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Destiny lies above the narrow view

LIFE CANNOT GO ON in the West—or in the rest of the world—as it has for the last 30 years. That is why 600 people, most of them under the age of 30, spent twelve days at the Moral Re-Armament world assembly in Caux, Switzerland, earlier this month to explore 'Our task and responsibility for the future.'

The session was prepared and led by young people from most countries of Europe and from North America, and was open to people of all ages. Nations had paired up over the months before to plan the conference—French and Germans, Dutch and British, Scandinavians, North and South Americans working together on different sections.

Their aim was to look at the situation in the world and help each participant discover what it would mean to become a shaper, rather than a victim, of events. 'Each person has a distinctive calling in life, some task which God means them to do,' said one discussion leader. 'We want to help people to find it.'

The theme was broken down into topics which will confront the world increasingly in the coming years—such as world resources, poverty, struggles for power and for liberation.

The emphasis was on the spiritual, as well as on the practical and the material. The seminar on resources, for instance, dealt not only with material resources but also the human resources of generosity, care and imagination that must be freed if the world's wealth is to be shared. 'The world's religions are reservoirs of purpose, hope and satisfaction in life,' said one of the speakers, microbiologist, Bryan Hamlin. 'But the dams of those reservoirs are being broken down. How to rebuild them is the task of all who care about the world's needs.'

Namibia

He was followed by Yukihsa Fujita who gave the example of work he and other Japanese have initiated to help the refugees of South East Asia. Charis Waddy, an expert on the Muslim world, then expanded the concept of a reservoir of faith. All this resulted in a wide-ranging discussion.

The presence of people from outside Europe gave a context to such discussions. There were participants from countries in turmoil like Laos and Ethiopia: Northern American Indians at the heart of the struggle for their people's dignity; men and women from all sides of the anguished situation in the Middle East; black and white from Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia.

These people had come seeking how to

bring answers to their mountainous problems. Zedekiah Ngavirue, Vice-President of the Namibian SWANU party, quoted the words of Kwame Nkrumah, 'Seek you first the political kingdom and all else will be added unto you', and went on to say that after a generation of political independence most Africans were still waiting for 'all else'. 'There is a need for a revolution of the mind in Africa,' he said. 'We need to put into practice what we have learnt here. With this help for the struggle ahead, Namibia can be an answer for the world, instead of the problem it is today.'

