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FORGING A SUPRA-NATIONAL CABINET

A session for politicians at the Moral Re-Armament World Assembly, Caux, Switzerland

PHOTOS: D CHANNER, M RUNDELL





TIME TO TALK... AND LISTEN

SOME 50 POLITICIANS and personalities from 16 countries took part in a special five-day session in the framework of the MRA world assembly at Caux, Switzerland, at the end of August. Half of them came from Southern Africa, with the largest single group coming from Zimbabwe Rhodesia. The problems of the sub-continent were the subject of many informal contacts and discussions, as well as a seminar on 'The Destiny of Southern Africa'. Another working session dealt with the part of minority and majority groups in democracy.

One black African politician, who had been actively involved in the bush war, said of Caux, 'If ever Lenin and Marx were resurrected from the grave, they would see here the classless society they were trying to build, but set on a Christian foundation.' He continued, 'Zimbabwe needs reconciliation. There is hatred and bitterness. It is not easy for people to forget. They look behind and see rivers and oceans of bloodshed.' An agreement might be reached in the talks next month in London, he concluded, but the leaders 'would need to learn how to forgive'. Such leaders were needed throughout the sub-continent.

A white politician said that it was strange that black and white had to come all the way to Switzerland to talk together, but continued, 'When men cease to talk, evil takes over. We have to find a new way, a peaceful way.' A farmer, who described himself as 'a white African', said that the greatest challenge would follow any settlement, 'to restore to normality the tens of thousands of young men who know nothing but killing'.

The gathering had been initiated by a German Member of Parliament, Adolf Scheu, who died suddenly last December. In opening the conference, one of the conference secretaries, Pierre Spoerri of Switzerland, described Mr Scheu's aims in calling the session.

'Firstly, Adolf Scheu felt that there was a need all over the world for men in public life to learn to make the bridge between their

personal convictions and their political actions. He said, "In Bonn, the capital of Germany, some of us political men are driven men, driven by events and external circumstances." He wanted to share his experience of taking time every morning to listen to the voice of his conscience or to the voice of God. He used to say, "At any given time during the day there are five good things that I am meant to be doing, and if I don't have this time of quiet I cannot decide what the priorities are."

'Secondly, he felt there was a need for what you might call "a world cabinet of supra-national friendship" or "a cabinet of conscience". He envisaged men in government, along with some back-benchers and perhaps some who are not actually in parliament, meeting in an atmosphere where such friendships could be forged.

'Thirdly, he felt there should be a platform where men could share how, through application of the voice of conscience and change in human nature, humanly impossible situations have begun to be resolved.'

Shrunk to mosquito size

At the final session, Mikko Asunta, who was for 20 years an MP and became Chairman of the Conservative Group of the Finnish Parliament, described how he had come with problems on his mind that had seemed colossal. 'But,' he continued, 'when I compare them with the problems of other people and the other countries represented here, they shrink to the size of a mosquito in our woods. The problems of the Third World have come close to me.'

The President of the Vaud Cantonal Parliament, Claude Berney, echoed this thought when greeting the conference at a special session attended by several other Vaud Cantonal MPs. 'Swiss democracy will have won its final victory,' the Socialist President said, 'the day when Switzerland understands that she has duties towards the rest of humanity.'

ABS

AN END TO 17 YEAR

The Hon Bona Malwal
Minister of Culture and Information
of the Sudan (1972-79), addressed
the delegates to the Political Session

THE CIVIL WAR in my country went on for 17 years. Finally in 1969 we sat down together to negotiate.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa; it is probably the most complex. There are the Arabs in the North, and people of black Africa in the South who have become Christian by training and education. I am one of them.

Just a few months before our independence in 1956, disturbances started which eventually became a civil war. When the British left, power passed into the hands of the Northern Sudanese who were mainly Arabs and Muslim. We felt that there was nothing left for us but to struggle for our just cause. The leader of the guerrillas in the South said that he did not feel any contradiction between his Christian faith and the fight for justice and equality.

Not bloodthirsty rebels

The national government did not want to negotiate with the rebels, because the government believed they would not keep agreements. There were some incidents which helped us with President Nimeiri. One in particular helped the North to understand that we were not just a bloodthirsty bunch of rebels but a thoughtful movement that was fighting for the just cause of the people of Southern Sudan. While contacts were going on between the two sides, a government plane crashed in the Southern bush and survivors were rescued by the guerrilla army. Rather than harming these Northern Sudanese, the guerrillas saw to it that they were given medical attention and escorted them to the outskirts of the nearest town and handed them over to the government forces.

After negotiations over many months we eventually agreed that there should be

What politicians seek at Caux

Georges Mesmin
Member of Parliament, Paris

I WOULD LIKE TO SAY why, in my opinion, politicians, parliamentarians, local and city councillors come to Caux.

