

REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE PROJECT

Case Study

Moral Re-Armament and the Agenda for Reconciliation

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This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

Not all the documents written for any project have been made public. When people in the area where a report has been done have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those documents private.

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I. Introduction and Focus of Case

A. Introduction

They come from all over the world, from different social, economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds drawn to a place that offers solace, beauty, comfort, and safety. They come each year to Caux, a small mountain town high above Montreux, Switzerland. Since 1946 Mountain House has been drawing people to come together and to work together morally and spiritually towards reconciliation.

Situated above Montreux with a view of Lake Geneva, the once first class Caux Palace Hotel is now Mountain House, owned by the Swiss Foundation for Moral Re-Armament. The ornately designed rooms now provide the sanctuary to discuss and share personal stories, national histories, and workshops on healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Caux is open for conferences each year through July and August and through the Christmas and New Year holidays.

It is the setting for stories of war, conflict, hope, and peace. These stories provide experiential theory of personal and political conflict resolution that, as Joseph Montville explains, “had its origin in spiritual experience and is being studied at diverse secular research institutions.”¹

B. Focus of Case

The MRA and the Agenda for Reconciliation (AfR) meeting in Caux, Switzerland, that took place during August 2000, was chosen as a case for the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Project to illustrate a methodology that builds outward from the transformation of the individual to the immediate society and consequently to the international level. Many of the efforts towards peace building are through local people who effectively build communication and dialogue often at a grass-roots level where politically it may not be possible at higher levels. Where, however, there has been a greater presence of MRA, more middle level representatives such as community leaders, journalists, clergy, academics, and teachers are present. MRA focuses on the approach of dialogue and often uses the shared experience of stories as the manner in which lessons are learned.

However, assessing attributable success to MRA proved to be difficult from the outset of this case study. Moral Re-Armament and the approximate forty country offices that include the United States, UK, Australia, the Swiss Foundation for Moral Re-Armament, and others do not work and are not structured as typical NGOs. There are comparatively few paid staff positions and most volunteer their time. There is seemingly little overall structure or policy of decision making with respect to responding to areas of conflict. There is in all likelihood some method by which an area is considered, but this was not shared with the writer. The different programs are generally funded through private means and quite often by individuals committed to the work of MRA. Recently there have been foundation grants, especially for the *Hope in the Cities* program. MRA is an organization that from very strong beginnings, based mainly on its

¹ Joseph Montville, “Foreword: Science and Faith Come Together,” in Michael Henderson, The Forgiveness Factor: Stories of Hope in a World of Conflict. 1996: Grosvenor Books, USA/London, p. xiv.

charismatic founder, Frank Buchman, has since suffered from an image of being “cultish” and almost arrogant in its approach. MRA is re-establishing itself now as a viable NGO in the conflict resolution and transformation arena, based on the tenets of individually based transformation. (interview with Peter Riddell, AfR Secretary/UK). The Agenda for Reconciliation focuses on healing the wounds of history through personal and societal transformation and reconciliation.

The case was compiled through numerous interviews at the Agenda for Reconciliation conference during August 2000 in Caux, Switzerland. There were no visits to individual MRA offices or any field visit undertaken. The intent had been for the writer to do a follow-up visit after the conference to Beirut, Lebanon, to fully gauge the impact of MRA on that country’s peace building efforts. This, however, did not prove possible. Thus the setting for this case study is the conference itself. This meant that individuals were often involved in many meetings which were not open to the writer. However, interviews did include staff of the MRA organization, individuals who volunteer each summer at Caux, individuals attending the Agenda for Reconciliation (AfR), and representatives from Lebanon who the writer was able to interview and speak with in a more concentrated fashion and who shared their work over a period of years both through MRA and within Lebanon. In addition, follow-up e-mail interviews were undertaken. The result of this approach is a case study that presents a less structured organization with a far less explicit approach than other cases within *Reflecting on Peace Practice* project. The role of MRA within the arena of peace building seems to be, for the most part, one of an indirect influence. The approach is to encourage the work of dialogue, usually trying to bridge differences among groups within areas of conflict and to provide a foundation for peace building. However, in an area of many different efforts being undertaken by numerous groups, it would be difficult to directly point to the efforts of MRA as influencing a specific outcome. Thus there are few specific indicators of the success of MRA. Having stated this, the case study points quite credibly to historic and recent conflicts in which MRA has played an important role in building peace and reconciliation.

MRA staff were not observed in any real type of situation or any direct conflict setting between nations. They were observed in plenary sessions and workshops, often in a more academic, instructional role, rather than as intermediaries or facilitators of dialogue. In the end, this case study reflects a conference and cannot do justice to assessing the true influence and impact of MRA in the area of conflict resolution. The writer was both observer and participant during the conference proceedings. I have tried to convey the emotional impact of the stories that were shared as well as the overall methodology that was observed.

This case study is organized with a background section on the history of MRA and Caux and then looks at the approach of MRA with the various programs and activities that have been undertaken. The Agenda for Reconciliation, as a program area and conference is discussed in greater detail. The Lebanese, in particular, have been influenced by the ideas of MRA. Since MRA has had a presence in Lebanon over a considerable period of time, this group was chosen as the focus of the case study. The background materials are drawn from the works of Michael Henderson, the biography of Irène Laure, and the compilation by Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. The author acknowledges the confidentiality and the sensitivity of the individuals interviewed. Many graciously shared their

views and their work. Due to this confidentiality, there are no direct quotes and only a few of the names of participants are given in this case.

With very little actual documentation about the work of MRA, the analysis and the conclusions made as to its impact thus become inherently more implicit. The work of MRA itself is both experiential and based on very long-term work in individual transformation and then outwardly affecting change in a more public arena. This has made it difficult to truly measure the influence of MRA. But MRA remains an organization of truly committed individuals and Caux provides a setting where stories of courage and great faith are shared. The work of MRA, overall, has become invaluable despite some of its organizational and methodological shortcomings.

II. Background of Moral Re-Armament and Caux

Moral Re-Armament traces its origins to Oxford University in England in 1921. By 1930, it was known as the Oxford Group. The inspiration came from an American Lutheran minister, Frank Buchman, who soon found followers in Britain, the United States, and the Scandinavian countries. Buchman's legacy to the world was Moral Re-Armament, a concept developed to build bridges in the world. The intent of Moral Re-Armament begins with one's own personal transformation and works outward from the self. The impact of Frank Buchman's work was an influence, not only on individuals, but also on organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous, which was a consequence of MRA. The Oxford Group served as the model for both Moral Re-Armament and Alcoholics Anonymous. The AA took the life changing principles that Buchman used in Moral Re-Armament and made them famous as the 12-Step Program.