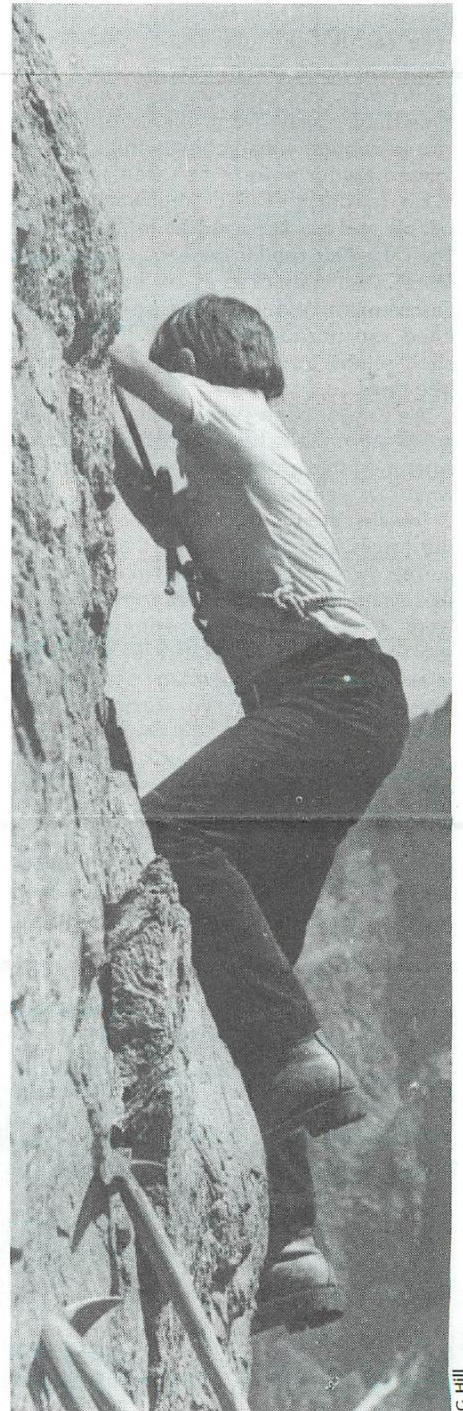
Life-calling

A South African futurologist described how, sitting in a poor African home near Pretoria, he had realised that his privileged way of life had led to 'alienation and injustice'. He would be ready, he had decided, to accept whatever standard and style of living would help to bring healing. A Zimbabwean nurse said that when she came to Caux two years ago, she had 'no place in her heart for whites'. Her one day there had transformed her life. Now she, a Shona, was working in Bulawayo, at the heart of the other major tribe of Zimbabwe, because she wanted to help answer tribal divisions.

The discovery of a life-calling grows out of many smaller decisions. In forums large and small, participants had the chance to explore what it would mean if they were to dedicate their lives to creating a new order in the world.

For many the first step was to put right wrong attitudes at home, school or work. A British sixth-former came to the session puzzled about his future. After a few days he decided to open himself to whatever God might ask of him. He saw that he needed to write his parents and put right his dishonest

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C Hill

Each afternoon seminars took place on liberation, resources, poverty and power. Here we print extracts from three of the talks which provoked discussion in the seminars on power and liberation:

Where the free are least free

Pierre Spoerri

I FIND two aspects of today's society surprising and alarming. The first is that in today's world some of the people who seem the most free or the most conscious of their freedom, are those who have been through the worst suffering.

In *The First Circle* Solzhenitsyn describes the conversation between a prisoner and his interrogator. The former says to the latter, 'You can tell the old You-know-who up there (meaning Stalin) that you only have power over people so long as you don't take everything away from them. But when you've robbed a man of everything he's no longer in your power—he's free again.'

Yet in our so-called free world, many people feel less and less free in themselves. The Pill, which used to be seen as a liberating force, is now attacked as an instrument of enslavement. When all censorship is abolished and pornography is totally free, the effect seems to be bound people rather than free ones.

We cannot choose deliberately either to go to jail or to suffer in order to discover what men like Solzhenitsyn have found. So what can we do?

The first step is to become conscious of the forces and mechanisms that make us unfree. In a European capital like Bonn one sees some of the anti-freedom forces at work. One of these is **pressure**. Everyone speaks of stress and the rat-race. A friend of mine who was a German Member of Parliament, used to say 'We are driven men'.

What do you do when you are under pressure? There are three attitudes you can take. The first is to make the courageous act of **opting out**. The second is to accept that stress is a fact of life if you want to get anywhere: you just have to live with it and pay the price of broken families and broken health. The third is to realise that stress is

often a state of mind as much as a state of fact. You may be under pressure from time to time, but pressure from outside only has a devastating effect when it meets pressure from inside and sets up an inner conflict.

The second is **conformity**—succumbing to the pressure of public opinion, to group pressure and group-think, to the dictatorship of the gang, the race or the class. We can all experience the freedom-destroying force of not wanting to stand alone, of not wanting to be attacked for stepping out of line.

In a book entitled *Victims of Group-think*, Irving Janis describes four instances of US foreign policy where the phenomenon of group-think had disastrous effects and two instances where resistance to these forces led to a breakthrough in world affairs. The author writes: 'Many forthright men who are quite willing to speak their piece despite risks to their career, become silent when faced with the possibility of losing the approval of fellow members of their primary work group.'

A third block to freedom is crooked and sticky **relationships**. Even in the freest democratic order many citizens are unable to live as free men and women because most of them—most of us—have some relationships, in their families or with their colleagues, that are corrupted.

Alexis de Toqueville, the French writer of the last century, wrote in *De la Democratie*: 'In the life of democratic peoples there is a very dangerous phase of transition. If in one of these peoples the desire for material enjoyment grows quicker than education and the habit of freedom, the moment comes when they are completely fascinated by the sight of these new desired goods and almost lose their heads over them. Obsessed by the desire to become rich, they do not notice that there is a direct connection between the well-being of the individual and the progress of the whole. One does not need to rob such citizens of their rights; they will give them up quite voluntarily.'

