

The Free Thinker

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All these articles have appeared in the Swedish issues of
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We are very sorry that we did not manage to come, as we had promised,
back to India and Nepal, Garwhal and Sikkim after the monsoons.

The first article, "Disasters of the Year", explains why.

After this year's many travel disasters, all we can do is to start planning for next year.

This is the 26th publication of the Letnany Publishers, which already have produced 12
books, but none of them so far in English. They will come also, however.

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Disasters of the Year

From a travelling point of view, it has been the worst year ever. All projected journeys ended in disaster, without a single exception. Even the one successful journey, a short trip to Budapest and back in summer, met with disaster in Germany, as two trains collided between Dresden and Berlin on the evening of July 6th, obliging all other trains to make wide detours, causing catastrophic delays, especially for train ferries.

But to begin from the beginning, the disasters all began in early spring, when we started to project an extensive journey for the summer to Tibet. The meticulous preparations for a proper expedition made it necessary to cancel my ordinary spring journey down to the Mediterranean countries. That is maybe why we had no spring in Scandinavia this year: I failed to go down and fetch it. The Tibetan expedition then failed completely because of political turbulences: our guide disappeared for three months, and the best thing we could do was to postpone it until next year.

Every summer I go home to Finland by bike, but this year the bike broke down completely, so completely, that it was impossible to fix it in Finland, so I had to carry it back to Sweden. It's not a commendable way of sporting. Then the real disastrous journey began.

It was time for the most necessary autumn journey down to the Mediterranean, the more vital this time since I had failed to come down in spring. Whatever happened? That's a long story. Here are the details:

Inter Rail Under Threat

Before buying my Inter Rail ticket in Sweden, I carefully informed myself about the political conditions in the Balkans. I was informed that only Rumania and Bulgaria demanded visa and that Inter Rail again was valid in Yugoslavia (Serbia).

As I passed the border of Yugoslavia by Subotica, I was ordered off the train to get the next train back to Hungary, since I did not have a visa. I offered to buy a transit visa, as you do on the borders of Rumania and Bulgaria, to be able to continue my journey. I had bought a couchette ticket for Istanbul for two nights for 53 D-marks. My request only angered the passport police officers, who took my passport away from me and asked me to leave the train.

Thus I had been misinformed in Sweden. Inter Rail travellers are welcome in Yugoslavia, but at the border they are brusquely turned back to where they came from to get a visa somewhere abroad with no accurate directions where.

Although the war in Yugoslavia is over, conditions have not improved. Going down the Balkans is to an Inter Rail traveller still to run the gauntlet. Last time I went through Rumania last year, the cost of a transit visa was 33 D-marks and in Bulgaria 55, which allowed you to remain in Bulgaria for 30 hours. If you paid 105 marks you could stay longer. If you only paid the short time visa and stayed more than 30 hours, anything could happen to you on the next border without anyone being responsible, the old socialist system still working on that level.

To enter Greece or Turkey by Inter Rail you have to go through either Rumania-Bulgaria or Yugoslavia, since also Italy is closed to Inter Rail travellers +26 since 1993, like France, Spain, Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland.

Although so many doors have been closed in Europe to Inter Rail travellers +26, these continue to purchase Inter Rail tickets, fooled by false information about improved conditions at least in Yugoslavia.

Then the question arises whether Inter Rail +26 is downright cheating or just a pathetic parody of what it was before 1993. Before 1993 Inter Rail was the perfect means

for travelling enthusiasts who refused to grow old to make connections and get familiar with the whole of Europe (including Morocco and Turkey) at a reasonable price. In 1989 the opened doors towards the east implied even further widened horizons and possibilities. Europe was on a right course, until in 1993 the one door and border after the other again began to close. Bulgaria reintroduced compulsory visa in 1993 at the same time as the whole Latin Europe excluded all older Inter Rail travellers, (those who know how to behave on trains,) and the same autumn it became impossible to pass through Yugoslavia, which it still is, unless you want to combat with Yugoslavian bureaucracy.

What possible benefits could then these countries in the Balkans and in southern Europe gain by humiliating, maltreating and frightening travellers away? Only a bad reputation for that country.

You can well understand that it must be to their interest to do without illegal immigration, refugees from the south and east and other doubtful people who could turn into problems, but to this category Scandinavians, Englishmen and other North Europeans hardly belong, who are enough furnished with dollars to be able to journey such distances voluntarily, and who from pure enthusiasm and cultural interest abandon themselves to the hardships of lengthy train voyages just to get into contact with other parts and peoples of Europe.

Together with me in Subotica two Poles were also found without a visa. They had spent considerable amounts in advance to go to Sofia and Istanbul and all around Turkey but now found themselves in trouble. He had an Inter Rail ticket but could not afford the Rumanian-Bulgarian visa gauntlet-running so could not get any further. She had an ordinary ticket to Sofia and not enough money to pay for a return ticket to Budapest, so she was thrown off this Yugoslavian IC-train within Hungary to continue by hitch-hiking God knows where.

I am myself an Inter Rail traveller since 1989, and this would have made my twelfth Inter Rail journey. Since I also was robbed in Subotica, I decided to go back home before I fell sick - the planned itinerary for 30 days was shortened to four.

In brief, Europe is on a wrong course. It is becoming more greedy and more inhuman. It is safer today to go around India on your own than in Europe. The promising liberalization of 1989 has literally run off the rails. The railway companies are closing their own possibilities, increasing the prices, want to turn all lines into IC or EC or something even more expensive and want to make it impossible for less rich people to travel, by removing the possibility to travel by night sitting up in second class. Thus the travellers lose heart and travel less, and railways become even less profitable.