The term Moral Re-Armament dates from 1938. As the world re-armed militarily to prepare for the impending war, "Buchman called for moral and spiritual rearmament as a complement to military rearmament."²

Restitution and forgiveness were the central doctrines that Buchman experienced in Keswick, England in 1908, and which affected his work throughout his life. They remain the essential themes of MRA today. Buchman adopted the principle of taking time each morning, often between five and six a.m., to prepare himself for the day and to ask God what He wanted done. He would listen and talk to God (what most people consider prayer) and would write down the thoughts that he received. "This concept of seeking guidance from God became the central pillar of his life and work."³ He believed that a life of faith was a disciplined life. He derived the four principles by which he was to live his life from Robert Speer's The Principles of Jesus. These principles were absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love. As Henderson writes, "To him there was a direct correlation between clarity on morals and the ability to discern guidance from God."⁴

² Michael Henderson, The Forgiveness Factor: Stories of Hope in a World of Conflict. 1996: Grosvenor Books, USA/London.

³ Henderson, op. cit. p. 259.

⁴ Ibid., p. 259.

At a disarmament conference in Washington, DC in 1921, Frank Buchman realized for the first time that the transforming power he had witnessed at the individual level could and needed to be brought to nations. At a time when many individuals were turning to communism, he encouraged young people, many of whom he had taught, to turn to Christianity. But Buchman did not take a narrow Christian fundamentalist view. Rather he believed in pan-nationalism. It was among the war veterans that his appeal drew the greatest response, for this was a period of growing pacifism and the time of the League of Nations. Put into this historical context, Buchman had a message of hope.

During the period of 1930 to 1937, many people came to hear Buchman and his ideas. He arranged meetings at Oxford University in England, in the United States, Sweden, Denmark, and Switzerland, which attracted thousands of people. The appeal not only went to the educated and privileged classes, but also to the working classes and those in various economic conditions. Buchman was, in the end, able to bridge these differences quite effectively.

Moral Re-Armament (MRA) was formally registered in the United Kingdom in 1938 and in 1941 in the United States. Today it is registered in approximately 40 countries. MRA was not a religious revival. The formation of MRA was to go beyond revival to revolution and renaissance. “Although his efforts many years before to redirect China [through the work of the Christian missionaries] had seemed to be unsuccessful, Buchman still believed in the power of changed individuals, particularly well-placed individuals, to affect policies, and even relations, between nations.”⁵ During his work in Europe in the thirties the ideas of MRA spread. The Dutch Foreign Minister, J.A.E. Patijn, had accompanied Buchman on his travels and effectively used the ideas of MRA to affect the relationship between Belgium and the Netherlands. After what had been a 70-year river conflict between the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam, the World Court handed down a decision in favor of Belgium. The remarks in the Belgian press did not make the decision any easier for the Dutch to accept. Patijn, at the time Dutch ambassador to Belgium, was preparing remarks for a banquet, when he received spiritual inspiration. Instead of a biting speech in retaliation for the press attack, he complimented the Belgians on the court’s decision and looked to it as paving the way for better friendship in the future. This resulted in a changed tone in the Belgian press and the Dutch press. Patijn became foreign minister the following year, 1936, and continued to take time to listen to God for greater objectivity that affected his personal and family life and his work as foreign minister.⁶

During the 1930s, Buchman drew great criticism as he tried to influence the leaders of Germany. His main contacts were Germans who were anti-Nazi and therefore needed anonymity. With the German invasion of Poland in September of 1939, Buchman’s work was viewed as a failure. However, his work in the Scandinavian countries greatly helped to support the wartime resistance work.

⁵ Henderson, *op. cit.* p. 263.

⁶ Henderson, *op. cit.* pp. 265-266.

During the post-war period Moral Re-Armament and Caux, Switzerland became and have remained inextricably linked. The beautiful and peaceful setting of Caux continues to provide the setting for meetings, gatherings, informal discussions and more importantly a secure environment where people from conflict situations can meet.

The Caux Palace Hotel was built in 1902 as a luxury hotel. The small museum, attached to what is now Mountain House, documents the ledgers of often well-known visitors. However the First World War, the Depression years, and the Second World War never really allowed the Caux Palace Hotel to be a financially viable entity. After the Second World War it housed interned Allied prisoners of war from Italy, Jewish refugees from Hungary and Italian refugees. The once elegant hotel became a haven for hopelessness and despair following the War.

Even as war was breaking out, Buchman was already considering how to begin the process of reconciliation in Europe after the war ended. He went to the United States and began to train a team for this very purpose. A group of Swiss close to Buchman believed they had a role to play in rebuilding Europe after the War. The idea of Caux and the symbol it would become was initiated by the Swiss diplomat, Philippe Mottu. He believed that if Switzerland was spared by the war, its responsibility for the future was to make available a place where European nations and people, torn apart by war, suffering, and resentment could gather and re-establish contact.

With that idea in mind, a group of Swiss purchased the Caux Palace Hotel to be a neutral setting where former enemies could meet and re-build broken relations. It was an enormous undertaking considering the enmity that existed among the nations of Europe and the rest of the world. The first conference of Moral Re-Armament was held at the end of July 1946. Among the first groups to experience the conference and this new encounter were the French and Germans.

There has been much written about the stories of MRA and this includes the biography of Irène Laure. Her story is likely the most memorable illustration of the work done at Caux through Moral Re-Armament. The documentary film based on her autobiography, For the Love of Tomorrow, is still shown at conferences such as the Agenda for Reconciliation at Caux and remains a symbol of the work of the MRA. Irène Laure, a French woman and committed socialist, who was Party Secretary at the time she attended Caux in 1947, had been in the Resistance with her husband and son. The Germans had, in fact, tortured her son. Upon her arrival at Caux and learning of the presence of Germans at the conference, she almost left. Frank Buchman, who had invited Irène Laure to Caux, and who believed that Europe could not rebuild without Germany, asked her what kind of unity she would want for Europe. For Madame Laure there began a struggle with her conscience. After several days in her room alone, she emerged and agreed to meet a German woman. So began the first and most effective step in building the reconciliation between France and Germany. Irène Laure made an apology at Caux for her own hatred of Germans. She believed that such hatred paved the way for war and her apology truly freed her heart. The German woman who met Irène Laure at lunch that day was the widow of Adam von Trott who had been one of the organizers of the anti-Hitler coup of July 1944 and who had subsequently been executed. Madame von Trott later asked forgiveness because she as a German and like many Germans had not resisted strongly enough to prevent the events that occurred from happening. Irène Laure later visited Germany, one of the first French to do so,

and worked tirelessly for a true reconciliation among the people of France and Germany. This episode and the post-war period represent some of the best-known efforts of MRA to the outside world and is perhaps its most energetic period.

Frank Buchman and MRA worked determinedly over a period of years for the reconciliation between France and Germany and for the new post-war Europe to economically and politically include Germany. There was, in fact, as one MRA worker defined it, a sense of urgency for the rebuilding of Europe, and many who worked with MRA spent months in Germany building the network that would eventually lead to reconciliation. The work included the meeting between Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman and discussions that would eventually lead to the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) that was the foundation for the European Union today. Edward Luttwak's chapter "Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement" in Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft is an in-depth discussion of this period.

