

Caux, 20 July 2008



A.R.K. MacKenzie, former British Ambassador, speaking in one of the morning 'Perspectives' sessions.

I would like to offer two illustrations of how what I call 'the Caux approach' worked out in international diplomatic events that I was involved in. One was while Frank Buchman was very much alive, the other happened long after his death, but it shows that his legacy lives on.

Many of you will remember the meeting at Yalta, between Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill, in the Crimea in February 1945. And they decided then that with the war coming to an end they should speed up the preparations for a postwar organization for peace and security. Security: their word. And they decided then that the world conference to set this organization up should be held in San Francisco, starting in April 1945.

So when all the world leaders arrived in San Francisco for this meeting they found Dr Frank Buchman already there: not because he had anything to do with Yalta but because three months before Yalta happened he had the strong thought to concentrate his efforts for Moral Re-Armament in California in the spring of 1945. And because the programme of Moral Re-Armament was emphasizing teamwork in industry, and many of the big American defence industries for the war were in California, he took with him the cast of a play called *The Forgotten Factor*. It was about an industrial dispute, not a diplomatic situation, but it showed vividly how through the introduction of forgotten factors the problem was solved.

So Buchman was there when the conference began. But he did not make any big speech there in San Francisco. He did not offer any written suggestions for the drafting of the Charter. In fact he wasn't even allocated a seat at the opening ceremonies. I happen to know, because I gave him mine.

What he did was to reserve a lunch table in the main corridor of the Fairmont Hotel for every day of the conference. The Fairmont Hotel was where the American delegation were centred and so it was a crossroads, and his table was just at the entrance to the dining room, and there he would meet the delegates at informal luncheons: men whom he had known in other parts of the world, or delegates who were introduced to him by some of his friends, including myself. And he made friends with them, and he explained his work to them. The result was that by the end of the conference he had received invitations to go to countries in many parts of the world, including significantly Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. And two of the delegates who became close friends of his were Dr Charles Maliki of Lebanon and Dr Fadhil Jamali of Iraq. Both of them became Foreign Ministers of their countries later, and both of them remained close friends of Dr Buchman until their deaths.

The conference got off to a very good start. There was a mood of optimism in the air, not cynicism. And we made rapid progress. And to produce an agreed Charter with 111 Articles at a conference of 50 countries, all under three months, was a remarkable achievement, as any diplomat in the audience today would agree. I don't know how long it would take to do a similar job today. But inevitably difficulties began to show up. There were two or three that were particularly starting to cause anxiety at the beginning of June. One was the voting procedures in the Security Council, a fascinating story which I can't go into today, and the other was the terms of the Trusteeship chapter in the UN Charter: what powers were to be given to the countries who would take over the mandates from the League of Nations that applied to territories in Africa and Asia

that were judged not yet ready for full self-government. And inevitably the leadership of one faction in the conference on that subject was Britain, because of all our colonial territories. The leadership of the other faction was the Philippines.

The leader of the Philippine delegation was General Carlos Romulo, a dynamic figure; some would say a demagogue, certainly a brilliant speaker. He was calling off-the-record press briefings stating that at the next meeting of the full Trusteeship committee he was going to flay the British alive, and so stories were even going out from San Francisco suggesting that the conference might have to adjourn without full agreement of this dispute.

At that moment, with the morale sagging, some of the delegates came to Dr Buchman and said 'Can you do anything to help?' And his reply was, 'Yes, I offer The Forgotten Factor' – this play that I mentioned. And it was put on the daily conference diary of events, and for three nights it was staged in the famous Bohemian Club Theatre in San Francisco. That play had a remarkable effect on many delegates, and in particular on Carlos Romulo because his touch with Dr Buchman and the effect of the play meant that when he came to make his speech at this fateful meeting of the Trusteeship Council the whole tone of it was so different from what we in the British delegation had been expecting that the British delegate, behind whom I was sitting, had to change his speech, right on the conference floor, to match the tone of the Philippine delegate. And on that basis the crisis over Trusteeships evaporated and within a few days the Trusteeship Committee reached agreement and the way was cleared to finish the drafting of the Charter.

After Romulo's key speech I passed a congratulatory note to him in the meeting and he sent one back saying: 'It was the forgotten factor, wasn't it?' Alistair Cooke, the celebrated BBC broadcaster, sent out a story saying that there was a mystery at the San Francisco conference: it was the outbreak of friendship between the British and Philippine delegations. And when President Truman came out a few days later for the signing ceremonies, he privately thanked Frank Buchman for his services.

So I identify five points of Frank Buchman's style of work from these events. The first is that he never put himself forward. He said once in Sweden, 'Forget about Frank Buchman, otherwise you will miss the point'. His aim was to be an instrument rather than an achiever. And instruments are often quite small and unnoticed, even if the final product is a rather large one. St Francis of Assisi prayed 'Make me an instrument of thy peace', and that was very much Frank Buchman's line of thought. He once said, 'I just let my life hang on the line like an old shirt and let the wind blow through it'. That is certainly not the normal procedure for professional diplomats, I can tell you.

Second point, Buchman focussed on people rather than on institutions or structures. He said late in his life, 'I have been wonderfully led to people who were ready'. And he had a remarkable sense of spotting the key man or woman in any given situation. Over Trusteeship it was Romulo. Over France and Germany at the end of World War Two it was Mme Irène Laure, the French Resistance leader. She came here burning with hatred against Germany and there are people here in the audience today who knew her and who can take you to the exact spot here where she wrestled with that hatred and got free of it. I still find that there is a lot of hurt around in the world and in people - and Caux is a place where you can leave hurts behind.

