

# Comments on the Dutch edition

**Paul Nouwen** in his foreword to the Dutch edition:

'In this beautiful description we follow how the search of the movement went. I hope the readers of this book will feel strengthened to promote the changes that are needed and to help people around them.'

**Katholiek Nieuwsblad:**

'The ideal to forgive for a better world is still of paramount importance... a near revolutionary thought in the Netherlands of today.'

**Friesch Dagblad:**

'This book is honest and it holds a mirror for the reader. It describes the essence of the movement, without being yet another catechism. The principles come together in the Golden Rule: Treat others as you want them to treat you.'

**Bert Endedijk**, publisher of the book in the Netherlands, director of Kok/ten Have:

'The author describes an important movement. She places herself in a vulnerable position by looking critically at the movement which is dear to her.'

**Father Bert ten Berge, SJ:**

'This book was my spiritual reading for my retreat. It gave me a lot of food for thought.'

# Reaching for a new world

Initiatives of Change seen through a  
Dutch window

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Hennie de Pous-de Jonge

CAUX BOOKS

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## Preface

A spiritual movement that came into being in the early years of the 20th century is in itself already becoming part of history. We can be grateful to Hennie de Pous-de Jonge for this lively, moving and informative book about the development of the Oxford Group – Moral Re-Armament, now Initiatives of Change, in her native country of the Netherlands. Her book is not limited to this country by the North Sea, since her compatriots have ventured far and wide and have played their part in trying to heal the hurts of her country's colonial past.

Caux Books produces this series of titles (the Caux Docs) in the hope that they will be of value and interest to those interested in this movement that has sought to make an impact on history for the better. Certainly it has marked the lives of many individuals, who in their turn, and in their different ways have indeed marked events, large and small. Here are lessons learned, mistakes made, lives changed, situations altered, all through the simple idea that people are both the root of the problem and the root of an answer.

*Andrew Stallybrass, Director, Caux Books*

## Acknowledgements

In this book I broadly follow the lines of my book written in Dutch on the development of Initiatives of Change and its fore-runners, *Reiken naar een nieuwe wereld*. For that book I received help from a number of people for which I want to express my deep appreciation. Digna Hintzen-Philips and Aad Burger have helped me think through the whole concept from the very beginning. Their knowledge, experience, insight and critical minds have proved invaluable. Lotty Wolvekamp gave information from the memoirs of her father. Also her own contribution was valuable, because of her inside knowledge of this work. Her mother Biny Wolvekamp was the one whose memory went back furthest. Some people have read the whole text and given critical comments. Apart from the people mentioned above they were: Anneke van Nouhuys, Geert-Willem Overdijkink, Maarten de Pous, Kees Scheijgrond and Jos Sterk.

I am grateful to everyone that I interviewed for the open and frank way they answered my questions. Two subscribers to the publication *Ander Nieuws* looked up documents in the archives in Friesland of which information I gratefully made use. Bas Woltjer helped me to find information in the archives of the office of Initiatives of Change in The Hague.

At a crucial moment Jonneke Burger came to help me. For a year and a half she came one day a week to discuss the progress of the book with me. She was my big stick and my sounding board. With her professional publishing training and her critical mind she was a great stimulus.

A big thank you goes to my husband, Johannes de Pous. He is my first and most important advisor. He read all versions with

his typical accuracy and gave comments. In all stages of writing he has continuously encouraged me.

This English book is not a translation, but a new creation. I owe thanks to the publisher of Caux Books, Andrew Stallybrass, for encouraging me to start this venture. Paul Williams, with endless patience, has put my writing into proper and readable English. I enjoyed the to and fro with him about the meaning of words and sayings. As second editor Ginny Wigan read the manuscript with a fresh and critical eye, which resulted in more deleting and rewriting. We share the love for language and an interest in finding just the right words and expressions. Paul and Ginny, thank you! And thank you, Blair Cummock, for the layout and design.

*Hennie de Pous-de Jonge*  
*The Hague, May 2009*

# Introduction

This is the story of a movement that did not set out to be one. What it did was to put movement into people with the aim of building a new, a better world. It is the story of an organisation, starting more as an organism, that, in the 80-plus years of its existence, twice changed its name: from Oxford Group to Moral Re-Armament and then to Initiatives of Change.

With the new names came a change in style. There was a different emphasis, but in essence the message stayed the same. And building bridges of trust always remained the prime activity; trust based on change in individuals. It sought to build bridges in the family – between man and woman, parents and children – but also between classes, races, adherents of different world views and religions, people coming from different cultures.

Since I am from the Netherlands and as this movement took root in my country, I am using its development here as a case study. Through this specific lens I have followed the 80-year journey of this international movement against the historical background and through the many upheavals that occurred since its beginning in the early 1920s.

This book is loosely based on my previous book in Dutch which was published in 2005 under the title *Reiken naar een nieuwe wereld* (Reaching out for a new world), in which I describe in a frank and open-hearted way the development of this movement through the experiences of particular people. Because I believe it has transferable lessons for anyone who wants to have a part in building trust in this divided world, I have re-written the book in English for an international audience.

The people who feature in this book have felt attracted to this community for a variety of reasons. The vision of a new world

taps into a deep longing. Who would not want this? The challenge is that the change that is required needs to start with myself. This seems obvious, but that may be precisely why we easily overlook it. One of the people that I interviewed told me that the idea that God has a plan and she could have a part in that was what appealed to her most. Often it is not easy to know what to do in a given situation. As human beings we need a quiet space to come to ourselves, to get to know ourselves, to acquire new insights and to find direction for our lives. In silence I can get more clarity on the road to be taken. Especially when I feel stuck, see no way out, the idea that new inspiration can be found in silence gives hope. For many in this book it was obvious that God could show them the steps to take. But the idea of quiet reflection was and is also attractive for people for whom God is not a reality. The 'quiet time', one of the basic tenets of this movement, has gradually become common property.

This idea appealed to me when I encountered it at the age of 16. My mother, who had known the Oxford Group in her youth and had kept in touch with some friends, invited me to come with her to the world conference centre of what was then Moral Re-Armament in Caux, Switzerland. I still remember when she suggested this to me. We were on holiday on one of the islands in the north of our country and swimming in the North Sea. Since my mother was active in the women's movement and president of a women's organisation in our home town, it was natural that she was invited to a conference for women in Caux. Since there was also a programme for young people she thought it would be nice if I came along. That same summer we travelled together to Caux, a small village above Montreux, where the conference centre looks down on the Lake of Geneva like a fairy-tale castle.

This visit would change the course of my life. I remember most vividly the talks with my roommate Josiene de Loor, who features in chapter 8 with her husband Aad Burger. Josiene, then 26 years of age, impressed me as a warm hearted and elegantly dressed woman, who introduced the idea of the 'quiet time' to

me. One first result of an insight gained from the quiet time was that I put right my relationship with my sister, who was one and a half years younger and very bright. When I apologized to her for my jealousy, she was very surprised and confided that she had been jealous of me. I am writing about her in the past tense because she died in the summer of 2002. Until the end of her life we have been the best of friends. Another outcome was that the Christian faith, in which I had been brought up, started to mean something in my daily life and the Bible became my guide.

A few years later when I was studying to become a teacher, the ideas of Moral Re-Armament chimed in very well with the general feeling that was paramount in my generation in the late 1960s. It was the sense that many things needed to be different in society and that we could actually make that difference. So after I finished my studies (which my father insisted I should do) I decided not to take up a teaching job, but instead to work with Moral Re-Armament which took me to begin with to India. It was the beginning of a life-long involvement, sometimes more, sometimes less, but throughout the 'quiet time' remained an anchor.

Not that the quiet time is a panacea for everything. It is not always obvious to know which road out of the many possibilities to take. Nor is the road that is shown necessarily easy. To change things in one's life and in the world, difficult decisions often need to be taken. It can demand sacrifices. The road of reconciliation, for example, requires insight as to where you yourself can take the first step. However logical it may sound, that is often very difficult. An enormous inner battle can precede it. Yet nothing is more freeing and infectious as when people are prepared to admit mistakes and simply and sincerely say 'I am sorry'.

A time of quiet reflection can help us find a meaning for our lives. And through it we can discover support and strength – for some from inside themselves, for others from the 'other side', the transcendence, which, depending on our tradition, we call by different names.

In this book people speak about God's guidance and God's

plan, and about choosing the right road. Here we are on thin ice. How can we be sure of what is right? It comes down to a searching and a feeling of our way. In good faith one takes a road, but one always needs moments when the decision can be tested and to remain open to critical remarks from others. As road signs we can use moral standards. In the range of ideas of this movement four are singled out: honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. How this happened I describe in the first chapter. They can serve as benchmarks and criteria; they stimulate the conscience and can help people to see what could be changed for the better in their lives.

People also feel attracted to this network of bridge builders, because it is about more than action. It is more than a network. It is a loosely-organised world family, where people help and support one another in the chosen task. There is here a natural connection between the personal and the global. The one cannot be seen separately from the other.

The movement is more practical than philosophical. It is not a new thought or belief. It does not take people out of their faith community or tradition. It is more a catalyst to encourage the existing good thoughts and ideas to be put into practice, the lubricant by which beautiful plans and intentions are made to work. From quiet reflection, and out of the experience of change, new ideas and initiatives are born. The name Initiatives of Change, adopted in 2001, exactly fits this process.

In the 80 years of bridge-building, things, naturally, did not always go well. Dogmatism crept in. People had to be very sure of their ground to withstand group pressure and to act in freedom and according to their own insight and conscience. 'Success stories' were not always put into perspective. In the heat of conviction and enthusiasm we sometimes gave the impression of having the solution for all problems and that we could implement it better than others. In short, mistakes were made. In different periods the movement was sometimes more and sometimes less controversial. It is hard to tell whether this was because of mistakes that were made or because it put a finger on sore spots. Probably both factors played a part.

A weakness was that the self criticism that one was expected to exercise in one's personal life was not always applied to the movement as a whole. It took a long time before it was realised that for any organisation self criticism and transparency only add to its credibility.

In the past years there has been more room for self criticism and for modesty. In that space the realisation grew: we do not have the answer and we cannot do it alone. We want to work together with organisations and individuals with similar aims. We hope from our experience to be able to make a specific contribution towards a more just and peaceful world.

The Oxford Group experienced a dynamic growth in the 1930s – a period of deep recession with which our present economic crisis is now being compared. Could it be that Initiatives of Change plays a similar role in this period of insecurity and concern? I believe it has something precious to contribute in face of the many challenges that lie ahead.

## CHAPTER 1

# How it started

The Oxford Group came into being almost organically. The founder of the Oxford Group was Frank Buchman, an American. From his many speeches and letters, and from the books written about him, it becomes clear that a culmination of different experiences led him into starting his life's work. He did not plan to found an organisation. However the Oxford Group, which later became Moral Re-Armament (MRA) and since 2001 has been called Initiatives of Change, has become internationally-known for the calibre and effect of its outreach work.

Frank Nathaniel Daniel Buchman was born in 1878 in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania (USA).<sup>1</sup> His father ran a grocery store there. The business went well and after a while Buchman senior bought a hotel near the railway station. The young Frank grew up in this busy hotel. Because of its location he became acquainted with the sorts of people who passed through the hotel. He learned from his parents the importance of receiving guests with well-prepared meals and immaculate rooms. The inclination to perfection in this field stayed with Buchman down the years.

Buchman's family came from Switzerland to the USA around 1750 and settled in Pennsylvania, where the people were called 'Pennsylvania Dutch'. Dutch here is a corruption of the word Deutsch, which means German. Their religion was Lutheran and Buchman always felt a special affinity with Switzerland and Germany.

To help with their son's education, the family decided to move to Allentown when he was 16 years old. Father Buchman opened a restaurant with a liquor store, and later also a wholesale

alcohol business. According to the biographer of Frank Buchman, English journalist Garth Lean, this was not the profession of a 'model father' in the Lutheran tradition. In the Buchman home people liked good food and a good glass of wine. Later Frank Buchman decided, in order to help a former alcoholic to stay sober, never to drink alcohol any more – a decision which he kept throughout his life.

After completing his theology studies, the socially-minded Buchman moved to a parish in Overbrook, a deprived area of Philadelphia. Though his undertaking was to help build up the parish, in fact he found his role was more akin to social work. In the first year he didn't even receive a salary and was financially dependent on his parents. The industrial revolution had created victims. In response to what he saw around him, Buchman decided to institute a home for neglected boys. The atmosphere was warm and the food was good. Buchman's idea was that one should not so much teach Christianity as live it. The home was very successful, and people from other cities came to see what he was doing.

The money for the home was administered by a board of six men. The board insisted that the home should eventually become financially self-supporting – an impossibility, since the boys were hardly able to pay rent or contribute to their living costs. The board asked Buchman to economize, especially on the food. This was totally unacceptable to Buchman. The conflict went so deep that he resigned. Embittered, he became ill. To aid his recovery his father gave him money for a journey to Europe.

### Change in Keswick

Buchman arrived in England in the summer of 1908, and went to Keswick in the Lake District, to take part in a Christian conference. He had hoped to meet the famous preacher F B Meyer. Meyer wasn't there, but Buchman heard a colleague of Meyer's preach, Jessie Penn-Lewis. In a small church with only 17 people in the audience, she spoke so movingly about the cross of Christ that, suddenly, this basic article of the faith of his

church became a personal and life-giving experience to Buchman. At that moment he saw himself as he was – a man full of pride, self-love and resentment. He realised that he himself was at the centre of his life and that his work had become his idol. He asked God to change him. And even though he still believed that he was right to disagree with the board, he saw that his resentment was wrong. He wrote a letter to each of the six board members, in which he asked forgiveness for his resentment. He did not receive any answers, but he became a free man. (According to Garth Lean, the reason he heard nothing back from any of them may have been that he neglected to include an address for the sender.)

That same day he met a student with whom he shared this experience. He discovered that this actually helped the other person to find a new direction for his life. These two experiences taught Buchman that anyone can make a new start and that such an experience can have an effect on others.

### Quiet time

In the 14 years following this experience Buchman was respectively Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) for Pennsylvania State University, missionary in India and China and lecturer at Hartford Theological College back in the USA. The experiences garnered in those years, coupled to what he learned from the Christian thinkers of his time, helped him to crystallise certain ideas.<sup>2</sup> These were not new ideas, but Buchman's expression of them made them available to everyone.

One such idea was the 'quiet time'. He learned about this while working as YMCA Secretary at Penn State College. He was working very hard, organising bible studies and meetings. The membership of the Christian student organisation doubled. He managed to make friends with people who had at first ridiculed him. Yet he was not satisfied. As he put it himself later: 'I worked 18 hours a day and had to have two telephones in my room. People came to me, but there was no change in people's lives. Nothing permanent was left.'

FB Meyer, the well-known Congregational evangelist whom Buchman had hoped to meet in Keswick, came to visit him. He watched Buchman working and gave him two pieces of advice: to listen more to God than to the telephone and to make one-to-one personal contacts central to his work, rather than large meetings. Buchman took this advice seriously. He decided, as he put it, 'to listen every morning from five till six, before the telephones start ringing, in a time of quiet to the still small voice of the living God'. This radical decision led to a chain reaction of changes in people, including those who set the tone of the College. The improved atmosphere was noticeable beyond the College and secretaries of the YMCA in other universities came to have a look. This again led to campaigns and student conferences which took place in the same spirit.

So at Penn State he learned that people can change. And that as a consequence situations can change, as did the atmosphere in the University. And he learned that change in 'key people' could bring about change in larger situations.

## China

As a missionary in China, which he first visited in 1916, Buchman tried to apply the same principles. He was asked to go there by John R Mott, the General-Secretary of the YMCA. Buchman's idea was not so much to speak at large meetings or organise conferences, but to help people to start a new life through one-to-one personal contacts. Buchman called this 'personal work'. For him this also meant that, if it was necessary, he would call a spade a spade and expose whatever he felt was not right frankly and freely. Also he wanted to work much more closely with the Chinese Christians, which was then not the 'done' thing. The thousands of mainly western Christian missionary workers were divided in their reaction to this approach. Either they applauded this fresh wind: people changed, it was Christianity in practice. Or they felt very uncomfortable with it, even felt threatened by this personal approach.

Some leading Chinese saw in Buchman's methods the solution

for the deplorable state China was in at that time. One of them, Hsu Ch'ien, acting Prime Minister for Sun Yat-sen, referred at a conference organised by Buchman (he did organise some conferences!) to the 'moral illnesses of national life that need to be tackled to save the country'. China was ripe for a revolutionary turnover. Hsu hoped that Christianity could bring about this change. On the other hand he believed that the foreign leaders of the church did not understand how China functioned. They wanted to change the Chinese culture without really taking the trouble to understand it.

Through his radical position Buchman collided with a large part of the Christian establishment. There were objections to his concept of personal work. His emphasis on the need for a moral change in the personal life of people was threatening for many. Buchman did not hesitate to share where he had needed to change himself, if he felt that it would make the message more clear. Some missionaries welcomed this fresh approach, but others found him 'arrogant and presumptuous, an egoist who constantly paraded his own successes.'<sup>3</sup> The opposition against him grew, and after 15 months, in which he gave himself with heart and soul, he was asked to leave China, not by the Chinese, but by the Christian missionary establishment.

It is interesting to note that what the Christian missionaries did not manage to do in China, a Russian revolutionary called Borodin did. He managed in that time to reach and win over enough key figures to ensure the success of his revolution, communism.

Something that Buchman learned during his time in China needs to be mentioned here. It is about the importance of teamwork. Buchman travelled through China with Howard Walter and Sherwood Day. The latter had graduated from the University of Yale and had been Secretary of the YMCA there. From 1916 till 1938 he worked closely with Frank Buchman. During their time in China the three discovered that there was a lot of unspoken criticism and division among them. They realised that they were in no position to tackle the division in China if they were divided among themselves. In a hotel room in Tietsin the

three companions sat down around the table to share honestly everything that had been unspoken between them. From these talks the principle developed, Sherwood Day later wrote, that no member of the team should say something about another member which he had not said to the person concerned. Since the talks in Tietsin Buchman considered complete openness the first requirement for effective teamwork, because that way trust is created.

From 1916 Buchman was on the Faculty of Hartford Theological College. This part-time position made it possible for him to travel a lot. But after a few years he found even this loose tie too confining and in the beginning of 1922 he decided to resign. Buchman had gained confidence in his ability to inspire people with his ideas. Now he saw for himself a prophetic task. Though he didn't realise it at the time, it meant from that moment on he would never again receive a salary. In his own words he started to live 'on faith and prayer', in the conviction that where God guides He also provides.

This became the basis of his world work. It meant that none of those who worked with him received any salary. His work was going to be financed from individual, often sacrificial, giving and in large part it still is up until this day. In different countries and in later years the 'faith and prayer' principle has been interpreted in more flexible ways, which could also mean receiving a modest salary or living allowance. Apart from not receiving a salary Buchman continued to work in the same manner, after his resignation from Hartford in 1922. At different universities – notably in Princeton (USA) and in Oxford (UK) – teams of students came into being. The work in Oxford grew so quickly from 1928 onwards that the nickname, the Oxford Group, simply stuck.

## Ideas

This is perhaps a good moment to recap shortly what Buchman's core ideas were: not new but certainly renewing. His theological background was Lutheran. In the theological language of that time one could say that he believed in the

sovereignty and power of God, the reality of sin, the necessity to give oneself over to the will of God, the peace-offering and changing power of Christ, the feeding value of prayer and the duty to witness about this. To begin with this faith was theoretical, but during the years in Overbrook and Penn State he experienced its practical working out. He saw that faith can change people for the better, and that if that happens, the atmosphere in a home, an institution, even in a university can change for the better. After his experience in Keswick, where he left behind his resentment, he believed anyone could change, and that one person's change can affect the life of another – for the better.

I have already mentioned his decision to devote the first hour of the day to a time of quiet. This meant for him to make his will subordinate to the will of God. From Professor Henry Wright of Yale University he learned to write down the thoughts he got in his quiet time. Wright's book, *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework*, inspired him. Here Wright writes that he reserved the first half hour of the day for a 'prayer in two directions', which means talking and listening. According to Wright, God could give him then, but also at other times, illuminating thoughts, on the condition that the human receiver was clean enough to receive these thoughts. Buchman, when he was teaching in Hartford, undertook a four-hour journey to Yale every week to hear Wright speak.

The quiet time calls for a number of checks to be carried out. We humans are very good at fooling ourselves. Also it can be very annoying, even dangerous, if people claim to know what God's will is. How do you know whether a certain thought from the quiet time should actually be carried out? Buchman used a number of tests for himself. It is, for example, important whether a thought is feasible. Maybe you have had the thought to visit somebody, but this person appears to be in another country. Or perhaps there was someone else who needed your help more urgently.

A good test is to compare the thoughts from the quiet time with the highest moral standards you know. For Buchman these were: honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. He had taken these

from the book *The Principles of Jesus* by his contemporary Robert Speer. According to Speer these principles were a summary of the teachings of Jesus. In his book he cites verses from the Bible to back up each principle. Frank Buchman followed Speer in this and only changed the order. The principles became known as 'The Four Standards'. Also the term 'The Absolutes' was used. The person who popularised this term was the earlier mentioned Professor Henry Wright, who was also very taken by Speer's work. The Four Standards became household words in the Oxford Group.<sup>4</sup> These standards should not be seen as aims in themselves, but rather as benchmarks or signposts.

Another test for Buchman was whether a thought was in agreement with the drift of the bible. The advice of friends, who also tried to live according to the guidance of God, was another important indicator. Therefore one needed to choose friends who did not necessarily always go along with everything one said. Buchman suggested measuring thoughts against the teachings of the church – for him, his Lutheran tradition. After testing, willingness to obey the thoughts was a final requirement.

In the course of the years he had learned that for Christianity to be effective it needed to have a moral backbone. By that he did not mean that people should live by rules. He meant that we voluntarily dispose of what is not in harmony with moral values and that we make our will subordinate to God's will. Then we experience a daily cleansing, forgiving and healing power.

Buchman wanted to win people for God. In the book *Soul Surgery* (1919) by Howard Walter, the only book in which Buchman cooperated, the message is: if people really change, then this change touches the deepest layers of their being, their motives and desires. The only one who can change somebody is God, but another person can help. This kind of help was not possible in large meetings, but needed to be given 'under four eyes', as Buchman put it. To be able to help another person, one needed to be a free person oneself – conscious of temptations and weaknesses, but not giving in to them; ready to face things from the past and where necessary to make amends. Buchman

focussed on individuals, not structures. He firmly believed that lasting change in social and political structures would only take place if people changed.

### House parties in the Netherlands

Buchman wanted to visit the Netherlands. A British acquaintance introduced him to a family from the Dutch nobility, on the country estate Rhederoord in De Steeg – a village in the hilly and forest-rich eastern part of the Netherlands. The family was called Van Heeckeren van Kell. In the spring of 1923 Buchman stopped off to visit them on his way to Germany. His visit made a big impression and he was asked to come back. The Van Heeckerens introduced Buchman to their friends. In 1924 a ‘house party’ took place during a weekend at Rhederoord, attended by between 30 and 40 people. The house party was a characteristic element in Buchman’s work at that time. It brought a varied group of people together for several days who, in a friendly atmosphere – relaxed, informal, often with great hilarity as well as great depth – talked about important, often personal, issues. This was not done in a theoretical way, but was both personal and practical. People shared with each other how they had overcome their problems and had given themselves over to Christ. The stories of people changing worked infectiously. Many people returned from such a house party with fresh hope and a renewed faith.

The sociologist Bert de Loor of the University of Nijmegen in the east of the Netherlands, described many of these house parties in a sociological study of the Oxford Group. For this research he spent many months in the early 1980s studying the archives in the centre of Initiatives of Change, to which he had free access in The Hague. He interviewed many people and also had access to the private archives of prominent leaders of the Oxford Group. He had an academic interest in this ‘social movement of the inter-bellum’, as he called it and also a personal one since his parents Dirk and Jozina de Loor were prominent members of the team of Moral Re-Armament after the Second World War. His book is of interest because de Loor

takes an independent academic view and describes both the strengths and the weaknesses of this movement in the 1930s.<sup>5</sup>

In the beginning those attracted to the Oxford Group were mainly people from the Dutch elite, but gradually 'ordinary' people also became part of the Oxford Group in the Netherlands. This can be deduced from examining the attendance at the house parties, which took place in all parts of the country. It was not customary, especially in those days, for the different classes to mingle, but they did do so in the Oxford Group house parties. It was, for example, quite normal for a factory director to be at a house party with one of his workers. A newspaper in the north of the country in a series of articles about a big house party (265 people) there in 1936 noted this mingling of classes as a striking feature, and also the fact that it was a religiously mixed group and that people spoke very simply and in a down-to-earth way.<sup>6</sup>

Before long the centre of the work of the Oxford Group moved from Rhederoord to The Hague. This was largely due to the conviction of an enthusiastic couple, Baron and Baroness Godfrey and Sylvia van Wassenaer van Catwijck, who first learned about the Oxford Group while living in Cambridge (UK) in 1928. They decided to return to The Hague in order to assist with this work in the Netherlands. The Van Wassenaers started by visiting all the Dutch Reformed church ministers in The Hague to tell them about the spiritual renewal they themselves had experienced. One minister responded and became part of their team. The Van Wassenaers' house became the Oxford Group centre for the next 10 years.

The Oxford Group soon became widely known. It had plenty of good write-ups in the papers. Trusted and well known figures in Dutch society took an active part, such as the theological professor Maarten van Rhijn, who wrote a series of articles on 'the Group', as it was also called.<sup>7</sup> But the growth was mainly due to the snowball effect. There was something very attractive and infectious in the atmosphere of the house parties and news about these meetings was spread by word of mouth. The fact that people visibly changed for the better caused curiosity.

In the parlance of that time 'change' meant among other things: to practise quiet times, to take an honest look at oneself, to put things right in relationships with others. It meant that you became part of the team and co-responsible for the work. The person who had 'changed' wanted to pass on his new understanding to others, to help others to change as well.

In hindsight one can question the distinction that was made between people who were 'changed' and people who were not 'changed'. Is not life one long process of change? And is person-to-person contact not always a two-way traffic? Not one person changing another person, but two people learning from one another? There are two things one can say about this. With the word 'change' people referred to a certain specific moment, when a person decided to put right what was wrong in his or her life and let that life be directed by God. At the same time it was realised that this was only the beginning of a life-long learning track.

Anyway, one can be envious of the enthusiasm and authenticity of the experiences of those people. It led to a lively atmosphere in and around the Oxford Group.

There was no planning how to pass on the message. It just happened, from one person to another. An example of this is how the centre of the work moved from De Steeg to The Hague. One of the daughters of the Van Heeckeren family, Lily, became committed to this work and organised a house party in her home Rhederoord in September 1927.<sup>8</sup> One of the participants was Eric van Lennep, who 'changed' and his new attitude to life made a big impression on his cousin, the earlier-mentioned Sylvia and her husband Godfrey van Wassenaer, in Cambridge. Another cousin of both Eric and Sylvia was Annie Sillem-Beels who also changed and her change made a big impression on her husband Albert Sillem, a successful businessman in Amsterdam. His identification with the Oxford Group had an infectious (and enlisting) influence on others in the Dutch establishment – people like the head of the Philips electrical company, industrialist Frits Philips and his wife Sylvia, and the Rotterdam banker Herman Hintzen. And so the Oxford Group's work, outreach and influence spread.

## Concert hall meetings

Another group of people whose introduction to the Oxford Group had a great effect were ministers from different Reformed churches. They were very often the initiators of house parties. One of them explained to a meeting of reformed ministers that he had rediscovered through the Oxford Group the healing and renewing power of the gospel. He also pointed out that the 'peculiarities' of the Oxford Group – to have quiet times, to seek God's direction and to share with others – were in fact biblical in origin.<sup>9</sup> Reverend Sasse, Dutch Reformed minister in Amsterdam, used his experience of the Oxford Group in his work to reach people outside the churches. From 1934 till 1937 the 'Bachzaal', a concert hall in Amsterdam, was used for this outreach work. Sasse often invited members of the Oxford Group to speak there. This hall became known as the 'church of the Oxford Group'.

Although for many church ministers the meeting with the Oxford Group gave a new impulse to their faith and their work, gradually the relationship between the churches and the Oxford Group became more problematical. This was partly caused by the attitude of members of the Oxford Group, who found the church rather dead and dull. They sometimes gave the impression they thought they were better than the church, because they helped people to find a living faith. Another problem was that the Oxford Group did not know how to handle criticism from the side of the churches – even sincere questions and constructive criticism. In fact the Oxford Group found it difficult to handle any criticism, even when this came from inside the movement itself. One of the leading ministers in the team, the Reverend Van Schothorst, discovered this.

In 1935 he had written a booklet in which he evaluated the work of the past years, pointing out where some things could be done better and what could be learned from mistakes. It was in short a manual for members of the Oxford Group who wanted to organise a house party or were asked to speak about it. He felt the need for this booklet because of the growing demands

on the Oxford Group and the question of how to respond to this in a fruitful way. A too-rapid growth for which one is not prepared could be harmful, he believed. Unfortunately there was no space for this kind of discussion and after pressure from abroad the 2,000 copies of this booklet were destroyed before they could be distributed. The general idea was that criticism, even constructive criticism, as in this booklet, would discourage people. What also prevented people from speaking out was the assumption that there was likely something wrong with you if you struck a critical note.

Something else happened which did not improve the relationship with the churches. In 1935 Frank Buchman came to give a speech in the concert hall in Amsterdam, mentioned earlier. By that time the Oxford Group was so well known that the hall was packed. In particular many theologians came to hear Frank Buchman, of whom they had heard so much. Unfortunately he disappointed them. According to the Reverend Sasse, Buchman gave a rather meaningless speech. Probably he had not lived enough into the Dutch situation and his American optimism and pragmatism collided with the Dutch need for more content and depth.<sup>10</sup> In spite of this, Sasse continued his work in Amsterdam. Many young people were attracted to the Group. In Amsterdam, but also in many other places, teams of the Oxford Group were meeting, helping each other, making plans, studying the Bible, praying and having quiet times together. There was a lot of interest in the press. Several books appeared. In a word, the Oxford Group was alive in the Netherlands. For very many people it meant a new meaning and direction in their lives.

Among these people were Cor de Pous and Sijtje Olij. In 1936 a friend invited them to a house party. They were both active in the church, he as President of a young men's association and she of one for young women. Yet they felt something was missing. They had been engaged for five years, but due to lack of finances they saw no possibility of marrying in those economically difficult years. They heard about the meetings in the concert hall in Amsterdam and decided to go there. It was

quite different from a church service, Cor de Pous said later. The atmosphere was relaxed and informal, even though there were hundreds of people. They heard a church minister speak about how one could listen to God, put one's life in order and find direction. Cor de Pous immediately knew what making a clean start meant in his life. He decided to tell his fiancée everything she did not know about him and to put right the relationship with his father, in whose nursery business he worked. For his fiancée this meant that from then on she could completely trust him. And trust became and remained the hallmark of their life together.

They became regular visitors at the meetings in the concert hall. They started to have quiet times and to read the Bible. One text meant a lot to them and they based the rest of their lives on it. It was: 'Do not worry. Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all else will be given to you' (Matthew 6: 25-33). They decided to get married that same year even though their financial situation had not improved. A few days before the wedding a friend offered Cor de Pous a better job in his big firm.

### Sailing camps

Reverend Sasse and his team in Amsterdam introduced special activities to attract young people. From 1936 till 1940 they organised annual August sailing camps for young people between the ages of 14 and 18. They were held in Friesland, the province with many lakes in the north of the Netherlands. A reporter from a leading Friesland newspaper visited one of these camps and wrote a series of articles in which he tried 'to give insight into the basic principles which this new world movement professes and wants to see practised in all parts of life'. It struck him that in the sailing camp that he visited all strata of society were represented. Participants came from both church and non-church backgrounds. There was a good mix of spiritual input and relaxation. 'The set-up of the camps is revolutionary', he wrote, 'God is accepted as leader of the camp, in which there is not one leader who dictates. Everyone is responsible and knows his task. The participants make the camp rules together, work

out who does what, and anyone can come with plans. Everything is simply, but hygienically and comfortably arranged, so that this camp is a true paradise where, on top of all this, they can also sail and swim.'

From this detailed report we also learn that there were good contacts with the nearby village. A soccer game was organized between the camp and the village. The local church minister came to visit the camp with his whole church council and 25 members of his parish. The reporter attended a performance where the young people creatively illustrated insights they had found in the camp. 'There is an atmosphere of informality and natural cheerfulness, and the relationship between boys and girls is pure and natural.'

On this last point Sasse and his team were obviously rather progressive, at least in the eyes of the Oxford Group team in The Hague, who frowned at the fact that this camp was for both boys and girls (although sleeping arrangements were separate). Other camps that were organized were strictly divided into boys' and girls' camps, as we will see in the next chapter. There was a distinct difference of approach between the liberal/free-thinking team of Amsterdam and the more conservative team in The Hague. 'The Hague' also looked with suspicion to the successful meetings in the concert hall in Amsterdam.<sup>11</sup>

### Mass meetings

From 1936 the work of the Oxford Group gained momentum, as Frank Buchman had the concept of organizing mass meetings in the countries around Germany. These could, so was his hope, put up a dam against the rising Nazism. Two hundred and eighty Dutch went by chartered boat to Ollerup in Denmark to attend a rally of 12,000 people held from 9-14 April, 1936. The trip on the boat there and back was transformed into an Oxford Group house party. That same year 500 Dutch went to England, where 25,000 people gathered in the British Industries Fair building in Birmingham.

It was a big transition from the intimate atmosphere of the house, where personal change and sharing with each other were

central, to these mass meetings, which were intended to be demonstrations of hope. Participants would enter the meeting hall in groups, marching with flags and singing national hymns and the especially-composed Oxford Group songs.

But even at these mass meetings the personal element was present, as is clear from the report from one of the Dutch participants in Birmingham, Bert Wolvekamp. In his memoirs he describes why he went and what he found. He was working in the accountancy department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, when quite by chance he read a book about the Oxford Group. This intrigued him so much that he decided to take part in the Birmingham rally where he stayed in a camp for young men in neighbouring Castle Bromwich. The very first evening he was captured by the message of the meeting in a big tent. He writes: "The subject was life-changing. A number of people told about how they had changed, after having shared with someone else what was wrong in their life and having decided to put things right with God's help. I looked at those people, heard their convincing voices and saw their facial expressions. I believed them and I was filled with an immense jealousy. At the end of the evening the leader of the meeting said: "If there are people here who have things in their life which they have never told anyone and for which they would be deadly ashamed for anyone to know, the night is long, go outside, find someone, tell him everything, go on your knees, give your life to God and come back here tomorrow. Then we will make plans for a new world."

'I went outside. Someone came up to me. I told him everything. We went down on our knees and I gave my life to God, without knowing what exactly this meant. But the next morning I got a first idea when I was having a quiet time with the others in my tent. Among the things I wrote down then were: to write my parents that I had regularly stolen money from them, to estimate how much it was and to repay them as soon as possible; to write to the treasury of my former student organisation and tell them that when I was their treasurer I never paid my own contribution – and finally to pay back what I owed.

They were my first steps in change, followed by many more. They are still going on and probably will do so till the end of my life. But I have always been grateful for those words: “And then we are going to make plans for a new world”. Not change simply to become a good person and go to heaven later, but to be part of a great adventure that would demand everything of me.’<sup>12</sup>

### ‘New Netherlands is launched’

In 1937, the year following the large Oxford Group rallies in Denmark and Britain, it was the turn of the Netherlands to take centre stage. Frank Buchman encouraged the Dutch team to organize a huge meeting in Utrecht, which would surpass the scale of a house party by a long way. The national demonstration ‘New Netherlands is launched’ took place in the vegetable auction halls of Utrecht (no other place was big enough). It started on Ascension Day 6 May and went on for 12 days until the Monday after Whitsun. The posters for this event, depicting the launching of a big ship, were visible everywhere. In total 100,000 people came. Participants, especially the guests from abroad, were put up in private homes. The young Dutch team slept in school classrooms. The national railway was fully involved in the organisation. Special trains were put on with reduced fares for those attending the meeting. The whole of Utrecht knew what was afoot. Utrecht’s main newspaper published a special Oxford Group supplement. From all corners of the country people came flocking in.

In 1996 one of the Dutch national radio stations looked back on this event in one of its contemporary history programmes.<sup>13</sup> People who had taken part were interviewed. They recalled, for example, how the delegation from Friesland came marching in with flags, dressed in national costume while the whole audience started to sing first the Frysian anthem and after that the national anthem. They described the packed hall with speakers from all over the world. Outside Scots delegates were walking though the city led by pipers and the skirl of bagpipes. The carillon of the Cathedral in the centre of Utrecht played Oxford Group

melodies. The well known poet and journalist Herman Salomonson wrote a special song for the occasion set to a familiar tune.

One can ask the question how these mass meetings relate to the advice Buchman was given at Penn State to put emphasis on personal work. The answer might be that the seriousness of the world situation gave him the incentive to work this way. At the same time personal work remained an important ingredient. Bert Wolvekamp, who was one of the organisers of this meeting witnesses to that. He says that in spite of the huge scale of the event over those Whitsun days, there was space and attention given to the individual. He describes in his memoirs the number of personal talks he had during those days. 'People wanted to change and be freed from impurity, dishonesty and hate. Many had never found anyone to whom they could express themselves fully and who could help them to change. So many people wanted a personal talk with one of our Dutch team or with one of the foreigners who came to be with us over those days! It meant that, with all else we had to do, we were busy day and night and could only snatch a few hours sleep in the school-rooms to which we were allocated. But it was worth it.'

But not everything went flawlessly. The special meeting for church ministers turned out to be a flop. The 'church ministers' day' had been carefully prepared by a number of Dutch ministers who were part of the team. But at the last moment Oxford Groupers from abroad took over. Different ministers who were later interviewed by Bert de Loor told him how painful this had been. The well-known and respected professor of theology, Maarten van Rhijn, who had helped to spread the early message of the Oxford Group, was not allowed to speak because the foreign Group members were afraid he would play to the gallery. Apparently the relations were such that the Dutch Group members gave in to the pressure. The Dutch church ministers, it seemed, were not trusted and people from abroad thought they knew better what needed to be said in Utrecht. But unfortunately they were wide of the mark.<sup>14</sup> This incident only increased the gap of mistrust and mutual criticism between the

Dutch churches and the Oxford Group. Much effort was needed to bridge that gap. The Oxford Group and later Moral Re-Armament has had to learn the hard way what its role in society is. It is not a religion, but rather encourages people to live out to the full what is dictated by their own religious or philosophical roots.

The church ministers were not alone in having a meeting of their own in Utrecht. There were meetings for nurses, lawyers, physicians, women, mayors, business people, teachers and professors.

‘Was a new Netherlands really launched?’ Peter Hintzen asks in his 1987 booklet *An idea whose time has come*. ‘War and occupation quickly followed this unforgettable event. But the new life kept on bearing fruit. Even today one notices in meeting people that ‘Utrecht 1937’ still has an effect.’<sup>15</sup>

### Oxford Group in Dutch East Indies

People were also coming into contact with the Oxford Group in the Dutch East Indies. In the bestseller *The Century of My Father* the journalist Geert Mak describes how his parents in the Dutch East Indies were influenced for a period by the range of ideas of the Oxford Group. He describes it as a ‘reveille for the well-to-do’. ‘The adherents believed that all that is wrong in the world is in the first place due to things that are wrong in the individual. That is why heart and faith needed to be reunited and everyone could work for that by listening to the inner voice.’

In Medan, where Mak’s parents lived and where his father was church minister, the church was touched by this renewing fire. ‘I think,’ Mak writes, ‘that in spite of the woolliness, the Oxford Group movement was an important phase for my parents: to believe was for them not only a collective emotion, as was often the case in many churches in those days, but more an individual feeling, that could be experienced both inside and outside the church. The word, the sermon, became less important; it had to come out of oneself. In the later war diaries of my father I often encounter the term “quiet time”, a sort of meditation from which

he gained much strength. The groups were an early, more or less natural, form of what later would be called “ecumenism”, the coming together of different churches.’<sup>16</sup>

In 1938 the Oxford Group was discussed in the meeting of the classis (regional synod) of the Reformed Churches of Batavia, where the Reverend Mak played a crucial role. There were opponents and supporters. The advantages and disadvantages were summed up. One side was afraid of what they perceived to be the undogmatic mode of operation of the Oxford Group. On the other hand there were those who had an eye for the new élan this movement meant for the believers. Thanks to the plea of the Reverend Mak, the final verdict was mild.<sup>17</sup>

Because of the war, which broke out soon after and which also impacted the Dutch East Indies, the Oxford Group was no longer in the public eye. But people who found a renewed faith through the Oxford Group were strengthened by that during the traumatic war years when the Dutch inhabitants of the Dutch Indies were imprisoned in Japanese concentration camps.

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1. For this chapter I consulted the following literature: Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman – a life*, Constable, London, 1985; Dr HD de Loor, *Nieuw Nederland loopt van stapel – De Oxfordgroep in Nederland, een sociale beweging van het interbellum*, (New Netherlands is launched – The Oxford Group in the Netherlands, a social movement in the interbellum) Uitgeverij (publisher) Kok, Kampen, 1986; Peter Hintzen, *Het verleden spreekt mee. Rondgang door de Nederlandse galerij*, (The past has a say. Tour in the Dutch picture gallery) Uitgeverij (publisher) Kok, Kampen, 1986 and *Een idee waarvoor de tijd gekomen is*, (An idea whose time has come) Uitgave (publisher) Nieuwsdienst Morele Herbewapening, Den Haag, 4de druk 1987; Prof Dr Theophil Spoerri, *Dynamiek vanuit de stilte – de actualiteit van Frank Buchman*, (Dynamic out of silence – Frank Buchman’s relevance today) Uitgeverij (publisher) Andries Blitz NV, Laren in samenwerking met de Stichting Nieuwe Wereld (in cooperation with the Foundation New World), 1972.

2. In the book *Streams – the Flow of Inspiration from Dwight Moody to Frank Buchman* Mark Guldseth (Frits Creek Studios, Alaska, USA, 1982) traces the roots of Buchman's philosophy and outlines the spiritual thinking of people who set in motion a new Christian renewal, starting with Dwight Moody at the end of the 19th century. Other names are: John Mott, Henry Drummond, Robert Speer, F B Meyer, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Mary McLeod-Bethune.
3. Garth Lean devotes a whole chapter to this episode, called 'Conflict in China'. The quote is from this chapter, where in 13 pages the conflict is examined in detail.
4. The Principles of Jesus by Dr Robert Speer (New York: Fleming H Revell, 1902). A good place to find out more about the roots of the Oxford Group is the website of Alcoholics Anonymous, [www.aabibliography.com](http://www.aabibliography.com). The AA originated in the 1930s out of the Oxford Group, when one alcoholic helped another alcoholic to stay sober. This is still the heart of the AA programme: people help each other with their personal experience of change. And in fact this is also still the essence of the successor of the Oxford Group, Initiatives of Change.
5. Dr H D (Bert) de Loor, *Nieuw Nederland loopt van stapel – De Oxfordgroep in Nederland, een sociale beweging van het interbellum*, Uitgeverij Kok, Kampen, 1986. (see note 1) In this and the next chapter I have gratefully made use of his research. Bert de Loor worked in the sociology research group of the theological faculty of the University of Nijmegen. The above-mentioned book was to be the last one he wrote. As he was finishing this book he was appointed Professor of Religious Sociology at the theological faculty of the University of Tilburg. As it happened he could not take up this position, because of the incurable illness that struck him. He died in the same year as the book *Nieuw Nederland loopt van stapel* (New Netherlands is launched) was published.
6. *Leeuwarder Courant*, 18, 21, 23 April 1936.
7. *Algemeen Weekblad voor Christendom en Cultuur* (General Weekly for Christianity and Culture), April 1932, of which Van Rhijn was the editor.
8. Lily van Heeckeren started to work full-time with Frank Buchman in 1929 and travelled with him and his international team, among other places to South Africa.
9. A reader of the Dutch Initiatives of Change newsletter *Ander Nieuws* (Other News) from Friesland found the handwritten report of this meeting in the 'Frysk Ryksargyf' in Leeuwarden, the archives of the province of Friesland.
10. One of Frank Buchman's life mottos was 'not one negative note', which could explain the hesitancy towards criticism. One can wonder

whether he also meant by that, that one should not evaluate and learn from past mistakes? The title of Van Schothorst's book was: *Over groep, groepeer en groepswork*, (About the Group, Groupers and the Group's work), which shows that it was meant to help the team of the OG to do their work better. The author kept a few copies for himself.

11. Bert Wolvekamp, himself a member of the team in Amsterdam, characterizes this as coming from the difference between the nobility (The Hague) and the patricians and businessmen (Amsterdam). From his private memoirs.

12. Life story of Bert Wolvekamp, from his private memoirs.

13. This radio series about history dedicated three broadcasts on Oxford Group/Moral Re-Armament, which they called 'The salvation army for the rich'. The three were named: The Oxford Group 1923-1944, Jubilation Years 1944-1955, Decline 1955-1995.

14. De Loor, p. 117 and 118.

15. Peter Hintzen, *Een idee waarvoor de tijd gekomen is* (An idea whose time has come), p. 23.

16. Geert Mak, *De eeuw van mijn vader* (The century of my father) , Uitgeverij Atlas, Amsterdam/Antwerpen, 1999, p. 201 and 202.

17. In A Agra's *De gereformeerde kerken in Nederlands-Indië/Indonesië, 1877-1961*, (The Reformed Churches in Dutch Indies/Indonesia between 1877 and 1961), Franeker, Wever,z.j., the author describes this meeting. According to the Batavia synod (classis), the disadvantages of the Oxford Group were: 1. Danger for the unity of the church communities. 2. An inclination to detach the work of the Holy Spirit from the Scripture. 3. It did not do justice to the central articles of faith. 4. Propaganda for quiet time and fasting which might not be according to the Scripture. The advantages were: 1. The seriousness about the message of conversion. 2. The conscience of many people has been awakened and through this people were brought to Jesus. 3. The stimulation to prayer, Bible reading and community outreach.

The conclusion was that a condemnation was not desirable, all the more so because the three advantages were still found too little in the churches.

## CHAPTER 2

# Oxford Group becomes Moral Re-Armament

1938 – the threat of war was in the air. The large mass meetings of the Oxford Group in 1936 and 1937 had not removed this threat, as Buchman may have hoped. The concern that Frank Buchman felt was expressed in a number of public speeches.<sup>1</sup> Because by this time he had become a well-known figure, his speeches received ample publicity in the world press, including the Netherlands. Instead of organising house parties, the Dutch MRA was busy translating and distributing his speeches. This was done from the national office in The Hague, which also published a newsletter to keep the larger team abreast of all the activities.

In the spring of 1938 *Rising Tide*, an illustrated magazine, was published aimed at reaching the masses with the message of the Oxford Group. The front cover showed cheerful young men marching with flags, simulating a rising tide. The message is clear: people with enthusiasm, courage, endurance and intelligence can, with the help of God, tackle selfishness, prejudice, fear, pride, greed and hate. The magazine, which was published simultaneously in English, Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Finnish, was an appeal to the nations to renew themselves under the guidance of God. In a message published in this magazine, J A N Patijn, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, called on the Dutch people to reflect on where they stood: 'Whoever loves his country and does not deny God, should work for this.'<sup>2</sup>

The magazine demonstrates the scale on which Buchman and his team wanted to tackle the world's problems. The aim was

nothing less than a new world order. Buchman was looking for a sentence, a slogan, which would powerfully reflect what the world needed. And as with the notions of the quiet time and the four moral standards – ideas which became his trade mark – this slogan was also handed to him by somebody else. It came from Harry Blomberg, Swedish socialist and author. Blomberg had been asked to think of a theme for the page on Sweden in *Rising Tide*. He thought how Swedish steel was being exported to all the European countries for their armaments and he wrote: ‘Sweden, reconciler of nations. We must re-arm ourselves morally.’ This was conveyed to Buchman who was staying in Freudenstadt, in the South of Germany, preparing a major speech to be delivered in London. And suddenly Buchman knew what the slogan should be: ‘A moral and spiritual re-armament. The next big movement in the world will be one of moral and spiritual re-armament.’ In the speech in East Ham Town Hall in London Buchman launched this thought before an audience of 3,000. At that time in May 1938 he touched a sensitive chord. His speech received publicity across the world. From then on his work was called Moral Re-Armament.

