

FORA CHANGE

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Fighting for
the soul of Eritrea p8

Lead story – p.4

No visible
means of
support?



by John Williams, Melbourne



Fair Go

It's election time again down here, and by the time you read this John Hewson may have replaced Paul Keating as Australia's Prime Minister. Both sides, thank heavens, are being sensitive and bi-partisan on Aboriginal issues.

Keating recently launched our national celebrations of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. His speech was lauded by Lois O'Donoghue, the national Aboriginal commission's Chairperson, as 'an unprecedented acknowledgement of the profound injustices suffered by Australia's Aboriginal people', and 'a foundation for a more hopeful future'.

The black-white relationship, said Keating, was 'a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will; our ability to say... that we are what we should be: truly the land of the fair go and the better chance'.

Who failed?

Keating then boldly got down to specifics. He called for 'an act of recognition that it was *we* who did the dispossessing. *We* took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. *We* brought the diseases, the alcohol. *We* committed the murders. *We* took the children from their mothers. *We* practised discrimination and exclusion.

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'It was *our* ignorance and *our* prejudice. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask – how would I feel if this were done to me? As a consequence we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.'

Global pressure

This is a long way, fortunately, from the old creed of 'white Australia'. My forebears wouldn't recognize many things about the country today. The word 'globalization', for instance. Like others, we have had to float our currency because of the speed of the world's financial wheeling and dealing.

The economists' hopes have not been borne out by the results. In spite of 0.3 per cent inflation, and a three-year 63 per cent growth in manufactured exports, we have a million unemployed. Our overseas debt has risen

from \$23 to \$163 billion in a decade, and the Australian dollar's international exchange rate has fallen 45.9 per cent against the currencies of our major trading partners.

Mateship

What happens to the human values of society under these 'globalized' economic pressures? Can mateship – our laconic brand of care for each other – survive? Such questions have been surfacing through the election rhetoric.

The range of people who hope to get a fair go here has grown in the last decades. In 1945, Australia was still an outpost of England. Then our door opened to Europeans displaced by the War. In the early Sixties some academics hesitantly suggested admitting about a hundred Asians a year. Then Vietnamese boat people started coming, and now Asian migrants make up 40 per cent of our intake. The will has grown to build a

genuinely multicultural society, and to become a full partner in the vast Asia-Pacific region. It's been a monumental shift.

Beaming in

In February the Australian Broadcasting Corporation launched satellite TV transmissions to Asia. This follows years of successful radio broadcasts. A million Chinese, offered an English-language course by Radio Australia, requested study kits. Now the University of Suzhou has published an 'English-Chinese Dictionary of Australianisms'. At least someone will understand our lingo.

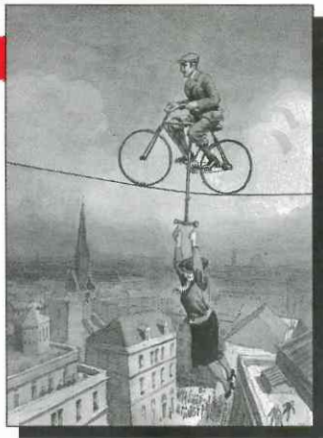
Set to rights

And mateship hasn't vanished, as I discovered the other day when a small catamaran that a friend and I were sailing capsized. We thought we knew how to right it, but failed to do so. Within minutes a small fishing boat showed up, and an unknown fisherman threw us a line. 'Rescues are getting expensive,' he muttered as he started the half-hour tow to shore. Safely on the beach, we asked what we could do to say thank you. 'No problem,' he said as he cruised away.

Who's for tennis?

The tennis stars at the Australian Open could have done with some of those sea breezes. Jim Courier and Stefan Edberg fought out the men's final on a court with a surface temperature of 65°C (155°F). And hot stuff it was.





COVER: No visible means of support

Illustration: copy by W Cameron-Johnson of lithograph of 1932 high-wire stunt

FOR A CHANGE

- examines the changes engulfing the world, what's going right as well as what's going wrong.
- focusses on people, many motivated by faith in God, who are making a difference to the world around them.
- explores the changes needed in attitudes and actions – as well as structures – which are crucial to peace, justice and the survival of the planet.
- was born out of the experience of Moral Re-Armament and draws its material from a wide range of sources.

FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

Morals are not enough

by Edward Peters

The smouldering argument about morality has burst into new flame in recent weeks in Britain. Horrific juvenile crimes, as in many other parts of the world, have stunned the public here. Many are ruing the collapse of what *The Times* called 'the informal moral structures [which] used to abound in society'.

Some still seem strangely reluctant to acknowledge the link between the decline of accepted standards of right and wrong, and the rise of uncivilized behaviour.

Others are tempted to rub their hands and say, 'I told you so'. Some of these see imposed codes of morality and behaviour as the only way forward.

Something deeper than moral rigidity is needed to answer our problems. Morality is essential, but it is not life's ultimate goal. It is both a signpost to, and a natural extension of, a further journey – the meeting of the human heart with God's heart of love.

Permissiveness and moral rigidity have one thing in common: they are founded on a lack of real love. Slavery to our desires and slavery to rules both destroy the freedom of spirit which is love's hallmark.

External behaviour is easier to change than the internal workings of a person's heart. While calling for moral standards we must not neglect the source from which morality flows. The loss of purpose and a sense of belonging, which are at the root of juvenile crime, can only be answered by a deeper quality of love.

This quality cannot be legislated for by government or paid for from social funds. It is passed on and picked up through caring families, schools, neighbours and friends.

It is time we stopped pretending that such spiritual qualities are an optional extra for the religiously-minded. We all need a spiritual renewal.

From it will come the right legal and structural changes. And a desire to seek and apply the eternal moral truths which lead to true inner freedom. ■

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A NOTE ON MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

Moral Re-Armament was launched in 1938 when Europe was rearming. Frank Buchman, MRA's American initiator, called for a programme of 'moral and spiritual rearmament' to address the root causes of conflict, and work towards a 'hate-free, fear-free, greed-free world'. Since then people of all backgrounds and traditions have been active in this programme on every continent.

MRA is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make real in their own life the changes they wish to see in society. A commitment to search for God's will in daily life forms the basis for creative initiative and common action. Absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change.

At the end of 1992, Andrew Page left his job and took an income drop of 70 per cent – of his own free will, so as to be ‘more available for people’. His friends and relations were appalled at the idea – people in the stockbroker belt west of London don’t do that sort of thing.

When Page handed in his resignation last August, his only prospect was part-time work with ARISE, a therapeutic group for addicts and their families which he had helped to set up. By December 31 he had been appointed Lay Minister for Pastoral Counselling at St James’s Church, Gerrards Cross. The post reassures his well-wishers but, as it is unpaid, will do nothing to pay the bills.

Twenty years ago, Elizabeth McGill took a similar decision, leaving a secure job to work on a reduced salary at a Christian theatre in London. Eight years later she gave up even that pay, to work full-time with Moral Re-Armament (MRA). It was, she says, the most terrifying day of her life.

Both these people have bet their livelihoods on the conviction that where God guides he provides – not because they think this makes them holy, but because there is no one to pay them to do what they believe they are called to do.

Encouragingly for Andrew Page and his family, Elizabeth McGill has found that it is possible to live in this way.

Money has never been something Elizabeth McGill could take lightly. One of 12 children brought up in poverty in the Depression, she emigrated to southern Africa with her husband to start a new life. She returned to Britain in 1958 with their two small children, after he was killed in a car accident.

After years of hard work and struggle to support her family, her decision in 1981 to give up her salary felt like ‘jumping off a cliff’. She remembers her enthusiastic response when she was asked to use her secretarial skills in MRA’s publishing work – and her horror when it dawned on her that this work would be unpaid.

