

'Our own hope rests in all the believers who will take their faith seriously and become artisans of peace.'

'The need is not for sentimental embraces which leave power structures unchallenged, but for what a black militant has called "the dynamic of reconciliation".'

'The more suffering people have been through, the more ready they are to open their hearts. That is the astonishing alternative face of poverty.'

'It does not seem that God recruits the performers of His will only within any one political framework. This is a source of continual disappointment to those who would like to corner God for their side.'

'The roads of conformity have always attracted crowds, and have never led mankind anywhere.'

'How many people reach adulthood without ever finding their motive for living?'

THE WORLD AT THE TURNING

EXPERIMENTS WITH MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

by Charles Piguet and Michel Sentis

Foreword by Cardinal König

Translated by Ailsa Hamilton



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Foreword

The movement of the Spirit which radiates from a small place above Lake Geneva, and which is known the world over as Moral Re-Armament, is one of the most significant and promising developments of our time. Since the end of the Second World War, Caux has been the regular meeting place for people of differing races, politics and classes, and from the conflict zones which threaten the peace of the world. Caux has done a great service in constantly bringing together people of divergent views and opposing stand-points. This is enabling the ideas of reconciliation and peace to break through in a world of increasing constraints and tensions. Even a small part of the story of Caux reveals an astonishing number of political, racial and social problems which have been both confronted and resolved. I am convinced that the Spirit of God is at work there.

This book is written from an angle at the same time universal, Christian and Catholic. It gives facts and stories about Moral Re-Armament which show that the world always alters for the better when individuals change for the better.

So this hope-filled book carries my best wishes as it goes on its way.

CARDINAL FRANZ KÖNIG
Archbishop of Vienna

When Jesus became conscious of their disbelief, he cried:

Who will be my auxiliaries in the cause of God?

The disciples replied:

We will be the auxiliaries of God.

**The Koran
Sura of the Family of Imran (III, 2)**

Introduction

The proposal to write this book was put to us by a publisher in Rome, who felt the need for a deeper understanding in Italy of the nature and work of Moral Re-Armament. We could have confined ourselves to the description of an international movement; we decided not to for two reasons.

First, it is difficult to encompass all the aspects of Moral Re-Armament, and equally difficult to make it fit into any category. It has no members, no hierarchy, no central world fund, no subscriptions. Second, it seemed to us that it would be of more value to outline some of the lessons learnt through experiences inspired by Moral Re-Armament across the world, so that they could be of use to everyone who feels concern for the future of mankind. Moral Re-Armament has no wish to gather people under a label. It offers a way to people who are looking for one, it is a hand held out to those who have found their way and are longing to go farther and faster.

Great themes are under debate today – the relationship between politics and faith, the place of the individual within society, the development of the poor nations of the world. Further questions trouble many minds: Do moral imperatives still have validity? Are Christianity and Marxism compatible?

We have no intention of trying to answer these questions either systematically or theoretically. They have been and are under enough scrutiny in writing, in seminar, in dialogue. The answers we try to offer are based on fact; sometimes we draw conclusions, sometimes we leave that to the reader.

And, as you read, you will learn something of the action of the teams of committed men and women, individual people of manifold initiative, who have been inspired by the thinking of Frank Buchman, born in Pennsylvania a hundred years ago. This is the international move to which both of us have devoted our lives.

CP and MS

1 Turning-point

Humanity has reached a turning-point. All nations alike are shaken by crisis to their very foundations. War and rebellion, economic disorder, famine, massacre and oppression, immorality and corruption threaten every continent.

Are these the presage of the final destruction? Some people are prepared to consign the world to the holocaust, taking their own positions either on the hard-pressed battlefields of the last of the just, or in the few remaining pleasure-groves.

Or are the agonies growing-pains? Is mankind, like an adolescent trying to come to terms with the thrusting impulses of human nature, simply thrown off balance by new forces which it has not yet mastered?

We believe that the world is ours, that there is an assured future and that the society of tomorrow can be created by the decisions taken today. It seems to us that each individual person who wants it – of whatever race, social background, age – can have a part in shaping the world which coming generations will inherit.

Faced with the growing turmoil, it is easy enough to slide into despair. People see violence and decadence encircling them, and their own integrity crumbles under the assaults of

materialism. The beguiling arguments of professors, psychiatrists, statisticians and sociologists befuddle the certainties. The sources of hope remain silent.

Some bravely take their stand within the fortress of the values which have been the strength of our civilisation: the family, moral principles, religion. But the besiegers devalue faithfulness, discipline and respect for human life in the name of freedom, and threaten to overrun the bastion, while each attack makes a seemingly irreparable breach.

All the programmes promising the ideal society have proved fallacious. All the causes, even the noblest, have become perverted. And nihilism has penetrated even the ranks of the revolutionaries.

So who is going to construct the world beyond the turning-point? What will they use as foundations? What will they take as reference points?

We are not in the business of forecasting. But two facts must be stated. First, the peoples of the world must learn brotherhood if they do not want to tear each other apart. This means finding universal reference points which can also be guide-lines in the life of each individual person. Second, this is the age of experience. In our day, authority resides only in what has been experienced. Beliefs – Marxist, Freudian, Christian or any other – have been undermined by the evident failure of the attempts to put them into practice. Our societies have proved incapable of satisfying the basic needs of food for all, work for all, a reason for living for all. None has succeeded in lifting the cloak of apathy or damping the flood of rebellion. Many of the people most sensitive to this situation, and therefore most capable of an original contribution to meeting our collective need, disperse their energies in drugs or in futile causes.

At other points in history when everything has seemed to

be disintegrating, some unexpected intervention has enabled mankind to move forward again. And the most lasting and positive of these interventions have been spiritual. At the outset of our own era, the network of men and women recruited by the comrades of Jesus offered an attitude to life which became the weft of a new civilisation. Later, Francis of Assisi affected all major aspects of the life of Europe. These people have emerged in other civilisations: the influence of Confucius has lasted for twenty-five centuries, and the Chinese Communists have been unable to eradicate it.

There are people at work today who will have the same effect on the life of mankind. They do not all belong to one movement, one organisation, one church. We have learnt, in thirty years of working with Buddhists, Hindus, North American Indians, Africans of all beliefs, militant Communists, young revolutionaries, powerful capitalists, peasants, politicians, trade union leaders, that hope is not confined to any one temple.

Our own view of the world is moulded by realism and imbued with a great confidence – that in spite of differences in culture, living standard and even spiritual viewpoint, the most powerful aspirations of mankind do grow from the same root. The intimate experiences of the heart and spirit are a reality which can be communicated and which every other human being can respond to, no matter how far removed their expression may be from one's own particular habit of thought.

Of course, this reality has to be stripped of the intellectual and religious verbalising we normally clothe it in: words, like grand garments on a wasted body, can hide internal poverty. We have to rediscover the one universal language – a life lived out.

This book is written for everyone who is looking to the

future. It is an invitation not only to search for allies and comrades among those who share traditional convictions, but also to hold out a hand to people of every belief who are ready to offer hope to mankind.

As we write, we see the faces of all those scattered over the continents who have been our brothers because we have had a shared *life*. The African official, senselessly imprisoned by a revolutionary clique, who manages to let us know from his cell that he is steadfast in hope; the shanty-dwellers in Rio de Janeiro whose human experience is so rich that many people covet it; the Asian journalist, faced with a dictatorial regime, who walks with open eyes towards arrest rather than keep silent; the teacher in a Communist country who is banished to a remote village because of his beliefs; the Irish women who risk their own lives to block the path of violence – these are the young shoots of the new world. The great dead branches which bar the sun may be masking them. But the forester has the joy of uncovering their living greenness beneath the tangle of brushwood which will be chopped down and left to rot.

During an unexpected encounter at Rome airport, the Prior of Taizé, Brother Roger Schutz, reminded us of what Pope John XXIII had said to him at the end of his life: 'We have missed the turning to ecumenism.' The great hope had been that the re-uniting of the Churches at the highest level would end the disgrace of divided Christianity. But the journey has had to go on the long way round. Perhaps now, at grassroots level, there can be a uniting of the people of all faiths, all backgrounds, all races, for whom God is not only a belief but a reality of daily life; who accept moral and spiritual discipline not under compulsion but because it is what they want; whose conscious mission is to resolve, where they are, the piercing problems of the age they live in.

2 In Our Hands

Both of us were about twenty when we encountered the men and women who had responded to Frank Buchman's call for Moral Re-Armament. The Second World War had just come to an end, and they had recently opened an international centre at Caux in Switzerland. From there, in the thirty-odd years since then, a way of life and thought has spread around the world.

We came from very defined and different backgrounds – Swiss Protestant and French Catholic. Five years of war had penned each of us into our own national communities. Now suddenly we found ourselves in a universal world. We swam in a colourful sea of all races, of every sort of costume, of varying political viewpoints. But our strongest impression was of the common element which permeated such diversity.

We both thought of ourselves as good Christians. The religious circles we each belonged to had accustomed us to live among people who were like ourselves. These circles, incidentally, were totally foreign to each other and would have consigned each other to perdition had not habit, ignorance and the certainty of exclusive possession of the truth kept them safely apart.

At Caux the people of Moral Re-Armament seemed to have transcended these enclosures. The militant German

Communist breathed the same air as the Canadian industrialist; the Italian princess had brought her apron so that she could join in the communal work; the veteran French Socialist spoke on the same platform as the Arab cabinet minister and the French priest who had given that year's national Lent addresses in Notre Dame. It was a time when this international kind of gathering was much less frequent than today, and that much more striking. In this great converted hotel, now the home of a vast family, there was a sense of brotherhood shocking in its reality.

The youth of Europe, to which we belonged, was there. Leif, who had been in the Norwegian Resistance. Peter, who had been a Young Nazi. Max, whose family had been decimated in the concentration camps. David, who had bailed out over Germany. Ludwig, who had been an artillery officer in the German army. Matt, who had fought in his tank against the tanks of Rommel at Benghazi. Some had lost brothers, others had lost their homes, many had lost their countries.

The truths which ran through the speeches were disconcertingly simple: 'Human nature can be changed. That is the root of the answer. National economies can be changed. That is the fruit of the answer. World history can be changed. That is the destiny of our age.' We were both irritated by this insistence on 'change', which felt like a threat to our way of life. But the scope of the great world design being drawn before our eyes was attractive. 'Remaking the world', which these men and women proposed to do, seemed a feasible goal.

CHARLES FIGUET

I arrived at Caux one day in 1946. I lived in Montreux, and I walked up to the hotel whose towers loomed over us from

the mountain-side. In the great hall with its huge bay window, once filled with armchairs and tea-tables, I found a meeting of several hundred people. Speakers were following each other informally to the platform, apparently without prepared texts.

A man goes to the platform and introduces himself. He is a Belgian officer who fought the invading Germans. He asks if there are any Germans in the hall. Several hands go up. He would like to speak especially to them, as representatives of their people. He has been nursing a hatred of Germany, and asks their forgiveness.

I was thunderstruck. Switzerland had not been involved in the war, but we knew enough of it to understand the meaning of a step like that: the ceasefire was only one year old. The attitude of this Belgian was personal to him. But as I watched, I seemed to see a reconciliation between two peoples. The inference emerged naturally. A new Europe, with yesterday's enemies as friends, was just over the horizon. A Christian gesture of humility and apology by one individual had become an event in history.

I was also impressed by the coherence of his attitude. He had realised that he had been in the wrong, and he had repaired that wrong. While I, genuinely following a religious road, had never within the circle of my own church seen any man so tread on his pride, risk his reputation, give up his hatred and bitterness. Bitterness – especially when it is justified – can be maintained, polished, cherished. My own life was full of such illogicalities, of which I was only vaguely aware.

Looking back now over thirty years, it seems to me that I was drawn both by a wish to achieve a life of clarity, free from contradictions, and by the hope of helping the whole of humanity to rid itself of contradictions. Like all young

men, I wanted to throw myself into some great undertaking. A life of clarity, as I soon discovered, could only be the fruit of a clear moral discipline. As for the great undertaking, I could be part of it in direct proportion to my submission of myself, with all my ambitions and secret hopes, to a higher authority. Then the Creator of the world since the beginning of time would allow me to take part in His creating. I undertook the commitment, renewed constantly since then, to obey Him as completely as my human understanding would let me.

For people of our generation, the reconciliation of Europe was an evident necessity, even though it was far beyond our expectations. Some countries, particularly Germany, found themselves totally isolated by the hostility created in their neighbours. Sixty-two Swiss families, moved by a deep gratitude to God for having spared their country from the ravages of war, had collected among themselves the money to buy the great hotel at Caux, once among the best in Switzerland and now on the brink of demolition. They wanted to make it a centre which could contribute to the moral rebuilding of Europe; they invited to it the people they knew in neighbouring countries; and, with the active encouragement of Buchman, they found the way to bring some Germans there.

When these first Germans arrived at Caux, bone-thin under ragged clothes – one man, later a politician, wore one yellow shoe and one black – a chorus of French people welcomed them with a song. As we took part in this adventure, it felt like the story of the prodigal son being lived out by whole nations.

If other people's faith was enough to move such mountains, what about ours? These events faced us with that question.

MICHEL SENTIS

My training in Catholic Action had rooted my faith in a firm religious practice. I was one of a small group of students who organised collective prayer every evening, community Mass during the week, spiritual training groups, an annual retreat conducted by Jesuits. We were rather arrogantly aware of being part of the spearhead of the Church militant, and our need to feel that we belonged to this elite sometimes made us close hypocritical eyes to our own failings.

The young people I suddenly found myself thrown with in Moral Re-Armament followed, in the main, a much more embryonic religious practice than my own. Many were not Catholic and only rarely went to church. But their spiritual life was rich enough to show up a poverty in me that I had not recognised. Little as some of them knew of God, they had taken that little seriously, and the presence of this living God could be sensed all through their lives.

‘What would happen if you took God seriously, like they do?’ I asked myself this one morning, and my conscience silently and immediately gave me the answer. I remembered a tiny incident. A friend had bravely announced his religious convictions by kneeling beside his bed to pray, and my thirst for popularity had made me deny my own faith and join in the general laughter. Much ashamed, I had tried to forget the whole unfortunate business, but it had left its painful mark on our relationship. Suddenly, I knew that taking God seriously meant going to the man I had hurt to ask his forgiveness. This apology created a bond between us which has lasted through more than thirty years of separate roads. I had tumbled from the spiritual heights where I liked to wander, down to the firm ground of experienced reality.

Three weeks in hospital for a leg operation gave me the time to deepen this search into my life. They were decisive

days, as my studies were coming to an end and I was faced with choosing a career. Then it was that the basic conflict in my life became apparent, between my desire for material advancement, my need of success, my arrogant ambition, and, on the other hand, my desire to be a Christian. I was at a crossroads and I had to choose.

I had been offered a contract by a bank, and had told them that I would give my answer when I left hospital. Now here was God offering me another contract, and this one I was afraid to sign. This contract was blank, and God was saying to me, 'Sign, and I will fill in the terms.' Before I left hospital, on my knees beside the bed, I signed.

The roads God has led me on since then have been completely different from the ones I had envisaged. Instead of finding myself behind a desk in a large bank, I launched out as a worker in a factory. The journey I have taken from there is not important; more to the point is the fact that at each moment of uncertainty in my life I can rely on that basic contract, which is the best of securities.

Many of those who were with us at Caux went through similar experiences in varying degrees. That was what we had in common and what united us above our differences of religion and of religious experience. God became real to each one of us. We were all eagerly reading a recent book, *Saints who Moved the World*.^{*} This title seemed a valid programme for our lives. The book contained the story of the reconciliation between the Mayor and the Bishop of Assisi at St Francis's bedside; we were seeing the reconciliation of Europeans on the platform of Caux. Both fruits seemed to us to have grown on the same tree.

^{*}By R. F. Miller, Hutchinson (London, 1949).

3 A Troubled Sea

So have we moved the world? That did need saints, and we were only sinners.

Many of those who knew each other at Caux at that time are now spread across the globe. Peter has become a politician. Willy is director of a large industrial concern. Ingrid is a journalist. Max works in electronics. They are following God's calling to them through their professional lives.

Others felt called to 'go on the road'. Often possessing only what their suitcases would hold, they went off, each following his or her own conviction, to offer themselves to other countries and other people. And ever since they have lived by the generosity of those who have wanted to support their work. So Francois has given twenty years of his life to Latin America, at first alone and then with his wife Nicole. Jens has cared persistently for Japan, Marcel and his wife Théri for Cyprus and the Middle East. Leif has thrown in his lot with the dissident intelligentsia of various countries. Henry has devoted himself to Africa, with his wife while she was alive and now on his own.

The roads which each of us have followed have taken us to many countries. In some places we have spent several years – Charles in Africa, Michel in Quebec. Now our children need to be at school, so we have our own homes, one

in Montreux and the other in Paris. And it is now our families who have to follow their callings as a unit.

It is not our intention to draw up a balance sheet of these years. The reconciliation of Europe, which we saw starting at Caux, is now part of history. The interesting point is that for the last thirty years the same process of reconciliation has taken place wherever a few people have had the courage to reconsider their lives in the sight of God. It has happened between Danes and Germans in Schleswig-Holstein, between German- and Italian-speakers in the South Tyrol, between north and south in the Sudan, between political factions in Morocco as it entered independence. Equally important, the work of these years – sometimes successful, sometimes not, often necessitating going back to the beginning and starting again – has produced reconcilers, people capable of living above crises and seeing beyond them.

In these last decades, the area around the Mediterranean has been the scene of innumerable conflicts. Marcel and Théri have made their home in Cyprus. In the summer of 1974 they were visiting Switzerland, their own country, when the news broke of the war between Greeks and Turks on the island. They had to follow the fortunes of their friends by letter.

Andreas Vlachos was on holiday with his family in northern Cyprus. One night he was woken by gunfire. Turkish troops had landed. There was no time to escape, and he was taken prisoner. For seventy-two days the convoy straggled from place to place, until finally they arrived in northern Turkey. Meantime his wife in disguise as an old peasant woman, his daughters dressed as boys for fear of rape, and his son were moved from village to village. After three weeks Vlachos and the convoy were released.

