

WHAT DOES VIOLENCE SAY ABOUT MAN?

By JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

"I VERY MUCH LIKE to torture animals." So writes Salvador Dali in his modest *Diary of a Genius*. One of his deepest regrets is, so he goes on to say, that he has never had the pleasure of watching a lion die of starvation.

Now lions are expensive luxuries but rats and other small animals come cheap and a modest equivalent of the experience denied Dali is enjoyed by many adolescents in high schools that buy from one of the largest biological supply houses complete starvation kits that include various deficient diets and thus provide for a refinement which only modern science has made possible. The victims eat but they die even more slowly than if they were entirely deprived of food. Thus the pleasure of watching them is prolonged and it may be justified on the ground that it is "educational."

A century ago Charles Darwin told a Royal Commission that experiments involving cruelty to animals were "damnable" unless they contribute important knowledge unobtainable in any other way. And when Thomas Henry Huxley heard of a vivisectionist who said that he might give his victims an anesthetic to keep them quiet but not to spare them pain, Huxley wrote, "I would willingly agree to any law which would send him to the treadmill." Certainly high school students have no need to prove for themselves that dietary deficiencies can be fatal and they learn nothing but hardness of heart from either these experiments or from some of the others now popular—such as, for instance, the inoculation of rodents or chicks with cancer. In their literature class they probably read "The Ancient Mariner" and are asked to comment upon:

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.

But a bright student might be inclined to reply that praying in schools is forbidden anyhow, and at least one teacher is reported to have brushed criticism

aside by explaining that students were sternly forbidden to regard their victims as pets or to take any interest in them as individuals. Another teacher, when asked why it was necessary to perform actual experiments when published accounts and photographs were available, replied that "using live animals fascinates the youngsters." He added that it wouldn't do to stop the experiment before death ensued because death made it "more dramatic" and "the children are not convinced unless the critters die."



THERE are, of course, laws against cruelty to animals, but I have never heard of a case where they were invoked to prevent any torture that claimed to have a scientific purpose. In fact, many, though not all, laboratory physiologists have bitterly opposed all the various bills introduced (chiefly, so far, without success) that would set up standards governing the treatment of laboratory animals—Senate Bill S1071, for instance. But does anyone dare say that no laboratory worker could possibly have a touch of sadism in him or even that routine familiarity with torture might make him callous? The very fact that laboratory experiments are conducted behind closed doors makes it all the more desirable that some sort of control or inspection be provided for. In England, where all possibly painful experiments must be licensed by the Home Office, eighty-eight biological fellows of the Royal Society answered a questionnaire in which they were asked whether or not they opposed these existing con-

trols, whether they believed they prevented the highest level of medical research, and whether they found in their own experience that control seriously frustrated legitimate results. Of the eighty-eight, only one replied "Yes" to any of the three questions; the rest gave a "No" to all three. Among comments from eminent persons were:

Sir Francis Walshe, F.R.S.: "A wide familiarity with the literature of experimental neuro-physiology leads me to think that in other countries where no such rational mode of control is used, quite a few futile and unnecessarily painful animal experiments are carried out by persons not always qualified to do them."

Professor A. T. Phillipson, deputy director of the Rowett Research Institute: "I am glad to hear the Americans are trying to introduce a bill similar to our Office Act."

Professor A. Habbow, F.R.S., director of the Chester Betty Cancer Research Institute: "I have, of course, been most interested to learn of the American bill and sorry to hear of opposition to it."

Nobel Prize-winner Professor H. A. Krebs: "I am very glad indeed to support a movement to introduce in the United States legislation similar to that operating in Great Britain. My answer to all three questions which you formulated at the end of your letter is a simple 'No.'"

ONE similar bill was recently introduced in one of the American state legislatures, whereupon an amendment was offered specifically exempting high school laboratories from any supervision or restriction. In the Middle Ages any cruelty was justified if it could be said to be in the defense of true religion; much the same is true today if science is substituted. But one does not have to oppose all vivisection to ask that the experimenter should be required to show, not merely that he could learn something from some horrible cruelty, but that what he could learn is important enough to be alleged as an excuse. I wonder, for instance, about the experiment recently reported to determine how much fire dogs could breathe without dying. The experimenter said that the Army "wanted to know." Why it wanted to know was not explained, but perhaps it was in order to make sure that its flame throwers were sufficiently lethal.

We like to tell ourselves that civilization has made us more humane. Our newspapers no longer carry advertisements like the following from a British periodical in 1730: "A mad bull, dressed up with fireworks, is to be turned loose . . . likewise a dog dressed up with fireworks; also a bear to be turned loose. N.B.—A cat is to be tied to the bull's

tail." Bear-baiting was officially prohibited in England in 1835 and a few years earlier the first law making cruelty to animals an offense *per se* was passed—over, incidentally, vigorous opposition in Parliament by those who called themselves anti-sentimentalists. Nevertheless, it sometimes seems that Emerson's Law of Compensation really does work—both ways. Perhaps there is less suffering inflicted upon animals that is frankly for pleasure but there is probably much more of it—quantitatively, at least—in the interest of scientific knowledge.

