroine's life before the action starts). Meanwhile Semiramide has fallen in love with Arsaces. At a great assembly she announces he is to be her husband (causing him and Azema much depression). This is like the Triumph Scene in Verdi's *Aida*. At a private interview Arsaces tells Semiramide who he is and that he may have to kill her (causing her much depression). This is like the third act of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. Finally, on the order of the gods, Arsaces slays Assur and the opera concludes with Arsaces king of Assyria, a lot of loose ends, and a triumphant chorus (in the original version Arsaces kills Semiramide—but there is a triumphant chorus just the same).

Rossini's music

How does Rossini cope with this musically? I think the answer is that his music is very nice to listen to. In fact too nice—you have no incentive to try and remember it. It is typical Italian opera music—refined, graceful, rhythmic, tuneful. The end of Act I, when Ninus's ghost makes its public appearance, is undoubtedly dramatic, especially with the imitation of rising winds. Francis Toye, in his book *Rossini: a study in tragi-comedy*, says that an ensemble in this called "Qual mesto gemito" gave Verdi the idea for the "Miserere" in *Il Trovatore*. On the other hand, when Arsaces is filled with horror at the prospect of having to murder his mother, the music does not seem to me to express his emotions effectively. When Semiramide and Assur slang each other in the second act it sounds at times like a love duet. One interesting point is that Rossini took more trouble with the orchestra than he had done previously, going so far as to have a military band on the stage in one scene.

Assur is the most effective character. He is a real sinister villain. At the end, when he must realise the gods are against him he does not lose heart but goes on with his wicked designs.

I think this opera is definitely worth hearing. But Richard Wagner said that it "exhibited all the faults by which Italian opera could be distinguished" and Wagner's opinion about opera is always worth thinking about.

Rossini, Verdi and Italian unity

However *Semiramide* introduces us to an important aspect of Rossini. We think of him as the composer of graceful, tuneful, sophisticated comedies like *The Barber of Seville*. He was that; but he also had a serious, even an idealistic side. In particular he was an enthusiast for Italian unity—like his greater fellow composer Verdi whose name was shouted as a slogan by Italian patriots because the letters forming it were the same as the initials of King Victor Emmanuel, champion of united Italy (Viva VERDI = Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia). In *The Italian Girl in Algiers* Rossini makes the heroine sing an impassioned aria in which she hopes that "Soon we shall see heroic deeds all over Italy." This happened, of course, especially where Garibaldi was in operation. *William Tell* also shows Rossini's sympathy for "nations struggling to be free" (to quote Mr. Gladstone).

In his lifetime Rossini was considered the greatest composer ever. Then came a reaction and he was looked on almost as evil. Now we think that he was a great composer, though not the greatest. In these days, when it is the custom to depict Richard Wagner as looking down in scorn on his fellow composers (in films—and in addition to other calumnies) we should remember it was Wagner who first gave a balanced evaluation of Rossini in words which Francis Toye admits were "kind, wise and just."

Some may feel (with disappointment!) that the lurid title of this article is unjustified (*Semiramide* never gets to first base with Arsaces). However, those with a certain type of imagination can use it; after all, in one scene, *Semiramide* and Arsaces end up in each other's arms!

FUNFAIR ACCIDENT

I could imagine your first cry;
How you would laugh,
Touch my own flesh in yours;
See you race across the years
Of gravel. You are calling
My name: "Mother! Mother!"
As I sat that day under a dull
May sky plotting your murder.

No difficulty taking you away:
"Only a slight discomforture,"
They said. Somewhere nearby
I could hear the screech
Of fire-brigades, or was it
Numerous ambulances?
Then the music cut out.
You dissolved amid the blurt
Of the transistor: "Five children dead."

CECILY DEIRDRE BOMBERG.

REVIEWS

BOOK

THE RISE OF THE COLOURED RACES by Keith Irvine.
Allen & Unwin, £5.50.

"A spectre is haunting the world," declares the author on his first page, "the spectre of colour." He then tells us that white-skinned Europeans have propagated two conflicting concepts. The first is white supremacy; and the second is the idea of a world based on equal rights for all men. "The question has yet to be decided whether the world community will be based upon the principle of racial privilege or upon the principle of equal rights."

If one were to judge this book by the confusion indicated on the preliminary page (set in italics), one would be inclined to dismiss it without more ado. It is not true that the world is haunted by the fear of coloured peoples. None of the communist countries and none of the twenty Latin American republics suffers from such a fear, so that excludes a large segment of mankind, not to mention Asia and Africa themselves. I do not assert that there is no streak of colour prejudice in those areas, but that is another matter. Moreover, by 1960 the end of white domination was in sight and so was the recognition of racial equality—in theory though not in practice. There is the rub and there lies the complexity of the present discontent, which eludes the author.

