

A NEW SPIRITUALITY FOR A WAR-TORN WORLD: ONE CANADIAN FAMILY'S INVESTMENT IN "MORAL RE-ARMAMENT"

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In the decades immediately following the Second World War, Moral Re-Armament (MRA) under its founder and leader, Frank Buchman (1878–1961), presented itself as a spiritually motivated third party uniquely equipped to achieve reconciliation among former combatants. This article raises a question important to the study of participants in peace movements, namely the influence of family socialization. Drawing on a large archival trove and on interviews, it examines how one Canadian family invested heavily in MRA ideals during the 1940s to 1960s and in the process experienced their own private peace and reconciliation as members tried to further the movement's collective goal.

INTRODUCTION

While spiritual idealism is often central to peace-making, there has been little attention to the role of Moral Re-Armament (MRA) in the reconstruction of war-torn countries in the decade following the Second World War.¹ A polarizing movement that drew extravagant claims of success from its admirers, but also strong criticism from opponents, MRA under its founder and leader, Frank Buchman (1878–1961), presented itself as a spiritually motivated third party uniquely equipped to resolve conflict and achieve nonviolent change among former combatants.² An in-depth objective analysis of the movement is still waiting, but a more balanced assessment is now beginning to emerge thanks to several recent works sensitive to MRA's complexities and tensions. Both Philip Boobyer, focusing on

PEACE RESEARCH

The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies

Volume 51, Number 1 (2019): 93-121

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