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with all good wishes,
November 2000. Robin.

PETER HOWARD: A RE-EVALUATION

By the same author

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DECLINE AND RENEWAL: EUROPE ANCIENT
AND MODERN
MODERN PROPHETIC VOICES
SPIRITUAL FORCES IN INTERNATIONAL
POLITICS

**PETER HOWARD:
A RE-EVALUATION**

with an introduction by
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PREFACE

The starting-point of this study was my conviction that Peter Howard's determination to build a core of young people in America grounded in a life of absolute moral standards, was the most statesmanlike contribution of anyone concerned with strengthening the leadership of the free world during the Cold War and for subsequent generations.

INTRODUCTION

If the persons God uses for great purposes include the unprepossessing and also the commanding, Peter Howard was definitely one of the latter. His frame was tall and his face magnificent; his long strides, piercing eyes and crisp voice suggested a sharpness of purpose. He teased and joked when he had free minutes with people he could be free with, but he left neither close colleagues nor the world outside in any doubt about where he was going and wanted others to go.

His conquest in early boyhood of the lame leg he was born with, a conquest marked for the rest of his life by a just-noticeable limp, was later to be matched by a resolve to help mould the world to God's design. The resolve touched off a ceaseless stream of passion that came pouring out as drama, poetry, books, letters, speeches and remarks or instructions on the run.

Often he was dazzling, and sometimes his wit was biting, so it was not surprising to learn that he had been a celebrated and feared journalist before the great change in his life that made him a tireless herald of God and the leader of a notable world movement.

Between 1956, when I first met him, and 1965, when he died in a hospital in Lima, Peru, I spent several spells with him. I was 29, and present in Lima, when Peter died. To me he personified courage, unflinching commitment, giving without counting the cost, and a mastery of words.

I loved my times with him, saw the warmth in his probing eyes, and was moved by his obedience to what he

felt to be God's will. His death, sudden when it came, and when he was only 56, was a great shock, and I can only hope that in the decades that have followed I have not let him down too much.

The ranks of the many who were inspired by Peter while he lived will increase as newer generations come to know him, for his thoughts seem as relevant today as when he first expressed them. Robin Mowat has performed a valuable service in presenting them afresh and earned the gratitude of many including me.

Rajmohan Gandhi
Caux
August 2000

CHARACTER AND CHANGE

As one of London's most aggressive and hyper-critical journalists, Peter Howard had developed an acidity which few could rival. But when another mode was needed, he could swiftly go to the other extreme. This was part of his education as a pressman which he owed to his mentor, Lord Beaverbrook.

On one occasion he had been invited to a City dinner at which he was to make a speech in reply to the toast of the guests. Beaverbrook's advice was "pour the soft oil of flattery down their backs. You will find men cannot have too much of it, however much they protest they do not like it."

According to Howard's account, he "wrote out a speech, including a friendly reference to each guest of distinction. It seemed high-pitched in its terms of adulation. I read it to Lord Beaverbrook. He did not approve. His criticism was based on the fact that my references were not oily enough.

"I redecorated my phrases in accordance with Lord Beaverbrook's suggestions. When the moment came at the City banquet I arose. I poured out my praises with such appearance of sincerity as I could muster. My white tie and tail coat helped to give tone to the occasion. As I sat down, the thought crossed my mind, 'It's too much. Nobody could swallow that dose.'

"The applause was a cannonade. I was undoubtedly the success of the evening. One distinguished guest shook my hand and said, 'If I may say so, Howard, you are a very

remarkable young man.' ... I found my heart pounding with pleasure at the compliment which had been paid me" (*Ideas Have Legs*, 22).

At the *Express* it was the proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook, who (he said) taught him to work. "He taught me the colossal adventure of work because it was a colossal adventure to him ... I was always conscious of the fact that Beaverbrook was enjoying the work, and tremendously enthusiastic about what he had to do ... I remember I went into him once and he suddenly gave me another article to write, and believe me I had a mass of work on my plate. You know what it is when someone's just a bit sulky, you can just see it. I thought, 'Oh God, not another one.' He whipped off his glasses and said, 'Now look here Peter, I pay you to work with me, but I don't want anybody with a mood near to me. If you want to have a mood, get your hat, put it on and get out of here and don't come back. If you want to work with me, stay, but I don't want any one with a mood'."

What made Peter Howard ready for his kind of revolutionary life? In the first place it was, he said, the influence of his father, who "taught me to say No to myself". He was the headmaster of the preparatory school, Crescent House, where Peter began his education in Latin and Greek. "He had a very simple method of training. We boys would be there and he'd say 'N.T.,N.T.' It means 'No translation, no tea.' If you sat with my father and had translation to do ... you'd do your translation with considerable fervour, if you were a hungry young boy waiting

for your tea. If there was no translation there was no tea until the translation was done. I have been immensely grateful for that discipline my father built into me ... I could never have got scholarships to Oxford. I could never have played football for England [nor] have done my work on the *Express*, and I could never have been as ready as I was for the kind of training Buchman gave me in Moral Re-Armament” (Educators conference, Mackinac, 6/7/64).

Howard was a person of immense vigour and zest. In his years at Crescent House he was “an invariably scruffy schoolboy, exceptionally untidy and always on the run. He would charge into a room with ink all over his face and hands, usually on his way to perform some practical joke.” To one of the boys who became his friend, he was “a rumbustious lad”, but with his intense activity there was also “an inherent kindness and generosity” (Anne Wolrige Gordon: *Peter Howard: Life and Letters* (London 1969) 24, 25).

His conviction that there was almost no difficulty which could not be overcome was strengthened by the fact that he overcame what might have been a serious handicap. He had been born with a very thin left leg, the back of his foot being attached to the knee joint. An operation straightened the leg, but in his early years he had to wear an iron brace and have daily massage. After an accident in his teens an amputation was recommended, but he argued successfully against this, since by then he had determined to star as a rigger player, having shed his leg-iron and “developed a rollicking gallop on the field, which made up in speed what he lost in lameness” (AWG 30). He went on to win his Blue at

Oxford, and then to play as captain of the team for England.

Besides outrageous pranks at Oxford and witty comments in *Isis* on speakers in the Union debates, there was an underlying seriousness in Peter. He was concerned about the conditions in which many of his poorest fellow-citizens were living. A chance to do something about this came with an offer to become the National Secretary of the Youth Movement of Oswald Mosley's New Party. This was at the time (1931) when Mosley was a bitter anti-Fascist, with a policy which he claimed to be the only one to deal adequately with unemployment in the depression. An incentive was the salary that went with the job, and Peter accepted it, though sceptical about Mosley's claims since "this crisis has not hit the vast and phlegmatic lump which is the great British public hard enough yet for them to take any new steps" (AWG 65).

But he threw himself into the work (he also accepted to stand for Parliament), with a round of speech-making—"I am so utterly exhausted after I have made a long speech as I put all of myself into it". But he felt strongly for the unemployed and the miners in South Wales, the suffering women's faces "etched for ever in my memory". Also "anger, pity, humiliation, a compound of every deep feeling of the human heart rose within me, for I saw that every one of those children had mis-shapen legs or ankles". In Glasgow later he was terribly shocked, particularly by the case of a man living in a single room with five children. "We were more crowded a week ago," said the man. "There was another kid here then. She died down here last Friday."

Peter's comment was, "life had so beaten this fellow that he just no longer cared about anything at all" (AWG 75).

These quotations are from letters to Doë in the autumn of 1931. Peter and Doë Metaxa had met at St Moritz that summer, when she was Ladies Junior Tennis Champion of France. "It was a surprise and shock to me when I first saw the force and fury [on the court] generated by so slight a person. I felt something of the wonder which would fill the mind of the onlooker if he saw a gazelle kicking buffaloes to extinction. Three days after I met her, I had proposed to her. Three seconds later she had refused me" (AWG 58, 60). But Peter pursued his aim with the same determination which had overcome his disability and had brought him the captaincy of England's rugger team. And the difficulties were great. The Metaxa parents had no intention of allowing their daughter to marry a (to them) socially unknown person like Peter. But he continued his wooing from his London base with weekend visits to Paris for the sake of the walk which John Metaxa allowed his daughter with him, under his supervision. Their correspondence continued, and a year after their first meeting their engagement was announced. The wedding was celebrated at Marseilles in December 1932.

By that time the Election had taken place which was a fiasco for Mosley's New Party. Neither he nor any of the candidates, including Peter, were successful. Mosley was moving towards fascism and the party was dissolved. But Peter was free to accept work with *Express Newspapers* in January 1934.

A few years later war had begun. After the defeat in France which led to the evacuation at Dunkirk of what was

left of the British Army, Howard joined with Michael Foot and Frank Owen to write *Guilty Men*, placing the blame on Neville Chamberlain and others who were still in the Cabinet.

As a co-author of that journalistic bombshell, Howard had some disturbing questions to ask. "Is it not possible that our national policy over the last ten years, that policy for which we now blame the leaders of those days so harshly, was in fact the policy which our inclinations demanded at the time—self-contentment, laziness, self-interest coupled with inefficiency? Be honest. It was the desire of the people over the last ten years to spend money on luxury rather than security, to tolerate injustice in the world as we tolerated it in our own community, to sit back and let everything slide, soothed by the drone of self-commendation, so long as people would not interfere with our comfort ... Are political leaders—political writers for that matter—who have relaxed their own standards of conduct and done plenty in their own lives to abolish the gap between right and wrong, able to give events such clear and balanced judgement on moral issues in the world before them?" (*Innocent Men*, 157-8)

There were a few leaders besides Beaverbrook in the pre-war period to whom Howard was prepared to give some credit. One of these was Churchill. "No fish are found today in the River Fleet. But plenty exercise their fins and flippers in the torrents and pools of Fleet Street. Most of them are sprats or sharks, though a few genuine whales stir the depths of the waters from time to time. One of the whales during my days in Fleet Street was Winston Churchill. The Prime Minister-to-be used to read my political articles

with care though not always with appreciation. He helped me greatly with comments and suggestions which found their way to me. He took exception to the phrase 'For why?' which I used from time to time. He would steam up to me in the Lobby of the House of Commons, looking like a formidable battleship, pouting 'For why? For why?' at me aggressively through the funnel of his mouth" (IHL 64-5). In another book of the same period (1945), *Men on Trial*, Howard wrote about Churchill's encouragement and criticism. "When this mood descends upon him he has the art of making you feel you are the most important person in the world to him at that moment." And politically, the country's debt to Churchill could hardly be exaggerated for what he did for us "in our dark hour of history. His pride in race and tradition and nationhood forbade him—and us—to admit for a moment the prospect of defeat" (*Men on Trial*, 12, 13).

