

Cummock

Alec Smith at the press conference where 'Now I call him Brother' was launched

THREE ARMIES INTO ONE WILL GO

ALEC SMITH, the son of Rhodesia's last Prime Minister, Ian Smith, has been in Britain for the launching of his book, 'Now I call him Brother'. The book, published by Marshall, Morgan & Scott on 15 November, tells his story to date. (See review on page 8.) Gerard Noel of the 'Catholic Herald' found the book 'fascinating'. Alec Smith is now a chaplain in the Zimbabwe National Army with the rank of Major.

During his two weeks in Britain, Alec Smith had numerous press and radio interviews, spoke to a gathering of MPs' wives, preached in a church in Aberdeen, visited Bristol and spoke to a gathering of theological students in Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. He described how he had found freedom from drugs and said that a Christian should have a revolutionary faith and be ready to be used as an instrument in changing his or her nation.

The following is taken from what Alec Smith said in an informal talk and in answer to questions at an evening reception in London. It was attended by several Africans, two former British Ambassadors, and many others with a first-hand knowledge of Southern Africa:

THOSE OF US WHO DO HAVE A FAITH must always think, what is the next step. How do we apply a living faith in a real situation, be it in our place of work, politically, socially or otherwise?

When I first became a Christian I knew that Christ had changed me, given me a new direction, a new start. But when I looked around my country I saw a civil war, racial divisions, tension, general deterioration, and I said, if Christ is real—and I knew he was—then he must have an answer. There is no such thing as a situation that is beyond the reach of God; there are only people who do not attempt to find their part in His way.

Now what a group of us who felt responsible for the situation in Rhodesia found ourselves doing was searching out God's plan for our country. Others gave us the rather illustrious name, 'cabinet of conscience'. We were a group, varying in numbers, young and old, black and white, who were simply prepared to be humble enough to listen to God and obey, and to be used in bringing about change in that situation. Once we had made that commitment, miracles did happen. We began to get leadings into certain key areas, to bring groups of people together in understanding. We were often the catalyst, the vehicle for such meetings taking place. *contd page 8*

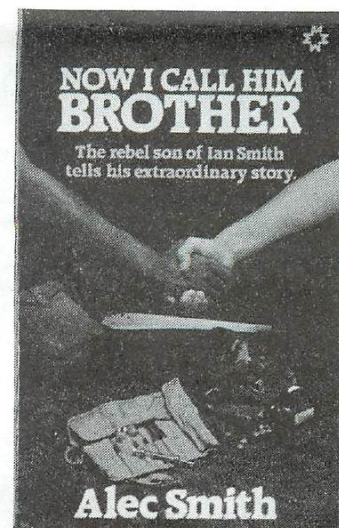
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A Happy Christmas
To All Our
Readers

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Book review...page 8

BETHLEHEM LETTERS

If Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother, had exchanged letters before Jesus's birth and afterwards, what would they have said to each other? Two Australians, Lindy Drew and Nada Bond, devised the following short play in which two women read the supposed letters by candlelight. Between the letters, a third person sings appropriate extracts from 'Mary's Carol' by Kathleen Johnson. We reprint the text of the play, omitting the stage directions.

Dear Elizabeth,

It was such a help to get your letter. We were so thrilled with the news of little John, and of Zech getting his voice back. I can't wait till we're all together again. We've both appreciated your advice. You're the only ones who really understand the basis of our marriage and the amazing secret of the baby. My head was full of questions and fears when I came to you and I needed that time to think and pray and take it all in. I appreciate more and more all the help you gave me, as time goes on!

Joe reads your letters over and over. It hasn't been easy for him. It's all happened so fast! But now we know for sure that God loves us and will look after everything, the fear has gone.

The sneers and insinuations haven't. They've gone on just the same since I came back to Nazareth. But somehow that doesn't matter now. The baby is what matters. I'm just longing to see him and hold him—it won't be long now. The privilege and responsibility stagger us at times. But of course, life goes on. Joe's so busy with other work that our kitchen shelves will just have to wait. But he has made a beautiful crib. He's a wonderful husband, Elizabeth, and we're really enjoying life...