### Tension in Europe

1938 meant a turning point for the Oxford Group, not only in the newly-chosen name. There was also a change in the organisational structure. What had already been noticeable at the big Whitsun rally in Utrecht became more evident. There was tighter central leadership. The ideological message was formulated by Buchman and his teams in the different countries and people were expected and indeed wanted to follow it. There was no room any more for self chosen local variations, which explains why the Dutch MRA stopped organising house parties and spent their time translating and distributing Buchman’s speeches.

A combination of different motives may have been the basis of this new line. The enormous numbers of (young) people that came forward needed to be given things to do, and kept an eye on. There may have been fear that if the message was not clearly

put down and passed on, it would be diluted. Most of all surely there was the enormous threat of war that induced this.

In a speech in Oxford on his 60th birthday, 4 June 1938, Buchman said: 'Enemies are marching in. The enemies of today are selfish materialism and moral apathy. These are the causes of our national ailments.' The seriousness of the world situation compelled Buchman to formulate his message as sharply as possible. The speech he gave on 16 August 1938 in Visby, Sweden, is an example of this. He challenged his audience not to be content with what he called 'armchair Christianity'. Even a renewal movement he thought too lethargic. He wanted a revolution and a renaissance. And he wanted to reach the millions and the leaders of nations.

In answer to this call, the Dutch team organised a big camp in the hilly, forest-covered eastern part of the Netherlands. The camp was actually three different camps at the same time: one for families, one for boys and one for girls. People were also accommodated in schoolrooms, men and women separately. The invitation read: 'Whether we like it or not, we are responsible for the future. The present problems are so immense that the individual loses the sense of the link between his own life and world events. We must re-arm spiritually. Anyone who feels that only this can help the world should come to the Oxford Group's National Camp where we will work out together how youth and older people can build up our country according to God's plan.' So in this invitation the Oxford Group called for a spiritual re-armament, not a moral one. But the name Moral Re-Armament would soon replace the Oxford Group and was to become a well-known brand name.

That year, in the beginning of September 1938, a large world assembly for Moral Re-Armament (MRA) was held in Interlaken (Switzerland). This was the first conference under the new name and the last in Europe before the war broke out. Tension was high across the continent. A couple from the Netherlands, just married, decided to go to this assembly for their honeymoon. They travelled through Germany and the wife still remembers the tense atmosphere there: hearing Hitler's voice shouting over the

radio, encountering road blocks and seeing newspapers containing terrible defamatory things about the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

In Interlaken the utmost effort was made to answer the growing fear and discord. In every meeting people gave evidence that it was possible to bridge gaps. For example a Japanese and a Chinese would speak together, a French and a German, a Sude-ten and a Czech, a conservative and a Marxist, black and white. But even before the conference was over participants were being called back to their countries for mobilisation.<sup>4</sup>

In the train from Interlaken back to the Netherlands two Dutch participants, Albert de Brauw and Jonathan Sillem, were sharing a compartment. Inspired by the conference they made plans to launch a call for moral and spiritual re-armament in the Dutch newspapers.<sup>5</sup> The idea was borrowed from England, where on 9 September 1938 eleven prominent citizens published a letter in *The Times*, in which they stated among other things that national security could only be accomplished by a moral renewal. On the train De Brauw and Sillem wrote the first draft of the planned appeal and discussed who they would ask to sign it. They managed to find eleven Dutch 'heavyweights' to sign the appeal, which appeared on 19 September and received wide coverage in the press. De Loor asks how it was possible that these prominent Dutch signed this appeal without hesitation, while they had no link with the Oxford Group or Moral Re-Armament. He answers the question for himself. It was, he thinks, because the appeal was framed in very general words. No right-minded person could be against a moral appeal to individuals to bring about a change of mentality in the country and its people through their own behaviour and effort.

### Appeal by Queen Wilhelmina

The appeal gained weight when one of the signatories managed to bring it to the attention of Queen Wilhelmina. The daily papers reported on 22 September 1938 that the Queen had taken note of the call for a moral and spiritual re-armament with approval and that she intended to receive the 11 signatories at her 'Soestdijk' palace. This meeting took place on 6 October.

On 11 October the Queen's support was reflected in an item in the daily papers called 'A personal word from the Queen'. In it she repeated her approval of the appeal. The Queen spoke of the 'oppressive days which are behind us', referring to the treaty of Munich (29 September 1938). She wrote: 'The longing for peace is common to all peoples. However, even though coupled to the strengthening of our armed forces, this is not enough. For the peace to be sustainable, it needs to be carried by the thought which is expressed in this appeal. All of us, without distinction, can contribute personally to the growth and development of this thought by wholeheartedly cooperating towards a moral and spiritual re-armament; this inner urge, which also brings about an outer turn-about, has as its consequence that honesty, trust and love will become guidelines between people and nations.'

The response to the Queen's appeal was overwhelming. In the archives of Initiatives of Change in the Netherlands are many statements, speeches, messages and press cuttings which witness to this. According to this material Moral Re-Armament seems to have been the talk of the day, right up to the First and Second Chamber of the Parliament. The Red Cross, the Juridical Power, the Commander of the Field Army, the Roman Catholic Workers' Association, the National Scout Association, a director of a bank, the Catholic employers, just to pick out a few, declared their approval. Articles appeared in soccer papers, which pointed out the importance of morally re-armed sportsmen. The weekly of the Dutch Diamond Workers announced Sunday meetings about Moral Re-Armament. In town halls people could sign expressions of support. All these declarations of support were sent to the Queen. She herself organised meetings with the staff of her royal household at her 'het Loo' Palace and with her forestry workers.<sup>6</sup>

For the first time there was support for the idea of moral re-armament from the Catholic part of the country. There was a big meeting in Amsterdam of all Roman Catholic trade and class organisations, attended by prominent members of the clergy, including the Archbishop. The meeting sent a telegram to the Queen, in which they said that they wanted to consider an

action to impress on the Dutch people the need for social justice and love and, based on that, a real community spirit. Later they interpreted this by founding the 'Bond zonder Naam' (Association without Name) as a Catholic counterpart of MRA.

The Queen's message had also reached the Dutch Indies. And not only among the Dutch living there. The 'Regentenbond' Sedjo Moeljo (Association of Governors) expressed their support. In meetings in Bandung and Buitenzorg (now Bogor), hosted by R A A Wiranata Koesoemah, Regent (Governor) of Bandung, there were speeches about 'Moral and Spiritual Re-Armament from the Islamic view point': 'We, Governors from Java and Madura, to whom are entrusted millions of the citizens of her Majesty's government have, through my intervention, presented a declaration of support because the principles in her Majesty's appeal are the same as those of the religion which is professed by the millions of Java.' He went on to illustrate this in many examples and quotes from the Koran.<sup>7</sup>

### Loudspeakers from the roofs

On 27 January 1939 the Queen repeated her earlier appeal through a speech on the radio which was also broadcast in the Dutch Indies. In the streets of The Hague thousands listened to her speech over loudspeakers placed on the roofs. She referred to the many responses she had had to her first appeal. 'Where the thought of a spiritual and moral re-armament has become the centre of attention, it has appeared to me that there is still a lot of difference of opinion as to how it should be applied. I will try here to clarify how I see it.' She called on people to have an eye for each other's needs. One of the needs that urgently needed to be tackled, she suggested, was widespread unemployment.

It is clear that the Queen wanted to see moral and spiritual re-armament worked out in very practical ways. She urged her provincial governors to come up with plans. She even convened a meeting with them on this subject in her 'Noordeinde' palace in The Hague.<sup>8</sup>

Everywhere in the country local committees began to tackle the problem of unemployment. Appeals were made to firms to

employ extra people. It is not known to what extent this actually happened.

Queen Wilhelmina also succeeded in passing on her enthusiasm about Moral Re-Armament to King Leopold of the Belgians. During a state visit to the Netherlands in November 1938 he underlined the need for a moral and spiritual re-armament. During the return visit of the Queen to Brussels in May 1939 this was again a subject of their talks. Leopold hoped that this 'noble initiative would also be tested in the international field'. Both he and Queen Wilhelmina made several appeals for peace for which they tried to get support from other countries. The idea was that perhaps the small European countries could play an intermediary role in trying to prevent a war. The Foreign Ministers from both countries did find backing from several other states, but it was too late and came to nothing. On 1 September 1939 the German armies invaded Poland. Two days later France and England declared war on Germany.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime Moral Re-Armament had become a household word in the Netherlands, largely because of the Queen's appeals. Approval of Moral Re-Armament's ideas was the generally accepted norm, although there were also some critical voices. Up until the appeal of the Queen, people in socialist and labour circles had been rather sceptical about the Oxford Group and MRA. But after the Queen's appeal they found they could go along, except that they wanted the ideas to be carried further.<sup>10</sup> The well known religious socialist and chief officer of the SDAP (the socialist party) Dr W Banning spelled this out in the booklet *Spiritual Re-Armament*, which he published in response to the Queen's appeal. His critique was that the needed change should be not only personal, but also structural. He maintained that the appeal for change came from the privileged of society, who saw the needed change mainly in personal terms. In this the distrust of the SDAP could be heard, because they saw in the leaders of MRA in the Netherlands the kind of people who had been in positions of power for decades and had kept the socialists outside the responsibilities of government. It is striking that in the MRA office in The Hague a reprint was

made of this pamphlet of Banning, in which only the positive extracts were included. The critical passages were left out. A false impression was given, making it appear that Banning saw MRA only in a positive light.

### Public domain and personal change

In his research De Loor wonders what all the approval and good words brought about. He cannot find practical examples where in this period Moral Re-Armament appears to have been tested. He concludes that the larger the movement grew and the more big names were connected with it, the less emphasis was placed on personal change.<sup>11</sup> De Loor puts his finger here on a tendency of the MRA team to use the names of well known public figures, who had voiced their approval, for propaganda. In the case of the Queen, she was sympathetic towards the idea of personal responsibility and change, but she did not intend to join a movement. It was going rather far to make her the central point of the national campaign of Moral Re-Armament. The Dutch MRA team could have been more discreet, not giving the impression they wanted to claim her for the movement. It is telling that in her autobiography Wilhelmina does not mention this episode at all.<sup>12</sup>

Many years later, on 6 December 1949, Frank Buchman visited Wilhelmina, by then Princess, having abdicated in 1948 in favour of her daughter Juliana. He was accompanied by the industrialist Frits Philips and his wife Sylvia Philips-van Lennep, who had arranged the visit. This was the first and only time Wilhelmina and Buchman met. Buchman started by complimenting Wilhelmina that she, through her radio broadcast in 1938, had shown herself a world citizen. She replied: 'I was a world citizen before that.' They discussed how the message of the Bible could be conveyed in the modern times. In this she had a rather more fundamentalist Christian view than Buchman. When Frits and Sylvia Philips invited Princess Wilhelmina to come to the then just opened world conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, she made it clear that hers was another road.<sup>13</sup>

De Loor's point that the more big names were involved, the

less emphasis there was on personal change, could have been the case in so far as MRA had become a household word in the country. But as far as personal work was concerned, the emphasis continued to be placed on the change that needed to start with every individual person. With that in mind, the Dutch MRA team organised many meetings. The MRA film *Youth Marches On*, made in Canada and England, was used to attract young Dutch people. In that last summer before war broke out, three big youth camps took place in different parts of the country. A family camp was organised to which 286 people came and for which tents were put up in a wilderness in the east of the country.<sup>14</sup>

And in the autumn of 1939 Johannes de Boer, of whom we will hear more in the next chapter, organised a six-day conference in Sneek, Friesland, to which hundreds of people came. This high attendance was largely thanks to the publicity provided by the provincial paper. It carried a major article by former Minister Patijn, in which he called on people to take responsibility wherever they were and to come to the days in Sneek to plan how to do this together. Bert Wolvekamp, who helped De Boer to organise the conference, recounts that a farmer came on the first day with his wife and was so taken that he returned the next day with some of his sons. The day after that he brought a whole bus from his village. This farmer resolved a feud which he had had with his neighbour, with whom he had not spoken for many years.<sup>15</sup>

## Mobilisation

On 1 September 1939 the Second World War broke out and the Dutch army was mobilised. In response to this the women of the Dutch MRA team drew up a manifesto, signed by prominent women, and it appeared in the newspapers on 12 October 1939. The manifesto began: 'The war with all its consequences has become a fact. Many wonder how it is possible that this disaster has come upon us, while we all want peace. War is a result of dishonesty, selfishness, thirst for power, greed and fear. We have all allowed these destructive forces into our lives. Not

only other people and nations, but all of us are to blame.’ The mobilisation to which this manifesto summoned women was to be a positive power in their own surroundings, for example not to give in to self-pity and not to start to hoard. During the week following this call, the MRA office in The Hague received 1,045 letters of support.<sup>16</sup>

We started this chapter with the speeches of Frank Buchman, which were broadcast and picked up all over the world. On 1, 2 and 3 December 1939 another series of radio broadcasts about Moral Re-Armament was sent out world-wide. In the Netherlands this led to large meetings in 12 cities, of which the biggest was the meeting on 1 December of 3,000 people in the Apollohal in Amsterdam. The next day, people gathered in many places to listen to Buchman’s radio broadcast called ‘Listening millions’ in which he quoted the civic heads of 550 cities and towns in Great Britain: ‘Today, when our whole world is threatened with ruin, we feel more urgently than ever before the need for that new force of Moral Re-Armament which can create a new world, a world of sanity and order, of plenty and of peace. Amid the failure of human wisdom, there is still one Supreme Source from whom all can draw new power, new hope, new illumination.’<sup>17</sup>

This vision of a new world had inspired thousands of people in the Netherlands in the years before the Second World War. The Oxford Group, and after that Moral Re-Armament, was undeniably a social movement in the inter-war period. De Loor documented in detail how this came about. In his biography of Wilhelmina Cees Fasseur described the interest in a moral re-armament in the years before the war as hype. ‘One is tempted,’ he writes, ‘to look somewhat pityingly at the slight mass hysteria which had got hold of a large part of Dutch society. Rather the massive support for the movement for a spiritual and moral re-armament could be seen as a cry of despair, a call for help from a world which was rapidly sliding into a big war and which was conscious of that; a war that no country wished, apart perhaps from Germany, least of all the people of the Netherlands.’<sup>18</sup>

The MRA team believed, or anyway hoped, war could be averted if enough people would re-arm morally and spiritually, and especially if people in key positions could be reached with this message. They not only believed this, but also acted on this conviction. Someone who went furthest in an endeavour to mediate was Herman Hintzen, the banker from Rotterdam. When the war had already started but the Netherlands had not yet been invaded, he organised a meeting for church leaders from the Netherlands, Scandinavia, France, England and Switzerland. This took place from 5-8 January 1940 in the neighbourhood of Apeldoorn, in the Netherlands. An important guest was the Norwegian Bishop Berggrav, who since September 1939 had developed a peace initiative with the idea that the neutral countries should no longer stand aside, but take a lead in the difficult world situation.

It appeared that at this meeting in Apeldoorn there were different assessments about what was going on in Germany and opposing views about what the role of the churches should be. Berggrav got little support for his peace plan. Nevertheless he did go with that plan to Berlin, but the Nazis were not interested. They already had their plans to invade Europe the coming spring.<sup>19</sup>

With hindsight one can say that the attempt to change the course of history, by trying to reach key figures at that time, was an over-simplification. It did not sufficiently acknowledge the demonic power that the ideology of National Socialism represented. Yet, one can also appreciate the courage and vision of people to take the steps they felt they should. It goes without saying that when it became clear that war could not be averted and when Germany invaded the Netherlands on 10 May 1940, people like Hintzen and his teammates were deeply disillusioned.

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1. In 1938 he delivered 11 public speeches – the biggest number in a single year of his whole career. In 1939 he gave 10. His speeches can be found in *Remaking the World – the speeches of Frank Buchman*, Blandford Press, London, Revised Edition, 1953.

2. Dr J A N Patijn, a good friend of the Oxford Group, was from 1937 till 1940 Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands. Prior to that he had been the Dutch envoy in Brussels (1930-1935) and Rome (1935-1937). While in Brussels he had the opportunity to practise the principles he had learned from the Oxford Group. There was a conflict between the Netherlands and Belgium which had to do with the river Maas. The Netherlands had lost the case in the International Court in The Hague. The press in Belgium was very anti-Dutch. Patijn had to give a public speech and decided, contrary to what was in his written speech, to congratulate Belgium on her success. The reaction in Belgium was overwhelming. All bitter commentaries stopped. Patijn declared later, in another speech in 1938, that it was his meeting the Oxford Group that had given him the conviction for this reconciling gesture at that time. (De Loor found a report of this last speech in the daily paper *De Telegraaf* of 18 September 1938, p.137)
3. The couple was Pieter and Nona de Brauw-van Tuyll van Serooskerken. Pieter was the son of A K C (Albert) de Brauw, well-known politician and lawyer accredited to the Supreme Court of the Netherlands. Albert de Brauw played an important role in spreading the ideas of Moral Re-Armament in the Netherlands.
4. Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman – a life*, 1985, p.273 and following.
5. Albert de Brauw, see note III. Jonathan Sillem was the Dutch Ambassador in Portugal, brother of Albert Sillem, the successful Amsterdam business man, whom we met in chapter 1. De Loor p. 129 and following.
6. Cees Fasseur, *Wilhelmina* (the biography of Queen Wilhelmina), Uitgeverij (publisher) Balans, Bilthoven, 2001, p. 247. The biographer of Queen Wilhelmina devotes several pages (243-250 and 556/557) to the Oxford Group/ Moral Re-Armament and Queen Wilhelmina's connection with it at the time.
7. The Dutch daily paper *De Telegraaf* of 15 December 1938 wrote: 'We consider it a happy initiative that the board of the 'Regentenbond' has shown its support for the action of moral re-armament, which has already had so many good consequences'. The speech of the Regent of Bandung was published by the 'Islam Study Club' in Bandung in 1939.
8. De Loor, p.140; Fasseur, p.249.
9. Fasseur, p.258-262. An appeal for peace by King Leopold was discussed and approved by ministers of Foreign Affairs from Scandinavia, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands during a meeting in Brussels on 23 August 1939. And at the instigation of her Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van Kleffens, Queen Wilhelmina together with King Leopold took the lead

on 28 August 1939 in offering their services for peace to Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Poland.

10. *Arbeiderspers* (Workers' Press) of 30 January 1939.

11. De Loor, p.140, 149, 150.

12. Wilhelmina, *Eenzaam maar niet alleen (Lonely but not alone)*, Uitgeverij W ten Have N.V. Amsterdam, 1959.

13. Fasseur, p.556, 557. Fasseur made use of the report of the visit that Buchman dictated to Morris Martin, at that time his secretary. This report is in the 'Koninklijk Huis Archief' (private archives of the royal family), to which Fasseur had access. He also consulted the correspondence of Princess Wilhelmina with Sylvia Philips-van Lennep in 1949 and 1951, which is in the same archive.

14. De Loor, p.148.

15. Wolvekamp, *Memoires*. De Loor, p.162.

16. De Loor, p.160, 161.

17. *Remaking the world – the speeches of Frank Buchman*, p.116-121.

18. Fasseur, p.250.

19. De Loor, p.164-168. De Loor describes in detail the mediation attempt of Bishop Berggrav and Hintzen's involvement. Present at the meeting of the church leaders was the Dutch ecumenical leader and Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches (in formation) Visser 't Hooft. He wrote about this episode in his memoirs, which De Loor consulted.

## CHAPTER 3

# The Netherlands at war

The Netherlands had managed to retain its neutrality during the First World War. The country hoped to keep its neutrality this time as well. But because one could never know for sure, the Dutch army was mobilised and Dutch soldiers were deployed at the borders. My father was one of those who was mobilised. The invasion of the German army on the night of 9 May 1940 came as an unexpected blow. The method of defence that had helped our country over the centuries – to cut through the dykes and make a water line of defence – was useless this time. The enemy simply dropped heavily-armed parachutists behind this defensive line. Nevertheless the Dutch army put up stiff resistance for five days. Then the city of Rotterdam was bombed and almost completely destroyed, including the historic heart of the city. The German military threatened to do the same with Utrecht, The Hague and Amsterdam. It was clear that it was useless to offer further resistance and on 14 May the Dutch army capitulated and the German occupation that was to last five years began. Queen Wilhelmina and her cabinet had moved to London on 13 May.

During the occupation, the Oxford Group/Moral Re-Armament as an organised national movement necessarily dissolved into anonymity. Individual Group members did what they could. Many tried to continue to carry out their positive life vision in the place where they were, under difficult circumstances. In this chapter some of them will step into the limelight. More examples could no doubt be added. Only after the liberation on 5 May 1945 could contact between MRA team members on a national level be resumed and a new phase started.

## On the bike

An active member of MRA in the northern province of Friesland was Johannes de Boer. We have met him already as the organizer of the successful six-day conference in Sneek. Johannes de Boer was one of those who had hoped that their endeavours could help avert the war. When it became clear that they had failed, he was completely taken aback. He wrote in his private memoirs: 'When the war broke out and the Germans invaded our country, it was for me and for many with me an enormous shock. It affected me so much, that for three days I stayed in bed, thinking "the war has come because we have not obeyed God".' What is striking is that Johannes de Boer, just like the women who drew up the manifesto after the mobilisation (as we saw in the previous chapter) blamed himself for the fact that the war started. It led him to take a decision that he had already been pondering for some time, namely to quit his job and work full-time for Moral Re-Armament. He had also waited till his wife was in full agreement. Now the time seemed ripe.

This meant a drastic change for the whole family, since from then on De Boer would no longer have a fixed income. Full-time voluntary workers with MRA did not get a salary, but expected to live on 'faith and prayer', which meant that he and his family were dependent on what other people felt inspired to give him. It did mean that they had to make economies.

His daughter Rinske Windig-de Boer remembers this as if it happened yesterday. 'We lived in a sunny rented house with a big vegetable garden. The rent was four guilders a month. When my father started to work full-time with MRA, it meant moving to a cheaper house, a rented one from the municipality, which was not so sunny, but it did have a vegetable garden. We had to economize, but we did not need much since we had the vegetable garden. And once in a while we got a bag full of second-hand clothes from a rich family in Rotterdam.'<sup>1</sup>

Johannes de Boer was one of the people in Friesland who had been introduced to the Oxford Group by Reverend Van Schothorst. It was he who had written the ill-fated guide book

on how to organize house-parties. Rinske Windig recalls, 'It actually started with my aunt. There had been a long-standing feud between her and my father, because my aunt thought that he and my mother did not bring up their five children properly. After my aunt met the Oxford Group she experienced a change of heart. She went to my mother and asked forgiveness for her critical attitude. This touched my father so much that he went to have a talk with Reverend Van Schothorst. By that time my father had worked his way up from farmhand to insurance agent. On his bicycle he collected money from the farmers. Some of that money he had borrowed for himself intending to pay it back later. He went to the head office to confess this. He did not have to go to prison. His brother-in-law and his brother advanced the money and he was able to keep his job.'

Working for Moral Re-Armament during the occupation meant trying to keep in touch with members of the MRA team. He did this by visiting them all over the country on his bicycle. Often colleagues would go with him, like Albert de Brauw, whom we met before, and Romo Gunning. The latter was Mayor of Yerseke, in the south western province of Zeeland. Meeting the Oxford Group in 1933 had transformed him. When he came home from a house-party his children noticed the difference. He lost his authoritarian attitude, he became a friendly father and less short-tempered. The family (there were seven children) began having a time of quiet time all together before breakfast. A passage from the Bible was read, followed by some quiet time, after which anyone who wanted could share their thoughts. Because he was not friendly to the Germans, Gunning was dismissed as Mayor in 1942 and the family moved to Doetinchem in the east of the country. Since he was unemployed, he could devote his time to MRA. Albert de Brauw had also lost his job with the Supreme Court for the same reason. It is remarkable, but typical of the culture in Moral Re-Armament, that people from the working class and the upper class worked together as if it was the most normal thing to do.

The occupying forces had banned Moral Re-Armament and the Oxford Group. On 9 April 1941 Mussert, leader of the

National Socialist movement in the Netherlands (NSB) had released a statement, published a few days later in a daily newspaper, under the heading 'Oxford against National Socialism'. In this he listed seven reasons why the Oxford Group was opposed to National Socialism and was actually working against it. One of the reasons he gave was that the Oxford Group 'denied that there was a difference between the races and that it practised this belief diligently'.<sup>2</sup>

Public meetings could no longer be held, but De Boer did organize small meetings in his house. When the Gestapo discovered this De Boer was picked up and taken to the prison in Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland. He wrote in his memoirs what followed: 'At night in the prison I had the thought "Have no fear, God will give you the words in your mouth. You can give Moral Re-armament to the Germans as well."' The interrogation started with the question, 'What do you want with this Moral Re-Armament?' Johannes de Boer answered: 'To build a new world.' Question: 'What kind of world?' Answer: 'A world without fear, without hate and without greed.' Question: 'Why are you not a National Socialist?' Answer: 'Because you will never succeed, because it does not go far enough.' Question: 'What do you mean?' Answer: 'You can never build a new world if you do not cut out the rotten part in your own heart.' The interrogation went on for an hour and a half, after which he was sent home.<sup>3</sup>

### Letters from prison

For other members of the team the confrontation with the occupying power turned out to be less fortunate. In 1937 Pim van Doorn, at that time studying at Leiden University, had attended the Whitsun rally of the Oxford Group 'New Netherlands is launched' in Utrecht. This event changed his life. Until 1940 he spent all his time working with the Oxford Group. He was an officer in the army in the five-day battle after the German invasion in May 1940. In 1940 and 1941 he tried to escape to England twice, without success. He then started to work for the underground resistance organisation, the 'Ordedienst' (OD). He

carried out espionage work for them at the different airports. When he tried to take the information he had gathered to England via Vichy/France, he was picked up at a simple road check-point in Northern France, arrested and sent back to the Netherlands. He was imprisoned in the Scheveningen prison, which was nicknamed the 'Orange Hotel', after which he was taken to the notorious prison camp in Amersfoort and then to Vught. Till July 1943 he spent his time in various other prisons, but was then executed by firing squad along with 16 other members of the OD.

The letters he wrote during his imprisonment have been preserved. Bert de Loor had access to the Van Doorn archives. After reading his letters, De Loor concludes that Pim van Doorn had kept his Oxford Group ideals unbroken until the end. He encouraged his family and friends, to whom he wrote, not to give in to the pressure of the occupation forces. The well-known Dutch resistance fighter and author Floris Bakels was with Van Doorn for a while in the prison at Utrecht.<sup>4</sup> On his release from prison after the war in August 1945, Bakels wrote to Pim van Doorn's father, 'Later I saw your son again in the prison in Utrecht, where I stayed for 10 months. I had a certain freedom of movement, because I acted as nurse there. This way I met up with your son regularly. Every time I spoke with Pim, I was struck by his extraordinary faith. He had put his whole trust on God, never lost his usual good humour and went totally peaceful towards what was ahead of him.'

In a farewell letter to his father, Pim van Doorn wrote, 'My work did not spring from hate, nor do I feel hate now, towards anyone. Had it pleased God that I would have lived, I would have dedicated my work to building a relationship of love and justice between us and the surrounding peoples. And since I am not able now to work for this on earth, I am convinced that others will carry on this work. Above all, there is a splendid task in store for the peoples of the Netherlands, whom I love so much.'<sup>5</sup>

### The small strip of light

In chapter One we met the poet-journalist Herman Salomonson, who wrote the lead song for the big Oxford Group Whit-sun rally in 1937. As poet and writer, Salomonson was known by his pseudonym Melis Stoke. Salomonson was head of ANETA, the Dutch-Indonesian press agency, which was housed in the same building as the national press agency, ANP. During the mobilisation he became a reserve captain in the army, a function which he combined with the work for ANETA. During the war days in May 1940 he was thus able to pass on military information, warnings and orders via Radio Scheveningen – among other things about German parachutists. Immediately after the capitulation Salomonson was denied entry into the ANP building. On top of that, at the beginning of June when the Germans discovered that he was a Jew, he was arrested and taken to the ‘Orange Hotel’ prison in Scheveningen. He was also interrogated about the Oxford Group. In 1941 he was transported to Buchenwald concentration camp.<sup>6</sup>

During his imprisonment Salomonson wrote poems which were distributed underground as widely as was possible during those war days. He wrote in those poems about the daily realities: a letter from home, the long quiet hours in silence, the brief ‘fresh air’ periods with fellow prisoners. In the poems, to which my translation does not do justice, he makes mention of his deep faith and trust in God. One of them is about the fear that wells up in him every time the key turns on the outside. He writes: ‘I have no key and no power, am quietly awaiting my fate. The will is not on this side... the key is in the Lord’s hand. The one who keeps me is God’. In more than one poem he writes about the small strip of light, through which the daylight comes into the cell. He likens this to the grace of God that shines into his heart. After the war the poems were published in the Rekrutenschool (School for Recruits) at the initiative of Albert de Brauw, who also wrote the foreword.<sup>7</sup>

After the war a fellow prisoner from Buchenwald wrote a letter to a family member of Salomonson. It appears from that

letter that Salomonson gained more freedom of movement after a while, because he became *Flurwärter* and as such had to distribute food and organise the outside 'fresh air' periods the prisoners were allowed. In this way he was able to offer support to his fellow prisoners. Through the opening for food in the cell door he spoke consoling words. 'He also wrote simple poems about the daily life in the prison camp – little poems, which were passed around from cell to cell and which made a deep impression – sometimes witty, but usually giving rise to a gentle homesickness for the surroundings and atmosphere that we had lost.'

Herman Salomonson was executed by firing squad in October 1942 in one of the satellite camps of Buchenwald.<sup>8</sup>

### Food help for Camp Vught

A remarkable initiative was that taken by Charlotte (Lotty) van Beuningen-Fentener van Vlissingen to help the prisoners of Camp Vught, a prison camp in the south of the country. In 1935 she had attended a meeting of the Oxford Group in The Hague and a story she heard there caught her interest. It was the experience of Digna Vlieland Heij-Mijer, whose eldest son had died in a mountaineering accident at the age of 29. The way the speaker had coped with this tragedy through her newly-found faith in God had made a deep impression on Lotty van Beuningen. She made a decision to have a daily quiet time, for which, to the dismay of her husband, she got up half an hour earlier every day. Two years later she was one of the driving forces behind the Whitsun rally in Utrecht.

In those early days of the war, when she had already passed the age of 60, she and her husband were living in Vught. A concentration camp was established near her home. Via workers from that camp, she heard about the terrible conditions there. There was a shortage of everything. Was there something that she could do? She decided to make sandwiches – freshly-made every day, and as they were perishable they would not be suitable for dispatch to Germany – and to send them with a farmer's wagon to the camp. She started with a few packages, but the rumour soon spread, and from relatives of the prisoners

and people in the neighbourhood she received gifts in kind to enable her to continue and expand her work. It happened that, for example, someone from the underground resistance movement would bring her a packet of food vouchers which were captured at a raid in a town hall. From all sides help came in, including practical help in preparing the sandwiches. The next thing was that she was able to deliver warm clothes, donated by a textile manufacturer. The parcels were always accompanied by a list of names, which were returned with the latest information on who was still in the camp, who had died or who had been sent elsewhere on transport. Thanks to the daily contact with the camp, she found out when prisoners were sent on the train for interrogation. Usually they were sent off on an empty stomach by the camp authorities, to make them less resistant during interrogation. On those days a lady from Lotty's committee would get into the train a station before Vught, with food and drink which she would distribute, while the soldiers who accompanied the prisoners turned a blind eye.

Of course Lotty van Beuningen had to get permission from the German commander of the camp to bring in the food parcels. In her book *A New World for my Grandchildren* she told the fascinating story of how three times she managed to convince a new commander. Her strategy was to try to reach their hearts and not to treat them as an enemy.

At the end of August 1944, when the camp was to be closed and the prisoners were to be put on transport to Germany, she managed to convince the commander at least to free the hostages, who even in the eyes of the Germans had not committed punishable acts. The argument she used was: 'Soon the war will be over and then you will be judged for what you have done here. Your mercy could then save you.' And this is actually what happened.<sup>9</sup>

### Girls from the biscuit factory

So even though with their joint endeavours, Oxford Group members had not managed to avert the war, the influence on the lives of individuals who had been touched was fundamental. In

spite of their disappointment, people remained faithful to the practice of having quiet times and tried where possible to act on the promptings they received. Like Ans Jansse, whose father owned a biscuit factory in Rotterdam. She had the idea of organizing summer camps for the factory girls. During the occupation sleeping in tents was not allowed, but she managed to find a farmer's hayloft where the girls could be put up. A central part of camp life was to have quiet times together. The camps had an impact on the lives of the girls and Ans Jansse kept in contact with some of them throughout her life.

One of the leaders of the summer camps was Betty Hintzen. She had wanted to go to university, but by the time she had finished her secondary school the universities were closed. So she joined a school for social work in Amsterdam instead. But in the winter of 1944, known in the Netherlands as the hunger winter, nearly everything came to a standstill and that school too closed. The Jansse biscuit factory had to close because of a lack of ingredients. There was no transport anymore. So Betty Hintzen was forced to stay at home and she did social work in practice. Together with Ans Jansse Betty gave courses in hygiene and other practical matters to the then unemployed factory girls.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after the beginning of the occupation Jewish students were forbidden to attend lectures. Students at Leiden University collected signatories and sent a letter of protest to Seyss-Inquart, the German-appointed *Reich Commissioner* (government commissioner). Dick van Tetterode, board member of his student faculty, was active in this. He had learned about the quiet time as an 18 year-old, when he attended a meeting of Moral Re-armament in 1938, and he kept up the habit after he started studying medicine in Leiden University. The ban on Jewish students was followed by a ban forbidding Jewish professors to lecture. On 26 November 1940 Professor R P Cleveringa held his renowned protest lecture in place of the lecture which was to have been given by his suspended Jewish colleague, Professor E M Meijers. After that the whole University of Leiden was closed by the occupation forces. At first Van

Tetterode continued his studies at home and later in Amsterdam. In February 1943 he and his fellow students were picked up during a raid and taken to the Vught prison camp, as a reprisal for the murder of a German general. After six weeks they were all released, but could only continue their studies if they signed the declaration of loyalty to the German occupier. Most refused, which meant they either had to go into hiding or were transported to Germany. Dick van Tetterode did not sign and went into hiding on a farm, where he worked as a farm hand for the next two years.

While someone like Johannes de Boer had the conviction that he should work 'full-time' with MRA during the German occupation, another member of the MRA team, Bert Wolvekamp, had an idea in the opposite direction. Working 'full-time' for him made him too conspicuous and he was in danger of being picked up. He therefore found work in a vinegar factory in Haarlem. In 1943 he married Biny Hopman, who had worked in the early war years as a nurse in Amsterdam, where there was still an active MRA youth group. They would meet secretly to share their thoughts and experiences and to support each other. Biny Hopman recalls how they met with a group of seven nurses (those who wanted and could) early every morning to have a quiet time. After her marriage to Bert Wolvekamp they would hold secret meetings in their home, making plans for after the war.

Promptings could sometimes save lives, as was the case with the Mayor of Middelburg, the capital of the south-western province of Zeeland. Jan van Walré de Bordes had come into contact with the Oxford Group when he was working with the League of Nations in Geneva. He decided to make a clean slate of his life, which resulted in a better relationship with his wife. He also remembered that when he had been Secretary of the Financial Department, he had claimed expenses for meals he had not consumed. He made recompense for this. Back in the Netherlands he became Mayor of Middelburg. In May 1940 most of the country was occupied, but the province of Zeeland was still free. A German attack was expected. One morning De

Bordes had the clear thought that the city would be bombed that afternoon. He decided to evacuate the centre of the city and, indeed, that afternoon German bombs fell. Many lives were saved because of the timely evacuation. In 1942 he resigned as Mayor. When after the liberation many government tasks were given to a Military Authority, De Bordes got posted there as major in the new Dutch Army.

### On a knife's edge

Meeting the Oxford Group also had far-reaching consequences for Frits and Sylvia Philips-van Lennep. Their first encounter with the Oxford Group had been in 1934 at a house party. First of all it meant a new openness between them as a couple. They decided to start every day by reading a passage from the New Testament and writing down the thoughts which came to them. They then read them out to each other. Often the thoughts were about everyday things, especially about the children, who enriched their family in the 1930s – number six was born at the beginning of 1940. With the threat of war and the occupation that followed, things became different. When the Board of Directors of the Philips Company moved to England in order to manage the businesses and factories in the rest of the world, Frits Philips, then aged 35, had the clear conviction that his duty was to remain in the Netherlands and try to keep the factories in Eindhoven going. Frits Philips was then faced with a devil's dilemma. It inevitably meant a certain degree of cooperation with the Germans. If he had refused this, people and machines would have been sent to Germany. So he opted for 'cooperation', but the cooperation given was 'slackened' and sabotaged in all kinds of cunning ways. Radios for example were made in such a way that they would stop working after a month. Every plan needed to be sent to Berlin for approval. They would contain deliberate mistakes, so that they had to be sent back. In this way the time taken to develop new products was protracted.<sup>11</sup>

Often Frits Philips had to operate on a knife's edge: should he simply refuse a request by the German occupiers or yield to it,

but in ways which would make up for the 'damage'? A striking example of this was his request to establish a Philips workshop in the Vught camp, the same one where Charlotte van Beuningen brought food, clothes and medicines. All patriotic feelings clashed with such a proposition. Unless...it was a chance to have a certain say over the scheme, to pay unannounced visits, to be able to choose which people would work there and to be able to give those workers a hot meal, in parity with the workers in the factories in Eindhoven, and which was soon popularly called *philiprak* (philimash). All these daring conditions were met. It meant that Jewish prisoners and others who were in danger of being deported, could be placed there. Later the whole Jewish contingent of Philips employees were placed there. Thanks to the brave endeavours of Philips managers (eg R E Laman Trip and others) they were saved from deportation on more than one occasion because they were 'indispensable for the production of important material'. When in the end this no longer appeared possible, this contingent still received exceptional treatment. Categorized as technical workforce, they were moved from one German factory to another and in this way most of them escaped the gas chambers.

In 1996 Frits Philips was decorated by Israeli Ambassador Yossi Gal in The Hague. He was given the Yad Vashem award in recognition of his organisation's part in saving 382 Jewish lives.<sup>12</sup> Following the liberation of the south of the Netherlands in the autumn of 1944, Frits Philips was one of a delegation of 17 people from the southern provinces with whom Queen Wilhelmina conferred in England for two days in February 1945.<sup>13</sup>

### With a hundred women

The occupying powers had decided to transport all Dutch reserve officers to Germany as prisoners of war. This led to strikes all over the country. Frits Philips was arrested and imprisoned because his influence on the morale of the Philips workers was feared by the authorities. They offered to release him on condition that he would settle in Arnhem and not

involve himself any longer with the factory in Eindhoven—something which was out of the question for him.

Nevertheless Philips was released after five months. But in July 1944 the rumours about the sabotage and the obstructive ploys of the Philips Company irritated the occupying powers so much, that they came to pick him up again. This time it would be serious. Frits Philips escaped just before the Germans came to seize him in his office and went into hiding. For a few weeks his wife Sylvia managed to fool the Germans with various excuses as to why her husband was not there, but when he did not return, they arrested her. Early one morning in August she was taken, with three Philips engineers, for a brief spell to the camp in Vught. In the book *45 jaar met Philips (45 Years with Philips)* she recounts: “The first night I was in a cell. The next morning I was brought to a barrack room with some 100 women, who were sitting at long tables doing twining. I was very warmly welcomed by the women from Eindhoven. It was an odd experience to go to bed in the evening in a long row of iron bunk beds, which were all interconnected, so that when one person turned over the whole row shook. Of course I could not sleep that night. I saw a nurse, who was also a prisoner, going by all the beds tending to people. That is great, I thought, that she can do something for others. Immediately the thought crossed my mind: “You can also do something. You can teach them to listen to Me.” That was a hope-giving thought.

‘While working during the day, we whispered to each other (speaking was forbidden, but who can stop a 100 women talking together?) and in the evening, when there were no guards, we gathered in a corner around some of the beds. In our barrack room there was a New Testament, of course forbidden, but a great help since there was no minister or priest. This made the experience that God himself could speak in our hearts all the more important. I told the women about the change that listening had brought in my own life, in my relationship to my husband, my children, and to other people. But that now in this concentration camp I realised that my life’s aim had, nearly imperceptibly, grown into building a world to God’s design,

without war and concentration camps. Earlier my aim had only been to have a happy family. But now I had an aim for my life which could not be taken away from me, whatever happened. All the time our talks returned to the new world we would create and each person's part in realising it.'

After a week Sylvia Philips and the three engineers were released, through the intervention of a person who was sympathetic towards the Germans and who, in the absence of Frits Philips, had allowed himself be appointed director of Philips. He wanted to do something in order to gain popularity in Eindhoven. In this however he did not succeed, but his attempt was Sylvia's salvation. A week after her release the whole camp was wound up and transported to Germany. Of the 100 women in her barrack room only 17 survived the concentration camp at Ravensbrück, and all of those had chronic ailments of lungs, kidneys or something else. Some of them came to visit Sylvia after the war to thank her for what she had given them. One of them had delivered a child while in prison, which died soon after birth. She had given her the name Sylvia.

On 18 September 1944 Eindhoven was liberated, but the evening before there was a bombing raid by the Germans. The Philips' eldest daughter, Digna Hintzen-Philips, recounted later, 'The morning after the bombing we were all sitting disheartened together in the cellar, while above us the house was partly in ruins. And then... my father came in! He had managed that night to pass through the enemy lines after a long detour from his hiding place. It was not only an unforgettable moment of joy and reunion after all we had been through; for me it was also a decisive moment. I had just turned 14 and, as the eldest, one feels responsible for the whole family. I thought: now we are all united again, we have survived! God spared us for something, I believed – something more than the ordinary life of a well-to-do family.'

It still took till 5 May 1945 before the whole country was liberated.

### Footnotes

1. For this chapter I made use of information I received from Rinske Windig-de Boer, Karel and Betty Gunning-Hintzen, Liesbeth de Voogd-Gunning, Dick and Agathe van Tetterode-van Walré de Bordes, Biny Wolvekamp-Hopman, Digna Hintzen-Philips.

2. This statement by Mussert was published on 11 April 1941 in the daily newspaper *Volk en Vaderland*. Archives in the office of Initiatives of Change in The Hague. The full statement of Mussert is set out as an appendix in *Open kaart over Morele Herbewapening*, (The Open Secret of MRA), Sijthoff Pers, Leiden, 1964.

Earlier the Gestapo had warned against the Oxford Group in an internal report called *Die Oxfordgruppenbewegung*, written in 1939 and published in 1942 (p.123-125) in *The Open Secret of MRA*, by J P Thornton-Duesbury, London, Blandford Press. See also *The World Rebuilt* by Peter Howard, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1951, 'The Gestapo Report' p.186-188).

*The Open Secret of MRA*, chapter 8, deals with the accusation that Buchman and MRA were pro-Nazi, p.59-66. For further reading on this I recommend *Frank Buchman – a life* chapter 19 (Bid for Germany) and chapter 21 (Hitler and the Gestapo clamp-down) where Garth Lean looks in detail at the work of Buchman in Germany before the war and the relationship with the Nazis. From that it is clear that Buchman hoped to avert disaster by trying to change influential people. That may have been naïve when set against the demonic forces at work, but it certainly was not pro-Nazi. On the contrary the National Socialists were afraid of the influence of MRA, because its values were opposed to the doctrine of the Nazis.

Bert de Loor comes to a similar conclusion in *Nieuw Nederland loopt van stapel* (chapter 6, The Oxford Group and National Socialism). He adds that the experiences of faith that group members had found in the Oxford Group helped them in the confrontation with the occupying force, as I illustrate in this chapter.

3. From the private memoirs of Johannes de Boer.

4. Floris Bakels was active in the resistance until he was arrested in April 1942. After being held in several prisons in the Netherlands he was taken to different concentration camps, the last being Dachau from where he was freed by the allied forces in 1945. He wrote several books about his experiences in order to warn against totalitarianism and dictatorship. His best known book is *Nacht und Nebel; mijn verhaal uit Duitse gevangenissen en concentratiekampen* (Night and Twilight; My Story from German Prisons and Concentration Camps), which was published in 1977 and became a bestseller.

5. De Loor, p.207-209. Also Peter Howard wrote about Pim van Doorn in

*Ideas Have Legs*, p.172, 173, (London, Frederick Muller, Ltd, 1945), saying, 'Pim's life and death is a symbol of the new spirit of youth which will make Europe rise again out of the ruins.'

6. The then head of the ANP in The Hague, Dr H W van der Vaart Smit, has recounted these events in his book *Wetenschappelijke Kritiek 1 op het geschiedwerk van Prof Dr L de Jong: Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de tweede wereldoorlog*, (Scientific critique 1 of the historic work of Prof Dr L de Jong: The Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War) published by De Pauw cv, Amsterdam in 1975. He wrote, 'When Hermann Göring appeared in The Hague and discovered that about 200 parachutists had disappeared, and it was explained to him what had been broadcast on the radio in those days there was hell to pay, especially when Göring was also told that the broadcaster was a Jew.'

7. *Rekrutenschool en andere gevangenisverzen* (School for Recruits and other prison verses) by Herman Salomonson (Melis Stoke) with an introduction by Mr A K C de Brauw, published by AAM Stols in The Hague, 1946.

8. Dr L de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, (The Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War), deel 4 (part 4), 1972, p.281-282.

9. Charlotte van Beuningen, *Een nieuwe wereld voor mijn kleinkinderen*, 1969, Ten Have NV, Amsterdam, p.231. It appeared also in an English translation *A New World for my Grandchildren*.

10. *Enkele herinneringen* (Some Memories), Ans Jansse, 2001.

11. Dr Ir F J Philips, *45 jaar met Philips*, Uitgeverij Ad. Donker BV, Rotterdam, 1976. Chapters 7 t/m 13. It was also published in English: Frederik Philips, *45 Years with Philips – an industrialist's life*, also published by Ad Donker. It was also published in Chinese, German, Japanese, Polish and Spanish.

12. I J Blanken, *Geschiedenis van Koninklijke Philips Electronics NV* (History of Royal Philips Electronics NV), Eindhoven, 2002, chapter 7, part 4. Apart from mentioning the gratitude of many people this chapter also deals with the accusation that Philips undertook this project for the pursuit of profit. The figures however speak for themselves: this two-year operation cost the company a million guilders.

13. Dr L de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, deel 10a, Het laatste jaar – Tweede helft* (The Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War, part 10a, The last year- Second Part), p.943 and following.

## CHAPTER 4

# Post-war reconstruction

For many 1945 may be just a date in the history books. For those who experienced the German occupation it is a date never to be forgotten. For the Netherlands it was the year of liberation – the end of the war years, the collapse of Nazi Germany, Hitler and his cohorts dead or imprisoned.<sup>1</sup>

In 1944 the south of the country had already been liberated. But after the battle of Arnhem, centred around the bridge over the river Rhine and lost by the allied forces (a battle which became known through the film *A Bridge Too Far*), the notorious 'hunger winter' began in the north above the big rivers. Many were to lose their lives.

After the liberation of the country south of the big rivers, some British servicemen who were involved in the Oxford Group and Moral Re-Armament reached Eindhoven. They brought books and brochures in their rucksacks. They rang the bell at the Philips family home and received an ecstatic welcome. Their arrival made an indelible impression on the eldest son Ton, who was then 12 years of age. The image, the day after their liberation, of a British soldier with a huge motor-bike at the front door is still vivid in his mind.

