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Sudanese experience—

when North/South dialogue went beyond talk

by Peter Everington, recently in Khartoum and Juba

ANYONE WHO DOUBTS that the impossible can happen should visit Juba, regional capital of South Sudan.

As the London *Economist* puts it, 'The end of 17 years' fighting in 1972 and, even more important, the continuation of six years' peace since then, constitute one of Africa's greatest success stories. It has been too little trumpeted.'

Down the decades, the North has feared that the South wanted to secede. The South has feared dominance by the North and the imposition of the Muslim religion. In 58 years of rule the British did not cure this mistrust, and indeed operated a closed district policy in the South. The mutiny of the Southern Regiment in 1955 just before independence signalled the start of open conflict.

By the sixties Juba was under tight control of the Northern army, paralysed by hate, suspicion and the prospect of continuing carnage. In one night alone a thousand of its citizens were massacred.

The Southern Sudanese mounted the Anya-Nya guerrilla campaign commanded by Joseph Lagu, and the North retaliated. During the civil war one million out of a population of three million Southerners fled their homes, a large proportion of them to neighbouring countries. Roads, schools, clinics, plantations, churches were devastated over a vast area.

But this is all in the past.

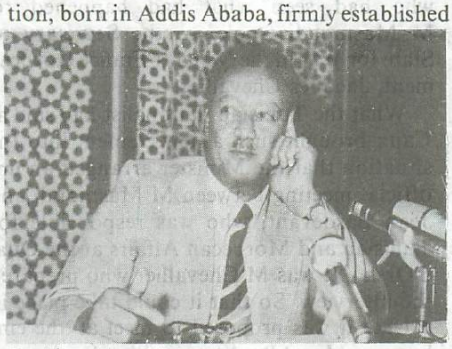
Sensational appointment

The Addis Ababa Accord of 1972 was a tribute to the humble statesmanship of President Numeiri and General Lagu. It brought an end to the war, gave the Southerners regional self-government, and specially recognised Christianity in the new Constitution. Numerous acts of forgiveness in Northerners and Southerners made agreement possible, and some Northerners ensured that a disproportionate amount of the national budget went to the South for reconstruction. Valuable mediation came also from the late Emperor Haile Selassie, the OAU and the African Council of Churches.

Since the Addis Ababa Accord the one million refugees have returned. Joseph Lagu came back as Commander of the Sudanese Army in the South, and 6,000 of his Anya-Nya fighters were enrolled as regular soldiers. Lagu has just become President of the Southern Region. With grants from the North and foreign aid, the reconstruction of roads, schools and agriculture is going ahead. A new bridge spans the Nile at Juba. A 200-mile canal has been started to bypass the notorious Sudd swamp. Southern MPs have taken their seats in the new Assembly at Juba after recent elections. The South is at peace.

Each year on 5 March, Sudan celebrates the Addis Ababa Accord in a different provincial capital. This year President Numeiri and his wife, the Cabinet, senior government officials, the diplomatic corps, the Sudanese and world press, and thousands of schoolchildren, farmers, industrial workers, local dignitaries and tribal dancers converged on Damazin, capital of the Blue Nile Province.

At the main ceremony Southern leaders shared the platform with Northern colleagues. Addressing the mainly Northern crowd, Clement Mboro, Speaker of the Southern Assembly, said, 'This reconciliation, born in Addis Ababa, firmly established in our beloved Sudan, should now hopefully be made available to the whole of humanity.'



Ministry of Information, Sudan

President Numeiri

Among those congratulating Mboro on his speech was Ahmed El Madhi, senior member of the Mahdi family who have three million Muslim followers in the North.

Back in the sixties these two men were bitterly at odds. It started in 1965 when a North-South solution was nearly achieved. Clement Mboro, the Christian Southerner, was made Minister of the Interior for the whole country, a sensational appointment. Yet within months a political row developed and he was replaced by Ahmed El Mahdi. They slanged each other furiously and the press relayed their division to the country.

Now Mboro says, 'Ahmed El Mahdi is my friend. I visited him in his home and reassured him that I want a united Sudan. He spoke out publicly about where he and his people had been wrong.'