My Dear Mary,

It was a tonic to us to get your happy letter, so full of life and faith. Yes, little John is growing stronger than we ever could have hoped. He's very alert and takes in a lot already. He's good as gold and we're grateful for that. I'm not as young as you, my dear, and I must admit, I do get a bit tired sometimes.

I wish you could see Zecharius. He's like a child again himself. He loves to play and laugh with his 'miracle boy', as he calls John. But sometimes I catch Zech looking pensive. It weighs heavily when you know your child is destined for something great—it's greater than we can grasp. We think about it a lot—and about our responsibility to bring him up, ready to face anything. Zech says John must be like a strong tree with his roots deep in God.

I know, Mary, that you are thinking of these things, too. You can be sure that we'll be praying for you all the time, especially in the coming weeks. We will be eagerly waiting to hear the news...

**Out on the hillside, a light in the sky,
There in the stable, a baby's cry...**

Dear Elizabeth,

Where do I start? There's so much to catch up on! Jesus is here beside me, on the lovely warm rug you wove for him. He's coming on well. I wish you could see him. He's a long baby and he's got a good thatch of black hair. I guess he looks like most babies, but we can't get over how perfect he is!

I know Joe told you the sequence of events. Everything has worked out amazingly well, though I could hardly see how it would, when we heard we had to leave Nazareth so suddenly. All I could think of was that Jesus was due any day!

There was plenty of time to think on the journey. At one point, as I stared at the road stretching ahead, thinking, 'Why?' I was suddenly reminded of that piece in the Scriptures which says that 'a great leader will come out of Bethlehem.' It was then I knew that it was all part of God's



A scene from another Christmas play, 'The Cowboys' Christmas'.

perfect plan.

But Elizabeth, I must admit that when I saw this shed that's become our home during the weeks here, I was terribly disappointed and close to tears. We were both exhausted but Joe said in his quiet way that we ought to thank God for giving us this place. Lots of people would go without any shelter that night. I knew he was right—and that I had built up a mental picture of what I felt was a worthy place for the Messiah to be born! And of course, I had expected to be at home, with all the family around! But, this very ordinary place is so right—and who am I to say how it should be?...

**Mary, Mary, what do you see?
Visions tonight of the man who will be,
Handmaid of God,
You dared to obey,
He has provided each step of the way....**

... Yes, Elizabeth, he IS special. God is sending lots of people to Him. You should see the visitors we have: all types and colours and ages. The most extraordinary thing is the way they react when they see Jesus. People just don't want to leave, once they're near his little makeshift cot. There's a magic of healing in the room—people's bitterness and disbelief seem to melt away; the lines on their faces soften. They even cry. As I watch these people, I realise that the power that radiates from Jesus is so great that the surroundings are irrelevant....

**Hearts that are frozen will melt in the light,
New men are born on Christmas night.
Shepherds and Kings come in from the cold,
Marvelling to see the things they've been told....**

... Three young men from the country came in on the very first evening. They had run all the way from the hills and were so breathless they could hardly explain it at first.

The Angel had spoken to them too. As they approached to worship Jesus they told us what the Angel had said: 'Don't be afraid. I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone. The Saviour, yes, the Messiah, has been born tonight. You will find him in a blanket in a simple shed in Bethlehem.' And so they found us! Oh, Elizabeth—my heart is bursting with joy as I see all these things happen! But as these people pour in, I wonder if we have really understood what kind of king Jesus will be?

Last night some very learned men came. They brought the most fabulous gifts for Jesus. There was a perfume—mysterious and bitter-sweet. As the fragrance wafted through the room I felt that pang again—that almost unbearable glimpse of agony in my baby's life. But then it went, as quickly as it had come. And all I knew—all that mattered—was that I was holding God's son in my arms.

**Look at the world your baby will share,
Beggars and brothels, dirt and despair.
Tyrants and traitors, peril and pain.
When will men turn from their madness again?
Mary, Mary, what do you hear?
A voice in your heart speaks louder than fear.
This is God's Son you hold on your knee, born to set men
and nations free....** ■

The full words and music of 'Mary's Carol' by Kathleen Johnson are available from Grosvenor Books, price with postage £0.35.



