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I was on Hitler's black list

A BOOK has just appeared called, "The Open Secret of MRA" (Blandford Press, London). It is by J. P. Thornton-Duesbery. He is head of an Oxford College, formerly head of the Church of England Theological College in Oxford, an intellectual who has known Moral Re-Armament intimately for 40 years.

His book appeared two days before a book of Mr Tom Driberg who made it one of his main aims in life to try to destroy Moral Re-Armament. Driberg's attacks are so well-worn that though Thornton-Duesbery's book came out before his, every point Driberg makes is fully answered.

There is the question of what Hitler thought of Moral Re-Armament. I am interested in that question and happen to know the answer as I was on Hitler's black list. I have handled the original Gestapo document which mentions me by name and gives instructions for the liquidation of the leadership of Moral Re-Armament in the countries Hitler's armies occupied.

It denounces MRA for "uncompromisingly taking up a frontal position against National Socialism," and says, "they encourage their members to place themselves fully beneath the Christian cross and to oppose the cross of the Swastika with the cross of Christ, as the former seeks to destroy the cross of Christ." Hitler had reason to fear the effect of MRA in uniting men in unshakable faith in God. In 1934 in Norway I met a certain Bishop Fjellbu, rugged as Norway's mountains.

Stood firm

He stood firm before the Nazis, and in 1945 he spoke in the church of St Martins-in-the-field in London and said: "I wish to state publicly that the foundation of the united resistance of the Norwegian churchmen to nazism was laid by the Oxford Group. (Now MRA).

Driberg finds it hard to understand the experience of change that came to Frank Buchman and launched him on his life's work. The facts are these. Buchman had built up a home for underprivileged boys in America. The hostel had a board of governors. At one time money was short and the governors advised Buchman to cut down on the boys' rations.

He bitterly opposed such a suggestion, coming as it did from men who never lacked anything. He resigned his position with bitterness against them. He felt it so intensely that it even affected his health. He travelled in England, and one day in a church he heard a preacher speak about the cross of Christ in a way that made it real to him.

New joy

He left behind him his bitterness. He apologised to the men he had hated. He found a new joy and power and freedom in his life. He felt burdens lifted from his shoulders. So marked was the change that his travelling companion asked what had happened. They took a long

walk and opened their hearts to each other.

Before the day was out Buchman's travelling companion had made the same decision to give up the things he knew were wrong in his life and let God direct him into a new course.

This may be strange to Mr Driberg but no less strange than the change that came to St Francis, John Wesley, Joan of Arc and countless others through the ages for whom an intense personal experience of God set them on the high road of service to humanity.

And one may note that their contemporaries attacked them far more virulently than Driberg ever attacked Frank Buchman. But history has been on the side

by
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of the fighting men of faith, not the carpers and the critics. Where does the money come from, asks Driberg, with an air of mystery. Mystery there is none. People who believe in MRA give money to the work.

The accounts in England are audited by Price Waterhouse, in South Africa by Peat, Marwick and Mitchell. Mr Driberg or anyone else can get the British balance sheet by paying one shilling to Her Majesty's Government. The workers for Moral Re-Armament get no salary, pension or guarantee.

Not strange

They put mission before money. They live from what is voluntarily given to them, often from those who have been helped by their work. It is not strange that when a couple are saved from divorce they want the person who has helped them to be able to continue his work and help others. It is not strange that when children who were on the wrong road find a high purpose for their lives, their parents are grateful. It is not strange that when delinquent parents find an answer to their selfish ways, children are grateful. It is not strange that when people who have drifted along, living only for themselves, find something worth fighting for, they back it with their money.

I think of men around the world who are doing this. There is Peter Howard, who gave up a five figure income (in pounds) to work without pay for MRA. His books have sold five million copies and he has not taken a cent for himself. With Britain protesting against the theatre of violence and dirt, he has had plays running for years, pointing men to the stars instead of the sewer.

Rough road

Again he has taken nothing for himself from the royalties. There is Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, who could have been a prominent editor and soon in the Cabinet. He has preferred to take the rough road of challenging the corruption and nepotism of India, and is leading a national crusade for a new India, strong, clean and united.

There is Conrad Hunte, the

cricketer who topped the West Indies batting averages in the Tests against England. He puts all his cricketing earnings into this work of remaking the world. He leads a valiant attack in the Caribbean. There is Masahide Shibusawa of Japan. He is the head of a great Japanese industrial family. His father was finance minister. His grandfather brought the industrial revolution to Japan. Shibusawa is mobilising the youth of the nation in the belief that Japan with an aim for Asia far greater than just making Japan wealthy could seize the initiative from Peking and lead Asia to freedom.

Driberg, who regards South Africa as "the most disgraceful tyranny since Hitler's", finds it hard to believe that any honourable South African could be out of prison. His objection to MRA is that its workers are not all in prison. South Africans find it hard to swallow this argument from one who looks at this country from 7,000 miles away.

Found way

People of Port Elizabeth will remember Mr Philip Vundla, who spoke in the Opera House in January when an African cast performed Howard's play, "The Dictator's Slippers". Vundla told of his background of intense bitterness to everything White. He told of his friend, Nico Ferreira, who used to be head of the Jeugbond in Pretoria University; how Ferreira had changed and found his way into Vundla's heart and home; how they were working to bring a change of heart and aim they had found to this and other countries.

There have been 26 major assemblies of MRA for all races in South Africa where men meet in unity and equality to seek the right way for our country. Anthony Quain in the Johannesburg Star (April 24, 1962) describes one such occasion as "the most impossible party — impossible because it could never happen in South Africa".

The "unthinkable" guests included "an Afrikaans judge of the Supreme Court, the elected spokesman of some 600,000 Africans who live around Johannesburg, an eminent Coloured leader in the Transvaal, a leading State Prosecutor in the treason trial, some leaders in the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress, a cross-section of the most rugged 'revolutionaries', members of the executive council of the A.N.C. Women's League, eminent White leaders of Johannesburg's commerce and industry, Basutoland chiefs."

It went on for "four days, with the guests having their meals together—400 at a time—everyone oblivious to the colour of the skin of his neighbour."

But the aims of MRA in South Africa are not in the first place racial peace, though a divided South Africa is impotent to give direction to modern Africa. Our aim is that a truly Christian South Africa, not Russia or Red China, should provide the pace-making, living, thinking, sweating and planning to meet the great needs of the whole continent for food, work, freedom and faith.

Then Africa will peak to the world, not with a red voice or a yellow voice, but with the voice of unity and humanity the world is longing for.