Why the thaw couldn't last

Harry Addison

'POWER TENDS TO CORRUPT: absolute power corrupts absolutely.' The words of Lord Acton, the famous English historian and political philosopher, sum up the dilemma posed by **political power**—it is absolutely necessary, but always dangerous.

Acton also said: 'The possession of absolute power corrodes the consciences, hardens the hearts, and confounds the understanding of monarchs.'

Jakob Burckhardt, the distinguished Swiss historian, agreed. He wrote: 'Now power is of its very nature evil: it is not stability, but a lust, and *ipse facto* insatiable, therefore unhappy in itself and doomed to make others unhappy.'

This is a moral diagnosis of a political problem. It points therefore to the need for a moral cure.

Scared

Are the dangers inherent in political power greater or less today than in earlier times? There is a growing use of terror and violence. Their perpetrators justify them as a legitimate means of winning power.

Is a materialistic society—one absorbed in the pursuit of a higher standard of living, a larger GNP and more material things—more or less vulnerable to the activities of power-seekers than one which puts moral and spiritual values first?

Frank Buchman, the initiator of MRA, described materialism as 'democracy's greatest enemy'. Speaking in 1938, he said 'An increasing number of citizens in democ-

Power points

Clara Jaeger

THE POWER each of us exerts automatically over other people, often without realizing it, sets off chemical reactions.

For instance, how do we react when a powerful personality or someone of high position enters a room or joins a group? Do we start to play up to them? We may attach ourselves to this kind of person in order to live in reflected glory, to use them as our protectors, or to use them to pull down other people while we stay safely in the background.

Then there is the friendship or marriage where one person is dominant and the other submissive, where two people are imprisoned in each other.

Or there is the group who build themselves up by gossiping about those they feel threatened by or jealous of.

It shocked me when I began to face this kind of drive in my own nature. But the first step in becoming free of the power of other people was to admit what I really wanted



Nigerians at Caux

atic states are now unwilling to acknowledge in speech and action those inner authorities on which the life of democracy depends.'

Many revolutionary leaders have set out to destroy tyrants. In doing so they have often sought, or found themselves compelled, to take absolute power. They have promised, often sincerely, that once they have achieved their aim, they will give freedom to the people. In practice they have rarely been able to do so.

This was Oliver Cromwell's experience in 17th century England. He fought a war against an autocratic king, and died a military dictator himself. S R Gardiner in his classic work on the period commented, 'It is never possible for men of the sword to rear the temple of recovered freedom...Military and political leaders...found themselves in a vicious circle from which there was no escape.'

In 18th century France, the Revolution which began with the slogans 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' ended within ten years in the dictatorship of Napoleon.

'The despot can do infinite good,' wrote Burckhardt. 'The one thing he cannot do is to establish lawful liberty.' Khrushchev found this to be true in Russia. He denounced Stalin as a bloodthirsty tyrant, and during the period known as 'the Thaw' attempted—probably quite genuinely—to relax the dictatorship. But in his *Memoirs* he writes 'We were scared, really scared. We were afraid the thaw might unleash a flood which we would not be able to control and which might drown us. It could have overflowed the banks of the Soviet riverbed and formed a tidal wave which would have washed away all the barriers and retaining walls of our society.'

In Czechoslovakia the same thing happened with the 'Prague Spring' of 1968. The

issue is being fought out in Poland at this moment.

Marx and his followers claimed that **economic power** was the source of all power. There is obvious truth in this. They believed that when economic power was taken from the rich, a classless society would emerge.

But this did not prove to be the case. After a visit to Russia within three years of the October Revolution, the English philosopher Bertrand Russell, who was favourably disposed towards the aims of the Bolsheviks, wrote, 'From the concentration of power the same evils arise as from the concentration of wealth.'

More than a generation later, Maurice Mercier, the French trade union leader, expressed the same conviction. Before he died he told a group of colleagues: 'There is a new capitalism abroad in the world today—the capitalism of power.'

Today it is hardly necessary to underline the importance of the **power of ideas**. 'There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come,' commented Victor Hugo.