The change from the success-seeking, comfortable-living man about town is described in *Ideas Have Legs*. "Looking back, I believe I was in search of some master passion, some great ideal to which I could wholly give myself, which would provide a motive and force for my living and by which the world could be remade (IHL 70).

"I was fresh from a meeting with some of the leading statesmen of Britain, at which many of the things said had incensed me by their complacency. At luncheon I launched into a criticism of these statesmen. The man sitting next me [Garth Lean] said, 'You know criticism is not much good by itself. Any fool can do it, and most fools do.' Then he went

on 'I believe the men of the future are those who match their criticism with cure.'

"I looked at this fellow with asperity. I was not accustomed to be spoken to in such a manner by people unknown to myself and therefore of small importance to me. I said sharply, 'Death is the only permanent cure for some of our politicians.' He replied, 'That is the mistake so many people like you make, if I may say so. Everybody says the world ought to be different. But only a few people know how it can happen.'

"I laughed with scorn and said, 'You're not suggesting you have some secret that will change the world, are you?' This man answered 'No. I'm not suggesting anything. I'm telling you. It is the forgotten factor that will turn the tide of history. It will affect the future more fundamentally than the discovery of wireless, print, steam or the internal combustion engine affected the past. It is not theory. It is fact. I have tried it.'

"I took a good look at this fellow. I saw he was no crank. Indeed he seemed one of the sanest men I ever had met. I realised that if what he told me was true, it was the most important thing which in the long run would give mankind the answer to each last baffling question ... At last I had come to the end of my old journey and the beginning of the new" (IHL 71-2).

Conversion or change—the difference in describing what for someone is a landmark in personal life (and maybe even in the life of the nation and the world) can be seen in the account of that moment in the life of John Wesley and that, 200 years later, in the life of Peter Howard. For Wesley

the moment came “about a quarter before nine” on 28 May 1738, when, after hearing a New Testament reading “I felt my heart strangely warmed”. This was the outcome of a long process, going back to his being saved as a child from the fire which destroyed his father’s vicarage. For Peter the process began at his lunch with Garth Lean after which “the whole difference between my life before meeting the Group and my life after meeting the Group was that I had learnt to apply in my inmost spirit standards to my conduct other than the single standard of what suited me best at any given moment.”

His graphic 20th century style depicts, in a way very different from Wesley’s, experiences common to both. Visiting the MRA centre at Hays Mews, Berkeley Square, he felt he had “come home” (IM 51). A key moment there was meeting Kit Prescott, who described the turning-point in his life, when he excused himself from going to a party and dance with a few old friends, in a note saying that he had decided to surrender his life to God, and so he would not be able to come because he knew he would now have other things to do. “What happened to me with these words said by the ordinary-looking Mr. Kit Prescott in his ordinary voice? I can only say that in an instant I *saw*” (IM 57).

Some of Howard’s most graphic descriptions are of life at Hay’s Mews, “the bustling, active centre of events. The people in the Group were working hard at their own jobs—above all at the constant daily struggle to change lives, to carry the message in which they believe to the nation. Yet at the same time, Hay’s Mews impressed me as a sort of focal point for men and women in every part of our island and in

every section of our life. Constantly people were arriving with personal or business problems to solve. They never doubted that a solution would be found there. Several people would sit listening to God together. They would share the guidance they received. Nobody who sought a solution at Hay's Mews, fully determined to follow that solution through, went away disappointed" (IM, 56).

Equally graphic is Howard's presentation of one thought that "stuck in my mind like a bramble in a sheep's coat"—*Where did the money come from?* I had heard the tale that God will provide ... but I simply could not believe that a body of men and women would really put the words of Christ and the instructions He gave His apostles to the test. That any collection of people would truly pray to God for their daily bread—leave it at that, and feel quite happy about it, knowing it would work out all right. So I watched events at Hay's Mews with immense care, trying to discover who paid the baker, the butcher and the telephone bill. ... In some ways the most staggering thing about the Group is their approach to the money question ... They do live by faith. And the most remarkable aspect of the whole affair is that it works. The Group believe that God will provide all material resources for those who listen and obey. The workers in the Group do not receive salaries. They may receive necessary help for expenses from such funds as are available. Each lives by his own faith in God. Those who have share with those who have not. No public or private appeal for funds is ever made."

Sin is a subject certainly dealt with by journalists, but few, if any, would call the wrongdoings which they portray

by that name. Howard proposes a “four standard test match, as a sort of game or experiment in seeing yourself as others see you”. Following a suggestion by Garth Lean he wrote down the four absolute standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love, and against each one “set down where I fell short of it ... All the faults you discover ... will have been apparent to your friends, even though you may have been unaware of them yourself” (IM, 153-4).

When Howard agreed to see Garth Lean it was with the motive of “exposing” MRA in the best (or worst) traditions of investigative journalism. This was in part compensation for a ban on negative articles about political personalities—previously his stock-in-trade—because many were with his former boss, Lord Beaverbrook, in the government or in other ways supporting the war effort. He agreed with Lean to have a quiet time (though still with the motive of “worming his way into the full confidence of Lean and other Groupers so that I could find out the whole truth about them”). When he sat with a piece of paper and a pencil, the thoughts were “of the most ordinary and pedestrian character”. But “try to be as helpful as possible in the office. You have no reason to be bitter”, and the reminder of a long-standing debt which he should pay, signalled—as he later realised—the beginning of profound changes in his life.

A clinching moment came after much agonising as to the right plan for his children when the blitz had started—should they be sent away to a safer place than Suffolk, vulnerable in the event of a German invasion? He prayed and had a time of quiet, when the “clear and urgent

thought” came to let them stay where they were. Instead of a de-bunking article about MRA, he wrote an appreciative one, but when the paper for which he worked, *The Daily Express*, refused to publish it, he felt he had to resign.

“The issue came in *The Express*”, said Peter (Mackinac, 6/7/64), “which, by the way, I did not seek. My guidance clearly from God was to force no issue but face it when it comes, and for nine months no issue was forced upon me, and then the right issue dropped in my lap. I suddenly got back to my home with my wife and three kids and debts and no income, and I thought ‘My God Almighty, what have you done? You’re a ruined man. People will say you’ve gone crazy. It’s a great gesture. Has it only been ambition? Did you want to be a great hero and now have you made a great ass of yourself?’ And for the first time in life I knew the reality of that cliché ‘frozen with fear’. I could not think. All that I could think about was ‘My God! It—it’s me! Here I am! My God!’ And that went on for really three weeks, a time of hell.

“And then, early one morning, God had been very good to me, and he spoke very clearly to me in spite of my fear. He said, ‘If you were not afraid, what would you do today? Now go and do it.’ And I saw perfectly clearly if I were not afraid, what I would do. And still feeling like hell, I went forth asking God to help me, and as I went, all the fear was taken from me. And I use my temptation of fear now as diagnosis. It’s always a diagnosis of something in me, because my fears are usually a signpost to the Cross. I fear not getting something I’m determined to have, or I fear losing something I want to keep. So when I get a temptation

to fear, which is several times a day, I've learned to take it to God, to weigh it in my heart and to get diagnosis from it."

The home to which Peter returned was "a ramshackle old farm [which] we had bought in a fit of enthusiasm, and often thought afterwards it was a mad thing to have done". Now, to make a living out of it much investment was needed with borrowed money. But the saga of Hill Farm, Lavenham, is worthy of recounting as an epic, not only for the sheer hard work of Peter and Doë. "Howard shouldered the burden himself. He would rise early at three or four o'clock in the morning. If he wanted a job done, he would always be there half-an-hour before time himself, and only leave when the others had gone home. In the early morning darkness you could see him, a massive shadow, striding round the buildings seeing that all was well." (AWG 171) Reality took the place of romantic visions of the countryside which they might once have had. "Townsmen forget the other side of the ledger—cold, wet, endless mornings when you strain your inside out cranking a tractor as the pale dawn breaks—then doggedly sit for hours on end bathed in the oil fumes and the damp mizzle which blows in from the North Sea" (IHL 135).

In this labour Doë had a full part. "I see her now, sweat dripping off her brow on to the baking summer earth, hoeing, hoeing until the time came for her to prepare the evening meal. I see her in an old mackintosh, with a sack tied round her head and shoulders, her body bent forward like an arrow against the horizontal December rain, rescuing hens from swamped hen-coops and bringing home a handful of eggs triumphantly for our winter meal" (IHL 136).

Besides benefiting from official advice, Howard sought advice from many of the most successful farmers in East Anglia, whose families had been farming for generations. He also gleaned the wisdom of the men of the land who worked for him. From being "C" the farm was upgraded to "A". Landgirls did their call-up time, and eventually there were two German prisoners of war. The farm came into healthy profit. And this went along with the annual horkey (harvest festival) receptions and rejoicings for neighbours and friends old and new, besides other entertaining, while providing full care and enjoyment for the children.

An experience which he later recounted throws light on another aspect of his achievement. One day, having been questioned by his tractor driver, Beaton, about "a very considerable difference in me", he replied, "I have decided to live, Tommy, the way I want all men to live. I've accepted absolute moral standards—honesty, purity, unselfishness and love—as my standards. If you work for somebody, you may see many things about that man that he doesn't see himself, and if you see me falling short at any point on any of these standards, will you please come and tell me. I'd regard that as a friendly action.'

"That had an appalling effect on Beaton. He was so embarrassed he didn't speak to me for six weeks, and every morning he'd come and go and never said a word. Then he came up to me one day and said 'Can I have a word with you?' I thought he was going to leave. I said 'Yes, what is it, Tom?' He said 'I've been pinching things from you.' He told me what he had stolen, a few things. I said 'What do you want to do about it?' He said 'I want to pay you back.' My

whole instinct was for heaven's sake forget the thing, he's admitted it, but I had the clear thought—no, let him pay, for his sake, not mine. I said 'All right, what are they worth?' He told me. I said 'Very well, where's the money?' He gave it me.

"Next day he came to me again. He said 'Can I speak to you again?' I didn't know what he had done this time. I trembled to think what more revelations would come out. He said to me 'I can't read or write, and I've always been ashamed to tell you for fear you'd think the worst of me.'

