

AFRICA'S POWER TO SURPRISE

ANDREW STALLYBRASS has recently returned from Lusaka, Zambia, where he was covering the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting for the Indian news magazine, 'Himmat':

SOME OF US thought that the Queen would not be safe in Lusaka. Some of us were fearful for ourselves—I was. We were wrong. We were not only safe, but were the beneficiaries as Zambia sacrificially poured out her best to look after her vast army of guests.

Some of us thought that the Commonwealth was doomed to an acrimonious break-up. We were wrong. Far from it; a new consensus has emerged that gives a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel for the suffering people of Zimbabwe Rhodesia and her neighbours.

The Commonwealth is one of the last forums in the world where people meet and talk with each other and not just at each other, across the rich-poor, north-south, black-white divides. Where the personality of a leader matters, not just the power of the country he represents. For instance, the teamwork and personal rapport between the left-of-centre Manley of Jamaica and the right-of-centre Fraser of Australia was an important catalyst in the crucial Southern Africa debate.

Nineteen of the Commonwealth's 41 members have less than a million people, and nine of these are island states with populations of less than 200,000. Yet here the voice of the small, the militarily and economically weak, is heard.

Our swift and superficial judgements are so often out of tune with the instinctive spiritual insight which is one of Africa's gifts. We journalists might have been more comfortable in London than in Lusaka. But what happened at the conference might not have happened elsewhere, perhaps nowhere outside Africa.

One senior Australian described the opening as the finest he'd ever seen, and he'd been to a good many. Australia would be hard pushed to equal it when they play host in two years' time, he said. He was commenting on the children's choir with their specially written welcome song, expressing the hope that the delegates would 'find solutions for peace', the schoolchildren marching into the hall with all the flags of the Commonwealth, Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus' at the close.

When she arrived, Mrs Thatcher said that she had come to learn. Her remark passed unnoticed by me, but not by the Zambians I met. They never expected a British Prime Minister to admit there was anything to learn.

ARCHBISHOP'S APPEAL TO COMMONWEALTH LEADERS

'Humanity, not brutality; persuasion, not dictatorship'

SPEAKING TO COMMONWEALTH Prime Ministers and delegates at the Summit Conference Ecumenical Service in Lusaka, the Archbishop of Lusaka thanked the Queen for her 'courageous decision' in coming to Zambia and challenged political leaders to be honest with themselves.

'Her Majesty's presence gave us, the people of Zambia, confidence in her,' said Archbishop Milingo, 'and surely we have come to know who are our friends.'

Speaking of the situation in Southern Africa as seen from Lusaka the Archbishop added that he did not believe God was a racist. 'I believe that He never created a race which is an appendage to another race. I also believe that in every race there is something special, that justifies its existence, and which contributes to the betterment of other races.'

The Archbishop said that each person who holds community responsibility must realise the consequences of hasty decisions and wrong utterances. Sometimes it seemed that everything is allowed to a politician as long as he or she is in power, but that was not true.

'We all need to be honest with ourselves

in order to put things right in the world,' he continued. 'The advice of Dr Frank N D Buchman is appropriate here. He said: "Absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love. Those are Christ's standards. Are they yours? You may have to put things straight. I had to. I began by writing to six people, admitting that ill will between us was my fault, and not theirs. Then I could really help people. Remember—if you want the world to get straight, get straight yourself."'

Many leaders had no moral guide and nothing was absolute in what they did. 'They refuse themselves nothing and in order to open up new channels of their enjoyment, they make new laws to safeguard their perpetuity.... But people expect a sincere love from their leaders. They expect a fair deal and treatment in the law. In a word, they expect humanity, instead of brutality; consideration, instead of one-sidedness; persuasion, instead of dictatorship.'

