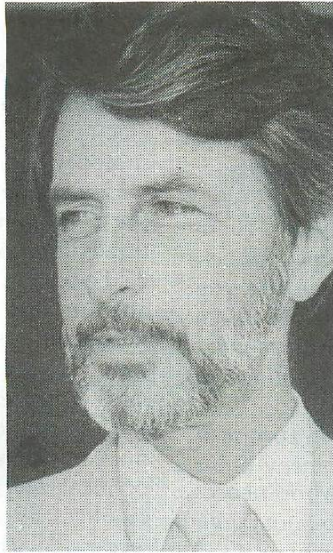


NEW WORLD NEWS

Vol32 No6 24 March 1984 20p



**SPECIAL ISSUE ON
BRIDGING GULFS**



Reg Blow (top left), advisor to the Victorian Government on Aboriginal issues; Viengxay Chantharasay (bottom left), originally from Laos; Jeremy Long (above), Australian national Commissioner for Community relations. Photos: Weeks

AUSTRALIA WAKING UP TO THE GLOBAL SOCIETY

A TRANSFORMATION has taken place in Australia, and many people have hardly realised it. Jeremy Long, the national Commissioner for Community Relations, speaking in Melbourne last month, pointed out that Australia has become one of the world's 'few genuine global societies—there are even Outer Mongolians and Eskimos here'. Australia was proving that different ethnic groups could live together, he said. The occasion was a seminar on 'What kind of nation do we want?', held at Armagh, the Australian-Pacific centre for Moral Re-Armament.

Official policies that approved of discrimination in many areas of national life had been changed within the last generation. But Mr Long was not complacent. His task is to deal with discrimination and he knows the uglier side of Australia. Nor were the 140 in his audience complacent. Many of them, like Mr Long, grapple daily with making that 'global society' work. They included a university professor, who had been threatened after writing against white racial extremism on the campus, and a researcher into unemployment in Northern Australia who had been shattered by the hopelessness she had met among Aboriginal families.

The pace of change had been such, Mr Long said, that it was no wonder some people resisted it. But Australia was proving wrong the pessimists who assert that when people of different ethnic groups are brought together, an 'iron law of ethnicity' ensures that there will be conflict. Conflict comes about not because two groups live together but when there is a large disparity between the wealth, status and power of the two groups, he said. 'We must demonstrate this in the world, because we are all on one small spaceship in the universe, and we have got to live together if we are going to live.'

The seminar was arranged by Melbourne citizens to discuss 'how to develop relationships and attitudes adequate for the coming decades'. Traditionally Australia has wel-

comed migrants from a wide range of European cultures. Now a quarter of her immigrants come from Asia. 'We are committed to a more equal participation of all Australians in our national life,' said Mr Long. Although Australians prided themselves on giving everyone a 'fair go', they were far from having lived up to it, particularly in relation to the Aboriginal people.

'But we can all act positively to shape our society,' he stressed, concluding with the hope that 'today we may together explore ways in which individual Australians can do some of that *shaping*'.

This conviction was the keynote of the day, together with the words of the seminar invitation: 'Fear, prejudice and discrimination can be left behind when we decide to change our own wrong attitudes rather than waiting for someone else to.'

Two prominent Aborigines gave their perspective. Reg Blow advises the Victorian Government on Aboriginal issues; and is also President of the Aboriginal Advancement League, which sometimes has very different views from the Government. Though Australia was a 'lucky country', he said, 'it was not so lucky for his people, on the bottom rung of the social and economic ladder—a situation creating conflict in other countries. 'But I don't want what is happening in the Middle East.'

Next year the state of Victoria would celebrate 150 years of 'European occupation', he went on. He had accepted a position on the committee organising the celebrations—'making clear that it is not a celebration from our point of view'—intending through it to promote the positive aspects of Aboriginal community and society. 'As the original people of Australia, we have a responsibility which is not being accorded to us—the care of this country,' he said. 'What we do here may show the whole nation what could be achieved.'

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BRIDGING GULFS

THE PEACE DEBATE is probably the hottest today. Whatever one's political stance—multilateralist, unilateralist or 'don't know'—it is best undergirded by an intelligent strategy of peace-making.

Effective peace-making has many ingredients. These range from education and diplomacy to less widely appreciated factors such as forgiveness and repentance. The true peacemaker understands that he needs to live at peace within himself and as far as possible at peace with all men. He also understands that working for peace is intimately bound up with the struggle to answer injustice.

The preoccupation with the East-West gulf, in Europe at least, makes it easy to forget that there are many other gulfs—each of which is a potential threat to world peace. None is more tragic and costly than the North-South gulf. Each day 40,000 children die from the effects of malnutrition—a 'Hiroshima' every three days. The failure of the North to treat this gulf as seriously as the East-West one shows how much our concept of peace-making needs to be broadened. It also underlines how much we need to expand our care and concern for others.

The following pages look further into the theme of bridging gulfs.

