

primary school where I attended the same class as my children. My first days were not easy as a lot of people couldn't understand that I could be a pupil rather than a teacher! As I write this story, I am now in the 5th grade and intend sitting for the Uganda primary leaving examinations.

I would like to conclude by saying that in November 2001 our two families came together to witness our church wedding together with our two children and our adopted Ugandan daughter. As we walked up to the altar to take our vows, my heart went out to the many children in south Sudan and in the Ugandan refugee camps who are still not able to receive any education.

Postscript: Francis writes in October 2018

A Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005 and after that I made several visits to South Sudan. In 2010 I joined the University of Juba to further my education but was forced to return to Uganda to be with my family, due to a student strike during which I was badly beaten. In 2011 South Sudan became independent and in 2013 civil war broke out once again. This civil war is more severe than the wars with the Arab north as it has taken on a tribal dimension.

In September (2018) the warring parties again signed a peace deal to end this current bloody war, and I and the Churches in the refugee camps in north Uganda are organising a 'Song and Worship Festival' in the camps in January 2019. It will be a time to say 'Thank you God' for watching over our lives in these difficult times and to ask for a lasting peace in South Sudan. Preparations are under way and I am holding meetings with many pastors ...pray for success.

Patriots who Bridged the Divides in Sudan's Early Years of Independence

Peter Everington*

Introduction

Ronald Forrest, in his vivid memoir for Sudan Studies No 56 (p. 26), mentions another British teacher in Sudan at the time, "an adherent of the Moral Re-Armament movement". That was me.

I worked in Sudan as a teacher and then college lecturer between 1958 and 1966. This article recalls some friendships and experiences, with particular reference to the Moral Re-Armament movement (MRA). My book of photos and memoirs, in English with Arabic translation, was published in December 2017. At the launch in Khartoum, it was a joy to meet several of my former students and their families. The English title translates an Arabic warning to me on 27 October 1964 from a boy sitting on the crossbar of his father's bicycle: "Watch your step, Khawaja". I was a lone foreign observer of the massed celebration outside the Republican Palace in Khartoum, following the downfall of General Abboud's government the day before.

On graduating from university in 1958, I applied to work in Sudan because of the Sudan government's interest in MRA². It had bought copies of MRA's all-African feature film Freedom as an aid to national cohesion and invited two British friends of mine to speak at scheduled showings. The movement had changed my patronising attitude to other races and was enlarging my horizons. Having friends among Middle Eastern and African students, I was appalled by Britain's 1956 invasion of Egypt. Wanting to help rebuild trust in some way, I switched to Arabic for my final year at Cambridge.

In the years following World War Two, MRA worked for reconciliation among former combatants. Its founder, Frank Buchman, was decorated by the leaders of France, Germany, Japan and the Philippines. In the 1950s, it was addressing the stand-off between the European colonial powers and the African independence movements.

¹ The book was published by DAL Group Cultural Forum and is available in Khartoum; contact cultural.forum@dalgroup.com In coffee table format, with 200 photos, it has proved difficult to send many copies abroad; hence this article. For UK enquiries, contact the author: peter19@gmail.com

²The name Moral Re-Armament was adopted in the years leading up to World War Two, when the European powers were re-arming militarily. Nowadays, the work is known as Initiatives of Change.

MRA posits standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love as the basis of personal and national decision-making. It asserts that the Creator has a plan for his world and each of us in silent reflection can find our part. When an individual finds a change of motive, and a team of like-minded people take a fresh initiative, there can be benefits to family and community life, and sometimes at international level.

After my June 1958 interview at the Sudan Embassy in London, the Ministry of Education gave me (like Ronald Forrest the previous year) a five-year contract to teach English in secondary schools, to start in September. In July, I did voluntary work on the catering side at MRA's main conference centre in Caux, Switzerland. I could attend the plenary sessions and converse with the many African participants. Some were actors in *Freedom*, written as a play three years before in Caux by a Nigerian, a Ghanaian and a South African.