While the role of MRA in aiding in the reconciliation between France and Germany between 1946 and 1950 may not be widely known, MRA has been recognized as one of the first organizations to help Germany interact once again with other nations. Certainly Buchman's conviction that Europe could not rebuild without Germany was based on the historical facts after World War I and the knowledge that nation size alone meant that Germany could not be isolated.

The decade that followed, the 1950s, was one in which the divisiveness of the political and ideological philosophies was viewed literally in the Iron Curtain. During this period, when communism and democracy strongly divided the worldviews, MRA became vehemently anti-Communist. But MRA, like many organizations, had a difficult line to walk in being both anti-Communist and critical of western governments. For some, MRA was not critical enough of Western policies. The result, as Bryan Hamlin points out in his correspondence of 6 October 2000, was that MRA was viewed as a right-wing organization. It ultimately earned the mistrust of the peace groups of the 1960s. This period also resulted in the dichotomy that continues to exist today and to affect the work of MRA. MRA continues to be unpopular with some Western governments such as the UK and the Netherlands, among others. MRA, it needs to be remembered, helped greatly the independence movements within the British colonies of Kenya and Nigeria. It also worked effectively behind the scenes to structure the secret meetings that led to Rhodesia becoming Zimbabwe. In addition, the work of MRA in breaking down apartheid in South Africa has been documented. MRA is also very clearly regarded as a religious group. Many Western governments remain skeptical. They are not visible or participating in Caux, for instance, at the Politicians' Round Table. There may be some opportunity now to change the perception of MRA for Western European governments due to initiatives such as the recent visit by representatives of the Horn of Africa. (See the Activities discussion below).

But the decade of the 1950s is also interesting from other perspectives. On the one hand, it was, according to Bryan Hamlin, a period when MRA had the most influence at a high political level. During this period, MRA was asked to aid the Japanese in building reconciliation with its enemies of WWII. In Basil Entwistle's book, Japan's Decisive Decade, the author describes his eight years of work in Japan. Japan's extraordinary re-entry into world politics and her economic and political recovery were based on the example that "combined the best of her

traditional culture with a realistic response to the problems of the times”⁷ Due to the presence of MRA in Japan during the 1930s, it was a recognized organization. During this period of the 1950s, MRA worked in Japan with a delegation of politicians, including the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and “was able to arrange for 60 of Japan’s new leaders to visit Europe and the United States.” The group went first to Caux and then to other European countries before going on to Washington, DC. In Washington, the personal representative of the Prime Minister of Japan addressed the U.S. Senate and apologized for breaking the almost century-old friendship between the two countries (B. Hamlin, 19 December 2000, and Entwistle). For the MRA as an organization, the work undertaken following WWII was some of their finest. There was, according to several MRA workers, a sense of urgency during that period of the great task to reconcile the world and to enable it to move forward. With this sense of urgency, many MRA workers worked far from home. Clearly Buchman directed the organization with a strong sense of purpose that may not be possible today.

After the death of Frank Buchman in 1961, internal conflicts within the MRA organization began to surface. Buchman’s personal charisma and personality had, I believe, a great deal to do with the early successes of MRA. After his death, during the period of the 1960s, the organization became fractionalized. The MRA in the United States, based in Mackinac, Michigan, launched the group “Up with People” that toured world-wide. The group separated itself from the MRA organization in the United States. This was a particularly tense time of the Cold War, and MRA’s staunchly anti-Communist stance was thought to diminish the effectiveness of UWP’s message. What was left of MRA in the United States collapsed. In 1976, MRA re-emerged in the United States, after a hiatus of eight years. Today MRA in the United States has one of the largest funded projects of any of the member countries of MRA.

MRA became less effective in its work for a period after Buchman’s death. This remained true until the 1980s. The organization split into two very different groups during this time. There had always been clashes of points of view among Buchman’s colleagues between those who put priority on changing the world and those who emphasized changing people. For a time, MRA was in fact a group of very committed individuals but with no strong organizational structure, leadership, or programs.

Even as it has strengthened in numbers and in the focus of its programs, MRA remains an organization that clearly is dependent upon key individuals who have committed their lives to the mission of MRA. In addition, about one hundred and fifty individuals volunteer on a regular basis and through their commitment make it possible for Caux to function each summer. Many volunteers enable MRA to continue its work throughout the world. These dedicated individuals and the stories of hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation are the facets that make MRA unique among NGOs in the peace-building arena.

Caux has hosted thousands of people over its more than fifty-year history. Each year hundreds of individuals, whether coming for their own growth and transformation or representing a group or NGO, come to Caux and share their stories, their hopes, and their experiences of forgiveness and personal transformation. In spite of all of its organizational and methodological shortcomings, MRA continues to be inspiring and valuable.

⁷ Entwistle, Basil. Japan’s Decisive Decade. 1985: Grosvenor Books, London. pp. 1-2.

III. The Approach of MRA

The aim of Moral Re-Armament is to create an international network of people who can work towards far-reaching change, locally and globally, by starting with change in their own lives. Its purpose is to encourage each individual to find his or her unique contribution to the transformation needed in the world. Buchman had always envisaged MRA not as an organization you joined or as a home for any single spiritual idea, but as a good road on which people of all faiths could travel together. Spiritual leaders and people of all faiths had always been welcomed and still come to Caux.

To achieve its aim, dialogue through formal plenary sessions and workshops and informal occasions on the terrace of Caux embrace the key elements of MRA. The approach is to access the values of MRA and to experience – whether through talk, film, music, etc. what the organization espouses. MRA staff and volunteers host newcomers and make sure that they are brought into discussions and are comfortable with their experiences. MRA addresses spiritual awareness and individual transformation through long-term care and prayer and the cultivation of spiritual support. MRA groups have sprung up in various countries, based on people who have been to Caux or one of the other five conference centers around the world. Each center uses the tenets of MRA but adapted to the local cultures. The result is that each MRA center is unique. A person can be influenced by going to Caux or one of the other MRA conference centers and may start an MRA group. But wherever the MRA group is in particular, people are encouraged to use MRA principles within their own personal and professional lives. Thus the societal transformation comes clearly from the individual base.

MRA holds the belief that when people begin by putting right where they themselves are wrong, they set in motion a wave of wider change. They believe that by working together, across differences of race, class, nationality, or religion, it is possible to create a worldwide community with a common purpose.

MRA and Agenda for Reconciliation use the approach that turns universal ethical ideals into behavior on an individual level. Using their role as educators and in an effort to build awareness, MRA promotes an open society and teaches human values and respect for human dignity. The approach is so subtle and experiential that it may be difficult to actually look at the results of a reconciliation and/or resolution of an issue as one led or influenced by the MRA. Thus MRA is very often not credited with its work. This indirect, behind the scenes approach, however, is what many believe to be MRA's strength. There are now some within the organization who believe that a shift in approach may be necessary and that MRA needs to move towards a far more directed approach. "MRA has no creed or dogmas. God is assumed to exist and to be actively involved in implementing a just and loving master plan for the world. Beyond these fundamental assumptions, MRA workers and literature reflect little interest in prescribing 'correct belief.' The closest the organization comes to doctrine is a belief in 'four absolute standards — honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love.' To the extent that individuals apply these standards to their lives, it is believed, they will find themselves and their relationships

transformed. To the extent that leaders apply these standards to their personal and public lives, society will be transformed.”⁸

The belief and the basis for MRA’s entire approach begin with the individual. The belief is that only by transforming ourselves can we help to transform our families, society, community, and on a global scale, the world. The MRA approach acknowledges and encourages our individual responsibility and recognizes that an individual can make a difference in the world.