Killing for fun and death as a spectacle are not, however, unknown today. In Tucson, Arizona, the head of a certain printing organization that opposes most of the present game laws abandoned the usually mealy-mouthed, gun-manufacturers' explanation of the wholesome effects of killing animals for fun (*i.e.*, outdoor exercise, contact with nature, making fathers pals with their sons, and so forth) for the statement that children ought to make early contact "with life and death." And frank though that was, it wasn't quite completely so. What he meant was not "familiarity with death" but "familiarity with killing," which is a rather different thing. And there is surely some doubt that there are not enough opportunities today to become familiar with that. We who have had the privilege of living in the Century of Progress have, as a matter of fact, had more opportunities to take killings of one sort or another for granted than had either our fathers or our grandfathers.

PERHAPS it is because there has been so much killing in our time that there seems to have been a reversal of the once-evident trend away from ritual violence. Perhaps the fun killings staged by some of the veterans' organizations that invite young folks to club rabbits to death is only a survival of a concept of sport widely prevalent down to the nineteenth century. But there is no doubt that bullfighting (once regarded as decidedly un-American) has become a smart diversion. Nor is its popularity confined to the Southwest, where the *corridas* (a little Spanish adds a touch of chic) staged just across the border are not only regularly advertised in our newspapers but often given critical reviews. Hemingway's blood lust no doubt had something to do with the rise of the fashion, but his celebration of the bullfight as the most refined expression of the sadistic impulse met with widespread response.

A few years ago, during a Congressional hearing, a witness introduced a memo from an advertising manager to the producer of a TV serial his company was sponsoring: "More violence and more bosoms." A great deal has been

written in quite proper protest against the violence that runs so consistently not only through TV melodramas and through the animated cartoons, but also through even the Disney nature films, where ritual fights (often carefully staged) play a large part. How much all these things are creating a taste, how much merely responding to it, would be hard to know, but less has been written about the increasing element of violence, danger, and death in the so-called spectator sports. American football (which a recent English critic called "not violent enough for a war, but too violent for a game") is relatively mild by comparison with air shows and auto races, though even in football there are some spectators whose excitement is increased by the fact that fatal injuries are at least a very real possibility. And as far as the air shows and races are concerned, their danger is frankly stressed in the advertisements.

THE most penetrating discussion I have ever seen of the part played by the ever-present threat of death at an auto race occurs, oddly enough, in a Bantam paperback called *When Engines Roar*. These "nineteen action-packed true stories capture all the daring and drama of the greatest moments in auto racing history" and are obviously directed at *aficionados*. But the volume does nevertheless include an article "The Psychology of Auto Racing," by one Raymond de Beker, which is reprinted from *The Annual Automobile Review*.

Mr. de Beker cites a variety of appeals that the spectacle of auto racing can and does make: Speed is one of the more spectacular achievements of technology and all aspects of technology fascinate modern man; crowds, noise, and mass hysteria offer an escape from the troubled self, and so forth, and so forth. But the principal conclusion that emerges from the analysis is foreshadowed by the opening sentence: "Motor races are just

as essential a part of modern life as gladiatorial combats were in ancient Rome."

After disposing rather briefly of the less obvious appeals, the author develops fully an analysis of the most powerful ones. "In no other sport . . . is the danger of death so imminent. At Le Mans death reaped eighteen victims in a matter of seconds . . . and though the spectators have every intention of running risks only by proxy, it happens that fate panders over-zealously to a taste that conscience scarcely dares to admit." Hence (as he might have added but didn't) it is all rather as though the spectator at the bullfight was occasionally tossed into the arena or the Roman fan at the Coliseum found himself, though no Christian, suddenly in the middle of the lions. (Which would have served him right enough.)

Mr. de Beker then concludes: "Mankind has reached a dangerous corner. . . . [He] seeks to perceive what fate this machine holds in store for him and to experience vicariously the pains of death and rebirth it involves. He wants to know if he can become the superman who defies the laws of space, the mechanized centaur he visualizes in the champion, and avoid the catastrophe which alarms yet attracts him as flame does a moth."

When I began to write this piece the moral I would have drawn from the bull ring and the race course would have been implied in the question just how far the spectator at either is from the Emperor Commodus, whom Suetonius describes as leaning over the box to stare intently into the face of the gladiator dying a few feet away. Now, however, I wonder if the auto race isn't, unlike the bullfight, something new rather than merely a recrudescence. Perhaps its chief significance is what Mr. de Beker makes it—as a ritual presentation of man face to face with the machine which he half hopes and half fears may put an end to him at last.

College Literary Magazine Contest: Editors of college literary magazines are reminded of the April 1 deadline in the annual contest sponsored by SR and the U.S. National Student Association.