IRON CURTAINS CAN BE MELTED

by Gordon Wise

THE WEST VACILLATES between stances that appease and threaten the Soviet Bloc. The former stance abets the further erosion of liberty and the consolidation of tyranny. The latter increases the risk of accidental mutual annihilation. There is, however, a third way—a highway which the West can approach along three roads.

First, let us approach the Soviet Union with an awareness of the talents and traditions, the pride and achievements of their peoples. The Russians are a proud people whose ancestors wrote history large. Their endurance and heroism in the Second World War (once they began fighting to defend Mother Russia rather than half-heartedly to preserve a hated regime) was a marvel of history. True, their economy and production of consumer goods are erratic compared with the West. But in those areas where they choose to apply their best skills and resources, they excel. Let us say so. We should appreciate whatever is worthy of appreciation. Let us stop seeking constantly to prove our superiority. Constant denigration of others is a symptom of a hidden fear of inferiority. A ceaseless striving to make them feel inferior is bound to increase their belligerence. It does nothing for us save bolster our flagging confidence in our own way of life. In short, how the Russians are treated has a great effect on what they do. Their seeming obsession with their military clout is not just a reaction to their suffering in World War II and their fear of encirclement. It is one area in which they can say, 'We're as strong as you are.'

Secondly, we could approach the Soviet Union from the left. A society which claims to be founded on the brotherhood of all mankind, on the common cause of the world's

proletariat, should be enlisted in a global bid to provide the necessities of life for everyone everywhere. The current squandering of resources on building weapons for our mutual destruction is a crime against all humanity. We must maintain an adequate, credible defence, with a demonstrated will to use it. But can we draw the line at a lower level of defence spending? If five swords are enough to defend ourselves, why fashion ten? Why not offer to beat two, three, four or even five swords into ploughshares and challenge the Soviets to do the same? Then we would all be able to make a realistic contribution to meeting the desperate needs of the hungry nations. Defend ourselves we must but let us also give a lead in diverting resources and transferring technology to the needy nations and in opening markets to their products. Some of our enlightened statesmen and technocrats have pointed the way. We need the political will to make these ideas work, and that means sacrifices by all of us, as well as courage in our political leadership. This may be a risk. But it can hardly be more risky than our present mutual glowering.

Brow-beating

The third approach is to practise what we preach. Central to the foundations of most democracies is a faith whose tenets include the admission of mistakes and, where appropriate, asking for forgiveness and forgiving others. Could this be practical politics? Certainly, the politics of brow-beating or blustering, of kow-towing or surrender change nothing. As a Zimbabwean freedom fighter said, 'Hating a man only makes him worse.' Maybe the way forward lies in truths with which we say we are familiar but which in practice we treat with contempt through failing to apply them.

Mankind is crying out for peace, even for hope that peace is possible. Our western countries which have pioneered so much in science and industry can surely pioneer in peace-making. We need to give mankind the hope that there is another option—in addition to the unacceptable ones of resignation to living with the permanent threat of a holocaust, and of an organised campaign against our nuclear defences which could both undermine our will to fight and also encourage aggression in those who threaten freedom.

The Soviets are still trying to foist their discredited ideology on to the rest of us even though *they know*, as we



Gordon Wise

Weeks

know, that it has run out of steam. Our common danger may lie less in a planned nuclear exchange than in the global anarchy which would follow the collapse of the disciplines and restraints in our respective systems—on the one hand when coercion ceases to terrorise; and on the other when we subvert ourselves through our own amorality. It would be tragic if, just at the moment when millions of people in the East begin to glimpse a way out and their system begins to crumble, we should allow the debasement of the values and beliefs which bind our Western societies together. We must live out and offer an alternative that is as valid for the East as for the West.

The younger men who were short-listed for the Kremlin's top job after Andropov died may have quite different approaches. Chernenko was a 'safe' choice. If we in the West are faithful, if we are firm and if we point a way out of a collision course, the time will come when the iron of the Iron Curtain will be melted by a new generation and a new warmth from both sides. This is not a revived naive longing for 'detente'. It would mean maintaining strength but also reaching out towards the hearts of the Russian people, perhaps showing their leaders a way to get off their own hook.

Peace will be a by-product of trust. Trust will be a by-product of change—the change that comes when we admit that our ways have been inadequate and seek to embrace the wider vision and the help of a Power beyond our own. ■

AFRICAN PEACEMAKERS

MICHAEL HENDERSON, a British journalist living in the USA, gives a weekly public affairs talk on KBOO radio in Portland, Oregon. We print extracts from two of them:

IT IS EXTRAORDINARY THAT PEACE should prove so elusive when so many people long for it. With the burgeoning of peace movements, with the widespread fear that the proliferation of nuclear weapons may lead us willy-nilly into a war that could destroy the world, it is important to be all the time trying to get perspective on the subject. Since I became involved in a peace commission I have been asking myself some questions about our work for peace. Is it inclusive enough, is it broad enough, is it fundamental enough and is there a challenge in it to the way each of us lives?

My uncle is a pacifist. Rather than serve in the armed forces he worked in World War I with refugees and in World War II with radium. My father volunteered before he was conscripted in both wars, fighting in the trenches and serving on the general staff. I never had the sense that one was less peace-loving than the other, that one was more selfless or indeed more Christian. Both made great sacrifices for their country and for their beliefs.