In this way the first contacts were made between those who had been involved in Moral Re-Armament in the allied countries and those who had survived the war in occupied Netherlands. Among the literature that the servicemen brought were brochures, *Battle Together for Britain* and *You Can Defend America*. These had been distributed on a nationwide scale in Britain and the USA to strengthen unity on the home front and enhance the teamwork in industry that was essential for the

allied war effort. The Dutch MRA team in the liberated south were at last able to meet together, something they had not been able to do during the years of occupation. They decided to translate these brochures, adapt them to the Dutch situation and distribute them on a large scale. The Dutch brochures were an appeal for solidarity and, in view of the need for reconstruction, to forget past divisions so that everyone could put their shoulder to the task ahead. This chimed in well with the spirit in the country. Everyone understood that after the occupation and the war there was a need for a united effort by all.

### The Netherlands will rise again

So in 1944 in Eindhoven a brochure was published entitled *Nederland zal herrijzen (The Netherlands will rise again)*. The foreword read: 'During the occupation many have learned to work together, many for whom that was impossible in earlier days. The wish for unity arises in many contexts. This book aims to show how we can achieve unity and how each one of us can cooperate right now for the resurrection of the Netherlands.' Summarising the message of the booklet: 'For the resurrection of the Netherlands we need: healthy families, cooperation at work, a united people. Can we achieve that? That depends on all of us! Change, unite, fight!'

In 1944 and 1945 in the United States various MRA conferences took place on Mackinac Island, Michigan, where Frank Buchman and his closest colleagues were together. On the agenda was the 'war of ideas'. They saw their new tasks as being the fight against materialism and the reconstruction of the post-war world.

A few Swiss, including Philippe and H el ene Mottu about whom I will say more later, came to one such conference as early as 1944. In 1945 they came again, and they were joined this time by small delegations from other European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway and the Netherlands. One of the Dutch, Bert Wolvekamp, recounts in his memoirs: 'The reception of the Dutch group in Mackinac was very emotional. All those gathered in the entrance hall welcomed us with our

national anthem, which they sang in perfect Dutch. The other European delegations were similarly received with their own national anthem. Others who joined us were British and American servicemen who had been demobilized early because their governments considered their work for Moral Re-Armament essential. For us from the war-impooverished continent of Europe the United States was another world. Before their departure back to Europe the Dutch delegation were given money to buy things in New York which were not yet available in the Netherlands.' These conferences in Mackinac were important because here, even before the war was over, plans were made for post-war Europe. A central role in these plans was played by the group of Swiss.

### Swiss initiative

Although neutral Switzerland had not been directly involved in the war, the tragedy in Europe had not left the Swiss untouched. Since the 1930s there had been a group of people who had dedicated themselves to the moral and spiritual re-armament of their country and its neighbours. One of them was Philippe Mottu, a diplomat who had experienced two bombings during the war, one in Helsinki by the Russians and one in Berlin by the allied forces. He was in touch with the German resistance against the Nazis and one of his friends was Adam von Trott who, besides being a leader of the resistance, was also was a high official in the German regime.

In 1940 Mottu and others founded the Swiss resistance movement, the Gothard League. During a meeting over Easter 1942 in Macolin with some 60 members of the Swiss MRA team, Philippe Mottu had a prompting which would have far-reaching consequences. 'If Switzerland is spared, it is our task to provide a place where the Europeans who are divided by hate, suffering and resentment, can come together.' This thought frightened Mottu so much that it took some time before he shared it even with his wife H el ene, let alone his colleagues.

Two years later Philippe and H el ene Mottu had the opportunity to share this idea with Frank Buchman when they were

attending the conference in Mackinac mentioned earlier. Their journey, for which German permission had been needed, was made possible by the intervention of Adam von Trott, who wanted, via Phippe Mottu, to send top-secret intelligence to the leaders in Washington about their group's preparations for a coup. Mottu did go to Washington, but found the talks with the Americans painful. President Roosevelt could not believe that there was a German opposition to Hitler. The information that Mottu passed on was not taken seriously. Mottu: 'The Americans were the prisoners of their own propaganda and considered all Germans to be Nazis.' After the failed assassination attempt on Hitler, Von Trott and his associates were sentenced to death and hanged.<sup>2</sup>

A year later, immediately after the war, Philippe and H el ene Mottu returned to Mackinac with a group of Swiss. With Buchman and his closest colleagues, they began to plan how the enormous task of reconstruction and reconciliation in Europe could be undertaken. Mottu proposed using a big hotel in Caux-sur-Montreux, which was standing empty after having been used as centre for refugees. Even before the war an MRA conference had taken place there, and Buchman had actually visited the building himself decades earlier. The Swiss wanted to know what Frank Buchman and his team thought of the idea. There was general approval, provided that those Swiss who had dedicated themselves to MRA were completely behind the proposal and would manage to find the finances and the personnel to make it possible.

At Easter 1946 the first international MRA conference to be held in free Europe took place in Interlaken. Some from the Netherlands were among those taking part.<sup>3</sup> Reporting on the conference, Philippe Mottu wrote to Frank Buchman. 'We Swiss feel ourselves to be Europeans and we will do everything to make Europe great again.'<sup>4</sup> The idea of using the Caux Palace Hotel for the reunification of Europe was discussed at this conference. Immediately afterwards a group of Swiss, accompanied by Bert Wolvekamp, went to take a closer look. On that cold spring day they found a totally neglected, filthy building

with blackened kitchens. But the view was magnificent, especially when the sun broke through and shone on the lake of Geneva far below. Afterwards they discussed the situation over a cup of warm coffee in the station's café. After some time of quiet reflection they reached the unanimous conclusion that this was an adventure they should embark on together in faith. There and then the decision was taken to make this former luxury hotel into a home for the world.

The initial idea was to rent the building, but the bank who owned it (the famous hotel was bankrupt) was planning to demolish it and only wanted to sell. Through gifts from 95 Swiss families and individuals they succeeded in buying the Caux Palace. In addition a number of them decided to give up their jobs to concentrate on getting the centre launched. Three couples took the lead in this: Philippe and Hélène Mottu, who were mentioned earlier, Robert and Dorli Hahnloser and Erich and Emmy Peyer. Hahnloser and Peyer were both engineers.

At the start of June they were able to take possession of the house. Much had to be repaired and cleaned. Along with a Swiss architect, a Dutch architect, Jap de Boer, son of Johannes de Boer, redesigned the entrance hall. Some 100 Swiss volunteers and many from other countries, including the Netherlands, managed to do enough cleaning and repair work to enable the first conference for Moral Re-Armament to be held there in July 1946.<sup>5</sup> Caux Palace was renamed Mountain House – at that time, MRA conferences on Mackinac Island, in the USA, were held in a building called Island House. But this name is rarely used. More often the name of the village Caux is used to refer to the international conference centre.

### ‘Where are the Germans?’

On 15 July 1946 Frank Buchman arrived in Caux with a large team from the United States and Great Britain. There, besides the Swiss, he encountered many from the countries which had recently been under German occupation. The story goes that after a warm welcome, Frank Buchman put the question: ‘Where are the Germans? Some of you think that Germany

needs to change; and that is true. But you will never be able to rebuild Europe without Germany.' That question caused shock waves among many of those present. It meant that men and women who had suffered in the war under the German occupation would soon be confronted in Caux with their former enemies.

From this account it might be deduced that inviting Germans to Caux was a completely new idea. But this was not the case for everybody. Philippe Mottu and his team had had the conviction from the very beginning that Germans needed to be involved in the reconstruction of Europe. Even in that first summer of 1946 they were hosting some 15 Germans in Caux. It is not clear whether these 15 had already arrived when Buchman posed the question, or whether they were still on their way. But it is clear that the Swiss had already made arrangements for Germans to come from the French-controlled zone. Four Germans, all from the French Zone, had attended the earlier conference at Interlaken. Their presence was made possible by the chief chaplain of the French occupying army in Germany, Bishop Sturm.<sup>6</sup>

One of the Germans who came to Caux in 1946 was Hans Stroh, student chaplain at the University of Tübingen. He had served in the medical service of the German army in Italy and after that on the Russian front where he had been made prisoner of war. After some months in Russian and Polish prison camps he was released. In Caux he said: 'Today I feel a heavy burden on my shoulders. I have not had enough courage and have not done what I should have done. So I am sharing the guilt of my people. I want to apologise to all who have suffered under the German yoke.'<sup>7</sup>

But it was still not possible for Germans to travel to Caux from the zones in Germany that were occupied by the British and the Americans. Buchman's question, however, sparked increased activity in Washington and London. So much so that a year later, with the full cooperation of the British and American allied military authorities, 150 Germans were permitted to leave Germany and attend the international conference in Caux.

That was extraordinary, because even though many of the German delegation had themselves (as non-Nazis) suffered under Hitler's regime, Germans – whatever their background – were not welcome at that time anywhere in western Europe.<sup>8</sup>

One of the French participants at Caux in 1947 was Irène Laure, Member of Parliament and secretary of the Socialist women's organisation. She had taken part in the French Resistance and suffered personally. When she heard that a German delegation was expected, her immediate reaction was: 'Then I will leave!' After an inner struggle she decided to stay, thinking of the future of Europe. Her first talk with a German was with Clarita von Trott, whose husband, Adam, had been executed after the attempt on Hitler's life, and who, in spite of what she had suffered herself, asked forgiveness for what Germany had brought about. Later at a meeting with people from all over the world, Irène Laure told her life story. She had become so bitter about the Germans that she had applauded the destruction of German cities. Now she realised that her hate was a barrier to the future of Europe and could be a factor in beginning a new war. For that hate she now asked for forgiveness. Her example brought many Germans and others to deep reflection and change.

This interaction with the Germans was not any easier for the Dutch who were present at that time in Caux. The first words were spoken, the first experiences shared and gradually the awareness grew that in order to build a new democratic Europe, the change and commitment of Germans was needed. Later this idea would, step by step, become public property. But Caux was one of the first places where the door to the international community was opened for the Germans. As a result further initiatives were taken in the Netherlands to build bridges with Germany and to support the fragile democracy in that country.

### Europe's novel experiment

When one looks at the European Union today, with its open borders, it is hard to imagine that straight after the war European cooperation was far from being a matter of course. The first

official step towards this – in 1951 with the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community – was an unusual and bold one. I have long known this, but quite how bold (and for some outrageous) this was hit me afresh after reading the biography of a European of the first hour, the Dutchman Max Kohnstamm.

The plan to put the coal and steel production of six countries under one authority was conceived by the Frenchman Jean Monnet and launched by the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, on 9 May 1950. This date is seen as the birth date of the European Union. The idea was that the six founding countries, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands, who had put their coal and steel production under one authority, would never be able to utilise these resources in a war against each other.

Kohnstamm heard about the plan when he met Monnet in 1950. He was deeply impressed with Monnet's world vision which resonated with his own. He was captivated by the idea of an open Europe with common supra-national institutions, in which power would be tempered by justice. In a German concentration camp in the Netherlands Kohnstamm had experienced the total absence of justice.

In 1947 he had visited Germany on behalf of the Dutch Reformed church with a church delegation in order to re-establish contacts with the German churches and church leaders. It was a confrontation with hunger, misery, cities in ruins and refugees. This convinced him that German isolation should be ended as soon as possible. He learned that there must be a distinction between the co-responsibility of the German people as a whole and the crime of the war criminals. This realisation brought a change in his thinking, and made it possible for him to relinquish his hatred of the Germans. From that moment Kohnstamm started to work towards the inclusion of Germany in the European family and to help the German economy to recover.

So in meeting Monnet he met a kindred spirit. They started to work together on the European project and would do so, as colleagues and as close friends, until Monnet's death in 1979.

Kohnstamm became the first Secretary of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), with Jean Monnet as the first President.

Reading about Kohnstamm and Monnet one realises that European cooperation was based on reconciliation and vision. The ECSC was only a vehicle to help countries put aside their narrow nationalism and to choose the road of community building, which is a slow process demanding patience and perseverance. The means are as important as the goal. In fact the question whether the means are right and moral, precedes the goal. They believed the very fact of cooperation is in itself a conciliatory process. From Kohnstamm's biography it is clear how much vision and persuasive power it took to get the first six countries to the point where they would give up part of their sovereignty. All along, the development of European cooperation has been one where vision was needed to carry it forward and to make sure the negotiations would not get bogged down in an endless tug-of-war. As they often did!

The now 94-year-old Kohnstamm who worked and lobbied (mostly behind the scenes) for European cooperation in different capacities, is still an advisor to the European Policy Centre in Brussels. In a recent interview he shared his concern about 'us' and 'them' thinking as the great temptation of our time. It seemingly creates order in a complex and chaotic world. But this thinking spells disaster for the world, he believes. Kohnstamm categorically rejects the thinking that evil is always with the other. In that way of thinking there is no place for the conciliatory power of cooperation, he claims. It is this vision we need to keep, if we want to survive – not only in Europe, but in the world at large. The vision of Kohnstamm and Monnet was never limited to the European continent, but always saw European cooperation as a means to serve the world.<sup>9</sup>

### MRA's overlooked role

The story of Monnet and Kohnstamm shows that it is hard, when you speak of European cooperation, to draw a line between the institutional, political level on one hand and the

personal level on the other. It was and is personal commitment and conviction that helped and helps political progress. It is in this sphere that the contribution of MRA to the post-war reconciliation and reconstruction of Europe should be seen. Because MRA works unofficially and often off the record, its contribution has not been very well documented. In 1994 the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in the USA undertook some thorough research to trace this contribution. It put its findings in a chapter in the book *Religion – the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*.<sup>10</sup> The chapter referred to is entitled: Franco-German Reconciliation: the Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement. The author of this chapter, Edward Luttwak, focuses on these two countries for several reasons. Firstly, the animosity between them was particularly strong. The Second World War was their third war in succession, after the First World War and the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Secondly, French and German participation in Caux is well-documented: between 1946 and 1950 1,983 French and 3,113 Germans took part in the conferences. Among them were leading figures from the political, business, church and media world, including Robert Schuman from France and Konrad Adenauer from Germany. Thirdly, the story of Irène Laure undoubtedly grips the imagination. Lastly the good relationship between France and Germany was generally seen as the essential backbone of European unity.

Of course Caux and MRA has also played a part in reconciling Germans with citizens of the other countries that had been occupied, which was indeed also very necessary. In the next chapter I will illustrate the rapprochement that was encouraged by MRA between Germany and their western neighbour, the Netherlands.

Luttwak describes how absolutely incredible it was in the immediate post-war years to have large groups of Germans leave their country and be allowed to enter Switzerland. It was thanks to convinced and committed MRA team members who happened to be in the right places. They arranged for the Germans to get the required exit and entry permits. He gives

evidence of how the actions of MRA helped create the conditions in which cooperation between the former enemies could flourish. 'It was not Moral Re-Armament but Jean Monnet who conceived the idea, but when Schuman set out to apply Monnet's concept, it was certainly a crucial advantage for the politicians and bureaucrats involved on all sides, that many leading French and German coal and steel industrialists and trade union leaders had already developed warm personal relationships. If MRA had done nothing else, its ancillary role in the creation of the ECSC would alone give it importance in the history of Europe.'<sup>11</sup>

The conferences in Caux, which from 1946 onwards were to take place every summer and on a smaller scale in the winter and at Easter, would draw thousands from across the world: statesmen and students, employers and employees, men and women from all kind of professions and backgrounds. This led to a creative interaction between what was discussed and experienced in Caux and what was then undertaken in peoples' own countries. This was certainly the case with the Netherlands where there was a fruitful exchange with Caux. For the Dutch, the activities inspired by Caux went beyond their national borders. Over the years, as a result of meetings in Caux, many Dutch took part in the work of MRA in Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, North and Latin America.

### Plays and musicals

In 1948 an international team of MRA came to the Netherlands with the musical *The Good Road*, following performances in Germany. The play was an invitation to the public to choose the good road of change, reconciliation and cooperation instead of that of division and materialism. Some of the actors were Dutch. The premiere, which took place in the Royal Theatre in The Hague, attracted considerable interest. Musicals were a new phenomenon. Also the international aspect added a very special dimension in those days. Besides all kinds of officials, the musical drew a lot of young people. The vision of a new future of cooperation between the nations touched the generally cyni-

cal students deeply. After the performance the cast would mingle with the public, who stayed on long afterwards to talk. The tour of *The Good Road* was the start of the use of plays and musicals in Europe to put across the message of change and renewal that MRA was promoting, as had already happened in the USA during the war.

To this end the Westminster Theatre in London was purchased in 1946. The money to do this was largely donated by British service men and women who gave the money that they had received on their demobilisation. The play *The Forgotten Factor* by Alan Thornhill, an English church minister and academic, which was written and performed during the war in the USA, had its European premiere here. It depicted a bitter industrial dispute and the personal aspects which play a hidden but important part in such conflicts. It went on tour in the mining and other industrial areas of Britain. Later it was performed in many countries and in different languages. In 1953 in Rotterdam it was performed in Dutch by an amateur theatre group of the staff association of the dockworkers and shipbuilders.

Another MRA play which was translated and performed by Dutch amateur actors was *The Boss* by the British journalist and author Peter Howard. Performances could be staged in quite small venues. One of the private performances was attended by Prime Minister Willem Drees and his wife. The play depicts a director who sees no other way than to sack 1,000 employees. At the end of the play the director says that he will do his best to find another solution and that he will enter into talks with the government about that – something which was not a matter of course in those days. Afterwards Drees said that he had watched the play with interest, but that in his mind it was dealing with American situations. Sacking 1,000 workers would not be possible in post-war Netherlands. Much later it became clear that Europe would have to deal with problems very similar to those facing the USA. The play was broadcast on Dutch national radio.

### *The Vanishing Island*

As previously stated, the musicals and plays with their message of hope appealed especially to young people. Seeing a play could change the course of one's life. This was certainly the experience of Annejet Philips, daughter of Frits and Sylvia Philips. As a 20-year-old, in 1954 she had somewhat reluctantly paid a visit to Caux on her way to Paris where she wanted to pursue a career in fashion design. On the last evening of her stay in Caux the play *We Are Tomorrow* was performed. Written by Peter Howard, it depicted a group of students in an English university confronted with the choice to stand up for freedom of conscience at the risk of one's life, or to keep quiet and pave the way to dictatorship. This message made a deep impression on Annejet. She could remember the time of occupation, when both her father and her mother had been imprisoned. She felt she was confronted with a choice: 'Shall I later lose everything in a world I do not want, or am I prepared to give everything for a future I do want?' After an inner struggle she determined on the latter. She decided to wipe the slate clean, put Paris to one side and accept the invitation to work with MRA in the USA on the costumes for a new musical called *The Vanishing Island*.<sup>12</sup>

The plays of MRA and the choice that Annejet and many other young people made must be seen against the background of the Cold War. The threat of a third world war was real. In this climate the message of MRA was: the choice is not between communism and capitalism or between east and west, there is another way.

This was precisely the message of the sparkling and humorous musical *The Vanishing Island*, also by Peter Howard. The story is of two islands: the prosperous Eiluph'mei (I love me) is being threatened by the much poorer dictatorially governed island of Weiheit'tiu (We hate you). The leader of this island curses the richer one saying: 'share your riches with us or we will make your island disappear'. And indeed, one sees the island of Eiluph'mei gradually disappearing! In the end it is the

honesty and humility of the king of Eiluph'mei that brings his countrymen to the realisation that they need to change. This again makes their enemies in Weiheit'tiu wake up to the fact that hate, just as much as greed, is a stumbling block on the road to a more just world.

With a party of 250 people and accompanied by politicians and senior figures from different countries (the so-called 'Statesmen's Mission') in 1955 and 1956 this musical travelled through the USA, Asia, Africa and Europe. In 11 countries visited, the group was invited officially by the government. All this involved considerable organisation. One of those working backstage was Ton Philips, the 20-year-old son of Frits and Sylvia Philips. He had started a physics course at the Technical University of Delft, planning in due course to work in his father's firm where he would put the ideas of MRA into practice. He looked forward to doing this especially in the field of employer-employee relations, so that Philips could have a positive world-wide image. But after three years of university he had started to have doubts. The abstract study of physics did not really appeal to him. What was more, he asked himself, would the company still exist by the time he was ready to influence the way things went? So real was the threat of communism felt! At Caux in the summer of 1954 he came to the same conclusion as his sister Annejet and decided to devote all his time to working with MRA.

In hindsight he wonders whether he should rather not have changed to the more concrete study of mechanical engineering in order to work as an engineer with Philips. 'Possibly I could have done more with my life', he says now. But at that time the feeling of urgency was so strong, that working full-time with MRA seemed the best option. And for big undertakings such as taking *The Vanishing Island* round the world a lot of people were needed. The leaders of MRA at that time felt the same sense of urgency. They clearly thought that working with MRA was the best contribution anyone could make, hence they did not go out of their way to encourage young people to finish their studies.

As a member of the backstage crew of *The Vanishing Island* in 1955 Ton Philips travelled through the USA and Asia. 'In the period that I travelled, we gave performances in Washington, Los Angeles, Hawaii, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka and India. Sometimes we were only a few days in a country,' he says. 'The whole loading space of an aircraft would be full of pieces of scenery and other stage equipment. To build up the stage and take it down again and then load it to go to another country was tough and heavy work. The aim of this play was to say to the countries: 'You do not need to choose between the USA and Russia, there is a third way'. After the performances hands-on experts would speak, like a Tunisian political leader, who recounted how his country had become independent without bloodshed. The whole enterprise was led by Peter Howard, who was in touch with many leaders of government.' Ton Philips remembers a special moment when, after a performance in Manila, a number of Japanese senators stepped forward and offered their apologies to the Filipinos present for the devastating war inflicted on them by Japan.

### Two weeks became nine years

Joty van Os was another who put everything aside to work with the touring plays and musicals of MRA. In 1951, having graduated in Dutch Indies Law in the Netherlands, she arrived in Paris where she intended to work as an *au pair*. There she came into contact with MRA. She had been born in what was then the Dutch Indies and during the Second World War had been imprisoned for three years in a Japanese concentration camp. Unaided, she travelled to the Netherlands and paid for the boat trip by working on the repatriation ship the Johan van Oldenbarneveld. With an interest-free loan from the Ministry of Education she managed to continue her studies.

In Paris she encountered the idea 'change the world and start with yourself'. This provided Joty with the answer to many questions she had been carrying with her after three years in a concentration camp. She found hope that the downward spiral of mistrust and power that always ends in war could be

adjusted upwards. 'I was 24,' she says, 'I wanted to believe that. It meant hope and trust in a new future.' She went for two weeks to Caux, and there she encountered the world. It especially struck her that people of all classes and races spoke freely with each other about personal matters. She discovered that others also carried with them ugly and sad experiences as well as pleasant ones. Honesty was the secret that could turn one into a free human being.

The two weeks became nine years. Joty was asked to help with plays and films which were produced in rapid succession in those years. The enthusiasm of young people from all over the world to take part in this was overwhelming. She flew with 200 people from 35 countries to Asia, where they presented plays and musicals like *Jotham Valley* and *The Forgotten Factor* in the newly-independent countries of India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Pakistan. *Jotham Valley* was a musical based on the true story from the West of the USA where two ranching brothers were in bitter conflict over water in their dry valley – a conflict that was resolved through reconciliation.

In 1955 Africans in Caux wrote a play called *Freedom*. Its message was that freedom is needed not only from foreign rulers, but also from rivalry, nepotism, tribalism and corruption. Joty helped mount this play in Caux and afterwards travelled with it through the USA. A film was made of it and later a video/DVD, which is still being shown in Africa and South America and it has lost none of its topicality.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of the nine years, four of which Joty van Os spent in the USA, a sense of not having any privacy began to trouble her. She had a growing feeling that her life had somehow been taken over by the group and by the ideology and that she had no room to develop herself. Looking back she feels that people had started to be unduly influenced by those they considered the leaders. On top of that the Cold War itself had left an ever-growing imprint on Moral Re-Armament, which then claimed to have the answer to the spread of communism. At the beginning of the 1960s she noticed a certain confusion in the team she was working with in Washington. There was a clear conflict

between two schools of thought, which, in the end, led to a division between the American and the European (especially British) teams of MRA.<sup>14</sup> At that time Joty was travelling with the niece of President Diem from Vietnam and another young woman from Taiwan, then called Formosa. At some point these two ladies decided to quit MRA and to start studying at an American university.

At that period in MRA this was considered a very negative step, because of the general belief that the needs of the world were so great that working full-time with MRA was the best thing anyone could possibly do. Anyone who left MRA work to do something else was betraying their highest calling. Of course one's calling can equally well be in another job or in a study, but it was not seen that way in those days.

Joty was held responsible by certain MRA leaders for the departure of the two young Asian women, and was asked to return immediately to the Netherlands. In this way the nine years came to an abrupt end. Nevertheless she looks back on that time with gratitude. 'It was a never-to-be-forgotten lesson in life', she says. 'And then there are all the friendships which have survived the years.'

Back in the Netherlands Joty remained faithful to her commitment to social change and in later years she has especially dedicated herself to the improvement of the relationship between her two countries, Indonesia and the Netherlands, of which we will hear more later.

### Across the borders of social classes

In the post-war period many employees from different Dutch companies attended the conferences in Caux. The journey and the international character of the conferences were novel experiences. Employees went, but also middle management and directors. Among those in the forefront were workers from the port and the shipping industry in Rotterdam. One of them was crane operator, Jan van Komen. He had the conviction that the crane operators needed to combine in order to have a stronger voice within the trade union, which indeed came about. Also

prominent was Evert Kupers, President of the largest trade union. He took part in a conference in Caux in 1950, and wrote the foreword in the brochure *World Labour and Caux*. In a talk on national radio in 1951 he explained why he thought MRA was important. 'MRA and the trade unions both stand for change. Through MRA employers start to see their workers more as co-workers than as subordinates, and employees start to feel more responsible for the business as a whole.'<sup>15</sup>

An example of this was the changed attitude of Charles Redelé, one of the directors of the Victoria Biscuit and Chocolate factory at Dordrecht, an old city in the south of the Netherlands. In 1950, after attending MRA conferences in Caux and in Le Touquet in France, he decided to end a long-standing quarrel with the Chairman of his trade organisation and to ask the employees to help him bring a new spirit in the firm. Workers volunteered suggestions on how to increase productivity. And they asked him to look for ways in which the profit from this could be used to lower the prices of the products, rather than to increase the income of the share-holders. Unjustified price increases were a national issue at that time, while wages were low and government-controlled. The workers' suggestions were implemented. Productivity increased considerably and the prices of a number of biscuits and other products were lowered.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of cooperation rather than confrontation also appealed to Frans Dohmen and his colleagues. Dohmen was President of the Catholic Miners Trade Union. Faced with the planned closure of the mines in the south-eastern province of Limburg, he went to England to see a performance of *The Forgotten Factor* and to talk through his situation with British miners. Dohmen declared himself ready to cooperate with the government on the closure of the mines, on condition that new jobs would be created and that the social consequences for the miners and their families would be taken care of. This happened.

As has already been seen, it was a feature of the MRA teams that people from different social classes worked side by side. They had a common bond in their conviction and the commit-

ment to work together for a more just and peaceful world. The story of my father-in-law, Cor de Pous, is a good example of this. In 1946 he and his wife Sijtje had decided to move to the village of De Steeg, where, at the Rhederoord country estate, the Oxford Group in the Netherlands had begun. After the war there were plans to use this house and the accompanying coach house (where many MRA activities were already taking place) as a conference centre. In order to help with this, Cor and Sijtje de Pous with their four children decided to leave Aalsmeer, a centre for the flower growing business just south of Amsterdam, and move eastwards. De Pous started to work as gardener on the Rhederoord estate, hoping that in his free time he could help develop the proposed conference centre. Plans to develop the centre however never materialised.

In 1951 he started to work in a nearby concrete factory, where he knew the managing director. He had the conviction to become more involved in the workers' movement. He organised delegations of workers to go to Caux. Cor and Sijtje de Pous's home was one which both workers and directors liked to visit. They had a special ability to develop good personal relations with everyone and all appreciated the listening ear they found there. After four years the President of the National Christian Trade Union, Marinus Ruppert, suggested to De Pous that he apply for the job of district governor of that union. He was successful, which suited him perfectly. He was able to bring to it both his experience with MRA and that of his time in the concrete factory.

The De Pouses had started their married life with the motto: 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all else will be given to you'. While brothers and sisters were running successful floriculture businesses, Cor and Sijtje de Pous felt other things were more important than just making money. This meant, especially in the beginning before the job with the trade union, that it was not easy for the family – with eventually six children – to make ends meet. Fortunately Sijtje de Pous was very creative with needle and thread and altered the second hand clothes that she received. There was not much

money for toys, but the children made their own toys and on top of that had the nearby forest at their disposal. The De Pous parents never pursued their own career, but when some of their children also decided not to pursue a career, but to work full-time with MRA they were initially disappointed. They were proud of their quick-learning children for whom an academic career seemed assured. But their deepest feeling was to stand behind the decisions their children had made.<sup>17</sup>

At the universities, too, there was a lot of interest in Moral Re-Armament. Every summer delegations of students took part in the conferences in Caux. The conferences appealed to them because of their emphasis on the connection between ideals, faith and practical life and also because of the international contacts one could make there. For some it led to a life-long commitment. It also meant an enlargement of their world. At that time students usually were from the better-to-do families. Often for the first time in their lives they would meet workers and visit their homes. Many of these workers would be politically on the left, many advocates of communist ideas. For them and for the students these exchanges, which allowed both sides to get acquainted with each others' circumstances and thinking, were beneficial.

This dismantling of the barriers between the social classes also happened between students from different backgrounds in the universities. This was the experience of Age van Randen. When he came across MRA as a student of the Technical University in Delft, it meant a renewed acquaintance. While at the secondary school in Leeuwarden, capital of the northern province of Friesland, he had read the book *Ideas Have Legs* by the British journalist and later leader of MRA, Peter Howard. This popular book (it went to three editions in Dutch) went the rounds at this school. It appealed to him because, coming from a socialist background and socially concerned as he was, it stirred him to cooperate with others to create a better world. There was a lively MRA team in Leeuwarden which met in the home of dentist Johan van der Veen.

In Delft Age van Randen encountered MRA again through

his fellow student Ton Philips. For a young man who had always strongly opposed the ruling class, meeting the son of a top industrialist was a revelation. They were also normal people, he discovered; people who, like him, were ready to dedicate themselves to bring about the changes needed in society.

There was an active group of students in Delft who organised meetings and visited the dock workers in Rotterdam. The group met regularly at the home of Professor Henk Dorgelo, who was one of the Dutch who took part in the Easter conference in Interlaken in 1946. They had quiet times together, shared their thoughts and made plans. Dorgelo's daughter Ineke, who later married Age van Randen, remembers that her father was always concerned with people. He was concerned to create a good atmosphere wherever he was and saw the care for people as at least as important as lecturing in his subject, physics. In 1955 Dorgelo was invited by the government to become the first Rector of the new Technical University of Eindhoven. When he died in 1961 the official organ of the students union dedicated a special issue to him, in which they wrote: 'His whole life was geared to creating a climate where people could grow together, and live together as one community.'

People worked together across national borders as well as across social borders. Contacts were made with foreign students from Indonesia, the Middle East and Suriname. One member of the student team was Jules Sedney, later Prime Minister of Suriname. All the activities should be seen against the international political background of that time. They were the years of reconstruction after the war, but also the years of the Cold War, with communist parties seeking to get a foothold wherever they could. In answer to this, MRA directed its attention to the same areas where the communists were active: the docks, the mines, the steel industry and the universities. Unlike the communists, MRA did not believe in class struggle, but in cooperation, in social change based on change in the individual, in shared responsibility for what needed to happen.

### The need for an 'ideology'

The army was also a field for international MRA action. In 1950 two high-ranking generals from France, together with senior officers from other countries, had organised a conference in Caux for more than 100 representatives from the armed forces of the free world. The organisers concluded that this conference had helped them to obtain a better understanding of the nature and the scope of the ideological battle. The Cold War had to be won in the ports, the factories and the mines. It was decided to cooperate in the conviction that the 'ideology' of MRA could be the uniting force to answer militant materialism. The Dutch General Kruls quotes the conclusions of this conference in his book *Vrede of Oorlog (Peace or War)*. 'Moral Re-Armament', he writes, 'wants to give us a united ideology to stand strong against a world on which communism has been enforced. Many leaders of armed forces have seen MRA as the movement which could provide the West, apart from a military readiness, with an ideological one, which would give the West a strong position in the war of ideas.'

In order to introduce the 'ideology' of Moral Re-Armament into the army, the military representatives in Caux had developed a training course for the army. During the war this course had already been given to units in USA and England. In the Netherlands Dick van Tetterode tried, during his compulsory military service, and with the help of his comrade and MRA team-mate Johan Oosters, to introduce this course in 'Ideological preparedness' as part of the training programme for the Dutch Army. They were invited to clarify this before a committee which included the heads of the chaplaincy. Some of them had theological objections, one being that God was referred to in very vague terms. They also discussed their proposal with the Chief of the General Staff General Kruls, who invited them to explain the matter in the annual meeting for all senior officers of the army. This however did not happen, because after some disagreement between General Kruls and the Minister of Defence, Kruls left the army. And soon after that Oosters and

Van Tetterode left the army too, because their term of conscription had come to an end.

So some people saw the case for introducing the ideas of MRA into the army, but there was also criticism. One, as I have mentioned, was theological: there was talk of God, but which God was meant was not sufficiently defined. Another was criticism of the word ideology. Although it was used by MRA in a positive sense, for many it had a negative connotation. And it should be admitted that it was rather pretentious to put forward MRA as the one and only answer to communism. Why should there be only one answer? Is not the mark of democracy that there are different ideologies and approaches? Perhaps one should rather use the words ideas and convictions, which could live side by side with other ideas and convictions?

The action in the army had a very limited impact. But the initiative taken at the end of 1959 with the manifesto *Ideology and Coexistence* drew country-wide attention. To coincide with similar action in a number of other countries, three million copies of the 32-page booklet were distributed door-to-door in the Netherlands. Its sharp stand against any kind of coexistence with communism caused a great deal of controversy and was criticised in the press. But there were also positive reactions.

The idea which was also articulated in the plays of Peter Howard, as we have seen, was that democracy needed an inspired ideology to be able to stand up to the totalitarian ideology of communism. Some called this plain anti-communism. This, however, was not a term of abuse for everyone. But MRA wanted to go further than simply being 'anti'. It propagated the ideology of spiritual and moral change as being a better way than both communism and western materialism. Perhaps this notion would have been more acceptable if the word ideology had not been used. Somehow the term stuck in many people's throats. They were afraid that it was not a neutral concept, but had totalitarian implications. Others wanted to remain faithful to their own faith and found the word ideology too secular or heathen.

Summing up, one can conclude that the negative effect of the manifesto, at least on the public image of MRA, has been greater than the positive.

### Inspiration from silence

Whatever these ups and downs, the personal approach remained the priority. The starting point was, and remains, personal change. Early in the morning, before breakfast, individuals are encouraged to take ample time to listen to God, to conscience, to the inner voice. This in order to find inspiration, but also to seek concrete ideas for how to go about things in daily life. It is something very personal, in which reading the Bible and prayer can have a part. Of course you could have a quiet time at other times of the day, but the time in the morning was the start. One took time to write down the thoughts that came and to discuss these with each other, in order to find a common mind and take common action. While on the one hand having a quiet time was a very individual action, yet it could also be something you did in a group. We saw for example that the students in Delft had quiet times together with their professor.

This is the experience of Pauline van der Zee-Lugard. She attended a girls' school in Eindhoven which had been founded by Sylvia Philips after the war. Sylvia gave the director, Ina van Santen, the opportunity to go to the USA to study new educational methods. Ina van Santen ended up at an MRA conference, where she experienced a change in her personal life. Henceforth she was not only able to introduce new educational methods, but also give the girls hope for the future. That was really necessary so soon after the war, says Pauline van der Zee. She had the feeling of being enclosed by a wall. But when her school director organised a meeting about world peace, windows opened for her. She started to have quiet times with a group of pupils. Many people have told me how they would have quiet times together as a family, often before breakfast!

Inspiration from the quiet time can have far-reaching results. It meant for Age van Randen, for example, as an architect just

starting out on his career, choosing to work in the less lucrative field of public (or social) housing. 'I wanted to do what I felt was right and not just what would make the most money', he says. At that time, around 1963, there was an enormous shortage of houses in the Netherlands. At least 150,000 houses were needed every year. Van Randen had the conviction that, even in the public housing sector, there should be some element of choice and clients should have the opportunity to be consulted.

How to solve the discrepancy between the ideal of people's involvement and the uniformity that mass production dictated, was a question that he remained concerned about. It was on the basis of that subject that he became Professor in Delft in 1973. He was co-founder of the Foundation for Open Building in 1983. The present IFD programme of that foundation (to build houses that would be 'industrial, flexible and de-mountable') is a continuation of that. IFD seeks to combine the benefits of mass production with an element of choice and variety. This example shows that quiet times are not something vague or abstract, but can have very concrete social implications. The aim after all was a more just and better world.

MRA teams had been formed in many places in the Netherlands. They acted as action groups before that term became fashionable. There was no board or formal membership. It was a way of life, voluntary work but with a strong motivation and commitment. Apart from the people who dedicated themselves to this work in and around their paid jobs, there were some 15, mostly younger people, who committed themselves to work full-time and unpaid to do all kinds of tasks for which the others did not have the time.

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1 For this chapter, apart from what is mentioned in the notes below, I have made use of information that I received from Aad Burger, Digna Hintzen-Philips, Ton Philips, Joty ter Kulve-van Os, Tony Roodvoets, Bas and Joos Woltjer-Dorgelo, Age and Ineke van Randen-Dorgelo, Dick and Agathe

van Tetterode-van Walré de Bordes, Annie Hoogendoorn, Pauline van der Zee-Lugard. Also Lotty Wolvekamp let me use part of the private memoirs of her father Bert Wolvekamp.

2. Philippe Mottu recounted this in *Caux is the place*, a lecture he gave on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conference centre Mountain House in Caux, 30 June 1996.

3. Among them Bert Wolvekamp and his wife Biny, the Delft professor Henk Dorgelo and his wife Herna, the Frysian Deputy of the province, Dirk de Loor, who later became mayor of Delft, and his wife Josien. We will meet them again later.

4. From a so-far unpublished manuscript by Andrew Stallybrass entitled *The Caux Palace – witness to a century*. Mottu kept Buchman informed by letter about the developments. For his manuscript Stallybrass drew on Mottu's correspondence with Buchman.

5. Information from the lecture *Caux is the place*, see note 1. And from *The old lady on the mountain – 50 years of Mountain House at the service of the world*, lecture by Andrew Stallybrass in Caux 21 August 1995.

6. The four were: Dr Siegfried Ernst and his wife, Reverend Eberhard Stammler and Dr Erich Winter. From *Mit Gott im Rückspiegel* by Siegfried Ernst, Gerhard Hess Verlag, Ulm 1998.

7. Information via e-mail on 30 May 2005 from Pierre Spoerri, who was a good friend of the late Hans Stroh. And from Waltraut Stroh (on 5 July 2005), daughter of Hans Stroh. She lives in the Netherlands and works as student chaplain in The Hague. Her late husband was a Dutch minister of the church.

8. See note 4. And *The Caux Palace – witness to a century* by Andrew Stallybrass.

9. *Max Kohnstamm, Leven en werk van een Europeaan* (Max Kohnstamm, Life and work of an European), by A G Harryvan and J van der Harst, Spectrum, 2008. Interview with Max Kohnstamm in *Vrij Nederland* by Marcel ten Hooven on 31 March 2007 entitled: Max Kohnstamm, Samen iets oplossen werkt verzoenend (To solve something together brings reconciliation).

10. *Religion: the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, Oxford University Press, 1994. Edited by Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson. The chapter referred to is from p.37-57, written by Edward Luttwak.

11. *Ibid*, page 52. Luttwak also goes into the relationship between Buchman and Schuman, shown in correspondence, in the fact that Schuman wrote the foreword in the French edition of *Réfaire le monde* (Remaking the World), and that upon the proposal of Schuman Buchman received the

award of the Croix de Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur on 4 June 1950 in recognition of Buchman's effort for Franco-German reconciliation. Luttwak adds to this last remark that this was matched by Adenauer's sponsorship of the equivalent Federal Republic decoration, the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit, for the same reason.

12. Annejet Philips married the Canadian Paul Campbell in 1957. Dr Campbell was on the staff of the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit before working as physician and close co-worker of Frank Buchman. He died in 1995. Annejet wrote two books, *Listen to the Children* and *Listen for a change*. Both books contain moving stories of honesty and change of parents and grandparents and in the last book of husbands and wives. She passed away in 2007.

13. The film *Freedom* has also been dubbed in Swahili, the language spoken in East Africa. Ton Philips travelled with this film in 1962 and 1963 all around Kenya, just before independence, together with black and white Kenyans. The wide-scale screenings of this film have, according to Ton Philips, played a part in reconciliation between the warring parties and the achievement of independence in a peaceful manner. This history has been recounted by Inge Bryan in 'The Role of Moral Re-Armament in the transition from colony to republic in Kenya (1960-1963)', doctoral thesis General History, University of Leiden, 30 August 1999.

14. In chapter 6 I will expand on this.

15. The text of the foreword to *World Labour and Caux* can also be found in Peter Howard's *The World Rebuilt*, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1951. The radio broadcast by Evert Kupers about MRA was on 5 October 1951, 20.40 till 21.00, Hilversum 2, de VPRO.

16. *Victoria Biscuits-Chocolat*, by Didier Sutter, published by Drukker, Paris, 2008, p.255-258. And *The World Rebuilt* by Peter Howard, p.85-86.

17. Cor and Sijtje de Pous told their story to Bert de Loor, which he recorded on tape, but did not use for his book.

## CHAPTER 5

# Germany and Indonesia: a next door neighbour and a far friend

There are two countries that require a special chapter. With the Netherlands' big next door neighbour, Germany, the relationship after the war had become one of resentment and mistrust. And in the case of Indonesia, with whom our country shared a 350-year history, the relationship entered a new phase after an independence struggle which marked some of our history's blackest pages.

### 'To wish all Germans well'

The first Dutch contacts with Germany in the spirit of Moral Re-Armament were made by young people.<sup>1</sup> They had joined an international action group from the conference centre in Caux that had been invited to Germany by the new democratic German governors and politicians. Some of these Dutch young people had postponed their studies to do this.

One of them was Peter Hintzen, who went on to become the leader of MRA in the Netherlands. In a book he later wrote about Germany, he offered a personal description of what these visits to Germany entailed.<sup>2</sup> 'Our team had been invited by the new leaders of Western Germany, such as Karl Arnold, Prime Minister of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. We came with musicals and plays; there were discussion meetings. It was not easy. In spite of my good will, I was full of resentment. The occupation, the bombing of my city Rotterdam, the hunger winter, the fact that my brother had been imprisoned in Buchenwald concentration camp, all this determined my attitude. Whenever I saw a fat German or a nice Mercedes, I thought: there they are

again! After a while I realised that things could not go on in this way. With this kind of contempt I could not properly be part of this programme. I saw that I had put myself as it were on an elevated throne and looked down on the German “Untermenschen”. Then I took a very simple decision, and that was to wish all Germans well. That changed me. When I opened my heart and my ears, I heard what I had not wanted to know: what many Germans had gone through.’ Hintzen recounts how he lived and worked in Germany for many years. As a 21-year-old student he got to know and work with young Germans of the same age. Some of them had been part of the *Hitler Jugend* (Hitler youth). Many of them had been recruited right at the end of the war and were now looking for something new.

Many contacts were made in the Ruhr, at that time the industrial heart of Germany. The visitors got to know many miners and workers in the steel industry as well as opening dialogues with the trade unions, the employers and the authorities. The damage from the war was enormous, but people were working very hard to rebuild the shattered economy. The communists had a big following among the workers and it was generally assumed that their aim was that West Germany, and especially the Ruhr area, would join the Soviet bloc along with East Germany – or at least be neutral and not side with Western Europe and the USA. We can hardly imagine it now, but the world war was only just over and there was a lot of uncertainty about which way things would go.

A mining company made available, free of charge, a large historic house in Castrop-Rauxel for MRA conferences and meetings. The theme of these was how to build democracy, how communist and non-communist workers could find a united basis to work on and how workers and employers would work together for the reconstruction of Germany. Another company made office space available in Gelsenkirchen. Many young people from the international MRA team would stay for weeks on end with German families, often sleeping on a mattress in the kitchen or on a couch in the living room. That was often all there was. Betty Hintzen, Peter Hintzen’s elder sister, was one of

them. She found it very impressive, she says, that these Germans shared what they had with them. When she saw how they too had suffered, she did not dare to raise the subject of the war. But later when she found the courage to talk about it, she discovered that many Germans had no idea about the suffering the Dutch had experienced. It had to be explained what the occupation had meant for the Dutch. They were surprised to learn that the Dutch saw them as enemies. They did not have the remotest idea how deep the feelings ran. A lot of talking had to be done before they could find common ground.

### 'Answerable for the suffering'

Not only did many Dutch visit Germany. There were also visits in the other direction. Different MRA plays in the German language and with a German cast were invited to the Netherlands. In May 1954, on the initiative of Dirk de Loor, Mayor of Delft, several performances took place. Possibly these were the first plays in the German language to be seen in the Netherlands after the war. At the end of 1956 there were further performances by German amateur actors. These were plays which had been translated from English into German, like *Der Chef* (The Boss).

In 1959 a group of miners from the Ruhr came to the Netherlands with a play they had written themselves, called *Hoffnung* (Hope). The performances in Rotterdam and The Hague were a success. There was no charge for tickets and everyone could listen to the Dutch translation through Philips earphones. One of the actors was Max Bladeck, a former communist veteran. He spoke after the performance in Rotterdam, saying that he and his fellow actors wanted to be 'completely answerable for the suffering this country and this city had experienced from the east'. Also speaking was Dirk de Loor, whose father, a former dock worker, had died during the hunger winter. 'I understand that many of us have watched the Germans with suspicion....But I have lost my mistrust and hate towards the Germans, because I know that it is possible for a new Germany to arise, built on the people who are standing behind me on the platform.'

The performances got a good press. The reviews wrote about an enthusiastic audience, who gave the miners a standing ovation after they had asked forgiveness for their part in the war. The communist party paper *De Waarheid* (The Truth) however was not so happy with the play, writing about 'so-called miners', 'an anti-communist play' and 'bragging songs'. It also 'revealed' that the author of *Hoffnung*, Hans Hartung, had been a member of the SS. But that was actually no secret at all. The purpose of MRA's actions in Germany had been to convince both fascists and communists that there was a better idea than the totalitarian ideologies they had adhered to. Whenever people had been honest about the past, wiped the slate clean and were ready to commit themselves to a better way, this was judged positively. But *De Waarheid* and the CPN (Communist Party in the Netherlands) were not alone in disagreeing with this approach. The commander of the Royal Military Academy (KMA) in Breda wanted to invite a former communist from the Ruhr who worked with MRA to speak to the cadets. When the BVD (internal intelligence service) got wind of this, it was prohibited at the last moment. It seems that, according to the BVD, someone who had once been a communist could never to be trusted and it was considered a state security risk to have the cadets meet him.

### Food for Germany

The previous chapter dealt with the normalisation of the relationship between Germany and its former adversaries. Germany quickly became part of the family of nations by virtue of being one of the founding members of the European Union and also by joining NATO in 1954. So politically we became allies. Yet on the personal level for a long time there remained deep differences and mistrust. These gradually receded, but can still crop up even to this day, for example at football matches!