This would be a most unsound development, since *trains are both the safest, the most comfortable and the most environmentally sound way of travelling, which at any cost should be encouraged instead of punished.*

What then is to be done about it? In order to understand the situation in Subotica correctly, more details should be given. We arrived at Subotica at 5 o'clock in the morning when passport and military policemen brusquely woke us up. When my passport did not contain a visa I was angrily ordered off the train. I then produced my wallet and demonstrated my good will by expressing my wish to buy a transit visa, since I had no intention of leaving the train before Istanbul. This only made the policemen more angry. There were altogether three different passport and police officials in the compartment at the same time. It contained only two other passengers, two cultivated Japanese gentlemen, who slept in the top berths, while I was lying in the bottom. As I wasn't even dressed and the police still ordered me off the train, there was some confusion, and I had to put my wallet aside. Next time I opened it (on the train back to Budapest) it was empty - 350 Swedish crowns and 50 D-marks had vanished (about £60). My conclusion is that only one (or several) of the officials could have taken

it, since I always kept that wallet in my breast pocket closest to my heart, except for that moment in the early morning. It wasn't too much money but enough for a loss.

Together with the two Poles I then had to wait for 4 1/2 hours in Subotica before our passports were returned to us and a train brought us back to Budapest. It was an ice cold rainy morning (14.9.1996) and there was no warming system at the station. If there was it had collapsed.

The Pole went off the train at the first station inside Hungary since it was an IC-train and he was afraid of getting into further trouble because he only had an Inter Rail ticket - Subotica had scared him. The Polish lady was forced off the train at the following station, the second inside Hungary, since she didn't have enough money to pay for a return ticket. The ticket to Sofia had cost her her last money. That she was a Polish citizen I could see from her passport. She was blonde, about 35, nicely dressed in a long frock in light colours - she was dressed for a summer climate. I tried to intervene for her, but the conductor was not reasonable, although he knew English. Before leaving me she said she would have to continue back to Budapest by hitch-hiking. The only thing I could do was to hope that she would not get pneumonia. I was myself ill for the next 70 days.

Last time I was in Yugoslavia was in autumn 1993, when for the first time it was impossible to get through. You were then given a phone number in Budapest for visa application, a number which in Budapest didn't work. Also the Poles were here given a phone number, but this was Saturday morning, and there was a long time to pass until Monday.

After my return to Gothenburg I learned from my Bulgarian friends that it has also occurred in Bulgaria that North Europeans have been refused transit visas although they have had valid tickets.

What you have to do is to demand internationally that countries participating in the Inter Rail system have to allow Inter Rail travellers to pass through, or else these countries have no right to be in the system.

If Yugoslavia and Bulgaria break the system, there will be no way through for Inter Rail travellers +26 down to Greece and Turkey, although these countries are glad to cooperate.

Of course, it would be desired that things would return to how they worked before 1993. But at the same time you can't force any country to join a good cooperation.

The final disaster: I booked a flight for India already on July 11th to take place on October 25th. I heard nothing and heard nothing as the autumn passed. Finally, four days before departure, I contacted my travel agent to learn if anything had happened. Everything was all right, they told me, and there was no problem on the way down. Only the return journey was not quite clear, since there was a waiting list, which could take some time to clear. How long would I have to wait in India for a return flight? I asked. The answer was: maybe a year. So I faced the most alluring perspective of a possible adventurous return flight from Kathmandu to maybe get thrown off the aeroplane in Mongolia or Siberia. Yugoslavia had already been bad enough, so I found the only sensible thing to do to cancel the journey - and start planning for next year.

The only good thing about all these five voyage fiascos is, that it couldn't become worse, which means, that at least some travel plans must succeed in 1997, both to the Mediterranean and to India - and maybe even to Tibet.

Doctor Sandy concerning "The New Frontier"

- a letter from Istanbul.

"I am very sorry to hear that you will not come down to me this year. But hold out, my dear friend! - Your old doctor will probably live at least one more year.

Answering your query concerning the Oriental mess, I would prefer a rather careful standing-point, since I know that you are not an atheist, and since my natural atheism during the years only has been confirmed. Without entering into this, without defending my atheism and without accusing any monotheistical religion, I would like to hint at a point or two which simply is too obvious to be ignored.

My probably greatest objection against monotheism is that it has the most infallible fallibility of always leading to partiality and biased conclusions. In spite of my atheism I can stand up to defending Jewish monotheism for the simple reason that it is based on a good book. Not everything is up to par in this good book, but that which is good enough is for me an enough reasonable defence for jewry to outlast time.

The Quran is a different thing however. Its aggressiveness is almost admirable for its sustained continuity, indefatigably preaching the enforcement of religious laws preferably by violence and excluding the female part of human life, (love, tenderness, consideration, sensitivity,) as if such disturbances in a monotheistically perfect world must needs be banished. To this comes the established intolerance in practical life and double standards often to the extreme. Islam preaches tolerance but is practically the most intolerant of all religions.