To me any peace effort worthy of the name and standing a chance of reaching its objective has to be one that can enlist the sympathy and energy and sacrifice of both sorts of men. Too many so-called peace workers seem to be so rigid in their approach, so self-righteous in their condemnation of others, that they end up making their own fellow countrymen and women, even their own elected representatives, their enemies.

Vital as it is for all of us to work towards nuclear disarmament, our present preoccupation with the subject could blind us to one awkward fact. If every nuclear weapon were suddenly miraculously removed from the earth it is doubtful if we would be any nearer peace. Misguided politicians or dictators might be more prepared to initiate a war with conventional weapons than with nuclear ones. A more fundamental approach is called for.

The truth is that the rock on which peacemaking efforts founder is human nature, the unresolved hurts, the frustrated ambitions, the desire for revenge. We need to be tackling these with the same determination we apply to opposing nuclear weaponry. The reason that we don't, of course, is that it is a tougher job and that it means that we need to be sure that these elements are absent from our own lives. I form the impression that Christ's saying, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God', applies not so much to those who only demonstrate for peace but to those who also live a quality of peace in their own lives.

There are examples in recent history from which we can take encouragement. Consider the night the Nigerian Civil War ended, in 1970. The Head of State, Major General Yakubu Gowon, put forward reconciliation as the basis of his policy. At the height of that war he had reminded his compatriots on both sides of the example of reconciliation between France and Germany. 'We cannot, however, achieve national reconciliation,' he said, 'by quoting the experience of other peoples. Honestly, I believe it is part of the African character to forgive and try to forget. Unless we try to forget, it will be more difficult to truly forgive.' Nigeria has other pressing problems now but that policy of reconciliation prevailed to such an extent that it removed much of the bitter legacy of war, a fact confirmed to me by senior people on both sides. 'No victors, no vanquished' became the official line.

Multiracial model

When Jomo Kenyatta, as Prime Minister of Kenya, first met the white settlers who had fought against him in the independence struggle, he told them, 'I have made many mistakes; please forgive me. You have made mistakes; I forgive you. I want you to stay and farm and farm well in this country. Let us join hands and work for the benefit of Kenya and not for the benefit of one particular community. This is what I beg you to believe. This is the policy of our Government.' There is no doubt that this approach was key to the development of that country. Without it Associated Press would never have been able to send out a story on Kenya, as they did last December, which was headlined in *The Oregonian*, 'A multiracial model in black Africa'.

For the Kenyans and the Nigerians, after years of repression, cruelty, torture, humiliation and personal loss, the act of forgiveness was no small thing. Nor was it for the French and Germans who fought three wars in 70 years and whose example was quoted by General Gowon.

We admire, at a distance, such people. We almost take for granted what they do. We expect as a matter of course that black and white in Africa should be able to live together after all they have been through. I sometimes wonder whether we are prepared, often in less traumatic circumstances, to reach out a forgiving hand to those we differ from politically or ideologically. ■

THE UNEQUAL TREATIES AND THE INFAMOUS TRADE

by Hedley Bunton

MY FIRST SIGHT OF HONG KONG was on a cold, drizzly day in January, 1933. Its famous peak and beautiful harbour were covered in cloud and mist. I spent a week there before proceeding 80 miles up the Pearl River to Canton to learn *Chinese and prepare myself for my work with the Chinese Church*. In all, I lived in Hong Kong for 17 years and in Canton for 12 years.

In Hong Kong my pride and patriotism were stirred by the British warships in the harbour; and in Canton I was pleased to see British and French gunboats anchored in the river off Shameen Island. Half of the island was the British Concession with British police in control. This half housed the British and American Consulates and many businesses. The other half was French with French gendarmes stationed there. There were also American gunboats in the river together with occasional Italian and other foreign naval vessels. Somehow they made me feel safer in a strange land.

There were still warlords and bandits around. When I travelled between the churches in the country areas there was some danger, but I knew that if I ran into difficulties the British consul would get into action on my behalf. I was proud to be a Britisher of Australian birth. I vaguely knew that I was protected by certain treaties although I had little idea of how they had come about.

A rude awakening came in the autumn of 1937. The Japanese Army had begun its invasion of North China in July and Canton was being bombed daily by Japanese aircraft from their warships in Bias Bay near Hong Kong. There was no night bombing in those days so the city came alive again after the all-clear signals.

‘Under one of those treaties, in 1842, we gained possession of a barren, rocky island called Hong Kong.’

One night I was at a Chinese wedding feast. The bombing had been particularly bad that day with many people killed and wounded and parts of the city burnt out. I was sitting next to a Chinese law student and we were discussing these terrible events. All of a sudden he said to me, ‘Next to the Japanese, the British are China’s worst enemies.’ Never had I been spoken to like that. I was hurt. I was angry. I was speechless. It was fortunate for me that I was speechless otherwise there might have been another international ‘incident’. (The Japanese did not at any stage call their attack on China war. It was always the ‘China incident’.)

