



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

[info@rafoc.org](mailto:info@rafoc.org)

[www.rafoc.org](http://www.rafoc.org)

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, Colin Francis, Geoff Quick, David Lake	
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison	<a href="mailto:bruce@jbharrison.co.za">bruce@jbharrison.co.za</a> Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams	<a href="mailto:vice-chairman@rafoc.org">vice-chairman@rafoc.org</a> Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616
Hon. Secretary:	Colin Ackroyd	Tel: 012 942 1111 Cell: 082 800 5845
Hon. Treasurer:	Jeff Earle	Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002
Committee Members:	Russell Swanborough	Tel: 011 884 2611 Cell: 083 263 2740
	Karl Jensen	Tel: 011 234 0598 Cell: 082 331 4652
	Jean-Michel Girard	Cell: 083 659 1067
	Geoff Fish	Tel: 012 667 2759 Cell: 083 660 9697
Web Master:	Hanke Fourie	Tel: Cell: 082 553 0210
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 48 – 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021

### GREETINGS:

*On March 5 it will be exactly one year since South Africa recorded its first official Covid-19 case. What a difference a year makes...Zondo Commission "live" better than any TV drama...People are pretending to be health workers to get the Covid-19 jab....At current rates, South Africa's vaccine rollout will take 20 years to complete: A Mexican Standoff appears to have developed at Nkandla as the ANC grapples with the Zuma conundrum even as Zuma faces the Constitutional Court...Ace, it appears, is part of the ANC furniture – will he jump, or will he be pushed? Bathabile Dhlamini twitters shrieks about her pension...Security expert on 6 cops being killed in 10 days: 'It shows you the caliber of criminals we have' – Oh yes, we do....*

Johannesburg City increases "Infrastructure spending" by R300 Million...ANC vs ANC on Joburg Toll Roads...Finance Minister shoots down defence budget recommendations...Dyck Advisory Group in Mozambique in Amnesty International spotlight...A battered SA Breweries (SAB) lost R36 billion potential revenue due to the three costly liquor bans...Port Elizabeth and other Eastern Province places get incomprehensible new names...

Elsewhere: Three female media workers shot to death in eastern Afghanistan...US revives investigation into George Floyd death, new jury and witnesses set to be called...North Korea hacked Pfizer because it wants to sell bootleg Covid vaccines...Nigerian schoolgirls rescued.

And the scoop of the week – read Guy Leitch's column in the March SA Flyer on the special SAA flight to fetch vaccines from Europe – How DPE bullied SAA and CAA.

[https://issuu.com/safllyermagazine/docs/saf\\_2021\\_03](https://issuu.com/safllyermagazine/docs/saf_2021_03)

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

Our AGM took place as a virtual "Zoom" Meeting at 13h00, Friday 5 March 2021. Nothing critical transpired and the Club will continue to function as it has in the past. A short report will be in the next Ramblings.

### WANDERERS CLUB UPDATE:

The relaxation of some of the restrictions which resulted in reducing the curfew hours and allowing once again the sale of alcohol brought some long-awaited relief to the hospitality industry. More members started coming to the club and enjoying the revamped Chariots pub and the menu offered by the new service provider, "Fourteen". Although there is something new in the décor and the

menu, most of the previous waiters have been employed by Fourteen and the members are pleased to see familiar faces which makes them feel at home once again. Some more changes will still be made before Chariots becomes more than just a pub. The need to provide a family-friendly atmosphere was identified some time ago but it has now become more urgent. The next phase is to renovate part of the clubhouse building and grounds adjacent to Chariots so as to provide an area where children can have fun whilst their parents are keeping an eye on them. More details to follow soon. In the meantime, stop by Chariots to see the facelift, enjoy a cold beverage, and try the new menu. (*Wanderers Newsletter*)

