

### Basic Questions

Was the play at Coventry entirely coincidental? If it was, how should I regard it? Was it a miraculous message from God in answer to my prayers for guidance? Conversely, was the sequence of events contrived? Was the whole thing a set-up, an elaborate form of indirect communication? If so, what was it intended to communicate? Which organisation was responsible? Was more than one organisation involved and if so did they have compatible or competing aims?

What would theologians think of the meaning of the event, assuming there was no link whatsoever by human agencies between myself, the real Harold Beck, and the fictitious Harold Beck in the play? If much if not all of it was of human contrivance should it still be regarded as God answering my prayers through man.

### My Reaction

My initial reaction was to regard the *Speak Up, Harold Beck!* event as the most extraordinary coincidence among the many I had encountered thus far. I had observed the author carefully as he replied to my question about how he had thought up the name Harold Beck and had come to the conclusion that he was speaking the truth. I had concluded likewise regarding his explanation of why his character had not carried out military service because of asthma.

The simplest response was to describe the *Speak Up, Harold Beck!* experience at social gatherings and the like. Thus for a while Sheila and I dined out on the story and I even recounted it to members of the Conservative Group on the District Council, showing them the lurid red poster and programme to back up the well-nigh incredible story.

Much more seriously, however, I regarded it as an answer to my prayers for guidance in the difficult and perplexing circumstances in which I still found myself. In this light it was clear that I was being enjoined to make my voice heard. The fact that the injunction had resulted from a Church activity whose main purpose was Christian understanding, prayer and worship seemed to make the message to Speak Up particularly credible.

But about what should I Speak Up? In a sense I had already spoken up by writing to the Home Secretary back in 1971. Of course, much had happened since then which should be exposed to public view so was I being asked to continue or intensify my efforts to reveal the past? However, as I had discovered in a Diocesan course I had run to help clergy with their pastoral care of casualties from Industry, I found it extremely difficult to Speak Up about my past. I understood a great deal about what had happened but not nearly enough to convey a convincing picture to those (the vast majority) who are unfamiliar with behavioural technology. A major part of the problem was overcoming the gross disinformation which had been put around, which was exacerbated by the different versions tailored to influence each individual being misinformed. Also, I had been actively prevented from communicating my past experiences and felt I was being diverted away from those previously involved.

Alternatively, was I being encouraged to be bolder in speaking my mind on all issues, not just my own experiences? As it happened an opportunity to Speak Up in that sense soon arose in local politics and I put the injunction into effect.

### Had I Misjudged?

With my full-time lecturing job, my District Council, NHS and many other leisure-time activities, as well as my family responsibilities, it was many years before I got down to detailed analysis of what had happened at Coventry. Indeed it was only after Area Health Authorities had been abolished (1982) and I had been defeated at a Local Authority election after 7 years as an Independent (1983), that I had the time to give serious and sustained attention to *Speak Up, Harold Beck!* and all it entailed. I soon found that my readiness to regard the whole episode as entirely coincidental may have been a profound misjudgement.

In 1984 I produced from contemporaneous notes and papers an account of the event entitled *The Coventry Miracle* and circulated it to a selected few in the Church, Freemasonry and politics. I found that

others with whom I discussed my findings were convinced that much if not all may have been contrived. Most significantly, I started getting responses to questions I had raised - it was as though there had been a stirring of conscience in someone 'out there' who felt I should be enlightened. In 1985 I produced two updates of the *The Coventry Miracle* embodying the extra information and circulated the new documents to a few more. One senior Mason commented that what I had experienced were standard Establishment practices though he could not understand why in my case it had gone on for so long.

What follows is an analysis of *The Coventry Miracle* on the assumption, for the sake of argument, that the sequence of events was wholly contrived.

### Identification of Target

The use of the name *Harold Beck* in the title was the surest way of identifying the target of the message. As has already been observed, the appearance of a forename as well as a surname in a play's title is rare and where it has occurred it has almost without exception referred to a famous fictional character or a highly significant historical figure. The party from Harpenden were bound to recognise my name and convey the message in the play's title back to me. Perhaps that was all that was originally intended. However, the note about the play on the back of the brochure (p1) indicated a far from sympathetic purpose.