‘I sat at lunch with friends, arguing and arguing. Then a thought came into my mind, “If you will

Where God guides, does he provide? Mary Lean talks to people with no visible means of support who rely on

Pennies from heaven



Elizabeth McGill





P. Cair

Andrew Page

ensuring her state pension. But there have been times when she has been desperate – ‘the gasman won’t wait’. At some of the worst moments, she won the draw at her son’s rugby club. ‘The fellow who ran it used to ask my son, “What is it with your mother?”’

Things are easier now she gets her pension – but she still holds her breath when the insurance bill falls due. ‘I spend a lot of time praying about money,’ she says. ‘God hasn’t let me down yet.’

Ever since the Hebrews received manna from heaven, people have been living ‘on faith and prayer’. Famous 19th century examples include George Muller, who cared for thousands of orphans on this basis, and James Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission (now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship). Both relied on prayer so strictly that they refused to tell anyone about their needs.

There are many more modern instances – among them the experiences of Basilea

grasp the nettle, I will give abundantly.” It was just as if someone else was sitting at the table. So I said OK. Afterwards a friend gave me £50 – and I thought, that’s fine, but what about next week?’

Some individuals began to give regularly to her, and another paid her national insurance contributions, en-

Schlink and her nuns in Darmstadt; several missionary and evangelistic organizations; a multitude of individual small-scale enterprises (see box) and the work of MRA.

In Britain, Leonard Cheshire’s homes for the disabled and chronically sick, now established in 49 countries, started out on this principle. Frances Jeram, warden of the first home, remembers a weekend when they had to turn the dining-room into a ward to accommodate all the new arrivals. When she told Cheshire they’d run out of blankets, he suggested she should take one off everybody’s bed. She pointed out that she had already done so, several times. ‘Not long afterwards a van drew up and deposited a large parcel on the doorstep. When we pulled the hessian off, it was full of blankets.’

All the groups which operate in this way – and many of the individuals – can give examples of such ‘manna from heaven’. My favourite – from an impeccable source – concerns a woman during World War II who had no meat to feed her sick mother. As she cycled home, a pheasant collided with an overhead electricity wire and fell into her bike-basket.

Short-sighted pheasants notwithstanding, most large-scale faith and prayer operations are more formalized. 125 years on, the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) still follows Hudson Taylor’s principle of non-solicitation in funding its 1200-odd workers, although information is given on request.

While OMF workers in the field ‘pray in’ God’s provision, OMF supporters in their home countries contribute to a central fund, which – after administrative costs are met – is divided between all workers equally. Gifts to help with extraordinary

personal needs – such as an operation – can bypass the system. As no one is meant to ask for money, the whole thing depends on a ‘sensitive pulse’ within the organization, says UK National Director David Ellis. ‘If we lose that spirit, the whole system won’t work.’

The same applies to MRA, which is less reticent about its needs but has no central fund to finance its workers’ personal expenses. MRA’s treasurer, Chris Evans, describes the system as a

network of givers and receivers, linked



Peter and Su Riddell

E. Peters

Pennies from heaven

by prayer, friendship, trust and a common commitment to try to find God's will. The mechanism is not just 'a signal through the ether untraceable by human means' nor simply a 'complex web of human relationships', but a bit of both.

Peter and Su Riddell are part of this MRA network, working without pay to build bridges between the Muslim and Christian worlds and to help young people towards faith. They have just moved into their eighth home in as many years of marriage – their low income has meant that they have had to rely on communal accommodation or on homes loaned or rented to them by friends.

A number of people give regularly to the Riddells and their four-year-old daughter. Su calls them their 'shareholders'. 'We feel answerable to them in the way we steward our time. We explain to them what we are doing, and why. This stops us going off on wild tangents.'

Peter sees the system as a functioning of community. Its motor is a spirit of outward orientation, service and giving in both the waged and unwaged. He sets this against the drive for self-advancement, fulfilment and individual security which, on the national and world scale, leaves so many out in the cold.

Finding the rent has often been a worry. Recently they were £600 down, when a friend rang to say that she had cancelled a trip overseas and wanted to give them the £600 she had set aside for it – plus a monthly gift. 'I don't think she knew – so it's more than just the functioning of a community,' Peter says. 'There's an intangible factor – someone sitting miles away with a sensitive spirit, who just happens to think of us and is free enough of possessions to consider giving.'

Jasper and Sheila Shotts represent the other side of the equation. Jasper is a social worker in child welfare in Hull, Sheila a teacher of nursery nurses and an all-but full-time mother. They make a point of living below their means, so as to have money to give to others. 'We want to be secure,' says Sheila, 'but we're happy to be secure



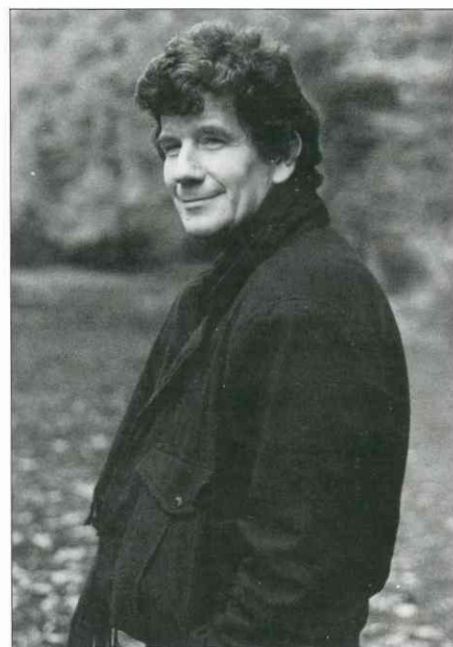
M Lean

Nigel Goodwin: 'I don't see God as a machine I can get lollipops from'

in four rooms with a black and white TV.'

'I like to think of money in terms not of notes, but of a spirit which flows between people, and between God and people,' she continues. Three years ago, when they went to Romania to work at a hospital for disabled children, they were on the receiving end of this flow. 'People were very generous,' says Jasper. 'One person gave us their week's family allowance, a student with an overdraft contributed and the local garage serviced our car for free.'

The experience encouraged them to rethink their finances. Each month they set aside a tenth of their income. Of this 40 per cent goes to their church, 20 per cent to support a couple of full-time



voluntary workers and 40 per cent to charity and ad-hoc giving. 'I don't feel it's my money,' says Jasper, while stressing that he's not a soft touch. 'If I spent everything I earned, I'd kick myself if I was short of money when someone needed it.'

The disadvantages of living with no visible means of support would seem obvious – insecurity, anxiety, a lack of independence. But looking back over 30 years of trusting God in this way, David Ellis of OMF has no complaints. 'I have found that if I get on with the things which are close to God's heart, he is able to meet the things close to mine. I wouldn't trade that experience with anyone.'

But what if the money doesn't come? Does it mean that one is doing the wrong thing? Or hasn't prayed enough? Or that one simply hasn't put enough thought into budgeting and money-raising?

Lyria Normington spent some years in France working with MRA and remembers being abused by someone because she could not afford to tip. 'I was always down to my last penny,' she says. 'Then someone suggested that I should work out what I needed each month and pray

Jasper and Sheila Shotts: 'If I spent everything I earned, I'd kick myself when someone needed it'

Breakfast at the Way Ahead

It's mid-afternoon, but when Joseph turns up at Bedford's Way Ahead café asking for breakfast, he gets it – with a large helping of teasing. He sleeps in a skip, and at the café finds not only food and warmth, but friendship as well.

Joseph is one of some 30 people who sleep rough in Bedford, a quiet country town just north of London. Last year its Housing Aid Centre saw 1200 people, 224 of them either homeless or in serious danger of becoming so. Up to 70 of them eat at the café each night.

The café is the result of an encounter between three remarkable people – an ex-con named Andy, an Irish nun and the owner of a local stationery shop. When Sister Josephine dropped into the shop to buy paper, she discovered that Andy served coffee and tea to the homeless every Saturday morning, in a warehouse lent by the shopowner, Fred Tollman.

A few months later, when Andy moved on to other social work, Sister Josephine asked Tollman if she could take over. 'He gave me the key just like that.' She began to dream of a kitchen and café, staffed by volunteers from local prayer groups and provisioned by prayer. 'I started talking about it, and out of the blue everything began to pour in. Isn't that wonderful?'

