

Confidential

April 20, 1990

Dear Friends,

The third in a series of Consultations on matters relating to MRA's operations took place in Brazil, April 1- 10.

A distinctive feature was the full engagement of Latin Americans in considering MRA's global responsibilities. They brought to the table rich treasure of experience, conviction and insight.

It was a help to the 25 of us present from 18 countries to view the world and the work from the perspective of the Southern Hemisphere. Like many Latin American nations, Brazil, with its 145,000,000 Portuguese-speaking inhabitants, suffers from acute social and economic problems. Not surprisingly, many fear that the reduction in East-West tensions will lead to a redirection of scarce resources from pressing North-South issues to Eastern Europe.

Our tasks were to evaluate the previous meetings, to carry forward discussions on "our ways of doing things" and training, and to address three other subjects: our ways of deciding; the contribution of ordinary men and women, and our attitude to practical social involvements; and strategies and priorities in Latin America.

Ironically, further illumination on the role of ordinary people was given later when we met at the MRA Center, Sitio Sao Luiz, with the taxi drivers, the trade unionists and the community (or favela) leaders who comprise much of our Brazilian tea:;. These friends have no consciousness of being "ordinary." Yet, because they live in the dimension of what needs to be done in the *nation*, they are equally at ease with the President (whom some were seeing this month), or with the favelados.

The Sitio, a complex of houses that accommodates 60 people, is situated on a hillside outside Petropolis, a city in the mountains 80 kms north of Rio. Under the watchful eye and with the quiet *inspiration* of Leonardo Lima, one of the dockers of Men of Brazil, and his wife Ita, it serves as a meeting ground for people from every sector of Brazilian society. We met generals and heard from a dozen men elected to represent their communities, trade *unions* and cooperatives. Their practical wisdom and down to earth stories touched our hearts.

The Consultation took place in the peaceful setting of a convent 80 kms north of Sao Paulo, run by the Sisters of Schoenstatt, a German based order. Our discussions were assisted by a marvellous evening with some of the Sisters and an evening of music and merriment, during which Cornelius Marivate of South Africa artfully transformed us into an "African chorus."

We were privileged to hear from Orlando Villas-Boas, a Brazilian anthropologist famous for his work with the native peoples of the Amazon, and Jones Santos Neves Filho, a Vice-Chairman of Brazil's Confederation of Industries and a member of the federal Congress.

Villas-Boas brought the heritage of the Amazonian Indians to life, and even offered hope for the forest. "Nineteen percent has been destroyed, but there is great hope because the ecological conscience has been awakened in Brazil, and the forest is very strong."

Jones, who came with his wife for two days, painted a vivid picture of the economic crisis that confronts the youthful new President, Fernando Collor de Mello, and of the glaring income disparities that represent a social time bomb. Jones calls for a revolution of conscience and of character through which conciliation will replace confrontation in the struggle for a just society.

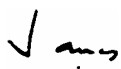
We began each day with a half-hour set aside for sharing thoughts of a personal nature. One participant, who holds a senior post in his profession and until now had not felt fully involved in the Consultation process, said, "This visit has helped me recommit myself and to appreciate what the MRA world family is capable of doing in the world. I see now that responsibility must be taken; it is not given." A young graduate said, "I have wanted to do something for the masses in my country. I see now that I need to start with 4 or 5 people." Another decided to learn the language of a neighboring country.

These times drew us closer together and created a spirit conducive to our search for fresh ways to cooperate with God.

Some of our number visited Argentina, Uruguay and Colombia beforehand, and most visited in Rio afterwards.

Previously some concern had been expressed that there may not have been sufficient consideration and understanding by our wider world force of the questions addressed at these Consultations. We urge each of you to discuss this report with the participants and those who share these concerns. We may discover that the lasting value of these meetings lies less in the conclusions reached than in the stimulus given to our ongoing search for better ways to serve God.

Yours ever,



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Distribution: All participants, plus those named below who are responsible for further distribution in their country or region.