Now, he was a lad I suppose who had left school at the age of 10; warm-hearted, but he couldn't read or write and he was ashamed of it. Then he told me one or two things about his home, having a bit of trouble there. We went down to his cottage. His wife is not an easy woman, but she was so moved when that man told her what he had told me about the stealing and his shame at not being able to read or write, [she] sat with her husband and taught the man at over 30 how to read and write. Now he's no great scholar, but he's a man you can trust with great affairs. He's absolutely honest. He's intensely proud of everything he does, and by the way was recently offered nearly twice as much money as I pay, turned it down flat. He said 'They've got something up at that farm money can't buy. They have children. They have a united home, a place of great welcome.'" (Mackinac, 6 July 1964)

Patrick Evans says in his book *Farming for Ever* (1996): "In the years immediately after the war I worked for Peter Howard on his farm near Lavenham, and it made a decisive impact on my thinking and living. Peter was a dynamic

character who led from the front and, inspired by his contact with Moral Re-Armament, was determined that his farm become a pattern of what God meant it to be. This included profitability and technical excellence but, above all, it represented a challenge to the motivation of all who worked with him. He was unsparingly honest about himself, and for that reason was surprisingly sensitive to all that goes on deep inside people ... He could be fierce in his criticisms [but] Peter was also both generous and convincing in his encouragement ... He was always fun to be with, as wholehearted in play as at work, and I well remember, when playing tag with the children, how he managed to evade my best efforts. He would let me get within feet of him, and then dance and dodge away, as nimble as someone half his size" (pp 22-24).

Oh, tender is the young green life
That paints the earth in spring—
With violets cushioned on the bank,
And bluebells marching rank by rank,
Or snowdrops in a ring.
But as the year becomes mature
And hot blows summer's breath,
Nettle and dock and weed arise,
Charlock with feverish yellow eyes,
To choke the crops to death.
So all young things can be beloved;
But love is harder when
The little lamb becomes a sheep,
The golden chick a hen.

Puppy turns dog with dirty paws,
Piglet turns hog with gobbling jaws,
And babies turn to men. (42)

In spring the horseman drives his plough
And lays the furrows row by row,
Like ripples of a rising tide
Across the arable they ride—
Then crooms to kill the tares and weeds,
With drills to sow the swelling seeds.
And some will fall and never grow,
Snatched straightaway by rook or crow.
And some will fall on stony ground;
So, rootless, withered will be found
In the sun's blaze. And some will choke
'Mid thistle, devil's claw and dock ...
And some will gleam with harvest gold
An hundred and an hundred-fold,
Just as two thousand years ago
The Son of Man foretold it so. (60)

Most of Howard's poems about the ordinary activities of the farm have significance in this way.

The stackyard ricks rise 'mid the hum
And bustle of the hungry drum.
The slender, silver straw of wheat,
Like ash-blond hair about your feet,
With oatstraw gold and beanstraw brown,
To build the thriving stackyard town,

While from the drum the sacks are filling
With grain for cattle and for milling—
The self-same kernel of the corn
Which Jesus ate one Sabbath morn. (59)

BUCHMAN AND HOWARD: "IDEOLOGY"

It was five years after his experiment of having a quiet time when Peter met Frank Buchman. By then, September 1945, the war had ended, travel restrictions were lifted, and Peter arrived at Mackinac. Despite their differences in age and background, the two men took to each other. Buchman immediately put Peter to work, in cities of America and Canada.

In the nine years since his interview with Himmler Buchman's understanding of what was involved in his commitment to remake the world had moved on. It may have been the Himmler experience, and his recognition that a demonic force had taken over in Germany, which brought him to realise the power in the 'ideologies' of Nazism and Communism. The word had only recently come into common use—the dictionary definition had been "science of ideas" or "visionary speculation" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1926).

Michael Hutchinson, a former Balliol Scholar, who was in America with Buchman, suggested using the word in connection with MRA. Buchman demurred. "But the more he pondered the matter, the more it seemed clear to him that any idea with a world-wide outlook and programme, and which made a total demand on a person, could properly be called an ideologyWhere [if applied to MRA] it differed from the materialist ideologies of the day was that it prescribed a total obedience not to any person, but to God." (Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman, a Life* 1985: 320).

This view was expressed by Buchman in the first speech

he made after recovering from the stroke in 1942 which partly disabled him. It was about “great forces at work in the world ... Communism and Fascism”, then MRA, whose aim “is to restore God to leadership as the directing force in the life of the nation ... America must recover her rightful ideology ...

“MRA first of all goes straight to the fundamental problem—it recognises sin. Sin is the disease, Jesus Christ is the cure ... Make sure there is no minimum emphasis on sin. Make it maximum. But then quickly make the adjustment. Change, unite, fight.

“You will find here the old fundamental truths—but you get them with a mighty, moving crescendo. MRA restores absolute standards in a day when selfishness and expediency are the common practice of men and nations ... Perhaps you do not put much stock in them any more..But to arm a people you must give them these simple, basic standards ... When people’s morals are confused their thinking becomes confused ... If you can get people who will live up to these absolutes and stand for them, then you have a force, a creative something in the community with a strength that nothing will gainsay.

“Everybody’s job is to find the God-arched master-plan not only for us, but for post-war Europe ... The battle for America is for the mind of America. A nation’s thinking is in ruins before a nation is in ruins. And America’s thinking is in ruins ... Unless America recovers her rightful ideology nothing but chaos awaits us. Our destiny is to obey the guidance of God ...” (Mackinac July 1943).

There was much new thinking here which stimulated Peter Howard. Before long “ideology” became central in his exposition. He may have contributed with others around Buchman to presenting the word in terms of “philosophy, passion and plan”. At any rate, in a radio talk a few weeks after meeting Buchman he was suddenly asked “just what is Moral Re-Armament?” He described it as giving democracy “what it lacked between the two wars—an inspired ideology. Some people think it a new religion. It is nothing of the kind. In fact it is a new force which at last gives legs to the ideas we know are right and sets them marching. It enlists all people of goodwill to change, unite and fight for a free future” (AWG 196).

At a farewell meeting for Howard before his return home in February 1946, Buchman said “Peter Howard has brought the conception of ideology to birth in America. It is hard to put into words what the country owes to him.”

Eighteen years later Cardinal Cushing, the Archbishop of Boston, said of him, “Peter Howard is a friend of mine. To his talent and training as a newspaperman he has added the moral insight drawn from experience with men in many lands ... Every Christian prays : ‘Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.’ It is nonsense to pray like that without seriously desiring what we are praying for. If I really want it, then I must stand up for it, in my own life and in the life of others, in the life of the nation and in the life of the whole world, with all that I am and have, led by God, in community with others who feel the same obligation. Then the miracle will be achieved and other nations and peoples will be impressed. They will follow genuine moral leadership,

not material progress. That is ideology. That is Christianity. That is moral strength.” (Foreword in Peter Howard: *Design for Dedication* (Chicago 1964)).

Howard was clear about what ideology was not, as he was clear in regard to what it was. “Some think of ideology as kindness, what we know as brotherhood, a few corners knocked off here and there and that is it. It needs more than that ... There can be a selfishness in dealing with personal sin. It is nothing to do with ideology unless it is related to changing people. Some people recoil from the highest challenge. They will be there always, demanding human fellowship at a low level. This has dragged most great religions down to ineffectiveness, and it is moral compromise which lies at the back of it” (AWG 274).

For five years Buchman and Howard worked closely together, until, as Howard relates, “from one day to the next Buchman bolted and barred every door and window in our relationship. Things continued so for nearly four years.” (AWG 204-5) They were, for Howard, “active years, but years in the wilderness. He passed through many moments of despair ... The apparent harshness with which Buchman dealt with Howard at this period was, in reality, a measure of his trust in him. Buchman was a genius at reading and understanding men ... He saw in Howard the possibility of great leadership, coupled with weaknesses of pride, conceit and a dependence upon man’s approval ... Those who knew Peter Howard in the last years of his life will understand that these four bleak years with Buchman made the achievements of the future possible” (AWG 204).

In February 1950 Buchman asked Howard to join him in Rome, and from then on until Buchman's death Howard worked closely with him. "It was in Rome that Howard was to find a liberty and commitment which he had searched for over four painful years." He said "I could not build friendship with Buchman by trying to do what I thought would please him. He fought strongly, with a fierceness that seemed unreasonable but which worked, against the weakness in those who tried to put their trust in him as a man. But if I was giving everything in a battle, I found myself in natural and spurring comradeship at his side ... It meant being ready for anything and everything God demanded" (AWG 220).

Howard's view was that "there are two schools of thought which may be called that of the 'enclavers' and that of the 'freebooters'. The enclavers are keen to create a fellowship in which the great truths of morality and God are held secure and where, in the midst of a planet that has turned its back upon such things, they can continue to live and induce some others to live in a way that seems best to them. The freebooters are out, night and day, with flashing swords, determined to win back from the modern world the property of God that materialists, intellectuals, Fascists and Communists have stolen, tried to destroy and hidden ... Freebooters now need to shed every non-essential action from their lives, to cleave to each other with a far less glutinous and more absolute honesty, to safeguard health, strength, time and passion, to see that every weapon put to use is of a professionalism and polish that enables them to have a better chance of advance" (AWG 274-5).

The most ambitious attempt during these years to put the freebooters' principles into action was the World Mission, when in 1955 Howard's musical play *The Vanishing Island* went with 244 people to 18 countries on four continents. Buchman followed the progress of the Mission with intense interest, but was doubtful as to how far it had brought real change to people's lives. Roland Wilson describes how he saw Buchman after the Mission's return to Britain, when the play went on in a London theatre with large queues and an enthusiastic response. "Yes", said Buchman, "that is a good reconnaissance work. But remember our work is founded on the handful of men with whom I spent seven years at Penn State" (Lean 492).

As regards Moral Re-Armament, Frank Buchman in his last months "seems to have felt that many of his colleagues had become dependent on each other and had lost the infectious spirit that changes lives, and that this was leading, as numbers grew, to an institutionalism which he had always aimed to avoid" (Lean 511ff). At Caux in 1961 Buchman gave his last challenge in his speech "Brave Men Choose" to his team as well as to the world at large. The unease he had been feeling focused at this time on his American colleagues. "He was in an agony of spirit at what he regarded as his failure to transmit to them the depth of his own experience. Would they be able to tackle the future without him, a situation which could not now be long delayed?" (Lean 526).