'You, who have come here, have in mind to change this situation. You have come here to share your people's problems and to contribute to the solution of other peoples' problems. As you lead your people, why not

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At the end of the conference, Thatcher, Nyerere and Kaunda were united in rejecting the negative tone of journalists who in all their press conferences pressed them on what they would do if this initiative failed. Why did we always foresee disaster instead of success?

It is only a beginning, a glimmer. But for the genius of Africa, it could have been an end. Thank you, Zambia, for the warmth of your welcome, thank you to all the exhausted drivers, secretaries, phone-operators, cooks, waiters, policemen, who served, tended, guarded and guided us 24 hours a day. And may Africa surprise us again with her power for forgiveness when the parties to the Zimbabwe Rhodesia conflict meet in London next month.

take the advice of St Paul to the Romans: "Love must be completely sincere. Love one another warmly as brothers in Christ, and be eager to show respect for each other."

'Those of us who have the responsibility to lead man in society,' added Archbishop Milingo, 'must take all precautions to treat him well, scrupulously and with the fear of the Lord.'

'May I conclude with the words of Dr Frank N D Buchman: "The world of today is waiting for guidance. We are now fighting a greater war than any war since the world began. It is not nation against nation, but chaos against God. New men, new nations, a new world—God controlled. There you have a programme valid for a world crisis."'

GDL



**Theatre:
battle of
the
storytellers**

**SEE
INSIDE**



Battle of the story-tellers

by Ronald Mann
theatre producer

HAVE THE ARTISTS, playwrights, script-writers, producers become one of the most decisive factors for the future of the human race?

Some would place them at the top of the ladder of influence, some on a lower rung; but every politician, industrialist, trade union leader knows he has to take them into account.

And everyone who is committed to the reshaping of society—whatever the shape they foresee—knows that to succeed they must have their 'story-tellers', and have them where they can reach large numbers of people.

Throughout history the story-teller has been educator, elucidator and entertainer. Painting on the wall of a cave, telling a story round the camp fire, dancing with the tribe, men from earliest times have passed on to each new generation their beliefs and experiences, their history and customs.

Even after the invention of writing, story-telling remained of supreme importance, whether the story was recited in a Jewish synagogue, enacted in a Greek amphitheatre, or acted out by the whole community in the streets and squares of a mediaeval town.

Today's story-tellers may sit in a room in Broadcasting House rather than beside a camp fire. They may work on a theatre stage rather than in a village street. They may use a movie camera or work with videotape rather than with carpenters' tools or crushed ochre. But their role is the same and their influence wider. At any hour of the day in Tokyo, Rio or New York, and in village as well as town, the images they have created are watched by hundreds of thousands, even millions.

Most of these men and women are artists. They portray the truth as they see it. Quite rightly, they do not feel that their creation can be dictated to them, nor do they welcome the censorship of others. What they believe today has a fair chance of becoming what the majority will believe tomorrow.

On a recent television programme, one of a panel of sixth-formers asked a well-known TV personality, 'Do you believe in God?' He replied quickly and brusquely, 'Of course not.' Suppose most of his colleagues thought the same way. If their view became the view of the majority of people tomorrow, could civilisation survive? Events in this century alone show that when a belief in the Fatherhood of God is discarded, the ideas of

the brotherhood of man and the sanctity of human life soon disappear also. To realise what happens then you only have to say to yourself: Hitler, Stalin, Cambodia.

When I was a boy of about seven one of my father's close friends returned home from a remote part of China. He had wanted to talk of Christ to people whose language was largely unknown outside their area. So he had got permission to go day by day into the local gaol, to visit a prisoner from that region. In this way he learnt the language, then he made the first dictionary and then the first translation of the Bible. It took several years of preparation before he started on what proved to be a remarkable pioneering work.

Walk down any street or travel in a train and look at people's faces, and the need of individuals for a fulfilling way of life cries out to you. Those who can hear these cries and long to answer them, and those who are concerned about the inequalities and injustices of the world and feel called by God to bring change, may need to learn the language of today—the art of writing, the visual and sound languages of TV, stage and screen; the technical languages of video and camera; the art of promotion and of finding the finance to undertake big productions. Having done so, they will have the means to reach people more quickly, possibly more effectively and certainly more widely than my father's friend was able to do with the written word.