During the last two centuries certain ideas have brought destruction, despair and disillusionment to the world. They have been compounded of these propositions:

1. Human nature is naturally good. All the evils in the world are due to faulty institutions or systems.

2. History is moving by inevitable laws towards a heaven on earth.

3. But to reach it, a revolution is necessary, involving the seizure of absolute power, if necessary by force.

4. The prize is so great that in order to win it, any means may legitimately be used. The end justifies the means.

Today the bankruptcy of ideologies foun-



One of the Nigerian delegation, Mena Amata, in the play 'In the years to come' which they presented

ded on these propositions is manifest. They have failed because they have been unrealistic about human nature—and have ignored the power of God to change it. There is an ideological vacuum to be filled.

This leads me on to the subject of **moral and spiritual power**—the power of Almighty God. It is to explore this dimension of power that we have come to Caux. In introducing it I want simply to give two quotations.

The first is from William Penn: 'Men must choose to be governed by God or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants.' There are two things in this sentence which challenge those of us who still enjoy democracy.

1. 'Men must choose'—we are free to choose, but we must choose. We cannot evade the choice.

2. 'They condemn themselves'—if we make the wrong choice, then we are responsible. We are not the victims of circumstances or of evil men.

And finally, Frank Buchman's last words, as he lay dying at Freudenstadt nineteen years ago: 'Why should not the world be governed by men governed by God?'

from them: approval, praise, acceptance. Step two was to turn to a power outside myself and to claim the help of God in overcoming these demands. This requires faith and a readiness to obey God. It has meant a decision that I will be the same with everyone, being myself and not trying to appear something I am not.

This sounds simplistic, but it takes a courageous resolve and application, day in and day out. The reward is liberation.

Many say they want to find God as a power in their lives. But God cannot be a power in a person's life if that person is either being controlled by, or controlling, another human being.

This does not mean we care less for those we love. On the contrary, it means we stop using them in order to satisfy something in ourselves; stop pushing our children so they will reflect glory on us or demanding that a husband or wife present a certain image so that we ourselves will appear successful.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gave God's standards to mankind as a guide to liberate us from the bondage of human control.

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attitude towards them. They responded with an enthusiastic telegram. A short time later he felt clearly that he should work in India before going to university. Before the session ended he knew what he should study at university.

'This time here has sent me back to the source inside me,' said a Lebanese teacher. 'To work for peace in my country, I have learnt that I must battle to get rid of all my prejudice and selfishness and work towards a humane and just society.'

'All my life I've been terrified of silence,' said a man who had separated from his wife. 'Here, in silence, I have seen a path which, whatever happens now to our marriage, will help me and my wife. It's as if I've been struggling up a mountain, and now I can see the top.'

An American, cured of addiction to drink, told of finding God's calling to him in work he had shied away from, with emotionally handicapped boys, and the joy he had found when he accepted that call. Stories like this illumined 'the poverty of the rich'—the theme of the Swiss-led meeting—and led

people to a search for greater aims than wealth and comfort, to discover faith and seek what God would have them do. 'I can see that my care for others is more important than my personal success,' said a British student of Asian origin. 'For me that means being ready to serve in a poorer country.'

'At home all I talked of was clothes and boys,' said a Japanese girl. 'Here I have realised how narrow my thinking was. I am going to help my fellow Asians, the refugees from Vietnam.'

Such decisions are greatly needed in a world where plans to answer problems so far outrun the will to put those plans into practice. An exiled Chilean academic, Juan Rada, who is associated with the Club of Rome, told the participants that, much though he appreciated the work of such international bodies as the United Nations agencies, his hope lay in 'the capacity of individuals to go out and do things'. Outlining the problems that must be solved in the coming years, he said, 'We must think globally and act locally.' The session demonstrated that his hope was not empty.

WHAT EGYPTIAN SHEPHERDS COULD DO FOR THE WORLD

AMONGST THOSE from Egypt at the youth-hosted session was a paediatrician, Ayman el Mohandes, from Cairo. In his thirties and married, he is doing a year's study in Lyons. Another Egyptian, an engineer who is a Coptic Christian, came with him to Caux.

Dr el Mohandes told me that he had come to Caux because of his concern for Egypt's development and relationship with the West. 'We have to learn how to deal with each other according to the absolute moral standards that are talked about here,' he said.

He outlined the development needs of his country—health services, education and better housing. Islam's approach to possessions had a direct bearing on this, he said. 'We consider that money and property is lent to a person by God,' he said. 'A Muslim is required to spend two and a half per cent of his income on other people. It is up to the individual how he does this.'