In July 1958, the Prime Minister of Sudan, Abdullah Khalil, sent a delegation to Caux: Buth Diu from Fangak, who was Minister of Works; another Southern member of parliament, Joshua Malwal Mut from Bentiu; Daud Abdel Latif from Wadi Halfa, who was Governor of Kassala Province; and Mohammed Salih Shangitti, Speaker of Parliament.



Sudanese MRA Conference in Caux, 1958. Left to right: Buth Diu, Mohammed Salih Shangitti, Joshua Malwal Mut, Daud Abdel Latif. (Credit: MRA)

I knew little about Sudan's North-South relations but I realised it was a landmark moment when Buth Diu apologised for his hatred of the Arab North in front of 600 people and pledged to work for a hate-free Africa. In the following years, I would get to know him and Daud Abdel Latif and their families well.

Arrival in Sudan

My flight from London landed at sunset at Wadi Seidna on 2 September 1958. I did not know it was the the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Omdurman

nor that the airport bus was taking us through Kereri, the Sudanese name for the battle.

My first daylight view of Africa was the Blue Nile in spate, seen from the front door of the Grand Hotel. Later that morning, pelicans were fishing in the confluence of the two rivers.



Confluence of the Blue and White Niles, Khartoum. (Credit: author)

Over the years, I would never tire of the grandeur of desert, mountain and river. On the river bank at Juba one morning, a kingfisher hovered in silhouette against the rising sun before plunging for its prey. When I returned two hours later, a young crocodile was sunning itself on a rock.

A verse from Psalm 104 says it all: "O Lord, what a variety you have made! And in wisdom have you made them all. The earth is full of your riches."

Port Sudan

Arriving at Port Sudan Boys' Secondary aged 23, there was everything to learn about the job and how to navigate in the country. Two years into Independence, I had expected hostility to the idea of Empire but was surprised by the openness towards the British as people. The Sudanese headmaster seemed to take pride in having a few tame imperialists on the staff, rather like Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie with his pet lions. There was appreciation of our best efforts and tolerance of our eccentricities.

In every senior class, at least one boy was capable of writing a lengthy poem which, when recited at a school concert, was greeted with the rapture a pop artist receives in the West. If love of poetry was a distinct Sudanese feature, love of politics was another. School strikes had been a weapon used against the Anglo-Egyptian administration. They remained a potent feature under subsequent Sudanese governments.



Daud Abdel Latif and family. (Credit: author)

In March each year, secondary school teachers were deployed around the province to invigilate final exams at intermediate schools. In 1959, I was sent to Aroma in the cotton area that was irrigated by seasonal flooding of the River Gash. As well as the invigilating, there were short interviews with candidates.

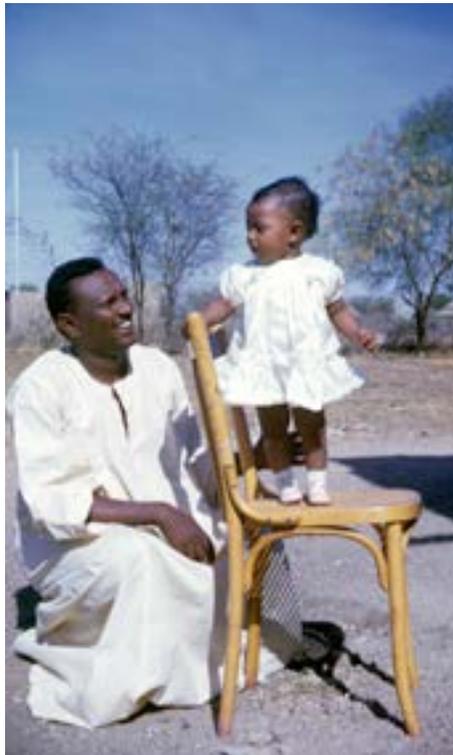
The Province headquarters at Kassala was an hour's drive away. I sent a message to Daud Abdel Latif asking if I could call on him. Back came an invitation to stay with the family at the Governor's Residence and the start of a friendship which continued when they and I moved to Khartoum.

