

Empowering

International
Humanist
News

50th Anniversary

Commemorative

Issue

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Diversity

Human rights

Humanism

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Babu Gogineni

Executive Director



Preparations for the 50th Anniversary General Assembly and Congress of the IHEU in the Netherlands, launch of the Online Humanist Congress, a 50th Anniversary Publication, a revamp of the IHEU Website, plans for a major Humanist News Portal, fund raising for the IHEU's activities at the International Institutions, devising strategies for increasing our impact internationally, fund raising for IHEU's Member Organisation activities, coordination for the IHEU's Growth and Development work, representing the IHEU at International and National Conferences, interacting with the press, campaigning for Dr. Shaikh in Pakistan, countering a malicious e-mail counter-campaign against the IHEU, negotiating with representatives of the EU for permanent youth internships at the IHEU office - and also bringing out this special double issue of the International Humanist News! So, I am pleased to inform you that we have appointed an Editor to ensure regular publication of the International Humanist News print version.

IHEU's Member Organisations in the Netherlands have done a great job of making arrangements for a Jubilee Congress we have all been looking forward to. I hope to see you there, and to introducing to you the IHN's new editor!

Your generous contributions to the Club 100 (there are still more places!) have made this possible! Thank you! Thanks to funding assistance the IHEU has received, we can now have a communication policy integrating the print and the Internet media. Do not just watch this space, also go to www.iheu.org and watch the computer screen for the major changes that are due in the coming months.

The IHEU was founded in the post-World War II period. Sadly, in its 50th year the world is again in an explosive state. We Humanists are needed more than ever.

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Armies and Citizens: from civil disobedience to

Hugo Estrella Tampieri

Our societies carry the blue print of their national armies almost from the very beginning of their existence. Central control of the President was a token of national unity. Military service was the complement of egalitarianism and immigrant masses. It was the final requisite to act as an equal citizen.

But with the rise of fascism, Argentine Military institutions developed the Prussian mindset. And with the crisis of the first coup d'Etat on September 6, 1930, Constitutional order was broken, and the Army became a mix of aristocracy, anti-Communist front and political party. Argentina had established a position of egalitarianism in foreign affairs questioned the Versailles Treaty and opposed US intervention in Central America, but now became a country occupied by its own armed forces. Torture, political imprisonment, repression of social protests, and a confusion with the Roman Catholic Church's views were the new realities that lasted for over half a century. They were also the main cause of a disastrous outcome that ended in the invention of the figure of "Desaparecidos", economic destruction of what was once the world's fifth wealthiest country, and a war with Great Britain.

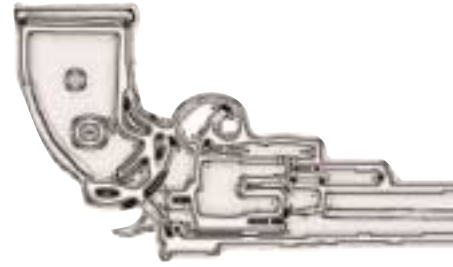
The latter was the Argentina I lived in my youth. Hundreds of boys of my age were killed in the unthinkable war of Malvinas Islands in 1982. The previous generation, the one of my parents, was burdened by exile, political persecution and death.

What was the chance for us, dissenters from such a mindset?

Humanism as option

Humanist philosophers like Thoreau or Bertrand Russell had paved the way for our challenging of that system. If Thoreau understood that jail was the proper place for a free man under similar circumstances (*After all, the state can only seize the body not the mind. If the consequence be prison, then "[t]he true place for a just man is also a prison,*), Russell clearly showed how this kind of repressive institutions work on people's minds.

For a Humanist there is basic alienation from military institutions. The basis of any military corps is the defense of a supra-human or non-human entity: the State. And the means to defend a non-human entity is 'naturally' destroying the enemy, who happens to be, no matter how ill defined by nationalistic propaganda, a bunch of Human beings. In the course of any conflict there are, naturally, losses. But as usually God is on the side of the fighters (both, in general) they are not really dead, but ejected to God's and the Fatherland's glorious Pantheon of heroes. This can act as a consolation for brothers, parents, widows, fatherless children. But it's not quite convincing for Humanists.



So what we have in the end, according to a Humanist view, is a group of human beings killing and being killed by other humans for the sake of non-human or non-existing entities. Moreover, war implies a nightmare in the lives of those who are not killed: destroying power plants, poisoning crops and fresh water resources, bombing civilian populations, etc. Intolerable, but how are we to oppose? The label of antipatriotic, traitor, communist or fascist (which side of the Iron Curtain are you?), queer, coward, anarchist, atheist, whatever the label used to diminish and equate the dissenter with the enemy. An enemy worse than the one beyond the border, because this one was someone who, having lived the glories of our Nation, chose to stand 'against' it during difficult times. This was the fate of Bertrand Russell during World War I, driving him to jail.

A War-Free World

The only way to achieve Humanism as a civilized allegiance to each other, is undoubtedly, by renouncing war. Can we think of a war-free world? Can we achieve it? A force in international relations leading to wars is fear. Fear of being deprived of our belongings, our freedoms, our life style, our families. What does war bring us in return? It deprives us of our belongings because they are destroyed or lessened by the taxes we have to pay for waging. We lose the freedom of movement, of speech or dissent. We have to modify our every day activities to reduce the chances of being attacked, we are forced to participate in support of those who are fighting, or those who are victims, but we are no longer able to live outside the rules of conflict. We are searched before boarding planes, our e-mails are certainly monitored. And in the worst case, we or our beloved ones are killed, injured or torn apart from what our little world.

So, war takes away from us what it is supposed to defend for us. It is the most expensive way to

edience to conscientious objection

ence. In Argentina, after decades of civil wars, the creation of a national Army under the cen-
litarian laws for secular education, secular civil register and other ways to integrate native pop-

Nathan Parker



become poor and miserable. But the most presti-
gious one.

The crime of attacking civilian populations, like New
York City, Guernica, Hiroshima or Dresden cannot be
justified. Nor can be justified the tactic of carpet-
bombing, supporting bloody dictatorships or estab-
lishing blockades that result in deaths of hundreds
of children. What can we do, instead?

First, following the beautiful and courageous words
of Albert Camus, say NO. There is no need to be a
gifted person to understand whatever is wrong.
Especially when it entitles killing, destroying. But it
takes a high level of courage to stand in the middle
of the crowd, and say 'NO! No, I don't want to kill.
No, I don't want to be killed.'

Humanists have taken stances: several IHEU's reso-
lutions call for the end of war, for the elimination of
weapons of mass destruction, for the strengthening
of the UN. Even more, three Humanist Manifestos
have urged us to think of a new civilization, based
on confidence, not steeped in horror. On shared
needs and challenges, instead of on cannibalistic
competition. Following Russell, Emerson, Thoreau
and many others, Humanists have challenged the
criminal political systems such as Apartheid, and all
kinds of wars and terrorism. They have all been
bright words and actions from organized Humanism.
Like when back in 1965 it was stated clearly:

*(Humanism stands for:)'The right of every person to
work that she or he considers to be meaningful.
Humanists support programmes that encourage
participation in the political and economic life of the
community while at the same time defending the
right to refuse to participate on grounds of conscien-*

*tious objection. (Humanists) Have a duty to observe
such laws that are or have been democratically
established as well as to participate in the process of
changing inadequate laws and rules through demo-
cratic procedures, employing civil disobedience as a
last resort'*

We have the choice, and under certain circum-
stances of knowledge and commitment, the duty to
oppose. If we want to survive, of course. We have
several ways in which we can oppose. Humanists
prefer democratic participation in changing laws. Or
civil disobedience. Civil disobedience can be a
stance of refusal to physically join an army, to be a
conscientious objector. This right is recognised in
most EU countries. This is to be spread world-wide,
through the ratification of treaties providing for it.
But there is also the obligation of avoiding forced
recruitment of those who, like so many children, are
every day forced to become soldiers.

Also, Humanists have proposed the imposition of a
special tax for the arms trade. They proposed it sev-
eral years before the Tobin Tax, which we support
wholeheartedly. If the Tobin Tax is established some
day most of the world arms trade will collapse. In
the meantime, we as concerned citizens, have the
right to oppose paying taxes that are going to be
used for military purposes. Quoting Thoreau: *'Must
the citizen even for a moment, or in the least degree
resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has
every man a conscience, then? I think we should be
men first and subjects afterward. It is not desirable
to cultivate respect for the law, as much as for the
right. The only obligation which I have a right to
assume is to do at any time what I think right'*

That is what the assumption of individual responsi-
bility implies. That is what Humanism is all about.

**Hugo Estrella is Director of the Humanist Association of
Argentina, an IHEU Member Organisation. This is an edited
version of his speech delivered as IHEU's representative at
the Launch Conference of the European Network for Peace
and Human Rights. Hugo Estrella's participation was facili-
tated by a travel grant from IHEU member organisation
HIVOS.**

**As a Peace Partner of UNESCO, and on the strength of its
pioneering work campaigning in Europe for the Right to
Conscientious Objection to Military Service, the IHEU had
been involved in the Conference planning.**

Women and War

Prasenjit Maiti

“All oppression creates a state of war” (Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*).

And in war oppression of women is to the fore: rape becomes a military tool of dominance, aggression and projected power.

Worst Victims

Among the worst victims of any war are women as they have been traditionally picked out by the dominant male power as the most vulnerable civilian enemy targets during military engagements. You actually succeed in subverting the very basis of your enemy's virile power if you succeed in violating the enemy's woman. Then rape becomes disguised military destruction as you also inevitably destroy the enemy's morale and legitimacy and his masculine, fighting qualities in the process. Any war necessarily leaves behind a trail of devastation in its bloody wake as noticed in widows and mothers who have lost their sons and sisters who have lost their brothers and daughters who have lost their fathers in action.

We read about such feminine suffering in the epics and war novels and watch movies, admire paintings and listen to music that deal with related themes. But reality is perhaps always more disturbing than art. Prisoner of War camps, the handling and exploitation of comfort women by soldiers in combat, Nazi and Japanese battle atrocities against women during the Second World War, the collective memory and killing fields of Vietnam – they all bear grim testimony to the fact that woman, being a most ordinary civilian and, therefore, a non-military subject, nevertheless becomes a most prominent military target during invasions.

War times are insane moments in human history when the exercise and passage of civilised law and order and governance – let alone good governance – are temporarily suspended to encourage widespread plunder, inhuman brutalities and mayhem.

Impact of Mass Violence

We have to look into the possible impact of mass violence against women and the violence this triggers off as a dangerous chain reaction, with mind-blowing consequences. Children suffer, dependents suffer, the service sector of the economy suffers and the entire domestic ethos of a given people may even be destroyed with the destruction of women – not necessarily in the physical sense – and their sanctity in war. Woman has always been the weaker, fairer other in the context of both martial and masculine hegemony. It becomes convenient, therefore, on the part of fighting men to attack and appropriate the women first and, in this logical process of

culmination, to eventually appropriate the otherness of the enemy's territoriality with a kind of xenophobic frenzy because the woman, in the final assessment is a man's property and nothing much else (according to the dominating male discourse). The enemy is not only then brought to his humble, submissive knees but the very core of his dignity and sanctimonious moral values is also simultaneously ripped out and violated in public. Just recall the Court Scene in the Mahabharata when Queen Draupadi, who was even menstruating at that point of time, was manhandled – without any effective protest whatsoever – before her famous and macho husbands and all the royal elders. Lord Rama fought with Ravana and ultimately killed him over the issue of a single woman – however, Rama also asked his wife Sita to prove her (unspoiled) chastity by entering into a circle of fire once the war was over. Therefore, Rama had fought the war not to prove his affection for Sita but to prove his unfaltering machismo.

