

The invisible revolution

MORAL RE-ARMAMENT has come to Pretoria.

Delegates to the International Assembly for Moral Re-Armament are Black and White, rich and not-so-rich, well-known or still making their mark. They come from many backgrounds and, if those who are devoting their lives to the cause have no visible means of support, the invisible means are undoubtedly something to reckon with.

MRA has never appeared to be short of funds. Undoubtedly, powerful and wealthy sponsors abound the world over, but can the great and ever-spreading influence of what used to be known as the "Oxford Group" be explained simply in terms of its being the firm stand of the capitalist world against the onslaught of communism?

The man-in-the-street is understandably a little confused. Is MRA a sect, a religious denomination, or is it a predominantly political in nature?

It might better be defined as an ideology with religious overtones.

Most MRA supporters belong to one or other of the recognised churches. These delegates, for instance, include Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, members of the Dutch Reformed Church and so on.

The Anglican Bishop of Lagos is there, and so is a member of the Dutch Reformed Church Synod, the Rev J. Windig, and a Minister of the Swedish Church, Rev Borje Malmgren. Another is a minister-playwright, the secretary of the Drama Council of the Methodist Church of Britain, the Rev Leslie Marsh.

Handbook

MRA, they all claim, simply deepens their religious life and gives it added meaning and significance.

"But MRA is not a movement," one of the delegates explained. "Rather it gets people moving. You don't join and you don't resign."

How, then, does it get people moving? And why? And in what direction?

The whys and the wherefores of MRA are succinctly summed up in "The Black and White Book," which is their answer to the Red Book of Chairman Mao.

Subtitle of "The Black and White Book" is "A Handbook of Revolution."

Now what sort of revolution would MRA be after? The revolution, they say, which builds an unselfish society without destroying innocent millions in the process — and in which everyone has a part.

As set out on "The Black and White Book," MRA sets out to achieve a world —

WHERE everyone has work, food and a home;

WHERE a man's character matters, not his colour;

WHERE industry aims to answer the



Some of the delegates (from left): Mr Richard Ruffin, a former Navy officer from Washington, DC; Dr Malcolm McKay, who was the Australian Minister of Navy from 1970-72; Mr Hugh Elliott, CMG, who worked for 33 years in government administration in Nigeria and has spent much of the last six years in Ethiopia; and Mr Pierre Spoerri, director of Moral Re-Armament's Caux Foundation.

needs of humanity, and is not an endless battle for control, profits and wages;

WHERE schools and universities have freedom without chaos and discipline without dictatorship;

WHERE no man or woman is exploited — or worshipped;

WHERE rich nations help and respect developing ones, and big nations do not bully small ones;

WHERE Communist and non-Communist countries face what they have done wrong and take on together the shaping of a just society.

How do they set about creating this modern utopia?

Basically, the idea is to start by changing people. "To expect a change in human nature may be an act of faith, but to expect a change in human society without it is an act of lunacy."

A change in the system is not enough. The radical revolutionary accepts for himself the changes he would like to see in others. "Where people have done this, they often became so different that they startled their friends and changed their enemies. And changed the trend of their age."

It is pointed out that, through the centuries, God is available to those

who really want to know Him and has done remarkable things through those who tried to find and follow His will.

Just as Mahatma Gandhi believed in the "inner voice" and wanted all Indians to listen to it, the millions who work through MRA daily listen to that voice. "You can try it," they say, "whether you believe in God or not."

Christ's standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love are the criteria and the creative thoughts which come through the "dynamic of silence" make of life a thrilling adventure.

To sum up: "The true revolutionary is passionate for what needs to be done and is not deterred by what people say cannot be done."

Drugs, sex, porn, money, power, hate are all examined in this search for personal freedom and the new and different power it brings — without the help of bombs. It is everybody's chance to live and work to redirect the course of history.

In essence, "it is part of the struggle between good and evil which goes on in every single person" and, because change must start with the individual before it spreads to the group, to the nation, to the world, MRA sets

great store by personal testimony. Individuals are always ready to tell how they came to understand that forgiveness heals hate and faith answers fear.

At this conference, delegates give evidence of the answer found in homes, education, industry and national life.

Talking to just a few of these men and women, I learned some interesting facts.

Mr Subbiah Kistasami, for instance, is an Indian teacher who left Natal, England 15 years ago a confirmed atheist and with race hatred uppermost in his mind. He had actually been involved in race riots here.

He learned the lesson of a change of heart in the individual leading to change spreading through a community. When his wife returned to India for two months last year and he went on a visit to North America, their small children were happily cared for by an English couple who made them members of their own family.

When I asked Mr Hugh Elliott why MRA followers appeared so well-heeled, he said I would be surprised to meet adherents in drought-stricken Ethiopia or the students at present holding a lively MRA conference in Berlin, where the message is that one not only changes a system but changes man.

Progress

The Bishop of Lagos, the Rt Rev S. Kale, had spent the weekend travelling through the considerable territory of Pretoria's Anglican diocese. He was pleased, for instance, to see that at the Jane Furse Hospital near Middelburg, while the matron was a White woman the assistants were African, which, at this stage was, he thought, as it should be. He saw much evidence of progress to praise, rather than dwelling on anything he did not find pleasing.

Another delegate is Ailsa Hamilton, joint author of "Cross Roads," a multimedia presentation which ran in London's West End for seven months and which will be performed at the Baker Hall here tonight (Wednesday) and on Saturday, the cast including player and singers from Atteridgeville, Mamelodi and Soweto. Miss Hamilton has directed the production.

This is the ideology which has attracted such adherents as the Rt Rev George Daneel, Mr Bremer Hofmeyr, Mr Justice Claassen, a former Supreme Court judge, and many more who speak with authority and have worked toward the holding of this international multi-racial congress in South Africa.

The founder of MRA, Dr Frazer Buchman, once suggested that South Africa was meant to become a sound board of an answer to the nations as MRA followers have come to believe that together they might usher in the greatest revolution yet.