A Nubian, with a culture distinct at many points from the Arab, Daud had a keen understanding of the mentality of the South Sudanese in their regard of the North. He was moved by Buth Diu's apology in Switzerland eight months before. While a Province Governor in the South a few years earlier, he had sent warning messages to Khartoum about the Government's Southern policy.

As a militant student at Gordon College, Daud had had his conflicts with the British. Yet his brilliant mind and independent spirit brought him rapid promotion in Government service. He was happy to answer my many questions, for instance about the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). President Tito and his wife visited Port Sudan in a Yugoslav warship, as part of his campaign

with Indian Premier Nehru and Egypt's President Nasser to steer a course between the Cold War opponents, and I was invited to attend a public meeting addressed by Tito and President Abboud. Daud's comment on NAM was "a policy where you stand for nothing and blackmail both sides."

Over my eight years in Sudan, I came across many Sudanese who regarded MRA as an aid to the practice of their religious or humanitarian ideals. Among them was Omer el Jak, a cotton classifier at the ginning factory of the Sudan Gezira Board (SGB) at El Hasaheisa. One year, the rains came early, presenting a threat to the harvested cotton piled up outside the factory. In his meditations at prayer time, Omer felt he should raise a volunteer team to work overtime beyond the



Cotton classifier El Jak at home in El Hasaheisa. (Credit: author)

mid-afternoon close of the working day. At the end of that ginning season, he wrote to me, "Because of Moral Re-Armament, thousands of bales of cotton have been saved which would otherwise have been ruined." Several years later, he was the first Sudanese to be appointed Chief Classifier of the SGB.

Khartoum

Khartoum Boys' Secondary was close to the University and thus to the political ferment of the day. Posted there in 1960, I became aware that a quarter of each class were likely to be committed Communists and another quarter, committed Muslim Brothers. The other half, who were not bothered about changing the world, were called 'Pepsis' by the Communists. Some of them were linked to political parties backed by the El Mahdi and El Mirghani families but under the military government of General Abboud, all political parties were banned. Abboud's two eldest sons were pupils at the school, as were the future President and Vice-President, Omer Hassan Ahmed el Beshir and Ali Osman Mohamed Taha.

The school buildings were the old South Barracks, built for the British Army. Many of the sweepers, messengers and cooks had worked for the British and lived in the nearby villages of Burri el Mahas and Burri Dereisa. The messenger of the English Department, named Mohammed Hassan, was universally known as Gilbert, after the sergeant-major whose kit he had once cleaned. The Head of the English Department was an Irishman. The other teachers were a Sudanese, a Scotsman, a Welsh woman and this Englishman. When the Five Nations Rugby Championship started, the rest of us persuaded the Sudanese to support France.



Khartoum Boys' Secondary School. (Credit: author)

Under successive headmasters, Abdel Gadir Tolodi and Abdel Bagi, there was a happy atmosphere in the school. For sport, we had the use of two football pitches only twice a week for 500 boys, and Abdel Bagi backed my efforts to set up cross-country running, on a course round the two nearby Burri villages. Numbers of boys took part on a voluntary basis and this led to an inter-school cross-country championship on the same course. The Minister of Education, Mohammed Talaal Farid, fired the starting gun; the team from Hantoub Secondary School were the winners.

The factor of Moral Re-Armament

For a large proportion of northern Sudanese at independence in January 1956, Sayed Abdel Rahman, the last surviving son of the Mahdi, was regarded as the father of the nation. When he died in 1959, his eldest son Siddig (father of Sadig el Mahdi) succeeded him.



Cross-Country Running. (Credit: author)

By a strange set of circumstances, I was invited to dinner with him one evening in 1960. After the Battle of Omdurman in 1898, Britain's General Kitchener had ordered his steamers to bombard El Mahdi's domed tomb in Omdurman. The grave was desecrated and its surroundings looted by British soldiers. The site lay in ruins until 1947, when the British, then in power, allowed the rebuilding of the tomb to a larger design, with a silvered dome. In 1961, a Scotsman, Sir Edward Stevenson, influenced by MRA, decided to return to the Mahdi family four looted objects in his possession. I was asked to hand them over and the small ceremony, with Sayed Siddig's response, was reported in *The Morning News* in Khartoum on December 22 1960.

