

'AGENTS OF CHANGE'

The Moral Re-Armament Association of Tanzania hosted a five-day All-Africa conference in Dar es Salaam last month, which focused on corruption, and on the Agenda for Reconciliation. It brought together more than 100 people from 15 African countries (Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania) and from Europe and America. Members of the diplomatic corps also attended.

It was inaugurated by Wilson Masilingi, the Minister of State in the President's office responsible for good governance. The conference was timely, he said, since the Tanzanian Government is formulating a national action against corruption, and looking for ideas. 'As agents of change', he said, 'MRA members work for new motives and relationships at all levels of society, beginning in their own lives.... The government is ready to work with you.'

The conference received wide coverage in the print and electronic media. 'Hate-free, fear-free and greed-free world meeting taking place this week', headlined the *Daily Mail* after a press conference by MRA chairman Ambassador Edward Mhina. 'Religious leaders have a role in reconciliation', echoed the *Guardian*, quoting Tanzanian Bishop Elinza Sendoro. The *Daily News* carried a front-page story about Dr Yusuf Al-Azhari from Somalia, who spoke on 'What has gone wrong in African leadership in the past 40 years?'

The conference looked at many current issues, and there were very honest exchanges. Each morning an hour was devoted to sessions entitled 'Message to my heart', conducted by Ashwin Patel from Kenya. After hearing about the Clean Election Campaign in Kenya, Tanzanians decided that they would start a similar campaign, with the aim of pre-empting corrupt practices before Tanzania goes to the polls next year.

Eileen Mavura

THE SECOND CLUTCH FLY

The 16th Visiting Course took place in April, at 'Eagles Perch', Cokolinoya, Crimea. This was the second VC invited by the Crimean American College (CAC). We had 21 participants, and two who had taken part in the earlier VC helped us to run this one.

The visiting team was Ademar de Broutelles, MRA co-worker from Brazil, David Curtis, a business training consultant from Sheffield, and his wife Judith, and me. As usual it took a couple of days to 'get the pitch' of the group, but then faces and hearts began to open and the course began to touch individual lives. Participation was lively, and by the end we had worked out how to involve even the quieter ones. Meal times were full of interest and questions. One evening the participants

staged plays they had written and rehearsed. We were excited by the imagination and quality of what we saw. Then we had a talent evening with music, jokes, mime and much fun. Other evenings saw silly games and Scottish country dancing – always a great hit!

The VC gradually goes deeper and challenges the thinking of participants. There was a great response to this challenge. 'I phoned my mother and apologised for my rude behaviour,' said one. 'I will go home and tell people the truth and reconcile with my sister,' said another. 'I have decided to pay my debts and to sort out my intimate life. I thank God.' Often small decisions, but as we have seen from the fascinating ways former course participants are at work across this region, great things could hinge on them.

Before we finished, we collected 'feedback'. Almost total satisfaction was expressed, and some valuable ideas. 'I didn't like the long quiet times,' said one, 'but they taught me to fly!'

This VC was not externally funded, and we are grateful to all who supported it. VC16 cost just over £3,000, of which participants and CAC paid 30%. We believe it was money well spent!

Erik Andren

ODAWARA CONFERENCE

At an MRA conference in Odawara, Dr Ben Markin, Ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina, made a moving appeal for the world to understand the size of the human disaster in the Balkans. Like tens of thousands of others, he had fled for his life when war broke out. Only a fundamental change in people could begin to meet the need, he said, and this could come through listening to the inner voice and applying absolute moral standards.

The two-day conference brought together 70 people from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Australia. The conference was carried in a buoyant spirit, and a number of people shared fresh decisions they had taken.

Kiyoshi Nagano

POPE RECEIVES ICF REPRESENTATIVES

Last month the Pope received Bernard Margueritte and myself, Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the International Communications Forum, in his private office. He listened with great attention to Bernard's outline, in fluent Polish, of the Forum's work. When he was told that many of those linked to the Forum were men and women of faith, and of all faiths, the Pope said, 'That is very good indeed'. When Bernard pointed out that the crisis in the media was a threat to democracy itself, the Pope nodded firmly.

We expressed our appreciation for his message on World Communications Day, 16 May, when he referred to the media's responsibility to witness to the truth about life, about human dignity and about the true meaning of our freedom and mutual interdependence. In the message the Pope had urged the media to become 'a more and more friendly companion to all people, presenting them with information wedded to wisdom and entertainment wedded to joy'.

