



Alan Thornhill (left) and Malcolm Muggeridge working on *Sentenced to Life*.

NEW WORLD NEWS

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Family or factory farm?

The new play 'Sentenced to Life', by Malcolm Muggeridge and Alan Thornhill, will open at the Westminster Theatre on 17 May after a week in Bath starting on 1 May, and a week of previews at the Westminster Theatre, beginning on 9 May.

The two authors spoke in London recently about the play. Mr Muggeridge said: THIS PLAY WAS BORN, in a sense, when the abortion bill was before the House of Commons. I was compering a BBC programme on this issue.

In introducing it I said that it seemed to me obvious that if abortion were legalised, pressure would be on for euthanasia to be legalised, and that, in this, essentially the same arguments would be deployed.

The panel of people, who included a number of clergymen, shouted out, 'Nonsense! Rubbish!' I can never forget it.

If you claim the right to decide that a life shall not begin, you will infallibly claim the right to end a life when you think it has no further point. We see now the full tide of presenting it as a humane measure, exactly comparable with what happened in the case of abortion.

Thumb screws

I am certain that if it is enacted, all the various reservations and conditions attached to the legislation will prove completely worthless. When it has been legalised, the temptation to governments to economise on the great difficulties—expense difficulties and personnel difficulties—of looking after the mentally disturbed, handicapped and the old and senile, by applying this euthanasia legislation, will be irresistible. That would be an enormous step downwards into another Dark Ages.

We stand at a parting of the ways. If it is true that men are in charge of their own destiny and that there is nothing in human life but the experience of living, then the

notion which through the 2,000 years of Christendom has governed all our spiritual and moral and even aesthetic efforts, the notion of mankind as a family with a father who is a loving God, whose concern with them is such that He has counted the hairs of every head—if that notion is gone, then we are left with a factory farm. And the guiding consideration must be, as it already is becoming, what is good for the livestock and what will promote the best economic results.

In a play you can translate these great moral and spiritual dilemmas into terms of a particular drama concerning particular human beings. Just as our Lord in His ministry taught with parables, with images, so we can make a contribution. We can present through a play what this hideous development is really about.

I believe the play is human. I hope it is humorous, because laughter is often a good medicine. The best of all is when laughter and tears come close together. But the subject is central and deadly serious. What we think and do about birth and death determines what we think and do about life. The battle runs through every one of us.

ALAN THORNHILL

It is not what the arguments say it is about—here is a person suffering acutely, surely it is a humane thing to end that suffering? Or the case mentioned on the recent television programme of a man who does exactly what the character in our play decides to do, to kill his wife because she asks him to.

We can present it in relation to the great questions that our very existence in this world raises. And that is why it is so important.

What is called the consensus, which is the peculiar sort of humanistic orthodoxy imposed on our western world today—and imposed, I should say, with a thoroughness and ruthlessness that Torquemada with his poor old thumb screws would have thought an excellent improvement on anything he could do—is entirely the other way. I parti-

cipated in a television discussion on this subject, which had five minutes against euthanasia to 25 minutes in favour. The consensus is in favour of the factory farm.

We as Christians have perhaps the greatest duty to fight every inch of the way over that. I would like to think that if there was only one person left in the world who would say that this is wrong, not just euthanasia, not just abortion, but this whole concept of what human beings are entitled to do, that still that one voice would be raised. This play is a way of raising it.

Fraudulent

I have no doubt myself that it will have its effect. It will give people cause not just to think about this question of euthanasia. That is in a sense a minor point.

The point is, are we entitled to take upon ourselves the responsibility of saying, 'That life I have decided is worthless. Therefore, I, a man, will say it should be ended'? That's what lies behind it all.

To this philosophy, we as Christians offer the alternative of love. We offer the reality of truth. That is the choice.

Even if the whole pressure in this contrary direction overwhelms us, we still have the immeasurable honour and joy of speaking up for what we know, from our personal experience, from the story of Christendom, from every great and good thing in what is called western civilisation. We know that what we are saying is true, and the other is fraudulent.

THEATRE ROYAL BATH

'Sentenced to Life'

From 1 May for one week
Monday to Friday 7.45pm
and Wednesday 2.30pm
Saturday 5pm and 8.15pm

WESTMINSTER THEATRE

Previews 9 - 16 May
at the same times as above
except Saturday 4.30pm and 7.45pm

Live-in, think-in, work-in

by Jay Kistasamy

THERE ARE SO MANY temptations and pressures on a student today—from extremist political philosophies to drugs. Many follow these paths simply to be 'with the gang'.

But is there something bigger, something that gives satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment to a person in whatever walk of life he may choose, whatever colour, race or background he may possess?

A group of us around the country have been planning a two-week programme at Tirley Garth in Cheshire, from 28 July to 12 August, for 16-year-olds upwards. We would like to see if there is an alternative path.