When, shortly afterwards, Buchman died, Peter Howard found himself "in charge" of MRA. He never liked the phrase. "So many seem to think it is a kind of grab for power. For me it means doing the simple things, like giving

myself to all people all the time regardless of how I am feeling or how they are behaving ... It means the knowledge that we must somehow get the discipline of Christ's Cross back into our affairs if we are going to go forward ... I feel not one whit more 'in charge' than anyone else who will bear the brunt" (AWG 293-4). But, as he said, Buchman had "paid me the compliment ... of holding me responsible for anything that went wrong anywhere in the world concerning our work, regardless of whether I knew anything about it or not ... In this sense I felt myself 'in charge' in so far as a man ever is in charge, for a long time before Buchman died" (AWG 285).

THE CHALLENGE TO YOUNG AMERICANS

Howard took on the task of teamwork not only with American colleagues but with those of all nationalities. He had in fact a special concern for America, and spent most of his last months there during the four years that were left him after Buchman's death. "His love for that country and her people had grown with the years ... He was almost un-British in his commitment and enthusiasm which were like a gust of fresh air. He spoke to Americans with hope: "The hard truth is that our fate, like the fate of the rest of humanity rests in your hands. Without American blood and treasure there would be no liberty left on earth today. If America fails the world fails, but America will not fail. America morally re-armed will capture the allegiance of the entire world, Communist and non-Communist alike, and will lead man into an age of justice, sanity, freedom and lasting peace"" (AWG 360).

He was speaking to everyone, including Native Americans. "I feel very much at home among the Indians," he said. "I have had the privilege of counting some of [them] among my friends—real friends—for the last three or four years ... I believe with all my heart that the Indian people can speak to the world with a voice no other citizens of the United States can use" (Santa Fe, 29/8/64).

But he had no illusions about the difficulties. "It seems to me that so many people will only do what they are fully convinced is bound to be a colossal and recognised success ... a determination to make the rest of the world like America, and a belief that anybody who says America needs

change is anti-God ... We must deal with this colossal perversion that this attitude of protectiveness towards America represents ... I feel frankly the demoralisation of a decadent giant in some of the actions and utterances from this country, and I must say so" (AWG 364).

"It was this sense of need," says his daughter, "plus his passionate, all-out fight, which enabled Howard to win young people" (AWG 366). His 1964 campaign in American universities and colleges was an extraordinary achievement, bringing 2,400 young people to Mackinac that year, to a conference for "Tomorrow's America", whose objective was "to raise a force of young Americans more disciplined and revolutionary, and more dedicated to building a world that works than any Communist, Fascist or other materialist."

"Howard warned those who lived in the MRA conference centre that there would be a flood of young people, but they hardly believed him. Some were horrified when the mass of youngsters, with their jazz bands, guitars and wild clothes began to arrive on the island" (AWG 371).

A sample of his words at the conference is as follows: "Last night we rejoiced in the talent, fun and magic of youth .. But with all the force at my command, I tell you, it will take more than music and laughter to carry us through the crisis that confronts America. You have to save a corrupt society from self-destruction, and to bring sanity back to a civilisation that is becoming a moral and spiritual nut-house. And time is running out" (AWG 371).

The background to this particular talk (24 July 1964) was violence in New York. "Do you realise that as we meet here in Mackinac, for five nights running guns were fired, men,

women and children hurt, property destroyed, shops looted in Harlem and Brooklyn?” He was pointing to what has been called more recently (by Mary Kaldor in *New and Old Wars*, 1999) “a continuum, starting with the combination of criminality and racism to be found in the inner cities of Europe and North America and reaching its most acute manifestation in the areas where the scale of violence is greatest”. Peter recognised this continuum and was proposing “the answer to Harlem, Florida and Mississippi, to the Vietnam bloodshed, the Berlin wall and the divisions that tear humanity apart.” He quoted appositely T.B. Macaulay, the early 19th century English historian: “Your republic will be pillaged and ravaged in the 20th century just as the Roman Empire was by the barbarians in the 5th century. With this difference: that the devastation of the Roman Empire came from abroad while your barbarians will be the people of your own country and the product of your own institutions”.

He realised that both the evil and “the answer” were to be found in the personal lives of individuals. It wasn’t just stirring speeches in meetings but dealing with the many young Americans who wrote to him. “They trusted him and he dealt with very real issues in their lives—incest, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, fraud and theft, as well as the despair of broken homes and total lack of faith in God” (AWG letter to author).

Peter was continuing the work that Frank Buchman and others had been doing in America before. Twenty-five years earlier Alan Thornhill in California had noticed there were “20,000 marriages in Los Angeles last year and 12,000

applications for divorce. No religion is taught in schools, crime abounds”, while in Seattle (where he was doing life-changing work in the university) “youth are adrift—without God and often with very little moral foundation. Yet they are magnificent material” (Letter from Alan Thornhill to his mother 4/10/39). His observations were fully along the same lines as Alan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind*, published a generation later (1987). Thornhill could also say prophetically, though Howard had not yet appeared on the scene, “I believe we may have a great youth movement on our hands here in America before long” (7/2/40).

With 2,400 young people at Mackinac in the summer of 1964 (and Howard’s intention of bringing another 10,000 the following year) it seemed as if Thornhill’s vision was being realised. Coming from Mackinac, Howard told the Rotarians of Milwaukee that “if these youth are given the right leadership and the right ideas they will respond. The background of homelife for many of them is tragic. Behind the facade of automobiles, cocktail cabinets, television sets and in many cases of formal church-going, lies a story of fear, cruelty, selfishness and the wrong kind of lust. One delegation of 42 from a certain part of America arrived and at the end of two or three days we discovered that without exception all of these boys and girls came from broken homes. At the end of eight weeks, with very few exceptions, these American youths had changed. They caught the vision of tomorrow’s America ... They began to get honest with their parents. They began to live straight and think straight.”

“America needs a passion for what is right—rooted in purity,” Peter was saying on that occasion at Mackinac, “otherwise she may succumb to the passions of those who are wrong—rooted in impurity. Do not fool yourselves. No man or woman run by sex can answer the needs of somebody run by hate of colour, race or class.” He was in touch with the Kennedy family and must have known something about the private life of JFK (assassinated the year before) and the incredible risks which he had taken in satisfying his sex-obsession. But these were hushed up and didn’t get into the press as was the case with President Clinton. It was only then that the “nut house” aspect of the case was revealed, culminating with the President being personally investigated on television, and the attempt of Senators to have him impeached. It is impossible to evaluate the adverse effect of this weakness in the presidency of the world’s only superpower at critical moments such as the Kosovo crisis, contrasting with Clinton’s leadership at his best, as in Northern Ireland.

A comment from Mal Whitfield, the black American Olympic Gold Medallist, quoted by Howard (*Design for Dedication* 29) is relevant here, on the failure, if not nullity of American policy. “The sex-mad Americans are ruining us in Africa. The impurity in the Americans is in direct proportion to the United States policy not working in Africa today.”

“We need to ask ourselves,” said Howard in his talk of 24 July 1964 at Mackinac, “what image of America shall we give mankind? Is it the Hollywood image—sex and violence? The Pentagon image—reliance on hardware and bombs? The C.I.A. image—pulling secret strings in other countries,

and sometimes the wrong strings? The Wall Street image—trust in the mighty dollar?” In fact it is—as it was then—an amalgam of these various images—sex and violence, bombing for a political (even if humanitarian) objective, with a lack of vision in facing difficulties. On the last point Howard had much to say concerning the murder of the Vietnamese President Diem, before his request could be carried out, for “a massive saturation programme of Viet Nam by Moral Re-Armament” (Vanderbilt 19/11/64). Instead there followed a massive saturation programme of bombing and land-fighting which failed to bring victory.

It was regrettable that this experiment in changing a critical political situation was prevented in this way by an act of violence (UCLA,8/1/64), with the consequence that America in Vietnam found itself “fighting an ideological war by military means alone,” whereas the real problem was Marxism which “has altered the climate of our century” (Vanderbilt). But for the next century, he suggested, “the pace could be set by young Americans who comprehend the need for revolution and give their lives for it” (Dartmouth College 12/11/64).

“We not only have to change the direction and standards of our people,” Howard had continued at Vanderbilt, “but we have to create in them the passion and commitment to build a new world.” He saw it as a “revolution of the human heart ... the character of man”, for which the world was ripe—“the only sane people in an insane world are those who will start to live today as mankind must live if we are to survive”.

With this challenge there was no anti-Americanism. Far

from it, Howard was eloquent in his praise of a country which he cherished as much as his own, and for that reason took her to task, even if praise and challenge might seem contradictory. He praised America “not just for her gold which, with a generosity unequalled in history, you have lavished to feed the hungry, house the homeless, help the helpless of the earth; not just for your blood which, shed unselfishly in skies and seas and lands unknown, has paid and still is paying the savage price history demands to keep men free ... but for the guts and genius of the choice you made to accept the pride and burden of world leadership. It was something unsought but thrust upon you. Nowadays people in Europe and elsewhere seem prone to criticise America, to enlarge upon her failures and to belittle her triumphs ... I would like with all the force at my command to tell you that no nation has ever shown in so dark an age of danger so shining a spirit of idealism backed by so many practical and continuing acts of valour and service ...

“Now another and more serious choice confronts us all. It is whether we are now going to concentrate as much on the character of man as we have done on wealth, scientific achievements, material well-being and environment; whether tomorrow’s America is going to be a blueprint for a world that works, where races, religions, classes, colours live without hate and fear and greed as sons and daughters of the Creator; or whether it will be a land shouting in the twilight of her history.” (Rotary Club, Baltimore, 21/7/64).

Howard’s call was to “a supreme and exacting revolutionary task ... full cooperation with the evolution of the human spirit ... the rebirth of humanity”, without which

“man is out of date. We are cavemen and jungle dwellers in the midst of a century which calls itself sophisticated ... Honesty, purity, unselfishness and love as absolute standards are the answer of greatness to an age grown small with corruption, contempt, cynicism and rationalized compromise with evil” (San Fernando State College, 16/11/64).

“My interest is revolution” were the opening words of Howard’s address at Dartmouth College (12/11/64). “It is a revolution involving not just the West but the world, and everybody in it. It will be accomplished by an explosion, a thunderstorm of the human heart, created by men and women who realize that the modernization of man is the great task of our times, that we can no longer live safe and free when we allow prehistoric emotions of hate, fear and greed to divide us, and that the alchemy of science ... cannot create golden conduct out of leaden instinct.” These words recall the statement by the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Murray Gell-Mann—to use the opportunities of the Information Age to enable “large numbers of people to understand the nature of the challenges they face. To get from here to there will require the renunciation or sublimation or transformation of our traditional appetites: to outbreed, outconsume and conquer our rivals ... These impulses ... may be hard-wired into our brains. But we no longer have the luxury of tolerating them” (Waldrop: *Complexity*, 351).

