

FORMER PRESIDENT TO OPEN CONFERENCE

The first President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, will open the all-Africa MRA conference in Dar es Salaam in May. Over the following four days there will be sessions on 'Corruption', 'Reconciliation' and 'Our vision for the 21st century'.

Eileen Mavura

SOMALIS IN OSLO AND STOCKHOLM

'Slowly Somalia is being rebuilt from the bottom, while the war-lords lose more and more power. Central to this process are people who have been inspired by MRA.' This was the sub-heading in the national Christian daily, which published a two page interview with former ambassador Dr Yusuf Omar Al-Azhari and former Minister of Fisheries, Osman Jama Ali. They spent a week in Oslo last month, and met politicians, Foreign Affairs officials and representatives of NGOs involved in Somalia such as Norwegian People's Aid and the Red Cross.

But primarily the two Somali leaders had come to meet the Somali community, which is 4,500 strong. They spent long hours every day talking to groups, explaining the peace process. About 60 turned up at a reception in the MRA Centre. Most of the Somalis in Oslo are young men, studying, and they evidently appreciated the chance to meet experienced elders.

Dr Al-Azhari and Mr Jama Ali visited Stockholm before and after Oslo. On the TV channel *Öppen Kanal* they were interviewed for an hour in Somali, for the benefit of the 5,000 Somalis in the Stockholm area. In the following days several meetings of Somalis, up to 300 at a time, were arranged to hear from them. When they spoke at the MRA home, Somalis and Swedes filled the room. They also met the Egyptian Ambassador, and Dr Al-Azhari met Swedish student leaders.

Everywhere they gave their experience of applying the principles and program of Moral Re-Armament. The *Vårt Land* article carries a moving account of their change, and underlines the hope they see for their country.

Gunnar Wieselgren Anders Eskeland

FEATURE ON MRA'S RECONCILING WORK

At the end of January one of Egypt's main newspapers *Al Ahram Weekly* carried an article on MRA by Dr Milad Hanna, well-known Egyptian thinker

and writer. Under the headline 'A moral victory', he refers to the appearance of a 'new global humanitarian culture' as shown by the arrival in Lebanon last year of a small group of Western volunteers to apologise 'for the horrific acts committed by the Crusades some nine centuries ago'. 'If such humanitarian gestures (whoever initiates them) become sufficiently frequent, they could do much to heal old wounds. Long-standing animosities could be assuaged. This new application of an old theory of civilisation may be an alternative to the clash of civilisations theory propagated by the American writer Samuel Huntington in 1993', writes Dr Hanna.

'The attempt to heal past injuries', he writes, 'and the wider endeavour to eradicate the seeds of hostility between cultures and civilisations, stems from a movement that arose before the Second World War in Europe' – MRA.

Afer tracing MRA's bridge-building work, especially in the post-war years, Dr Hanna writes that 'MRA has persevered in applying its message of reconciliation'. He says he has 'learned much' during his annual visits to Caux, and refers to his suggestion at Caux last year that MRA intervene in Sudan 'in an attempt to alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people, which has lasted so agonisingly long'.

HISTORIC WALK RE-ENACTED IN ALABAMA

On Sunday, March 7, over 500 people marched from Brown's Chapel to the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama in a re-enactment of the Voting Rights March of 1965. The 1965 march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama (approximately 50 miles) was made to protest the lack of voting rights for African Americans. Eventually this non-violent march, which was hindered by violent attacks from local citizens and police, gained such widespread publicity that the Voting Rights Act was passed.

Hope in the Cities was invited to Selma by Councilman Yusuf Abdus-Salaam who read about it in a National League of Cities newspaper. He recognized the importance of a spiritual and personal approach to building a just society and felt 'it was divine intervention' that he saw this article.

The racial attitudes in Selma permeate almost the entire town. For instance, during the last 10 to 15 years, only African Americans have attended the Voting Rights Walk re-enactment. Over recent months Hope in the Cities has trained facilitators, and met with many in the small southern town to assist in building a diverse core group. This year a small and

very dedicated group who call themselves Selma Hope in the Cities brought together African Americans and European Americans to walk together behind a banner 'Selma Hope in the Cities' and to invite other Selma citizens to join them in honest conversation. Public dialogues using the Hope in the Cities dialogue model will begin this spring.

Cricket White

BOOKLET ON MRA IN BRITAIN

With the move to Roman House, the formation of Agenda for Reconciliation and the launch of the Clean Slate Programme, to name just three developments, it is quite likely that MRA in Britain will have a higher public profile by the end of 1999. We welcome this, and pray that it will happen in the right ways.

If this is so, we will need to be able to answer the question 'What is MRA?'

So far it has been the practice for each of us to give our own answer to that question, painting a fascinating, but to the outsider sometimes confusing, picture. As society demands more and more transparency, we believe this position needs to change. When people genuinely want to know what MRA is, they need to be given a clear answer both to inform them and to counteract any suspicions or misinformation.

