

Christian Counter-Attack

by Garth Lean, London

Garth Lean, author and biographer, addressed a meeting of clergy, ministers and Christian workers at the Westminster Theatre, London on 19 March. With Sir Arnold Lunn he is co-author of a book entitled 'Christian Counter-Attack', which will be published in the autumn by Blandford Press. We publish parts of his address:

I AM CONVINCED that the time is overdue for a Christian counter-attack, and that if we Christians are bold in our faith, the tide of human history can be turned.

Sören Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, once said, 'Christianity may be taken away from Europe as the only way of convincing people of its value.' Both parts of that prophecy are becoming true.

Underground church

In Russia, where repeated official attempts have been made to stamp out Christianity, a new and triumphant underground church is coming to birth. In the West where the failure of

Christianity has been largely due to our Christian loss of nerve, thinking people are increasingly seeing that secularism is a dead end.

Dr Bryan Wilson, the agnostic or atheist sociologist, in his book, 'Religion in Secular Society', questions whether democracy will be able to find an adequate cohesion to replace that provided by Christianity. Christianity, he says, built into people a disinterested devotion which affected the whole of society, but this is now a moral capital debt which is not being serviced. He doubts whether our industrial society can flourish without it and foresees increasing corruption, crime and violence. This could lead to the backlash of dictatorship.

What Dr Wilson says about industry can be duplicated in every sphere of our national life. Universities are falling to pieces because there is no longer any common philosophy of education which binds students and teachers together. And so it is in every sphere.

Some of us blame the government,

or management, or labour or the youth. But really we are all to blame and most of all those of us who call ourselves Christians.

Mr Roy Fuller, the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, said in his inaugural lecture that young people, and particularly the offspring of the intelligentsia, revolt by dropping out of education, contracting risky erotic alliances, etc, largely because 'they see their parents more and more obsessed by the gadgets of affluence and less and less convinced that anything can be done by way of principle and belief.'

Loss of nerve

Or, as *The International Times*, the organ of the Hippy 'underground', more pithily puts it, 'Realise that the older people drink and get high and feel great and you do other things and get high and they spit on you.'

I have said that our Christian betrayal is a loss of nerve, but in my case, I know that a loss of nerve is always due to a deeper cause. When I

photo Leggat

'TURNING ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS'
Hundreds listen to speakers at the opening of the new building at Panchgani, the MRA Conference Centre in India.

See Indian press reports of conference in enclosed supplement



lose my nerve, it is generally because I have lost my fire, my faith that God can intervene in any situation and transform it. And such a loss of faith is always due to some moral compromise, to my losing my moral edge through some indiscipline or failure in my own life or to my accepting a more comfortable life in thought or word or deed than a Christian ought to accept.

I had a sad encounter not so long ago with one of the Princes of my own Church. At the end of the time he said, 'We here, Mr Lean, are conducting a holding operation, and hardly that. I see little hope for doing any better.' It was a tragedy to see his acceptance that the Church must play a defensive role.

Are we Christians going complacently to accept the disappearance of what little remains of our Christian culture? What can an ordinary Christian do? I would like to make four suggestions:

1 Be ready to be seen to be different

Professor William Barclay, whose new translation of The New Testament is so helpful, points out that St Paul always addressed his fellow-Christians as 'the saints'. 'The Greek word,' writes Barclay, 'is sometimes translated "holy", but the root meaning of it is "different". It describes something which is different from the ordinary run of things. Therefore, basically, the Christian is a man who is different from the people of the world.'

This is, of course, an exactly opposite conception from that held by many of us Christians today. St Paul said, 'Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.' We seem to fall over ourselves to conform to the world rather than to transform it and in the process we are transformed by the world until we are indistinguishable from the secularists among whom we live. Why then should any secularist want to become a Christian?

Almost everyone has a family. Could every Christian family be so different that it challenges, inspires and heals everyone who enters it? That is the aim of our family. And, in a way, it takes less and less to achieve. One Oxford graduate was astounded that my son and I could actually work together on anything. Many people to-

day seem to be afraid of their children.

Once it was said that children were stultified by lack of love from their parents. Now it almost appears that parents stultify themselves through terror of not being liked by their children. Actually children value being challenged to do what is right. They do not feel secure with parents who shilly-shally.

We have two children. A son who has just left Oxford and a daughter doing her A-levels at boarding school. It was always clear to us that they would have to decide for themselves whether or not to give their lives to Christ, and that they would only do this if they saw that it worked with us. Both have done so.

Shortly after our son decided, a brilliant scientist who lives next door to us bounced into our house and asked, 'Are you a volunteer or a conscript?' Geoffrey told him that he was a volunteer and that all his friends at Oxford knew it. Today he is in Australia working with Moral Re-Armament.

Some people loved Christ while He was on earth, but many hated Him, and I have never met anyone who changed who was not furious at some point in the process. 'I hate you, Socrates,' said Alcibiades, 'because every time I meet you, you let me see what I am.' I sometimes felt like that with Frank Buchman.

