

appearance" (to borrow a description jokingly applied to Christina Alberta in Wells's later novel *Christina Alberta's Father*). She puts forward the argument tentatively at first, but in the end conclusively: marriage is not what she wants; she wants to love where she chooses; she wants both Leadford and his rival. "Am I not a mind that you must think of me as nothing but a woman?"

What infuriated the righteous, and Wells's enemies in the Fabian Society, was that Wells not only advocated free love, but had the cheek to practise it. He defied the conventions of the time. There is an amusing example of this in *H.G. Wells in Love*. Before the first World War, Wells was enjoying an affair with the Gräfin von Arnim, the Irish lady whose book, *Elizabeth And Her German Garden*, was beloved in stately and less stately homes up and down the land.

One day Wells and von Arnim found something in the correspondence columns of *The Times* which amused them. It was, says Wells,

a letter from Mrs. Humphrey Ward denouncing the moral tone of the younger generation, apropos of a rising young writer, Rebecca West, and, having read it aloud, we decided we had to do something about it. So we stripped ourselves under the trees as though there was no one in the world but ourselves, and made love all over Mrs. Humphrey Ward. And when we had dressed again we lit a match and burnt her.

A word should be said finally about the form of *In the Days of the Comet*. Although it has been referred to here as elsewhere as a novel, it is in fact a separate if allied form, a novella. A novella, as properly understood, restricts itself to a single situation or event. It has few characters, and they mainly function in a symbolic role: the protagonist, the woman as love object, the rival, the mother, the statesman, and so on. Goethe's *Elective Affinities* is a good example of a novella. And *In the Days of the Comet* is a rare English example of the mode — a much more perfect example than has hitherto been recognised.

In it, H.G. Wells shows his characteristic dissatisfaction with the existing order, his spirited hatred of the mess we have got ourselves into, his striving for better things. No doubt if he were alive today he would still find ample reason for dissatisfaction, hatred, striving.

☆ ☆ ☆

In the Days of the Comet has been republished by the Hogarth Press (Chatto & Windus); *H.G. Wells in Love*, edited by G.P. Wells, is published by Faber & Faber.

Human Rights

Lord Stewart of Fulham

Address to The H.G. Wells Society at its Annual General Meeting, May 21st 1983: With special reference to the book Human Rights and World Order by James Dilloway, recently published by the Society.

The Foresight of H.G. Wells

Dilloway's book reminds us that Wells was one of the first to see that a Declaration of Rights would be an essential part of the reconstruction of human society after the Second World War. He formulated such a declaration in *Rights of Man* (published 1940) and more fully in *Phoenix* (1942). A comparison of these with the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948, demonstrates the clarity with which Wells had foreseen what would be needed.

The scope of human rights

Both the Wellsian and the United Nations' declarations of rights contain two main groups:—

1) Legal and political, i.e. the freedom of thought, speech, worship, association, freedom of the person, freedom from violence, and all that we describe, in general, as "freedom under the law" — from which springs the important corollary that the citizen has a right to share in making the law.

2) Social and economic — e.g. right to education, right to work (which, in Wells's statement, is correlated with a duty to work), right to a material standard of life sufficient to ensure the full development of the personality.

The government of any country, however poor, can, if it has the will, guarantee the first group. Success in the second depends on a country's economic progress. Consequently, the extent to which human rights can be extended throughout the world is linked with the extent to which richer countries give aid to the less fortunate.

Human Rights and World Order

To H.G. Wells, these two were connected because he envisaged man as a citizen of the world: his rights must therefore be rights to be enjoyed the world over, with world order to protect them. In practice, we have found that useful, if limited, results have come from enshrining human rights in a United Nations Document.

1) Each nation has undertaken an *international* obligation to observe human rights: if it is questioned about alleged failures to observe them it cannot complain that this is interference in its *internal* affairs.

2) As is pointed out in a valuable section of Mr. Dilloway's book, the U.N. concern for human rights has given rise to a large number of international conventions dealing with particular abuses: and while these are not always observed, they maintain a world-wide pressure against tyranny.

3) The growth of international organisations to deal with health, the environment,

aid to poorer countries etc. helps to create a world in which the realisation of the social and economic group of human rights will become easier.