I went home confused, resentful and questioning. Why had that Chinese student said that? Was there any truth in it? In defence there ran through my mind all the good things I knew of that some British had done in China. I had accepted uncritically the brief statements in British history books about our wars with China. We were always right because our navy and army had defeated the Chinese. Treaties were made whereby ports were opened for trade with the West, diplomatic relations were established and

there was freedom to promote Western religion and education. Britain and America even gave scholarships for young Chinese to study overseas and in due course thousands took them up.

Under one of those treaties, in 1842, we gained possession of a barren, rocky island called Hong Kong. Over the years we changed it into a prosperous and busy trading centre to which Chinese flocked from the Mainland, until now 98 per cent of its five and half million population are Chinese.

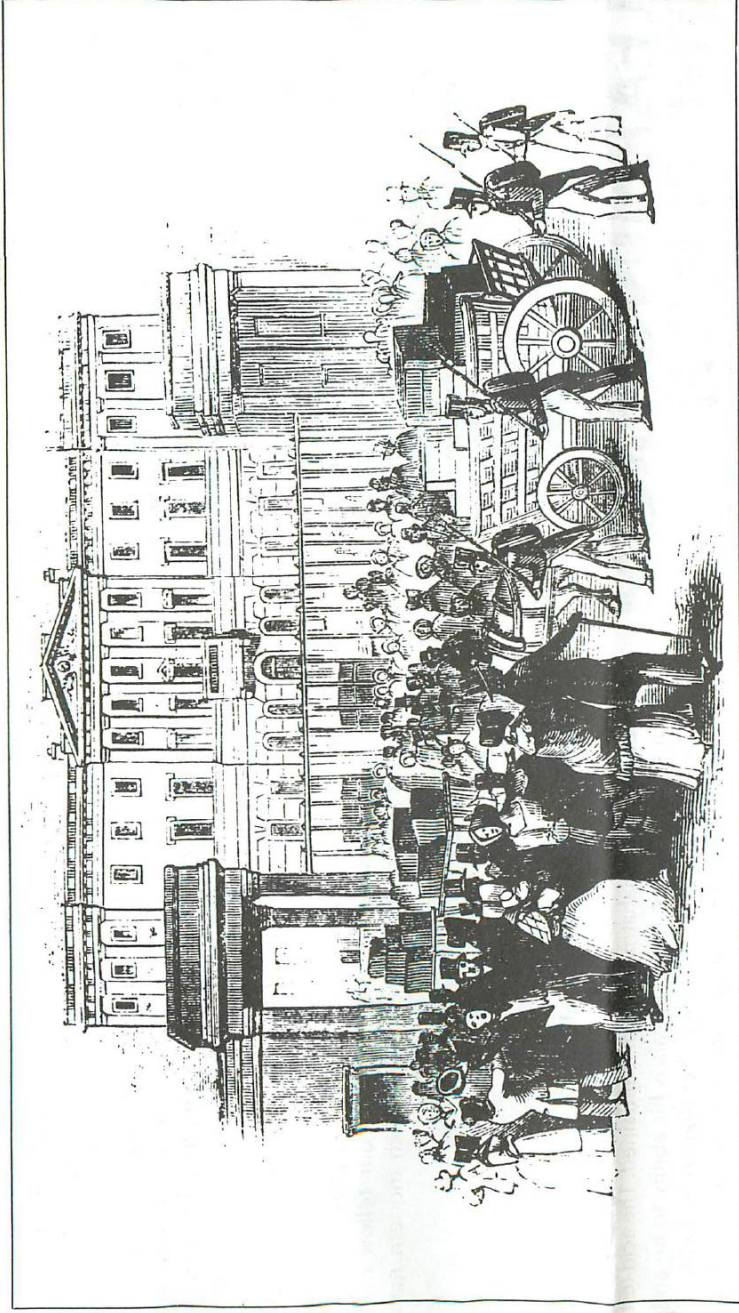
I knew that my reactions to what the student said to me were wrong although natural. I decided to read other histories than British. What I discovered made me ashamed of what my race had done in China. I also learned that the Chinese called those treaties ‘unequal’, and why.

‘Whether I liked it or not, I was a representative of that race’

For decades we British had smuggled opium into China against the laws of the country. It has been calculated that 284,582 tons of opium were exported from British India to China between 1838 and 1900—half a ton of opium for every hour of all those years. We did not allow the Indians to smoke the opium because it was physically, mentally and morally harmful, but we were prepared to sell it to those Chinese who would co-operate with us in breaking the laws of their own government. The opium poppy was grown in Bengal where at one stage 600,000 acres were under cultivation. We fought three wars with the Chinese over the opium trade and finally forced them to legalise it. China then decided to cultivate the opium poppy herself in order to force down the price which had been draining the country of its silver currency. The British claimed that the money was needed to pay for governing India.

