

MRA COMES TO SWAZILAND

Delegates from four Southern African countries attended the eight day Moral Re-Armament Conference on the theme "Which Way Africa?" held at the Matsapha Swazi National High School last month. The aim of the conference, in the broad outline, was to "make Africa a pattern of living for all nations; a continent where men live as God meant them to."

The conference was initiated by young people in Swaziland under the direction of the head boy and head girl of the Swazi National School and attended by delegates from Lesotho, Botswana, the Republic and Swaziland.

The purpose of the conference, the initiators explained, was to create a new type of man to make a functionable world; to promote the will to work, wealth being the inevitable product; to induce patriotism going beyond tribe, race and national boundaries and lastly to demonstrate that Africa, with a cure to corruption, hatred and division, could make a constructive contribution to the development of the human race.

The whole man

Enlarging on these four aims, the students contended: "We want to develop the whole man. We want to train and develop his hands, his body, his intellect as well as his heart. All these aspects must be trained equally. There is not much use for a nice fellow who can't use his hands or his brains. But there is no peace for a nation with brilliant men whose hearts are ruled by hate, jealousy or dirt, no matter how brilliant or capable they are with their hands."

Opening the conference, the Rev. A. B. Gamede, principal liaison officer between the Government and the Swazi Nation, discussed the value of MRA to Swaziland in preparing today's youth as the leaders of tomorrow. He said:

"Moral Re-Armament comes to Swaziland when the world's youth, including Swazis, are experiencing a surge of revolutionary determination to do something that will change the world. They feel that no matter what the consequences may be, the future lies with new movements and new approaches to world problems."

A vigorous movement

"Moral Re-Armament has become a vigorous movement of the age. It has reconciled nations, races, management and labour. Its successful conferences in England, the Netherlands, America, Switzerland and other countries have won a big following."

"Our youth in Swaziland are keeping abreast of world developments. They read about Vietnam, Rhodesia's UDL, race conflicts. They take note of the ideologies, take sides and form opinions. Usually it is not the numbing influences of their homeland that mould their philosophy, but the propaganda and ideologies of the outside world."

The moral front

"On the moral front absolute respect for self, parents, associates and authority has degenerated. Drunkenness, hooliganism, housebreaking and theft are increasing every day. Love and lust have been so confused as to result in numerous illegitimate children who in turn will be a great burden on the State."

"MRA must try to understand and appreciate Swaziland youth, enter into their perplexities and problems, and try to orient them in the confusing contradictions of modern propaganda."

"It is these young people who

will make choices, map out a national policy tomorrow, and, to a great extent, determine the Swazi national destiny.

"Many of you have seen MRA films and have deduced what the movement stands for. Many people receive it here in Swaziland as a movement which will build good leaders and good followers of tomorrow."

Explosion of response

Replying to Mr Gamede, the head boy of the Swazi National School, Magalela Maphalala, said:

"I have often wondered why peace never settles in most of our African States. Today I have found out why. We have neglected to change people. Only through the elimination of corruption and selfishness in one's own life will a man become fit to lead. When absolute moral standards predominate our lives we will have found the answer to our political and social problems."

"This conference will develop patriotism. There will be an explosion of response to its challenge from the youth of Swaziland."

Message from Jonathan

The following day a Lesotho delegate read to the conference a message from the Prime Minister, Chief Jonathan Leabua:

"As Prime Minister of the newly created Kingdom of Lesotho, I welcome the opportunity of sending a message to the MRA Conference assembled in Swaziland."

"I have recently returned to my country from an extended tour of the Far East. I considered it my bounden duty to do all possible to send five of my young men to the conference as representatives of Lesotho."

Don't sit and wait

"I did this because I am fully aware how important MRA is for Lesotho, Africa and the world. Most of us in the modern world are satisfied to sit passively by and await what we consider inevitable. I am quite convinced that is not what God expects of us."

"In addressing myself to you young men and women I am talking to people whose responsibility it is to make Africa the sort of place God would like it to be. I am not saying this lightly. It is your responsibility and mine."

A revolutionary

On December 17 Dr William Nkomo of Pretoria addressed the conference on freedom and how men, after freeing themselves from the slavery of other men, easily become enslaved by their own habits. He said:

"I have always been a revolutionary. I am told that I came into the world shouting. I was one of those who initiated the African National Congress Youth League. We were out for bloody revolution. Today I am fighting in a different way, but I am still fighting."

Man's birthright

"I have always fought for freedom because I think freedom is every man's birthright. But I have seen men bleed for freedom and yet freedom has passed them by because they did not stand on solid ground. They became free from the slavery of other men, but they never became free from the slavery of their own habits — from drink and drugs and women and money. So they lost their freedom and others inherited their birthright."

"I believe freedom is man's birthright and greatness is man's destiny. I determined myself never to be third class or fourth class but to stand equal with the best. We must help men to become great because man was made by God for greatness."

Was a politician

"I was a politician and we politicians often made passionate speeches, and we felt we had achieved something. Then we went away and drank. But we had achieved nothing because we gave ourselves to lesser things."

"Many people know what is right. They know the principles on which to architect the future. But they have not followed them. They have compromised, and out of compromise has come confusion and chaos. And confusion will continue until they take up their battle again on the basis of the right they denied."

Verge of independence

"Swaziland is on the verge of independence. Many I know are poor. But poverty has never stopped man from moving ahead. It is not so much poverty that worries me as the moral poverty in leadership in the world today. The greatest secret of leadership is that God can tell you what to do. When man listens God speaks."

"We want men who are dedicated to the cause of the human race, not to the cause of their own success."

Africa's millions

"Africa has 220 million people. But the world has 3,000 million people. I have to expand my thinking and think not just of a place for my own group, but a place for the whole human race."

"Often we have put God into the small mould of our own group thinking. But we must think of God globally. That is why I am interested in a global force to remake the world."

Challenge each other

"I belong to a Christian body. But when I am with them they do not challenge me to change."

Everyone is nice and polite to everyone else. Moral Re-Armament challenged me to change and in our Christian bodies we need to challenge each other."

"When the early Methodists met they talked about how you were getting on in your battle with sin and the devil. We need this today. When we give way to sin we see things negatively. We see things as impossible. But with God they are not impossible."

Great changes needed

"There need to be great changes in the world. Many are looking to violence. There have always been extremities in which men have felt they had to fight. Many of you want to see a change in the policy of South Africa, as I do. But I do not think you will do it by preparing guns against South Africa."

"Those who think of force need to understand what we are dealing with. If you start a world war it will not be a question of who wins, but of who is left over. And there is no guarantee that those who are left over will be men who will listen to God."

The Answer Continent

"But South Africa will be interested in a new type of African who bases his life on moral standards and who thinks for the world. I personally believe that Dr Verwoerd before he died was beginning to think in new ways, as when he received the Prime Minister of Lesotho as an equal on South African soil."

"This Christmas is a time of uncertainty and groping for humanity. Yet the message given two thousand years ago is the greatest message ever given to the world and you are taking it up for a continent."

"Africa has been called the Dark Continent, the Question Mark Continent. But together we will make it the Answer Continent."