

ASIA PLATEAU
LIBRARY
PANCHGANI

***THE NEW TYPE OF
COMMONWEALTH***

PETER HOWARD

MR. PETER HOWARD GAVE THIS ADDRESS AT THE
INVITATION OF COMMONWEALTH CHALLENGE, A
MORAL RE-ARMAMENT TRAINING COURSE, IN THE
ASSEMBLY HALL, ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
LONDON, ON SUNDAY, 13 DECEMBER, 1964

© PETER HOWARD, 1964

*Further copies, price 1s, postage extra, available from the
Oxford Group, 4 Hays Mews, London, W.1. Printed in Great Britain by
W. & J. Mackay & Co Ltd, Fair Row, Chatham, Kent*

ONLY the extremely aged or the extremely wealthy want everything to go on precisely as it is in the world. I am committed to revolution. I don't mean that I am going to spring upon you with a knife and try and chop off your head. That is poor revolution. It is often the hallmark of frustrated reactionaries. I mean a revolution where social, economic and political circumstances of this world change and change rapidly. Unless we commit ourselves to that kind of revolution, we may see a situation come upon the earth where revolution of all kinds will be out of the question for a number of ages. That I don't want to see.

I am not one of those people who cheapen history by pretending that all who went forth from this country into Africa and Asia were mean-spirited, hard-hearted devils. Some went with good intent. They did their utmost to help the people of the countries they entered. Many laid down their lives without great personal gain and at great personal sacrifice. If anybody wants to get me on the platform sneering at such men, leaping on their graves and shouting, 'Down with Imperialism', I am not playing that game. I don't think it is right.

At the same time, Imperialism is a word that means many things to many people. If Imperialism is taken to mean that one lot of people for their own benefit enter into the life of another lot of people and exploit them, grind them down and grow rich on their miseries and depravations, I am frontally opposed to Imperialism, past, present, and future. I am opposed to it whatever colour of the coat it wears. I am opposed to it if it is white, yellow, red, or black.

No colour has the prerogative of virtue, wisdom, or iniquity. I have just come from the United States. There a certain section used to publish abroad their view that everybody with a black skin was some kind of black devil and everybody with a white skin was some kind of white saint. Now the wheel has swung full circle. There are vast areas in the United States which seem to hold that everybody with a black skin is a black saint and everybody with a white skin is a white devil. Frankly, I think it is equally untrue. Men are men. We inherit an earth which is in a considerable mess. The issue is whether or not together we are going to try and build a world that works or whether we are going to hate each other, divide against each other, denigrate each other, and finally hand

on to our children a world that may have disintegrated or even destroyed itself. Perhaps, we can rebuild the world together. By ourselves and separately we can do nothing but slide backwards and downwards on the mountain slopes of modern history.

We face big problems when we consider what kind of new Commonwealth we are going to build. Somebody said to me just now they hoped the Commonwealth would continue. I hope so too. But I am sure if it does it has got to continue in a shape and form not yet seen or known. It must be a new concept with a new aim and with new motives for all partners of the Commonwealth.

There is a new word come into my vocabulary, the word 'proliferation'. It is a wonderful word. As far as I can make out it just means an increase. People talk about the proliferation of the bomb. They say that China has now built a bomb and that it is all right as it is only an unsophisticated bomb. What difference there is when you are hit by a sophisticated bomb or an unsophisticated bomb, I do not know. I am keen to interview the first man who can tell us how it feels to be hit by both. But China has a bomb, America has a bomb, Russia has a bomb, this country has some kind of a bomb, the French have some kind of a bomb, Nasser in Egypt is certainly completing a bomb, Israel says they are going to have a bomb, Sukarno boasts he will have a bomb next year – because the United States gave him reactors from which bombs can be made, Japan says that she will probably build a bomb because China has one. If we live till 1975 we may have twenty or twenty-five countries with bombs, sophisticated or otherwise.

How do we answer the proliferation of the bombs? The answer we give at the moment is proliferation of division. We insist on the class war. It may be justified but it is a poor answer to the proliferation of the bomb. We insist on a colour war. We insist on wars in the home – family life has never been so divided throughout the world. We even insist on a war between youth and age. The proliferation of division is an ignorant and poor reply to the proliferation of the bomb.