## WOKE GONE MAD:

Amnesty International has said it will cease calling Alexei Navalny a “prisoner of conscience”, following pressure to condemn anti-migrant statements he made in the 2000s as hate speech. Employees of Amnesty International said the organisation had received messages about Navalny’s past remarks that they felt “were part of a coordinated campaign to discredit him abroad”, but nonetheless felt compelled to change his designation. “Yes, we are no longer going to use the phrase ‘prisoner of conscience’ in regards to [Navalny] insofar as our law and policy department, having reviewed Navalny’s remarks from the mid-2000s, came to the conclusion that they meet the level of ‘hate speech’,” Alexander Artemev, Amnesty International’s media manager for Europe and central Asia, told TV Rain. In a crowing tweet, the head of Russia’s state-funded TV network RT, Margarita Simonyan, wrote that the west was “crying that this came after our columnist used concrete examples that reminded everyone he [Navalny] is a Nazi”. Join the dots....(*Sky*)

## TWA FLIGHT 800:



The National Transportation Safety Board said it will destroy the remaining wreckage of TWA Flight 800 after nearly 20 years as a training tool. TWA Flight 800 grabbed the world’s attention when shortly after takeoff from John F. Kennedy International Airport in July 1996, the Paris-bound Boeing 747 exploded, killing all 230 onboard. The NTSB investigation became the longest, most complicated and expensive investigation in aviation history, lasting more than four years and costing \$40 million. Housed for nearly two decades in a warehouse at the NTSB Training Centre in Ashburn, Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C., the wreckage has been used to teach thousands of air crash investigators and transportation specialists from around the world. On Monday, the NTSB said in a news release it will decommission and destroy the wreckage as the lease on the 30,000-square foot warehouse is set to expire. "Advances in investigative techniques such as 3-D scanning and drone imagery lessen the relevance of the large-scale reconstruction in teaching modern investigative techniques," the NTSB added. While the wreckage is not open to the public, family members of the

victims are allowed to visit as often as they like. In the years following the crash, loved ones would come and leave mementos in the seats of their family members. The probable cause of the TWA Flight 800 crash was an explosion in the centre wing fuel tank. The final report indicated that faulty wiring ignited the flammable fuel/air mixture, causing the explosion 12 minutes after takeoff. The investigation and subsequent NTSB safety recommendations changed the course of aviation. "From that investigation we issued safety recommendations that fundamentally changed the way aircraft are designed," the NTSB said. "The investigation also led to a memorandum of understanding between the FBI and the NTSB regarding investigations of accidents resulting from intentional acts as well as evidence collection and preservation." (*NY Times*)

## **RAF MARHAM'S VICTOR:**



The Handley Page Victor "Gate Guardian" has been scrapped after bids to find a home for the Cold War relic failed. The V-bomber will be replaced with a Tornado guardian, celebrating the station's long association with the fast jet retired from service with the RAF in 2018. Aircraft crash recovery specialists from Boscombe removed the airframe when the complexities and cost of removing and maintaining the aircraft deterred potential buyers. The Joint Aircraft Recovery and Transportation Squadron enlisted recovery mechanics from 7 Aviation Close Support Battalion REME with their specialist vehicles to pull the Victor from a gravel area onto the station car park for dismantling. Following months of planning, hampered by the coronavirus pandemic and the bird-nesting season, the removal took two weeks with the team working into the night. Gp Capt James Beck said: "It was sad to see the Victor go – the decision had to be made. Despite the fantastic efforts of a team of volunteers who tried to maintain her, the aircraft was in very poor condition. The Victor will not be forgotten though as there are plans to commemorate the V Force within the area where the Victor stood." Victor aircraft can still be seen at the Royal Air Force Museum and the Imperial War Museum collection at Duxford. (*RAF News*)

