
LETTERS

“Anthrax Bomb”

JULIAN LEWIS' article “Churchill and the ‘Anthrax Bomb’” [ENCOUNTER, February 1982] was well done. I was not surprised that it was not taken seriously by the British General Staff or Churchill. Even today with after 40 years of research worldwide, it is no more attractive.

I wish to point out that *Brucella* never was considered as a possible BW [Bacteriological Warfare] agent. The organism is subject to change when grown in large batches. I produced with *Brucella antigen* for three years, and hardly a fortnight passed that a rough phase (non-pathogenic) would appear.

Enclosed is a list of Zoonoses all of which had been looked at as possible BW agents. None are acceptable. Likewise, I know of no human disease agents, except possibly Myco-tuberculosis, that would be considered in BW. If one considers BW impact on animal industries, then there are many possibilities. In the past 30 years, I have visited laboratories in Europe, USSR, and Asia where related research has been going on. I have never had much enthusiasm for BW.

Let's keep the record clean.

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Ronald Knox's “RC” Disc

A. N. WILSON (ENCOUNTER, February, p. 68) quotes the late Ronald Knox as saying in a sermon: “When we get to heaven, St Peter will not ask us whether we have been good or bad; merely whether we have RC stamped on our identity disc.”

It is true that Knox said in an address to Catholic undergraduates (*The Hidden Stream*, 1952, p. 132; reprinted in *University and Anglican Sermons*, 1963, p. 242): “All the identity discs in heaven are surcharged RC.” But he certainly did not mean either (1) that a Catholic who died in his sins would go to heaven, or (2) that no non-Catholic, however virtuous, would do so.

The first of these propositions could hardly be held by any orthodox Christian (what about Judas?), and certainly not by an old-fashioned Catholic. As to the second, in the same address—it is entitled “Salvation outside the Church”—Knox explained his meaning that the Catholic church was the *appointed* channel of salvation but that those outside might, if in good faith, be saved as what he called “Catholics without knowing it.” He wrote similarly in chapter XVIII of *The Belief of Catholics* (1927) and chapters XXVIII and XXX of *Difficulties* (1932, 2nd ed., 1952), an exchange of arguments about Catholicism between himself and Arnold Lunn. In the latter chapter occurs the sentence:

“We can only suppose that God judges with infinite tenderness the opportunities, the temptations, the natural disadvantages, the motives, the struggles, of every soul that has ever lived.”

I suggest that the record should be put straight for the sake of Knox's memory and of what Mr Wilson calls the “stern old religion” of fifty years ago.

P. S. FALLA

*Bromley
Kent*

Adorno in New York

IN HIS review of Elizabeth Young-Buehl's book Mr Maurice Cranston states (ENCOUNTER, December 1982, p. 59) that in the 1970s Hannah Arendt “joined the faculty of the New School of Social Research in New York, ironically an offshoot of the Frankfurt Institute brought to America by her old enemy, T. W. Adorno.” This statement contains several mistakes.

The New School for Social Research was founded by Alvin Johnson and opened its door to students in the spring of 1919 when Adorno was 16 years old. Hannah Arendt did not join the faculty of the New School, an institution for adult education, but the Graduate Faculty of the New School. It was founded by Alvin Johnson as the so-called “University-in-Exile” in 1933 before the Frankfurt Institute was given a haven by Columbia University. Adorno moved from London to New York in February 1938 upon the invitation of Max Horkheimer, the director of the Frankfurt Institute.

HANS SPEIER

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Educational Follies

ESMOND WRIGHT's timely reminder (“Our Schools: A Tragic Split,” ENCOUNTER, January) of the excesses being practised in some American public school systems—and his lament for the collapse of standards here and the virtual destruction of the British grammar schools—will have interested anyone who is concerned about the state of our schools.

Certainly we can ill afford to ape on this side of the Atlantic the excessive concern for pupils' rights that he mentions. Too much damage has been done here already by trendy doctrinaires, who have exhibited a hysterical concern for so-called egalitarianism, combined with an insidious worship of anti-intellectualism, that has dragged down standards and driven many thoughtful and often better qualified pedagogues from the classrooms in despair. At the same time excessive libertarian zeal has undermined discipline; while the romantic notion that every pupil is happier and more successful doing as he or she pleases has almost put an end to traditional structured, purposeful learning.

Nor have the reformers finished yet: given the chance, they would sweep away examinations, those bastions of standards, eliminate academic work—including the ending of English A-level examinations that help select pupils for university study—and generally reduce school to a bland, largely meaningless and effortless progress towards higher education, free and on demand.