Two poems by Michael Thwaites

Christmas Tree

*Fresh from the forest, piled on jolting trucks
The trees arrive and wait their picking over
Like captives of some ancient war.*

*Chosen tree
We lift you over the threshold to our hearth.
There you will stand through the twelve days of Christmas,
A messenger, a presence
Filling the house with resinous smell of pine
Your glooms conceiving needle-points of light.*

*Radiata pine, primitive first last tree,
Soon you will brown, an outcast, on the tip.*

*But for this hour
You hold the timeless in your brief green boughs
The cardboard angels, home-made crib, the straw,
The new-born baby older than Abraham
The tinsel star outshining nebulae.*

A talk to the willow

*When you were caught red-rooted in the drain
You wept, of course, but did the same again
Not a year later. Look me in the eyes
So please don't bother to pretend surprise.
Recall the second time the drainer came
And summon, if you can, some sense of shame.
The case was clear. 'Want my advice?' said he,
Folding the cheque—'You'd best take out the tree.'
You heard, or did not hear? It's hard to tell.
But the next Spring, as I remember well,
You spurted such a torrent of pure charm
As might excuse Beelzebub from harm,
Such waterfalls of soft bewitching green
As never in our garden had been seen
In any previous year.*

*Well now, attend.
Assume your spirit wishes to amend
But thirst is strong, I will not be judgmental
Or ask too much of passions elemental.
There is a history (let us wear no blinkers)
You come of a long line of heavy drinkers.
Therefore your restless roots shall be confined
By a deep trench, with plastic sheeting lined.
You shall be watered well, to ease temptation,
So can we hope for your co-operation?
Though to the pure, they say, all things are pure,
Please try to keep your thoughts out of the sewer.*

Poems copyright Michael Thwaites



NICK THE MURDERER

A true story from Denis Foss

I WAS CAPTAIN of the *Baltic Trader*, a cargo liner running from Hamburg to Bremen, Rotterdam, Antwerp and round the Mediterranean. On one trip I had to find a Second Steward in a hurry, and my agents sent me Nick. He appeared on board in Antwerp with a scar on his face, and an open shirt revealing another scar across his chest. As we were due to sail in 15 minutes, I had no time to ask questions and I signed him on.

Soon I discovered from Nick that he had just come out of prison after committing a murder in Paris. Apparently he had previously committed another murder in Antwerp, and had many cases of robbery with violence to his name.

'Who else have you told about this?' I asked.

'Nobody. Nobody speaks French except you.'

'Don't tell anybody about this. You have paid the price and as far as the law is concerned you are now a free man. If I hear you have told anyone I will put you ashore at the next port. Now, go and get on with your job.'

The trip from Antwerp to Oran took five days. During that period Nick did his job well. He was a good steward, no question: spotlessly clean and a good time-keeper. The only thing wrong was that he was morose and had little to say for himself.

Nazi

On the way back we had a long passage from Southern Spain to Hamburg. Soon after sailing from Cartagena I sent for him and said, 'Come in, Nick. Sit down. I want you to tell me your whole story.'

He told me that his parents had been Rexists (Belgian Nazis) and he had joined the Hitler Youth. When he was 14, he had been sent to Nuremberg with a delegation from Belgium where he had marched at a party rally and had been completely captivated by the whole Nazi ritual and ideology.

When he was 16 or 17, he volunteered as a messenger boy with the German forces which were then attacking Russia. He was sent to Stalingrad. He was blown up and badly injured—hence the scars. He was brought back to Hamburg and spent many months in hospital.

After the war, he was discharged fit, and went back to Brussels. He found that his home had been blown up by the local Communist underground. His parents, brothers and sisters had been killed and he could find none of his relations.

So he found himself with nowhere to go and no means of earning his living, as he had no skills or training. He set out on a career of raiding small post offices on the outskirts of towns and cities. He did this all over the country. At one place the old woman behind the counter resisted, so he hit her over the head with a club which he carried. She had a particularly thin skull and she died without him knowing. Eventually the police picked him up and he was put in prison with a 'life sentence', which actually lasted about eight years.

When Nick came out of prison one of the 'after prison'

services eventually got him a job as a steward on a Panamanian flag ship.

The Captain was a German and the ship sailed across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal, to Hawaii. Some of the crew went ashore there, had a few drinks and then found themselves outside Honolulu with no money to pay for a taxi back to the ship. Nick said, 'I know how to get money. We'll hold up a post office.'