We all have convictions. Without them we wouldn't be serious politicians. We come here looking for a redefinition of our convictions. But here we learn something that is difficult for a politician—to respect all

RS OF CIVIL WAR—SUDAN'S SETTLEMENT

'Bring your troops into national army' President told rebels

regional government in Southern Sudan, which was proclaimed by President Nimeiri in Khartoum on 3 March 1972. The conditions of the proclamation were sent back to the bush to General Joseph Lagu, who led the guerrilla army. Before the implementation of the terms, General Lagu said that just as President Nimeiri had expressed goodwill and good intentions, we ourselves would declare a ceasefire, and that he would go to Juba to meet the President with one of the rifles that the guerrilla army was using—and hand it over as a sign that we had accepted peace. The President immediately handed it back, saying, 'We honour men who have fought against us, and invite you to bring your troops into the national army to defend our country together.'

Supernatural hands

Since then Southern Sudan has enjoyed a regional government and Northern Sudan has respected the terms of that agreement. General Lagu, who led the 17-year rebellion, is now the President of the autonomous regional government of the South.

When contacts first opened between the South and North it seemed that supernatural hands were working in our affairs. We appeared to be operating under a divine guidance, and certain personal relationships were integral to the building of trust which had to take place in every department. The key issue was the absorption and integration of the armed forces, an intricate process requiring complete mutual confidence in motives. Eventually the national army in the Southern region was divided equally, 50 per cent Northern and 50 per cent Southern ex-rebels, all fully trained with combined command structure, in which, if the Unit Commander was a Northerner his Second-in-Command must be a Southerner, and vice versa. This operates on Divisional, Brigade, Battalion and even Company level.

The basis of our successful experiment in the Sudan is 'unity in diversity'. We have come to recognise that there is nothing that I, being a black African from the South and

non-Muslim, can do about the fact that my countrymen from the North happen to be Muslim and Arabs. I cannot change this by policy or by government process. We must recognise this and work on what unity can be created in this diversity. The running of the two systems in the country is based on respecting the cultural, religious and racial diversities that are part of the Sudan. We have found in eight years of applying this that diversity, rather than being a cause of division, has become a source of enrichment for the Sudan and we think that there is no price too great to pay for this rare and precious partnership and balance.

Personal relationships between individuals of both sides have been of cardinal importance in our story. One such concerns Sayed Ahmed el Mahdi, who was at Caux some years ago and is an influential Muslim leader. When we attempted to negotiate in 1965 he was the Minister of the Interior and it was his responsibility to maintain law and order.

Weekly in prison

I was then the only Southerner who could speak out for Southern Sudan. So I established a small newspaper in which I exposed the evil deeds of the Sudanese army in the South. It was his responsibility not only to deny that I was telling the truth but also to prosecute me each time I said what he regarded as a lie. He would send the police to raid my newspaper office and put me in prison almost every week. This procedure went on for about two years, until he lost his post of Minister of the Interior. His prisons were very foul places in which to spend a lot of time. I felt that there could never be any real friendship between Ahmed el Mahdi and me.

In 1967 I was elected to parliament and the situation eased for me for a short spell. Then President Nimeiri took over, and one of the first things he did was to ban my newspaper. He banned all newspapers for a week, and then he gave back all the licences except mine. He said he was not prepared to send

opinions. During these days we have been able to listen to people talking about Southern Africa at a particularly difficult time, and despite certain remarks which could be hurtful, people have not become angry. We have listened to everyone, and we have all benefited.

The second thing that we look for here is a way of life. Fundamentally it is what is in the Gospel: openness to others, love towards others and forgiveness. What is even more difficult is to pardon someone when one thinks that the other is wholly in the wrong. I confess that I have rarely done it, but when I have done it, I have seen that it works.

We politicians are inclined to battle at the level of personalities. One thing we slowly learn here at Caux is to distinguish between the battle of ideas and the battle with a man who is an adversary now but who tomorrow could become a friend.

The third thing we find here is an atmosphere of friendship. In this building you make friends who want nothing from you. This is not the kind of friend you generally meet in political life—'You give me this and I will give you that.' Here we have a vision of a world of goodwill, a world where one cares for the real interests of others and not one's own. It is a well of living unselfishness.



The Hon Bona Malwal

me to prison, so he would rather keep my licence!

Subsequently Ahmed el Mahdi and I worked in the same building. He managed his family business from his offices which happened to be on the floor above mine, and we always avoided each other. If he was using the elevator I would wait to use it until he was gone. But one day he apparently watched me and hid, and after I got into the elevator he followed me and embraced me as if we were long-time friends. I was really taken by surprise. You can't reject a warm, goodhearted greeting like that.