When it came to the play itself there were several additional identifiers put in to make sure the real Harold Beck got the message:-

- The actor playing the fictitious Harold Beck wore a mask displaying the same basic features as the real Harold Beck, namely dark hair, parted on the left, wearing glasses and with a moustache. To one distinguished clergyman this was convincing evidence of contrivance - he asked "Why would it be necessary for the actor to present other than his own appearance, suitably made up, in portraying a person who was supposed to be entirely fictitious and look like anyone"?
- In the play it was claimed that the fictitious character did not carry out military service because of asthma, which was exactly the position of the real Harold Beck. Come to think of it, since he was supposed to be 10 years younger would he have had to undertake military service?
- In the programme *1975 (May) Red Friday* is listed as a key event in the fictitious Harold Beck's life. We attended the Belgrade Theatre, having booked well beforehand, on the only Friday in May 1975 on which the play was performed.
- The name of the wife of the Coventry character is given as Sandra, so she was another Mrs. S. Beck. Then, what better forename alluding to the real Harold Beck's Sheila than one in which only the four middle letters are changed?
- According to the poster/brochure displayed at The Belgrade in February 1975 the fictitious Harold Beck had a dead end job in local government; as a Polytechnic lecturer and as a District Councillor the real Harold Beck could be doubly regarded as fitting that description.
- When some 9 years later daughter Bridget was asked by Sheila what she remembered of the play she said "The Harold Beck in the play used a bulldog clip to hold his pyjama trousers up, just like Daddy did". And so the real Harold Beck did! The chances that other men did likewise must be extremely small so if this was a deliberately introduced identifier rather than the most incredible coincidence of all, it was an indication of how detailed was the information held on the real Harold Beck.

### Negative Signals

Having identified directly and by allusion to whom the play was directed, what was being communicated?

First there were the political implications, not only of the play itself but of the literature - the two posters, the fictitious Harold Beck's potted biography and Beck's Song. By association they all made the real Harold Beck out to be very left-wing.

The A4 poster in particular strongly conveyed this image by placing Harold Beck third in a hierarchy of Harold Wilson followed by Tony Benn. Beck's Song referred to the red of the East coming to warm "us",

which both by itself and seen in the context of Carpenter's Song made Harold Beck out as longing for the spread of Communism.

There could be several interpretations of the political content of *The Coventry Miracle*:-

- It could have been intended as a massive deterrent to pursuing a political career. To be thought of in such left wing terms in the Conservative Party would be the death knell to continued involvement. Also, some in the Conservative Party saw the real Harold Beck as a possible Leader but with Margaret Thatcher taking over from Ted Heath just before the start of *The Coventry Miracle* sequence he would now be regarded as redundant.
- The positioning of the three pictures in a hierarchy could be interpreted as a hint that Tony Benn might succeed Harold Wilson as Labour Party Leader and perhaps Prime Minister and that Harold Beck might succeed Tony Benn. This would have been anathema to the real Harold Beck.
- The Harold Beck in the play was a patient in a psychiatric hospital. This was the opposite to the situation of the real Harold Beck. As Chairman of NW Herts CHC he was, due to the decades old practice of London authorities 'exporting' their mental illness and mental handicap patients to asylums in Hertfordshire, involved in looking after the interests of an exceptionally large number of such patients. Later, as a member of Hertfordshire Area Health Authority, he was designated a manager under the 1959 Mental Health Act and chaired Section panels as well as appointment committees for psychiatrist registrars and house officers.

#### International Connotations

The World Premiere tag on the poster/brochure seen at The Belgrade in February 1975 may not have been just a pretentious way of billing a play which outwardly had only a very local significance and which was not intended for presentation outside Coventry. It may have been a double-entendre conjuring up a Prime Minister who was a world leader or even the leader of a World Government. It was certainly consistent with a question I put in my 1971 Report to the Home Secretary; arising directly from my experiences to that time - I had asked whether or not some major countries were collaborating in international leadership training schemes. Also, in the year or so before the play was put on I had become quite active in the United Nations Association and perhaps the international dimension was put in as reinforcement of a new interest. However it was one interest among many, undertaken as a balancing act to local interests rather than as a new direction in which I wished to strike out.

In this connection it is interesting to note that whereas Carpenter's song in the Programme was solely about England, Beck's song had world connotations. Another point worth noting is that while the West is not mentioned in these songs, both have an implied East-West theme and this could denote power-bloc relationships.