After 20 minutes, Jean Paul II shook hands warmly with us saying, 'My blessings for your activity'.

Bill Porter

JOURNEY OF HEALING

Last year, hundreds of thousands of Australians said sorry to the 'stolen generations' – the Aboriginal people forcibly removed from their families with the aim of assimilating them into Western culture.

This massive expression of empathy touched the hearts of many who suffer as a result of these policies. This year they responded by launching a Journey of Healing for all who want to help the healing process among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples'.

Most cities chose a procession to symbolise the launch. In Adelaide, a thousand people walked to forgotten places such as the site of Piltawodli, an Aboriginal school opened by German missionaries in 1839.

School children sang in the local Aboriginal language, perhaps for the first time since 1845, when troops demolished the buildings and the children were moved to an all-English school which banned their language. Many suburbs, country towns and rural centres organised their own events, as did hundreds of schools, churches and community organisations. There was plenty of music, with two new CDs launched. Two national TV stations screened programmes.

There is much to be done on the Journey. Many Aboriginal people are still alienated and in despair. But Aboriginal leaders say that since Sorry Day they have noticed an increased respect for Aboriginal people among the general community.

Perhaps this is due particularly to the stolen generations, who have continually kept the focus on healing rather than blame. At the Journey's launch in the Great Hall of Parliament in Canberra, a thousand voices joined in the theme song, written by two Aboriginal people who have suffered from the removal policies:

Come join the journey, Journey of Healing
Let the spirit guide us, hand in hand
Let's heal our hearts, let's heal our pain,
And bring the stolen children home again
We must take this journey together as friends.

The ideas developed by MRA across the world have played a great role in the whole concept of the Journey.

John Bond

DUTCH TREATS

Since last September MRA has held a national conference, two family conferences and four luncheons with guest speakers. Fifty people came to hear Jeroen

CLEANING THE SLATE

Recently, after an operation, I had difficulty sleeping. A young man had moved in to the flat above me. His job meant he came home at all hours, clattering in his heavy boots on the bare floors, and then he would switch on the television – loudly!

One night at 2.00am I could bear it no longer. So I went up and asked him politely if he could take off his boots and play the television softly. He was very abusive and told me he could do what he liked.

The noise continued and I became very distressed. Then he was joined by a girl who I discovered was his new young wife. I appealed to them both, with the same response from him, though she was more sympathetic. Things improved for a while but the noise returned. I began to feel very angry and bitter, toying with the idea of enlisting the police.

Then I discovered that they were expecting a baby. I had the totally unexpected thought, 'Why not get the girl a gift for the baby?' My first reaction was, 'Why should I? We're practically enemies'. But the thought persisted.

When I gave her my gift she flung her arms around me, thanked me and said how lonely she had been. She invited me for coffee and we had a good chat.

When, later, I moved out of my flat she offered to help with my packing. Later her husband stopped me and thanked me too and, to my surprise, apologised for being so awful about the noise. He told me they were moving to Sydney and invited me to come and stay with them, offering to pay my fare!

I was amazed at how things had turned around. What was most surprising to me was how my anger vanished the moment I gave the gift and was so warmly thanked, and I felt a real love for them.

They are now living in Sydney and we keep in touch. It has proved a healing experience for all three of us.

Louise Abraham, Melbourne

Gunning speak about Islam and politics after his stay in Gaza. Many were new to MRA, as were many who came to the national conference in Utrecht.

We have just spent a weekend with twenty people, as we did last year, finalising the programme for 1999/2000. Responsibility for the various occasions has been divided up among working groups. We find this helps to share the load, and allows for more creativity. The printed programme will be ready in August.

One of our national newspapers carried an interesting, reasonably balanced article on Frank Buchman, in a series on the history of this century. A national radio station broadcast a 45-minute programme on the Oxford Group and MRA in a series describing idealists of this century.

Johannes de Pous

CREATORS OF PEACE ACTIVE IN HOLLAND

Imagine the Caux Agenda for Reconciliation multiplied 20 times, and you get an idea of the four-day 'Hague Appeal for Peace' held in May. It commemorated the first world peace conference ever, convened in The Hague a hundred years ago by the Czar of Russia. That conference was attended by heads of state and generals from 26 countries. This was attended by 7000 people, mainly from NGOs, from over 100 countries.

