

As from Berlin

Dear Friends,

September 19, 1991

History is in the middle of one of its amazing accelerations. Those taking part in MRA's sixth global consultation were privileged to meet just outside Berlin, at the heart of what has been a divided continent for most of our lives. One evening we walked under the Brandenburg Gate and along the scar-trace of the now-vanished Berlin Wall. On another day we saw the room in Potsdam where Stalin, Truman, Churchill and then Attlee confirmed the post-war division of Germany. One of our German hosts told us of the tens of thousands who had lost their jobs in the recent changes, and of the 100,000 who worked for the East German secret police.

German friends came to meet with us on different occasions. Young Germans spoke of their need as a nation to grow in responsibility. "Proud is not the right word," said one, "but I feel I can care, I can take responsibility for my country now." A Polish woman told us how her previous "visit" to Berlin had been in a prison train, between two concentration camps, during an Allied bombing raid. "I never wanted to come back, but when I saw the TV pictures of the Wall coming down, I cried, and all my fears of a reunified Germany were gone with the tears."

So these changes, and the deep emotions and challenges they raise, were the backdrop to our consultation. "Am I serious?" one young European asked, as he decided to give his whole time to the work of MRA, "am I serious about the cry from Eastern Europe that I hear?" "If you take on something big enough and bold enough," one Asian said to the Europeans present, "it will be an asset for the whole world."

A young person said, "I feel close to you because you are searching; and because you aren't only looking for what MRA can do, but for what God wants done and how MRA may help." She thus expressed the paradox: that our sense of need is proportional to the scale of our aims, and that our inadequacy becomes our greatest asset.

As the talkative amongst us listened better, and as the reticent supped forward, peacefulness began to replace impatience, and timidity gave way to a spirit of daring. How easy it is, we all felt, to limit our vision and boldness because of our lack of resources. If we move beyond what we can do to what needs to be done, we find there are more team-mates than we dreamt of, and team-building for a task takes the place of perpetuating a movement. Someone remarked, "MRA is not the treasure but a shovel to dig it up with." Another person said, "I need to move beyond responsibility for MRA to responsibility for all of God's world."

One of our themes was enlistment. It was not recruiting to a movement that we were talking about. We were searching for greater inclusion, more unselfishness in helping others find their calling wherever it may lead them.

We reflected on blocks in ourselves which make us hard to work with. We tried to tease out ways of operating which would give more space for others to participate and grow.

We reviewed existing enlistment opportunities, and brain-stormed for fresh ones. The report gives some ideas. But we felt that the keys to enlistment are in us: a greater sense of adventure, and of mission, a deeper joy and a humbler expression of need.

Our other main theme was the consultation process itself. The consultations initiated three years ago have helped meet our need for greater trust, cohesion and responsibility. We felt that they should continue, though annual meetings would be sufficient.

However, because the consultations have not yet proven wholly effective in discerning priorities and strategies, we recommend they be supplemented. On the one hand we see a need for similar consultations on the regional level, and on the other hand recognise a necessity for more continuous coordination of our search for strategies and global cohesion.

Our discussions led us to think that an international coordination group of five or six trusted friends should be set up. While it would have no executive authority, it would consult widely, assist the exchange of information, convene meetings, recommend actions and coordinate plans. The purpose would be to enable us to respond more effectively to newly emerging needs and opportunities, such as those in Eastern Europe, and to focus our energies worldwide more intelligently.

The enclosed report spells out its proposed responsibilities more fully and recommends an inclusive and democratic approach to discovering who among us would be able and willing to devote ourselves to this service role for limited periods, as well as a timetable for decision.

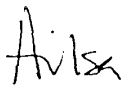
This group would in no way replace other means of making our teamwork more effective. Above all, no method can ever be a substitute for the quality of our friendship.

We hope that the report makes dear the train of thought which brought us to these conclusions, and that detailed and open discussion of them will give us all discernment of what the Almighty is now requiring of us.

