

### Epilogue for *Dynamic out of Silence* by Pierre Spoerri, son of the author

When *Dynamic out of Silence* was originally going to be published in 1971 in Germany and Switzerland, my father asked me to write a post-script, as he always had the next generation and the generation after that in mind when he wrote. This was the seventh version of a manuscript that he had reworked and reworked over quite a number of years. When the time for publication came, he was not well, having survived two heart-attacks and was suffering from angina pectoris and he said that he spent more ‘heart-blood’ on this text than for any of his other books.

We worked closely together on all the details of the book. For him to work in an ‘inter-generational team’, was an experience which he cherished. Having met Frank Buchman in the early nineteen thirties and having worked closely with him in many countries while, at the same time, holding down an exacting job as professor of literature and history at Zurich University, he had considered several times giving up his academic job and joining Buchman to work full-time for Moral Re-Armament. The tension between his professional duties and his commitment for what Buchman called the task of remaking the world sometimes threatened to break him. So he did not hesitate to encourage me wholeheartedly when I decided, in the immediate post-war years, to leave other professional ambitions behind and work full-time with Buchman and his team.

Of the over twenty books that my father wrote in his lifetime, *Dynamic out of Silence* is besides his Introduction to Dante’s Divine Comedy the one that is still most read today, forty years after his death. One of the reasons, possibly, is that there is still a deep longing in many people for finding something beyond superficial and meaningless living. Yet Buchman’s life and philosophy and my father’s description of it seem to be in total contrast to much of what is thought, said and published today. Neither Buchman nor my father tried to be politically correct or to adapt themselves to the Zeitgeist, the ‘spirit of the times’. There is a profound contrast between today’s noise in the street and in the media on one side and the silence that is a central part of the kind of life Buchman proposes. The inhumanity of certain economic developments is in total contrast to the philosophy of caring and sharing which a world-wide network of people that Buchman built up and that is still at work in many parts of the world proposes.

Another contrast is between the utter predictability of self-centred and even group- or ethnically-centred persons and the totally unpredictable ways of the Spirit. Another aspect of *Dynamic out of Silence* that is relevant today is how it deals with what is today called ‘conflict resolution’. Today hundreds of students worldwide are studying this subject at many universities across the world. Hundreds of NGO’s are working in the field trying to solve national and ethnical conflicts. When Buchman was alive, the term conflict resolution was not yet used, but the aim of overcoming division and healing bitterness was central in all that he and his team were doing across the world. His approach was obviously more pragmatic than theoretical or academic. ‘Peace is not an idea, it is people becoming different’ spelled out a practical programme that everybody could understand. In this field as in others the need to combine structural changes with a change of attitudes in individuals is being recognized today by many, even if the practical application of the principle – Buchman’s strong point - is still often neglected.

Forty years have gone by since the first edition of *Dynamic out of Silence* was published, and more than fifty years have gone by since the death of Frank Buchman. The world and the work that Buchman built up have changed a great deal. My father would rejoice in a Russian colleague writing the foreword for this new edition, especially one who has suffered himself in the Gulag and who has seen the transition of Russia from dictatorship to freedom.

But if my father was still living today - working on his eight draft! - what might he possibly write differently? He wrote the book as a convinced Christian and largely from a Christian perspective. But still, in his own mind, what he wrote was valid for people of all faiths. So if he were writing it today - at the beginning of a new millennium - he probably would not drop anything of what he had written but he might well add something on this particular subject. He might include his own and Frank Buchman's experiences during their long visits to Morocco where they both had natural and deep contacts with men and women of the Muslim faith. He would probably also describe in a more detailed way Buchman's work with spiritual leaders of the Buddhist and Hindu faith and his statement, in one of his last speeches, that 'Catholic, Jew and Protestant, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Confucians - all find that they can change, where needed, and travel along this good road together'. It will never be easy - it never has been - to avoid the trap of indifferentism and the opposite trap of arrogance and superiority. The specific art of heightening each other's deepest convictions without betraying one's own faith may have been one contribution which Buchman and the people around him brought to this eternal search for a way through the maze of inter-religious relations.

To the dwindling generation who knew Frank Buchman during his last years, and to those who have never met him, this great American has left a dynamic heritage. It is not a heritage anybody can rest on or one that can be exploited for anybody's glory. But it is one whose realisation could give content to the lives of many generations to come.

Pierre Spoerri, 2002