

'Green' vice president of German parliament praises paganism

by Rainer Apel

"The anti-Christian current has set as its goal, the destruction of the value of the Cross, emptying it of its meaning, by denying that in it, Man finds the roots of his new life, and by claiming that the Cross is incapable of nourishing future prospects or hopes. Man, they say, is only a creature of the earth, which ought to live as if God did not exist."

So reads a key statement at the beginning of the new papal encyclical, "*Ut unum sint*: On the Commitment to Ecumenicism," which calls upon all churches within the broad Judeo-Christian spectrum to strengthen their efforts to oppose the onslaught of the *Zeitgeist* and of pagan cults. It especially points to the common martyrdom which all Christian religions have suffered under the onslaught of neo-pagan currents such as fascism and bolshevism. The encyclical concentrates on religious questions, questions of the commonalities and differences among the various religious communities, and it goes right up to the edge of the realm of politics, and even of economic policy, in that each of the various concepts of economics follows a distinctly different image of man. But together with previous encyclicals issued by Pope John Paul II, what emerges is a general attitude of opposition to neo-liberalism, and especially opposition to the ideology of the Conservative Revolution (and its "green" variant), whose view of Man is that he is a beast. Venturing far beyond the realm of the Catholic Church itself, the new encyclical reminds all Christian believers that in Christianity, Man is understood as the *image of God*, as a creature who is clearly distinct from the beast, and who possesses some of God's positive-creative potential. The encyclical spreads optimism that on the threshold of the third millennium, it is indeed possible to better humanity's situation.

Prince Philip is the driving force

This culturally optimistic conception of man stands diametrically opposed to the cultist conception, which, from time immemorial, has been propounded by the oligarchy, and in modern times by the English monarchy, to the end of manipulating its "subjects." It is therefore no wonder that since 1961, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has been the driving force at the head of the World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly the World Wildlife Fund), an organization

which can be characterized as the mother-hen for all the other radical environmentalist groups which sprang up in the meantime. As this newspaper has repeatedly documented, it was in Prince Philip's office that the "green" *Zeitgeist* and its "movement" was forged as a weapon against modern industrial society: On May 18, 1990, speaking before the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Philip took a stand against Judeo-Christian values, saying that for him, it is "now obvious that the environmental pragmatism of the so-called pagan religions such as that of the American Indians, the Polynesians, and the Australian Aborigines, is more reality-oriented from the standpoint of environmental ethics, than that of the rather intellectually monotheistic philosophy of the religions of revelation."

Prince Philip's false equations—"nature equals paganism" and "destruction of nature equals Christianity"—are a central feature of the ecological propaganda against the idea of population growth. Another central feature is the claim made by contemporary anthropology (ecology's somewhat older sister-movement), that man is *by nature* a violent creature, and has always been a beast whose bloodthirstiness has been somewhat curbed, but never completely overcome. It is further claimed that the old cults knew about the bestial in Man, but that this has been suppressed by the modern religions, and that the cultish, primitive societies could survive better than our modern, more complicated social order can. The crisis of modern civilization, according to the anthropologists, is once again bringing out the beast in Man—just look at the Balkans, Rwanda, etc.

It has been necessary to preface our report with this rather long-winded discourse, in order to set the proper context for reading and evaluating a German-language book by Antje Vollmer titled *Heisser Frieden (Hot Peace)*, which appeared shortly before the release of the papal encyclical. Antje Vollmer, co-founder of the German Green party, at the instigation of Christian Democratic parliamentary group manager Wolfgang Schäubele, and with the votes of the Christian Democratic faction, was elected in 1994 to the post of vice president of the German parliament, the Bundestag. Had Mrs. Vollmer's book appeared at an earlier point, it is quite likely that a number of parliamentarians from the Christian Democratic

Union and the Bavaria-based Christian Social Union—parties which still at least like to consider themselves Christian—would have had second thoughts about electing Schäubele's candidate to one of the highest posts in our parliamentary democracy.

A book about violence

Mrs. Vollmer's foreword gives us ill forebodings of what is to follow. She begins: "This is a book about violence—a discomfiting topic. Violence, long thought tamed, is now returning to Europe in devastating and archaic forms. Anyone can confirm for themselves this swelling tide of chaotic currents and goat-songs (tragedies), and can at the same time realize how impotent the culture of the moderns is to deal with them adequately." Here Antje Vollmer uses a well-known trick from anthropology, not naming violence by its real name, and acting as if violence were ubiquitous and present in all men, and as if the distinction between criminals and victims did not exist.