“In other words,” Howard continued at Dartmouth, “the world will be modernized and rebuilt by those willing to match this revolutionary age by a revolution in their own

aims and motives ... a revolutionary commitment to change the direction of history.” At UCLA he called for the creation of “men free from hate, fear and selfishness—a type of man as different from the Stone Age man, the Steel Age man or the Dollar and Sex Age man as a spaceman is from a man pushing a wheelbarrow ... We need a revolution to carry the whole world forward fast to its next stage in human evolution.”

An address which Howard gave at the Town Hall, Los Angeles, on the global implications of this theme, was included in the twice-monthly *Vital Speeches of the Day* of 15 March 1964 along with others by such as Lyndon Johnson, Adlai Stevenson and R.A. Butler—his hard-hitting style did not disqualify him from inclusion, warning his audience that “without a revolutionary plan in which all men can share, America may become a dead knight in armour.” And the plan would have to “enlist the whole earth in its next forward step”, the answer to Communism in its “bid to capture and change the nature of mankind.” He quoted the view of Asians who had told him during a recent journey in their countries that America “now is ready to encourage violence in order to achieve her purposes in another country,” followed by a detailed narration of events in Viet Nam leading to the murder of Diem. And with perhaps an allusion to the former President J.F. Kennedy he said that “public men should live lives beyond suspicion. Nobody forces a man into public life, but if he chooses to serve the public, then his private life no longer becomes entirely his own affair.”

By this time Howard was a well-known personality in

USA. On the 5th of March 1964 he addressed the Senate of the Massachusetts House of Assembly.

“It is a high honour to address this historic body,” he said. “The fruit of freedom that millions yet enjoy sprang from roots in this Legislature as from the council chambers and debating halls of Greece and Rome.” After complimenting Senator John Powers, who introduced him, as “one of the most knowledgeable men in the world on the subject of constitutional and parliamentary law”, he went on with a challenge. “The test of this century will prove to be whether a man matches the growth of wealth and power with the growth of spirit and character—or whether, like an infant playing with terrible toys, he destroys the house he would have inherited ... If America succeeds in creating the new type of man and the new type of society that the pace and pressure of the hour demands, she will lead humanity onwards in the next stage of human evolution.”

Much of his speech was a presentation of Rajmohan Gandhi, a grandson of the Mahatma, and his enterprise in raising “a force of able, intelligent young men and women who will live straight, who will not be corrupted by money or power, who can lead [his] nation.” This introduced his similar aim for America—to raise “an army of dedicated revolutionaries, men and women who attack injustice and corruption fearlessly ... who will apply rigorous standards of honesty, purity, and unselfishness to their daily living ... who will boldly seek out the true voice of their heart, the voice of God, and will fight for it ...

“To nations like yours, and perhaps my own, is entrusted moral leadership of the world. But we cannot offer

moral leadership to nations if we have moral laxity in our homes, moral anarchy in industry, moral compromise in the private lives of public men." He quoted General Shoup, commanding his men of the Marine Corps at Okinawa: "A man who can break or rationalize the oath he gave before God and man when he repeated his marriage vows is a man who could, if he so desired, or was subject to severe pressure, rationalize breaking the oath he took when he became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. A man who can betray his wife and children for lustful purposes is a man who could betray his country for his own ends."

Finally he gave a warning about a matter which had aroused his deep concern, a recent Supreme Court ruling against religious teaching in schools. "It is not for me to question Supreme Court decisions. But no supreme Court can prevent any heart, any home, any school, any industry, any assembly, from obeying the guidance that a Supreme Being gives to conscience and to heart. The word of God may be kept by law out of schools. Then the words of the professors of anti-God should also, in my view, legally be silenced, those teachers and professors who use their so-called intellectuality to confuse and destroy the faith of youth. I am sure of this. If we curb God in the upbringing of our children, as we curb dogs in our streets, we are on the road to tyranny."

He concluded: "One state Legislature free from fear of what men say, committed not just to do the right as God grants us to see the right, but to legislate and agitate so that

what is right becomes the norm of modern America, will give once more to nations the secret of a freedom that endures and to the whole world points the high road to a lasting peace.”

Howard’s visit was noted in the *Boston Herald*. It was reported that “at that moment [5 March] Senator Powers was in the company of Peter Howard, a British Journalist, athlete, and spokesman for the Moral Rearmament movement, and to see the two of them together was to understand some of the Senator’s appeal. There was an ease—an ecumenical ease, as it were—that enabled him to make Peter Howard, oh, so very very British, wonder where this man had been all his life.”

“Ecumenical ease” was a gift, or an art, which Peter could maintain with Russians as with Senator Powers (reciprocal in his case) or anyone else. He seems to have had a fellow-feeling for Khrushchev, who had been trying, “after 46 years of socialist experiment to change the motive and character of man, [but] had failed to create a new type of man in the Soviet ... I thought it showed a sign of hope. If you get men who for 46 years have relied on material things to create a new character in men, and have the courage to stand forward and say it has failed, I wonder what the free world can say to them” (UCLA). He quoted Khrushchev in another context: “The state will wither away, but only when men learn to live without compulsion unselfishly. I must admit we have not achieved that revolutionary aim yet” (Dartmouth).

Peter welcomed the positive response (when it occurred) from Soviet diplomats. He quoted conversations which two

American Olympic gold Medallists, Sayre and Wailes, had with their Russian counterparts and with the Naval Attaché at the Russian Embassy in Tokyo, Admiral Sobolev. The Admiral expressed surprise at meeting two such Americans. "You know where you are going and where you want to take the world. I will call you both Columbuses who chart a new course on an untried sea. A moral revolution is the hardest. It will take a long time. A revolution of the heart is what is needed" (Dartmouth).

Peter's call was to "a supreme and exacting revolutionary task ... full cooperation with the evolution of the human spirit ... the rebirth of humanity", without which "man is out of date. We are cavemen and jungle dwellers in the midst of a century which calls itself sophisticated ... Honesty, purity, unselfishness and love as absolute standards are the answer of greatness to an age grown small with corruption, contempt, cynicism and rationalized compromise with evil" (San Fernando State College, 16/11/64).

He moved people by sharing his fears and difficulties. "I very seldom get up before an audience without having a strong temptation of fear ... I'll tell you how I first learned the real answer to fear. If you're on the give to somebody you can never feel fear. It's only if you're on the get to somebody that you're afraid. I think that's probably what it means when it says 'perfect love casteth out fear,' because perfect love is constant give".

Peter talked about his brother of whom he was jealous. Eventually he wrote a letter to put this right, which at first sparked an angry reaction. But later the brother came to have a talk and "we talked for the first time in years as

brothers are meant to talk, with no shadows between us. We went to see my mother and father next day—the rift in our family was mended,” and his brother found the beginnings of a faith in God. Not long afterwards he was killed at Arnhem in the Second World War (UCLA).

Peter realised that he was not going to have 100% full-hearted support from all his listeners—at most he could inspire a creative minority (though the phrase invented by Toynbee was not yet current in the days when he read philosophy at Oxford). “Of course if you do try and carry a revolution to humanity through a change in human nature,” he said at Santa Fe, “every selfish individual is against you.” At the end of the Mackinac conference for “tomorrow’s America” he said “If you find artillery firing, you know you’re on target.”

He also warned that although, in a positive sense, big doors swing on little hinges, “sometimes the hinge on which a big door swings is just about the size of a cigarette, sometimes it may be a relationship, sometimes a habit, sometimes that hinge is just that 5 or 10% which you still hang on to ... If you have a 5% or a 10% which you still hang on to, that is what runs your life. The thing we hang on to and will not give up is the thing that runs us” (Special supplement to *Tomorrow’s American*, 18/8/64). “Let me tell you what sometimes happens. “You come to a place like this. You enjoy it. Then something makes you feel uneasy. You think everyone is looking at you and talking about you. They are not really. It is your conscience doing its necessary work. You think of that

relationship that is not pure. That money or book that is not your own. Some of you change and set about changing the world. That is mature and sensible. Others decide to segregate themselves from God and to protect themselves from the pricks of conscience. So they become critical. They seek out others who also want to continue their selfish ways ... You form a cave of compromise, a delightful den of defeat. You may find some cleric or priest who has been critical of Moral Re-Armament—and in many churches you will find critics as well as champions ...

“We need to face the truth that it is not the old or the young, the black or the white, the Communist, Fascist or phoney idealist that is to blame. We are all to blame for the state of our society. America’s choice will be made not by the next President in the White House. It will be made by ordinary Americans in their millions” (Mackinac 24/7/64).

TIME OF CHANGE: ANCIENT AND MODERN

There was certainly a need in the Roman Empire for a purifying of morals and for attacking the evils of slavery, and Rome itself seemed to be the proper place for a central thrust by the new spiritual force of the Christians. Remarkably St. Paul got himself there at government expense to expedite the process.

He certainly had success in bringing about a change in his guards and no doubt in the people who visited him, but there was no more success than there had been at Jerusalem in winning over the establishment, who became for nearly three centuries the main opponents of the faith. Although gradually influential men and women were converted, the movement did not gain official recognition until Constantine, three centuries after the Crucifixion. By then the divisions among Christians had a weakening effect, culminating in theological battles which sometimes infected other conflicts, notably the riots in Constantinople between rival groups of chariot-racing fans. It needed an inspired leader, Pope Gregory I (the Great), a man of extraordinary abilities and convictions, to make Rome once again a capital, this time in a spiritual sense.

Today history is moving at breakneck speed, largely because of the rapid progress of technology and the revolution in travel and communications. What took several centuries to develop in Antiquity may be a matter of decades in the new Millennium. The leavening of the lump of culture, in the West and its extensions, took the best part of the first two millennia, until new and promising norms were being

established in the last decades before World War I—norms largely destroyed by the two world wars and the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

Peter Howard's aim was not merely to re-establish the better norms of the past, but to develop a new type of society in which the acceptance of new norms (absolute standards) would lead to a *change in human nature*—“a type of man as different from the Stone Age man, the Steel Age man or the Dollar and Sex Age man as a spaceman is from a man pushing a wheelbarrow”. In Christian terms, Howard was building on what Jesus had shown—“a visible pattern of goodness and a new power to remake human nature”. (William Neil: *The Bible Story*, 1971) Who are we to say that such an evolution of mankind might not be the intention of the Almighty during the millennium which has just begun?