The American police in Hawaii were quick to pick them all up and shipped them back to their home countries. Nick went back to prison again, this time for 18 months. When he came out he couldn't get back on a ship because of his record.

Fair chance

He moved down to France to try and get work, and was in Paris when a man walked up to him and said, 'You're a nice looking young man. I'll give you 500 francs if you'll sleep with me.' Nick was furious and said, 'Go away, you dirty old man.'

The Frenchman pulled out a great wad of notes and said, 'Look, I've got plenty of money. I can make life very easy for you if you come with me.'

Nick said, 'Go on away, I've seen too much of that in prison. I hate it.' As he walked away he thought to himself, 'Why should that dirty old man have all that money and I've got nothing?' He picked up a brick and threw it from a distance of six to eight feet. It knocked the fellow down, dead. I stopped Nick and said, 'Tell me something. Did throwing the brick kill him or did you pick up the brick afterwards and kill him deliberately?' 'That's right. I did hit him afterwards.' The police picked him up and he went back to jail in Brussels.

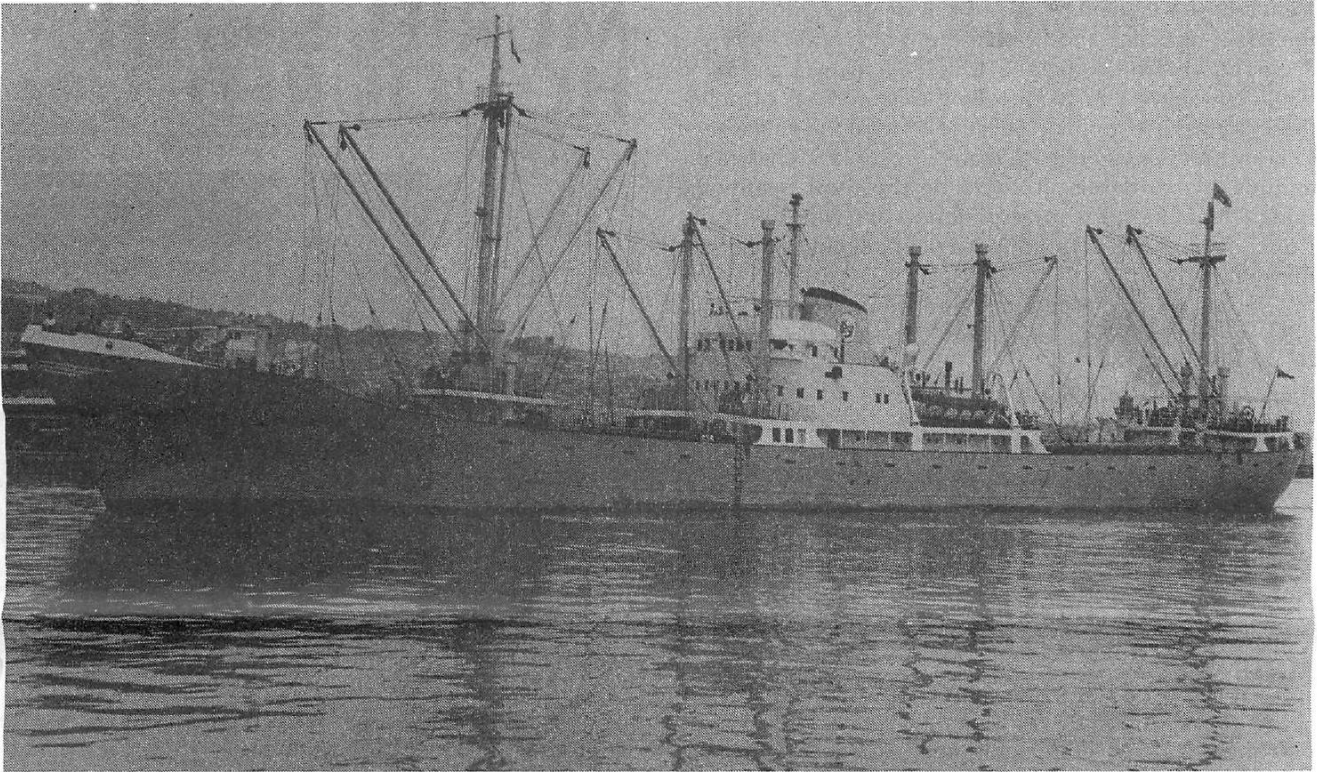
A prison chaplain whom he'd known before wanted to help him. The man felt Nick hadn't had a fair chance—his parents being killed, the Nazi Youth, and his post-war troubles. He believed that if only Nick could be adopted by a Christian family, he might become a changed man. So he advertised in the press to see if a family anywhere in Belgium was prepared to take in a man with two murder convictions.

