

Report of the South African Consultation

Chapel Hill, 12th March 1999

Dear friends,

Some have said that they don't appreciate too much the local colour, sights and sounds in these reports; they want to get to the meat. These can skip to our conclusions on the following pages. Those who enjoy trying to live into the experience and the process, read on!

Our South African hosts have excelled themselves in their care for us and in giving us the warmest of welcomes to their country. Indeed they have been experiencing a bit of a heat wave, whereas some of the Europeans and Americans were coming straight from the snow and ice of winter. For several of us this has been a memorable first visit to Africa - a journey back to the beginnings of humans' life on earth, the earliest of whose remains were found in the Sterkfontein caves not far from where we were staying. At the mid-point of our deliberations we visited a game park in a volcanic crater some 1,200,000 years old, where we marvelled at the majesty of the many wild animals.

All of us have followed events in South Africa with emotion, so it was a joy to find ourselves in this country that is trying to clean its slate and start afresh. President Mandela has called for a moral regeneration of the nation, and we spent an inspiring afternoon with a group of the South African MRA team, hearing about their efforts to forward this process through their schools programme, their touches with the leadership, and the networks they are building in farming and rural development. On four evenings, guest personalities came to talk to us, giving us a variety of insights into the country. We heard from Piet Meiring, an Afrikaner theology professor and former member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; John Burrell, an Anglican church minister; Joe Tshawane, director of the King/Luthuli Transformation Centre and Moderator-elect of the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church; and Chris Landsberg, a political scientist and Deputy Director of the Centre for Policy Studies in Johannesburg.

Thirty-seven of us from 22 countries met in the Chapel Hill conference centre, at the end of a dirt road at the foot of the Magaliesberg mountains, an hour and a half's drive from Pretoria. Our hosts, a Canadian-American couple, had felt called to offer a place of rest and refreshment for body and soul. They plied us with excellent food, and created an atmosphere of peace for the seven hours of daily meetings that stretched our minds and hearts. Several commented that they could not have kept up the pace in another setting and climate. We were woken by a dawn chorus of unfamiliar bird-song, before a prepared 'thought for the day' under an open-sided thatched roof in close company with some of our cousins, the monkeys and baboons. One day a Christian friend invited us to meditate on a Sufi thought, 'God said: Do not consider whether you are up a tree or down a hole. Consider Me, for I am the key to the way.' Another day a Muslim quoted from a Christian text: 'If today is quiet, trust in stillness. If today is action, trust the activity. If it is time to wait, trust the pause. If it is time to receive that which we have been waiting for, trust that it will happen clearly and with power, and receive the gift with joy.' Then we had further quiet in this lovely Garden-of-Eden setting. After breakfast, we gathered in small groups for sharing and fellowship, before the main 'business' sessions.

'When I do the mending, God does the healing,' said one. Another said that given time together and sharing, 'We are of one heart, as a family. My suspicion of new ideas has melted with the rising of the African sun.' 'People want to hear fresh experiences, not just deep-frozen ones,' said a third. 'God is not nervous,' shared another. As we part, we look to the future with a renewed sense of confidence in our calling, and a decision to leave fears behind.

The process

Over the last ten years the Consultation process has brought together some 200 representatives of the different parts of our world work seeking 'the unanimity of the spirit', rather than as delegates mandated to vote for or against agenda items. We feel that it is worth explaining briefly how the decision-making process has worked this time. In deciding to adopt the Jamaica Consultation proposals ('MRA Worldwide - looking forward to the 21st century'), and in choosing the members of the International Council, we did not formally vote. We were all given orange and blue cards: orange to express 'warm feelings' towards a proposal, and blue to express 'coolness', some reservation or question. This enabled those with reservations on a particular question to be heard before a decision was reached. It did not replace times of quiet together, which we had frequently as we continued until consensus was reached. This process has meant that all relevant questions have been aired and noted.

International Council

We unanimously approved, with some minor changes, the Jamaica proposals for the creation of a new International Council and a group of elders to replace the International Coordination Group. (See 'MRA Worldwide' document with Appendix at end.) The International Council is accountable to the annual Consultations. It will start work on July 1, 1999.

