



HOLLAND:

An editor recommends

'THERE IS SO MUCH BAD NEWS in our times. Negative news on violence, corruption, bitter class war and attack on moral values,' wrote Deputy Chief Editor and columnist J G Heitink in Holland's largest circulation daily *De Telegraaf*. In a column headlined 'A good message which is brought to us from Asia', he continued, 'That is why I have great appreciation for the courage with which a number of young people from various Asian countries and New Zealand, particularly students, have engaged in battle against the ills of our times.'

Heitink was writing about *Song of Asia* in Holland. After announcing where the show was to be performed and how to get tickets, he apologised for doing so with the words, 'For this one and possibly only time I commend a musical. I saw the show last year in Caux, in the centre of MRA, and I was struck by its originality which knew how to combine national folklore of the various countries with a message these young people want to bring, all served with humour and yet with an earnest, and above all positive, aim.'

When the box offices in Eindhoven, the Hague and Amstelveen (a suburb of Amsterdam) for the showings of *Song of Asia* received more requests for seats than they could provide, an extra showing in an 1,800-seat hall had to be arranged.

The 65 Asians from 14 countries have come to Holland at a time of uncertainty and need. Economic recession and social conflict are shaking the Socialist-Christian Democrat coalition and people's attitudes. The influx of tens of thousands of Surinamese in the concluding months of 1975 and the hijacking of a train and the occupation of the Indonesian Amsterdam consulate by South Moluccan separatists have destroyed all sense of 'it cannot happen here'.

Receiving the Asian force Socialist Mayor J J van der Lee of Eindhoven said, 'You have



The Tanzanian Ambassador, M N Rattansey (left), talks with Conrad Hunte (right), from Barbados, and the producer, Suresh Chandra, after the premiere of 'Song of Asia' in the Hague.



A rousing welcome for the cast in Eindhoven.

PHOTOS BY PANKAJ SHAH

defined your mission with the words, "Hate can disappear. That is one of the world's most important discoveries." Though I do not wish to speak of feelings of hatred that may possibly exist between some people in our community, the situation with regard to tolerance is less happy than it used to be.

'I call intolerance an evil of our times. Listening to each other is the basis of mutual understanding. I hope your show will have both here and elsewhere the effect to which you aspire, namely that it will promote the spread of mutual understanding over a divided world.'

Both in Eindhoven and the Hague *Song of Asia* drew an enthusiastic response from a

distinguished audience that packed the respective theatres. In both cities there were industrial and civic personalities. In the Hague there were eight ambassadors and a number of other diplomats. Bishop Simonis of Rotterdam attended the Hague performance with his Vicar General. Earlier in the week he received a group of the Asians.

In parliament there were group discussions with foreign affairs experts of the Socialist and the Catholic People's Party. With Christian Democrat MPs the Asians discussed the apparent dilemma of the West that many material aspirations seem to have been fulfilled and yet dissatisfaction continues. A Muslim member of the cast urged them to rekindle the flame of their faith in Europe.

Hundreds of students saw parts of the show in the famous Minerva student club of Leiden. The conviction and songs of the Asians managed to impose attentive silence in a place of customary beery noise. Members of the cast visited secondary schools and found with students and pupils keen interest for the international MRA conference for young people scheduled for Easter in Holland. A group also visited the Hague prison on the initiative of the Catholic prison priest.

The shows were attended by people from Suriname. A group of Moluccans came to a meeting following the performance of *Song of Asia* in Eindhoven.

PETER HINTZEN



Social Democrat MPs receive members of the cast in Parliament House.

NEW WORLD NEWS

FOR MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

Where it starts

THE HISTORY of the world and of these islands is filled with tales of barbarism, wars, persecutions, treachery to the State, massacres, pogroms and murder.

Today, in offices and homes, factories, unions, schools and the media, people terrorise each other. Children die of neglect at home; women form centres to which they flee, often terrorising in return the husbands and fathers of their battered children; schoolchildren commit suicide from fear of their classmates.

Marx maintained a hundred years ago that Britain's downfall would come through Ireland and this idea is systematically being carried out today in sectarian killings and terror. So-called liberation fronts and rebel forces march across the world fuelled and fired on hate, bitterness and revenge with destruction as their end.