Howard's prophetic vision was made real by his transforming work in many individual lives. After his last great year in the United States, he moved on to Latin America, where he died at Lima on 25 February 1965.

PETER HOWARD'S PLAYS

Ann Buckles Orteig writes:

I first met Peter Howard in 1957 on Mackinac Island, Michigan at a Conference of Moral Re-Armament. At that time I was an actress on Broadway and in Television. On the night I arrived it was my good fortune to see a musical, *The Vanishing Island*, written by Peter Howard. The brilliance and challenge of that production touched me. I had always wanted to see a play like that where not only problems were thrust at you, but possible solutions as well.

The next morning at breakfast was the first time I saw Peter Howard. He was a tall, handsome man with a chiselled face who walked by and left a piece of paper on my table. On it was written a poem by George Herbert entitled 'Love'. That poem expressed God's love for one who did not feel worthy to accept it. That was what I was feeling. I knew then that this man had a grasp on human nature and was a mover and a shaker. I later came to realize that is what I liked most about his plays.

Several others of his plays were presented and I extended my stay in order to see them. When a plan to write a new musical began to develop, I cancelled my contracts on Broadway and in TV to stay and take a part in it. That musical was *The Crowning Experience*. After opening in Atlanta, Georgia, and Washington DC in January 1958, we made it into a film. It premiered in 1959 simultaneously in New York and London. *The Crowning Experience* is still

playing around the world.

Peter Howard played an important part in the writing of that musical although his name did not appear on the programme. He felt strongly that change needed to happen in the white race as well as in the black. I still have scenes and songs written by Peter that would have dramatized that need in a vital way, but were never included in the show. In my opinion those scenes would have made the show more relevant today.

Through the next seven years he played a major part in my life. I acted in his plays, sometimes with him in the cast. He was a good actor, honest, straightforward, unentangled with special effect. His acting offered not merely a character, but also a partition behind which we could study and evaluate that character. Like the rest of his life in leadership, he was out to state the truth while he himself stayed out of the way of his message. He lived what he challenged others to live. He did not draw people to himself, not on stage, in his plays, or in his books. He drew them to the deepest place in themselves and presented a way to change.

I once said to him, "With you, Peter, you can't win." He answered, "With you, why do you have to?" Exactly. Through that I realized I was driven to be right, to be thought right, to impress and prove my worth. At that time I had little faith in God, or in His love and forgiveness. Peter stood aside and let me see that, and remained a friend to help me change.

I acted in his plays *The Ladder* and *The Hurricane* at the Westminster Theatre in London. He asked me to play the part of Mary in *Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill*. I regret that I

did not do it. Later he asked me to produce *Through the Garden Wall* on Broadway. I attempted to do this, but people who had other interests prevented it. I later directed it in Caux, Switzerland, in the manner and style which he had suggested.

Peter wrote his plays the way he lived, stark, clear, and open to be interpreted by the actor as well as those in the audience. He was not possessive as a writer. He would often get a plot clear in his mind, a subject that needed to be expressed, a hot topic at the moment in world affairs, and then would turn it over for another writer to write.

He did not always receive the credit he deserved. When he was wrong, he was quick to admit it and change. He was equally quick to forgive and get on with life. Once when I had become involved on a destructive path, he and his wife invited me to join them. I protested. He insisted, and when I was honest with them he said, "It seems to me you have been operating on three cylinders instead of four." The next day he asked me to come on his tour through South America to handle his press. I told him I didn't know anything about that work. He replied, "I do." I accepted his invitation. This tour took him to heads of state in every country we visited. He spoke to millions. Throngs welcomed him in the airports in the cities where we went.

In the midst of this he always took the time to find me, speak to me, read my releases, and include me in his schedule. Once he said to me, "You don't need to check these with me." I was astounded by his trust and generosity. It inspired me to do my best. He was that way with everyone on his team. Once he passed me in the lobby in Argentina,

and asked how I was doing. I told him I wanted to write. He said, "Great. Do you want to write, books, plays, what?" I said, "No, just good releases." He answered, "Put your best fruit in the front window. Stick to nouns, not adjectives. One thought to a sentence. Develop your own style." Another time he encouraged me to write about women, and said he thought that would make a great book, particularly if women could see themselves as they really are.

Peter was constantly spurring us on to greater heights. He wanted us to produce action shots like the great sports photographs in Brazil. He wanted those of us on our tour to appear on television in every kind of show, in musical shows like the one where Dame Flora MacLeod's piper played his bagpipes, game shows, debates, speeches, interviews, and we did. Once in passing he quickly asked me how I was doing. I made some remark about the team. He called back over his shoulder, "Just leap over it! Just leap over it!" When a very serious group, who called themselves "the intellectuals," were gathered to dialogue with Peter and others he insisted that I join them, much to the chagrin of some. He included those around him, men and women, to stretch and grow and join in the battle to remake the world.

Peter died suddenly in Peru. My final task on the job was to release his death notices. After that was completed I returned to New York and on the strength of what Peter had taught me, became the Director of Public Relations for Harper's Bazaar Magazine.

I have for some time been convinced that a retrospective of Peter's plays should be produced as he intended them to be seen. As most of the successful plays

being presented on major stages today are revivals, Howard's too have a proper place and can excite new audiences as well as old. They speak stringently to today's world as they did when they were written, especially *The Ladder*, *Through the Garden Wall*, and *Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill*. They deal with politics, family, Church. Because he wrote plays for a purpose, they are in company with the plays of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Tolstoy, and the Noh Drama, as well as those produced by the Rhapsodic Theatre in Poland.

The subjects are universal and ideological, presenting moral truths powerfully gripping and sustaining those who watch them. His purpose was to change the world. He showed that it was possible by dramatizing change through individual characters and through change in the plot situations, not an easy task for any writer. It is easier to write of the problems in human nature and in the world we create as a result of them. To write of aspirations fulfilled, of a new positive way of doing things, of bringing about peace in the heart reflected in the consequences of action, and effecting change through this action, is seldom seen in the plays of today. It is far easier to write descriptively of the horrors we face in life than to show the way out of those circumstances. It was said of one of his plays, "Peter Howard is a man who lives into the world's problems and its agonies and wants to play his part in answering them." Another critic stated, "His plays are shot through with a profound understanding of human nature and with direct experience of world events."

He boldly stated his purpose in writing his thirty books and twelve plays: "I write to give people a purpose. The purpose is clear. The aim is simple. It is to encourage men to

accept the growth in character that is essential if civilization is to survive. It is to help all who want peace in the world to be ready to pay the price of peace in their own personalities.”

I consider it a rare privilege to have known and worked with Mr. Howard. Frank Buchman, friend and mentor of Peter Howard, said to those of us in the theatre, “Create the freedom that gives us the freedom to create”. Peter Howard did just that, and provided the opportunity for millions to share in it.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PLAYS

Peter Howard's objective in his plays was to enlist everybody everywhere in a revolution to remake the world" (*Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill*, Preface, 15, 16). His view was that in Britain he was preaching to "a nation of moral funks. We would rather keep good men silent or out than risk siding with them ... The existing institution in British theatre, sustained by some critics, decrees that satirists, sexists and sadists with a few drunkards thrown in are often more certain of welcome as artists, actors, producers or writers than those who lead less exotic lives (p. 8). If this institution or conception is challenged, some critics first try to slay with silence. When that fails they march to slaughter with smear ... So for the benefit of any men of bias who may see or read *Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill*, I would like to make one point of it plain. It is in fact an attempt to show who are the Christ-killers of all times (pp. 8, 9) ... Some seem to think that if Christ had had a good public relations officer, He would not have been killed. It is a misreading of history ... Christ with His desire for perfection, His challenge, 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect', is an everlasting barb in the conscience of humanity. That is why so many try to popularise Christ by attempting to diminish Him, to emasculate His absolute moral claims (p. 11).

"If Christ in the flesh came walking down Piccadilly, He would find friends among the people, rich men as well as poor, harlot and pervert as well as puritan and housewife, teenage ton-uppers as well as elderly squares. But the Establishment, Left and Right, would find ways of killing Him

and, with modern progress, killing Him fast. For Christ was and is and ever will be outside the control of any Establishment. This is something that Establishments, including established churches, cannot bear" (p. 12).

Evidently the Establishment is the "Scribes and Pharisees" of the Gospels, though there is some ambivalence as regards bishops. The four of the play, Howard tells us, "are not real bishops [who] are for the most part sincere and splendid men"—his barbs are for those "who seem eager with doubtful disputations on theology to dispossess men of faith, and confuse a nation with justifications of infidelity and deviance" (p. 13). In any case, as the play demonstrates, having Christ around for any length of time is too much for most people to bear and He has to be got rid of—even if sometimes those regarded by the Establishment as on the lowest levels of white society, prostitutes, coloured people, look for and find Him.

Every play of Peter Howard's has either a character representing Christ or a man (in *The Diplomats* a married couple) who bring a change in life to the other dramatic personae—though in *Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill* one person also dies as a result of the encounter with the returning Christ. In *Through the Garden Wall* the Christ-character is Dr Gold, and in *The Ladder* The man with a bag. In other plays the life-changers are The Prisoner in *The Dictator's Slippers*, Paul Warrior in *We are Tomorrow*, John Brook in *The Real News*, Frank Buchman in *Pickle Hill*, Mark Pearce in *The Hurricane*, and the grandfather (Josh) in *Happy Deathday*, while two people share this role in *Music at Midnight*, Lena and Margaret.

The originality and vigour, with which Howard (with Alan Thornhill in *The Hurricane* and *Music at Midnight*, and with Howard's daughter Anne Wolrige Gordon in *Happy Deathday*), carries out these various forms for the presentation of his message, are a new way in English theatre of developing themes of spirituality and morals related to the social and political context of the time. This was the period of the Cold War, a context which is marked in a general way in *The Boss*, *Through the Garden Wall*, *The Diplomats*, *We are Tomorrow* and *The Dictator's Slippers*, and specifically in *Music at Midnight*, written and performed at the time of the Hungarian rising and its suppression (1956).

