



ACROSS THE WORLD'S DIVIDES

A Global Consultation in Lebanon from March 31 to April 5 brought together 30 people from MRA/IC teams in some 20 countries. The subject was: "The basic intuition (central insight) of Initiatives of Change/ Moral Re-Armament, as a basis for creative partnerships across the world's divides."

Five representatives went from Britain. Ginny Wigan from Cheshire writes something of her experience there:

One afternoon we divided for two memorable trips. One half went to a Palestinian refugee camp (in fact four-storey small tenement buildings in Beirut). Joe Hakim (Christian, Beirut resident) accompanied this group – his first visit to the camp. Left as it is, one can see that the situation in which the 350,000 Palestinians find themselves in Lebanon will have the potential to turn divisive and dangerous, even explosive.

Joe later told us that the day after meeting the Palestinian refugees he attended a professional seminar at a luxury downtown Beirut hotel: the challenge for him was to be the same person in both places, both situations. He apologised to the Palestinians in the camp for his indifference to them and their condition and said he wanted to get to know them better. Immediately two of the Palestinians extended invitations to him to visit them in their homes.

The same day the rest of us went to meet Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlullah, a renowned Shi'ite spiritual leader. We drove through Beirut across the old front line, where one can still see war-damaged and unrepaired buildings, half the side of a block of apartments blown away, with people still living there, and also the stunning new buildings in the rebuilt heart of the city.



The Consultation participants

Our minibus dived down a back alley, around a mosque – beautiful, modern, its richly carved stone wall still under construction – to stop by an unprepossessing collection of buildings behind a steel gate. We passed through a checkpoint manned by armed guards. Some women looking out of the building above our bus were highly amused to see a bunch of Western-looking women carefully (and amateurishly) wrapping their heads in shawls prior to disembarking!

We went upstairs to a room with chairs around the wall, where we were served strong sweet tea in small glasses by young men who looked more like bodyguards than waiters. In came Sheikh Fadlullah and spoke to us for perhaps 20 minutes about what Islam is and means. Niketu Iralu of Nagaland responded, presenting a gift from us all.

‘The real thing’

The palpable effect Niketu’s own personal story had on the burly young bodyguards who listened attentively, both in the room and beyond the doorway, was what my Dad would call ‘the real thing’, the unadulterated work Buchman initiated. It was not just what Niketu said and how he said it; it was the open-mouthed delight on those young men’s faces.

Niketu spoke of how, after meeting the ideas of MRA, he was honest with his father about the way he had spent his money, and owned up to cheating in a maths exam at

school. He explained what this decision led him to for his life’s work. It moved me very much. The heart of IC, the heart of MRA, is when what is in the heart of one person touches the heart of another person, through its connection with God, and both become different.

The evening we spent with the Lebanese MRA/IC team was a revelation. Their enjoyment of each other, appreciation and friendship, mirthful teasing, honesty and singing together was hugely attractive and highly infectious.

Reaching out

Ramez Salamé, our host, gave the powerful illustration of his own experience of one man’s individual decision leading him from one person to another, unknowing about who would turn out to be ‘strategic’, but simply following the imperatives of reaching out to the next person during the war, then working with friends after the war.

Many others had also been involved in the saga, but it began with Ramez himself. As the story unfolded he invited some of the other people in it to speak to us for two minutes each. It was not unlike experiencing a river growing, from a small trickle to a stream, joined by other streams, until it becomes a mighty torrent.

A superb evening, where warmth and friendship in a common cause were clear. They must have had difficulties, but that was not what came over to the rest of us!

TEN YEARS OF DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA

It was exciting to arrive in South Africa during the celebrations of ten years of democracy and free elections held for the third time.