It would be unfair to blame all of this recipe for educational catastrophe on our American cousins, many of whom have fought tenaciously over many years against the follies of the educational progressives. Indeed our own Labour party has been in the forefront of the “progressive movement” over here, particularly with their obsession with the comprehensive schools, the failings of which become more obvious all the time. We must also recall the history of Soviet education in the 1920s and early ’30s before the iron hand of Stalin descended on the schools and restored a considerable measure of old-fashioned rigidity and discipline. An interesting glimpse of this phase of Soviet schooling can be got from the impressions

of the veteran American reporter, Dorothy Thompson, published in England in 1929 under the title *The New Russia* (Jonathan Cape); one brief quotation will suffice—

“This school-life is chaotic, disorganised, tentative, experimental, a life in which teachers struggle with students to determine who shall rule; in which no formal discipline prevails, in which fully as much time is spent in social organisation . . . as in work . . .” (p. 211, ch. IX.)

In those halcyon years of the ’20s all the libertarian notions so dear to our own reformers of the Left were enthusiastically and disastrously put into practice.

It can surely not be a coincidence that extremist elements today in England have enthusiastically supported those very measures that the verdict of history has shown to be so damaging.

J. H. K. LOCKHART

London

On “Buzz Words” (or jargon for jargon)

ABCDEFGHI

abcdefghijkl

THE only fault in Lord Denning’s masterly assault on legal and bureaucratic Jargonauts—“lost in their own obscurity,” he accused at the annual Plain English awards—is that it didn’t go far enough. Our language is infested with dry and wet rot. Hardly surprising, when so many people talk and write just that.

But it is all only part of the Jargonaut Syndrome. Right across society from playground to union headquarters, the wonderfully precise tool that is English, offering an exact and generally simple word for every use, is being rusted by gobbledegook. Cant of all kinds—political, slangy, fashionable, alluringly known as ‘Buzz Words’ (jargon for jargon, come to think of it)—strives to oust Plain English.

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HANDS UP all those remembering the drone of meaningful . . . open-ended . . . inter-personal! Some of *THE* words of the late-Sixties.

The soberer Seventies were a boom time for Environmental Speak:

organic . . . whole . . . global . . . doomsday . . . resources . . . ecology.

There was an earnestness, a sort of new puritanism, reverberating in the Buzzes; dialogue . . . structural . . . multi-national . . . Third World. We also got *non-violence* (what’s wrong with peaceful?) . . . *urban renewal* . . . *secularisation* . . . *strategy* . . . *ecumenical* . . . *verbalisation* . . . *alternative technology*.

EIGHTIES BUZZ, so far, has spawned *caring* . . . *single-parent* . . . (nonsensical if taken literally) *relationship* . . . *awareness* . . . *consciousness* (as in *consciousness-raising*) . . . *multi-purpose*.

Oh yes, and all the *ists-and-isms*: *racism* . . . *elitist* . . . *entryism* . . . *ageism*.

Along with the *cant-decanter*s are the *show-offs*. They grab for the right-sounding word and get it wrong. Prestigious is *judged* from *trickery*, sheer

sleight of hand, to *high praise*. *Disinterest*, meaning *lack of bias*, *skids into uninterest* . . .

WE ARE building mazes of inner-city, community-based, spontaneous, loving, workshops where we indulge in encounters, multi-culturism, alientation and ethnicity. (“You sound **ETHNIC**,” a snooty young actress recently complimented my Somerset accent.)

Things tend to be orientated (male-oriented, politically-oriented, community-oriented) and run by a pressure group, movement, task force or crusade.

There are *Buzz Words* to tart up homely things. No more Halls, Clubs or Institutes—Centre Rules, O.K.? Sports, health, day-care, community, social centres, everything but a Centre Centre, and that cannot be far off.

Forget rooms, people meet in Bar Areas or Coffee Lounges, while parks become Play Areas. A Church congregation is a Caring Community, a busybody is a Spokesperson.

Trendy parsons, when not vandalising their literary heritage, contribute scores of *Buzz Words* such as *pastoral*, *sharing*, *reconciliation*, *celebration*, *creativity*, *awareness*, and *sensitivity*. There’s no real *Buzz Word* obfuscation of God but give them time.

BUZZ WORDS are treacherous, often reversing meaning. “*Caring parents*” can be irresponsible mothers and fathers afraid of the unpopularity and effort generated by discipline. Relationships tend to concern people more interested in sex than becoming related.