Double Jeopardy

It is true that wars have been declared because of women – recall Helen of Troy – and wars have been instigated by women like Cleopatra. But it is an even greater truth that women have always been exploited and finally destroyed during combat. A woman faces a double jeopardy during war – she has to suffer as a woman and she has also to suffer as the symbol of pride, prestige and property of her man. Invading armies have been traditionally given the license to gang rape women, often before their helpless men at gunpoint – this not only results in distorted sexual gratification for the invaders but also effectively breaks down the enemy's final vestiges of any meaningful resistance. So the Women and War interface would come across as both a gender and a humanitarian issue to which international Institutions and NGOs should accord immediate and topmost priority. They must help formulate agreements like the historic Geneva and Berne Conventions. This would at least constitute the first faltering step toward a better human civilization and a Brave New World in this most insecure new millennium.

Prasenjit Maiti is Senior Lecturer in Political Science at Burdwan University, India.



Language and War

M. J Hardman

Language is inseparable from humanity and follows us in all our works. Language is the instrument with which we form thought and feeling, mood, aspiration, will and act, the instrument by whose means we influence and are influenced, the ultimate and deepest foundation of human society. So inextricably has language grown inside personality, home, nation, humanity, and life itself that we may sometimes be tempted to ask whether language is a mere reflection of these things, or whether language simply is all of those things the very origin of their growth.

Adapted from Louis Hjelmslev Prolegomena to a Theory of Language, 1953

As Humanists we seek peace and we seek to construct peace in our daily lives. Many of us choose non-violent toys for our children, we try to minimize the amount of violence that our children see on television, we criticize the glorification of violence in the news media. We often also decry the lack of civility in our daily discourse. We clearly recognize the power of language. Nevertheless, we use a great deal of violent language in ordinary everyday speech quite oblivious of the way in which we are constructing our language to glorify war and violence and in that way make such violence appear appropriate even acceptable when it appears in reality.

Let me give you an example:

Johnny don't fight at school. Your mother is waging the war on cancer. Your father has his battles every-day at work. Your sister has to attack her studies. We just can't have you fighting at school.

One might consider just what message little Johnny is receiving. In this paragraph there is no incivility or any language that would be forbidden as abusive or violent. It is, nevertheless, loaded with violence. The all-day every-day level is where the seeds of violence are planted and the appropriateness of war is taught.

Generative metaphors are a basic structure of ordinary language use. These metaphors are those that we use to construct the world around us, those that we need only allude to, to be fully understood. War itself is such a metaphor, where allusions to battles and victories and challenges and firepower and attacks can evoke the whole panoply of two sides in contention where only one will in the end remain. There are three examples of the use of war as a generative metaphor in the example paragraph above. As Humanists we recognize in a fully rational way that between humans an absolute victory or an absolute defeat is rarely a desirable or even an

attainable outcome. We also recognize that violence begets violence and that war is much more a cause of problems than a solution to them. In our daily speech we behave quite otherwise.

The first way in which we make war an 'appropriate' response to problems, then, is that we metaphorize the non-violent as war, as in the following examples.

- We *wage war* on cancer / *war* on drugs / *war* on crime.
- In medicine we *attack*, treat *aggressively*, use *ammunition* from a pharmacological arsenal stocked with *big gun* antibiotics. In the end we conquer disease.
- We try to *conquer* someone we love by dressing to kill, by fighting for love, by winning someone's love.
- We perceive business as war: Angry consumers are forcing a revolution in the car lot.
- Sony: A new round of sword play.
- The Taste of Victory: In the battle of ideas between liberals and conservatives, a little magazine that has played a large role celebrates 30 years on the firing line.

Two other generative metaphors meet with war and the three sets interact to metaphorize each other to the detriment, I would argue, of all three. The three that interact with each other are war, sex, and sports. We seek to *win* a lover and once the lover is *conquered* what are we to do? We make a sport of love and war out of sports, sometimes defined as a substitute for war, rather than as an exertion and exhilaration of the possibilities of the human body, or even as the pleasure of structured movement.

We further make war an 'appropriate' response to problems by inverting the metaphors when we metaphorize the violent as peace, as in the following examples from the nuclear industry.

clean bombs = mass murder, mangled bodies & unspeakable human suffering (with less radioactivity killing people is not 'dirty!'); surgically clean strikes (sounds like medicine); countervalue attacks (incinerating cities); collateral damage (human death); silos = where missiles are kept, as though they were nutritious grain; 'Congratulations to the new parents. "Can hardly wait to see the new arrival" (telegram announcing the successful atomic bomb explosion); little boy = Hiroshima bomb; in the early tests: if the baby was a boy = good (the bomb exploded) / if the baby was a girl = dud.

These two language behaviors together have the effect of

- A) making violence OK and even desirable when quite inappropriate and
- B) making the reality of genuine violence invisible.

Both serve to increase the amount of violence with which we live and to increase the possibility and reality of war itself.

Constructing Peaceful Metaphors

If we as Humanists wish to construct a peaceful world, part of our task is to construct peaceful generative metaphors, to discuss peaceful events within a peaceful language construct. The second part is to discuss violence with violent linguistic constructs to make such violence clearly visible, that such violence may be perceived as such and, hopefully, reduced.

To this end, I would like to suggest the following:

- A) Observe your own language quite consciously for a specific period looking for the violent metaphors you use. You may be very surprised. You will also find that you start hearing the violence in the language around you.
- B) Construct for your own use a set of alternate metaphors that can replace the violent ones.
- C) Observe the difference it makes in your own perception and in the reactions of those around you as you use these alternate metaphors.

Constructing new metaphors is a difficult task. One way to do so is to list a set of the violent metaphors that you have heard and then write out for yourself an alternate set using such non-violent generative metaphors as gardening, or music, or carpentry, or weaving/needle arts, or cooking. You may find that one or another of these cognitive sets is compatible with your own perception patterns.

To help in the initial stages of constructing such metaphors, I include here some examples that others have constructed.

Violent metaphor: It's a blast. (said of a party)
Alternate: It's a roller coaster ride.

Violent metaphor: You're the bomb.
Alternate: You're the frosting on my cake.

Violent metaphor: the anthropology metaphor of the survival of the fittest causes focus on competition and violence and has been overlaid onto academics, economics, and all other cultural constructs, giving *defense* and *whipping things into shape* and a *dog eat dog world*.

Alternate: a metaphor based on grooming in nature, with a focus on cooperation, would give us *smooth* and / a 'dog lick dog world', and we might be closer to what ecologists today see as essential to survival, far more than competition.

Violent metaphor: Peace as the absence of war (giving primacy to violence as a definer).
Alternate: Peace is like making a patchwork quilt.

Peace is a Patchwork Quilt

Peace is like having a potluck. Peace is like having a house built with many kinds of bricks. With the metaphor of peace as a patchwork quilt development agents could look at so-called third world countries as pieces of the quilt. They can, and

should, be considered as valued contributors to the global well-being of the people of the world, just like in the quilt the pieces are together, but remain distinguishable. Instead of modernizing third world countries in the sense of westernizing, development agents could try to learn from them, not just their values and ways of life, but also specific knowledge about medicine (called *ethnomedicine*), plant and animal species (*ethnobotany*, *ethnobiology*) among other things. Participatory development.

Violent metaphor: She shot down every one of his arguments.

Alternate: She took apart every one of his arguments (carpentry).

She unraveled every one of his arguments (weaving).

Violent metaphor: This is a battle over principles, not just opinions.

Alternate: This discussion is built on principles, not just opinions (carpentry).

This discussion is woven of principles, not just opinions (weaving).

Violent metaphor: That first argument was a real bombshell - it just tore our case apart.

Alternate: That first argument was a thunderstorm - it stopped us from building our case (carpentry).

That first argument was a knot in the yarn - it stopped us from weaving our textile (weaving).

The construction of peace in our everyday language and thus in our everyday perceptual patterns is an ongoing process. I was shocked to discover how much violence I used in my language when I began the process of change within myself. This must be a cooperative community endeavour. A major problem in this reconstruction is that we have come to regard the violent metaphors as the most *vivid* and the most *powerful*. That perception in and of itself must change by our own creative use of language such that peaceful metaphors come to be perceived also as vivid and powerful.

One rewrite that I use for myself comes from the false perception that pacifist and passive be somehow related. They are not; they sound similar by chance correspondence through historical convergence. Rather than define myself in the negative (being a pacifist is not passive) I have come to use the following:

Being a pacifist requires a high level of commitment to activism. The same active level of commitment will be necessary if we are to construct peace in our language.

Prof. M.J. Hardman is Board Member of the American Humanist Association. She works at the University of Florida and examples in this article are from students and participants in her workshops.

Citizens Call for Peace

When passions were running high with the dispute over Kashmir threatening to lead to a full scale war between India and Pakistan, with over a million military personnel amassed on either side of the border at Kashmir, with open and veiled threats being exchanged about possible nuclear strikes, 26 eminent citizens from each side of the India-Pakistan border (amongst whom Humanists, civil rights leaders and religious personalities) issued the following statement. The statement was simultaneously released in Lahore and in New Delhi.

Over the past several decades, Humanists on both sides were involved in citizen-to-citizen solidarity meetings, exchange visits, and various other peace initiatives to reduce the threat of war.

"The spectre of another conflict between India and Pakistan is haunting one-fifth of humankind. As concerned Pakistanis and Indians, we urge the governments of the two countries to refrain from seeking military solutions to eminently political problems. Wars have offered no solutions in the past. It is irrational to expect that a fourth, bloodier and costlier war can do so in future. To the contrary, it will deepen the conflict between the two countries, add to the burden of military spending, reinforce militaristic and chauvinistic elements, and negate the process of democratization and development.

"We believe there are no outstanding problems, including terrorism and Kashmir, which cannot be solved peacefully in a manner which could be acceptable to both the peoples and governments in India and Pakistan in the spirit of Simla Agreement. Terrorists have no respect for life, peace, much less a country's sovereignty. They killed innocent French, American and Pakistanis in Karachi and Islamabad, shot dead in Kaluchak near Jammu bus passengers and family members of armed forces personnel and many many others in the recent past. We condemn all acts of terrorism and urge the two governments jointly to act against terrorists and their organizations simultaneously addressing causes underlying mindless violence.

"We appeal to the governments of India and Pakistan to initiate a bold new process of peace and cooperation in South Asia.

Among the Signatories from India are Radical Humanists Justice V.M. Tarkunde and N.D. Pancholi; literary personalities Arundhati Roy and Nirmal Deshpande and journalist Kuldip Nayar

Among the Signatories from Pakistan are former Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid, Justice Fakhruddin G Ebrahim, former judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan, Air Marshal Zafar A Chowdhry, former chief of air staff, Afrasiab Khattak, chairman, Human Rights Commission

Peace in Ireland?