My greatest objection against Islam, however, is that it is naturally anti-democratic. Turkey could only turn itself into a democracy by cleansing the state from Islam. It could not be done away with completely, and that's why Turkish democracy never succeeded completely. Islam can only be sustained by totalitarianism. When a Moslem country goes democratic, its Moslem system goes out of order. Islam and democracy are incompatible. Strange enough, that is not the case with any other religion: they all mix well with democracy. Only communism suffers from the same problem

That's why as a casual and practical pragmatist my only possible diagnosis on Islam has to be, that the Moslem world will never taste freedom until it is freed from Islam. If Islam can find it satisfactory to exist outside politics, which was Kemal Atatürk's definite desire, Islam would survive, especially if it concentrated on developing such constructive forms as Sufi, Ahmadiyah, Bahai and whirling dervishes; but politically Islam has no future. Without admitting it, it is well aware of the fact, which it tries to hide by applying such desperate measures as the enforced backwardness of Algeria and the latest terror the Talibans in some kind of a strange bolting self-destructiveness, like the swine running into the sea of Galilee.

It is interesting to analyze the political changes of the world since 1989, but it really hasn't changed at all. Only the frontiers have changed. During the cold war the frontier went right across Europe. Almost all of Asia sided with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact against the free world west of the iron curtain, while only a few islands remained out in the dark: Hongkong, Israel, Kuwait, Singapore and Indonesia. This darkness has greatly been reduced by the Soviet Union changing side and becoming white with the whole of eastern Europe - it is almost unavoidable now that Russia joins NATO to insure itself against the growing threats from Moslem Asia and China. While only ten years ago the Russians were the villains in Afghanistan, they are now on the right side against the Taliban terrorists. The nations which today are found on the "wrong" side, and thereby continue to make a frontier, are really only Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, China, Burma, North Korea and Cuba. Foul players but not lost in the

dark are the dictatorship of Indonesia, the double-crossing Pakistan and civil war Turkey. But the frontier in Turkey is a separate front outside the great game. Paradoxically the terrorist Ghaddafi is right when he tries to persuade Turkey to let the Kurds have their own state. But the Kurds do not belong in the bad lot of Sudan-Iraq-Iran & CO.

The cold war is over, but instead we have a new frontier against China and Islam. The cold war lasted for 40 years. I don't think the new battle will take as long, especially since the Russians now are on our side."

This diagnosis of doctor Sandy's has caused some reactions, but the general view among professionals seems to be, that "the worst thing about doctor's Sandy's diagnosis is, that he is perfectly right". Living as a guest in a Moslem country, (now and then also residing in Greece, Cyprus, Hungary and other exotic countries,) he expresses his ideas only in private letters and never in the press. For security reasons, he is unknown to the world and leads a private life incognito.

What the Holy Quran does not say about Mahomet

There are two stories about the Prophet which have been told and spread ever since his death but which no faithful Muslim ever mentions a word of. The first tells the story about how it befell when he forbade the use of strong drinks. He had had some carousal with some pals in such a swell party, that none of the participants could remember anything afterwards. Apparently the drinking bout had not been entirely successful, though, as the gay guys with hang-overs woke up the day after and found one of the party stone dead cut to pieces by a scimitar. The pals were terrified and most of all the Prophet. No one could explain what had happened. As they looked things over it proved no better, than that it happened to be the very Prophet's own scimitar that was bloody, and not only his scimitar, but even his clothes and his very own hands. The Prophet was mortified by such a dreadful situation. He promised to never again taste any strong liquor, and to make an example he ordered all his followers to obey this most sacred commandment. Since that party Muslims are not allowed to drink any alcohol, as a consequence of the Prophet having had one glass too much.

The second story is about the Prophet's unhappy death. He was only some sixty years when he began to suffer from gaga and start chasing the fair young daughters of the faithful. There was one girl in particular whom he just couldn't stop persuing, which was a most improper thing for such a holy Prophet to do. So her family decided to make an end on the disgrace for the good of all, for the sake of the Prophet's own reputation and for the sake of the whole of Islam and its glorious future. So they framed him and used the girl for a bait one night as it was dark, so that, as he chased her, he was trapped to fall down into a deep well. They pretended not to have noticed it and let him languish to death safely in the bottom of the well. Of course, such a sorry end to the Prophet was an impossibility to Islam, so the thing was hushed down completely. Instead the official version of the Prophet's death is, that he was carried off from the rock of Jerusalem by angels - or was it white horses? - and brought directly home to heaven. Whatever version is more credible appears from the fact, that the later version obviously could have been made up from the motive, that the truth needed some face-lifting - for the sake of Islam.

Because of such stories, which have been current in those parts of the world ever since the Prophet's own lifetime, innocent people like Salman Rushdie are banned and proscribed, and all faithful Moslems are encouraged to murder him in the most sacred

name of Allah. The Prophet himself forbade the telling of stories and myths but seems to have had no objection against stories and myths about himself.

The Problem Concerning Turkey, Armenia, Kurdistan, Iraq, Iran etc. - in Brief

This article was written 28.3.1992 and has never been published here before, since *the Free Thinker* then did not yet exist. However, the article is still valid, why it is publishable in this context.

"Starting in Iran, the worst seems to be over. President Rafsanjani has managed a difficult position for two years, and his becoming a president at all must be regarded as lucky considering the darker profiles of the other candidates. He is flexible, is able to listen and can adapt to changing circumstances, which none of the others can do. Against him stand the more militant and one-sided Shia Muslims, Hizbollah the dreaded servants of Khomeini, and the Mujaheddin NLA (operating in western Iran) organizing strikes, demonstrations and riots in the country. The NLA are militant leftists, they worship the memory of the 70,000 martyred victims of Khomeini and have lost some importance after the death of Khomeini. They made a bad show by siding with Saddam Hussein against Iran in the eight years war. Their leaders are a romantic couple who are recognized by their crimson scarfs and turbans. It would be vital for them to reach some agreement with Rafsanjani to survive and to get the Hizbollah under control. The revolutionary aggressions of Iran today are limited to barking against Israel and the stubborn maintenance of a most stupid death sentence against the harmless philosopher Salman Rushdie.