The opening meeting brought together Nobel Peace Laureates, Foreign Ministers, young people and artists, led selflessly by Cora Weiss of the International Peace Bureau. When Judy Collins sang 'Amazing Grace' one could feel the Holy Spirit come into the hall. In a smuggled video message, Aung San Suu Kyi said only a change in the way people think will bring democracy. 'If there is one lesson to be learned from the Burmese crisis,' she said, 'it is that it helps to have caring friends.'

Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam from India and Heyde Duran from Colombia were there with Hester and Jerker Mila and others of us from Holland. As 'Creators of Peace' we networked from one of the booths, and handed out a folder with information about the AFR in Caux.

We met many friends. Louise Diamond presented a workshop on multitrack diplomacy. Two of the six speakers at a session of the World Conference for Religion and Peace had been at Caux. We were struck by the emphasis on conflict resolution and on the need for a change of heart. As UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said at the closure, 'One can feel the energy and the yearning for peace in this room.'

Digna Hintzen

OXFORD CONFERENCE ON CAMBODIA'S FUTURE

The Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford, hosted a one-day conference on 5 June entitled 'CAMBODIA: moving towards a better future'. At the suggestion of Cambodians living in Britain, the conference was opened and closed by a senior Buddhist monk, Venerable Ajahn Sumedho. This was a new experience for many of the speakers, and put the academic exchanges in a distinctive context.

Twenty-two papers on topics ranging from 'crime and culpability among Khmer Rouge leaders' to 'gendered violence' and the 'psychosocial issues of demobilising soldiers' were presented. Alan Channer gave a paper on 'revitalising the moral and spiritual fabric of Cambodian society' which mentioned the work of MRA along with other influences for reconciliation, healing and peace in the country. *The Serene Smile* and *The Serene Life* videos (available from MRA Productions) were screened and copies purchased. *Global Express* on the theme of self-worth was also taken by some participants.

The occasion was funded, in part, by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

FRANCE: PASSING THE BATON

For the last eight months, 13 of us men and women from different generations have been meeting to plan the transfer of responsibility to the next generation and to study the needed structural and organisational changes of MRA in France.

This led to a one-day meeting of about 30 people in their thirties and forties whose lives have been affected by MRA. They have begun to look at the way to pursue and/or recreate the work that has been done by their elders over the last half-century.

At the AGM of the French MRA Association on 29 May, another baton was passed. Daniel Dommel, Chairman of Transparency International France, handed over the Chairmanship of the MRA Board to industrialist Jean Fayet, who wants to dedicate his years of retirement to the field of moral and spiritual development, in particular with MRA. Jean Fayet was recently part of the group that visited Gaza and Israel.

Philippe Lasserre and Frédéric Chavanne

ALLOWING GOD TO ILLUMINATE

Describing his Keswick experience many years later, Frank Buchman said, 'For the first time I saw myself with all my pride, my selfishness, my failure and my sin.' 'For the first time'. What about those of us known as MRA workers today? We are capable of apologising for wrong acts. Do we still allow God to show what our whole nature is like, and the way to be different? Or are we basically satisfied with ourselves, feeling no need to start all over again?

In the last year I was forced to ask what satisfies me. 'Recounting my travels, encounters and actions', was the honest answer. Of course, that is often part of God's plan. But who gets the glory? If I steal it, this breeds rivalry, and others feel excluded. And what happens if you can't travel?

God's gift, to pray for and accept, is a new person who rejoices in what others are led to be and do.

The attraction of MRA remains a fellowship of recently forgiven sinners who have decided to put God first and take on the world together.

Asked to give an example of what MRA really is, a friend told me, 'It was X on the farm at Panchgani, sharing his whole life with me, giving me hope that I too could change.' This friend has since brought that hope to countless people and countries.

Do we share enough? Once at Caux, as a student group from the Middle East was arriving, I got into a quarrel with an older British colleague. He had asked me to make arrangements for their stay, and their visit afterwards to Britain, having done it himself for years with other such groups. Yet here he was at Caux, and everyone was asking him about the arrangements, not realising that I was 'in charge'. In a quiet time together, I saw that, yes, I had agreed to be responsible, but I also wanted to be recognised as No 1.

Private apology followed and I thought it was all over. But at a big planning meeting that afternoon, as I gave a 'positive' account of the group's arrival, a Swiss friend said across the room, 'Didn't you have to work through certain difficulties?'. Telling 80 people was a fuller experience of 'Pour contempt on all my pride'.

