

BACK TO GREATNESS

By Gordon Wise

SELF-DENIGRATION by the British has been almost elevated to a form of art. It is time to remind them that there is nothing new in Britain having to co-exist with, and face, powers stronger than herself. She did this under the first Elizabeth, when the might of Spain and France loomed large over the Western world and whose populations and wealth were greater than that of Britain.

Later, single-handed, she faced the force of Napoleonic France. As Churchill told the boys of his old school, Harrow, at the grimmest moment of the last war, "Never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing great or small, large or petty—never give in except to considerations of honour and good sense."

The historian, Sir Arthur Bryant, two years ago reminded Britain of her main mission, which Milton called her "ancient precedence of teaching the nations how to live". In Bryant's view this task began before Trafalgar, before the Industrial Revolution. "She saved Christian civilization in the days of Alfred", he wrote, "and established the principles of political freedom in Parliamentary Government in the Middle Ages".

Now, says Bryant, Britain cannot, by pleading penury, withdraw into an inglorious isolation without betraying those that look to her for leadership.

Fair challenge

There are many in this country who would like to see the nation stride forward. But biting and baying at her heels is a minority bent on debasing our quality of life.

This is not a political question but it is fair to ask what the Conservative Government is going to do about it. Politicians tell you that during the general election campaign there were many questions about abortion, pornography, narcotics, divorce reform and violence.

An English author, Pamela Hansford Johnson, writing in "The New Statesman" recently, dealt sharply with a pornographic book. She had an angry come-back from the publisher. In her rebuttal of his charge, Miss Hansford Johnson made an important point, "Among other human rights is the right to be appalled, and say so".

An acknowledged expert in the realm of education, the

controversial child specialist, Dr. Benjamin Spock, has had second thoughts about some aspects of his uninhibited liberalism. Talking about authors and producers of books and films advocating obscenity and brutality, he said: "Such works are unhealthy for society because they assault the carefully constructed inhibitions and sublimations of sexuality and violence that are normal for all human beings (except those raised without any morals at all) and that are essential in the foundations of civilisation."

Spock reversed his well-quoted philosophy of allowing children to do a good deal of what they fancy when he said, "The abrupt and aggressive breaking down of inhibitions can be disturbing to a society as a whole and particularly to its children, even if sincere efforts are made to shield the children. This seems more risky when a society already has soaring rates of delinquency and crime, an insatiable appetite for brutality on television and what I consider an unprecedented loss of belief in man's worthiness".

The great British statesman Disraeli underlined for the Britain of his day the need to encourage self-reliance and resource in the

national character. Without it, he said, "No State is safe, political institutions are meat without salt, the Crown a bauble, the Church an establishment, Parliament a debating club, civilisation itself a fitful and transient dream".



Dr. William N'Komo