This is a picture of Britain and the world at the beginning of 1976.

Many people must wonder why we remain moral pygmies when we are so technologically and scientifically advanced; when world ecumenism draws upon a common mind; when the ordinary working man and woman have in their respective homes and at their leisure more than any Caesar or Cleopatra boasted in their palaces.

This year the European Economic Council is setting up a conference to investigate terrorism, kidnapping and hi-jacking. What will be the outcome? New international laws? Sharing of different countries' methods and tactics?

John Wesley 200 hundred years ago saved Britain from bloody revolution. Change came to the nation which was then at the crossroads as she is today. Wesley geared himself to the idea that where men and women changed so the nation would change.

Facing our natures

I recently apologised for a long-held resentment. I discovered cruelty in my nature, the unwillingness to be corrected. I terrorised in verbal retaliation and silent moods. I shouldered class war feelings. When I listened to the voice within me which urged me to apologise, the chain of hate was broken and the healing process begun.

I believe God wants us to get a perspective on a crumbling civilisation, not to shore up the foundations, neither to pin on ourselves meaningless denominational labels, but to find the vision of His Kingdom to give to others. Can we face the cruelty in our own nature as we face the headlines each day? Can we perceive the Kingdom of God in each person we approach?

'The Kingdom of God is within you.'

PATRICIA JONES

'The power of this performance is its truth'

DER MERKER, published by the Friends of the Opera in Vienna, has reviewed the premiere of 'Song of Asia' in London:

This is a show which does not fit into any ordinary category of theatre. Sixty young people from 14 different Asian countries take part in a performance which is both absorbing entertainment and immensely moving. Its message is one of compassion, of international understanding and good-will in a world beset by doubt, jealousy and guilt.

The evocative music of the East links a series of dances and sketches — some of them very amusing — which illustrate old differences between peoples of eastern lands and the understanding of individuals which can eventually break down the barriers.

One enacts the doubt of islanders in Papua New Guinea when white miners arrive to develop the country's copper resources, and the discussions which led to eventual co-operation between the people and the 'outsiders' for the advantage and development of a 'new' independent country. Another shows a Japanese doctor whose family died or suffered at Hiroshima finding fellowship with a Chinese couple whose son died at the hands of his countrymen. A third shows a guerrilla whose brothers died in

Reprinted

The issue of 'New World News' (Vol 24 No 10) describing 'Ride! Ride!' and giving details of performances has been reprinted. Special offer: 20 copies for £1. (plus postage)

Asian jungle warfare finding strength and wisdom to greet his enemies as human beings — 'If I can have the courage to kill a man, why can't I love him enough to make him different?'

The themes are very simple, very human and very real. Some are emotionally so simple that the sophisticated audience may be embarrassed by the plain statement of life and death. The power of this performance is its truth — many of the performers have experienced these events at first hand. But the show is knit together by the Indian's gift of laughing at himself (it was conceived and first performed in India), and the humorous Indian sketches are delightfully done.

120,000 people in India and Indo-China saw *Song of Asia* before it came to Europe in March 1975. Since then it has played in France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark and Norway. After three weeks in London it will be seen in Oxford and South Wales (where the Welsh will surely take it to their musical and emotional hearts!).

Brilliant oriental costumes, dance rhythms, and a universal chord of suffering and hope make *Song of Asia* a remarkable experience.

In less than three weeks' time the premiere of 'Ride! Ride!' will take place in the Theatre Royal, Nottingham. The professional cast is rehearsing now under the direction of Peter Coe.

Last week Dr John Gibbs and his wife, Sheila, described the background to this forthcoming event at a meeting in the Westminster Theatre.

Dr Gibbs, a psychologist by profession, is a former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, the highest office open to a layman in Methodism, and Chairman of the Board of Management of all Methodist Schools.

Mrs Gibbs, in addition to other responsibilities in Methodism, is the first woman member of the Board of Finance of the Methodist Church.

We print some of their remarks.

Embarrassed, appalled ... and elated

LET US BEGIN with Alan Thornhill's play *Mr Wilberforce MP*.

For many years Dr Benson Perkins, a past president of the Methodist Conference, had been urging Alan Thornhill to write a play about John Wesley and he had always said it was far too vast a subject to have in a play. Wesley's life almost spans the eighteenth century. He rode over a quarter of a million miles through the length and breadth of England, made forays into Scotland and Ireland and Wales and influenced thousands of people of his time and since.

