

Editorial: Unprofessional Foul

Aristotle departed voluntarily from Athens in order to save the Athenian people from a second crime against philosophy. The Master of Balliol has not been so generous to the Czechoslovak Government. Though his Senior Tutor, Dr W. H. Newton-Smith, had been arrested, interrogated and deported on 8 March 1980, Dr Kenny risked and duly incurred a similar fate. After he had spoken in Dr Julius Tomín's seminar he and Mrs Kenny were deported on 11 April. Dr K. V. Wilkes, Secretary of the Sub-Faculty of Philosophy at Oxford, has sent us a copy of a letter of protest which has been addressed 'to Czechoslovak Embassies in London, Paris, Ottawa, New York and Bonn':

We are outraged to hear of the repeated harassment to which our colleague Dr Julius Tomín has been subjected in recent weeks. It is shocking that his philosophy seminar has been broken up several times by the police, that he has been arrested on several occasions along with his colleagues and students, and that some of his students have been subjected to savage physical beating.

We wish to protest most energetically against the repeated violations of: Article 20 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which guarantees to everyone 'the right to peaceful assembly and association', and which the Czechoslovak Government undertook to respect after the Helsinki Agreement; and Article 19 of the *International Pact on Civil and Political Rights*, which guarantees to everyone 'the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers', and which acquired validity in Czechoslovakia on 23 March 1976.

We earnestly hope that the Czechoslovak Government will put an end to this brutal and senseless repression of philosophical study and discussion.

These political sentiments are unexceptionable, and they are fully supported by facts given in a longer statement which has reached us from the same source. The political geography of the covering letter seems more dubious. Is there a Czechoslovak Embassy in New York? If so, is there also a Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington?

Dr Tomín's seminar is described as a private philosophy study-group. The harassment of its founder, its members and its guests provides further evidence (if, as Beachcomber always said, proof were needed) that privacy of thought and study is as repellent as any other form of privacy to the authorities of a monolithic state founded upon doctrinal orthodoxy and governed by the priests of a true faith.

In the exercise of our own precious editorial freedom let us add only one incidental comment to the otherwise unqualified support that readers of this journal will give to the Oxford protest. Upon his return to England Dr Kenny sent a letter to the Editor of *The Times*. He there argued that the giving of unpaid lectures or seminars is a normal part of a philosopher's holiday and therefore that he had no obligation to refer to Dr Tomín's study-group when stating the purpose of his visit to Prague. No doubt he would have been refused a Czechoslovak tourist visa if he had announced that one of the purposes of his visit—and surely not a subsidiary purpose—was to take part in such subversive activities as the elucidation of Aristotle's *Ethics*. But to be denied admission to a country for harbouring such an intention is as honourable as to be expelled from a country for perpetrating such an act.