We were grateful for all those involved in the process this year. Ninety-three people were nominated, some by a number of people, some by one person or by themselves, including 26 non-full-time workers. The Latin American team made no nominations from their region, as no one was available to serve at this point. Apart from this obvious lack, the nominations reflected the cultural and geographical diversity of our fellowship. There were fourteen people on the final short-list for consideration in South Africa. Given their excellent qualities, we were faced with difficult decisions. We looked for people who were relatively well-known and so could win the confidence of our team worldwide; and who had a grasp of world affairs and the ways of politics, a compassionate care for people, an ability to deal with many issues at the same time, and the readiness to travel a good deal besides meeting twice a year.

In making this final selection, we wish to reaffirm the conviction of the Consultation that all those on the short-list will continue to play a vital role of service to our world fellowship, and that all of us at the Consultation also need to take full responsibility for the tasks ahead. There has been some fear of leadership among us as a world work, but we see this process as affirming a spiritual and moral leadership rather than establishing a board of directors. One of us expressed his greatest fear, that these structures would encourage some to sit back and take less responsibility. We feel that all of us in our world work are called to take more.

In a very open spirit we searched for a consensus on who we felt was meant to serve at this point. Our final decision, prayerfully arrived at, follows. We have reaffirmed, from the existing International Coordination Group, James Hore-Ruthven (UK) and Anne-Marie Tate (France), to serve two further years in completion of their three-year terms. Ren-Jou Liu (Taiwan) would like to serve only one more year instead of two in view of other coming responsibilities, and we accepted his decision with regret. Suresh Khatri (Fiji) has accepted to stay on until June 2000, extending his term by one year to help with the transition. We further selected Ailsa Hamilton (UK), Pieter Horn (South Africa), Ashwin Patel (Kenya) and Peter Thwaites (Australia) to start their terms in July 1999; and Laurent Gagnon (Canada), Rajmohan Gandhi (India) and Dick Ruffin (USA) to start in July 2000. (See page 5 for a chart.)

We accepted with gratitude Lotty Wolvekamp's offer to set up the International Council secretariat, which will also become operational in July. She will create a team to take this on - so any offers of help to her, please.

We heard a report on the activities of the International Coordination Group. The newly created elders will take over the conflict resolving role that has occupied a good deal of the ICG's time over the last years. (Three former ICG members have been asked to gather the first group of elders, whose names will be announced in the World Bulletin: see Appendix.)

We encouraged the International Council to continue to co-opt individuals to help them with specific tasks.

A working group from this Consultation will study further the methods of selection of candidates for the International Council and of participants in the Consultations. This group will consult our world team through the World Bulletin and make recommendations to the next Consultation. (Reference people: Rob Corcoran, Bhanu Kale, Claire Leggat, Mona Marzouk, John Mills, Marianne Spreng, Andrew Stallybrass.)

We saw a need to examine further how to shape the tasks of the International Council so that more people in jobs and with family responsibilities can play a part, and to see how younger people can be included more. We warmly thanked the Consultation Support Group, and in particular Mona Marzouk and Marianne Spreng for their massive labours and service in this nomination and selection process.

Named programmes

We spent three full days discussing named programmes. Under this heading we saw two categories, which can each be further divided into international and national programmes. The first category is MRA programmes, which may have some separate structures but largely operate through MRA legal bodies. The second category is related programmes. The present MRA World Wide Web sites show this clearly: there are 'MRA sites' (Foundations for Freedom, Agenda for Reconciliation, Hope in the Cities, etc) and 'related sites' (Caux Round Table, International Communications Forum, etc). We were conscious also of all the work of MRA that does not fit any of these definitions.

One image we used was the port that is MRA, and the boats - named programmes - setting out to sea and returning for replenishment, and also bringing back interesting cargo. We looked at the concerns for strengthening the port - the heart of MRA - from which the venturers set forth. Most of our time was spent discussing the international programmes. We were sorry that no one from the Caux Round Table was able to come.

