



The M.R.A. Choir, a truly international combination whose members came from 10 countries, pictured as they sang outside the Heidelberg Town Hall.



Below: "What a cross-section there was"—here is a group of farmers from Northern and Eastern Transvaal, the Karoo, the Free State and Kenya who attended the assembly

The Spirit of "The Forgotten Factor" was there . . .

WHAT HAPPENED AT HEIDELBERG

BY ELMA KINGSWELL

"The streets of Heidelberg are quiet again. The little Greek shop is empty. But across the land have sped 450 people who have been awakened to fight for a new destiny for Africa."

PICTURE a sleepy dorp in the heart of the Transvaal veld suddenly being galvanised by the arrival of the first All-Africa Moral Re-armament Assembly to be held in this continent. An invasion of motor-cars heralded the opening of the conference. Visitors arrived in seemingly endless succession from the Cape, the Karoo, the Rhodesias and from many parts of the Platteland. Many even came from the more northern and remote parts of Africa—from the Sudan, East Africa and Nigeria. An invasion of some four hundred and fifty delegates from fifteen different countries came to rouse the dove-cotes of quiet little Heidelberg.

A warm South African sun and clear blue skies greeted the nations as they assembled in the Town Hall. An international chorus of youth from ten different countries sang a welcome song for the Mayor. National flags formed the background to the stage—the Stars and Stripes of America, the Union Jack, the Lion Rampant of Scotland, the Crosses of Norway, Denmark and Switzerland, and the youngest flag of them all—that of the Union of South Africa. The spirit of "The Forgotten Factor" was there, that gallant play which has done so much to hearten the miners of the Rand towns. Very few present had not seen one or more showings of "The Forgotten Factor" which has just completed one hundred and sixteen performances in this country.

What a cross section of the people were gathered together—everything from fashionably-dressed women from the Golden City to plain farmers' wives; Free State farmers with their "bokbaards," theological students, uniformed soldiers, union leaders, mine managers and young married couples. All were there for one main purpose—to find an answer to the divisions in Africa.

Before we talk about the conference let us take a look outside and see what is happening in just one little corner of the town. There is a Greek shop just opposite the Town Hall, a cafe where the owner, a Greek from Athens with the grace and the *savoir faire* of a *maitre d'hotel*, more than welcomes all and tells us that he "is Moral Re-armament, too." In Greece he met Wing Commander Edward Howell of the R.A.F., who was shot down over Crete and wrote the book "Escape to Live." His smile and the sunshine for trade is more than brisk and he has added the Continental touch to the occasion by placing a few tables for the overflow outside (a strange practice by conservative South African standards).

Inside the Town Hall, as one session succeeds another and more and more delegates arrive from all over the country, you feel that "this is the heartbeat of South Africa."

AND you feel the pull of a new force in the land. You feel it in the prophetic voice of "Rassie" Erasmus, the Mineworkers' Vice-President and beloved "Commandant - Generaal." Earnestly he paces the platform and addresses the delegates with the same fire as led the miners to battle in the great strike of 1922. He tells of his friendship with "the two greatest men I have known — Paul Kruger and Dr Frank Buchman. Frank Buchman is the prophet of this age," he says. "He is showing a tormented world how to rid its heart of hatred. I, who have hated deeply, have purged my own heart of bitterness. I appeal for all of us to do this together. Otherwise together we shall go down to destruction."

Immediately his appeal is taken up. A Johannesburg man, formerly an officer in the British Army in India, goes to the platform and speaks with genuine feeling of the bitterness which people of his background have caused in South Africa. "Many of us are sorry for this," he says, "but not sorry enough to say so. We have been too proud. I do want to say so now."

As he turns from the platform another delegate, the principal of an Afrikaans-medium agricultural school, intercepts him and shakes him by the hand. Lean and strong, his face weather-tanned, you could imagine him riding away to do battle in one of the commandos of 1900. "I speak," he says, "as one who has had cause to be bitter. I lost my sister in the concentration camps during the South African War. But today I too am willing to apologise for any careless word I have spoken which may have caused division and I pledge myself with my friend here to build a new age for South Africa."

In the hall on Easter Monday night there sat side by side other old opponents—senior executives

of the gold-mining industry together with five leaders from the Mineworkers' Union. They talked openly of the 100 per cent. improvement in their relationship since "The Forgotten Factor" came to the Reef. And they listened and spoke with the other delegates—Sir Charles Mortimer, Kenya's respected Minister of Health for many years, and men and women from Rhodesia and Nigeria who know the ferment of ideologies in those countries and are bringing the answer.

The wide-brimmed hat on that farmer over there will tell you he comes from Kenya. Go and talk to him and you will find that his mother's family settled on the South African frontier in 1820 and his father gave his name to the Transvaal town of Barberton. He himself is on a frontier today. He will tell you of the fear of spears and of darkness that lurks in the heart of many a frontiersman these days; and how the discovery that "people matter more than things" has changed his farming methods from "fear and thunder" to trust and affection.

The stocky, smiling figure standing with him nods emphatic agreement. A typical platteland farmer, he will tell you how he learned to say "sorry" to his Native workers and to treat them with respect. As a result many who had left him and drifted to the cities—and this is a big South African headache—hearing of the change in their old "baas" had come back again.

MARRIED couples from Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Nairobi have been getting "re-married" here, too. They tell of the breaking of barriers built by pride. But more convincing than any words is the joy on their faces and the spring in their step as you meet them in the Town Hall garden.

Through all that goes on, runs one insistent theme—the security of the country in an ideological age; how South Africa can take her place

(Continued on page 83)

What Happened at Heidelberg

(Continued from page 49)

among the nations with an ideology that can win the world.

The Army takes part. From headquarters in Pretoria, night after night, come groups of senior officers—the Commandant of the Military Training College at Voortrekkerhoogte, heads of the Air Force and the Quartermaster's staff. Brigadier H. B. Klopper, D.S.O., Director-General of all South Africa's ground troops, came three times. With the plain, direct words of a fighting man he told the Assembly, "You have got something that certainly is stronger than most weapons we soldiers carry. You have something that will influence people far beyond the fear that is inculcated with the weapons of today."

The South African Police are here, too.

Towards the end of the Assembly a quiet man, bearded like the late General Smuts, with eyes twinkling behind his glasses, comes and watches all that is going on. He is Mr H. J. Klopper, M.P. for the area of Vredefort. He fought against

the British in the South African War and today is a member of Dr Malan's Government Party. There is a fire burning deep in him which flames as he speaks. "I love my country," he says. "I only trust that our race will take the ideals of Moral Re-armament, and just as we have received so much in our heritage from other countries we shall now give back with interest what we have received in the past.

"There is a road for us all," the Nationalist M.P. continued, "where we can work together for the good of mankind, for every race—white, yellow or black. We have all been created by God and there is a road on which we can all prosper. It has been shown us as the Good Road of Moral Re-Armament."

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