Another aspect of the Cold War reflected in these plays is the fact that Communists from the Ruhr, often in the leadership and of many years standing, came to Caux and changed. Such events inspired the creation of Coolcreek in *The Boss*, as a Communist who changed, or The Prisoner in *The Dictator's Slippers*, and suggests what happened to Zenofors in *The Diplomats*. The real drama in the Ruhr has been well portrayed by Leif Hovelsen in his book *Out of the Evil Night*, events in which, having given up his university studies, he played a leading part. Hence it was realistic for Howard to portray young people, like John Brook in *The Real News* or Peter in *The Boss*, taking a leading part in the revolution of MRA.

The human agents have their role, but of course God is carrying out His work, often acting directly through apparently minor characters like the Trumppers in *The Diplomats*, and always effecting changes in attitude and *character* of those concerned, resulting from a realisation of

wrong-doing such as dishonesty in the form of not being open with parents or partner about activity which might be objectionable, as in the case of Irene spending time with the Zenofors without telling her father Sir Malcolm Wisdom. And there is God clearing away the hypocrisy, inadequacy and shallowness in much ecclesiastical thinking (the bishops in *Mr Brown*)—also how bossiness and human planning may apparently succeed in a worldly sense while the planner may be unaware of the real situation, as in *The Ladder*, where Hero's relation to his mistress was far more true marriage than his relations with his more socially climbing wife. There are also the explosive effects which can be the consequence of God coming directly into the situation: the Harlot and Black Man may change in *Mr Brown*, but in the scene in the pub the literally violent opposition of Andy leads to his sudden death.

Through the Garden Wall makes its point in a spirit of comedy, with the Allways family facing things out with their neighbours, the Stones, while the teenagers from each home, Rod and Fernanda, are enjoying a romantic and in-fighting relationship. The wall is in some ways not a real division—people can pass through it, even push it into each other's gardens. In the case of both young and old the need is to be really honest with each other (within their respective worlds and then get together with their neighbours). Both families have to move beyond pretending they are different from what they are. The clue to Cold War relevance is that Mr. Stone's first name is Samovar.

Change begins with Dr. Gold being called in to decide whether Grandma Allways (representing Christian

standards) is dead or not. In fact she is dead, "soul-assassinated" by the Allways couple—who killed "her character, godliness, all-out honesty, the unselfishness that makes a nation move towards greatness instead of towards decadence". Dr. Gold is ready to give shock treatment if necessary—he smacks Fernanda on her bottom to help her get honest about herself, instead (like Rod) of pretending to be other than she is. The challenge to change—in both families—comes from the teenagers who find "something better to live for", accepting God's authority and so changing. As Dr. Gold says, "change is more practical than chaos—and it's cheaper".

A light-hearted approach also makes its serious points in a compelling way in *The Real News*. The play is set in the office of a national newspaper, of which Howard's experience as a journalist creates a remarkably authentic atmosphere. The period is the height of the Cold War: the Government is about to confirm an important agreement with America, but a plan to stop this is master-minded by the Communist agent Simon, who is the confidential secretary of "Mac", the boss of the paper "The Daily Flash". Mac doesn't realise what is going on, nor does his long-term employé and associate Fish.

Hamilton, a politician who had graduated into public life as a journalist on the "Flash", tries for Mac's support to encourage opposition in the Cabinet to the point where he (Hamilton) might replace the Prime Minister. John Brook, who had got his place on the "Flash" by pretence, becomes honest through taking seriously a speech on which Mac has asked for a comment, "The new statesmanship to end

confusion” by Frank Buchman. Refusing to go along with Hamilton’s plot by writing up his ambitious manoeuvres, he wins over Fish, discredits Simon, and enables Mac to understand what has been going on and change his attitude accordingly.

We are Tomorrow is more complex. A group of three students, awaiting the results of their final examinations in a college of “an ancient university”, are joined by the sceptical Dean (Pewter) and two girls. They are waited upon by college servants Hope and Memory, who hate each other. A fourth student, Paul Warrior, joins them—he has just experienced a change in his life after accepting the challenge of four absolute standards, and apologises for the things he has said or thought about his friends, including the girls, Eve in particular, whom he had pretended to love. The girls leave angrily, though the boys respond positively, as does Hope. Pewter remains sceptical, supported by Memory.

Act 2 takes place 25 years later in the same college. Pewter, Hope and Memory are still there, with the sons and daughters of the young people of Act 1. They now live in a fascist or communist type of society whose watchword is “solidarity” [which, contrary to the author’s guess at a possible future, became the watchword of freedom in communised Poland]. A textbook in use is *Analysis of the Downfall of Christian Civilisation*, with the divorce rate as one of the causes—there had been a “sentimental concept of liberty ... giving everyone the right to say, do, think and act exactly as they pleased. Religion was just a drug to keep the nerves quiet”. Paul Warrior’s son takes an independent line and tells the others how his father had accepted absolute standards

and gave his life to remaking the world, accepting "God's plan for himself and all nations." He himself believed his father was right, and that "a Godless society will perish." Soon after, State Officers came and took him away. Pewter reacts strongly, saying that someone must have been spying, while admitting he had "betrayed a generation because he never found an answer to his own bitterness." Memory, revealing himself to be the State Security Officer in the university, summons another officer to come and march Pewter off at gunpoint. He says that he (Memory) had killed Hope.

Act 2, Scene 2 presents an alternative to the dictator society, 23 years after the time of Act 1, with the same sons and daughters as in Act 2, Scene 1. Only this time it is 'Year of Renaissance 23.' Pewter and Memory are still there, and Hope reappears after "all the things you've just dreamed up ... are dead and gone." Memory is still cynical, but Hope invites him to come and "see the Youth a quarter of a century on, the world rebuilt." What they see are the boys and girls preparing a birthday party for Hope, at which they all explain the various kinds of change they had experienced. Pewter also appears saying that Warrior's example had stirred him "to pour contempt on pride". The finale is the reconciliation of Hope and Memory, started by Hope apologising for his "cold, proud heart" and asking forgiveness for that and his jealousy, in response to the promptings of "the inner voice that speaks to every man who takes the time to listen." The changed Memory says that henceforward he

“will fill men’s hearts with cheer, their minds endow,
with promise of a healing power in men
to learn the art of unity again”.

Another play of complex construction is *Music at Midnight*. It opens with father and daughter Lena at home in a country which has been or is being occupied by a hostile power (mother had been killed by a bomb in previous war). The son Nils, a leader of the revolution which the tanks are forcibly annulling, enters with the Ambassador from a Western country, who says he is leaving and has one spare seat on the plane. In a quiet time (learnt from mother) it is decided that Nils should go. Scene 2 is in the Western country, where the Chief Minister’s wife Margaret and their son Stephen are with newspaper owner Southstream. The Chief Minister accuses Southstream for his articles attacking him—they are “nationally dangerous”, and anyway, apart from protesting, the government can’t do anything against the occupying power for fear of bringing on an atomic war. However Southstream says he will “print everything”. The Chief Minister complains that “they want one to run the country [or] the world. But I don’t even know how to cope with a wayward son” (for Stephen has been annoying him with activities such as “squatting for peace”). At this point the Ambassador enters, followed soon after by Nils, who accuses the Chief Minister and his people of being cowards for standing aside, instead of having courage “to lead the world”. Attacking him verbally, he eventually does so physically, but Stephen pulls him away—which impresses his father and Nils, who then explains how it was that he had

come with the Ambassador after it was decided by way of a quiet time, when his family laid aside all their own points of view and listened to God. The Chief Minister begins to wonder whether this procedure might be possible with his Cabinet.

In the next scene Stephen tells Nils that he has far more sympathy with his country's enemies than with his people—"at least they are creating something new [compared with] all the plushy unreality that is the hallmark of our so-called democracy." But Margaret gets them together by saying that they are both fighters, and suggests that there might be "something great and all-inclusive that we could each of us fight together." She refers to the quiet time which Nils and family had as "a way of deciding things for the world that's bigger than any of us or our point of view, bigger than the East or the West." Thereafter all concerned begin to see where they were wrong: Nils to shed his hate—"we ourselves are mostly to blame"; Stephen realises from a hostile crowd outside that "the same forces that are mowing down his friends ... are endlessly working to divide and destroy us", and confesses that he had been writing articles hostile to his father for Southstream; Margaret says she has been patting, pleasing and spoiling both her son and husband, and calls on her husband to "stand like a man before God"; and the Chief Minister thanks Stephen and looks to him "to continue together". He decides on "changing everything in me and ... starting again. We've got to think and plan unselfishly for the world."

Similar themes are presented with great imaginative variety in other plays, for instance *The Dictator's Slippers*,

where the Cabinet (or equivalent) of a Communist-type country discover that the dictator has been dead for many months, with his doctor running the country, but that with his death they have to get together and do it themselves, on the lines suggested by the now released Prisoner, who has learnt "the new dialectic" for doing this at a conference near Geneva [undoubtedly Caux] which demonstrated "a universal need and a universal answer".

Another dimension of thought and vision come into Howard's last play, *Happy Deathday*, which was written with a particular person in mind—a girl of 18 who had asked him after one of his speeches whether it was right for her to sleep with men before marriage, a thing she found it very hard to speak about with her parents. The girl in the play, Jetta, is very fond of her almost bed-ridden, Bible-reading and Bible-quoting grandfather Joshua (Josh), but is at odds with her parents, especially her mother who lost her childhood faith when it was replaced by the atheistic views of her successful science researcher husband (Esteban) aided by his black assistant (Sylvester). The strong feelings in the family, aggravated by speculation as to who would inherit grandfather's money, reach a degree of mutual antagonism which turns the situation into what Howard elsewhere terms a "nut-house", culminating in open hatred between mother and daughter. Esteban's aggressively stated doctrines about the non-spiritual nature of man and the rapid development, in which he is involved personally, of methods for control of ageing, skin colour and population increase, are an annoyance to Josh, and leave little or no time for talk about personal matters with Jetta, while the mother expresses

hatred of her with virulence, accusing her of having wormed her way into her grandfather's graces for the sake of his money.