Australia: -Mayor, Pacific: - Leggat; Asia: Philippines - Cardel; South - Vijaylakshmi Subrahmanyam; Malaysia - Haridas; Japan. Rest - Fujita; Africa: East - Patel; South - Horn; Zimbabwe - Sibare; Nigeria, Rest - I. Amata; N. America: Canada - Weeks; USA - Ruffin; Latin America: - Puig, Vogel; Europe: France - Lasserre; Germany - Brackle; Netherlands - J. de Pous; Scandinavia - Gundersen; Switzerland - Spreng; UK - Wise, Hore-Ruthven; Middle East - Grandy

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## **REPORT ON BRAZIL CONSULTATION - APRIL, 1990**

A few of the main points:

- 1) The Consultations to date have contributed to the effectiveness and cohesion of the work. Twice yearly meetings should continue until shown otherwise. More effort is needed to assure (1) that the perspectives given are taken into account, and (2) that the thoughts of a wider range of the force are brought to each Consultation. Earlier identification of participants would be helpful.
- 2) Effective decision-making would be facilitated by coordinating groups formed around a variety of issues. Persons responsible should be identified. Representatives of such groups should take part in global Consultations as appropriate.
- 3) Training, in all its aspects, needs greater emphasis.
- 4) Direct social involvements should remain a matter of personal leading. Conscious effort is required to avoid unintended isolation from the poor and the powerless: regular contact can open up new dimensions of one's own heart and mind.
- 5) Strategies in Latin America should focus on building trust between those who have least natural contact, as the military and human rights advocates or the very affluent and the very poor.

### **I EVALUATION OF PREVIOUS CONSULTATIONS**

We found it helpful to evaluate the meetings in Chantilly, France, and at Mount Fuji, Japan. The former was seen in retrospect as part of God's preparation of us for the unexpected events in Eastern Europe. Without it, the swift and wholehearted response to the Swedish invitation to confer on these developments would not have been possible. Chantilly also opened the way for significant participation in Caux from the Lebanon, Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Discussions there, as well as in Japan later, contributed to the effectiveness of the mission to Thailand, Burma and the Cambodian refugee camps at the end of 1989.

We heard evidence from many countries of the valuable stimulus of the Japanese consultation to ongoing discussion of our ways of doing things, the expressions of our message and our training programs. Several have noted that the varied characteristics and structures of the work in different countries are an enrichment. In one country the issues raised by the report helped generate a new spirit of unity. In another, a healthy debate on the purposes of the work was sparked off. While concrete results are

less easy to identify, seeds were planted which will bear much fruit if we persist in our inquiries and our resolves.

There were follow-up discussions on two subjects:

A) Our Ways of Doing Things

- 1) The Latin American team will reassess the vocabulary in Spanish used to express certain basic truths.
- 2) The inter-faith prayer meetings in Panchgani have proven effective in preparing hearts for deeper change.
- 3) We often underestimate what people in their 20s and 30s can take on. A change is needed, particularly on the point of not judging others, so that we allow and encourage young people to take full responsibility. It is so much easier for older people to assume they know better.
- 4) Communications - The World Bulletin should be more widely circulated outside the English-speaking world. Luis Puig and Tatjana Horbenko will do this in Spanish for Latin America.
- 5) Special attention should be given to the universality of our expressions this summer in Caux and in all public meetings.

B) Training

Discussion was in the perspective that enlistment is more likely a response to the boldness of our aims than to the type of training offered.

- 1) After 13 years, Australia will not offer the Study Course in 1991, but is considering offering a 3-month course again in 1992 and then in every second year in February, March and April. The Indian team will decide soon whether to undertake the Study Course in alternate years, beginning in 1991. In this event, support from the world force would be essential. In addition, we felt to encourage similar study programs in other countries, wherever practical.
- 2) The proposed international coordinating group on training is desirable and should focus on opportunities for training and the availability of people to serve. Jean Brown's suggestion that the World Bulletin be a vehicle for communicating this and other information on training was endorsed. More importantly, her offer to coordinate this group and help define further its mission was welcomed with enthusiasm.

- 3) There was full encouragement to explore and develop the Caux Intern Program. Vijaylakshmi, Peter Hintzen, Laurent Gagnon, Peter Thwaites, Mike and Jean Brown and Rob and Sue Corcoran will be available for discussions in Caux.
- 4) Any adequate training program requires that it be a priority for a number of people. This is borne out in India's 18-year experience with industrial seminars in which 7,000 people have participated. Niketu said: "If you start something, you must persist in it."
- 5) A more systematic approach to the development of young fulltime workers is needed. Components could include learning specific skills and languages, supervised study, experience as part of a larger center as well as in a family set-up, and participation in some campaign. While this could naturally be worked out in relation to particular needs and situations, the coordinating group could collect ideas for such training.
- 6) The desire for further training is by no means restricted to young people. Many of all generations want it. Among recent responses to this need are weekend "search parties" in the USA and a three-stage training given in Colombia. The coordinating group could serve as a repository of materials developed for such training programs.
- 7) Recent experience of Nigerian actions and the team with Howard Grace visiting schools in Britain reminded us of the unique training opportunities that such field actions provide, particularly with respect to taking initiative and expressing one's convictions. Opportunities for valuable training in the field exist in Central America with Eliezer Cifuentes and the Molinas, and in Rio de Janeiro with Luiz Pereira.
- 8) We should be open to larger actions, as proposed for Latin America, or even for major undertakings such as would be involved if a world dramatic production came to fruition. (Further 'brain-storming' about such a production will take place in early August during a creativity workshop in Caux.)