The Way Ahead concentrates on evening meals, as other church groups provide breakfast and lunch. The tables sport cheerful cloths and pot plants, and a reassuring notice announces, 'There is no



charge, please make a donation.' In the babble of animated discussion, it's not immediately apparent who's a volunteer and who's a customer.

Gifts have come in money and in kind, from clothes and food to a sink and freezer. Recently Sister Josephine received two offers on the same day, from completely separate sources – one of a double bed, the other of bed-linen. She passed them on to a regular who had just found accommodation.

A year into the project there are some problems: complaints from a neighbour about rowdiness and worries about the possibility of unwelcome visits from drug pushers. Sister Josephine isn't easily put off. 'It's not just about giving people food,' she says. 'We give our love and we listen.' Some of the original customers have found housing, others are seeking counselling on addiction. 'We have seen such a change in people since we opened. We have seen the Lord raise them up.'

specifically for that amount. I began to go so, and several people who could not have known about my prayer began to give to me. Each month I had the amount I needed.'

And if the money still doesn't come?

'In the end, you don't know,' says Nigel Cooke, whose Christian film company produced the films *Tanglewood Secret* and *Treasures of the Snow*. 'It's like the problem of pain – it raises all sorts of theories, but they're not necessarily satisfying.'

Cooke refuses to continue any project which risks incurring debts which he cannot cover. One film is stalled at the moment for just this reason. 'We're not here to be successful, or to prove that God provides money if we go out in faith, but to become more like Christ. You may become more like Christ if you're not a success.'

Nigel Goodwin, founder of the Arts Centre Group for Christians in the arts and media, wrestles with the same conundrums. 'I don't see God as a button-presser, a machine I can go to and get lollipops from,' he says. 'God gives us

amazing answers to prayer when we are babies in faith. But he expects us to mature when we grow up. We have to search farther, look farther, walk farther to grow.'

For all that, he has quite the best manna from heaven story I have ever heard – bar, perhaps, the pheasant. Having found a faith, as a young actor, he decided in 1964 to go to Bible College. Two weeks before the first term began he was still praying for the fees. Then a woman turned up on his doorstep, asking if someone called Nigel lived there.

It transpired that the name had been going round in her head while she prayed, and not knowing any Nigels, she had got into her car and started driving. After a while she had stopped and asked a passer-by if he knew anyone called Nigel in the neighbourhood. He had given her an address and when she knocked on the door, Goodwin's sister had answered. The woman ended up supporting him through college.

And how will it work for the Pages? Watch this space.



Manna from heaven?



Fighting for the soul of Eritrea

Abeba Tesfagiorgis has just returned to her country after 14 years of exile. Imprisoned in the mid-Seventies for supporting Eritrea's freedom-fighters, she has been a patriot since her student days. A small woman, she carries with her an ebullient optimism, despite the pain and hardships she has experienced.

Eritrea, bordered by Ethiopia, Sudan and the Red Sea, was colonized by Italy in the late 19th century and administered by the British after 1941. In 1952 it was federated with Ethiopia, ignoring the wishes of its people. In 1962 Emperor Haile Selassie annexed Eritrea and a year later Eritrean guerrillas took up arms. Their resistance escalated after the Marxist Dergue took power in Ethiopia in 1974.

As a student, Abeba Tesfagiorgis demonstrated against the imposition of Amharic – the language of Ethiopia's ruling group – in Eritrean schools. By 1974 she was working for Ethiopian Airlines in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, while her husband, Mesfun, worked at the American Consulate. They had a comfortable home and help to look after their four daughters. Abeba prided herself on welcoming their many visitors with fresh flowers from her garden and generous

As the people of Eritrea vote on their independence, Evelyn Ruffin meets a woman who has suffered for her country.

quantities of good food.

As the fighting between the Eritrean groups and the Ethiopian government intensified, so did the famine in Eritrea's villages, brought on by persistent drought since 1972. Abeba felt she could not stand idly by.

The board of the local YWCA, on which she served, commissioned research on the extent of the famine and then confronted the government with its findings. The government – 'afraid of world opinion,' she says – gave permission for a relief programme.

The operation had the secondary effect of pulling people together and strengthening their sense of community. Alarmed,

the government closed it down in early 1975. An effort to continue through mosques and churches was stopped three months later.

Abeba persisted with clandestine relief efforts until 30th September 1975, when two men appeared at her office, forced her into a car and drove her to the notorious Palace Prison. She remembers thinking, 'They'll beat me for some time and then release me, but there will be no leak.' But she was to spend the next six months in the Palace and Haz Haz prisons.

In fact she was never beaten, but underwent intensive interrogation and threats, saw cellmates tortured,

exchange. She found herself telling her friends the story of a French woman she had met, who had suffered deeply during World War II, but had found the courage to let go of her hatred of the Germans and work to build a united Europe. Her cellmates took the point, and the atmosphere was transformed.

Her husband's arrest unexpectedly strengthened her. A guard tipped her off as to when he would be taken outside for a brief spell in the sun and did nothing to prevent the encounter that ensued. She saw this as God's reassurance 'that one day I would be free and that our freedom struggle would be successful'.

Once released, she says, Mesfun renewed his campaign for her release. At the end of March 1976, the government let her go, as they had no case against her. She was sent straight into exile in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

The family followed her. The situation in the country continued to deteriorate. During the Red Terror of 1977-8, between 50 and 100 people were executed every night in Addis. Mesfun and Abeba became convinced that the time had come to leave the country.

Mesfun was able to get out by attending a commercial seminar in Nairobi, but Abeba and the girls had to escape via Asmara and the territory controlled by the EPLF. They made their way separately to Asmara, from which she was still barred, donned villagers' clothes and set off.

When they reached the liberated city of Keren, Ruth and Tamar, aged 16 and 18, announced that they had enlisted with the EPLF and would not be coming to the US. Abeba was speechless. 'I pulled myself together and tried to tell them that given their upbringing they were bound to be more of a burden than help to the struggle; that they would be more use with a proper education.' Eventually she realized she had no choice: they were old enough to make their own decisions and she respected and supported their cause. Only by going twice to pray in church did she find the peace to let them go.

Reunited with Mesfun in Washington DC in March 1978, Abeba found work at the World Bank and the younger girls quickly excelled at school. But Abeba's inner life was in turmoil. She found she had no access to the people in government who might help Eritrea. 'I felt completely helpless, devastated, that you had to be somebody, to have an office, power to get any attention.'

She had a recurring dream that Tamar was calling her and was haunted by the idea of her wounded and trapped in battle somewhere. (She learned later that Tamar had in fact been wounded at that time, had lost her sight completely for several weeks and had only partially regained it.)

Afraid of losing her mind, she recalled that people in Eritrea go to holy places to be cured and to gain inner strength and peace. She decided that her bath would

become such a place and for seven consecutive days she bathed for 45 minutes in the early morning, praying and visualizing that she was being healed. Gradually her depression eased.

By June 1986, both Ruth and Tamar were married and Tamar had a son. Abeba returned to the liberated area of Eritrea for the first time, to find her daughters unembittered by their experiences. She was moved by the fighters' spirit and amazed to discover a complete field hospital built into five miles of tunnels and chambers in the mountains and invisible from the outside. She saw it as a symbol of her people's determination to fight on against all odds.

Five years later, in 1991, the Dergue fell before the advancing troops of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front, a coalition of different resistance groups including the EPLF. President Mengistu fled the country and Eritrea became de facto independent, with its status to be officially determined in April's plebiscite.

Abeba ascribes the victory of three million Eritreans against a nation of 40 million, backed by foreign powers, to the spirit she saw in the field. 'The fighters loved each other so much that you could see it in their day to day life,' she says. 'They were so humane in inhumane circumstances.' They had even been known to help retreating Ethiopian soldiers with food and water. She longs for her compatriots to retain this spirit and 'keep forgiving hearts towards each other'.