This provokes a similar response from Jetta. The family doctor fails in his attempts to be a calming influence on the occasion of Josh's birthday—forecast as his last in view of his precarious health—and the bad feelings culminate in a scene at the celebratory dinner when Esteban refuses to stand for grace which Josh insists on giving while standing. Meanwhile Jetta finds that she has become pregnant by Sylvester, and having been refused an abortion by the doctor commits suicide, notifying the family of her intention in a note which comes to them falling from Josh's Bible (where she has placed it) during the dinner at the moment when he is standing to read from it for the grace. This is the moment of truth for Esteban, who is shaken in his views, encouraging Josh in his steadfastness ("you are our faith"), while Josh deplors his failure to give Jetta the secret of life and hope because his own life had been a sham. But Esteban tells him "you stand for hope in the world where all hope is meaningless otherwise." Josh recognises that Esteban is changing and prepares to read something from the Bible, "now you have the knowledge to believe". Esteban offers to read it for him:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west so far

hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him” (Psalm 103).

One of Howard’s plays that may be best remembered is *Give a Dog a Bone*, which played at the Westminster Theatre during many winter seasons. What the *Evening Standard* called “an enchanting frolic” had the serious purpose of deterring young and old from irresponsible attitudes towards their own shortcomings in relation to the ills and evils of the world. It deals with the threat that anyone uttering the phrase “I couldn’t care less” would be changed into an animal by the dominating rat-like personification of power-seeking materialism, who is accepted as an uncle by (approximately) 11-year old Mickey, who with Ringo, his bone-loving dog, are the central characters in the play. Ringo and “Mr Space”, who suddenly appears from the sky, avert the danger of Mickey uttering the dreadful words (Ringo by loud barking), and save a difficult situation when Mickey has left his unpleasant home for London, meeting on his way various people who are being, or who have been, turned into animals. These are encouraged by Mr. Space, now helped by Mickey and Ringo, to say “please, thank you and sorry”, so enabling them to be changed back into their proper selves. In accepting to do this, the pig-like Lord Swill becomes again a distinguished-looking aristocrat, who brings the proceedings to a joyful conclusion in the ball-room of his ancestral home.

POEMS

A constant, in fact a major theme, in Howard's poetry is nature and the countryside.

I have known dawn stride through the woods
And warm the cobwebs off the corn,
I have loved flowers and birds and fields
And laughed to see lambs born. (11)

My ears remember bells that chime
Across the fields, while scent of lime
And wood fires in the wintertime
Make nostrils tremble at the breath
Of memories vivid unto death. (69)

Many of his poems reflect his life as a farmer, and the changing seasons evoke some of his best verses.

The shimmering flame of the blossom leaps on
the wood and the hill,
Vivid and shy as a maiden dancing with fresh-
learned skill,
Or scampering past the hedges like a wildfoot
boy with a will. (57)

Something of his early years is in that last line, amplified elsewhere.

And indeed, alone on the mountains I have

suddenly started to run—
I have shouted aloud in the wind, alone in the
mountains.
I leapt the rocks, I swept the slopes of the hills,
The springy tussocks of heather, the bracken-
fronds brushing my knees,
The plashy grip of the marshland around my
feet. (27)

As he says—

Memory has a richness
Beyond our power to buy,
And we cannot sell it either—
It is with us till we die.
Her golden lamps stay shining
To lighten destiny. (43)

In this vein he speaks of his father.

Oh, I can remember in childhood
The prickly smell of your tweeds,
The bend of your back at digging,
Your care as you drilled the seeds.
And best of all I remember
The hard, warm grip of your hand,
As I trotted along, two steps to your one,
Over the Harlech sand. (43)

Many poems of recollection and delight are of his wife,

notably the series beginning 'Doë I'.

It seems antique, Victorian,
In this chromium-plated life,
To find a husband sending
Birthday poems to his wife.
What can I set in writing
To answer every year
Of glittering, varied treasure
You've lavished on me, dear?

You can't pay fines with farthings,
That's only common sense,
Nor heavy debts with halfpennies,
Nor repay pearls with pence.

Yet what I have I offer,
And give the scales a shove,
To balance all your treasure—
I offer you my love. (23)

Some of these poems are joint biography.

... Somewhere sits for ever,
On the mountain side,
A boy who tried
To wed you. You said "Never",
And the boy laughs when you answer, "No",
For the warmth of your eyes does not say so.
He chuckles when you turn him down,

While somewhere for ever you frown and frown,
Enraged that he should swiftly guess
While your lips said “No” your heart said “Yes”. (33)

When we set forth together
 The air was dim with bells,
And hot with Marseilles weather
 And thick with Marseilles smells.

I’ve loved each tiny moment;
 I hoard it in my heart—
Our first twelve years together,
 A winged and flying start.

And better lies ahead, dear,
 For us who grow not old.
The memories are silver,
 But the promises are gold. (24)

But eventually the day came with the thought of ageing.

That was a thing, we felt, which others knew,
But, for ourselves, somehow it wasn’t true.
We were so young and thought we knew so much,
Yet knew so little. Hearts leaped at the touch
Of hands. “But will they always leap?” you said.
I laughed. And then you turned away your head.
The wind across the lake blew suddenly cold
At the untimely thought of growing old. (29)

But still—

The sun was like an orange,
The moon was like a pear,
And through the bars of networked stars
Honey fell in your hair. (31)

The most magnificent poem of praise and honour for Doë comes in *The Taj Mahal by Night and Day on our 20th Anniversary*.

Pearl in the mist, you sleep against the moon
So vast, so cold, so ancient in your dreams.
Shell-like and delicate, at heat of noon,
Your snow smooth dome yet gleams.

A marble memory of love gone by,
Of laughter that the climate of the years
Has frozen into stone—against the sky
Your diamonds shine like tears.

And twenty thousand men moulded with sweat
For twenty years that marble into leaf,
A foliage of love, lest men forget
Through centuries your grief.

No marble and no moonlight mark our days.
For us the timeless trail when all is loss
Of diamonds and delight, of pearl-strewn ways—
And gain, the eternal Cross.

But in this fleeting second of our life
Look down young stars as I my pledge unfold.
I would not trade one moment with my wife
For all the Taj—in gold. (35)

In many poems Howard's strong religious faith is evident.

And just as God drew in the sky
His bow of mystic symmetry—
A covenant of majesty,
That men no more need dread a flood
As symbol of the wrath of God—
So year by year He sends the spring,
Promise and pardon mingling,
While Christ eternal from the Cross
Bounty bestows from utter loss. (58)

The Christian festivals are celebrated.

The rough sounds of the farm and Inn,
The odours just the same today,
As when two thousand years ago
Sweet Jesus in the stable lay.

Yet nothing is the same since then,
And nothing, while the centuries pass,
Can stain the wonder and the love
Of Him who lay mid ox and ass. (19)

Spring-time and Easter go together.

Spring touches with her garment's hem
The thickets as she garlands them;
With green and blossom cloaks the thorn
That crowned a King one bitter dawn. (59)

Some poems are patriotic, in the sense of Britain bringing an answer to the world's needs.

The dust and dream of the battle dies,
The crown of our longing broken lies,
A tattered banner, a jagged sword,
Lean our larder, our gold outpoured.
What gifts can Britain bring?

Only a heart that is humble now,
A head not overproud to bow,
Willing to listen, apt to learn.
Then the fires in Britain once more shall burn.
We shall have gifts to bring. (72)

Vision for India (Gandhi, 62), Nigeria, Egypt, Turkey, Burma is in *Songs of the Future*.

These poems are all from Howard's own collection, *Above the Smoke and Stir* (Grosvenor Books, London), published in 1975, ten years after his death. The title is taken from Milton: "Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call earth". In his Introduction Howard says, among other things:

“These are battle poems. They were born among the joys and pains, the wounds and victories of the fight for a new world. Most of them were written for someone in my family or among my friends, to encourage them when the fight was hard or to give them a token of the love I have for them.

“These poems are rooted in reality. They tell for people who live today the tale of a tomorrow that is already coming to birth. They sing of an answer which is conquering the problems of our age. Their hope is not vain and their faith is not a delusion. It is for everyone everywhere.”

The numbers in brackets after each poem indicate the page from which it comes.

Appendix

In his treatment of other politicians besides Churchill in *Men on Trial*, Howard in the main restricts himself to friendly comments and suggestions. Ernest Bevin, he says, "in his job as Foreign Secretary can afford to avail himself of a new grace and mellowness which will make him a historic figure rather than merely a big shot of today. He could be the man whom hundreds of millions of inarticulate ordinary folk, Bevin's folk, the whole world over are looking for. That is, a reconciler of the nations. If he is to do it he must first learn to reconcile people in his own nation. At present he outrages so many people inside as well as outside the Labour Party. He cannot seem to help it. Indeed he boasts that he is the elephant who never forgets an injury" (MT 25).

Among statesmen Anthony Eden finds a place. Howard hoped he would be "setting the pace" for necessary change "in the ranks of the Tories themselves ... Fires of opposition and persecution can forge a prophet out of a picturesque personality and drive him forward to a greater destiny" (MT 44).

Being at Westminster, says Howard, should involve awareness of "the war of ideas ... which runs through nations ... A war of arms decides which nation shall be the boss, but the war of ideas decides what idea shall boss the nations ... Hitler won the war of ideas in Germany before he set Germany on the march. He fired the whole of his nation with the idea 'My race shall rule' before a shot was fired in the war ... Now democracy's big idea is

that 'God shall rule in the affairs of men'. It is from that idea, none other, that the conception of man's equality and brotherhood springs" (MT 55).

In Howard's evaluation of the statesmen of his day, Sir Stafford Cripps comes nearest to fulfilling his ideal. "He has been called a political innocent. Well, in an age where Guilty Men abound, Innocents are rare. They shine like good deeds in a naughty world. Sir Stafford's innocence consists in believing the faith which others of his party profess. Once I asked him what he thought was the main need for the post-war age. He made a surprising answer. 'I think our first need is to establish moral principle in politics. We need fixed and absolute standards of right and wrong, accepted by all, against which every political action can be measured.' I asked whether he thought this moral principle of right and wrong should apply to international as well as internal policy. Cripps replied 'Yes'.

"Somebody once remarked that Christ was safe so long as you kept Him locked up inside churches. It was when you let Him out into the world that he became dangerous. Sir Stafford is one of those uncomfortable people who believe Christianity is 'do' as well as 'talk'. Those who know him best declare that recently the ingredients of the Cripps character are altering ... I am told that this statesman who refuses to accept human nature as something immovable but believes that its basic destiny is advance and change, himself is changing" (MT 68-70).

For the Conservatives Howard's appeal was to the

Young Tories to “provide their party with the flame of a moral purpose. This at present the Tories lack. There is more talk of political principle than of moral principle in their counsels. The difference between moral and political principles is this—moral principles do not alter; political principles are often shifting and degenerate to political expediency” (MT 78).