We are therefore preparing a short booklet, for use in Britain, to answer the question 'What is MRA and what is it now doing?'. After wide consultation, five of us have undertaken the task – Chris Evans, Mary Lean, Edward Peters, Mike Smith, and Christopher Morgan, a marketing expert new to MRA but with strong conviction about it. His role is to make sure that what is written will be expressed freshly, in ways that are clear to an 'outsider'. The five of us will consult closely with a second group, Philip Boobbyer, Rev Anthony Craig, Ailsa Hamilton, Mike Lowe, Kumar Raval and Imam Abduljalil Sajid.

It is the first time we have done anything like this, and we would ask for your prayers.

Chris Evans

MEDIA FORUM ON TOUGH QUESTIONS

In London last month, *The Financial Times* hosted a forum on 'The Media and Public Confidence', looking at issues such as 'Media and Democracy', 'Ownership and Editorial Control' and whether the media trivialises important questions. Chair of the International Communications Forum Bill Porter chaired a session on 'International Experience'. Speaking in this session were Bernard Margueritte, French correspondent in Warsaw, and Professor David Flint, Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority. Features writer of the *Daily Telegraph*, Graham Turner, was one speaker at another session which dealt with 'Pornography and Prurience'.

CLEANING THE SLATE

'I find I am constantly having to wipe my personal slate clean with my wife. The other weekend, I got so angry, over what I thought at the time was unduly sharp criticism from her over an incident with one of our children, that I took myself off to the cinema by myself! It was pride on my part, for which I had to apologise to her later, for abandoning her to the two children, when the other one needed support with homework.'

'When I read the Clean Slate Guide and considered where I needed to clean my slate, I realised that I had closed my heart to Germany. I did not want to go there again. I find it difficult not knowing the language. I had seen TV programmes that made me scared of Germany. I realised that it hinged around a German colleague who I found difficult. I have decided to make my colleague a real friend and open my heart to Germany.' (*Judith Henderson*)

'There are many things I should not do, such as being critical of other people. However, the practical one item I can do is to behave better towards my brother, who is difficult with his legs and way to walk, and about other things about his body. I must keep the Promise in my mind.'

'A shop assistant undercharged me several times. When I became aware of this, rather than rectifying the situation I continued to take advantage of it. On reading about the Clean Slate Campaign I decided to pay back the difference, as I had to admit that I would certainly have complained if I had been overcharged. The shop assistant refused to accept it, as I was "such a regular customer". I still felt uneasy and sent the money to the manager without identifying the shop assistant, explaining why I was doing it.'

'Today I finally returned an overdue book to a church library, having meant to do so for a long time, and rededicated myself as a servant of God. Having that book had kept me back from looking friends in the eye and talking to them about the CSC.' (*David Down*)

'Cleaning my slate has meant clearing my room! My very small bedroom is also my office. It has been swamped with piles of papers which get moved from desk to bed and back again daily. Having filled four black refuse bags, renewed my filing system, written over 20 letters and returned "borrowed" items to their rightful owners I feel a sense of clarity beginning to emerge from the fog. I can actually find things when I need them.' (*Joy Weeks*)

NB: Please do write in with your recent experience of slate-cleaning, as we would like to carry stories each month to encourage one another. Just to remind you, the deadline for sending material is the 15th of each month – the Editors

STOP PRESS!

The Consultation in South Africa has just come to an end. Thirty-seven of us from 22 countries met for eight days of reflection, discussion, discernment, decision-making in the beauty and peace of the Mahaliesberg mountains, with only the sounds of birds singing, frogs croaking and baboons bickering to interrupt us.... Read all about it in the Report (either enclosed or now available from your WB distributor).

Now, after a day's public meeting in Johannesburg and a Sunday in Soweto, those who can stay on are dispersing to different parts of the country. Representatives of Hope in the Cities will give a presentation in Witbank, representatives of Agenda for Reconciliation are going to Cape Town to meet MPs, while three other groups are going to Elim in the Northern Province, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

Mary Lean

INTERNATIONAL GROUP IN MEXICO

Twelve of us from the USA, Brazil and UK have just spent three days at the University of Monterrey, Mexico, as guests of the Social and Community Department. This came about through Hector Garcia, a resident of Minneapolis/St Paul who, as a result of meeting Mexican participants in the Caux Round Table, was invited to speak about MRA at the University 18 months ago. Following this, a group including the President of the Students Federation and the head of the Social and Community Department, a Marist brother, initiated this event.

We were impressed by the frankness of the discussions, which included much personal honesty, as well as consideration of projects to help in poor parts of the city and among indigenous communities in rural areas. As a basis for their commitment, one student formulated the principle: 'Integrity is the result, experienced in all aspects of life, when one looks for truth and chooses good with intent to love.'

Tom Jones Luis Puig Mike Olson

'NEVER A DULL MOMENT'

Sixteen young Australians and New Zealanders have just spent six weeks in India. Two of their hosts, Vijayalakshmi and Jyothi Subrahmanyam, write:

Vijayalakshmi: From the moment I heard Mike and Jean Brown's thoughts on bringing a group of young adults to India I wanted to support the venture. Many of the group were children and grandchildren of friends who had close links with India. This was one way we could express our gratitude for their dedicated service. Though I felt totally inadequate, I decided to enjoy every moment of the course. It proved to be an amazing experience. Besides Australians and New Zealanders, we had people from India, Sri Lanka, Korea, Taiwan and Lithuania.