Les Reid

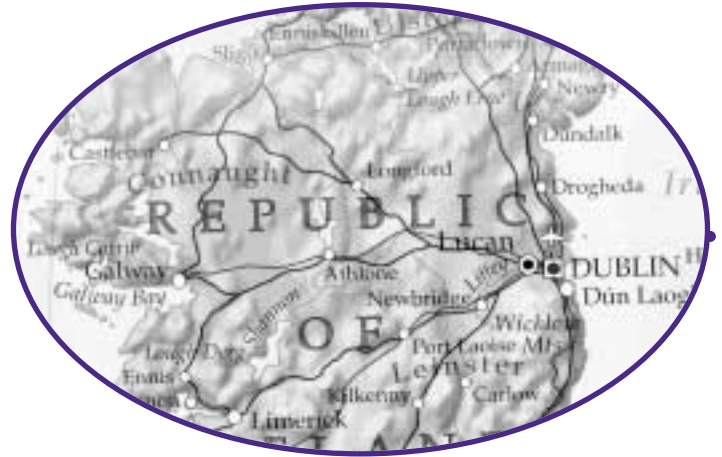
In 1998, on Good Friday, the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland signed an agreement which initiated a peace process. The process has had its share of hiccups but there has been some clear advance towards peace. Res Leid, Secretary of the Belfast Humanist Group, summarises a complex situation.

The great sectarian struggle between Protestants and Catholics, which has been going on for many generations, does not really concern Humanists, because we do not ally ourselves with either camp, but we can get caught up in the violence all the same. We are a tiny minority, trying to talk rationally when Godzilla and King Kong are fighting to the death beside us. You would hope that more people would join the Humanists in that situation, to speak up for rational, non-sectarian views, but that has not happened so far.

However, we do have today a better chance of peace than we have had for generations. At long last, politicians, both British and Irish, both Unionist and Nationalist, and both Protestant and Catholic, have sat down at the negotiating table and have talked about the best way forward for our troubled country. The politics of confrontation and violence have been replaced with the politics of discussion and negotiation.

Most Humanists here support the Agreement, but it could all fall apart yet. The extreme unionists, led by Ian Paisley, a fundamentalist Protestant cleric, are opposed to the Agreement and would like it to fail. They represent between 20 and 25% of the people. They are opposed to close relations with Southern Ireland, partly because they suspect the South is trying to take over, but also because the South is devoutly Catholic.

The main problem is terrorist guns. The Agreement makes many references to 'decommissioning', which means the dismantling of all terrorist weapons. All the other provisions of the Agreement are now in place: hundreds of prisoners have been released from gaol, the N. Ireland Assembly has been elected, Government responsibilities have been shared out, the North-South Council has met - but still no arms have been destroyed. The Protestant terrorists made a small gesture in 1998, destroying about



twenty rifles, but the Catholic terrorists (the IRA) did not reciprocate and nothing else has happened as regards arms. Of course, there is a ceasefire at present and very few people have been killed during the last two years. Some people think that is enough - a ceasefire is as good as decommissioning, they say. But the Agreement does promise decommissioning and the Protestant/Unionist side are insisting on it. If there is still no decommissioning in 2002 then all the Protestant/Unionist side, the extremists and the moderates, will abandon the Assembly and the Agreement will be at an end.

Ireland's Troubled History

The problems in Northern Ireland have deep roots. For example, England and Ireland were at war in the 1500s and there were great massacres of both Protestants by Catholics and Catholics by Protestants in the 1600s. But such battles were being fought all over Europe at that time - we call them the Wars of Religion, and they involved Holland, France, Italy, Spain and England. The tragedy for N. Ireland is that the problem was never resolved here as it was elsewhere in Europe. We are a museum of ancient conflict.

Anyway, when Ireland got its independence from Britain in 1922, the Protestants in the North said that they did not want to be part of the new Ireland. They wanted to stay with Britain because they said the new Ireland would be Catholic and their rights would not be respected: 'Home Rule is Rome Rule'. The result was Civil War in Ireland between those who insisted on independence for the whole island (the Die-Hards) and those who accepted partition (the Staters). Eventually the Staters won and the North was allowed to stay British while the rest of the island became the Republic of Ireland.

That arrangement could have worked if people had been more tolerant. But they were not. The South became officially Catholic and the North became officially Protestant. In the South, Catholic rulings on divorce, education, contraception, censorship, etc., became law, regardless of the Protestant minority. And in the North, politics was dominated by the Orange Order, a Protestant organisation which commemorates ancient victories over Catholics, eg. the Battle of the Boyne, 1690, which they celebrate every July. (Those facts show you how religion is at the core of the problem - what separates North and South is the difference of religion, and the main political parties in the North are identified accordingly.)

If the people had been more tolerant and had accepted that their neighbours followed a slightly different version of Christianity, then the Troubles need never have happened. If they had been friendly, rather than arrogant, then the border might have withered away in time and North and South might have been reconciled. But, instead, the two countries were in a state of tension. Instead of relaxation and reconciliation, there was tension and hatred. Some extremists who never accepted partition, some Die-Hards, kept murdering Northern policemen on the border. Catholics who lived in the North were treated as unreliable and suspicious characters. Finally the tension exploded in 1969 and the hatred turned to violence, claiming hundreds of lives. By the time the Agreement was signed in 1998, nearly 4,000 people had been killed and many times that number seriously injured. That is not a huge number compared to the deaths in Rwanda, for example, but the total population of

Northern Ireland is only one and a half million and nearly all those killings were deliberate, calculated murders. In short, this is a pretty sick society.

The Agreement is a well thought out compromise. It offers an escape from the endless cycle of accusation and counter-accusation. All the parties involved stand to gain something and they all have to yield something. For example, the Nationalists/Catholics gain power-sharing arrangements and cross-border institutions. The Unionists/Protestants gain devolved government and a constitutional guarantee (ie. the border stays as long as the majority in the North wish it). Both sides gain political power in the Assembly and clear procedures for regular referenda on the border. On the debit side, the Nationalists have to accept that the unification of North and South has been postponed, while the Unionists have to accept that the South has a role in Northern Ireland politics.

Integrated Schooling

But the part of the Agreement which the Humanists welcome most has received least attention. It says

that integrated education should be encouraged. At present, the churches have too much say. There is apartheid in the schools, with Catholic schools and Protestant schools segregated from the children's earliest years. To its credit, the State tried to set up a fully integrated system back in 1922 when the country was created, but the churches would not accept that dilution of their power. They insisted on segregated schools.

Humanists think that our political problems might have been very different if Catholic and Protestant children had gone to school together. Even today, there is a lot of resistance to integration, especially from the clerics themselves. Public opinion surveys tend to show that the people are in favour of integrated schools, but obviously the clerics are frightened that they will lose a steady supply of church members, so they are fighting integration. Some Catholic clerics have described integration as another attack on the minority!

Many liberal Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, are campaigning for integrated schools, and the Humanists are doing so too. But the segregated system is well established and reorganisation

“Humanists think that our political problems might have been very different if Catholic and Protestant children had gone to school together”

would require a major upheaval. We have been campaigning to integrate the staffs of the schools first and so remove the schools' religious identities. But even that gradual approach seems to scare people. They seem to want integration but they do not want to change the way things are done. And very few of the politicians in the new Assembly are strongly committed to integration, since they are products of the old religio-political divisions themselves. So the Humanists and the liberal Christians will have to keep up the struggle. Let us be optimistic - the Berlin Wall came down, apartheid in S. Africa was ended, segregation in the USA was banned - sometimes there is progress!

Les Reid is Secretary of the Belfast Humanist Group

Website:
www.reids24.freeserve.co.uk

Belief in Peru

Manuel A. Paz y Mino

Since the arrival five hundred years ago of the Spanish and Portuguese Conquerors in the lands now known as Latin America, the predominant religion has been Catholicism, established by fire and sword among the native peoples of that continent. And since then the Indian people —the Incas, Aztecs, Auracans, etc.—have been dominated and exploited for their abundant land, gold and silver.

The native cults that worshiped natural forces were forbidden and their practitioners were pursued, tortured and killed by the colonizers. Yet those ancient cults still survive in spite of the 'extermination of idolatries'. They have adapted to and mingled with the Roman Catholic rites. That religious syncretism may still be seen today in many provincial religious festivals — a result of racial and cultural mixing.

Religious Privilege

As in other parts of the world during the time of the Viceroyalty of Peru, the Inquisition pursued Jews and heretics. The Spanish domination of Peru and South America lasted until the nineteenth Century and part of their inheritance was a very rich and powerful Catholic Church owning money, houses and lands, many private schools and some universities. Even today the Peruvian State gives the Catholic Church special privileges such as exemption from taxes and makes payments to its higher representatives. The President of the Republic attends Catholic mass on Independence Day and gives his greeting to the image of the 'Lord of the Miracles' in Holy Week and in October. Buildings - public as well as private — are inaugurated with the blessing of a Catholic priest. And each of the Peruvian Armed Forces has its own image to venerate and mentions God in its official motto. Every August 29th the Peruvian Police's higher officers give their public homage to Santa Rosa de Lima, a Dominican nun from the colonial period.

In public schools the official contents of the classes on religion have a Catholic orientation, and not a few of the directors and teachers make their students pray. However, any student can ask permission to stop attending that course.



Religion and Cults

Like any great ideological group, there are within Peruvian Catholicism both conservative and liberal tendencies and there is even a Charismatic Biblical revival similar to Protestant Pentecostalism. Despite most of the population declaring itself to be Catholic their religious observance is often reduced merely to taking the sacraments and not to the standards of Christian morality. Although there are many believers raised in a faith that they still hold, many have had a scientific training. But understandably, where there is more social injustice, material poverty and poor education, the majority of people will search for consolation in supernatural powers.

From the first decades of the Twentieth Century the successive Peruvian State Constitutions have guaranteed, at least on paper, liberty of conscience and belief. In the beginning of the century the first Protestant missions arrived in Peru and by the end of the century the number of sects was growing rapidly. For example, the well-known inter-denominational American group, the Christian and Missionary Church has a temple in practically every district of Lima, the capital city, and in every important city in the country. Many bankrupt movie theaters have been bought or rented by Pentecostal preachers and healers for use as temples. There are also sects originating in Peru like the Mission of the Israeli New Pact, a Judeo-Christian group with a large number of followers living in the poorer quarters of Lima and among the farming colonies in the border regions of Peru (some of them even becoming congressmen in the National Parliament in 2000, like some members of Opus Dei).

A number of bizarre UFO cults have also appeared in Peru, like Alfa and Omega, and Rama. Alfa and Omega proclaims that Jesus Christ will return to

Earth with his angels in flying saucers; the Chilean Luis Soto founded this cult and affirmed that his hundreds of drawings with ufological and biblical contents had been revealed by God through telepathy. Alfa and Omega has included Socialism in its theology. The other Peruvian cult, Rama, was founded by Sixto Paz Wells (b. 1955) who says he has had telepathic contact and space voyages since age of nineteen. The group has had several branches and followers in many Latin American countries as well as Spain.

Peruvian Non-belief

But what about of Peruvian non-believers? Like any other country in the Western hemisphere Peru had and still has them, many of them famous. A strong critic of the clergy and the Church was the anarchist writer of the end of the Nineteenth Century, Manuel González Prada, whose ideas influenced Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, founder of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), whose candidate Alan García lost the Presidential election 2001-2006 to Alejandro Toledo. At present the most famous Peruvian non-believer is novelist Mario Vargas Llosa who is a declared agnostic. He lost in the elections for President of the Republic in 1990 against a candidate was initially supported by the Evangelicals: Alberto Fujimori. At that time the Catholic Church had such a fear of them that they organized a massive special procession with the Lord of Miracles.