El Mahdi confirms this, saying, 'It is amazing how human beings can be so completely wrong. We in the North denied Southerners their just rights, not realising the true facts. Now we must look at the settlement in its moral dimension, not just the political aspect, and see where we can help other countries.'

Guerrilla war

Many Sudanese feel that more of this personal reconciliation is needed. 'We have found political unity,' says Charles Buth Diu, a Southern teacher working in the North. 'Now we need unity between people.' His father, the late Buth Diu, did as much as anyone to create such unity. A leader of the Nuer people in the South, and many times a Cabinet minister, he lost his hatred of Northerners as a result of seeing the Moral Re-Armament film *Freedom*.

In 1966 Buth Diu and a Northern friend, Dr Mohammed El Murtada Mustafa, now Acting Director of Labour, arranged the gift of leather from the Sudan Government Tannery, which panels the entrance hall of MRA's London centre, as a symbol of their determination to help bring North-South unity. In 1971 they submitted joint

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Buth Diu (left), then Minister of Works, at Caux in 1958 with a delegation of Northern and Southern Sudanese.

Guess who's coming to dinner?
—when diplomacy took a surprising turn

The way in which Tunisia and Morocco gained their independence without bloodshed is to many in the English-speaking world an unfamiliar chapter. Some of the dramatic story is revealed in *Le Fil Conducteur*, the autobiography of a great Frenchwoman, Baroness Diane de Watteville-Berckheim, who died last year at the age of 90.

Her Paris home, which in her lifetime played a significant role in encouraging Franco-German reconciliation and in opening up what one senior French journalist called 'the dialogue of de-colonialisation', continues after her death to be a Moral Re-Armament centre for France.

We print an extract about Tunisia from her book.

IN SEPTEMBER 1953, still fully engaged in the war in Indo-China, France viewed with concern the mounting tension in North Africa, particularly in Tunisia. The Nationalist Movement, the Néo-Destour, was calling for total independence. Its leader, Bourguiba, was in prison, as were almost all his lieutenants.

One of these, Mohamed Masmoudi, had even been condemned to death by the French, whom he hated bitterly. Finally released from prison, he was working as a political correspondent in Paris on a newspaper in his own country, but under police surveillance.

It was in this climate that an event took place which was completely unknown to the press and whose consequences could not be foreseen.

One of his colleagues, a Paris journalist, brought M Masmoudi to Caux. On hearing the convictions of Irène Laure, former Secretary-General of the Socialist Women of France, and seeing the reconciliation between Germans and French, he felt his hatred for France slipping away. He said publicly that instead of going to Egypt as he had planned, to take up arms to liberate Tunisia, he had decided to return to Paris, confident that a new way would open up for his country. This complete change of attitude made a powerful impression both in Paris and in Tunis.

Some months later, M Mendes-France became Prime Minister and proposed giving the Protectorate of Tunisia autonomy. That raised a grave difficulty [owing to the deep distrust between French and Tunisian leaders—Editor]. Two of our French friends who had seen what had happened to M Masmoudi, spoke to the Secretary of State for War in the Mendes-France Government, Jacques Chevallier.

What the Tunisian nationalist had said at Caux brought such a new element into the situation that the Minister arranged an unofficial meeting between M Masmoudi and Jean Basdevant, who was responsible for Tunisian and Moroccan Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay. It was M Chevallier who prepared the interview. So that it could take place in private it was proposed to meet at 'the embassy of Moral Re-Armament' at Boulogne.

A dinner for eight was fixed for 28 July. Those expected for the occasion in addition to the two protagonists and M Chevallier, who initiated the whole affair, were Didier Lazard, an old college friend of M Basdevant, our Scottish friend Lawson Wood, who already knew M Masmoudi and was living in the house, and Robert Carmichael, President of the Jute Industry of France, along with two South Africans who came from Caux, old enemies who had been reconciled, the one an Afrikaner who had played rugby for his country with the Springboks, and the other a black leader of his people.

With M Masmoudi defending the interests of his country and M Basdevant representing those of France, one could say that these two people were in fact 'on the two sides of the barricades'. Neither had ever met the other.

