

Life-style for a generation

by

Andrew Stallybrass

Summing up the youth sessions
at the MRA World Assembly

IN THE YEAR 2000 our generation will be around fifty years old. Many forecasts are pessimistic: unemployment, war, pollution, loneliness, overpopulation. We can despair, or find the hope that is born when we start with change in the one place where we can be fully possible—ourselves. And if we commit ourselves now to living out a new life-style, to an all-out experiment in faith and in obedience to God's directives, the world at the turn of the century could be a very different place.

Two hundred and ninety eight school and university students, young working and professional people from thirty two countries—we've spent two ten-day sessions exploring this life-style, and plunging into this experiment of faith of Moral Re-Armament.

From the open-air barbecue that started each session to the two hour show staged by the creative workshops at the close, the days—and the evenings—have been full. Starting with meetings in small groups at 7.30 in the morning, in every free corner of the conference centre, we asked questions about what we were seeing and hearing, shared our conclusions, and the decisions we were taking.

When in the same groups, we plunged

into the practical work of house-keeping, preparing, cooking and serving the food for the whole conference.

And on top of taking a full part in the conference programme of meetings, plays and films, in the afternoons we had our special programme—the study course and the creative workshop.

Micro-decisions

In the study course we examined the link between our lives and world events. Most of us are conscious of how world events affect the lives of individuals, including ourselves. We also studied how the lives and actions of individuals affect our nations and the world. In this interaction an ordinary person is not just a helpless victim. His decisions in his own life are a force helping to shape the world that he and others have to live in. He may be in a key position of influence, so that the effects of his decisions are felt immediately by thousands of people. Then there are what a French professor calls 'micro-decisions'—the tiny decisions that make up the way millions of people live day by day. Finally there are the decisions of seemingly ordinary people to do something quite extraordinary—usually stemming from a deep spiritual or ideological conviction. Saints such as Francis or Joan launched spiritual currents which have permanently affected history. In our time too, men and women of faith and spiritual power have altered and are altering the course of history in unexpected ways.

Then we listened to the experience of people fighting for MRA at all levels—in the home, in parliament, at university, in industry, in the church, from many parts of the world. We saw the differences and the similarities between our situations at different levels, in

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East and West meet at Greenwich

THE MAYOR OF GREENWICH, Councillor R F Neve, welcomes an Egyptian student delegation to his London Borough.

The delegation—fifteen selected students from five universities sent by the Ministry of Youth—is now visiting Britain after attending the Assembly at Caux.

The Mayor met the students on their arrival by boat at Greenwich Pier. Presenting them with a plaque of the arms of the Borough he said he was particularly glad to welcome them as a member of the Labour Middle East Committee.

The Egyptian delegation also presented him with a plaque.

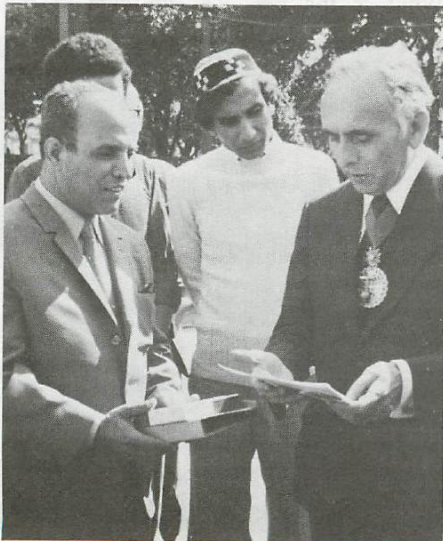


photo Betts

**NEW
WORLD
NEWS**
FOR MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

'Still time in Rhodesia'

THE REV ARTHUR KANODEREKA, Rhodesian Methodist minister and member of the African National Council, told the Caux Assembly, 'I believe God still has time to work among us and bring a change of heart which will answer the things which divide us. Violence for God's sake is not in His line.'

The Rev Kanodereka, who has served in areas of Rhodesia where there is guerrilla warfare, said, 'I regret that in the past I worked only for my own people, the Africans. Now I will fight for what is right with everyone, not just for the benefit of one colour.'

Headmasters

Four African headmasters from South Africa were welcomed to the Assembly by Miss June Chabaku, a drama teacher and social worker from Johannesburg. Speaking about her country she said, 'The whites there are not sojourners. They belong there. They must learn to share with us. But we blacks, too, must realise that we must have the answer to hate and bitterness.'