We — in AERPFA or Peruvian Institute of Applied Philosophy - began in 1994 to present a philosophy applied to human and social issues, with special emphasis on the criticism of supernatural, paranormal and pseudoscientific beliefs, through lectures, books and periodicals. We are very glad to have translated and/or published papers and books by Humanist authors from both the American and European continents, such as Paul Kurtz and Finngeir Hiorth. To date we have published seventeen books and seven periodicals on paper or in electronic form. In 2002 we are going to launch a documentary video series with the support of the IHEU and a work by Antony Flew, a Humanist book for children and other publications. AERPFA has also its own Center for Inquiry with a Humanist and Skeptical library and a small room for meetings.

In 1998 we were co-founders of the Peruvian Non-Religious Movement (MPA) and founders of the Peruvian Center for Investigation of the Paranormal, Pseudoscience and Irrationality (CIPSI-PERU). MPA organized 15 public debates with believers on diverse topics both metaphysical and ethical-practical during 2000 and early 2001 and wrote 2 manifestos. Presently in 2002 MPA is organising about 10 lectures with non believers and religious freethinkers. These activities were and are

conducted in the auditorium of the Red Owl Cultural Association whose staff members were also co-founders of MPA.

CIPSI-PERU has as its main work monitoring media reports on the paranormal in order to send them the criticisms and explanations of their reported phenomena, and to organise video-forums mainly for students.

We know that there are many atheists and agnostics around, many of them the heirs of Marxism and Logical Positivism, some simply critics of the Establishment, unconscious Humanists. There are also many people searching for answers to their existential and intellectual questions in sources other than the religious or paranormal. They need and want to know about philosophical and scientific critics. But in Latin America, and especially in Peru, such information is rarely, if ever, to hand. All they have to do is understand that there are other people that think as them and that they are not alone. That is our mission.

Dr Manuel Paz is Director of AERPFA, an IHEU Member Organisation. He is directing a video series on Humanism, funded by the IHEU.

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Secular Values in Bangladesh

Ansar Ahmed Ullah



Bangladesh came into being as a sovereign state in 1971 after a bloody war of independence & broke away from the Islamic Pakistan. In 1947, when the British gave up their rule of India, Pakistan was created for the Muslims of India (In 1956 Pakistan was declared an Islamic Republic by the military junta, though the founder of Pakistan Mr Jinnah had said citizens of Pakistan would be known as Pakistanis rather than by their religious identity).

As the majority of Muslims in India lived in the eastern and western part of India, the Pakistani state was created with two separate regions: the western region (consisting of Sind, Punjab, frontier province and Baluchistan) became known as West Pakistan and the eastern region (of East Bengal) became known as East Pakistan. It was an absurd situation, a country in two halves with the Indian state in between. The two regions had nothing in common except religion.

The Bengali Tradition

The Bengalis by tradition were, if not secular, tolerant of other faiths because for centuries they lived side by side in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. It must be said here that when Islam came to Bengal it hit softer grounds because Islam came to Bengal via Sufis and Islamic preachers who settled in Bengal and adopted the local cultural customs unlike other parts of the world where Muslims came as conquerors and invaders. It was first the British with their imperialistic policy of divide and rule and then the Pakistanis and during the Bangladesh period the various military/autocratic regimes tried to instil this idea that the Bengali Muslims were Muslims only.

During the Pakistani (1947-1971) period various measures were taken to make the Bengali Muslims pukka Muslims because the Bengali Muslims were converted Hindus (the West Pakistanis were converts as well, Islam did not originate in Pakistan!). The first onslaught came on the Bengali language. It was said the Bengali language was not a Islamic language, it was the language of the Hindus because Bengali Hindus also spoke in Bengali. Urdu (the language of West Pakistani rulers most of whom came from India-primarily from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, only 7% of the West Pakistanis spoke Urdu) was declared the state language of Pakistan arguing it was the language of Muslims (there is no such thing as language of Muslims, the Koran is written in Arabic and the Prophet Mohammed was an Arab speaker). They tried to introduce Arabic words into the Bengali language and attempted to write Bengali language in Arabic script. The Pakistani regime even banned Tagore only because

he happens to be a Bengali. Indian Bengali films were banned. Bengali New Year and other local festivals were termed as Hindu influenced cultural activities. As a reaction to this the Bengali frustration grew against the so called Muslim Homeland concept of Pakistan and asserted their own distinct Bengali identity. The students and the intelligentsia protested against the onslaught on their cultural heritage in the name of religion, and launched a campaign to establish Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan.

The Language Movement

The language movement was a secular campaign. Here I would like to quote Dhaka University Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury who said, 'Language is secular. The Bengalis love for their language is indicative of their abiding secularism. The language movement represents a rejection ... of nationalism based on religion (discriminating and undermining minority faiths where as the language movement was lead by Bengalis belonging to all faiths).The language movement is significant in many ways. It represents a very positive and firm declaration in favour of secular nationalism. The movement provided us with....the image of martyrdom for a secular cause.'

In fact the language movement instilled a identity which was secular, the Bengalis realised regardless of the fact that majority of them being Muslims (in East Pakistan-East Bengal, West Bengal is predominantly Hindu) there were other Bengalis who were not Muslims (Hindus, Christians and Buddhists) but shared the same common values and cultural practices. As a collective Bengali ethnic group they fought against the imposition of prejudice and discrimination by the Pakistani authority in the name of Islam. Therefore when the independence movement materialised in the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971, once again the movement was secular. The people of Bangladesh of all faiths and of all ethnic groups (there are many smaller ethnic and tribal groups in Bangladesh) took part in the independence movement. It was a turning point for the Bengalis.

Secularism in Bangladesh

The first Govt of Bangladesh enshrined secularism as one of its main principle into its constitution. (secularism in the context of Bangladesh concept is probably not true to how its perceived elsewhere. In Bangladesh secularism meant equal opportunity for all faith groups to practice their religion without being discriminated and the prevention of religion being used by political parties to pursue their own party political agenda).

Unfortunately, in Bangladesh successive military juntas, autocratic regimes and sectarian right wing parties have all used religion to strengthen their grip in power by thinking they were appeasing the majority population of the country. It was the late Ziaur Rahman, soldier turned politician, who repealed secularism from the constitution and introduced 'In the name of Allah....' above the Preamble of the constitution , the word secularism in the Preamble was substituted by the words, 'Absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah....'. He further allowed fundamentalist religious parties (these parties were banned after the independence of Bangladesh) to enter the political arena of Bangladesh.



IHEU funds health care programmes of its member organisation, Assembly of Freethinkers, Bangladesh

It was Gen Ershad, another military ruler who made Islam the state religion of Bangladesh and in 1990 and in 1992 he failed to prevent systematic planned attack on the Hindu minority of Bangladesh on the pretext of Babri Mosque destruction by Hindu fundamentalists in India. He patronised a number of so called saints who came to limelight during his rule. As a result receiving blessings from these saints became common for politicians of all major parties.

The current situation in Bangladesh is that the political grouping are in two camps. Those who believe in Bengali nationalism (secular and inclusive of all people of Bangladesh) and Bangladeshi nationalism (sectarian and bias towards Muslims). The last general election that took place in Oct 2001, brought a four party (Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party-Bangladeshi nationalist, Ershad's Jatiyo Party-Bangladeshi nationalist, Jamate Islami-sectarian and Islami oikyo Jote-fundamentalist) alliance into power.

Oppression of the Hindu Minority

With the four party alliance in power, the sectarian elements of these parties went on a rampage

against the Hindus and their properties in many parts of the country. In fact the intimidation of the Hindus stated well before the election in order to deter them (Hindus) from casting their votes as the four party alliance feared majority Hindus would vote for the Awami League. In Bangladesh, traditionally minority people have always voted for the Awami League due to its secular manifesto. After the election the attacks on minority people took an ugly turn. Members of the ruling four party alliance carried out systematic torture, killing, rape, arson and looting against Hindu families. Many Hindu families were forced to leave their homes to take refuge in India. It is claimed by many human rights organisation more than 1000 Hindu women were raped and 15-20,000 Hindus have fled to India.

I would like to give a typical example of what happened to a 15 year old Hindu school girl Purnima Rani Sheel. On 8 Oct 2001 a group of 25/30 men attacked Purnima's home at night, gang raped and then kidnapped her. Her parents and a younger sister were also severely beaten. Purnima was gang raped for two hours, as her family lay unconscious. After the attack the family was warned not to report the incident to the Police. The incident could not be kept secret as the family had to be admitted to the hospital for treatment. The Police accepted a case charging the perpetrators but refused to accept the rape case. Purnima was taken to the local district hospital where the doctors certified she was raped. She further gave her testimony to the local magistrate who ordered the arrest of 15 perpetrators she named, only one was arrested. Following this incident the family took shelter elsewhere. There too, the family is under threat from the attackers, who are pressurising the family to withdraw the case or face dire consequences.

It is unfortunate for Bangladesh a country with long tradition of tolerance has been used time after time by various political groupings to further their own agenda at the expense of the Hindu minority.

Equality, personal freedom, human dignity, fraternity, welfare and rule of law have been ensured in the constitution of Bangladesh yet the minority people suffers from religious persecution instigated by right wing sectarian parties and regimes.

In an atmosphere of heightened communal tension and in a country like Bangladesh where 130 million people live in the most crowded and poorest land in the world, where most people are illiterate it is far more easy to promote religion promising miracles than secular values. Universal education is the only long term guarantee of a genuinely secular society.

On a positive note, the civil society of Bangladesh are actively challenging the dark forces of sectarianism and fundamentalism to secure universal human values for all citizens of Bangladesh.

Ansar Ahmed Ullah is a secular activist campaigning for minority rights in Bangladesh.

IHEU Amsterdam Decl

Extracts from a document to be considered at the IHEU's 50th Anniversary Congress.

Humanism is offered as a way out of the present crisis of civilisation. More than a long tradition that has inspired many of the world's great thinkers and of science itself.

Humanism unites all those who can no longer believe in the various creeds. It is based on conviction on respect for humankind as moral beings. The fundamentals of humanism follows:

1. Humanism is democratic. Humanism aims at the fullest possible development of each individual. Development is a matter of right. The democratic principle can be applied to all human methods of government

2. Humanism is Rational. It seeks to use science creatively, not destructively. It advocates the scientific method to problems of human welfare. Humanists believe that the tremendous problems faced can be solved. Science gives us the means but human values propose the ends.

3. Humanism supports democracy and human rights. Humanism aims at the fullest possible development of each individual. Development are matters of right. The principles of democracy and human rights can be applied to all methods of government.

4. Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility. Humanism is committed to society, and recognises our dependence on and responsibility towards the natural world. It is thus committed to education from indoctrination.

5. Humanism is a lifeway aiming at the maximum possible fulfilment through the education of everyone everywhere. Our primary task today is to make human beings aware in their own lives. To. By utilising free inquiry and the power of science for peace and in the service of humanity that confront us all.