During the programme there will be a chance to discuss what we can do about the gap between rich and poor in the world, how you find the courage to stand for what you believe in, how to live in freedom, the revolution in men that is needed to cure the wrongs in the world, and 'Can God speak?'

There will be drama and music workshops. By the end of the programme we hope to produce a presentation of what we have discovered together. There will also be sport, work on the farm and visits to meet those concerned with the running of industries in the area.

Some may wish to work with us after the programme and put into practice what they have discovered in areas of need around the country, and at the MRA conference at Caux, Switzerland.

More information is available from the programme secretary, Tirley Garth, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0LZ, England.

More human Swedes

'THERE IS A SPIRITUAL VACUUM in the Swedish youth,' said Swedish parliamentarian and member of the Education Committee, Sven Johansson, at a Scandinavian conference in Karlstad, Sweden.

Mr Johansson told of a young girl who had come to Parliament asking, 'When are you going to teach us the meaning of life?'

This search for something to live for is common in Scandinavia, and 125 people from four Nordic countries met at an MRA conference last month to discuss how education could help develop free and responsible people.

Former Minister of Education Professor Anton Skulberg from Norway, said he believed people's personal qualities strongly influenced the making of the structures and decided whether society should become more human in the future.

The conference was one of a series of events in Karlstad.



J Spooner

BRITAIN 2000, the play written by a London housewife and performed by Asians, English and West Indians, was presented in Sheffield, Britain's fifth largest city, as part of the city's International Harmony Week. Our picture shows the cast, who had travelled from London to present the play-reading, being welcomed to Sheffield by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Mrs Winifred Golding, and Mr Golding.

Two hundred people, including city councillors, leaders of the racial communities and police representatives, filled the hall.

Dr Narayan Swamy, Chairman of Sheffield's Community Relations Council, chairing the occasion, said, 'This play challenges all of us to create a world where all live together in peace. This can be done if each of us overcomes any feelings we have against others.'

Concluding the evening, John Pate, until recently a Labour County Councillor, made a plea for Britain to adopt big enough aims. 'Any sectional interest divides,' he said, 'Racial harmony comes about when we see everyone has a part in building a new world.'

AROUSE THE CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION

A national assembly has been called in Orleans, the city where Charles VII of France was crowned by Joan of Arc. The invitation to the assembly reads:

A NEW FRANCE CAN BE BORN.

What are we ready to do for this?

Will we cultivate in our own hearts a respect for the weak and an awareness of the aspirations of minorities so that this becomes a reality in public life?

Will we in our families, in the factory, office or group to which we belong, adopt an attitude of listening to the other person, which means we build cells of democracy everywhere?

Will we accept an expansion of our hearts and minds to include all mankind, that would raise us above sectional interests—the kind that presently clash within the narrow confines of our own land—and that could lead us to our true

destiny at the heart of the world community?

In every walk of life there are Frenchmen convinced that the nation's renewal must come through moral and spiritual renewal. Will they succeed in uniting above non-essentials to win the sceptics and bring a new vigour to our national life?

During the Orleans weekend, men in public life and ordinary citizens who are preoccupied by these questions will have the chance to share their experiences and consider what changes are needed in our living, and how to arouse the conscience of the nation to accept them.

Set me in some high place

by Thomas Tull

Eternal spirit, set me in some high place

To view the states and kingdoms of our time!

Give me the heart to bridge the yawning space

Between creed and colour, continent and clime,

And see the human family as a whole

In all its glorious variety,

Its infinite needs, its craving for a role

For young and old to mould their destiny.

Give me imagination to understand

What motivates this splendid diverse band,

The simple things that bind us to each other—

The smile of a child, devotion of a mother—

And steel my strength and courage to the end

To serve God and my brothers as a friend.

Mr Tull is a former British High Commissioner to Malawi.

A Briton in South Africa



by Patrick Wolrige Gordon

D Channer

Patrick Wolrige Gordon was the Member of Parliament for East Aberdeenshire from 1958 to 1974. He farms in Aberdeenshire and recently spent six weeks in Southern Africa.

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE to persuade any nation—let alone South Africa—that a nation can change its attitude to its historic role, and yet retain its moral and spiritual quality at the same time. For example, in its reaction from imperialism Britain is managing the first. But can it claim to be achieving the second? South Africans are much more convinced about the pornography, the strikes and the hypocrisy in Britain, than they are

about her character.

It is most unfortunate, where South Africa is concerned, that Britain does not manage her changing role more convincingly. If she did, her views on racial discrimination, as being not only morally wrong, but even an offence in law, would carry far more weight in South Africa.

As it is, white South Africans are turning only slowly and under protest towards a more equitable treatment of the black and coloured people. The Afrikaners tend to see their role in history as justified mastery of the non-whites, and justified conflict with the British.