Neophytos Christodoulides wrote: 'Famagusta was very badly battered, and we stayed in our cellar for a week. Then one night we were able to escape. We spent seventeen days in a refugee camp in the British base at Dhekelia. We had no money and no change of clothes. We had just enough food to stay alive. In the fields around the base, tens of thousands of people were sleeping under the trees. We thank God that we are all alive, except for one nephew of whom we have no news. We have lost all our possessions, but our faith never!'

Another letter was from Spyros Stephou. 'In spite of the discouraging facts,' he wrote, 'I am sure that Greek and Turkish Cypriots can find an answer to their hate and mistrust, forget the sufferings they have been through, and live without reference to great-power politics. Cypriots themselves can work together to create a united Cyprus. I am sure there is still very fertile ground for positive action to reunite our two communities. With the help and guidance of God, I am fighting and will go on fighting for this goal.'

In August 1976, some months after these confrontations in Cyprus, Andreas Vlachos, Neophytos Christodoulides, Spyros Stephou and their families were together at Caux. They were in a group of Cypriots who had come to a conference for the peoples of the Mediterranean, organised by French of every background as part of that summer's Moral Re-Armament assembly. There were nearly 500 there, from France, Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Morocco, the Middle East, Malta and other nations. There were Turks as well.

One evening all these people met, and the Cypriots were asked to speak. They nominated Andreas Vlachos, by then president of the association for prisoners of war in Turkey, as their first spokesman. In the great hall at Caux, Vlachos found himself facing the Turks. The words he knew he must

say dried in his throat. Then he regained his courage: 'We have been wrong too, and I ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. In spite of the enormous problems which have divided us, we must work together to make a better world for our children.' A Turkish doctor got up and embraced him.

Spyros Stephou talked of the terror he and his family had been through. 'At first my wife and I were horrified at what was happening,' he said. 'We lost our nerve. We were swept up in the general panic, and we nearly rushed out into the street to yell our fury with everyone else. But we hung on to what we had learnt through Moral Re-Armament – to have a quiet heart and to listen to the inner voice. We had the feeling that God was still with us and that He loved our island. We had the thought to invite a whole range of people we knew, in all sections of the community, to come to our home and discuss the situation. We were afraid nobody would come. But a former cabinet minister, two judges, a member of parliament, a schools inspector – about twenty people in all – met in our home. At that meeting we were able to turn again towards the reconciliation which was needed beyond the immediate conflict.'

Blessed are the peace-makers!

Spyros Stephou was not a natural entrant for the categories listed in the Sermon on the Mount. He was, rather, a bomb-maker. In 1955 he had joined the secret army which was fighting the British occupation of Cyprus. He was in charge of guerrilla operations in the port of Famagusta, and had organised a hundred bomb attacks against British ships, the port installations and the administrative offices. Maroulla, his wife, took part in these activities. At times she carried bombs hidden under her skirt.

But at home their married life was disintegrating. Spyros was spending more and more time gambling and drinking. 'I was living an impossible life,' he says. 'My comrades were afraid that I would betray secrets and they tried to get me away from my vices, but it didn't work.' As Cyprus became independent, Spyros lost all hope of saving his marriage.

Shortly after this he met Marcel and Théri. 'Go and change the British,' said he, 'instead of coming to talk Moral Re-Armament to me.' But he grasped one reality – the British were in no way responsible for his divorce proceedings, nor for his quarrels with his underground comrades. All of them, in fact, were trampling on one another to get the posts left vacant when the British had gone.

Stephou learnt to pay attention to the voice of his conscience. What his wife had shouted at him and his comrades had tried to force on him, this voice made him do the moment he had the courage to listen to it. He decided to be totally honest about his past with Maroulla and ask her forgiveness. She gave him the cold shoulder, reading it as yet another manoeuvre. But little by little she realised that Stephou had meant it – he was no longer the same man.

The town of Famagusta soon realised it too. Stephou was on a committee which allocated bank loans to government officials. Many of these loans were, in fact, made for trumped-up reasons to 'friends' who spent them on gambling and drink. At the first meeting which Stephou attended after he had sorted out his own life, a request for £350 was under consideration. It came from one of his friends, who needed it 'for the expenses of his sister's wedding'. Stephou recommended refusal. There was general astonishment. The name of the petitioner was repeated, in case he had not understood. So he explained: '*Primo*, this man hasn't got

any sisters; *secundo*, we have already allocated him funds for marrying off several sisters.'

This story went the rounds of the town. The friend burst into Stephou's house in a rage. Others were furious as well. To escape the subsequent threats, Stephou resigned from the committee. But his colleagues insisted that he withdraw his resignation.

In 1964, when tension between Greek and Turk exploded into civil war, Stephou was deputy director of customs at Famagusta, a responsible position in the Greek community. One day, army headquarters telephoned him to say that a young Greek, whose father had just been killed by Turks, had taken a gun and was firing at the Turkish school, which was in the Greek section of the town. Turkish soldiers were on their way to the school; at any moment the inevitable reprisals would begin. Stephou weighed the danger. He reflected for a few seconds, and decided to telephone a leader in the Turkish community whom he knew. He got through to him. 'Give us ten minutes,' he said, 'time to get the fellow to stop shooting.' The Turk knew and trusted Stephou, and he agreed. Stephou found two of the young man's friends and they, at the risk of their own lives, persuaded him to halt his frenzied attack.

Throughout this period of civil war, Famagusta remained an island of relative peace in the midst of nationwide confrontations between the two communities. In that port, Greek and Turkish Cypriots never stopped working side by side. This was largely due to Stephou, who had always kept his friendships in both communities and had won the respect of both sides.

Stephou talked simply about these experiences to the Mediterranean audience at Caux. He took no credit for himself, but he offered hope. A Lebanese, whose son had

been killed in their civil war, sat with eyes full of tears. Lebanon needed the same healing, the same spirit of reconciliation.

It is one thing to grasp such a point, another to put it into practice. The Lebanese had his goodwill put to the test even before he left Caux, when he lunched with a man from an Arab nation. After the requisite series of courteous exchanges, the Lebanese and the Arab launched into a bitter quarrel. All the violent feelings which lie behind the tragic situation in the Middle East rose to the surface, and acid remarks flew back and forth. Among the four others at the table was a French Member of Parliament. We remained silent at first. But the temperature was rising. One of us cut across the two men: 'Why dig the chasm even deeper? Whatever has been wrong in the past, isn't the point to look together at what ought to be done for the future?' They quietened down. With great sensitivity, the Member of Parliament put the debate back in its international context. When we got up from table half an hour later the two men, after visible hesitation, shook hands.

We stood and talked with one of them, there in the dining room. We discussed what had happened at the meal. It was always worth saying honestly what you thought, even though it produced explosions; at home, for instance, it was always better to say what you really felt, rather than pretending to agree or simply avoiding delicate subjects – but you had to know how to go back to the point of disagreement and see where you were wrong yourself. Our friend, recently married, had also learnt this.

The next day, as he left Caux, he asked us to carry his deepest apologies to his antagonist of the day before, as he had not been able to find him to talk face to face. In this

man's life, the personal and the international had become one.

Reconciliation is the key to the future in the Mediterranean region. But is it not childish, faced with so many problems, so many blind passions, so many unleashed hatreds, to hope that individual people can have any effect? Our own hope rests in all the believers – Jew and Moslem, Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic – who will take their faith seriously and become artisans of peace. There is a spark in the heart of so many believers; why could not the breath of a new wind fan these sparks into a fire?

'Between children of the same God,' said Professor Mohammed Fadhil Jamali of the University of Tunis, 'there exist constructive energies of reconciliation and cooperation. Moral Re-Armament reminds us of the existence of these energies, which are part of the long Mediterranean tradition.' And when President Sadat made the courageous gesture of going to visit his enemy of yesterday, *Le Figaro* headlined, 'God re-entered in the game of history'.

The world is threatening to tear itself into two halves, one rich and the other poor. The nations of the Mediterranean are on the dividing line, and they can still draw on the extraordinary spiritual heritage of the great monotheistic religions which they have given to the world. A group of those from the Mediterranean who had met at Caux found ourselves, a few months later, in Malta. We went to the beach where Paul of Tarsus had been shipwrecked on his way to Rome. The Maltese priest who welcomed us told us, 'I was the supreme example of the busy priest – never enough time to get through everything, very little time for God. Then I went to a retreat in Rome, and I was born again and gave myself again.' Then he added, 'The world is anxiously

waiting to see what the Spirit of God can do in, by, for and through a chosen few given to Him completely.'

If the spirit which lived in Paul is to live again on the shores of the Mediterranean, many people will have to experience the shipwreck of the ambitions and preoccupations which are propelling them forward. Then, naked, abandoned on the shore, dispossessed of everything, they could astonish the world.

4 Races

From the Mediterranean southwards stretches the huge continent of Africa. Its diverse inhabitants have one characteristic in common. Arab and Berber in the north, Malagasy, Bantu in the centre and south, all these peoples have suffered under colonisers from across the seas. To reduce the cross-currents in the Africa of today to their political dimension – colonisation, decolonisation, neo-colonialism – is to misunderstand the essential springs of the human spirit. The arrogance of 'Christian' whites is now confronted with the resentment it has created in the peoples they colonised. These two attitudes, so deeply rooted that they seem to be immovable facts, are the real source of the conflict.

One of the heaviest burdens on the European conscience is the slave trade, the origin of the strong black-white tensions in the contemporary United States. Many white countries are reaping the bitter fruits of past mistakes. This is true also in relation to the indigenous minorities on the whole American continent; and it is true of Asia and the Pacific peoples.

In this context the word 'reconciliation' takes on a new dimension. The need is not for sentimental embraces which leave power structures unchallenged, but for what a black militant has called 'the dynamic of reconciliation'. He defines

it like this: 'Forgiveness on the part of those who have endured suffering, and repentance on the part of those who might have caused that suffering, must meet. The synthesis created will be adequate to lead to total change – racial, social and international – all based on personal change.' He believes that this encounter will not simply happen through some historical process: it can only be the result of a moral choice by individuals. Its basis is not only friendship between people, but also and essentially the renewed friendship of each person with God.

Some years ago we were in Atlanta with a group of Africans. In the United States of that time, only one hotel in this Southern city would receive blacks, and there we stayed. One evening we visited a white family of religious bent who lived a few hundred yards from this hotel. The conversation turned to the race question. 'You have to watch out for those people,' said our hosts; and they recited a list of the killings, kidnappings of white children, and assorted atrocities which they said were routine in the area around our hotel. We knew they were prejudiced, but we have to admit in all humility that we did not find the courage to tell them where we were staying.

Prejudices feed not on facts but on feelings. When a prejudice has taken root, human nature looks for the facts – if necessary inventing, distorting or even provoking them – which justify those feelings. 'The majority of Christians in this country seldom make the effort to get to know fellow-Christians across the colour line,' admitted one South African. 'This is where we as whites are most to blame. We get to know those working for us in our homes or in our businesses, but very seldom take the trouble to get to know black people with whom we can associate on equal terms.'

The audience listening to this white man was almost entirely black. Ds George Daneel was speaking to the Inter-denominational African Ministers' Association of South Africa. Their invitation was a recognition of his individual courage as a Dutch Reformed minister whose church has on the whole supported rather than challenged the policies of the country's white leadership.

'There was a time when I wouldn't shake hands with a black man,' Daneel told his African colleagues, 'not because I thought it was wrong, but because I was brought up that way. Then God showed me that in my relationship with the black people, my life was not governed by Him but by tradition and the fear of being different from what was accepted in Afrikaner circles. I saw clearly that I was part of the disease that was creating division between the races, and that my prejudice and attitude of superiority were not only an offence against the black people but a sin against God, and a rejection of His command to love your neighbour as yourself. The fact that I inherited this attitude from my forefathers didn't make it less sinful.'

Daneel had been a rugby football star in his student days, which meant that he was known all over South Africa. While he was playing for the Springboks, he met Frank Buchman and an international group who had come to South Africa with him. The encounter changed his life; the change surprised the whole nation. That was in 1929. For the fifty years since then, he has patiently worked to create a team of men and women of different races who can meet together to plan for the future. These people are black, Coloured, Indian, Afrikaner and English-speaking, and all carry weight in their own communities.

Eighty-five of them were meeting outside Johannesburg in October 1977, a few days after the announcement by the

Minister of Justice that the black militant Steve Biko had died in prison. The news had aroused violent reactions in the country, which vibrated through this gathering too.

'God have mercy upon us,' said an Afrikaner woman. 'If we got what we deserved, that would be the end of us.'

A young black woman who had often met Biko in her parents' home said to them all: 'After Steve Biko's death, I felt the temptation to turn back. What hope had we left?' She was having an inner battle between the desire to enlist on the side of violence, and the consequences of her Christian commitment. 'What this Afrikaner woman said has helped me to find my faith again.'

A professor from Stellenbosch spoke: 'I found an old account book of one of my farmer forebears of 300 years ago, which listed eighty sheep and fourteen slaves. This slavery continued for 150 years. For the last 150 years, the blacks have still been slaves *de facto*.'

A leader of the black township of Soweto stood up and described the lives of the million inhabitants of this restless community, hedged in by injustices of education, of housing, of transport, of food supply. 'The Establishment is like a concrete wall,' he said.

The Stellenbosch professor later remarked, 'For the first time I have heard these things without getting defensive. Some of the things he said are wrong, but I am concerned with the things he said that are right. Nothing less than a complete transformation of South African society will be adequate.'

These men and women have to call on all their resources of faith to overcome their feelings. They have to hope, if they are to undertake to reverse the tide of violence.

The peoples of South Africa want to find each other in love; from outside, they are encouraged into violence. They

are thirsty for living water; they are drowned in accusations. The accusers, safely ensconced in their judgement seats, could have on their consciences the death of a community of peoples to whom they did not offer the drink of compassion.

At the turbulent moment when Rhodesia was becoming Zimbabwe, a white professor from Salisbury University spoke to a congregation in a black church: 'The white people need to repent, to be sorry. They need to show God and the black people of this country that they are truly sorry for the racial injustice they have done. Next Friday is the national day of prayer and fasting when the President has called us to repent. It would be good if the white people were to come into this church, and tell you on their knees that they were sorry. But most of them will pray in their own churches.

'Tonight,' Desmond Reader went on, 'I have to make two apologies to you. First, because I am British. We set up the colonial system here. We developed the country, but we prevented or delayed allowing all races to take part. And secondly, because I am Rhodesian. I have accepted racial discrimination in the sense that I have not protested strongly enough against it, and therefore I am responsible.'

Then Arthur Kanodereka, the black minister who had invited him, spoke: 'My father was an evangelist and I followed in his footsteps, but his Christ never became mine. One day, suddenly, Christ appeared to me, suffering not only for the blacks but for the whites and for all men. I realised that I was preaching love but living hate. Then I felt I must love the whites until they can find something new. The Christ of my father had become my Christ.'

Ten months later Kanodereka was assassinated by men who rejected this choice. But when in 1980 Zimbabwe

stepped into independence, it was in the spirit which Kan-odereka had stood for.

A growing number of people are finding the courage to rethink their attitudes and political behaviour in the light of their religious convictions. Will they be submerged by a tide of violence? Only the future will show. But theirs is the good fight, because it transcends any changes in structure.

Southern Africa is the flashpoint of a problem which faces our entire generation: how a minority can live within the majority and still keep its identity. The historian Arnold Toynbee wrote that what is being decided in South Africa is not only the fate of the people who live there, but the fate of all mankind. In Southern Africa the minority is white; elsewhere it is black, American Indian, Asian, Christian, a language group. In most industrialised countries, large minorities have moved in to do the work which the inhabitants no longer wish to do. Giovanni Agnelli, the chairman of Fiat, said to us in Turin, 'Our greatest problem in Europe in a few years' time will be the migrant workers.'

In Britain there are a million and a half West Indians, Indians, Pakistanis, Africans and other immigrants, most of them permanent residents. Conrad Hunte, a West Indian, is one of them. Several years ago he felt the need to take urgent action to forestall violence between the immigrant communities and the native population. He and a group of friends from different races mounted a campaign in thirty-three English cities and towns with large immigrant communities. As a result, attitudes began to change. In Sheffield, for example, the owner of a chain of dress shops decided to employ black as well as white sales staff. An Indian family in the London suburbs decided to make their home a meeting place for people of all races.

Hunte and his colleagues visited the leaders of the different immigrant associations, particularly the Black Power groups. These people, often graduates of the best universities, feel a deep frustration at being regarded as second-class citizens. At that time they believed only in violence and confrontation. But they were struck by Hunte's approach to the problem and they introduced him to hundreds of their comrades in the different immigrant associations. When in April 1968 the Black Power leaders in Britain heard the news of the assassination of Martin Luther King, they decided not to launch the riots which they had organised in preparation for such an event. They had come to the conclusion that violence would not advance their cause.

Hunte's authority comes partly from his prowess in the great English game of cricket. As vice-captain of the West Indies team in the sixties, he played a key part in their great international victories. When they defeated Australia, half a million people came out on the streets to cheer them. He was an idol. But in some countries he was a pariah, not allowed to enter certain hotels and public places.

A decade ago, he decided to give up his professional career and answer a calling. His thought was, 'We need to anticipate and cure the causes of colour war in Britain for the sake of the world.' Since then he has pursued his action in other parts of the world. He tells here what happened to him in South Africa, where he went with a multi-racial group to meet people in the different communities.

CONRAD HUNTE

With twenty-five friends from thirteen countries, I travelled from Johannesburg to Cape Town, a distance of 1,200 miles. Due to a shortage of petrol, fourteen of us were forced to spend a night on the way. One of our party went into the

hotel to find out if we were all welcome there, since two of us were black. He was assured that we were. But when we arrived at the reception desk the two black receptionists took a look at the other black person, a South African, and said, 'You can't stay in the front with the rest. We have a room for you at the back.'

I was shocked. According to the new South African policy I, as a visitor, could have had a room with the rest in front, but there was no question of my abandoning Sam to sleep on his own at the back. I went with him.

Even as we thanked God for safety during the day and for shelter at night, I could not stop the tears. I began to cry. Through my tears God spoke to me and said, 'Did I not promise you at the start of this visit to Southern Africa that you would learn to understand the suffering Christ?' My tears dried up and I saw that He was asking me to share the life of the poor.