Ahmed el Mahdi, fourth son of Sayed Abdel Rahman el Mahdi, had met Frank Buchman, the initiator of Moral Re-Armament, during his student years at Oxford. He was intrigued by the care and vision of this elderly

Christian. Buchman told him he would be a statesman and Ahmed took that as an encouragement to apply his faith to governance and to cooperate with people of other traditions. In the next five years I was to learn from him how much of Muslim teaching tallied with my Christian aspirations.



Ahmed el Mahdi. (Credit: author)

At Eid al Fitr in 1961, as Commander of the Ansar Youth, Ahmed el Mahdi was expected to visit the main celebration in each of 'The Three Towns'. He was setting off for Khartoum North, with the aim of going next to Khartoum, when suddenly an inner compulsion made him turn back and go to Omdurman first. Unknown to him, in the great square in front of the Mahdi's Tomb, the Police had clashed violently with the Ansar (the Mahdi's followers) and opened fire. The Ansar were arming

themselves with wooden clubs and iron bars, and there could have been a bloodbath with national consequences. However, Ahmed managed to calm the Ansar and send them home, and the next day the military government apologised and thanked him for his intervention. Ahmed ascribed it to God's guidance overruling his own plans.

Friends and colleagues

Yousif el Khalifa was the first Muslim Brother I knew well. In 1961, a message came to Khartoum Secondary asking me to call on him at the nearby Publications Bureau of the Ministry of Education. He was starting a programme, 'Learn Arabic by Radio', and needed someone to speak the English context for his Arabic sounds. For the next year, we met nearly every week at Radio Omdurman to record a series of 15-minute programmes. In 1955, Yousif had been teaching at Rumbek Secondary when the Southern Regiment

of the Army mutinied and there was widespread killing of Northern Sudanese in the South. Thousands had to be evacuated. Yousif however, returned to the North without bitterness, conscious of the long-term indignities felt by the South. In 1958, when he was on a course studying Linguistics in Michigan, USA, he and his wife attended the summer conference of MRA at Mackinac Island. They were impressed by the attempt to heal America's racial divides and hoped this could be applied to Sudan. Back in Khartoum, he and Buth Diu became good friends.

Since his July 1958 visit to Caux, life had not been easy for Buth Diu. The military coup of November 17 that year left him without his minister's job, salary and government house. In the years that followed, armed opposition grew in the South, leading to full-scale civil war in 1963. As a Southern politician in Khartoum, he fell under suspicion from both sides. Even under provocation, he held to his decision not to hate. He once said to me, "I wish hate was something you could see like a dog, and shoot." Happiness reigned in his family in their modest rented home, and people from North and South flocked to it.

Among them was a young economist in the Ministry of Labour called Mohammed el Murtada Mustafa.

He had encountered Moral Re-Armament while studying in Ethiopia. He was struck by MRA's saying, 'In any dispute, the important thing is not who is right, but what is right', and was applying this to his conciliation work in the Ministry to some effect. As his friendship with Buth Diu deepened, he wondered if this approach had a bearing on the North-South conflict. Meanwhile, there were further setbacks and tragedies to come before such thinking could gain traction.

The 1960s: turbulent times

Many Sudanese today seem to



*Dr Mohammed el Murtada Mustafa.
(Credit: MRA)*

regard the 1960s as the golden age of their independence, and that may well be so. My memory is of gathering discontent at the restrictions imposed by the military government and increasing bad news from the South.

I only managed two visits to the South during my eight years. Christmas 1961 was spent with friends who were teaching at Rumbek Secondary School, followed by a trip by lorry to Juba, where I stayed with another teacher. In 1962, there was a strike of teachers in Bahr el Ghazal, and teachers from Khartoum Secondary were sent to Wau to invigilate exams. Again I went to Rumbek. On both visits, the grandeur of the scenery and the dignity of the people were clouded by mistrust as rebellion gathered against the North. In 1963 the defection of Joseph Lagu from the Sudanese Armed Forces to the Southern Anyanya movement brought fresh impetus to the war.

