

From "The Nation", Rangoon, Burma
September 17, 1961:

FRANK BUCHMAN, A TRIBUTE

Speech given by Hon'ble U Nu, Prime Minister of Burma,
at Caux, Switzerland, on the 9th September, 1961, as a
tribute to the memory of Dr. Frank Buchman.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Comrades, Fellow-workers and Colleagues in the Cause of Freedom and Peace, I have come here today to Caux, one of the principal headquarters of Moral Re-Armament, to speak to you, his dear friends and followers about your great leader, Dr. Frank Buchman, to breathe again the air of friendship, goodwill, harmony, tranquillity, and peace which pervades the hallowed hermitage of Caux, and thus pay my humble tribute to the memory of one, who was my own personal friend, who was also a faithful friend and a well-wisher of my country and my people, and who above all was a faithful friend and lover of all the peoples and all the countries of the world.

Of course, the moment I heard of his passing away, I sent a cable of condolence to all of you, but as a cable is such an impersonal and mechanical instrument of expressing one's sorrow and admiration for such a great man as Frank that I have come here to you, across miles of land and water to give this personal tribute to Dr. Frank Buchman and his work in the cause of human dignity, human freedom and human happiness.

I have been reading again that wonderful book produced by all of you entitled "Frank Buchman: Eighty: By His Friends". The hackneyed phrase "A labour of love" will have an added meaning and an added emphasis, when it is used to describe this book. The personality of Dr. Buchman and the personalities of his friends are painted in words, whose colours are restrained and yet stand out vividly, like the colour of deep-red roses which formed the garlands which his friends from time to time had offered him and like the colour of the deep-red roses which were offered to him by Nebi the Jester in the full-page drawing of Frank Buchman printed in a Swiss journal in 1958 on the occasion of his Eightieth Birthday.

Apart from simple, yet poetic words of the book, the photographs that it contains also express the abiding friendship of Dr. Buchman in many countries and at various times. Among his friends were included abbots and hermits, kings and princes, chancellors and prime ministers, lords and dames, scholars and poets, artists and journalists, cooks and chauffeurs, miners and woodsmen, Negroes and Red-Indians, Europeans and Americans, Africans and Asians and so on - the list is indeed very long.

To all of them he was their personal friend Frank, and to Dr. Buchman, every one of them was an individual, worthy to be admired, to be understood, and to be loved. Surely, in our times there has been no other person with such an infinite capacity for friendship and trust, that is the double capacity to make friends and to be accepted as a friend. This infinite and deep capacity for friendship and trust is well-illustrated by the words of his friend, Joseph Scott, the California pioneer:

"Out of an abundance of my heart, and my deep affection for him, I wish for dear Frank for his eightieth birthday all the blessings and happiness the good Lord can bestow upon him ... I am asking God's choicest blessings upon his wholesome soul."

In the same wonderful book, there is a drawing by one of you of Dr. Buchman's home in Allentown in the State of Pennsylvania in the United States of America, and we can see that the house itself reflects the Man. The house is constructed on simple lines and it has a harmonious and happy atmosphere of its own. Yet, it has two small towers which seem to stretch out to the infinite sky. Like his house, Dr. Buchman possessed a simple and a child-like nature, which could be seen in the twinkle of his eyes.

This twinkle in his eyes was in many ways the outstanding physical trait in Dr. Buchman, and the quality and the brightness of the twinkle never seemed to have changed or diminished throughout his life. The same twinkle was in many respects a key-note of his character, his spirit, his faith and his mission in life. In the words of an Indian High Commissioner, this twinkle in his eyes reflected a gentle and a child-like character with a natural and effervescent humour. His spirit, like the twin towers of his house, reached out to the infinite beyond, and drew from it a simple but abiding faith in God, which sustained him throughout his life.

Physically, Dr. Buchman was never a strong and robust man, but the strength of his spirit hid this fact even from some of his closest friends. For long periods especially in his later life, he had to spend his time in bed, but as he was so full of humour, and so full of kindness that the friends who thronged his bed-room every morning during these dark periods, often forgot that he was infirm and unwell. This feature of Dr. Buchman's life is well-summed up in the words of a famous Australian newspaperman:

"From dawn till past midnight he was at the service of even the least promising, always cheerful, seemingly never discouraged. Not till a year later, when I went on long walks with him in St. James' Park in London, did I realize how great was the strain on his vitality. But he was sustained by his great faith, a faith which has moved mountains."