The poor in this and every other land face shocks daily. They are forced to turn either to Christ for healing or away from Him in despair. Where would I turn? During the day I was a comrade with my other friends seeking to bring healing where there may be hurts. By night I had become a non-person, not worthy of care and cleanliness, for the toilets were filthy and the bathroom was closed for the night. There was candlelight only and the walls were cold and bare. The blankets and sheets though clean were tattered. That is the life of the poor – the human side. On the other side, there is the triumphant Christ.

Five messengers of the Spirit came to me in that room. I was able to perceive their presence: my father, who had died only the year previously; my grandmother, who had died twenty years before; and three friends, an American, an Englishman and an African. They appeared to me to help

me bear this experience and to understand it, and to make it an ennobling experience, not an embittered one. Then I recalled what a leading Afrikaner academic had said to us just two weeks before. He said, 'Our country is in need of healing. We need your help, not as critics but as prophets. The critic sees from the outside and judges. The prophet sees from the inside and weeps.'

I was given a clearer understanding of the struggle in Southern Africa and perhaps in the world. It is a spiritual struggle between good and evil. This struggle goes on in your heart and mine every day. Victory must come at this level on a big enough scale before it will come at the level of politics, economics, social structures and other important aspects of life. To denounce present policies or try to justify them is to miss the point.

From his spiritual experience Conrad Hunte draws a strength which can lay low any barrier. Other people in other places must allow faith to take far deeper root in their lives if it is to become the framework of the society we have to build.

5 Person to Person

Chance meetings on journeys can come alive. In the train between Milan and Rome we found ourselves next to a young Colombian priest, and we began to talk. In love with life, a devout football fan, thirsty for knowledge, he also had the quiet assurance of the person who has chosen his road and deliberately accepted its sacrifices. However, his thesis on the education of the masses, patiently developed during two years of study in Rome, seemed markedly theoretical now that he was preparing to go home and face the actual problems of a wretched, poverty-ridden people exploited by an all-powerful oligarchy.

Would it be enough to 'conscientize' the masses – that fashionable new word for the process of making people conscious of their state? If you refuse to accept the 'theology of violence' put forward by certain writers, can you still help the liberation of the poor? These large questions were troubling him, and only one thing seemed clear: that, in face of the burning realities of the South American continent, to be content only to administer the sacraments would be a betrayal. Even moral principles seemed no longer completely clear to him. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had just published its 'Declaration on some questions of sexual ethics'. Of course that was all perfectly true. But

could you hope to get young people today to accept it? Wasn't it out of date?

It would have been no help to add new arguments to these puzzlings. The stories which follow illustrate what we tried to say to him. They are about men and women of the Brazilian masses who have become initiators of development in themselves and their community. The inner strength which they have relied on has grown from a moral discipline which they have had the courage to accept. So in that corner of Latin America they have formed a network of genuine charity, the source of a transformation in people and a transformation in social structures. Heedless of reports by development experts, independently of successive regimes in Rio de Janeiro or Brasilia, this network is growing from person to person.

José Veras was born in the poverty-stricken North-East of Brazil which for decades has been sending its population to the rich cities of the south in search of work. His father, separated from his mother, had taken him to Rio. Brought up without a real home and with no education, José had to go out to work when he was ten to help to support his father, his sister and an uncle. When he married at twenty-two, poverty was still his closest companion. His religious heritage made him avoid the Communists, but he joined the socialist party, founded its Trotskyite wing and quickly became secretary in charge of recruiting.

Veras went to work on the Rio tramways, and there he organised a union. In 1954 he used his reputation among the tramworkers to stand as a socialist candidate in the federal elections. He capitalised on their grievances and although stoppages by public service workers were illegal, organised a strike. He mobilised 2,000 men at union headquarters to

send out as pickets across the city. Suddenly, a mass of police surrounded the union offices – 1,300 men found themselves trapped. The situation was becoming serious. Every pocket held a gun. Counting on his immunity from arrest as an election candidate, Veras first approached the police to try and defuse the confrontation. Then, after talking with them, he conceived an original strategy. He went back into his office, switched on the public address system, and suggested to the encircled men that they should walk voluntarily into the police trucks and buses. The haul was somewhat larger than the police had anticipated.

'Police Arrest 1,300 Tramworkers' read next day's huge headlines. But the prisoners were already free. Veras had alerted the State Minister of Justice, a socialist like himself, who had intervened to avoid social disturbance in an election period.

Some of the tramworkers' grievances were met. Veras was not elected.

This could have been just another of these politico-social incidents which are of interest only to those involved. But it caught the attention of a group of dockers in Santos who had adopted the spirit of Moral Re-Armament. They were struck by the unusual attitude in Veras which had prevented a serious and potentially bloody confrontation, and they invited him to come and see them. Veras, in his turn, was intrigued by the fact that the dockers of Santos were taking notice of the tramworkers of Rio, and he decided to make the seven-hour train journey.

Today Veras remembers nothing of that meeting. What changed his life was the return journey. Alone in his compartment, he sat absorbed in the book which the dockers had given him. There he discovered the battle being fought by people of all backgrounds, some socialists like himself,

who had understood that change in structures happens through change in people. Perhaps he should look at his own way of tackling life. 'When you organised the tramworkers' strike,' he admitted to himself, 'you were less concerned with answering their grievances than with getting yourself into the political limelight. If all the socialist leaders are like you, the socialist cause hasn't much hope.'

The following August, two of the Santos dockers were going to an international assembly at Caux. They had collected money among their friends for the journey to Switzerland, and invited Veras to go with them. He accepted. And he was staggered by the world-wide dimension of this gathering: 'There was a socialism truly at the service of mankind, whatever their class – not just the socialism of my class. I said to myself: If capitalists can change, isn't that the way to create the society I want?' Looking back now on his past attitudes, Veras says, 'In our unions we were fighting for the interests of our class, often to the detriment of the national interest or even the interest of other countries. So where was the difference between our attitude and the attitude we were attacking in the capitalists?'

Veras made his first truly revolutionary gesture on his return to Rio. He organised a mass meeting of the tramworkers and told them he had decided to be a 'clean man', which meant being truly honest with them: 'I must ask your forgiveness for having exploited your grievances for my own political advantage. From now on I will behave differently.' When he had finished speaking he did not know whether the listening men would take his apology for a sign of weakness or follow him on the new road. It was only several months later that he realised how well he had been understood. The union had opened a holiday home and wanted a man of integrity in charge of it; they chose him.

In 1970 the streets of Rio said farewell to the noise and colour of the trams rattling along on their ancient rails. Modern buses came in their place. And Veras found himself working in the bus terminal at Nova Iguaçu, the dormitory town thirty-two kilometres inland from Rio. There, ten per cent of the population were unemployed. Around the bus depot the down-and-outs newly arrived from the North-East tried to earn a few cruzeiros by selling whatever they could find to the queuing passengers. Many of them had left the countryside and arrived in town with no trade, their only asset the hands they could no longer find any use for. These street-sellers lived on the fringes of society, constantly under the eye of the police, tempted to every crookedness. Many were criminals.

Veras picked out one who seemed to have a certain authority. He won his confidence and then his friendship; and he discovered the extreme poverty of the slum where Everardo lived with his eight children, and the fact that the tiny amount of money he did earn vanished on gambling, smoke and drink. He invited Everardo to his home.

Veras's family had a simple story to tell. At the moment when he had spoken so honestly to his union colleagues, José had also had to take a courageous step at home. Daniel and Lydia, his eldest children, then sixteen and fourteen, had not spoken to each other for two years. In spite of all the efforts of their parents, a vast gulf had opened up in the life of the family, affecting all the ten children. 'I realised,' José told Everardo, 'that our family life had been destroyed by the way I had lived outside our home. I decided to be honest with both Daniel and Lydia. I wasn't at all proud of the father I had to show them – and they were very shaken because they had regarded me as a bit of a saint, and they hadn't wanted to talk about their own problems to one of

those! Then,' went on Veras, 'I had to tell my wife about the times I had been unfaithful to her. She wouldn't talk to me for days after that.'

Mrs Veras added, 'I hadn't been much help myself. I had my suspicions long before he told me, and I was very resentful, and that made a bad atmosphere at home too.'

In the warmth of this family Everardo relaxed. They talked around the table about the problems in his life, and about how his comrades could be helped to get free of the trap of their circumstances.

Veras often went for the weekend to a conference centre, the Sitio São Luis near Petrópolis, created by a convinced group of militant Rio dockers and other people who shared their belief in the spirit of Moral Re-Armament. It was a place where people from the port and the slums of Rio, and from other towns, met frequently to give each other support and help in solving the problems which surrounded them. Everardo accepted Veras's invitation to go with him to the Sitio for a weekend. There he decided to stop drinking and gambling; and his family felt the effect immediately.

'If you have the measles,' Frank Buchman used to say, 'you give them to everyone you meet. If you don't have them, you can talk about them until you are red in the face but nobody will catch them!' The epidemic which had spread from the Santos dockers to José Veras now reached the street-sellers by way of Everardo.

It had also long taken hold in the port of Rio. Nelson Marcellino de Carvalho, manager of the baggage warehouse, had been reconciled with his enemy Damasio Cardoso, leader of an unofficial union, who had tried to kill him. As a result the port, once paralysed by strikes, divided by gangs and ruled by their bosses, had held its first genuinely free union elections. The dockers told their story in a film called

Men of Brazil which, in many different languages, spread this spirit to audiences of dockers in Chittagong, Lisbon, London, Montreal, Genoa, Montevideo.

The Rio dockers then involved themselves in the situation in the favelas – the shanty towns where corrugated iron, flattened oil drums, cardboard and abandoned planks shelter the poverty brought down from the North-East. In the favela of Parada de Lucas they met Euclides da Silva, its elected president. Da Silva had got hold of the electricity concession and was selling power for the shacks at more than double the original price. When he heard the dockers talk about absolute honesty, he was touched on the raw. He admitted his exploitation to his customers, reduced his commission to the minimum and offered his resignation as president – and was re-elected.

Many other people were affected, including the leader of the São João favela, Luiz Pereira. By trade a tiler and by taste a samba expert, he went to all the parties and was seen everywhere, except in his home – perched at the top of the steep hillside to which the favela clung. His wife Edir did washing for the rich people who lived among tarred roads, which she reached through the labyrinths of mud which served as pathways in the favela. She brought up their five children with great difficulty. Every day she had to trudge down to the bottom of the hill to the public tap, and up again carrying the water on her head. Twelve years in these conditions had soured her. 'Then suddenly,' she says, 'I saw my husband changing. He didn't drink any more, and he even asked me to come with him to the parties. Everyone noticed that he was different.'

A short time before, there had been a tense situation in that favela. The owner of the land on which it had been built – without authorisation – began to evict the families and

demolish the shacks which it had taken them years to put together. There were serious confrontations. 'It was during these incidents,' says Edir, 'that Luiz met a man from another favela. From him he learnt, bit by bit, to turn to God and ask for His guidance in his decisions.' Pereira became a man who took responsibility not only for himself and his own family, but for the hundreds of families who lived in the favela. He decided to investigate all the possible ways of finding new homes for the people who had been evicted. He applied to a housing society funded by the state, but found it difficult to get the necessary priority. So he decided to approach the Minister of the Interior himself. He telephoned, and to his surprise was given an appointment. The result: his friends in the favela would be rehoused. Soon apartment buildings were going up, and one fine day in May the families were taken in trucks, with all their possessions, to their new flats in the suburb of Lins Vasconcellos.

Edir was intensely happy. 'When I saw the kitchen, the bathroom, the taps for the water, I was so overwhelmed I had to sit down. It was so extraordinary not to have to go and fetch water any more, not to have to struggle up that hill ever again.' But she and her husband are carrying on the battle: 'We've been able to transform our own conditions - that's a lot, but it isn't everything. We must help all the people who are still living in favelas to have homes, a home like ours. And we must see that the community spirit that we had in our wooden shacks doesn't die between our new concrete walls.'

All these people have understood that there are spiritual problems to be resolved along with the material ones. When Euclides da Silva was in Recife, he talked to Archbishop Dom Helder Camara about their joint work ten years earlier

during one of the first rehousing campaigns. As Auxiliary Bishop of Rio, Dom Helder had organised the St Sebastian Crusade (named for Rio's patron saint) in response to a call from Pope Pius XII at the Eucharistic Congress in 1954. Da Silva was already president of the Parada de Lucas favela, and he had worked with Dom Helder. But the results of this first effort had been unsatisfactory. Seven hundred and fifty families had indeed been rehoused in apartment buildings, but the district became a focus for unrest and crime. Launched with the best of intentions, the project had become a pattern to be avoided rather than followed.

Now Da Silva admitted to the Archbishop of Recife that he himself had been partly to blame for this failure. He said to him in effect, 'I was glad to work with you, but I don't know if you realised what kind of man I was then. I was exploiting the people in the favelas by making them pay nearly two and a half times what the electricity cost. I had several mistresses. I was so jealous of a rival that I had decided to kill him.' Then he told the Archbishop what had helped him to change and to become capable of thinking for the real needs of the people in his district.

The lasting results from subsequent rehousing work in Rio have been built on confidence between the favela leaders and the local authorities. The building of homes has been made possible through the rebuilding of people. The leader of one association of rehoused favela people says, 'We have emerged from under-development thanks to those of us who have taken a good dose of human solidarity.'

Luiz Pereira and José Veras with their wives, and all the people in the chain of this story, have joined the battle to enlarge the dose of human solidarity. In 1979 they organised an international conference in Salvador de Bahía on the theme of reconciliation and invited colleagues from other

Latin American countries too, as they are aware that what they have learnt is valid for the whole of their continent. We had the good fortune to be there as well.

The conference was opened by Cardinal Avelar Brandão Vilela, Archbishop of Salvador and Primate of Brazil. He evaluated the spirit in which these men and women are working as 'a serious and vital call for ethical, moral and religious values. . . . Many people do not believe in love as a transforming process, only in hate. But hate is a negative force: the constructive force is love.'

With great conviction, the Cardinal said to us, 'We must have the courage to assume responsibility for opening new roads for the times we live in, which are a challenge to us all. Moral Re-Armament illuminates the plan of God for humanity. . . . We are all called to this. I would call it a battle without quarter, because the situation in the world is much more serious than we suppose.'

The task is immense. But it is easy for technocrats to forget that the dynamic for the transformation of the world lies in hearts which are willing to open. And the more suffering people have been through, the more ready they are to open their hearts. That is the astonishing alternative face of poverty. Some see it only as a reservoir of hate to be used in their battle for control. But this other aspect of poverty is one of the world's most remarkable potential treasures. You have to know how to love to discover it, and how to serve to make it available for the world.

6 Classes

The class war has now become a focus for debate between Christians.

A priest stands up in the audience to confront us with the evident fact that this is a war which must be fought. Capitalism is the evil; to be born rich is the original sin; the institutions of capitalism are basically wicked and must be destroyed – this is the only redemption. His arguments echo those of certain contemporary writings which conjoin the class hatred of Karl Marx with the message of love proclaimed by Christ. By shaking this mixture of oil and water hard enough, it is possible to achieve the conviction that it is a homogeneous material.

The distinguished couple – he is an industrialist – who receive us in their salon believe, on the other hand, that the class war is the manifestation of atheistic materialism, their enemy. For them, the political and social organisation which they help to maintain has always found its justification in Scripture. Only the enemies of religion could wish to overthrow it. That the class war might have been born of the attitude of their own class is an idea that has never ruffled their tranquil consciences.

And for the student who has moved to the poorest part of town so that he can live out his Christianity more consist-

ently, the question is still open. He is simply like so many people who feel that, in order to be faithful to their Gospel ideal, they must take the side of the underprivileged. But often the grievances of these people push sincere Christians into a flirtation with materialist concepts of which at heart they disapprove. They no longer see how the Christian ideas which they profess can be applied in practice. Caught in the daily debate between capitalism and socialism, they no longer feel certain that Christianity can remain above the conflict.

But God calls each person to play a role which is his alone in creating a world where people can live as brothers and sisters. Our own commitment has brought us in contact with powerful capitalists and with militant socialists and Communists, but without our ever feeling that we had to take sides. Rather, the contrary has happened. We have seen capitalists change, we have seen socialists change, we have seen Communists change. The evolution in these people has not been initiated from outside, from a debate on the value of one system or another, but from within, from an interior recognition, a call to a higher task for the good of a greater number. When these people from opposing camps have taken the trouble to listen to each other, there has followed a kind of fertilisation of thought which has produced new fruits of greater justice.

A socialist member of parliament once explained at length to Frank Buchman the social tensions in his country, to which the reply, given with a slight twinkle, was, 'I have come to the conclusion that there are only two classes in the world – those who change and those who don't.' The world's economy will, in fact, only be fundamentally reorientated by a change of motive and behaviour. And it is a change which is possible.

We knew two Frenchmen, of the same generation and as different from each other as it is possible to imagine. But the battles which they each fought united them at the level of genuine service to humanity. Maurice Mercier was a worker, short, tough, stocky, a product of the French Communist Party, a leader who knew how to galvanise an audience with his telescopic phrases, who carried the burden of the aspirations of the ordinary man. Robert Carmichael was an employer, at the head of his professional organisations, full of the assurance conferred by physical height and by elevated position, a chairman who could dominate a board meeting with dry firmness, and spot the figure in the balance sheet which betrayed a weakness. These two men met at various points on the front line of the class war. In 1936 they faced each other across the negotiating table during the great confrontations at the time of the Popular Front. Carmichael, then aged thirty-five, was defender of the interests of the textile employers' organisations. Mercier, twenty-nine, represented the textile workers for the Paris region in the Communist-led General Workers' Confederation, the CGT. Two personalities, two adversaries.

By different routes, Carmichael and Mercier were to meet a dozen years later in a totally different setting, at a conference organised by Moral Re-Armament. One day a textile manufacturer, a colleague of Robert Carmichael, came to Mercier's union office. He was troubled by the critical state of the textile industry after the second world war, and felt that everything possible should be done to bring together the managers and the trade union leaders, so that jointly they could make the best use of the means of production.

Mercier was also looking for a new way. He had been profoundly marked by the experiences of the preceding ten years. He had taken part in the Resistance, and had skirted

the edge of death more than once. One day, in the train on his way to a secret rendezvous in Toulouse, he happened to open a paper and in it he read that twenty-two of his union comrades had just been shot by the Gestapo. 'The train was unheated, I was hungry, I was cold. The execution of my friends crushed my morale. For several minutes I considered abandoning the underground struggle. Then I found a place of silence in my heart, and all at once I decided that I would fight on whatever happened. I knew immediately that it was the right decision – I was warm, I wasn't hungry any longer, and my morale was ironclad. That was when I discovered that there really is a higher force which comes into play when you give yourself to the greater good of mankind.'