There was the case of Norway and Denmark who had a dispute over fishing rights in Greenland. Buchman zeroed in on one man, Freddie Ramm from Norway, a journalist, hardbitten, hard-drinking, fomenting a campaign of hatred in the Norwegian press against Denmark because the world court had sided with Denmark. He met Buchman, his life was changed, he became different, he decided to go over to Denmark and apologize publicly for what he had been doing. And the problem evaporated. Burma, which Frank Buchman loved very much - he devoted a lot of time to U Nu, the Prime Minister, right up until the fateful night in 1962 when U Nu was deposed, arrested and thrown into prison by a military junta who are still running Burma today. I happen to remember it very vividly because I was in the British Embassy in Rangoon at the time.

This focus on key people is not the normal bureaucratic approach. Buchman did not deny that there are

technical problems to be solved; he did not deny that there are institutions that are needed. And he never belittled any of the work I was trying to do inside the UN. But his perspective was different. He said that the problems we were trying to deal with that were on the table were often less complicated than the problems that were sitting around the table. And no one seemed to be doing anything about them. And yet there can be an act of honesty, or forgiveness, or a gesture of respect that can transform that situation and generate a new energy which can lead to the solving of much larger conflicts. That was true in the Romulo case. It was true with Irène Laure. When I have listened in the last couple of days to these brilliant exposés of world problems, I have thought often that perhaps the next step is to try to identify the people who are ready, as Buchman used to do, to deal with these problems.

Third: Buchman emphasized change rather than reconciliation. His whole work in a sense was about reconciliation, but he rarely used the word. He was after something much deeper in people, deeper than the change which is normally associated with conflict resolution. He was less interested in compromise than in commitment. He would certainly agree with Ambassador Sahnoun's statement in our programme that a deeper diagnosis of the world's ills is needed. He never made it easy. On his 60th birthday he issued a statement which said, 'The fullest measure of courage, discipline and sacrifice is going to be needed'. His aim was to create an atmosphere in which people decided to change, not just make speeches or point fingers.

Fourthly, because he was aiming at this deeper measure of change, he was inevitably a transcendentalist rather than a humanist. That is to say, he was categorically sure that only God can change human nature. Does that mean that there is no room here for non-believers? Not at all. I can never remember Buchman turning anybody away. But in his own belief and his own philosophy there was this deep belief that there is a God with a plan, and I think we need to beware of anything that waters down that concept in 'the Caux approach'.

And lastly, he attached the greatest importance to silence. He said, 'Disciplined silence can be the regulator of men and nations'. I am not going to elaborate on that here because there is going to be much talk of that here and opportunities to practise silence. He felt that a daily time of silence should be the normal for everybody if they were going to live out the fullness of life that he was describing.

So now I want to turn briefly to the other illustration, which shows how big doors can turn on small hinges. The World Bank in the late 1970s decided there was a need for a new mechanism to speed up world development. It was decided to have an independent Commission and Willy Brandt of Germany was selected Chairman. He chose 18 committee members, nine from the poor world and nine from the rich world. Sir Edward Heath, our Prime Minister, was the British representative, and I was named as his assistant.

At the start of our work we made a lot of headway, but then unfortunately inside the Commission a problem arose. Really just a personality clash between two men. One from the poor world and one from the rich. And it got worse, and at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur it leaked to the press. And when that happened a signal went off in my mind that this was dangerous and that I had to do something about it. Now I didn't need to do anything about it, I was being paid handsomely to do economic research for Heath. And there were risks in getting involved in such a situation: I might get booted down the stairs. But I felt that I should do something. No time for all the details, but I got separate dates with the two men involved and I certainly felt the need of a higher wisdom. Somehow or other, I think I must have been given the words. Neither of them responded immediately, and were rather quiet, but from that day the mood in the Commission changed, and we made progress.

But the story didn't end there. Fifteen months later we were meeting in The Hague. We had practically completed our work. And then at the meeting there everything started to go wrong. Everyone wanted to change something. There were so many prima donnas in the room. Finally Willy Brandt gave up and went back to Germany. When that happened the only thing was for the committee to go into emergency session to try and decide what to do. By the end of the afternoon the only thing they could agree on was to turn over

all the documentation to the two men who had been quarrelling the year before, saying 'Anything the two of you can agree on, the rest of us will support'. That was how the Brandt Report was published and it became an international best-seller. When that happened at The Hague, I thought: 'What if I had not obeyed the thought that suddenly came to me 15 months earlier?'

Just one further honest admission, however. At The Hague a five-man drafting committee was set up to do the final editing work, of whom I was one. And we were given one month to do it. We were working 15 hours a day. One man was holding us up repeatedly. He happened to be an Indian economist, who felt passionately about the evils of multinational companies. Now we had stated categorically in the Report that multinational companies must change, but he wanted to repeat this every second page in the Report, and it went on and on, and I am afraid that I got impatient with the way he was holding us up. And then I got sarcastic and began to make jokes against him, and I could see that some other people in the room were amused but he was not.

And then that night I suddenly had another of these arresting thoughts: 'Today you made an enemy'. I knew instantly what I must do. The next morning I went to the office, buzzed for the elevator, and who was in the elevator but my Indian friend. So I made my apologies right there in the elevator and he was rather silent. But from that day the work in our committee was changed, and what was more important to me, that man became my good friend to the end of his life.

So these are just two examples of how 'the Caux approach' applies, and I hope that more of us, after being here, will try it out.

A.R.K. Mackenzie

Archie Mackenzie was a British diplomat for 32 years, serving as Ambassador to Tunisia and as Minister to ECOSOC at the United Nations in New York. He was in the British delegations at Dumbarton Oaks and in San Francisco where the ground work was laid for the United Nations. He served also as British representative on the Brandt Commission. He knew Frank Buchman, the initiator of *Initiatives of Change*, for over 20 years and has had a close association with its work since he was a student at Glasgow University.