Humanism is a way of life that offers an ethical and rational means of action. It is based on conviction to associate themselves with us in this cause.

aration on Humanism

Modern Humanism is the outcome of a creative artists and gave rise to

eds and are willing to base their s of modern humanism are as

every human being. It holds that human an relationships and is not restricted to

vocates a world-wide application of ndous problems with which humanity is s.

possible development of every human being. It holds that democracy and human n be applied to many human relationships and are not restricted to methods of

ity. Humanism ventures to build a world on the idea of the free person responsible l world. Humanism is un-dogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents. It is

cultivation of ethical and creative living. Humanism can be a way of life for e simplest terms of what Humanism can mean to them and what it commits them compassion, we have confidence that humanity will be able to solve the problems

ddressing the challenges of our times. We call upon all who share this



Problems of Science in Pakistan

Dr Anis Alam



Since independence in 1947 new universities were opened in Pakistan with the aim of producing graduates in large numbers; however research was neglected. In 1986 - 87 the total enrolment in all of the twenty two universities in the country was a mere 65,340. During the first forty years of its existence, Pakistan produced only 128 Ph.D.s in sciences in all the universities and research institutions of Pakistan. Dr. Anis Alam alerts us to the alarming situation.

Sad State of Affairs

Despite the dismal state of science in Pakistan her scientists have successfully built nuclear bombs, fired guided rockets, run nuclear plants for decades. However, Pakistani scientific community is among the most irrational, retrogressive, conservative and least objective professional body anywhere. I make this statement with full responsibility as a member of this community for over thirty-five years. This is especially true of the Physics community, responsible for the bomb and missile programmes. I think the main reasons for this sad state of affairs are:

- Science in Pakistan has never been introduced, taught, promoted, cultivated and practiced for its critical, objective, rational, libratory spirit and character. It has been generally confused with its scientific and technological artifacts (atomic bomb, rockets, planes, tanks, jets, cars, computers, electrical, opto-electric and electronic gadgetry, diagnostic and therapeutic medicine, chemicals, films, computers, satellites based communications, mobile phones, internet, etc).

- The state has always sought to produce scientists who could solve scientific and technical problems while remaining social and cultural conservatives. This is corroborated by the fact that, Well-qualified life scientists often publicly deny theory of evolution.

- Physicists often denigrate cause-effect relationship (causality).

- No representative body of Pakistani scientists and engineers for example, Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Pakistan Institute of Physics, Pakistan Institute of Engineers, Pakistan Association of Scientists and Scientific Professions, Pakistan Physics Society has ever issued any statement or adopted any policy that was critical of government

policies (e.g., the islamisation of science, the atomic policy). They have almost always operated as spokespersons for the government in power. As

- Since 1977, the state through its education policy has decreed that every school science text book compulsorily carries sections on religion in chapter elucidating methodology of science. The message is unambiguous to the young, study science, but only as a subject with lots of useful information. Disregarding its critical, rational, objective and skeptical methodology. Theology rules as it did through out the pre-industrial era.

Science was developed in Europe as a liberating force in opposition to the prevalent dominant forces of the clergy and the feudal. In the developing countries modern science was in general introduced by Christian missionaries under the protection of European colonial powers. In the mind of the public it was identified as an alien and coercive force associated with an alien power that used it to establish, secure, promote and develop its own political, cultural and economic interests.

Even after the departure of colonial powers, and announcement of independence, science is seen only as collection of facts and theories to be remembered. Technology is seen only as useful gadgetry. Scientific method, its universal efficacy, its liberating role are generally neglected.

General Zia ul Haq

In Pakistan a dangerous trend has developed over the last fifteen years or so. Attempts have been made at state level to undermine the objectivity and rationality of science by rekindling the debates long forgotten in Europe. Through the Zia period, (1977 onwards) a confusing mixture of science and religion was promoted. Scarce resources that ought to have been devoted to the promotion and develop-

ment of science were wasted on activities that only promoted an anti-scientific attitude and values. Federal Ministry of Science and Technology that was created to promote science was used to organize an international symposium on 'Science and Islam'. It was sad to see the foremost professional bodies of scientists and engineers in Pakistan to get on to this band wagon. Three years later The Pakistan Association of Scientists and Scientific Professions (PASSP) organized an international conference on 'Science in Islamic Polity -Its Past, Present and Future' in collaboration with the government of Pakistan. Millions were lavishly spent on the arrangements. The PASSP then organized another national seminar on 'Quran & Science' (26th June 1986, Karachi). Among the participants of these meetings were almost the entire hierarchy of Pakistani science, Professors, Deans, Vice-Chancellors, Heads of research organizations, Heads of Ministries of Science, Education Industry, Commerce. The 80s were wasted in such frivolous activities. Books were written by otherwise competent scientists not on their scientific expertise but on trying to prove that religion offers a better understanding of the physical, chemical and biological and cosmic world than science!

Needless to say these activities neither served the cause of religion nor of science. They only confused the public and allowed psychopants to play up to the powerful General Zia. All these activities, state supported facilitated the Talibanization of Pakistani society. Pakistani society was ripped apart by sectarian conflicts, that still haunt. When three quarters of the people are kept illiterate, the rest given a dangerous mixture of outmoded customs, practices, views and blatant lies, the average person succumbs to the propaganda of religious bigots. If people are properly educated so as to fully develop their critical faculty and their creativity, then they will be able to penetrate through! the smoke screen of intolerance, hatred, prejudice and patent falsehood.

Militarisation of Science

The events of 1971 with their culmination in the secession of the eastern wing from Pakistan however changed the direction and thrust of Pakistani nuclear program. The new man in power, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, changed the goals of the PAEC program, from pursuit of nuclear power for peaceful purposes to the preparation of nuclear bombs. From the mid 70s Pakistan tried to develop self reliance in nuclear fuel, as foreign suppliers of the Karachi nuclear reactor had suspended the supply of enriched uranium needed to fuel the reactor. Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission started an ambitious program for achieving self-reliance in basic nuclear technology. A Center for Nuclear Sciences (CNS) was established; other centers were established for exploration, mining and refining of Uranium ore, for fabrication of nuclear fuel rods, for instrumentation and for advanced computation. The Prime Minister was

in direct control of the PAEC. Its budget was not under government audit. From 1976 the work of PAEC came to be supplemented by the Kahuta Research laboratories (KRL). These facilities were set up by Abdul Qadeer Khan a metallurgist by training to produce enriched uranium.

It is essential to understand that since 70s, Pakistan's atomic energy program has been basically a program to acquire capability to make atomic bombs. This program should be considered as part of the procurement program of Pakistan's armed forces to acquire effective and lethal weaponry. Atomic bomb for Pakistan's defense establishment is an extremely effective weapon like any other weapon just more lethal, more effective and far more destructive. The goal of acquisition of the capability to build a nuclear bomb has been pursued with single mindedness.

Science and technology in Pakistan has come to be associated only with the nuclear capability. Non nuclear science research and development has suffered. As has often been pointed out. As far as the civil society is concerned total concentration on nuclear bomb program to the neglect of science and technology in general has greatly harmed Pakistani science, technology and industry. Without the trained manpower, scientists, engineers, technicians in adequate number backed by requisite infrastructure, Pakistan's quest to develop nuclear capability will just be an idle dream. Pakistan's nuclear program despite consuming the lion's share of all allocation for scientific research for the last decade and half is yet to add one single kilowatt of electricity to national grid since early seventies.

When knowledge in general and science in particular is cultivated in its true critical spirit only then Pakistan and other developing countries will be able to devote their considerable potential to overcome their state of underdevelopment.

Dr. Anis Alam is Professor of Physics at the University of Punjab, Lahore

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Humanism and Women's Rights in Nigeria



Dr C.O.Isiramen

Today, the issue of women's emancipation has become a buzz word the world over. It is a great concern to many that women are deprived of their human rights. Among those concerned are the humanists who have often emphasized the authentic realisation of the human rights of women.

The fact is that there is an obvious conflict of opinions among feminist thinkers as to what women's liberation is actually all about. For some feminists, women's liberation means an attack on the male folk, for some others it means a revolt against the demeaning status of women in the traditional society. I believe a Humanistic approach to the problem is possible.

Humanism

Humanism has many connotations. I use Humanism as spelt out in the Dictionary of Philosophy: 'The ideal of a rich flourishing of individual potentiality...'. It is 'the tendency to emphasize man and his status, importance, powers, achievements, interests or authority'. The humanist system of thought advocates the best for everyone. It promotes individual freedom and emancipation and the establishment of a just and free society for all. Humanism advocates the dethronement of all forms of discriminations, oppression or subjugation be it sexist or cultural. It is therefore correct to say that the call for women's emancipation in Nigeria is a humanistic one, because it urges the non-denial of rights, dignity and respectability of women and girl children.

Nigerian Constitution

The rights of women in Nigeria are clearly spelt out in the nation's constitution. Right is defined as 'A power, privilege or immunity, guaranteed under a constitution, status or decisional laws or claimed as a respect of long usage. In moral vocabulary, respect for rights is seen as a matter of justice. Rights can be asserted, demanded or stood upon. The obligation they impose are expected to be performed and their non-performance occasions feeling of indignation, resentment and disappointment.

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, chapter 4 sections 33-43 guarantees every Nigerian the following fundamental rights: The right to life. The right to dignity of human person. The right to personal liberty. The right to freedom of statement. The right to freedom from discrimina-

tion. The right against compulsory acquisition of property without compensation.

Also chapter 2, section 15 of the constitution states that discrimination on the grounds of sex shall be prohibited. While section 17 upholds that 'The social order is founded on the ideals of freedom, equality and justice. The sanctity of the human person shall be recognized and enhanced.'

The rights of women enshrined in the Nigerian constitution are consistent with the ideals of humanism. But unfortunately, the rights and ideals have remained paper tigers, mere theoretical postulations without any practical bearing on the lives and conditions of the Nigerian women. In practice, Nigerian society is replete with anti-humanist ideals. Women are systematically relegated to inferior positions.

Anti-Humanism and Women

It is sad to note that in a country where the rights of women are stipulated so in its constitution, women are still considered inferior. Women are considered to be people who can be seen but not heard. In northern Nigeria, women are not even seen! Women are considered tools and properties of men 'whose superior position had been ordained by the divine powers or the society.' Culturally, almost every evil occurrence in society is attributed to women who are often humiliated and accused of being responsible for the deaths of their husbands and children.

Educationally, women constitute the largest disadvantaged group in the country, the United Nations Chronicles acknowledges that there is gross inequality between men and women in the area of education. Politically, while women constitute more than half of the population, they are grossly under-represented within the decision-making bodies. The ratio of females to males in the Presidency and in the National Assembly is still exceedingly low. Factors militating against women politically in Nigeria can be summed up as follows: Prevailing

unequal division of labour in household and child care duties, negative attitudes towards women's participation in public life, the lack of confidence on the part of the electorate Another perceived constraint relates to the short historical traditions of women political participation combined with inaccessibility to Knowledge and education.

Traditionally, women in Nigeria face 'deep prejudices, profound discrimination, barriers to their advancement in the areas of education, politics, economics, nutrition, healthcare, equality and even survival itself.'