At the war's end, Mercier had seen the intense solidarity of the Resistance give way to the lowest jealousies and the most obscure intrigues. He left the Communist Party and resigned from his union post. Separated from a great revolutionary machine, he found himself with empty hands and an empty heart. With several friends, he had just created the new trade union organisation Force Ouvrière. This was the Mercier whom the industrialist called on. He invited him to meet other trade unionists and some employers at a Moral Re-Armament meeting at Caux, and Mercier accepted. So began what the militant unionist called 'the second revolutionary phase of my life'.

At Caux, Mercier found Robert Carmichael. Carmichael was already familiar with the gatherings there. Two years earlier he had come out of curiosity, and had met there several couples from the Welsh mining valleys. The men told him about the hunger and unemployment of 1929; their wives described the sufferings and hatreds of that period. But these people had broken out of the circle of resentment and revenge. They talked with conviction about their sense

of responsibility for their industry, and they wanted to take part in rebuilding the world. Carmichael was shattered by this encounter. These people had an inner flame which he knew nothing of.

Carmichael realised that his life was full of useless activities, that his only aims were profitability and success, that money had been more important to him than people. He felt the need to put his whole life, personal and professional, on a different basis. There, at Caux, he learned to search in quietness for what God wanted of him. During one of these times of meditation he had the apparently absurd idea of inviting a militant Communist from one of his factories to come with him to a three-day gathering which was to follow the Caux conference.

It was obvious to him that the worker would refuse, but he decided to obey this inner instruction. To his astonishment, the militant Communist accepted. And this man went home from the gathering having made a completely personal decision – to stop drinking – which proved to be important to him, as it opened the way back to a satisfactory family life.

In the following months, the spectacular change in the life of this Communist worker had its effect on his comrades in the factory. The bistro over the road lost its customers, and the workers persuaded the owner to convert it into a grocery store. A new atmosphere was born in the small firm, and in this atmosphere manager and workers decided to tackle various problems together. Productivity went up, wages went up by nearly fifty per cent, homes were built for the most badly housed, there was a measure of job security. Carmichael watched a loss-making firm, which he had been on the point of closing down, become a prosperous business.

For Carmichael this experience, though it was on a small

scale, altered his whole conception of the running of industry. He had thought first for the needs of his workers, and they in their turn had thought of the needs of the firm. He had learnt to work with them as a team, a great change after twenty-five years of authoritarian management. This was the Carmichael whom Mercier found when he arrived at Caux for three days.

Mercier noticed first that the young people who were running the great centre at Caux had a faith and dynamism matching those which had drawn him to the Communists. He then observed Carmichael and the other industrialists there, and realised that in the atmosphere of the conference these men were becoming more clearly aware of their own responsibilities in the face of specific social and national situations.

'We need a complete revolution in industry, and this implies a fundamental change in our aims,' Carmichael told his colleagues from different countries. 'It is no longer enough for us in management to work only for our profits, nor for the workers to aim only at earning their wages. We must combine our strengths to meet the needs of all men and to rebuild the world.'

Suddenly a new perspective opened in front of Mercier. 'Class war today,' he said, 'means one half of humanity against the other half, each possessing a powerful arsenal of destruction. The choice for each of us is to create a revolution through our faith and our conscience, or to suffer a revolution imposed by force.' He was glimpsing the possibility of a revolution different from the one to which he had given all his energies as a Communist, a revolution which would not be at the service of one class only but would call out the best in all people. Joint action on the basis of abso-

lute honesty appeared to him the only way to mobilise the energies of all to answer the immense needs of mankind.

In his own particular style, Mercier launched the slogan which formed the basis of his actions for the next twenty years: 'Not one cry of hatred, not one hour of work lost, not one drop of blood shed – that is the revolution to which Moral Re-Armament calls bosses and workers.' But would his comrades follow him out of the rut which the class-war concept had become? He knew that some would desert him – it had happened before. He knew that others would follow him, and placed his hope in that.

On February 1, 1951, on the initiative of the men who had met at Caux, textile managers and workers signed a national agreement, the first in France since the war. It guaranteed to employees for the first time that they would get a share in the benefits of higher productivity, and 600,000 workers were given large wage rises. That same year, on Mercier's initiative, eighty factory delegations made up of employers, workers and staff met at conferences organised by Moral Re-Armament. His hope had been fulfilled.

On June 9, 1953, the textile employers and trade unions – except for the CGT – signed a solemn agreement 'in complete openness, in the common interest of workers, firms and country'. For the next twenty years this agreement remained the foundation-stone of a policy of cooperation in the industry. Under its terms, French textile workers were the first in the country to benefit from, among other things, a retirement pension scheme, partial unemployment benefit, and a share in the results of increased productivity. But it also had other repercussions.

Several months after the signing of the textile agreement, France was faced with a serious threat of inflation. Every industry was disrupted by strikes. Under union pressure,

some employers had already conceded wage rises of twenty per cent. The cost of living was rising. Workers in other industries were claiming rises equal to the highest already awarded. The Prime Minister, Antoine Pinay, called on the textile industry to help, as he judged it the only one capable, because of the spirit between employers and workers, of putting the national interest first. A new agreement was signed, by which textile workers accepted a rise of eight per cent and the employers undertook not to raise prices. This reasoned decision contributed to the arrest of inflation. In *Le Figaro*, the Prime Minister called the agreement 'one of the first solid achievements on the road of the change which is indispensable to the economic survival of the country'.

When in May 1968 an immense wave of unrest swept France, and most of the factories in the country were closed by strikes, some for six or seven weeks, the textile industry was scarcely affected. And at national level, employers were obliged to grant French workers in general some of the social benefits which the textile workers already enjoyed.

By his policy of cooperation on the basis of honesty, Mercier had produced more social progress than others had through using confrontation. When he died in 1972, he left behind him a team of militant trade unionists in different countries who are continuing the same battle.

During the same years, Robert Carmichael had given this battle a fresh dimension. After his experience of the consultation process in the textile industry, he felt impelled to carry the same new policy into the relations between a certain group of industrialised countries and developing countries. What had first proved valid in a small firm, and then in a whole industry, showed itself to be possible on the international level.

Carmichael's business was chiefly in the spinning and

weaving of jute for the manufacture of string, sacks and matting. It was therefore based on the work of the peasants, mainly in India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), who grew the plant from which this natural fibre comes. In 1951 Carmichael went on an economic mission to Asia, which took him to Calcutta. There he saw misery encamped in the streets. A clear thought came to him: 'I am responsible for the millions of jute-growing peasants who are dying of hunger.' He accepted this responsibility as a vocation.

Within a few years he was putting his strategy into action. As the main trading partners of India and Pakistan in this commodity are nearly all in Europe, the first stage was the formation in 1956 of an association of all the European importers of jute, of which he became head. Having got them together, he then aimed during successive annual conferences to train them in a new way of thinking. In Stockholm in 1959 he said to them, 'If the European jute industry makes an effort to create a sane economy in this sector with India and Pakistan, it can find its true mission, its real reason for existence. To do this, the basic motives of European industrialists must undergo a fundamental change.' A tide of opposition threatened to stop him. Carmichael offered his resignation as president. But the interests which had united against him found themselves divided on the question of a successor, and he was asked to resume his position.

In spite of a physical handicap which made travelling more and more painful, Carmichael undertook constant journeys to Asia, weaving new ties between two developing countries and eight industrialised countries. It was a difficult task. He had to fight the speculative tendencies of certain traders. Several times he had to help his Asian partners to find an identity of view while the troops of their two countries were confronting each other in a fratricidal war.

In 1965 all the countries which produced or processed jute met in Rome under the auspices of the FAO, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. The demand of the Third World countries for a stabilisation in the prices of raw materials was making itself felt, and this was the first free negotiation on the price of one particular commodity. This conference was a decisive advance in Carmichael's battle; but it opened under the worst of auspices. Delegations from several countries arrived with instructions which would have prevented any conclusion of the negotiations, and Carmichael found his path blocked by certain of his European colleagues who did not want their president to commit himself. He accepted the situation calmly, as he had not made the success of the conference a matter of ambition or prestige. His only motive was the calling which had impelled him for the last fifteen years. He also knew that the real obstacles lay not in situations but in human reactions.

For years he had been building friendships with each of the men at the conference, had visited their homes and talked over their family problems. So in Rome he was able to overcome the obstacles one after the other. He offered the chairmanship of the debate to the most awkward person. Astonished and flattered, the man accepted the responsibility of arbiter, and carried out his duties impeccably without imposing his own arguments. In friendly conversation with another man, Carmichael discovered a wide community of view which official instructions were making it impossible to reveal. With the help of this man, Carmichael retrieved the situation. It had been expected that the figures put on the table at the opening of negotiations would be so far apart as to make agreement impossible. However, one of the Asian delegates, encouraged by the spirit of total frankness which

Carmichael had introduced into the debate, proposed a figure which was agreed immediately. The other details then settled themselves as a matter of course.

Subsequent difficulties in negotiating the price of jute in no way detract from the pioneer work done by Carmichael. For the first time the price of a basic raw material, the subject of litigation between industrialised and developing nations, had been freely negotiated between equal partners. As the Director General of the FAO recognised, the jute industry had shown to nations which were opposed on the question of other raw materials that there was a way to cooperate in complete openness. At a moment when the confrontation over the prices of oil, cocoa, copper, sugar and other raw materials could develop into a global class war, other people have committed themselves, as Carmichael did, to making this spirit of cooperation supreme. Our children will know whether they have succeeded.

7 Communists

A member of the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party one day received a small group of people connected with Moral Re-Armament. Among them was a Canadian industrialist, the very image of the distinguished capitalist. The Communist leader looked at him warily. The Canadian smiled and said, 'You and I would agree on one point – men like me very much need to change.' The Italian laughed, and let him have his say.

The industrialist explained that the change which had come into his life had led him to pay back money to the Treasury, to try and see his firm through the eyes of his workers and thus to meet many of their demands, to make certain choices in the light of his customers' needs rather than his own interest. The Italian made him sit down, and he was able to elaborate on these points without interruption. 'You know, you are the first capitalist I have ever been prepared to trust,' said the Communist, handing him a cup of coffee. When they parted, he added, 'Bring me twenty capitalists like you, and I'll believe in your outfit!'

Many of the people who look upon Communists as their enemies have never had the opportunity to get to know any of them as people. Still less have they ever considered their thought processes, and the inner conflict between theory and

experience which confronts them. Our concern here is not with the political, economic or social levels – which for Christians cannot be the first consideration – but with the basic level of the human being, in relation to his or her fellows and to God.

By reducing a human person to one component in a collective, by explaining a human person only by his or her role in society, Communism denies the unique character of each individual as inheritor of a unique destiny, responsible and free before God. But no one can point the finger. We all occasionally surprise ourselves by finding that the person in front of us has become an anonymous function. There cannot be many of us who have not handed a ticket to the conductor without looking up from an absorbing article in the newspaper.

By making the laws of the market the criterion of their equilibrium, liberal societies equally have refused the individual his unique character. People have been considered only in function of their capacity as producers and consumers. This denial of respect has structuralised the exploitation of man by man, to which Communism is a reaction. But Communism, being guilty of the same attitude, can only produce yet other injustices, as it redistributes the roles of exploiter and exploited.

In the spirit of the Gospel we cannot treat Communists as enemies. Nor can we accept them as colleagues without becoming corrupted by their way of thought. But we can welcome them as brothers and sisters, as sinners like ourselves; which means that we must be conscious of sharing the same sin, and above all that we must have found victory over it. The defenders of freedom are today incapable of changing the Communists because, often without realising it, they are tainted with the same evil.

One Soviet functionary who thought he had 'chosen freedom' by asking for asylum in a Western country soon changed his tune. He could not find in his new country the freedom he was looking for. He became the prisoner of financial problems, of dissatisfied emotions, of impossible ambitions, and finally of fear of the Soviet secret police. To the astonishment of his host country, he asked to return to the Soviet Union, in spite of warnings about his probable fate. Back in his own country, he soon found himself on the road to the Gulag. There, in the ultimate prison, he had a profound spiritual experience. He totally conquered fear, he had no more unsatisfied ambition, he found the joy of not having to depend on the affection of any other human being. He managed to write to his friends who had stayed in the West to tell them what true freedom is.

This man's freedom has not been taken away from him by *them*, but by himself. Who are our *them*, the ones we blame daily for the fetters and the limitations we put upon ourselves? We grumble about the 'consumer society' when the real trouble is us, the consumers. We blame society or the church for imposing unwanted children on us, when we ourselves deliberately enter upon actions which lead to their conception. We condemn Communists as disruptive elements when we ourselves are responsible for the injustices they denounce.

Communism is based upon the existence of *them*, the owner class, who bear the responsibility for what goes wrong. The sinners are *them*. Eliminating *them* would create an aseptic society free of all ills. But the societies which have been created in this way continue to breed wrongs, and the Communists are constantly forced to look among their own ranks for *them*, whom they then make, in ever new categories, the scapegoats for their own failures. They try to

escape the ill which they carry within themselves.

There are only two positions possible. Either one refuses to be totally responsible before the Creator, and therefore searches out a victim to carry one's sins. Or else, accepting total responsibility for sin, one asks for forgiveness and accepts change. Anyone who does not, at every step, accept the second position, ultimately finds himself in the same camp as the Communists. Many have not the courage to make this choice. And it is because the Communists know how to exploit such a failure of nerve that they hold out a hand to the Christians.

If Christians do not live their faith with intensity and clarity, they rapidly find it easier to settle into the comfort of this subtle atheism which allows them to be tolerant towards themselves and demands neither repentance nor change. Many Christians who think themselves politically far removed from the Communists are already spiritually quite close to them when they deliberately stifle their own consciences for the sake of power, money or some other object of satisfaction.

The one fundamental difference is that while Communists are logical within their dialectic, Christians in this state are in contradiction with their belief, and therefore Communism is allowed to win.

When Christians live according to their beliefs, it is the Communists who discover the contradiction between the apparent logic of their system and the stifled longings of their conscience. Many Communists have been brought to reconsider their ideas after seeing the faith of particular people affect society in a way which seemed to them positive. 'At Caux, for the first time I have seen the International lived,' said a worker who had fought in the Party ranks for a quarter of a century.

To reject Communists en bloc as belonging to the enemy camp is to put each one of them into a category and therefore, in fact, to deny them the characteristic of being uniquely loved by God, which is the heritage of every human being. Our job, on the contrary, is to help every Communist we meet to free himself from the iron yoke of the doctrine and the system so that he can recover his own originality as a child of God. In our experience it is often with regard to family life – the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children – or when faced with grief, suffering or death, that Communists are ready to allow themselves to comprehend the unique character of their own inner being. At this level their inner aspirations contradict the system which they are trying to adhere to with all their might.

This conviction has grown in us in the course of conversations with Communists of the most varied backgrounds to whom we have tried to offer a fraternal hand – veterans of the workers' struggle, functionaries of Communist countries, members of the Party hierarchy, intellectuals attempting to create for themselves a system which is to their own taste. These people meet you with the quiet confidence that they are easily going to convince you, as they believe their ideas to be rock-solid. Under cover of an exchange of views during which the other person sometimes enjoys the satisfaction of winning points on the strength of his arguments, a dialogue then starts up on a personal level. The other person the more readily enters upon it as this territory appears neutral, encouraging human exchanges which will later allow him to dominate you the better in the ideological realm. But this is often where the Achilles heel of the Communist lies.

In a Third World capital, we were sitting next to a Communist diplomat in a theatre. Conversation began. The re-

marks we made to the diplomat roused his curiosity, as they did not fit the category of 'bourgeois capitalist from an imperialist nation journeying in the Third World'. We told him about our commitment to the action of Moral Re-Armament. Our views intrigued him further, and he invited us to his embassy, where for the moment he was Chargé d'affaires.

Two days later we felt impelled to go and ring the doorbell of the embassy at one o'clock, when the offices were closing for lunch. This meant that if the diplomat did not want to see us, he could use the pretext that the hour was inconvenient; if he wanted to see us alone, he could explain later that we had appeared at an unaccustomed time. Our ring of the bell caused some awkwardness in the embassy. The door was opened. We announced ourselves. The door was closed, leaving us in the street. Obviously we were not behaving in the customary manner. After ten minutes our diplomat friend appeared, profuse in apologies, and asked us in. Apart from the doorkeeper who had given us so cold a welcome, he seemed to be alone in the embassy: he had to go himself to find the fruit juice for us and the vodka for himself.

Banal conversation on the merits of the socialist system. Then, as all the Communist Parties in the world had at that moment sounded the trumpet of peace, inquiries as to our position on the question of peace – trying, no doubt, to provoke an answer which would allow him to advance a pawn.

'Peace,' one of us said to him, 'is not only an idea to be fought for. Above all, it is people who decide to live differently. In a marriage, for instance, the husband is generally in favour of peace – and so is the wife. But that doesn't always prevent quarrels. And when there has been a quarrel, in order to re-establish peace one of them has to put aside pride and apologise to the other. Peace is born from change.'

This answer, it must be admitted, was motivated partly by the desire to avoid a trap. To our surprise, it completely altered the nature of the conversation. The diplomat, it appeared, had a few difficulties in organising his family life. His two sons, seventeen and fifteen, were studying in his own country. His wife wished to be with her children at this important time in their lives, and our visit had fallen during one of her numerous absences. He regretted not having his wife by his side to help him to carry his responsibilities at the embassy.

We realised that he had never dared to talk about these difficulties to any of his colleagues, as he knew in advance that, regardless of the feelings of a father or a husband, the sharp edge of official doctrine would come down: duty to the State above all.

'How do you cope with situations like that?' he asked us. We tried to give him honest answers out of our own experience that both husband and wife can respect a common authority which helps to see clearly in such dilemmas, and that God speaks through our conscience.

'I don't believe in God.'

'Perhaps not, but you believe – and probably your wife does too – that you have a conscience which tells you what you ought to do.'

'Yes – a revolutionary conscience.'

'Call it what you will – but when your wife comes back, why not try facing this conscience in silence together? In a spirit of absolute honesty and absolute unselfishness, you could search how to resolve the conflict. And try it without either imposing your opinion on the other, but respecting the other's conscience.' We illustrated this suggestion by describing how we had resolved some family impasse of our own.

