

The only unjust system condemned at the Conference was that of South Africa. None of the Resolutions of the Conference indicated whether the Bishops believe the system in the Communist countries to be just or unjust. They do go on, in the same Resolution 27, to declare their support for "direct non-violent action, civil disobedience and conscientious objection", and to "pay tribute to those who in recent years have kept before the world the growing threat of militarism" (that is, the Peace Movement). The threat to "peace" is diagnosed as "militarism", not as the spread, whether by peaceful or violent means, of totalitarian ideology. The Resolution makes no concession to the Western view, admits no reason for the West's defensive measures, pays no tribute to the Defence policies which have probably prevented another major war.

Taken as a whole, the Resolution affirms that war is not

permissible in any circumstances, not even as a last resort, and cannot serve just ends. But "armed struggle" *is* permissible, and serves "justice". No guidance is offered as to when "all other ways" might be reckoned as exhausted, or how "justice" may be recognised and where it is to be found. The vocabulary, the phraseology, the intended connotations, and the content closely match similar policy-pronouncements of the Soviet Union and the United Nations. As another Resolution of the same Conference called for the "unbanning of the African National Congress and the Pan-Africa[nist] Congress", just what their "armed struggle" means in the real world becomes apparent. Only "in the circumstances of Northern Ireland" did the Conference "condemn all violence".

At Lambeth—as everywhere, and always—the case for terrorism is a case for someone else to be its victim.

Regent's Park, NW1

The goats had a party last night.

Tigers came: deserting the cool gardens.
Their pond lies empty, desecrated
with mud washed from feline paws
as they pace restless before the glass.

Wolves: replete in their stony wood
with pickings cast aside by distracted men
hurrying to escape the clammy grasp
of a humid sun-stolen morning.

Elephants: listless in the wake
of a march across mountains unbroken
by the arrogance of human ingenuity.
A light chain will suffice
to protect Hannibal's tanks
before a new Cannae.

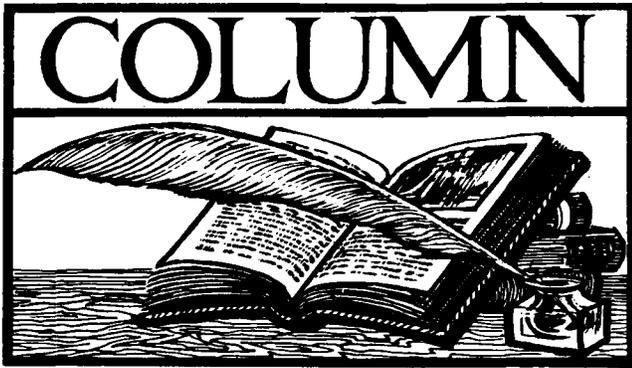
Owls: unblinking, silent, bearing gifts
of expiation in talons sharpened
on a dead tree-trunk: white mice
sacrificed against the night,
to lay on the altar of watchful Athene.

Dawn comes: alligators desert the warm swamp.
Glide silent past sleeping prey
dreaming of home.

Morning: a still silence
broken only by malicious screams
from guests uninvited.

And the goats sit, placid. Nothing
will disturb their quiet desperation
as they rest immobile under a sun
which burns away their memories.

Edward Rogerson



HOW WOULD YOU plan your ideal hotel bedroom? I know a few things I should ban from mine. Twin beds, for a start: how many couples have to wrestle with mattresses and bed-linen to arrange an uncomfortable makeshift double bed? Then there are German duvets—too short to tuck in, too narrow to stay on, stifling in summer, inadequate in winter. How do tall Germans manage to sleep with warm feet? Perhaps they rely on the central heating and air-conditioning: but that's another thing. Some air-conditioners sound like permanent atmospherics: and some hotels that use them won't allow guests the luxury of an open window. Once, in New Orleans, I had to threaten smashing the glass before the bell captain produced the necessary key.