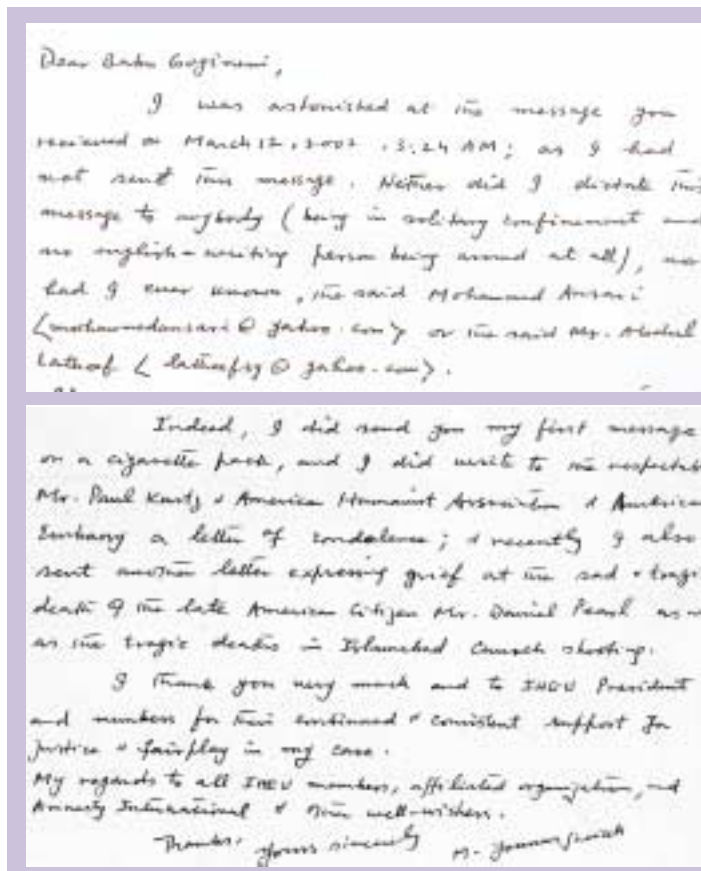
The Feminist Movement in Nigeria

Feminist philosophy requires the liberation and emancipation of women from the shackles of oppression and dehumanisation. Unfortunately, some happenings in the feminist circles can hardly enhance the cause of Nigerian women. This is because feminists tend not to be clear as to who a liberated woman is. Thus the feminist philosophy incorporates views and perspectives which are sometimes conflicting and contradictory. There is the traditional view which holds that it is wrong for women to be talking of liberation. The traditional stance believes that the traditional status of women should be maintained. There is then the liberal view which claims that the stereotyping of females is unjust. It claims that it is socially unjust and inhuman to discriminate against women in political, economic and legal spheres. Although the liberal feminist does not condemn all sex roles, s/he however condemns emphatically all dehumanising elements which women are made to endure right from the cradle.

The radical view is yet another feminist position which advocates a complete revolution in the social system and not mere reforms. According to this view, feminists make claims like: Let the men say whatever they like, women liberation is a reality in the fast changing world. Men have tried to make the world static because they are tired horses Now is the women's era. Who says it is not right for the woman to tell her man to stay below if she can fit in conveniently on top? Radical feminism requires 'freedom from sexual classification altogether rather than merely an equalisation of sex roles.' Women are advised to free themselves from marriage and childbirth. If the world must be populated, technological means have to be employed. As a result of this, some women and even men are suspicious of the feminist movement; not wanting to have anything to do with it, branding it irresponsible.

Humanism is a philosophy that upholds the equality and dignity of all humans both male and female. Humanism is not feminism, though many humanists tend to support and share in feminist ideals and values. For the Nigerian women, the humanist world-view offers a more veritable frame-work for the free exercise of their rights, and the full and unfettered development of their potentials.

Dr. Isiramen is Lecturer at the Department of Religions and Cultural Studies at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria. She is a member of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and presented a paper on Women and Human Rights at the October 2001 African Humanist Conference in Nigeria.



Email.con

A mischievous counter-campaign to undermine IHEU's efforts to save Dr. Shaikh, condemned to death in Pakistan on charges of Blasphemy, was launched against the IHEU in February. E Mails were circulated around the world by Mssrs. 'Mohammed Ansari' and 'Abdul Lateef' claiming to speak respectively from Pakistan and Singapore, and on behalf of Dr. Shaikh. These e mails, and the allegations contained in them have been given wide and repeated exposure by one 'Susanna Pratt' claiming to mail from Australia. The e mails accuse the IHEU and its Executive Director of forging letters in the name of Dr. Shaikh. 'Ms. Susanna Pratt' even started an e mail discussion group called 'Humanist_Initiative' to further malign the IHEU and its Executive Director.

The IHEU strongly condemns such malicious and anonymous attacks, and warns its associates, members and fellow campaigners not to be misled.

We reproduce extracts from a letter dated 21 March 2002 by Dr. Shaikh, written in response to the mails from 'Mssrs Ansari and Lateef' which IHEU managed to reach Dr. Shaikh in his Death Cell.

The Institute for Humanist Studies (IHS) which joined the IHEU as a Specialist Member Organisation in 2001 was founded in 1999 to provide a range of services to the Humanist community: from web-hosting to the provision of training courses, and financial support for projects around the world. The founder and eminence grise behind the Institute is its president and long-time humanist, Larry Jones. IHEU Vice president Roy Brown spoke recently to Larry Jones at the Institute headquarters in Albany, New York.

IHN: Larry, tell us about the Institute for Humanist Studies.

LJ: IHS is composed of two parts. One is, we develop our own programs to promote Humanism. These are not meant to compete with any other organisations' programs but are designed to fill a need that is not being met. The other part is the IHS Fund. Through this fund we put a significant part of our resources into supporting the programs of other organisations.

IHN: Can you perhaps tell us first about your in-house programs, the programs that you run yourselves?

LJ: We are creating a distance-learning program called the Continuum of Humanist Education, or COHE. It consists of a series of on-line courses on Humanism from a number of perspectives: history, psychology, philosophy, and activism. Each course has a number of levels. The idea behind COHE is to reach the maximum number of people and to address as many of their needs for knowledge about Humanism as possible. Some, for example may only be looking for a cursory knowledge – an introduction - which we offer free. The other modules – all of which are low cost – cover Humanism in more depth. The first modules will be ready in the Summer of 2002. We plan to develop further modules in the future. The more advanced modules will be at the level of college courses in philosophy and we would hope to get accreditation for these courses.

The other main activity of the Institute is the Humanist Internet

Project or HIP. The purpose is to help Humanist organisations use the technology of the Internet. The Internet is redefining how information is distributed. It enables people and organisations at very low cost to get their word out to the public – it opens a gateway to the world for them. So we offer web sites free of charge. We are currently hosting 40 or 50 web sites. The other part of the Humanist Internet Project is to create a Humanist World site to serve as a resource to humanist and other free-thought organisations around the world.

IHS has also underwritten the publication of a Humanist textbook written by Lewis Vaughn suitable for college level philosophy and religion courses. The book is called Humanism and Heresy and will be published by Rowman and Littlefield.

IHN: Can we come now to the IHS Fund. This will have a huge impact for a number of developing Humanist organisations around the world. How do you see the priorities for this fund. What are the key issues you are trying to address?

LJ: Well, the Fund is governed by a committee made up of significant donors to IHS. I believe that donors are investors – in Humanism as well as in IHS. As investors I felt they should be invited to participate in the governance of the IHS Fund. At our first board meeting we agreed on guidelines for awarding grants. We have about \$110,000 per year to distribute initially but we are hoping this will grow as we attract new donors.

In general we want to support



projects that increase awareness about humanism, that teach people about humanism, and defend and protect the interests of non-believers. In addition, the committee favours programs that have the potential to become self-sustaining and programs that can serve as a template for other organisations – that are portable to other organisations to amplify the effect of the grants. We are also particularly interested in supporting student proposals. We are keen to bring young people into the movement. They are our future.

We favour programmes that foster co-operation and collaboration between organisations and we are also interested in programs that use new technologies to promote humanism effectively.

IHN: Larry, can you tell us something about your background?

LJ: I was born into an atheist family. My father was a strident atheist. I didn't discover Humanism until rather late in life. In the mid 1980s I discovered a local Humanist group in Albany,

The IHN Interview

Larry Jones

the Capital District Humanist Society. I then connected with the Council for Secular Humanism. I eventually served on the CDHS board and became the executive director from 1998 to 2000. I also serve on the board of the Center for Inquiry and I am treasurer of CSICOP. So I have an interest in both Skepticism and Humanism.

IHS is funded by an annual grant from the National Philanthropic Trust. This is a donor-advised fund used by the Jones family as our charitable vehicle. Out of that fund I can direct about \$110,000 a year to IHS. We use that money strictly to fund other organisations. We do not co-mingle the funds with other operational accounts of IHS. It is strictly segregated into an IHS Fund account. The other expenses of IHS are funded by private donations. I supplied most of the seed money but I am happy to say that we are beginning to attract the attention of other secular philanthropists who have so far this year provided a further \$97,000. It is my hope that we can double that by next year. The reason being that by the summer of this year we should have a product COHE. I

call this our dot-com stage. Lots of ideas, lots of promise. No product. But we will have a product shortly and the HIP program is going full bore.

IHN: You are known as someone who likes to keep in the background, hide your light. You have been quoted as saying – with Harry S. Truman – ‘It is remarkable how much you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.’

LJ: Well, I have adopted that as the company motto. What motivated me really to start this organisation was the disarray I found in the humanist and free-thought movement in the United States. It is a splintered, competing collection of organisations that are not very effective in countering the onslaught of the religious right - which is more organised and far better funded than we are. And so I wanted to create an organisation that used its resources rather uniquely. One, we develop our own programs and two, we support the best work of others. We utilise a great part of our resources to help others develop and run programs, who can develop and run them better than we can. We are a very small organisation and have limited human resources. There are other organizations with greater resources and special skills that can better run and develop programs than we can. And so we support them rather than try and compete with them and waste resources. So I think it’s an efficient way to allocate resources.

IHN: I am aware of a number of US foundations that restrict their giving to American causes. What gave you your interest in the wider world, in international issues?

LJ: Humanism is an important global concept. I feel very strongly that if the world were more humanistic it would be a better world. We support programs and proposals on their merits. We don’t provide support

to organisations for their capital programs or to fatten their bottom line. We are looking at projects and programs that teach people about humanism, that make the public more aware of humanism and spread these ideas to a wider public.

IHN: Can you tell us something about your plans for IHS for the future?

LJ: Once we get COHE up and running I would like to expand the direction of IHS into the political arena. If Humanism is ever going to have any influence in the world it must influence policy makers. So we are considering hiring a full-time lobbyist. We are well located here in the capital of New York State. Our activities will be at first local – in New York State --, but after we have gotten some experience, I would hope that in the future we will have a lobbyist in Washington. I can’t stress enough the importance of being able to influence policy makers. I think it’s a very important project and we are planning to do that in the very near future.

Another direction in which we want to develop IHS is to make it into a think tank where the media can come when they are seeking a humanist or secular perspective on a current issue – an information resource. I think we are uniquely positioned to do that because in our on-line curriculum we have scholars around the world, writing courses for us so we have a pool of experts from which we can obtain statements and have interviews done. So we have a unique resource of expertise available to us.

We also want to restart a program a rapid response network. This goes along with our mission of protecting other free-thought organisations and individuals. It is important to be able to respond rapidly to bills and other initiatives that come up say in the legislature. We need to be able to respond in a clear and timely fashion in order to influence the debate.