However, the plays and films through which God has transformed lives, are not just a product of technique. Usually they come out of a God-given concern for people and for situations. Illustrations spring to mind from recent months in Britain. A belief in the destiny of the Celtic people gave birth to the play *Columba*. A housewife's experi-

STORY-TELLERS contd p4



It started on stage

Dutch student ANNEMIEK WINDIG acted in an amateur production of Peter Howard's play 'The Ladder', last month. The play tells the story of a careerist confronted by a man whose values are startlingly different from his own. Annemiek writes:

I WAS off stage at the end of the play, when the humble man (who is really Jesus) is nailed to the Cross. I felt as if the nails went through my soul and Jesus was offering His Cross to me.

It was not a vision or a great experience, just a quiet feeling that Jesus was there saying, 'I give you My best gift, please accept it.' I had always seen the Cross as a burden that one day I knew I would have to take on, but I had never thought of it as a gift.

During the days that followed some people asked me, 'What are you most afraid of losing if you give your life to God? Is there



Michel Orphelin



Hugh Steadman Williams

Channel



Actor's addiction

Next week 'Poor Man, Rich Man', Hugh Steadman Williams' play about St Francis, will be showing at the Netherbow Theatre, Edinburgh, as part of the Festival fringe. JEAN-JACQUES ODIER and NATHALIE O'NEILL spoke to Michel Orphelin, who plays St Francis, and Hugh Steadman Williams:

The central theme of the show is how modern St Francis of Assisi's experience is. How do you see this?

MICHEL ORPHELIN: St Francis was dedicated to the absolute. He wanted to go right to the heart of the Gospel. This is what makes him timeless. People are always writing books about him in order to discover more, for the world today hungers for the absolute.

HUGH STEADMAN WILLIAMS: Like many others, Francis' father was a man to whom money and business success mattered more than his son's future. Francis broke with him, and many young people today share his attitude. Then he went much further than reaction, and began to deepen his philosophy of poverty.

We should also mention his respect for nature, which is something that the ecological movement today has in common with him. But Francis was led by God towards

anything that stands between you and God?' These questions brought out things I had tried not to think about. On the one side I felt a longing to put everything right with God, on the other a fear of losing out in the bargain.

These things kept turning in my mind, and I felt very stressed. I wished that everything was cleared up so that I could have real fun and not have part of me missing. Then one night I told a friend how I felt, and she asked me if I would like to give my life to God. I knew it was now or never, so we prayed, and I asked God to take away everything of me that was wrong so that there would be a place for Him.

Then I was alone, and I felt my heart break. Something was torn out of me, not quietly and peacefully, but as if my own flesh was torn from me. I was left empty inside with a raw wound. Then I went walking and everything was so new and beautiful and I knew my heart was open for all the good to come in. I'd like to think of God as a mighty power, but He was just there as a personal friend.

nature, not the other way round. He believed that man must respect animals and nature because like him they are part of God's creation.

ORPHELIN: Today everything is so complicated, every question must be analysed before conclusions may be drawn; but Francis trusted that God would speak simply to him. To know God's will he would take a lucky dip with the Gospels.

WILLIAMS: I think too of his work of reconciliation. During the Third Crusade he went to the Holy Land. This marked the beginning of a dialogue. In our day people see dialogue as the alternative to war.

Francis had absolutely no self-importance. Nowadays we tend to be cynical about the great. Men want power, and once they have got it they do very little for their people. In refusing to be one of the great, his influence was considerable. He also rejected both property and learning as they were the bases of power in his day.

What has it meant to you, author and actor, to identify yourselves with St Francis?