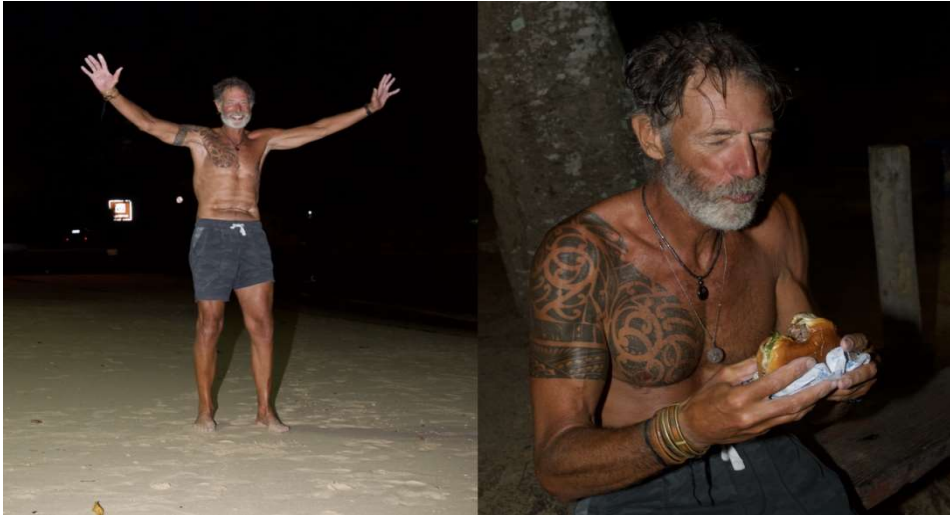
## **SINKING OF THE BIRKENHEAD:**

"Stand fast - women and children first!" The troopship, HMS Birkenhead, sank in the early hours of 26 February 1852. To ensure that even after 169 years the courage of the men that day is not forgotten, a remembrance service is annually held on (25 and) 26 February in various towns around the world. In Gansbaai, the event usually includes a small remembrance ceremony at sea close to the rock where the Birkenhead was wrecked and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Danger Point Lighthouse. The lighthouse was erected in 1895 in order to warn ships of the dangerous reef and overlooks the Birkenhead Rock where HMS Birkenhead met her sad fate. This year the ceremony at the Danger Point Lighthouse could not be held due to Covid-19 restrictions. True to tradition, a boat trip to



Birkenhead Rock took place on the morning of 25 February 2021 (as bad weather predicted for the 26th). After a short message and prayer, fynbos and lavender were cast into the sea in remembrance of those who lost their lives. May we always remember those brave soldiers who stood back, even as the ship broke up, to let the women and children board the life rafts first. Although never part of international maritime law, the “Birkenhead Drill”, is now seen as a standard evacuation procedure in maritime disasters. (*All Over the Overberg*)

## ANOTHER TRANSATLANTIC RECORD - BY A SOUTH AFRICAN:



*Cabo Frio, Rio de Janeiro (01 March 2021)* – Rowing for the planet and sustainable development, extreme adventurer and ex-naval officer, Zirk Botha (59 years old) completed his solo transatlantic ocean crossing on his boat ‘Ratel’, from South Africa to Brazil in a world record of 70 days, over a total distance of 7200km or 4000 nautical miles. After leaving Cape Town on 19 December 2020, Botha rowed into the small bay of Buzios just north of Rio de Janeiro, at 03:45 on 27 February 2021, South African Time / 22:45, 26 February 2021, Brazilian time. After recuperating in Buzios on Saturday, he rowed on to Cabo Frio on Sunday, to complete his voyage and to receive a massive Brazilian welcome at the original Rio de Janeiro Yacht Club, better known as “late Clube do Rio de Janeiro”. Escorted in by a flotilla of boats and welcomed by locals, dignitaries and media, Botha was the toast of the town. Ironically, none of Zirk’s South African family or friends could be at the finish, as South Africans are currently blocked from entering Brazil due to Covid-19 related travel restrictions. Stepping off his boat “Ratel” onto Brazilian soil for the first time in Buzios after months at sea, Botha described his legs as very wobbly and the experience as totally overwhelming. “When I started planning this trip two years ago people said I was mad. I want to encourage everyone to dream big, do big and never to allow anyone to discourage you. Life is a great adventure.” On his row, Botha had to deal with the multiple challenges of wild seas, sleep deprivation, isolation, and the risk of encountering ships. “While I had near perfect weather conditions to facilitate a record-breaking crossing, it has been intense, with only two calm days over the whole crossing. The relentless nature of the weather has been physically and mentally draining. I wasn’t prepared for that type of challenge.” (*News 24*)