We were guests of Lillian Cingo, manager of Phelophepa (meaning good clean health), the 16-coach health train which travels to rural areas for ten months of the year. It provides primary health care to those least able to access it. The train is also celebrating ten successful years. It offers dental and eye care clinics, a therapy centre, basic drugs and a week's training to 25 local people who will continue with care and support when the train moves on. The train is staffed by a professional team and final year university students from all over South Africa who come for two weeks at a time.

We had met Lillian when she trained and worked as a nurse in the UK for over 25 years, giving much to our NHS before returning to South Africa to use those skills in healing, counselling, building bridges and keeping the train "on track" in the new South Africa.

We were given a warm African welcome by Lillian and her family, starting with a trip to Soweto and a meal in her family home. We visited the Hector Pearson Museum built to commemorate one of the boys shot during the fight against apartheid. His sister now welcomes visitors to the museum, which



The health train

shows the history and inhumanity of the struggle as well as the progress made in healing and building. Here we first met the tremendous enthusiasm and determination to make South Africa work, an acknowledgement of the past and the energy released by the forgiveness and reconciliation that happens as people of all races work together. This is a gift South Africa has to offer our world in conflict.

As we travelled we saw the progress that has been made in providing homes, healthcare, water and electricity, as well as how much still has to be done especially in the face of HIV/AIDS. We were also grateful to see many of our other MRA/IC colleagues in Pretoria and Cape Town.

Our last three days we spent with the train. The volunteers and train staff carried out their almost impossible task with enthusiasm and dedication. We were also taken to a community-training centre where local people were taught skills that will enable them to work, restoring dignity and life purpose.

We were representing the Canon

Collins Trust, a UK charity that faithfully raises money for the train and other projects in South Africa. Having heard so much about the train, it was a privilege to see it in action at last.

**Annejet Campbell
Phyl Cameron-Johnson
Daphne Horder**

David Chanter



**CARDINAL
FRANZ
KÖNIG,
Archbishop
Emeritus of
Vienna**

Gordon and Marjory Wise write of their 38-year friendship with Cardinal Franz König of Austria, who was laid to rest in St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna on March 27:

Hella Pick wrote in *The Guardian*, "Every generation produces a handful of outstanding individuals whose ideas and actions can make a real difference to their age. Cardinal König belonged to that group. He was not only a remarkable prelate and diplomat, but also a great humanitarian whose liberalism and commitment to ecumenism carried influence far beyond his native Austria. Some think that he was the best Pope the world never had."

He often expressed his high regard for MRA. He said, "Moral Re-Armament is providential. It is a new inspiration for everyone. Your calling is the same as a religious order. You are an apostolate of the laity."

He wrote to a friend of what he saw as "the great impulses originating in Buchman's movement. As is evident from the story of his life, these are the forces which lead out of the insecurity and the manifestation of decadence in our times into a better world. As far as lies within my power, I shall willingly support this great concern of yours."

A trail-blazer in the furthering of respected relationships between the different faiths, he said to us in Vienna: "Our job as Christians is to help those of other faiths to live their faith more committedly, not seek to convert them, for that is the Holy Spirit's work."

The final delight for us during this long friendship was being able to attend Cardinal König's Golden Jubilee in the City Hall of Vienna in September 2002.

The Jubilee was sparkling, attended by the Austrian President, the cabinet and church dignitaries of many denominations from neighbouring countries as well as Austria. We saw in a brilliant documentary made for the occasion Cardinal König's part in past events. We knew we were there to honour one of the 20th century's most loved and significantly effective figures.

A CELEBRATION

On April 21, 20 years of the **Barnabas Charitable Trust** was celebrated at Greencoat Place.

Mary Lean, daughter of the founder of the Trust, outlined its purpose and explained how it began in 1984 on the initiative of the Lean and the Vickers families.

She said: "Since its earlier days MRA/IC has worked on the principle that where God guides, He will provide. My father set up the Barnabas Trust as a charitable fund to support people engaged in full-time Christian work who did not receive a salary, or who had worked full-time in the past and were not in paid employment."