More worrying is the situation in Iraq, which will not improve as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power. The Kuwait crisis stroke hard against everyone except the guilty, and the hardest hit were the Kurds, the Shia Muslims of the south and the 13 percent Assyrian Christians. The Assyrian Christians in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Lebanon and other places in the area are about 5 million and have a hard time everywhere. If any, they are to be counted with in building a future in this politically collapsing area.

Naturally the Kurds are entitled to their own state. The sooner it is constituted (at the cost of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria,) the better. As long as they are forbidden a state of their own, the civil wars will continue. They are not, however, entirely innocent of their own situation.

In the beginning of the century a strange political ethnic cleansing took place in the area (mostly in the years 1895-1908) which must be considered as the chief source of all the troubles. Two million Armenians (Christians) were systematically massacred by the Turks. The world just watched it and did nothing. There is only one parallel in history: the holocaust against 6 million Jews in the second world war. Everyone knows about that. The Jews now have their own state, the Germans have confessed their crimes, many of the guilty have been punished, and Israel still today receives large amounts of money for indemnity. Of course, nothing of this will in the least compensate the brutal slaughter of 6 million Jews. But nothing has been done to indemnify the slaughter of 2 million Armenians. Not a penny has been paid for indemnity, not one Turk has officially confessed any part of any crime in this, there are only 100,000 Armenians left in Turkey today, and many of them have been forced to become Muslims.

The Kurds took part in the massacres. In the name of Allah the Turks and the Kurds went together extirpating the Armenians, the Kurds being promised the lands of the Armenians as a reward. Today the Kurds have the same problem with the Turks as the Armenians had a hundred years ago, and the Turks have even greater problems with

the martial Kurds. As long as the Turks continue battling this problem Turkey will never be accepted in the EC. While the Turks seem as reluctant to let the Kurds have their own state as in his days the great Pharaoh was reluctant to let the children of Israel go, the problem seems too difficult for a solution, especially since 2 million innocent Armenians are waiting for a compensation which they never can get, since they were all brutally murdered. In comparison with this, the sacrifice of 70,000 martyrs to Khomeini appears as something of a modest parenthesis.

The best thing we Europeans can do to solve our immigrant problems is to arrange matters so that people can live in peace and security in these their own war-torn home countries from which they come."

Since these words were written in March 1992, things have grown worse for the Kurds and for the Shia Muslims in southern Iraq by 1) the failure of the USA in the Gulf War to depose Saddam Hussein, which they thought they could arrange by simply telling the Kurds to do away with him, which only resulted in the increased oppression of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein, and 2) the mad project of Saddam Hussein to drain the marshes of the southern Shia Muslims by digging a monstrous canal through the marshlands, which turned these into a desert in a full scale environmental disaster, as if all Saddam's environmental disasters in the Gulf War in the Persian Gulf had not been enough. The USA thought Saddam's remaining in office would add to the stability in the area, while *the Free Thinker* considers this measure a most fatal error.

The War in Afghanistan

"There has been a war going on in Afghanistan for 17 years. There is no sign of any peace there. I have always been interested in Afghanistan since my grandfather was an Afghan and my father used to travel to Afghanistan to see his cousins. But it's twenty years since we last heard anything about my father's relatives because of the war.

Some facts of Afghanistan:

The last king was Mohammed Zaher Shah, and he still lives in Italy. Monarchy fell in Afghanistan in 1973 when the Shah's son-in-law Mohammed Davod organized a coup while the Shah was abroad. Afghanistan was then made a republic. The communists seized power in 1978 in another coup, and the new leader was Nor Mohammed Taraki. Since the Afghans are Muslims, they could not accept the communists in Afghanistan, and as the communists were threatened with defeat they asked the Soviet Union for help. The Russians occupied Afghanistan in 1979, and since then there has been war. Nearly two million Afghans have died and five million have fled to the neighbouring countries. The whole country is ruined. The Russians left Afghanistan after ten years of war in 1989. But there are millions of mines left in Afghanistan which kill innocent civilians every day. After the Russians returned to the Soviet Union, the communists remained in office until 1992. During their time many leaders followed each other and killed each other or were killed by the people or by Russians. After Nor Mohammed Taraki there was Mohammed Hafizollah Amin and after him Babrak Karmel and then Najibullah until 1992.

The communists were overthrown in 1992 by the Muslims, and Najibullah found protection at the UN headquarters of Kabul. There are many different Islamic groups in Afghanistan who fought together against the Russians, but they couldn't agree in peace, so there were new wars between them after 1992. More than 100,000 have died since then in the fighting. A few great names are the former president Rabbani and the general Ahmad Shah Masoud, who is also called the Panjshir Lion: he was a legendary warrior against the Russians. Golabodin Hektmarjar and general Dostam are other

important war leaders. They almost overdid it in the war against the Russians and the communists. The Taliban, who were formed only two years ago, conquered Kabul in the end of September, and a new civil war has begun as a preliminary result. Kabul is the only capital in the world which has been completely destroyed. It's incredible how the destruction of Kabul has been going on from the fall of the communists in 1992 until 1996. The Taliban executed doctor Najibullah, the former president of the communists, without a trial three weeks ago. At the moment the war is carried on between the forces of Masoud and those absolutely fundamentalistic Taliban. Is 17 years of war not enough? The Afghans wonder how long they have to keep waiting for peace.