#### Number Signalling

The 10/6 number feature was present in *The Coventry Miracle*. On the poster/brochure, the nine plays to be put on in Belgrade 1 were listed as 10 and there were 6 to be put on in Belgrade 2. Also, in the programme the fictitious Harold Beck was said to be 10 years younger than the real one while Edward Carpenter was said to be 60 years older. The natural tendency is to regard all this as sheer coincidence but on the other hand the 10/6 phenomenon was cropping up so often. And if it was a purposeful indirect communication, what did it signify? No.6 for No.10? Someone with a birthday on 6th October or 10th June? Royal Alpha Lodge No.16, to the meeting place of which Caius Lodge No.3355 had been diverted when I was in its Chair?

#### Edward Carpenter

Was the Edward Carpenter featured in the programme a made-up person, like the Harold Beck of the play, or had he actually existed? Enquiry by the real Harold Beck showed that there had been an Edward Carpenter of that ilk and in October 1989 he learned about him from a real and live Edward Carpenter. The occasion was a United Nations Service at All Saints Church in Harpenden at which the preacher was the Rev. Dr. Edward Carpenter, the former Dean of Westminster. He had been invited by his friend, Rev. Neil Collings, who the year before had been appointed by the Lord Chancellor as Rector of the 'Royal Peculiar' Parish of St. Nicholas, Harpenden. The former Dean delivered an excellent Sermon on the

history of the United Nations, its current problems, the opportunities it faced and what we as Christians can do about it.

At coffee afterwards, Edward Carpenter told the real Harold Beck that he had researched and written a great deal about his earlier namesake. He had hoped to publish a definitive work on him but the project hadn't come to fruition. One of his findings was that the Edward Carpenter featured in *Speak Up, Harold Beck!* had been a committed homosexual.

Before long, the real Harold Beck's view of the Edward Carpenter element in *The Coventry Miracle* was completely transformed by associating three more items of information which were put his way in the late 1980's with an event back in November 1972. First he was told that the Dean of Westminster was not responsible to any Bishop or Diocese but only to Her Majesty The Queen. Secondly, another Parish source told him an appointment which would seem extraordinary was in the offing but he was not to be surprised by it - it had been well researched. Thirdly, Rev. Edward Carpenter had been appointed Dean of Westminster in 1974, the year before *Speak Up, Harold Beck!* was put on in Coventry.

<b>Learning Sessions</b>		RFX
I Sat Nov 11	11am-1pm	THE MEANING OF STEWARDSHIP
Opening of Learning Sessions		Rt. Rev. John Hare, Bishop of Bedford
What is Stewardship?		Harold Beck
Sonship before Stewardship		Rev. Michael Mayne, of the BBC.
Objectives of the Diocese		Bishop of Bedford
Christian Objectives		Philip Searby

The 1972 event was one of the Learning Sessions of a Stewardship Conference. The contribution immediately following the real Harold Beck's was by Rev. Michael Mayne, then of the BBC. After his move to Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, Michael Mayne was in 1986 appointed Edward Carpenter's successor as Dean of Westminster! Was the inclusion of an Edward Carpenter in the 1975 events an allusion to the Office of Dean of Westminster? If so, the point was completely lost on the real Harold Beck for although he met and talked with senior figures in

the Anglican Church, including Bishops (and indeed two future Archbishops of Canterbury), as well with one in the Methodist Church at the time of possible merger with the Anglicans (Gordon Wakefield), he had no thought of a career in the Church and had not been assiduous in noting who was appointed to which Office.

#### Author Involvement?

If the play was wholly contrived, how did the title name and the allusive material get into the production? Clearly the author would have been involved but a significant and perhaps even the major input may have been by others in the production team.

The play was described as a psychodrama, which implies a great deal of ad-libbing around a theme or set of roles rather than a script. Thus some of the material linking to the real Harold Beck may have been inserted into what was seen and heard on the stage by members of the cast and particularly the actor playing the fictitious Harold Beck. The actual material would undoubtedly have changed from performance to performance and it could have been that the one seen by the real Harold Beck on the so-called Red Friday had some rather special features.

Then again, the posters and the programme would have been produced by other members of the Belgrade team or by external agencies. The cast and perhaps the author may have had very little knowledge of what was going into the printed material components of the production.

All this adds up to the possibility of the allusive material being injected by several routes with each not knowing the significance or even the existence of contributions by the others. This would require the separate supply of the allusive material to the different routes, no doubt along the lines of the 'telephone exchange' principal of communication about which I had been instructed at Marconi Instruments as part of my so-called training.