## RAIDING THE POSTBANK – AND SASSA:

“Postbank, the banking division of South Africa's Post Office, is scrambling to limit the damage after employees printed and then stole its master key. The bank believes that in late 2018, employees printed the 36-digit code that acts as the master key and used it to access accounts and make more than 25,000 fraudulent transactions. In total, the rogue employees stole more than \$3.2 million through their scheme. After discovering the breach, Postbank must now replace all customer cards that were generated using the compromised master key, an operation that may cost the bank another \$58 million. A majority of the cards that must be replaced are reportedly for receiving government aid

(SASSA), though normal payment cards are also included in the tally. The Postbank incident is unique, as banks' master keys are not often compromised, let alone stolen outright. (*News 24*)

## MEMBERS NEWS:

“Priscilla (Henwood) asked me (Julia - her Scribe) to drop you a short note to say she is missing having me read the Ramblings to her each week, but as the Health Care Unit at Helderberg Village is in lockdown and has been since the 23rd January, I have been unable to get to her and to her computer to be able to read them, although her son Dennis is able to access her emails and he sends them on to me now. However, Priscilla was in the isolation ward for 12 days, as she tested positive for Covid. She was quite ill with bronchitis, but with all the wonderful care of doctor and staff in the Health Care, she managed to get through the isolation and is now back in her own room in the Frail Care section. I communicate telephonically with her each day, but for a period of about 2 weeks, due to a fault with the 'speaker' facility of her special phone, we were not able to hear each other. Fortunately, a replacement phone was found and installed and so we can communicate again thank goodness. I too miss reading the Ramblings to her, which I always enjoy and find so interesting. With kind regards, Julia”

## CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Eleven months, 342+ days since the start of the great modern rinderpest, this is the forty- eighth weekly Newssheet - “Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings” - that will help us all to keep in contact and entertained through the lockdown.

Thanks again to all those who have contributed and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

Please continue to take care – we’ve made it so far – enjoy the relaxation of prohibition and restaurants re-opening – but continue to keep safe in these incredibly troubled times: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, avoid gatherings and remember that all this, too, shall pass.... We’ll keep you posted on resuming lunches when we can, and further developments at Wanderers as they progressively resume services.

So, let’s hear from you...Please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to:

[bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## TAILPIECE:

Apparently, when you drink a pint of beer, you shorten your lifespan by 9 minutes. So according to my calculations, I died sometime in 1644...

I wish my siblings would stop calling me “spoiled” just because I’m the baby of the family. The fact is my parents kept on having children until they found one they liked. It is so not my issue....

The three hardest things to say:

1. I was wrong.
2. I need help.
3. ~~Worcestershire sauce~~. Gqeberha

I’ll never forget the look on the cashier’s face when she scanned the packet of birdseed, and I asked her how long it takes for the birds to grow once I’ve planted them...

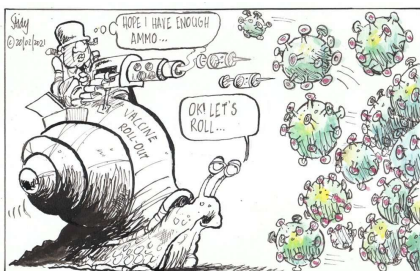
Some Tweets from the social media storm after Tiger’s accident:

- “He was out clubbing apparently”
- “Gotta have balls to drive like that”
- “He was a fairway from home still”
- “Should have used a different driver”
- “Par for the course after a heavy night out...”
- “Must have lost concentration on the back nine”
- “Properly in the rough”

## MAKING A BABY:

The Patels were unable to conceive children and decided to use a surrogate father to start their family. (This is a big business in India) On the day the proxy father was to arrive, Mr. Patel kissed his wife goodbye and said, 'Well, I'm off now. The man should be here soon.' Half an hour later, just by chance, a door-to-door baby photographer happened to ring the doorbell, hoping to make a sale. 'Good morning, Ma'am', he said, 'I've come to...' 'Oh, no need to explain,' Mrs. Patel cut in, embarrassed, 'I've been expecting you.' 'Have you really?' said the photographer. 'Well, that's good. Did you know babies are my specialty?' 'Well that's what my husband and I had hoped. Please come in and have a seat! After a moment she asked, blushing, 'Well, where do we start?' 'Leave everything to me. I usually try two in the bathtub, one on the couch, and perhaps a couple on the bed. And sometimes the living room floor is fun. You can really spread out there.' 'Bathtub, living room floor? No wonder it didn't work out for Harry and me!' 'Well, Ma'am, none of us can guarantee a good one every time. But if we try several different positions and I shoot from six or seven angles, I'm sure you'll be pleased with the results.' 'My, that's a lot!', gasped Mrs. Patel. 'Ma'am, in my line of work a man has to take his time. I'd love to be in and out in five minutes, but I'm sure you'd be disappointed with that.' 'Don't I know it,' said Mrs. Patel quietly.