'I have decided to be part of this answer. It meant starting with myself. You can change structures. But only if you have leaders who will not compromise with evil, who will not accept bribes, who will care for people, who will not be tempted by sex, will they bring stable government. In the midst of uprisings and confusion in Africa we need to create those kind of leaders.'



Students from (l to r) Germany, Switzerland, Egypt and Malta.

photo: Rengfelt

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different countries, so that we can help each other and start to create a united force.

We felt the need to become more ideologically aware. What ideas and aims guided the actions of people in the past? What results did they produce? What are the ideas and philosophies abroad in the world today? What is our own aim and our own philosophy for ourselves, our country and the world? What will be the result?

And of course we wanted to answer some of the questions we expressed in our application forms: about the situation in the Third World countries; how to affect Russia and the Communist world. Several said they wanted to discover how to apply their faith in the society we live in. Some of us wanted to know how to change the atmosphere in our universities. And it has been suggested that we need to think beyond university and study to what a life commitment means in a profession.

We drew some conclusions – not only intellectually (what the world is like) but also for ourselves (what we are going to do and be).

New songs

Others of us started to explore the art of communicating our convictions. The invitation expressed our aim: 'To develop the ability to encourage change in men and society through music, song, mime and other media.' At the end of each course, we presented an evening of our ideas to the rest of the conference. Twelve new songs were written and presented for the first time, with the help of professional musicians. Three poems were set to music, one using a blend of Indian, Laotian and classical Western dancing to illustrate its theme.

Groups met in quiet corners to hammer out ideas, where we learnt not to impose our own thing, but to work as a team to create something together, above differences of language and cul-

ture. Many drew on their own experiences – of life in university, or of coffee bar gangs and the race to keep up with fashion.

Family life came in for satire, with father, a judge, coming back from a hard day in the courts and putting the rest of the family in the dock, only to find that they all agreed he's the guilty one. They end by all apologising to the dog, the object of their dispute.

One of the most original and moving items was a monologue, cut by flashback scenes, set in the train carrying a young girl home from Caux and the youth sessions, evoking the decisions she'd taken, the challenges awaiting her on her return, and ending as the train arrives at its destination with the prayer that God will provide strength and guidance.

It's clear to us all that the important thing about a visit to Caux is what happens afterwards. We were inspired by the example of many who committed themselves to this revolution a generation ago, and to hear where this adventure has led them, the result it has brought.

No one can tell what we'll be doing a generation on, nor what the world will be like. But we've got some practical ideas for the future, and a good many costly decisions already behind us. 'I've learnt we can do without the things that are worshipped in our society,' said a high school student. 'It's difficult to live at this new rhythm. There are temptations to fall back into the old pace. I won't be just a cog in the old heap, but a motor to help my friends rethink what they are living for.'

Several responded to the challenge to help prepare for *Song of Asia's* tour in Scandinavia and Britain. 'It means stepping outside my small self-centred world,' said Barbara Ruthardt. 'It means seeing my country and its policy from outside, seeing what its problems are and what it has to give. I want to learn to work for a course that has nothing to do with

myself, to serve others and not to calculate what I will profit from it.'

Many came to Caux as a result of *Song of Asia's* first months in Europe, and we were all glad to mix with the cast in the practical work and in the sessions. 'We Christians can learn many things from the believers of other religions. *Song of Asia* can bring us far-reaching impulses that effect concrete change in our thought and actions,' commented a young European. A second, who had postponed a teaching job to work with *Song of Asia*, added, 'I've given my life one hundred per cent to God so that He can use me to rebuild the world.'

'We can pass on our convictions to a far greater public through the media,' said Joachim, one of the many Germans present. And there are many other practical focuses for our convictions: books, songs, articles for our local papers, letters to MPs, photographic stories and even a short film is in the making. An Oxford university student accepted to act as a clearing house and co-ordinating centre for news and plans from all those different European universities. Some aim to travel and help each other with short actions in each other's countries.

Revolutionary cells

We will need to meet again at Christmas, and Easter; and some of us are rethinking our future plans in the light of the task to be done. 'I've renewed the decision to listen to God every day,' said one, 'and I'm ready to let Him guide me in choosing my profession and planning my future.' A young Indian engineer said, 'We need today, in every sphere of life, men with professional competence and allegiance to a common good transcending lesser loyalties.'