The word "race" was used in the Bible to mean mankind. Its present restricted usage is a product of the modern economic system we call capitalism, with its extension as imperialism. It was empire-building, including the slave trade, in the last couple of centuries which produced the need for a theory of white superiority over coloured peoples. When the British and French political empires were dismantled, the need to retain a tranquil sense of racial superiority declined and has now disappeared, at least in formal legal terms and as a defence of European vested interests. Today nobody (even in South Africa) in high office proclaims that white is better than black. Equality is conceded in principle but the character of the western economic system makes Europeans slow and reluctant to admit equality in economic and social (as distinct from political) terms.

Mr. Irvine is an Englishman who has lived for many years in New York where he advised Ghana's representatives at the United Nations. His heart is in the right place; and he must have spent ten years assembling all the information in this wide survey. Other writers will no doubt benefit by his labours, particularly if they try not merely to collect facts, as he does, but to analyse their significance. Is it not high time that we recognised the cult of the fact as the futile occupation it has become in many fields of effort. We all suffer from files, mainly because we forget that piles of facts no more make a true picture than piles of bricks make a house. Mr. Irvine seems innocent of any social and political theory with which to assess the materials he has gathered with such pains. In its absence his big book of 646 pages, while pleasant enough to browse in, does little to illuminate the situations that disturb all who have a social conscience in matters of race relations.

JOHN GILD

THEATRE

RICHARD'S CORK LEG by Brendan Behan.
Royal Court Theatre.

You could call this the first pantomime of the winter season for *Richard's Cork Leg* is a jolly, happy frolic by a vivacious cast that includes the Dubliners. This is the last work for the stage that Behan wrote, and though roughly completed when Behan was in California in 1964, the manuscripts were mislaid and only rediscovered last year among the now deceased writer's effects. The director Alan Simpson put the finishing touches to the piece, mounted this production at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and now brings it to the Royal Court.

The text is liberally spiced with strong language on the fundamental subjects of living and dying, sex and religion; yet, in good Behan fashion, they become matters to laugh and sing about. Although the main attraction that drew me to see this production was admittedly to see the folk group which must be one of the finest set of traditionalist musicians in the world, it was good to find that a strong cast of Irish actresses more than equalled the talents of the men. The story line is scanty in the first act and dwindles away to almost nothing in the second act when the motley gang of undertakers, blind beggars, Catholic prostitutes and a black American mortician sit cooped up in a local lady dignitary's parlour, the daughter of the house playing an imaginary harp, the bawds singing party pieces and the whole company becoming progressively drunk. Fine acting comes from Eileen Colgan and Joan O'Hara as the two bawds, Luke Kelly as Cronin, and Ronnie Drew as Hero Hogan. Kelly's gravelly singing voice, and Drew's incredibly rich base voice are the delights of the show, while the remaining three Dubliners handle the musical accompaniment to the many songs with their usual expertise.

LINDSEY HARRIS

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LETTERS

Marx and the Philosophy of Fascism

It is fraudulent—or indicative of an inadequate knowledge of Marx's work as a whole—to suggest that there is a single, definitive, correct interpretation of Marx which can be derived from his own writings. The bitter contradictions and disputes between Communist intellectuals concerning Marx's method and what he really meant by such concepts as the dialectic, alienation, "increasing misery," and his theory of history, make this crystal clear.

What is now generally admitted is that Marx's thought bears the imprint of Hegel's influence. Readers of *The Freethinker* can draw their own conclusions from the following citations:

"The state is not the abstract confronting the citizens; they are parts of it, like members of an organic body, where no member is end and none is means." (Hegel)

"Contemporary philosophy constructs the state out of the idea of the totality. It conceives the state as a great organism in which legal, moral and political freedom attain their realisation and the individual citizen obeys in the laws of the state only his own reason, human reason." (Marx)

"I, as a citizen, have indeed a will of my own; but . . . since the nation, as the state, is of the essence and nature of our very being, it is evident that the universal will of the state is identical with our concrete and actual ethical personality." (Gentile)

"Here already we have *dialectics* (as Hegel's genius recognised): the *individual* is the *universal*. Consequently, the opposites (the individual is opposed to the universal) are identical." (Lenin)

There is no mistaking here the line of descent which runs from Hegel to Marx and Lenin, and to Gentile, the "Philosopher of Fascism."
JUDEX.