The photographer opened his briefcase and pulled out a portfolio of his baby pictures. 'This was done on the top of a bus,' he said. 'Oh, my God!' Mrs. Patel exclaimed, grasping at her throat. 'And these twins turned out exceptionally well - when you consider their mother was so difficult to work with.' 'She was difficult?' asked Mrs. Patel. 'Yes, I'm afraid so. I finally had to take her to the park to get the job done right. People were crowding around four and five deep to get a good look' 'Four and five deep?' said Mrs. Patel, her eyes wide with amazement. 'Yes', the photographer replied. 'And for more than three hours, too. The mother was constantly squealing and yelling - I could hardly concentrate, and when darkness approached, I had to rush my shots. Finally, when the squirrels began nibbling on my equipment, I just had to pack it all in.' Mrs. Patel leaned forward. 'Do you mean they actually chewed on your, uh...equipment?' 'It's true, Ma'am, yes... Well, if you're ready, I'll set-up my tripod and we can get to work right away.' 'Tripod?' said Mrs Patel, faintly... 'Oh yes, Ma'am. I need to use a tripod to rest my Canon on. It's much too big to be held in the hand very long.' Mrs. Patel fainted....





MATT

MATT



*'Two people may meet indoors to discuss Alex Salmond, but only if they forget about it afterwards'*



*'These expected tax rises: they are being tried out on older age-groups first, aren't they?'*



## LIE IN THE DARK AND LISTEN...



BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL, GREEN PARK

### LETTER TO A BOMBER CREW – SUNDAY GRAPHIC JUNE 27, 1943:

Down here where I am writing all is quiet. I can just see the shapes of flowers in the garden, the swaying outlines of the great oaks over yonder, but out there in the lane all seems asleep. The youngsters who were out playing on the green went home long ago. The last footsteps from the last train have died away. And I am up late tonight trying to imagine you bomber crews up there in the high heavens, you who with your pals have been going over and over, for an hour it seems to me, and then on and on. Yes, the RAF is at it again tonight. Another big raid.

I want to imagine you, the bomber crews, clear in my mind. Maybe I know some of you. For all I know I may have passed some of you in Trafalgar Square this week.

“Up in the air, somewhere this very night, are men who not so long ago were at school. I think of them that way still.”

It's dark over England now. All the colours have gone out of it until the morning comes. Of course that is why you are there, isn't it? The last few years have been like heavy night. Lights have gone out and all our friends have gone off somewhere. We have all lost each other – for a time! But we want those colours back, the old happy life and a better life, an end to this hell upon earth and a beginning of something like God's will on earth, as it is in heaven.

How strange, how terribly strange, boys, that to get those better things you are flying through the night high above me, heavily loaded up, with a grim job to do, at any cost, before morning.

Presently the morning will come, a new dawn for the whole world, and you up there are chasing away the long night. That is not just easy sentiment. I believe it I absolutely true. Sometimes, just for a moment, the sound of you passing eastward gets me down a bit. That is when I forget everything else and just think of our poor, silly humanity. But you are the drummers of the dawn. I am very sure of that.

Your job is to smash up and paralyze enemy concentrations, armament works, factories, bases, marshalling yards, transport – anything in fact, and everything the enemy is waiting to use to defeat us. If he can, to dominate us, enslave us, to destroy our way of life, to enforce upon us the mad idolatry of races and blood instead of the worship of the one true God.

Yet to you, it means, if you are to get your target, that you must have extra skill and take extra risks. That factory must go. That U boat base must be crippled. That terminus must be put out of action. And you, therefore, must make a straight run in, flak or no flak, life or no life. You don't throw your stuff anywhere, you aim. That is a risky job - that final aim.