But after seeing *Mr Wilberforce MP* another president of the Methodist Conference, Dr Maldwyn Edwards, asked Mr Thornhill to write a play about John Wesley. And Alan Thornhill said, 'Well, give me a story from your own research. A story of one life through which I can perhaps present a small part of Wesley's life.' He knew that Dr Maldwyn Edwards was one of Methodism's great Wesley scholars.

Within a week the story came through.

Dr Maldwyn Edwards retired from being the Chairman of the Cardiff and Swansea District and we visited him in Bristol. At his garden gate he told us about *Ride! Ride!* and he asked us whether our drama group in our church, Trinity, Penarth, could be the first presenters of the play. We had done a great deal of drama and with very large casts.

And so the manuscript of the play and the music popped through our letterbox a few days later.

The manuscript caused very considerable embarrassment. Embarrassment because it made such enormous demands on cast, singing, acting, on staging and we couldn't see that any Methodist Church group would be able to present it adequately. Then we suddenly thought of the theatre church in Bolton, and sent the script to the Rev Leslie Marsh who was the minister of that church at the time. They undertook the first production.

But more importantly, they took it, lock, stock and barrel, to the Newcastle Methodist Conference in 1973. They gave it on a one-night stand and the reception that it received from largely the Methodist Conference was **overwhelming**. Next morning a motion was made in Conference that the play should be performed in every District in the country.



Could it be done?

We set about seeing if this could be done. We were able to gather together a group in South Wales centred on our own group. We had a production in the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff and packed it out for a whole week.

We also took it to the Methodist Conference, this time in Bristol. Here again it received a tremendous welcome, by all the sort of people who go to make up the Methodist Conference — clergy, laymen, scholars, businessmen. And they called for it again to be done.

It looked as though this could not happen. Groups did not come forward. Nothing moved. It looked as though it might be the very end of the venture.

But no — because at this point Ronald Mann took a ride himself around the country with Tony Bigland riding pillion. (They were later to become members of the council of the production company.) And they visited the various theatres in the North and centre of England and got them to promise that they would keep a week for a professional production. With no company, with no producer, with no cast! In addition to looking the theatres, Ronald Mann also was instrumental in raising £20,000. So that at the Liverpool Conference a year later we were able to announce that a professional production would be mounted.

So we formed Aldersgate Productions Ltd, with these terms of reference — 'for the advancement of the Christian religion, and the publication of plays and literary works which will encourage people to live, in accordance with the principles of the Christian religion.'

We gathered together a group of people who would form the Council of Management. We have a number of distinguished Methodists, laymen and women and ministers on our board, and also a number of people from other churches and from this theatre, contributing a great deal of know-how. Indeed, too much cannot be said of the contribution that the Westminster Theatre and its people have made to the launching of *Ride! Ride!*

Why Aldersgate? Well, those who are Methodists will know exactly why Aldersgate — the place where John Wesley had his great heart-warming experience changing the course of his life and maybe the course of British and world history. A splendid emotion-laden name. But for those who do not know, or for those who would be embarrassed if they did, it sounds as though it's the name of an ordinary company, slightly centred on the City of London, which sounds financially respected!

In December there was an interesting meeting of Aldersgate Productions Ltd, and one of the highlights was when Penelope Thwaites, who has written the music for the show, was introduced to the Board, most of whom had not met her before, and they were absolutely delighted with her. She had been working hard writing many songs for the new version of *Ride! Ride!*

And here we come to a very moving experience in our lives which was hearing Alan Thornhill read this new version.

Anybody who has written anything knows how very difficult it is when you have finished it and read the proofs and it has been acted and then you have to re-write it and it's back on your plate again and you are faced with the long drudgery of re-thinking and re-writing it.

One morning in December Alan Thornhill read the new version to us. We could see what tremendous hard work it has entailed. We could appreciate the integrity with which he had altered some things, and refused to alter other things which might have given a different gloss on the character and message of John Wesley. But above all I would like to pay tribute to the great grace on the part of Alan Thornhill and Penelope Thwaites that was manifest in the re-writing of that play.