M Chevallier was the only one who had all the threads in his hand. Suddenly, less than an hour before the dinner, events took a dramatic turn. M Chevallier telephoned to say that he had just been called by the Prime Minister to a Cabinet meeting at the same hour as the dinner. He regretted this misfortune and asked us to excuse him to his guests, adding ... that he had not told either that they were going to meet the other!

We decided to welcome each guest separately on arrival, to explain the situation and to open the way for them to withdraw should they wish to do so under the circumstances.

Both stayed, but the beginning of the meal was glacial. The two principal guests did not say a word. It was the South Africans who began to create a more relaxed atmosphere. The white man spoke of the spirit of superiority of his own race which had created bitterness among the other races; the black spoke of the hatred which embittered the conflict. Each recognised their own wrong.

Explosives

When the dessert was brought in, the unexpected happened. M Masmoudi, without even touching his dessert pushed his plate aside and, resting his elbows on the table, a thick-set and impressive figure, started to speak.

'I began my studies in Tunisia,' he said. 'I finished them in Paris. I thus have the advantage of a double culture.'

He told how he had lost his hatred of the French, then passed on to the relations between Tunisia and France. 'We are responsible,' said he, 'for the southern shore of the Mediterranean, just as you are responsible for the northern shore....' We listened to him with acute attention.

He spoke for a long time without interruption and during the whole of that time there was not a single hurtful word with regard to France—something quite remarkable on the part of a man who later admitted that he had been 'stuffed as full of hatred as a bomb is with explosives'.

When M Masmoudi had finished speaking, M Basdevant quite naturally felt that he must reply. He did so with all the cautious discretion of a high-ranking civil servant, but nevertheless everything had become different. When the party moved to the salon for coffee, the two protagonists led the way together chatting in friendly fashion.

This was not all; political circumstances demanded that the negotiations should begin a short time afterwards between Tunisia and France. M Masmoudi was no longer the agitator watched by the police, but the negotiator representing his country.

Talks took place in the Rue de Solférino at the Ministry for Tunisian and Moroccan Affairs. The two interlocutors were accompanied by a certain number of experts on each side. It was among those on both sides that the most intransigent elements were to be found, so that—by a singular paradox—M Basdevant and M Masmoudi found themselves negotiating less with each other

North Africans and French at Caux in 1953. (L to r) Si Bekkai, later first Prime Minister of independent Morocco, Irene Laure, Robert Carmichael, Mohamed Masmoudi.

than each with the members of his own delegation!

It is said that in the course of these discussions, when the situation became too tense, the talks were suspended. M Basdevant and M Masmoudi went down into the gardens of the Ministry and walked and talked at length together, seeking the best way to get the negotiations out of the impasse.

Later when the negotiations resulted in the granting of autonomy to Tunisia, M Masmoudi, who had become a Minister, accepted an invitation to go to the United States to join an international mission that Frank Buchman was preparing for Asia.

In Washington M Masmoudi said publicly, 'Without Moral Re-Armament my country would today be engaged in a war without mercy against France.' When this news landed on our telex at Paris, we thought, 'This is a bit strong, this is claiming a great deal! We cannot give it just like that to the press.' We sought out M Basdevant at the Quai d'Orsay to ask his opinion. 'It is perfectly true. Go ahead and publish it,' he replied without a moment's hesitation.

Three years later, M Masmoudi, when he had become Ambassador for Tunisia in Paris, wished to bring several friends to our home in Boulogne. I replied to him that the house was always at his disposal. 'It's true,' he responded, 'this house is the embassy of the heart.'

Arms laid down

Lawson Wood adds:

In this account, what is condensed into a few sentences about the conference between the French and the Tunisians actually took nine hard and long months to achieve. Again and again when we met Masmoudi at the end of a day, we would find him in despair about making any headway and wondering whether it was worth going on. Fortunately he did so, a decision from which many today in similar circumstances might take heart.

Several years later, two incidents threw further light on events. A member of the French Diplomatic Service to whom we mentioned the name of Masmoudi said, 'Yes, I know, I was part of the French delegation and we were often embarrassed by his moral authority.'