In autumn 1964, came the massive campaign of strikes and demonstrations in many towns of the North which led to the downfall of the military government. I lived in a bachelor flat in Sharia el Jama'a, Khartoum, and most of the major demonstrations by different factions came past my home. By then, I had been appointed a lecturer in English at the new Higher Teacher Training Institute in Omdurman. Sadly, one of my students, Abdel Rahim Harran, gained fame as a martyr of the uprising. He was one of those severely wounded by the shooting of unarmed demonstrators near the Republican Palace. When I visited him in hospital, his first words were, "What are the British newspapers saying about us?" As I praised his courage, he said, "I would give the last drop of my blood for my country." Next morning at the Institute, news came that he had died. Over 40 people were killed in that incident, a last desperate measure by the Abboud government.

The most sensational appointment by the new Provisional Government was that of a Southerner, Clement Mboro, as Minister of the Interior. This was taken as a serious attempt to end the war in the South. In late November, he went on a tour of Government centres in the South. There was a horrible sequel. On a Sunday afternoon, December 6th 1964, a vast crowd of Southern building workers and others gathered outside Khartoum Airport to welcome him back. His arrival was delayed and a rumour circulated that he had been assassinated in Malakal by the Northern army. In rage, the crowd fanned out across the capital, stoning cars and assaulting people. In revenge, Northern vigilantes armed themselves with staves and iron bars, and long into the night killed Southerners wherever they found them. Meanwhile, Clement Mboro flew in from Malakal, appalled at the carnage.

Usually on a Friday morning I went to the Khartoum home of Daud Abdel Latif to chat with him and his wife Fathiya and enjoy the company of their young family. Five days after the violence, they were in a sombre mood. Daud

did not tell me what he planned to do but months later, the public learned he had travelled to meet leaders of the Southern rebel movement in neighbouring countries. On behalf of the Government, he invited them to a Round Table Conference that took place later in 1965. This foundered on the lack of personal trust on both sides but it was another step in a serious search for peace.

A few years before, I had bought a 16 mm film projector and screen to show *Freedom* (either in Arabic or English) and other MRA films. One day in 1965, I was asked to show the English version to the boys of Rumbek Secondary who had been evacuated to Khartoum. The film depicts rival politicians in a fictional Africa country, along with a representative of white 'Imperia', finding common cause after much conflict and heart searching. This leads to independence without bloodshed. As I was preparing to leave after the film, a furious young Dinka called Sirr Anai came and shouted at me. Next evening, he came to my home, and his hatred of the North poured out. He told me his first instinct had been to smash the projector. For him as a revolutionary socialist, forgiveness was a betrayal of the struggle. In the South, his father had been severely injured in the fight against the Sudanese Army. I could only tell him how I once hated a British army officer who ill-treated me but I realised that my hatred was as bad as what the officer had done and it was a liberation to write and apologise for it. In the next days, with the help of Buth Diu and others, Sirr came to recognise personal hatred as a force that destroys socialism and any other humanitarian endeavour. What was needed was a revolutionary passion to turn enemies into friends and together find what was right for the world.

Growing numbers of Southern and Northern Sudanese students with this new thinking flocked to Buth Diu's home each week, alongside his children's school friends, and some politicians. By now Buth was again a Minister (of Animal Resources) and had a spacious garden at his government house. One evening he gave a dinner for a visiting Indian journalist, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. Rajmohan Gandhi was running an MRA campaign for a clean united India and had founded a weekly news magazine in Bombay called *Himmat*, along with a training centre at Panchgani. Sirr Anai asked if he could come to India for a year's training in journalism. With Mohammed el Murtada's help, this happened two years later. In the 1970s, Sirr became Editor of *The Nile Mirror* in Juba.

