

Harding tape: **Geoffrey Daukes**, Tirley meeting, 21st July 1979.

“...the point of my story is that anyone who cleans up his own life can very soon have a part in straightening out nations. And when I was a rascal, the age of some of you, last year of school, a little while back, I met this idea. One of the masters at our school¹, thank God, had found this idea and he apologised in one of our classes for his very sarcastic, biting tongue, and we were all absolutely thrilled by this and two of my friends who had more courage than I had went up to him afterwards and thanked him, and he said, ‘If you want to know more come to my house and I will tell you.’

So these two came back with a book called ‘Innocent Men’ by Peter Howard, and I read that and was absolutely fascinated, and I thought, ‘This is the biggest idea I have seen. My life could really count in doing something for the world if I got straightened out.’ So I had a good look at these 4 absolute standards, which you have all heard about, and of course it didn’t require profound thought before I was struck by a number of things. Such as that in my study there was a very nice array of books. Trouble was, half of them belonged to somebody else or to the school library. So obviously I needed to take them back, and I did that. Then there was the little matter of cheating in one class, which every single person did in the French class, with a book under the table, and two of us went along and told the master concerned, who was very delighted and invited us to come to his house and listen to gramophone records. And then there were certain personal habits that needed straightening out.

And then there was my relationship with my father, who was a very tough old colonialist, who had ruled India with a rod of iron and got used to giving orders there, and pursued the same policy at home - much to my resentment. And when I began to listen to the inner voice, the thought came to me clear, ‘Whatever your father did, your bitterness is wrong and you must put it right.’ And so one day I plucked up all my courage and bearded him in his study and said, ‘I am very sorry. I have been very resentful against you’, and I told him the dishonesties and impurities which I had decided to stop, and the new thing I was taking on with my life. And to my amazement it changed him a great deal, and he used to apologise when he lost his temper, which he frequently did. In fact the whole atmosphere in our family changed, and the wall between us - what is now called the generation gap - disappeared. And I thought then, ‘Well if this idea can change my father it must be strong enough to change anybody.’

And then I had wanted to become a diplomat, as he was at the end of his life, and it struck me that it was more important to learn the art of changing men and do it in this case in the framework of the ideas of MRA. So I decided to give my life for that. And quite soon afterwards I found myself at a conference in America, at a place like this, and one of the men who was there was the leader of the delegation from the Cameroons. A very senior political leader from the Cameroons,² which was then under the trusteeship for the UN of the French, in West Africa. This man used to say, ‘Africa is shaped like a pistol and we are the trigger’. It was rather like that. He had come to this conference, incidentally, because he had picked up a student, a girl,³ in his car one day and was giving her a lift and she told him about MRA and her own experience, and said ‘There is a place in America where they are having a conference. You ought to go.’ And a few days later he got an invitation and he remembered this talk, felt it was a genuine thing and decided to go.

¹Chaplin George Snow—later Bishop of Whitby & father of journalist Jon Snow.

² M Charles Assalé (1911–1999) was a Cameroonian politician of the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon. He served as Minister of Finance of French Cameroon from 1958 to 1959, and was the first Prime Minister of the federated state of East Cameroon from 15 May 1960 to 19 June 1965.

³ Bettina...?

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After the conference he went on to be the leader of his delegation at the United Nations in New York, and as I speak French and he was a French-speaking African, I was asked if I would go along and help him to find his way around NY and so on. So he went in there, to really fight for the independence of his country. And very soon after he had got in there, they got in the most flaming row with the French and they were arguing furiously and getting nowhere. But he had learnt this secret of listening for guidance every morning. And we were doing this together, in the same room in the house where we were staying.⁴ And he had the thought to invite the French to a nice French supper in one of these restaurants in NY where you can get food of different countries, and not to talk politics but to tell them the story of his own change. And some of his colleagues were very much against this.

I may say that it is an ideological cockpit, the UN, where communists were operating with women and a lot of money and invitations to different parts of the world, trying to get many of these African leaders off their way. There was another man from his country who was fighting for independence in the jungle, and he was also there trying to win the Africans to his side. His body was later found in a Geneva hotel room, where he was murdered.

My friend decided that he would go ahead with this invitation to the French, and so he worked out a nice but not too expensive supper - he didn't have much money - and invited the French to it. And he told them the story of what had happened to him, which was that when he had been at the MRA conference he had begun to think of his own life, and he suddenly remembered his son, who had gone to Paris to study and had got into bad company there and had also got a girl in the family way without marrying her, and then had got into despair and tried to throw himself into the Seine, the river, to commit suicide. And had been stopped by a policeman, who wrote to the father saying what had happened to the son, 'What are you going to do about it?' And instead of having real compassion towards his son, my friend had climbed onto his high horse and wrote him a letter saying 'You are blotting the copybook of our great family name. You must behave better or I will cut off all your money.' And that of course had not helped at all. And when he was at this MRA conference and took an honest look at his own life, he suddenly realised how self-righteous he had been, because actually he had done many of the same things as his son was doing and he had never been honest with his son. And he wrote a very humble letter to the son, saying these things and apologising for his superiority and pride. And during the time when we were together in NY he got a marvellous letter back from the son which began, 'Dear father, it is I who should kneel at your feet and ask for your forgiveness.' And I may say it completely changed the son's whole attitude to life. He went back to his country and became a useful citizen.

This was told to the French and the other African leaders at this evening supper, and it had an absolutely magical effect. He showed me the letter from the head of the French delegation the next day, an atheist, very deeply moved. And from that moment onwards the whole tenor of the negotiations changed, and they gained their independence at that session of the UN. 'Why shoot our enemies, if we can change them?' And, as a matter of fact, he had also written to one of the other political leaders in his country saying, 'I have been spreading nasty stories about you behind your back and I am sorry.' And very soon after that, that man became the Prime Minister, when they were independent, and he said to my friend, 'You are the kind of honest politician we need. Come and join my Cabinet.' And he became the Finance Minister. And a year or two later when that man became President, he became Prime Minister. And he

⁴ Dellwood, Mount Kisco, New York; given by Emily Hammond (of the Vanderbilt family) to MRA.

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therefore was able to give this new leadership in many ways to his country and the countries round about.

But I feel anyone here who starts on that path can affect nations.”