

elections. This is tribalism, disrespect, intolerance to

# Time For Stocktaking

Eve

If anyone says that this was the last Xmas this millennium with any certainty, they have only a minimal chance of being correct. Only a smaller part of the world's population believe in the Gregorian calendar (which is incorrect anyway so their millennium was either a few years ago or will be a few years hence). They just happen to be the ones who think that the whole world belongs to them and therefore should be like them. Still, it's time for stocktaking.

This year, travelling from Bosnia to Palestine and across Africa from Ethiopia to South Africa and back to England and Denmark, it becomes more and more evident to me that our culture is just one small part of the globe, and we have a long, long way to go before we realise the consequences of that.

This has been a year of intense learning for me. There has been so much to take in, from Old Jerusalem and Addis Abbeba to the savannas of Serengeti and the remote bush of Africa, to the ruins of Sarajevo and Ilha de Mozambique, to African rural homesteads and villages emptied by AIDS. History comes alive as you walk where Sheba was once queen, and then where Solomon was once king; to where slaves were shipped out in those terrible times from Tanzania's Bagamoyo (which means "I lay down my heart") or from Ilha de Mozambique's old dark slave house still lurking within view of the massive forbidding fortress, to the Arab countries, Europe and the Americas.

At the same time, the recent past becomes more inscrutable as peaceful democratic elections are held in country after country where people who recently committed the worst atrocities against each other stand peacefully in the same voter's queues. The once-assumed certainties of the present becomes less comprehensible when you stand amongst ruins in Bosnia and listen to what happened to the Bosnian Moslems while Europe stood by and let it happen until it was too late – and in Kosovo – and now again in Chechnya. Wasn't it Elie Wiesel who said that indifference is the greatest crime against humanity? European tribalism, and Islamophobia, is perhaps the worst tribalism of all.

What of the future? That, too, seems less certain as you see the child-adults of Zambia trying to keep together the remnants of their AIDS-smitten families for the few years they have left; or as you see what were once lifelong jobs and security in Europe dwindling to a few years in a firm before a takeover, redundancy, and despair.

All over the world we are being thrown back onto

our own resources for survival – millions in desperate straits yet with cultural and social richness, others surrounded by material affluence but in cultural and social paucity. What is the greater evil – the one-party state that ensures that everyone has good food, health, education and work, or the global economic system that we have today, where the 358 wealthiest people in the world own as much as the poorest 45% of the entire population of the world?

Africa – a vast continent with enormous variety, and yet still one Africa, something of its own and now struggling to find out what exactly that something is and to be proud of it, and it is a tremendous privilege to be a part of that journey.

Education as Europeans and Americans know it is a complete failure in Africa – and how could it ever have been a success? Originally, it is the education devised by the urban European bourgeoisie for their own children. They had wealth, could pay taxes, they had time and leisure, so how could that ever have been relevant for rural Africa, where most Africans live?

So what I have been looking at this year is what possibilities there are for a different future for Africa other than laying down their hearts once again and going into some new form of slavery of the soul through globalised education. The time scale is very long indeed. Once AIDS has cut its swathe through the continent, and that is happening on a big scale now, it will take generations to rebuild a population. What will happen to countries like Namibia, who simply cannot afford to lose a quarter of their 1.6 million population without society collapsing?

No-one seems to know. Privilege brings obligation with it, and because I am so privileged as to be allowed to continue working with education in Africa, I feel obliged to give all I can. It has been a tremendously rewarding year for me, thanks to the generosity of my African colleagues, where my presence is wanted and the ideas I share and the questions I ask are highly appreciated: it is all part of helping people become more themselves, create sense and meaning in what they do, and to reject anything which is irrelevant for their children, such as the instant answers and standardised fast food packages of education which Europe and America are so eager to export under the guise of development aid or even satellites of their own schools and colleges.

Roger Avenstrup

I WOULD like to express my condolences to all Namibians who have been victims of the shooting incident and help you in your efforts.

Drinking and driving has been the cause of many deaths on the roads. Now we have one: 'Everyth'ing'.

Sometimes we have done and don't understand being killed, are destroyed 'the situation' What on earth is an end.

"I'm not a Namibian. I

Namibia and the top quality environment exciting an attraction in our region Corp

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COMPLIMENTS of the

## Whiteboard Suggestions

exactly what our Webmaster plans to do, among others, to eliminate the unused white-