In 1998 – over 50 years after the end of the war – the Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok invited the German Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl to visit Rotterdam. Kohl used the opportunity to apologize profusely for the German actions in the war and

for the bombing of the city he was visiting. I know of no other country that has gone so far in facing squarely and admitting its past wrong-doings, or one that has so often apologized and done so much to put things right. This country deserves a big hearted approach, and fortunately many Dutch have been able to show that.

Immediately after the war, however, this was not so obvious and a lot of courage and determination was needed, as Egbert de Vries discovered. De Vries, then a professor at the Agricultural University of Wageningen, had come across the ideas of the Oxford Group and MRA when he lived in the Dutch Indies before the war. When he returned to the Netherlands after his internment in Japanese concentration camps he remained faithful to these ideas. At one point straight after the war, in spite of the fact that food was still rationed, there was a surplus of vegetables in the Netherlands. Would they simply be removed from the market, as would have been the case before the war? De Vries knew that our eastern neighbours were very short of food. He had the idea that the surplus vegetables should go to Germany. This suggestion met considerable resistance. For many the concept of doing something to help the Germans was unthinkable. Yet he persisted. One of his MRA colleagues came to his aid. Henk van den Broek was well known for his regular broadcasts, under his nickname 'De Rotterdammer', from London for the underground radio Oranje (Orange). Now he gave a radio broadcast entitled 'Throwing away or giving away?' The then Minister of Agriculture, Sicco Mansholt, took the idea on board and the Government decided to cooperate. And so it happened that the surplus food went to Germany.

We human beings tend to find it easier to see where we have been wronged, than where we have wronged others. In this context the expression 'The bottom has a longer memory than the boot' speaks volumes. The Dutch are no exception. We welcome apologies from Germans or Japanese, but when it comes to apologizing ourselves we find it hard going, as will be obvious from the rest of this chapter.

## Japanese camps in Indonesia

As I have described, the ideas of the Oxford Group and MRA had resonated with many in the Dutch Indies before the war. The interest of Queen Wilhelmina had been a help in this. Initially these ideas spread among the Dutch there, but it wasn't long before Indonesian government officials and educators became involved. When the Japanese occupied the Dutch Indies all these activities came to a standstill. Many Dutch were interned by the Japanese. There are stories of people who found that their experiences of the Oxford Group gave them courage and strength in the extremely difficult conditions in the camps.

Trudes and Gusta Voorhoeve, for example. Trudes Voorhoeve had worked for 11 years as a construction engineer in the Dutch Indies when the Japanese invaded. He and his wife Gusta were interned in different camps. After four and a half years of deprivation they miraculously found each other again. They were assigned the garage belonging to a house as living quarters. The house itself was occupied by the Yusuf family. He was a Major in the Indonesian army. This was the world upside down compared to the situation before the war. The Voorhoeves, however, turned to a habit which had individually been their main support in the camps – to listen in quiet to their inner voice. They decided to befriend the inhabitants of the house. That friendship produced a chain reaction. The Yusufs became interested in MRA. He was in charge of a hospital and discovered that money that was earmarked for the patients had disappeared into the pockets of some other board members. He dealt with the corruptness of that situation. The Voorhoeves returned to the Netherlands, but the friendship with the Yusufs lasted their lifetime.

Back in the Netherlands they took an active part in the programme of MRA. One of the things that those from the Dutch Indies who had been in Japanese camps felt especially concerned about was the relationship with Japan. The resentment for the suffering was deep. What made it worse was the lack of interest in the Netherlands for what their countrymen

had gone through in a far-off place. The country was too preoccupied with what had happened nearer home and with what the Dutch in the German concentration camps had gone through. So this largely unrecognised and unhealed suffering erupted when it was announced that the Japanese Emperor Hirohito, for many the symbol of the Japanese cruelty, was to pay a state visit to the Netherlands in 1971.

A wave of anger and indignation washed over the country. Yet, some like the Voorhoeves had the courage to strike a different note. In spite of the suffering they had themselves experienced in the Japanese camps, they did not want to hold onto resentment and hate. To coincide with the visit they organised a series of meetings which asked how Europe and Asia could be partners for a new world. Former prisoners from the Japanese concentration camps spoke, people who had reason to hate and be resentful. A woman whose husband perished in the camps; a mother whose little son had died in front of her eyes. This mother told how she had lost her hatred towards Japan after she met Japanese who had asked her forgiveness for what their country had done to her and other Dutch in Indonesia. 'We have all come out of the war more or less wounded', she said, 'but I know that these wounds can be healed if we are prepared to forgive those who have inflicted them, and we do not keep scratching the scars open.'

It takes time to heal wounds from the past. And the question of the relationship with Japan remained a sore point, liable to re-surface at any time. For example it became an issue again when the son of Hirohito, Emperor Akihito, visited the Netherlands in 1999 to commemorate the 400-year relationship between the two countries. (The Netherlands was the first, and for a long time the only, western country to trade with Japan and had a trading base on the island of Decima.) A Japanese professor who came to live in the Netherlands in 1991 was surprised to learn about the strong feelings towards his country. He came to know the victims of Japanese aggression and started to work with them for reconciliation. But I will tell their story in a later chapter.

## Victims and culprits

The relationship between Indonesia (since 1945 the name for what used to be called the Dutch East Indies) and the Netherlands is very complicated and cannot be described in simple black and white terms. I have painted above a picture of the Netherlands and Japan, where, in the Dutch Indies, the Dutch were the victims. But if you look at the former colonizer and the former colony, then the Netherlands emerges as the culprit and Indonesia the victim. Many Dutch, of course, did not see it this way. They were so used to the fact that the Dutch Indies were part of the kingdom, that they just could not comprehend the justifiable wish of Indonesia to be independent. A factor which made things more complicated was that certain parts of the Dutch Indies, like West Papua and the Moluccas, did not want to become part of Indonesia. They expected help from the Netherlands to gain their own independence. But due to various circumstances, not least the international political situation, the Netherlands was unable to fulfil these expectations. I will come back to this later, too.

After the war, the world had changed. The time when European countries would rule over other countries in far-away parts of the world was over. But it took several years for the Netherlands to accept that this also applied to their favourite colony, the Dutch Indies. For many it was more than a colony. It was part of the kingdom, with many interwoven strands in literature, culture and language. For this reason the Netherlands did not accept Indonesia's unilateral declaration of independence on 17 August 1945. The Netherlands sent in troops for what we called a 'police action' and the Indonesians called 'Dutch aggression' and several years of bloodshed followed. On 27 December 1949 the Dutch officially handed over sovereignty to the Indonesians. For many years in the Netherlands this date marked the independence of Indonesia. It took till 17 August 2005, at the 60th anniversary, for the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Ben Bot to recognise, on behalf of the whole country, the Indonesian date (17 August 1945) as the official foundation

date of the Republic of Indonesia. In his speech he apologised for the 'unnecessarily painful and violent separation of our two countries'.

As I said, it is easier to see where we ourselves have been wounded, than where we have wounded others. It was, and still is, difficult for the Dutch to face up to the black pages in our history – although less so now. And there are many who have done so. We are proud of our country's enterprising spirit. Our forebears sailed the seas, set forth on dangerous journeys, 'discovered' new lands, traded with the whole world. But as colonizers we also oppressed people or treated them as second class citizens. And as slave traders we treated people as less than human. Our heroic deeds figure prominently in our history books. But there is much less space for the other side – colonisation and the slave trade. We are shocked that Japanese do not learn in their school text books about the atrocities of their army during the Second World War. But we should learn much more about our own black pages. The people from Suriname, themselves descendents of slaves, who live in the Netherlands, are helping us to face up to this past of ours. They want the Dutch to understand why they are here. Partly thanks to their insistence, an institute was opened in 2003 aimed at keeping the memory of slavery and the slave trade alive. We now have monuments to commemorate the ending of the slave trade and in the new National History Museum there will be a section on this subject.

### Re-establishing a relationship

To come back to our relationship with Indonesia, the members of the MRA team in the Netherlands were among the first to accept the new situation concerning Indonesia and try to build bridges between the two peoples. They made contact with Indonesians who came to the Netherlands for study or to confer with the Dutch government.

In 1949 a major round table conference was held in the Netherlands to settle the conditions for Indonesian independence. The Indonesian ministers and diplomats who had come for the

negotiations had brought their wives with them. Charlotte (Lotty) van Beuningen discovered that there was no programme provided for the wives. She formed a special welcome committee to fill the gap. The Indonesian wives, among them the ladies Hatta, Sjahrir, Maramis and Sastroamodjojo, would come for tea in her home in Wassenaar, near The Hague. The house, where Lotty van Beuningen had moved after the death of her husband, was used for MRA activities. After tea they would all board a hired bus for visits to schools, agencies engaged in social work, various factories that held an interest for them and the flower auction in Aalsmeer. Lotty van Beuningen later wrote about these days: ‘The relationship between our countries was, after the “police actions”, very awkward and it took a lot of hard work to get this done, but, maybe because of that, our small token of warm-heartedness and respect made a deep impression on our guests. As a result of this our committee was invited to attend the last session of the conference. There it was openly acknowledged, I think it was by Dr Mohammed Hatta, how much our care for the ladies had contributed to an atmosphere where amicable consultation was possible.’ This initiative led in some cases to friendship which would last for years, as was the case with Mrs Hatta, the wife of the Vice-President of independent Indonesia.<sup>3</sup>

### Commotion in Baguio

Dirk de Loor, Mayor of Delft since 1951, was one who became involved, through his contacts with Indonesians in the Netherlands. This involvement increased when, in 1958, he attended an international MRA conference in Baguio, Philippines. There Japanese politicians and senior civil servants apologized to the Filipino people for Japanese behaviour in the war. A delegation from Indonesia was also present. Although these Indonesians were fluent in the Dutch language, they refused to speak it with the Dutch who were there and kept their distance. This was a clear signal that they had neither forgotten nor forgiven the colonial past and the ‘police actions’.

Dirk de Loor wrestled with this as a Christian and a social

democrat. Was there something that God, or his conscience, was telling him on this issue? The apologies of the Japanese went through his mind and heart. He pondered how we Dutch are proud of the achievements of our country, even when they owed nothing to any merit of ours. Should we not likewise feel some responsibility for what has been wrong? He recalled that many Dutch, from different political parties, had admitted privately that, though the Dutch had done many good things, they had also done some bad, very bad, things in Indonesia. Examples that come to mind include the Boven-Digoel camp, where the Dutch had imprisoned Indonesian nationalist leaders without trial, and the violent 'police actions' after the war with the disproportionate loss of life entailed.

At the next session of the conference De Loor spoke about his inner wrestling and asked the Indonesians present for forgiveness for the superior attitude of the Dutch and for the black pages in the Indonesian history that his people had written. He called on the Indonesians to work together on a new basis. This triggered the Indonesians present to apologize for their feelings of bitterness. One of them said, 'I have blamed the Dutch for everything that is wrong with my country. But with a heart full of bitterness I cannot do anything for my country.' De Loor answered, 'Together we can make the black pages of our history white again'.

At the end of the session the Indonesian delegates came to shake his hand and suddenly began talking to him in Dutch. Among them were Police Commissioner Soemarsono and his wife and Ario Piereno, President of the Indonesian National Youth Front. The Philippine radio broadcast all this and when the Indonesian Ambassador in Manila heard about it, he rushed to Baguio to talk with De Loor. 'I have never heard a Dutchman ask for forgiveness', was his comment.

Via the international press agencies, the news of De Loor's apology quickly reached the Netherlands where it led to a storm of protest. This was partly because the information had reached the Netherlands in a distorted form. But even when what really happened had been clarified, there was fierce debate as to

whether a country could make moral mistakes and whether one could ask forgiveness for them. No less than 120 leading articles appeared and hundreds of letters to the press were sent in. Pros and cons were heard. One of the arguments of the pros was that we did expect and appreciate apologies from Germany and Japan! The cons said it was a disgrace that a public figure like De Loor had besmirched Dutch history while abroad. He was also ridiculed. Some even insisted that De Loor should be sacked as Mayor of Delft and Member of the Senate, but neither Government nor Parliament even considered this demand. But he did have to clarify his attitude in many places, including in the Senate, where he represented the Socialist Party from 1955 till 1969. He was also summoned by the Minister of the Interior to account for his actions. In the Second Chamber Prime Minister Drees had to field questions about the apology.

The extent of the uproar illustrates the sensitivity of the issue. What made it more complicated was that many Dutch sided with the Papuan and Moluccan people and were indignant about the Indonesian Government's treatment of these ethnic groups. In other words: why apologize to a victim who is also a culprit? Which all goes to show that in this world there is no clear distinction between culprits and victims. We all have something of both in us, which is a sobering thought.

When, soon after the conference in Baguio, the relationship with Indonesia reached a new low over the deportation of the 50,000 Dutch who were still living there, De Loor decided he should visit Indonesia. He asked Jap de Boer and Lotty van Beuningen to go with him. It was remarkable that they were able to obtain visas, since the Dutch were not welcome at that time. Lotty van Beuningen was received by Mrs Hatta and the other ladies she had entertained in her home 10 years earlier. In the week they were in Jakarta they met six people in leading positions. They told them that their aim was to find a solution to the problems between the two countries. Lotty van Beuningen later recounted, 'We spoke very frankly about the reasons for Indonesian bitterness against the Netherlands. One point which was mentioned most frequently was that we had done far

too little to provide for education, especially at the secondary and university level. They felt that we had deliberately wanted to keep their people uneducated. Another grievance was that, no matter what academic grade they reached, they were never paid the same salary as a Dutchman on a corresponding level. On the other hand, these leaders, who had all studied in the Netherlands, spoke with the utmost regard and appreciation of their teachers in the Netherlands. They hinted that they still felt the closest links with the Dutch, as well as being very much at ease with them.'

During this 1959 visit some highly placed Indonesians proposed a plan to bridge the gap in understanding between the two governments. The idea was that each government would appoint two or three trusted people to serve on a special committee. This would meet in a neutral place to work out differences away from the gaze of the press. Those putting forward the plan were convinced an agreement could be found. Back in the Netherlands De Loor, De Boer and Lotty van Beuningen passed on this proposal to some cabinet ministers and members of parliament. This led to a request to report on the visit to Prime Minister Beel. Sadly no further official action resulted.<sup>4</sup> Other prominent Dutch like Frits Philips, who were inspired by MRA, also made suggestions to the government on how to build trust with Indonesia, but also to no avail. On the personal level however people continued to build bridges.

### The message of Linggarjati

In December 2006, with my husband, I visited Indonesia for the first time. When our plane landed, a wave of emotion came over me. I was about to set foot in the land to which my grandparents had moved in 1919 and where my mother spent her youth. Everywhere you are confronted with history that our countries share. One cannot escape the memory of the Dutch presence in the buildings, railways, language, infrastructure etc. The legacy of the violent independence movement is also visible everywhere. In virtually every town there is a monument recalling the struggle and honouring the Indonesian heroes. I am glad that,

on 17 August 2005, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernhard Bot, expressed our country's regret for what had happened, saying that the violence that occurred between 1945 and 1949 had been unnecessary. It is true that it was unnecessary. Things could have been very different if the 1946 Linggarjati draft agreement had been accepted and implemented by the Dutch Government.

Linggarjati, West Java, is on the slopes of the Tjeremai volcano, half an hour from the big harbour city of Cirebon. There in late 1946 a series of meetings took place between an official delegation from the Netherlands Government and the unilaterally-declared Republic of Indonesia. The subject was the future status of the country. The fact that the Dutch conferred with the Indonesians meant in fact that they accepted them as equal partners. This was astonishing if one realises that the Indonesian nationalists who came to negotiate had earlier been seen as rebels and had been imprisoned by the Dutch – some in the infamous Boven-Digoel camp. The leader of the Dutch delegation was Willem Schermerhorn, Prime Minister of the post-war extra-parliamentary cabinet (1945/1946). Sutan Sjahrir led the Indonesian delegation. Before the war, as the founder of the Indonesian Socialist Party, he had been imprisoned and then exiled for many years for his nationalist activities. After the war he was appointed Prime Minister (1945-47) by President Sukarno.

The negotiations took place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This is evident from the actual draft agreement. This envisaged the Netherlands Indies becoming The Federal Republic of the United States of Indonesia in a union with the Netherlands and with the Dutch Queen as the Head of State. Unfortunately on their return the Dutch delegation failed to find sufficient backing in Parliament for the agreement to be ratified. In fact our Parliament amended the agreement in a way the Indonesians could not accept. In July 1947 the Dutch Government revoked the agreement and embarked on the intervention which is referred to in our history text books as the 'police action'. The result was three years of bloodshed and many lost lives.

The Linggarjati agreement is known better by Indonesians than by us Dutch. They learn about it in their history lessons; we don't. The house in which the meetings took place is now a museum. Joty ter Kulve-van Os, whom we met in an earlier chapter, happened to grow up in this house. Her father, Koos van Os, built it for his family in 1930. On one of his visits to Indonesia, Joty's brother Willem discovered that their parental home had been made into a museum. He and Joty decided to support it. In the Netherlands they initiated the 'Friends of Linggarjati' association, with the aim of supporting the museum. They also want to encourage the many Dutch who visit Indonesia to make the detour to visit Linggarjati.

The museum's aim is to commemorate this historic occasion and keep alive the spirit of respect and openness in which the talks took place. It is an example of the prevalence of the spirit of dialogue and human goodwill. People with very different perspectives – some of the Indonesian delegates had been imprisoned by the Dutch – talked and listened until they found agreement. The Linggarjati Agreement was the *de facto* recognition of the Republic of Indonesia by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It recognised the right of self-determination after centuries of domination. The fact that it was not implemented does not make it less significant. Learning more about this can help Dutch people to see the Indonesian perspective and strengthen the ties between the two peoples. Sadly, we in the Netherlands know too little about this episode of our past.

Today the museum is also supported by the Dutch Government. This was apparent on 11 November 2006 when the 60th anniversary of the agreement of Linggarjati was commemorated in the presence of the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hasan Wirajuda, the Dutch Ambassador to Indonesia, Nicolaas van Dam, Bupati (Mayor) Haji Aang Hamid Suganda of Kuningan, to which Linggarjati belongs, and 600 other guests. The spacious garden of the museum was venue to the event. Among the special guests from the Netherlands were Willem van Os, his sister, Joty ter Kulve-van Os, and her son, Peter ter Kulve. At the occasion Wirajuda announced the cultural

agreement he was about to make with his Dutch counterpart Bernhard Bot.

In 2008 the Netherlands instituted a Dutch East Indies Remembrance Centre in Arnhem. Joty ter Kulve is happy about that, because, as she says, 'there is still a virtual Dutch East Indies. Its inhabitants live in the Netherlands and in other parts of the world – the Dutch Indies people, the Moluccans, the Papuans and others. A Remembrance Centre will honour all the unacknowledged and drowned sorrow in the Far East. It will also be a place of hope, strength and victory, because we, the citizens of that now virtual country, have rebuilt our lives and have become world citizens.'

The special relationship with Indonesia remains. Joty sums it up like this: 'For me and for at least a million Dutch, Indonesia is not like other countries. It is the country where our forebears have worked and are buried.' I myself am in that category. There are many things in our colonial past we can and should be ashamed of. Apart from the violence, there was the injustice and unequal treatment of the Indonesians. But things are never fully black or white. Many, many Dutch, like Joty's parents and my grandparents, gave the best years of their life to the country where they worked, designed, built, planted. As the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs said at the 60th commemoration of Linggarjati, 'We have a common heritage of 350 years, and we need to look after it. To be able to do that together we need to know and learn from the past and appreciate the viewpoint of the other.' A good way to do that is to visit the museum at Linggarjati, as we did.

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1. Apart from what is mentioned in the notes below for this chapter I made use of information that I received from Betty Gunning-Hintzen, Aad Burger and Joty ter Kulve-van Os. Also I have taken information from the doctoral thesis by Jeroen van der Kris, *Morele Herbewapening in de jaren vijftig – een idee waarvoor de tijd gekomen was* (Moral Re-Armament in the fifties – an idea for which the time had come), Erasmus University

Rotterdam, 1994. Van der Kris had full access to the archives in the office of MRA in The Hague. And I have made use of reports in the Dutch MRA periodical *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* (New World News) numbers 6 and 8, 1971 and 7 and 8, 1972

2. P Hintzen, *Duitsland – bewogen hart van Europa, een beknopte geschiedenis* (Germany – troubled heart of Europe, a brief history) , Nijmegen, Sun, 1996, p.224-226

3. Charlotte van Beuningen, *Een nieuwe wereld voor onze kleinkinderen*, Ten Have, Amsterdam 1969. English edition *A New World for our Grandchildren*, Himmat Publication Trust, p.93-94 in the English edition.

4. Idem, p.163-168.

## CHAPTER 6

# From revolutionary youth to lively families

The swinging Sixties marked a turning point after the post-war years of reconstruction. The pre-war generation that had worked single-mindedly to rebuild society was being replaced by a new generation. After years of economizing there was suddenly prosperity for everyone. One result of television entering everyday life was that some politicians fell off their pedestals. When seen on television, it turned out that they were very normal people – just like anyone else. And then there was the issue of Vietnam. In this war, the first to be televised, a totally different United States of America appeared from the one that had saved our country at the end of the Second World War. Those in authority in the Netherlands were seen as accomplices of the American war coalition. In sum, people started to look differently at old values and certainties. The church became less central in public life and society became increasingly secularised, a development which many people watched with concern.<sup>1</sup>

In many parts of the world groups of young activists began to revolt against those in authority. The post-war generation which had been brought up in prosperity grew increasingly critical of this same prosperity. There was an atmosphere of idealism in the air. A more just, peaceful and sustainable world should be possible. I am from that generation and remember that clear belief we had that we could and we would change the world. That is why, as a student, MRA appealed to me. It seemed a very logical next step. And what MRA said was, if you

want to change the world, of course the place to start is with yourself.

The two main issues on the minds of myself and my friends were democratisation of the universities and the war in Vietnam. We were for the first and against the latter! In countries like France and Germany the student revolt led to fiercer actions than in the Netherlands. Here they took a less threatening (and sometimes even playful) turn – occupations of universities, demonstrations, and the so called ‘sit-ins’ and ‘teach-ins’. In a sit-in the students would sit down on the floor of an auditorium or lecture room *en masse* and just occupy it. A sit-in could easily turn into a teach-in, when people not only sat down, but discussed topical issues and planned next steps. I remember vividly one such a teach-in when we discussed the war in Vietnam.

This was also the time that Mao Zedong sought to mobilise discontent by urging the youth of China to become standard bearers for the Cultural Revolution. The experiment was to cost millions of lives and turned out to be a disaster for the development of China.

In Moral Re-Armament, too, the atmosphere and tone was again gradually changing. This change coincided with a change in the international leadership. Frank Buchman died in 1961. After his death, the Englishman Peter Howard, formerly a journalist with *The Daily Express*, assumed the leadership. Howard had been working closely with Buchman since 1950. The way Howard got in touch with Buchman is noteworthy. Howard wanted to get at the ‘truth’ about MRA and write a damning article about it. He interviewed Garth Lean, one of Buchman’s close associates, and tried to get to know the movement from inside. But he was totally unprepared for what happened next. He found himself becoming more and more interested. An agnostic, Howard found a faith in God and started to play a leading role in MRA. In his book *Innocent Men* he told what happened. Its publication cost him his well-paid job at *The Daily Express*. Howard used his writing talents to the full to spread the message of MRA to a broader public. His books and

articles had a wide readership. His bestseller *Ideas Have Legs* was published in 13 countries and languages. The Dutch version ran to three editions and introduced many in the Netherlands to Moral Re-Armament. I mentioned in chapter 4 that this was the book that was passed around Age van Randen's secondary school. It was also the first MRA book that I read, and it struck me because of its authenticity. Howard wrote many plays and musicals, some of which were filmed. His sudden death in 1965 brought his creative leadership to a premature end.

### The longing of young people

In the early 1960s Peter Howard spent considerable time in the USA. A series of speaking engagements at American universities revealed to him the longing in young people to do something meaningful with their lives. He realised that MRA's current way of working did not sufficiently meet this longing. The somewhat formal and 'dignified' style in which the conferences in Caux, Switzerland, and in the American conference centre on Mackinac Island, in Northern Michigan were held was too far away from the world in which young people lived. At Howard's instigation (from 1964) youth conferences were organised in Mackinac in a different style. In the dining room small tables made way for long trestle tables, self-service was introduced instead of formal restaurant-style service. The whole atmosphere was more like a youth camp, with a variety evening at the end for which songs and sketches were performed by, among others, three talented American country and western singers, the Colwell Brothers.

The Colwell Brothers, Steve, Paul and Ralph, had worked for 11 years outside their own country with MRA. They had gone to take part in a conference in Caux in 1953. Their music was a hit – not only their country and western repertoire, but also the new songs they wrote on the core themes of MRA and special ones to welcome delegates from different countries. They sang in French to Robert Schuman (French Foreign Minister from 1948 till 1952) who was taking part in the conference in Caux that summer in 1953.<sup>2</sup> At the end of their stay they

were invited by Frank Buchman to be part of his international travelling full-time team. After a lot of inner turmoil they agreed, which meant saying no to pursuing their musical careers in the States. The youngest brother, Ralph, had not even finished his secondary school! For the next years they travelled the world, enhancing the impact and appeal of MRA with original songs in numerous languages. Frank McGee wrote about them in *A Song for the World*. I found the chapter about their turbulent year (1960) in the Congo especially moving. For more than a decade they lived in many countries outside their own. When they returned to the USA in 1964 they found a very different atmosphere from when they left. They modernized their repertoire, bought electric guitars and found themselves in the summer of 1964 in Mackinac amidst hundreds of enthusiastic youth, who were keen to do something constructive with their lives.<sup>3</sup>

A young Dutchman who experienced this invigorating atmosphere was Maarten de Pous, son of Cor and Sijtje de Pous. He was due to study physics at the Technical University of Delft. He had had good examination results and had been granted a scholarship. Just before starting his university career he spent the summer helping at the conferences in Caux, where he took a decision which changed the course of his life. 'It was 1959, at the height of the Cold War. Moral Re-Armament was seen as the alternative to communism. Everyone was needed to put flesh on this alternative way,' he said later. So instead of going to Delft, at the age of 18 he left for Mackinac Island, where he helped build a film studio. This film studio was planned to enable the message of MRA to reach ever greater numbers of people through plays and films. The construction work took two years. After that he became assistant-cameraman and helped film MRA plays and conferences.

De Pous describes the atmosphere in the USA at that time as one charged with enthusiasm and idealism. Peter Howard had a vision for the American youth. He advocated American freedom and democracy – but with a moral backbone – as the alternative to Marxism.

## Make your own Sing-Out

In the summer of 1965 more than a thousand young people had gathered for a youth conference on Mackinac Island. They were joined by a plane full of 150 youth from Europe, among them a group from the Netherlands. It was an unprecedented coming together of enthusiasm, talent and creativity. Out of all this and led by the Colwell brothers, a musical show was born entitled *Sing-Out*, the lead song of which – *Up with People!* – became an immediate hit. A year later three Sing-Outs, involving hundreds of people from different countries, were on tour, two in the USA and one in Japan. The preparation of the tours, the logistics, the finding of sponsors and host families was all done by the participants themselves. Young people who came to the main Sing-Out performances were encouraged to start their own show, helped by a book with texts and music: *Make your own Sing-Out!*

Maarten de Pous accompanied Sing-Outs in the USA from 1965 till 1968. In those years 150 local casts of the show were active, and scores more sprang up across the world. For two years he worked in New Mexico and Arizona, where he cooperated closely with young people and leaders of the Native American people. His task, and that of the other coordinators, was to help with the production and the content of the Sing-Out shows.

The show and the songs had a general positive message. The idea was that with the appeal of music and a good deal of optimism one could inspire people to commit themselves to build a better world. Among the more experienced workers for MRA, especially in Great Britain, there were raised eyebrows at this approach, which was seen as superficial, perhaps even inadequate. They feared that the full depth of what MRA stood for was not being adequately conveyed. This difference in perception was given an extra dimension after the sudden death of Peter Howard early in 1965. The issue was no longer purely the content, but also the question of who would now be in charge. Who would be the successor of Peter Howard and the 'heir' to

lead MRA? And where would the headquarters be? People on both sides of the Atlantic felt they had the legitimate claim.

In 1967 Blanton Belk resigned his position as leader of MRA in the USA and in 1968 Up with People was incorporated as a non-sectarian, educational and cultural organisation with the mission of creating understanding across the world. Belk became its first President and remained in post for 25 years. Maarten de Pous, still working with MRA in the States at that time, says that one day it was simply announced that from then on the work of MRA would continue under this new name. It was stressed that it was only a change of name, not of aim. But the ties with the spiritual legacy of MRA became looser. This way Up with People and MRA grew apart.

### MRA and Up with People go their separate ways

It is Maarten de Pous's contention that both sides were the losers from parting company. If the two had stayed together, he believes, Up with People could have freed MRA from an often-too-rigid moral straitjacket, and in its turn MRA might have been able to contribute something to Up with People. As it was, the breach prompted a number of people, both younger and older, who had worked with MRA till then, to go their own way. Often in the work of MRA, for the sake of the 'cause', too little attention was paid to nurturing the gifts of young people and to ensuring their development. For many finding work after so many years of unpaid voluntary work, and often with an uncompleted formal education, was not easy. Even so, thanks to their international experience, their spirit of service and their insight into human nature, many found responsible positions. Others stayed with Up with People where, from then on they received a salary. (The leaders of Up with People realised earlier than MRA that in the long run, with people starting families, renting or buying houses and becoming taxable members of society, it was necessary to provide salaries.) This applied to the staff of Up with People. The young people, often students, who took part in the shows, were expected to pay a participation fee. The duration of this participation had changed from an open-

ended commitment to a one-year enrolment. Up with People became very successful. At a certain point five different shows travelled the world. Highlights were performances in China in 1978 and in the Soviet Union in 1988, just before the fall of the Berlin Wall!<sup>4</sup> In 2000 Up with People suspended operations due to increasing costs. In 2004 there was a restart with a six months educational travel programme. Today there is a very active alumni organisation with more than 20,000 members.<sup>5</sup>

This split meant a temporary halt to MRA activities in the USA. Around 1975 there was a restart centred in Richmond, Virginia. Different important initiatives came out of that, such as Hope in the Cities and the Caux Scholars Programme.

### Imitation

Sing-Out and Up with People took root in a number of countries. Often this came with financial support from the USA, but not always. In Latin-America a young lawyer from Uruguay and his American wife, Omar and Jeanette Ibargoyen, founded *Viva la Gente*. Although this group had the same name as Up with People, from the very beginning it developed its own programme. As far as the content was concerned it stayed closer to MRA. It became an educational and cultural programme for young people that was wholly focussed on Latin America and was financially independent. At the end of the 1990s the name was changed to *Gente que Avanza*, which means People on the Move. The change was made to avoid confusion with Up with People, but also because Up with People forbade them to use the name *Viva la Gente*. *Gente que Avanza* is still active. Now they also welcome people from outside Latin America to join their yearly programme. In 2004 two Dutch girls took part, having learned Spanish for that purpose.

In 1999 40 members of *Gente que Avanza* accepted an invitation to the world conference centre in Caux in search of their spiritual roots. Since then there has been greater cooperation between this work in Latin America and the rest of the world network of MRA. Similar groups also sprang up in South Africa and in Kenya, with the respective names of *Springbok Stampede*

and *Harambee Africa*. In some countries like South Korea, Sing-Outs are still active.

The breach between MRA and Up with People/Sing-Out has had effects far beyond the USA. Wherever Sing-Outs were created you needed to decide to which 'camp' you wanted to belong. Sometimes this led to painful situations which, decades later, have continued to hamper the work of MRA. In the Netherlands there has never been a split. There was a Sing-Out here too, but that was part of the activities of MRA. Since then, over the years many painful experiences have been healed by renewed contact between former friends on either side of the Atlantic. After all, they had been through so much together in all those years of hard work and commitment, that it would be a shame not to look for rapprochement.

### Sing-Out in The Netherlands

During the autumn holiday in 1964 a newly married couple, Peter and Digna Hintzen, organised a Film Festival for young people. Student representatives from all secondary schools in the country were invited. The Hintzens rented a cinema in The Hague and one autumn Saturday young people came streaming in to watch a series of MRA films. In hindsight, admits Digna Hintzen, the programme was so packed full as to be almost indigestible. Each film taken separately was impressive enough, like the film *Freedom* about the battle for independence in Africa, filmed in Nigeria by one of Walt Disney's leading wildlife cameramen. But when all the films shown were taken together, the message of change, apology and reconciliation was perhaps over-concentrated.

Nevertheless the response was such that, in 1965, as a follow up of this festival a youth conference was organised. And some of the participants went on to the New Year conference in Caux. In the meantime some of the songs of *Sing-Out* had reached the Netherlands and their message struck a chord with the young people: freedom is not free, you need to pay a price by the way you live; one needs to have an aim in life that is worth living for; human beings are more valuable than anything else.

So the concept of a Dutch *Sing-Out* with Dutch songs was born. Some of the songs in it were translated from English numbers in the American show. There was a great deal of enthusiasm and talent. Young people brought their friends and once a month there was a rehearsal in the MRA centre near The Hague. The result was a lively show with songs and sketches, under the direction of Kees Driessen, who worked for KLM, the Royal Dutch Airlines. In his free time he was active in an amateur drama society. One of the motors of this show was medical student Peter Wolvekamp, son of Bert and Biny Wolvekamp. Peter kept in touch with the group and acted as their mentor. The cast performed in secondary schools around the country. A highlight was the performance in the summer of 1966 for Prime Minister Cals and his wife, in the garden of the 'Catshuis', the official residence in The Hague.

As a continuation of this *Sing-Out*, Peter Hintzen wrote a new musical play called *The Dutch Fun Fair (De Hollandse Kermis)*, the music of which was composed and performed by the participants. In the summer of 1967 the cast performed this in Caux, with a written translation in English. That summer a tragedy struck the group with the death of their key figure, Peter Wolvekamp, from a wasting disease which he had been fighting for some years. He was just 21. This blow and other factors saw the group fall apart, though some of them have stayed in close association with MRA till this day.

### Travelling shows

In 1968 Europe<sup>6</sup>, taking its lead from Paris, was under the spell of the student revolts. As opposed to the violent revolution proposed by Marx, Mao and Che Guevara, Moral Re-Armament offered a different revolution. Evil, it argued, is not confined to only one class. Everyone has greed and selfishness in them. If people were ready to apply to themselves the change they want to see in society, that would constitute a greater revolution. This idea appealed to a great number of European youth. Many were inspired by an Indian MRA musical revue called *India Arise* which toured Europe. In it young people from that great and

diverse subcontinent portrayed, in colourful song and dance, the vision they had for their country. In turn European youth were inspired to write their own revue, which they called *Anything to Declare?*. The title referred to the question one is asked by customs officers when entering a new country. Yes, we have something to declare, the actors sang. We want to declare that Europe needs to look outside its borders. The cast of some 50 from 19 countries travelled around Europe in 1968 and then embarked on a tour of Asia and Australia from 1969 till 1971.

It could be asked who benefited most from this tour, the many thousands who saw the show all over the world or the actors themselves? It could well be the latter. In the course of these years they formed a solid, closely-knit community and a large number of them have since taken responsibility for the work of MRA in different countries and have left a mark on it which is still visible today. The author of this book is one of them.

*Anything to Declare?* was partly inspired by *India Arise*. And in their turn, in 1973 another group of young people from all over Asia created a show called *Song of Asia*. This musical was created at Asia Plateau, the MRA centre in India just outside the village of Panchgani in the hills of Maharashtra. This show travelled for some years around the world, visiting many countries. Their visit to the Netherlands at the end of 1975 was a great success with sell-out performances in different cities. The cast stayed with Dutch families and met students and members of parliament. The show received good reviews in the main newspapers, which appreciated the true stories of how divisions were healed and hate overcome.

It is arguable that all these shows would not have happened without the inspiring example of the Sing-Outs and Up With People. The leadership of MRA in Europe were forced to think more creatively about how to engage their young people at home. The home-grown British musical *It's Our Country, Jack!* which toured Britain in 1966 and 1967 clearly had this aim. Some of its sketches and songs appeared again in *Anything to Declare?*. Greater inclusion of younger people was certainly passed on to MRA leadership in India and Australasia.

### *The black and white book*

Tapping into the optimism and idealism of young people who wanted to commit themselves to create a better world, MRA published *The Black and White Book*. The Dutch language edition was launched on 30 October 1973 in the Nieuwspoort press centre. The subtitle of the booklet was: 'for revolutionaries'. The little book had the same format as the then famous *Little Red Book* of Mao's thoughts and was presented as an alternative to it. It offered a revolution of hope, based on the experience of ordinary people who had dedicated themselves to work for an unselfish society.

*The Black and White Book* clearly wanted to address both the western and the communist world and appeal to the revolutionary élan among the young people. Che Guevara was quoted with approval: 'If our revolution is not aiming to change people, I am not interested.' The booklet related true stories of people who had started to change themselves and whose change brought about a chain reaction in their environment.

No matter how appealing this booklet is, giving the perspective of an ideal world, there are some weaknesses, which are understandable in the revolutionary spirit of that time. Given the urgency that people felt, there was no room for nuance. On the plus side is the fact that the booklet cut through the oversimplification that the communist world was bad and the western world was good. But then the answer provided was another simplification. It implied that if every one follows the standard method of change spelled out, success would be assured. But since people will never be perfect, there is a tension between the story as told and the reality. It could be that the world in that time was a bit more neatly arranged than it is now, but even then it can't always have been so easy to distinguish between good and bad. Even then there must have been stories which did not have a successful ending. Even then there must have been disappointment and failure, for which no one in particular could be blamed – just the obstinacy of human nature and the complexity of our world.

It would be good to weigh this, because there is a cost to over-simplification. The cost is the disappointment when things do not work out as suggested. The cost is the self-blame people feel if the reality they encounter is impervious to their best efforts to bring change.

*The Black and White Book* is great for its appeal to set off on the road to changing the world. And we definitely need stories to inspire us. But the next thing that is needed is some guidelines for what to do when things become difficult. How to overcome disappointment? And how to keep at it if success fails to occur?<sup>7</sup>

### Youth conferences in European cities

Anneco Adriaanse was one of the young Dutch who were behind the publication of the *The Black and White Book*. Her grandfather invited her to a meeting in Arnhem, not far from where she lived in the east of the Netherlands. She took along a group of her friends. At the meeting they heard other young people tell how, because they wanted to change the world, they had started with themselves in a very practical ways, for example, by taking back to a shop things they had not paid for. Anneco's friends were not particularly impressed. But for Anneco these stories struck a chord. Much later, when she had decided to make a clean slate herself, she went to a supermarket to pay back money for certain items she had not paid for. The shopkeeper appreciated the gesture, but found it difficult to know exactly how to account for it!

She started going to MRA meetings in the Netherlands and in Caux. What struck her most was the creativity. She was looking for an aim in her life. She felt life so far had not treated her well. Her boyfriend had committed suicide after she had broken off their relationship. Through MRA she found a faith in God. By working hard and doing her utmost to live according to God's standards she tried to forget what had happened. But the real healing of these tragic events happened only years later.

In those days large MRA youth conferences took place in different European cities, in which Anneco played an active part. The one in the Netherlands was held over Easter in 1976 in

Nijmegen, a 2,000-year-old city with a well-known university in the east of the country. Of the 200 participants, 55 came from Germany and 35 from England. Key note speaker Ludek Pachman, Czech chess grandmaster and freedom fighter, made a deep impression on everybody. The title of Pachman's speech was: 'From Marxism to a Christian revolution – what Europe needs and what I have experienced'. He told the European youth how he had looked to Marxism as the answer to fascism. But soon disappointment came, and his dream was completely shattered when in 1968 the 'socialism with a human face', better known as the Prague Spring, was violently crushed. During his subsequent imprisonment he returned to the Christian faith in which he was brought up. The answer to the communist threat was, Pachman told his young audience, a moral revolution. The problem of the West was the unchecked pursuit of profit, which weakened its will. But if the West so wanted it could overcome all its problems, because its spiritual and material potential was infinitely stronger than that of the Eastern bloc.

That summer 200 young people from 30 countries met in Caux and out of their combined conviction a musical show was created called *Time to Choose*. Because by that time Anneco had finished her studies she decided to join the small group with this production on their three month tour through Southern Africa. A year later she went back and worked with MRA in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

### Families: looking in, reaching out

The youth activities very naturally led to family ones. To see how these developed we need to go back to the film festival organised by the Hintzens in 1964. One of those who had attended was Marina Verhulst, then President of the Pupils' Council of her secondary school. Since then she had kept in touch and was one of the leading figures in *Sing Out Netherlands*. After graduating from the naval academy she married naval officer Kees Scheijgrond. When their children were small they began organising gatherings for families. Other parents they contacted soon became enthusiastic. Those involved quickly saw how

valuable it was to be able to exchange their experiences about family life, marriage and bringing up children with others who held the same values. Because bringing up children is something in which no one is an expert, all participants could learn from each other.

At that time in the 1970s the institutions of marriage and family were being questioned everywhere. In Dutch society there was a fierce battle for individual rights and the rights of women. These family conferences pleaded for men and women, fathers and mothers, to contribute to a new kind of society. Honesty about motives and feelings helped people to become clear about everyone's specific calling.

One of the participants in these conversations was Maria Driessen, a nurse and recently married to the Englishman Howard Grace. Howard is a talented photographer. At one weekend family conference, held in January 1977 in the MRA centre in The Hague, he started to take photographs of personalities and events of the weekend. The theme of the conference was: 'Away with the family, or with the family on the way to changed society?' Howard Grace also photographed the participants in their homes and let them tell their story. He put these different stories together in a 40-minute slideshow. In English it was entitled, '*Families: looking in, reaching out*'.<sup>8</sup> The message is that the family is not a fort that needs to be protected against the outside world, but rather a base of operations from which change and renewal can be brought to society.

### With the best of intentions

In this production the story is told of Riek de Boer-Leistra and her daughter Johanna. Riek's husband Jap had helped with the reconstruction of Mountain House in Caux in 1946, while Riek helped clean the interior of the building. They married in the early 1950s, their only daughter, Johanna, was born in 1959, and Jap and Riek had worked with MRA in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea during 1967 and 1968, leaving Johanna in the care of another Dutch family while they were away. Riek returned early from Australasia to rejoin her daughter, who was

not yet 10 years old. Jap was going to return via India. But the plane he took from Bombay to return home never arrived. Immediately after take-off it crashed. Riek says: 'After I received the news of my husband's death there was only one thing I could do: make a total surrender to God. I knew that if I gave in to myself and my distress it would mean complete desperation. This total surrender to God has been the key for me not to feel any bitterness, or to feel lost or useless. A year after the crash I received his wedding ring, which had been found in the debris. When I held this ring in my hands, it was as if God said to me: "When you gave everything to me, you trusted me to look after you. I will, to the smallest detail".'

Johanna's reaction was to escape into a dream world. She closed the door, totally shutting out her grief. 'It was a normal reaction', she now says. 'It was too painful to face. The door could only be opened when I was ready for it.' Eight years later at the Easter youth conference in Nijmegen in 1976, which I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Johanna felt ready to open the door. 'There,' she says, 'my eyes were opened. Suddenly – it was during the Easter vigil – I saw that I had put up a blockade and had become insensitive towards the distress of my mother. Later we had an honest talk, which gave me a new love towards her.'

This new relationship with her mother gave Johanna the chance to talk with her about an earlier traumatic period in her life. From 1963, when she was not yet four years old, till 1964, her parents had left her in the 'Caux school' in order to work in the Ruhr in Germany. Parents who felt called to work with MRA elsewhere in the world would sometimes leave children at this school. It was a real school with qualified teachers. The children were well looked after. But to the infant Johanna it seemed as if her parents had simply left her. Later she realised how difficult it must have been for them as well. When Johanna's own daughter was three years of age, Riek said to her: 'How on earth could I have done that?' 'It broke my mother's heart', Johanna says. 'My mother said that my father found it even harder.' Johanna thinks that enormous pressure must have been put on her parents to do this. The feeling of

urgency was intense. People were afraid Western Germany would fall prey to communism or that a third world war would break out. Because of their background, Johanna's parents had a natural link with workers and were therefore well suited to work in the Ruhr. Looking back, Johanna has understanding and respect for what her parents did. 'Who knows what would have happened to Germany if all these people had not made this kind of sacrifice? They did what they did with the best of intentions. I have forgiven my parents everything. In spite of everything I have had a great upbringing.'

### Family conferences in Caux

The slide show, *Families: looking in, reaching out* led, from 1979, to a series of annual family conferences during the summers at Caux. Just as so many young people coming to Mackinac changed the way things were done there, the influx of families led to big changes in the conferences in Caux. For one week there would be hundreds of grown ups and as many children around in the conference centre. That meant that children's beds and children's chairs had to be purchased. The conferences were initiated by the same people who were behind the family conferences in the Netherlands: Kees and Marina Scheijgrond, Peter and Digna Hintzen, Maarten de Pous and his English wife, Elisabeth de Pous-Davey. But they could never have done it without the very active support of other families from the Netherlands and from other countries!<sup>9</sup> The programme for the parents was not difficult to organise. There were enough interesting subjects they wanted to discuss. But it was more difficult to organise a programme for the children in the different age groups, not least because of all the translation that was needed. There was an endless flow of creativity to cater for all that. Every day started with a session for everyone where the puppets and clowns were special favourites.

After seven years, when the children of these families had grown up and some of them started to take part in separate youth conferences, this group ended the summer family conferences. In the meantime Caux had become a lot more child-

friendly, and from then on families with children were welcome all summer.

Between 1988 and 2000 another group of Dutch families started to organise family conferences in Caux – this time around Christmas and the New Year. Many of the themes were prepared in the Netherlands by a team of families led by my husband Johannes de Pous. Other families from different European countries joined us. A special feature was that parents and children, including teenagers and some in their early twenties, actively took part in constructing the themes, which were dealt with in all kinds of creative ways – through painting, acting, dance, writing, poetry, singing and music. The smaller number attending (maximum 200), the snow outside and the enormous open fire inside gave the conferences a homely atmosphere. For a few winters the Dutch children got a special treat from an older Swiss gentleman, Jacques Henri, who gave these children from a country without mountains skiing lessons. He personally made sure each of the children had the proper ski equipment. He gave them an unforgettable experience. Apart from the skiing there was skating, sledging and walking.

Christmas and New Year is celebrated in the different European countries in different ways. Participants brought to the conferences all these varied customs which were harmoniously joined together.

After 2000 another group of families from Switzerland, Austria and Germany started to organize winter conferences in Caux, where families are especially welcome. And from 2003 a group of families from Norway started to organise summer family conferences in Caux on alternate years. Pivot of this group was Camilla Nelson, who with her parents Jens and Klär Wilhelmsen, had taken part in the family conferences in the early 1980s, and now came with her own husband and children.

### The changing of the guard

As in Caux, MRA family activities continue in the Netherlands to this day. And here too from time to time there is a changing of the guard. The people who organise them now are not the

same as the group which started them. When the children grow up and leave home the baton is passed on to new parents with young children. Those parents often themselves took part in the earlier family conferences when they were children. The family days and weekends take place in an informal atmosphere. It is not all talk: young and old go out into the great out-doors for sport or games. Sometimes experts in a particular field are invited to speak on their subject, but often the participants themselves take care of the content from their own experience.

Paul Berkhout from The Hague, a restorer of antique furniture, is one of those who has organised family events since 1998. When asked why he was doing this, he said: 'The family for me is the symbol of security. I think my own past plays a role in this. When I was young my family at home was like a handful of loose sand. I learned how I did *not* want things to be. My own sense of lack of security has meant that I want to do it differently for my family. And I want to pass on what I have learned. That is why I am active in the family group.'