Most Afghans miss the monarchy and the former king Zaher Shah, but he has declined to return to Afghanistan. He survived a knife assault a few years ago and lives in Italy since 1973 and is almost 80 years old. We feel very much sorry for the Afghans and Afghanistan when we think of the happy golden days during the reign of Zaher Shah. Alas, times have changed.

Here is an old song from the days when the British were defeated in Afghanistan:

Children of imperialism, listen to me !
Take it easy, and play no more with fire,
for I was an Afghan, and I made the British run away.
I thundered against them like lightning,
and with my bare hands I crushed them.
So, get lost, you miserable British, for you can't escape us.
This is the land of the Afghans, and you can't kid us any more."

- with greetings from our Afghan correspondent.

Eric Newby : A Short Walk in the Hindukush

This is a marvellously entertaining travel story glittering with good humour from beginning to end. The two Englishmen Eric Newby and Hugh Carless abandon themselves in an effort to climb one of the highest peaks in Afghanistan without any experience at all from mountaineering, so they practice at first on a few hills in Wales. Now the Afghan Himalayas happen to be most atrocious and hostile mountains which hardly have been climbed at all - rather have they always claimed victims - and dreadful weather combined with savage local barbarians did not make things easier. You get a vivid insight into the unfathomable mysteries and absurd conditions of an alien world, where the people of Nuristan maybe were the last people in Asia to be islamized by the sword in 1895. Before that, the people of this country, which previously was called Kafiristan, were among the world's wildest savages with a polytheistic mythology of their own, and their main professions were as goatherds and robbers. This was the area where Alexander the Great in his time had the greatest difficulties on his quest for India, where he found the hardest resistance from the most qualified fighters he ever knew. Many of them have still today blue eyes and blond hair, but all the varieties of the human race are to be found among these hills, like in Pakistan and northern India. The one thing which Eric Newby neglects in his hilarious chronicle is to mention Rudyard Kipling, whose maybe most fantastic short story "*The Man who Wanted to be a King*" is a story about this very country of Kafiristan, nowadays Nuristan.

The mountaineering then only resulted in disasters. Twice the stalwart British attacked the forbidding summit of Mir Samir at almost 20,000 feet and had to turn back only a few hundred meters from the top on both occasions. They laboured in this enterprise for two weeks until dysentery and diarrheas and other Himalayic symptoms

of overstraining forced them off the mountain; and retreating for good they had no better luck than to find a witness to their total defeat in Wilfred Thesiger, who was on his way up alone.

The book deserves to be read carefully, because there are wonderful details everywhere, the conversation is reliably spiritual all the way, and it is great fun to partake in all the disasters and hilarious catastrophes of the intrepid couple. One has to be grateful for their safe return, so that they could tell the story of their defeat, since this part of the world is famous for all the visitors who just vanished without even a story to tell.

K2 - the Adventure

This film was shot in British Columbia and in Kashmir often in 20 degrees minus and on altitudes above 3000 meters. It told the story of two chums, who had been climbing mountains together for ten years, and who in Alaska met with an expedition who planned an assault on K2, Mount Godwin Austen in Kashmir, the world's second highest and most dangerous mountain. It's the weather which makes it so perilous, because it may shift in an instant from a bright day to a cold murderous blast of blinding snowstorms, which blows you off the mountain or freezes you to death in a second.

The expedition leader was a millionaire of about 60 years, who paid for everything and continued climbing impossible mountains although he really was too old for that already. His second mate was a young self-sufficient macho hero called Dallas. Number three was his girl and number four a Japanese veteran. To these were added our two chums, one of them a professor of quantum physics with an incredible capacity for always calculating the risks correctly and thereby how to avoid them, married and father of one child; and his pal, an invulnerable dreadnought, who could venture on anything and always be sure to come out all right.

The nature of K2, however, has the disadvantage of refusing half of its climbers to return alive. As our expedition embarked on the attempt in spite of rebellious porters and other unsurmountable difficulties, they met with another expedition on its way down after some evident catastrophes: one among them was mad, and another was dead. A few extra members of the party had been left behind dead up there somewhere in the vast deepfreeze. Our expedition continued, however, its two main characters, Dallas and Dreadnought, having an argument on the way and fighting it out with proper fisticuffs.

This was just the beginning. The old leader soon suffered from emphysema and could go no further, so he ordered Dallas and the Japanese gentleman to continue alone towards the top, while our two chums would remain as reserves: this was not according to the bargain or the program, so violent protests took place but were of no avail: the millionaire decided everything, because he had the money. In the morning the Jap returned from above alone and dying: he and Dallas had lost their tent as they had been taken by surprise by a snowstorm. Dallas was still up there somewhere, and the Jap had at least succeeded in returning alive. After telling so much of a story, however, he expired.

But the two chums decided to dare an attempt as the weather cleared next day. They happily reached the top, but the way down is always much more difficult than the way up, especially on such a mountain. The weather became worse again, soon they could see nothing, and the next moment they lost their footholds and met with disaster. The professor broke his leg in a fall of some fifty meters. He ordered his partner to leave

him and save at least himself. The Dreadnought reluctantly agreed to this and not without the wildest protests.