The glasses of fruit juice sat on the table half empty, the glass of vodka barely touched. A long silence. Our friend sat thinking, head bent.

Suddenly he raised his head, looked us straight in the eye, and said simply, 'I will try.'

It was two o'clock, and all of us had long forgotten that it was time to eat. We took our leave. The diplomat gave us his address at the Foreign Ministry in his country. We shook hands warmly, friends for life.

We have never seen him since. But the image remains of this small, frail plant beginning to grow. Within the personality of the diplomat, its tiny roots had started to penetrate under the huge stones of the monument raised to the glory of socialism.

There is only one indestructible monument in the heart of a person, the one built to the glory of God. It is not made of stone but of spirit. In helping individual Communists to build this living monument, we can offer them freedom from the weight which crushes their personality.

If they wish to do this, the defenders of freedom will need, like the Canadian industrialist, a breadth of thought, an experience of battling for a more just world, a global vocation, which can capture the attention of the Communists – who will be interested only in people committed to a coherent ideological undertaking.

They will also need to be certain that they do not have other monuments weighing down their own personalities, monuments which may appear less grandiose but are none the less cumbersome, raised in their hearts to the glory of success, power, sex or money. Anyone who holds out a hand to the Communists while ignoring this reality risks either ending up in their ranks, or having to learn the lesson in the collective solitude of some Gulag.

8 Public People

The corridors of parliaments and international conferences, the outer offices of municipal councillors, of members of parliament or congress and cabinet ministers, have often seemed to us like spiritual deserts to which no one brings water. The churchman one comes across by accident often hurriedly explains that his presence is due to some project to be followed through, some subsidy to be obtained, some legislation to be influenced. The person of faith who works there in an official capacity rarely has the opportunity to show his or her colours, and often does not know how to build a bridge between inner conviction and professional duties. So can anyone be astonished if this spiritual desert produces bitter fruits?

There are missions to the young, to seamen, to immigrants, even to prostitutes, but no one seems to have much idea of how to develop a mission to our public men and women. It is true that for many people the world of politics seems out of reach. Voters resign themselves to accepting the decisions taken by 'them', or, without necessarily joining in violent protest, come to feel that after all this is the only effective method. No one, in any case, any longer feels that the pieces of paper put periodically in the ballot box have a decisive influence on the workings of powerful political ma-

chines. Among those who do lay claim to moral and spiritual values, most are convinced that these values are incompatible with public life, and have therefore ceased trying to pass them on to their leaders.

But this desert is ready to absorb all the living water which is poured on to it. At the close of a Moral Re-Armament meeting, a member of parliament turned to the gathering and said, 'For God's sake, keep on offering spiritual help to the politicians!' Each one of us inherits a share of responsibility for the human community, a responsibility which, by the democratic method, we delegate to some of our fellows. In the name of this inheritance, we must be concerned with the use which politicians make of their power. That is democracy, not only the paper put in the ballot box. But how, in practice, to go about it?

We were once in a capital city whose streets were filled with rioters. Apart from the revolutionaries erecting barricades and the toughs setting fire to cars, no one was thinking of anything but the safety of themselves and their possessions. We went into the empty corridors of a parliament dominated by fear. The occasional politician was wandering about in search of information or rumour. Others, panic-stricken, had taken refuge in their offices.

The politician we had come to see tried to guess at our intentions. Accustomed to being asked for favours, he could not conceive that anyone would approach him in a disinterested fashion, simply to offer him support in an hour of crisis. He opened by saying, 'If you want petrol coupons, let me tell you that I haven't even got any for myself!' We wanted nothing from him, only to let him know about the conviction of a number of his fellow citizens who had signed a declaration. 'The future of the nation,' it stated, 'is in the hands of the ordinary person who will let the voice of con-

science speak in his heart and decide to act as a person responsible for the nation.'

We suggested to the parliamentarian that we should be quiet for a moment, to find in silence the perspective everyone needed in face of the serious situation. We then told each other the thoughts which had come in this silence. It was a time of real communication. Only at the moment of shaking hands on parting did the politician show his true gratitude, because he realised then that we had had no hidden motive. Total selflessness is the more effective in political circles for being so rare.

In May 1968, at the height of France's crisis, we were in the drawing room of a member of Georges Pompidou's government. His ashen face betrayed panic. His eyes avoided ours. It was no use addressing the cabinet minister, he no longer existed. It was this shattered man whom we had to help to find his courage again. What is power when the person holding it disintegrates?

Among those who haunt the corridors of parliaments and ministerial offices, there are those who do it for good causes. But the justice of a cause can serve as a screen for their own ambitions. While they believe themselves disinterested, the objectives they are pursuing have become their property. If one tries to work as a servant of God, leaving behind ambition and the desire to be seen, public people – so glibly criticised and blamed for every wrong – turn out to be humans like oneself. Behind the imposing desk heaped with files containing the destinies of people and families, the person sitting in the minister's leather chair is an ordinary human, with the passions, the greatnesses and the vilenesses which are in all of us. That is the human being we can and must be brother or sister to. That is the human being who in the last resort determines the behaviour of the public person.

We asked one political leader if he had ever come up against the question of corruption. He told us that when he first took public office an influential industrialist had come to offer his services. In the course of the interview this man took an envelope out of his jacket pocket and sat there turning it over and over. The politician decided to ignore it. 'That day,' he said to us, 'I made a choice for integrity which marked me for life.' He added that he had also made an enemy who bore him a grudge throughout the whole of his career.

At a diplomatic dinner a powerful Soviet politician had poured out a flood of propaganda for two hours when suddenly, in private after the meal, a confused father revealed himself. How could he rebuild his bridges with his son? There was obviously no one in his entourage to whom he could go for a helping hand. We told him what we had learnt about openness within the family. He decided to try it out when he went back to Moscow.

There was a politician in a Latin country who represented an ethnic minority in conflict with the majority. He realised that the deepest division in his own life was not from his traditional opponents but from a colleague in his own party. He apologised to this man for resentment and jealousy, and became reconciled with him. At once the two men were able to support a proposed solution which resolved a conflict between the two communities.

To be brother or sister to people like this, all that is needed is a little clarity about oneself. In fact, what clogs the thinking of a public person are simply the conflicts and contradictions of the ordinary human being inside him or her. A Norwegian member of parliament has a story to tell about this.

ANTON SKULBERG

I was worried about my youngest son. He was doing badly at school and I was haunted by the fear that he would get into drugs and fail his exams. I was so afraid that I started to try and control him. When encouragement did not work, nagging took over, and then constraint. My son started to lie in order to escape my domination, and I started imagining things he hadn't done at all. When fear grips you – and on top of that you are very ambitious for your children – your head and your heart stop working.

One morning when I woke up, I suddenly remembered my own father. I had resented his domination. I understood then that my fear of my father was at the root of my problem with my son. It was the reason for my control, which in its turn had produced a very understandable rebellion in him. I asked God what to do, and I knew that I must admit my mistakes and apologise to my son. But how? There was no longer any contact between us.

I would write him a letter! So that is what I did, in French to avoid getting lost in too many words, and I put the letter on his bed. Two days later, I found the answer on mine. Communication was reestablished. Little by little we began to become friends. His school marks went up, and my son began to feel responsible for himself.

This was a very important preparation for me, because two months later I was appointed Minister of Education and Church Affairs. I had learnt that if you want responsible people, you have to give them responsibility. Besides, a minister constantly has to take decisions, some of which will affect hundreds of thousands of people and families. Too often decisions are taken under the influence of fear. I have learnt instead to look for God's will. And today's problems

are so complex that you cannot manage alone – you have to rely on this search.

That is the experience of a father called to be responsible for the education of all the children in his country.

Many people of faith enter the political arena armed only with the same weapons as those who use no spiritual reference points. They restrict themselves to forming pressure groups, pushing their man forward, organising boycotts, denouncing scandals. Once in power, they often show themselves little different from their predecessors, because the methods they have used have bit by bit corrupted them. There is nothing of their faith left in their behaviour.

It does not seem, incidentally, that God recruits the performers of His will only within any one particular political framework. This is a source of continual disappointment to those who would like to corner God for their side.

But when a person in public life, of whatever political group, refuses all compromise of conscience, he or she becomes a catalyst for the positive responses which result from bringing out the best in his or her colleagues. There is a diplomat who made the choice at the age of twenty to give God precedence in his life, and has never gone back on that choice; and whose whole career is a witness to this process. In one particular instance, his influence was felt in his absence and unknown to him.

A major international conference was on the point of failure, due to the lack of a consensus. The president, an Arab minister, made a proposal which, contrary to his hopes, only increased the disagreement. The impasse was complete. A delegate from another country, who knew the diplomat in question and also knew that the Arab minister held him in great respect, went to see the minister. 'What do you

think our mutual friend would have done in this situation?' he asked. It was like a magic formula, and opened the way to a fruitful discussion. The Arab president put aside his self-esteem, apologised to the conference for his unhelpful proposal and withdrew it. The atmosphere of the deliberations was transformed, and the conference came to a successful conclusion.

On an occasion of crisis between two great nations, one statesman had the insight to realise that the tension was caused by a morbid hate and mistrust in a member of the opposing cabinet. Meeting this man in a third country, and having a heart-to-heart talk which helped him to overcome his resentment, rescued the situation. We ourselves happened to be the intermediaries in arranging this encounter.

The German socialist member of parliament, Adolf Scheu, believed that 'a politician can be the most talented speaker, the most skilled tactician, the most conscientious member of his party, but there is an essential factor missing if he doesn't know how to change the attitude of difficult people'. Scheu belonged to the group of men and women from the most varying political backgrounds, in many parliaments around the world, who are trying to create a new spirit.

'Many of the members of this chamber are Christians. Does the way we behave towards each other show that we are truly democrats and Christians? What about the application of our principles in the daily realities of this assembly? I believe we are far from it. Don't we, the Christians, always join in when it comes to smearing or ridiculing the opposing party?' For the German television audience, watching this speech in the Bundestag in March 1975, Scheu was expressing what they were feeling. 'Something out of the ordinary, not seen in this place for the past quarter of a century,' wrote the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* the following day.

The conclusion of Scheu's speech that day is also our conviction: 'We all believe in the strength and potential effect of negative minorities; we even fear them. Why shouldn't we begin to believe as well that positive minorities can transform situations?' The decision to belong to this kind of positive minority is open to every person, wherever he or she may be.

If we can get as far as helping our public figures to overcome their inner contradictions, we must also open up for them a new dimension of thought, so that the Christian principles we believe in begin to inform the realities of public institutions. What counts then is the scope of our understanding of the world.

Some politicians have no ideology. They do not know what kind of society they want to create, what principles should regulate relations between countries, what distant objectives their generation should be pursuing. They govern pragmatically, without a north star, propelled by the winds of passing trends, buffeted by the waves of opinion polls, trying to survive in the midst of political storms. If we want to get beside such men and women and to keep our sense of direction, we must possess besides a personal faith, however profound, an ideological conception – an overall view of relationships, not only of our own with those close to us, but of all people with each other, of the peoples of the world with each other. As our personal faith is a guide for our own lives, so our ideological conception can become the guide for our country and for the relations between countries.

But how can an ordinary citizen acquire this dimension of thought? There is too often a small voice murmuring, 'You're already devoting yourself to your own group – family, community, trade union or whatever it is – so isn't that

enough?' The greater one's dedication to a limited group, the easier it is to make excuses for refusing to enlarge the scope of one's caring. Carrying humanity is a challenge. It means in fact deciding that not one of our brothers or sisters, however far removed, will be consciously kept out of our hearts. We could allow our leaders to climb with us toward this summit. It is the opposite process from trying to get them to concentrate on sectional demands, even if that is necessary at times.

God has given us this world. It is up to us to be responsible for it. That is a choice which each person – Christian, Buddhist, Moslem, atheist – can accept or reject. For a Christian, who claims allegiance to a Christ who died for all people, this choice is normal, even though it presumes an unattainable selflessness.

9 Politician's Experience

During a recent international gathering, we found ourselves in a discussion group with people from thirteen countries, from all ages and many professions, sitting relaxed in the open air. The fellowship created by spending several days of reflection together had produced an atmosphere in which everyone felt at liberty to talk about their real preoccupations. Among the youngest in the group were two students from Rome. 'What on earth could we do to change the way our politicians carry on?' they asked. Their tone of voice revealed very little hope that young people like themselves could really shake up the state of things in their country. The young priest who was leading our discussion turned to one of the participants and said, 'Perhaps Dr Klaus would like to help to answer these young women?'

The man sitting with us, Josef Klaus, was the former head of the Austrian government. He told us that in the fifties, when he was Governor of Salzburg, two young men had come to see him in his office, and their visit had had decisive consequences for him. Turning to a man opposite he said, 'And one of them is here with us today!' This man, then twenty-two, had gone with a friend to meet people from different sections of Austrian life. Someone had suggested that they should visit Josef Klaus. With the slenderest of

introductions but strong in conviction, they had asked to see the Governor. He received them, and as a result later went to an international assembly organised by Moral Re-Armament at Caux.

'I learnt at Caux,' went on Klaus, 'one of the most important things in my life – the habit of a time of quiet at the start of each day. I give myself the discipline of writing in a notebook the thoughts I get during these times of meditation. I have a pile of notebooks at home, filled with the fruits of these periods I have spent in reflection all through my political life.'

The two girls had to leave a few minutes afterwards to catch the train back to Rome. But we later went to see Josef Klaus to ask if he would open up some of these notebooks for us. He and his wife received us in their charming house, bathed in light and peace, clinging to a hillside that looks out on infinity – a perfect place for meditation.

We wanted to know what it was in this first contact at Caux with Frank Buchman and his colleagues which had so captured a public man. Klaus brought out a book he had written after leaving his post as Chancellor, and read us the passage describing this encounter: 'Of course, what they were offering me was already part of the Catholic heritage; of course, we had learnt it during religious instruction and from the pulpit; of course, we had read it in the Bible, in the letters of St Paul, and in the writings of St Augustine and St Thomas. Nevertheless, it was these people who showed me its practical application in the spiritual battle.'

Klaus's face lit up as he explained this to us: 'I see very busy people – officials, businessmen, politicians, even artists – taking time to keep physically fit. For more than forty years I have spent five or ten minutes a day on exercises myself. But besides that, since my first visit to Caux

twenty-seven years ago, I have taken time each morning to keep spiritually fit.'

For Klaus this preparation for the day contains three elements – prayer, in the traditional Christian family style; the reading of a spiritual work; and finally reflection, pen in hand, on the day ahead. 'This practice was of particular help when I was at the height of my responsibilities,' he said. 'I would write down some thoughts, sometimes only a few sentences, on the events which awaited me. What should I do? What should I say? No details, but an orientation, sometimes simply an attitude to be taken. Then I felt prepared and sustained by a strength greater than my own. And when I went into the Chancellor's office at nine o'clock, I felt free and happy, even though I knew that my daily work was going to demand rapid and sometimes immediate decisions on policy and action.'

Klaus is a man who, as he says himself, has never worn a gag. When he was Minister of Finance he had to speak at a conference of the World Bank in New York. A series of his colleagues from the hundred or so countries represented had already expressed almost identical views on monetary stability, the international economic order and aid to developing nations. He considered that a new note was needed. So he emphasised the moral and spiritual principles which are essential in every responsible economic policy and in every development programme. The welcome given to his remarks in this forum of high finance was not overwhelming. One or two colleagues came and shook his hand in a rather silent fashion. But the Wall Street weekly, *The Banker*, headlined its report of the conference 'Spiritual and Moral Standards'.

By applying these principles to public life, the Austrian Minister of Finance sometimes earned a reputation for stubbornness. He held the view that a responsible financial policy

meant that the state should not spend more than it received. It was therefore impossible to satisfy everyone, and when one group or another had not gained the advantages it claimed a right to, the minister found himself adorned with every sort of label – anti-social and too socially minded, pro-American and Russophile, neutralist and NATO agent. Yet throughout his career he never allowed political opportunism to make him abandon the line of conduct he had set himself. It would be better, it seemed to him, to give up his position. And that is in fact what he did when he resigned as Minister of Finance in March 1963. In September of that same year his political friends visited him in his law office and offered him the post of President of the People's Party and therefore of Chancellor. Few men in European politics in the last decades have enjoyed this kind of moral authority.

When he was preparing for the first visit of an Austrian Chancellor to Yugoslavia since the war, Klaus insisted that exchanges between ideologically antagonistic governments should be bypassed and contact made with the people, in order to create good neighbourliness between the two countries. He was given time on Yugoslavian television. Speaking in Serbo-Croat, he talked of the difficult relationship which had existed between their two peoples for half a century, recognised the mistakes his own country had made, and expressed his confidence in the possibility of future cooperation, in spite of differences in economic and social systems.

Several hours later, the Austrian delegation was dining with Marshal Tito and other Yugoslav dignitaries. A general talked to his Austrian neighbour about the broadcast. Normally he switched off when Germany or Austria were mentioned, as his family had been decimated by soldiers of the Reich during the partisan struggle. But out of curiosity he and his wife had listened to the Chancellor's speech through

to the end. They had been touched by what he had said, and had talked about it together for a long time afterwards. They had decided that from now on they would adopt a new attitude, because they realised that by stifling every effort at dialogue, let alone every feeling of common humanity, they were risking the silencing of the voices of reconciliation.

In his official contacts, Klaus always tried to reach the real person. He describes his visit to President Johnson in the United States: 'After the welcoming ceremony – helicopter flight from the airport to the White House grounds, gun salutes, fanfares, military parade, speeches – I found myself alone with the President in his office. I immediately felt the weight of the burden which this man was carrying. His physical fatigue was evident. The wrinkles on his forehead, on a face still lively and tanned, had become small cords. His eyes wandered. His feet, up on a stool, moved all the time, like someone who has difficulties of circulation. None of this was surprising. Johnson had spent a good part of the night conferring with the military at Camp David on the Vietnamisation of the war in Indochina and the withdrawal of American troops. Martin Luther King had been assassinated a few days earlier, and riots had broken out all over the country. Besides this, Johnson's decision not to stand for re-election as President felt more like an admission of the failure of his policies than an approaching and welcome relief from the burdens of office.'