## **II DECISION-MAKING**

While most of us like to feel part of important decisions, somewhat fewer are prepared either to do the necessary homework or to take full responsibility for their consequences.

Obstacles to good decision-making are the same in our work as in the world. They include distrust, nationalism, overbusyness, false reticence, a lack of resources, selfishness, distorted world views and a fire-brigade mentality. While the qualities that make for efficient decision-making (close friendships, responsibility for the whole, the freedom to give and accept correction, good communication) remain essential, we thought the formation of coordinating groups could be a help.

Coordinating Groups: The decentralization and diversification of MRA in recent years has reflected and encouraged greater individual initiative. However, the globalization of many issues, the expansion of our work and the need to find priorities cause us to search for improved ways of coordinating our efforts. We think it would help to form international coordinating groups around shared concerns, be they regions of the world, global issues such as the environment, the urban crises and the role of industry, or areas of concern within our work, such as publications, training, dramatic productions, etc. Good current examples <sup>are</sup> the group concerned with cities -and those coordinating moves in Eastern Europe. Such groups should be flexible and unstructured, though some persons should be identified as reference points for those with ideas or information. Their names should be published in the World Bulletin.

Effective coordination requires a spirit of service, trust, openness, and a genuine concern for the issue. Good communications are essential. Special effort is needed to overcome technical, language and other barriers, and we must take advantage of facsimile and other modern technology wherever possible. Communications in Latin America, for instance, is very expensive and not always reliable. Those of us from more privileged regions must "go the extra mile."

Participation in such groups will provide not only the possibility of a speedier response to changing situations but also opportunities for global team-building which in the past were provided by large campaigns. There would be many benefits from inter-action between such groups, as for example those concerned with industry and others with the environment or cities. These groups should feed in naturally to the consultation process and help us choose priorities.

### **III THE ORDINARY PERSON**

A) "Are we recognizing and developing adequately the opportunities for ordinary men and women to give answers and hope to the world?"

We started from the premise that we are all "ordinary people", but that in this context we were talking of people without visible wealth, power or influence.

As we reflected, it became increasingly clear that the question is not whether we are developing their opportunities, but whether we recognize that without the contribution of ordinary people God's plan will not be realized.

we recalled that it was Bill Pickle who caught Carl Hambro's imagination and the Harijans of Delhi who touched the heart of the Indian President. The port workers and favelados of Brazil have carried MRA to leaders world wide. Many of us get so busy with administration or projects that we fail to spend adequate time with people from all walks of life.

"We are all meant to be fishermen. It is up to God to decide the size of the fish,!" said one person.

We need to remember that people in positions of worldly power are also ordinary people with quite ordinary needs, and no less deserving of our care.

B) "Should we consider involvement in specific areas of social concern as part of our commitment to build a new society?"

1) We are always called upon to "love thy neighbor" and must be ready to respond when called upon to help those with spiritual, material and medical needs. Several present recounted stories to this effect.

2) For some individuals, and indeed sometimes for a group, there will be a particular calling to some form of social work. Several echoed to the experience of one person who wrote to us describing how his own life had been deeply changed by his obedience to God's leading to reach out practically to people in great need.

3) The primary role of Moral Re-Armament, however, remains the moral and spiritual development of people which leads on to other forms of needed change and frequently initiates an important social work in some field.

Luiz Pereira told us that in all his 20 years of work with the favelados he had never done social work in the sense of offering material help. His message is one of change. That is what they want. But when there were some serious floods, he was in there personally helping many hours a day.

Some other comments:

"Our motives (for doing social work) must be pure and not condescending. For some, there can be a false satisfaction in

caring for the underprivileged because of the warm response. It can be more difficult and more challenging to care for privileged people, who do not have a sense of need and may not offer a warm response."

"At first, when someone introduced me as a social worker, I was amazed. But then I thought, 'If our task as MRA is to turn the tide of history Godwards, we are social workers at a deeper level because we are attending to the spiritual needs of society.'"