At an MRA conference in Mackinac Island, Michigan, four years after these events, I met and talked with a member of a Tunisian delegation. I discovered that he had been one of the gun-runners for the Tunisians who had risen in arms against the French. Then he told me that he had been present the night Masmoudi came up into the hills in Tunisia after the negotiations in Paris had been successfully concluded. He reported to the Fellagha and urged them to lay down their arms. They replied that they did not trust the French as they had always broken their promises in the past. Masmoudi responded by saying that this time it was different and that they could take his word for it, which they did.

These are facts of history. They are also foundations on which much can yet be built.

The ins and outs of a new estate

MARIVALDO WAS NOT KEEN to see Luiz Pereira. Luiz was always after him, quietly and persistently. Marivaldo did everything to avoid him—took hours having a bath, pretended to be asleep when he called. But he finally got interested in what Luiz had to say.

Luiz is a former leader of the *favela* (shanty-town) dwellers in Rio de Janeiro, and Marivaldo is a young fellow, normally on the streets and in trouble. Luiz is one of those who set to work to answer the *favela* problem.

The whole of his *favela* has been rehoused, and Luiz lives in one of the new housing estates. Now he is working to create a community there—an estate which is cared for, and with people who care for each other. So with Marivaldo he began to organise weekly meetings for the young people. Over Easter, a group of them came to the MRA centre to learn more. They heard the experiences of people who had decided to live by absolute moral standards—dockers, housewives, teachers.

A flood of honesty followed, everyone talking at once. One girl wept as she told the tragic story of her sister, who had been hooked on drugs at school, was 'sold' to a prostitute in a *favela*, and is now in hospital. She blamed her sister for the hurt this had caused the family, and had never been to visit her. The next day she said, 'I have decided to break my pride and to visit my sister at least once a week.'

Renato, a university student, said, 'I went to Bahia (NE Brazil) for ten days. I stayed with a family who impressed me so much by the love they had for each other—the care of the small daughters for their father and vice versa, that it made me think of my own father. He left our family eight years ago and I had hardly seen him since. I was very bitter against him. We had suffered a lot, not only financially, but also from not having all the respect and help that a father brings to a home. I decided to apologise to my father. I had tried the experience of apologising before, but that time it was to a colleague, and I was certainly in the wrong. This time it was much harder, as I felt I was 99 per cent right, but that one per cent wrong was my bitterness.

Before the beach

'To my surprise, he welcomed me. He told me how much he had felt his failure as a father and his hurt at the bitterness and rejection of his children. He has another family now, but a few days later he came to visit my family, and for the first time he was not thrown out of the house. Over this Easter weekend, my sister, her husband and my younger brother have all gone to visit him.'

Could the change in the lives of these young people and their families begin to affect the life of this vast city, with the second highest rate of violence in the world? That is the task in front of them. The conclusion of one girl was: 'Now I have to go away and decide: is this going to come first in my life, before the beach, before the party I want to go to?'

One thing is sure: it won't give Marivaldo much time for sleep! **AC**

Choose freedom

J Azzopardi

Four hundred people crowded the hall in Mellieha, Malta, to hear from an MRA force from eight countries. Here Thomas Braeckle from Germany talks to some of the audience. 'Their experience is that they can either be prisoners of hate, fear and greed, or choose the freedom that comes through obeying God,' wrote one Maltese newspaper about their visit.

CAUX SUMMER DIARY

CANADIANS AND AMERICANS will host a special session at the MRA World Assembly in Caux, Switzerland, this summer from August 20—28.

'To make democracy work takes men and women who are willing to change and who regardless of cost stand up for what is right,' they say in their invitation.

'We North Americans have sometimes pushed our own ideas, often without even listening to each other. At other times we have withdrawn. Now a growing number of us wish to act in true partnership with other peoples.'

They give five questions they wish to consider during this conference

- The family's potential
- The strength of racial and cultural differences
- Man: cause, victim and cure of unemployment
- Money—its use and abuse
- *Resources*—enough for need but not for greed.

Here is a full list of sessions:

July 8—15 and August 1—10: Frank Buchman anniversary conference
In these two periods there will be a special emphasis on the work which Frank Buchman initiated. Its outreach and specific task in today's world will be examined.