Mrs. Vollmer does not wish to name names. "This book is based on an assumption," she writes in the foreword. "It proceeds from the assumption that the discussion about violence goes astray whenever it inquires about the roots, the guilty parties, or the ostensibly lacking norms and values. Contrary to the usual practice, our investigation does not dwell upon the search for causes. It takes as a given, what the myths speak about: that violence has always existed, since the dawn of human history."

At this point, one might be tempted to simply close the book and cast it into the pile of those countless, trendy books on "violence," none of which adds a jot to our actual comprehension of the subject. But her foreword also contains a strange formulation which makes our ears prick up: "With this other view of the dark side of human history, I have found that well-known concepts have often become murky, and previous judgments have been overturned: Sacrificial cults, myths, and rites were not, after all, merely instruments for the enslavement of human souls through magic, but rather, were often also regulatory systems of great wisdom and knowledge about human nature."

Let us, therefore, see where the Bundestag vice president—who, by the way, is also a theologian of the German Evangelical Church—leads us on her journey toward the ostensible wisdom of the pagan oracles. She first takes us to Nepal, to the Dassain Festival of the Gods, which she herself attended a few years ago. There, in the city of Bhaktapur, the climax of the days-long Dassain Festival occurs when the gods of the city (Nava Durgas) sacrifice a consecrated lamb atop a white stone; the lamb's blood trickles down onto a crowd of people who are concealed underneath a white cloth. Now the magic moment is come, "when all Nava Durgas drink from the freshly spurting blood. They immediately become dizzy and go into a trance. This is the Incarnation: Now the Nava Durgas are no longer of this world, they are

actually gods, and will rule over the city for one week."

During that one week of continuous cult festivities, sacrifices are made throughout the city; animals are slaughtered in every locality—but in a special way, as Mrs. Vollmer describes: "Usually the thing to be sacrificed is something living: With bare hands, with a sharpened thumbnail, a suckling pig's heart is torn out of its body. Then begins the time of the Great Slaughter; all the streets are covered with blood," etc. At the conclusion of these "festivities," everyone drinks one more time from the blood of a freshly slaughtered buffalo, and goes into an "ecstatic, wild dancing, which refuses to end, and grows wilder and more aggressive than at the outset. In former days, so it is said, it was not uncommon that one of the Nava Durgas would fall to the ground, dead, after this excess. It was a dance of the dead. So powerful was its magic spell, that it literally determined life and death. Afterwards, the city and its inhabitants returned to their former peaceable ways."

Now, Antje Vollmer, who erroneously believes that here she has discovered echoes of the animal-sacrifice practices of the Jewish and early Christian tradition, sees the Dassain Festival as a sign of higher human development, since the "transition from human sacrifice to animal sacrifice is found at the start of all high cultures." But Mrs. Vollmer is quick to add that everyone knows "at the same time, that this is not always successful," since these festival days are seen "as rowdy days, as eerie times when the old, outmoded orders reclaim their rightful place and must be vanquished anew; the old German tribes knew this, as well as the early natural religions of the Celts. The totem as a taboo area, within whose bounds all is permitted: murder and incest, debauchery (etc.)."

Has the Protestant theologian Antje Vollmer, we might ask, ever celebrated the Christian Christmas festival, which proclaims quite another message? But she seems to have written off the Christian religion: She does not look to Christianity to provide any solution to such "problems" as the "immense influx [into Europe] of people from the East and the South"—a danger which she paints large in her book, *despite* the possibility of industrial and agricultural development. "The real cradle of civilization," she writes, "is not in Europe at all; rather, it was on the dusty, red soil of the land of two rivers, the birthplace of three world religions. But what was thought, dreamed, passed on, and written down concerning rules of social behavior, commandments, norms, and values, has now been almost completely used up."

Mrs. Vollmer explains that in her opinion, "even a people's morality and ethics" is also "a finite resource; over-exploited, it, too, can go into decline, just as mineral deposits, rain forests, topsoil, and the ozone layer can." This is indeed an *insane* train of thought, one worthy of Prince Philip himself.

Mrs. Vollmer apparently got this idea from cultural anthropologist René Girard, author of the book *Das Heilige und*

die Gewalt (Violence and the Sacred), whom she frequently quotes in her book, and who is highly respected by certain neo-pagan circles. Girard, in turn, in his own book, admiringly cites anthropological studies by one Edward E. Evans-Pritchard of certain tribes along the Upper Nile, who believe that man and beast have equal status. This English “researcher” just happens to be the father of a certain Michael Evans-Pritchard, who of late has been functioning as one of the lead actors in the English-oligarchical slander campaign being waged by the media against President Clinton. So the neo-pagan, oligarchical world is rather small, after all.