The Chancellor knew of the religious convictions held by the American President. His ambassador in Washington had told him that Johnson, on the eve of an important decision, had gone privately to a church for two hours to pray. 'I abandoned all the usual superficial phrases, banal condolences on the death of King, and tried, as Frank Buchman would have, to offer personal help, to talk man to man. And

from this angle I think our conversation was a help to the President.'

Klaus also told us about the day he spent with Khrushchev when he was First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This was in 1960. Khrushchev was on an official visit to Austria, and with his retinue – his wife, his two daughters, his son-in-law Adzhubei, Kosygin, Gromyko and other Soviet officials – was due to spend a day in the province of Salzburg. The programme included a visit to a huge hydro-electric complex at some distance from the provincial capital. This is Klaus's own description of events.

JOSEF KLAUS

We left by bus, and I was sitting beside Khrushchev. He very quickly got on the attack. The economy of the USSR, like the strength of Communism throughout the world, was developing rapidly. The gross national product, the production of heavy industry, and soon the production of consumer goods, were also growing more quickly in the Soviet Union than in the West, and would even surpass those of the United States.

Didn't he think that the United States and the West would rise to the challenge and move towards confrontation?

'Impossible,' replied Khrushchev, 'because capitalism would not be capable of it. We know the laws of nature and of society. That is our great advantage. Communism will soon have gained the victory over capitalism.'

I intimated that our form of capitalism was minor compared to the State capitalism of the USSR. Besides, another enemy had appeared at the very heart of the Communist-collectivist system and was threatening it more surely than any external enemy – the cult of personality. The human personality would always revolt against levelling, deprivation

of freedom, being under orders. This must also be true in the Soviet Union.

Khrushchev answered brusquely, 'With us it isn't the individual who decides, it's the Party, the collective.' I took leave to doubt this, and remarked that it was only necessary to look around me in this bus to confirm that one person was dominant and that there was no trace of collective consultation nor of sharing in decision-making. I received no reply.

We arrived at the great buildings at Moselboden. As a welcome to the many visitors from every country who came here, they had been decorated with a forest of flags. For some reason, the sight of all these flags rubbed my guest up the wrong way. He burst out, 'In my lifetime there will only be one flag flying here, the flag of international Communism triumphant!' Was this an exhibition of the special Khrushchev manner? I do not know. Whatever it was, I did not offer any remark.

After lunch, I found myself once more in the bus at Khrushchev's side and the ideological confrontation resumed at full tilt. The supreme master of Marxist dialectics tried to get me at bay. I had had enough, and, to put an end to the debate, I said without more ado, 'Mr First Secretary, I will tell you my political and social credo and then we'll stop this discussion. It is simple – the freedom and dignity of man.' Then, as if he wanted to coax me into his camp, Khrushchev put his hand on my arm and said warmly, 'The freedom and dignity of man are my ideal as well. You know, since I took the helm there are no more concentration camps in the USSR and no one is put in prison for religious or philosophical beliefs.'

I was conscious that there had indeed been a certain change in Russia, but I held to my point and said, 'If you

think that respecting the dignity and freedom of man simply means stopping sending people to Siberia, you underestimate your task. Why don't you allow your citizens to emigrate? Why don't you give them the freedom to work and live where they want? Why don't you tolerate other political parties besides your own?' Khrushchev seemed less sure of himself and got on the defensive: the USSR was surrounded by capitalist countries, so Marxist-Leninist teaching could not be applied so rapidly in all its purity; it was still necessary for the Soviet citizen to sacrifice his liberty for a certain period. . . .¹

Klaus does not take the story of this encounter any further. He quoted to us the sentence from *Cancer Ward* in which Solzhenitsyn writes of the 'indicator' which exists somewhere in the heart of each human being and which 'works in spite of everything'.² This meeting with the supreme head of international Communism had shown that in him, too, the indicator was still working.

But it was time to leave Dr Klaus and his wife. We had spent more than four hours with them. While we finished our tea, and before he came with us to the station, Klaus told us about the visit he had just made to the president of one of our countries. Three times in the course of the conversation the president had interrupted himself to say, 'What a good thing you came! Come back and see me again. This kind of conversation is what I most lack.'

As with the poor in the port and shanty towns of Rio, a current can pass from one person to the next among the great, the holders of power. In God's eyes, all are human beings.

¹*Macht und Ohnmacht in Oesterreich* by Josef Klaus, Verlag Molden (Vienna, 1971), p. 462.

²*Cancer Ward* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Penguin (London, 1971), p. 414.

10 Disarray and Destiny

Young people today experience very sharply some of the flagrant contradictions of our society, but they have not been given the preparation to face them. Education systems are being put in question. People are asking what knowledge to pass on, whether to teach a trade, what training to give. But is anyone daring to ask the question: what are the most crying existential needs of the young?

For centuries, society remained fixed within immutable structures. Everyone knew the well-defined place he or she occupied, each child inherited at birth a known framework. This established order, however questionable it may seem to us today, had at least the merit of offering each person a certain degree of security. This is why some want to cling to it.

Along with this hierarchical organisation of society went a system of education now called 'elitist'. The word 'hereditary' would seem more appropriate. In fact, while the sons of the privileged were educated and trained for careers which suited their status, the sons of peasants became peasants, and the sons of shoemakers became craftsmen. A factor passed from father to son which included not only the techniques of a trade but also a professional ethic, a way of life which flowed from the accepted structures. But this sectional

system, while it allowed each person to visualise his life and prepare for it, did not allow individual talents to blossom beyond fairly narrow boundaries.

So, as part of the evolution of society, more and more voices have been raised in the claim for the right to an 'egalitarian' education. Reforms in this direction have followed one after the other, and some progress has been made. But paradoxically, in the colleges and universities of the West and of the Third World, there are more rootless and disorientated young people than there have ever been. Faced with the possibility of preparing for every career, they do not know which to choose. If they have chosen a career, they are not certain of a job. If they have a job, they often do not find in it what they were looking for. From this insecurity is born rebellion.

To give everyone a chance of finding a place in society, there are attempts to give everyone the training which will meet the needs of the State. This notion has seduced various generous spirits. Angela Davis writes of the 'ideal socio-economic arrangement, that every person could give to the society according to his ability and his talents, and that in turn he could receive material and spiritual aid in accordance with his needs'.* But between the ideal which drew the young black militant American to Communism, and the reality in which the young of certain totalitarian countries live, there is a wide gulf. Wherever it has been applied, this system has created new inequalities. Having got rid of one elite, another has been installed.

Must disarray be the price of freedom, and constraint the price of equality?

The situation which faces young people in the contemporary

**An Autobiography* by Angela Davis, Hutchinson (London, 1975), p. 109.

world requires us to give them inner certainties which they can make theirs for life. There is no need to make a sociological study to realise that most of them are sailing with no compass or rudder to guide their journeying. They are drifting with the currents. 'Seen from outside, students can seem frightening,' says a young theologian who is in daily contact with students. 'They like to impress the bourgeoisie with their demonstrations. But you only have to talk with four or five of them to discover what misery their bravado is hiding. They are totally disorientated. They no longer know what is right and what is wrong, nor what philosophy to follow.'

There is within each human being a conscience which is ready to guide. Like our eyes, it has been given to us to see our way through life. But modern man has lost the art of using it. Not only are we hardly taught to respect it; great efforts are made to deny its existence. Nevertheless, each turning point in life calls for its use, each event is an opportunity to refine it, in ourselves and in others.

If you discover one evening that your small daughter has stolen peanuts from the supermarket, what is your reaction? Virtuous indignation, injured vanity, fear of having a delinquent on your hands – and the whole rigmarole of punishments and lies, and in the end repression and revolt? Or else indulgence: she is so little, and the theft is so minimal – and the beginning of the stifling of a conscience and, in the end, that insecurity?

'But no,' said the small girl, now a mother in her turn, 'when my parents found the shells in my pockets and saw my sheepish face, they simply suggested that the three of us should be quiet for a moment to listen to our own hearts. I knew quickly enough: I would go and see the shopkeeper and offer him my pocket money. My mother came as far as the shop door with me next day to give me courage. When

I came out, clutching to my chest the bag of peanuts the shopkeeper had given me to share out with my brothers and sisters, not only had I acquired respect for other people's property and an experience of victory over fear, but I also knew that there was an internal guide to turn to always.'

A banal little story, perhaps. But put it beside the experience which Jean-Paul Sartre went through at the same age and which he described in *Words**: 'I had been playing with matches and had burnt a mat; I was busy covering up my crime when suddenly God saw me. I felt His gaze inside my head and on my hands; I turned round and round in the bathroom, horribly visible, a living target. I was saved by indignation: I grew angry at such a crude lack of tact, and blasphemed, muttering like my grandfather: "Sacré nom de Dieu de nom de Dieu de nom de Dieu." He never looked at me again.' And the master of existentialism adds, 'Today, when He is mentioned, I say with the amusement and lack of regret of some ageing beau who meets an old flame: "Fifty years ago . . . without the accident which separated us, there might have been something between us."'

It makes one dream of what Sartre could have been had he listened to his childhood conscience. Would he have written, 'There is nothing in the sky, neither Good nor Evil, nor anyone to give me orders'? Would he have encouraged a whole generation to go in that direction? He himself calls this incident 'the story of a missed vocation'.

Many masters of thought have, over the last half-century, denied the existence of conscience. They have stated that they were thus opening the road of liberation. It seems to us that, on the contrary, the absence of inner direction has had the worst of consequences. It has led the family, the school, **Words* by Jean-Paul Sartre, Hamish Hamilton (London 1964), pp. 70-71.

the system, either to reinforce the barriers or to accept situations of chaos which in the end require intolerable restraints. It has allowed some to offer external replacement 'consciences' – Party conscience, people's conscience, proletarian conscience – which have become instruments of power for the more effective control of the masses. And finally, it has allowed people to wander down roads which have no way out, where they have fallen into slaveries like drugs. So where is the liberation?

'Education must see its principal assignment and mission in refining man's capacity to listen to his conscience,' wrote the Austrian psychiatrist Victor Frankl. 'Then he will be equipped, even in an age of meaninglessness, always to find meaning, that is to say, the unique meaning of each life situation. And out of his personal conscience he will in addition be capable of resisting both totalitarianism and conformism. So by an awakened and refined conscience he will overcome the existential vacuum.'

Frankl puts his finger here on the source of the confusion. The ambition of parents or teachers, the advice so generously strewn around, make it even more difficult for the adolescent to feel 'the unique meaning of his life situation'. He is already over-inclined either to conformity or to reaction. The existential vacuum can only be filled from within.

One young man we know found himself at the age of seventeen cooling his heels in a high school where the teaching was beyond him. He had the honesty to face himself and to recognise that he was not made for academic studies. He realised that he had been driven by fear of ending up working with his father in the family foundry. Freed from his inhibitions and clear on his capacities, he gave up studying and became an apprentice. Then he went to the foundry and for several years acted as assistant to his father. When the father

reached retirement age, he handed the reins to the son and became his assistant. The team spirit which they created in their workshops, the decision-sharing and profit-sharing with the employees which they established, are today a model for other companies.

This industrialist found his motive for living at the age of seventeen. How many people reach adulthood without ever finding theirs? The secretary of a Christian student organisation in Germany, Michael Herwig, says that one of the main problems he encounters with young people is the choice of studies, behind which lies the shadow of the question of how to give sense to a whole lifetime.

MICHAEL HERWIG

Each time I have an interview in depth with a student, after he has said everything and I have said everything it is the time of silence which brings inner certainty. If I just give advice, he will come back in a few days for more, and if I leave town he will be lost. That is why it is no good giving a glass of water, he has to find his own inner spring. Advice can be disputed, but it is the certainty born in silent reflection which allows each person to win his own battle.

I always have to aim at going deep enough. More than filling a gap, the point is to help human beings to put themselves at the disposition of the divine plan for the world. If a student comes to tell me that he or she does not know what studies to take up, I have no automatic answer to give. These questions of profession are the most difficult, because so much depends on them, and I do not want to take decisions for other people. But they do give me the chance to go further.

One day a girl came to ask my advice about her studies. I said to her, 'Perhaps you should begin by giving God the

whole of your life, your studies, everything you do.' This gave her a shock. She went off for a two-hour walk, and at the end of it she did take that fundamental decision.

Herwig sees giving one's life to God as the spiritual road which can lead to a destiny – a vocation, in the sense of a response to an interior call. It is not necessary to limit this word to its sense of 'religious vocation', which people sometimes want to do. One can only remain faithful for life to any undertaking if one has the certainty that it is God's will.

For Alec Smith, a young white African, this was clear: 'I discovered there was a difference between giving my life to God so that He could sort me out, and giving my life to God to work towards establishing His authority in the power structure of the country.' Smith did need to get sorted out. He had to give up drugs and become reconciled with his father, then Prime Minister of his country. But the sense of destiny which he subsequently found meant that he played an important part at a crucial moment as the link between two communities. Within the conscience the certainties are born which are then the source of a sense of destiny.

Like it or not, we are all educators. Each of our actions, each of our words influences those around us. No human being can cut himself off from this reality of the presence of others. Even a person who withdraws from the world – religious vocation, desert island or suicide – has by the very act been an example to other people, for good or ill. Each of us must ask himself or herself what mark is being printed on the people around, what values passed on, what destiny offered. All human beings need examples, and all are examples for others, at the same time teacher and taught. Each life is called to leave its mark. That is more than a profession.

11 Faiths

Many observers wonder what is the common ground of all those who say they are part of Moral Re-Armament. Seeing the variety of religions, beliefs and non-beliefs gathered under the same banner, they fear that individuals will allow their own heritage to become impoverished and will give allegiance to some vague common denominator to which everyone can rally. Experience, however, belies these fears.

Seeing the emphasis given to the absolute nature of moral principles, others have warned of the danger of a moralism which can only lead to emptiness. Nevertheless, many atheists have found religious belief from this starting-point.

Others wonder whether the aim of social transformation pursued by the people of Moral Re-Armament does not arise from a confusion of the ideological and religious domains, with the religious disappearing in the ideological. But this is not the impression of anyone who has been to a conference at Caux.

We, too, have asked ourselves all these questions. And sometimes we have been tempted to cut-and-dried answers. But it seems to us now that it is not possible to provide answers from a static position, because the subject matter is a dynamic. A flash photo of a runner at full tilt offers a poor image of his motion.

Some who come to Caux are agnostics, and they feel at home in an atmosphere where individual convictions are respected. They find themselves not in an institution, where one *is*, but in a dynamic of inner renewal which allows one to *become*. So not every agnostic who comes remains in that frame of mind, because this dynamic often takes people where they had never thought to go. The only thing that counts is for each person to accept to move forward as an inner light shows them the way.

Les Dennison is a builder in Coventry. Illegitimate and brought up without religious faith, he found in Marxism a struggle which suited his aspirations. He became a militant trade unionist. One day a friend pointed out that while he was struggling to unite the working class, he was allowing the greatest disunity in his own home. 'It hit me straight between the eyes,' he said. He mended his relationships with his son and his wife, and found that he had entered upon a dynamic of change which took him beyond Marxism.

One Sunday morning he went into a church. 'God,' he said, 'I'm in Your house. Let's have some evidence.'

At that moment the Anglican priest came up to him and asked, 'What's your trouble?' 'I'm trying to find if God's there.' 'Let's go and pray,' said the priest.

That day Dennison began to find a faith, which today is his motivating force. He has *become* one of those, both trade unionists and employers, whose moral stature has taken them beyond the social conflicts in Britain.

Soubert Son, a Buddhist from Kampuchea, was brought up by Jesuits. He writes*: 'I rejected everything I had learnt about Christianity, not because of the Christianity but be-

*In the Belgian Catholic magazine *Nouveaux Rhythmes du Monde* (nos. 3/4, 1974).

cause I associated this religion with Western culture.' The gulf between the two traditions seemed impossible to bridge: 'For Buddhists, every person must save himself by walking along the road Buddha showed us. For Christians, it is faith that saves.'

Torn between his ancestral Buddhist tradition and a Judaeo-Christian culture, Soubert Son went to the Moral Re-Armament centre at Panchgani in India. There he found people of all faiths, each following his own dynamic. 'The first step proposed by Moral Re-Armament is a moral change, a healing, a recognition of the failure of our basic nature.' Soubert accepted this first step. 'Having taken this moral step, the question of belief or non-belief in God no longer had any relevance. In fact, the only question I asked myself was whether I did or did not want to experience the spiritual life which leads to knowledge of God.'

He goes on: 'My hatred of Western influence, which I had come to look upon as cultural colonialism, left me. The point, in reality, was to come to terms with my personal conscience and stop isolating myself within an attitude of criticism and hatred. . . . I reached the summit. . . . All the contradictions disappeared.' Soubert, with his Eastern wisdom, adds, 'Christians have given God a name. Every person in the depth of his own heart gives Him a special name. Sectarianism and fanaticism arise from the belief that the name we ourselves give Him is the best one.'

An Indian paediatrician, a Hindu, told not long ago in Caux how he had been helped in his spiritual life by a Christian friend. This friend, knowing the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, had asked him, 'Do you read any holy book daily?' and offered him a copy of the Dhyana Gita. This led the doctor to get for himself a copy of the Bhagavad Gita. 'I enjoyed

this so much that now I wanted to know something about the Holy Bible. So I asked a Catholic nun where I could go to get a Bible commentary. So she gave me a commentary – by a Protestant. And this book has brought me really so much nearer to Jesus Christ. Now every morning I read the Bible and my Gita.’ He added, ‘God has taught me to treat each child who comes to the hospital as if he were my own.’ And he said, ‘If that young Christian had given me a Bible straight away, I would have reacted. Here was a good Christian who was guided by God.’

We had a conversation with a Moslem professor about our attitude to our respective religious convictions. ‘Moral Re-Armament allows us to work together on the basis of our highest common denominator,’ he said. ‘But we must not forget that the principles we share are the outcome of a larger body of teachings, which vary in number and in importance from one religion to another. We can become conscious of the aims and principles which we have in common, and make these the basis of joint action, but it must not be done at the cost of abandoning one’s own religion. We may emphasise certain teachings which are common to Islam and to other religions, but we do not abandon nor forget the rest of the teachings of Islam.’ He quoted in Arabic, and then translated for us: ‘The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then he between whom and thee there was enmity will become as though he were a loyal friend.’*

He felt, as we felt, that a believer cannot tamper with the indivisible nature of his belief, and therefore he and we found ourselves taking religious positions which were humanly irreconcilable; but we can take common action to

*Koran (XLI, 34).