Marxism as an Applied Social Science

One of the main feelings common to the critics of Marxism is their tendency to "quote" Marx, Lenin and Stalin without dates or source references that can be checked. Hence both genuineness and context cannot be verified. I am sure, for example, that Judex's "Lenin" of 9 September is mythical.

Philip Hinchliff shows a little more conscience and gives the source of his Lenin quotation on ethics. But it is out of context. Lenin in fact said that "we repudiate ethics and morality . . . in the sense in which it was preached by the bourgeoisie, who derived ethics from God's commandments. We, of course, say that we do not believe in God, and that we know perfectly well that the clergy, the landlords and the bourgeoisie spoke in the name of God in pursuit of their own interests as exploiters.

"We repudiate all morality taken apart from human society and classes . . . Morality for us is subordinated to the interests of the class struggle . . . overthrowing the Tsars, overthrowing the capitalists, abolishing the capitalist class." In other words—"subordinated to" the ending the utterly immoral social system imposed by capitalism.

As to modern Soviet communist morality, I recommend readers to refer to my *Humanist* article of August 1962. I think even Dr. Claud Watson would find that the Russians have not so much to "regain" as he imagines. When you are on Kropotkin, why not recommend a re-reading of his *Ethics*—useful for both Marxists and humanists alike.

R. S. Montague and Ian Harris are caustic about alleged "state capitalism," whatever that may mean. Ian Harris tries to suggest that the use of public property in the U.S.S.R. is no different from that of a large private corporation hierarchy. May I point out two fundamental differences: the public property of the U.S.S.R. is used to provide the optimum long-run improvement in the material and cultural standards of the people, with planning, stable prices, and no unemployment. Whatever faults may rise, this is both the principle and the practice. The large corporation is out for profit. This involves raising prices (wherever the degree of monopoly allows) and causing unemployment. (When Ford decided not have a new auto works in Britain this was not for the British people's welfare, but for the interests of American shareholders.) Internationally, the U.S.S.R. has revolutionised the supply of means of production (capital goods) to backward countries, selling them outright on credit bearing only 2 or 2½ per cent interest. This takes the place of the traditional capitalist "investment abroad" under which system all capital "supplied" remained the property of the suppliers on which tribute was thenceforward drawn in perpetuity or until the receiving country repudiated the "debt". These differences are quite adequate to distinguish socialism from capitalism.

Philip Hinchliff is wrong in saying that Marxists allege that every "stage" or "jump" must lead to something "higher." This reflects his Hegel-obsession, not Marxism. Again, he finds it "not in the least clear how the workers are ever going to come to socialism"; but not so Mr. Maudling, who in his Memorandum as reported in the *Evening Standard* of 12 September said: "Capitalism has worked so far because the majority had not been prepared to use their potential political and economic power against the prosperous minority . . . Now the situation was changing . . ."

Maudling is no conscious Marxist, but he is unconsciously voicing the Marxist view. When the working people are sufficiently fed up to liberate themselves from the indoctrination of the mass media, then the time will come!

Scientific interpretations are not infallible and often contro-

versial. Medicine is an applied science, but not every "cure" works. Marxism is an applied social science, but here too "cures" may go wrong at times. In both cases the need is to improve the science, not reject it.

Perhaps, after all, Groucho Marx would have been a more suitable subject for discussion for some readers.

PAT SLOAN.

Playing it Rough

Dr. Claud Watson (letters, 9 September) is relieved that I do not admire the K.G.B.; I do not admire the British police, either!

Dr. Watson says that all police have to "play it rough" sometimes with dangerous criminals. Unfortunately, the British police seem to "play it rough" with militants and left-wingers, and treat real criminals very gently indeed. I think they would be every bit as bad as the K.G.B. but for the restraining hand of a democratic government.

How do I imagine that the Russians will regain their liberty? I still think by struggle; after all, Russia is now a great industrial country whose working class are technically efficient and more intelligent than the primitive peasants of 1917. Dictatorships tend to be confined to countries lacking a modern industrialised economy, so I do not think that the Russians will tolerate the K.G.B. or bureaucracy much longer. I am hopeful that the Russian people will have a second revolution which will have happier results than the first.
J. H. MORTEN.

Chance, Causality and Design

M. A. Forsyth's letter (16 September) betrays a misunderstanding of the concept of "chance" as defined by Jacques Monod, and of the arguments put forward by Brian Khan and myself (letters, 2 September) in support of Monod's thesis.