Announcements giving details of the contest have already been sent to most of the nation's campuses. This year's competition will cover materials published in undergraduate literary magazines during the 1964-65 academic year. Awards will be given for the best single issue, for the best poem, for the best short story, and for the best nonfiction piece. Campus editors are urged to choose entries in one or more of the four categories and to submit four copies of each nomination.

SR will award the winning magazine \$250 and an inscribed plaque. Winners in the individual categories will receive hand-lettered scrolls, and the winning poem will be published in SR, along with the names of all the winners. Entries and inquiries should be addressed to Magazine Contest, U.S. National Student Association, 3457 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

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Double Jeopardy: U.N. and Vietnam

THE UNITED STATES pressed for a showdown in the recent session of the United Nations General Assembly against states that hadn't met their payments for the peace-keeping operations of the U.N. The United States argued that it was not for individual nations to determine whether assessments were unreasonable and improper. They were obligated to support the U.N. whether they liked it or not. France and the Soviet Union didn't like it. Desperate attempts to find a formula for averting an ominous confrontation all failed. The General Assembly adjourned in the deepest gloom it has known since 1945.

It might be argued that the United States didn't take into account the fact that a showdown could be far less damaging to the Soviet Union in particular than to the United Nations in general. As against this was the need to gain acceptance for the principle of compulsory obligations in matters concerned with keeping the peace. In the sense that the development of a higher sovereignty for preserving the peace is the largest single challenge of the twentieth century, a defense can be made for the American position on assessments.

But the American argument for supporting the authority of the United Nations was negated only a few days later by the United States itself when it spurned the call by Secretary-General U Thant for a conference looking toward an effective resolution of the war crisis in Vietnam. The principle we sought to uphold against the Soviet Union and France we set aside when our own in-

terests were directly involved. Is it argued that the two cases are not similar? That the first case involved financial obligations and the second a situation in which the United States was already committed to a fixed course of action? The underlying principle in both cases has to do with the primacy of the U.N. in dealing with threats to world peace. The action in Suez and the Congo, which produced the financial crisis, was carried out in the interests of world peace. The action of the Secretary-General in calling for a conference over Vietnam was advanced in the interests of world peace. It is difficult to assert that the U.N. enjoys supranational status in fixing dues for peace-keeping operations while downgrading the role of the U.N. in peace-keeping itself.

Perhaps it will be said that the U.N. had no effective way of acting in Vietnam since not all parties to the dispute were members of the U.N. But the point at issue here is not whether the U.N. could or could not have been effective in mounting an armed action in Vietnam similar to its action in Korea or Suez or the Congo. What the U.N. tried to do was to initiate negotiations in a situation fast spiraling into a large-scale war. The United States declined U Thant's request with thanks. It was almost as though we were sending regrets for our inability to accept an invitation to a ball.

If France and the Soviet Union seemed cavalier in their attitude toward the United Nations, the attitude of the United States verged on condescension. One would suppose by this time that the

United Nations does not exist for the purpose of making polite inquiries to concerned parties in questions of war and peace but for the hard and impersonal purpose of keeping this planet from atomic incineration.

Sooner or later the American people are going to have to make up their mind about what they want their government's position on the United Nations to be. So far, our position on the U.N. has been to give it full backing—up to the point where it impinges on the basic thrust of our foreign policy. Essentially, the U.N. has not been primary in our foreign policy. Primary elements include our nuclear stockpiles, our bases, NATO, SEATO, and our direct presence in various countries.

But if Vietnam has taught us anything, it is that the old policy of alliances, stockpiles, and bulging muscles is no longer the prime or workable instrument it was in the pre-atomic world of disconnected national units. NATO hasn't worked in Europe. SEATO hasn't worked in Indo-China. Raw force hasn't worked in Vietnam, either for France or the United States. But our response to the new facts of life is to put more of the unworkables to work instead of making a total commitment to the development of a collective mechanism for creating workable world law.

It is not solely geography that is interconnected in an atomic age. Actions are interconnected. We are pursuing a policy in Vietnam without regard to the effects on other elements bearing on our total security. The whole effort to keep the Soviet Union and Communist China from coming together in a vast military coalition; the need to keep the nations of Africa and Asia from veering toward Communist China; the need to keep a world organization competitive with the U.N. from being formed with Peking at the center; the need to create conditions that will make possible increasing control over the highly combustible nuclear arms race—all these are interconnected; all are affected adversely by the decision to spurn the good offices of the U.N. in Vietnam.

Equally important but largely disregarded is the connection between Saigon and Selma. Until President Johnson spoke before Congress last week, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Americans to explain to themselves or anyone else the contrast represented by the resolute policy of the United States in putting down disorders in Vietnam while observing zealous circumspection in Alabama. The President did honor to himself and the nation in recognizing the role of the U.S. in the Selmas of the South. He will do equal honor to the nation and the hopes for world peace in recognizing the role of the U.N. in the Vietnams of the world. —N.C.