There was opposition to the trade from missionaries in China and from concerned people in Britain. *The Times* condemned the trade in a leading article on 3 December 1842. Church leaders spoke against it. The politician W E Gladstone said of the first opium war, ‘A war more unjust in its origin, a war more calculated to cover this country with permanent disgrace, I do not know and have not read of. The British flag is hoisted to protect an infamous contraband traffic...’ In 1891 a motion was carried in the House of Commons that the trade in opium was morally indefensible, but the British Indian Government took no notice. Even a Royal Commission which lasted for two years concluded, ‘We agree in not recommending any action tending to the destruction of the trade.’

Under the treaties, the foreign powers forced special privileges from the Chinese. In each port areas had to be set aside where foreigners could live under the protection of their own laws, police and warships. These areas were called Concessions. So there were Russian Concessions, British Concessions, French Concessions, German Concessions and, in Shanghai, the International Concession as



'Chinese tribute money entering the Mint' from the 'Illustrated London News', 1842

well. A foreigner who committed a crime in China could not be tried according to Chinese law. If he were British he had to be tried in a British court on British soil in a British Concession in China, or back home in Britain. Special privileges had to be granted for the protection of the Christian missionaries, and also for Chinese Christians engaged in lawsuits. In the case of one Western country it was written into the treaty that the foreign bishops of the church should be given the status of Chinese mandarins.

So I now understood why the Chinese called those treaties 'unequal', and why the law student believed the British to be China's worst enemies, after the Japanese.

I never saw that student again, but what he had started in my thinking led to a revolution in my living. I felt deeply ashamed and embarrassed and had to face the question, what to do about it? Then I had an idea. I was an Australian, so that let me out. But not for long. I remembered that my ancestors were from the British Isles and that my passport identified me as a British subject although an Australian citizen. However, my defence mechanism came to the rescue again. Even though I was British, those things had happened decades before I was born. But into my mind came a thought that I could not get rid of, however much I tried. The responsible people were dead, but I was a Britisher living in China—whether I liked it or not, I was regarded as a representative of that race. More important still, my race called itself Christian and yet had done all those unchristian things in China. I found the logic of this unanswerable. The final question was—would I accept responsibility for the sins of my race against China?

After some days of wrestling with my feelings, and with my personal and racial pride I found the answer. Several years before, I had decided that I would do what I could to put right what was wrong in myself and in the world wherever I might be. I knew that I could not alter the past wrong-doings of my race in China, nor put right the incalculable harm we had done to so many Chinese for over a hundred years. But I could at least admit the evil we had

done and ask forgiveness for it. I decided that if ever again any Chinese faced me with the things my race had done against his, I would admit the truth of them, sincerely apologise and ask forgiveness.

I did not have to wait long. With blazing eyes, a harsh voice and bitterness in every word, a Chinese laid bare before me the details of our crimes against his race and country. I let him finish, and when the torrent had ceased said, 'I know that everything you have said is true, and I am sorry. On behalf of my race I want to apologise for the many wrong things we British have done to your people and your country. Will you please forgive us?'

The result was amazing. The anger went out of his eyes and the bitterness out of his voice. He began to smile. He put out his hand, took mine, and said, 'Well, you know, China hasn't always been right either!'

That experience was a liberating one for both of us. My apology liberated me from the chains of the past sins of the British in China. He was liberated from the bitterness and hatred they had bred in him. In a moment, a new force entered the hearts and minds of both of us. It did not alter the past but it did change in some degree the present and allow one Chinese and one Britisher to begin a new and better relationship.

I have often wondered what might have happened if, many years ago, a British Prime Minister had apologised to the Chinese Emperor or the Dowager Empress. Indeed, is it not worth considering what might happen now if such an apology were made to today's leaders of China?

Britain and China are negotiating now about the future of Hong Kong from 1997 onwards. Progress has been difficult. To my mind there is one important factor missing from one side in the negotiations. As far as I know, no representative of a British Government has ever asked forgiveness of the Chinese people and their representatives for what we did to them in the past. It is never too late to apologise and build an entirely new relationship of the heart as well as the mind. ■

'Learning from the South—what, why and how?' was the title of a conference in January organised by the Centre for Overseas Studies of the University of Bristol School of Education in conjunction with the Development Studies Association. TEAME MEBRAHTU, a lecturer in education at the University of Bristol School of Education, gave the keynote address. Explaining that 'North' and 'South' were shorthand terms for greatly differing countries, Dr Mebrahtu put forward three reasons why the North should learn from the South. First, he said, the fact that the North was affluent and dominant now did not necessarily mean that it would remain so indefinitely; secondly, 'Northern civilisation' which tended to glorify power and violence left a number of grave questions unanswered; and finally, as the North did not have a monopoly of truth, justice, harmony and peace, learning from the South would augur well for both hemispheres.

The following article consists of extracts from Dr Mebrahtu's paper, which will eventually be published with the full conference proceedings:

LEARNING FROM THE SOUTH

TO DISMISS THE CALL for learning from the South as myth is to underestimate the past and future contributions of the South to the progress of mankind.