Another member is Uyên Lu, who came to the Netherlands as a 16-year-old boat refugee from Vietnam – the Netherlands because she happened to be picked up by a Dutch ship. She and her husband (who also came here as a boat refugee from Vietnam) and their two children live in Assen, in the north of the country, where she works for an insurance company. The ideas of Initiatives of Change (the name now used for MRA) and the way it is practised appeal to her and that is why she wants to play an active part. As a Buddhist she is especially interested in the subjects which are discussed in the family conferences. She and her husband have done extremely well in the Netherlands. At the time they arrived, refugees still received a warm welcome and there were plenty of facilities for schooling. She speaks perfect Dutch and seems totally integrated. Yet she does not want to immerse herself completely in our materialist society. The centuries-old wisdom she brought from the Far East helps her to keep a balance – something she hopes to pass on to her children.

The conviction that bringing up children is among the most important things that one can do is the reason that Lis de Pous

remains active in this group, even though her own children are grown up. She knows from her own experience how important it is for parents to share what they have learned. 'To bring up your own children is one of the biggest challenges of our time', she says. 'Parents and educators are searching how to fulfil their task. In our meetings, when we discuss relevant themes, they feel supported in their difficult task.'

A very special day was organised by the family group, with a theme that interested not only parents, but also the older teenager and young adults – lasting relationships. On a sunny day in June 2002 Paul and Els van Tongeren shared in a very open way their own experiences. Paul van Tongeren's heart beats for a better world. As Founder and Director of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention he tried to get those active in the field of peace-building to cooperate. But on this occasion he and his wife Els spoke about themselves. They shared the extraordinary story of how they had divorced after 30 years of marriage, and five years later remarried – each other. The way they spoke openly about the conflicts in their relationship and how they had found each other again moved the audience profoundly and led to deep discussions.

In 1944, when Paul was two years old, his father was executed by the Germans. His mother, who then had to leave the house with all her children, did not speak for the next 20 years of her life – right up until her death – because of the shock. Because of his disastrous youth, Paul said he had a piece of concrete with a lid on it somewhere in his heart. No one could reach that, not even Els. The shock of Els' departure broke this concrete open. After five years, they found each other again. Paul, who had never stopped loving Els, said: 'I found a new openness to Els. Through this change miraculous things happened in my work, for example finding office space and arranging for a Chair for Conflict Prevention in the University in Utrecht. I started a miracles note book.' Els added: 'Because we now have good communication, there is a new joy and happiness in our relationship. The fascinating aspect of such a relationship is that you bring out the subconscious in the other.'

We all have dark sides, which we do not take into account. In a good relationship these sides become discussable.’

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1. For this chapter I made use of information from *Een idee waarvoor de tijd gekomen is* (An idea whose time has come) by Peter Hintzen, reports from the MRA publication *NieuwWereld Nieuws* (New World News) and the IofC publication *Ander Nieuws* (Other News), interviews with Digna Hintzen-Philips, Maarten de Pous, Anneo Vrieling-Adriaanse, Jan van Nouhuys, Dieuwke Roodvoets-van der Veen, Johanna de Boer.
  2. Together with Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman drew up the internationally renowned Schuman plan, which he published on 9 May 1950. This date is now regarded as the birth of the European Union. He proposed a joint control of coal and steel production, the most important materials for the armaments industry. The basic idea was to put coal and steel production beyond the hands of any single nation, so that they would not be able to fight another war. He got the support of the German Chancellor Adenauer for the plan. In April 1951 six countries, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands signed the agreement for the European Coal and Steel Community. In the last chapter I will come back to the way the EU started as a peace initiative.
  3. Frank McGee, *A Song for the World – the Amazing Story of The Colwell Brothers and Herb Allen: Musical Diplomats, How Vision, Creativity and Commitment Sparked the Up with People Phenomenon*, Many Roads Publishing, Santa Barbara, 2007.
  4. Idem
  5. [www.upwithpeople.org](http://www.upwithpeople.org)
  6. I realise that when I speak about Europe at this time, it is western Europe that I refer to. Only after the fall of the Berlin Wall did Europe get a bigger dimension for us in the west, meaning the whole of the continent.
  7. *The Black and White Book* by Sydney Cook and Garth Lean was published in nine languages. In the Netherlands a group of nine young people were responsible for the publication.
  8. It was translated into eight languages, among those Indonesian.
  9. From the Netherlands the families Gunning, Overdijkink, Burger, Van der Zee, Van Nieukerken, Van Nouhuys, Geertsema, Roodvoets could be mentioned. And Erik and Sheila Andren and Pauline Strongman from England, Heinz and Gisela Krieg from Germany, Jens and Klär Wilhelmsen from Norway, Jean-Jacques and Marie-Lise Odier from France, Peter and Vroni Hegi from Switzerland.

## CHAPTER 7

# 'The steady growth of a new world'

'Here we present ourselves in a new outfit. Our intention is to bring you news about the steady growth of a new world.' These were the words with which *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* (New World News, *NWN*), a new fortnightly publication, introduced itself in January 1968. The 'new outfit' was referring to the fact that there had been earlier regular news letters in a different format.<sup>1</sup> The second sentence is very telling and says something of the atmosphere at that time. The issues of the magazine in those years breathe a belief in progress. Slowly but surely we are building a new world. It is just a question of time and commitment.

Idealism was in the air, and with it a strong belief that society could be changed for the better. This attitude was not confined to MRA circles. Society as a whole was permeated with it. It was fashionable to feel solidarity with the poor countries and peoples. Peter Hintzen called this trend 'third world mysticism'.<sup>2</sup> The trouble with idealism however is that it quickly evaporates if it does not have a solid base. This was, and is, the conviction of MRA.

Idealism needs to be based on the idea that change starts with oneself. And for the 'third world mystics' at that time, it needed to start with us in the west. Young people especially found creative ways to pass on this message. The idea that you could have a part in creating a new world was so appealing that many a young man or woman gave up study and career in order to work full-time with MRA without any financial security. There was this enormous sense of urgency: the world needs to be renewed – other forces are at work, there is no time to lose.

There is no time to finish your education first. Later, when people started to look more realistically at how far and fast it was possible to change society, some were sorry not to have finished their education.

The word 'ideology' was used, to emphasise that what was needed to create a new world was not a commitment just for the weekend or for your leisure time, but something that would involve your whole life. In contrast to the challenge of the communist ideology, which was out for world domination, the west with her permissive pragmatic society was regarded as being without an aim, and without an idea. We in the west were no match, unless we also had an ideology; an ideology which would be based on the values which had made western Europe great. And we had to live up to these values. This was the challenge that Ludek Pachman put to the young people at that Easter conference in 1968.

With this intense sense of urgency, mistakes were made. I mentioned the action with the booklet *Ideology and Coexistence*, the door-to-door distribution of which in 1959 had not had the desired effect. More disturbing, and because of the moralising tone leading to a lot of irritation, were the full-page newspaper advertisements in the beginning of the 1960s. They attracted widespread attention, because MRA was among the first to use this medium to carry a message like this. The problem was that, with one exception, all the advertisements were translated directly from English. It was taken for granted that what seemed the right thing to do in Britain, would also be needed and useful in the Netherlands. In those days MRA policy was largely decided by senior people in Britain and followed in other countries without further ado. This was certainly the case in the Netherlands. After the war many English full-timers worked in the Netherlands and had a big influence on how things were done.

The Cold War, which we were in the midst of, was the central theme of these advertisements. In England there had been political scandals, in which communist spies used homosexual and extra-marital heterosexual contacts. In some of the MRA

advertisements homosexuality and homosexual relations, which were then punishable in England, were roundly condemned. In those days homosexuality in the Netherlands, though not a punishable offence, was still taboo, but there was no reason to raise this matter in the Netherlands in such an aggressive way. This is apart from the fundamental question of whether it was and is right to pass such a moral judgement. Ironically the advertisements had an unintended effect. It is quite possible that this action of MRA has helped the homosexual cause in the Netherlands on the way. The negative effects of these advertisements have followed MRA and Initiatives of Change in the Netherlands till this day, because they are still in all the press archives. With every contact with the press this comes up and one has to answer questions about it.

### Snow White and the seven dwarfs

All this publicity had another effect. As in the years before the Second World War, MRA was again receiving nation-wide attention. Thanks to a new broadcasting law, it was possible for us to submit a request for broadcasting time to the responsible minister. To the surprise of many, she granted this. So between 1967 and 1972, with six others (among them the Humanist Alliance and the Society for Sexual Reformation), MRA became a small broadcasting licence-holder. The press referred to the seven as 'Snow White and the seven dwarfs', Snow White no doubt being the minister. It meant that MRA could produce 12 radio broadcasts per year along with three television broadcasts of 10 minutes each.

In these broadcasts the vision was given of a just new world, where people were inspired by a new spirit, and where moral values were taken seriously both in personal and in national life and where everyone was invited to start change with themselves. It turned out that the broadcasts were watched and listened to by a large audience. After each broadcast people would phone in. In order to answer all the calls, all the telephone lines in the MRA office in The Hague were manned for several hours after each broadcast. Subscriptions to the Newsletter went up by 25

percent. After some broadcasts the phones would keep ringing for hours on end. Also hundreds of responses came by post. At the end of 1968 the television broadcast about *Anything to Declare?* got the most viewers of all the small broadcast licence-holders. Another programme which prompted a big response was one on the importance of family life.

After some years the 'dwarfs' lost their broadcasting licences, with the argument that their input would be given space by the big broadcasting corporations. By and large this did not happen in the case of MRA.

### The permissive society

Certain developments in society were looked upon in MRA circles with concern. A society where everything was allowed – the so-called permissive society – would inevitably lead to chaos and destruction. This conclusion comes through in the newsletters of that time. And is there any wonder that young people rebel against their parents, if the aim in life of these parents is, in the eyes of their children, rather small and self-centred?

In the face of the permissive society MRA challenged people to have a bigger aim to live for. If that bigger aim was lacking, young people would look for refuge in drugs. It was generally accepted in Dutch society that hard drugs were dangerous, but public debate centred around the use of soft drugs. The general opinion was that soft drugs were harmless.

One person who disputed this was Rotterdam general practitioner Karel Gunning. From his experience as a physician in Morocco he knew that soft drugs also have negative effects, both physical and psychological. He found supporters for this view but there were also opponents. With others, he founded the Dutch Physicians Alliance which propagated this view and also campaigned for the protection of the unborn child. He also was co-founder of the World Federation of Doctors Who Respect Human Life. It took a long time, but gradually the idea gained ground in the media and the institutions that were dealing with drug addiction, that soft drugs were not as harmless as they were made out to be.

Something else that comes out of the newsletters is concern about the advancing emancipation of women, especially in a new section in *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* called '*Door vrouwen bezien*' (As viewed by women), edited by Digna Hintzen-Philips. In this popular and most widely read page, (also read by men because of the human interest) a dual message was given. On the one hand the woman's role as wife and mother in the family is crucial, on the other hand women have an important part in working for a new world outside their families. Yet women should not look for satisfaction in a career but rather in looking after their families. Unlike the demands of the feminists, this women's section in *NWN* emphasises service – stressing that Christianity calls everyone to serve and, more controversially, even appearing to imply that this is especially so for women.

In the meantime, many women who were committed to working with MRA did not always feel restricted to stay at home to look after their families. They felt responsible for what was happening in society and freed themselves where possible to take part in different initiatives. It seems, from the De Boer family experience, and others like them, that parents were quite prepared to leave their children in the care of others if the work for 'a new world' would call them to faraway lands.

Of far-reaching effect was the introduction in the early 1960s of the contraceptive pill. It was heralded as the ultimate freedom for women. Other people were concerned that it degraded women to becoming sex objects. Recently someone commented in our newspaper that May 1968 was actually more than anything else a sexual revolution. 'Boss of our own belly', was the credo of some feminists. Looking back I wonder whether women have really become freer. I read a report of an interesting debate between a woman in her 20s and a woman over 50. The latter still believed in the achievements of the sexual revolution. The young woman, a journalist, was very concerned about the sexualisation (indeed she called it 'pornofication') of our society which turns even young girls into sex objects.

It is clear that, as in the 1960s and 1970s, every innovation, every new development demands an ethical answer. And the

more that becomes possible, the more inner discipline is required. Unlimited freedom in the end causes us to lose our freedom. Perhaps this is clearer now than it was in the 1960s.

### Films in our homes

You did not need to travel in order to work for a new world. Apart from the fact that the most important thing for all of us is how we practise our ideals in our normal daily life, the MRA team all over the country was very active with organising film showings in their own cities or villages. In the 1960s and 1970s MRA produced a stream of new films and documentaries on topical social themes. Usually the films were shown in someone's home. The hosts invited neighbours and friends. Before the invention of the video and DVD, showing a film was quite an undertaking. Someone would come from The Hague with a 16 millimetre film, a heavy projector and a screen. My husband was one of those who travelled around the country to show the films on request. He has seen the films so many times that he can recite whole sections of them. The film was always introduced and afterwards there would be a discussion. Sometimes people rented a hall for the showing. And occasionally the film was shown in a cinema. A big nationwide team ensured that the films were circulated around the country. I remember organising several showings in my home town, one of them in my church.

The films, sometimes based on plays written by Peter Howard, sometimes based on true stories, dealt with topical social issues, like the race issue, the generation gap, the end of colonisation, social tension.

In several documentaries, the conference centre in Caux plays a central role. One of them tells the story of the Dutch journalist Fred Ladenius, who was posted in Rome. In the spring of 1967 he had to cover the growing conflict between the German-speaking minority and the Italian-speaking majority in South Tyrol (Alto Adige), in the northern part of Italy for the *Osservatore Romano*. Instead of just reporting on the conflict, he wondered if he could do something to help solve it. He invited

politicians from both sides to Caux. In the next 18 months six such delegations went to Caux. The politicians returned noticeably different. The Bishop of the area, Dr Joseph Gargitter, is reported to have commented in July 1969: 'After the return of these German and Italian-speaking politicians, I observed that a change had happened to them. Suddenly I heard from their mouth things which had never been said before.' Partly thanks to that, a treaty was signed before another year was over. Commenting on the treaty, the Milan newspaper *Il Giorno* reported: 'From those meetings in Caux came the new spirit which has made possible an effective solution to the problems of Alto Adige.'<sup>3</sup>

Some films and documentaries were also made available in video form, like the story of Irène Laure and the reconciliation between France and Germany (*For the Love of Tomorrow*, 1985). There were documentaries, too, about India and South Africa, which served as catalysts to increase the involvement of the Dutch team with those parts of the world.

### Actions for India

There was a great deal of enthusiasm to do something for India. This may have had something to do with the third world mysticism that Peter Hintzen wrote about. Also it is sometimes easier to view 'the steady growth of a new world' in a faraway country where the problems can literally be found on the streets. In those days India still was a poor developing country: difficult to imagine now, when Indian firms are taking over Dutch ones! But at that time there were nation-wide fund-raising actions in the Netherlands with evening-long programmes which everyone watched on television to help India.

One thing which caught the imagination of the Dutch team was the 'March on Wheels' led by Rajmohan Gandhi in 1963. In 1930 his grandfather Mahatma Gandhi had, together with 72 supporters of the non-violent resistance against British rule, walked 300 kilometres from Ahmedabad to the sea in order to harvest salt. Salt was, according to Gandhi, a gift of God, but the British had put taxes on it. The famous Salt March was a

symbolic, non-violent protest against this and it was to be the turning point in the battle for independence.

Doubtless with this in mind, Rajmohan Gandhi, with four colleagues, organised a nation-wide March on Wheels – this time not for independence, but for a 'strong, clean and united India'. They started with 70 people in the most southern tip of India and journeyed more than 6,000 kilometres to the capital New Delhi. The interest aroused on the way, especially from young people, was overwhelming. Ton Philips, who took part in the march, thinks that Peter Howard, who was also present, was inspired by this to reach out to young people in the USA. This resulted in his speaking tour around the universities there, which led to the *Sing-Outs* and *Up with People*.

As a follow-up to the March, youth camps were organised in which more than 4,000 young people took part. The youth camp in Panchgani, held in the state Maharashtra in 1964, had far-reaching consequences. After the camp, 11 of the local citizens approached Gandhi, saying: 'Now you cannot just leave'. Gandhi answered: 'If you give us land, we will give you a centre'. Four years later, on the plateau above the village, a conference and training centre was built called 'Asia Plateau'.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi was in Europe in 1965, during which time he spoke at an MRA youth camp in the north of England about his vision for India and his own estimation of the urgent physical and ideological needs of the subcontinent. His youthful audience, drawn from many parts of the UK and from several other European countries, were left in no doubt that India needed the answer to corruption and communism which MRA offered, in order to stop millions from dying of hunger and a whole vital area of the world going behind the Iron Curtain. It was a matter of months, not decades. Put like that, it was hardly surprising Gandhi received a willing response and several young men and women altered their education and career plans and went to India to help.

Another consequence of the March on Wheels and the youth camps was that young Indians, who wanted to continue the action, wrote the musical show *India Arise* based on their own

experiences. Over a six-month period they performed the show in 44 cities and villages all over India. After this they brought it to Europe where, as we have already seen, it in turn helped to inspire European youth to write the show *Anything to Declare?*

The plan to build a conference and training centre in Panchgani inspired many Dutch people with a readiness to make sacrifices. Creative ways were devised to raise money. One lady in The Hague, for example, organised a fair in a busy shopping centre which raised 9,000 guilders. This raising of money and the organising of meetings about India went on for several years. Publicity was given for this in the MRA newsletters and in our radio and TV broadcasts. When the centre in Panchgani was opened on 20 January 1968 many Dutch were among the foreign guests. The second phase of the complex was opened a year later by Charlotte van Beuningen. Frits Philips donated a large proportion of the electrical equipment, including a six-channel translation system for the auditorium cum theatre, which was opened by him in 1971.

The centre in Panchgani is still used intensively. When one reads any issue of *Disha* (the quarterly magazine of IofC in India), one is stunned to see the number and variety of activities taking place there. In one year I counted 74 courses and conferences, some of one day duration, but most of them more. The Asia Plateau centre celebrated its 40th anniversary in January 2008. It was attended by 250 people from 32 countries.<sup>5</sup>

### The South African connection

The other country that was very much in the public eye and on many people's hearts at that time was South Africa. The historic tie of the Netherlands with South Africa goes back to the year 1652 when the Dutch colonial administrator Jan van Riebeeck established a way-station for the Dutch East Indies Company, north-east of the Cape of Good Hope, on Table Bay. This eventually developed into Cape Town. The ships sailing to the Dutch Indies needed somewhere to replenish their supplies with fresh food and water and the Cape was ideal for that. After a while the Dutch East Indies Company needed skilled farmers at the

Cape of Good Hope. The first group to arrive for this purpose landed in December 1787 – a community of French Huguenots, who had fled to the Netherlands because of religious persecution. More settlers came from the Netherlands and Germany. So the way-station became a Dutch colony for the next 150 years until it was invaded and occupied by the British.

I will not go into what happened after that. That is what history books are for. I just wanted to show that the ethnic and language link goes back a long way. Having said that, we are not so proud of the word from our language that has been used for the policy that has oppressed black people – the word *apartheid*.

The link between MRA and South Africa also goes back a long way. In 1929, the early days of the Oxford Group, Frank Buchman went to South Africa with a large group. One of them was Lily van Heeckeren, the daughter of the family in the Netherlands with whom the Oxford Group started after a visit of Buchman. Because the Governor-General, the Earl of Athlone, was a family friend of the Van Heeckerens, Lily van Heeckeren stayed at Government House while in Pretoria. Athlone was particularly interested in the variety of people that the Oxford Group reached, one being the young Afrikaner George Daneel, member of the 1928 Springbok Rugby team (a major claim to fame in South Africa) who was studying to be a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>6</sup> After this initial visit there were constant visits to and from South Africa by people connected with the Oxford Group/MRA, and the ideas gained ground.

We will now jump to 1953, when MRA wanted to support the work in Southern Africa with a large international team. To transport this team a KLM plane was chartered, for which a lot of the money was raised in the Netherlands. The pilot offered to fly the plane free of charge. It left in December of that year from Amsterdam. The team (including Aad Burger, Charlotte van Beuningen and Dick van Tetterode from the Netherlands) attended conferences in which people from all races took part, which was unique at that time.

The first of these multi racial conferences took place in Lusaka, capital of Zambia. A racially mixed delegation from South Africa was present, among them George Daneel and his wife Joey (Johanna). For Daneel it was a new experience to meet black and white as equals, and the full force of his feeling of superiority dawned on him. He publicly apologised for this to the black people present: 'I realised that the relationship between black and white was the biggest issue in the country.' For Daneel, as minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, to speak out against *apartheid* at that time was quite unheard of. It took the Synod of his church another 45 years to do the same.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile another member of the South African delegation, William Nkomo, faced a similar challenge. Nkomo, along with Nelson Mandela, was one of the founders of the African National Congress Youth League. Speaking later alongside Daneel at a multi-racial public meeting in Cape Town City Hall, Nkomo said: 'I saw white men change, and black men change, and I myself decided to change.' This made national headlines: 'Black/white on MRA platform'. The police who were present could not take action under the laws as they then stood. Later the apartheid laws would be tightened. In the documentary film, *A Man for all People*, Nkomo, who was also a physician, tells his moving story.

In the 1970s delegations of black and white South Africans came regularly to the conferences in Caux. One such group came on to visit the Netherlands in 1973. In their meetings with politicians and prominent people from the Dutch Reformed church they pleaded for support for the economic development of the eight homelands. This support would not, according to the South African guests, amount to supporting the status quo, as was the general opinion, but would in fact be an effective way to combat inequality and injustice from within. This was, at that time in the Netherlands, a very debatable point of view. In those years there was fierce discussion as to whether or not boycott was an effective way to fight the injustice of apartheid. People in opposing camps would not trust each other.

One person whom they convinced was Jaap Windig, who was working for the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands (he became an ordained minister in 1976) and was a member of the Synod. At the next Synod meeting he pleaded for the use of investment to bring about better facilities for the black African population. Also he insisted on consultation with the people and the leaders of the homelands, to find out what they wanted. His motion was passed with a large majority.

When, in 1974, Windig went with a Dutch delegation to an MRA multiracial conference in South Africa's capital, Pretoria, he shared this story with the conference delegates. The conference was being led by George Daneel, and Professor Cornelius Marivate, an educationalist who would later be an ANC Member of the first free parliament of South Africa. At the close of the conference Daneel said: 'Change does not start when we point out the mistakes of others, but when we face our own mistakes. We as whites carry an enormous responsibility.'

Earlier, at the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa in 1969, Daneel had stated that discrimination of black people was 'sinful in the eyes of God'. He believed that moral and spiritual change in the end would bring about the necessary political change and not the other way around. That may explain why he never broke with his church and Afrikanerdom, as did his more militant contemporary Beyers Naudé. But he went on preaching and living the change he wanted to see. In 1987 he wrote to President John Vorster, calling for an 'honest acknowledgement of guilt and a change of attitude' from Afrikanerdom. In a talk he and Vorster had afterwards, the latter justified his government's policies. But later, just before his death, Vorster remarked in private: 'Daneel was right after all'.<sup>8</sup>

And Daneel was one spearhead for a growing number of senior Afrikaner academics and churchmen who were coming to question the rightness of apartheid. Against the wishes of the government, in the mid-1980s, 50 travelled to Senegal in West Africa for a first ever meeting with leading figures in the ANC.

## Confrontation or living the alternative?

The message of MRA in South Africa was that, just like anywhere else, all involved needed change. No one should wait for the other to begin. This starting point appealed to many people, both in the black and in the white communities, and here there was no hiding of lights under a bushel. In 1977 a book *Southern Africa – What kind of change?* was published, running into three editions. On its cover it stated: ‘The extraordinary range of people in this book – black, white and brown; Dutch Reformed dominees and ANC nationalists; plattelanders and protest marchers – cover the spectrum of Southern Africa. Can these people find a future together? They believe they can – and they tell how they have put it to the proof.’<sup>9</sup>

Of course it was not easy to practise, challenging as it did accepted ways of doing things – especially when the basis for change should be equality, and injustice needed to be exposed. The MRA team in South Africa rejected apartheid, but wanted to change things without affronting the authorities too much. That this nevertheless happened had partly to do with the way of working of some MRA full-time workers from abroad who came to work in South Africa.

One of them was Anneco Adriaanse. She had got to know South Africa when she had travelled through the country with the youth group *Time to Choose*. She went back to work with MRA in South Africa at the same time as Howard and Maria Grace-Driessen. The three of them had good contacts with black people in Soweto and Atteridgeville, and Anneco especially had a rapport with the young people there. Anneco had permission to go into the townships as a religious-social worker. At first she found it difficult to make friends, but after a while she started to feel at home. She helped the women cook for special festivals, joined in with the singing and dancing and gave sewing lessons. In the townships there was a lot of interest in the road to change that MRA propagated. This asked of her, she felt, to really live out in her own life the change she was advocating. In Soweto she was given the African name Momthandazo, which means ‘she who prays’.

Their activities did not remain unnoticed by the security police. At a given moment in 1979 the South African leaders of MRA were warned by the security police that the South African authorities were not happy with the way the Graces and Anneco operated and that they should leave the country. The resident team and some of the foreign full-time workers clearly had different opinions on how to respond to the state and its policies. So Anneco and the Graces were asked to leave the country right away. For Howard the journey back home was particularly painful. He had just visited a young black friend, Linda Mario Mogale, from Soweto in prison and had had a long talk with him. Mogale had been the chairman of the Soweto Student Representative Council and a leader of the 1976 Soweto school boycott, but to get him out of the way he was charged with murder and arson. He was being tortured in prison. Doubtless their conversation had been transmitted to the authorities. Just before his forced departure Howard had received a request to be a 'character witness' at the trial of this friend. It pained him in the depth of his soul that he could not answer the call of his friend, who possibly faced execution. As it happened he was imprisoned on Robben Island.<sup>10</sup>

For all three this was a traumatic experience. Back in the Netherlands Anneco discovered she could not simply get over this trauma. It took her three years before she could function again in a job. The Graces went to England, where Howard, then 40 years of age and with a degree in physics, studied for a post-graduate teaching diploma to enable him to take up teaching. Maria was occupied with the care of their small children.

Asked for a response to what had happened, Pieter Horn from South Africa writes that this had also been a very difficult time for those in the South African MRA team. They were constantly monitored by the security police. A number of them were taken in for questioning more than once, at times having to make provision at home in case they would not be released. 'Our perspective', Horn writes, 'was not to be confrontational about apartheid, but to live the alternative to apartheid in our centres, activities, public meetings and utterances. On a number

of occasions groups from the liberation movement and the State apparatus tried to use MRA and a lot of the time it was not easy to know whom to trust. And it is always a fact that, rightly or wrongly, foreigners are more scrutinized than our own citizens. Still I think that as leaders of MRA in South Africa we should have taken more time to include the Graces and Anneco in what was going on in the country and given them more comradeship.'

Since then Pieter and Howard have been happily working together on certain projects. 'Nevertheless,' writes Horn, 'I have to accept that we may never agree on what really happened during that time.'

Lessons can be drawn from this South African example. It is easy to have a theoretical idea of what our ideal world should look like. Consider for example the vision spelled out in *The Black and White Book* in the previous chapter. It is so immensely more difficult to know what it means in a specific situation like this one. How should you act to make your vision come true? People reach different conclusions, and who is to say which one is right? Out of sincere motives people have chosen different roads. Obviously those from other countries were less hindered by inside knowledge and therefore may have been naïve. Possibly those inside the structure knew too much, and may have been too cautious. Who knows? At that time it was hard to judge and even in hindsight, one has to accept that our understanding of historic events may never converge, as Pieter Horn concludes. The lesson from this experience in South Africa could be that we always need a certain amount of modesty in judging a situation. It could just be that we do not see the whole picture.

## Structures and people

When one thinks about working for a more just society, there is always the question whether the change should start with people or with structures. Usually the 'haves' – those who have arrived – prefer changing people and to leave the structures intact. And the 'have-nots' – the young, the poor, the ones at the 'other end' of society – want to change structures. In the 1960s

and 1970s it was fashionable, as we have seen in this chapter, to side with the 'have-nots'. So much so that some 'haves' felt pushed onto the defensive.

One of them decided to take action: why should not managers and directors also have a part in creating a new world? That was the idea of Friedrich Schock, director of a family firm in the south of Germany. He wrote to others in industry whom he had met at Caux: 'Why should we be pushed onto the defensive, when action is required for a more just society?' His appeal resonated in different western European countries, among them the Netherlands. This led to the birth of the annual Caux Conferences for Business and Industry (CCBI). The aim of these conferences was to create trust through honest conversations. Frits Philips of the Philips Company was involved from the beginning. Together with his son-in-law Peter Hintzen, who acted as Secretary, he took an active part in organising these conferences. He undertook these Caux-based activities in a personal capacity and never as member of the management of Philips.

Conferences for people in industry were also organised in the Netherlands. A lot of the initiative here came from people from the port of Rotterdam. One of them was Piet Dinkelaar, President of the Staff Association of dockworkers and shipbuilders. He and his wife Toni were instrumental in performances of MRA plays by their amateur theatre group. The agenda for these conferences related to issues on the national scene, but also explored what Dutch industry could do for Europe and the rest of the world.

Fruitful consultation between government, employers and employees has been widely seen in the Netherlands as the basis of good entrepreneurship. This has a special name here – the 'polder model' (a *polder* is reclaimed land below sea-level). The name comes from the idea that to keep our polder dry, which is in the interest of everyone, cooperation of everyone is needed. In our country, of which one third is below sea level, we cannot afford *not* to cooperate. So rather than employers and employees taking opposite positions, we tend to look for compromises.

This model goes back to the 13th century, when the first democratic governing bodies, 'De Waterschappen' (Water Boards) were the ones that were responsible for keeping the water out, the country dry and looking after all out waterways. The idea being that the different parties have a common interest. The question is whether this also applies on a wider, world scale. The reports from these conferences do not indicate an unequivocal answer to this. Is what is good for industry here also good for the developing world and vice versa? What does world-wide solidarity mean? And how can we encourage Dutch society to look critically at their own motives and way of living? The challenge to find answers to these questions remains.

Around 1974 the term 'New Lifestyle' came in vogue. The crisis of raw materials (put on the agenda by the Club of Rome), the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, discrimination in a whole variety of fields, pollution and recession – all this pricked the consciences of people of good will.

The churches appealed to people to be good stewards of what was entrusted to us. The Council of Churches declared the year 1975 as the year of the 'New Life Style' and distributed a magazine called '*New is Different*'. In it the aim was explained: 'Looking for a new life-style, which is geared to changes in society, undergirded by changes in ourselves.'

A dividing line became visible between people more to the left of the political spectrum who were out to change structures and those who wanted to change people, which was considered more right wing. The call for a new life-style tried to combine the two. To ask for change in structures could be an excuse not to work on a change in mentality in oneself, was one journalist's comment.<sup>11</sup> In *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* the hope was voiced that this action for a new, more austere life style would be a challenge for left and right alike, because 'the willingness to change is not the monopoly of one political school of thought, but springs from the acknowledgment of one's own imperfection and the need for renewal, personally as well as world wide'.

MRA assumed that if people changed for the better, the rest would follow. The question is whether this can be taken for

granted? Structures can be very resistant to change. On the other hand, structures only change if people dedicate themselves whole-heartedly to making it happen and if there is enough public support. And hence we arrive again at the necessity of personal change, both in mentality and in behaviour.

One aspect of the new life-style did not appear initially to attract so much interest in MRA circles – and that was the environment. Arjen Schots, a plant scientist from the University of Wageningen, tried to raise interest in it. He initiated a national conference on nature and environment in Wageningen in 1989. And he was involved in organising eight symposia on sustainable development which took place from 1988 till 1995 in Caux. At that time however the subject did not really catch on. Individual people connected to MRA tried as conscientious consumers to deliver a personal contribution to a better environment. And there have been specific initiatives in different countries. But for the organisation as a whole the environment did not become an early major issue until a few years ago.

Now gradually sustainability is gaining momentum for IofC. There is a growing conviction that the environment, together with our climate, could well prove to be the issue of common interest which would make us all, human beings together on planet earth, cooperate rather than fight each other.<sup>12</sup>

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1. The preceding publication was called *MRA Nieuwsdienst Morele Herbewapening* (MRA News Service Moral Re-Armament), which was published every two weeks. Apart from that there was a quarterly colour magazine called *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* (New World News)

2. He wrote this in an article about the partnership of Europe and Asia to create a new world. *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws*, 1971, number 7. In this chapter I have made use of a lot of articles from *NWN*, which I will not acknowledge in their entirety. Also I have made use of information received from Aad Burger, Anneco Vrieling-Adriaanse, Howard Grace, Maria Grace-Driessen, Pieter Horn and Peter Hannon.

3. *The Black and White Book* also reports this story on p. 57-59. The quotation in *Il Giorno* is from 8 May 1971.

4. *From India with Hope* by Michael Henderson, Grosvenor Books, London, 1972

5. [www.in.iofc.org](http://www.in.iofc.org)

6. *Frank Buchman – a life* by Garth Lean, p. 140-143

7. *Dominee George Daneel, Springbok and anti-apartheid campaigner*, obituary by Mary Lean in the British paper *The Independent*, 27 October 2004. Daneel died at the age of 100.

8. *Ibid*

9. Peter Hannon, *Southern Africa – what kind of change?* Grosvenor Books, Johannesburg, 1977.

10. On 30 December 1979 Howard Grace received a letter from Mogale from Robben Island: 'Thanks ever so much for your wonderful letter which I received just recently. I was overjoyed when I heard that you have now settled down well in your own little house together with the kids. I'd like once more to say thank you very much for all the love you have shown and showered upon me... All is going fine for me, and I ask for your prayers that the LORD should give me patience.' Howard writes: Obviously he couldn't comment on his situation as the letter would be censored. It arrived at our home without a postage stamp on it but with the stamp of the prison department Robben Island. Mogale was released from prison in 1981.

11. Rex Brico in an article on the action of the churches in *Elseviers Magazine*, 22 February 1975.

12. In the special global consultation in Asia Plateau, Panchgani, India, held from 22-30 January 2008 one of the resolutions was about IofC and the environment. Also the IofC programme Farmers' Dialogue has put this subject on the agenda. [www.farmersdialogue.org](http://www.farmersdialogue.org)

## CHAPTER 8

# A house with a heart

In the middle of The Hague, near Parliament, ministries, the Peace Palace and other international institutions, big shops, theatres, cinemas, public transport and, last but not least, 10 minutes by bike from the North Sea, is a small street called Amaliastraat, where at number 10 the work of MRA has been organised since 1952.

Wea Driessen-Jonker was one of the driving forces behind the acquisition of this office, which later became a centre for meetings and also provided accommodation. Wea and her husband Kees got to know MRA at the Utrecht Whitsun rally in 1937 when it was still called the Oxford Group. Both were fond of theatre. They had met in an amateur dramatics group, performing Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. He was Peer and she was Anitra. Hence they were happy with the many MRA plays and musicals, of which Kees directed a few. In the 1960s the Driessens organised regular charter flights for Dutch people to go to London to see MRA plays in the Westminster Theatre, then a focus for much of MRA's outreach work in Britain. In that Kees Driessen combined his work (for the Royal Dutch Airlines), with his love for theatre and his conviction for MRA.<sup>1</sup>

In 1985 Wea Driessen wrote, in 15 closely typed pages, a history of 33 years of Amaliastraat 10.<sup>2</sup> It makes fascinating reading. It details how it started with the renting of one floor and how, in 1963, the whole four-story town house was bought. Later on it underwent a radical alteration. The renovated centre was opened on 13 October 1972 by the President of the Second Chamber, F J F M van Riel – an event that was reported in the main newspapers. One of them cited Dirk de Loor, who was

then President of the Dutch Foundation of MRA: 'This house is a sign of hope in a world which seems to feed despair.' Van Riel officiated at the opening in a personal capacity. Nevertheless he was asked to justify this action in a television programme. He said that he had done it because he wanted to support something which he, as a citizen, considered a good and worth-while cause.

From Wea Driessen's account the centre was a hive of activity, with lots of volunteers coming in to attend to finances, help with administration, sending out the newsletters, organising meetings, publishing books and brochures etc etc.

Two people who worked from Amaliastraat 10, and who for decades were the public face of MRA in the Netherlands, were Peter Hintzen and Aad Burger. From 1955 they were the editors of the different MRA publications. They first met at a boys' camp run by the Dutch Christian Student Organisation (NCSV) in 1941. Later, after the war, they both studied in Leiden. Each decided to commit himself full-time to MRA. They worked together for more than 50 years, until the sudden death of Peter Hintzen on 28 June 1996 brought the partnership to a close. The daily newspaper *Trouw* carried this news under the headline 'Leader of Moral Re-Armament in the Netherlands has died'.

### Pacesetter

As a 21-year-old atheist student, Peter Hintzen was taken by his father to the international conference centre of MRA in Caux. The thing that motivated him to accompany his father, was a row they had recently had. His father had accused Peter of being selfish and superficial. Peter Hintzen did not mind the accusation of selfishness, after all it is normal for people to be selfish, he thought. But as an intellectual and a critic of society he did not like to be called superficial. He started to question himself – which made him receptive for what he was to encounter in Caux. Why not work together with these people instead of mounting a crusade for a better world on my own, he thought. He liked the notion of absolute honesty, especially if that meant he could at last tell his father what he thought of him. But on further reflection he realised, 'It's not about him,

but about yourself that you need to tell the truth'. Hesitantly he started an honest talk with his father in which he confessed things he had hoped his father would never find out. To his surprise his father was also open about himself. The relationship between this authoritarian father of eight children and his rebel son changed for good.

For 12 years Hintzen worked mainly in other countries with MRA: in post-war Germany where he learned to open his heart and mind to the suffering the Germans had also undergone, which enabled him to become a bridge-builder between the two countries; in the United States and for three years in India and Pakistan. There he experienced that Hindus and Muslims have no problem with a Christian who tries to practise his belief. Moments of quiet spent together were a united and uniting source of inspiration, he learned.

In 1962 Hintzen had the conviction to return to the Netherlands and to work there with MRA. He wanted to give it a Dutch image. He started to write regularly on topical issues for weekly and daily newspapers, picking out the weak points in our society as he perceived them. Through these articles he was gradually creating a distinct profile for MRA in his own country. In 1963 he married Digna Philips. They lived for 12 years in Wassenaar, a village near The Hague, in a house that was given to MRA by Lotty van Beuningen. Their two sons were born there. Later they were able to move into a home of their own.

In the course of the years, through daily reflection and reading the Bible – for a while he read it in Greek – he found a faith in God as a loving father. In his last Christmas card to friends he wrote that he had come to the conclusion that what counted most in life was friendship, faithfulness and the willingness to serve.

His sudden death from cardiac arrest came as a great shock to us all. He had lived a very healthy life, always bicycling the half hour to the office no matter what the weather was like. Only in the immediate months before his death did he have problems, and these he attributed to his efforts to finish the manuscript of his book *Duitsland – bewogen hart van Europa*

(Germany – troubled heart of Europe). His friend Hans van den Broek, European Commissioner and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, had promised to receive the first copy during a ceremony scheduled to take place in Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations.

The presentation took place posthumously, with speeches by Digna Hintzen, Van den Broek and the German Professor Lademacher, Director of the Centre for Dutch Studies (Zentrum für Niederlande-Studien) at the University of Münster. The event was organised by the Clingendael Institute together with the Dutch foundation to promote German studies. So his bridge-building between the two countries continued even after his death.

From his office in Amaliastraat 10, for 35 years Peter Hintzen was the heart and soul of MRA's work in the Netherlands. He initiated many activities, both at grass roots level and with high-level round-table talks between politicians, employers and trade unions. His astonishing dynamism was sometimes difficult to keep up with. Through the columns which he wrote over 27 years in the fortnightly *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* and through his books and other publications he influenced the thinking of many.

In 1986, on the occasion of the Queen's birthday, he was made – in the words of the *Staatscourant* (Government Gazette) – 'as head of Moral Re-Armament in the Netherlands', Officer in the Order of Oranje-Nassau. He received this honour on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for his 40 years' work for Moral Re-Armament in different countries. The Mayor of Wassenaar who presented him with the honour called him a bridge-builder – among other things for organising the industrial round table conferences in Caux.

### 'Married to Latin America'

Peter Hintzen used to say that when he married Digna he did not know he was also marrying Latin America! Earlier Digna had worked for three years in Argentina and other countries on that continent. That was why they were invited to accompany Peter

Howard and a team of 20, including Rajmohan Gandhi, on a six-week speaking tour through Latin America. This was dramatically brought to an end by Howard's sudden death, at 56, from viral pneumonia and subsequent heart failure. Howard was honoured with a lying-in-state in the impressive City Hall in Lima, Peru from where news of his death went to all corners of the world. After the main party, including his widow Doë, had left for England with his body, those who stayed behind were at a loss as to what to do next. The last country scheduled to be visited on the tour had been Colombia. Then an editorial in a Bogotá newspaper expressed the hope that the remainder of Peter Howard's company would not be so disheartened as to cancel their visit to Colombia. Thus a group of 12, including the Hintzens, landed at Bogotá airport, 8,000 feet above sea level, on 15 March 1965. There was a press conference and they were received by the Cardinal and civic leaders.

After two weeks of speeches and appointments most of the international group returned to their respective countries. Only the Hintzens and an Austrian colleague, Peter Orglmeister, stayed on to finalise some matters and to fulfil one more speaking engagement, to the employers' association. It was at the moment that the first kidnappings of two industrialists had taken place. People were shocked and looking for a solution. So when they heard from the Hintzens about what had happened in the port of Rio de Janeiro, where MRA had helped to bring about the first democratic elections, as well as bringing a new spirit of honesty and unity, there was great interest. At the end of their talk they were approached by Julian Moreno Mejía, Vice-President of the association, who was also the head of the steel works Paz del Río. He wanted them to take the film *Men of Brazil*, which gives the true account of what happened in the port of Rio de Janeiro (acted by the main protagonists themselves) to the interior of the province of Boyacá and screen it for the steel workers and coalminers of his company, where he was having trouble with the unions. In *Men of Brazil* port workers and trade unionists together battle successfully against corrupt officials and gangsters who kept the port of Rio in a stranglehold.

At first the Hintzens and Orglmeister refused, since they did not want to be used as an instrument to tame the trade unions. But when three union leaders backed the invitation, they felt that they could no longer refuse. The company even paid for former Guatemalan trade union leader Luis Puig to fly from Perú to support them, as at that time Peter Hintzen did not speak Spanish. All this was rather against the wishes of the Hintzens, who had to cancel private plans. The whole operation meant they had to stay on for four months, during which time they met revolutionary students as well as pupils from an elite girls' school. Interestingly, these people, rather than the steel workers, became the founders of the work of MRA, and what is today Initiatives of Change, in Colombia.

So, after their initial apprehension, this commitment to Colombia proved to be an immense enrichment of their lives. After one or two shorter visits, they spent several weeks each year in that country from 1972 on.

In their reports in *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* they brought that part of the world closer to the people in the Netherlands. In 1992, 'Columbus Year' – because it was 500 years since Columbus 'discovered' America – Peter Hintzen published a book called *Spaans-Amerika, onbekend, onbemind, onbegrepen* (Spanish-America: unknown, unloved, misunderstood). At the special launching of the book in the MRA centre in The Hague, Hintzen presented the first copy to the then Minister of Development Cooperation Jan Pronk. In his vote of thanks the Minister made a heartfelt plea for more attention to be given to Latin America. In the 1970s the subcontinent had been in the news because it was fashionable to be against the fascist military dictatorships there. But since then attention had diminished, wrongly so according to the Minister. With his book Hintzen aimed to rekindle interest and help his countrymen to a better understanding of the subcontinent – which was not 'discovered' by Europeans, but by expeditions from Asia and Oceania some 40,000 years earlier!

Colombia became the Hintzens' second home. After one visit at the beginning of 1993 they wrote: '27 days, two conferences,

eight speaking engagements, 31 times invited for a meal somewhere, 30 individual appointments... In and out of buses. All the time travelling on roads with dangerous pot holes. What has it yielded? In the first place we have empowered and encouraged in their faith those who invited us. In a country like Colombia one cannot change things with a magic wand... But one can try to be part of a stream of divine leading.' This is how they saw their work. They felt called to go there to support their friends, no matter whether there were visible results or not. They felt an unbreakable bond with 'the fantastic people there, who dare to dedicate themselves to bringing about positive change'.

In 1993 Peter Hintzen received the award of Commander in the Order of Merit of the Republic of Colombia from Colombian Ambassador to the Netherlands, Alberto Villamizar. The Ambassador said it was for the bridge-building Hintzen had done between the Embassy of Colombia and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for his objective articles about the country in different newspapers. The catalyst was a seminar in 1990 in the Peace Palace in The Hague, where three Colombians and their Dutch colleagues in the field of justice, press and commerce had crossed swords, moderated by Peter Hintzen. It was at a time of much drugs-related violence in Colombia and the accusations went back and forth ('How dare the Europeans talk about the violence in another country, when they have unleashed the most bloody wars in the history of mankind!'). The way Hintzen was able to calm the turbulent waters, with humour and love for both continents, earned him the gratitude of the Colombians.

Digna Hintzen was also honoured by the Colombian government. In September 2005 she received the award of Grand Officer in the same order of Merit from Ambassador Guillermo Fernández de Soto as 'acknowledgment for her work and her special love for our country, and for her special personal qualities'. De Soto called Digna Hintzen 'a more than good friend of Colombia'. Also after the death of her husband she continues the close contact and goes on visiting Colombia, and other countries in Latin-America, at least once a year.

## Social-democrat

Across from Peter Hintzen's desk at the office in Amaliastraat 10, was that of Aad Burger.

The two friends and colleagues often had different opinions on political issues – Hintzen was a liberal and Burger a social-democrat. When working on the periodical *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws*, of which much later (in 1975) I also became an editor, I witnessed many heated discussions. The fact that I was active in the Christian Democratic Party added to an interesting exchange of views and it demonstrates that working with MRA does not mean being aligned with a particular political stream. The different viewpoints helped them both to keep a balance.

After completing his law studies, Aad Burger also started to work full-time with MRA. From 1953, when he travelled with a large group from Europe in a chartered plane to Southern Africa, he stayed on for several years in Africa. While working in Nigeria he contracted polio. 'During the journey through Nigeria I had some health problems, but the right diagnosis was not made. One night I woke up and had the very clear thought "it could be that you will be paralysed"'. When polio was diagnosed I had the feeling that God had warned me and would give me the power to endure it. Many patients get depressed and that has, according to the doctor, a negative effect on recovery. We were convinced that God had a plan for every human being. In life one needs to discover that plan and follow it, and this is not hampered by one's physical condition. This attitude has helped me to accept my handicap and not be put off by it.' As it turned out, Burger was not paralysed, but still handicapped. Even so his handicap has not stopped him from living a full and active life.

Aad Burger comes from both a social-democratic and Christian background. In the 1960s something happened which made him decide to become more active in politics. Some people in the social-democratic party (PvdA) turned against the ideas of MRA – or what they imagined them to be. An Amsterdam branch of the party submitted a motion at a national congress

which criticised MRA and asked the party to take a stand against it. The executive of the party decided not to consider the motion, since their tradition was not to take a position concerning religious or spiritual questions. One consequence of this was that some of the MRA team who were members of the party or who voted Social-Democrat decided to become more active in politics. Burger was one of them.

He says about this time: 'We wanted to think out how we could better articulate what the ideas of MRA would mean in the political field, not only in the PvdA, but also in contacts with the Christian parties and the liberals. I found it important that the ideas of MRA and of the practice of Christianity would help socialism and social democracy achieve its ideals. Of course this was not at all easy and I did not really know how to start. So what I did was to approach people and situations that I encountered with an open mind, make friends and help find solutions for problems in society and not worry too much about the results.' In those days Burger wrote regular articles for the independent periodical for Christianity and socialism *Tijd en Taak* (Time and Task), which was published by the Woodbrookers (a group of Dutch theology students had been to Woodbrooke, a Quaker centre in England, and on their return founded a group for spiritual renewal).