Flabbergasted

Amazing though it seems, a family in Brussels wrote and said they were willing to try it. The husband was a magazine editor. He, with his wife and two teenage daughters were staunch Catholics. When Nick came out of his second eight years, they took him into their home. He had been staying with them for only a few weeks when he joined my ship. Of course I was flabbergasted by all this. I didn't know what to say. My wife joined us in Hamburg to go to Bremen and Antwerp with us. I wondered whether I should tell her the Steward looking after us was a twice-convicted murderer. I said nothing.

We sailed again and when we were crossing the Bay of Biscay Nick came to see me and said, 'Sir, when we get to Algiers can I have some money to buy a radio please?'

'All right Nick, it's quite a good idea. But just a minute—didn't you tell me that you'd robbed lots of post offices? Could you possibly tell me the addresses of any of them, and how much you stole?'



The Baltic Trader

'Yes a few. I can't remember them all,' he said.

'Well don't you think you ought to make some restitution—send money to some of these people to clear up your life so you can get rid of this criminal hangover that dogs you?'

'Oh,' he said, 'I don't see why I should do a thing like that,' and he went out of the room.

This happened just before Christmas. Now it is common practice on British ships that when the officers have had their Christmas dinner, the stewards sit down for their dinner and the officers wait on them. This time, when the chief officer came and put a menu in front of Nick and said, 'What will you have, sir?' Nick didn't understand. He said, 'What are you doing?' The Chief Officer said, 'Well it is usual on British ships that the officers serve the crew on Christmas Day to show their gratitude for their service.' Nick looked at him, got up and left the table. The others thought perhaps he was not feeling well or something. Anyway, he didn't come back.

I went to see Nick, and found him lying on his bed weeping. I sat down and waited until he'd stopped, and said 'Well, Nick, what's the trouble?'

He said, 'Sir, Sir, I have never seen anything like this. Always I have been pushed around. Always being ordered to do things. Always at the bottom of the tree, and then to have one of the senior officers come up to me and say, "What would you like, sir?" and offer to serve me, was more than I could take.'

I said, 'He's right Nick, we always do this. Come on up and have something to eat.'

I brought him up and we went into the saloon. There was nobody there by then. I cut him a slice of turkey and a slice of ham, and we sat down. The Chief Officer joined us and we talked together and had a friendly time. From that day onwards Nick's attitude to us and to life in general was changed.

He came to me in January and said, 'You know what you said to me about all the places I'd robbed? Well, I've made a list of the ones I can remember and approximately how much I stole. I'd like to pay them back.' So we started writing letters and writing out cheques, posting off money to the people in Belgium and in France that he could remember.

We completed the trip and once more we sailed from Antwerp for Oran. We docked there early in the morning and it was another busy day for me, loading and discharging. We were due to sail fairly late at night for Algiers. At about 8 o'clock, a man came and knocked on my door. I said, 'Come on in.' When he entered I saw he was dressed in uniform.

He sat down and said, 'I'm the Chief of Police for Oran. I wanted to have a word with you about your steward Nick Guillaume. Did you know he was an ex-murderer?'

I said 'Yes, of course I did. What I'd like to know is how you know he's an ex-murderer?'

'He came to see me this morning when he was ashore,' said the Police Chief. 'He told me, "My name is Guillaume. You'll find me on the records. I've been in prison twice for murder. I wanted you to know that you can cross me off the book as I'm never going to do anything like that again."' He went on to tell us what had happened to him since he had been on this ship, and how it had changed his whole attitude to life, and I wanted to meet the men who had so changed this man. Do they all know about him being a murderer?'

'No', I replied. 'He hasn't been treated any differently from anybody else, but it was just the fact that they all cared for him, liked him and worked with him.'