The Position Today

It is painfully clear that despite all the declarations, conventions etc., the present extent of human rights throughout the world falls far below Wells's hopes. With human rights in mind, we may classify the States of the world as follows:—

1) Stable democracies in which human rights are firmly guaranteed. Infringements are readily detected and remedied by ordinary legal process, or by appeal to an international tribunal, such as the European Court.

2) Communist states and others operating a one-party system of government. It is claimed that this system does give the citizen an effective share in law-making and that a written Constitution guarantees other essential rights. It is difficult to accept this claim since exercise of freedom of speech etc., such as is readily allowed in the democracies, is in these states treated as criminal. Substantial advance in human rights seems unlikely in these countries without a fundamental change in the form of government: but some progress has been made by persistent agitation on behalf of individuals in groups, or by invoking the relevant clauses of the Helsinki Agreement.

3) Traditional or military forms of non-democratic rule. Here the record of human rights is patchy and haphazard, but some of the governments are susceptible to propaganda.

Meanwhile, over this confused scene hangs the ominous shadow of nuclear armaments.

What Can Be Done?

How do we travel from a divided and dangerous world to a world united in upholding human rights? Mr. Dilloway quotes H.G. Wells as putting his faith in "a world-wide coalescence of all the scattered forces of creation and protest in the human heart into one consciously revolutionary movement based on the declared rights of man". One can imagine this happening in the democracies: can we see it happening in Communist countries?

In several of Wells's writings, two themes recur: (1) the emergence throughout the world of groups of intelligent, self-disciplined and internationally-minded people, capable of managing modern society — we see this in the *Open Conspiracy*, *Modern Utopia*, *Things to Come*. (2) a vast international conflict which destroys our present societies, with all their imperfections, and enables the thoughtful élite to take over: we see this in *Things to Come*, *Mr. Parham* and the *Holy Terror*. None of this is very attractive: international conflicts today would be far more destructive than Wells could imagine: and we have not much faith left in intelligent élites.

But if we are disappointed that Wells offers us no clear guide for the future, we must admit that we do not, so far, seem able to do much better. May I, however, suggest possible lines of advance:

1) The stable democracies are the main safeguards of such human rights as we have. They should therefore be ready to defend themselves, if need comes, against

attack. Yet, since world conflict could destroy all human rights, we must seek defence without provocation. The watchwords "détente" and "co-existence" are still valid.

2) The United Nations — and other groupings, such as the European Community — should be encouraged in all activities which make it easier to detect infringement of human rights and seek redress. There should be similar encouragement to voluntary bodies (e.g. Amnesty) seeking the same ends.

3) In view of the difficulty of promoting human rights in very poor countries, there should be a great increase, on the lines of the two Brandt Reports, in aid to developing countries.

The Temper of an Age: H.G. Wells' message on war, 1914 to 1936

R. T. Stearn

"He linked insights, articulated hopes and fears, educated masses, expressed the temper of an age."

W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State*¹

"War is a horrible thing, and constantly more horrible and dreadful, so that unless it is ended it will certainly end human society."

*The Outline of History*²

H.G. Wells' response to the Great War — from initial surprise and alarm to support and later to disillusionment — has been told and retold by Wells and his biographers. Before the war he had been interested in war, fought his little wars and written repeatedly with exceptional, if flawed, prescience, on war. Before 1914 he formed ideas on war and the military which he retained through and after the Great War, notably on the conservatism and incompetence of professional officers, and he pronounced on military topics from inadequate knowledge. This also he continued to do after 1914; there was basic continuity throughout his writing on war. This article considers his public message on war through his writings.³ It considers also what he did not have to write, the unspoken assumptions and mental climate he and his readers shared.

The War That Will End War (1914)

Soon after the outbreak of the war, Wells' message on it began with the journalism he reprinted in October 1914 as the shilling paperback *The War That Will End War*. In this he declared his support for the war and asserted it was just and noble, against an evil adversary. Here he was typical of almost all his countrymen. This was the Rupert Brooke phase of the war, the period of Pals' battalions and a million volunteers, of idealism, self-sacrifice. Wells wrote in the *Times*, "Nobody wants to be a non-combatant in a war of this sort".⁴ Yet he saw differently and further than most supporters of the war. A recurring theme of his fiction had been war destroying the old system and leading to the establishment of a world state. In 1914 the idea that war might shatter the existing system and end European civilisation,