In the city of Utrecht he fulfilled different executive functions in the Socialist party. For many years he represented the Utrecht district in the national party council and for 15 years he was a member of the Municipal Council.

In 1968 he married Josiene, daughter of Dirk de Loor, then Mayor of Delft, and they had a son and a daughter. Josiene also came from a Christian and Social-Democratic background. After having worked full-time with MRA for a while, she had returned to teaching and became head of a kindergarden. With her professional background she later helped Digna Hintzen to organise the child care in Caux during the summer conferences.

After marrying Aad she quit her job in order to work again with MRA. Together they started a discussion group in Utrecht for Dutch people and people from the migrant community. They

linked this activity with the Hope in the Cities programme of MRA, about which I will say more later. Since Josiene's sudden death in 1997, Aad has continued with this bridge-building work.

On 29 May 2004, in the Queen's Birthday Honours, Burger was made a Knight in the Order of Oranje-Nassau. The Mayor of Utrecht said at that occasion: 'Looking at the world; looking at yourself; drawing the consequences and acting accordingly. You are one of the rare people who have been doing this for nearly half a century with great conviction and consistency.' She pointed out Burger's involvement at 'national and international level with Moral Re-Armament, which since 2001 is called Initiatives of Change'.

### Home with a heart for the world

It was not only MRA's work in the Netherlands that was organised from the centre in the Amaliastraat. There was cooperation with other European countries and there were also links with other continents. This often happened because people had personal contacts and friendships which developed over the years, as I have shown. This was certainly the case with Dick and Agathe van Tetterode, who lived for a few years in the Amaliastraat centre after its renovation. They had a special love for Indonesia.

After completing his medical training, Van Tetterode (we have met him already several times in earlier chapters) worked full-time with MRA. As a doctor he was very impressed with the book *Médecine de la personne* (translated in English as *The Healing of Persons*) by the Swiss physician Paul Tournier which dealt with the spiritual and psychological causes of illnesses. In Dutch it was published under the name *Radicale Therapie* (Radical Therapy). It was so popular in the Netherlands that it ran to seven editions. Tournier dedicated it to Frank N D Buchman 'whose message had a profound influence on my personal life and who forced me to think about the actual meaning of my calling'. In it Tournier shows how medicine should deal with the whole person and not just the illness. With many examples from

his practice he showed that illness provides the opportunity to find something new in life, and that cure is often connected with that. Moral, spiritual and physical health are one inseparable whole.<sup>3</sup>

By working with MRA Van Tetterode hoped to learn more about this side of health. Hence he worked in different countries in Europe, Asia and Africa, where he would often accompany MRA groups travelling with plays. When he was young his dream had been to go as a missionary doctor to Indonesia, but events there after independence made that impossible. When he was travelling as a doctor with the European musical show *Anything to Declare?* in Asia, he and his wife Agathe seized the opportunity to visit Indonesia for three weeks.

This was the beginning of a long relationship with that country. Between 1970 and 1998 they made seven visits of three to eight months, in which they endeavoured to encourage those who had encountered MRA in earlier years and wanted to practise its ideas. They started off by visiting the Yusuf family, in whose garage Trudes and Gusta Voorhoeve had lived after their release from the Japanese camps. The Yusufs introduced them to their friends. The four became friends for life. From Frits and Sylvia Philips they had been given an introduction to Panolih, who acted for the Philips Company in Indonesia. They stayed with him for months on end and he also helped them find their way around. Among the many other friends they made there they retained a special affection for John and Jusni Kusumawardhy, who had worked full-time with MRA for a period, and Ario Piereno, whom we met earlier as one of the Indonesians whom Dirk de Loor had befriended in Baguio.

My husband Johannes and I moved into Amaliastraat 10 soon after our marriage in February 1977 and have lived there ever since. Our three children were born and raised there and left the house in due course. It was natural for them to meet all the people who worked there or stayed with us for shorter or longer periods, including people from other countries and continents. In general they considered it an advantage (an enrichment they say) that the world came into our house in the form of

many visitors and often was the discussion topic at meal times. Our daughter once said after a woman from Sri Lanka, who was involved in the peace process in her country, had visited us that she learned more from one evening with her than from many lessons at school.

One person who lived in a separate apartment in the centre for a longer period (from 1990 till 2001) was Lotty Wolvekamp, daughter of Bert and Biny Wolvekamp, who became a great friend of our children. When she was 13 she took part in *Sing-Out Netherlands* and a year later in the musical the *Dutch Funfair*. The death of her brother Peter when she was 14 made a deep impression on her. The way he had coped with his illness had kindled her interest in MRA. At different moments in her life Lotty has, as she puts it, 'heard a call, which was so clear as if somebody was standing behind me'. That voice told her to serve God and later to undergo training to become an international secretary. In an independent way she has *always* been able to follow her conviction within the fellowship of MRA. It took her, among other places, to Canada, where the team was in the process of rebuilding after the Sing Out split and to Argentina where she experienced the changeover from dictatorship to democracy. For 30 years she was, though based in the Netherlands, especially involved with the Caux conference secretariat and the international organisation of MRA in different forms.

### Youth in action

From the centre my husband and I initiated and helped organise many activities. These were often targeted at special audiences, like people from industry, families, women, and youth. And sometimes we organised larger national conferences. When you read the invitations for these you will see that we always tried to address current needs, which were felt to be urgent at the time. There was a lot of fear of a nuclear war. The injustice of poverty, dictatorship, the increasing number of refugees in the world was also felt deeply. And then we needed to see what to do about the divisions in our own country. Recession and

unemployment were often on the agenda. All these were reasons to stop and review where we were going. Although you can never answer all the needs, there is always something one can do, however small, to make the world a better place.

Because we were young ourselves we naturally had special interest in organising activities for young people. These might take the form of discussion meetings on Saturday evenings or youth camps in the Whitsun holidays. Meetings would also take place elsewhere – in people's homes or student flats. Looking at the subjects we discussed, you get an idea what the public debate was about. Hot issues were nuclear energy and nuclear arms, or subjects like abortion and euthanasia (in 1980 a new abortion law was being considered). We invited Karel Gunning of the Dutch Physicians Alliance to speak about the Right to Life. Many themes had to do with individual choices: how to find a fulfilling aim in life in our consumer society? It was the time when people were starting to live together without being married – so marriage and sexuality were also hot topics. What was needed in a sustainable relationship? What does it mean to be faithful?

The military coup in the former Dutch colony of Suriname on 25 February 1980 resulted in many more Surinamese coming to live in the Netherlands, and we asked someone from that community to come and tell us about the situation of the Surinamese in the Netherlands. Often the talks were about how to live your Christian faith and what it meant to take moral standards as guidelines for your life.

There was a lot of interaction in Western Europe between teams of young people who were committed to live out the principles of MRA in their daily life of study or work. They organised conferences together, some of these in Caux, and there were actions, visits and combined projects. These projects had names like 'European Action Group', 'Mobile Action Group' or 'Ten Month Programme'. To take part in these young people needed to take time off study or work to travel with MRA. Or they went for a gap year to help run Tirley Garth, the MRA conference centre in England.

Over Easter 1977 my husband and I took part in a lively youth conference in the beautiful city of Heidelberg in Germany. It was organised by people from all over Germany, with participants from Switzerland, Austria, France and England. The most impressive part was a trial performance of a play by Heinz and Gisela Krieg from Berlin about Germany and the Germans, centering on the question of guilt. They presented it together. With humour and honesty it touched everyone deeply and helped those of us from other countries to understand and appreciate Germany better. The play was called *Zum Beispiel Deutschland* (Germany For Example). When it was fully ready it was performed by a cast of 40 young Germans, at, among other places, Caux. In the spring of 1979 the play was invited to Orleans in France as part of a conference organised by a group of young French.

'The future – our responsibility', an action of the young team in Norway in 1976, inspired youth in the Netherlands. It was triggered by a survey in that country into the sexual habits of young people. It turned out that there was no difference between the behaviour of Christians and non-Christians, which many people found shocking. It caused a debate in the country about what a Christian life style should be. At a MRA youth summer camp in Norway this question was discussed. From this the idea came to launch an appeal which would be signed by 1,000 young people and published in newspapers. The money for this was raised and more than 1,000 signatories were found to sign an appeal in which a new world order was connected to a new lifestyle based on the moral standards of the Bible and in which sex was not just another consumer article. A newspaper called this project 'a revolution of purity'. The appeal was the subject of discussion of the Whitsun camp in the Netherlands in 1977.

Earlier I mentioned the youth conference in Nijmegen at Easter 1976, where Ludek Pachman made such an impression. Thirty five came from Britain with songs and sketches and the French, Belgians and Germans put together a creative meeting in which they demonstrated how young Europeans were ready

to work together, free from the ballast of the past. At another Easter international youth conference in the Netherlands in 1984 a group of Scandinavians brought the *Nordic Revue*, a sparkling show which they had assembled over the previous years, getting together from time to time from the different areas where they lived. They poked fun at the stony faces of their egocentric society. It was a society where people put each other in boxes, stuck labels on them and shouted slogans, instead of really meeting one another. They completed the show in stages, eventually calling it *Hvem Narres*, which means 'Who do you think you are kidding?' They then performed it at a youth conference in Caux in July 1986. This was the start of an eventful year, when 30 of them took the show on the road and performed it all over the four Nordic countries, from Helsinki and Tromsø in the north to Copenhagen in the south, travelling in a bus they purchased especially for this purpose. Several of this group, after they had had families themselves, were the ones who initiated the series of family conferences during the summer in Caux from 2003.

At that same conference in 1984 the play *Everywoman* by the British playwright Hugh Williams was produced by students of the teacher training college in Delft. Hugh Williams was connected with the Westminster Theatre in London and wrote many plays in which the message of MRA was portrayed. Staging this with her fellow students was the idea of Annemieke Windig, who played the leading role of a successful business-woman who must choose between power and integrity. After a confrontation with death she becomes a new person. Being students of English, they performed the play in the original language, directed by their English teacher Michael Pugh. They had also performed the play in a theatre in Delft and in the English church in The Hague.

Annemieke, daughter of Jaap and Rinske Windig, had been brought up with the ideas of MRA. But after she had taken part in a youth conference in Tirley Garth with some other young Dutch, she started to feel a new sense of ownership. She decided to give her life to God, which she compared with a plunge into

the cold sea. She lived at that time in Den Helder right on the North Sea and used to take a swim there in the evening with her friends, starting in May and going right through until October. She likened this to her surrender to God. She asked: 'God please take away what is wrong in my life, and will You come in to occupy that place instead.' At first she says she felt as if something was torn out of her heart which was painful and left her with an empty feeling. But soon that emptiness was filled with a new feeling of relief and good things streamed into her heart. Her eyes opened to the world and she felt she had grown up spiritually.

Looking at the experiences of young people in that time and the way they expressed themselves one must conclude that the frame of reference was naturally mostly Christian. Annemieke Windig had this spiritual experience after she had taken part in the play *The Ladder* and she felt Jesus offering the cross to her as a gift. Something that she had considered a burden became a freeing experience. In their appeal the young Norwegians spoke freely about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In one of the Whitsun camps the subject was the meaning of the Holy Spirit. At a retreat for young people led by the Jesuit priest Father Ben Bot the subject was the person of Jesus. Who was He, whose birth is taken by a large part of the world as the beginning of the present calendar?

The secularisation of our society was only just beginning. And for many young people faith and the Bible stories were still part of their spiritual luggage; meeting MRA helped make it come alive and practical. Interestingly this stress on the Christian faith did not necessarily mean that people from other religions did not feel welcome. A young Muslim participant at one of the Whitsun camps shared that her faith had started to mean more to her after she had decided to listen to God. She felt able to share in the open atmosphere of the meeting her concern that many people in the Netherlands could not seem to bring themselves to respect the Muslim faith.

## Protestant and Catholic

MRA is open to people from all faiths or no faith, but in those years we did not go out of our way to promote inter-faith dialogues. Indeed it seemed quite ground-breaking that Protestants and Catholics found themselves working together in the framework of MRA. The two spiritual guides in the '80s were Father Ben Bot, a Jesuit, and Reverend Jaap Windig, Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. They both contributed greatly to the spiritual growth of the members of the team. At the different Easter conferences they provided church services. They also gave spiritual guidance in their columns in the periodical *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws* under the heading *Food for the Quiet Time*, in which they expanded on quiet times, moral standards and prayer in the light of Bible texts. Father Bot explained in his first column why keeping the practice of having regular quiet times is essential to staying spiritually healthy. 'The quiet time is really a spiritual meal, a quenching at a eternal spring. Not only praying, but also listening. Not only taking in great truths, but also thinking how to practise these in one's every day life.'

Inner listening was very important for him. At a national conference in 1981 Father Bot gave the opening address on this subject. 'When we look at the history of mankind', he said, 'we see that all through the ages people have sought solitude and silence. Moses did that and Buddha; Jesus, Paul and Mohammed did that, and men and women closer to our time. An impressive row of listeners who knew how to pick up the deepest signals of the human heart and thus became responsible leaders of humanity. In order to practise this listening you do not need to be a believer. It is the calling of every human being.'

While the Oxford Group had taken root in the Netherlands in the Protestant churches to begin with, gradually MRA became more ecumenical. Initially, there was in the Roman Catholic Church a certain concern that if people had quiet times they might be too inclined to follow their own conscience, without the guidance of the church in the person of the priest.

In Belgium there was active opposition from the hierarchy of

the Roman Catholic Church. After two incognito visits to Caux (in 1948 and 1950) Cardinal Suenens wrote a little book called *Wat moeten we denken van Morele Herbewapening?* (What to think about Moral Re-Armament?), in which he was very critical of MRA.

Although the booklet was written back in 1953, the MRA team in Belgium still found it an obstacle to their work in the '70s. Two of the team decided to talk to the Cardinal face-to-face. They were Lou Reymen, Flemish, at that time an administrator at a secondary school in Hasselt, and Fernand Maton, Walloon, who was a land surveyor in Namur. They told the Cardinal what meeting MRA had meant for both of them and how it had strengthened their Catholic faith. They also shared their conviction that MRA could be a bridge to foster rapprochement between Flemish and Walloon. The two friends Reymen and Maton were themselves an example of this. They also discussed the notion of 'God's guidance'.

The Cardinal had found in Caux that people used this term too glibly and appealed to the inspiration of God for all kinds of trivial things. His criticism, which he also voiced in this booklet, boiled down to the fact that MRA moves in a religious field and uses religious terms, but in too general a way for a Catholic. However he liked the expression the 'inner voice' as another way of speaking of the 'voice of conscience'. All three found the meeting, which started with prayer and ended with a reading from the Bible, helpful.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of certain opposition, the work of MRA, especially in Hasselt, had several highlights. In 1975 some 60 members of the musical *Song of Asia* visited Hasselt. There were discussion evenings in a large Catholic secondary school at the initiative of the Director Sister Marie-Christine. Alongside Lou Reymen there was an active team of MRA in the city. In these years there was a lot of contact between The Hague and Hasselt. Several times groups from Hasselt came to the Amaliastraat centre in The Hague – on one occasion a bus with 50 of Sister Marie-Christine's pupils. Reciprocal groups from the Netherlands made the journey to Hasselt, for example to speak in the school

classes about MRA. In October 1977 the Belgian team organised a conference in that same school which drew more than 60 participants, some from the Netherlands and France.

The division between the French speaking Wallonians and the Dutch speaking Flemish was one of the themes. Before saying anything directly about this, Lou Reymen and Fernand Maton gave a demonstration of unity by opening the conference together. Reymen turned around the national slogan of Belgium 'Power through Unity' and said: 'The question is where we get the power from to find unity?' And Maton said: 'Before I met MRA I did not want to, and I did not dare to, speak Dutch. It makes you feel superior when the other person speaks your language. The first point of change for me was to speak Dutch. It is a beautiful language and I like speaking it. It made me culturally richer.' The Deacon and the Suffragan Bishop came to a film showing which was part of this conference.

Another highlight was the premiere in Dutch of *Oratorio For Our Time* in the spring of 1981. This French creation for orchestra, soloists and choir was born in Caux in 1973. It deals with the meaning of the Christian faith in modern times, both for the individual and for society. It was the result of the cooperation between Françoise Caubel, who wrote the words, and Felix Lisiecki, who wrote the music. Jozef de Backer, a teacher of religion in a secondary school in Hasselt, wrote the Dutch translation. The performance in the St Quintinus cathedral in Hasselt was a great success. People from the Netherlands who attended, then invited the Oratorio to be performed in the Netherlands as part of a national MRA conference in May 1981.

But to come back to the relationship with the Catholic Church: In the Netherlands the Catholic authorities were less critical. The Carmelite Father Dr A van der Wey was convinced that contact with MRA could be beneficial for Catholics and he spread this message in articles and speeches.<sup>5</sup> Gradually the conviction grew in the Catholic world that MRA did not take people away from their own faith, but rather brought them nearer. The rapprochement was not only evidenced in the commitment of Father Bot S J, but also in the fact that Dr

Simonis, when he was Bishop of Rotterdam (he later became Archbishop of Utrecht and Cardinal), opened the new MRA house in Wassenaar.<sup>6</sup> He also spoke at a national MRA conference, as did his successor in Rotterdam, Bishop Bär.

The improved understanding was also demonstrated in a joint project in 1982 between a Christian Association of Artists (Algemene Kristelijke Kunstenaarsvereniging), a Franciscan organisation (Franciscaanse Samenwerking) and MRA. The three organised several performances of the one-man show '*Un soleil en pleine nuit*' (Poor Man, Rich Man, in English) about the life of Francis of Assisi. Written by the Englishman Hugh Williams and acted by the French mime artist Michel Orphelin, it illustrated how a contemporary Francis might react to the challenges of our time. The performances in Den Bosch and Nijmegen were well attended. In Nijmegen a lot of Franciscans came and in Den Bosch, the Queen's Commissioner for Brabant and Bishop Bluysen of Den Bosch both attended. Lotty Wolvekamp, who was involved in the organisation of the tour on behalf of MRA, has good memories of the cooperation with the two other organisations.

The Papal Nuncio in The Hague, Edward Cassidy, took part in one of the round table talks that Peter Hintzen organised in the house in Wassenaar, where Cassidy spoke about the importance of 'track-two diplomacy'. The positive attitude of Cassidy, who later became Cardinal, was another sign of the improved relationship.

### Message for all Europeans

In November 1978 a small meeting took place in the home of Fernand and Lette Maton in Namur (Belgium). Fernand's good friend Lou Reymen was there. Also present were Aad Burger from the Netherlands, Charles Danguy and Michel Sentis from France and others from different European countries. The first elections for the European parliament were due to take place in June 1979. Fernand Maton suggested it was time to send a message to all Europeans. What kind of face would Europe show to the world? In the past Europe had two faces: a beautiful one

and an ugly one. What would her face in the future be? Maton believed, and the others agreed, that the face of Europe does not only depend on politicians. It also depends on the moral choices of all the inhabitants of this privileged continent.

Those who had gathered in the Maton home drafted an appeal, which was published in several European languages. It is worth quoting some of the text, since it is still relevant today and no doubt will be in the future. This challenge will always be there and we will never be able to sit back. 'Europe today proclaims faith, truth and respect for human dignity, but at the same time spreads permissiveness and corruption. We claim to be a community based on brotherhood, but are beset with power struggles and divided by sectional interest. We profess high ideals but make little attempt to apply them in our homes, schools, factories, farms, parliament and international institutions.'

The message claims that the face of Europe will depend on the personal choices of individual people. 'Each of us must decide, in the silence of his own conscience, to stand firm for honesty and moral integrity and to selflessly care and share, for therein lies our only hope of creating a more just society.' This is the choice that needs to be taken in economic life. And it is a choice for the leaders of Europe, but they can only make it if they are backed by the people they represent.

There were campaigns to collect signatures for this appeal in the different countries, which was a good exercise in European thinking and cooperation. Those who signed promised to test 'our personal decisions and public policies by these principles'. In the Netherlands 130 prominent people signed, from Parliament, trade unions, political left and right, churches, education and the legal world. On 5 June 1979 one of the Dutch national radio stations devoted the whole day to covering the elections for the European parliament. Aad Burger was interviewed about 'the Message to all Europeans'. He was asked what this message had to do with the elections. He answered that democracy has a moral and spiritual element: the way people and nations treat each other and which human values they adhere to. Several newspapers wrote about the message and some printed the whole text.

In October that same year a combined 10-day European action took place in Lorraine, France, hosted by Charles and Juliette Danguy. It climaxed with a conference in the Town Hall of Metz which closed with a reading of the Message to all Europeans. At the same time it was seen as the beginning of a series of new initiatives aimed at giving European unity and cooperation a deeper meaning and at promoting solidarity with those countries and regions where there are the greatest needs. For Charles Danguy this was the continuation of a life-long commitment to Europe. From then on he made it his priority to get to know as many Members of the European Parliament as possible through regularly following the Parliamentary sessions, mostly in Strasbourg. His aim was and is to build trust and help to develop honest conversations between them and citizens eager to know more because they wanted to be more responsible for the shaping of the Europe of tomorrow.

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1. For this chapter I have made use of information received from Maria Grace-Driessen, Digna Hintzen-Philips, Aad Burger, Jonneke Burger, Jens Jonathan Wilhelmsen, Heinz Krieg, Charles Danguy. Also I have used many reports in *NWN*.

2. Wea Driessen, *33 jaar Amaliastraat 10*, Den Haag, December 1985

3. Dr Paul Tournier, *Médecine de la personne*, Delachaux & Niestlé SA Neuchatel. In Dutch: *Radicale Therapie*, Ten Have bv, Baarn. In this book he quotes the manifesto of doctors at the first international conference for Moral and Spiritual Re-Armament in Interlaken, September 1938 'The health of a people depends on the discipline and altruism of all its citizens. The moral, spiritual and physical health are one inseparable whole...'

4. A report of this meeting on 11 February 1976 was made by F Maton and L Reyem. On 23 March 1976 LJ Cardinal Suenens approved this report after having rewritten some of it. I have made use of the approved report.

5. *Herinneringen van Pater dr A van der Wey O Carm* (Memories of Father Van der Wey), Catholic Documentation Centre in Nijmegen, 1976. Also in a series of articles in the Catholic periodical *De Bazuin*.

6. On the spot where the house stood that Lotty van Beuningen gave for the use of MRA in 1955, in 1975 a new house was built which was again used as home and conference centre for MRA and opened by Bishop Simonis. Later it turned out to be inconvenient and not necessary to have two centres, so in 1991 this house in Wassenaar was sold and only the centre in The Hague remains.

## CHAPTER 9

# A colourful collection of initiatives

### Caux Round Table

In 1985 an article appeared in one of our leading daily papers under the heading 'The false smile of Japan'. It flagged up the danger that the Japanese would destroy the electronics industry of Europe by offering their products far below the market value, as had happened with the car industry in the USA. Frits Philips, former President of Philips and by then 80 years of age, raised the issue in a letter to a number of Japanese he had met in Caux. The letter was co-signed by Olivier Giscard d'Estaing, founding Dean and Director General of the management institute INSEAD in Fontainebleau, in France. In their letter they suggested an informal get-together at the conference centre in Caux with industrial leaders from the US and Europe for a frank and open discussion. The Japanese agreed and thus in the summer of 1986 a delegation arrived from Japan. Among them were the President of Canon, Ryuzaburo Kaku, the former President of Matsushita Electronics, Toshihiko Yamashita, and the chief editor of the *Japan Times*, Toshiaki Ogasawara.

Everything was well prepared, but right from the first morning session things became difficult. While the Japanese were waiting politely until they were given the word, the Americans and Europeans jumped in with every opportunity to ventilate their complaints about Japanese trade practices. The result was a highly frustrated Japanese delegation. Hastily the organisers discussed during the lunch break how to continue, and several agenda items were formulated which could be discussed in smaller groups. It was agreed that every time the Japanese

would get the first word. Through this new approach the air was gradually cleared and the two-day conference turned out to be a fruitful one. By getting to know each other better both sides began to understand and trust each other. They decided to continue these tri-lateral discussions under the name Caux Round Table (CRT). The coordination and the secretariat was based in the IofC office in the Amaliastraat in The Hague, overseen by Maarten de Pous, working in close cooperation with colleagues from Japan and the USA. In its first communiqué the CRT stated, 'Nations must put their own house in order and be able to compete with each other.' It continued, 'The developed countries have a common responsibility to support economic and social progress in the Third World.' The emphasis on the key role of business in the creation of a just and sustainable world has, in the course of the years, become one of the CRT's hallmarks.

As an immediate result of the talks in Switzerland, the Japanese participants wrote a frank letter to Prime Minister Nakasone with some suggestions on how to enlarge Japan's internal market, to diminish the national debt and to open Japan's borders to foreign products. In 1990 they published *Proposals for the renewal of Japan*, in which they called for a shift of priorities: no longer the race to catch up with the West – in which they had already succeeded anyway – but rather the participation of Japan in promoting the prosperity of all.

Just like the Japanese, the American and the European members tried to raise top level interest for the aims of the CRT. The members from the USA, after returning to New York, had talks with economic policy makers like David Rockefeller and Martin Feldstein. A delegation of European members brought constructive suggestions to the European Commission in Brussels during a visit to its Vice-President, Martin Bangemann.

The Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade, Yvonne van Rooy, was the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the CRT in Caux in 1989. In her speech she addressed the fear of European unification that existed outside our continent. She managed to reassure the participants, especially those from Japan, that the

decision to create a Europe without borders would not mean Europe becoming a fortress. This was, she said, out of the question, because Europe as the biggest trading power in the world, would burn its own fingers in doing so. At that time Europe had a 20%, USA 15% and Japan 9% share of world trade. Together this was less than half, as well as being a diminishing percentage. It was her conviction that these three trading powers would need to undertake joint responsible leadership in the world. Another guest speaker at that meeting was P C Luthar, former President of India's official trade organisation, who had been host to members of the CRT. India, he said, is not only a market, but can help less developed countries with appropriate technology. 'Give us help without conditions and open your markets for our products', he said.<sup>1</sup>

In the years that followed, other leading figures from the Netherlands would give the keynote speeches, like former Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers (1997), Shell executive Jeroen van der Veer (2001) and the President of the influential Social-Economic Council, Herman Wijffels (2003). Wijffels is now Executive Director of the World Bank. He is also a member of the International Advisory Council of the CRT, together with Lo van Wachem, former President of Shell.

As long as his age and health permitted Frits Philips attended the annual meetings of the CRT. The particular ingredient of these meetings was and is the friendship and the trust that has grown over the years. That plus the atmosphere that Caux radiates, have made these annual Global Dialogues into something very different from other international business conferences. For logistical reasons meetings now also take place in other venues.

## Ethical Code

Before the birth of the Social Forum in Porto Alegre, counterpart of the consultation of top industrialists and policy makers in Davos, the CRT was already formulating an ethical code for multinationals. Based on the Japanese concept *kyosei* (living and working together for the common good, enabling coopera-

tion and mutual prosperity to coexist with healthy and fair competition) and the concept of human dignity (referring to the sacredness or value of each person as an end in itself, not simply as a means to the fulfilment of others' purposes), the *Caux Round Table Principles for Business* are the most wide-spread in the world. A supportive article in the *Financial Times* greatly contributed to this world wide distribution. Under the heading 'The search for universal ethics' Tim Dickson wrote, 'It is thought to be the first time that a document of this kind has attracted influential supporters from Europe, Japan and the US.'<sup>2</sup> The article unleashed a whole raft of reactions. I remember that in our office they came streaming in via telephone and fax, since those were still the days before e-mail.

In its introduction this ethical code states that the business world should play an important role in improving economic and social conditions. The code offers multinationals a world standard against which business behaviour can be measured. First general principles are mentioned and then guidelines for the responsibility of companies vis-à-vis the stakeholders: customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers, competitors and the community.<sup>3</sup> Some points from the *Principles for Business* are:

- When businesses work in another country they should also contribute to the social advancement of that country and abide by human rights.
- Business behaviour should not only follow the letter of the law, but also the spirit.
- Honesty and trustworthiness create a spirit of trust which benefits business.
- International rules and treaties should be observed.
- A business should respect and, where possible, improve the environment, and promote sustainable development.
- A business should not participate in or condone bribery, money laundering, or other corrupt practices.

In *Moral Capitalism – Reconciling Private Interest with the Public Good*, Steve Young, International Director of the CRT

since 2000, develops the Principles further. The book is described on the flap as 'A guide for the use of the Caux Round Table principles for Business'.<sup>4</sup> Young starts from the assumption that someone's private life and his work should be compatible. Faith and moral values that people adhere to should be integrated in their work, so that they can take sound and honest decisions, both as business men or women and as private individuals. On 26 May 2004 *Moral Capitalism* was launched in the Netherlands at the University of Nyenrode School of Business. Stephen Young presented a copy of his book to Karel Noordzij, then Chairman of the Board of Managing Directors of PGGM (a large pension fund) and a member of the CRT Global Governing Board. Co-founder of the CRT Olivier Giscard d'Estaing was also present and underlined the importance of Young's book for a fairer market economy.

Maarten de Pous has been the CRT's European Coordinator from its founding in 1986. Since January 2008 he has continued his commitment to the Caux Round Table as Senior Advisor. CRT chapters are being formed in a growing number of countries (already established in Japan, Mexico, Malaysia, Germany, Poland, Croatia). He believes that if it succeeds in involving courageous and visionary leaders, the CRT will continue to make an important contribution, both as a think tank for launching creative initiatives and as a forum for honest dialogue.

### Example for top industrialists

Frits Philips was 80 years of age when he took the initiative that led to the Caux Round Table. As a top industrialist and as a person he was an example of what the CRT, with its ethical aspirations, stood for. This did not go unnoticed in the Netherlands. Just how much he was known and loved was obvious at the celebration of his 100th birthday on 16 April 2005. It explains the host of articles, TV and radio programmes the event generated. It was national news. In his home city of Eindhoven it was cause for a celebration in which the whole town participated. For one day it was called Frits Philips city. There was, and this list is far from complete, a Frits Philips bus,

exhibitions and performances all over the town, a Frits Philips market, special cakes called Fritske, which one could pay for with a Fritske commemoration coin and a commemoration concert. The local newspaper produced a 40-page special edition. Among reasons for his popularity were mentioned his sense of humour, the fact that he remained ordinary, his enthusiasm for his soccer club PSV, but above all his social commitment, which by and large the media attributed to his involvement with MRA/IofC. As one news-paper put it, 'His life was geared to the renewal of people and society. His motto being: Treat others as you want to be treated yourself.' Another paper quoted one of his sons saying, 'In our family no one went to bed with a quarrel unresolved. If something was the matter you talked it over and when he or my mother were in the wrong, they were always big enough to apologize.'

When he died less than eight months after this birthday this level of coverage was repeated. It was again national news and the whole city of Eindhoven was in mourning. One prime time national news programme portrayed him as the leader of the family firm for 30 years, the favourite of his workers, the pride of his city Eindhoven, and a man of deep faith. I was also interviewed. They focused on his link with MRA/IofC and showed interesting archive material: Frits Philips speaking at the Utrecht Whitsun rally in 1937 and Queen Wilhelmina calling for a moral and spiritual re-armament in 1938.

Frits Philips could serve as an example for other top industrialists. He was not out to enrich himself, but used his wealth for social improvement. He did not derive his worth from his fortune, but from his humanity.

### Alcoholics Anonymous

The Caux Round Table is one the initiatives which is referred to in the new name Initiatives of Change (IofC).<sup>5</sup> It was by no means the first initiative. Because the Oxford Group (or Moral Re-Armament and Initiatives of Change after it) was never a centrally governed top-down body, but always a colourful collection of people who, out of an inner conviction, wanted to

work for a better world, there was also an equally colourful collection of initiatives great or small.

The best-known one from the early times is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), an organisation which is recognised worldwide and which itself has had many spin-offs, each dealing with a specific addiction. AA derived its ideas of self-examination, acknowledging and sharing ones own weaknesses, putting things right and working together with others, directly from the Oxford Group and Sam Shoemaker, an early colleague of Frank Buchman. These ideas can be found in the 12 steps, still used by AA. People help each other to stay away from alcohol. This was the case with the founders of AA. Bill Williams told his story to Bob Smith and by doing so helped Bob and also himself. They became known as Bill W and Dr Bob of the AA. The Dutch sociologist P van Haberdien conducted research into AA for five years and visited AA self-help groups in the Netherlands and Belgium. In his 1986 doctoral thesis *Zelfhulp bij anonieme alcoholisten* (Self-help with Alcoholics Anonymous) he writes: 'AA does more than kicking the habit. The alcoholic must take ownership of a whole new set of values. I call this a moral rearmament. Humility, personal responsibility and honesty are essential.'<sup>6</sup>

In 2005 I received a request from the addiction clinic of a psychiatric hospital in The Hague to speak about the connection between Oxford Group and AA. When I got there it turned out I was speaking to some 40 or 50 alcoholics and other addicts who were all getting professional treatment in this clinic for addiction and who all also belonged to AA groups. The person who had asked me to come was Bert. When I later interviewed him and his colleague Michel, whose addiction had been heroine, I found out how this connection came about.

In 2000 those running the addiction clinic were concerned about the large percentage of addicts who, after having been treated successfully, fell back. The Director asked Michel to look for a new method of treatment. Michel discovered the Minnesota model in the USA in which the programme of AA is combined with behavioural scientific methods. Back in the

Netherlands Michel got in touch with AA via Bert, whom he knew. And together they introduced the AA method to this clinic, where they both work as 'hands-on' experts and therapists. From their own painful experience they are able to help others. Bert says that he used to pray to God to help him to stop drinking, but he refused to take the necessary steps. At the moment of his deepest need, he said to God: 'I will do the practical part, if you help me.' Michel calls his liberation from addiction a spiritual awakening.

In 2007 a tall friendly young man rang the door bell of our office in Amaliastraat. He had also been an addict, he had also been helped by AA and he also wanted to find out more about the roots of AA. It turned out his own addiction was sex and the special brand of AA that helped him was the 'Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous'. The only way to become really free, he had learned, was to be completely honest about his problem and to face squarely the cost of his addiction. And then the 12 steps helped him further. Like Bert and Michel he says you must never consider yourself permanently cured. The addiction is always there around the corner. But, he says, with the help of God he can stay sober day by day. To do that he practises daily the last three of the 12 steps: quiet time, critical self-examination, restitution where necessary and to help others. The gist of the programme is really a change of heart.

I started this section explaining the name Initiatives of Change. Although one can definitely consider AA as an initiative which came out of change and aims for change, the name IofC came into being to combine the initiatives which sprang up in the 1980s and 1990s. Most of these stayed under the umbrella of first Moral Re-Armament and then, from 2001, Initiatives of Change.

### Young entrepreneurs

Two young Dutch, Jan Schouten and Martin Jansen, visited Caux in the summer of 1993 and listened in at the meeting of the Caux Round Table. They found this so inspiring that they decided to start something like it for young people working in

trade and industry. The first meeting of the Junior Round Table (JRT) took place the next year in Caux with 12 participants from seven countries. The Junior Round Table grew into a network of more than 100 young entrepreneurs who work mainly in Europe and the USA, Mexico, India and Africa and who want to take their social responsibility seriously. Up until 2004 the JRT met every summer in Caux and once a year somewhere else in the world – for example in the Netherlands, USA, Croatia, India and Ukraine. They aim to inspire each other by exchanging ideas, convictions and experiences at work and outside. Different Dutch, like Dorien Moret, Erik Pennings, Menso Fermin and Hein Bogaard have taken a leading role in it.

In 2000 10 young people who were working in industry, civil service, education, media and healthcare came together in the IofC centre in The Hague to reflect on society and their role in it. They described themselves as a ‘think tank’ and decided to meet regularly. The group grew to be more than 20 strong and still meets. The make-up of the group changes as people move away and others join. The idea remains the same – to confront each other with ideas and issues, coming as they do from different areas of society. It is a sort of common contemplation from where everyone is ready to face the practice of daily life. Some were also members of the JRT, until that group ceased to be active in 2004. After the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on 11 September 2001, the think tank decided to invite others of their age group from the Moslem community, which led to fruitful exchanges.

Menso Fermin moved on from the JRT to organising conferences in Caux for Business and Industry. He had become convinced that it was not enough just to organise conferences. In 2001, together with Stephen Greisdorf from the USA, he took the lead in transforming these conferences into a global year-round programme called: ‘Caux Initiatives for Business’. Its starting point is that if people are personally motivated to do their work in an ethical and socially responsible way, this will benefit both the firm and society. Ultimately the imbalance in

the economy needs to be corrected. To combat poverty personal dedication is needed. Caux Initiatives for Business works closely with the industrial conferences in Asia Plateau, the training centre of IofC in Panchgani, India. This cooperation has led to the formation in India of a centre for ethical leadership (CENTRAL) and a resource centre for good governance (Centre for Governance). Menso Fermin stepped down from the international coordination of the CIB in 2005. This role is now in the hands of Mohan Bhagwandas from Australia. One of the major annual events is the conference in Caux on 'Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy'.

Menso Fermin's involvement with the CIB was in parallel with his conviction for IofC. He discovered a connection between his training as interim controller and advisor, the practice of his work with a big accountancy firm, and his philosophy of life. The connection between the first two is not so difficult, but to connect both with his faith is a lot more difficult. Trust is one of the essential building stones of society and of our prosperity. To him this is underlined by the 2008 mortgage crisis and the scandals around fraudulent industries. Meeting people from all corners of the world has helped his understanding of what is actually going on. Also he learned to look more critically at himself and the society he lives in, the Netherlands.

To have a personal ethical code of conduct is as vital in our country as anywhere else. Menso Fermin experienced this in a job he was doing for a firm with a unsatisfactory financial basis and where there was a fine line between good and bad. He needed to work on a knife edge. He took what he was doing into his quiet times and tried to work as honestly as he could towards an honest operational management. At some point this firm was accused of fraud and Fermin's role also came under investigation. He was found to be above criticism and was grateful to have learned the practice of quiet times and to check his thoughts with the principles of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, which guarded him from blunders.

This experience gave him the conviction that, for the CIB conferences, it is more important to have personal witnesses

than a theoretical analysis of the world situation by famous speakers, especially on subjects such as globalisation and ethics. The special contribution of IofC is to show that change starts with oneself and that finding the way out of the ethical dilemmas of responsible enterprise starts with personal insight and recognition. Lastly the Junior Round Table gave him something very special. It is there where he met Marijana Longin from Croatia, to whom he is happily married.

### Democracy needs moral foundations

Many initiatives came into being after 1990 – after the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of communism. The leadership programme Foundations for Freedom (F4F) is an example of this. It started in 1993 as an initiative to demonstrate and strengthen the foundations for freedom and democracy in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The idea behind F4F is that moral and spiritual values are essential to achieve this vision and that there is a connection between the change in individuals and renewal in society. The programme consists of courses, seminars, workshops and follow up meetings where people are encouraged to promote honesty and transparency in the civil service and business life; to support the development of an honest and independent press; to base education on sound moral and spiritual values.

A couple from the Netherlands who became involved in this programme are Kees and Marina Scheijgrond from Gouda. They got to know about it through their friends Erik and Sheila Andren from England, with whom – as we heard earlier – they had organised family conferences at Caux in the 1970s and 1980s. Erik Andren had the conviction to do something for young people from Central and Eastern Europe and set up Foundations for Freedom as an initiative under the umbrella of IofC.

A naval officer, Kees Scheijgrond took early retirement in 1989 when he was 52. At that time of *glasnost* and *perestroika* it became easier to travel to Eastern European countries. Scheijgrond decided to learn Russian because he felt the need to

make contact with the former enemies in order to get to know them. In 1990 he visited Poland, his first experience of Eastern Europe. By that time his wife Marina had completed her theological studies and become minister of a liberal protestant church. Over the next 10 years they travelled together to Siberia, Ukraine, Lithuania and Romania to give in total some 15 F4F courses.

Their involvement with F4F led to other initiatives. In Ukraine the Scheijgronds met a group of handicapped people and their parents. The idea grew to send 20 second-hand wheelchairs to Ukraine, in which they were helped by the Dutch humanitarian foundation Holland-Ukraine. Wheelchairs also need repairing, so the next step was to develop a wheelchair repair workshop in Lviv, run by handicapped people. They were able to do this with the help of different bodies in the Netherlands, one of them being the Beenhakker wheelchair company which provided technical and material assistance. The work with the handicapped also involved a rehabilitation centre, sports for handicapped people and help for hospitals and clinics.<sup>7</sup>

An F4F course in Baia Mare, in the north west of Romania, in 2004 had an unexpected sequel. Two Romanian-Orthodox priests, with the backing of their Bishop and of the regional education inspector, had asked for an anti-corruption seminar, based on F4F principles. Kees and Marina Scheijgrond went to Baia Mare where, along with Angela Starovoitova from Ukraine and Vitalie Cracan from Moldova, they gave a course for some 40 participants from education, politics, civil service and judiciary.

It so happened that a Danish lawyer, Torsten Hvidt, who had arranged training for Romanian lawyers in Denmark, was in Baia Mare on a return visit. Because he knew the Scheijgronds through the IofC network, he decided to look in at the seminar. As he witnessed them giving the course, there came into his mind a request he had just received from a Sierra Leonean living in Denmark, John Bangura. That was to give a course in democratic principles for the police and military in Sierra Leone.

Seeing the Scheijgronds in action and recalling that both Kees and Marina had a naval background and knew what it was to wear a uniform, prompted him to ask them to develop a course for the Sierra Leone security forces.

The Scheijgronds like challenges and after a few weeks of reflection they decided to say yes. On the basis of their experiences with F4F and knowing he would get help from Barry Hart, trauma expert from the Eastern Mennonite University in the USA, Kees wrote a prospectus. The target group was extended to include the army and civil society. With the same conviction and drive they had displayed with F4F, the Scheijgronds now plunged into this new adventure. Early 2005 the programme Moral Foundations for Democracy (MFD), a training for reconciliation and change in Sierra Leone, was launched. In this they work in cooperation with Hope Sierra Leone<sup>8</sup> and a team from different western countries including Denmark, Norway and UK. The focus is on training trainers so that in due course many thousands of Sierra Leonians can be reached.

In the build-up to the elections of August 2007 – the first free elections since the end of the civil war – John Bangura and Hope Sierra Leone initiated a campaign for clean and honest elections. At their request, the Scheijgronds led a three-day dialogue for politicians and representatives from civil society in Freetown. After the successful elections, another ‘Train the Trainers’ course was given in the beginning of 2008 with the backing of the newly elected President Ernest Bai Koroma. The President believes that the change in mentality that these courses propagate is necessary for the reconstruction of the country. That visit was the fifth in three years that the Scheijgronds paid to Sierra Leone.

The challenge – besides the ever-present need for funds – is that the trainers understand the essence of the programme, which is that social change is only sustainable if it is based on a practical personal change in mentality, motivation and attitude. This remains an always obvious but uncomfortable truth, and an ongoing challenge. You have to be prepared to let the change you want to see affect your own personal life also. For this

programme to continue and be sustainable a constant awareness of this in the form of introspection and self-criticism is vital.

### Interaction with international programmes

In the work to promote understanding and dialogue in our multicultural country Aad Burger and Kees Scheijgrond, on behalf of their Dutch colleagues, were in contact with the international IofC programme of Hope in the Cities. This originated in Richmond, USA, with the aim of combating racism. The concept of the 'honest conversations' was also key here. Delegations of Hope in the Cities from other countries visited the Netherlands. For example in February 1999 a culturally mixed delegation from England, France, Germany, Norway and Denmark came to the Netherlands to prepare a conference for Caux about the issues facing the cities. During their visit they took the opportunity to learn more about the Dutch situation. In Utrecht they met Police Commissioner Papeveld and Police Inspector Timmer, who had been given the task of improving relationships between the police and the Islamic communities. It became obvious how similar the dilemmas are that we face in our cities and how we can learn from each other, both from the successes recorded and from the mistakes made.<sup>9</sup>

On another occasion, in May 2004, three members of Hope in the Cities from England came to share experiences with police and others concerned with city issues in Utrecht, Gouda and The Hague.<sup>10</sup> The programme in Utrecht was organised by Hayat Chidi, the first woman Police Inspector of Moroccan descent. In Gouda they visited Rachid Tighadouini's community centre. As a baker in a problem area of his city, Tighadouini, originally from Morocco, talked with many people over the counter and learned something of the fears in his multicultural area. He wanted to do something about this and together with a Dutch inhabitant he started a community centre. The aim was to help the Moroccan inhabitants integrate in Dutch society and to create a neighbourhood where people could live together without fear. They included local people in their plans. His story

is a colourful one with ups and downs, but they did manage to improve the atmosphere in the quarter.<sup>11</sup>

There was, and is, also interaction with different peace-building programmes of IofC, for example Creators of Peace (CoP), which was born at a conference in Caux initiated by African women in 1991. Hester Mila-Groeneweg is leader of the Creators of Peace group in the Netherlands. Hester taught art and graphic design for more than 30 years. She is also an artist in her own right. In her work she expresses the spirituality which is the guideline of her life. She designed the Creators of Peace logo and also made several display panels for conferences in Caux.

In 1999 the Creators of Peace group in the Netherlands took part in a huge peace conference 'The Hague Appeal for Peace', along with 700 other NGOs, totalling 10,000 peace activists. The occasion was the 100th anniversary of the first peace conference in The Hague in May 1899 which had been initiated by Tsar Nicolas II with the support of Queen Wilhemina, to whom he was distantly related. This conference resulted in the founding of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the building of the Peace Palace, which was the beginning of The Hague becoming the juridical capital of the world.

Two who came over especially to help with the action in 1999 were Heyde Duran from Colombia and Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam from India.

The stand of Creators of Peace was just across the way from that of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP). Its founder, and Director till 2007, Paul van Tongeren came to our stand to buy the book *Religion – the missing dimension of statecraft*. This encounter was the beginning of cooperation between him and IofC. Paul van Tongeren and his wife Els, have been attending, and taking an active part in, the IofC conferences of Agenda for Reconciliation (AfR) in Caux since 2000. He became a member of the International Advisory Council of AfR and he continues to be part of the international group which organises the peace-building conferences in Caux. As someone who goes to many conferences, he believes that IofC has a

special role to play. The conferences in Caux, he says, are different, but important in the whole of the peace-building work. When he invites people to Caux, he puts it this way, 'The spirit of Caux is very special, because people are encouraged to listen to one another. It is a spirit of openness, dialogue, personal responsibility, of building trust and working towards reconciliation. Many meetings and conferences are on an intellectual level. In Caux one is touched on a deeper level by the openness and positive intention of the other person. That spirit in Caux is tangible and that makes the meetings so exceptional.'

And he adds: 'In the course of 60 years Caux has undertaken pioneering work in the field of reconciliation, but at the same time has had very little connection with the international conflict resolution and peace-building community. It is good that this has changed lately and the experiences and spirit of Caux are now being shared in a broader context. Reconciliation is very important and is underplayed in international discourse. Caux has an important responsibility to share its impressive experiences with others.'

Paul van Tongeren is now Secretary-General of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict which he founded.

## Silver in motion

A colourful collection of initiatives! The next two are very different, but certainly colourful.

Often an initiative starts with an idea. Someone sees a need and wants to do something about it. But that does not mean that from there on it is always plain sailing. Silversmith Jan van Nouhuys had a good idea, but when he encountered rejection it felt like a door slammed in his face.

In 1990 his silversmith workshop had been in existence for 15 years. He had been concerned for some time about the downward spiral in which the profession of silversmith had found itself. He taught at the vocational College for gold- and silversmithing in Silver City, Schoonhoven. He noticed however that for the students who had specialised in manufacturing large

silver objects, as he did, there was no climate in which their artistic talents could flourish. Van Nouhuys had an idea. He proposed that the silver museum in Schoonhoven organise an exhibition of his work together with that of his pupils. This might help to attract more publicity for silver art, he argued. The museum, however, turned down the proposal. A door closed.