Jeanne Faber, Secretary of the Trust since its inception, talked of the origin of the name. "In the New Testament, Barnabas was given his name because it meant 'Son of Comfort' or 'Son of Consolation', and for his work of charity. He also befriended Paul in front of the disciples who were suspicious of him. He must have been a courageous and caring man.

"At the first meeting in the Leans' home in Oxford we started with a gift from the Lean and Vickers families. Margot Lean, who was not a Trustee, said in her usual forthright manner, 'We will give the money away and live on faith and prayer, in the same way as the people we want to help. If God wants the Trust to go on, He will provide.' So, we did – and He did!

"The Trust has grown beyond our wildest dreams and we all marvel at God's provision. We have been able to help more than 20 couples or individuals with interest-free loans towards the buying of a home of their own, as well as helping people on a regular basis with money for their everyday expenses. We feel deeply grateful to the donors who make all this possible, and for those who have left money to the Trust in their wills. Our task is to see that your gifts reach those who have needs.

Rewarding and faith-giving

"It has been one of the most rewarding and faith-giving things I have ever experienced in my 50 years of working with MRA."

The original letter sent out in 1984, announcing the formation of the Trust, said: "The Trust does not aim to replace faith and prayer in people's lives – far from it – but to encourage all to take more adventurous initiatives to fulfil their calling." That is still true today.

Betty Rainbow spoke about some of the gifts and legacies, large and small, that have been generously given and felt there was a romance in God's provision, often unexpected. She had been privileged to work on the accounts and finances for 19 years. Tony Thomas has succeeded her as Treasurer.

The Trustees provided an iced cake for the occasion which was much enjoyed by all!

Greencoat Forum

FARMING AS IF EVERYONE MATTERED

was the theme of last month's Forum hosted by the International Farmers' Dialogue – an IC programme. Co-ordinator Jim Wigan introduced Claude Bourdin, who spoke on agriculture in France, and Dr Christie Peacock, Chief Executive of the NGO, Farm Africa.

French farmers are finding it increasingly hard to make a living and feel insecure and under-valued, said Bourdin. He is Co-ordinator for the Farmers' Dialogue in France, organises a local Farmers-Employers group and is Mayor of his village.

"Sometimes farmers feel treated as just gardeners or tourist appendages. There is no hope and no vision. Today you need to judge French farmers not by the size of their tractors or farms but by the size of their overdrafts with the bank."

Farmers' Dialogue programmes gave hope because the opportunity for international contacts made them realise they were not alone and helped them to see their profession in a larger world framework. "We see what we have in common. As we talk with farmers from other countries and situations, we are given new ideas and gain new perspectives. Sometimes simply having a discussion enables common sense solutions to emerge."



Blair Cummock

Claude Bourdin, Pat Evans, and Dr Christie Peacock

Dr Christie Peacock from Farm Africa appealed for greater status for small farmers across Africa. "Agriculture used to have a high standing in the development plans of Western countries but over the last ten years this has been lost," she said. "For long as an organisation we just coped with it and carried on giving what help we could. We have decided we must do something."

They have produced an "agenda and rationale" for investing in African agriculture and are busy lobbying the Department for International Development. A new document *Reaching the poor – a call to action* sets out why it makes sense to invest in smallholder farmers in Africa. Although understandable that governments gave large sums in direct food aid during a crisis, it made more sense to enable poor farmers to increase their production.

Investment in farming and in the all-important local infrastructure was at an all-time low. Dr Peacock asserted that this showed a total lack of vision. The present Millennium

Development Goals put by far the greater emphasis on health and education. These were important, but common sense and perspective was needed as support for farming was fundamental to the future. "Farming is where people are and it needs to be the starting point for reducing poverty in Africa."

She urged everyone to write their MP, asking for a greater percentage of the African aid budget to be given to small-scale agriculture.