Obsession in the North with the creation of extra material wealth indicates greater concern with goods than with people. It also implies the North's inability to solve the mismatch between employment and unemployment, work and leisure, and between learning and working. Technologicalised economy, bureaucratisation of major institutions and pluralistic structures of modern society have threatened the individual not only with meaninglessness in the world of his work but also with loss of meaning in his relations with other people.

Moreover, as the problems of acid rain, pollution in, say, Japan, and the neglect of agriculture in the USSR may testify, this unbalanced and ecologically unsound model of industrialisation is still plaguing the North (and those countries of the South which have adopted large-scale industry).

Thus, a re-examination of the performance of the small-scale labour-intensive rural enterprises, say of India, and of the other aspects of intermediate technology which are surely but slowly finding a home in the South, may provide certain necessary clues in ensuring closer linking of agriculture with industry, in avoiding the rather sad human and social costs, and eventually in halting the North's technological juggernaut.

A fuller meaning of life

The North's stunning success in science and technology has enabled its residents in particular and mankind in general, to alleviate their physical ills with more efficacy and has served them with the necessities of life in greater profusion. But in spite of these accomplishments, man's feelings of helplessness, frustration and alienation appear to have increased. Technological civilisation has not succeeded in liberating man from the perennial problems

which spring from a goal of 'to have' rather than 'to be'. Nor has it enabled him correctly to understand the meaning of life and the significance of his own existence.

Notwithstanding Aristotle's warning in the third century BC of the danger of imagining that wealth is the cause of happiness, and fooled by its advances in knowledge and power, the North seems to have surrendered to a naive satisfaction at its magnificent material achievements and to have gone astray into 'an incredibly superficial conception of civilisation'. The evils of consumerism, which is often seen as an answer to everything, are as harmful as those of malnutrition. Materialism, competition and prestige fever, envy, lack of humanity and feeling for our fellow men constitute part of the sickness from which modern man suffers.

Acid test

What seems to promote real happiness and to increase capacity for service is the 'deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants', as Mahatma Gandhi maintained. The acid test which separates man from animals is his ability to be and feel responsible and responsive rather than to lead a life of mere acquisition of wealth or ease or pleasure. The life of love (caring for others) is much more rewarding than the love of life per se. After all, being human must necessarily mean being able to be directed to something other than oneself. Thus, a look southwards may help the North learn something from, say, Africa's 'humane, tender and rare quality of joy and gentleness' (in the words of a Northerner). In spite of its stereotyped image of being 'backward' and 'underdeveloped', the South's interest in social welfare, family units, respect for elders and discipline, in friendship and feeling for mankind, may provide the necessary equilibrium in order to make the inner life of the Northerners 'more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in short more human a life'.

A future together?

North-South discussions of the past two decades have, with notable exceptions, resulted in oft-repeated but seldom heeded demands for the restructuring of the international economic order. At the moment, the alliance between them, if any, is questionable. But when all is said and done there is a belief, which I share, that the resolution of the North-South conflicts must be based on the humility of the North to learn from the South and on the magnanimity of the South to forget and forgive and enlist the needed support and understanding of the North in its development. For better, for worse, the future of the South is intricately intertwined with that of the North. Therefore, it is only what is good for both that will be good for each one of them. When that new age dawns both will find freedom in unity and co-operation. Then both will discover that development has nothing to do with dividing the family of nations into a hierarchy of 'developed' and 'developing' camps. Moreover, then unlike now, civilisation will be judged not by the creation of space-ships and the 'humane' neutron bomb, but by using technology and science to benefit mankind. Meanwhile, however, each one of the twain can take steps which will widen its tolerance, understanding and knowledge of the other. ■

WALES LINK

A RECENT ISSUE of *Y Faner*, the Welsh weekly news magazine, carried a page-long article headlined 'Link of Hope'. It was referring to Wales Link (in Welsh *Dolen Cymru*), a new initiative to 'twin' Wales with one of the small developing countries of the Third World.

An innovative medical doctor from Anglesey first voiced the idea. Carl Iwan Clowes, a Specialist in Community Medicine with the Gwynedd Area Health Authority, was one of many who attended a 'Dialogue on Wales' Rôle' at Bangor at the end of 1982. It brought together prominent national figures of differing political backgrounds and ordinary people seeking solutions. It was while the Dialogue was considering Wales' contribution in a world setting that Dr Clowes put forward the concept of Wales Link.

'The widening gulf between the countries of the materially privileged "North" and those of the developing "South" is a potentially greater source of world instability than that which separates East and West,' states a pamphlet setting out Wales Link's aims. 'Wales Link exists to throw one bridge across that divide by organising a link between Wales and one of the Least Developed Countries.'

There are presently 36 LDCs (Least Developed Countries) as designated by the World Health Organisation. There is a gap between them and the other developing countries, not only in wealth but in such things as infant mortality, life expectancy and provision of health care. They have been called 'the Third World's Third World'.

Wales Link will therefore be seeking to bring together two very different and materially unequal communities in friendship and understanding. It feels that ties will strengthen as each country enables the other to learn more about its aspirations, people, history, culture, education and economy.