Using this position, MRA advises the individual to take time each day to listen to God, as Buchman himself practiced. Eastern religions encourage this same idea through meditation as a regular practice. Mahatma Gandhi addressed this technique as listening to one’s inner voice. John Paul Lederach uses this same concept in Preparing for Peace, in which he clearly links peace building with personal transformation.

The transformation that MRA uses as its foundation is based on honesty with oneself and others; unselfishness; purity; and love. These four principles are considered to be absolutes and form the foundation upon which MRA builds the awareness of one’s responsibility for our actions and our beliefs. With responsibility comes true freedom and peace. MRA teaches that by taking responsibility for one’s actions and thoughts, one can then take the responsibility to ask forgiveness for what we believe to be injustices and to ask forgiveness for our own prejudices and intolerances. MRA views forgiveness with repentance and restitution as the necessary ingredients to achieving a true level of reconciliation whether with family members or between nations. Forgiveness, however, does not mean excusing criminal behavior nor does it mean giving up the struggle for justice. One cannot move forward and come to terms with the past without justice since no true peace in any conflict is possible unless some degree of justice has been achieved. It is, I believe, understandable to recognize the difficulty with which questions of attributions of MRA’s work have developed.

The approach is not a formal methodology. It is based entirely on one’s individual development. As Peter Riddell describes the process, he believes that one cannot predict any specific outcome. The moral and spiritual health of nations starts with individuals moving outwards into society from this base. The different programs that MRA has undertaken in the past and continues to develop are based on this idea. The outward link is that as an individual works on the inner turmoil, one’s relationships are in turn affected. This is the internal dynamics of nature. With a deep change of heart comes a change in one’s values and this can then have a range of effects – economic, social, family, community, political, as well as with areas of conflict (interview, 20 August 2000). There is a progression beginning with the individual. Others within MRA, however, do have expectations and focus on outcome. While still coming from that inner point of change, they believe that individuals can work tirelessly for changed communities to result in economic, social, and political equality.

MRA creates an atmosphere that is propitious to reconciliation, but it cannot ultimately predict any outcome of its various meetings and conferences. It provides a setting, Caux, for the annual summer conference of the Agenda for Reconciliation to occur. That, for many who have worked

⁸ Ron Kraybill, “Transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: The Role of Religious Actors,” in Johnston and Sampson, p. 224.

within MRA, is the extent of its intention. The outcomes themselves may only appear to be completely serendipitous. The reality is somewhat different.

Agenda for Reconciliation organizers strategically invite people to Caux each year for its annual conference. People are invited to the conference as part of the overall year-round reconciliation efforts being undertaken in several countries by MRA. During the August 2000 conference, the plenary sessions were developed around the stories of forgiveness to be shared and entitled “Witnessing to Hope.” While the approach may seem unintentional, the reality is there is a great deal of planning and inherent method. Ultimately the stories and the dialogues move people to new levels of personal transformations. The invitations are made to purposefully help to affect dialogue and interactions during the time of the conference in Caux. The plenary sessions and the different workshops reflect the individuals present and are actually evolving during the week. While there is much preparation for the Agenda for Reconciliation, there is a sense of meetings and dialogues occurring spontaneously and unplanned.

The question of how this individual approach translates to entire nations and foreign policy decisions is indeed more difficult to assess. Certainly politicians have, in the past and more recently, been influenced by MRA and have credited MRA directly in their work. But the link to direct impacts and indicators of success is difficult to make. Riddell believes that what MRA has not done particularly well is deal with the issues of corruption and governments. Personal honesty and integrity and how they are manifested within the larger, public arena of politics, he believes, needs to be more directly addressed.

The belief within the MRA is that a relationship exists between apology and reconciliation. In countries where “Truth and Reconciliation” panels exist, and MRA’s own history have proven this to be reality. Where there is no closure, there is the need to fight again. Where there has been no reconciliation, there is revenge and the outlet for this revenge most usually results in further conflict. This, at least, is the belief of MRA and those who speak about forgiveness as freeing one entirely to be able to do God’s work. The former Somali Ambassador to the United States, Yusuf Omar Al-Azhari’s story is relevant. His story of his six years of imprisonment in solitary confinement after the Soviet-supported coup of Gen. Mohammed Siad Barre ruled Somalia is one of courage and faith. He found the courage to forgive Barre personally, and his capacity to forgive released him from bitterness and gave Al-Azhari the moral authority to seek peace from the warlords who provoked a civil war in his country. Al-Azhari has told his story to many audiences, including one of the plenary sessions this past August in Caux. Al-Azhari believes that by forgiving he broke the chain of hatred, and insecurity and liberated himself entirely from unhappiness. Forgiveness is a must if one wants to live in a fellow partnership with others (Dr. Yusuf Al-Azhari, “Forgiveness is the Answer,” Caux, August 2000).

The significance of what Dr. Al-Azhari and Irène Laure have done has had a strong impact on MRA – both its approach and philosophy. It continues to encourage these public discussions of forgiveness. Within the arena of national politics, reconciliation, beginning among individuals, can have enormous impact on the relationships among nations.

With its focus on these types of experiential approaches, it becomes all the more difficult to translate the work of MRA to specific policy and to assess its impact. MRA believes that the

experience of forgiveness is available to everyone. The parameters of that forgiveness do not mean forgetting nor does forgiveness absolve anyone from the consequences of his or her actions. Forgiveness does not always lead to reconciliation, since there is no conscious amnesia. Suffering and those who have suffered enormous losses through armed conflict are honored. But MRA stresses the need to break the chains of the past and to build a better world. In that way forgiveness acknowledges the responsibility for one's actions and frees one to make different decisions.

What the approach of MRA achieves is to create an environment of trust and of safety, which makes possible this level of forgiveness that leads to new consciousness. It offers a setting where often-historic enemies from areas of conflict can meet as individuals and human beings and find what it is they share rather than what it is that they dispute. The strength of MRA is that by building dialogue it is building the foundation whereby nations caught in conflict today can enable the necessary political decisions to end the conflict. Individuals at Caux are building that critical mass that can make peace building possible. Forgiveness and reconciliation remain indispensable to the life of a nation and between nations. Forgiveness is the key by which nations learn from history and take what they need from these lessons without the need to continue the conflict.

