

gifts, intelligence or charm, the gift of leadership can be used for good or evil. You and I know that there are some people that it is VERY hard to say, "No!" to. They just push and push us to follow them – but remember! Leaders need followers and you do not have to be a follower. You are free to say, "No!" if you think that what the leader wants you to do is not right.

But sometimes leaders are very exciting, and fashionable and everyone else is following them –so what do you do? When I was 19, I was working at a conference center in Switzerland before I went to Oxford. The rest of the team were mainly German girls. One afternoon, I was asked to be on duty and they were free to attend a lecture. Afterwards they told me that the lecture was by a German woman who had been a teenager at the time when Hitler was coming to power. She told them what it felt like to be German when Germany was feeling the disgrace, the *lodja*, of being defeated in the First World War, and so people were feeling very depressed. And then this man Hitler spoke of Germany being great again and proud and making the other nations respect it and building up its army and its weapons. Most of the German people did not test his character but just listened to his words and were carried away by the power of his words. Like thousands of other young people, this woman got involved in the German Youth Movements – wonderful movements that had field-trips and camps and activities of all kinds that gave the young people of this defeated nation a sense of identity and pride. "Later," she said, "when some of us realized how bad Hitler was, it was too late." They had given him power and now there were the secret police who would come and take you away if you spoke against Hitler. It took 6 years of war and millions of lives to defeat him and liberate the German people from the trap of this dictator.

But some leaders are a great blessing. You and I, in our lives, may know people whom we want to lead us when we have to decide something. We know they will always give us good advice. "What do you think, mother/father/grandfather/auntie/

friend/teacher?" I think of a wise man who was a church member of the village church where I was a minister. Edward was old and had had a hard life. As a boy, he had been trained as a book-binder and printer – a good trade. But Britain suffered a very bad economic depression in the 1930s and there was much suffering among the poor – and no work for bookbinders and printers – and he became a street cleaner to feed his family. But his quality of character was so fine that he ended up Head of the Cleaning Services for the whole of the district – a very good management job. In the group of churches I belong to, each church is governed by a Church Meeting of all the members so we did a lot of talking and discussion before deciding on anything. Edward would listen quietly to everything that everyone said and, right at the end, he would give his opinion. What he said was always very wise and he would thus influence the decisions that we made. He was the true leader of the congregation and time after time, people accepted his leadership by agreeing with him.

When people worry so much about examination results, I think, "Examination results prove that you are clever (*chalak*) but they do not necessarily mean that you are wise." I hope this school will help you to be both wise and clever so that your leadership is accepted because, when you speak, people will know that what you are saying is something right and good that they should agree with and act upon. God bless you.



THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA – 1

Assembly 98 – July 17th 2003

When a country has a revolution, it usually means violence and war. But sometimes, just sometimes, a country has a bloodless revolution – a revolution with no war. But that cannot happen

without very remarkable people as leaders – on both sides – leaders who say, “Let us not hate each other. Let us work together for a different future.”

When I was working for my A levels, a new girl came into our Senior School. She and her family were white people who had moved from the Union of South Africa. This is the country that is at the bottom of Africa – a huge country. The Portuguese were the first people to sail round the bottom of South Africa but it was mainly the Dutch who colonized it – with great difficulty. They had to be tough people. Making a living as a farmer was hard and the black people were often hostile – not surprising when their land was being taken! Then the English defeated the Dutch and South Africa became part of the British Empire. Around the middle of the last century, the government, which was in the hands mainly of the Dutch – or the Afrikaners as they were called - established a form of government and way of life based on the principle of *apartheid* – that is, separate development for the people with 3 different skin colours. These were the *white people*, the *coloured people* (which was the name they gave to the people who had come from India, brought into the colony for special work – they were called ‘the coloureds’) – and, finally, the *blacks*, of whom there were millions more than the whites or coloureds. The theory was that each race should be allowed to develop separately - they should not mix. It was meant to be equal development but, in fact, it wasn't. Those who were not white people were made to live in separate places, not so nice as the areas for the white people, so that meant that many had to travel a long way from home to work. It meant that there were separate schools and hospitals, separate seats in the park, “whites only” “non-whites only”, separate toilets – the whole of life was separated. If you were a non-white, you had to have a passbook that stated what colour of skin you had although, of course, there were mixed race people there and it was possible for two children in the same family to be allocated to different schools because

their skins were a different colour. There was much hatred and superstition between the races. A white couple one day were visited by two people, also white, who sat and talked to them and then left. Later they discovered that the grandfather of one of them was a black man – and they burnt the chair on which he had been sitting. That is racism – hatred based on the colour of someone's skin or their racial or social identity. Britain was so ashamed of what was going on in South Africa that its membership of the British Commonwealth was stopped.