IHN: You have got quite an ambitious program there. How long will it take you to put this in place?

LJ: Well, we need more funding. I provided all of the seed money for this organisation but other donations are beginning to come in. As soon as the money comes in we will put it to work.

IHN: If I were somebody working with a small group of humanists in a country in say south-east Asia or Africa and looking for support, how would I approach you?

We have an application form on line at www.humaniststudies.org. Go to that. It's a fairly simple application form. Fill it out. Then there is a place to further explain your project – add a page or two of description. If we need any more information on it we will request it from you. Our IHS Fund committee meets once a year in January and we will consider these projects. So it's a

one-year cycle. In 2002 we had well over \$500,000 worth of requests. Unfortunately we only had \$110,000 to give away. But it is my hope that secular philanthropists will discover that the IHS Fund is a unique way to fulfil their philanthropic goals - because we have everything in place to research proposals. The IHS Fund committee oversees the proposals and we offer technical assistance to the recipients to help ensure that their projects are a success. We are also trying to put in place a donor-recipient clearing-house. We need to collaborate with other donor organisations so that donor resources can be effectively allocated: to prevent double-dipping and so recipients won't need to make lots of applications to lots of different donors.

I am hoping that within a decade the fund will be able to distribute a million dollars a year to the

freethought and humanist movement. If we can attract enough outside money, and I am hoping we can, I think it is realisable. And with that kind of injection of energy into the movement I think we can accomplish a great deal.

IHN: Larry, one final question: what was your personal motivation in setting up the Institute and the fund?

LJ: Basic to the reason I am doing this is that I would like to see a time – perhaps not in my lifetime – when people of non belief will be accepted; when our opinions and perspectives will be accepted and influential. In short, I would like to see a time when Humanism has influence in the world. And I hope in some small way that what we are doing is contributing to that effort.

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(Please note that for international payments an International credit card may be the cheapest and most convenient way to pay. Transfers through banks may attract charges which are high)

IHEYO News

IHEYO - the International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organisation, the IHEU's Youth wing - has been busy organising an International Youth Conference, setting in place a youth-internship programme at the IHEU office, relaunching its website (www.ihayo.org), building a virtual library of youth humanism, and maintaining a list-serve on the Internet for discussing Humanism. Currently plans are also being made to arrange year-long internships for European youth who will work on specific projects at the IHEU office in London.

IHEYO-International Youth Conference

The IHEYO-International Youth Conference on Empowering Youth in the Humanist Movement will be held in the Netherlands from 1 to 5 July. Thanks to grants from the Youth Programme of the European Union, and from IHEU Specialist Member Organisations HIVOS (Humanist Institute for Development Co-operation, the Netherlands), and IHS (Institute for Humanist Studies, USA), more than 50 young humanists will participate in this conference.

Young humanists from all over the world, specially from Europe, Africa and North America will have an opportunity to share experiences, and to plan future cooperation. The IHEYO International Conference participants will also have the opportunity to participate fully in IHEU's 50th Anniversary World Humanist Congress. As the World Humanist Congress too will feature workshops involving youth, we hope that this will be a great stimulus for the formation of a stronger youth movement, and will consequently strengthen the humanist movement as a whole.

Virtual Library on Youth Humanism

IHEYO is creating a data base on Youth Humanism on its website. Over the past several months data has been collected about humanist youth groups and youth activities around the world, and we hope that this virtual library will help provide easy access to information about youth humanism in other countries. The IHEYO would be very pleased to receive contributions for the database: if you have not done so already, please send us details about humanist youth activities in your country or in your organisation. Do remember to write a note of about three to five hundred words on your organisation's plans to involve Humanist youth, your recent experiences, as well as contact details and websites.

IHEYO-CommonSense Internship programme

The IHEYO-CommonSense internship programme was started in 2001 and will continue in 2002. This internship programme offers an outstanding young

person aged below 30 the opportunity to work for a month at a humanist organization in a country other than his or her own; internship opportunities are also available at the IHEU's headquarters in London as part of this programme. The internship programme offers travel and living expenses, and aims to provide to humanist youth an opportunity to know about humanism in the host country, and to develop leadership in the youth humanist movement.

The intern for 2002 at the IHEU headquarters in the early summer will be James Walker from the US. James will at first go to the Netherlands and help organise the IHEYO-Youth Conference. After the Youth Conference, he will work the rest of the month in London at the IHEYO where he will follow up plans made during the Youth Conference. James is a 20 year-old Bio-Chemistry student and has been involved in several volunteer activities. He is eager to learn more about how to translate humanist beliefs into action.

IHEYO-EU Internship Programme

In addition to the IHEYO-CommonSense Internship programme which is open to Humanist Youth from all over the world, the IHEYO hopes to launch 12-month internships for which only European Humanist youth are eligible. Negotiations are on at the moment, but when confirmed, these internships will be funded through the European Union's Youth programme. Humanist youth in Europe who will be under 26 years of age in January 2003 should write to the IHEYO expressing their interest in the internship programme. Please send a detailed CV with information on your involvement in Humanism in your country, languages that you can communicate in, and if possible, with special Humanist projects that you have in mind.

**Ms. Gea Meijers, intern at IHEU office
e-mail youth@iheu.org
telephone 00 44 20 7831 4817 (London).**

Taking the Course of Reason

Austin Dacey

For some time, Europe has led the way in providing opportunities for accredited academic studies in skepticism, humanism, and rationalism. For instance, in the Netherlands, the University for Humanist Studies at Utrecht offers a six-year interdisciplinary advanced degree program with specialisations in research, policy, education, and counseling. Founded in 1989, the University is recognised and subsidised by the Dutch Ministry of Education and enrolls over 300 students. At the University of Hertfordshire in the UK, the Perrott-Warrick Research Unit conducts critical, empirical investigation into parapsychological phenomena and sponsors pioneering participatory experiments that have reached over 18 million people through the British mass media.

Some rationalist organisations in North America have also developed educational programs. The North American Committee for Humanism was formed in 1982 to establish The Humanist Institute, which was dedicated to leadership training for those involved in organised humanism. Since 1989, the Center for Inquiry Institute has sponsored seminars and workshops in critical inquiry, skepticism, and humanism, including Skeptic's Toolbox, a team-taught workshop in hands-on skeptical investigation held each summer at the University of Oregon. Although they have been quite successful, these programs did not offer an accredited degree or credit towards such a degree, and they attracted few 'traditional-age' students. At the same time, English-speaking academic disciplines such as philosophy and religious studies, which had been dominated by the naturalistic worldview throughout the first half of the twentieth century, have seen the return of self-confident and intellectually respectable non-naturalism and theism in the last twenty-five years. Courses and institutes on spirituality and untested alternative medicine proliferate at mainstream medical schools

Center for Inquiry Institute

In December 2001 the Center for Inquiry Institute announced a dramatic consolidation and expansion of its efforts: the launch of a two-week summer school with courses available for transferable college credit through the State University of New York system. The full-time courses, seminars, assistantships, and recreational activities are held in and around the Center for Inquiry main campus in Amherst, New York, taking full advantage of its



Students at the Institute

staff, classrooms, computing facilities, and 34,000-plus volume libraries, as well as its proximity to the University at Buffalo and Upstate New York attractions. Traditional students are being attracted through the Campus Freethought Alliance and other student networks maintained by the Center, and exchange programs with Chinese and Russian institutions are being arranged. Undergraduate students may apply for assistantships that include partial or full tuition waivers. Together with the Skeptic's Toolbox workshop, this main summer session establishes a permanent, annual academic calendar for the Institute, made possible by the recent establishment of a specially dedicated one million dollar endowment.

Organisers see the new summer school as an important step towards the creation of a North American degree program in critical inquiry and naturalism. Past students of the Institute have gone on to work at *The American Prospect* magazine, About.com, Council for Secular Humanism, *Skeptical Inquirer*, the International Humanist and Ethical Union, and elsewhere. Others have participated for personal enrichment or to inform their community activism. Now undergraduate students may attend Institute offerings to earn credit toward degrees at their home institutions.



"North America has long needed a permanent home for academically rigorous training in critical rational inquiry and philosophical naturalism," commented Institute president Dr. Paul Kurtz. "Thanks to the commitment of our many loyal students, friends, and supporters, we can now say that the Center for Inquiry is that home."

2002 Summer Session

The 2002 main summer session runs July 14-28, and comprises courses in Introduction to Critical Inquiry (logic, critical thinking, and scientific reasoning) and History and Philosophy of Naturalism, along with guest lectures, presentations, and guided cultural tours to Upstate New York sites of historic importance to skepticism and freethought. Students who cannot attend the full session may register for one or both weekend seminars (July 19-20 and July 26-27), which include a special guest presentation on Friday evening, an all-day guided cultural tour on Saturday, and a Saturday luncheon.

Course instructors and lecturers for summer 2002 include Glenn C. Altschuler, Professor of American Studies at Cornell University and co-author of *Revivalism, Social Conscience and Community in the Burned-Over District: The Trial of Rhoda Bement* (Cornell 1983); Nicholas Capaldi, a professor in the departments of philosophy and law at The University of Tulsa, former editor of *Public Affairs Quarterly*, and author of *The Art of Deception: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Prometheus Books 1987); Margaret Downey, founder and director of the Anti-Discrimination Support Network and invited representative at United Nations conferences on freedom of conscience; Richard Hull, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University at Buffalo and executive director of The Texas Council for the Humanities; Marvin Kohl, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, City University of New York; author, *The Morality of Killing* (Humanities Press 1974); Paul Kurtz, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy,

University at Buffalo; Joe Nickell, Senior Research Fellow of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal; and Sally Roesch Wagner, lecturer and historian seen on the Ken Burns documentary, 'Not For Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.'

To obtain an application or more information, visit www.centerforinquiry.net or contact Center for Inquiry Institute, PO Box 741, Amherst, New York 14226, USA, tel: 716-636-4869 x223, fax: 716-636-1733, email: adacey@centerforinquiry.net.

Austin Dacey is director of the Center for Inquiry Institute and executive editor of *Philo*, an academic journal of philosophical naturalism.

Blasphemous Readings!

UK Humanists challenge law that restricts free speech

July 11 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the conviction of Gay News for blasphemous libel. To mark the event, and to reopen calls for the blasphemy law to be abolished, secularist and humanist groups will mount a direct challenge to the law by inviting a group of celebrities and public figures to read in public the poem that sparked the prosecution.

'The Love that Dare not Speak its Name' by James Kirkup, which caused Mary Whitehouse to bring the prosecution in 1976, will be read out through a megaphone on the steps of a central London church by prominent supporters of free speech. This will pose a direct challenge to the law of blasphemy which is still in effect. The protest is supported by the National Secular Society, the British Humanist Association, the Rationalist Press Association and the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association.

The reading will take place at 11am on the steps of a church (exact location will be announced nearer the time). Those so far who have confirmed their participation are: Claire Rayner (agony aunt and campaigner on social issues); Jonathan Meades (broadcaster and journalist); Alice Mahon MP; George Melly (entertainer and broadcaster); Laurie Taylor (broadcaster and academic); Peter Tatchell (human rights campaigner); A.C. Grayling (philosopher and journalist); Tony Reeves (artist who drew the original illustration that accompanied the poem and formed part of the trial).