WILLIAMS: It helped me to see my spiritual poverty. Prayer did not have its proper place in my life. My touch with God was slender, whereas Francis had a living personal relationship. You could call the story of that relationship a love story.

ORPHELIN: It has been a passionate adventure for me, passionate in the true sense of the word, which comes from Christ's passion. I felt myself at the foot of a mountain I could not get past—to put on a two hour show in English with 19 songs, when I find it hard work even to sing in rhythm. I was seized with panic. During the rehearsals, as soon as some new person entered the hall, I lost my nerve and forgot everything.

When Hugh and I went to Assisi three years ago, we visited St Clare's church. We had with us a Franciscan from Malta. He went and told the sister who was guardian there that we were contemplating a play about St Francis. 'Tell your friends,' she replied, 'that they will not understand St Francis from books but on their knees.'

I have often been on my knees, at rehearsals and even in the middle of the night. When fear came over me, there was only one thing I could do—throw myself into God's arms and ask Him for the strength I needed. The answer I got each time was this: 'Go ahead. No worry. Work. That is what you are here for. Leave everything in My hands.'

Since then I have had no more fear, at least no real fears. I have no longer lost my nerve. Week by week God gave me signs that it would work out, and I received them as gifts from heaven. When we let ourselves be placed on the Cross and die there, God brings us to life again. That is my message as an actor.

Preparing this show required a real effort to uproot myself. If you don't do this with God, you need compensations and long for other pleasures. But with God everything is different. Working hand in hand with Him is a stimulant for me. This is my addiction and it is deeply satisfying.



Introduction to magic

21,000 CHILDREN came to the Westminster Theatre in seven weeks last winter, to take part in the 'Day of London Theatre' programme. Already 3,000 secondary school pupils are booked in for the new programme which opens in September, while 300 primary schools have applied for the junior programme from late October to January.

The 'Day of London Theatre' has been running for ten years, and is now moving into a new phase. We asked Joy Weeks, the theatre's new Educational Director, what the changes entail.

'The first half of the day's programme is given to a demonstration of the A to Z of putting on a play—lights, costumes, direction, all the back stage operations,' she explained. 'Then in the afternoon the children watch a professional performance of a play. In the past this has meant that we have only offered the 'Day of London Theatre' when there has been an appropriate play at the theatre—often at short notice, and only on Wednesdays, when there is a matinee.'

'But now we have decided to produce special plays for the course—so it will be able to take place regardless of what is on at the theatre in the evenings.' The 'Day of London Theatre' will become a regular, annual programme—four days a week in September and February/March for secondary schools, and five days a week from late October to January, linked to the theatre's Christmas production, for primary schools. 'This will mean that schools can plan ahead as they have to do,' says Joy Weeks.

She trained as a teacher of speech and drama. Her love of acting began at school in Swanage, through school productions and visits to the local theatre. 'I'll always remember the performance of *The Tempest* there when Ariel leant against the cave and the whole thing collapsed. Nearer perfection were the productions of touring companies—particularly ballet.

Her hope is that the 'Day of London Theatre' will inspire the same love of theatre in those who attend. 'I want them to experience the magic of live theatre,' she says. 'They will never know the best until they've seen it—and that's why it's so important that we show them the highest professional standards.'

When Joy took on the new programme, she and her colleagues invited teachers who had brought classes in the past to come and discuss what should happen in the future. 'We asked them what plays we should

produce for the schools—should we do classics or set books? With a few exceptions they said that because of this theatre's Christian philosophy we were able to do something few others could, to produce plays which raised issues that they felt unable to deal with at school. This is what they asked us to do.'

The leaflet for the course promises plays 'which will dramatise personal, social and moral dilemmas and point to the added dimension of faith which has prompted so much responsible initiative in society'. It was to work with such a play—about Wilberforce and his fight to abolish the slave trade—that Joy Weeks gave up her job in 1965.

