

"The March" is a BBC film that has been aired frequently in Europe but has seldom been seen in the New World. Reviewer Gustav Uhlich is a retired gastroenterologist, a man of letters, and a native of Austria. In 1994, The Social Contract Press published *The Way I Think It Was*, Dr. Uhlich's recollections of his boyhood days in Europe during the Second World War.

Out of Africa

A Video Review by Gustav Uhlich

One morning in 1972 at his home by the shore of the Mediterranean, novelist Jean Raspail had a vision: "They were here! A million poor wretches, armed only with their weakness and their numbers, overwhelmed by misery, encumbered by starving brown and black children, ready to disembark on our soil, the vanguard of the multitudes pressing hard against every part of the tired and overfed West."

The vision never left Raspail. In his novel, *The Camp of the Saints*, he paints a fascinating picture of the ensuing confrontation — a problem absolutely insoluble by our present moral standards: "To let them in would destroy us. To reject them would destroy them."

Twenty years have passed since publication of Raspail's prophetic vision. The mass migrations of desperate refugees, be it from hunger or persecution, have become a common sight on the evening news. Since most of these lamentable events take place in far-away countries, we respond to them with the expression of moral indignation and a moderate dose of comforting charity. Political correctness does not permit a rational discussion of a rapidly growing problem. As long as we do not step on anyone's hypersensitive toes, everything will turn out all right after all. Why fuss over a very uncomfortable issue?

Credit goes to the British Broadcasting Corporation to disturb our complacent posture. In a recently released film, *The March*, the viewer is confronted with blunt questions. How should our established Western Culture (for the sake of avoiding the explosive term "The White Race") react to the rapid expansion and "peaceful" aggression of other cultural groups? Should we give free rein to instinctive impulses of self-preservation, at the risk of widespread xenophobia, assertive racism and open warfare? Is it more appropriate to mobilize to the utmost our compassionate potential? Are we ready to embrace all members of the human species as our brothers and sisters, and — more to the point — to share with them the abundance of worldly goods that supposedly has fallen into our laps? Or should we perhaps rely on our ability to analyze and openly discuss a problem with long-term consequences for all of us — the "haves" as well as the "have-nots?"

The March begins somewhere in Central Africa with a group of hunger-stricken villagers, led by a charismatic

"Mahdi" under the slogan "We have nothing to lose — let us march to Europe and let them watch us die." No threat of violence, killing, aggression. Just a genuine act of desperation, born of hopeless misery.

As the march gains momentum the West dispatches Ms. Fitzgerald, Commissioner for Aid and Development of the European Community. She approaches the situation under the banner of "If you cannot win with love, love the ones you win." The Mahdi is not impressed. "We are poor because you are rich," he explains, and "You make up 20 percent of the world population yet you consume 80 percent of the resources..." and "It would cost \$50.00 to feed one of us for one year; you spend \$200.00 per year to feed your cat." The Commissioner takes the message back to Brussels. The Commission is unable to act and demands more reports on the

situation.

Many other Africans join the march as it progresses. The international headlines speak of millions; in fact there are some 200,000 marchers. Libyan and Algerian politicians — and even a black American politician from Detroit — exploit the event for their own purposes. Demonstrations and riots break out in major Western cities. A television producer offers cogent advice to the Mahdi as to the most media-effective way of crossing the Straits of Gibraltar. Europe mobilizes its multinational army. The final confrontation is inevitable.

That is where the film ends. It is up to all people of good will to think their way through the many questions raised in *The March*. So far, I have reached only one conclusion: our seemingly endless obsession with recounting and memorializing the inhumanity of man towards man with the pious wish that it "may never happen again" has done little to improve human conduct. What we can learn from the past is that we must realistically appraise the future and prepare to meet inevitable conflict with wisdom and civility. *The March* points us in the right direction by defining a major problem of burgeoning population and its attendant miseries rapidly approaching our doorsteps. The film opens a pathway to intelligent discussion. If we care at all for our own future, we need to step onto that pathway. ■

[Editor's note: As this issue went to press our offices were still trying to find out where the video could be obtained for purchase or rental. If interested, please contact us at (616) 347-1171, Fax (616) 347-1185.]