Like the Arthurian Knight Sir Galahad, he had a heroic mission and a great hope, and, therefore, he was worthy to stand besides Galahad and say that

"His strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure."

His critics spoke against him not because they really disliked him, but because they found this great faith of Dr. Buchman awe-inspiring to the point of fear, as they judged it against their own background of materialism and false values. Such a critic told a Master of St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, "Be very careful and avoid Buchman altogether." Thus, such critics would say of Dr. Buchman:

"Come, Weave a circle round him thrice, and close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew has fed, and drunk the milk of paradise."

Indeed thousands of people drawn from every walk of human life and from all races of the world have learnt to love Frank Buchman and had been drawn towards

him, because of the very fact that they knew him to be a man of God who had drunk the milk of paradise.

Whether we believe in a personal and supreme God or whether we believe in Karma or the web we ourselves weave by our own deeds and actions, we must notice that there is a rhythm and design, plan and pattern in the life of every human-being. However, this pattern and this rhythm are more noticeable in the case of great thinkers, great teachers, and great leaders of men.

In the life of Dr. Buchman, there is a pattern and a design whose finish and whose completeness makes it so impressive, so beautiful and so vivid. A rose does not spring up overnight and from nothing, and the greatness and the beauty of Frank Buchman's life had their origins long before he was born.

His great-great-grandfather was one Theodore Buchman or Bibliander if we are to use the literary or Greek form of his name. He was a professor at the University of Zurich, not many miles away from here, and was the successor to the great and fiery reformer Zwingli. It was the 16th century, when the mediaeval Christian church in Europe was being shaken by reforms from within and the threat of Islam from outside. Bibliander felt that the Christian should understand the Muslim, and with the purpose of making this "alien" religion known to his own people he took up the study of Arabic and translated the Koran from its original version. A contemporary scholar summed up the character and pattern of Bibliander's life in the following words:

"Bibliander believed that every man, everywhere could hear God's voice in his heart. Bibliander had a world vision, and that is why he translated the Koran into German. Bibliander answered the totalitarian offensive of the East not with a message of opposition and fear, but with a message of love."

These words with some slight modifications here and there can also express the faith, the vision and the love that Frank Buchman had in God and in humanity.

Frank's great-grandfather, Jakob Buchman, in 1740, sailed in search of freedom and liberty to Pennsylvania, that new country, which had been founded by that great lover of liberty, William Penn himself. In the same Pennsylvania, made beautiful by nature through her streams, mountains and forests, and made beautiful also by the personalities of Puritans and Freedom-Seekers, young Frank Buchman was born and brought up.

As he reached maturity, although his own heart was full of peace, he was stricken by the sight of men made unhappy and turbulent by greed, hatred, injustice and misunderstanding. The close of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, saw great changes in the structure of human society and the mode of living of human-beings in general. The world had become full of material riches, but the spirit of mankind was beginning to starve.

The First World War and its terrible and tragic consequences failed to open the eyes of men to the fact that for material prosperity, mankind was exchanging its precious heirloom of spiritual freedom. Within twenty years after this First World War, the great powers of the world had forgotten the sorrows and the sufferings of 1914-18, and were feverishly preparing to go to war again.

So, in that fateful year 1938, history found Frank Buchman spending a holiday at Waldlust Hotel just outside the city of Freudenstadt in the Black Forest Region of Germany. He was distressed by the folly of the power-hungry nations in staging an armament race which could and would result within a few months, in a great global war, the effects of which no country or nation could escape. He pondered and he thought to find a way to prevent such terrible wars happening again, and finally the idea and the ideology of Moral Re-Armament was born.

As the war clouds gathered thick and fearsome, the idea of MRA spread from country to country. It was, of course, too late to prevent the storm from breaking and lashing humanity with whips of iron and fire, gun-powder and atom, and the members of the young MRA Movement fought with courage but without bitterness in the cause of freedom. In the terrible years of strife and change and struggle which followed the Second World War, Dr. Buchman and all of you worked for peace, goodwill and spiritual happiness of mankind.

On the 8th August, 1961, at the ripe age of 83, soon after another great and successful assembly at Caux, Frank Buchman passed away and his great and beautiful life had come full circle. It seemed so fitting that he should see his final vision and close his life at the very place where his great idea was born, and it seemed also so fitting that his mortal remains should lie buried besides the grave of his parents, in the beautiful state where he himself was born and his character forged.