Then we have a proliferation of population. It just means that families are getting bigger. For good or ill, by the year 2000 those of you who will live that long (and many of you will) will have 6,000 million people sharing this earth with you. In order to feed them all, even at the present standard of life, we have to double the present output of world food. That can be done. Technically it could be done quite quickly. But, how do we answer the proliferation of population? I will tell you how we answer it in the West. We have the insolence to point fingers at nations in Asia and Africa where the population is growing, to criticize them. We

even send them pills, which they don't much want and which they don't much use. In our own society in the West we proliferate impurity. We create a philosophy which says that anything goes, that pre-marital adultery is all right, that you can do what you like when you like and that anybody who feels guilty about any act of impurity or fornication is out of date. It is a poor answer from the West to the proliferation of population if we criticize those where the population is rising and at the same time say it is impossible for man to control the body God gave him.

Then you have the proliferation of evil. I do not believe that Communism is the big devil in the world. Some people do. I think millions and millions and millions of hungry, hopeless people go to Communism by default. They are determined to revolutionize the world and the world ought to be revolutionized. They see in Communism the one force which seems determined to revolutionize humanity, so to Communism they turn. I don't feel too critical of them. But I say this. If you have an idea backed by the total resource of great states which says that their revolution can never succeed till the myth of God is removed from the mind of man (that is Lenin) and that their morality is wholly subordinate to the interests of the class struggle (that is Lenin) you do have a proliferation of what was once called evil. Because what it says is this: we cannot succeed unless humanity accepts that what suits us is right, that what suits everybody else is wrong. We cannot succeed unless everybody accepts that the ends justify the means. I do not believe that is right. Nor do I believe in the long run it will succeed in building a world that works. Nor, if you accept that philosophy, can you rightly point a finger of scorn or criticism at any Hitler, or any Stalin, or any Imperialist. All of those people have taken the view that they are so noble in their aspiration that what happens to the people around them does not matter for too long. And if you take that view, you are not in a position to criticize these people who in the past and in the present are still so hardily criticized.

We need a very definitely new kind of Commonwealth and it has got to be new in three ways:

FIRSTLY, it has got to be a common wealth. That it never has been. People talk about the Commonwealth but what is common with the wealth of an association of men and women, where for example, the total income in black Africa averages about 5s a day per head, except where in some countries it falls as low as 2s a day? How can you call it a common wealth when you compare it with the welfare state of Britain? There is no sharing of wealth at all. How can you call it a common wealth where in Africa today one doctor exists for every 17,000 people while in some

of our countries there is one doctor for every 600 people? In black Africa 25 per cent of live births die in infancy. Here around 2 per cent is the figure. African farmers produce per man 4 per cent of the food Western farmers produce. That is my criticism of people who talk glibly about Commonwealth but mean, 'We are fat and you are thin.' If we are going to have a Commonwealth it ought to be a common wealth where everybody cares enough and shares enough and there is enough productivity, wealth, food, facilities for housing, education, for everybody in the Commonwealth of nations to be properly looked after within ten years if we decide to make it our main aim. If as comrades in the Commonwealth we decide we are going to each look after our own corner as best we may, it will never be a common wealth. It will never work. The Commonwealth can never, never continue on the present basis. It will disintegrate if the main aim is self-interest.

SECONDLY, it has got to be united and expansive, not divided and contracting. We are not united. There is great division among us. I do not mean just disagreements on how a thing should be done, how an aim should be achieved, but about basic concepts of the future of man, about the kind of society we want, revolution or anti-revolution.

People talk a lot about South Africa. Many disapprove of the policy of apartheid. I don't believe the answer is to throw a country like South Africa out because you disagree with her. It is an admission of failure if you do so. It is not revolutionary. It is reactionary. If you accept the principle that yesterday you could throw somebody out because you did not like the way they did things and because you cannot change them, it may not be long before Britain will be required to leave the Commonwealth. They may throw us out because they don't like our principles.

If you adopt the policy of keeping people out because you disagree with them, you cannot object to the Americans keeping Red China out of the U.N. because they disagree with her. South Africa ought to have stayed in the Commonwealth and been changed by the Commonwealth. We could and should have helped her find the right answer, instead of creating more division.