In the following years, many wonderful things were given in the reshaping of Britain's relations with the Middle East. That new comradeship with my colleague was one important element. As people come to Caux, perhaps for the first time, seeking vision for today's world, it may be urgent that we MRA workers remain open to the depth of change we experienced 'the first time'.

Peter Everington

A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL RE-AWAKENING

We now have a booklet to answer the question 'What is MRA in Britain?'. The cover describes MRA as 'a moral and spiritual re-awakening'.

We have printed only 5,000 for the moment, but might use it more widely. It is written for Britain, but if you would like a copy you are welcome to order one from Daphne Waterston, 12 Palace St., London SW1E 5JF. It sells for £1, but we would be happy to send individual copies to WB readers on a 'pay as you can' basis.

Chris Evans

LIFE – FAITH – FELLOWSHIP – JULY 26-29

The Life - Faith - Fellowship session on the theme "*How to accompany each other on our spiritual journey – spiritual insight, discernment, working it out in daily life*" is miraculously taking shape. These three days are to help us strengthen our own relationship with God, find inner peace about our various responsibilities and learn afresh how to pass on a deeper quality of care to others. We shall benefit from the participation of Soeur Françoise, from the Swiss Protestant Community of Grandchamps, Rabbi Dr Julian Jacobs, who has been in charge of the interfaith portfolio in the Cabinet of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, and Dr Fathi Osman from Egypt, who edited a London-based Muslim magazine.

The schedule will provide space for reflection, personal talks and sharing in small groups. It will start on the morning of 26 July, so participants are invited to arrive from 5.00pm onwards on Sunday 25.

**Jacqui Daukes, Christine Karrer, Anne-Marie Tate
– and all the preparation team**

UPDATE LATIN AMERICAN STYLE

As a result of consultations between the cast, those in Caux and other friends, the whole of 'Gente que Avanza' (40 people) will come to Caux between 9 July and 8 August. It has been most faith building to see how gifts have come towards their fares and stay. So far we have 37 tickets and one third of the cost of their stay.

Gunnar Söderlund, Marianne Spreng

EFFECTIVE LIVING COURSE IN AUSTRALIA

Australia is ready to host another nine week *Effective Living Course* in February 2000. This would be the 21st course. Those responsible would like to know whether a program of this kind is welcomed, and whether there are young adults who would like to participate. We would appreciate your responses by 15 July.

Rob Wood and John Mills

MRA LOGO

In Holland we wish to create a (Dutch) MRA logo. But, we would like it to have a link with other MRA logos. Do they exist? Please could anyone using an MRA or related logo send a copy to us, the Dutch PR team, c/o MRA, Amaliastraat 10, NL - 2514 JC The Hague.

FACTS ON FAXES, PHONES AND ADDRESSES

Norway: Jens Wilhelmsen has a new e-mail address: Jens-Jonathan.Wilhelmsen@c2i.net

Malaysia: Julie Tan now has has an e-mail address: jaytee@pd.jaring.my

Calendar of Events

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|---------|----------------------------------|--|-----|------------|
| JUN '99 | <u>Novosibirsk Russia</u> | 'Foundations for Freedom' Visiting Course | Jun | 1 - 10 |
| JUL '99 | <u>Caux Switzerland</u> | Summer conference: 'Cleaning the slate, the promise of a new start' | Jul | 10 - 16 |
| JUL '99 | <u>Caux Switzerland</u> | Caux Conference for Business and Industry | Jul | 19 - 24 |
| JUL '99 | <u>Tainan Taiwan</u> | 9 th Asia-Pacific Youth Conference (APYC) | Jul | 24 - 29 |
| JUL '99 | <u>Caux Switzerland</u> | An International Cities Consultation | Jul | 30 - Aug 5 |
| AUG '99 | <u>Caux Switzerland</u> | Agenda for Reconciliation | Aug | 8 - 15 |
| AUG '99 | <u>Caux Switzerland</u> | A Conversation on Aims and Values for the 21 st century | Aug | 17 - 22 |
| NOV '99 | <u>Malta</u> | Dialogue for Mediterranean region | Nov | 5 - 10 |
| NOV '99 | <u>Schengen Luxembourg</u> | One-day seminar 'Où allons-nous en Europe?' – organised by families and local leadership of the east of France | Nov | 6 |
| DEC '99 | <u>Collaroy Sydney Australia</u> | A conference to mark the new century | Dec | 3 - 7 |

The deadline for the next Bulletin is Wednesday, September 15th, 1999

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