The years of exile have not been easy. After four years in Washington, Mesfun and Abeba moved to Texas where they took over a grocery store and struggled to get it onto a sound footing. Now as they return home, Abeba plans to do human rights work. 'My concern,' she says, 'is not only for economic development, for that will come, but for inner strength and the integrity and moral values of my people.'



became deathly ill and saw first her husband and then her father arrested in order to bring pressure to bear on her. She stood before a firing squad for an hour, thinking this was the end. 'I said a short prayer: Oh Lord, give me the courage to die bravely like so many of my people have, without screaming or begging for mercy, and receive me in thy kingdom.' When at last the soldiers moved from their positions, she realized this had just been another ploy to extract a confession of involvement with the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF).

Through her prison experience she found deeper faith and a new understanding of her country and people. She was crowded into a six-by-five-foot cell with five other women from backgrounds totally different to hers. She learned of their families, their poverty and struggles, and of their varied routes to prison. Despite their enforced proximity, they were deeply divided: one of them had even betrayed another in order to spare herself.

Abeba felt she must do something to diffuse the tension and one night, after their evening prayers, she said, 'We all pray together for our release and for peace. But God will not answer our prayers if we keep nursing resentment and hatred for one another.' Her assertion set off a heated

● *British publisher William Porter puts the international businesswoman Kubi Indi brings the plight of her country's*

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by
Choice Okoro

D Channer



Bill Porter

● Four converging strands of experience wound together to impel British publisher William Porter to launch the International Communications Forum in 1991. This initiative has brought together 200 professionals from 28 countries to explore how to create a fairer, cleaner media environment worldwide.

In the summer of 1990 Porter, by then a publishing consultant living in France, read in London's *Financial Times* that the communications industry was now the largest in the world. 'Is it therefore the most responsible?' he asked himself – and answered his own question with a resounding 'No'.

A few weeks later, accompanied by his Yugoslavian wife Sonja, he attended an industrial conference at the MRA centre in Caux, Switzerland. He heard a Russian businessman say, 'Our motivation has been to do as we were told. Our quality was what we could get away with.' Not exactly an adequate preparation for launching a market economy, thought Porter.

'But what had we in British publishing to offer? As

Chief Executive of a major publishing group my motivation had largely been to make money for myself and for my company and to increase the importance and influence of both. If I insisted on quality, it was for those ends. I lacked a wider dimension that could help to change the nature of people.'

At that time Porter, like many in the West, was re-

joining in the collapse of the communist dictatorships in the East and rather smugly believing that this would usher in a period of unhindered progress and prosperity, based on democracy and market economies. But violence, confrontation and misery around the world seemed to put an end to that dream.

'I had to take a good look at my own moral and spiritual fundamentals and ask myself, "What can I do?"', says Porter. 'And as I had worked in journalism and publishing most of my working life, I went on to ask "What can the media do?"'

The fourth and decisive event took place when Porter told Sonja, then critically ill, what he was thinking. 'She was half-Montenegrin, half-Bosnian, had studied in Belgrade, Serbia, had lived in Croatia, and was fluent in eight languages. She always spoke her mind with Slav bluntness,' he says. 'If you feel all these things,' Sonja said to him, 'you had better do something about it.' She was to die four weeks later, but she had given Porter the prod that he needed.

He explored his ideas with

some like-minded colleagues – among them a former President of the Publishers' Association of Great Britain, an Indian editor, an investigative journalist on a British national newspaper and the Vice-Chairman of the European Advertising Tripartite from France.

The upshot was the launching of the first Communications Forum in Caux in August 1991, followed by Forums in Le Touquet, France, in April 1992, and in Caux in August 1992. A fourth takes place near Chicago this month and a fifth in Russia's 'science capital', Nizhni Novgorod, in September. Other events have taken place in India and Britain. Their published reports reach way beyond the circle of those who attend.

'There is a sea-change taking place among the best people in the media,' Porter believes. 'As well as reporting and interpreting events, they are now seeing it as their responsibility to seek solutions as well. They realize they cannot live in isolation from the world: that what we publish or broadcast affects not only others' children and grandchildren, but our own too.'

'The world has gone a long way towards the edge. We must consciously begin to create a new culture based on moral values. Our contribution is to develop a worldwide network of media people who will have confidence in each other and who will work together to move our society decisively away from the "zero" of evil towards the "100" of good.'

● **Zimbabwean businesswoman and actress Kubi Indi has taken up the cause of her country's destitute children. She is doing so through a feature film, 'because it is the best way I know of telling the government and people about the problem'.**

Indi, who has spent the last ten years as honorary mother to children in

various orphanages, says the number of homeless children is mounting. A report commissioned by the film producers concludes, 'Thousands of children around Zimbabwe live as orphans, as street children, as squatter children, as child workers trapped in prostitution, sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation, as disabled children and juvenile delinquents.'

Kubi Indi's range of cosmetic products has made her name a household word in her country. This won't be the first time she has pursued a cause through a feature film. Two years ago she helped to make *Neria*, a film on the treatment of widows in the traditional Zimbabwean setting. The film aimed to alert people to the issue, and to inform widows about their traditional and legal rights. Its effectiveness has surprised Indi. 'It is a favourite at women's seminars, while acting as an eye-opener to women in the rural areas,' she says.

She hopes her next movie, *Our children, our future*, will do the same for Zimbabwe's children. 'It is not just for the kid on the

street,' she says. 'Even those who live in their homes with their parents have problems.'

Though the film will use fictitious characters, the stories are drawn from real life. The narrator will be an eight-year-old.

The evidence of homelessness can be seen in the railway stations at night, says Indi. She connects the problem to the economic structural adjustment programme recently introduced in the country. 'These kids run from the villages to the cities because of hunger and they are treated as nothing.'

As a young woman in the Seventies, Indi sat helplessly through television programmes about the horrors of starvation in Ethiopia. 'Nothing moved me like the pain and hunger I saw in the eyes of the children and the desperation of the mothers who could do nothing to alleviate their suffering.' She vowed that she would



Kubi Indi

dedicate her life to bringing relief to destitute children. She hopes to fulfil that promise with this film.

Her business success has enabled her to finance the research on the film. UNICEF has also contributed, and so have private investors and donors. Indi is also hoping for government support. All profits will go to orphanages and educational trust funds for Zimbabwean children.

Shooting starts on 1 May and is expected to take six

weeks. Director Godwin Mawuru, who also directed *Neria*, will use the production as an opportunity to train young men and women in film-making.

'We have people coming to make films in this country who bring their own crews and don't leave any knowledge behind,' says Indi. Next time, she plans, there will be trained young Zimbabweans waiting to take those jobs.

Additional reporting by Hugh Williams

TURNING POINTS by Paul Williams

When Swedish farmer Ove Jensen decided to get honest about unpaid taxes, he never dreamt it would become a talking point in his country's Parliament. Nor that the Swedish press would make his 'private' decision a national event.

Finding 'the good life' as a successful young dairy and pig farmer not fully

satisfying, he had accepted an invitation from his vicar to attend an international conference for Moral Re-Armament in Caux, Switzerland. There he made the experiment of asking God to show him a realistic picture of the life he was leading. 'The picture I got was of a very selfish man who had cheated at school, and who as a farmer only paid taxes on that part of my income which I knew the government could monitor. And, in spite of the fact that I had to look after two alcoholics, I was drinking a lot myself.'

He says the turning point in his life came when he decided to put right what he could, 'even if it went against my family's will'. The tax 'arrears' he had

accumulated had been quite substantial, and he had to sell one of his two cars to find enough money.

'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,' mused the man at the Income Tax Office as he added up what Jensen owed over five years. Feeling that he had still not done enough, Jensen sat down to write to the Minister of Finance 'to apologize for having put an extra burden of tax on other people's shoulders'.

Some days later the matter was raised in Parliament. A member rose to ask the Minister of Finance whether he had thought of sending the whole nation to the same conference, so that they would pay tax honestly too. The story made the news in

Sweden's largest daily, *Dagens Nyheter*.