'repel evil', and we then become 'loyal friends'. The professor clarified this: 'If a person disguised his belief because it was different from the prevailing one, in order to please a group, he would lose nearly everything he had to offer. Our cooperation must be based on openness about our own religious practices and characteristics.'

It is in this spirit that we have seen Moslems and Christians working together for many years, sharing with each other their own spiritual discoveries. 'Wisdom is like the believer's lost property,' said our friend, quoting the Prophet. 'Wherever he finds it, he claims it.'

What the men and women of Moral Re-Armament have in common is not common ground, but that they are moving forward together, with the same wind propelling them in the same direction. Christians give a name to the wind, putting in one word their ultimate destination. Others go forward in their own tradition. Maurice Mercier, the French trade unionist who has appeared in an earlier chapter, did not regard himself as a believer but used the expression 'convergence' – the convergence of all these roads.

Frank Buchman, who had been ordained as a Lutheran minister, never tried to create a denominational or interdenominational organisation. What was important to him was not a static grouping but a dynamic current, a forward process – something which cannot be called a 'movement' as the word has lost all dynamic sense. For him, any person advancing on the road of God could help another person along that road in the way shown by their own culture and tradition. Buchman had a conception of a plurality of roads which brought him to respect the heritage of each. If people could not all have the same *being*, they could have the same *becoming*.

All his life Buchman was part of the modern development which has allowed people of different faiths to enrich each other spiritually. He liked to talk of his ancestor Theodore Bibliander, who shocked the Zürich Academy in the sixteenth century by producing the first Latin translation of the Koran. The Swiss scholar Theophil Spoerri has written that Buchman inherited this spirit. It is a fact that he took an early interest in the souls who did not belong inside the circle of his Lutheran church. In India and China in 1915 he realised the futility of the competition between different Christian denominations in face of the immense needs of these nation-continent. In 1930, he met the Primate of Sweden, the Lutheran Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, one of the chief initiators of the ecumenical movement. Söderblom saw in the action which Buchman was leading the practical expression of the spirit he was looking for, and wrote to him:

‘The work that God has chosen you for cannot be too highly appreciated. I have felt from the very beginning of our modern unity-strivings how necessary it is never to build only on human arrangements and fellowship in thoughts and plans. There must be, as you write, and as you act, a deeper unity.

‘We need that individual renewal and that deepening of our Christian unity to an utmost degree. Without the perfect sincerity that is created by God’s presence, no real unity is possible that is able to conquer all human prides, sensibilities and shortcomings. Your concern is for what faith and life most need – the absolute sovereignty of Christ in our hearts, words and deeds.’

This was written over fifty years ago.

When Frank Buchman arrived in Europe in 1946, the centre of his action was Caux, which is on the boundary

between the Protestant canton of Vaud and the Catholic cantons of Fribourg and Valais – in other words, on the border of northern Protestant Europe and southern Catholic Europe. Mgr François Charrière, then Bishop of Fribourg, invited Buchman to Rome in May 1947, for the canonisation of the Swiss saint Nicholas von der Flue. That was the first of a series of visits which took him nearly every year to Rome or elsewhere in Italy.

Buchman met with much misunderstanding among those who held a static view of traditional confessional compartments, but he also found many men in the church who like him were on the move and wanted to take mankind forward on a new tide. But Buchman died in 1961, before this tide had begun to move, thanks to Pope John XXIII, towards the openness which we know today.

It is hardly surprising that the people gathered and trained by Buchman have played a special role in countries where large communities from differing religions live side by side, and where no one section can solve national problems alone. Caux was, for example, the place where Moslems from North Africa could meet the French at the time of the independence struggles. These men looked for a way, under the authority of God, to release their nations from the conflicts into which they had entered – a search which at times had a markedly positive influence on the political plane.

In the Sudan there has been a reconciliation between the Moslem North and the Christian and animist South. Some of the men whom we have met at Moral Re-Armament conferences have played a decisive role in producing this solution. 'We are all children of God,' said Buchman to the first Sudanese delegation which went to the United States to meet him.

In Vietnam, Buddhists and Christians would meet to

spend time in silence together, to listen to the inner voice which they called by different names, to pray and to think through what they should do for their country.

India, a country of multiple religions, needs to find a way to reunite her children. At Panchgani, the Moral Re-Armament centre, the Hindu who lives there with his family, the Baptist from the North-East, the Parsee journalist, the Catholic Archbishop on a visit, can all feel entirely at one in the service of their country in the sight of God.

Modern communications have made the world into one large community. They also require us to come out of our religious ghettos and find the vocabulary, the attitudes, the behaviour which will allow all people to unite in a common spiritual battle. Buchman's contribution was to have sensed this need before events forced it upon the consciousness of our generation.

Having lived now for thirty years in an atmosphere of deep brotherhood between people of different faiths, the two of us – one Catholic, the other Protestant – would like to offer one simple reflection.

What has united us – ourselves and all those with whom we have worked – has never been what we were. We have recognised our differences, given up certain prejudices, learnt to respect one another; but none of this could have welded us together.

What has united us is that we have all accepted to walk the road of an inner renewal which has obliged each of us to deepen our faith, to draw on the resources which our respective religious traditions made available to us.

What has united us has been our readiness to grow, to expand into the dimension of the love of God for mankind.

12 Riches in Poverty

Poverty of possessions can be a source of discouragement. But what really is poverty? The materialist world has produced a strange attitude towards it, which has narrowed its meaning. Poverty is considered only a material state, to be measured in statistics like standard of living and per capita annual income, presented by economists in terms of one Western currency or another. But we have observed for ourselves the richness of human warmth among the people who live in the streets of India and, in contrast, the destitution in the fur-coated cocktail society of Paris. The materialist world has become incapable of recognising its own poverty.

In the West, material poverty is both an evil and an ideal. The evil must be tackled as if it were cancer or bilharzia. Those who suffer from it must be rescued, and by material means: funds, organisations, new financial laws. This approach has its uses, of course, but it is the product of a purblind view – blind to another sort of poverty which these very means create. The ideal is the inaccessible perfection admired in monks, missionaries and other dedicated people who have chosen to live in poverty, but whom ‘common sense’ forbids one to follow.

But there is a richness of life which is the privilege of

those who choose poverty, as there can be a great poverty in the lot of the rich. The work of God through history shows Him using poor means against powerful forces laden with wealth. The frail child in Bethlehem, who had to sleep in a manger, upturned the history of humanity. Then there were two figures in the first century, a prisoner who came to Rome and was eventually beheaded, and the powerful emperor to whom he had appealed. There were the Catholic kings and the popes who rallied immense armies to confront Islam, and the *poverello* of Assisi who went alone to talk to the Saladin. Closer to us, think of the huge proportion of the gross national product of the Soviet Union which is devoted to defending socialist achievements, and the solitary conviction of a few individuals which is shaking that regime.

In this permanent historical confrontation, the rich and powerful are always blind to the forces of the non-rich, because they are unable to imagine any wealth or power of a different order from their own. They are unaware of this other dialectic of history, an alternative to the one analysed by Karl Marx.

There is an adventurous and revolutionary basis for undertaking any enterprise: 'Where God guides, He provides.' Both of us have at times found ourselves alone in a strange country, without money or anywhere to live, wondering where the next day would come from. But God is Providence, and in an eminently practical fashion. We have had to learn to live 'by faith and prayer', and not to become paralysed by being penniless or by our ignorance of people or situations.

A 'North-South' conference was held in Paris between industrialised and developing nations, and two young Frenchwomen wrote to each of the twenty-seven ministers attending it. They wrote with faith and sincerity about the

hope which young people were placing in this conference, as they feel so strongly the need for greater justice between rich and poor nations. One of the joint presidents of the conference invited them to come and talk about the conviction which had impelled them to write, and introduced them to his staff and to others of the delegates. God can give an authority which surpasses that given by man, however powerful.

One Easter several years ago a friend from the Philippines was at the family table in the home of one of us. This distinguished visitor, who had been Secretary of Agriculture in the Magsaysay government, was far from his own family on this special day, so we shared with him some thoughts we had had about that. He listened and thanked us, and then turned to Christine, the seventeen-year-old Canadian who was helping to look after the children: 'And what about you? Have you something to say too?' Christine blushed a little, hesitated, and then said in a clear voice, 'It seems to me that you are an impatient man.'

Our visitor blushed in his turn, hesitated too, and then said, 'You are the first person who has had the courage to say that to me.'

Five years later we were lunching at Vevey in Switzerland with the same Filipino, whom we had not seen since. 'What's happened to Christine?' he asked. 'I've never forgotten what she said to me. It is true that I am an impatient man.'

Christine had found in herself the authority to tell the truth to a man old enough to be her grandfather. When we asked him for permission to tell this story, he answered, 'Put my name in too, if you want.'

Many people feel helpless before the gigantic mechanism of modern society. God, however, puts into our hands weapons

which may seem powerless but which are capable of penetrating the thickest armour. One simple weapon is silence. Frank Buchman taught us to take enough time each day to place ourselves before God and ask for His illumination. It is a simple discipline whose value is understood as it is practised.

If we believe there is a Master of our conscience, we can say to this Master as resolutely and clearly as to a person sitting opposite us: 'Speak to me – I'm listening.' We can ask this Master what he has to say. We cannot confine him to our own dilemmas – should I turn right, should I turn left. He might want us to go straight ahead; he might want to talk to us about something quite else. If the Master seems silent, we must examine the wall separating us from him, the sin we are fond of and to which we give a comforting name. We have to choose between our Master and this sin.

Our own experience is that the time of reflection in the morning can, unless one is careful, take on the habit of sliding into intellectual meditation or of sorting out the day's programme. A Moslem mystic from Alexandria said, 'He who is negligent awakens in the morning by considering what he is going to do; and he who is wise by considering what God will do with him.' We have known many religious people, in the habit of meditating, who have also had to decide afresh to listen.

Even more important, this discipline reveals the simplicity with which this voice can be heard in the heart of every person you meet, whoever he or she is. You can, in the most natural way in the world, suggest to the person you are talking with that you should both be quiet and allow this internal voice to speak. A Dominican, who had been asked by two laymen over lunch to be quiet with them, wrote to us a few days later, 'The suggestion of these two men was

a shock. I realised that I, a religious man, had never had the courage to suggest this to my own visitors.'

The Swiss journalist Karl Wick wrote on Buchman's death*, 'Frank Buchman has taken the silence of reflection from the cloister to the minister's study, the industrialist's office, the workshop.' We have seen many times the extraordinary change of direction which comes into a situation after a few minutes spent in silence by a person not much used to facing his or her conscience. We have sat in silence in a Swiss banker's office, in a Communist ambassador's reception room, in a Montreal docker's living room. An old trade unionist advised his colleagues, 'If you are fighting for justice, you know that in the person you are talking to there is a voice which also fights for justice. So let that voice speak – it will do a better job than you.'

To be silent in your heart, to allow the One who knows to speak, is to have access to a Wisdom greater than your own. A cabinet minister who was taking on a heavy responsibility for the economy of his country said to us, 'What I find disconcerting is that the more we have of experts, studies and computers for grasping economic realities, the more we find that the realities are eluding us.' He is not alone in this confusion. He was rather surprised and pensive when we told him later the thoughts which had come to us about his situation: 'Your job is not to become prime minister. But if you take enough time for listening and meditation, you could bring a new dimension of wisdom into the government.'

To be quiet and listen is to discover that He who knows better than we do can illuminate our intelligence and reveal a part of the hidden face of things. Or, to put it another way, it can raise our mind towards the universal view whose lack we deplore in so many decisions. The fashion in uni-

**Vaterland*, 9 August 1961.

versity life is for 'plural disciplines'. Silence gives access to the wisdom of the Master of plural disciplines.

'It is in the morning, before all distractions and all human contact, that we must listen to God. Write, to hear the Word better and to retain what He says.' So recommended the French priest Alphonse Gratry. In our noisy twentieth century, should this not be the first of our disciplines?

The second weapon we are offered is the irresistible force of moral values lived out as absolutes. We all have the tendency to tolerate our own 'little sins': as long as the main lines of life are straight, we think, a few little blurs don't matter. This is an understandable human view, but one which robs us of an opportunity God wants to give us. The blur becomes a screen which means that people cannot see God at work in what we do.

A young man arrived late one morning at the factory where he had just begun working. This would not help the reputation he was building for himself, so he tried to put together a valid reason. But in an instant of silence he was reminded, 'Whatever happens, be absolutely honest.' He had to stop a moment in the factory courtyard to recover his courage before he said to the foreman, 'When my alarm went off this morning, I stopped it and went back to sleep.' No comment. But later the foreman came back and said, 'In the fifteen years I have been here, you are the first person who has arrived late and told me the truth.' That evening they had a conversation which was decisive in the foreman's life. He changed from being an authoritarian, and his change affected the life of the factory.

This kind of experience comes to everyone who has the courage to go as far as the absolute. 'God is not interested in the ninety-five per cent you have given Him,' said Buch-

man, 'but in the last five per cent you have kept back.' Buchman offered four standards of reference against which to gauge one's life: absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love. In our modern world these absolutes, when they are accepted, cut through to the quick. A businessman friend of ours is unstoppable when he begins to describe the shock waves which his decision to be absolutely honest produced in the top echelons of the tax department, among his suppliers, his customers and his lawyers – truly a rock thrown into the pool.

But there are other weapons available as well: our failure to reach the absolute. The dialectic of God is astonishing, because it permits defeats to be turned into victories. In a marriage, apologies for the clashes of daily life become a cement which binds as firmly as expressions of affection and love.

One day we were walking along a corridor of the Caux centre with a politician when an Arab teacher came up to him. 'I have hated you,' he said, and listed the decisions made by the politician which had caused this hatred. Then he went on, 'I have learnt here not to hate, and I ask your forgiveness.' A long conversation began there in the corridor, and at the end they parted with a warm handshake. The politician turned to us and said, 'That man was not under any obligation to say those things to me, but he did. He has taught me a lesson.' The politician was Robert Schuman, Foreign Minister of France.

Apologies, forgiveness, recognition of one's own mistakes, represent today a dynamic whose effectiveness has been proved in family life and in factory and office, in political life and international relations. Discoveries in this realm

between father and son, husband and wife, are also valid for managing directors and government leaders.

The Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Josef Bech, received his old friend Konrad Adenauer on an official visit, and was surprised to find the German Chancellor apologising to him, on behalf of the German people, for the behaviour of the Nazis towards the people of Luxembourg. Bech told us, 'Adenauer's gesture moved me all the more because there were no witnesses, and I knew enough of his life to know that he had himself been a victim of the Nazi regime.'

Each time we have been able to establish a relationship of confidence with a Chinese man or woman, we have discovered, as vivid as if it had happened yesterday, the resentment left by the shocking behaviour of the International Expedition in 1900. This ancient people has a long memory. Who will be the European statesman, from west or east, who will understand the mistakes of his or her predecessors and have the courage to ask forgiveness for them? This question, like many others, must be answered by somebody. The peace of the world could depend on a simple Christian gesture.

In its traditional dimension, the poverty of God is expressed by the way we handle what has been entrusted to us, in particular whatever money we have – or do not have. Sex, power and money are the secret springs of many actions. They are a part of the collective property which God has entrusted to each person. Everyone is free to use them for selfish purposes to the detriment of the collective; everyone who does that corrupts themselves. Everyone is also free to put them under the authority of God to be used for the progress of the world. The three traditional vows of some religious orders – chastity, poverty and obedience – are the expression of a special surrender in these domains. Each

person has to find the way in his or her particular circumstances to allow the authority of God to penetrate these realms.

To be accountable before God for what one possesses offers a life of adventure. This at least is the experience of many people we know, young people and heads of families, company directors and leaders of large organisations. It means at times extreme prudence, to be certain of using to the best advantage what they have been entrusted with, and at other times a mad daring to rely on Providence to supply the needs of what they have undertaken. They have learnt to treat the smallest and largest sums of money with the same thrift and generosity – thrift, because there is no threshold below which God has no right in their affairs, and generosity because they need to treat others with the same generosity that God has shown towards them.

Buchman was a past master at teaching these lessons. A young man came to join him for forty-eight hours in an Italian town. Buchman enquired how much money he had in his pocket. 'Almost nothing.' 'Well, I have had the thought to share with you the money I have been sent today.' He asked a colleague how much money had come in the mail. This man went off and fetched a pile of envelopes, and then read out the names of people scattered round the world who had sent gifts – five Swiss francs here, two hundred dollars there. Buchman, who had not yet been through his correspondence, asked what it all added up to. The total was fairly large. Buchman turned to his young colleague: 'You're going to be rich!' And he immediately wrote out a cheque for half the total amount.

In truth the young man was rich – richer than he had ever been. All the shop windows, until that moment filled with inaccessible objects, suddenly contained possible pos-

sessions. Half a dozen handkerchiefs – quite useless, in the absence of any cold – became the first actual possessions. But these six handkerchiefs generated a long internal meditation on the corrupting power of money, the consumer society, how to handle possessions. Five weeks later, Buchman undertook the production of a film and began to raise large sums of money through the generosity of many donors. The amount of the cheque was returned to him, minus the price of six handkerchiefs. As the handkerchiefs had hardly been used, twenty years later they were still there as a reminder of the lesson. So they were after all a useful investment.

A young woman colleague of ours who went to serve in distant countries wrote, ‘Each tube of toothpaste I buy, each journey I undertake, represents the generosity of one person – or of 120, for my journey to Africa. For these people, helping me is a personal commitment of their will, their possessions, their soul and their heart. How could I deny them this commitment by not living by faith?’

A harijan in India decided to stop smoking, and his family’s standard of living rose by thirty per cent. It is out of solidarity with people like him that neither of us smoke. There are many things like this which the poverty of God takes away from us and then enriches us with.

The vast international action we are associated with – the upkeep of many centres, the publication of books, the production of plays, the financing of intercontinental travel – has rested and continues to rest on this unshakeable faith in Providence. A subject of mystery for those who refuse the experience of His generosity, Providence remains the only source of true and authentic security – the only certain investment, stockbrokers would call it.