In the meantime the old expedition leader decided to abandon the base camp since his life was in peril and since the weather up there was so bad that the four climbers had to be given up as lost.

But on the way down our dreadnought encountered the frozen body of Dallas. Here the story took its most interesting turn: Dallas had with him all the equipment, such as ropes, vitamins and adrenalin capsules, which the chums had lost in their fall. Our Dreadnought decided to return with this equipment to his dying comrade. He found him all right, gave him adrenalin injections and put him on his one functioning foot, and with solemn carefulness they started to come down together, while the weather still was the worst imaginable and they didn't even know where they were.

Meanwhile the millionaire and the girl left the base camp by helicopter. The pilot insisted on going round the mountain just to have a last look if any survivor would come in sight for a last chance. Fortunately they thus found the two chums, who could be saved, while only two of the six in the expedition thus had perished.

The greatest losers in the expedition then had been Dallas (dead) and the millionaire, who never again would be allowed on any mountain. Already in the beginning, when Dallas proved so arrogant that it came to fistcuffs on the way up, it was certain that the expedition could not succeed. As an experienced traveller expressed it: If there is trouble between members in an expedition, the expedition should be cancelled immediately. Here the two leading heroes had an almost deadly row and still enforced the enterprise, in which two people died, one completely innocent of any fracas. Was it worth it?

The message of the film was maybe something like: money and power is necessary but never sufficient, while consideration and humanity outlasts death.

At the same time the film was an excellent lesson in sportmanship. Nothing is more important in demanding expeditions than the maintenance of good sportmanship. Intrigues, going behind the backs of others, withholding information, backbiting, betrayal and overrunning - all such matters are purely destructive and the opposite of sportmanship. If such superfluties can not be avoided, it is better to cancel the expedition.

Shakespeare in Calcutta

Calcutta has always been the centre of Indian quality films with such a man as Satyajit Ray for a dominating figure, while Bombay more has been the manufacturer of glittering soap operas. The small film "36 Chowringhee Lane" is a typical Calcutta production in its heart-rending realism and sharp expressive down-to-earth humanity and so true to life and conditions in Calcutta that it is almost overwhelming.

Miss Violet Stanhope is a small aged teacher in a girls' school, where she teaches Shakespeare to her girls. The play which she always uses is "Twelfth Night". She lives with a cat at home which she calls Sir Toby (Belch), and her entire world consists only of her tiny old beautiful apartment on Chowringhee Lane, the school and the girls, Shakespeare, and a dying brother in a hospital, whom she visits every thursday. The only other place she visits is the cemetery with the tombs of her relatives from the times of the second world war. Like her dying brother, she is English.

This small world of hers is kept up with a consistent humorous courage by the small lady, and the camera compliments her life with illustrating shots from the life of Calcutta - the poverty, the beggars, the slums, the rickshaw runners, the permanent

congestion on Hooghly Bridge, (then still the only bridge across the river,) and the lost splendours from the times when Calcutta was the second city of the British Empire.

The monotony of her life is interrupted one day as she meets an old pupil who necessarily wants to introduce her fiancé to her old teacher. The old lady then insists on inviting them both to tea, and the young couple is charmed by the perfect coziness of her small but wonderful home. They get the idea that it would be the ideal meeting place for them as lovers. Through guile they succeed in persuading the old teacher to allow them to use her home while she is away at school - she is led to believe that the fiancé is a great writer who needs a place to work in peace and quiet for his great books. Miss Stanhope with her fine literary education can not resist this idea.

That's where the tragedy begins, which never fully becomes a tragedy, because nothing can perturb Miss Stanhope. At school she is overrun by a younger teacher who takes over her Shakespeare class while Miss Stanhope is reduced to teaching grammar. Her brother dies in hospital without her being present, since she is then lured out by the young couple to have some fun with them. Gradually she realizes that they have borrowed access to her apartment merely for their love meetings, but it doesn't matter - she still believes in the young couple as her friends, she continues to encourage them and help them, - and she is present at their wedding. For a wedding present she gives them her old funnel gramophone with records from the 40's of the old fast kind. She wants to invite them home to her on Christmas Day to please them with a real Christmas Pudding, but they decline the invitation, stating that they will not be at home during Christmas. That's how she gets the idea that she will give them her Christmas Pudding anyway, by going to their house and leaving it on their door-step, while they are away.

The Calcutta Christmas is illustrated with overwhelmingly objective pathos. You see all the beggars and homeless, who just lie about in the streets in heaps everywhere, the endless poverty and slum conditions, while a vulgar arrangement of "Silent Night" booms ironically in the air. And Miss Stanhope arrives at the house of the young wedded couple to leave her Christmas Pudding. She is encountered by a house full of lights and guests who are having a gay Christmas cocktail-party, and the guests are all young and rich and vulgarly noisy having drinks and luxuries galore. Not until then she understands.

She returns home with her Christmas Pudding undelivered, and she quotes Shakespeare. She recalls two of the most remarkable characters that Shakespeare ever invented - Malvolio and King Lear, the two greatest clowns of all - "Pray, do not mock me: I am a very foolish fond old man, fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less; and, to deal plainly, I fear I am not in my perfect mind..."

And she returns to her old world of only memories - a young handsome lover who died in the second world war, her only relative the brother, who died completely gaga at the hospital, and what else besides Shakespeare?