'But we need to apply Islam's teachings more fully,' he went on. 'The spirit of taking responsibility for each other is waning in my country. I want to change this. We cannot sit back and wait for governments. Each of us is meant to be a shepherd, responsible for whatever flock we are given—our school, our hospital, our job.'

'Egyptians are tired of slogans. What we need are people whose lives are an example of what the country needs—like Mahatma Gandhi, who brought such change in India.'

And what about relationships with the West? Here, he replied, the picture was not rosy. He gave three reasons for this. 'First, the West has not been able to deliver a message to Egypt, to show its actions are morally motivated. We are a nation of faith. The communists delivered a strong message, but they could not sow their seeds in our soil because of our faith.'

'Second, much of the economic aid you have given us has been directed more towards making rapid profits than towards our economic reconstruction. Third, corruption in our country has been encouraged by Western businessmen. I am not insinuating that they are corrupt. But outside their own countries they go along with corruption for their own interests.'

Let them respond

Not only the West was at fault. 'We countries of the Third World have become so greedy and selfish, all competing for the superpowers' aid,' he went on.

Dr el Mohandes is proud of Egypt's contribution to her neighbours' development. 'At one time 60 per cent of the teachers in the Arab World were Egyptians and we have about 3000 doctors and engineers in underdeveloped areas.'

'But,' he went on, 'sometimes Egyptians go to a more underprivileged country with the superior attitude with which some

Americans come to us in Egypt. We all need a change of attitude, so that we take what we need and give what we can. If we only take, that is greed, and if we only give, that can be insulting.'

Pursuing this point, I asked what he felt Egypt should give to the West. In reply, he told me about his experience in Lyons. 'In the hospital I eat with the French medical staff. Because of my religion I do not drink the wine served there. When they ask me why, I say that I have chosen my faith as a way of life.'

'Medical people are often cynical about faith and at first I tended to be stigmatized for my beliefs. But as our relationship grew warmer, I was overjoyed that some of my colleagues, who would not admit their faith openly, came to me, a man of a different faith, and told me that deep inside they did believe in God.' His stand had encouraged them to take their Christian faith seriously.

'I believe our faiths are fundamental to bringing the right concept of development to our countries. In the Holy Koran, God says to the prophet Mohammed, "If my worshippers should ask of me, tell them that I am near, and that I shall answer their call. But let them have faith in me and let them respond."

'So before we ask others to help us change the world, let us put our hands out to God, and I have a strong feeling He won't fail us.'

John Bond



After singing a medley of spirituals, Pat Wilson steps out of the clothes of slavery

Free Americas

'ARE WE FREE enough to serve?' This was the question asked by the North, South and Central Americans who conducted a meeting at the youth-hosted session at Caux on the theme of 'Liberty and Responsibility'.

The meeting was opened and closed by two original Americans, Devlin Small Legs and Ed Burnstick, from Alberta, Canada. Mr Small Legs presented an Indian 'house protection' to the Caux centre. For its very salvation, he said, the world must learn to live simply from its 'natural peoples' who understood and respected nature.

Speakers from the United States, Canada, Brazil told of their search for freedom—from prejudice, materialism and in their relationships with other people—so that they could serve their communities and other countries.

Pat Wilson, a television broadcaster from Virginia, USA, sang a medley of negro spirituals to the assembly. 'Slavery in a physical sense is long gone for black Americans,' she said. 'But many are economically and politically enslaved, with the

high unemployment and crime rate.'

Bitterness and self-pity, too, could be forms of slavery, she said. 'I need to repent of my bitterness about slavery. African leaders sold slaves to the whites—we must repent too.'

Two high school students from the United States spoke of how they had faced their racial prejudice at the conference. John Gardner from Alabama said that he had not realised the deep prejudice he had held against black people. He apologised for the jokes he had told against minorities. 'I used to hate white people,' said Conrad Small from Brooklyn, New York. 'I would bring my friends into white neighbourhoods and beat people up. I have been wrong.'

'Infidelity cost me a marriage and left me with bitterness,' said Lew Baldwin from the United States. 'I went on my knees and asked God for change and forgiveness. He gave me both.'

Mr Baldwin asked the forgiveness of the Muslims in the audience for the way many Americans had worked in their countries with no respect for their faith. 'We want to live differently,' he said. 'To that end I give myself.'

Andrew Trotter