Yours sincerely,



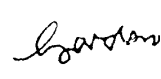
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BERLIN CONSULTATION, August 29 - September 4, 1991

ENLISTMENT

At the end of his life, Frank Buchman spoke of having been wonderfully led to the people God had prepared. There is today no lack of prepared people. Enlistment means the discovery of such people and our engagement with them in the great tasks God sets before us.

There is an essential connection between enlistment in this broad sense and our conviction about MRA's role in the world. We cannot expect others to commit themselves if we lack confidence in our own calling. One person in his forties said, "There is in some of us a lack of prophetic vision and articulation of aims. This is the task of my generation. It is a vast spiritual step. Good, adequate management of what exists is not enough." Referring to the current extraordinary events in Europe, he said, "Our generation can take on something of the same adventure as those in a previous generation, mostly in their thirties, who started Caux."

The exhilarating events of recent times in Europe and also in other continents point towards the tasks ahead. Chasms of mistrust and fear and centuries of hurt and hate separate peoples from one another. Yet at the heart of events are prepared men and women whom God is using to bring change. Remarkable numbers of such people are finding their way to Caux and to MRA. As we respond and reach out with these men and women to address the compelling and evident needs for renewal and reconciliation, we find ourselves colleagues and companions in a journey of faith and of service. By the joy and love and all-outness with which we set out on this journey, many others will be attracted.

Frameworks for Enlistment

As a practical matter, we see the need for frameworks in which others can take part and receive initial exposure to the ideas and experiences of MRA. While many of these, such as the Caux Round Table, would be primarily vehicles for change in society, others would also have the dear aim of helping individuals find direction for life and a calling. Among such individuals would be those specifically called to give their full time with MRA, whether for life or for some period. Here are some available frameworks:

The Caux Scholars Programme: First discussed at Mr. Fuji in 1989, a six-week pilot course was offered this summer for 22 students. It provided a rigorous academic challenge in the field of conflict analysis and resolution in the framework of the Caux conference. The student body was of high calibre, and about half had no previous knowledge of MRA. Many were deeply affected by the spirit of the people they met. The programme also had the advantage of bringing to Caux a talented faculty which not only gave academic credibility to the programme but contributed to the conference as a whole. A full report will be available soon, with a prospectus for 1992. These can be obtained from Rob Corcoran at 1103 Sunset Avenue, Richmond, VA 23221, USA.

The response of Norwegians to the demand from many leaders in Eastern Europe for training in the moral foundations of democracy inspired us greatly. (For details, write Jens Wilhelmsen at: Postboks 3018, Elisenberg, 0207 Oslo 2, Norway.) We encourage those visiting those countries to explore such requests, and to respond wholeheartedly. Our responses may take many forms, from formal courses to artistic offerings, but if they are in the spirit of a common search, where each learns from the other, we believe they will lead to new, quite unexpected and imaginative frameworks for the future enlistment of many in Western Europe and beyond.

The merit of the Studies in Effective Living course, the most recent of which was held in Panchgani, can be seen in the lives of those who have taken part in the last seventeen years. Next year this course will

be held again in Melbourne, starting in February; brochures are available from: 21 Dorcas Street, S. Melbourne, Victoria 3205, Australia.

Amina Dikedi outlined plans for a musical show to be created by a group of young Nigerians, starting in January 1992. It would travel throughout their country and probably beyond. She said, "Friends in Nigeria feel the need for the youth to make a bold statement. In a world where many things are going wrong, people become part of the system, cynical, or sit on the fence. There is need to provide an alternative: the moral and spiritual approach to development in all spheres."

Initial Development of Full Time Workers

For young people who take the first steps in commitment, we must provide many more practical and challenging experiences. This requires creative thought. But as noted in previous consultations, the greatest blocks to creative initiatives are often in ourselves. These include:

- A desire to keep things the way they are.
- The search for "helpers" instead of partners and renewers.
- Fear for ourselves, for the future of our work, and for those who may join us.
- Unresolved hurts and bitterness from the past.
- Unwillingness to drop what we are doing if new initiatives are launched.

One person said he had decided to review radically his daily life and programme, together with his colleagues. "Our potential for enlistment must be carried in thought and prayer at the heart of the team. Are the ideas of young people taken seriously, or are they pushed aside by preoccupation with tasks already undertaken and the burden of our centres?"