Ten years later the story resurfaced after a member of the congregation heard Jensen's testimony in church and phoned the local press. There was a rash of articles in some ten papers across the country, including an interview featured on the back page of the big evening paper, *Expressen*.

'Having put right what I could,' Jensen recalls, 'I began to read the Bible again and found that this time it made more sense to me.' He also started to believe that God could help him with decisions about how to run the farm. He decided, he says, to make the meeting of others' needs the chief aim of his farming. ■



Peace at last in South Tyrol

South Tyrol could have become a little Yugoslavia. But after 20 years of painstaking but peaceful negotiation, the ethnic disputes were resolved. Pierre Spoerri tells how it was done.

At the end of January, Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro made the first visit to Vienna by an Italian Head of State since Italy became a united nation in 1859. One reason why this had not happened before was a thorny issue that had divided Austria and Italy ever since the First World War – the conflict over the South Tyrol. In June 1992 the Austrian National Assembly had finally

declared – by a vote of 125 to 30 – that Italy had fulfilled all the conditions of the negotiated agreement on the South Tyrol. As the *Washington Post* commented, this vote ‘cleared the way for the peaceful resolution of one of Central Europe’s longest disputes about the rights of minorities’.

Seen from the air, Europe is a complex mosaic of rivers and mountains, forests, fields and towns. But little is seen of the

deep wounds left by history, or of the scars that threaten to break open again, bringing new pain and conflict. These scars often follow the dividing line of national and regional frontiers.

Former Yugoslavia is one victim of these reopened wounds. It lies on the border between the lands of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which Western Roman Catholic forces had the upper hand, and the regions long controlled by

the Ottoman and Orthodox forces to the south.

Another scar runs through the line of the Alps. Frontiers in this region have shifted constantly as armies from north and south have crossed the mountain passes and tried to impose their power on the peoples living on either side. During the First World War, the Allies secretly promised the South Tyrol, one of the provinces of the dissolved Austro-Hungarian Empire which lies on this fault line, to Italy in return for entering the war on their side.

As has often happened in history, at the end of the war a sizeable population got caught on the wrong side of the newly established border. By the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919), 200,000 German-speaking people suddenly found themselves part of a nation state that was passionately Italian. It was the making of a potent witch's brew.

Under Benito Mussolini, with Fascism the national ideology of Italy, the South Tyroleans suffered persecution. Ethnic cleansing – the term was not yet born – was applied systematically. German language and culture were forbidden. German newspapers were banned. German names – even on grave stones – had to be Italianized. The Catholic mass was the only public place where German continued to be used.

In a bid to change the ethnic balance, thousands of South Italians were settled in South Tyrol, and many of the former population were driven out. Hitler, in need of Mussolini's support, agreed to Italy's demand that by 1942 all German-speaking South Tyroleans who wanted to remain faithful to their language should be transferred to Germany. 85 per cent of the remaining 120,000 German speakers chose this option.

Those who remained felt abandoned by a continent which, after World War II, had no stomach for discussing frontier changes. The Italian government promised some minority rights, but these satisfied neither the South Tyroleans nor Austria, whose Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky raised the issue of South Tyrol at the United Nations in 1959. Meanwhile the people of the mountain valleys were growing restless, and bomb attacks by extremists showed that time for negotiations was running out. The terrain was perfect for prolonged guerilla resistance.

Amazingly, this did not happen. By 1972, after long negotiations, a 'package' was agreed involving major concessions from both sides. The German-speaking population forfeited its demand for independence or reunification with Austria. The Italian-speakers accepted that both languages would have equal status in education, the judiciary and civil service, and even that Italian-speakers in some public offices would have to learn German.

Full cultural autonomy for the South Tyroleans had to be guaranteed. A majority within both groups had to be

convinced that sufficient trust existed for a multicultural and multi-language society to be built. At the time the agreement was signed, it was estimated that its 137 legislative measures would take two years to implement. In fact it took 20 for the Italian Parliament to ratify them all. Up to the last moment no one knew whether the confused political situation in Italy would cause other hold-ups. But there was enough political will on both sides to push the agreement through.

Are there any elements which could be applied to other ethnic conflicts? 30 years of complex negotiations cannot be summarized in a few lines. Nor did they follow a straight line; there were many occasions when serious crises threatened to stop the whole process. At times like these a new factor was required for the momentum to be regained.

In the late Sixties, for instance, an impasse was reached. A Dutch television journalist visiting South Tyrol suggested to Governor Silvius Magnago, leader of the South Tyrol Peoples Party, that he bring a group from both sides of the conflict to the international centre for Moral Re-Armament at Caux in Switzerland. Meeting people from India and many other parts of the world allowed the South Tyroleans to see their own difficulties from a new perspective.

It was a watershed for many of those present. 'Next time we meet together,' said Governor Magnano to his opposite numbers before leaving, 'we shall not glare at each other but meet in friendship because of our experience here.' Dr Armando Bertorelle, Italian President of the Regional Parliament, added: 'We saw that there was something bigger to participate in. The foundations have been laid and now the new house of South Tyrol can be built.' Some time later Giuseppe Pasquali, the 31-year-old Mayor of Bolzano, said: 'We were only very few then who believed that any co-habitation (of the two populations) would be possible. Often we were in disagreement and in spite of it we constantly met again and looked for possible solutions.'

It was one thing for the leaders of the two negotiating parties to agree. It was another for the agreement to be ratified by majorities within the parties and by the population as a whole. On the South Tyrol side, the main political party (SVP) was divided not only between those for and against the agreement but also between rival personalities.

Two of the representatives in the Italian Parliament in Rome led rival groups. One of them, Dr Karl Mitterdorfer, later reminisced about a personal decision he took which was to have important consequences. He was in the habit of seeking God's direction, and had had an insistent thought to 'have a talk with the leader of the opposition wing' in his own party. 'It was not easy,' he recalls, 'for it is a basic principle for a politician that he must never admit that he has done



'With good will something has been achieved which can be a model for many other situations'

Karl Mitterdorfer

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'I apologized for the many wrong things that had been between us. The result was remarkable. My attitude and relationship with this opponent became quite different. This affected our relationship with politicians and parties outside our ranks.'

At that time the SVP was facing a split. Whether the political agreement could have gone through if this split had not been healed, is an open question.

Narrow nationalism, Mitterdorfer said in July 1992, 'is that kind of collective selfishness where one group demands rights for itself which it is not ready to concede to others. In view of the wars that are breaking out in Europe, it is very important that in at least one region such a problem has been brought under control and has been solved by agreement and by negotiations between all the parties concerned. All had to compromise. Austria and Italy deserve credit for closing the book on this conflict.'

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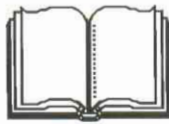
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BOOK REVIEWS

HISTORY AND THE CREATIVE MINORITY

Decline and renewal: Europe ancient and modern
by RC Mowat
New Cherwell Press, Oxford

Will the latter 1990s bring peace or war, prosperity or depression?

It is indisputable that Europe has reached an historic turning point. The Cold War is over. Russia is in turmoil as new systems replace 70 years of failed communism. But her peoples are still suffering. Eastern Europe has become a zone of instability racked by poverty and privatizations, unemployment and migrations. The European Community seems lost in a period of introspection.

Who will initiate change?

We are not unique: history gives clues to politicians and society-changers. In his valuable analysis, *Decline and renewal: Europe ancient and modern*, RC Mowat sweeps a searchlight on the process of change from Greek and Roman times to today.

Concentrating mainly on moral change in society, politics and religion, Mowat presents his central thesis: revolutionary change – for better or worse – is brought about by small groups sometimes marginal to society. In Greece the *heterai* (companions) – call-girls talented in music and other arts – influenced a positive change of the wife's position from near slave to educated partner. Christianity rose from a marginal sect to a state religion and blunted the cruelties of Rome (though, perhaps sooner than Mowat admits, it exhibited intolerance, anti-semitism and violence). In Germany the *Männerbund* or union of men single-mindedly aiming at a specific goal was the germ cell of the Third Reich.