2 Aim to speak to everybody about our deepest experience

This does not mean boring people, but being alert. Wilberforce, before he went to a party, used to plan what he called 'launchers', by which he could turn the conversation into fruitful channels. St Paul once said, 'Talk to them agreeably and with a flavour of wit and try to fit your answers to the need of each one.'

At Oxford last week a history lecturer gave a two-day seminar on post-war Europe. He reviewed the facts objectively, but then said, 'Every historian must see history from his own point of view and mine is that of a Christian. I found the Christian faith through the Oxford Group while here at Oxford in the thirties. He told the students of his experience and showed how the Christian conviction of men like Adenauer, Schuman and de Gasperi, all of whom had had close touch with MRA, had affected Europe.'

3 Expect people to change

A journalist once came to me for an interview. I knew that he was greatly enraged in not being allowed any longer to pull politicians to pieces, and so he was out to pull me to pieces—which is not a difficult job. I felt helpless because he had a great newspaper behind him and I had nothing. But God gave me the expectation that the man would change, and at the end of that very interview, he knelt down and gave his life to God. That man was Peter Howard in whose honour the Arts Centre connected to this theatre was built.

Yet even after such experiences, my struggle always is to believe that God will change the men I meet. And when I am doubtful, this generally means that I am not letting Him change me on some specific point.

4 Seek out the people who can change events and put them in touch with God

There are two powerful streams of atheism running through Christian thought at the moment. The first is represented by people who try to maintain their personal faith but do not believe that God can do anything to answer the social, national and international problems of the day. They might be called 'the ghetto dwellers'.

The other strain of atheism is represented by churchmen who, because they do not believe that God can change men's characters, have despaired of traditional Christianity and put all their energies into secular movements like civil rights or food for Biafra. These things are important, but they are not the whole of Christianity. Some of these people, I call them 'the boulevard dwellers', think their job is to fill in the gaps in the welfare state. Some openly advocate violence, as with the Committee of the American Council of Churches who foresaw the day when there would be snipers in the steeples.

The answer to this atheism is Christian revolution. That revolution is, as Frank Buchman once said, a revolution of social, industrial, national and international change, all based on personal change. It is our job as Christians to seek out the pivotal men in every trouble spot and give them such an experience of change that they are able to change conditions around them.

EUROPE AND AFRICA— New motives needed

What will happen when hostilities end in the Nigerian conflict? Clearly a massive programme of relief and reconstruction will be needed in the war-devastated areas.

But more important, men must heal the hatreds which, left untouched, could lead to recurrent bloodshed or war.

Hugh Elliott, CMG, CON recently wrote an article, published in *Inter-state*, paper of the University College of Wales, which is relevant to these issues and the future. Elliott served 33 years in Nigeria, the last seven of which he was working as a senior administrator in Nigeria after independence. He retired two years ago. Below are extracts from his article.

THE WORST LEGACY of our rule was that we sowed the seeds of our own nationalistic divisions—so that Africa is now split into French-, English-, Spanish-, Portuguese- and Afrikaans-speaking areas, with far-reaching consequences. More serious, these small, inadequate groupings are

now splitting, by the same force of nationalism, into tribal groupings.

It is not Nigeria only that is in danger of breaking up. Almost every leader in Africa knows that he has a potential Biafra on his hands. In almost every one of the 14 States that comprise West Africa there are movements regarded as 'subversive', organised chiefly by men from minority tribes to that of the Government in power; since 1960 the tragic cycle of the nationalist-tribalist drive has been all too evident.

Can this cycle be broken? I think it can, and I do not think we have any right to watch this tragic cycle with cynical detachment. But it will require a different example from Europe; a

new perspective; and leadership which shows exceptional courage.

First, we Europeans need a new humility about the cost of our own fratricidal nationalism; not only the massive one which divided Europe into opposing armed camps, but the petty passionate nationalisms which divide the South Tyrol, the Walloons and Flemings in Belgium, and the extremists in Scotland and Wales. But nationalism is also national selfishness . . . and as Britain indulges her colossal in-turning preoccupation with her minor economic ailments . . . we should recognise that before we can lecture the developing nations we must first cure ourselves.

A second step is a wider perspective. This can be done as people from all parts of the world meet and talk honestly together with the aims des-

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Hope in the midst of crisis

From our West African correspondent

I WALKED UP to the main gate of the Police Training Camp. A sharp challenge rang out, 'Stop where you are!' A police guard stood pointing his rifle and bayonet at me, obviously ready to pull the trigger if I advanced a foot. With tension high in the area at the time, for all he knew I might have been a white mercenary up to no good.

'I would like to see the Commandant,' I said. Without turning his head the sentry called out to the guard house. The Sergeant came out. 'What do you want?' he said to me gruffly. 'I want to see the Commandant about showing a Moral Re-Armament film,' I replied. A broad smile lit up his face, 'Moral Re-Armament! You are welcome! Come in!'