The white police were very powerful, and, at times, very brutal. No opposition was allowed. Many very promising and educated younger people were murdered by the police – the black leaders of the future were being exterminated. The finest leader of the blacks, called Nelson Mandela, with his friends, was put on an island prison where they stayed for 27 years. But they refused to let their anger at injustice make them bitter. They asked for books to read in their time off from the hard work they had to do. They talked together of the future South Africa that they all hoped for and became more and more educated and stronger and stronger in their characters.

The father of the new girl in my school asked our Principal if he could talk to the school about the South African situation. He told us that life there was so bad that he believed there would be a terrible bloodbath. He said, a few million white people were holding down many million black people and, one day, surely, the blacks would rise up and murder them all! He could not imagine that people could be treated like that and not explode in anger – one day. He had taken his family out of South Africa to save them from such an end.

But God had other plans for South Africa and he was preparing leaders. One day, a little black boy was in the street holding the hand of his mother who was a hospital cleaning lady. A white man passed by and raised his hat to his mother. He could not believe it – a white man being polite to his mother! The little boy

was to become a little man with a big smile, a fine brain and the heart of a lion – Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The man who raised his hat to his mother was an extraordinary English priest called Father Trevor Huddleston who had lived and worked for years among the black people, keeping alive their desire for justice but helping them not to hate. These were the sort of people who were to save South Africa from a terrible fate but it was not going to be easy. I will continue this story tomorrow. God bless you.



THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA – 2

Assembly 99 – July 16, 2003

Yesterday I began to tell you the story of the peaceful revolution in one country – which one? -The Union of South Africa. I wonder if any of you looked at your atlases and found it. Many people said that there would surely be a terrible bloodbath there because the black people were so oppressed by the white people. Many millions of black people were living with injustice and prejudice under a government of a tiny minority of white people who believed in ‘apartheid’ – a Dutch word meaning separate development – but, some people said, it sounded like APART HATE and that was what it was. Society was divided into three groups, according to skin-colour - the white people, the coloured (or Indian) people and the black people. The three lived in separate areas and, if a white person’s salary was 100%, then the coloured person’s salary was 50% and the black person’s salary was 25%. But, among the black people, there was a movement for change, shared by most of the Christian churches, that said, “Of course, we must work hard for change but we must not hate the white people. They must be shamed into giving us our freedom and our rights.” At a conference in Switzerland in the 1960s, I met

a coloured Christian minister and a black minister who spoke with much understanding about the white people who were mainly descendants of the Dutch who had settled there. They said, “They are frightened. First the British took their land, and now they are frightened that we will.” I was amazed that people who were suffering so much under this government, were refusing to hate those who were causing the suffering. They were trying to understand them.

Across the world, people began to put great pressure on the racist, white government of South Africa. No country would play sport with them. People would not buy South African products. People supported the African National Congress, the ANC, the party of Nelson Mandela, though he and his friends had been in prison on Robben Island for many years, and others had had to flee to other countries. There was a great movement to FREE NELSON MANDELA. People wore T shirts with this message and waved banners and went on rallies. Outside the South African Embassy in London, there was always a demonstration, every day for year after year. The churches that the white minority government supported had, for some years, said that the Bible agreed with their attitude but some of their Bible scholars began to say that the Bible did NOT say those things. It had been misinterpreted -and its leaders began to talk of peace and reconciliation between black and white.

The white police force continued to treat the blacks very badly. But every time someone was killed in police custody, their funeral was made the occasion for a great demonstration when thousands and thousands of black people – men and women and children - would sing and dance through the streets of the coming freedom that they could not see but was already in their hearts. There were so many of them that even the police were helpless. On one occasion, they had shot into the crowd and there was a massacre and it was all over the front pages of the world’s newspapers and all the governments were very angry and they did not do it again.