The book also explores how societies as diverse as Papal Europe, the Russian autocracies built by Peter the Great and Lenin, and Nazi Europe can explode from their overweening concentration of power.

Mowat is perhaps too unsystematic in his examples. Many figures, though remarkable and even heroic, did not initiate major change; artists usually only reflected change in society; the German resistance was unsuccessful in combating the Nazis. He often treats

'decline' and 'decadence' as synonyms and hence gives little consideration to the impact of technology on the renewal of civilizations. He does however mention the role of consensus-building in the economic rise of Germany and Japan after the war.

Franco-German reconciliation was effected by the strength of resolve of such politicians as Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer. Their work would not have succeeded if numerous religious and political bodies – including such groups as Moral Re-Armament – had not decided to act as lightning conductors for hatred and mistrust.

Both the Nazis, for evil, and these Europeans, for good, addressed the full range of human needs: from food, clothing and housing to the nation's need for a place in the world and for spiritual motivation.

Today hatred, bloodshed and war follow the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The Near East, Africa and Asia witness similar scenes. On top of this, over the next century the planet will have to cope with aggravated pollution as our population perhaps triples. Integrated markets may bring poverty to villages and once great nations.

Where are the motivated individuals and groups to face the challenges of our age?

David Price



Robert Schuman: strength of resolve

COMING HOME

Prayer – finding the heart's true home

by Richard Foster
Hodder and Stoughton, London

Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of discipline* and *Money, sex and power*, has left it till now to write about prayer – despite its prime importance for all who thirst for the spiritual life. The reason, he says, is that he wasn't ready.

Prayer may be the great forgotten art of the 20th century. Despite the cacophony of words our culture produces, we are scarcely able to communicate with each other. Small wonder then that we have lost the art of communion with God. What St Clement of Alexandria wrote of an earlier age is truer still today: 'We have become like old shoes – all worn out except the tongue.'

Without prayer we are strangers in a foreign universe, searching for we don't know what. To pray, says Foster, is to come home. Or, as St Augustine wrote, 'Our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.'

Foster brings to the reader not only his own experience of prayer, but also gems of advice culled from great spiritual masters

down the ages: Thomas à Kempis, Mother Julian of Norwich, St John of the Cross, Madame Guyon, to name but a few, as well as more recent divines such as Thomas Merton, CS Lewis and Anthony Bloom. Perhaps it is the chief merit of the author that he makes such ageless wisdom available to the modern reader. Prayer, the saints remind us, begins in God's love for us and its end is simply a response of love.

Don't be in a hurry to read this book. Like any manual of practical instruction, the important thing is the doing. If a book on prayer is successful it will constantly move the reader to put the book down and pray. In this Foster's book succeeds.

Mike Lowe

People power, Taiwanese style

Voters in Taiwan's first democratic election told their candidates that they would not put up with corruption. The campaign's initiator, Ren-Jou Liu, tells the story.

Ever since 1949 Taiwan has had a democratic constitution. But until 1988 the ruling party, the Kuomintang, banned opposition parties. Two thirds of the seats in Parliament were uncontested, and many had been occupied by the same people for 40 years. Only one third of MPs were elected every four years.

In last December's general election, for the first time since 1949, all parliamentary seats were up for election and opposition parties were allowed. 350 candidates contested the 125 seats to be directly elected to the constituencies. A further 36 seats, including five for overseas Chinese, were allocated between parties in proportion to the total votes they received.

Over the past 40 years corruption has been rife in local elections, the rich using their wealth to obtain political power. People have become increasingly fed up with this. They hoped that this new general election would shift the balance of power towards ordinary people.

In June last year I had the idea of launching a campaign for a clean election. Colleagues working with me in Moral Re-Armament supported me, and we drew up a declaration which voters could sign, promising not to accept bribes from candidates. We invited other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including



The President of Taiwan, Lee Teng-hui, hands his declaration to Ren-Jou Liu.

religious bodies, to join us.

At first some were reluctant to participate, partly out of doubt that anything could be achieved, and partly because religious groups did not want to get involved in politics. But seven or eight organizations did join us and we formed a committee, meeting weekly to plan the campaign. Gradually a spirit of openness managed to break down the barriers of suspicion between our various groups.

We had interviews with the Prime Minister and with the President who gave us their support. They also made it clear to the religious leaders that they could take part.

The education ministry sent the declaration to 4.2 million parents, with a letter asking them how they could expect their children to be honest in exams if they were dishonest in elections.

As our campaign gathered momentum, other organizations joined in - eventually 67 NGOs gave their support and sent the declaration to their members. Young people helped publicize the campaign by singing in public squares where stalls had been set up for signing the declaration. Children released balloons carrying anti-vote-buying slogans. Taiwan's largest circulation paper in Chinese, *The China Times*, allocated US\$400,000 to support the campaign, printing two million stickers

for people's homes saying, 'This house does not accept bribes'. Roman Catholic, Buddhist and Tao religious leaders joined in the call for a clean election.

650,000 voters signed the declaration and sent it back to us. We then wrote to all the candidates telling them how much the nation needed integrity, and informing them that all these voters had promised not to accept bribes. We invited the candidates to promise not to try to buy votes: 162 of them agreed.

On election day, many of those who had spent money on vote-buying lost their seats, while the highest majorities went to honest candidates. 'The people's hatred for money politics reached its highest point,' said *The China News*. Five millionaire candidates, popularly known as 'golden oxen', were defeated. One out of every two incumbents lost their seats. The highest single vote went to a former Director-General of the Environmental Protection Administration who resigned in order to run a shoe-string campaign without party backing.

The ruling party, which kept its majority but with its lowest-ever vote, regarded the result as its biggest failure in 40 years. The party General Secretary submitted his resignation.

It was a great victory, not for one party or another, but for democracy and for moral and spiritual values in our country. ■



