

REVIEW OF 1961

In fact of threat to our very existence, sane humanity everywhere asserts that Life Is Our Right.

It's a good life, on the whole, that we enjoy in the 20th Century. Superlatively good for yachtsmen, battling their way here in the Tasmania race. Good, too, for Aussies who don't aspire to own yachts: Witness Sydney's Life Savers in the annual Surf Carnival.

And in York Minister, how good life was that day when the young Duke of Kent married Miss Katherine Worsley.

On that June day no one had time to think of 1961 as the year of the great threat. No one, that is, in York; but in West Berlin where they've lived for years with peril on the doorstep, the menace heightened. By Kremlin orders East Germany threw up a wall, which today pitilessly divides the former Capital: separates wives from husbands, mothers from children. This is the situation which could, if madness prevailed, explode into World War 3.

While tension mounted in Berlin, Russia resumed Nuclear Bomb Testing.

The tests had no military purpose; they were a crude way of scaring neutrals into believing that the safe course is to toe the Kremlin line. And if Mau Tse Tung could be persuaded, also, so much the better. But behind all this is the possibility that Nuclear Testing will harm generations yet unborn. Hence in Trafalgar Square Ban The Bomb was the demand of passive resisters. They represented millions - some famous, like John Osborne and the forth-right dramatist, Shelagh Delaney - asserting that LIFE IS OUR RIGHT.

U.N. Secretary Dag Hammarskjold (working for peace in another way), was killed in the round of duty. His plane crashed in Rhodesia. That dedicated man died for mankind. With a general strike, the year began for Belgium. An illustration that peacetime has troubles enough, without war adding to them.

LIFE IS OUR RIGHT, but no one expects it to be all honey. Not in Algeria, certainly were what they call a "limited" war has plagued France for 7 years. Not even De Gaulle knows how to end it.

Paris at one stage expected an invasion, led by Mutinous Generals from Algeria. Fortunately, it never happened.

Strife or no strife, love finds a way. Jersey proved that honeymooners don't always want to be by themselves, provided that the hotel has newly-weds only. They'd had a tiring day. Goodness, look at the time - 17 minutes to 10!

King Hussein of Jordan married again; his bride (an English girl), Toni Gardiner. Life is their right, too.

It's never too late to marry. How Camberwell cheered Sidney Thain. He said he was 102. The bride, a mere 73. Then the birth certificate proved Sidney was no more than 79. Still, mistakes happen in the best regulated romances.

In recognised sports, a vintage year. Stirling Moss won the Monaco Grand Prix.

At Goodwood, he won the T.T. for the 7th time.

And what a race for the Indianapolis 500 mile. 200,000 watched 33 drivers in that death defying event. It gets more hair-raising every year. 5 cars came to grief in a chain-reaction pile-up.

In the Derby, sensation of another kind; victory for a 66-1 outsider, Psidium; a freak result, blamed on the bone-hard going. But everyone praised the brilliant riding of French Jockey Roger Poincelet; his first win in 9 Derbys. A grand horse and a very proud owner.

At the White City, it was goodbye to the great Gordon Pirie, at anyrate as an amateur. The match was, England V. Russia. In a grandstand career finish he brilliantly won the 5,000 metres. A wonderful athlete.

In the Test Matches that formidable bowler Davidson played a big part in helping Australia to retain the Ashes. Richie Benaud and his men played sporting cricket, and the policy payed off. Earlier, at Wembley, Tottenham Hotspur won the Cup and became the Team of the Century. Bobby Smith scored the first goal.

Leicester City had no answer to these Spurs. A good pass put Dyson in possession. Goal number 2.

Already League Champions, Spurs had won the Double for the first time in 63 years. And on that day, how good life was for Danny Blanchflower and his wonder-team.

Life was good, too, in the Commonwealth. Sierra Leone, Britain's oldest colony in West Africa became independant. Representing the Queen, the Duke of Kent conveyed the Independence Declaration to premier Sir Milton Margai.

The Queen herself toured India, Pakistan and Persia, seeing the infinite variety of the gorgeous East. The Maharajah of Benares was her Majesty's host on this occasion.

Eleven Commonwealth Premiers met at Lancaster House, and this time there was a note of regret; for South Africa was leaving the British Family of Nations. The new Republic was proclaimed in Pretoria.

Hopes were high in Washington when John Kennedy was inaugurated - the youngest man ever to be elected President of the United States. Millions believed that the West now had a man who would stand firm in face of the threat to humanity. If only all unofficial ambassadors where as friendly as Yuri Gagarin, first man to go into orbit. Britain certainly took him to it's heart.

In this field, America is rapidly catching up.

First, the U.S. rocketed a man into outerspace, 115 miles high. He was Commander Allan Shepperd. He returned no worse for the experience.

At the annual Red Square parade, the Kremlin felt very much on top of the world; with Yuri Gagarin still very much the hero. No qualms over poisoning the atmosphere or rattling the sabre in Berlin. But tragedy can come without war. It came to Croydon. 33 boys killed in an air crash in Norway. Six other holiday makers died at Chamonix, when a jet plane cut the Mount Blanc Cable Railway. 81 people where trapped all night. Their rescue seemed a miracle to them. An avalanche in the Salzburg Alps killed 3 climbers. How puny men seem, confronted with the wrath of nature.

And how puny we often seem when trying to solve our own difficulties. Thousands of builders went on strike over a tea break. The year seemed to be a succession of strikes; most of them more serious than this.

The teachers admittedly, agitated with some good reason, demonstrating outside N.U.T. Headquarters. They maintained that they had a raw deal over the pay pause. Fortunately, no strike.

So, all in all, we are grateful to the jokers who give us the unexpected laugh. Cyrus B. Tycoon Junior, built his own boat, just to show he could do it.

And thanks also to the rock and roll talent who got together at the Lyceum for the National Championships. Going one better there was the Twist.

Life goes on. One birth pleased everyone. At Clarence House, Princess Margaret had a son. She had faith that the future is good. And if everyone has faith, it will be.

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The Princess was a very happy mother when she and Lord Snowdon left Clarence House to take the baby home.

As for faith, there was plenty in evidence, when 90,000 attended mass at the Patrician Congress in Dublin, showing that mankind still cherishes values other than material. Life must go on. And high over Farnborough airmen, perhaps could see the world in right perspective. We must resolve that this pleasant land - indeed all lands - shall not be destroyed. LIFE IS OUR RIGHT.