I walked beside the Sergeant across the square to the Commandant's office. 'I saw that MRA film *Freedom* when

you showed it here a few weeks ago,' he said. 'It completely transformed my family. My wife and I are united now!' At that moment we reached the Commandant's office. The door was open. The Sergeant leapt to attention, saluted and was gone.

Guns put away

Some time later in London, a Nigeria Police Inspector came with a Nigerian friend to see the musical *Annie* at the Westminster Theatre. He told us that a couple of months earlier when the Inspector General of Police had arranged for the film *Freedom* to be shown to all the officers and men of the Nigeria Police in his area, he had seen the film in his barracks. At the time there was fear of an attack. The barracks were bristling with guns. It was an explosive situation which needed only a spark of panic to ignite.



A recent showing of the film 'Freedom' in Oto village, Nigeria. In the background (far right) His Highness the Oloto watches from the verandah of his palace.
photo Carpenter

'We need more professors like this one!'

I TOOK PART recently in a fascinating seminar on 'Contemporary Europe', which was organised in the Oxford College of Technology by a principal lecturer, R C Mowat.

The aim of the seminar was to analyse the forces at work in contemporary Europe, and so to indicate ways in which a strategy for pursuing the forward movement towards a united Europe could be developed. Although the seminar was purely voluntary, more than 80 students took part; a record, I was told, for the College!

The seminar, a series of lectures and discussions, dealt with: the reconciliation between France and Germany, the Schuman Plan, the creation of the Common Market and of EFTA, the British position towards Europe and a rapid survey of the last decade.

I was impressed by the importance which Mowat attributed to certain statesmen of faith and conviction. He

said that it was thanks to men such as Schuman, De Gasperi, André Philipp and Adenauer that the period after the Second World War had been different from that after the First and that Europe, which was considered by many objective observers to be finished, had another chance.

Speaking about the events of last May in Paris and about 'participation', Mowat told us how he himself had 'participated' in the forties. At that time he had worked with an international force of men and women trained by MRA in the Ruhr. This action brought an answer to the social problems created by the last war and the policy of the Allies and helped to create a new spirit between France and Germany.

He challenged his pupils to find their own kind of participation which would bring the same practical answer to the problems of modern Europe.

In the last 14 years, I have spent most of my time at school or university in Switzerland. But this is the first time in my life that I have heard a lecturer affirm a Christian conviction based on facts and experiences and I found it most refreshing and encouraging. If there were more professors like Mowat, we students would not need to riot to obtain that which is due to us: an education which not only develops our brain, but which challenges and helps us to take the ethical positions indispensable for any

responsible member of society.

Mowat intends to pursue this experiment and to extend it to other colleges. May he find many followers!

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graduate in politics from
Lausanne University, Switzerland.

'Anything to Declare?' in Liverpool

'WE MUST LOOK further than just Merseyside,' was a headline in the *Liverpool Daily Post* on 24 March. This, the article said, is what is needed if this key industrial region is to realise its tremendous economic potential.

The same point was made by the cast of *Anything to Declare?* this week to the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Ald J E Hopson. He said at a civic reception, 'As well as manufactured goods, Britain's largest export port could send out to the world men with answers to industrial conflict.'

Addressing the cast, Jim Worthington, member of the National Executive of the National Union of Seamen said that it was through MRA that management and labour could thrash out their grievances without rancour. 'This is what the Merseyside really needs to do and what your visit is making possible,' he said.

Australian industrialists see 'Forgotten Factor'

THE LORD MAYOR OF PERTH in Western Australia, T E Wardle, last week gave a dinner for 97 industrialists and citizens of the state, to launch a continent-wide offensive of MRA. He took them to see a special performance of *The Forgotten Factor* in the city's most modern civic centre.

'*The Forgotten Factor* provides a formula which could bring about nationwide harmony,' the Lord Mayor told his guests. 'It does not just provide a formula but indicates the means whereby the change may be brought about. I saw *The Forgotten Factor* at the MRA conference in Perth and feel it should go further.'

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cribed by Victor Larock, who said: 'We need to modernise men as well as machines. Only as man is modernised, changed and renewed in his spirit is he equipped to live at peace in this age of advanced technology.'

Official international conferences there are in plenty, but as the UN shows, delegates bound by their own briefs and concerned chiefly to impress their own Governments usually generate more heat than light. Unofficial conferences, however, with the right atmosphere and objectives can work wonders.

A third step is the crucial importance of leadership—and men with the courage to give leadership towards a sane world can be found and develop-

ed. There are examples which are hopeful pointers.

The crux of the whole matter is whether the remotivation of man is possible—a revolution of thinking and of aims adequate for our age. If so, to multiply such examples and to develop the art of modernising men is the most important task of our lifetime.

HUGH ELLIOTT is currently in Ethiopia where plans are going forward for an international conference on the theme, 'Modern Men to Make Modern Nations', initiated by the Governor General of Eritrea and the Eritrean Committee for Moral Re-Armament. People from many parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe will attend the conference, which will take place in Asmara, Eritrea, Ethiopia from 25 April to 5 May.