We said that when the script first came through our letterbox we were embarrassed. Now we are appalled — and elated.

We are appalled when we think of the magnitude of what we have undertaken. The raising of the money in the first place, to launch the production. To be on the safe side we thought we should have £45,000. We have not got that yet. We had applied to the Joseph Rank Benevolent Trusts for support. But they were unable so to do. We have a little in-joke in Methodism that Methodist finances are supported by the 'rank and file'. And this really meant that we had to go to the file! But it was a good thing. Because it meant that so many people have been involved in the production and raising of money. The interest has spread. Nobody can say that it is just the brain child of one concern or one foundation. This is something that Methodism has taken unto itself.



Finding John Wesley

And then of course the finding of a director. We are very fortunate because not only have we found Peter Coe, but he has been able to

introduce us to artists who will be able to take the parts and take them fittingly. We have of course had public auditions. But it has also been his own personal experience of working with people that has been very valuable.

At one time we were afraid that we were going to have to write a very apologetic letter, if not to John Wesley, at any rate to the *Methodist Recorder*. Because it didn't seem that we could find anyone to fit the part of Wesley who was under 6'1". The trouble is that those who are good Methodists will know that Wesley was, dare we say it, 5'2". Our Wesley is not 5'2", but he is close enough.

It has been very moving when we have met the cast how many of them have emphasised their Methodist background. This was splendid because it really is important that the cast should understand what we are trying to do and what they in fact will be trying to do. And because it is going to be such an unusual play we felt we would try and break down any barriers between 'us and them'. So we have evolved a system of partnership between management and players, which may well be quite a forerunner for relationships in the theatre in the future. If we can't do it in this play what play can it be done in?

Now there have been other problems. People have misunderstood. Some people have said we are too professional, we are not professional enough, we are commercial, we are not commercial enough. Not infrequently have we had to write letters of reply to clarify points and explain misunderstandings.



Not our sole property

We are elated because of the warm response and the publicity we have received, and because of the enthusiasm of the leaders of the Methodist Church. How much the chairmen in the Districts are going to use it as an occasion for evangelism, for deepening people's faith and for bringing people to an understanding of the life of John Wesley and Jesus Christ to whom he points.

There has been a great deal of reminder of the rock from which we are hewn. We are not hewn from the rock of John Wesley. Although John Wesley is the founder of our church he is not our sole property. He is not a man for one church, he is a man for all churches. And for all seasons. We share him with the Christian church. He was a man of the eighteenth century, 1776 or thereabouts. *Ride! Ride!* does take us back to that century. But it doesn't leave us there. The power that gave drive to the Methodist revolution is still available to us today. And almost unbelievably John Wesley is going to ride again in 1976.

We pray that this may be an opportunity of Christ becoming regnant — that's an expression John Wesley uses very movingly in the play. And the effect on Britain, and indeed the world, might be incalculable.

Activists for a new way

A GROUP OF YOUNG BRAZILIANS have called a conference with the theme, 'Young people united in the rebuilding of society'. It is taking place this week in Sitio Sao Luiz, Petropolis, the Moral Re-Armament Centre for Latin America.

'We are staging this conference,' says Ernesto Veras, son of a trade unionist and one of the organisers, 'so that young people can find their rightful place in society, not being sucked up to as future rulers, nor mollycoddled as eternal babies, but as activists for the new way of life which they are needed to help create.'

There is a running debate in Brazilian public life about the meaning and practice of democracy, especially as regards the activities of students and trade unions. Both these groups, who are often critical of official policy, are finding a positive contribution to nation-building in the action of Moral Re-Armament.

Last September trade union leaders repre-



Planning the conference at Sitio Sao Luiz, Brazil: Wanderley de Assis (left), portworker; Rosa Maria de Assis (right), his wife and a music teacher; and Ernesto Veras (2nd from right), all from Rio de Janeiro.

senting over one million Brazilian workers attended an MRA Trade Union Seminar. Ernesto Veras and other young people took part by presenting the play, *The Forgotten Factor*, for the first time in Portuguese. Following this, leaders asked for programmes in their own unions and this month the play was given in the hall of the Hotel Workers' Trade Union of Rio de Janeiro at the invitation of the president, Sr Cassiano. Out of this common action of students and workers have grown the ideas for the February meeting.