Mrs. Vollmer herself, who has apparently skimmed through all this without giving it much thought, feels no need to know much about the oligarchical background; all she wants to do, is follow in the footsteps of many other prominent people, and spread this neo-pagan propaganda far and wide. For example, in her book she expresses the view that humanity is almost inexorably and compulsively striving toward a “new barbarism,” a bloodbath similar to the Thirty Years War, because of the failure of the elites. The chief reason why the elites failed, according to Mrs. Vollmer, is that they were too late in taking to heart the wisdom of the old cults, because they were not quick to create new sacrificial rituals in order to channel people’s ostensibly “innate” violent proclivities (just look at the Nepalese Dassain Festival. . .) and to usher in the “third phase of civilization.” Nevertheless, Mrs. Vollmer says, there are some places where a start could have been made, and perhaps could still be made before it is “too late”—in the media, for example.

“Ever since the 1920s, the new media have been *the* coveted goal of political movements. The media set the aesthetic criteria of our public places; they lend everything an aura of irresistibility. Heretofore unimaginable possibilities for influencing the masses open up for whoever becomes the first to possess the new media. The media always play upon people’s curiosity and thirst for fascination, and thus on their creative potential, on their ability to marvel. At the same time, the media also prey upon their gullibility and defenseless naivete,” Antje Vollmer writes. She continues: “On the question of the usefulness of the new media, no one was more modern than National Socialism. In contrast to the pictorial arts—where what dominated, in keeping with the Führer’s tastes, were the quaint, and, in the final analysis, harmless Nazi bacon-slabs in the manner of the 19th century—the films, the architecture of the grand plazas and show-streets of Nazi culture were sensationally modern. This will to form, this aesthetic bid for power is typified by Leni Riefenstahl’s films (which admittedly show a certain formal genius), and was further refined by Sergei Eisenstein. This modernity is symbolized by the suggestive colorings and light-beacons, the almost mystical decorations of public places, and the mass marches. Today, every rock concert contains elements of such a multi-dimensional intensity of experience.”

Up to now, apparently, no one in the otherwise astute and “politically correct” German literary scene has gotten upset over this passage in Antje Vollmer’s book. Could it be that this is because she is from the Green party? One need only think back to 1988, when the Greens unjustly accused Bundestag President Philipp Jenninger of having made excuses for the Nazis and their holocaust, causing a scandal which forced Jenninger to resign. But now, almost seven years later, a “green” Bundestag vice president can get away with picking out an ostensibly positive feature from the Nazi era, actually writing it down on paper—and absolutely nothing happens to her! Of course, elsewhere in her book, Antje Vollmer is politically “correct” enough to include a condemnation of Hitler and Stalin, the “fascist-racist” and “socialist-bolshevik” variants of the “violent excesses” of the 20th century.

The counterculture cult

Antje Vollmer is not far off the mark with her observation on the connection between Leni Riefenstahl and modern rock music. Years ago, it was reported that English rock singers were using old Hitler films, carefully studying his gestures as he spoke before mass rallies, and attempting to apply this for their own purposes.

For Antje Vollmer, rock music carries the seeds of the “third phase” of civilization. Since 1989, i.e., since the end of the Cold War, we have had a “hot peace,” an extremely unstable condition, she writes. There are “no longer elites which can entrust themselves with such civilizing tasks,” and the “chief actors in the third phase of civilization—crafty at surviving, experienced in doing without, responsible for the whole, and yet still creative about the future—have yet to appear upon the European stage.”

“But also in European and American culture, artists and stars have in the meantime constituted themselves as a lonely avant-garde in the social processes of mollifying and taming violence,” Mrs. Vollmer explains in another passage. “With a great sense of doing the obvious, and mostly without even knowing what they are actually bringing about, they are laboring together on this most difficult work. Thus, they are far ahead of the politicians. They are the true *citoyens* of today’s civilization. Within themselves they gather up the entire confusion of collective emotions and affects, and give them an incomparable, authentic expression.”

“Make love—not war! It’s still happening today. Despite all the denials, the Vietnam War was actually lost on the fields of Woodstock,” Mrs. Vollmer’s book says at the very end. And though one might have doubts about whether that will be enough to deter the Serbs (to take just one example), we are nevertheless anxious to see what course the Bundestag will take under this vice president. Soon, perhaps, we may see bags flying as they did back in 1983—bags filled with Leni Riefenstahl’s “suggestive dyes” so cherished by Mrs. Vollmer.