But when one road is blocked, you look for another way. In the end Van Nouhuys thought of a much better idea to generate interest in silver art. It was an idea he called 'Silver in Motion' and it would put more in motion than Jan van Nouhuys and his wife Anneke had dreamed of (from the very beginning she had been fully part of the project with Jan).

It started with a plan to try to bring together those who had learned the art of big silver. A colleague from the vocational college suggested inviting other artists too. An advertisement placed in several national art magazines inspired more than 40 artists, of whom half were gold- or silversmiths, to take part in a series of five seminars. At the end of it all participants were asked to design an artwork in silver. The whole project ended with an exhibition of all the designs.

At least this is what Jan and Anneke thought. But they did not get away with it that easily. The enthusiasm of the participants was unstoppable. They now wanted to actually make all the designs. The result was that there was enormous activity over the whole summer. The college for silversmithing opened its doors, so that the artists could work there and also provided them with guidance and support, so that they saw their ideas become reality.

This explosion of creativity went on show in the Schielandhuis Museum in Rotterdam in 1991. The following year Silver in Motion organised another series of lectures. At an exhibition afterwards in the prestigious Design Museum in Gent, Belgium, there were 100 silver art objects. Silver in Motion had triggered a discussion on the place of contemporary silver in the world of art. The exhibition travelled to three other well-known museums in the West, East and South of the Netherlands.

After 10 years, in 2000, the project came to an end. Silver in Motion's mission had been completed. Contemporary silver had managed to secure a place among art lovers and therefore there was now space for the growing number of artists/silversmiths to work in.

The beautifully renovated water tower in Schoonhoven was given a new function by Silver in Motion – as exhibition area with workshops for two silversmiths. Like the others, Van Nouhuys himself benefited enormously from this project. The climate has become such that the large silver artworks that he makes are more widely appreciated and sold. He notices this fresh interest at the prestigious annual art fair PAN, Amsterdam, where he exhibits his work.

But an artist can never sit back. After major successes the question arises: how to continue, especially when the economic tide is unfavourable? Through rough and smooth the conviction that Jan started with stays with him. As a young, independent entrepreneur he had nearly thrown in the towel at the very beginning, after an imbalanced high tax assessment and his accountant advised him to quit. As he started out he sometimes found himself confronted with customers who asked him not to count the value added tax. After all this would be cheaper for both parties! But he always refused, since he had decided to base his business on honesty. This refusal has cost him clients, which he badly needed in the beginning. Yet 'in the deepest crisis', so Jan remembers, 'there was a soft, warm, fatherly voice in his heart, which said: Continue, continue, continue...'. A well known art and antique dealer from The Hague, Bram Aardewerk, also came to his rescue. He had great faith in Jan and encouraged him where he could. Once, when he wanted to buy something from Jan and heard the price, he exclaimed: 'What? That is much too cheap. You must double your hourly rate.' And then he bought it for nearly double the price.

At the end of November 2004 Jan van Nouhuys was appointed Honorary Citizen of the Silvercity (Schoonhoven). To symbolize this he received the silver honorary key of the city from the hands of the mayor. He was being honoured, the

Mayor said, because he had dedicated himself with unbridled energy to modern silver craft. It was also appreciated that in the 1980s Van Nouhuys was one of the motors behind renewed silversmith training. And as President he succeeded in raising the profile of the annual Schoonhoven Silverday, which is now the National Silverday.

Jan is grateful that as a 16-year-old, when the Dutch *Sing Out* group came to his school with songs and sketches, he learned the art of quiet times. 'I learned that I need from time to time to withdraw from the whirlpool of every day to pay attention to the still voice in my heart, which can bring wisdom in a sometimes crazy life and direction in times of rudderless, drifting existence. This notion is the core of my life.'

Anneke, who is the youngest child of Cor and Sijtje de Pous, has her own independent faith and conviction, and has taken on this adventure with Jan from the beginning. And so far both of them have never had reason to doubt the small voice which encouraged them to continue.

They now live in the centre of Schoonhoven in an artistically designed house, in which Jan could realize many creative ideas, with a gallery attached and his workshop across the road.

### A l'Arche experience

The other example started with Maarten de Pous, who, during one of his visits to the USA, discovered the books of Henri Nouwen. He was so taken by the writing of this Dutch priest/writer, who was then working in the USA and who was at that time better known there than in his own country, that he wanted to meet him. This happened when Henri Nouwen was visiting his family in the Netherlands. The next thing was that Maarten de Pous invited Nouwen to give a lecture in the home of Karel and Betty Gunning which is in Rotterdam near the Nouwen family home.

To continue this story we need to introduce Sia Windig, youngest daughter of Jaap and Rinske Windig, who in 1987 was in the final year of her social youth work studies. Sia attended the lecture by Henri Nouwen. He spoke about Jean

Vanier, the founder of the l'Arche communities. There people with and without a mental handicap live together in a community where spirituality plays a large part. In her final paper Sia was dealing with the question whether faith can, or should be allowed to, play a part in helping young people. In l'Arche she saw how this could happen.

After finishing her studies she went to work for a year in a l'Arche community in Paris. There she learned what it means to live alongside the person with a handicap as a human being rather than a social worker. Through this way of living together a consciousness comes into being of the special gifts of heart that people with a mental handicap can offer and a place where that can be revealed. She noticed that one gets more of an eye and an ear for what is really needed, something which in ordinary institutions, because of the pressure of work, one does not get around to. She became more and more convinced that there should be space for the approach of l'Arche in the Netherlands. Sia decided to write a letter with her conviction to Jean Vanier. To her surprise Vanier trusted her with the realisation of the idea. He gave her the names of other Dutch with a l'Arche experience.

A working group was set up and at the end of 1994 the first l'Arche house was opened in Gouda. What is expressed here in one sentence actually took six years and a lot of meetings (many of which took place in the centre of IofC in The Hague), visits to politicians and civil servants, meetings with institutions and many phone calls. Over those years I was closely involved in this process. Exactly what opening a l'Arche house entailed took a lot of explaining to the different authorities. That is why in the autumn of 1990 a number of us from the working group went together with the provincial governor and the provincial civil servant concerned to visit a l'Arche community in Antwerp. The result of all this effort was that the l'Arche community was officially accepted as a form of handicap care which could therefore be subsidised.

The meticulous and realistic way the international l'Arche community accompanied this working group has made a deep

impression on me. It was clear that no-one was out for quick success, but the purpose was that the new community would have solid roots in Dutch society and that the people concerned would feel ownership of the l'Arche principles. In the meantime there is now a second home in Gouda and also a workshop. It is an example of an idea becoming reality.<sup>12</sup>

In April 2008 one of our main national newspapers carried a long article on the special care in the l'Arche houses. The reporter had stayed in a l'Arche house for 24 hours and captured the special atmosphere in her article. It remains a challenge to explain the combination of spiritual community and official institution for handicap care. As far as the inspector was concerned they were, to begin with at least, considered a risk group. But over the years they have managed to comply with the official demands and still keep their identity. The essence of l'Arche, as expressed in the article, is that mentally handicapped people are not a nuisance, but can be an enrichment to society with their warmth of heart and their sincere spirituality.<sup>13</sup>

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1. Report in *Nieuw Wereld Nieuws*, 16 September 1989. For this chapter I have made ample use of the reports in this periodical and also from *Ander Nieuws*. Furthermore I have made use of information received from Maarten de Pous, Digna Hintzen-Philips, Menso Fermin, Kees and Marina Scheijgrond-Verhulst, Jan and Anneke van Nouhuys-de Pous and Sia Windig.

2. *Financial Times*, 22 July 1994. On 25 August 1994 the same paper devoted an article to the meeting of the CRT in Caux.

3. The CRT Principles for Business 'owes a substantial debt to *The Minnesota Principles*, a statement of business behaviour developed by the Minnesota Centre for Corporate Responsibility. The Centre hosted and chaired the drafting committee, which included Japanese, European and United States representatives'. Quote from the introduction of the CRT Principles. See also: [www.cauxroundtable.org](http://www.cauxroundtable.org).

4. Stephen Young, *Moral Capitalism – reconciling private interest with the public good*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco, 2004.

5. From here on I will use both the names Initiatives of Change and Moral Re-Armament and also the abbreviations IofC and MRA. In chapter 11, I will come back to the name change.

6. P van Haberden, *Zelfhulp bij Anonieme Alcoholisten*, (Self-help with Alcoholics Anonymous) Katholieke Universiteit Brabant, Trouw, 8 October 1986. See also Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman – a life*, pp 151-153.

7. The projects were made possible through the help of Beenhakker wheel chair company, MATRA, an aid programme for Eastern Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PUM (Project Dispatching Managers), Reeuwijk Rotary Club, the Poland-Ukraine Foundation, RESPO Foundation from Heerenveen and the Henri Nouwen Foundation.

8. Hope Sierra Leone was founded by John Bangura in 2000 in order to bring change and reconciliation to his war- torn country.

9. Police Commissioner J Th L Papeveld gave a profound speech entitled 'Police in the multicultural society' in the IofC centre in The Hague in September 1999. He went back a long way in history to look at how the Dutch have dealt with immigrants and he emphasised how seriously the police endeavour to live into the other cultures, even to the extent of visiting the countries from where the migrants come, from such as Morocco. This page on the Dutch IofC website is very well visited.

10. They were Glen Williams, Lawrence Fearon and Phoebe Gill.

11. The story of Rachid Tighadouini on the Dutch IofC website is also very popular.

12. In 1990/1991 I followed the cadre school of the Christian Democratic Party. For my final paper and research I looked into the possibility of the l'Arche houses becoming one of the accepted forms of the care for the mentally handicapped, an addition to the forms of provision already there. In a l'Arche home one lives together as a family. Handicapped and the assistants (carers) do the housework together. Key words are: social integration and acceptance (the house is in a normal suburb), development of one's personality, smallness of scale (between four and six handicapped live in a house with the same number of assistants), and a democratic set up (all inhabitants take decisions together after discussion). There is a personal relationship between handicapped and assistants. Spirituality plays a key part. Living and working in a l'Arche home demands a lot of dedication from the assistants, but they consider it also as an enrichment.

13. Irene de Pous, (my daughter!) *De Ark leert vooral van gehandicapte* (L'Arche learns chiefly from handicapped), *Trouw*, 28 April 2008.

## CHAPTER 10

# The road of reconciliation

Everyone wants peace, but the road to peace is strewn with many obstacles and road blocks. Somewhere on this road one is confronted with the need for change in one's own heart. We see this need sharpest in other people, but the starting point is with ourselves. This could prove to be the greatest obstacle, because change in my own heart demands an openness and vulnerability that I cannot always muster. Anger, hate, bitterness and indignation can form a wall of security from which we can only disassociate with a lot of effort, even if these feelings make us ill inside. Our surroundings do not always help either.

This is the experience of Lou Reymen from Hasselt (Belgium).<sup>1</sup> In 1988 his daughter Ann, aged 23, was killed by her former boyfriend. 'It is very strange', says Reymen, 'if I am ill, everyone comes with advice on how I can get cured. But if I am sick with hate, no one wants to cure me. On the contrary, everyone stirs up the fire of hate by saying: "If I were you, I would kill him."'

Around 1970 Reymen came in contact with Moral Re-Armament through a radio broadcast. This helped him in the years that followed to put his faith into practice. When he and his wife Mariëtte received the worst news that parents can get, they asked themselves what their faith could mean in these terrible circumstances. They thought of the parents of the killer. How dreadful it must be for them too. Through the local priest they let them know that they were ready to receive them. Two hours later the bell rang: the parents of the killer. The two mothers cried, embracing each other, comforting each other. The four of them prayed together for their children.

## The first step

Looking back Lou Reymen thinks that, thanks to this step, he has been enabled to remain free from feelings of hate and revenge. In this period he thought of two women whom he met years before in Caux and who were an example to him. An Irish woman had told him that she wanted to meet the murderer of her son. A Swiss woman, who had become permanently disabled after a serious car accident, taught him never to ask why something in your life happened, but rather what you can learn from it that can be used in your life.

Some months after the death of their daughter, Lou got in touch with the parents of a murdered child in Leuven. This was the start of the organisation 'Parents of a Murdered Child'. The parents meet in each others' homes, where they share a meal together. 'It is easier to talk around the meal table', Reymen says. Someone from the centre for victim support attended the talks. Later on Reymen helped write the book '*Leven met een schaduw*' (Living with a shadow), which relates the experiences of these parents.<sup>2</sup> The title reflects the reality that the terrible event stays with the bereaved for the rest of their lives. 'It is as if it happened yesterday,' says Lou, 'I do not cry now as much as I did in the beginning, but the pain remains the same.'

The book makes many recommendations, such as taking prevention seriously. His daughter had asked for protection on several occasions after receiving death threats, but in vain. Now the police take prevention more seriously. Another recommendation is that legal assistants in the office of the public prosecutor should be available to help the victims. The book is used in Belgium for police training.

Through this event, which totally changed his life ('There is a life before Ann, and a life after Ann'), Lou could easily have been eaten up by hatred. But he chose another way, a way where somewhere along the journey the word forgiveness appears. He would have liked to forgive the murderer face-to-face, but the Court has forbidden any contact between them. Reymen is not to get in touch with him, and the culprit, who was released from

prison in 2002, is not allowed to enter Hasselt. Others in the organisation Parents of a Murdered Child think that he goes too far in his talking about forgiveness. Twice he was asked to take part in a Dutch television talk programme, where he noticed he was totally alone in his idea that the road of hate is a dead end.

His wife Mariette found it difficult to follow her husband in this. After the initial meeting with the parents of the murderer, she withdrew inside herself. She was already suffering from Parkinson's disease and four years after the event she passed away.

Humanly speaking, Lou noticed, taking revenge and hating seems more normal, easier and spontaneous. But it also leads to self-destruction. It corrodes you inside, while the other person may not even know that he is hated. To forgive is not something human and natural. Lou Reymen experiences it as a grace that he has been allowed to forgive. According to him the first step is the most important one. It represents the intention. If the first step is taken, the rest needs to grow. It helped him that he was able to talk about this first step, which unfortunately his wife could not. That is how he was able to remain faithful to his conviction: no hate, no revenge, no bitterness.

### Letting go of old pain

In November 1999 in the IofC centre at Amaliastraat, The Hague, a conference took place on the theme 'The art of getting older'. Out of what was expressed, one conclusion was that one of the great arts of getting older is to let go of old pain. If you do not wait until your deathbed, but let go of old pain, anger, frustrations, aversions – yes even hate – much earlier, a way is opened for something new. In one of the discussion groups there were two women who had suffered during the Second World War in the Japanese camps in the Dutch Indies. They were completely free of hate. Their lively spirit and positive outlook on life were striking. The two women, Adrie Lindeijer-van der Baan, and Else Lüning-Burger, later told their story to Geert-Willem Overdijkink, editor of *Ander Nieuws* (IofC public newsletter). This issue appeared just before the visit of the

Japanese Emperor Akihito, on the anniversary of the 400-year relationship between the Netherlands and Japan. Just as happened in 1971 during the visit of his father, this visit caused considerable upheaval. From the stories of these two women, however, a more conciliatory attitude was heard.

'I was carried through my imprisonment by God', says Else Lüning. Born in Switzerland, she married a Dutch man and in 1936 they went to the Dutch Indies to work and live on a rubber plantation. As a Swiss she did not have to go into the Japanese camp, but she went voluntarily so that her mother-in-law would not have to go alone. Her Dutch husband was put to work on the Burma railway. She told about the terrible hardship in the camp, where she nevertheless always felt the presence of God. She managed not to succumb to hatred of the Japanese, but rather hate their system, and she is very grateful not to have harboured hate in her heart. After the war she and her husband were reunited.

Her son is now in business with Japanese firms. Once she was staying with him, when the doorbell rang and two Japanese business partners were on the doorstep. Else Lüning happened to open the door, and she could, with a free heart, say, 'Welcome. So good to meet you.'

Adrie – she was then still called Van der Baan – was in the same internment camp as her sister Riek and her friend Nel Lindeijer. Nel died of exhaustion just before the end of the war and left behind four children. Adrie and Riek took care of the children and after the war, in 1946, Adrie married the father of the foursome.

Along with the eldest of the children, Wim, Adrie Lindeijer has been involved in reconciling Dutch and Japanese since the 1990s. It is reconciliation which is based not on glossing over the past, but rather on facing things as they really were and still reaching out towards each other.

Wim Lindeijer says that the hate he felt towards the Japanese has disappeared completely over the past years. He feels a liberated man. Looking back, he can point to three experiences that helped to liberate him. First of all there was his mother Nel's

farewell letter. It was free from any charges or accusations against Japan or the Japanese. Just before she died she said to young Wim, when he promised to avenge her, that in a heart filled with hate there is no room for love. She said goodbye to life and to her children in a peaceful manner, which made an unforgettable impression on Wim, who was nine years old at the time. Secondly there was the diary of Wim's father in the form of letters he wrote, but obviously could not send, to his wife and children while a prisoner of war on Java and later in Japan. The letters breathe realism, but no ill-will. They reveal a faith in God, and love and care for his family. Wim first became acquainted with the letters when he was 13. When he read them again 40 years later, he decided to edit them, added some material of his own and gave the volume to his second mother Adrie for her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The editing of the book helped him to process the past. He translated it into English and it has now been published in Japanese. This is the third experience that helped the last bit of hate against the Japanese melt away: namely the reaction in Japan to his father's diary. There was sincere interest, openness, and yes remorse about the war. The book is used in Japan to help combat ignorance about its war past.<sup>3</sup>

### Memorial in Mizumaki

In Mizumaki, on the island of Kyushu in Japan, where there were many prisoners-of-war camps, there is a monument to the 858 Dutch who perished in them. The memorial is an initiative of the Dutch former prisoner-of-war Dolf Winkler and is supported by a local committee that is also responsible for its maintenance. The Buddhist teacher Y Ashiba played an important role in realising this. This is especially significant because of the criticism of the attitude of the Zen Buddhist schools during the Second World War. Kei'itsu Hosokawa, General Secretary of the Myoshin-ji School of the Rinzai Zen Buddhism, issued a statement in October 2002 in which he officially apologised in name of his organisation for their conduct during the war. He said he was sorry that the Myoshin-ji School not only

failed to offer any resistance to the war effort, but even actively advanced it.<sup>4</sup>

On 5 October 1997 Wim Lindeijer spoke at the annual commemoration in Mizumaki. He asked forgiveness for the hate he had felt against Japan. Lindeijer believes that his attitude is important to achieve reconciliation and to encourage others to free themselves from the feelings that keep us divided from each other.

Lindeijer understands those who ask for, and even demand, material compensation. But he believes that this material restitution will never be enough to satisfy a heart that is not freed from hate. The liberation from hate and ill-will is so special for him – he describes it as a load fallen from his shoulders – that he cannot stop witnessing about it.

With others the Lindeijers have founded a group to promote dialogue between the Netherlands and Japan, and to organise conferences to this end. One of these was at the occasion of the publication of his father's diary in Japanese.<sup>5</sup>

### What one person can do

Someone with whom the Lindeijers work very closely in the steering committee of Dialogue Netherlands-Japan is Takamitsu Muraoka, Professor (now Emeritus) of Hebrew at Leiden University and a member of the Japanese Christian Fellowship Church of the Netherlands. In 1991 he arrived in Leiden to take up the post of lecturer in Hebrew. Immediately after his arrival an incident took place that made him aware of the extent of the hostility towards Japan that existed in the Netherlands. The wreath that the Japanese Prime Minister had laid near the Indies Monument in The Hague was later thrown in the water near by. Several years later, in 1996, Muraoka read a hostile article on Japan in one of our leading newspapers. He responded to this with a letter to the editor. When Wim Lindeijer and his mother Adrie read it, they decided to get in touch with Muraoka. This led to a close contact and cooperation. Muraoka, who speaks fluent Dutch, was so impressed with the diary of Wim's father, that he undertook to edit the Japanese edition.

Contact with the victims of the Japanese aggression opened Muraoka's eyes. His father had served in the Japanese Army in the Second World War, but he had no idea what had happened in Indonesia or in other Asian countries. He does not consider himself responsible for the Japanese deeds of aggression (he was only seven when the war ended), but he is ashamed. Just as one can be collectively proud of one's country, he believes it is also possible to feel collective guilt. He feels it is important for Japan and the Japanese to be confronted with the dark past, to somehow process this. Such acknowledgment will also help his people to learn the needed lessons from the past. 'If we do not pay the material and moral debts of the war, the post-war generation will keep on paying the cost.' Muraoka gives examples in the practical daily business traffic with other Asian countries, where Japan still loses contracts because of this.

As a Christian he felt called to do his part in making amends. To this end, he decided after his retirement in 2003 to give one month every year to lecture without pay in one of the countries that has suffered under Japanese aggression. He started his conciliatory action in South Korea in 2003. After that followed Indonesia in 2004, Singapore in 2005, Hong Kong in 2006, Philippines in 2007 and China in 2008. For 2009 the plan is to go to Taiwan and for 2010 he is in consultation with Myanmar/Burma and Malaysia.

In the Netherlands he continues reaching out to the former victims of Japan. His humble and modest attitude disarms people. In December 2003 Professor Muraoka spoke in the IofC centre in The Hague on the subject 'Reconciliation between peoples – what one person can do'. In fact he thought the question should be 'what one person should do'. The motto on all our publications is: 'Initiatives of Change challenges everyone to be a pioneer for a positive change in society, starting with oneself'. 'This is exactly what I strive for out of my Christian conviction', he said.

An announcement in the local newspaper brought a group of people to this meeting who were connected to a centre that helps victims of the Japanese internment camps. One of them

organised a follow up meeting with this group and with Muraoka and his wife. It had a healing effect. One man who during the earlier meeting had refused to shake hands with Muraoka, managed to do this at this second meeting.

### A never-ending process

These stories show something of change, reconciliation and peace. They also show that it is a road that you travel, a process that never ends. The crucial thing is not whether we reach the goal of peace, but whether we are ready to travel the road of peace. And it is a great help to find companions, allies on that road.

One such ally is former Ambassador Edy Korthals Altes. In 2000, when MRA in the Netherlands had taken as its theme of the year 'On the road to change, reconciliation and peace', Korthals Altes spoke at a national conference about his mission. In 1986, when he was Netherlands Ambassador in Madrid, he felt increasingly unhappy about the arms race and the position taken by his government. At the same time he had a comfortable job, which he did not want to give up. After months of inner struggle he had a dream in which Christ asked him: 'And you, what have you done with what you know?' All inner struggle disappeared. He felt it was the old question: 'Adam, where are you?' He knew then what to do. He decided to resign and give the rest of his life to the battle for peace.

In 2000 his book *Heart and Soul for Europe – an essay on spiritual renewal* had just appeared.<sup>6</sup> In that book as well as in this conference speech – and in many others – he analysed the crisis our world is in and points to a way out.

The crisis is threefold, he believes. Firstly the arms race, which is based on an outdated concept of security – that whoever wants peace needs to prepare for war. This militarisation, which even encompasses space, fills him with great concern. He never tires of warning, like a modern prophet, that whoever wants peace needs to prepare for peace, a peace which needs to be based on a spiritual renewal. The amount of money spent on arms is a moral disgrace. There is no short cut, either, to answer the other challenges – those of the progressive destruction of our

environment and the unacceptable gap between rich and poor. We need to combat the idea that the human being has an endless need for material goods. Where does our identity lie? In our position, our house, our car? Or in our humanity? Because he believes that spirituality is the key to a process of change, he initiated a series of conferences in Caux centred around the theme 'The Spiritual Factor in Secular Society'.<sup>7</sup>

### In the rustle of the wind

You need stamina to work for change, reconciliation and peace. Someone who knows this perhaps more than most is Amapon Jos Frans Marey. Marey is Sera Bawa (which means great ruler) of a noble family in the Waropen tribe in the west of the Indonesian province of Papua. In the beginning of the 1960s he was Advisor to State Secretary Bot, Secretary of Domestic Affairs, when the Netherlands, under pressure from the United Nations and especially from the USA, was compelled to hand over what was then Dutch New Guinea to Indonesia. One of the provisions of the New York Agreement, which regulated the hand-over, was that a referendum would be held among the Papuan population on their political future.

But that only happened in 1969. On top of that it was not really a referendum. Instead 1,026 people were enclosed for three months in barracks, where they were pressed and persuaded with presents to opt for joining Indonesia. This procedure was a Javanese system called 'musjawarah'. This so called 'Act of Free Choice' was not seen by the Papuans as a free choice. Their democratic tradition, which they share with the rest of Melanesia, in which a council of elders decide matters, was ignored. Already, back in 1963, Indonesia had dismantled the representative bodies chosen by the Papuans.

Just before the handover Marey and other Papua leaders left post-haste for the Netherlands. Due to their close connection with the Dutch administration, they had reason to fear for their lives in what was now called Irian Jaya. Before arriving in the Netherlands something had happened to Marey which had made him denounce violence and through which he had become

convinced of the importance of peaceful solutions. Together with other Papuans, and with the encouragement of State Secretary Bot, he had attended a Moral Re-Armament conference in Odawara, Japan. For the Papuans who had suffered much under the Japanese occupation, it was a major step to go to Japan. In Odawara, Marey met people who convinced him that you cannot build bridges between people when your heart is filled with hate. Among those whose stories made a big impression on him were Frits and Sylvia Philips, who had suffered under German occupation, Rajmohan Gandhi from India who had wrestled with his hate towards the British and Chief Walking Buffalo, who had forgiven the Americans for what they had done to the native Americans. Whenever Marey speaks about Odawara he always mentions these names. Because of them he chose to walk the road of reconciliation.

It was not easy. 'Until today I wonder whether I have helped the Netherlands and the West to bargain away my people' says Marey. 'Am I also to blame for the murder of the hundred thousands Papuans since the hand-over? What has the white brother brought me? This dilemma I carry with me in the name of the Netherlands, who should solve this together with the UN and the USA.'

In spite of this moral dilemma which troubled his conscience he remained faithful to the answer he got in Odawara when he was asking God in prayer if he should hold on to his hate and the past. In the rustle of the wind the answer came: Seek a new path.

In 2001 Marey spoke during the Peace Building Initiatives conference in Caux about his personal dilemma, the dilemma of the Papuan people and his search for new ways of reconciliation and dialogue. 'I believe', says Marey, 'that there will come a day when the Indonesians will acknowledge the human dignity of the Papuans and that both parties will sit around the table in order to create a new future.'

In 2003, at Marey's invitation, a delegation of seven Papuans from Papua, joined by seven Papuans from the Netherlands, took part in another conference for peace initiatives in Caux. The visit was part of an initiative to make Papua a land of

peace. This campaign, in which the leaders of the main religious groups are working together, is coordinated by the Office of Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Jayapura (known in Papua under the abbreviation SKP, Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian) and the local Fransiscan Friars. In Caux, the Papuans said they saw political dialogue with the Indonesian government as the only realistic option. But they also acknowledged the necessity to promote unity among the Papuans themselves, as well as cooperation with the Indonesians from other islands who have come to live in Papua in great numbers since the 1960s.

To be able to achieve a better future for the people of West Papua they need the support of the international community, they said. That is why they were so grateful for the interest in their story shown in Caux. They also received a lot of attention in the Netherlands which they visited immediately afterwards.

The project 'Papua – land of peace' still continues. It focuses among other things on advocacy on the human rights situation in Papua, research and documentation, interfaith dialogue, peace and reconciliation and ecological justice.<sup>8</sup>

### Reconciliation with life

One of the most difficult things in life is to reconcile with the inevitable, for example illness and handicap. In our western society we do not like to engage with this at all. We would prefer to banish whatever is imperfect. But the striking thing is that illness and handicap can release unexpected forces of compassion and love.

When their daughter Wendelien was three, Geert and Annemarie Geertsema discovered that she had retarded mental development. That discovery was the start of a long journey through the world of healthcare. They received a lot of support from doctors and social workers, but they also followed their own insight and inner promptings. This meant that at one point when they saw their daughter go downhill in the psychiatric hospital where she was, they took her home and looked after her themselves for nearly a year.

In the more than 30 years they have lived alongside their daughter, they have learned a lot. 'I do not ask: Why did God do this to us? But, where is the strength where healing can be found?' says Geert. They both found that strength in their faith. And also with the friends that they made in the MRA family conferences in the Netherlands and in Caux, to which they also took Wendelien. In the family slide show that was mentioned earlier Annemarie speaks about the love and patience one needs to bring up children. Wendelien was only a baby then. Annemarie did not know at that stage how much love and patience she and Geert would need to accompany their daughter. They did not find a cure for Wendelien, but they found strength for themselves to keep going. After all these years Annemarie says that their lives have been enriched by Wendelien. 'She gives so much pure love, and we learn so much from her. I would not want to miss her for anything.' For the last 15 years Wendelien has lived in a Rudolf Steiner home, where she fits in well and is looked after perfectly, but where the parents are able to keep a finger on the pulse.

There is one thing which the Geertsemas have would have wished to do differently. Wendelien's two older brothers supported their parents in their care for their sister – out of loyalty. 'But', so the parents say now, 'because of all the attention that Wendelien needed, we did not fully take into account what went on in the boys. Fortunately we have been able to talk about this with them openly and this has improved our mutual relationship.'

### What is normal?

The question we face in our societies is whether we want to banish as much as possible anything that is imperfect, abnormal, or a handicap or whether we can accept that this is part of life. Another question we should ask is: What is normal? I once heard Jean Vanier, the spiritual father of the l'Arche homes for mentally handicapped people, answer this question with a telling story. During the founding of l'Arche homes in the Netherlands he came to speak in the Netherlands several times.

He related how once a 'normal' man was visiting him in the l'Arche home in Trosly-Breuil in France. His guest had a lot of problems he wanted to discuss. 'Suddenly,' says Vanier, 'our housemate Jean-Claude, a Mongol, came into the room with a radiant smile. He took the hand of my "normal visitor", took my hand and then, still laughing, left the room. My visitor looked at me and said: "Is it not sad to see such children?" Mister "Normal" is blind. He cannot see how happy Jean-Claude is.'

For years there has been a public debate about ante-natal diagnostics. On the surface the discussion is about wanting to prevent the birth of children with a handicap. On a deeper level it is about what kind of society we want.

When Annemieke Kes-Windig was expecting her third child she had just turned 36. At that time, in 1996, there was a new regulation that every pregnant woman above 36 should be offered a chorionic villus sampling (a form of prenatal diagnosis to determine chromosomal or genetic disorders in the foetus). Annemieke said she first wanted to think about it. On her next visit to the midwife she said she did not want it. 'Whatever is growing in me, is welcome.' After a very difficult delivery Kier came into the world. It appeared that he had a congenital defect and would have to go through life as a midget.

Six weeks before the delivery Annemieke's father passed away. On the evening after the funeral Annemieke wrote a poem which went something like this:

*The child I carry within me is a poem  
A new song that will be sung  
To the honour of God.  
Although this child may be different from all other children,  
It comes from the same place, from God.  
There where love resides,  
That love it carries within.  
Just as the grass is singing its song in the wind,  
So this child will sing for God.*

The poem comforted her after the birth of Kier. Annemieke felt God's presence very clearly around the birth. Kier was welcome.

He is now 12 years of age, a cheerful and very clever boy. He has begun to have difficulties with the realisation that there are certain things he cannot do, like playing basket ball. But his mother thinks there are other things he might do very well, like skiing.

Annemieke's attitude is that each time problems arise, corresponding solutions can be found. Often solutions or waymarks leading to solutions will appear when other voices are stilled. Ever since her student days she has tried to maintain the habit of setting time aside every day for a quiet time. Of course she has also experienced that it is not always that easy! There were periods in her life she has had to ask help from outside, when it did not come from the stillness within. But the thought to ask for help and from whom to ask it came to her in her quiet time. 'The Bible and quiet times – that is and remains the basis.'

### The quality of our society

In the opinion of Geert Geertsema, the quality of our society is judged according to its care for the weak. They can bring out the best in their fellow human beings. This is also the opinion of Yvonne Timmerman-Buck, which she shared in a speech in the IofC centre at Amaliastraat in 2002. She was then President of the Christian Democratic faction in the Senate (first chamber). A year later she became President of the Senate. She spoke about abortion and euthanasia and the protection of life at its beginning and at its end.

The subject was in the news again because the new euthanasia law, that had been passed in Parliament the year before, was about to come into effect. At the same time a new embryo law was being discussed in the Senate. Timmerman found it strange that, contrary to the commotion around the euthanasia law the year before, the media were paying hardly any attention to this new law, although it raised important ethical questions. The question which was also discussed at this meeting is: who is

responsible in these sort of issues – the government or the citizen? ‘The government cannot judge in individual situations,’ says Timmerman. It can also not go any further than the length of its vaulting pole, and that vaulting pole is the ethical support in society. That is why in the discussion about what is and what is not permitted ethically, people should ask themselves, “What kind of society do we want? Which values are important? What do we mean when we speak about the quality of society?”

Someone has remarked that what is technically possible, sooner or later becomes permitted ethically. This is true unless we – and this is how the rest of the discussion could be summed up – decide that we will not just let whatever comes, come, but judge the developments in the light of the kind of culture we really want. A culture, for example, where people care for and love one another, and where self-interest is related to the general interest.

The discussion goes on. In 2004 the National Health Council (Gezondheidsraad) advised that all pregnant women be screened for Down’s syndrome. Someone who questions this advice is Paul Cobben, Professor of the History of Modern Philosophy at the University of Tilburg. At a family conference in 2005 he explained his objections as a philosopher and as father of a son with Down’s syndrome. The Health Council presupposes that lack of autonomy causes suffering. The child will suffer, because it is not autonomous. And the parent suffers on his behalf. ‘My son is now 22,’ says Cobben. ‘He works for a farmer. He loves life. I shower him every day. Often he says, “That was nice yesterday.” And then he mentions something he has done. He is not an incomplete human being. He is just handicapped.’

### Ethical questions on life and death

The more that becomes technically possible, the more ethical questions, which cannot be easily answered, arise. In 2008, the discussion was about selection of embryos in IVF cases. When should it be permitted and when not?

In these discussions we cannot be superficial. We cannot simply escape by saying that life and death are in God’s hands.

Humans are already too heavily involved in these matters, and hence we are faced with dilemmas our forebears were not faced with. When is something euthanasia or when it is simply a right to die? A 28-year-old man had been the victim of stabbing, so badly injured that the only thing he could still do for himself was to nod and shake his head. For the rest he was paralysed and his breathing and everything else was done artificially. He managed to convey his wish to the doctors to stop the artificial respiration, which they did. Then there was a discussion: what was the cause of his death? Was it the stabbing or the stopping of the artificial respiration? The word euthanasia was even used for the latter option. Of course this would make a world of difference for the perpetrator. Thank goodness the judge ruled that the man had died as a result of the stabbing.

There is a grey area here, which makes it difficult to know for sure what is right and what is wrong. It will always very much depend on the circumstances and that lays a big burden on the individual's moral judgement.

Science does not stand still. The beginning and the end of life are increasingly connected with moral choices. Since 2007 all pregnant women in the Netherlands are offered tests, not only to look for Down's syndrome, but also other illnesses or abnormalities. Three women wrote a book about the moral dilemmas caused by ante-natal screening. It highlighted the fact that one always has to make a choice. If you choose to have the tests and it shows that something is amiss, you have to decide whether or not to keep the child. Or you choose not to have the test, and accept the consequences. Either way a feeling of guilt is likely. On top of that the tests appear to offer a security which is false, because the tests have risks and 100 per cent security can never be guaranteed. And ultimately society as a whole may become less welcoming to people with handicaps and abnormalities, as if it should somehow be possible to eliminate these altogether.

In the ethical discussion that always follows the technical innovations, there is no blueprint to guide us. But in the end it should not be techniques that determine the quality of our society, but the way we treat the most vulnerable among us. We

must reconcile ourselves to the fact that we can never banish suffering, but we can determine how we go about dealing with it.

We need to ensure that one day we will not wake up in a society that, ever so gradually, has changed into something we do not want.

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1 We met him earlier in chapter 8. The story of Lou Reymen is based on talks and correspondence I had with him in the course of 2000 and in 2001, and again in 2008. His story is also recounted by Michael Henderson in his book *Forgiveness – breaking the chain of hate*, Book Partners, 2002, Wilsonville, Oregon (USA).

Additionally for this chapter I have made use of information received from Else Lünig-Burger, Adrie Lindeijer-van der Baan, Wim Lindeijer, Takamitsu Muraoka, Edy Korthals Altes, Amapon Jos Frans Marey, Geert and Annemarie Geertsema, Annemieke Kes-Windig. I have also made use of reports in *Ander Nieuws*.

2 *Leven met een schaduw – ervaringen van ouders van een vermoord kind*, (Living with a shadow – experiences of parents of a murdered child); edited by Ivo Aertsen, Centrum Slachtofferhulp Leuven (Centre Help for Victims), Standaard Uitgeverij, Antwerpen.

3 The English title is: *Kisses to Nel and the children: from a POW Camp in Japan*, by Evert W Lindeijer.

4 The declaration appeared in *Nieuws Magazine* (News Magazine) of the 'Stichting Japanse Ereschulden' (Foundation for Japanese Debts of Honour), April 2003.

5 See also [www.djdialogue.org](http://www.djdialogue.org): Dutch-Japanese Dialogue – the Pacific War and thereafter.

6 Edy Korthals Altes, *Heart and Soul for Europe – an essay on spiritual renewal*, published by Van Gorcum, 1999, the Netherlands. In 2008 another book by him came out, entitled *Spiritual Awakening – The Hidden Key to Peace and Security, Just and Sustainable Economics, A Responsible European Union* (Peeters Publishers, Leuven, Belgium).

7 In 2002, in cooperation with World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) and the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). In 2003 the theme especially addressed was: Can Religions be partners for

peace? For that conference IofC cooperated with the United Religions Initiative in the person of its President in the Netherlands, Ari van Buuren. And in 2005 the theme was: A Heart and a Soul for Europe.

8 The project 'Papua – land of peace' is supported financially by the Dutch development cooperation organisation Cordaid. It also supported the visit of the group from Papua to Caux as part of this project. More on [www.hampapua.org/skp](http://www.hampapua.org/skp)

9 Anja de Grient Dreux, Hellen Kooijman, Marijke Koreman. *Prenataal onderzoek. Over keuzes en dilemmas*. (Ante-natal research: choices and dilemmas)

## CHAPTER 11

# A new wind

In the previous chapters I have written about the development of this movement and illustrated how it always has been a child of its time. People felt responsible for the society they were living in. Initiatives and actions often were a reaction to topical issues.

Also the fact that the name was changed twice is an illustration of this.

The change of name from Oxford Group to Moral Re-Armament in 1938 went relatively smoothly. Frank Buchman launched the new name as part of a programme for spiritual and moral re-armament at a time when the nations were arming themselves for war, and most of his followers (although indeed not everyone) followed him in that change of emphasis. When in the last decade of the 20th century the time seemed ripe for another name change, finding the right formula did not prove so easy.

For some time there had been dissatisfaction with the name Moral Re-Armament. Translated into other languages, the name sounded moralistic and less melodious. A lot of explanation was needed: the word moral was not meant to be moralistic and re-armament had nothing to do with weapons. Possibly some people thought of the spiritual armament of which the apostle Paul writes in the letter to the people in Ephesus<sup>1</sup> and sometimes people said, 'What a good name, this is just what we need'. But for most people the name was a mouthful of strange sounds, as was the case with the Dutch translation. It could also be that the name Moral Re-Armament was more suited to the era of the Second World War and the Cold War than what

followed, and not so much to the time after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

At the same time there were other developments. Not only was there dissatisfaction with the name, but also with the lack of international cohesion. There was international cooperation, for example in varying coalitions to mount specific actions or to organize the annual conferences in Caux. Newcomers in Caux were often surprised to find everything well organized, without someone being visibly 'in charge'. We were proud of the name that someone invented for this: inspired anarchy. If you had an idea, you looked for team mates and initiated something. Often it worked!

Since the death of Peter Howard in 1965 the work continued without a formally-constituted central authority. There was however an informal authority in existence which was strong and did not allow much participation in the leadership. So increasingly the need was felt for a more democratic structure in our international cooperation.

A third aspect, and related to the second one, pointing to the need for renewal was the group culture as it had developed in the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies of the 20th century. There were no written rules, but there was a strong unwritten code of behaviour. Group pressure could prevent people from taking their own inner promptings seriously. This led to a certain uniformity. Important decisions, some very personal ones, were put before an authoritative leader or discussed in the group. For someone who did not agree with the current group culture, it was difficult to step out of line. Through the custom of sharing thoughts from the quiet time with others, people knew a lot about each other. This meant on the one hand that one felt carried and supported by the group, on the other hand it could also lead to the wrong kind of dependence. The leaders of the moment wielded too much influence, which was neither good for them nor for everyone else. One had to have a very strong and independent mind to steer an alternative course.

The principle was that God could use every person and that anyone can take an inspired initiative. But in practice not every-

one was taken equally seriously. Leadership goes to the spiritually fit, was the adage. But who decided who was spiritually fit? It was not clear how decisions were taken and by whom. The movement was in danger of becoming a bastion with a code of conduct one had to agree with. In other words Moral Re-Armament risked becoming what it did not want to be, a sect.

For some, group pressure has been very costly. In my interviews with people I came across some painful experiences. People suffered because the emphasis put on absolute moral standards led them to feel worthless, always in need of change and never good enough. Or they felt, or feel, an aversion to the quiet time, because it was (mis) used in their youth as a means to discipline or control them.

One woman told me how she grew up in an MRA family. Her parents were respected full-time workers. From early on she felt she was never good enough. After her schooling she went to work full-time with MRA with the idea to serve and efface herself. She fully agreed with the theory of MRA, but in practice felt very unhappy. At the age of 29 she decided to leave MRA work and to start training as a nurse in the Netherlands. She wanted to be independent and when she woke up to the fact that she was allowed to be whom she was, she gradually re-found her own identity.

When talking with another person I realized that for people with a compliant character, the message of MRA, when applied in the most radical and absolute form, was not without danger. This person is an artistic type. She planned to go to art academy after spending a summer in Caux. That summer gave her the idea that art was only good if it helped to change people, and not just to give people aesthetic pleasure. She decided to forego the art academy and instead work with MRA in another country. After two years away she still felt that she was not good enough. She kept thinking she needed to change more and decided to study psychology. The thing that bothered her most was the idea that one should be out to change other people. 'I met so many sincere people, whom I did not need to change,' she said later. 'I am not better than they are.' Yet for a long time

she harboured a feeling of guilt. 'I was called and did not go all the way.' Her lack of self confidence was one of the factors that led to the break-up of her marriage.

Others were strong enough to follow their own conviction. But this could mean they had to break off from the MRA team. Like the man the team felt should break off with his fiancée. He refused, left the team and married her. Forty years later I met them, still happily married. What they had learned during their time with MRA, especially the quiet times, has supported them all through their life. But the incident before their marriage remained a sore point. When I met them they had just read the original Dutch version of this book, and this had proved a healing experience. In their case the simple recognition in print that mistakes had been made, was enough for the wound to be healed.

### International consultations

Towards the end of the 1980s a new wind started to blow. A need was felt for more transparent and democratic structures. In 1989 the first international MRA meeting took place that led to what came to be called 'the consultation process'. Those taking part in this process included both people who worked full-time with MRA and people who were in other jobs, but were otherwise equally committed to its aims. To start with, these meetings, held over several days, took place every half year. From 1993 they were held yearly and from 2002 every two years. The consultations took place in different parts of the world. Those attending either represented their country or region or were knowledgeable in a certain field. Participants were expected to discuss the themes ahead of time with their national or regional teams and to report back to them afterwards. In this way many more people were involved in the discussions and the decisions.

The first consultation in April 1989 was held in Chantilly, France. High on the agenda was how to pursue the many openings there were in the then still-communist world. There had been contacts over the years, but at that time much more

suddenly seemed possible. Later that year in Tokyo the consultation centred around seeking ways to strengthen the non-Christian and non-western character of MRA.

After the consultation in Japan the team in the Netherlands started a series of evenings to talk about the subjects which were under discussion there and at the following consultations. Those evenings led to frank exchanges in the Dutch team. For example about the 'group culture', the way decisions were taken and whether there was space and freedom to do things differently and to interpret the message in a more contemporary way. Through engaging with the different people from the Netherlands who had travelled to take part in the various consultations, the team could participate in a direct way.

Social involvement was the point of interest in Sao Paulo, Brazil in April 1990. Also there were discussions about the internal decision-making process. To strengthen this it was decided to form several international coordination groups around specific subjects.

The conference centre, Mountain House, in Caux plays a special role in the work of MRA, but the upkeep of the building – which dates from the beginning of the 1900s – had become more and more of a burden. In September 1990 (in the French village of Dingy-en-Vauche, near Geneva) it was decided that this centre, which played such a large role internationally, should also be carried more internationally. The load would therefore fall less heavily on the Swiss. And also there should be more space for a new generation to take responsibility. At the same consultation a proposal was discussed to generate income by renting out the building in the off-conference season.<sup>2</sup>

It took several more years before action was taken on this last suggestion. At some point Aad Burger, who was then the Dutch representative on the Swiss board that was responsible for Caux, submitted a memo from the Dutch team with suggestions concerning the short term and the long term future of the conference centre in Caux. This helped put the subject on the agenda again. Alongside similar suggestions from other countries, this led to a working group being established to study the

use of Mountain House in the non-conference period. In the end the Swiss board decided to try to find a suitable tenant for those nine or ten months when the building stood empty, indicating that it might take several years to find one. However, not long after this decision, there was an advertisement in a local newspaper taken out by the Swiss Hotel Management School. It was looking for a new building! It turned out that Mountain House was exactly the sort of place it was looking for. Since 1995 this international hotel school has used the conference centre in Caux from September up until June. Both parties have co-operated well and income from the rent helps with the upkeep of the buildings.<sup>3</sup>

The international consultations have acted as an effective stimulus. The decisions taken have had significant consequences for the world work of MRA. The themes were often linked to the place and time of the consultations. The one in India in February 1991 coincided with the first Gulf war and was directed to the inter-religious character of MRA and to a better understanding of Islam. In Berlin that same year attention was concentrated on the new reality of a Europe without Iron Curtain and Wall. There the decision was taken to form an International Coordination Group.

### Transparency in finance

Finance was one aspect of the work of Moral Re-Armament that needed to be more transparent. The basic principle had always been that where God guides the necessary means would become available. Pray enough and trust enough and the money for initiatives would be forthcoming. Often this worked, partly thanks to some well-to-do people who had the means and conviction to support this work. But money did not only come out of abundance. The main cost of the work was carried by ordinary people who lived simply, even sacrificially, in order to contribute as much as they could.

Just as the different programmes and initiatives needed to be financed, so also individual people who felt called to work with MRA on a full-time basis, had to make ends meet. The term

used for this was 'to live on faith and prayer'. To live on this basis required a lot of trust, because often people would not know if they had the money they needed for next week. When it turned out well, trust was increased. For young single people with few financial commitments this way of life was a lot easier than for families with children. But even then the same principle applied. My husband and I have a telling experience. When our first child was being baptised, there was a woman in the congregation who, without knowing us very well, had the thought to give a certain sum annually for our little son. When she told us this after the church service, we felt it was an answer to prayer. I had been quite worried about bringing a child into this world without any financial security.

But no matter how beautiful this principle was and is, there is another side to the coin. People who worked full-time with MRA, could feel dependent on their benefactors. It could cloud the relationship and lead to a lack of naturalness and freedom. Sometimes full-time workers felt they were living in a glass house and people did call on them to account for their spending behaviour. And did the fact that money sometimes, or often, did not come in mean that the person concerned had too little faith or had not prayed enough? Worries about money have caused many sleepless nights. In many countries, including the Netherlands, full-timers felt compelled to look for a paid job due to lack of money.