We can't imagine the grimness of it all. I suppose that you get accustomed to seeing the flaming hell beneath you. My guess is that you never get quite accustomed to that.

There are human beings down there, human beings who have tried to make the whole world their slaves, perverted human beings, but still somehow human. You have not aimed at them – at this human being or that. You have aimed at a devilish system. Involved in that system are those involved who are working for it when you come. And they must be stopped – at whatever cost to them or to you. But your target is always a thing and the men who refuse to stop working that thing.



Indiscriminate bombing is a fool's game anyhow. It accomplishes nothing. We have had a lot of it over here. Civilians have been bombed and machine gunned in these very country lanes.

Your objectives are very different. Bombing must mean loss of life. What else can it mean, unless, all factories and plants are evacuated? You are not responsible for that loss of life. It is a consequence of that evil system that demanded life be surrendered to it, heart, and soul. That system must be smashed once and for all. And it must give account for all the pains and dangers that it forced upon a foolish people.

We are only seeking for ourselves, for our children and for the rest of the world the freedom that God gave us as his most wonderful gift. Without that freedom we should all be a lot of goose-stepping dolls or gang of cut-throat gangsters. For, if the Germans won, they would try to turn our little ones into that.

Probably, on that job of yours tonight you haven't had time to think of all this. But you must think – for you and about you.

Possibly I will get a bit of flak, letter flak, for writing this article. Somebody will call me a blood thirsty parson, a tub-thumping idiot who would like to go and bless every bomb that can fall anywhere. Well, if somebody thinks that they have got me wrong. I am not that sort. God knows I want a friendly world. So, do all you boys who are doing some weeding before anyone can plant flowers again in the good earth.

I loathe all hatred everywhere. I think that of all the famines that may come after the war will be a famine of love. Life without love is an empty shell. It is not life at all. For that very reason this incitement to hate that came from Germany, this gloating over agony that has come from all the Axis powers must be stopped.

We have tried argument as history will plainly show. We bowed low to the point of humiliation to avoid bloodshed. That history will also record. But it is not the slightest bit of good arguing with a tiger. In actual fact, the tiger made his spring in the middle of the argument. Now the tiger, who mauled us badly for years, complains that he is getting hurt. Whose fault is that?

Consider this alternative. But for you boys in the air we would be without weapon which alone can give us victory in this war. All the other arms are vitally necessary of course, but weakness in the air might well mean defeat.

Without that same air-strength the invasion of Europe would cost us a million more lives than it may cost – even if we could attempt it at all. Without that air strength all we could hope for would be a patched-up compromise peace and that would mean – in my judgement – total defeat inside ten years.

Total defeat would mean the dark ages back again for 40 or 50 generations. It would mean the enthronement arrogance and beastliness, of cruelty and lust and hatred. It would mean the blotting out of the Christian faith if that could be done. It would mean the defilement of the minds and souls of all our children.

Does anybody want that? Does anybody think that any such thing could be the will of the good God? I don't.

We must demand unconditional surrender. There is no other end, and what is happening now may bring that surrender quicker than some people think. That would be a mercy. It is for that mercy that you boys up there are going out this very night.

Keep in mind what Christ said, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that no more that can do."

What more then is there than the killing of the body? There is the death of the soul. That I think has nearly happened in Germany. How nearly I can't tell. But the truth is that what the world calls evil – cruelty and lust and sadism and pride and hate – Germany calls "good".

On the other hand, what all Christendom calls good – justice and kindness and mercy – Germany calls effeminate and bad. Therefore, only out of a great tribulation can Germany once again – one day – call her soul her own. Only so can her little ones ever pray to "Our Father Which art in Heaven..."

I think sometimes that, apart from the rescue of our Christian civilisation, apart from the protection of the weak against the bullying of the strong, we are really saving Germany from herself.

You bomber crews have had to lose a lot of things in your lives that makes life so sweet when a man is strong and young. All that shall return again, please God. But meanwhile you are saving a world from death - and worse.

*The **Reverend W H ELLIOT**, in a message to our (RAF) bomber pilots/crews, gives his own complete answer to those who are in doubt about our (UK's) bombing policy.*