

CUSO AND THE THIRD WORLD

by **JIM MORRISON**

CUSO is an independent development agency which recruits and sends skilled individuals from all walks of life to help nations of the Third World train their people in the skills needed to cope with our fast changing, technological world.

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Canadian Teachers to Nigeria

Do you sometimes feel that your students don't appreciate the effort you put into the class you teach? Are there times when you wish you could teach, for once, only those who really want to learn, who cry out for education? Perhaps the answer would be to go overseas to a Developing/Third World Country that needs and appreciates your talents. The grass is always greener...and you know the rest. It would be wise however to examine this 'pasture' on the other side of the fence more closely and ask yourself if you will make the best use of it or simply trample it underfoot.

Looking 'over there' from here is very deceptive. One can read and listen and ask questions of those who have been to a developing country but one cannot escape the fact that a bias will always be present at the source. If you are fortunate enough to be able to travel to South America, Africa, or Asia, how much of your opinion of the country will be based on a few days at a hotel you thought not quite up to Canadian standards? Or just eating North American meals as you were afraid of what the 'native' food may cause? The beaches were nice but you didn't actually leave your culture behind. This experience will only provide a high

polish to the thin veneer of opinions you already had. After a two or three week stay one leaves a country not with knowledge of it but perhaps a nodding acquaintance with it.

This is not to say however that length of stay means wisdom. A long sojourn does not an expert make. I lived in West Africa for eight years, in Ghana and Nigeria, and the longer I stayed the less I knew. That is to say, I was an 'expert' when I first reached West Africa and a mute observer a month later. Things become much more complicated the closer one gets to them and both Nigeria and Ghana had their share of complications. One of the many is the education system and we can now return to the initial theme. Would you want to go to Africa to teach? If so, Why? Most importantly, do they need you? Will you be a burden when all along you thought you were making a sacrifice by going overseas to teach? If we may focus on a specific country, are you, as a Canadian teacher going to Nigeria, irrelevant to Nigeria's future?

To help you answer some of these questions, let's look at the Nigeria of today. With a population of over sixty million, ninety per cent of which is rural and illiterate, and a rapidly declining agricultural output, Nigeria may seem to be similar to the one hundred other nations in the Third World. However, Nigeria stands apart from so many of the others due to its possession of the one commodity that is in great demand in the industrialized world-oil. Nigeria is seventh in the world in oil production and it provides Nigeria with over eighty per cent of its GNP Gross National Product. With this oil wealth the Nigerian Government has decided to initiate a Universal Primary Education program for the country by next year or as soon as possible. This means that every child over five years old has the right to a free primary education. A good thing, you may say,

admirable. But what does one do with the literates that such a system produces? Perhaps ten per cent will go on to secondary school if there is room, but the rest? They are literate so they go to the towns and cities for jobs. The prevalent opinion in Nigeria is that only illiterates farm. Agricultural production goes down even further. Last year Nigeria so rich in livestock had to import beef. Will Universal Primary Education solve this problem?

One concern that is uppermost in the minds of many Nigerians is how the scheme is to be implemented. Will education be free and compulsory or free and voluntary? If its voluntary, perhaps farmers while keep their children at home on the farm. On the other hand if its compulsory, will the Moslems of Northern Nigeria be forced to send their children to a school teaching Western concepts instead of to the more traditional Korannio beliefs. A Western system would conflict in many ways with Islamic doctrine, and since the Moslems are over fifty per cent of the country's population, their discord cannot be taken lightly.

But wait. Before we can suggest a solution to this problem we must realize it is all part of a larger problem. Whatever it may be, when, if at all, are the indigenous religioner customs to be subserged for progress-to most of us 'Westernization'? Perhaps you may say that Westernization is the answer to their problems and the sooner they westernize the better for them! If this is the case than a consideration of the western influence on Nigeria's culture and how Nigeria is coping with it is more useful here than an outline of your teaching responsibilities. For the problems lie beyond the schools - the involve the world-view of the whole country.

Modernization for Nigeria is not questioned. What is questioned is how this process is to be controlled.

Modernization is the adeptation of the science and technology exhibited by Europe, Japan and North America to Nigerian needs. In many cases however, Westernization tends to replace modernization i.e. an adoption of western culture rather than an adaptation of its more useful aspects. However Nigeria escape the culture of the English-speaking world when English is the language of commerce and government in Nigeria? Before Nigeria became independent in 1960, this was not considered a problem. All subjects taught in Nigerian schools were British-oriented and in English. Now these subjects have been indigenized to become Nigerian History, Nigerian Geography, or Nigerian Literature. The emphasis has shifted from the Kings of England to the Emirs of the Sokoto Caliphate. Wole Soyinka and Cinus Chinua Achebe now occupy the bookshelf where once Dickens and Shakespeare reigned supreme. Nigeria now looks to Nigerian and African writers for its poetry, its novels and its history - a process that can only produce at this time, not a rabid ethnocentrism but, a recognition of self - of self-respect and self-confidence. Perhaps we do share something with this part of the developing world.