IV. MRA Structure, Activities, and Programs

A. Structure

Moral Re-Armament is a somewhat loosely structured organization. The activities of MRA that are concerned with relations within and between countries are assembled under the Agenda for Reconciliation (AfR). Currently, AfR has an International Advisory Council with representatives from twenty-one different countries. In addition, a steering committee of ten representatives helps to guide the direction of the AfR in its conference work. MRA, overall, has an International Council composed of nine people who are selected globally and serve for three-year terms. This International Council deals with making MRA a cohesive movement and gives direction where MRA should focus its efforts in the world (correspondence with Bryan Hamlin, 6 October 2000). It is supported by a minimal secretariat. The Swiss Foundation for MRA is responsible for the more than 300-room Mountain House in Caux, Switzerland, which is used as a conference center for MRA activities through July and August and during Christmas each year (and which is rented out to a hotel school for the rest of the year). One of the week-long conferences each summer for the past four years has been the program on Agenda for Reconciliation.

AfR is one of several divisions of MRA and is relatively new as a program area. While the potential exists for AfR to become possibly the largest MRA division, its budget is quite small. Other divisions include:

- Hope in the Cities (inter-racial work in large cities in various countries, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia)

- International Communications Forum (holds conferences around the world on ethics in the media, administered from France and England)
- Foundations for Freedom (runs training seminars for younger people in central and Eastern Europe on basic values of democracy, administered in Oxford, England)
- Caux Scholars Program (organizes an annual five-week course for college students in conflict resolution at Caux, administered from Washington, DC)

As an organization, MRA is atypical for several reasons. While its work may be viewed as based in conflict resolution, most of its staff is not trained in conflict resolution. They see their work based in discussions of forgiveness and reconciliation and from that perspective they are very well informed. Since many people attending AfR were not working at building peace in areas of conflict, but came for personal growth, one cannot, I believe, view the MRA as a conflict resolution organization. The foundation of dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation can lead to greater understanding among groups that in turn can lead to resolving conflicts. It is a strong basis from which to work. MRA is an organization based on one's personal transformation and this has often been the starting point for building peace among nations. Its programs build from this individual level outward and within the public realm try to build bridges whether between warring ethnic groups or across racial lines.

There is only a small proportion of paid staff of MRA. Hundreds of volunteers help to make the annual conferences happen. An interesting note is that many who serve MRA as volunteers were there as children themselves of MRA parents and/or grandparents. The organization draws people and families through generations and the volunteers who work for MRA seem to have learned the commitment from older generations of their own families.

MRA draws strongly religious-oriented people from widely different faiths and creeds to the organization. MRA is not clearly associated with a religious denomination such as the Quakers. It therefore does not have access to funding that a specific religious organization would have. In fact the funding issues for MRA are at the moment enormous. With their work and approach it has been difficult to get funding through the normal route of foundations. There is also some hesitancy on the part of MRA officials to become part of the mainstream. They see the organization as something unique and something to be experienced. MRA staff hesitate to target the normal funding route due to the need for accountability, the idea that their work might be lessened through this association, and that MRA proposals are not concretely based on outcome or performance assessment. It is no wonder that the organization has a somewhat indifferent and critical reputation and is not viewed as a policy structured organization, but rather as a somewhat closed religious group. This reputation began during the period of the Cold War, and MRA has since been viewed critically, especially within diplomatic circles in Western Europe.

MRA does not undertake the typical project work within areas of conflict that other NGOs normally do. It is entirely the interests of the individual or the group leading the effort that leads to work in a particular area of conflict. In addition, MRA tries to inject moral principles into the decision-making process of key political leaders. MRA supports social change by way of individual change. Much of their agenda is unspoken, which has resulted in a critical lack of funds for its work.

MRA has a highly decentralized organizational structure. Possibly due to this structure, it does not undertake strategic planning. The basic principles of its mission have remained unchanged for fifty years. The MRA centers created during the decades of 1960 to 1980 — Asia Plateau in Panchgani, Western India; a center in Melbourne, Australia; one in Petropolis, Brazil; the MRA center in the United Kingdom; and the center in Washington, D.C. — all work independently of each other, though in close teamwork. In addition to these main centers, approximately sixty other countries have an MRA presence, and there are twenty offices worldwide. The Netherlands, for instance, has an MRA office in The Hague. Like many MRA offices, the building was donated. Since each country can determine its own structure, the Dutch MRA is a foundation. The foundation board works with finances, which has made this particular office independent. Another group sets up the annual calendar of events and meetings. The MRA in Germany, on the other hand, has no centralized office and no independent programming is done. Rather, there the MRA is a loose association of people committed to its principles but who are not organized any further. The International Council for MRA (IC) was formed to provide more coordination, while still allowing each country to take on its own initiatives, based on the interests of its members. The IC is a group of nine people selected globally, who each serve for a three-year term. In addition, for the past twelve years, there have been annual international consultations, or mini-parliaments, involving people from many countries where MRA is active in an effort to share ideas and approaches and to have some cohesion as to where MRA might focus its efforts in the world. The IC is intended to coordinate all the international program areas that include Agenda for Reconciliation, Hope in the Cities, Foundations for Freedom, etc. (H.de Pous-de Jonge, correspondence, 6 November 2000; B. Hamlin, correspondence, 6 October 2000).

This decentralized structure of the organization also gives MRA its very flexible and seemingly unintentional approach. While a unified philosophy binds all the national teams of MRA, the individual strategic approaches means that each country team works independently. An important element is that MRA believes that working on issues, such as its Clean Election Campaign in Kenya and Taiwan, needs to come from people within a country. Others from MRA travel to different countries only when invited and the link with the local group is very clear. There is no perception of outsiders coming with all the answers. In this way, their method may be more effective. But, I also believe this approach can and possibly does work against the organization. It is difficult to assess an organization when its work so widely varies. The smaller country teams work with very small numbers of people, so the philosophy of MRA is not necessarily spreading widely. There is also no consistent measure of performance for their programs, nor in taking the MRA approach out to the political arena. This may also be the reason for the different perceptions of MRA. As in any organization, there are conservative and liberal views. For some, especially the older generation of MRA members, the organization is Christian-based and is intended to re-arm the world spiritually and morally. For younger members, the organization is a wider spiritual experience and one that invites people of all religions to join in working towards transformation. In this way, also, there is the need to approach the world in a new way and to accommodate the 21st century.

B. Activities

Moral Re-Armament works through its country bases relying very much on volunteer efforts. The current activities that AfR is pursuing have included a Mediterranean Dialogue in Malta in November 1999 which brought people from around the Mediterranean who are working in the same spirit into contact with the citizens of Malta. Part of the symbolism of this conference was that it was actually held in Malta, rather than using Caux or another MRA center. Because of the positive feedback from this Malta Conference, organizers are looking at a possible follow-up conference, in the Fall of 2001, that again would focus on the common interests of all groups residing in the Mediterranean area. AfR has five declared areas of focus: the Middle East; Rwanda and neighboring countries; the Horn of Africa/Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia; Cambodia; and Papua-New Guinea.