In Europe, Third World linking has been experimented with by villages, towns and even quite large cities, but so far not on a country to country basis. It won't all happen at once. The Wales Link Committee, headed by G O Williams, the former Archbishop of Wales, sees the relationship growing 'from the first exploratory contacts to a multi-linking of numerous individuals, groups and institutions throughout the two communities'. The connection would be at many levels—village with village, school with school, farmer with farmer, church with church and so on.

Interest within Wales is growing. Already one school, one parish, one youth group have asked to be linked. Offers of help have come in from many parts. A television crew wants to go out to report on the link country as soon as the link is established. Radio and daily papers have explained the idea and carried requests for people's ideas and suggestions—including the most suitable country to link with.

One side of the bridge, therefore, is rising. The concept has been launched. A great deal remains to be done. It is hoped that soon the 'other end' of the bridge will be finalised.

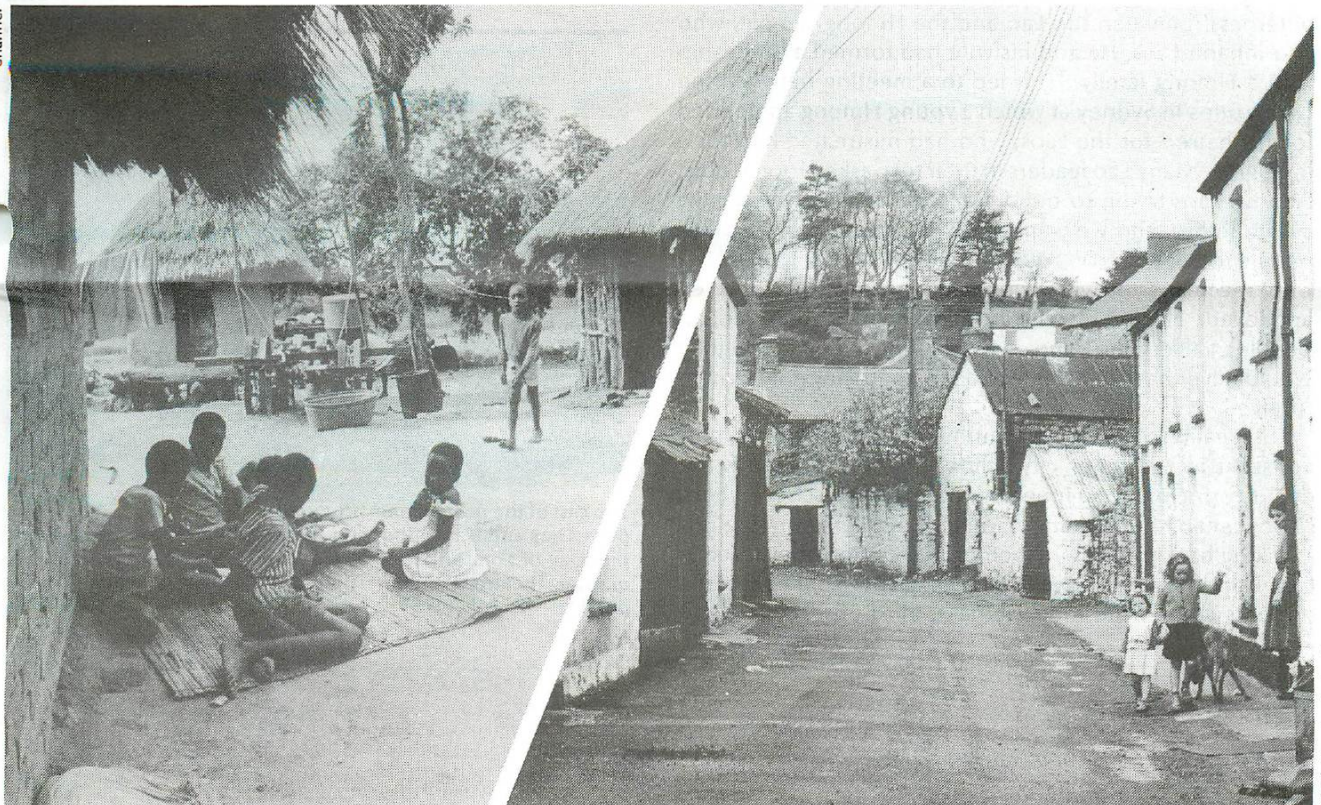
When it is, the bridge will carry two-way traffic. 'There will be a wealth of viewpoints, experience and culture the developing country can share with us,' says the statement of aims. Many of us may have to learn to receive as well as to give.

A living and effective linking could touch the interest and imagination of a great number of people so far unaware of, or uninvolved in, aid efforts. If it does, and if the idea takes hold, Wales will be able to play its own individual part in helping to bridge the gulf between 'North' and 'South'.

Dr Clowes comments, 'If the same story could be repeated 35 times over, the world would certainly be a richer place.'

Paul Williams

Channer



Third World village... Welsh village

British Tourist Authority

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His wife Walda, as the Uniting Church's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, has set up a council to advise on the best use of \$750,000 worth of church property being given to Aboriginal groups for amenities such as child care projects and training facilities. She is working both to break down the mistrust many of her people have felt towards Christians ever since—as many Aborigines see it—the early missionaries took away their culture; and 'to bridge the gap between my people and those who are ignorant of the facts or who choose to keep their minds closed'.