'Here I have seen that God's plan has no limits,' said Dorothea Kogel, 'and our part in this plan has also no limits. I see that I am responsible not only for my own personal work as a teacher, but for education in my country. What is the best we can give to our



Catarina Lorenzon from Sweden and a group from the

pupils? We need a united team who will take responsibility. I will work to build that. I also want to work towards an international conference for educators next year.'

Most of us started with simple steps of change with the family, with friends and enemies. 'I've decided to live in the open, to stop talking disparagingly about teachers or other pupils,' said one school student. 'I must leave my complacency and self-righteousness at the Cross. I am sure that God has bigger and better things for me.' Habits broken, apologies made, relationships ended, letters written – and 'there will be other changes', as a young Norwegian warned. But of course we are more interested in what we do than in what we don't. 'We must build friendships for life. We can open our homes and use them as revolutionary cells in our cities and towns,' a commerce graduate said.

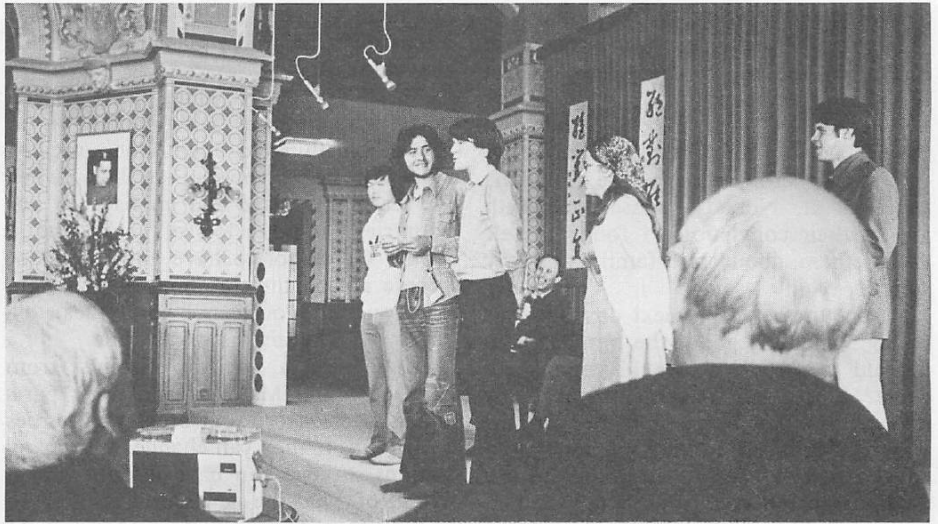
We didn't all agree on everything, but most of us are with the girl who said, 'I believe total commitment is necessary if the next generation is to have a worthwhile future.'

A chain reaction of change

From a session of the Assembly

CHRIS GILL: A few months ago I met a student in London. He was a Trotskyite student, an International Socialist. We talked about change in the world, and about Moral Re-Armament. After some time he said, 'Well, how can I help you?' I didn't know what to say, so, though fearful, I said, 'Let's have a moment of quiet and God will tell us.'

After that time of quiet he said, 'I'm coming up to Oxford next term. Could I be your representative there?' – presuming that Moral Re-Armament had not reached Oxford yet!



Denis Nowlan, from Oxford University, introduces Frenchman Michel Hentzler. With them are (l to r) Lim Chuan Poh, Elizabeth Tooms and Chris Gill. Hentzler said, 'We must fight against the selfishness which corrupts our hearts and makes us blind. Three months ago I didn't know MRA. Before coming to Caux I was in constant revolt against society—partly through the way I dressed and wore my hair. I criticized all the ideas of my family and friends. I talked a lot but didn't listen to others. I long for the gulf between the generations to be bridged because we need to work together.'

photo: B Almond

Later I went to Oxford. I knocked on his door. He said, 'Welcome, do you want somewhere to stay?' I stayed with him a few days. We used to have long discussions. But I put to him, 'Why don't you put this idea into practise? Why not come with an action group with this show *Cross Road* which gives people the challenge of MRA and shows what ordinary people can do?'

I'll let this student carry on the story.

DENIS NOWLAN: We took this show to the universities of Newcastle and Durham, and we took it to the mining towns of Fife. I met teachers and mine workers and heard about their sufferings, and the things they care about. I met a Communist miner. We sat in his tiny living room and discussed ideology and the Marxist dialectic. I told him all about MRA – I was getting very enthusiastic by this time about the theories of MRA.