The Horn of Africa visit to Europe in May 2000 was an important outreach effort. Representatives from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya visited European ministries to talk about peace building and to establish some parameters for structuring civil societies in their respective countries. The members of the visiting delegation included Dr. Yusuf Omar Al-Azhari from Somalia; Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat from Kenya; Ato Mammo Wudneh, a noted writer and journalist from Ethiopia; and Mr. Fessaha Fre Weri from Eritrea. The delegation visited government agencies in Brussels, Bonn, Bern, Lucerne, Geneva, Paris, Stockholm, and London. The group focused its discussions on the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the future need for reconciliation between these two parties and how these countries of the Horn of Africa might receive more assistance in building momentum for reconciliation in the area from these western governments. The four people, each from a different religious group (Coptic, Catholic, Muslim and Protestant) and from countries either at war or with strained relations, had come together to speak the same message of peace. This had, according to a report of the visit, a profound effect on ministers and members of the individual diaspora communities within the cities the group visited. The group shared their individual experiences and beliefs in the power of forgiveness as a tool for reconciliation. Each was an example of how reconciliation was possible. Interviews by various media in the countries the group visited were arranged and were relayed extensively by newspapers throughout the region. MRA, during its Agenda for Reconciliation meeting in Caux in August 2000, established a Horn of Africa working group to continue the momentum established by this visit and to keep the issues and concerns for peace in this area before the governments of Western Europe.

Another interesting example is the efforts by members of the Swiss Foundation of MRA. They have for some years taken active interest in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and there has been increasing participation from the region in the Caux conferences. Two people recently visited Kosovo to determine the efficacy of establishing dialogue for reconciliation. Learning this would be premature, the Swiss MRA is biding its time. The election of Cornelio Sommaruga, former President of the International Committee for the Red Cross, to the presidency of the Swiss Foundation of MRA has already changed its image. He has taken an active lead in organizing a gathering of NGOs in Switzerland for the Horn of Africa visit and is actively pursuing other opportunities for MRA's involvement in dialogue and peace building. Another on-going activity is the work of MRA Australia in the Papua-New Guinea dialogue and working towards reconciliation with the secessionist movement in Bougainville. The individuals

and groups involved clearly acknowledge the work of Alan Weeks from the MRA Australia office and encourage anyone interested in their reconciliation process to contact him. The work undertaken for this reconciliation has gone on for years, and Mr. Weeks is an eloquent spokesman for its effectiveness.

MRA activities have increased after a period of steady decline (correspondence with P. Riddell, 22 September 2000). There is now a new center in London, for instance, that serves as the base for MRA operations in the UK. MRA group meetings are held in each country where they are registered and where there is an MRA presence. Each group develops its own programs quite independently of other country programs, while sharing ideas throughout the MRA network. Programs may be open to the public or the focus may be dialogue and sharing among members of the MRA network. The level of outreach depends upon the MRA team within each country. The examples discussed above focus on MRA efforts that are well established. In many countries, MRA is still a new and emerging presence whose work is still developing.

C. Programs

MRA has a number of programs in addition to Agenda for Reconciliation that hold conferences in Caux during the summer. The Caux Scholars Program is a five-week program on ‘conflict transformation’ aimed at university students or people who have graduated. This program brings people from all over the world. Its staff is drawn largely from George Mason University and Eastern Mennonite University in the United States. The Caux Scholars Program overlaps with the Agenda for Reconciliation program each year to enable students of this program to participate and observe sessions, workshops, etc. on reconciliation and peace-building. In addition, MRA has its Business and Industry program for young business people to use the spirit of MRA to affect business and industrial relations. MRA’s Hope in the Cities program, based in Richmond Virginia, is probably the largest funded program. This program is also the best known program of MRA, since it receives quite a lot of press coverage in the United States. By comparison, the Agenda for Reconciliation, started in 1997, is still relatively small and is not nearly as well funded or as well known.

1. Agenda for Reconciliation Session, Caux, 2000

In 1996 Caux celebrated its 50th anniversary season. One of the elements of the celebration was a symposium on the theme ‘Agenda for Reconciliation.’ Themes of reconciliation, past and future, in various areas of the world were addressed during this symposium. Preventive diplomacy began to be discussed as well with the relationship of this type of “Track II diplomacy,” as it is called, and the recognition of the role of the non-governmental organizations, NGOs, who often have insights into situations and cultures that are not always available to diplomats or officials. Recognizing this theme, a decision was made to launch “Agenda for Reconciliation” as an on-going program. This would enable work to be coordinated and would serve to link those working locally to effect some changes within their countries and areas of conflicts and at the political level. It was also an effort to make this experience available to diplomats, governments, the UN, European Union, and other regional organizations with a view to seeing a larger picture of reconciliation and the need of approaching peace building from both the grass-roots and the political levels concurrently.

Agenda for Reconciliation is now in its fourth year. Each summer a conference has been organized under this program in Caux, Switzerland. The conference for the week of 14-20 August 2000 was entitled “Witnessing to Hope.” Through plenary sessions, workshops, and discussion groups, this week-long conference explored three themes:

Healing the wounds of history
The power of forgiveness
Hope – ‘a passion for the possible’

It has typical conference plenary sessions and workshops, but unlike other conferences there is truly a spirit about Caux. From the safety of its dining room and terraces, bridges are built through both spontaneous and deliberate dialogue. All the above themes are explored through individual stories and through discussions, both formal and informal, films and documentaries, and round-tables.

For this year’s conference, over 500 people attended from 64 nations. It was an impressive first morning session in the room that must have served at one time as a reception room for the hotel and is now the Main Hall. Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga addressed the group during the first morning session. On subsequent days there were speakers from Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Somalia, Bosnia and Croatia, Ghana, Korea and Japan, and Aboriginals from Australia. All spoke eloquently and powerfully about their individual experiences and discovering the ability to forgive and to reconcile with recent and historic enemies. These experiences enabled them all, each in his or her own way, to work for peace and justice within their countries.

The conference is organized with community discussion groups that actually become teams over the eight days, working together in various service roles such as cooking, housekeeping, or serving meals. This year’s conference highlighted a three-day discussion entitled “Euro-Mediterranean Relationships: Jews, Christians, and Muslims – Healing the past and building the future.” It was several years in the making according to Bryan Hamlin, a member of AfR’s Steering Committee and long-time member and organizer of MRA and its work. The discussion was organized by Yehezkel Landau, Bryan Hamlin, Anne Hamlin, and Rabbi Dr Marc Gopin, a professor at Tufts University and a member of AfR’s International Advisory Council. The idea of this particular workshop was to initiate a tri-religious discussion. The amount of time that was allotted, three one and a half-hour sessions, made it difficult to come to any conclusions, and each of the three groups of this workshop came up with their own discussion. This meant that not everyone was participating in the discussions. While there was not enough concentrated time to discuss some difficult and very weighty subjects, it was not always clear to the writer whether these sessions achieved the intent of the organizers. However, the main dialogue often spawned side discussions that continued well past the session and usually during a meal. This is an example of the type of discussion that MRA fosters. That MRA seems to achieve these spontaneous dialogues so facilely has much to do with the people invited and chosen to attend. In reality, individuals and groups within certain countries and from specific areas are invited to attend Caux. The result is therefore not as serendipitous as it would appear. All prospective participants must apply and be accepted to attend Caux. This allows for some intentional grouping and acknowledgement of how the conference will be structured. Knowing the groups

to be present, the Conference organizers structure plenary sessions and workshops to draw on the interests of the participants present.