There was so much bounce and life in the young

people, and I learnt much during our five weeks together. I learnt that the source of energy remains even when your body feels worn out... There is never a dull moment if you seek the creative approach, novel, imaginative. Having been brought up to live the straight and narrow path it was hard to understand certain mannerisms, but when I took time with individuals, I saw a different side. While there were colossal mood swings in the young people, they were very sensitive to how I felt and to my needs. I learnt there is no security in following the call to adventure. And in knowing the spiritual you cannot despise the earthly. The purpose of my journey is compassion.

Jyothi writes: It was great fun to have young people from so many different countries. At the end of December we had the Asia Pacific Youth Conference group and then in January the training course group. I soon realised that I needed to be honest if I wanted them to be honest. I felt very inadequate because of their spontaneous and quick answers. But this taught me to get out of the shell and to be open. Having patience at all times. Not to react or judge any one. I am grateful for all these experiences because this has widened my thinking. It has helped me to be ready for unexpected adventures.

GENERALS FIND COMMON CAUSE WITH MRA

In January a major article by retired journalist Eduard Rozental entitled 'Apostles of Reconciliation' was published in the prestigious Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*.

In 1969 Rozental was working in Switzerland, and spent a day and a half at Caux. He then wrote a feature story in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiya*, in which he 'unmasked' the activities of MRA.

During the Perestroika period Rozental attempted to describe more objectively what he had learnt about MRA; but his article was passed over by the main Soviet newspapers. Now, eight years later, he has finally succeeded. In the article, he skilfully describes the origins of MRA, its spiritual foundations, activities (especially in the first post-war years) and current directions of its work. He tries to trace the connection between its moral principles and the current situation in Russia, where the moral deficit is now much more serious than our former commodities deficit.

Perhaps, this moral deficit was the cause of an extremely rude response to the article in a letter to the newspaper by another retired journalist – known for his faithfulness to Soviet social and political thought – who had encountered MRA in Latin America in the '60s.

A letter from Rozental and an article by Professor Grigori Pomerants both rebutted the letter-writer's views, and gave more examples of MRA's work.

As a result of his article, Eduard Rozental has been contacted by a representative of an international organization 'Generals For Humanity', established by retired Russian generals. These generals, some of

whom are professors at military academies, have asked Rozental to address their group. In the ideals of MRA and its experience of reconciliation they see common cause with their organisation, and a meeting point between the concepts of patriotism and universal human values.

Igor Chegis

SWISS AND JAPANESE MPS SIGN INVITATION

The invitation letter for the Politicians' Round Table, which will be held at Caux in the framework of the Agenda for Reconciliation session in August, is once again signed by national parliamentarians from Switzerland and Japan. It is available in French from Philippe Lasserre at the MRA office in France, or in English from me (at the address on the back page of the Bulletin).

Andrew Lancaster

FAMILIES IN CAUX

Last summer at Caux we had, unexpectedly, a family with five children, ages one to ten – the Stainsbys from Ireland. Their presence contributed amazingly to the whole atmosphere in the house. Joe Carter sitting and singing on the terrace, the youngest on his knee,

the other children around him clapping their hands... Afterwards, their mother wrote saying how much it had meant that people cared about how the children were doing. The eldest boy had remarked: 'Everybody likes Luke (3), that's why we are famous here!'

Another great gift last year was the presence of a trained kindergarten teacher from Germany. For years we have longed for this and it made all the difference. She felt so at home that she will come again. (We came to the conclusion that parents with children under two should bring along some one to look after them). We had volunteers from Russia, India/USA, Britain and Slovakia, who all had some previous experience. But we could do with more next summer. It is a wonderful way for young people, men and women, to 'sniff' at Caux! And if you know of any families coming, please let us know ahead of time!

Joyce Kneale, Evelyne Seydoux, Digna Hintzen

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Calendar of Events

MAR '99	<u>Chapel Hill South Africa</u>	MRA Global Consultation	Mar 5 - 12
MAR '99	<u>Tirley Garth UK</u>	Global Club	Mar 26 - 28
APR '99	<u>Simperofol Crimea</u>	'Foundations For Freedom' Visiting Course at Crimean American College	Apr 10 - 21
APR '99	<u>Tirley Garth UK</u>	Spring planning meeting for Caux 1999	Apr 30 - May 3
MAY '99	<u>Novosibirsk Russia</u>	'Foundations For Freedom' Visiting Course	May 5 - 15
MAY '99	<u>Dar es Salaam Tanzania</u>	All Africa consultation/conference	May 12 - 17
MAY '99	<u>Odawara Japan</u>	22nd Annual Conference: Working as a world family for a better 21st Century	May 22 - 23
JUL '99	<u>Caux Switzerland</u>	Summer conference: 'Cleaning the slate, the promise of a new start'	Jul 10 - Aug 22
DEC '99	<u>Collaroy Sydney Australia</u>	A conference to mark the new century	Dec 3 - 7

The deadline for the next Bulletin is Thursday, April 15, 1999

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