

The Indian and the security policeman

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LIFE is full of surprises. Recently my wife and I went into an Indian home in Bombay. We found the family speaking Afrikaans. It is their home language. They used to live in Evaton, Transvaal.

The father was politically active in South Africa. A Special Branch man was permanently at his meetings. The time came when the Indian decided he had better leave the country.

A strange bond grew up between the Indian and the Afrikaner policeman. He says that when they parted they practically wept on each other's shoulders.

This was one of the reassuring things my wife and I discovered in our recent tour of some of the world's trouble spots. There was, of course, much to depress us.

We were, for instance, in Kenya when the Kikuyu oathings were going on. The

A Johannesburg Moral Rearmament leader describes some of the grounds for hope he discovered in a recent tour of the darker places of the earth.

oath is that the Kikuyu will rule for ever.

They are arbitrarily placing their tribesmen in every possible position of authority. Tom Mboya's assassination was part of the operation, I was told.

In Northern Ireland we saw 400 houses in Belfast wholly or partly burned out. In Londonderry we went into Bogside, the area where 30,000 Catholics live. Every entrance to Bogside but one was barricaded off. Our car was searched for petrol bombs and weapons. Neither the police nor the army were going in.

The Bogside vigilantes were running their "little republic." Signs announced that you were entering "Free Derry."

We found a little Irish home feeding all the vigilantes who had given up their paid jobs. In the kitchen at 11.30 p.m. were 25 people getting their food, sent from Donegal across the border.

In Ethiopia we found an unannounced civil war going on. Eritrea and Ethiopia used to be separate countries. The United Nations brought them into a federation. Emperor Haile Selassie dissolved the federation and declared a unitary state. The Eritreans object to this and now war in the forests is an accepted part of life.

Beatings

In India we found that 85 political murders had taken place in the State of West Bengal, particularly in Calcutta, in eight months under its pro-Communist popular front government.

We found students beating up examiners if the papers were too difficult, and examinees beating up the invigilators who tried to stop the cheating.

We found Christians in Assam going off to Peking with their Bibles in their pockets to learn how to fight for their rights. We may yet see the supreme irony that the Christians bring Communism into Assam in the name of freedom.

Yet, like the strange link between the Indian and the policeman, there were grounds for encouragement.

In Kenya were Christians choosing death before denying their faith. We found 10,000 Kikuyu in an anti-oathing rally.

We also met Chief Jonathan Barasa giving the lie to the saying that every man has his price. He lives in the same little house as before independence. He has

done wonders to raise up his people. But he still has difficulty finding the money for his children's school fees.

If someone remarks that nobody is incorruptible, people say: "What about Chief Jonathan Barasa?"

Ethiopia leads the crusade against South Africa. Yet we found people there ready to talk frankly and sanely. We dined with the Government Press chief in Asmara. He thinks that South Africa needs to change.

I said: "I agree with you. I do not think we have come to our final solution. But let us think what will help bring about a change. Do you think that threats and boycotts tend to make South Africa more open-minded or more reactionary?"

Help

He had never asked himself that question and readily conceded that it was bound to help the reactionary forces. The evening ended with his getting me to write an article for his papers outlining a policy that would help the forward-looking forces in South Africa.

In Belfast we met an Irish grandmother. Her house had been burned out, leaving her no time to gather her money or her rings. She had not a trace of bitterness or frustration, and a twinkle in her eye.

She now lives with her son-in-law, a factory manager. He has had stricken from the employment questionnaire any item that will indicate whether the applicant is a Protestant or a Catholic.

He says: "I belong to the Catholic minority. We tend to blame the Protestant majority, point to the discriminations we suffer, and wash our hands of responsibility. But I have decided that nobody will rob me of my God-given right to be responsible for the life of my country."

In India we saw a potential civil war in the hills of Assam resolved with unity and goodwill.

One man who had fought passionately for the rights of his tribe decided to ask not what was best for his sectional group, but what was best for India and the world. He chose a new course and thousands followed.

When despondent about India's future we reminded ourselves that for 22 years 500-million Indians, with vast differences of language and caste and culture, have lived together with a considerable measure of unity, freedom and democracy.

Nothing on that scale has been attempted in the history of man.

-Bremer Hofmeyr