Campaign poster: the red character reads 'No' to bribery

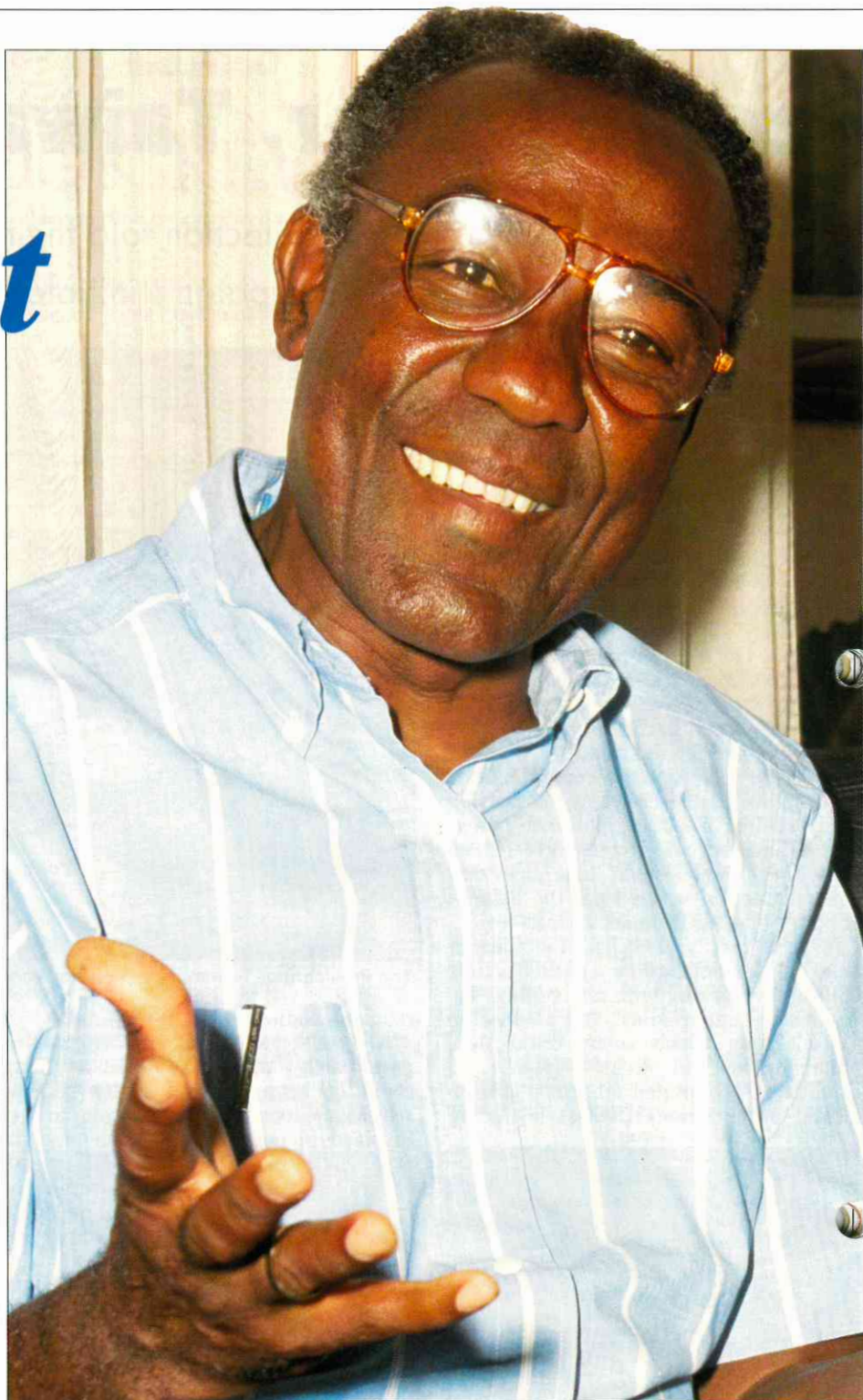
Hunte hits out for the new South Africa

Conrad Hunte's greatest talent is not his prowess with the cricket bat, which gained him international fame in the 1960s. It is his ability to use his cricketing skills to affect the world around him.

Hunte, a former vice-captain of the West Indies cricket team, has visited South Africa eight times since 1976. The political changes that began in 1990 gave him an opening to play what could be his greatest innings ever – a three-year contract from the United Cricket Board of South Africa to identify and help train the talented black youngsters who will become some of the cricketing greats of tomorrow.

South Africa's return to world cricket after more than two decades of isolation has aroused interest in the game in the crowded black townships around the major cities, where for most young people it is a new sport. Hunte, who has moved to Johannesburg with his wife and their three children, sees this as an opportunity that goes beyond the game itself.

'I see my role as National Development Cricket Coach as a mission which gives me the opportunity to put back some of what I got out of the game. Cricket was a powerful force for us in the West Indies.



A. Kumalo

As South Africa grapples with human nature in technicolour, Anthony Duigan writes from Johannesburg about the international cricketer who is working to create a different vision.

Talent in the game gave us the opportunity to rise both economically and socially from backgrounds very similar to those of many South African blacks.'

In his view, the game can offer black South Africans a passport to economic and social mobility. And given the greater agenda in a country that is battling to contain its diverse forces and forge a new future, Hunte is keen to alert the politicians to the powerful catalyst that cricket can be.

'One of the greatest difficulties black South Africans face is a debilitating lack of self-confidence and even selfhood. This leads to a dependency attitude which has been reinforced by apartheid.

'But there are further obstacles for a black person to overcome, even if he has the talent to become a great cricketer, for instance. These are the other elements of township life – the poverty-stricken environment, the violence and instability, the need to grasp social abilities they have not had the opportunity to learn.'

'The greatest challenge in his work, Hunte maintains, is how to address these political needs – 'to make individuals responsible and to bring about harmony where there is discord, peace where there is conflict, hope where there is despair and love where there is hate'.

What are the hopeful signs he sees in a South Africa emerging from a troubled past?

'There is a measure of goodwill among black and white,' he says. 'I have been fortunate enough to relate to both groups and can be a bridge between them. That gives me hope.

'Also, there's definite cricketing talent among the township youngsters. Within the next three to five years we should produce two or three stars who will take their place alongside their white compatriots at home and abroad. My objective is to pull them through and to create a model that can be used for others.

'When this happens, South Africans will see them not as black, white or brown but as excellent.'

South Africa is a religious country, and Hunte sees this as a further source of hope – if faith is applied in its fullest dimension. 'This is a country where the relationship between God and man has been emphasized. The missing factor is the relationship between man and man. It will take a lot of forgiveness and compassion on the part of the hurting and a lot of understanding and willingness to sacrifice on the part of the privileged to create a new relationship. But this is the essential foundation of a better future.'

To a more timid soul, the size of the challenge might seem too daunting to tackle head on. But Conrad has no hesitation in using the platforms he creates – and those he finds himself on – to promote the vision that has driven him for decades and which led him in 1967 to give up a full-time international cricket career.

'I believe there are three things every individual should attempt to do in his or

her life – do something great for God, do something great for your neighbour and do something great for yourself.'

Hunte wants to help individuals discover the power they have to change not only their own circumstances, but also those of their neighbours, country and even the world.

As a sought-after speaker, Hunte has delivered the valedictory addresses at several leading schools in Johannesburg and Pretoria. Along with the thought he puts into these addresses goes the humour that bubbles out in the story of the beer that helped to change his life.

In the winter of 1967, Hunte was convinced that he should give up his career to work for racial harmony in Britain. But he could not get over the twin fears of returning to poverty should he give up cricket and of the misunderstanding he might face in the black community which regarded him as a hero.

'There I was, walking up Down St in London's Mayfair,' he recalls. 'On the right as I walked and wrestled with my fears was a pub. On the left was a church. Suddenly I had this thought, "Look up!" And I did. And there was the message I needed, in neon lights: "Take Courage" (Courage being the name of a well-known beer).

'I turned straight into the church on my left and as I prayed my fears fell into perspective and I was able to accept fully the challenge I had been toying with of

working to bring healing between black and white in Britain.'

This was the start of an extraordinarily eventful two and a half decades which have brought him full circle to a position where he is now a key player in South African sport and an individual of potential influence in the socio-political arena.

In the midst of an intensive programme that is taking him to other parts of the continent, Hunte is looking for ways of using the influence he has gained.

'The time is right in South Africa for individuals to do something great,' he says.

That 'something' Hunte sees as 'a drastic application of our faith in the public arena' – for instance, the building of relationships between disparate political forces, the initiation of dialogue across the many divides in South African society, the building of informal networks of people who will uphold and promote a new moral order for the country.

'I believe we have certain factors on our side,' he says. 'For instance, there tends to be a clear dividing line between right and wrong here, unlike the situation in the developed countries where there are so many grey areas. I believe this gives impetus to us to find a synthesis above politics and racial connections.'

Conrad and his family expect to be in South Africa for up to ten years. They are part of the dynamic which is shaping the country and they have no intention of being spectators. ■



Hunte with the young talent of South Africa

Victim gives vandal a new start



Dennis Mayor

by Michael Henderson

It might, like many another racial incident, have left the community and the victim embittered.

J Lee Johnson, 34, a black entrepreneur in Lawrence, New Jersey, arrived at his computer company to find racial slurs painted on the walls and a dead bird lying on the doorstep. He had just opened a new company in the neighbourhood.

The graffiti contained references to the Ku Klux Klan, a drawing of a painted cross and the words, 'No Nigir'. As the local paper wrote, 'The green spray-painted words were crude and one was even misspelled, but their meaning was clear: blacks are not welcome.'

Johnson, whose parents were raised in the South and who knew first hand the racism they had undergone, did not feel welcome. 'At first I didn't know what to do,' he says. 'This was like a cold slap in the face. It knocked a little bit of the wind out of my sails.'