What is it then she understood? Suddenly she realized, that no one cared any longer for an old English maid in Calcutta thirty years after Indian independence. She has fallen outside time. At the same time she has witnessed the contrast between the brave new world in India with the young rich generation only laughing at history and her cultural inheritance, unless they could use it for their own selfish satisfactions, and the world she still represents of high educational standards, morals and ideals. And the contrast is too striking.

The remarkable thing is that this film was made in India by Hindus. Both Bengali and English is spoken, and the two pathetic main parts - the old teacher and her dying brother - are also in reality an English brother and sister who have stayed on in India after 1947.

The Shakespeare Debate with John Bede and Carl O. Nordling

This continued for several volumes, but the last word was John Bede's:

"Thanks for sending me the works of Carl O. Nordling. He has put forth a most admirable and magnificent work of research, and I wonder if he realizes himself the importance of his findings. I am inclined to agree with him and accept his theories on almost every point, but in the end he stumbles on his own wicket and backfires. I must maintain that Shakespeare was *not* Marlowe nor Thomas Kyd and least of all Robert Burton. This clergyman is the very opposite of Shakespeare: a devout protestant, an unbearably tedious pedant, and a most unspiritual and unsophisticated bore completely lacking the art and vocabulary of Shakespeare. His work has merits but far from the merits of Shakespeare.

On the other hand, this Derby theory remains interesting and not without a certain plausibility. Mr Nordling's case is hopeless, however, without proper evidence. You'll never convince the world that Shakespeare was not Shakespeare without definite material evidence. The Shakespearisms of Marlowe, Burton and others can always be explained in other ways. It is known that Marlowe collaborated with Shakespeare at least in Henry VI Part One. Burton was clearly influenced by Shakespeare, since he has references to him, while there is not one reference to Michel de Montaigne in Burton, which clearly is one of Shakespeare's greatest influences. This is only one point of many indicating a clear incompatibility between Shakespeare and Burton.

The link between many Elizabethans and post-Elizabethans is a certain spirit of mind, which is felt both in Kyd, Marlowe, Jonson, Bacon, Burton and others, which reaches its highest expression in the personality of Shakespeare. Also William Stanley voices this spirit in his late epitaphs. But although Shakespeare leaves the scene and dies, the spirit prevails and never leaves England. It is also felt in Milton, Dryden, Swift, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley, the Brontë sisters and even in Conan Doyle and Robert Louis Stevenson, Kipling and Somerset Maugham. But this spirit must never be confused in the days of Shakespeare with other personalities than Shakespeare. William Stanley might well have been under its influence, since he knew Shakespeare personally, but the intimacy with this spirit does not imply that Stanley was Shakespeare.

This is my argument against mr Nordling and Lord Stanley as a Kelt and representative of the English-speaking peoples and, as I claim, myself an intimate of the spirit of Shakespeare.

The issue remains interesting, more material will certainly appear to shed some more light on the mystery, but no scientist will get anywhere in the ways of new theories without proper evidence which dispels every shadow of a doubt."

So much for John Bede. His answer is oracular and ambiguous. He accepts mr Nordling's theories with one hand only to refute them with the other. One could also say, that he neither opens nor closes the door but leaves it slightly ajar. And one can well ask if such an explanation to the mystery as "Shakespeare's spirit making itself felt in others than Shakespeare"

can be regarded as scientifically acceptable.

Mr Nordling's theories are basically these:

- 1) Shakespeare's dialect is not the language of Shakespeare's home county but belongs rather to the north of England in counties like Lancashire, Cheshire and Yorkshire, which Shakespeare never visited, and which dialect is not used outside these counties, while earl William Stanley was from these very parts.

2) The two epitaphs in Tong and Chelsea are easier to identify with Shakespeare than many of his sonnets. These epitaphs were provably written by William Stanley in 1631 and 1632, that is more than fifteen years after Shakespeare's death.

3) "Hamlet" can only have been written by someone intimately familiar with the life of the Danish court at Kronborg Castle in Elsinore in 1585. Shakespeare had no connection with the Danish court while William Stanley most probably did have.

4) The social position of William Stanley as a close relative of both the English and the Scottish royal families and his resignation from the rights of royal succession fits psychologically perfectly with the position and predicament of Hamlet in the play.

5) Many details and geographical descriptions in the plays of Shakespeare show that the author knew the world well outside England, so well that he must have been a traveller himself. Shakespeare was not. Stanley did travel in his youth.

These are the main arguments of Carl O. Nordling, of which the three first are the most important.

Peter Fleming and the Great Game

This brother of Ian Fleming wrote his most renowned book "Bayonets to Lhasa" about the Younghusband expedition 1904 to Tibet, in 1960 directly after the Tibetan rebellion in 1959 and the escape of Dalai Lama from Lhasa. No wonder then that the book is much more than just a documentary on the Younghusband expedition.

Peter Fleming is really the first one to realize what the Chinese actually have done. He makes his book the instrument to sound the alarm of what is going on, in a most literarily proper way, thereby directly catching on to "the Great Game" of the 19th century and opening the scene for its continuation.

"The Great Game" in the 19th century was the competition between Britain and Russia for domination in central Asia. It almost amounted to a frontier between the two super powers going right through Persia and Afghanistan, since the British were very much afraid of the Russians gaining a foothold in Kashmir and Himalaya. To prevent the Russians from entering Tibet, the Younghusband expedition was launched, which practically led to Tibetan independence until 1950. Colonel Younghusband reached Lhasa and achieved some trade agreements with the Tibetan government, which excluded both China and Russia from Tibet. At the same time, the British left Tibet as untouched as Nepal.