These are a few of the basic lessons which we have learnt and which are open to everyone. We could have written of others. There are, for instance, the prayer and the listening silence which have become simple acts, sometimes collective, which belong in the kitchen as well as backstage in a theatre, before a meeting or at the end of a talk with a friend. We have also had to learn to do nothing, to be like a broom hung behind the door, happy to wait until someone needs it to do some sweeping.

13 Meditation in Action

Many Christians – clergy and lay people – look in vain for a balance between spiritual life and active life. They either fall for the temptation of activity – political, union, social – and let their spiritual life keep up as it can; or they succumb to the lure of a spiritual search which soon cuts them off from the responsibilities which they should be carrying. In the first instance, their spiritual life runs the risk of withering from contact with other active people whose concerns are not the same as theirs. In the second, they confirm the prejudices of those who think that Christians are incapable of taking any action to change society. ‘In the world’ or ‘out of the world’ seems to be the dilemma.

Frank Buchman was at the same time a man of action and a man of prayer, a man who could move crowds and a man of silence, a man deeply involved in the great questions of the age and a man of detachment who knew how to let other people take action. The heritage of wide experience which he left has made its mark on both of us. He had a genius for passing on certain truths, which he had no doubt discovered through his mistakes.

We have learnt to mistrust activity as an end in itself. Even if it is undertaken in response to an inner call, it can in fact take the place of that call and become a framework

for the development of our own ego. An uncertainty comes in. We are no longer sure whether the field we are working in still belongs to the Father or whether, out of the habit of being in it, we consider it our own property.

A friend hired a gardener to look after the vegetable garden, and told him that he could take any vegetables which he himself did not eat. It was not very long before the gardener came to him and announced, 'You can keep the lettuce – I don't need it.' We often find ourselves behaving like the gardener. God entrusts us with a mission. We take it over and ask God, with utmost sincerity, to help us to fulfil our mission. Our friend laughed gently when he told us the story of his gardener. Probably God does the same.

The wider the action in which we are involved, the more aware we must be of these realities. There are certain signs which can make us prick up our ears. Do we get resentful rather than being pleased if someone succeeds better than us in the sector where we feel we are doing a good job? Do we prefer a small kingdom over which we can reign, like a toad in a puddle, rather than feeling like a fish lost in the ocean? Do we find it easier to work alone than with others? A deep honesty about the smallest contractions of the heart prevents the establishment of this uncertainty which allows the Father's domain to become unawares our own domain.

Do we give details their true importance? The employer thinks his role is to draw the main lines and not to concern himself with the small details. The servant knows he will be judged by how clean the corners are. What about the corners in our activity? What about the corners in our lives? Shoes uncleaned, bedroom not tidied, letters unanswered, a drift in the disciplines of prayer and meditation, can be like fungus on a branch, the advance warnings of a sickness which could devour the whole tree.

Sex offers several corners where the man or woman of action can let dirt accumulate out of carelessness. It is the fashion, even in certain religious circles, to be indulgent towards the behaviour of others, as this allows a certain indulgence towards oneself. This apparently liberal attitude seems to develop as soon as we ourselves become the centre of what we are doing. As long as concessions to sexuality do not interfere with our activity, we think, they are unimportant details. But in fact the self-gratification they produce deflects the real satisfaction which comes from serving others. Not to have the courage to live, to offer and to expect of others the virtue of purity seems a deeply pessimistic capitulation to the domination of human selfishness over the world.

Young people who are challenged with a demanding purity seem to find the answer to their concerns more surely in that than in the shilly-shallying of those who want to win their confidence by being accomplices in their defeats.

The word *sin* has been folded up and put away in the sacristan's cupboard by the contemporary world. People are afraid to bring it out again in case certain other people think they are out of date. We can only wish good luck to these self-styled modernists.

Activity without a sense of sin becomes sterile activism. By referring constantly to absolute moral principles, we are always brought to turn to God for the strength to overcome the weaknesses of our nature and for the light to guide our steps. Some people of good will and good works bewail their inability to influence those around them. The cure to their ineffectiveness may be closer at hand than they would care to admit.

We want to *do*. God invites us to *be*. Life teaches us, if we are attentive, the ineffectiveness of *doing*. We can give

ourselves the illusion of fruitfulness by filling the day with activities and contacts, and miss the only important activity – enough time for silence and prayer; and the only important contact – with our Father. We can, on the other hand, rest in the simple effectiveness of *being* where God wants us, as He wants us.

Frank Buchman, in *Remaking the World**, tells of an experience in 1908 which marked his life.

FRANK BUCHMAN

My first venture was a home for working boys in an industrial city. I wanted them to have sufficient food and the right surroundings. . . . I had difficulties with my Board. They did not understand the problems of nutrition and training. We got up against each other, and it was then that I learnt that I too, like those children, wanted to have my own way. . . . For the first time I saw myself with all my pride, my selfishness, my failure and my sin. 'I' was the centre of my own life. If I was to be different, then that big 'I' had to be crossed out. I saw the resentments I had against six men standing out like tombstones in my heart. I asked God to change me, and He told me to put things right with those six men. I obeyed God and wrote six letters of apology. That same day God used me to change another man's life. . . . I learnt the truth that when man listens, God speaks; when man obeys, God acts; when men change, nations change.

A young priest said before leaving a gathering at Caux, 'I owe an apology to everyone here, as representatives of the human family, as I do to God, for having turned away from the path of listening to God. I have let myself be taken over

* *Remaking the World* by Frank N. D. Buchman, Blandford (London, 1961), pp. 83,187.

not only by the desire but by the passion for knowledge, and so I have almost stopped asking God what He wants of me. I realise that over the past years I have been guided from outside, not from within, and because of that I have been ineffective – unable to help anyone at all to advance on the road to God.’

The Indian journalist Rajmohan Gandhi, who draws on the wisdom both of Buchman and of his grandfather Mahatma Gandhi, says, ‘God works most of the time without us, sometimes through us, often in spite of us.’

Buchman was a remarkable organiser. He chartered planes, moved 200 people at a time round the world, coordinated the activities of men and women at work in many countries. But he said to us time and again, ‘If you haven’t trained ten people to do your work better than you do it yourself, you have done nothing.’ In this respect he showed the same spirit as the founders of the religious orders.

A distinguished churchman who had been to Caux decided to create an organisation which would do the same kind of work. He erected vast buildings in a suburb of Rome and gathered there a good hundred priests and monks. He then invited Buchman to come and speak to them. We passed through Rome some days later, and Buchman said to us, ‘I accepted the Father’s invitation rather reluctantly, and I spoke to all those respectable people, who were all more learned than I. But if he thinks he will get people on the move that way, I think he is in for some disillusion.’

Buchman used to say, ‘It’s no use throwing eye-medicine out of a second-storey window.’ He regarded any activity from the point of view of the men and women whom it would win and train. The only result which interested him was the increase in faith which it created in individual

people. That was the true measure of what had been passed on, once what was done had been done, and what was said had been forgotten. In fact, from one end of the world to the other, you meet people today who were affected by Buchman and who are almost the only inheritance he left.

He left no successor. He was the leader of those around him because of his own spiritual authority. But as no position had been instituted, there was none to pass on. Those who wanted to continue what he started have had to learn to work together. This is a need felt in many situations. The complexity of today's problems and the multiplicity of circumstances cannot be processed through one person's mind alone, and many groups are trying to create a team which can work as one; but many are also discouraged by the frictions which this creates.

Communist leaders have asked us how the people responsible for Moral Re-Armament, representing so many different viewpoints and coming from different races and countries, can work together. It has been a surprise to them to discover that the coordination of a multiplicity of initiatives in many countries depends not on a hierarchical organisation but only on the bonds of unity between people who consider themselves equals. To judge by their questions, they are not wholly satisfied by the workings of the different Soviets and the various branches of their Party.

Religious dignitaries have asked us the same questions. Collegiality is in fact recommended by many of them, although it proves to have its difficulties. We were talking about this with a priest in Rome. Three essential points seemed to sum up what we have learnt ourselves through constant joint decision-making on issues which can be fairly complex.

First, collegiality can only exist when each person feels

responsible for the whole and not only for a section. This assumes that each one is conscious of an authority over him or her, the Master who has the only overall view of the situation. Capability must take second place to obedience to this authority. Anyone who believes he himself has an overall view is a source of discord in a group working together.

Next, it is essential to have true friendship among those who are in the group. This is perhaps not possible with everyone when there are many present; but there must be enough bonds of brotherhood between people two by two, so that no one feels isolated and each one feels surrounded by friends.

Last, it is a fundamental necessity that this friendship be of a quality which allows people to correct each other and be corrected when the need arises.

Our friend stopped us. 'I think we manage the first two points,' he said. 'But as for the third, I'm too polite to my colleagues.' A member of a large religious order told us, 'No one in our ranks dares to correct anyone else. Even our superior only does it in extreme cases.'

Buchman often said to us, 'I have to risk my relationships with my friends every day.' The writer had frequent experience of this. In his last conversation with Buchman, he was briskly put in his place: 'Yesterday you came to see me, and your report was so full of the part you had played yourself that I can't remember anything else.' The comment was deserved. Ten days later, Buchman was dying. The memory of this conversation remains vivid, because it was a normal outcome of friendship with him. The two authors of this book have punctuated their own friendship, no doubt inadequately, with such correctives. This is part of the joy of working together.

Risking relationships can sometimes mean losing the

friendship of the person you have been frank with. This price must be paid by anyone who wants to hold to the line they feel is straight. We ourselves have watched certain people who were close to us take another course. The brotherhood of people who worked with Buchman has had its splits, as all human groupings have. There is then a great temptation to think that you yourself are on the right side, and it is others who have strayed. In such circumstances an attitude of charity is a test of availability to God. Every time we have judged another person, the diverging paths have hardened and the links have become almost impossible to renew. When we have accepted the situation with charity, regarding it as an opportunity to see where we have been wrong ourselves, God – to our great astonishment – has often created a renewal of friendship Himself.

Our unity depends on our unity with God, and not on any institutional links between us. This has been our experience. We offer it with humility, for who can dare to be certain of still remaining within that demanding unity tomorrow?

14 Auxiliaries of God

Every person is asked to be a discoverer, to set out on unknown roads and blaze a trail for future generations to follow. But fear of the unknown makes most of us prefer the comfortable roads already tried out by the majority. We feel secure on them because everyone else is there too. The roads of conformity have always attracted crowds, and have never led mankind anywhere. Humanity progresses at the speed with which a few people find the courage to open up new ways – for Gandhi it was non-violence, for Baird it was television, for Mother Teresa it is absolute respect for life.

Sitting in an airport lounge waiting with 450 other passengers to board one of the jumbo jets which cross the Atlantic every twenty minutes, you say to yourself that there is not much adventure in such a journey. But it took a Genoese setting off with a few friends in three sailing ships on August 3, 1492, to open up this route. The first journey was followed immediately by others, each one discovering more of what became known as 'the new world'. Before Columbus died, fourteen years after his first voyage, 200 ships had already made the crossing. The path of adventure was already becoming a well-marked route. But think how many daring exploits, crazy adventures, brilliant inventions it has taken since then to arrive at the placid routine of the jumbo jets.

Where are the realms for the Christopher Columbuses of our age to explore? When Diocletian inaugurated his grandiose thermal baths in 306, he may have been under the impression that he was advancing the art of social life which was blossoming in Rome and other places at the time. But the pomp of empire was coming to an end, and a hundred years later death walked the ruins of this masterly edifice. Life, on the other hand, was born from the tomb of the 30,000 Christians whom Diocletian used to build the baths and then massacred.

Our generation must ask where the roads to the future lie. Our universities are producing researchers by the row. They jostle each other in the narrow field of science, to the point where the vigour of scientific progress is endangering the inner balance of our society. Modern man has been given means which he uses without discernment. Techniques of death advance beside techniques of life, the globe becomes polluted in one area while it is cleared of disease in another. We have sent men to the moon, but was that truly a road to the future for mankind?

No one any longer holds the illusion that even the most revolutionary scientific discovery could of itself improve the world we live in. Contemporary man, with his technical progress, has created a social machine of enormous complexity in the midst of which he feels small, crushed, ground down. Each invention which increases the power, the potential and the size of the machine only enhances his feelings of servitude and frustration.

The time has come for discoveries in the moral and spiritual realm. Charles de Foucauld, going off to pray in the desert, seemed to be following a road already explored by innumerable hermits. But in the writings which he left, there was something totally new. In the spiritual desert of his

generation, he opened up a way which is today being followed by hundreds of men and women. In the same way, some of the people in this book have set out into the unknown, looking for a new world. Some of the roads they have followed have been described so that others can explore them in their turn, and push further forward in the same directions. There are obviously many roads. But among the multitude of tasks to which people of our generation could devote their lives, some are both urgent and open to everyone.

First, people must learn to get on with each other. For centuries the distance which a horse could cover in a day fixed the size of principalities. By allowing us to reach the other side of the world in less than twenty-four hours, the airplane has reduced our planet to the size of the principalities of yesterday. Seen from the same perspective, the problems between races, nations, political systems have taken on the dimensions of parish feuds. Yesterday villages learnt to respect each other; today peoples and continents must learn the same.

We have seen some people set themselves simply to help individuals to understand each other, to overcome prejudices and antagonisms. All of us in our daily life meet people we tend to brush aside because they are of another race, another generation, another school of thought, another way of life. What do we do with the chances we are given to bring mankind together in one large family?

A Canadian friend said one day to an official in North Africa, 'You are as near to God as you are to the person from whom you feel most divided.' The North African, who had thought himself a good Moselm, was so shaken that he went immediately and became reconciled with his mortal

enemy. Who are the people we feel separated from? They are never at the other end of the world, but close at hand. The unity of mankind starts with us, where we are.

We can create new relationships in our communities. Talking to Italian- and German-speaking inhabitants of the Southern Tyrol some years ago, Rajmohan Gandhi said, 'How can we hope to solve the confrontations between all our communities in India if your two communities, which are both Christian, can't get on together?' The people listening were shaken, and played a decisive part in resolving the tensions in that part of Italy. This did not go unnoticed in India.

By becoming reconciled with those from whom we have cut ourselves off, we can be examples for other people to follow. And we will become closer to all the inhabitants of our planet. The longest journey begins with the first step.

Our generation must also make the riches of the world available for the use of everyone and the exploitation of no one. When people talk of the sharing of wealth, the mind conjures up images of the fabulously rich in glossy magazines and the skin-and-bones beings on faraway continents. But we risk settling comfortably between the extravagance of one lot – we're not like them! – and the distance of the other lot – we can't do anything for them! If we let our conscience speak, no doubt we will understand where we are involved.

A young man who had been demonstrating in the streets against imperialism and capitalism understood how he had exploited the girls he had been going out with. A former bank director realised that he had cheated the community by a false tax declaration. A girl apologised to her family for having treated their home like a hotel.

We can also learn to live not for ourselves but other

people, and find out how to give the most to them instead of taking the most from them. In the family and at work are natural places to begin. 'I have decided to do a full day's work for a full day's pay,' said a British worker. This attitude, if widely adopted, would produce a new economy. There is enough in the world for what everyone needs, but not for what everyone wants.

Why could not people everywhere – doctors, craftsmen, architects, farmers, industrialists, businessmen, workers – begin to blaze trails in this realm, using honesty and unselfishness, as well as love for their fellows, as guidelines? Would they not see the politicians following them and taking action to redress the injustices between peoples? We cannot leave it to the experts of the World Bank, the Club of Rome or UNCTAD to create a new world order. This will germinate around people who, like those whose stories we have told, will cut through the inextricable economic jungle a great axis of new relationships based on respect for all human beings.

A further task for our generation will be to make good the spiritual deficit in modern man left by the material progress of the last century. Lacking any perspective on his existence, man today does not know what to do with the immense possibilities open to him. He travels and meets no one. He reads and learns nothing. He runs through life and does not know where he is going.

The first place to find an answer to this crisis and regain our balance is in our own lives. There is no point in imitating past generations, because they carried other responsibilities and lived by another rhythm, in a more stable and more restricted world. We have to find within ourselves the way God is asking us to live at this close of the twentieth century.

Many people have accepted the discipline of putting enough silence into their lives. For one woman we know, the first step was to buy an alarm clock. She wanted to give God an hour every morning before the clamour of modern life absorbed all her attention. Everyone must find their own system, their own discipline. It is in our daily lives that we must create the synthesis between the inheritance of the centuries, which each of us has received through our traditions, and the fascinating age in which we are privileged to live.

Finally, our generation must offer every person new motives for living. Some of the motives on offer today contribute to the chaos we are living in. People have set their wills to winning the race for power, money, the easy life. But the minority who have won success and privilege have found no real satisfaction, and have relegated the masses to poverty, anger and despair. Young people, having failed to find inspiring motives through their parents or their teachers, have gone searching for obscure motives either in the agitations of pseudo-revolutionaries or in meditation under false gurus. What are the motives for living that we can find, capable of convincing both the busy, skilled engineer and the lost adolescent? Motives for living which are chosen in the light of the needs of all mankind will be understood by the peasant in the Asian ricefields, the docker in New York, and our neighbour over the fence.

This presupposes that we have decided not to pattern our lives on the banalities which seduce those around us, but to have the courage to live differently from others. It will undoubtedly mean saying *no* to some things which most people accept, and *yes* to some things which most people refuse or ridicule. The roads to tomorrow for mankind will be laid at

that price. It is only within our own consciences that we can hear this call from beyond ourselves. Then we will decide to focus our whole life on a choice which we have freely made, and God will show us the road He wants us to open up for others.

Where will God find His auxiliaries in the task of giving every person food, a roof, work, and also a reason to live and to hope? The answer is for us to give.

Further Reading

Remaking the World, Frank N. D. Buchman, Blandford
(London, 1961)

Fresh Hope for the World, edited by Gabriel Marcel, Longmans (London, 1960)

The Black and White Book, Sydney Cook and Garth Lean, Blandford (London, 1972)

Dynamic out of Silence, Theophil Spoerri, Grosvenor Books (London 1976, reprinted 1981)

Man and Structures, Jens-J. Wilhelmsen, Grosvenor Books (London 1977, reprinted 1982)

These and other books, and further information on Moral Re-Armament, are available from:

21 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205, Australia
387 chemin de la Côte Ste Catherine, Montreal, Quebec
H2V 2BF, Canada

12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF, England
Mountain House, CH1824 Caux, Switzerland

1103 Sunset Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221, USA