But Johnson is tough. His parents had also brought him up never to hate anyone because of their race or religion. 'Most people thought I would be in a retaliatory mood,' he told me. 'But we can't afford to let these things rip our communities.'

Local residents and businesspeople rallied round, telling him that what had happened was deplorable and didn't

reflect the feeling in the neighbourhood. 'They told me to hang in there.' The mayor came by, expressing her horror and the commitment of the community that such actions would not be tolerated. Churches and other community groups, aware that racial incidents although uncommon were not unknown in the area, set up support networks. Johnson's mailbag was 'stuffed' with letters from caring people.

Five days after the incident the police charged the vandal - a 10-year-old boy.

in life, believing that America cannot afford to lose a generation to hatred and bias.

The white youngster had never met a black man. Johnson gave him a tour of his business, meeting blacks, whites and Hispanics who worked there. He introduced him to the inside of computers. They sat and talked on the very spot where the boy had left the dead bird.

Today, Johnson tells me, the boy is doing better at school with computers.

'He has found a place channel energies which had gone astray. I like to visualize ten years down the road, what would be his mindset if we don't reach out and show him the beauty of differences in people.'

The blotches of paint covering up the graffiti still remain on the wall. Johnson can't yet afford to paint the building. They are a constant reminder of the past. But the friendship he has built with a young boy who knew no better is a stake in a different future and part of the cure to what he calls the threatening disease of prejudice. A community is the richer for his action.

Michael Henderson is a British journalist living in the USA.

'It's coming out in small children, and it's got to stop.'

'I was floored,' Johnson told a racist-sensitivity training session at the local Episcopal church. 'You really can't say it's the parents' fault. Kids are exposed to hatred and violence on television every day. It's what we are as a community. It's coming out in small children, and it's got to stop.'

He decided to reach out to the young man as others had done to him earlier on

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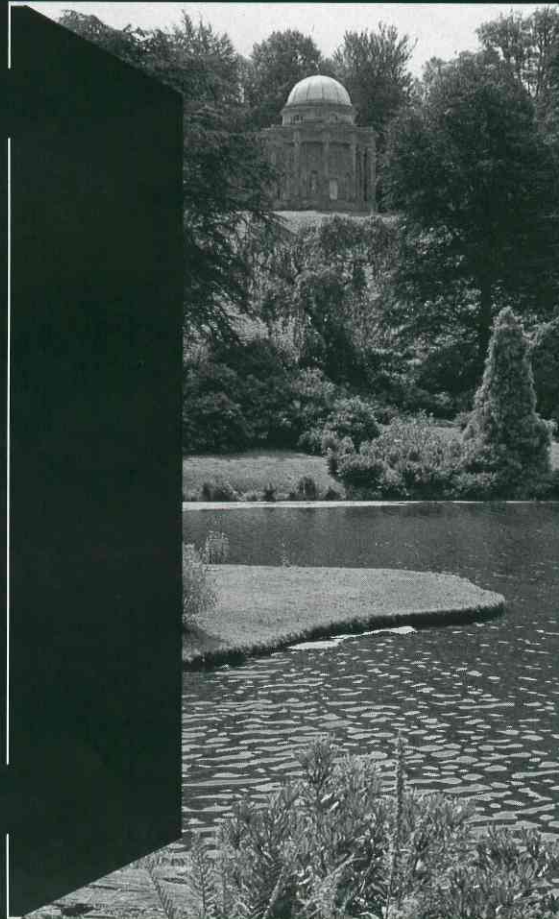
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by Catherine Weeks

The last door



Rex Features/Graphic: P. Carr

When the door of death opens for me,
Before the closing of the door again
As memory fades; I hope that you will see –
A fleeting glimpse perhaps – a future light,
Some intimation that will still remain
To stir your faith, and in a questioning night
Remind you of the light you briefly saw,
Of bright becoming through that open door.

*Catherine Weeks wrote this poem in 1985.
She went through the door herself last August.*

Why I joined the ANC

It is often said that Afrikaners – as members of South Africa's Dutch-descended minority – are obsessed with questions about their own identity. If one happens to be a grandson of a famous/infamous Afrikaner Nationalist leader, it is not surprising that one often wonders what it means to be an Afrikaner today.

How does one make sense of the sources of one's self – South African, Afrikaner, white, male, Verwoerd, Christian in a post-apartheid SA, in a world where there is a renewed sense of the problems posed by ethnicity/tribalism/nationalism? With the latter universal problems in mind, I offer a few personal thoughts.

At the moment SA is going through a process of change, with most apartheid laws being scrapped and with negotiations for a new constitution underway. These changes are important, but in practice the decades of institutionalized segregation still pose huge problems. Sociological and economic realities interact with selective media coverage to reinforce a culture of 'fundamental differences' between white and black South Africans.

Re-education

On returning from England to a 'new SA' in 1990, it was painfully easy to slide back into 'us' and 'them'. Perhaps this was because I was teaching at the predominantly white, Afrikaner University of Stellenbosch and living in a seductively beautiful suburb called Paradise Valley. Encounters with fellow South Africans made it clear, however, that our minds and hearts still require a lot of decolonization.

It is not surprising that re-education is needed, after so many years of indoctrination about the 'black threat' (linked to the 'red threat'). This was combined with distorted or no information about the 'rest of Africa'. Present levels of 'black on black' violence and high crime rates tragically add fuel to the fire.

What would decolonization mean, especially for Afrikaners? Some have concluded that only an independent homeland will guarantee their religion, language and culture. In contrast to other white groups on the right, the policies of these 'homelanders' recently underwent important changes. These include their public acceptance that being an Afrikaner does not necessarily imply being white, their readiness to take part in negotiations and the



by Wilhelm Verwoerd

relatively small scale of their land claims.

I've got a number of problems with this attempt to break the ideological, historical link between white domination and Afrikaner nationalism. I remember clearly the puzzlement in the eyes of a Zambian priest during my first venture north of the Limpopo in 1988. 'Why do you Afrikaners try so hard to separate yourselves from us Africans?' he asked.

I fail to see how we will be able to live peacefully side by side, if we don't learn to

'Apartheid was not a misfortune, it was an injustice.'

live together in one country – a country in which ethnicity is taken seriously as a cultural fact, but not as the basis for political rights.

Of course identification with a group is part of being human. The problem is to separate this from malignant collective selfishness, favouring one's group simply because it is one's own. We need a creative reinterpretation of what it means to be an Afrikaner, putting much more emphasis on the 'Afrika'. I agree fully with Kwame Appiah of Ghana that to be an African

(Afrika-ner?) implies a 'willy-nilly' commitment to the whole continent.

For this commitment to be sustained, we must get to the bottom of what has happened in the past. Given Afrikaners' unique political power since 1940, we carry a heavy responsibility for the disastrous exploitation of ethnicity by the apartheid government. It is not enough to describe 'separate development' as a policy which was formulated with good intentions but which, unfortunately, failed in practice.

Apartheid was not a misfortune, it was an injustice. It might be explained, but it cannot be justified and we cannot escape from our present and future obligations. I'm not suggesting a self-destructive 'guilt-trip'. An honest confrontation with our collective past can become a crucial source of moral growth and lasting reconciliation.

Healing

Recently this belief has been strengthened through a number of personal experiences, before and after my decision to become a member of the ANC. For many years I did not want to become involved in politics – as a Christian I felt it was too dirty and as a Verwoerd I was afraid of losing my individuality in the shadow of my grandfather.

Gradually it became clear, especially after a meeting with Dr Mandela, that concern about my identity was preventing me from contributing to the process of healing. I've seen how a few words in public and some basic commitments can begin to heal the emotional scars of Verwoerdian apartheid, how painful symbols can be used in a positive way.

Thus, though the future is unclear, the challenge for today remains: to translate the source of our individual and collective selves into resources to serve all (South) Africans – to start with.

Wilhelm Verwoerd is a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

NEXT ISSUE

Lead story: *For A Change* investigates an Indian model of human relations at work.

Profile: Leo Tindemanns, former Belgian Prime Minister and present European parliamentarian