#### **IV STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES IN LATIN AMERICA**

A country by country review of the situation in much of Latin America gave us context for discussion of inspired strategies for the region. We recognized that a common factor in many problems in Latin America is the deep division between different parts of society, especially between the few very rich and the many very poor. We have a responsibility to help bridge these divisions.

Specific ideas included:

1) Recognizing that deep distrust between military leaders and more reform-minded civilians is a source of instability in much of Latin America, we endorsed a Costa Rican initiative to organize in San Jose a seminar for 25 or so senior military and political leaders from the five Central American countries.

2) It is timely to initiate contact with Cuban leaders and exiles. Certain steps are being taken.

3) The emergence of Latin American countries from dictatorship is relevant to the democratic revolution in Eastern Europe. The Argentineans, for example, expressed a strong inner leading to open their hearts to Poland. A shared faith as well as common economic problems prompted their offer of tangible support for the fresh undertakings in Poland.

4) Mexico must be included in our thought and work. Jorge Virchez, a doctoral student in Quebec, will go soon to encourage Mexican participation in Caux this summer. "I will take responsibility in Mexico. Today the smallest team in Latin America is born," he said. He would be grateful for names of Mexicans with whom we are in touch. He can be reached c/o Gagnon, 1426 rue Marechal Foch, Quebec G1S 2C6, Canada.

5) Initiatives should be undertaken soon in Chile and Paraguay to develop the emerging teams, and in Bolivia to open doors.

6) Other ideas expressed and which engendered considerable interest included the launching of industrial seminars at the



Petropolis center in Brazil, modeled on those in India, and related meetings between senior management and trade union leaders; a campaign in several countries in 1991 or 1992 of sufficient scope and depth to attract media attention and reach all strata of society; and an action in Brasilia around Dr. Jones Santos Neves, a senior industrialist recently elected to Congress, and other friends.

## V FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

1) We should continue bi-annual consultations until clearly shown otherwise. One should be in Europe Shortly after the Caux summer; the other in a more distant place in the February-April period. The exact time and place of the next meeting will be decided soon in Europe. Niketu said Indian friends would welcome the 5th Consultation in February 1991 for a period of two weeks, one of which would be in action around the country. This was enthusiastically accepted. Chris said that at an appropriate time Australia would also be pleased to host a Consultation if distance and travel cost were not seen to be too great an obstacle.

2) Agenda items for the next consultations might include:

What is MRA's unique role and task?  
Nationalism  
The use and support of Caux off-season  
Continuance in the Soviet Union and Central Europe  
Authority and freedom in the service of God

Thoughts for the agenda may be sent to Michel Sentis, Gordon Wise or Dick Ruffin. With others they will continue to act as an informal secretariat to coordinate these Consultations. Suggestions should be sent soon so that the letter of invitation can be mailed in mid-June.

3) A suggestion of Laurent *Gagnon* that the Indian Consultation discuss "Understanding the aspirations of the Muslim world" received support from many present.

4) We agreed that 25 people is an appropriate upper limit, that younger participation is essential, that the perspective brought by those in various jobs is invaluable and that *continuity* at Consultations should be maintained by at least 3 or 4 people who had been present at a previous Consultation.

5) The considerable expense of these *consultations*, including the provision of simultaneous *translation*, is justified by the value of full *inclusion*. Because there are many items that need deliberation and a large number of people whose perspectives are

vital, twice yearly meetings seem right. The expense should be borne by the entire world family to the maximum degree possible.

Participants:

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Asia: Niketu Iralu - India

Australia/Pacific - Chris Mayor - Australia

Europe: Spyros Stephou - Cyprus  
Michel Sentis - France  
Peter Hintzen - Netherlands  
Hanni Blundell (Mrs.) - Switzerland  
James Hore-Ruthven - UK  
Janet Paine (Mrs.) - UK

Central and South America: Antonia Gallicchio (Mrs.) - Argentina  
Ricardo Maiztegui - Argentina  
Luis Puig - Brazil  
Luiz Pereira - Brazil  
Antonio Rodrigues - Brazil  
Jones Santos Neves - Brazil  
Tatjana Horbenko (Mrs.) - Brazil  
Marta Rueda (Mrs.) - Colombia  
Eduardo Molina - El Salvador  
Eliezer Cifuentes - Guatemala  
Lino Cortizo - Uruguay

North America: Laurent Gagnon - Canada  
Jorge Virchez - Mexico  
Dick and Randy Ruffin - USA