“*Functional*” architecture embraces homes failing to function—leaking or unopenable windows, broken lifts. Community can cover groups of warring factions.

And so it goes. Lord Denning has gored Bureau Speak, but that is only a start.

Resist the Jargonauts. Before meaning and common sense die, not with a whimper but a Buzz . . .

Shaun Usher

in the DAILY MAIL (London)

Esslin's "Brecht"

I WAS very grateful for Martin Esslin's ENCOUNTER article on Bert Brecht (December 1982), and indeed for the excellent research work in German and Soviet archives of Professor David Pike (as incorporated in his recent book *German Writers in Soviet Exile, 1933-45*). It is about time that Brecht himself was looked at in the ironic and realistic way which he always held to be the critical ideal.

Unfortunately, readers and writers of Brecht, not to mention the naive-obtuse producers of his pieces in the theatre, always took an embarrassingly simplistic view. They either took him at his word (all those mean-spirited Stalinist pieties!), or they conjured up some devious "Galilean" figure who secretly believed in the truth and only because of his open Communist political commitment found himself saddled with "difficulties in writing the truth." Actually the truth is in the psychological middle. He was, like many endowed literary spirits of our century, simple-minded in form and complex in content; he rendered unto his Caesar what the Caesarean party-line demanded, and then played in the dark with heresies, subtleties, and deviations.

Martin Esslin's book on Brecht, subtitled *A Choice of*

Evils, went into this problem many years ago. Now we have so much more evidence of the "evil" to which a formidable man of letters, very talented (more than that: touched with genius) and vastly influential, found himself committed because at least one half of his mind and spirit was caught up in an orthodox belief and loyalty to gods that may have failed privately but never in public. For example, Sidney Hook has told us in his memoir of his passionate argument with Brecht who held fast to Stalin's version of the Moscow Show Trials of 1936-38—and if the victims were innocent, then the Revolution needed their confessions of guilt even more! . . .

The other day I came across some verses of the well-known German writer-in-exile, Hans Sahl, who still lives here in New York. Since you have published some of Brecht's poems in German, perhaps you will find space for Sahl's lines of 1944 giving a poignant vignette of yet another critic's writer's "Difficulties in Getting Along with the Poet Brecht", together with my own very modest prose translation which cannot capture the ironic parodies of Brecht's own style, rhymes, and puns....

New York City

NORMAN MAYLAND

Schwierigkeiten im Verkehr mit dem Dichter Brecht (1944)

Von HANS SAHL

*Der Dichter Bert Brecht sagte zu mir
nachmittags um vier
siebenundfünfzigste Straße Ecke Lexington
Avenue:*

*Hören Sie zu,
dieses Gespräch macht mich nicht glücklich,
verlassen Sie augenblicklich
mein Zimmer
für immer.
Ich dulde nicht,
daß in diesem Appartement,
welches mir sehr behagt,
jemand etwas Schlechtes sagt
über den Mann im Kreml.*

*Ich erhob mich von meinem Schemel.
Und außerdem, sagte der Dichter Bert Brecht
und hob den Finger,
man darf nie gegen die Armen sein,
und verließ das Zimmer.*

*Ich setzte mich wieder auf meinen Schemel
und sagte (im Hinblick auf den Mann im Kreml):
Eben weil ich für die Armen bin und mich zu
ihnen zähle,
möchte ich nicht, daß man sie verfolgt oder
quäle.*

*Ich gehe, wohl wissend, was Sie bewegt
und daß beim Schreiben der Wahrheit, Herr
Brecht,
die Schwierigkeit eben darin besteht,
daß man sie nicht unterschlägt.*

The poet Bert Brecht said to me, one afternoon around four, it was on Lexington Avenue and 57th Street.

Now listen to me, I'm not at all happy about our conversation, so would you this instant get out of this place forever—I'm very comfortable in this apartment and have no patience with anybody saying bad things about the man in the Kremlin.

I got up from my stool. And, even more than that, said the poet Bert Brecht, one must never be against the Poor, and he waved his finger at me and left the room.

I sat down on my stool again and said (with reference to the man in the Kremlin) that just because I was for the poor folk and counted myself among them. I didn't much like it when they were persecuted or tortured. I leave now, knowing full well what moves you. But you see, Herr Brecht, the real difficulty in writing the truth is taking care that the truth doesn't get repressed.

