

MORAL RE-ARMAMENT—II**Early Emphasis on Confessions****Origin and Prospects of the "Oxford Group"**

By a Special Representative of The Star

MORAL RE-ARMAMENT, or the "First Century Christian Fellowship," was started by Dr. Frank Buchman, who is now 73. Critics complained that in its early stages the movement placed undue emphasis on personal confessions, sometimes made in public and often connected with sexual misbehaviour.

In 1938 Dr. Buchman invented the term "Moral Re-Armament" and tackled a wider type of problem; most people dreaded the thought of war and wanted to know if and how it could be averted. The movement to-day is strongly anti-Communist.

The Reverend Frank Buchman is an American Lutheran. He worked in a Lutheran settlement house in Philadelphia, and was for six years secretary of the Y.M.C.A. at Pennsylvania State College. He went to the Far East as a missionary, but achieved his first fame at American and British universities, where his teaching gained many adherents, including South African Rhodes Scholars.

Moral Re-Armament workers are not pacifists; many of them are ex-soldiers or former Resistance fighters of the recent war. They practise a mild form of self-discipline, such as non-smoking, but otherwise lead ordinary lives.

Most of them have to work for a living, like anyone else, but full-time workers, including Dr. Buchman, rely entirely on providence. They travel from country to country, living in private homes. Supporters have included John D. Rockefeller, Junior, and other wealthy individuals.

All Welcomed

THERE is apparently nothing fanatical about Moral Re-Armament. Having no particular political or economic programme to offer, the movement is also free, it seems, from moral indignation. No one, whatever his political or economic views, is censured; all are welcomed.

This certainly makes for elasticity. Moral Re-Armament supporters love to argue with Communists. A student of the College of the Good Road related with pride that, after discussion, a German Communist admitted: "The dictatorship of the proletariat can't work without moral re-armament."

However, the movement is out-

spoken against the sterile horror of class war. But in its anxiety to work through the individual and convert all men irrespective of their views on politics and economics, it may have lost a little in the way of honest anger directed against obvious abuses.

A follower of Dr. Buchman would probably not emulate Christ's example in scourging the money-changers from the temple.

Students Trained

WHILE opposing Communism, the movement is ready to learn from it. The Communists' successes among university students made a profound impression. Moral Re-Armament decided to train students itself, and so the College of the Good Road was founded.

The students take courses and lectures, but their main learning is done in travelling in various countries, where they live in the homes of factory owners and workers who will receive them, find out what people are saying and thinking, and, of course, pass on their own message.

Students get scholarships, financed as usual by donors, which range from £100 to £600 a year. "Our classrooms," one student wrote, "have been in mines, factories, drawing rooms, lecture halls and parliaments; our professors and teachers have been labour leaders, business men and statesmen."

Africans

STUDENTS are drawn from all countries and all races; one is Parsi Soekawati, the son of the President of East Indonesia. There are also African students—

Italian M.P.s Wash Dishes

Members of the Italian Parliament wash dishes at Caux, in Switzerland, where they attended the World Assembly of Moral Re-Armament.

and a former leader of Hitler Youth.

Moral Re-Armament claims some astonishing converts. There is Fred Copeman, who led the British Navy "revolt" at Invergordon, joined the Communist Party, and then was won over. There are the German Communist leaders who were sent to Caux, Moral Re-Armament's world headquarters in Switzerland, to disrupt the movement, and who returned to preach the doctrine instead and converted their trade union followers.

The literature of Moral Re-Armament claims an almost monotonous list of successes. "Unanimous"; "everywhere the response was the same"; "the Marxist chairman of the Works Council listened to our ideology and decided to fight for what he had heard"—are statements that crop up constantly in Moral Re-Armament publications.

Interpretation

WHAT do the students of the College of the Good Road actually learn? The economics course puts emphasis on "give instead of take" and "ownership involves stewardship." A "moral and spiritual" interpretation of history is given as a counter to the Marxists' materialist interpretation. It is all very simple—but vague.

The movement seems to have a contempt for "problems" other than the central problem of converting individuals to the good life. "Psychology ceases to be an endless study of problems and becomes a study of the answers to problems," it is stated.

A student writes: "I haven't been limited to the study of theories, statistics, ballistics and problems . . . a brand new world of study has been opened to me."

"We have found the answer which we are being trained to give the world," writes another, "to be simple and always valid."

Simplicity

THIS simplicity, and absolute certainty, may account for a large part of the movement's success in winning adherents—just as for the same reason the absolutes of Communism have won over many "intellectuals" tortured with Hamlet-like self-doubts.

In a world which daily grows more complicated and presents more and more "problems" it is comforting to be assured, on the highest, divinely inspired authority, that there is one simple answer to everything.

The movement has now been in being for 20 or 30 years. Whether it will go from strength to strength until the whole world is converted, as its adherents hope, or will vanish as other "revivals" have done, only time can tell.

Billy Sunday, who converted tens of thousands, also had influential backing; but the human race remained, for the most part, unrepentant backsliders.

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