On that basis they have built an impressive culture and a successful economy. But not only are apartheid and separate development wrong. They will provoke a holocaust. Many white South Africans know it. They know it could destroy all their efforts. But they are imprisoned by their ideology. They feel that any real change threatens their historic role, their culture and themselves.

Christian West

In that context Britain is little help. She looks too much like a civilisation in decline. But even in Britain, if it applied the policy of Moral Re-Armament, that appearance of decline would change very quickly, because

absolute moral standards do wonders for any Britisher however decadent: and the guidance of God is something every Christian prays for every week.

Both points could provide the injection in the fuel system South Africa needs to continue the impetus towards change. Is she then justified in her reaction to them, namely that she will not try such a policy until some other country has tried it first, notably in the decadent, but theoretically Christian West?

Whipping boy

I don't believe she is so justified. The Voortrekkers struck out for new countries against enormous odds with an invincible faith in God and confidence in themselves. Their descendants could strike out again and show the world that belief in and obedience to the will of God can cure the most difficult racial problems and even convert the sense of injustice, discrimination and hatred among the coloured and black people to one of love, equal merit and mutual responsibility.

Then South Africa, at present the world's whipping boy, could become the world's head-boy, that other nations might learn of her, how to create a truly multi-racial society, without a holocaust, and with an answer to the problems of race, class, injustice and hate, which are common to all.

Of a new Irish nation



by Edith Ramsay

W Roche

'YOU MUST HAVE DONE WELL for yourselves to be living there,' said my new Catholic friend in Derry, when I referred to my childhood in the Malone Road area of Belfast. Had he hit the nail on the head? When I thought of some of our neighbours, I knew we were not rich, but we had got on and were comfortable.

Eat scones

I was back in Ireland after nearly 40 years. I had been in America and Nigeria, married a Scot and raised a family in England. Would it be the same magical land I had always remembered? Or would time and troubles have altered it?

Granted, Belfast looked a bit drab, and one's handbag is methodically searched. The butcher's shop where my mother bought the

Sunday joint, the grocer's, the green grocer's, the cobbler's, the sweep's house had all disappeared, and their place taken by office buildings. The site of my father's warehouse on Brunswick Street is now a car park.

But the real Ireland, which as a girl I always knew existed, and had occasionally glimpsed, is still there. For on this occasion I had the privilege to meet, talk, drink tea and eat scones with some of the native Catholic Irish to whose land my ancestors came as Protestant settlers 320 years ago.

Stone masons

We were fairly ordinary people who came over—two brothers, stone masons, so the family story goes—to build a fortified mansion for Lord Conway at Portmore, on the Antrim shore of Lough Neagh. Cromwell's armies had retired from the scene and the settlers were establishing themselves. My ancestors were not soldiers, they did not put women and children to the sword, but we established ourselves as foreign settlers knowing the land had been taken from its former owners. The British Government of the day made it possible for people like ourselves to move in. I don't think we were vicious; but I do think we were inhumanly thoughtless.

Princes or protectors

Endless books have been written about the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I could never understand why people fought about religion; it seemed the very antithesis of the Methodist teaching we were brought up on. But I think ruthless

men, be they kings, princes or protectors, used the ferment of new ideas to ride to power, and others fought back to hold power or land.

As Protestants in the north of Ireland, we dug ourselves in, worked hard and became farmers, craftsmen, business and professional people. But the memory of those early days, and the fear aroused in both Irish and settler communities, has been passed on from father to son.

I talked about these things with a nun in charge of a big girls' school. 'Where exactly did your family first come to?' she asked me, and I told her. 'No, that's not where my people were,' she replied. She knew the land that had belonged to her family before the settlers came. But for the love of God, how can you heal hurts like that, and put right wrongs?

Ireland needs all

Is this what gives Ireland its magic? There are the hills and fields and loughs—but also there is a people who have defended their land and kept their identity against all comers for nearly 900 years. The Irish people will open their hearts and hands to anyone who comes in friendship, but will fight to the end against anyone who wants to impose his will on them or their land.

I talked with one of the Catholic hierarchy, who knew I came from an ethnic minority which had always sought pride of place. He simply said, 'Ireland needs all her ethnic groups.' I knew I was not one of the Irish race, but perhaps forgiveness was possible and I could be one of a new Irish nation.

Senior partner takes charge

Due to the professional code of ethics of the Royal Institute of British Architects, the writer must remain anonymous.

THE ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE in which I was a partner was forced to the wall by the recent economic recession in Britain. It was the same with many other small practices.

We saw the downturn and prepared to weather a few bad months—maybe a year. Eventually we were down from five partners to two, plus a secretary. We were at the end of all our projects, with nothing coming forward.