The conference was organized each day with morning plenary sessions with speakers telling their stories of forgiveness under “Witnessing to Hope.” Then the community groups to which each participant was assigned met. The afternoons had simultaneous workshops for participants to choose. One workshop, by invitation only and intended for politicians and diplomats, was the Politicians’ Round Table, which had six sessions. The evenings presented different cultural events and music representative of the participants.

The idea of the Politicians’ Round Table (PRT) started in 1997. The Politicians’ Round Table has few politicians who are currently in office sitting at the table. Participating in the PRT during August 2000 were 36 individuals from 19 countries who are playing active roles in the national life of their countries. Eight were currently-serving politicians that included a Senator from Switzerland; two from Jamaica including the Head of State, Governor General Sir Howard Cooke; four from Japan including a former Prime Minister, Mr. Tsutomu Hata; and one from India. There were seven retired politicians from Italy, Japan, Chad, Korea, Algeria, Sudan, and United Kingdom. In addition, there were three currently serving civil servants and diplomats from Palestine, Jamaica, and China and three former diplomats from Somalia, United Kingdom, and Germany. Eleven members of international organizations, NGOs, and academic institutions were also present from Cambodia, Fiji, Switzerland, Somalia, Sudan, United States, Japan, Germany, and Bosnia-Herzegovina (correspondence from P. Riddell of 28 February 2001). Peter Riddell recognizes the need for more political involvement from Western European countries and recognizes that MRA has had a “bad name” in some European countries that needs to be changed. In addition the term ‘moral’ became taboo in the 1970s. MRA was early on arrogant in its attitude to church and organized religion. The organization began to take a somewhat defensive attitude, Riddell believes, and is only now re-inventing itself and trying to make its programs more widely known. It is greatly dependent upon volunteers, and this has become a difficulty with shrinking numbers. Riddell believes that the Politicians’ Round Table has the potential to be effective in discussing lessons learned and conveying best practices for countries in different phases of conflict or for countries now looking towards nation-building and rebuilding civic society after years of conflict.

2. The Lebanese and MRA

The Lebanese as an identifiable group have been a visible part of MRA for a number of years. This case study was initially intended to follow the Lebanese group at Caux with possible follow-up of their work in Beirut. While this did not prove possible, the Lebanese have made some very important inroads for Lebanon. MRA has been active in Lebanon since the 1960s largely due to MRA people who would come to the country and lecture to the youth in schools and universities. But it was not until the 1980s that the Lebanese “team actually took shape.”

The Lebanese group attending Caux this year included both Christians and Muslims. From the observer’s vantage point, they were very much an intact group. This is a country with eighteen different religious sects, and while internal war has fractionalized them, the group at Caux was committed to working towards reconciliation. The timing of this year’s conference came only

two months after Israel's withdrawal from Southern Lebanon. While outwardly there is peace, Lebanon clearly faces the rebuilding of its own civil society.

What was apparent was the depth of reconciliation that is occurring among individuals of this group and outwardly towards the other Middle Eastern nations present. With no short-term solutions to difficult and complex conflicts, those who believe in the ideals of MRA quietly and consistently work their own approach. They believe that political leaders cannot go too far ahead of the community and the whole range of society must find within themselves the willingness to come to terms with its hurts.

Ramez Salameh is an example of an individual who first came in contact with MRA in Lebanon as a student during the late 1960s. Some of the Lebanese present at Caux this year were inspired by MRA during that time. There have been on-going dialogues between Lebanese Christians and Muslims since 1984. But the real commitment to the principles of MRA began with Salameh. He was a member of a Christian militia at the outbreak of the conflict. In order to see an Arab friend whom he known for so long, he needed to put his weapons down to cross to the part of Beirut where the friend lived. In this literal laying down of his weapon, he figuratively and spiritually began his journey of reconciliation. His action began the dialogues that continued throughout the war and which still regularly take place today. Those taking part in these dialogues include many with responsibilities within Lebanon – politicians, professors, professional and religious people. Salameh's own experiences and his progression towards working with honesty and listening to God have helped to build a base over time in Lebanon. He believes that eradicating prejudice and ignorance will make an important contribution to the life of his nation. Change happens slowly, but change can affect a society dramatically. He used the example of Assaad Chaftari, who during the war had been a leader of a Christian militia. He stirred a positive movement in Lebanon by his open letter of apology that was published by the media in February of last year. This open letter was, according to Salameh, very important. Chaftari took responsibility for his own future and that of his country and wrote that forgiveness, while seemingly impossible, is essential for the reconstruction of a people, a country, and the world (press release, 14 August 2000, and interview with Salameh, 17 August 2000).

The aim of MRA is simply and essentially to change people's lives. One must, according to Salameh live for truth and seek the good for others, not oneself, and for a nation. He believes that the changes that have been occurring within Lebanon have occurred as a direct result of the groups that have been meeting for the past sixteen years in dialogue and building connections among themselves as people sharing a common country and common interests, in spite of religious differences. Salameh believes that MRA helps Christians and Muslims have a relationship at the deepest level. If and when trust is built and truly established, then solutions can arise. He believed that this case study can truly only touch the surface of MRA and how it works. Change occurs over a very long period of time, and in truth, reconciliation is a long process that helps to heal the wounds of the past and to build the bridges for the future (Salamah interview, 17 August 2000).

During one of the plenary sessions on "Witnessing to Hope," Assaad Chaftari told the assembled group of his life as a leader of the Christian militia. He also related the time he met a group of Lebanese that had a forum for dialogue between Christians and Muslims during the darkest days

of the war. The audience responded emotionally and volubly with applause after Chafturi asked for forgiveness of the Muslims for the role he had personally taken in the war. The next day, a fellow Lebanese of Muslim faith pledged himself to work for reconciliation along with Chafturi and other Lebanese “healers.” These are the moments that have made MRA symbolic of change and exhibit how deep and honest personal transformation can transform entire societies.

What was evidenced in Caux is the commitment and the long-term process that builds towards peace, within oneself and then outwardly. It begins with honesty with oneself. It also begins with silence and listening. No dialogue can even start unless and until it is a dialogue among equals and equals who have each other’s greatest good at heart. The Lebanese, in the past fifteen years of dialogue, through some of the darkest days of their own civil war, have kept the hope of reconciliation as an ever-present beacon. This Lebanese dialogue results from changes of the heart, changes in attitude towards “the other.” It has resulted in a committed core group of people, the “team” who are the foundation for MRA’s work in Lebanon.