Outama Abhay from Laos thanked the Aborigines present and 'the Australians who have arrived here before us' for welcoming him and his people to their country. 'Australia has taken in many refugees over the last 200 years,' he said. 'But we have been a more difficult problem because we have marked social and cultural differences. People often think we have come only to take and not to give. But we want to contribute. We came because we had no choice. When your own country has been at war for 30 years, you can imagine how much that draws you.'

'I am proud to be Australian and share this great land,' he went on. 'I am also proud to be Lao. I believe that our culture benefits Australia, and if we open our hearts we can make the bridge between us.' The challenge to his people, he stressed, was that they open their hearts to 'those who come to Australia after us and experience the problems we are now facing.'

Forced to flee

Also from Laos were Tianethone Chantharasay and his wife Viengxay. Mr Chantharasay was his country's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the last coalition government. In 1975 they were forced to flee the country at 20 minutes' notice. 'We are grateful to be in Australia,' he said. 'But even among ourselves here there is division.' He told of 'years of bitterness' between the Lao and the Hmong people, who also inhabit Laos. He and his wife had formed a friendship with a Hmong family. 'This led to a meeting between the two groups in Sydney at which a young Hmong apologised for his hatred for the Laos, who had mistreated him for a long time. Many Lao leaders in their turn asked forgiveness. Now we are trying to build something between our two communities, and we want to do the same with the other people in this country. You can build nothing with hate. But with free hearts you will build a nation that will be respected and loved.' He and his wife are active in the care of Laotian people of all ethnic groups. Mrs Chantharasay said that they would never have been able to do this had they not learnt to forgive.

The reality of Australia's multi-cultural society is most apparent in the inner city schools. Lance Vertigan is the deputy principal of an inner Melbourne high school where 75 per cent of the students' parents come from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In their primary school they teach in Greek and Turkish as well as English. Over 25 per cent of the students come from Indo-China, a third of these have no

parents in Australia and often no one outside the school who offers a caring relationship. Though unprepared for the many difficulties this had created, schools were responding imaginatively, Mr Vertigan said. In his own school they had realised that if they were to create a happy, secure environment—a precondition of learning—they had to help every child to find a sense of identity. So they held a multi-cultural day, at which each child had to identify the part of the world from which his or her forebears had come. Only Aborigines could nominate Australia. Since then they have studied many of the countries and cultures from which immigrants have come to Australia, and this has helped break down prejudice.

All seven speakers were convinced that Australia could meet the many-sided challenge she was facing. The response was a two-hour exchange of ideas. 'My only disappointment is that this is not on national television,' said Jim Beggs, president of the Melbourne waterside workers (dockers). Seventy-five per cent of his men were born overseas. 'In the trades unions we occasionally have an ethnic conference, and we send along our ethnic minorities,' he said. 'After today, I think that more people like myself need to get along to them too, to understand what people who were not born here feel. The measure of a nation's quality of life is the way we treat our minorities.'

An elderly woman from a pioneering family said she had been brought up to believe that she was superior to Aborigines. 'Till now I have never acknowledged that I felt that way. I want to learn to care.' A university administrative officer from England said he had felt superior to white Australians. 'I came to Australia to run away from hurts,' he said. 'But when you bring a hurt spirit to a country, it quickly makes itself at home in the hurts there. From now I mean to work differently.'

As a Vietnamese refugee summed up, 'I am a cynical person, but with the attitudes we have heard here today, there is hope.'

John Bond



The cast of the professional production of 'Clashpoint', the play by Betty Gray and Nancy Ruthven. Through March, the play is part of the 'Day of London Theatre' programme for schools at the Westminster Theatre, London. There are also 'late matinees' for the public. (Box Office: 01-834 0283)

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Published fortnightly for Moral Re-Armament by The Good Road Ltd, 12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF, England. Printed by T W Pegg and Sons Ltd. Articles may be reproduced without reference to the editor, acknowledgement welcomed. Price 20p. 10 copies £1.70 plus postage. Special rates for pre-publication bulk orders. **Annual subscriptions: British Isles** £8.50 (2 copies of each issue £12.00); UK pensioners and students £6.50 (2 copies £10.00). **All other countries** airmail £11.00. Regional offices and rates: **Australia** New World News, PO Box 1078J, GPO Melbourne, Vic 3001 \$20.00; **Canada** Moral Re-Armament, 387 chemin de la Cote Ste Catherine, Montreal, Quebec H2V 2B5 \$25.00; **New Zealand** New World News, PO Box 31009, Christchurch \$25.00; **South Africa** Moral Re-Armament, PO Box 10144, Johannesburg, 2000 R20.00; **USA** Moral Re-Armament Inc, 1030 Fifteenth Street NW, Suite 908, Washington DC 20005 \$20.00. **Editorial and business address:** 12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF. Tel: 01-828 6591.