Kenya and Uganda

In 1963, I spent the whole of my annual leave in Kenya, with a brief visit to Uganda. In Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta was being sworn in as Prime Minister as Self-Government began. It was not many years since the Mau Mau uprising, when Kenyatta had been detained by the British. During this time some

white farmers visited him, asking his forgiveness for their attitude of racial superiority and pledging to work for a multiracial Kenya. They showed him the film *Freedom*. He asked them to translate it into Ki-swahili and show it to the whole country. People in Britain raised money for film vans and sent volunteers to help man them. 700,000 Kenyans saw the film in stadiums and market places during the five years spanning independence. I took part in this programme, working alongside ex-*Mau Mau* fighters, white settlers, and British and Canadian volunteers.

Jomo Kenyatta's slogan on becoming President at Independence in December that year was *Harambee* (Work Together). An MRA youth campaign formed round this concept. At an African conference in Nairobi in 1965, a show of song, dance and sketches took shape, to illustrate the force of reconciliation. Sudanese who had attended returned to Khartoum with the plea that *Harambee Africa* be invited to Sudan. Buth Diu and the Minister of Education, Hassan Awadallah, won acceptance for this in cabinet, with Daud Abdel Latif's strong support. I spent the four months of my final leave on the preparations, including another visit to Nairobi.

In July 1966, the Government sent a Sudan Airways plane, at their expense, to bring the company of 70 people to Khartoum for two weeks as their guests. The Sudanese jazz artist Sharhabeell Ahmed gave the services of his band. He translated some of the *Harambee* songs into Arabic, and wrote a welcome song of his own, training a chorus that included Sirr Anai and Buth Diu's children; they were to sing at the airport as *Harambee Africa* arrived. The show was performed at the National Theatre in Omdurman, at Khartoum University, and in the Atbara football stadium. President Ismail el Azhari attended the National Theatre showing and later presented the cast with a silver shield at the Republican Palace. Prime Minister El Sadig el Mahdi entertained them



Harambee Africa at Khartoum University (Credit: Jürg Kobler)

on a river steamer, and urged them to spread their message in Africa. From Khartoum, the Sudan Airways plane took them to Addis Ababa, where they were guests of Emperor Haile Selassie for a week.



President Ismail el Azhari receiving the cast of Harambee Africa. Credit: Jürg Kobler)

Peacemakers

The North-South war dragged on for several years. It was the statesmanship of President Jaafar Numeiri and General Joseph Lagu that enabled the Addis Ababa Peace Accord of 1972. In the 1990s, I met Achol Deng Achol, then Sudanese Ambassador to the Netherlands. As a Law student at Khartoum University 30 years before, he had been a frequent visitor to Buth Diu's home and part of the support team for *Harambee Africa*. He told me that MRA had also played a significant role in helping lay the foundations for peace within Sudan.

Buth Diu died soon after the Peace Accord. By 1972, Mohammed el Murtada Mustafa had a doctorate in Economics from Northeastern University in Boston. Working with the Government of Sudan, he drafted the International Labour Organisation report, *Growth, Employment and Equity: a comprehensive strategy for the Sudan* (ILO, Geneva 1976). He received some criticism from Sudanese for singling out the South as a priority area for development. In an article written in 1983, he looked back on this report and his experience with MRA:

"I allocated a special chapter to the South as I believed we Northerners did not only have to ask them to forget the past, but had to sacrifice to make practical restitution."

"Of course many other people contributed to North-South reconciliation at the time, and many more are needed now to sustain it. However, I learned from Buth Diu's example that the settling of problems does not depend primarily on technicalities and formal approaches. Basic solutions come from a cure to the weaknesses of human nature – pride, fear, hatred and suspicion. These can be replaced by forgiveness, love and common targets for the well-being of a nation, as individuals find courage to obey God's guidance.

Twenty years ago when I was a Pan-African Scholar at the University of Addis Ababa, I saw poverty and corruption around me. It was then that I met Moral Re-Armament. 'People First' became the essence of my ideology. I learned that man matters for himself. He is a spiritual, not just an economic being."

* Peter Everington worked for the Sudan Ministry of Education in 1958-66 and has since made 25 return visits, on student exchange projects and to support the peacemakers.



The author on Jebel Marra above the Deriba Crater. (Credit: Ian Morrison)