Paul Williams

THE LADDER IN MERE

Peter Howard's evocative and ever-topical play *The Ladder* was presented as a reading in the parish church of St Michael on April 7 in Mere, Wiltshire. The cast of eleven enjoyed working together and the performance was much appreciated by the audience, who sat in silence at the end.

Mrs Howard, who gave her permission for this event, wrote that *The Ladder* has been given as a reading in places as diverse as an Orthodox monastery in the Tatra Mountains, in Washington DC and in Melbourne Cathedral. These, of course, are in addition to countless stage performances in many different countries over the years.

Russell and Ann Carpenter

COMMON GROUND

In the latest issue of *Common Ground*, journal of the Council of

Christians and Jews, Michael Henderson's 1½-page article on the Caux centre in Switzerland is headed "A Place of Healing and Hope". The article concludes with Israeli Yehezkel Laudau's description:

"Caux is a holy place where miracles of transformation happen, where the Spirit which animates the universe and reveals itself to us in love moves people's hearts in the direction of healing and hope."

Also announced are the dates and theme of this year's conferences, "Narrowing the gap between ideals and interests".

INSIDE TIME

Rachel Billington, in her column in the March edition of *Inside Time*, the prison newspaper, writes of Henderson's book, *Forgiveness: Breaking the Chain of Hate*:

"It describes a series of situations in which people, famous or unknown, are reconciled to some injustice and manage to come to a better understanding and, sometimes, to forgive. In one example, a man finds himself sitting next to Mother Teresa on a nine-hour flight. The story she tells about reconciling a sick old woman from the streets with her son, who has literally dumped her into a dustbin to die, changes the listener's whole attitude to life. For anyone interested in the subject, I would highly recommend it. It is published by Grosvenor Books."

FAITH IN DIPLOMACY TAPED

Through the generosity of Ruth Lamond, Archie Mackenzie's book *Faith in Diplomacy* has been recorded on a set of tapes (nine in all) for the visually impaired. They are available from Calibre Cassette Library, a registered charity in Buckinghamshire, who provide a free service to people certified as "print disabled". They have 19,000 members on their list and also have a catalogue and website, which are regularly updated. Tapes can be borrowed for indefinite periods and postage for the blind is free. Their address is: Calibre Cassette Library, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5XQ. Tel: 01296 432339, fax 01296 392 599, email: info@calibre.org.uk

A set of tapes is also available at Greencoat Place (ref David Locke).

Correction

Dick Channer writes that the *How to Listen to God* leaflet, to which he referred in last month's Newsletter, is an original Oxford Group leaflet and not a crystallisation of Wally Paton's recent book.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AT 24 GREENCOAT PLACE

Saturday May 15, 10.30 am-4 pm
People Making a Difference - From the personal to the global.

A day to focus on creating community. What part can each of us play? Coffee, lunch and tea will be provided.

Invitation cards are available for you and your friends.

RSVP 020 7798 6000 or

e-mail: reception@london.iofc.org

FRIENDS OF WESTMINSTER PRODUCTIONS

Saturday May 8 at 3 pm

An illustrated talk by Stephen Broadbent, Sculptor Extraordinary, with projections of some of his recent large public works in Warrington, Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast and Lincoln.

All welcome.

GREENCOAT FORUMS

(RSVP 020 7798 6000)

Light refreshments from 6.30 pm

Speakers: 7.15 till 9 pm

Tuesday May 11

Alexander Pinchook, lecturer in Physics from Mozyr, Belarus, and his wife Natalia, a journalist, on: *Helping Chernobyl's children*

Thursday June 17

Dr Philip Boobbyer, lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Canterbury, on: *Faith and Conscience in Moscow and Canterbury*

This issue was edited by Mary Jones and Janet Paine with layout by Blair Cummock. Please send material for the June issue by May 26 to Ann Carpenter, Bourne Cottage, Mill Lane, Mere, Warminster, Wilts BA12 6DA, email: russell.ann@tiscali.co.uk