By the end of the afternoon I was surprised that I hadn't had much of an effect on his thinking. We went away. Later I was talking about my ineffectiveness. A young man said to me: 'If you really want to be effective, why don't you put right what you fear most in your own life? And don't waste any time about it. Do it today.'

It brought me to the point where I knew I had to change. I went off and wrote down my thoughts as he'd been recommending. To my astonishment I had the thought that I should go and apologise to a man that I'd hated. And that I should send back money I'd stolen from school, even admit that I'd cheated in exams. I knew I wouldn't be free to change society until I'd done all this. I decided that day, and wrote those letters.

I can only describe it like a sun rising with me. It was something far greater than anything I'd experienced on the drugs I'd been taking.

Sometime after that I came to Caux. I began to plan for my university. I was frightened. How do you help others to change, and how do people react? I was frightened that my family would react against me when they found out that I wasn't all that I said I was. In fact they didn't think that I was all I said I was!

I talked to my father and said what I'd decided to do. He was silent, and then he said, 'It's the spirit of God at work.'

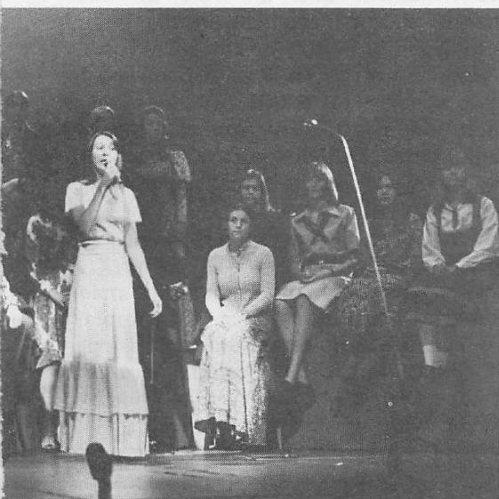
The man whom I'd hated became my friend. I went back to the university. Some of my friends were surprised by the new way I'd decided to live. I was often tempted to compromise. 'Everyone's going in one direction, and it's so unreasonable to live these absolute moral standards! You'll only make yourself unpopular.' By the grace of God I did manage to stick by them more or less. I realised as time went by how much people were depending on me to stick by them – people who laughed at me and made fun of my decisions were in fact looking to me to make a stand in the university. They saw in me a hope of something different for themselves.

Last term we had the idea of bringing a minibus to Caux with some students from Oxford. Two weeks before the end of term a girl came into my room. She borrowed a book, *Good God, It Works!* by Garth Lean.

I'll let her tell the story herself.

ELIZABETH TOOMS: I made many friends at university, and it was great fun. But I lived a compromise with what I knew was right, I was also unhappy many, many times. I did a lot of things that I'm ashamed of now. Most of us had nothing to believe in, we have no commitment to anything because we're all disillusioned. Nobody follows what they say.

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creative workshop present one of twelve new songs.
photo: Rengfelt

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My family is divided. My father is in one place and my mother in another. I was very upset about it.

When I read this book, I wanted to meet Garth Lean. I was impressed by the atmosphere in his house, and the peace of it. Nobody pressed me with any of their convictions. I found myself telling them about my family and my worries.

I went to see Denis next day. He was telling somebody about the minibus, and he said to me, 'How would you like to come?' I decided to come. I wrote my mother, and I apologised to her for the way I'd behaved in the previous holidays. I had refused to allow her to say anything to me and I didn't talk to her.

I didn't like it here at first. I said this to Denis. He said, 'If you gave your life to God, things would be different. You have to decide.'

I thought: 'This is something I can believe in, something so big and so real, and the people here not only say it but they live it, it's something I could commit my whole life to, something totally worthwhile.' So I said, 'OK God, you win. I'll give my life to you.'

Immediately there was a fantastic feeling of peace. Then I realised I had to write to one or two friends and tell them what has happened, and to write to my mother and tell her everything about my life in Oxford, the things that will perhaps completely upset her, because they are so different from what she really thinks I am. I don't know what's going to happen. But I know I've done the right thing.

I want to thank all of you here who've shown me the way. I hope I can show the way to other people as you've shown it to me.

LIM CHUAN POH: I'm from Singapore, studying in Oxford. They told me about Caux but I wasn't impressed except by the dishwasher—they said it stretched from one end of a room to the other! But something made me decide to come. A few days ago I had supper with Garth Lean. He gave me a challenge to take the high jump of faith. I didn't want to make this commitment. I have been a Christian for a long time. But only 50% of myself I gave to God. The other 50 I kept to myself. So I can have the best of both worlds—I can get on well with my Marxist friends and my Christian friends.