In 1947 India separated from Britain and made it impossible for Britain to assist Tibet in any way. Instead the Chinese were given free hands to do whatever they liked in central Asia. 1949 Mao seized power in Peking, and he immediately planned an invasion of Tibet, which was carried out the next year. The Tibetans were forced to sign an agreement in 17 paragraphs under the threat of war if they didn't, and during the years that followed every single one of these paragraphs were violated by the Chinese, until the Tibetans had had enough of it and rebelled in 1959, which made it possible for Dalai Lama to escape to India.

Peter Fleming very percipiently points out the greatest harm in all this, which is an upset power balance in Asia. China was given the whole field alone to do whatever they liked with almost all Asia without anyone being able to interfere. Peter Fleming's perspicacity reaches a climax as he reveals the immense strategic importance of the Chinese occupation of the Tibetan plateau, from which heights long distance missiles can reach almost any object on the planet or at least every city in Asia, since Tibet is in the middle. Neither Britain nor India realized this possibility and danger in 1947 when India broke loose, which only Winston Churchill reacted against, who then was bereft of all possibilities to do anything about it.

The Murder of Panchen Lama

The last year even Dalai Lama has voiced the opinion that Panchen Lama was murdered by the Chinese in January 1989. This is what is known in the matter:

Shortly before Panchen Lama left Peking to return to Tibet in January 1989, he had a great quarrel with the communist leaders in Peking. Two days after having publicly branded the Chinese oppression in Tibet he had pains in his chest. He called for his doctor in the evening, but that doctor never turned up. Instead an unknown nurse appeared to give him an injection. After this injection Panchen Lama fell into a coma. He was dead before sunrise, while the Chinese claim that he suffered a heart attack and died later in the afternoon.

Shortly upon this a number of Panchen Lama's relatives were disposed of in the same way: they were visited by strange nurses who gave them injections putting them into a coma, whereupon they died. China officially explained that they also had suffered from sudden heart attacks. This strange occurrence of so many heart attacks in one family must then have been something of an epidemic.

This method of execution in China is regarded as more human than to shoot the victim a bullet in his neck and then bill his family for the bullet, although the more elegant method is also more expensive. Above all, it is more discreet and more diplomatically supple, especially concerning high officials with a public reputation.

The greatest worry of Dalai Lama concerning the 6-year-old Panchen Lama, who was arrested and taken away together with his parents by the Chinese, is that he might vanish into a Chinese psychiatric asylum to be drugged and brainwashed.

Chinese prisons are known to be the most horrible in the world. The one thing more horribly unhuman would then be Chinese psychiatry.

This article caused some consternation and protests. It was stipulated, that it can not be proved that Panchen Lama or his relatives were murdered, and that their heart attacks might have been natural. We have to admit that none of these alleged murders have been scientifically proved.

But put the case that Panchen Lama really died of a heart attack and that all his relatives did the same. What then might have caused his heart attack? Is it impossible that 14 years' imprisonment and torture might have affected his condition and added to the risk of a heart attack at the age of only 52? Already in 1962, when Panchen Lama criticized the Chinese for the first time, he was put under close guard and forbidden to speak publicly. It took two years before the Chinese dared to let him speak publicly again. It was then on the great occasion at Barkhor, the great square in central Lhasa, when Panchen Lama praised Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence so that every Tibetan could hear it. Consequently the Chinese buried Panchen Lama alive for 14 years after a mock trial in which he was publicly manhandled.

Even after his release in 1978 he was often taken in again by the Chinese and was sometimes seen with a cauliflower ear, which he hardly had managed to inflict on himself.

In brief, although the possibility that Panchen Lama might have died of a heart attack can not be theoretically excluded, the Chinese must all the same be held responsible for his martyrdom.

It has also been stated, that Tibetans can die of heart attacks from pure empathy with a close relative, who has died in this manner. With this theory for an explanation, the relatives of Panchen Lama might have died naturally, although their heart attacks were strikingly epidemic. But if the Chinese were directly responsible for the death of

Panchen Lama, the more responsible they were then for the deaths of his relatives, especially if they all died of empathic heart attacks.

So in any case the Chinese remain morally and directly responsible, which no natural or medical expertise in the world can explain away. To this comes the fact, that the Chinese had every motive in the world to wish to get rid of the exclusively embarrassing presence and existence of the late Panchen Lama.

A Political Reflection

Now and then you hear countries like China, Turkey, Iraq and Indonesia scold the United States and other western nations for interfering with "the internal affairs" of these countries. Without any exception it has proved, that whenever these quarrels occur, those "internal affairs" always consist of genocides, to such an extent, that it has become axiomatic, that whenever a country tells other nations to refrain from interfering in "the internal affairs" of that country, the only thing that country wants is to continue practising genocide alone and in peace.

The more important then to interfere with "the internal affairs" of countries like China, Turkey, Iraq and Indonesia.

Pilgrimage to Kailas

An expedition will take place from Stockholm on May 3rd 1997, going by air to Kathmandu and then by Lhasa to Kailas with a Tibetan guide. If you are interested, please contact "Study and Travel" in Stockholm, Box 17552, S-11819 Stockholm, phone 46 8 4529696, fax 46 8 4529797. The duration of the expedition will be at least 33 days at the price of about £2700, which is cheap, if you compare with other expeditions.

Gothenburg, Sweden, December 8th, 1996.