As Brian Khan explained, chance refers not to the absence of causation but to the absence of design. Mr. Forsyth thinks this is tantamount to saying that "the automatic boiling of water, on being heated, is an act of chance." But the mere fact that water boils when in contact with sufficient heat is a matter of cause and effect—based, at the molecular level, on statistical certainty. Neither chance nor design comes into the causation unless the particular circumstances affecting the coming together of the water and the heat are considered. If someone deliberately brings them together in order to boil the water, this is an act of purpose; if they come together fortuitously (for example, because the house is on fire), this is chance. But even the act of purpose always has innumerable chance factors behind it—for instance, the chances determining the very existence of a human being with the desire and the wherewithal to boil water at that particular time and in that particular place.

As for Mr. Forsyth's reference to games of chance, no one denies that "all kinds of factors" determine the outcome: it is in the random bringing together of the variable factors into a particular relationship that chance resides. Where players are able to control some of the variable factors, an element of skill reduces the element of chance.

Since, says Monod, happenings at the molecular level are completely random—though often statistically certain—*everything* is ultimately determined by chance. Moreover, in such unique events as the "creation" of a particular planet, a particular animal species, or a particular individual, even the certainty that is inherent in large numbers is absent. There is thus no room left for the religious concepts of ultimate purpose and divine will—nor, similarly, for Lady Luck or dialectical materialism! Hence the unease that Monod has caused among theologians on the one hand and Marxists on the other. (Believers in lucky charms are less likely to have read Monod.)

Some of the up-to-date theologians are now reduced to saying, "Yes, perhaps God is, so to speak, just playing dice—but might he not have loaded the dice?" Oh, God of my youth, how low hast thou fallen!
BARBARA SMOKER.

M. A. Forsyth (letters, 16 September) puts forward a very good explanation why Trevor Morgan should have written as he did; but rather than showing him to be in any way correct, it just shows how he tries to refute Monod by the unthinking use of a popular misconception.

The view that the order of nature is not a matter of chance and that it must therefore have been set up by a designing deity, is a traditional theistic formula (bequeathed with modifications to other philosophies) against which Jacques Monod has written his

book. To argue as Trevor Morgan argues—that Monod denies causation, when in fact all that he denies is design or purpose in nature; and further, to paraphrase Spinoza to the effect that chance (like God) is the asylum of ignorance—is entirely to misconstrue Monod's meaning.

The interaction of heat with water to produce steam would, of course, be classed as necessity—the other half of the Monodist dualism (or *deuce!* as some would have it) which I neglected to mention. The result of any interaction must be and cannot be other than what it is; but to the total realm of interacting entities there is no common or directing cause.

The idea that chance is a providential force acting in our interests is, as Mrs. Forsyth points out, a mistaken and mischievous notion—but a notion which the unthinking equation of chance and God might unwittingly foster! Chance (the unplanned and uncontrolled processes of nature) is neutral towards us and more often than not destructive to our welfare. BRIAN KAHN.

My holidays left me oblivious of the amount of criticism my article, "The Necessity of Chance" produced. My delay in replying, therefore, is the result of pure chance, and not design. I was also *unaware* of the Editor's deadline.

After reading the comments of Mr. Meulen (2 September) I feel I can do no more than thank him for explaining the Humean position and apologise for any distress I may have caused.

Not so, though, those fiery words of "wisdom" that dragged out from Brian Khan (letter, 2 September). "Trevor Morgan," he writes, "fails to see that to argue against chance is to argue for design;" this shows that what he fails to see is that *polar opposites are valid, but only in a limited field*. In the context of a universal theory, his logic runs that if I refuse to accept that a certain thing is black, then I am arguing that that certain thing is white. My reading of M. Monod's theory and the correspondence applicable to it, leaves me in no doubt that "chance" and its implications cover far more than Brian Khan's naïvety imagines.

Firstly, Monod's scientific (?) postulate "objectivity" (nature is objective and not projective) is an obvious attempt to divorce the human mind from nature and subjugate the latter to the former; yet at the same time claiming to be "objective." Hence, we read: "... in a very real sense the organism effectively transcends physical laws." Is that not precisely what the soul used to do? And is that not precisely what these well-paid and well-trained employees have been doing for years—opening the doors and windows of society to let in all the spooks, gods, gurus, and cod-mouthed apologists that the fantasies of the human mind can visualise? If, as Ralph Champion states (9 September), Karl Popper has shown that the alternative between materialism and idealism is "spurious," then why is it these similar types always take the subjective, and fiercely oppose the alternative? Would they perhaps answer—"chance"?