I was afraid that someone might want me to commit myself. I had a great feeling of fear. As Garth Lean said, 'You are in total darkness, and you hear below you somebody splashing happily, and the sound of water. But you're not sure whether they are splashing in a bath tub or in a lake. So dare not dive.'

I made a dive. I found it is a big lake. I can swim in it. I'm glad to have made that decision.

There are many young people here. There may be some flame burning in us, to do something to build a new society. Will this flame continue to burn when we leave this place and go back to our countries? It takes lots of guts to stand alone. We've got to have guts. A lot of people are on the threshold of making a decision, but you're not sure. I can assure you. The dive is worthwhile.

There are a lot of students from Singapore and Malaysia and other parts of Asia in Oxford and other universities in Britain. If they can change, then many nations in Asia can have leaders with a vision of what the new world is.

We want *Song of Asia* to come to Oxford. Students are living for selfish gain, not for the good of the people. We give them a greater aim in life—far greater than Communism and other forms of political ideas. MRA has a greater set of ideas than all these.

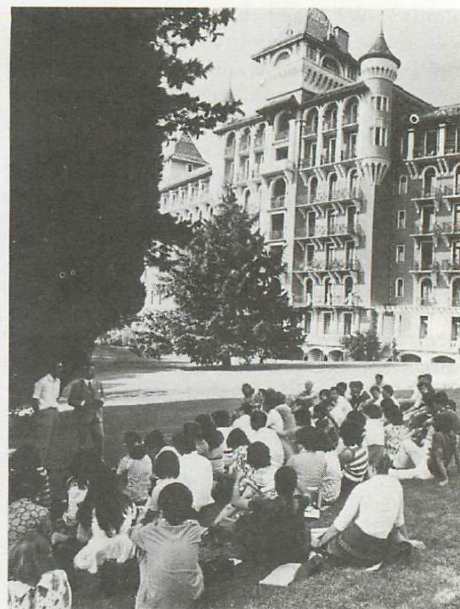
at a glance

● 'A dynamic force of men and women from more than 12 countries give what they have to say with passion, humour and directness,' wrote the *Berner Oberländer Nachrichten*, a daily of the canton of Bern, referring to *Song of Asia* performances in the Schoenau Theatre, Steffisburg. More than 850 people including visitors from Bern, Jura and many parts of Switzerland applauded the public showing there.

A special matinée showing was also given for 700 primary and secondary students from different schools of the town.

The Asian force was welcomed by the mayors of the towns of Thun and Steffisburg. Speaking in the 450-year-old town-hall the Mayor of Thun, Mr Eggenberger, said, 'Democracy means living together, together deepening the sense of human community, together tackling and bridging opposing points of view by mutual respect. You attempt with your performances to advance mutual respect and understanding and to deepen human contacts between races and religions. This is a difficult undertaking. The authorities of the town of Thun congratulate you for your courage and we wish that your message be understood.'

The cast of *Song of Asia* has now returned to Caux for further performances there.



Forty Japanese hear from speakers on the lawn at Mountain House. photo: Rengfelt

● Fiji's Clerk of the Senate officially invited Members to see the MRA films *A Man for All People* and *Men of Brazil*. Senators were joined by members of the Great Council of Chiefs, Parliament and Suva City Council.

The Senate Vice-President welcomed guests and a Member of the Council of Chiefs concluded the evening with appreciation for 'the message of hope' in the films. The following day another Chief arranged for a lunch-time screening of *A Man for All People* after the opening session of the Council of Chiefs.

The Master Builders of Fiji showed *Men of Brazil* at their July meeting, and a Catholic priest also arranged an evening for 200 adults and teenagers to see this film.

Alternative

In a twenty minute radio interview, broadcast to all 300 inhabited islands in the Dominion, Michael Lennon, former New Zealand trade union executive member, was questioned about Moral Re-Armament and the role of trade unions and management in the 'moral responsibility of solving the problems besetting industry'. He was also invited to give a paper at a trade union seminar sponsored by the Fiji Council of Trade Unions. Mr Lennon spoke about change in men as the alternative to class struggle.

Two Suva Rotary Clubs welcomed speakers who described MRA's work to answer great human problems in many countries and the part that Fiji can play. Two cabinet ministers, the Commissioner of Police and the Governor of the Rotary District of New Zealand and the Pacific were present at one meeting.