South Africa is out. It is the one country in Africa with a white population which has nowhere to go. In Kenya the white settlers who wanted to leave could come back to Britain. In Algeria the white settlers who were kicked out could go back to France. Where do the white South Africans go? They have been there for 200 and 300 years. Some may say they should not have come in the first place. Be that as it may, it is the only country they know. They have no place to go and if you force the point that we are going to expel them, segregate them,

ostracize them, you are running headlong into war. At this stage of the game war might suit Verwoerd best. He still happens to have the armed strength to put down any attempt to overthrow him. It is a weakness in our present Commonwealth association to have so reactionary and so weak a concept that we cannot take those whose policies we hate and despise and scorn, sit them down and deal with them in such a way that the sheer impetus of our opinion alters their policies, their motives and their aims. It could have been done. Nobody tried it. There was no alternative offered except: 'Change or get out.' And if you are in charge of a country, pride does operate. Which of us in charge of our countries at any international conference being told, 'Change or get out', would humbly say, 'We change and stay'?

THIRDLY, it has got to be a common wealth, it has got to be united and expansive and it has got to be revolutionary. By revolutionary I mean it has got to see the whole world order changed. I do not accept any more the view that we of the West, having created two world wars in my lifetime, having created the economic situation that has built Fascism, Hitlerism and gave Karl Marx his thesis, having seen in our own midst colossal social injustice and misery and tolerated it, can now turn to other people and say, 'Whatever you do, you are free of course, but you make a great mistake if you don't do as we do.' All of us may have to find an entirely new concept of society. That is what interests me.

I would like to offer humanity an alternative to Communism. I am not now attacking Communism. Communism is a revolutionary programme for the world. But it is too small to unite the Communists themselves and too dangerous to keep peace in the world. Any idea based on hatred and violence and keeping another class or colour or race out is too small for our times. I would like a revolutionary concept big enough to offer everybody a fair and equal part in it as partners, and powerful enough to change the materialistic motives that have created the present situation of our times.

The Commonwealth is a society in existence which offers the best hope of doing that if we choose to do it. It is difficult. It is also important. It is the most revolutionary attack, the most revolutionary solution, the most revolutionary answer that could be proposed before the councils of men. Unhappily so far I have not seen that proposition coming out of the Commonwealth councils that exist, or of any other international political gatherings.

I read a letter the other day from a gentleman called Mr. Walter Lippmann. He is an American. But it seems to me to represent exactly the wrong attitude of the West towards countries that were, and in some

cases still are, members of the Commonwealth. He said about Asia: 'The best we can hope for in what is the national sphere of influence of China is the gradual development of national Tito-type Communist regimes. You can't make democracies out of these countries. What we ought to aim at is guaranteed independence, a guarantee in which China, the Soviet, the United States, Great Britain, France and perhaps Australia and New Zealand would all be participants. The representatives of Western civilization cannot expect to remain on the mainland of Asia. Our natural power is at sea. Such an evolution might open up the Indian Eastern flank to a very considerable uncertainty. But can anyone tell us what the future of India is to be? It has this superstructure of parliamentary government and civil service, very good, very impressive. And this foundation of tribal castes, of village life which seems quite unaffected by it.'

An Indian friend saw this, which to me is an attitude of effortless superiority and of colossal exploitation. What Lippmann seems to say is, 'How best can we use the Asian countries to keep us safe and free?' If I do him an injustice, I ask his pardon.

My friend from India, who is an intelligent newspaperman, wrote calling my attention to this. He says, 'Mr. Lippmann is free to expound his ideas from his position of influence. But there are 470 million people in India and many millions in South-East Asia besides who in spite of their poverty and suffering, in spite of the basic defects in the structure of their society which must change, will not permit themselves to be traded in the drawing rooms and cabinets of the Western world.' I could not agree more with the man. At the same time, if you have that attitude in the hearts of people in the West, I am not sure that a revolutionary Commonwealth society is likely to emerge.

My Indian friend goes on, 'The caste system, which worries Mr. Lippmann, is almost dead. India's greatest sin has been that since Independence she has concentrated only on her own improvement. She has not thought adequately for the world. Wrapped in the policy of non-alignment she has failed to take responsibility for the freedom and security of South-East Asia and of all men.'

I felt that was a pretty noble letter from my Indian friend. I believe it to be true. One of the great weaknesses of the modern world is that we all think of our own corner whereas we are living in a world where we have got to learn to think and plan for the whole of the world.