Dr. Buchman's philosophy, Dr. Buchman's religion, Dr. Buchman's way of life and Dr. Buchman's mission were based on the Four Absolutes, namely, Absolute Honesty, Absolute Purity, Absolute Unselfishness and Absolute Love. These marble-and-gold pillars of strength sum up the spirit of all great religions and they have supported and helped great nations to achieve and maintain their greatness.

Dr. Buchman, while giving this message to great statesmen and great makers of national independence, never failed to emphasize the fact that nations are made up of individuals. He once said, "As I am, so is my nation." These words are worthy to be written in gold, ornamented with rubies and emeralds, on the walls of Parliaments and political assemblies.

This political philosophy of Dr. Buchman, so simply and effectively said, should always be remembered by all leaders of men whether in politics or in business or in commerce or in other walks of life. Morality has one standard of measure only, and the measure cannot vary either with time or with space. Circumstances change, but absolute standards of morality, namely, honesty, purity, unselfishness and love can never change. Just as there can never be any excuse for any individual to vary or depart from these absolute standards, so there can never be any excuse for a country or a nation to vary or depart from the same absolute standards.

Dr. Buchman proved again and again that all individuals, all groups, all parties and all nations should remember and behave accordingly to these standards, whether in victory or in defeat. He offered his hand of friendship and his gift of political philosophy to those nations, who were tasting the bitterness of defeat and disaster, and also to those nations who were victorious, triumphant and yet unhappy during the decade immediately following the termination of the Second World War in 1945.

He also offered in the same stormy decade the same hand of friendship and the same political philosophy to the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa exulting in their newly-gained freedom and to those powers bewildered and made forlorn with the loss of their colonies.

This hand of friendship and this moral and political philosophy were accepted by all nations, attracted alike by the personality of Dr. Buchman and the wisdom of his ideas. For, Dr. Buchman followed himself the path that he had made for others. Often in history of mankind, with philosophers and leaders, there has been a tragic gap between precept and practice, but for Frank Buchman there was never any gap. Throughout his life, he never wavered from those absolute standards that he so cherished.

Again in the history of mankind, great ideas and great missions have passed into tragic oblivion with the passing of the particular philosopher or the particular leader. But I feel confident, as thousands of others feel, that the MRA will not fade away with the death of its founder Frank Buchman. I am confident, firstly because Dr. Buchman himself had achieved so much before he died, and secondly because he has left in you a great band of devoted workers who will continue the work of Dr. Buchman with a hope and a faith and a steadfastness, worthy of Mr. Steadfast himself of "Pilgrims' Progress".

The friendship and the philosophy that Dr. Buchman gave them remain enshrined not only in the hearts of many statesmen, many captains and kings of industry and business and other leaders of society, but also in the hearts of ordinary, average and simple people spread all over the world, and they all will support and encourage you and love you and wish you well in your endeavours to build a bridge of gold and silver, supported by the Four Marble-and-Gold Pillars of Wisdom, between misunderstanding, suspicious and unhappy nations of our present world.

Friends and Comrades, we all know of that glorious incident in the life of Dr. Buchman connected with the death of his mother to whom he had been always intensely devoted. He was travelling in India at that time in a train, and suddenly he saw a glorious vision of light which brightened and gilded the simple Indian railway carriage. "What a glorious vision," he said to his companion. "My beloved mother must have died." Instead of shedding idle tears, he accepted the death of his beloved mother with fortitude and understanding, and also as an inspiration and a vision to continue his great work for the moral upliftment of mankind in general.

The path in the beautiful Black Forest along which Frank Buchman was walking when the great thought came to him, has been marked and named, "Frank Buchman's Way". But there is also another path in the ugly Black Forests stretched all over the world which is unmarked and unnamed, but which is nonetheless known and clear for you to follow, and there you will be meeting Dr. Buchman again. The Black Forest of Germany in ancient and mediaeval times, was a place of terror and fear and darkness, and yet through human endeavour it has become a place of beauty. I am sure that in the same way you, who are my Friends and Comrades, will be able to rid the Black Forests of the world of fear and unhappiness, resulting from lack of morality.

I may end this humble tribute to the memory of my friend, Frank Buchman, by quoting the lines written by Frank's own brother who died in France in the First World War, and with which Frank Buchman himself comforted those who had lost their loved ones:

He lives. He lives in all the past.
He lives, nor to the last
Of seeing him again will I despair.
In dreams I see him now,
And upon his angel brow
I see it writ, Thou shalt meet me there.

Reproduced from the Collections of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress