



LETTERS

Islam and Women

As the Vietnam war was drawing to a close, I attended a meeting where several Vietnamese women told of their experiences. After the meeting had proceeded for some time and questions were put to our guests, one Vietnamese woman said that, having attended several meetings, she had gained the impression that Australian women were at war with their men.

After a great deal of discussion, the women assured us that they had no intention of being pushed back into the kitchen after hostilities had ceased. It was with this in mind that I felt disappointment after reading Carlotta McIntosh's "After the Long-Haired Heroines" (ALR 115).

This is the second article I have read by Australian women visiting Vietnam and both articles failed to convince me that those Vietnamese women have not been betrayed. Perhaps Carlotta's reference to Vietnamese peasant women being defined by traditional values and the old Confucian saying, "one man is worth a hundred women" says it all!

I would also like to comment on Michael Humphrey's "The Caucasian Equation" (also ALR 115). There can be no doubt that there is much disaffection among Islamic people as there is disaffection among all alienated people. However, there is far more to the fanaticism of fundamentalist Islam as there is far more to fundamentalist Christianity than believing in Christ.

As a woman, I am terrified of all fundamentalist religions but more so of Islam with its ultra-oppression of women, its cultural clitoridectomies, infibulations and total ownership of women by men. I am also afraid of the slow but pervasive extension of Islam all over the world by increased populations (male ego enhanced by number of sons) resulting in the ultimate

takeover when in a majority as in Nigeria and Lebanon, among others. The Soviet Union, too, is experiencing this uncontrolled increase of population in the Muslim area.

Fundamentalists, because of their fanaticism, view other people's tolerance as weakness, a trait to be despised. Already we have witnessed how strongly intimidated people feel. The Salman Rushdie affair exposed this intimidation across the world. Even the Left under the guise of religious tolerance seems to fall over backwards in what appears to be a 'let's not offend them' attitude by going to the trouble of trying to analyse events to explain the upsurge of fundamentalism while ignoring the extremely threatening side of fundamentalism, be it Christianity, Judaism or Islam.

For how long will we delude ourselves by choosing to ignore what is happening world wide while continuing to appease the monster?

Fay Nishri,
Port Macquarie, NSW.

*Cocky S****

On the expiry of my ALR sub I will not be renewing. In my opinion, over the past year only occasional issues or articles rendered worthwhile reading. There have been all too few articles contributing to debate of the vital problems of our times - these are buried in a hodge-podge of fancy verbiage that does violence to the English language and the already tortured brains of serious political thinkers. How the editors of a journal claiming to come from the ideology of the Left can waste space with unutterable rubbish is beyond my understanding. These high-falutin' columns can only be described in the colourful language my brother uses to describe them - to wit: "a load of hot cocky shit".

Vic Bird,
Forster, NSW.

Clerical Error

April's "Loose Cannon" (ALR 116) included a sustained attack on the "incompetent and conservative" leadership of the Federated Clerks Union. Your columnist rightly took issue with material published in the FCU national journal, *The Clerk*.

Unfortunately, "Loose Cannon" failed to point out that several branches of the FCU, representing a majority of FCU members, have progressive

leaderships which do not support the Maynes national FCU leadership. These branches have been locked in a bitter battle with the Maynes group for control of the FCU nationally for almost a decade. Subject to possible amalgamations, this battle will culminate in August 1991 in the first ever direct membership elections of national FCU officials. The FCU is not a "lousy union" with "incompetent and conservative officials" in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia (other FCU branches can speak for themselves). I would suggest that your columnist does a bit more research before commenting on trade union affairs in future.

Lindsay Tanner, State secretary,
FCU, Victorian branch.

Back up

Nearly every time my ALR arrives there is something in it that gets my back up. In February it was the cover and article "Death of Communism". If I wanted to read what Murdoch's hacks think about what is happening in the world I'd buy *The Australian*, not subscribe to ALR. And Brian Aarons' article didn't properly debate the issue raised by McGuinness.

In the March issue Carlotta McIntosh refers to Ho Chi Minh City as Saigon and calls the NLF 'Vietcong', a term which was used by the US invaders as a derogatory term. I don't know how old or where she was during the 'sixties, but surely the editorial collective should have picked that one up, especially after she did the same in a previous article. And this in the year that we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Vietnam Moratorium. I'm sure I'm not the only reader who found this offensive and upsetting in a journal that calls itself a LEFT review.

While I'm at it, here are a couple of other things I think ALR could do without. Like that silly article about Di and Fergie, "Letter from Ephesus" (the significance of that title eludes me), Dr Hartman and the last page "Consuming Passions". We can read about food and wine ad nauseam in the daily press and umpteen magazines. Can many of your readers afford the stuff anyway? I certainly can't! It makes me wonder if ALR shouldn't change its name to *Middle Australia Review*.

Ruth Berman,
Middle Park, Vic.