He said, 'There's more to it than that. There's something deeply changed in this man.'

The Chief of Police did not stay very long, and after he

went ashore we sailed. When we got to Algiers, down came the Chief of Police and he told the same sort of story.

On the way from Algiers to Tunis I sent for Nick and asked him, 'Why have you been telling all the chiefs of police these things?' He replied, 'Because it's what the police need to know. If they could learn that it's possible to change the attitude of murderers, it could be the most heartening thing. I feel I must use my experiences and what I've learnt from being on board this ship, to help the police deal with murderers.'

After we'd completed our round trip in the Mediterranean we sailed once more from Cartagena for Hamburg. When we got there we were told that the ship had been transferred to a new line sailing out of London.

The union rules said that any ship having a home port in the UK must carry only British crew, so Nick had to leave the ship. However, I was able to track down the German Captain that Nick had sailed with before, and found that he needed a steward. Nick joined as Second Steward, and within six months he was made Chief Steward. He stayed for five years with the same Captain.

Different

From then on I could only keep in touch with Nick through his adoptive family in Brussels. They had written to me saying how different Nick was when he came home—how it was almost a miracle that he was so different, and that he was a great help to the family, greatly loved by them all.

Suddenly his health broke down. Apparently the injuries he'd received at Stalingrad had gradually become worse, and he died in his mid-forties.

In my bedroom is a picture that Nick gave me when he left my ship. It shows a seaman steering a ship in rough weather with the sea blowing over him. Behind him is the shadowy image of Christ. As Nick gave it me, he said, 'I believe that Christ has been guiding this ship and the people in it and made me totally different. I'm eternally grateful, and I want you to keep this and remember me.' ■



The picture which Nick gave Denis Foss

MURIEL SMITH HONOURED



Muriel Smith

MURIEL SMITH, the mezzo soprano who starred in the MRA film, *The Crowning Experience*, was one of nine women in education, the arts and community service honoured in the 1984 Salute to Black Women at the Mary McLeod Bethune Recognition Luncheon in Washington, DC, on 10 November. The luncheon was sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Region of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). National Council President, Dorothy Height, presented the awards.

The citation for Miss Smith read: 'A professional in theatre and concert, Ms Smith has been in numerous plays here in the US and places abroad, such as England, Scotland and Italy. Ms Smith had the honor of portraying Mary McLeod Bethune in the film *The Crowning Experience*, a historical documentation of the last months of Mrs Bethune's life. Ms Smith continues to perform for community affairs such as the Virginia Opera Association and other charitable events.'

In her remarks to the luncheon, Dorothy Height emphasized the NCNW's underlying concepts of commitment, unity and self-reliance and read Mary McLeod Bethune's 'legacy' to her followers, in which she spelled out her principles. Each of the women being honoured was given a copy of the 'legacy' which included: love, hope, a thirst for education, the challenge of developing confidence in one another, respect for the use of power, faith, racial dignity, a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow man, and, finally, responsibility to our young people.

The Crowning Experience, by Alan Thornhill, was produced by MRA in 1957, in the aftermath of racial conflict in Little Rock, Arkansas, and elsewhere. It was performed for four months in Atlanta, Georgia, and was credited with facilitating the peaceful integration of buses and other public areas in that major southern city. Its Washington, DC, performance broke an attendance record which had stood for 123 years.

As a film, it continues to be shown around the world. Miss Smith, who starred as Carmen Jones on Broadway and as Carmen at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, turned down an offer to play the part of Bess in MGM's film version of *Porgy and Bess* in order to do *The Crowning Experience*.

Miss Smith was recently welcomed by the Mayor to Frederick, Maryland, and was made an honorary citizen. ■

THEATRE REVIEW

THE LION THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

ON SATURDAY 24 NOVEMBER I went to see a performance of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* at the Westminster Theatre. It was beautifully done, with excellent costumes. The actors did very well, especially two of the children, Edmund and Lucy.

The story-line is a bit like the Bible rewritten. The Lion Aslan turns out to be a kind of Jesus Mark 2 in that he sacrifices himself for the boy Edmund and fights evil. The White Witch comes over as a kind of devil, giving temptations to Edmund. Therefore I think it has a kind of moral—not the moral that says, 'When the White Witch offers you Turkish Delight don't accept it', but the kind of moral that tells you inside that that is not the right kind of person to go with.