AUTHORS

Malcolm Bradbury is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia. His novels include *Eating People is Wrong* (1959), *Stepping Westward* (1965), and *The History Man* (1975). His latest, *Rates of Exchange*, from which "Recep." is an excerpt, will be published in the US by Knopf, and in England, on 5 April, by Secker & Warburg.

David Marquand, Professor of Contemporary History and Politics at the University of Salford, was a Labour Member of Parliament for Ashfield from 1966-77, when he joined the staff of Roy Jenkins, the newly appointed President of the European Commission in Brussels. He has been a member of the National Committee of the SDP since the beginning, and is SDP prospective parliamentary candidate for High Peak in Derbyshire. His biography of Ramsay MacDonald appeared in 1977, and *Parliament for Europe* in 1979 (Cape); he is the editor of *John Mackintosh on Parliamentary and Social Democracy* (Longman, 1982). Among his articles in ENCOUNTER are "Inquest on a Movement" (July 1979)—a study of the causes of the Labour Party defeat in the 1979 election which was co-winner of the 1980 George Orwell Memorial Prize—and "Trying to Diagnose the British Disease" (December 1980).

Alun Chalfont was Defence Correspondent of *The Times* from 1961-64, when he was created a Life Peer, serving in Harold Wilson's Cabinet as Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, until 1970. His most recent contribution to ENCOUNTER is "Stormy Atlantic Weather" (January 1983).

Peter Redgrove's latest novel is *The Facilitators* (1982), published by Routledge, who in the same year brought out his most recent book of poems, *The Apple Broadcast*.

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph* in London. His profiles of House of Commons personalities, *The Senate of Lilliput*, will be published later this year by Faber.

François Fejtő is Paris correspondent for *Il Giornale Nuovo*. He is the author of *The French Communist Party* (M.I.T. Press, 1967) and *History of the People's Democracies* (Penguin ed., 1974).

Terence Hawkes, Professor of English at University College, Cardiff, is General Editor of the *New Accents* series (Methuen). His own books include *Metaphor* (1972), *Shakespeare's Talking Animals* (Edward Arnold, 1974), and *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Methuen, 1977).

John Bossy, Professor of History at the University of York, is the author of *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, published in Britain by Darton Longman & Todd (1976, paperback 1979), and in the US by Oxford University Press.

John Bayley is Wharton Professor of English Literature and Fellow of St Catherine's College, University of Oxford. Among his books are *Shakespeare and Tragedy*

(Routledge, 1981), *An Essay on Hardy* (Cambridge University Press, 1978, n.e. 1981), and *The Uses of Division* (Chatto, 1976).

John Mole's most recent book of poems is *Feeding the Lake* (Secker, 1981). He is co-editor of an anthology, *Poetry 1945-80*, to be published this year by Longman.

George Urban graduated from Budapest University in 1947 and obtained his Ph.D. at the University of London in 1956. He served with the BBC from 1948-60 and from 1960-65 was director of university broadcasting for Radio Free Europe. He is now academic consultant to RFE, and recorded his conversation with Eugene Rostow on their behalf. Among numerous publications, he has edited *Détente* (1976), *Hazards of Learning* (1977), *Eurocommunism* (1978), *Communist Reformation* (1979), and *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World* (1982), all published by Maurice Temple Smith. Many of the extended conversations which appear in his books had their first publication in ENCOUNTER.

Frank Offenbach lives in Bonn, and is a free-lance journalist specialising in the Middle East.

Patrick Seale writes on Middle Eastern affairs for *The Observer* in London. Among his books are *The Struggle for Syria* (1965), and, as co-author, *French Revolution 1968* and *Philby: The Long Road to Moscow* (n.e. Penguin, 1978).

Conor Cruise O'Brien, Irish historian, literary critic, diplomat and politician, is the author of a book on Camus (1968) and of works on the history of Ireland and on the United Nations, where he served under Dag Hammarskjöld. From 1962-65 he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana. He was a Member of the Irish Parliament and then a Senator from 1969-79, serving for four years as a Minister in the Labour Cabinet of Liam Cosgrave. He was until recently Editor-in-Chief of *The Observer*, for which he still writes a regular weekly column. His article on "Liberty & Terror" appeared in the October 1977 issue of ENCOUNTER.

WE REGRET that in the March issue (Leonard Schapiro, "Russian Censorship, Then & Now", p. 86, line 6), the year in which *The Contemporary* was founded by Pushkin was erroneously given as 1856; it should of course have been 1836.

The Uncertain Ally, by Michael Chichester and John Wilkinson (reviewed by Philip Towle in the March issue) is published by Gower at £15.00.

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