Young people coming newly into full-time work with MRA need clear reference points, definite tasks, a variety of experience and a clear meaning to what they are doing.

We made the following proposals:

1. To make Europe a focal area for a "chain of training", a continent-wide effort in which various initiatives could support and interact with each other. To this end we propose to experiment in two places with methods of operating that are specifically geared to training. One of these would be a local situation with an already established MRA centre and structure, and people in one city are considering offering themselves for this. The other would be the new flat taken on by Andrew and Eliane Stallybrass in Geneva, which is being established to provide a training infrastructure for young people. From these two studies it is hoped that valuable experience may be gained which could help other situations to become more 'training-friendly'.
2. To review and make available the 'Charter of Expectations' developed last year by Jean Brown. This brief document aims to help answer the frustration often caused when a new person comes to work in an MRA environment with differing expectations from those of the people with whom he or she is working. The 'Charter of Expectations' could help provide a basis for mutual agreement of responsibilities.
3. To focus on finance as a crucial area needing to be addressed if we want more young people to work with us. This is equally true for those who come to work with MRA in mid-career, carrying with them responsibilities like education, house mortgages and car expenses, or care for elderly parents. We decided to collect information about how the needs of full-time

volunteers are being met today in different countries. We will also look at the methods and experiences of other religious organizations in meeting the needs of their volunteers. From these experiences we hope to understand better how financial needs can become creative opportunities rather than obstacles to enlistment. Meanwhile, we commend your attention to the section on finance in the Mt. Fuji Consultation Report of 1989. If you wish to participate in this working group, contact Edward Peters at: 69 Victoria Road, Oxford, OX2 7QG, England.

Ongoing training

Another key to enlistment is an adequate programme of continuing education for those committed to MRA, whether full-time or in the resident force.

1. The Mount Fuji consultation endorsed Peter Vickers' suggestion that "the personal development and effectiveness of full-time workers would be enhanced by regular self-assessments". His ideas for a self-assessment questionnaire, which could be reviewed with a trusted friend annually will be refined and made available to those interested. A similar assessment of MRA's personnel needs as a force should also be considered.

2. We should encourage one another to pursue independent study, including varied enough reading, personal research projects, and development of specific skills. Such mutual encouragement could be facilitated if an individual established a relationship with someone he or she would regard as a kind of mentor or adviser.

3. We should multiply opportunities for weekend gatherings accessible to the resident force to which we might invite help from those outside our fellowship. These weekends could include spiritual retreats, topical seminars and skill-building workshops. Group dynamics, leadership and personal counselling are examples of areas where much can be learned from people outside MRA.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

We are unanimous in recommending that the global consultations continue. The openness and transparency of the process have generated greater trust and cohesion, and increased confidence in the continuing role of Moral Re-Armament. It has also opened the way to greater responsibility for many of the 130 people who have taken part. Some who were skeptical have indicated their gratitude for the way it has stimulated thought and deepened our sense of being a world family.

At the same time, we recognised various deficiencies. Our evaluation therefore led us to recommend certain improvements in the process.

Recommended areas for improvement:

1. Global consultations should take place once a year, probably during the October-November period. This would allow time for the lessons of the Caux summer to be absorbed and for many national meetings to take place.
2. Regional consultations in the same spirit of openness should be encouraged. Efforts to forge strategies for continents could generate unity, change and growth in responsible leadership. Asian friends meeting in Taiwan said that such gatherings would enable them to assess priorities and see how to support each other more effectively. Latin Americans have held regional gatherings for the last three years and the Africans will hold their first consultation early in 1992.

3. The duration should be longer, probably a full week. This would allow space for more adequate spiritual nurture, for living into the situation in the host country, for consideration of opportunities and needs that may have arisen since the agenda was finalised, and for the inclusion of visitors with specialised knowledge relevant to the agenda.
4. The locations of the meetings should continue to vary, with preference given to places off the beaten path, or where recent events have generated changes that should be observed at first hand by more of our force.
5. Time, place and agenda should be established well in advance, giving more space for preparations and making it easier for those in jobs to participate.
6. The size should be kept to approximately 25, with participation reflecting the maximum diversity practical in light of the agenda. For continuity, some regions and countries might ask one of their number to attend two or three years in succession.
7. The support group established a year ago should continue to prepare and administer the consultations. After careful listening to all and sundry, they would finalise time, place, and agenda, and assure appropriate participation. They would assist the follow up and keep the world fellowship informed on all matters relating to the consultations.