But yet to reach a multi-lingual population (over 350 languages) a lingua franca is essential and the colonial past has provided it-English. Recently it has been widely condemned as the language of the 'colonial masters' and therefore not relevant to an independent Nigeria. An African language, it is said, should be substituted - be it Hausa or Swahili- to overcome this problem. However, many Nigerians feel it is a matter of adapting the English language to indigenous dialects which would more clearly express African concepts. There is already a distinctive dialect based on English widely used in Nigeria. A working knowledge of English in government, business and academic matters facilitates communication beyond Nigeria and Africa. It is truly a two-edged sword-a potential destroyer of indigenous culture yet a consolidating force in a modernizing Nigeria.

In your journey outward than, observe and consider what is around you. Avoid false promises and hasty judgements. Comprehend the larger issues to understand the small school in which you teach. If you do you will eave behind friends and achievements but take away memories and a greater understanding of the world beyond that we see dimly through out Euro-centric spectacles. There are two things about Nigeria that will remain with me for a long time to come: first there are the people-the adaptable, energetic people and, secondly what they embody-their enthusiasm for life, for progress and the search for a solution to the problem that hinder them. After considering what I have written above, perhaps you will be a small part of this solution.

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its effect, Amnesty relies both on the strength of numbers and on the general desire of governments for an untarnished international image that will reap rewards in terms of political alliances and trade relationships. It seems to work:

"Believe me, only a person who has lived under subhuman conditions is capable of realizing the value of your gesture, which was of great spiritual and moral comfort to me.

"I was tried by War Tribunal in the midst of an atmosphere of expectation, because of the Declaration of human rights, and because of many letters of help from people like you. They contributed to create favourable conditions for us. As a result, we (ten of us) were set free..." (letter to Halifax member from Chilean ex-prisoner.)

IN MEMORY OF MAO TSE-TUNG



The people of Canada were deeply shocked and grieved to learn of the death of Mao Tse-Tung. His contribution to the liberation of the Chinese people and nation, to the building of a new socialist China, to the unity and progress of the entire Third World, to relations of peaceful coexistence between countries of different social systems, and to the development of friendly relations between the Chinese people and all other peoples, including the Canadian people, is well known and admired throughout the world. China has lost a great leader.

The leadership of Mao Tse-Tung as his nation's saviour is described in the anthem written during the 1930's "The East in Red"

*Red is the east, rises the sun;
China has brought forth a Mao
Tse-tung
For the peoples' happiness he
works,
He is the peoples' liberator*

He will be remembered for leading his nation on the first steps to renewing their dignity and freedom by showing them the path to overcoming hunger, privation and disease.

Mao Tse-tung was born on December 26, 1893 in the village of Shoashan in the central province of Hunan, China. He died at 00:10 September 9, 1976, in Peking at age 83. In his long life he made an unprecedented contribution to the history of the Chinese people. His thoughts and writings will continue to influence the people of the world and the people of China for a long time to come.

China's 800 million people are saddened now because they have lost this esteemed and beloved leader. This summer while visiting the Peoples' Republic of China, I had many opportunities to talk to the ordinary people in parks or streets. Whenever I mentioned the differences between the new and forward looking China of today and the depressed nation of the past, friendly faces would smile and say "It is really because of the correct line of Chairman Mao."

In twenty eight years the Peoples' Republic has been transformed from a semi-feudal colony into an independent and self sufficient nation. She has solved the age old problems of feeding and clothing her population and teaching over ninety percent of her people to read and write.

The Chinese people have also advanced in the world of science and medicine. China has also been able to provide assistance to the other countries of the third world based on a diplomatic policy of promoting friendship with all people's.

How can all these achievements made by a people in the brief historical period of twenty eight years be attributed to the correctness of Mao's line? This political philosophy was developed through the creative application of Marxism to the conditions of China. In particular it was his clear vision of the ultimate goal and his deep understanding of local conditions which are the basis of his social and political analysis. This has separated him from many of his revolutionary colleagues who have failed to remain to the task of guiding the Chinese people on the path of revolution. His understanding of his peoples social development as expressed in his writings, will continue to influence the Chinese people and the people of the world for along time to come.

Chairperson Mao is not merely the founder of the Chinese Communist Party of the Peoples' Republic of China. His analysis of the continuous nature of socialist revolution has illuminated the need for a series of cultural revolutions to ensure further progress on the path to socialism. The prominent campaigns to educate the people of China on the nature of the mistakes with Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping were making in following a "revisionist" line. Mao saw that the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China was merely the first stage in a long process of revolution.

I hope that Mao Tse-tung will be remembered as he wanted to be; not as a soldier, leader, statesman of author but as a teacher. A teacher whose students were a nation and whose lesson gave the courage, strength and direction to build a completely new society.

by **CHAI CHU THOMPSON**