Six years before she had visited the MRA assembly at Caux, Switzerland, and first realised the power of drama as a vehicle of ideas. 'It was at the time of Cyprus's independence. Greeks and Turks came to the conference and produced a play, *Miracle in the Sun*, which dramatised reconciliation. I found it very powerful and convincing. When I returned to school I began to work with the students helping them to see the drama of real life.'

Choice of endings

Since then Joy Weeks has spent some years in India, where she and another teacher, Ann Rignall, were asked to help develop a course in leadership and responsibility at a girls' school in Madras. The course has appeared as a book, *The Way Ahead*.

What criterion does she use in choosing plays for the 'Day of London Theatre'? 'They must be entertaining, with either a lot of dramatic content or humour, and they must stimulate discussion.' The programme opens this September with a new play by Hugh Steadman Williams, *Stranger in the House*. In it, a playwright asks his family to act out the play he is working on, which portrays a politician torn between his home life and his career. The audience is left with the choice of three possible endings.

Joy Weeks looks forward to the arrival of the first students, and is intrigued by the fact that an adult theatre society has enrolled for a day, and that a group of sixth formers have applied to come the day before their term begins. 'Teachers have said to us, "It's so nice to come to a building where the children are really appreciated and wanted, rather than tolerated or even resented. We feel you really enjoy having us." And we do,' she adds.

Mary Lean
'*The Way Ahead*' by Ann Rignall and Joy Weeks is available from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Rd, London SW18 3JJ. Price £3.00 postage paid.

Toowoomba film

TOOWOOMBA, in the Australian state of Queensland, screened the film *Give a Dog a Bone* for over 1000 children as part of its International Year of the Child activities. The Mayor, a Member of the State Parliament and the Chairman of the IYC committee were all present at the final screening of the pantomime film.

Welsh MP launches pamphlets

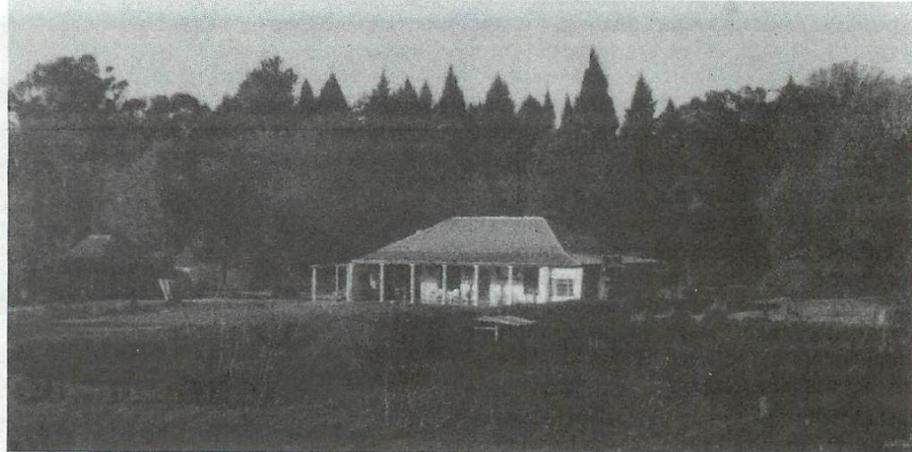
AT THE ROYAL NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD in Caernarfon this month, Plaid Cymru MP Dafydd Wigley called on political parties to search for ideals. He was launching two new pamphlets in Welsh which, he said, were 'relevant for the political path which lies ahead'.

Speaking at the MRA tent on the Eisteddfod field, Mr Wigley welcomed the publication of the pamphlets—one on the life of Keir Hardie, the Christian labour pioneer, and the other about St Columba.

'There is a vacuum of ideas in politics today,' he said. 'It stems from the lessening influence of religion.' He compared the General Election earlier this year to an auction, which had highlighted the materialism of society and political parties. 'We need to try to find new ideals for our age.'