There is also a rich variety of inspiring national named programmes: the Clean Elections campaigns in Kenya, Taiwan, Brazil and elsewhere, schools programmes in South Africa and the UK, industrial seminars at Panchgani, and so on. A wide range of development and participation programmes for young people also exists: study courses such as the Effective Living Course, Asia-Pacific Youth Conferences, Caux Scholars Program, and others.

CONCLUSIONS

We wholeheartedly support the present named programmes. They have all sprung from people with a sense of mission and calling, and stand for change in individuals and the answering of particular needs in or between nations. We are also aware that they do not cover the whole spectrum of urgent needs in the world, for example family issues and the fight against poverty and corruption. The conclusions and guidelines that follow concern the MRA programmes; we hope that the related programmes will also take them into consideration.

We welcomed the way in which these named programmes:

- respond to major issues on the hearts of people around the world
- offer greater clarity of aim and focus
- reach out into new areas and touch fresh people, offering a vehicle for enlistment and

participation

- express our message in a contemporary way
- bring renewal and new skills into MRA
- attract alternative sources of funding

We also recognise that the programmes may also have some unintended consequences which mean that vigilance is needed. They:

- may increase pressure on limited human resources
- can cause tensions by employing paid staff alongside volunteer workers
- could divert finances
- might become more interested in the agenda than in people
- could lead to a fragmentation of MRA
- can be insensitive to national needs and timing

The transmission of the spirit of MRA depends primarily on us as individuals, how we live, not on programmes alone. Lasting change lies in changed hearts. We need a fresh impulse at the heart of MRA for fellowship and spiritual renewal, and to foster the growth of living local cells. Departmentalisation has sometimes led to lack of information and suspicion. We note, however, that those at present responsible for these named programmes likewise devote much time and energy to nurturing the 'heart of MRA', and we trust that this balance will continue.

The name Moral Re-Armament has entirely positive connotations in many places; in others it causes problems. The named programmes have in some cases created networks and gained support that would not otherwise have been forthcoming under the name of Moral Re-Armament. For example, some Foundations for Freedom courses have been funded by the British government. Different countries have the freedom to make some changes of name, in consultation with the International Council. We recognise a certain frustration with our collective inability to arrive at a conclusion in the continuing quest for a possible new name. With the other changes under way, the question remains open, but a decision cannot be made in haste. We were encouraged to hear that a working group on this issue will meet this summer with John Bond.

WORKING GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There should be regular evaluations of our programmes by those not directly involved:

1. As well as drawing on the people and resources of MRA, do the named programmes feed back people and resources into MRA as a whole?
2. Is the leadership enabling others in the programme to grow?
3. Is it a relevant vehicle for the message of MRA?
4. What are the relations with local and national MRA teams?

Named programmes moving into geographical areas where there are MRA teams should operate in consultation and partnership with local people.

The content of named programmes can be freely adapted for local use, but for the sake of coherence as well as courtesy and common sense, the originators should be consulted.

The named programmes have a record of effectiveness in specific local situations; they can now adapt to wider environments. (For example, Hope in the Cities is working on broadening the applicability of its printed materials and training methods.)

The International Council should play a monitoring/co-ordinating role in connection with the named programmes.

The leadership of the different named programmes should meet at least once a year, in order to improve co-ordination and cross-fertilisation. We encourage honest conversations within and between these named programmes, and with the broader fellowship of MRA.

Those responsible for the named programmes should consult with the International Council and inform the World Bulletin on dates of major events and activities.

When working with other organisations, they should seek to discern MRA's distinctive, specific contribution.

The named programmes should aim to be all-inclusive and universal, welcoming people from different faiths and traditions.

Next year's Consultation

We gratefully accepted the warm invitation of our Indian friends to hold the next Consultation in Asia Plateau, Panchgani, from 4th to 11th February, 2000, on a theme to be finalised. The Consultation preparation team will include: Marta Dabrowska, Bhanu Kale, Ren-Jou Liu, S'fiso Msimang, Amit Mukherjee, Ernesto Veras and Lotty Wolvekamp.