The MRA work, overall, is not clearly structured, although the team meets regularly. Among the Lebanese, it is not considered an organization. It is a network of people joined together by the message of MRA. However, even without a strong organizational structure, MRA is in charge of the actions of the group and it is an MRA concern. Just as they began, weekly meetings continue today and are considered to be the essence of the MRA work in Lebanon. The concept of “quiet time” is the essential element of these meetings. The sharing goes beyond political discussions, but is personal and based on friendship and trust.

The key element is the dependence upon God’s guidance to the members of this network on both personal and community levels. Most of the actions or programs result from personal changes among the members of the team. The main purpose of the MRA team is to invite people to meet God in their individual lives and to go through the experience of change, which could lead to a change in society. There are some structured meetings such as school meetings, dialogues, special weekends, and meetings with key figures in society, lawyers, professors, etc. But the work begins with this core team. The period now as Lebanon begins to rebuild its civil society will test the MRA team, the strength of its contacts, and the foundation it has laid.

There is a momentum now within Lebanon and among the Lebanese who have been attending Caux regularly. Many Lebanese have visited Caux since 1979. Each year there are usually between 10 and 20 Lebanese from different religions and different regions at Caux. The experiences at Caux have broadened the experiences of these individuals on different levels, and this has enriched the overall work of the MRA in Lebanon. All have experienced the power of the stories, looking at responsibility, discussions of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the experience of growth. The Lebanese MRA team not only attend the Agenda for Reconciliation conference but often the “Life, Faith and Fellowship” conference as well. This particular summer, the group attended the “Life, Faith and Fellowship” conference together and were integral to its discussions about the value of faith and the faith in one’s own life.

This is clearly the time for the Lebanese to rebuild their own society and to focus internally on nation-building. This became apparent during Caux. Paramount is the re-building of a nation that has been torn apart by twenty-four years of war. Rebuilding nations after conflict has not

been a high priority for MRA, although it is where Frank Buchman and MRA were crucial after World War II in helping France and Germany to reconcile. The time may have arrived again for MRA to consider this as an important policy and direction of their work. As Assaad Chaftari shared in his correspondence, “Lebanon is more than a country, it is a message. We have been through a bloody war followed by many crises. The Lebanese now need to learn to build something new for the future. Nothing can happen unless the hearts and wills take a new direction in this life. It is our responsibility to share our experiences with others and to keep on a continuous search for truth, hand in hand with ‘others.’”

V. Analysis and Conclusions

- (1) MRA has suffered from the perception of its religiosity in its 63 years and still has an image problem among some western nations and politicians. In truth MRA does apply quite openly what Luttwak describes as “its own activist brand of theistic morality”⁹ to areas of conflict, certainly beginning with the task of reconciling the nations of France and Germany. But the greatest drawback for MRA, in looking at it as a methodological approach to conflict transformation, is that its approach is individually centered. Its influence on outcomes of conflicts and the indicators of its work to transform conflicts thus become very unclear. This is a question of attribution to MRA.
- (2) MRA activities resist evaluation . MRA’s goals and ‘modus operandi’ are so spiritual that it is, as Kraybill points out, impossible to judge whether “targeted public figures acted with greater moral consciences as a result of the promptings of MRA friends or associates or, if so, what the impact of their behavior might have been” (Johnston and Sampson, p. 232).
- (3) The MRA organizers for the Agenda for Reconciliation strategically invite participants to Caux who have begun individual journeys of forgiveness. This presents a like-minded audience which in no way undermines the powerful effect the individual stories of forgiveness and reconciliation have. It is impossible to measure the individual changes and what happens within the deeper privacy of an individual’s soul. Much of the impact of the AfR was through private conversations. While there were dramatic public moments, and even, in some cases, some changes of view, it would still be difficult to measure direct impacts.
- (4) What the approach lacks is an intentional focus in its actions. MRA has its own methods for how it chooses areas of conflict to address and how and through what means it becomes involved. According to Bryan Hamlin, MRA has some historic links to certain countries. The AfR Steering Committee deliberates on the areas of conflict on which to focus. The decisions are based on: (a) local people connected to MRA and how strong the presence is; and (b) can MRA make a meaningful contribution to a particular situation that is not already being addressed by another

⁹ Luttwak, Edward. “Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement” in Johnston and Sampson, Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft. p. 45.

- organization. MRA could well be in a position through its annual conferences at Caux and through its many established contacts to move purposefully into conflict transformation.
- (5) MRA does not appear to have any assessment tools by which to determine which areas of conflict to step into. For instance, the work that MRA does through its centers needs more recognition. The work of the Australia MRA team in Papua-New Guinea is an example. This approach and documentation of this case would provide information on how the conflict was assessed and how dialogue for change actually took place. MRA needs to convey the effectiveness of its techniques.
 - (6) Do all countries attending Caux have the same needs? MRA can consider a two-track program at Caux, with the Agenda for Reconciliation addressing conflict situations and post-conflict rebuilding. (Author's note: as of January 2001, there are two AfR tracks).
 - (7) The informal and spontaneous dialogue that occurs is the key to MRA's success, but the results are not usually shared. This means there are no lessons learned or best practices that can be models for other conflict areas. There is no documentation that is produced that clearly links MRA to the work being done. Documentation about the process of reconciliation of Papua-New Guinea undertaken by MRA Australia could be extremely useful.
 - (8) There appears to be no formal training for MRA workers. The on-the-job training is in all likelihood significant. As MRA strategically looks at its organizational direction, this may need to become more formalized.
 - (9) Many of the main discussions — such as the focus on the Euro/Mediterranean region and religion — are simply too large to adequately discuss within 1.5 hour sessions over a 3 day period. MRA has a very broad focus for its Agenda for Reconciliation, and like at most conferences with so many concurrent sessions, a participant may feel that he or she missed another equally interesting or personally important session.
 - (10) The Politicians' Round Table during the AfR conference in August 2000 was made up for the most part of African nations and approximately six representatives from Japan. During the introductory session several participants indicated the need for information from other nations as to how conflicts were resolved and were clearly looking for best practices in the academic and methodological sense. This, however, was not a clear focus for the sessions.
 - (11) The Politicians' Round Table has a great deal of potential for MRA. In structuring future discussions, some issues to address are whether resolutions from this group can be effective and how to use the media to greater advantage.
 - (12) MRA has the potential to play an important role in areas of emerging democracy and civil societies. This is especially true in those areas where MRA has had a presence.

Its work throughout its history of looking at governments and ethics and business could serve MRA well were it to address these ideas more specifically.

One last observation: in a world increasingly fractionalized, Caux, through its many conferences and programs, may well be a symbol of hope among people and nations who come each year to share a bond that transcends all differences. If this alone is what MRA achieves, then it is successful. While the achievements of the organization are too personal and at most times too intangible to measure, Caux remains a place of hope for those who have lost hope and a place of beauty for those surrounded by war, poverty, and destruction. It also is a place to share stories that are at times unimaginable. In this way, MRA has remained true to the legacy of its founder.

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