IHEU at the UN, New York

IHEU has Specialist Consultative NGO Status with ECOSOC at the UN. In January 2002 the IHEU's UN NGO delegation at New York was relaunched at a meeting organised by IHEU Vice President Jan Loeb Eisler who is also the EC Representative in the delegation. Margaretha Jones and Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld are the joint-protom leaders. Former US Ambassador Carlton Coon and Matt Cherry, Executive Director of the Institute for Humanist Studies, are also a members of the delegation.

Human Rights

On April 11 we witnessed a historic ceremony when the UN established a permanent international criminal court. The inclusion of 66 countries, 6 more than needed, many with painful histories, such as Cambodia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, served as final ratification. This court will try individuals charged with horrendous crimes such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Such a court has been on the UN agenda since 1948 and the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials after World War II. In recent years world response to the appalling massacres in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have served to speed the process.

The ICC will be independent of the UN and accountable to the countries that ratify the treaty. The ICC will act only when ratifying nations are unable or unwilling to prosecute individuals committing such crimes. This court is being actively opposed by the U.S. For information contact the website of the NGO Coalition for the ICC which IHEU too supports. (www.iccnw.org)

Global Poverty

Development and global poverty was the focus of a recent conference in Monterey, Mexico. The many world leaders attending were rethinking strategies on the persistent problem of poverty. Some progress has been made with respect to literacy, population growth, clean water, sanitation and some health conditions. Yet half of the world still lives on less than US \$2 a day, and a fifth on less than \$1.

The amount of foreign aid, especially from the US has fallen over the years. Often aid is distributed through incompetent and sometimes corrupt regimes. When loans cannot be repaid, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) imposes harsh measures resulting in much suffering from decreases in social spending. Sometimes aid is used for political purposes. For example, European governments subsidize former colonies to retain influence. Subsidies to farmers in rich Western countries ruin third world markets: corn from Iowa floods Mexico's markets and onions from France swamp Senegal. According to a World Bank report, subsidies within wealthy nations run about 1 billion a day, about 6 times the sums spent on aid.

Dr Sylvain Ehrenfeld

8-10 May 2002

The UN General Assembly Special Session on Children

The IHEU was invited to participate in the NGO events related to the UN GA's Special Session (UNGASS) on Children. IHEU organised a special Humanist delegation led by IHEU's New York UN NGO delegation leader Margaretha Jones and IHEU Vice President Jan Loeb Eisler. Two students from Summerhill School, UK: Journey Roberts ((American, 14) and James Friis Lawrence (UK, 18) were also nominated as members of the IHEU delegation. The IHEU delegation's brief was to promote the rights and autonomy of children and young persons, to highlight the incursions of religion into school curricula including science classes as well as express their disgust at the scandalous Paedophilia cases within the Catholic Church and

At the UNGASS there was widespread consternation about the attempts of the Bush administration and its allies from the Vatican and Islamic countries to promote policies denying abortion services to teenagers. The US also tried to undermine the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it is not willing to ratify. After Somalia's recent ratification, the US is the only country on the planet which has not ratified this landmark 1989 treaty which prohibits the judicial execution of persons below 18 years of age: nearly half of the US states allow judicial execution of minors.

James Friss-Lawrence reports on the work he did on behalf of Humanism:

In New York, I made myself as visible as possible as an IHEU delegate with the help of Margaretha Jones, the leader of my delegation. We attended numerous NGO events, asked questions from the floor and networked. I was also able to brief my fellow delegate Journey Roberts, who was able to confront gender inequalities caused by religion, at a major UNICEF event on girls rights 'Girls Speak Out!' At the final US briefing in the UN, Michael Newman - Humanist and Summerhill teacher - confronted the US negotiator with his view that the US government was bullying the UN, and asked him whether they were setting a good example to children about democracy! The Negotiator answered by saying

that the US had better child protection laws than the UK. This made apparent the US's, 'our country's better than yours' attitude. When pushed, he refused to answer any further on the subject. As the US negotiator was leaving a protest broke out, and men and woman wearing reproductive rights t-shirts, held up posters bearing the word 'SHAME', followed by the chant, 'shame on the US delegation.' The protest moved out of the Church and into the street, where it was quickly dispersed by the police. I was involved in the protest. Upon entering the UN building, myself, and a small group of other students were detained, because the police feared that we would protest in the UN building. Our passes were not returned to us for almost an hour, and only at the insistence of the UN NGO office.

Back in the UK after the New York conference, on Thursday 30th May, I sat in a meeting organised by two government departments that would, hopefully, reveal the full damage inflicted by the U.S on the outcome document from the U.N General Assembly's Special Session on The Rights Of The Child. There I questioned how much of the damage had been caused by the Islamic fundamentalists and right wing Christian groups, as their presence was disguised but not invisible. The straight forward, yet, not unrewarding answer was that, the



power of the right wing Christian government of **James Friis-Lawrence, on the right**

the U.S, adding the influence of fundamentalist Islamic countries and that of the Vatican, meant that reproductive rights and the education of those rights, had been diluted to a much less potent version of their former selves. The U.S also wanted to continue condemning children to death. Yet again in world history, the U.S is using its financial power to influence young governments and their economic policies. This is not a word that holds much hope for me, after a conference that has had over three years of planning, and has weakened its own foundations because of a bully nation, that cannot acknowledge global democracy.

At this briefing I also questioned the UK's policies towards religion in education. I asked the panel what their position was towards state-run education having a Christian bias, and schools based on

differing faiths, ignoring the multicultural society and the growing needs of refugees and immigrants. I explained that I thought the UK's school system helped racism and prejudice, by narrowing chil-



dren's view of the global community. I also said **Lobbying for Humanism**

that, more further a field, on a more international level, religion was used as an excuse to send young girls into prostitution to pay for the boys' education. The government official responded with a weak defence of the government's policy of creating faith schools.

This was what I was able to achieve as an IHEU delegate at the UN Special Session On The Rights Of the Child. Our work would not have been possible without the support given to us by the New York humanists and Ethical Society members. Our thanks go to Curt Collier, leader of the Riverdale and Yonkers Ethical Cultural Society and Christine Tuillon from the NY Ethical Society of Queens. Thanks also go to Jerry Mintz, from AERO, and Leonard Tutton, a democratic teacher, who funded our trip.

James Friis-Lawrence, 18 years old, is a Summerhill student. He was the only child to speak at the UNESCO conference of Education Ministers at Geneva last September addressing them on the importance of schools based on children's rights. He is a children's rights activist.

Matt Cherry, member of the IHEU UN NGO delegation at New York has been elected Secretary to the UN NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, at New York.

The IHEU's status as an NGO eligible to file collective complaints to the Council of Europe on violation of the European Social Charter has been approved for a further period of four years up to 2006 by an inter-Ministerial Committee at Strasbourg.

Free Internet Access for IHEU Members



Bring your organization into the cyberage with a website and e-mail on Humanists.net.

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The Institute for Humanist Studies (IHS), has developed its own website hosting service, and is now able to offer free websites and email to all IHEU member organizations. The websites we host are independent of IHS, and do not carry any adverts. We are happy to accept sites already hosted elsewhere, but we are especially interested in facilitating a web presence for those organizations that are new to the online community or might not otherwise be able to own a website.

Our web hosting service is part of the Institute's commitment to cooperation and innovation in promoting humanism. The Institute has been offering website hosting through its humanists.net project for over a year and we already host over 40 independent humanist sites, including the websites of several national humanist organizations.

Most groups use our third-level domain sites — with an address like

www.yourgroup.humanists.net

For name recognition purposes, some get a 'vanity name' like www.yourgroup.org which can be set up to redirect to the humanists.net address. In both cases email addresses will be through humanists.net, for example

yourgroup@humanists.net

For IHEU member organizations that require a genuine primary level domain with domain-specific e-mail addresses

@yourgroup.org,

the Institute now offers that service as well.

Free email is available to groups in both programs, and can be used as POP accounts as well as forwarding accounts or aliases. And all humanists.net e-mail can now be checked on the web from any online computer anywhere in the world!

Please note that in offering to host sites, IHS is not offering to develop and maintain the content of the sites. We can give informal assistance if you have specific technical or design questions about your site; and our hosting company makes available a number of online educational resources and web-building tools for our users. The Institute would like to be able to provide more help to webmasters, and also to help groups with little or no web expertise among their members. To this end, we are completing webmaster resource pages where webmasters can share their ideas, problems, and technology.

We also hope that webmasters will volunteer their expertise to help groups who need assistance in launching or developing their web presence. Anyone who is interested in learning more about the Humanists.net hosting project, or in offering to be a webmaster mentor, should visit our website at <http://www.humanists.net>. You can also email Mary Ellen Sikes, IHS Associate Director, with any questions about the humanists.net project, at MaryEllen@humaniststudies.org.

Matt Cherry, Executive Director, Institute for Humanist Studies
www.humanworldcongress.org

IHEU 50th Anniversary Online Humanist Congress



The IHEU Online Congress relates to the actual programme of the IHEU's 50th Anniversary Congress, of the International Humanist Youth Conference, and to events at the Academic International Conference being organised to commemorate the IHEU's Jubilee Year.

Join what will be a vibrant on-line Humanist community. You will be able to participate in live chat events with Congress Workshop leaders, and even follow the webcasting (audio as well as video) of the actual events.

The Website is launched with technical assistance and support from Human Media Support, the IHEU's newest Specialist Member Organisation from the Netherlands. It will continue to be a web-based discussion forum after the 2002 Congress.

ANNOUNCING!

a major resource for Humanist and Human Rights activists. Details of the news portal will be announced at the IHEU Congress in Noordwijkerhout. The project receives financial assistance from IHEU Specialist Member Organisation, Institute for Humanist Studies, and technical support from Human Media Support.



Putting IHEU on the Net: Rob Bonhof and Piet Brinkman from Human Media Support with Gea Meijers. Unseen in photo, but with a presence on the website is Alexander Kyrkos.

Final Word

For the organised Humanist movement growth is essential, however, for the last few years I have had second thoughts about its importance. Visiting small humanist groups around the world, I have learnt that the most important quality of organised Humanism is active members. This is what keeps our movement going, and achieving. Humanist campaigns in Slovakia, in India, in Pakistan, in Egypt, in the US, in Argentina, in South Africa, in Australia are a testimony to this.

In June, IHEU Director Babu Gogineni and I participated in the General Assembly of Secular Culture Society one of our Member Organisations in Poland. Poland has 9 humanist/freethought groups. None of them is very large - only a handful of hardworking idealists - but fighting for freedom and equality, tolerance and justice. They publish magazines and distribute them to radical youth and intellectuals. These small groups play a more important role in Catholic Polish society today than many well established humanist organisations in other countries, with thousands of members, a paid staff and well equipped headquarters. These activists are our inspiration in the International movement. We need more of them.

The challenge for Humanists from all continents gathering at the 15th Humanist World Congress in Noordwijkerhout in the Netherlands this month is to get existing members to do something more for Humanism. The last fifty years have been an exciting time for International Humanism, but the coming years hold the promise of greater success if we can manage to transform our members into activists. Don't we have some successful organisation builders out there who could give us a hand and help in devising the right Strategy?

Levi Fragell
President, IHEU



Bert Gasenbeek & Babu Gogineni [editors]

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