The author would therefore be involved in a wholly contrived production but not necessarily to the extent which might at first sight seem obvious. If he was so involved, the answers he gave to some test questions, which were convincing at the time, would have been the usual seemingly innocent fall-back or cover-up stories which are thought out in advance on the well-known principle of 'plausible deniability'.

Conversely, however, the author may have been the sole driving force behind contrivances in the play and indeed may have been recruited or 'planted' for that purpose

#### Coventry/Harpenden Links

In a contrived scheme it would have been pointless for the all-important title and brief information on the play to have been displayed in Coventry if people from Harpenden had not been there to see it. The planning of the play would have required coordination with the visit by the youth leaders and young people from the Parish of Harpenden.

Kennedy House had been used at least once by the Parish of Harpenden prior to the 1975 visit. The Minutes of the Parish Youth Committee meeting on 11th January 1972, at which Rev. Gordon Martin, Youth Chaplain to the Diocesan Bishop (Robert Runcie), was present, record the decision to use Kennedy House for a Leadership Training weekend. When it came to organising the 1975 weekend, Kennedy House was booked in the usual way and then the booking to see a play at The Belgrade on the Saturday evening was made from the Harpenden end. The agency which initiated the *Speak Up, Harold Beck!* event could have received intelligence from Harpenden that the visit was to be paid to The Belgrade - because of the on-going gathering of intelligence about the real Harold Beck, this would have been easy. The agency could then have worked with one or more of the theatre people.

#### Timings

It is worth considering the possibility that the play may have been added to the bottom of the list on the poster/brochure at short notice, simply with a view to conveying the message of the title back to the real Harold Beck. The title could then have been removed from the list.

When, however, the real Harold Beck acted upon news of the play by drawing it to the attention of a newspaper and ordering tickets, the play might then have gone ahead in greatly expanded form. The flexibility of the drama form chosen would have made extensions quite easy and material could even have been introduced as late as the dress rehearsal.

The large poster and the Programme would have had to be designed a month or so ahead of the first performance but the A4 poster could have been produced at very few days' notice.

#### Organisation

Which organisation was responsible for the whole exercise? To be able to organise the *Speak Up, Harold Beck!* as well as other 'happenings' there has to be a network which is strong on psychological methods of influencing people, has considerable resources of people and equipment at its disposal and is able to operate continuously over a period of decades. Clearly, the organisation would need to have sufficient clout to obtain the cooperation of various Government and non-Government bodies. Its aim would be to influence the lives of individuals for State or political purposes. The organisation may be privately funded, with resources comparable to those provided by Governments and would therefore most likely to be operating within a known large organisation. There must be very few organisations which fit this description.

## Purpose

The identity of the organisation responsible for the operation must be related to its purpose. A few ideas on what was intended are:-

- Some organisation actually wanted the real Harold Beck to Speak Up about his experiences.
- Another possibility was that the whole business was arranged to give him a massive jolt which would so discourage him that he would be rendered harmless, or at least NOT "the most dangerous man in Britain". In this case the perpetrators would consider it virtually impossible for him to Speak Up about the past.
- Yet another possible purpose might have been to convey to others, by association, the impression that he was very left wing. This would imply that the organisation responsible probably had a right-wing ideology.
- Alternatively the left-wing portrayal may have been to induce him to move from the Conservative fold to Labour following Harold Wilson's return to power.
- One technique of indirect communication is to state the opposite in public; the message is then derived from the context by considering opposites. On this basis the symbolism of the A4 poster would be along the lines that Harold Wilson was a moderate Labour man while Tony Benn was very much to the left. If the Conservative Party equivalents are then considered, Ted Heath, the moderate, was followed by Margaret Thatcher considerably to the right. Who was next in the hierarchy? None other than Harold Beck!
- On 10th June 1987 a Trades Union man at the House of Commons came as a fellow-speaker to an IEE meeting on Career Development, organised by a GEC man on behalf of an IEE Professional Group on Management Techniques, of which I was Chairman. The TU man spoke warmly about The Speaker chairing the Commons Management Committee, prompting the real Harold Beck to wonder if someone was putting that connotation on the play's title.

### Concluding Note by the real Harold Beck

The basic questions remain - to what extent was *The Coventry Miracle* sheer coincidence and how much of it, if any, was contrived? Also, what was its significance in theological terms?

It should be noted that in October 1975, in response to the miracle at Coventry, I spoke up about a local issue and by May 1976 I was out of politics as a Conservative but continued as an Independent.

Harold Beck  
January 2014