Present support group: Rob Corcoran, Jean-Marc Duckert, Yukihisa Fujita, Ailsa Hamilton, John Mills, Haridas Nair, Edward Peters, Dick Ruffin, Vijaylakshmi Subrahmanyam.

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION GROUP

Even with such improvements, a number of needs remain that in our view could not properly be met through this process. For example, the consultations have not proved an effective framework for deciding priorities and shaping strategies. At best, they have commended other gatherings that can do this, as with the meetings on Eastern Europe that grew out of the consultation in France in April 1989.

As the work spreads to parts of the world where there are no long-standing teams, and as initiatives of committed friends take us increasingly into unknown areas, our efforts tend to become more scattered. This puts a strain on the human and financial resources now available. While we have boundless faith in God's provision for initiatives taken in obedience to Him, we believe there are ways to make better use of what has been given.

Specifically, we believe that recent experience points to the need for a small group who would be willing to help coordinate and give care to our international efforts. Those involved would assimilate information from many sources, consult widely with those who might bring information and clarity to various issues, and focus attention as suitable on matters that require consideration and decision. In this way they would supplement the informal networks of cooperation that already exist. We believe they would help us move from consultation to timely decisions and implementation. However, as they would not have executive authority, their effectiveness would depend largely on their capacity to inspire unity and cooperation.

Although conscious that such a step is new and perhaps controversial, we came to the conclusion that the moment was ripe to experiment with this new method of service. One participant who was new to the consultations said that he had been praying for just such a group of "care-takers" since Frank Buchman's death over 30 years ago.

We identified four areas of service and functions for a coordination group:

1. To be a reference point for the scheduling of MRA's international events, to avoid unnecessary conflicts of time and to take advantage of unexpected opportunities.
2. To help discern global priorities and strategies, particularly in response to rapidly moving events such as experienced in recent weeks.
3. To serve as a reference point for initiatives, plans and concepts, including those that could set precedents affecting us all or impact the way MRA is perceived and understood around the world. For example, the formation of new legal bodies of MRA (there were five in the last year) would be referred to this group.
4. To constitute a body to which national teams, various groups, and individuals could turn for help and advice about issues that may have been difficult to solve locally.

Specific recommendations:

1. The group should be called the 'international coordination group'.
2. It would consist of 5-6 people, each with terms of three years. Terms would be staggered, and individuals could not serve successive terms.
3. The world force would be invited to make nominations, either from the full-time or resident force. These nominations would be strictly confidential and would be considered by a selection committee of five or six experienced and trusted friends, who would themselves not be eligible to serve on the group. This committee would make the final selections based on the recommendations of the world force, the willingness of nominees to serve and their own judgment about an appropriate mix of skills, experience, sensitivities, and knowledge of the world and of the work.
4. It is hoped that this proposal will be thoroughly discussed and debated during the remainder of 1991. In early January, representatives of different regions will meet in Geneva to decide whether to go ahead or not. If yes, they would finalise details for implementation no later than July 1992.
5. The global consultation of 1995 would evaluate our experience with the international coordination group and decide whether it is meeting our needs as a world force, or whether it should be altered or abandoned.

We recognise that the proposal is novel and the procedures more elaborate than we are used to. Questions are expected and welcome. Those who met in Berlin are available to participate in any discussions, and will do their best to explain the thinking that lies behind the recommendations.

CAUX REVIEW

There was a timeliness to the themes of Caux this summer, and we could not meet so soon after the conference without taking time for grateful evaluation. Among other aspects, the changes in Eastern Europe had *been* amply reflected in the people who came from there. And in addition to all that was hoped, planned and worked for, there had been - as so often - a rich harvest of the unexpected.