'Some turn to Marxism to fill the vacuum,' he continued. The pamphlet on Keir Hardie contained an interesting comment on the Marxists of his day, who, said Hardie, believed that Socialism could not be attained by peaceful means and that it was in the workers' interest to encourage hate and war. 'That is not my Socialism,' said Hardie. 'Mine can come only out of a change of heart, and in peace, not war.'

Mr Wigley commented, 'If this pamphlet does nothing more than bring that quotation



COOLMOREEN FARM (above) lies at the heart of Zimbabwe Rhodesia. Given to Moral Re-Armament two years ago, it is devoted to building the trust and understanding on which a new nation can flourish.

People of all kinds, black and white, have come to the farm, to help in its work of reconciliation, and in the development of its facilities. What makes people ready to dig 400 metres of trenches, half a metre deep, in hard ground, under the hot sun, for no wages? One young African said, 'We want to give our maximum to make this a place where racial conflict and tribalism can be cured and we can live together and care for one another as sons and daughters of God.'

to the attention of young people in Wales today it will have justified its publication.'

The translator of the two pamphlets, E H Griffiths, was also present at the launching which was chaired by Gwladys Williams of Abersoch, North Wales.

'Columba' by Reginald Hale, 30p postage paid; 'Keir Hardie' by Garth Lean, 35p postage paid; both translated by E H Griffiths and available from Grosvenor Books.

Dafydd Wigley, MP for Caernarfon and District, speaks at the launching of two new Welsh pamphlets at the Eisteddfod.



Stoddard

STORY-TELLERS contd from p2

ence of the power of Christ to heal bitterness produced *Flashpoint*, with its answer to conflict between communities. Two plays about St Francis—*Brother Francis* and *Poor Man, Rich Man*—challenge the materialism of our age, while *Keir Hardie—the man they could not buy* was written out of conviction for the future of the labour movement.

Plays and films like these carry hope and a challenge to crucial areas of national, and sometimes international, life. Many have been created as part of the work of Moral Re-Armament in the last 40 years—the African film *Freedom*, the industrial drama *The Forgotten Factor*, *The Crowning Experience*, a story which grew out of the race conflict in America and influenced black and white in the deep South, and many others.

These, with many plays of the past, and of such 20th century authors as T S Eliot, are the heritage. So is the work of numerous Christian theatre and film groups all over the world. This heritage is available for all who see the struggle between the forces of God

and anti-God reaching one of its highest pitches in the media world and want to engage in it.

Time may not be on their side but much of the material is. Some of the most dramatic and moving stories of human history are those of the men and women who have fought this battle. Most of Shakespeare's plays are concerned with this struggle in the human spirit. Who can see *Macbeth* without understanding something of the destructive power of ambition?

Above all, the task is to lift a corner of the curtain so that we may glimpse the wonder and magic of that wider, deeper world. Most people have moments when wonder walks into their hearts—the first glimpse of a new baby, with its amazing perfection of eyes, nose, finger-nails, every detail complete; moments on a lonely mountain top or a desolate seashore when an awareness of another dimension beyond the material world comes like the lifting of a mist.

For many who have faced the reality of evil in their own natures, and have known the healing flood of forgiveness, there is the supreme moment of experiencing the

reality of God.

The natural consequence of such experiences is the desire to pass them on—to find the creative means through which others may become so intrigued and enchanted that they begin to seek for themselves. Many people of faith are increasingly aware that this must be done, and deeply appreciative of the experience and availability of theatres and film companies dedicated to this purpose. A network of like-minded people now exists and is expanding. There is a growing awareness that anyone who wants to change the world and neglects this area is like a modern general who goes into battle with his troops, but ignores the war in the air, with its planes, missiles and rockets.

To win this battle is not easy. Many have gone into it and been lured away by the temptations of success and popularity. This is a realm, too, where conformity and pretence can kill the power to convey. The conviction has to be a firm one—that God shall rule in the hearts of men and in the councils of nations, and that His truth shall be made known to every last person on the earth, whatever the cost.