I want to say something about America. I would like to get America in the Commonwealth. Now, don't get me wrong. I would like the whole earth to become a common wealth. I happen to think that America is not

in a very much different position from other countries which once were our unwilling hosts and have since shown us the back door. They have been free for a long time. They possess the greatest accumulation of material wealth and power in the whole of God's earth. Why should they not be coaxed, induced and lured into a revolutionary concept for humanity, which at the moment they lack? The Americans go from place to place. They hand out dollars with a generosity which no other country in history has ever shown. But people take their money and hate their guts. The main reason is quite simple. They feel that America is primarily out for the Americans. They don't want to be bribed, bullied, or exploited by Americans or anybody else. They want a fair share in a world revolution. Nobody can pretend that American policy offers that. God knows nobody can pretend British policy offers it. The only people who offer it at the moment are the Communists and they offer it at the expense of anybody who does not happen to come from their class or their line. It is a divisive but a world idea. The Commonwealth should say to the Communist and the non-Communist world alike, 'Look here, Communism and anti-Communism have both failed to build the new type of man and the new type of society. Let's do it now together on a fresh basis and we will show you how.'

It could happen in America. I don't think anybody, whatever their background, rejoices at recent events in the Congo. But I have been in Mississippi. People who live in a country where workers go down to help under-privileged people and are secretly slain and buried after torture, can't say much about what goes on in the Congo. But, if we want America to feel guilty about Mississippi, we all ought to feel guilty about the Congo. Any breakdown in the normalcy of human comradeship where we all are sons and daughters of God should be a stain on the soul and a bruise on the heart of us all. I do not feel inclined to point the finger. If I point the finger at anybody over the Congo, I point it at those people who have widely proclaimed the horrible sufferings and torture of the white people, but have said nothing about the black people who died. And at the same time at the people who have pretended that it is all the white people's fault for going in and rescuing their nationals, or all the black people's fault for being so brutal to them. It is a colossal stain upon all of us that we tolerate such things in our society. You cannot say to America, 'Feel guilty about Mississippi', unless we are all ready to feel guilty about the other parts of the world where that kind of thing goes on.

A lot of people talk about the southern states of America. I have been there. I went down there not long ago with a number of men and

women from Africa – people of distinction in their own countries. At the end of a week they all came to me. Two things amazed them. One was the economic privilege of the Negro homes in the southern states where most people have for the most part a decent standard of life. The second thing they said was this: 'These American Negroes treat us Africans in exactly the way that they say the white people treat them.' That effortless superiority because you come from another part of the world with a different tradition and different upbringing is part of the hellish division of our times. We have got to face the fact that these attitudes are in all of us. We will not change them by pointing out those we dislike, hating those we dislike, and urging violence against those we dislike. If that is our answer, sooner or later we are going to have atomic war. If that is what we want, that is the way to get it.

The right answer is to face the fact that in all our hearts is an element of bigotry, an element of superiority, an element of bitterness, an element of hate. But also the capacity to have our hearts enlarged so that we care for everybody enough to include them as part of our family and help them to become different. If we got that going in society and in the Commonwealth we should see the greatest revolution of all time in this century, a hazard that would be worth attempting.

The original inhabitants of America are Indians. The white people were not first in America. The Indians have been pushed back and back and back and robbed of their land. They live in reservations and pueblos. Some of the reservations and pueblos they live in, where the white man in the past gave them the courtesy of thousands of acres of barren desert and woodland in their own country, have suddenly begun to yield oil. Some of the Indians have become among the richest people in the United States of America. The head of Phillips Oil, Keeler, is also the head of the Cherokee Indians. He is one of the big businessmen of the world and as true a man as I ever was privileged to know, passionately keen to see that his people play their rightful part in the life of America. It is an interesting thing that by and large the black people in America won't listen to the white American, nor the white American to the black people. They all listen to the Indian if he has something to say.