The consultation in Ottawa, Canada, in 1992 took a close look at the finances of our work. Because the MRA work in every country is financially (and otherwise) relatively independent, there appeared to be great differences. There were countries that looked after their full-time workers well and there were others, including some wealthy countries, where full-timers received so little support and appreciation that they were forced to look for other, paid, employment. As a consequence the work in one country collapsed. The actual costs of the activities of MRA were not transparent because the work was mainly carried by unpaid volunteers. One conclusion was that the term 'faith and prayer' may have led to too passive an

attitude being adopted in ensuring financial provision. A more proactive and creative attitude was needed.

In some countries the fact that people who were working full-time with MRA did not receive a salary but were dependent on gifts was not culturally acceptable. In Japan, for example, this was seen as the wrong kind of dependence. It could even be typified as nepotism. Henceforth full-timer workers in Japan received a salary. In Ottawa it was decided to find new ways to look after full-timers, all the more so because many of them did not have proper arrangements for their pensions. Plans were also made to lessen the dependence on individual donations, and to attract funds, especially for special projects, from organisations, industry and governments.

India is a good example how this can be done. From the beginning of 1970 regular industrial conferences have been held at Asia Plateau, the residential conference centre in Panchgani. These have helped to improve the industrial climate in Jamshedpur and other industrial areas in India. Since 1977 people who are connected with industry in Jamshedpur and who are involved in the work of MRA/IofC have met together on a weekly basis. The industrial conferences in Panchgani help answer a real need, because every firm over a certain size in India is required to provide management training. Whole delegations take part in these successful conferences. They are an important source of income for the conference centre and the work in India.

Since the consultation in Ottawa more care has been taken internationally over the financial position of people who work full-time with MRA/IofC. In the Netherlands it was decided to give full-time workers an allowance according to their needs.

My own experience is a case in point. At the end of the 1980s, with the commitments of a family with three children, our money worries were so big that I needed to take a job. I went into teaching in a nearby school, a job which I enjoyed very much and which gave me a chance to practice my MRA principles in a school situation. The little free time I had I still devoted to MRA activities. After 10 years however with both my teaching becoming more demanding and also the MRA

work that I was doing growing, I needed to make a choice. Because by that time the Dutch Foundation had decided to give full-time workers an allowance, I could take the decision to work full-time with MRA again.

### New name

We started this chapter with dissatisfaction over the name. The MRA international consultation in Cyprus in 1993 reached a consensus that the name should be changed. But in the immediate years that followed nothing further was done. However in 1998 in Jamaica a name change was back on the agenda. A working group was formed to host an international (email) discussion. Then the International Council, which was set up at the consultation in South-Africa in 1999 as the successor of the International Coordination Group, took up the issue. Lotty Wolvekamp from the Netherlands was the secretary of this Council up to 2004, working from IofC's office in The Hague.<sup>4</sup> She was closely involved in the process of finding a new name.

The consultation in Richmond (USA, March 2001) was asked to choose between two possible names that had emerged as clear favourites. The choice was Change International or Initiatives of Change. Voting was split equally. During a special consultation in Caux that summer there was a unanimous decision to choose Initiatives of Change.

The name change was announced publicly at a press conference hosted jointly by the President of the Swiss Caux Foundation, Cornelio Sommaruga and Rajmohan Gandhi, from India who was a member of the International Council. Sommaruga said: 'This new name relates to our core message that the individual has the power to bring change to the world, as we each begin with ourselves. The old name was a product of its time. The new name reflects more adequately our initiatives for social justice in a world where the gap between rich and poor is ever widening. It underlines the individual's responsibility for society. Gandhi said: 'With the new name, ethical and spiritual values remain the centre of our reflection and of our action. The content remains the same, although the label has changed. This

new name says better what we are – an international network of people of all generations, cultures and religions, involved in personal and global initiatives.’

So after years of consultation a new international name was agreed on. The question that now arose was what this work should be called in non-English speaking countries. Some decided to translate the name, although not always literally. Other countries decided to keep the abbreviation MRA in front of the new name. In the Netherlands it took two rounds of consultation with the wider team to decide to use the English name, since the Dutch translation sounded too strange. A subtitle in Dutch, ‘Change: personal, worldwide’ was added.

The new name did not mean that MRA dropped its conviction that change in the world needed to be based on a moral and spiritual change in people. And that a more peaceful and just world will only come when individuals are willing to pay the price in their own lives.

But the new name was coupled with a new spirit and a new style, which was in effect already in evidence. We no longer acted as if we believed we had an exclusive hold on the truth. There was more cooperation with other organisations. In spite of the more intensive international consultative structure, there was at the same time freedom of action. With it all came more transparency, more space for different opinions and views and more openness to criticism. In cooperating with others the specificity of Initiatives of Change became clearer – namely the emphasis it placed on the connection between personal change and change in the world: from the personal to the global.

## Aims

Apart from their role in facilitating the name change, the international consultations have been used to fine-tune the content of the message and give deeper thought to the expression of the aims. These did not have to be dreamt up. One only needed to look at what IofC was actually doing in the world and try to group these activities under a few general headings. In this way in Cyprus (1993) five aims were formulated:

- Healing the wounds of history that sustain cycles of revenge, especially where cultures and civilisations meet.
- Strengthening the moral and spiritual dimensions of democracy, so challenging selfish interests and corruption.
- Helping individuals and families to counter the climate of blame and selfishness with a culture of care and personal responsibility.
- Rebuilding a sense of community and hope in cities and tackling the causes of racial and communal discrimination.
- Forging networks among people from different cultures and faiths based on a shared commitment to work for reconciliation, justice and peace.

In 2000 a sixth aim was added: ‘Strengthening the motivation of care and moral commitment in economic life and thinking, in order to create jobs, correct economic and environmental imbalance, and tackle the root causes of poverty.’ Earlier I have written that the environment was never much to the fore. But here it gets a special mention.

The aims listed sound very ambitious. They are at least as ambitious as ‘building a new world’, as the aim was expressed in the earlier years. But neither then nor now was this seen as a reason not to work towards them.

## The connection

Initiatives of Change is neither a religion nor a world view. In this ‘world family’ there is a great variety of convictions and views, but there is something that connects everyone – which can be called the foundation stone of IofC. Basically this is the notion that there is an intimate connection between the way we would like the world to be and the way we live ourselves. A need was felt to spell out more fully what this meant. At the consultation in 2001 in Richmond (USA) a nine-point declaration was drawn up on which the international community of

IofC with all its cultures, nationalities, religions and world views could agree. Because they are so well thought through and so topical they are worth mentioning here in full. They are the so-called Richmond Affirmations:

*‘As an international fellowship open to people of all cultures, nationalities, religions and beliefs, we affirm:*

- That in this era of globalisation, an individual can be a powerful agent for positive change in society.
- That in this age characterized by an overabundance of information, listening in silence – to God, to the Inner Voice, or to conscience – is an essential source of inner freedom, discernment and direction.
- That in this age where pressures on our life and time lead us to live on the surface of our being, change on a personal and global scale starts with the ongoing process of self-discovery.
- That in this climate of moral relativism, honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love offer benchmarks against which to measure our individual and collective behaviour.
- That in this time when profits and results are made paramount, genuine care for and by individuals is at the heart of any effort toward lasting change in society.
- That in this time of communal tension, all people should be valued equally: every person has a story to tell and a part to play.
- That in this time when cycles of hatred and resentment are perpetuated, acknowledgement of past wrongs, forgiveness, and restoration are means by which the human spirit is liberated and history is healed.
- That in a society that is quick to assign blame, honest conversations can unite people for action across barriers that have historically divided them.
- That in a world marked by divisions and self-interest, communities of dedicated people can unite to serve as models of a more just and compassionate society.’

All these points were further clarified in the consultation report. It is worth looking at the clarification of the fourth point, because the four moral values have been a pillar of the work from the very early years:

‘Honesty means a commitment to truthfulness – matching words with deeds, and not consciously misleading or giving false impressions, building a culture of transparency and fairness in public and private life.

‘Purity has to do with clarifying motives and intentions, wholeheartedness, freeing relationships from manipulation and exploitation, finding liberation from addictions, lust and greed.

‘Unselfishness: we are expected to use our resources and talents to meet the needs of others, and to respect and serve others as we would wish others respect and serve us. One could say a commitment to caring and sharing, to generosity and hospitality.

‘Love complements it all and puts the other standards in a context. Love is needed to heal wounds and to forgive one another. In the end everyone longs in the depths of one’s soul to be embraced, valued and respected.’<sup>5</sup>

These values – they are called benchmarks here, they have also been called standards or principles – can have a practical function when we are looking for direction in our lives. They also, when applied, help to create a sound foundation for our society, whereas greed and dishonesty jeopardize these foundations. We all know examples of that. But they can also be (and have been, as we have seen) misused to teach someone a lesson, to bombard one another with the ‘truth’. People have suffered when these standards have been seen as aims in themselves rather than as means towards an aim. That is why it is important to see honesty, purity and unselfishness in the light of love, which does not harm the other person or yourself.

It will be clear by now that MRA/IofC always had only a minimum of structure. Some structure was needed, for example, to manage the finances. Therefore in most countries it is organised as a foundation or an association. In the Netherlands a

foundation, founded in 1948, is responsible for the financial management.

Every country is independent, but it fitted well with the way things were developing internationally to connect all these national foundations and associations. This happened in 2002 when the Association of Initiatives of Change International was founded. While the earlier-mentioned International Council is concerned with internal matters and policies, the International Association is a legal body, which can act as an 'official' voice to the outside world, for example representing IofC to other bodies like the United Nations. The Association safeguards the use of the name and seeks to promote cooperation between its members, at present some 22 national bodies. A General Assembly is held once a year. The first President was Cornelio Sommaruga, who till 2004 was also President of the Swiss Foundation of Initiatives of Change and formerly President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. He did a lot to make the international conference centre in Caux and the work of IofC in general more widely known. Partly thanks to him, the International Association of IofC was granted Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and participatory status with the Council of Europe.

Cornelio Sommaruga was in 2007 succeeded as President of the International Association by Mohamed Sahnoun from Algeria, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who in turn was succeeded in 2009 by Rajmohan Gandhi, from India.

## Communication revolution

The changes in Moral Re-Armament – since 2001 Initiatives of Change – coincided with great changes in the world: the rapid growth of globalisation, the end of the Cold War, the communication revolution from letters to fax to e-mail and a movement towards more transparency and democracy. The international consultations created more transparency, a more democratic leadership, common basic assumptions as well as facilitating the change of name.

There is no doubt that the communication revolution improved international cooperation. Today e-mail groups coordinate actions and organise conferences. And through the internet the work receives greater publicity internationally. In 1998, we in the Netherlands were, of all the countries where MRA was active, among the first to have a website for MRA.

The internationalisation of the work of IofC, taken with the communications revolution, poses new challenges. For one thing it has increased the use of English as our common means of communication. This means that native English-speakers have a relatively greater input into our international publications. These do not always sufficiently portray how much happens in the non English-speaking parts of the world. This imbalance can never be totally corrected, but it is certainly a help when it is recognised.

Obvious efforts are asked of the non English-speakers. But also of the native English speakers, when on their own ground. They have to accept that their language is used in ways they might not like, and very often with a reduced vocabulary which can lead to sterility of thought and expression. In a sense it is no longer their language. It is now, as the lingua franca, owned by the world. This calls for understanding and generosity: to allow all these different uses with a free and appreciative heart. Understanding: because the words used may mean something different to the user from another cultural background.

It is a help for both groups to learn other languages. A language represents a culture, a world view. That is why translating is so difficult. And that is why if Initiatives of Change is to be a real global network, it needs to demonstrate global diversity. It needs to make allowance for different cultures and world views, which are inextricably connected to languages. A beginning has been made with this by creating a global website in different languages.

Initiatives of Change is a bottom-up organisation. It will not, and should not, change into a top-down organisation. The power lies with the convictions and the initiatives of the rank and file. The art is to stimulate people without wanting to

control. The kind of leadership that is needed is servant leadership. And the secret of that is to enable what happens locally to be visible internationally and to count.

But Initiatives of Change is more than an organisation. It is also a world family. Through the international consultations and in cooperating on special programmes, people from different countries get to know each other. By working closely together and by participating in moments of reflection and sharing, ties of trust and friendship are formed. And that in the end is the life blood circulating through the veins of this world-wide network.

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1 Ephesians 6, verse 13-17, where St Paul speaks of putting on the 'full armour of God'. This includes the belt of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

2 The proposal came from businessmen Ron Nater and Steve Hall. More details in the report of this consultation which can be found on the network member pages of the global website. ([www.iofc.org](http://www.iofc.org)) along with all the other consultation reports

3 From the private archives of Aad Burger.

4 Lotty Wolvekamp was also responsible for the secretariat and the administration of the conferences in Caux from 1980 to 2003. She helped to computerize the whole operation there and trained dozens of people from all over the world.

5 See the report of the Richmond consultation for more details on these nine points.

## CHAPTER 12

# Choice for a new world

This book has, in broad outline, followed the development of a movement in the Netherlands and, through this window, its development in the world. It started with renewal. Many people welcomed this renewal as a fresh wind blowing through a stuffy house. They experienced how freeing it can be when you allow personal change into your life.

The frame of reference in the 1920s and 1930s in the Netherlands was Christian. Most people believed in God. In personal matters conscience was more developed. The aim of the Oxford Group and Moral Re-Armament was personal change and, through it, change in society: a new world. Because it can be very infectious when people experience a change of heart and tell others about it, the movement spread like a wildfire. A manifestation of unprecedented enthusiasm, a social movement, an historic phenomenon, were phrases that Bert de Loor used to describe it in his *A New Netherlands Is Launched*. He saw that the movement coincided with the demand for a more dynamic experience of Christianity which was surfacing at the same time in the (Protestant) churches. The economic crisis and the threat of war in the 1930s made this need even greater.

### Two developments

There are two developments which every religion, group or movement encounters sooner or later. On the one hand there is the very human wish to consolidate the fresh discoveries, to grasp hold of the new experience, or could one say to entrench it into dogmas? On the other hand there is the need to constantly rearticulate the message for new times. The Oxford

Group/ Moral Re-Armament experienced both. The two tendencies can keep each other in balance: hold on to and turn around; conserve and renew. Peter Howard, leader of MRA in the 1960s, used the terms ‘enclavers’ and ‘freebooters’ by which he meant to describe those who defend their own territory, and those who venture out.

Yet it seems that the importance of the latter grows. Because if one does not know how to explain the message, relate it and interpret it, one loses the connection with the present time. This goes for every movement, every faith tradition, every world view. I would like to quote here Henk Vroom, Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the Free University of Amsterdam. He writes: ‘Every philosophical, religious or ideological tradition needs to adapt to changed circumstances. They are hermeneutic: they interpret the tradition, that which has been passed down, constantly making adjustments. In the course of the years traditions renew themselves; if they don’t they fossilize.’<sup>1</sup>

In fact, this is what always happened with Initiatives of Change. It constantly adapted to changed circumstances. Of course the fundamental idea stayed the same – a new world starts with new people – and the aim in essence ‘to build bridges’ – but the emphasis differed, depending on the times. The Oxford Group, Moral Re-Armament and Initiatives of Change were and are children of their time: during the economic crisis in the 1930s, in the face of war, taking part in post-war reconstruction, in the ideological battle of the Cold War. And also when the Cold War ended, and the orderly, neatly-arranged division between the communist and the free world made place for a jumble of conflicts and interests. When the battle of ideas or ideologies seemed to be replaced by a collision of cultures, a lot also happened in the work of Initiatives of Change, as we have seen, with the change of name and of style.

### In search of a common denominator

I remember a conference in Caux in the winter of 1989-90 just after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The presence of two families from Leipzig meant that the new situation in Europe was also

reflected in Caux. They shared with those present the events that led to the turnaround in which the people of Leipzig had played a big part. In the excitement that the end of the great divide in Europe generated in all who were in Caux at that time, Professor of German Literature in Lausanne W Stauffacher, spoke sobering and prophetic words, which I have never forgotten. 'That wall actually suited us quite well,' he said. 'We could lead a comfortable life and not care about the people behind it. But now the situation has changed completely. The people from Eastern Europe will make an appeal to us. We cannot go by old certainties any more. We have to be ready to make changes, just like them.'

At the time I was teaching European geography to 11 year olds. Suddenly Europe was twice as big, the maps in the textbooks were outdated and my pupils had to learn many more names of places, which hitherto had been all lumped together as being behind the Iron Curtain.

This event seems far behind us and we are now used to travelling freely in Europe and to seeing all the many different number plates on cars on our roads. It would seem that nothing divides us anymore, but that is not true. History still divides us. Can we in the west imagine what it was like to live under communist dictatorship? Gradually we discover facts of deprivation, propaganda, lies, fear, mistrust, injustice, suffering. We read about it in the papers. And we go there and speak with people and discover how our respective histories have formed us. We realize how different the frame of reference is between a person in Europe who has lived since 1945 in freedom, and who, ideally, learned to cope with the luxury of freedom and abundance, and the person who lived under dictatorship and only recently found himself or herself confronted with the same freedom and the same abundant supply of commercial goods (even if one is not able to purchase them).

Our world has become pluralistic in every aspect. In my country the Christian religion has become one of a number. No one religion or world view can claim to know or own the truth. And also the secular model is no longer regarded as the univer-

sal answer, although until recently many in western Europe thought it was the ideal for the whole world. There is a growing understanding now that this panacea is not very realistic. Even close to us we see that religion is not a dying folklore, but a factor that needs to be reckoned with. In the rest of the world religions have always remained important. It is time to take these perspectives seriously.<sup>2</sup>

All these different frames of reference make it difficult to find a common denominator. What do you refer to when you meet someone? Is there a universal God? What images do people have? Are there universal values? Are there European or even Dutch values and what are they? One thing that we all seem to have in common is our dependence on money and market, and hence the economic crisis hits everyone. But it would be a pity if that unites us more than cultural and moral values.

In the search for a common denominator, we come across the so-called Golden Rule, which appears in every religion and world view in different phraseology: Treat others as you want them to treat you.<sup>3</sup> This phrase is as true as it is simple. The world would surely look very different if everyone abided by it. What is also universally applicable is the slogan which has become something of a cliché, but which, like all clichés, contains a lot of truth: Change the world, but begin with yourself. This book describes people who have tried to do just that.

A unifying factor in an encounter with 'the other' is that we stay very close to what we hold deepest and highest in our own tradition. But not in a self-righteous or dogmatic way. We do it simply by saying: 'This is what I find important, even though I do not always live up to it. And I do not say this should be the most important thing for everybody.' Then there is space for sharing. In my experience it is our dogmas that divide, and our personal experiences that unite.

### Learning from the past

In this pluralist world the idea of building bridges of trust between people is more needed than ever. It is good to realise we do not need to start from scratch – we do not need to reinvent the

wheel. We can learn from the experiences of others, for example from the people I portray in this book. They have something to tell us. They had ideas how they could affect society, they became self-starters. There was no external authority which tried to inject some movement into them. No, the movement came from within. They dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to build a new world. It was not something they did on the side. They gave themselves and sacrificed time and money. They were committed and faithful. They did not, and do not, retire. The energy may become less, the inventiveness does not.

Of course not everything was ideal. The older generation is the first to admit that mistakes were made. It is important to acknowledge where things went wrong, because this is the only way to learn from the past. That is why this book has, here and there, struck a critical note. But it is mild criticism, because it is easy to be wise with hindsight. I wanted to write honestly, but with respect for people who acted to the best of their knowledge and insight. Everyone is a child of his time, so are we. And later generations will judge *us* with the insight of their time. But that wisdom and overview we do not have now.

You need a certain distance before you can look at the past and learn from it. In the Netherlands, over the last years, there has been a trend towards openness about past mistakes.

The Director of our national railways for example apologised in 2005 for the role his company played in deporting Jews during the Second World War. As we saw in an earlier chapter, it took the Dutch government till 2005 to admit to and say sorry for the black pages in our history following Indonesia's unilateral declaration of independence on 17 August 1945 when my country sent troops, provoking four years of bloodshed. The apology came in a speech given by our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ben Bot, when he attended an occasion to celebrate 60 years of Indonesian independence. The fact that he attended in person on the date which had always been disputed by the Dutch spoke as powerfully as what he actually said. But a frank and free acknowledgment and apology continues to be surrounded by controversy even today, as was clear in 2008

when a specific massacre in that period, for which the still-living bereaved asked recognition and compensation, was in the news.<sup>4</sup>

Yet different examples, like the apologies in 2008 of the Australian and the Canadian Prime Ministers to their indigenous populations, have shown that recognition of past wrongs and frank apology adds to the dignity of people and of a country.

So it is only to be praised if a movement is also able to look frankly at past wrongs. But this, as we have seen, has often been a weakness with Initiatives of Change. Yes, individuals could do wrong and needed to change, but the movement as a whole could not. Or if there was something wrong, it would not be right to expose it because that could be seen as negative and discouraging. Of course the contrary is true. It is discouraging if wrongs are not recognised but rather covered up. Acknowledgement of past wrongs adds to one's credibility.

For a group, organisation or institution with high ideals, critical self examination – listening to whistle blowers and dissidents – is of vital importance. In *The Philosophy of Christ*, the French philosopher Frédéric Lenoir asks how it was possible that the Christian religion at different times in history could degenerate in such a way that its practice was the exact opposite of the message it was based on. Well, he points out, it is precisely because it strove for such high ideals. 'Christianity has been able to commit immeasurable terrors, because it offers weak people the possibility to rise to staggering heights. As the medieval proverb says: "Corruptio optimi pessima": The degeneration of the best leads to the worst.' Lenoir illustrates this further with the example of the Inquisition, where the revolutionary and liberating message of Christ was reshaped into its absolute opposite by the clerical institution.<sup>5</sup>

### Standards, values and virtues

So if we – in all modesty, because we are not perfect ourselves – look at the past, what is there to learn? One thing it seems to me is the importance of balance. Let us look at the role that the absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and

love, have played. This has been both positive and negative. They have and do serve as a test which stimulates the conscience. Looking at them and at yourself has a shock effect, they help to give an insight into oneself, and have a positive effect on how we are and how we live. But there is also another side. The emphasis put on them, especially with the word 'absolute' in front of them, has also had a negative effect. People could feel unworthy, always thinking they needed to change and would never ever be good enough. I have spoken with people who have had to have therapeutic treatment to help them to regain their self worth.

Should we not look at these moral values in a more balanced way? It is a pity that for many people they became something of a dogma. The idea that the whole moral spectrum could be brought back to those four is itself debateable. There are more moral values that we could be guided by. I can think of moderation, trustworthiness, patience, a sense of perspective, courage, generosity, solidarity, authenticity, freedom, independence, justice. Also the use of the adjective 'absolute' can be questioned. Is it not true that standards and values are always seen in relation to the situation in which we find ourselves, our own personality, the time and culture we live in? There is in other words not an absolute truth, in any case not one that is known by anyone living on earth. The challenge for each of us is to find the right way to act in any given situation.

I found it inspiring and refreshing to look at morality from another angle – the ethics of virtue. I had previously thought that the word 'virtue' had a rather pathetic, sentimental ring about it. Mistakenly, as I discovered some years ago when I learned about virtues in a new way. Instead of being pathetic or corny, the word 'virtue' actually means moral excellence. You can still hear this meaning in the words 'virtuoso' and 'virtuosity'. The verb that goes with virtues is to train or to exercise (as someone only becomes a virtuoso violinist after a lot of training), as the verb that goes with standards or norms is to measure. You can say that when you look at your life it can be good to measure it against moral standards, it can also be good

to train yourself in certain virtues. A virtue can eventually become second nature.

The interesting thing about virtues is that they always have the right centre of balance, but that does not mean that this centre is the same for everybody. Aristotle, the father of *Virtue Ethics*, describes every virtue as a balance point between a deficiency and an excess of a trait. The point of greatest virtue lies not in the exact middle, but at a 'golden mean' sometimes closer to one extreme than the other. For example, courage is the mean between cowardice and foolhardiness, confidence the mean between self-deprecation and vanity, and generosity the mean between miserliness and extravagance. This 'golden mean' is not the same for everybody. For example, what the right courageous action is for a person depends on his ability, personality and the circumstances. The middle is relative, but not relativistic. Although there is not an absolute middle, there is the right middle for everyone.<sup>6</sup>

### Finding the balance

It can be very attractive to think in terms of black and white. It gives us the feeling we can grip things, but in the end thinking in black or white leads to fanaticism and intolerance. In the decades after the Second World War black and white thinking was very strong within Moral Re-Armament. But not only there. In general there was a need to look back at the war years in terms of black and white. Someone had been either good in the war, meaning taking part in the resistance or bad, meaning having sided with the Nazis. The well known Dutch historian Lou de Jong, whose life work has been to write about the Netherlands during the German occupation, described those years in these terms. For decades his words were gospel, and if he had judged someone as having been bad, it was just too bad for that person. After his death in 2005 some newspaper articles questioned the way he had painted this period in black and white, good or bad. Sixty years after the end of this war, it was finally recognized that most people during the war had neither been very bad, nor very good, but had just tried to survive.<sup>7</sup>

People might argue that saying goodbye to thinking in black and white means moving onto a slippery slope and choosing the easy way. I believe the opposite is true. Looking for balance and nuance is the more difficult road. It is always a challenge to conscientiously make the right comparative assessment.

To look for a balance is also important if we think of the urgency of the task and the speed with which we need to take it up. In certain periods, when the situation looked urgent, peace within reach and society repairable, it seemed pointless to first finish your education or to find a regular job. Looking from where we are now, this urgency falls into perspective. We still wrestle with similar or even worse issues. The question is whether fast is always good. Today there is a new appreciation for slow. Something that grows slowly has more chance to develop roots. To win time does not necessarily mean to have more time. In other words, if society is less repairable than we had hoped and if everything does not depend on us, we can relax more. This does not mean we can lean back and let things drift. Here also we need to find the right balance. There is a time for everything. It can be a sign of faith and trust to wait for the right moment. We cannot essentially change the world, but the right behaviour of individual people can certainly make the world a better place.

The art is to be both visionary and realistic, because we know of what great deeds, but also of what huge outrages, people are capable.

### Special approach

Initiatives of Change faces the challenge to 'translate' its message for the present time. As I wrote in the previous chapter, different consultations have tried to do just that. The so-called 'Richmond Affirmations' of 2001 are a good example.

The experience is that its special approach to problems still works today. Paul van Tongeren, of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, sees a distinctive role for IofC and Caux in the field of peace building. While many peace conferences are conducted at an intellectual level, in Caux

people are touched at a deeper level. He encourages people to come to Caux because of the special spirit of openness, dialogue and personal responsibility which help towards trust building.<sup>8</sup>

I mentioned earlier the book *Religion the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, where a whole chapter is devoted to this special approach. The author of this chapter, Edward Luttwak, asks how it was possible that a relatively insignificant organisation with very modest means was able to play a significant role in the reconciliation between two arch-enemies, France and Germany. He mentions as a basic principle of MRA the conviction that to change anything in the world, the consciences and the mentality of individuals need to change. And that in conflict situations the first step is to induce the parties to listen to one another. In the words of Luttwak: 'MRA's *modus operandi* in conflict resolution was and is to engender a heightened spiritual sensitivity in both parties and to thereby induce them to enter into a genuine and deep dialogue marked by a reciprocal sense of moral obligation... In the case at hand, if French and German invitees could both achieve an enhanced spiritual consciousness, that in itself would provide a medium in which the barriers of national antagonisms would have no place, allowing each side unobstructed access to the other's resentments, guilt and fears, which could then in turn be overcome by exchanges of reassurances and expressions of repentance as well as mutual regard, even affection.'

For that to happen the circumstances and the surroundings must be right. And they were just right in the conference centre in Caux, which looks like a fairy tale castle and is situated in breathtaking Alpine surroundings. Other factors that helped, according to Luttwak, were the fact that the conferences took several days to weeks, over which time an intimate atmosphere was created. Also the style was informal. Because there was no housekeeping staff, everyone, rich and poor, workers and employers, former enemies, worked together in the kitchen, the dining room and the wash-up, which created an atmosphere of comradeship. This atmosphere was such that people were prepared to make personal statements in public about personal insights.

Up to today Caux plays a role as a safe place where opponents and people from conflict areas around the world can come, meet and find rapprochement in the 'spirit of Caux'. Often people say that you cannot describe what Caux is like, you need to experience it. But if we try, as Luttwak did, we can add to his description: personal commitment and care, eye for detail, an encouragement to look for the fault in yourself and to apologize sincerely for that, a vulnerable and modest attitude, heart power, not to stand on one's dignity.

This spirit is not there as a matter of course. Because it depends on all those who work there, it always needs to be re-created, mastered. And, maybe seemingly contrary to what I have just written about special approach, this spirit is not exclusive to Caux or to IofC for that matter. There are more people than we think who want to build bridges and minimize gaps. All these people are partners, allies and co-owners of the process of necessary change.

### Europe's challenge

In order to know what needs to be changed and how to move forward, we do need to know the past. It has been said before. If not, we risk losing the good things we have and we run the danger of making the same mistakes. It goes for organisations like Initiatives of Change, it goes for countries and for continents. Take the example of Europe. Earlier I wrote about the painful but necessary process of reconciliation and rapprochement after the Second World War and how the ensuing cooperation stemmed from a brave and previously unarticulated vision. When you think of this vision and the conviction that the architects of a united Europe had, it is painful to see how laborious the cooperation between the countries of the European Union is now. The small materialist thinking and lack of vision is enough to make you weep. And how can the new members of the EU catch a larger vision, including the role of Europe in the world, if the founding members (my country included) lack this?

Present day Europeans need to be reminded of their shared history, and how precarious and precious their newfound coop-

eration is. Sometimes people who live further away can help us see this. American-Swiss scholar Catherine Guisan, who teaches political science at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA, found the origins of European cooperation so intriguing that she wrote a book about it, *Un sens à l'Europe: Gagner la paix (1950-2003)*. She detects three principles of action moving forward the progressive pacification of Europe through European integration: reconciliation, power as action in concert, and recognition.

Reconciliation rests on forgiveness and promise, which are political acts (as philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Human Condition*). In spite of being deeply wronged, peoples initiate reconnection with the perpetrator in order to make non-violent political interaction possible again. Guisan cites Max Kohnstamm, whom we met in chapter 4 and who was the first Secretary-General of the European Coal and Steel Community. But reconciliation is only the beginning. Guisan argues that some European political actors attempted to pioneer a new form of power, action in concert, rather than power as domination, when they signed the Rome Treaties of 1958. The third principle, mutual recognition, has driven the enlargement processes since 1972. At best, the participating countries do not lose their identity, but accept mutual transformation. Recognition costs money: EU structural funds modestly redistribute the resources from richer to poorer regions across the EU, and all member States have benefited. Multilingualism is another feature of recognition, which means that in the European Parliament there are more interpreters and translators than members. Until now EU member states have shared leadership through the EU rotating presidency and on the Commission.

Remembering how we won the peace is important because peace is not made once and for all. Rather this process should be understood as a 'treasure' that needs rediscovery. Moreover there are areas in Europe where real peace is still a far away ideal. Could past experiences help? Could the principles of reconciliation, power as action in concert and recognition move Europeans to craft a new chapter of the European story in the

Balkans and Cyprus? This is Guisan's challenge to Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Another lesson to draw from the European experience after the war is that for change to be effective it needs to take place on two levels. In the past there were visionary leaders in the different countries who took the road of reconciliation and rapprochement. But these steps at the top were matched by initiatives in which millions of ordinary people were involved. I wrote about the role of Caux, about the exchanges of groups who visited each others' countries with plays and about the many volunteers who stayed and lived for years in the Ruhr. Apart from the work of MRA there were hundreds of other initiatives: youth and student exchange programmes, international youth camps, links between hundreds of towns and cities and endeavours to harmonize history books, to mention just some.<sup>10</sup>

If we now want to create a Europe with a heart and a soul this also needs to happen on two levels. We cannot expect vision from our leaders if we the citizens are inward looking, afraid and mainly out for self interest. Courage is needed at the top *and* at the grass roots.

### The world's divides

The slogan which was adopted at the consultation in March 2006 in Malaysia as IofC's mission for the coming years was 'Building trust across the world's divides'. Divides there are aplenty and there is no shortage of tasks for Initiatives of Change. One divide which is of great concern to many is that between the Muslim and the non-Muslim world. The very fact that we make this distinction at all is telling. The difficulty is that it is not only a religious divide but also a political, economic and cultural divide. Many factors make it more difficult to bridge this divide, not least the situation in the Middle East. For different reasons it is of special concern for Europe. The political deadlock in the Middle East cannot be seen apart from the centuries of discrimination and persecution of Jews on our continent. The economic and political imbalance aggravate the discontent and the anger. Europe, and the whole western world, have a lot to account for. It is good to realise this, so that in our moral

indignation we do not mount too high a horse. And then of course 'the Muslim world' is not just in distant lands, it has become part and parcel of many of our European countries.

In the Netherlands we have had our share of incidents which have caused us to start speaking in terms of Muslim and non-Muslim. Since the attacks on 11 September 2001 in the USA, polarisation has grown and Muslims have started to feel less comfortable and welcome in my country. Then on the 2 November 2004 something happened which shocked the whole country. Theo van Gogh, a controversial filmmaker, and an outspoken critic of Islam (he also offended Christians and Jews), was murdered in Amsterdam. He had just dropped his son off at school and was bicycling on to his studio. The perpetrator, a 26-year-old Dutch man of Moroccan descent, followed him by bicycle, shot him, then stabbed him and cut his throat in the name of Islam. All this became clear from a five-page letter left on the body. The last straw for the perpetrator seems to have been the film *Submission* made by Van Gogh on the basis of a script written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a liberal member of parliament originally from Somalia. It aimed to expose and denounce the abuse of women in Moslem communities by showing scars on a woman's body. The body was covered with verses from the Koran that can be interpreted as condoning the maltreatment of women. The film was shown on television. The letter warned Hirsi Ali that she would be the next victim.

The murder was followed by an avalanche of emotions and opinions, expressed through the media and on the streets. A number of attacks on mosques, Moslem schools and churches followed. Thousands of people gathered on the evening of the murder in the centre of Amsterdam, and listened to speeches lamenting the murder of freedom of speech and hailing Van Gogh as a champion of that freedom. In the days that followed this was the main line in discussions in the media. One member of parliament stated that he hoped that this murder would not legitimise the opinions of Van Gogh. Later on more nuances were expressed, for example that freedom of speech is not the only and ultimate value to be defended.

Besides expressions of anger, there were also initiatives that tried to point to a way out of the polarisation. One of them took place in the IofC centre in the Amaliastraat. A number of Muslims and non-Muslims in the network of IofC organised an evening of solidarity, where we all shared what we wanted and what we did not want for our country. And we shared signs of hope. One participant said: 'there is a we-atmosphere all around here'. This is exactly the point. Those who want to divide us want us to believe that we have different interests. But we don't. Most of us want to bring up our children with moral values to become responsible citizens in a peaceful and just society. In this we are allies.

Four years later another anti-Islam film threatened to disrupt our society, fanning the smouldering embers into the flame. This time the film-maker was a right wing parliamentarian, Geert Wilders, whose party came from nowhere to win nine seats at the general election of November 2006. His programme is very simple: he blames Islam and the Koran for most things that are wrong. He announced his film months before and because people knew his inflammatory pronouncements they feared the worst.

But everyone had learned from the previous time and from the turmoil around the Danish cartoon affair.<sup>11</sup> Muslim leaders had appealed to their constituencies not to react in the way that Wilders would wish them to react. And indeed they did not. When at last the film *Fitna* came out there were a few ripples, a few demonstrations in far away countries, but in the Netherlands there was mainly silent condemnation. Dutch Muslims discovered that when they do not react to insults, they break the vicious circle of provocation and violence. The insult can stay with the insulter and there is space created for dialogue and cooperation.

In this dialogue we see there are different values at stake, which only appear to conflict. Freedom of belief and speech on the one hand, respect for other people's religion and tradition on the other. Ironically many Muslims have come to western Europe precisely to enjoy freedoms that they do not have in

their own homelands. They have come to countries where, though we may disagree with the way people use freedom, we defend their freedom to do so. In my country we Christians have got used to people making fun of our religion, even though we may not like it and find it distasteful. We choose to ignore it and think 'we know who said this'. Muslims are not used to this and besides, because of their feeling of solidarity (the Umma), if an insult is made in one part of the world, the whole of Islam world-wide is up in arms, sometimes literally. Maybe this can be compared with how indignant (though possibly not enough) we get here when in another part of the world human rights are violated, when we read for example that an innocent girl, a victim of rape, is stoned.

In an honest conversation, through which we hold up a mirror to each other, we can find the balance of the values we hold dear. We treasure our freedom of speech, but will not let it become dogma. It is rather an essential right. Precisely to preserve that right, we must handle it with care; not out of fear, but out of love, respect, appreciation and last but not least out of a feeling of responsibility.

### The soft voice of nuance

In the verbal violence that characterizes the debate around Islam, it is difficult to hear the soft voice of nuance. In 2006 the Scientific Council for Government Policy in the Netherlands (WRR) produced some thoughtful advice on the approach of Islam, which was at once drowned in loud cries of condemnation. In their report *Dynamics in Islamic Activism*, research was shared on points of contact in Islam regarding democracy and human rights.<sup>12</sup> Some of the recommendations hit the headlines: we should be open to the diversity of points of view in Islam and it might be a good idea for our government to talk to the then democratically elected Hamas.

Some politicians and opinion-leaders reacted as if they'd been stung by a wasp. With accusations like 'unworldly' and 'bungle' the report was consigned straight to the rubbish-bin.

But reading the 334-page report convinces me that the super-

ficial polemic that dominated the news for a few days did not do justice to it. *Dynamics in Islamic Activism* is a courageous attempt to find a way out of the dilemma concerning Islam that we are all in. It argues that there is possibly less of a divide between the western and Islamic worlds than there is between those in both worlds who seek confrontation and those in both who keep on believing in dialogue. The authors of this report clearly belong to the second category. A phrase that is used throughout is 'points of contact'. The authors look for points of contact to lessen the tensions and to support the processes of democratisation and an improvement of human rights. But the 'west' should not impose this from a superior standpoint – the desired changes should come from within.

The western world, concludes the WRR, does not have a monopoly on the interpretation of human rights, nor on the behaviour that goes with it. We need self criticism. Not so long ago women in the Netherlands did not have the same rights as men (and there are still some areas of inequality). Can the foreign policy of western countries, of which the Netherlands is one, always stand the test of human rights? We should look at our own, still recent, bloody history.

When we descend from the heights of our moral indignation, we can see points of contact with Islamic activism for democratisation and human rights. The Dutch report shows that – just like in Christianity – there is in Islam a whole spectrum of convictions, of faith. And this has been true for centuries. There were and are thinkers who take the Koran literally, and there are reformers who want to look more to the spirit of the Koran. The WRR portrays some pioneers from the past who have resisted the 'degeneration' of Islam into a religion which is purely preoccupied with what one should and should not do.

And then there are a whole set of current reformers in Europe and in the Islamic countries who seek a connection between Islam and modernity. One of these is the Egyptian professor Nasr Abu Zayd, who was then Professor of Islamic Studies at Leiden University and still lectures at the University for the Humanities in Utrecht, where he holds the Ibn Rushd chair. His

study on *A reformation of Islamic thought*, on which the WRR study is partly based, came out at the same time.<sup>13</sup>

If one reads the Koranic texts in their historic context, space is created to look at their meaning for our present time. What matters is the power of these texts to bear on circumstances other than when they were written. In this way, says Abu Zayd, space is created for human innovations such as democracy and human rights.

### Working together

I have elaborated on the division between Muslim and non-Muslim which is so much to the fore in these days. But we should not let this blind us to other divisions that need to be bridged. For all those, whether in society at large, or whether very near at home, in our own neighbourhood, workplace or family, honest conversation is a vital element. After taking part in dialogue, when I have learned about someone's opinions, beliefs, customs, feelings and convictions, when I have accepted that my truth is not the only way to look at a situation, then the best way to overcome divisions is to find a common task to work for. In fact I am not giving a chronological order here. It may well be that we start by working together and in the process learn from and about each other.

Personally I treasure the times when I have worked together with a diverse group to prepare a conference or a particular initiative. In this way we have worked across the cultural divides, with teams from different European countries with multi-cultural populations. The added value of this cooperation is that you visit each others' countries and learn about the situation first hand. Also through working together a start has been made in bridging the east-west and the north-south divides in Europe.

A major feat in this process was the all-European IofC gathering in Kiev in October 2006, where 85 people from 17 European countries reviewed the work of *Initiatives of Change* across the whole of the European continent. With great vigour and enthusiasm our Ukrainian hosts organised the logistics and

made us feel welcome and at home. Ukraine, where at that time the spirit of the Orange Revolution was tangible, plays an important part in the work of IofC.

One of the outcomes of this meeting was a conference in the south of Europe, in Italy. Before the food crisis became headline news in 2008, organic farmer Cristina Bignardi, suggested the theme 'Food: between Surplus and Famine'. At the conference, held in October 2008 near Bologna, it turned out that this was an issue that concerns all of us, consumers and producers, and faces us with moral choices. By our choices we can promote the production of healthy food and lessen the use of chemicals. It is quite a responsibility, because a healthy environment depends on it, not only for us but also for the generations to come.<sup>14</sup>

The above-mentioned initiatives were carried out in cooperation with people who are involved in Foundations for Freedom. This IofC programme in eastern Europe, about which I wrote earlier, is carried mainly by young people who are convinced that the freedom their countries found after the collapse of communism, needs to have moral foundations if it is to survive. Cooperation with them is very important for those of us in western Europe, not only because we may be able to help, but also because we can learn. We can learn to appreciate our freedom and understand better the dangers that threaten it. We can also allow ourselves to become infected by their drive, conviction and enthusiasm – to exchange our selective and careful commitment to a more wholehearted one. Freedom, to survive, must have moral foundations both in east and in west.

## A new world

To end, there remains the question of a new world. The hope and the expectation of a new world runs like a red thread through this book. It was and is the motivation of the people I have written about, and not only of them. The prospect of another, more just and peaceful world has motivated people in the past and still does. People who worked and work for this are faithful and committed. But sometimes one wonders: Does it have the desired result? Do we see any evidence of this new world?

There are, it seems to me, two answers to this question. They may seem to contradict each other, but both are still true. The first answer is: no, we do not see this new world. We reach out for it, but we do not reach it. It remains a beckoning, but at the same time disappearing prospect. We see how it *could* be, a world where no-one has too much or too little, where everyone has enough. Where we care for each other, but also for future generations. Where we act as stewards of the earth and not as owners. But alas it remains a dream image, which fades away before the raw daily reality.

The other answer, which is equally true, is: yes, we see the new world. Look around you. Look at the many places where people demonstrate examples of it. People who have decided to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. People who refuse to be part of the culture of grab. People who counter corruption with integrity. Who take responsibility for their environment. People who quietly and imperturbably go on working, caring, loving. People who parry noise with quiet, superficiality with deepening and in the madness of the day make space for reflection. That is also the reality.<sup>15</sup>

We all live with these two realities. But if we choose to be part of the second one, we get a clearer eye with which to see the hopeful signs of a new world.

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1. *Europa – Balans en Richting (Europe – Balance and Direction)* edited by Jan van Burg, Pieter Anton van Gennip and Edy Korthals Altes, published by Lannoo nv, Tiel, 2003. The quote is from the chapter by Henk Vroom entitled 'Levensbeschouwing is geen privé-zaak' (Philosophy of Life is not a private matter).

2. In *Worlds of Power – Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (Hurst & Company, London, 2004) Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar make this point. Ellis is Director of the Africa programme of the International Crisis Group. Ter Haar is Professor of Religion, Human Rights and Social Change at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. She specialized in the religious traditions in Africa.

3. This Golden Rule has been worked out by professor Hans Küng in different books, such as *Global Responsibility – In search of a new World Ethic* (1990, London). He is the founder of the Global Ethic Foundation, Tübingen, Germany. His foundation created an exhibition about world ethics, entitled World Religions/ Universal Peace/ Global Ethic, which was shown during the month of July, 2005, in Caux, during the conference 'A Heart and a Soul for Europe'. Küng gave a lecture at the same conference on 'Europe and the new paradigm of international relations'. He believes there can only be peace in the world when there is peace between religions and that our globe can only survive when there is a common ethic.

4. This massacre by the Dutch army took place in 1947 in Rawagede (now Balongsari), West Java. Over several years a group of Indonesians tried to bring this to the attention of the Dutch government and the media. In 2008 the media suddenly started to pay attention and different newspapers called on the Dutch government to recognise this misdeed and apologize for it. As a result, 61 years after the event, the Dutch Ambassador in Indonesia, Nikolaas van Dam, attended the commemoration on the site for the first time and offered deep apologies in the name of the Dutch government. The bereaved are now asking for compensation.

5. *Le Christ Philosophe (The Philosophy of Christ)*, by Frédéric Lenoir, Paris, Plon 2007

6. I learned about Virtue Ethics from Professor Paul van Tongeren, Professor of Ethics at the University of Nijmegen. In 2004 he led a study day for the team of Initiatives of Change on this theme under the title 'Virtuoso Living'. He wrote *Deugdelijk Leven, een inleiding in de deugdethiek (Sound Living – an introduction to Virtue Ethics)*, SUN, Amsterdam, 2003. Not to be confused with Paul van Tongeren, who is the Secretary-General of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and about whom I wrote in chapter 9.

7. Dr L de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog (The Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War)*, 14 parts in 29 books.

8. For his vision for Caux see also chapter 9.

9. Catherine Guisan took her doctoral degree on this subject at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis (USA). A popular version of her dissertation was published in 2003 by Odile Jacob in Paris and is entitled *Un sens à l'Europe*. Catherine Guisan gave the opening speech on this subject for the conference, A Heart and a Soul for Europe, on 16 July 2005.

10. In *The German-French reconciliation – a pattern for Europe*, a lecture by Pierre Spoerri for the Caux Scholars Programme in 1993, Spoerri refers to Professor Alfred Grosser of the Sorbonne University in Paris. Grosser

(who was Jewish) was born in Germany, fled to France and is now an international authority in the field of the French-German relationship. Grosser describes in his book *Le Crime et La Mémoire* (Flammarion, Paris, 1989) the role of history professors and teachers in different countries in harmonizing history.

11. On 30 September 2005 the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published 12 cartoons, most of which depicted the Islamic Prophet Mohammed in a way which was very offensive for Muslims. This led to protests all across the Muslim world, which lasted many months. Some protests escalated into violence and resulted in more than 100 deaths.

12. *Dynamiek in islamitisch activisme- aanknopingspunten voor democratisering en mensenrechten (Dynamic in Islamic Activism – Points of Contact for Democratisation and Human Rights)*, WRR (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (Scientific Council for Government Policy), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2006.

13. *Reformation of Islamic Thought – A Critical Historical Analysis*, Nasr Abu Zayd with the assistance of Dr Katajun Amirpur and Dr Mohammed Nur Kholis Setiawan, WRR, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2006.

14. 'Between Surplus and Hunger: food, a crossroad for peace', 9–12 October 2008. Farmers, consumers and scientists from 11 European countries met in the Italian city of Castel San Pietro, near Bologna, to address problems concerning food. This was a joint initiative of Initiatives of Change, Italy, Pace Adesso (an Italian peace organization) and CEFA (European Committee for Training and Agriculture). Three conference reports written by Irene de Pous can be found on [www.iofc.org](http://www.iofc.org). They are entitled: Between Surplus and Hunger: Food: a crossroad for peace; Environmental toxins: Time to Heed the Canary's Warning; Food conference: Bringing Farmers to the Table. Related websites: Yellow Canaries Network: [www.kanariefaglarna.com](http://www.kanariefaglarna.com); Farmers Dialogue: [www.fd.iofc.org](http://www.fd.iofc.org)

15. In the Christian tradition the new world – the Kingdom of God – is also both: a future prospect and something which is already here and now, when you have eyes to see it. It is something that is given by God and at the same time something for which we need to work ourselves.

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