Following the Consultation, at the invitation of their hosts, many of the participants are staying on for different actions and visits in South Africa.

Reg BARRY, South Africa; Collie BURTON, USA; Rob CORCORAN, USA; Marta DABROWSKA, Poland; Amina DIKEDI, Nigeria; Lawrence FEARON, UK; Harry FERNGREN, Sweden; Lise GAGNON, Canada; Ailsa HAMILTON, UK; Bryan HAMLIN, USA; James HORE-RUTHVEN, UK; Suresh KHATRI, Fiji; Bhanu KALE, India; Joseph KARANJA, Kenya; Abel KATITO, Zimbabwe; Mary LEAN, UK; Ren-Jou LIU, Taiwan; Claire LEGGAT, UK/New Zealand; Mona MARZOUK, UK/Egypt; Patrick McNAMARA, USA; John MILLS, Australia; Snowy MOHLALA, South Africa; S'fiso MSIMANG, South Africa; Amit MUKHERJEE, India; Kiyoshi NAGANO, Japan; Jean-Jacques ODIER, France/Switzerland; Edward PETERS, UK; Sam PONO, South Africa; Andrew STALLYBRASS, Switzerland; Anne-Marie TATE, France; Nicole THIEKE, Germany; Ernesto VERAS, Brazil; Jens WILHELMSSEN, Norway; Richard WILSON, Jamaica; Lotty WOLVEKAMP, Holland; Peter WOOD, New Zealand

* * * *

International Council terms of service (July 1 - June 30)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Amina DIKEDI		-----						
Jens WILHELMSSEN		-----						
Suresh KHATRI		-----						
Ren-Jou LIU			-----					
James HORE-RUTHVEN			-----					
Anne-Marie TATE			-----					
Ailsa HAMILTON				-----				
Pieter HORN				-----				
Ashwin PATEL				-----				
Peter THWAITES				-----				
Laurent GAGNON					-----			
Rajmohan GANDHI					-----			
Dick RUFFIN					-----			

MRA WORLDWIDE - LOOKING FORWARD TO THE 21ST CENTURY
New patterns of international consultation, communication and decision-making

Guiding principles

- * Our world team is united by
 - the quality of our spiritual life, based on seeking divine direction and accepting absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love
 - a shared global vision
 - our commitment to changing society
 - * All leadership offered within MRA will be 'servant leadership'
 - * Subsidiarity: decisions will be made at the nearest level appropriate to the events
- 1 MRA WORLDWIDE is based on committed individuals and includes
- local cells for friendship, sharing and teamwork
 - programmes and teams linked by common themes
 - national and regional consultations agreeing wider priorities
 - legal bodies (where applicable)
- 2 ANNUAL GLOBAL CONSULTATIONS
- MRA's primary international policy-making forum
 - representative of the diversity of the MRA family
 - participants commissioned by national or regional teams (see Appendix)
- 3 INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
- 7-10 people, each bringing particular gifts and talents
 - each with a sense of calling to this service
 - fully available

Terms of reference

To provide leadership and direction by

- * encouraging a shared global vision
- * responding to and empowering committed teams at every level
- * nurturing the spiritual life of our world family, and fostering the development of people
- * discerning opportunities, developing strategies and recommending priorities in the international deployment of people and money, and setting agendas for the annual consultations
- * stimulating efforts to get MRA's message into the public domain
- * overseeing the schedule of MRA's international events
- * being the reference point for initiatives and policies that affect MRA's international standing, including formalised connections with other groups and the creation of new MRA centres and official bodies

Accountability

- to the annual global consultations

The authority of the International Council will be based on the trust shown by MRA's world family and the endorsement given by the global consultation process.

Method

- close and regular communications, with visits as possible, between the International Council and the worldwide team, including local teams and those responsible for MRA's initiatives
- a revised and enhanced World Bulletin as the primary regular communication channel
- co-opting appropriate people as needed to handle particular issues or situations

Terms and selection

- 3-year terms, renewable and staggered
- selected by the annual global consultation

(For detailed proposals, see Appendix)

Financed largely by contributions from national bodies, as well as by individual gifts.