Every four Indians in the United States of America have one white employee of the Federal Government employed to look after them. Once you reach a point where the four men you are looking after can look after themselves, you are out of a job. The result is that the Indians deeply feel that there is a vested interest in keeping them ill educated, keeping them poor, keeping them out. We had 2,500 young Americans in Mackinac Island last summer. Among them were people from over

twenty of the Indian tribes. When they first came they were watchful. They had never sat down with people who were not Indian. Some of them didn't even know how you sat at a table. They had never sat at a table. After a bit, when we said to them, 'You can do something for your country nobody else can do', they began to participate. They rose to heights of sheer human courage in character I have rarely seen in other elements of America. They went back to their pueblos.

We told an Indian girl that we thought it was reactionary to expect America to be different if you were unwilling to change yourself. She said, 'I don't believe in God. I believe in the Great Spirit.' We said, 'Fine, let's see if the Great Spirit can talk to you.' So she was quiet for a minute or two and then she got very angry. We asked her who she was angry with. She said she was angry with the Great Spirit. So we asked her why. She said, 'Well, I had the idea that I should not shoot eagles any more.' It sounded ridiculous. But in her part of America eagles soar over these great peaks. They are protected by law because they are rare birds. She used to go out in the morning – she was a good shot – and with a .22 rifle shoot the eagles. She used to sell the tail feathers in Albuquerque and other cities for \$3 per feather. It was a source of income. She said with great bitterness, 'Why did God give us eagles if He did not want us to shoot them?' It was God this time, not the Great Spirit, I may say.

That girl went back. Of course there was division in the home, there were real problems of drink and other things in her pueblo. Her family is united, she has collected now nearly a thousand Indians from many different tribes to meet together in this new year at Albuquerque. The Americans say, 'We have never known Indians before do anything together or stand up and be articulate.' These people are holding this great assembly to talk to America because they have found in their own life not just the change that is needed but the cohesion that is needed for a revolutionary goal. They are going to say to the white and the black Americans, 'Your aims are too small. History has out-run your thinking. We have got to teach you to think again for the whole of America and the whole of humanity.' I believe it is going to be a hammer blow that will create an entirely new image of the American Indian before the eyes of a nation. I am proud to say I have been asked to go there and speak to them and I am going. That all came from one girl on a simple point.

Let me say this one last thing to you. There are only two types of people in the world today. There are some people who believe that we are just animals. We may dress in a different way from the beasts, we may rise in a different way from the beasts, we may communicate in a different way from the beasts, but basically they believe that there is

nothing in us but liquid, chemicals, fats, muscles that you can melt down, bottle, label, and shelve. That is the whole of you. They think that man made God and is now in a position of maturity where he can destroy Him.

On the other hand there are people like myself who believe that God made man and that there is in all of us a spark of the Eternal which is as important, as everlasting, and as precious in the life of everybody, whatever their background and colour, as it is in the life of any other man. The God who made us can guide us and change us, teach us to control the longings He implanted in us and give us His purpose for humanity. It is something which nowadays nobody thinks about. But looking at the great men and the great powers who run our affairs it might be a good thing if people started to think that way again. It would give a fresh concept. I remember that some of the Mau Mau men in Kenya told me that the thing which had made them most cynical was to hear the white Christians in the Sunday Schools praying, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', and then going out and living exactly the same old way. I think 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' as a commitment of life is far more revolutionary and radical than anything concocted by Karl Marx or the filthy paraphernalia of Fascism. If we accepted that dedication as our aim and theme, we could together, in the nations represented here, rapidly alter the course of modern history. Men can change. I know it myself. When I first was challenged by Moral Re-Armament I had no faith. I was successful. I was going up the ladder. I was challenged on simple points: I wrote about unity but I was divided from my only brother. I wrote about honesty but I was not honest with my wife. I didn't pay my income tax. In my newspaper office I used to write strong editorials criticizing the Government and cheat on my expenses every week. I also had to face the fact, which I did with tears, and I was over thirty, that my whole upbringing had been to believe that because I was white and English I was therefore superior to everybody else. I began to get a glimpse in my heart of what that attitude had done to millions and millions of my fellow men. That was what sparked me and made me decide to give all that I knew of myself to all that I knew of God for His purpose and His revolution. That is what I am trying to do today.

If you tell me I do not do it too well, I will heartily agree with you. All I can say is that I do all I see and if anybody here can show us how to be more effective and revolutionary in building a new type of society based on a new type of man, I will be his grateful debtor. But, if anybody here says that all that bad eggs need is a newer, more expensive frying pan, I will not agree with you.