July 17—27: For a living democracy
A ten-day session in which people of all ages, meeting and working in small groups, aim to find together a deeper understanding of their faith, of the world we live in, and the task of a moral and spiritual re-armament that confronts the whole of humanity.

August 13—20: Dialogue for change
Initiated by European trade unionists and workers.

August 14—17: The care and cure of modern man and society
Initiated by doctors and health workers with a special emphasis on health in relation to industry and world needs.

August 20—28: People can change—the unifying idea for our time
Hosted by North Americans of different races and cultures.

August 30—September 4: The economy and society of the future
For industrial management, trade union officials and politicians. The invitation asks: 'How can we develop an economy and society which is effective, where everyone's needs are met and where every man and woman can play a responsible part?'

Punchy asides

SENTENCED TO LIFE, the play by Malcolm Muggeridge and Alan Thornhill centred round the controversial subject of euthanasia, opened in Bath last week.

'The stumbling block in the arguably humane theories in support of euthanasia is that, in order for one person to have the right to die, another has to be given the right to kill,' wrote the *Western Daily Press* in its review. 'This play by two eminent Christian thinkers faces the dilemma without flinching.

'It's world premiere last night held the audience enthralled and undoubtedly sent the debate far beyond the confines of the theatre.... The humour makes the unthinkable palatable. The tension and moral agonies could be felt throughout the audience.'

The Guardian's South-West edition says the play is 'infinitely better than much offered on the capital's commercial stage'. It calls it 'a polished piece of writing, sardonically funny rather than sanctimonious.

'There is a cutting indictment of the manipulative media whose insensitive TV director is caricatured rather than savaged. We detect the Muggeridge epigrams amid the heavenly glances and Punchy asides. They complement his co-writer's proven grasp of theatre.'

The *Evening Post* called the play 'high drama, beautifully acted.... It represents an impassioned, eloquent plea against euthanasia.'

'Watchman' in the *Church of England Newspaper*, reporting on a press conference given by the play's authors, says, 'Certainly if the swift verbal felicities are at all typical of the play, audiences will find that the Christian viewpoint has seldom been expressed with so exact and Shavian a wit.'

Sentenced to Life opens at the Westminster Theatre on May 17.

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recommendations to the Government for a settlement (see NWN 16 July 1977). Their main points were included in the Addis Ababa Accord the following year.

Crucial now is the comradeship between Joseph Lagu and President Numeiri. Up to 1972 they were pitted against each other in guerrilla war. Both now are in a civilian role. Lagu is new to the Presidency of the Southern Region. He is short, trim, tough and a devout Christian. Asked to address a vast political rally in Juba recently, he startled the crowds by beginning with prayer.

President Numeiri is the one above all who had the courage to grant the South new constitutional rights in 1972. Before he seized power in 1969 he was an officer in the South who came to respect the Southerners and be respected by them.

Refugees

He has been a hard-living soldier, scarcely known for Muslim devotions. Yet it is no secret in Khartoum that there has been a dramatic change in the President's lifestyle. 'He is talking the language of conversion and he is really sincere about it,' says Sadiq El Mahdi, a bitter Northern enemy of Numeiri who has also been reconciled with him. Perhaps Numeiri feels that he has survived so many plots from the likes of Sadiq that he owes something to Divine Providence.

In a poor country that is twice the size of the combined EEC states, it is easy to list internal stresses, before you start to compute the perils of Cuban brigades and Russian tanks in next-door Ethiopia. For instance, Sudan is trying to feed a quarter of a million Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees.

Yet the North-South reconciliation gives substance to President Numeiri's claim: 'Sudan offers a unique experiment which proves Africa is capable of solving its own problems peacefully, safeguarding its independence and securing legitimate rights for ethnic minorities.'

The French correction

IN A RECENT NWN we said that Charles VII of France was crowned at Orleans. In fact as one of our readers, Philippe Lasserre, points out, he was crowned at Reims after Joan of Arc had defeated the English at Orleans, opening the road to Reims.

A conference has been called at Orleans on May 20 and 21 by men in public life in France and ordinary citizens to consider 'what changes are needed in our living, and how to arouse the conscience of the nation to accept them'.

The conference organisers warmly welcome British participation in the weekend.

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