The conference organisers are all students and young workers in Rio. They aim for a

'deepening of faith and experience' and in their regular planning meetings have been preparing topics for discussion such as, 'The challenge of faith in today's world', 'Moral principles as a weapon in the ideological conflict' and 'A strategy to build a firm basis for the future of our country'.

'When I met MRA I was apathetic and didn't worry myself with what went on around me,' says 17-year-old student Wagner Lancellotti. 'Then I took part in *The Forgotten Factor*. I learnt a great deal because without the help of God we could never have put on that show! After that I knew we youth were not on the right road. I realised that a new world had better start at home, so I went to my mother and sister and apologised to them for the constant fights we had had.'

In a letter to the Minister of Education in Brasilia, informing him of their initiative, the young people state, 'We youth today may be the leaders of our nations tomorrow. We want to lay aside indifference and take up that responsibility, to fight now so that in the future we will have a different world, without hate, corruption or violence, a world guided by men guided by God.'

'As important as structures'

F LOUIS, President of the 18,000-strong Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Employees Association, Bangalore, spoke at the Moral Re-Armament Training Centre, Asia Plateau, Panchgani, during the first of a new series of training courses for creative leadership in *industry and national development*.

'I have been around the world and attended conferences, but this is the first conference where I saw human nature being tackled,' he said. 'The trade union movement has been too centered on material values,' he went on, 'and it requires spiritual values to complement them.' He had decided to apologise to his father for bitterness.

With him was H Mahadevan, General Secretary of the union, who is also the convener of all the public sector unions in Bangalore, which has the biggest concentration of public sector industries in the country. Mr Mahadevan said, 'I have learnt that changing men is as important as changing the structures of society. I will apply this in my work. Now I know where I stand and where I am going.' He wanted to give more of his time and energy to unorganised workers who he felt had been neglected by the leaders of the organised workers.

B A Dixit, Personnel Manager of National Organic Chemical Industries Ltd, Bombay, came because he was struck by the change in

his brother-in-law, the manager of another firm in Bombay. After two-and-a-half days Mr Dixit said he had been 'cynical and opposed' to MRA. But he had checked up with one of the gardeners at the centre and found out that 'what was preached was also lived'. This gardener had said he would not leave even if offered twice the salary because of the spirit there. Mr Dixit went on, 'My motives have not been straight. I have strived to look better than others. I have seen how my behaviour influences the actions of my wife, son and daughter. Similarly it must be influencing my workers and the country. I have found meaning in my life.'

Marathi performance

There was a delegation of 16 from Walchandnagar Industries, near Pune, employing about 4,000 workers. Recently they settled a dispute over incentives and norms of production. The legal officer of the company gave sixty per cent of the credit to the training in MRA three previous delegations of senior management and union officials had received at Asia Plateau.

Employees of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation, employing more than 50,000 workers, staged a Marathi version of the MRA industrial play, *The Forgotten Factor*. They plan to show this play in all the 23 divisions of the state transport system. For the last four months the cast and the director — Professor Kelkar, a well known figure on the Marathi stage — have given their weekends for rehearsals.

BHANU KALE

DETERMINED

ST JOHN'S EDMONTON REPORT published a thousand-word article with photos about the recent Calgary conference. It concludes, 'Mr Iralu and others at the meeting spoke of incidents of conflict transformed to co-operation by application of MRA principles, from an England torn by labor-management disputes, to an Ireland torn by civil war. Dr Campbell, in his concluding address, said these hopeful events are still "behind" the headlines. But history, he continued, has been changed by small but determined groups before. And the MRA firmly believes that if its members listen for God's direction, then history can be changed again.'

TOMORROW'S WALES

A CONFERENCE 'Wales and tomorrow's world' is to be held on 28 February at South Glamorgan County Headquarters, Cardiff. The invitation states, 'Individuals, groups, communities, countries are searching for ways to build an unselfish society. We know what is wrong—it fills the papers and the news programmes. Can Wales help humanity find a new and sane road to tread? A road for every age, race, colour, every language?'

There will be speakers from 'Action '75', the initiative of trade unionists to support 'a year for Britain, not a year for self'.

The play *Britain 2000* will be presented by African, Asian, English and West Indian families.