Served by a Secretariat

A Secretary with a team who will have as their primary responsibility assisting the International Council and the global consultations. (For detailed proposals, see Appendix)

Supported by the Elders

An informal 'resource body' to advise and support the International Council. (For detailed proposals, see Appendix)

A full review of the working of the International Council, including the elders and secretariat, will be undertaken by the global consultation five years after it has started functioning.

The International Council will start working from July 1, 1999.

Appendix

A TERMS AND SELECTION OF INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

(This is the present process. A working group has been set up to examine it and suggest improvements; their recommendations will be put before the 2000 consultation.)

Terms: 2-3 members of the Council will be replaced each year. After the initial three-year period of service, a Council member may be renominated and selected for one further term, either immediately or later.

Selection process: This will take place every second year, and will be handled by a nominations committee appointed by the annual global consultation. Nominations for the Council will be invited from around the world, and the names of those nominees with a sense of calling and a readiness to be available if chosen, will go forward for decision at the next annual global consultation. This consultation will choose one group of new members to join the Council in July of that year, and a second group who will join in July of the following year.

B ORGANISATION OF GLOBAL CONSULTATIONS

Each global consultation will nominate a planning committee, normally three people, to undertake the practical arrangements for the following consultation, including the responsibility to ensure a balanced representation.

C SECRETARIAT

This team will give practical support to the work of the International Council. They will handle communications, travel arrangements and financial accounting, and generally facilitate the carrying out of the International Council's responsibilities. The secretariat will start functioning at the same time as the International Council.

The secretariat team will be chosen by the International Council after inviting suggestions from the MRA world community. They will work in full cooperation with and at the service of the Council. Length of service will usually be from three to five years.

D PANEL OF ELDERS

The elders will consist of about twelve individuals, with between them a wide background knowledge and understanding of our world work, and a care for the welfare of the people currently undertaking it. They will be selected from those former members of the International Coordination Group/International Council who are willing to serve, and others who may volunteer or be invited. Their names will be made known through the World Bulletin.

Their function will be to provide resources of wisdom and experience. They will work quietly, usually not more than two or three on any particular subject, and only when asked to do so, either by the International Council or by a national body. Individuals can also take concerns to them if

they feel these are crucial to our work but too personal or sensitive to come within the remit of the International Council or a national body. They will be independent of the International Council, but will keep them informed. Any complaints about the International Council could also be addressed to them.

If requested by the International Council or a national MRA body, they will take responsibility for a process leading to resolution of conflicts. This process will be decided by the elders with the inclusion of concerned parties, on the understanding that any recommendations made will be respected and acted upon.

They will not be expected to meet as elders just for the sake of meeting, but will confer with each other in any way they find suitable. Nor will they be expected to present any 'group of elders' view, only the view of the individuals involved on any matter which has been put before them.

They will maintain confidentiality on matters put before them, but will have the freedom to discuss these with any other elder unless asked for cogent reasons not to do so. If they feel the need to discuss matters put before them with people other than fellow elders and those directly concerned, they will do so only with permission from the latter.

They will be expected to come back to those who have turned to them within a reasonable time with suggestions or advice. In return for their time and care, they will be entitled to expect that their suggestions or advice will be taken seriously and followed through to conclusion, if necessary with their continued involvement.

They will serve not longer than five years and not less than two, and length of service will be flexible according to their different situations. Each one on retiring will work with the whole group of elders to find a replacement. Three former members of the International Coordination Group will create the first group of elders.

* * * * *

In summary

Annual global consultation: selects and reviews International Council
appoints IC nominations committee
appoints preparation committee for next consultation
International Council: chooses secretariat
Elders: serve a maximum of five years, arrange their own replacement

Annual schedule

February/March annual global consultation
July 1 changeover of International Council members
October 31 deadline for suggested participants in next consultation and, every second year, nominations for the International Council

Reviews

2000 IC selection process; 2004 IC, elders, secretariat

March 1999