I think it is a very good family play to go to overall, especially for children of seven to eleven and their parents. It was obvious that the audience liked what they saw, by their cheering at the end and the way they went along with the story. I would recommend this play to anyone who wants to go to a Christmas play. They should also buy the Narnia books.

Gregory Williams, 12

'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' adapted from C S Lewis's book by Glyn Robbins is directed by Richard H Williams. For further information phone Westminster Theatre Box Office, 01-834 0283

ADULT VIEW

'THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE' is an excellent play for children. No one can doubt that who has enjoyed a performance in the midst of a full house of school children and followed their enthusiastic cheering as well as rapt attention at every turn of the story. The producers and the actors bring C S Lewis's Narnia so imaginatively to life.

But time and time again one is struck with the other dimensions, so relevant to modern society, which the play in the guise of a fairy story opens up. It wouldn't be Lewis, if it didn't.

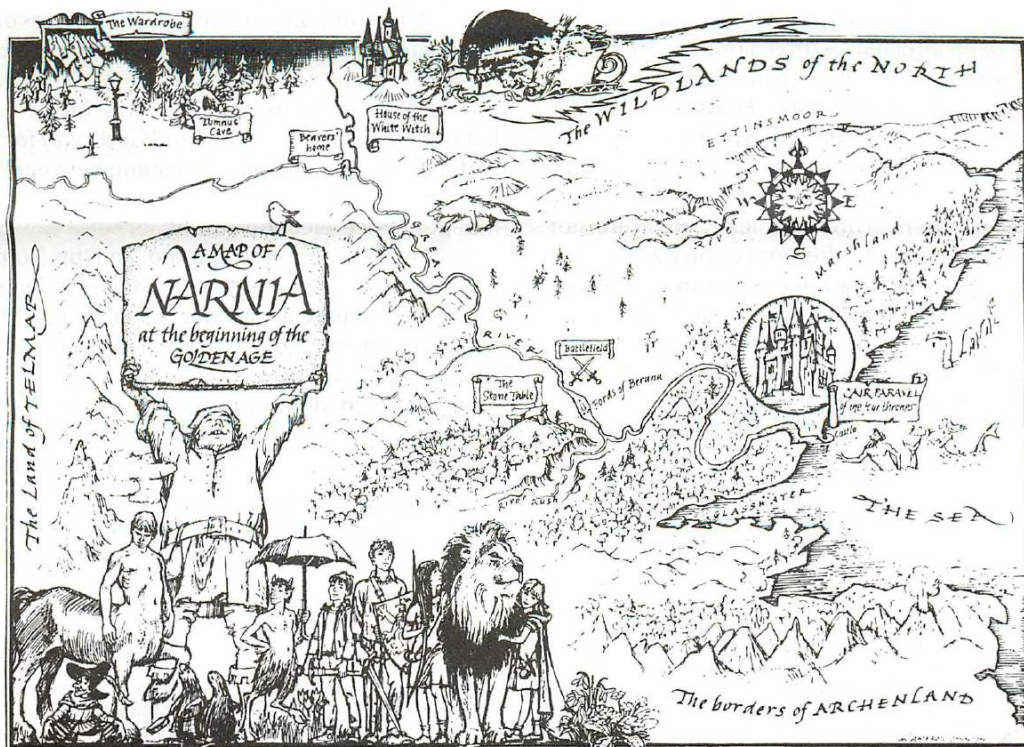
Narnia is a totalitarian state, ruled by the White Witch and her agents. The people are kept in line through fear and violence. Even the trees in the forest are part of the system. They all listen when you walk among them and some of them, one doesn't know which, will report what they hear to the Witch. Under her spell Narnia is a land of snow and ice, where nothing grows and spring is a dream far away.

But in spite of the risks there are those who dare to dream that dream and to live for it, like the beavers who help the four children to find their way to Aslan, the Lion and the true King of Narnia. He teaches them how to take up his battle, what it will involve of courage, suffering and final freedom.