Then he said, 'I have always wanted to make amends with you. I regret everything that has happened. Personally I wish we had not got into the situation where I was forced to send you to prison all the time. There was nothing personal and I've respected what you've been trying to do. Can you forgive those wasted years?'

Enemy becomes a friend

So we had a cup of tea and discussed the matter. Since then we have been reconciled and we're now very good and close friends, taking every opportunity of working together. Later when he and his people had difficulties with the government of which I became a member, I defended him. I tried to suggest to the President that we could become reconciled with Ahmed, who was in prison himself at the time. The President listened and Ahmed was released and was later appointed a member of the Central Committee of our ruling party. This and other such relationships based on honest apology and forgiveness are the nuts and bolts that will hold our vast country together under present pressures.



M and Mme Mesmin



His Eminence Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, (left) talks with Italian Senator Karl Mitterdorfer. Addressing the conference, Cardinal Koenig said that even more important than talking about needed social changes, it is essential 'that man changes and that he knows what God wants him to do. We need Caux more than so many institutions in the world.'

Possibility for partnership

Karl Mitterdorfer
Senator, Italy

WE POLITICIANS find ourselves in a difficult position. People expect everything from us and then nothing we do is right. Moreover, in our system at least, we have to stand for re-election. So it is tempting to say what people want to hear.

It is dangerous to listen too much to what people say rather than to the voice of God. For this reason, if a politician considers something to be important, he should be ready to implement it regardless of any reactions his constituents have. I don't need to tell you how difficult that is.

For over 20 years I have represented a small national minority, the German-speaking people of the South Tyrol, in the Italian parliament. I came to Caux for the first time about 10 years ago with a delegation of Italians and people from the South Tyrol. The visit helped us overcome difficulties which

had arisen between our two communities and the state. But for me the significant point was when I accepted personal responsibility and was ready to admit honestly where I had done something wrong.

More recently, a colleague deprived me of an important position. This happens in politics. You have to reckon with it. Such things leave a certain amount of bitterness behind. My relations with this colleague were strained. I kept finding excuses not to go and talk with him and try to put things right.

Finally, some time later, I took my courage in both hands and said to my colleague, 'We must talk things over. When can I have a talk with you?' We met, and an extraordinary thing happened. Before I could say a word, he apologised for the way he had wronged me. I wanted to apologise to him, but he apologised to me and we discovered a totally new relationship—a constructive, reciprocal partnership.

I believe that here lies a possibility which could help us to tackle the problems we face in politics, and bring them to a positive conclusion. Through this, too, God's Holy Spirit can be integrated into our daily lives.

'The first step in reorienting our minds to God is to listen twice as much as we talk. This is a simple programme of how to begin. Yet here lies the strategy to win the world from her egocentric ways. For immediately self is the centre of the picture, there war has begun, whether in individuals or in nations. Fear is another kind of guidance. People are afraid, and so they will not fight the daily battle against selfishness.

'God's guidance is an absolute necessity and the irreducible minimum to keep millions spiritually and physically alive. It is the nation's life blood. Without it nations perish. Statesmen living this quality of life will make it possible for the Mind of God to become the mind of nations.'

Frank N D Buchman

Negotiate with yourself



Professor Hudson Ntsanwisi
Chief Minister of Gazankulu,
South Africa

I AM A CHAMPION OF CHANGE. I am a champion of a new quality of life in which people work together. The most important thing for us in South Africa is to try to kill apartheid in the minds of the people. Before it dies in the minds of the people, no amount of legislation can kill it.

Up to now, the whites have tried to bridge the gap between the races on their own. It hasn't worked. Now the Africans must take on this task. That means sharing power and working together.

Our people believe that one of our priorities must be the establishment of a sound spiritual infrastructure, an infrastructure which will recognise the humanity of all human beings under God.

Today Caux is teaching us that there are certain things we must do to evaluate a situation, certain formulae, certain norms which each of us must use, certain moral standards. If we use them firstly for ourselves, then we can apply them in our relations with others.

Caux is not a place for political negotiations. At Caux you negotiate with yourself, with your spirit.

In debates in our Legislative Assembly I used to believe that the best way to answer an argument was to bring a superior argument and cut down my opponent. I did that and it worked, but it brought in its train many enemies who felt humiliated. I came to Caux and learned another philosophy, where you don't think about crushing your enemy but you aim to win your enemy through honesty, love and understanding, in order to build a better world for all. I discovered it is a philosophy that works. If you change you can change other men. The Speaker of our Legislative Assembly is here with me. He and I were in opposite camps, we didn't see eye to eye. But today we are able to work together and even to travel here.

When heart speaks to heart and man speaks to man, and when man apologises to man, something miraculous happens. And that is what black and white need in my country, South Africa. It is that human element which must be developed and generated.