Secondly, the teleonomic properties observable in nature have not always been associated with the "idea of God" alone. Historical materialism has always been aware of them, but has refused to recognise a *super-natural* creator. But there again, a vast difference lies between *that* position and Monod's "chance"; and the eminent biologist is well aware of the terrible tangle he has got himself into. For he finds himself compelled to say: "Objectivity nevertheless obliges us to recognise the teleonomic character of living organisms, to admit that in their structure and performance they decide on and pursue a purpose. Here therefore, at least in appearance, lies a profound epistemological contradiction."

Now this neo-Kantian eclecticism may well be compatible with the "materialistic" ideas of Messrs. Kahn and Rodger, but the dialectician would say that M. Monod can extricate himself from this hopeless muddle only by elevating this loose stop-gap term to the deistic heights of a First Cause! An *uncaused cause*, mark you! And if, as Barbara Smoker states, "... the particular contacts of [of biochemical compounds] were still *determined* by chance; and so with every event in the universe;" how far away are we from this? I wonder what kind of language Chapman Cohen would have used at this point?

No. When the sun starts pirouetting around the earth, using the moon as its yo-yo, and philosophical idealists declare that the human mind is a product of nature and subject to *natural* laws; then I will consider it high time that I changed my ideas.

TREVOR MORGAN.

This correspondence is now closed! (Ed.)

Editorial Fabrication

You suggest that since the Secretary of the National Secular Society has not failed to criticise the "occidental barbarity" going on in Northern Ireland this weakens my criticism of his comments in regard to the giving of equal rights to our small, sober, industrious Muslim community. Please explain.

You use the Editor's prerogative to comment upon my letter by a deliberate and calculated fabrication regarding my attitude to things Irish: we all know what we think of people who use methods such as this. Had the truth or falsity of your lie any relevance to the subject it might have had a little virtue; since it had not I will not ask you to explain. An apology would perhaps be less embarrassing—for you. GERALD SAMUEL.

An Ironic Accusation

I was criticised in *The Freethinker* (letters, 16 September) for using emotive terms when replying to a Muslim demand for segregated education. It is indeed ironic that the accusation was made by Gerald Samuel whose own emotional rallery when attacking anyone who dares to question the absolute wisdom and justice of all things emanating from Jewry is making him a figure of fun in the secularist movement and, I suspect, elsewhere. His sneer about "the hallowed tradition of secularist racialism" is at par with the jibes of ultra-Right morons who have asserted that freethought organisations are part of an international Jewish conspiracy to destroy Christian civilisation.

I did not refer to classrooms being turned into churches and chapels when writing to *The Times Educational Supplement* (though that term has been frequently used by secularists without causing Gerald Samuel's blood pressure to rise) for the simple reason that I was answering a Muslim, not a Christian, demand for educational privileges. I agree that Muslims are a small and inoffensive community, but that does not mean a socially retrograde proposal (for segregated education) should not be resisted.

Mr. Samuel accused me of suggesting that those Muslims who beat their children for not attending their place of worship "are capable of the occidental barbarity of sustained vicarious and particularised murder being currently permitted in Northern Ireland." If he were more objective, and less emotional, Gerald Samuel would have understood that I was not accusing Muslim parents of beating their children, but referring to a case where a Muslim religious leader beat other people's children for attending a school function instead of going to the mosque.

I should like to think that Muslims are incapable of performing such barbaric acts as are being committed by all sides in Northern Ireland. But events in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, are too recent to encourage such hopes.

We live in a world in which discrimination, injustice, intolerance and segregation are prevalent. Fortunately there are many people who are prepared, in a voluntary or a professional capacity, to combat these social evils. They are not helped by those who see Jew-haters, race discriminators and male chauvinist pigs under every bed. WILLIAM MCILROY,

General Secretary, National Secular Society.

Tolerance and the Individual

In your 9 September editorial on the recent cruise by Christian crusaders, you touch briefly (and with devilish good sense) upon religious 'love' and secular tolerance.

However, one can only *tolerate* something of which one in some way disapproves; therefore, in order to tolerate a person, as an *individual*, one would have to disapprove of that person's individual existence in some way.

There is, surely, a secular sense in which the bond of humanity involves a feeling of "compassionate love" for all human beings—however we may disapprove of our unlovely habits.

CHARLES BYASS.

The Editor comments:

I agree with our correspondent's remarks on tolerance, but would also advocate tolerance (as being preferable to hostility or suspicion) in dealing with the strange or the unfamiliar, such as someone from another culture. The term I used in my editorial to cover other cases was "good neighbourliness" but, of course, you have to get to know your neighbour a little first.