There are also minor irritations. Some chains of hotels pile the table high with promotional literature: it mostly features fat nonentities in tuxedos enjoying a drink with the manager in The Star Trek Room. Others feature fixed clock radios in lieu of an early call: they're frequently limited to the local equivalent of the golden oldie singalong programme. Almost every large hotel, nowadays, also offers each guest a refrigerated mini-bar. Just the thing, you may think, for insomniacs parched by the air-conditioning: but look at the prices. In Luxembourg recently, a miniature of whisky from the mini-bar cost exactly the same as a full litre bottle in the airport's duty-free store.

No: my ideal hotel bedroom would dispense with gimmicks and gadgets. It would give service instead. A bowl of fresh fruit and a vase of flowers, certainly; non-blinding bedside lamps; a usable desk with a proper light, ample writing-paper, and a working ball-point pen. Bottled water in a cooler; plenty of clothes-hangers; a bath and wash-basin with rubber, not metal or plastic, plugs. Breakfast with fresh bread, real milk, and tea not made with tea-bags. No chivvying to collect the tray, as in some French hotels, incessantly demanding "*le plateau*" before you've eaten *le plat*; but rapid bedmaking once the guest's departed, to avoid returning in mid-afternoon to a room like a wrecked bordello.

I'd retain, in fact, only one routine feature from most hotels I've stayed in; and that is the multi-channel television set. However good the company downstairs may be, there's always a twinge of guilty pleasure in putting the door on the chain, loosening one's tie, slipping one's shoes off, and dipping quickly through the assorted fare on the country's TV. In some European cities, this often includes foreign TV as well. For any visiting journalist, it surely beats cab-drivers as a source of local colour.

Nowhere was this more obvious than in Florence a couple of months ago. After a long, high-minded day at a learned conference, I punched the television buttons in search of entertainment. Fifteen of them produced pictures: but only one—for France's *Antenne 2*—showed anything worth watching at that time of night. Apart from sport and pop music, most of the Italian channels were featuring situation comedies or soap operas, all frequently punctuated by the self-same advertisements, cataleptically boring by the fifth or sixth time around.

There was one exception. I forget which channel it was—but I kept coming back to it, for reasons that will soon emerge. It was a quiz show with two contestants at a time, one male and one female. The master of ceremonies was a plump, artificially grinning man with a shock of curly dark hair. He looked rather like the late Alexander Woollcott, of whom someone once said: "His head is kinda big, but his face is kinda small." Signor Alessandro, as we may as well call him, also had small hands and feet for such a pear-shaped body, and his gestures were neat and precise rather than *macho*. However, he was surrounded by what used to be called "lovelies"—wobblingly nubile young women, as in the Benny Hill show, but topless. Nor was this all. The contestants in the quiz, if they got the wrong answer, were themselves invited to perform a mild strip-tease. I made an excuse and switched channels, of course, before they got beyond the bathrobes provided by the ever-thoughtful programme-makers.

THIS MAMMARY memory was very much in my mind when the British Government published its recent thoughts on the future of broadcasting. One independent TV company had even been advertising in the press the prurient Italian-style dangers it feared we might face in a deregulated TV market—though later reports alleged that the strip-teasing Italian housewife supposedly shown in the ads was in fact a model from a British agency. Would the real thing have proved too popular to make the point?

As it happened, the warning may well have been needless. The Government's plans include a watchdog, headed by a respected figure, to curb any disastrous excess. Nor is Government thinking on the future of television untimely, a pointless onslaught on the present four-channel system with which many British viewers are still content.

Inevitably, satellite TV will sooner or later increase most viewers' choice—of channels, that is. Whatever regulations may seek to restrict or restrain satellite signals, it will be very difficult to prevent transmission, and almost impossible to prevent reception. Powerful signals can already be received on quite small dish antennae; and policing people's use of such dishes would be as impracticable as it was to police citizens' band radios when they were still illegal.

What can and will be done, no doubt, is to carve up the frequencies, as in the case of sound radio: but, although jamming may be technically feasible—rather more so, perhaps, than for sound alone—no democratic Government seems likely to be able to stop its citizens tuning in to satellite television from most places in the world.