By this time we were heavily in debt, having used all our private capital to sustain the practice. But the recession outlasted our resources. We had to stop paying ourselves. Dissolution was inevitable. My partner sold his house, paid his portion of the debts and emigrated to South Africa.

I was bitter about prospects in Britain. I had put years and effort into building up the practice and there it was—gone. As a family we made plans to emigrate to New Zealand.

Head lease

Some weeks later I said to my wife, 'I cannot just put my finger on it, but I feel it's wrong to emigrate.' She too felt this way. We sought God's direction. To go seemed like quitting. It was simply to enable us to feather our nest more easily. It was wrong. We decided to stay.

Easier said than done. My wife is a doctor—thus we had a source of income. But

the debts left by my practice could not be paid off that way. What was I to do? I had no work on my own. Jobs in other practices were vanishing like snow in the sun.

Then God put some unlikely thoughts into my head.

- 1 Stay in practice by yourself.
- 2 Maintain the practice's address and telephone number.
- 3 Obtain the head lease for the entire office premises (that is, rent the whole premises from the landlord).

None of these thoughts seemed to solve the problems, yet as I began to obey them things happened. Stay in practice; fine, but how? Within days I was asked to refurbish a large Georgian house and to put it to office use. Enough work for a year had just arrived. I set to work, grateful and not a little surprised.

Headstrong

There was no reason why I could not stay at the same address, but I rejected the idea of obtaining the head lease. It was madness in my position. More expense and further long-term financial responsibility seemed the last thing I needed. With a major recession on, and bankruptcies commonplace, who would rent space from me? I threw the idea out.

But it kept coming back; so I wrote to the landlord. The head lease was available subject to terms. I prayed and we negotiated. After months of hard bargaining, I was presented with a 20-year head lease to sign. But should I? There were no tenants to be seen. There was a further £2,500 to spend on the building before I could let it. There were fees for solicitors and agents, not to mention the cost of the lease itself. All round it would leave me about £10,000 in debt. Again I

prayed, this time with the lease in front of me. 'It's the right thing to do; sign it' came the thought, so I did.

One small suite of offices was already occupied, I was in the other and one of the two larger suites let immediately. I was overjoyed, but my joy was short-lived. The other suite would not let. The stream of visitors to see it slowed to a trickle and then dried up. Weeks passed and I was getting really worried. The break-even was in the last suite. I felt I had made a major mistake, had been headstrong and foolish and through it I was jeopardising my family.

That evening I shared my worries with my wife and said that selling the head lease seemed the only safe course open to me if I was to avoid bankruptcy. After a long talk we asked for God's guidance on the matter. We both had the thought to spend more money on the last suite and that all would be taken care of. The coincidence was remarkable, and the next morning I authorised the work to be done. Later in the morning the agent called. Could he bring someone to see the suite? They came after lunch and the suite was let at the full asking price!

Overheads

Two-and-a-half years later, my practice is still just me and a secretary, but work is trickling in and I have begun to pay myself again. The rentals from the building pay for the overheads of the business. All my earnings have gone into paying off the debts, and now I am on the financial level again.

These years have been strewn with evidence of God's intervention. Again and again He has worked things out. He obviously knows His way round my business rather better than I do, so He's now the Senior Partner.

Listening to God and Frenchmen

Here, in a letter to a friend, Karen Smith from Canada, a biology graduate doing au pair work in Europe, tells what happened when she dropped in on the MRA assembly at Caux last Christmas on her way to Israel.

Just wanted to write and tell you what happened to me. I wanted to go to Israel, right? However, at Caux I found I could no longer run away from trying to find out whether God existed or not. I realised that I myself had the potential to find out and if this was reality it was useless to ignore it.

So I decided to give God the reins of my life for a while, and told Him (whatever I knew of Him) that if He didn't want me to go to Israel, He'd have to give me a very clear alternative.

A few days later I had an invitation from a family in Paris whom I had met at Caux, that if I wanted to come and live with them I was welcome. I did not want to go, but I figured that now I really couldn't back out of this experiment, so I said yes.

Much to my surprise, I found everything here that I could possibly want in a home in Europe. The biggest joke on me is that I didn't want to come! I don't know what the next step is but that will come later, I guess. Meanwhile, I'm trying to learn to listen to God and Frenchmen. I don't know which is more difficult, but I think I'm catching on.

I found an answer to my own question of whether God is a crutch or not. I think God is only a crutch (meaning something we use to explain away anything we don't understand, and something which props up our lives and gives meaning to it when we can't think of any other meaning) when we never do anything to further our own spiritual growth and faith.

If we put our faith in God and do the things He tells us to do (gulp), we end up in all kinds of situations that make us very dependent on God, thereby rediscovering for ourselves His existence. Some of these situations often are things which our own insecurity would never let us do if we believed that God was only a crutch. A living God will help us, but we only learn when we obey Him.

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