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Revolutionary Peter Howard Gained Both Love And Hate

IN ONE of his last public speeches, Peter Howard, playwright, author and sportsman, and the world leader of Moral Re-Armament, discussed the life and times of Winston Churchill. "What we want in days of peace," he said, "is the statesman who will do for our moral courage what Churchill did for our guts in war."

There are thousands round the world who believe that Peter Howard himself was such a statesman. He died at the weekend at the age of 56. He seemed, in fact, to have burnt himself out.

For Howard was a revolutionary. His revolution brought him love and brought him hate. It led him to believe that everyone he met, rich and poor, Black and White, boss and worker could and should be part of the remaking of the world.

For England

Peter Howard was born a cripple. His right ankle touched his knee, and his leg had to be broken and reset. At the age of seven he overheard the family doctor tell his mother that his thin leg would prohibit him from playing sport.

Ten years later he was playing rugby for Oxford, and in 1931 he captained England. Before the war, the tall, square-jawed young man with deep-set eyes won for England the world's Olympic bobsleigh championship. It is said to be the world's most dangerous and thrilling sport, and means sliding down a mountain at 90 miles an hour.

Lord Beaverbrook, the first baron of Fleet Street, sent for him, and made him Britain's best-known and highest paid political columnist.

One day, Howard was ordered by his paper, the Daily Express, to investigate Moral Re-Armament. He expected to stab it to death with his pen. Instead, he found an idea which captured his life.

Howard wrote a book supporting Moral Re-Armament. He called it "Innocent Men." It was widely sold, but it earned for

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Howard dismissal from the newspaper. Yet, 20 years later — last year — Beaverbrook sent for Howard and asked him to write his official biography. Howard did so, and called it "Beaverbrook the Unknown."

All Howard possessed when he was fired was a picturesque farm which had been run at a loss. With his wife, former Doë Metaxa, a Wimbledon champion, and his three children, he set about the task of putting the neglected land in order.

Show Place

Today Hill Farm, near Lavenham, on England's east coast, is a show place where government officials demonstrate the rewards of conservation. Howard, who died in Peru, will be buried tomorrow in Lavenham's churchyard.

Howard dedicated his heart and his pen to the work of Moral Re-Armament. Nearly 5m. copies of his books have been sold in 20 languages, but he did not accept one cent of the R600,000 in royalties. All the money went to the work of M.R.A.

He also wrote 17 plays, many of which have had long runs in London's West End and on Broadway, and he wrote two feature films.

From Tokio to New York, from Oxford to Delhi, no speaker was in greater demand. In a ten-week spell in America last year

he made 46 speeches in 29 cities. These speeches, incidentally have been collected in a book called "Design for Dedication," recently released in South Africa.

A Theme

Late week, Peter Howard said: "Somewhere out of the heart of the Free World has got to come a theme, a goal, an aim bigger than Communism and anti-Communism; which will be pursued with discipline and unselfishness that wins. Someone must pattern the next step for humanity. We are in the midst of a struggle to decide whether the freedoms we inherited, and for which millions have died, shall survive or perish from the earth — whether civilisation based on moral order shall endure, or whether humanity is to be robbed of ancient virtues and left to destruction in an atomic jungle."

Howard blazed with the belief that "Thy will would be done on earth as it is in heaven." He has left his fire in many hearts.