The children may not but sense these dimensions instinctively. For the adults it is part of our every day reality. It is the challenge and the choice that we are confronted with in 1984, whether as a present fact or a future possibility. Yet there is also a solution of enough depth to match the problems we face. In the form of a children's play, all right, but it may be in that frame of mind that we will get it—and enjoy it. I enjoyed it and was even moved by it and thought of many whom I would like to see it.

F H Wetterfors

William Cameron-Johnson's map of Narnia



Alec Smith



contd from page 1

The book tells the story of Desmond Reader, who was one of our group. He was a professor in the University of Rhodesia, as it was then. Through a personal experience of reconciliation he found a new working relationship with one of his colleagues—a black, senior lecturer in the same department. This man had strong links with the nationalist movements, and Professor Reader by his status as a senior professor had many links with the Government, MPs and so on. These two men engineered a series of dinners and private meetings between the two warring sides, where there was a chance for understanding to grow between people who had never met each other face to face before.

This is just one of many stories I could tell of the different occasions that the 'cabinet of conscience' were able to achieve.

* * *

To my mind, what happened in the Army was one of the real miracles in Zimbabwe. I happen to have first-hand experience of the Army. People take for granted what happened there, as they take for granted the whole miracle of Zimbabwe. We had a seven-year war in Zimbabwe during which, at a conservative estimate, 30,000 people were killed. There's hardly a family in the country that has not in some way been affected—either a relative, a brother, a sister or friend who died. Then some politicians push pens across a piece of paper at Lancaster House, and it's all over—peace is signed. To expect everyone to drop their weapons and go home was to expect miracles—and that's what happened. Then we integrated three armies that had been fighting each other. Three armies! We were not asking them to go home to a different country and forget the war existed. Armies that had been fighting and killing each other joined together, forming unified battalions, living in unified barracks, in the same barrack room. Soldiers that had last year been trying to blow each other to bits chatting over a Coca Cola in the canteen—that is the miracle of Zimbabwe. It had to happen in individual people. There were something like 80 to 100 thousand combatants in the war, to say nothing of the people on either side who took political standpoints. Every individual soldier who fought in that war had to go through a personal

change of heart and attitude towards his enemies. To this day we have entire regiments completely integrated from all three armies and you cannot tell one from the other. They all work together and serve one Government. That is not something to be taken lightly. ■

HUGH ELLIOTT reviews

NOW I CALL HIM BROTHER

by Alec Smith

THIS BOOK, once picked up, is hard to put down. It tells the story of the son of Ian Smith, former Prime Minister of Rhodesia, and the author of UDI.

Alec Smith describes his happy childhood on his father's farm; his increasing rebellion after his father became Prime Minister; how he got hooked on hard drugs and was finally convicted for pushing them; and the extraordinary experience which changed his whole life as he found Christ and became free. At this point he had to make a further decision. As he puts it, 'The big question for me was how this change related to the crisis in my nation. I discovered that there was a big difference between giving my life to God so that my problems could be sorted out and giving my life to God to work towards establishing His authority in the power structure of my country.' Meeting MRA helped him decide to do both.

In 1975, as the civil war escalated, he took part in an international MRA conference in the capital, Salisbury. There Alec Smith met a black nationalist, Arthur Kanodereka, who lost his hatred of the whites because of the change he saw in Alec. The friendship and teamwork of these two men made an impact on the country. It aroused opposition, but also affected Ian Smith's thinking.

Alec Smith and Arthur Kanodereka travelled together to South Africa and other countries. Smith goes on to describe how Kanodereka was assassinated after a peace mission to meet the guerrilla leaders in Zambia and Mozambique; how a 'cabinet of conscience' was formed and worked behind the scenes to try and find God's way for the country, and how this led to a secret meeting between Mugabe and Ian Smith just before the announcement of the pre-independence election results.

A possible coup was averted and by 'something of a miracle', in Lord Carrington's phrase, independence was ushered in amidst peace and much rejoicing.

Alec Smith ends with a strong challenge to white Zimbabweans to stay and serve the country. He calls on Christians everywhere to demonstrate that a new kind of society, where wealth is shared and the races work together, will only come through a radical change in people. ■

'Now I call him Brother' by Alec Smith, published by Marshall, Morgan and Scott. Available from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ, paperback price £1.75, with postage £1.95.

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