We also reviewed changes in the running of the Caux conferences which had been proposed at last year's global consultation in Dingy, near Geneva. While persistence had been needed to implement them, we agreed that they had contributed significantly to a more open atmosphere in Caux this year.

Gains: The communities (work and discussion groups) and the open forums (daily planning meetings for everyone) increased the sense of inclusion and belonging. Because of their small size (15 - 20 persons), the communities proved an excellent framework for personal sharing and decision.

Daily 7.30 meetings of those running the current session with others responsible for the conference overall helped to keep a sense of cohesion as well as sensitivity to the needs of particular people and groups.

Improvements needed: Better training of group leaders is essential if communities are to be effective.

Everyone should be encouraged to attend the Open Forums. This would help create a sense of being one family and bring greater depth as well as democracy.

We need opportunities for those carrying responsibility for MRA to discuss topics not directly related to the current session. We recommend that such smaller gatherings take place twice a week in the afternoon.

Caux out of season

The Caux community based in the Villa Maria was augmented in the spring by two groups, one from New Zealand and the other from the study course at Panchgani. These helped immeasurably to carry the work during a let to an outside organization, visits from the International Labour Organization in June, and throughout the summer. This made a noticeable difference to the spirit and smoothness of the practical operations. Further enlargement of the Caux community off season would make possible additional outside lets and would be much appreciated.

Friends of Caux

The proposal at Dingy for 'Friends of Caux' to be established in different countries has been followed in the United States, where a semi-annual Friends of Caux newsletter updates over 500 people on all developments relating to Caux: special conferences, personnel, work in progress, financial needs, status of major renovations, etc. We hope other areas will consider implementing this proposal. For information on the American initiative, write Kathy Beenen at 32 E. Pleasant Lake Road, St. Paul, MN 55127, USA.

Advance planning

There was agreement that the annual November Caux-coordination meeting in Holland (The Hague, Nov 13-17) should take on more of the nature of a European regional consultation, so that the Caux programme and invitation reflect strategy rather than inadvertently create it. This gathering might also help the Swiss Foundation with ideas on the financing of Caux, as well as on how to deal with the increasing numbers of people who want to come to conferences.

A regular Caux planning meeting in May should have the same Europe-wide dimension, and include some thought for the conference programme of the following year. Some afternoon meetings during the conference should carry forward these discussions. Immediately following the Caux sessions, a few days should be set aside to finalise a schedule for the following summer.

INFORMATION FLOW

A more generous flow of information means a wider access to responsibility. While mindful of the dangers for some of information overload, we believe we would do well to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion.

Specific recommendations

- that any decision requiring action should be recorded on paper for all those involved, so that there is no ambiguity about the decision and where responsibility for its implementation lies.
- that in general, reports should err on the side of brevity (is this a fair exception?), thus enhancing the likelihood of their being read!
- that every report should include a list of those receiving it, especially in any one country or region, and any instructions for further dissemination.

World Bulletin

Better use could be made of the World Bulletin to keep us moving forward together. There were suggestions for regular sections on:

- i) the MRA calendar. This may enable us to schedule regional, national and international events in better relation to the time and resources available.
- ii) a clearing house for offers of assistance, needs for help in practical matters, and opportunities for participation in a particular situation or campaign.
- iii) situation reports: occasional reports from individuals or groups who have been experimenting with some new way of doing things - enlisting people, living in community, raising money - explaining the advantages and difficulties, and inviting comment.

The question arises of whether the information in the World Bulletin is sufficiently available to non-English-speakers. The Latin American method of sending out a summary in Portuguese and Spanish was noted as an example possibly worth following.

FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

A suggestion which received wide support was that at the 1992 consultation we should examine the whole area of finance. This would include both philosophy and practice, and might focus on what can be learned from innovative approaches both to raising funds and to looking after the needs of full-time volunteers. Richard Weeks said that the Canadians were considering a firm offer to host this consultation, possibly in October/ November.

Thoughts on any aspects of the overall consultation process, including ideas for agenda and places of meeting, will be greatly appreciated. Please send your comments to one of the support group.

Participants at Berlin Consultation: August 29 - September 4, 199

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