

6 - Silts of Outrage



Algeria/Niger border, Sierra Leone and Ireland – 1986/87

It seems that nothing would serve the society of post-colonial Africa quite as well as a good epidemic of amnesia, for what is most essential in the present reality is that those striving for future peace forget about the outrages of the past.

It seems insufficient to entrust reconciliation to mere expressions of forgiveness for such expressions are not to be trusted, not even by those expressing. Professions of forgiveness, no matter how vehement, are intellectual things, matters for the mind, while reconciliation, the appeasement of memories, is a matter for the heart. Memories left lying about in the pathway to peace will eventually stub the toes of road-weary travellers. The pain can lead the heart to overwhelm the strongest mind and in the temporary blindness of it the way can again be lost.

Like the rivers that flow through valley after valley of its land, the memories of Africa flow through generation after generation of its people. Bequeathed at firesides by outraged fathers upon innocent sons, they pass from one to the next and the outrage too is swept along, for like murky silt it permeates the running stream. And as the sons become fathers they create new outrageous memories and call their own sons to the fireside.

To bring about the peace, one must still the river of memories long enough to settle the silts of outrage.

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In contrast to Adam Strong, who was spending Christmas in Algeria in spite of his parents, Donagh Cafferky was there pretty much because of his, the ‘Cafferkys Senior’.