

HATE OR HOPE FROM AFRICAMRS MIYEN

What will Black Africa offer the world in the second half of the twentieth century? General Amin's treatment of his Asian population raises this question in an acute form.

Two people from Africa I met last week represented in sharp contrast the choice facing their continent. One was a young African attending a youth conference in Manchester. His bitterness and jealousy of the affluent nations coloured all he said and did. It made me wonder what sort of future a man filled with hate and rivalry would build.

The other person I met was an Inspectress of Schools in South Africa. Her story left me with hope.

In 1965 Mrs. Miyen was an assistant teacher still under training. Her headmaster was a white Afrikaner. One day he decided to go with Mrs. Miyen to supervise her on teaching practice in another school. They went in the school mini-van. There were four places in the front but Mrs. Miyen was expected to sit on the floor at the back.

Unknown to the headmaster she was then three months pregnant. It was bitterly cold. By the time they reached the school Mrs. Miyen was feeling so ill she could not teach. She was also seething with hate and bitterness. She asked to be excused and left the school for the hospital. She remained there for two weeks and her baby was saved.

The Swiss doctor who treated Mrs. Miyen made a friend of her and gradually found out what had happened. A few days after Mrs. Miyen had left the hospital, Dr. Zuber went to see her. They had a frank talk. He asked Mrs. Miyen whether she had ever listened to God. "No", was the reply. "Well, that is what we are going to do right now", said her friend.

She was provided with pen and paper. After a struggle she wrote down, "I hate my headmaster". Then a question came to her mind, "Why

are you so proud?". This she could not bring herself to put down so instead she wrote, "Pride". The doctor's thoughts were concerned with how much Mrs. Miyen and her husband were meant to do for her country. Mrs. Miyen read out what she had written. However, she decided she could not pocket her pride or apologise to her headmaster.

For three weeks she was in turmoil. As the time went by she knew in her heart that she had to go to her headmaster. She told him honestly what she had felt in her heart. She had purposely taught the pupils to hate the white man through her history lessons. She apologised for this. The headmaster rose and came round the desk to where she sat. He shook her hand warmly and said, "I should have been the one to apologise first, for my hatred and bitterness against the black people".

Next morning the headmaster told the whole school what had happened. He ended by saying, "So far this school has been run on my will. From now on it will be run on God's will".

Mrs. Miyen says the atmosphere in the school changed from that day. The white teachers voluntarily left their more comfortable staff room to be with their black colleagues and real unity began to grow.