



Paradise on Earth

An interview with Robert Muller, Part 2

Conducted by Douglas Gillies

“I am recommending very vocally that they should have an **entirely new United Nations**. The UN is **no longer capable** of playing the roles which have become much more difficult today than they were at the time of its creation. **Big businesses**, and the Washington organizations dealing with money in the world, all these should come together and create practically a new United Nations.”

Editor’s Note: Robert Muller, who won the Academy’s 2005 Humanitarian Award at the Global MindChange Forum, turned 84 on March 10 and celebrated the occasion both by jotting down his 7,000th idea “for a better world” and also by participating in a Q&A interview with participants from around the world over the Internet. This article is an edited transcript of that interview, conducted with his biographer Douglas Gillies.



In a world characterized by ever-shorter time spans and intense attention on the present, Muller’s perspective as an elder seems indescribably valuable. He does not despair about the human condition, because he, his parents, and grandparents lived collectively through six Franco-Germanic wars. He now views a relatively placid European Union and knows anything is possible within time.

Dr. Muller lives most of the year at his small farm overlooking the University for Peace, on a sacred indigenous hill, Mt. Rasur, from which — according to indigenous prophecy — a civilization of peace will extend to the entire world. His traditional Costa Rican house is located just up the hill from the Peace Monument of the University. In addition to his duties at the University, he devotes time to his writings and is an internationally acclaimed, multi-lingual speaker and author of fourteen books published in various languages. He has published his *Testament to the UN* as well as his plans and dreams for a peaceful, happy world.

Douglas: I wonder if one of the roots of our biggest challenge is that we believe that we are separate from one another, different from one another. Do you sense that there is any sort of shift toward a different awareness and that we are actually connected and that we are all one human family?

Robert: I think that the major obstacle to go towards this new type of situation between countries are the militaries. The militaries are diminishing. They are disappearing. In my home town in Alsace-Lorraine, every morning after church we, the children, had to walk in front of a procession in the town, in the name of war. My, my, my! To have France be capable of dominating other countries, and having wars.

Today it has all disappeared. The armies are having more and more difficulties continuing to exist. For example, now recently things are going to a particular country to help it to solve its problems. But those are little things and they do not go very often. The latest war, which was defined last year, lasted about one month [*The Israel-Hamas conflict*]. They had to close it. Nobody was interested any more.

So I have made the proposal, as a matter of fact, that the solution to this is that the militaries become part of the police force. That the police are here to put order if there is trouble somewhere, but not in another country. For example, in France, we do not call the police "the police". They are called "l'agents de la paix." *The agents of peace*. The French police have been called the agents of peace since the last century.

When we were children, if we had a problem, if we had difficulties crossing the street because there were too many automobiles, we went quickly to the policemen, and we said, "Monsieur agent, would you be so kind and help me to cross the street?"

So here already is one country where the police are an agency of peace. If we would put the armies into the police, we would no longer have the problem of their looking for wars and problems in order to survive. Governments, they do not like to touch the police because they would be told, "You do not know what the Germans might do to you someday. What would happen to our colonies, and things of this sort?" That is another big aspect which is difficult. But again to get a united world is very, very difficult. And you cannot imagine that you can solve all this overnight. It might take 50 years, and maybe a hundred years, but it will take place. There is no doubt about that.

Douglas: In one of the questions there was a concern about genetically engineered seeds. Companies sell seeds that won't reproduce the plants. You have to keep buying the seeds from the company. That spills

into a larger controversy: how business is changing the landscape of the world, and how that might be affecting our ability to achieve Paradise Earth. Do you have a sense for the role of business in this evolving vision of Paradise Earth?

Robert: Here we have a problem because the United Nations got an order from the United States, not to have anything to do with multinational corporations. So that you have no world views that would condemn certain actions of the worldwide businesses. The worldwide businesses... each year in the United Nations, we invite them before the opening of the General Assembly, with a group of other people and representatives of the nations, they have a meeting to give us indications about the future.

I can tell you that all these heads of multinational corporations who come to the meeting are very often the people who make great proposals for unions between nations. I would not condemn the world corporations. They are beginning to be aware of this, and that if they would continue to maneuver with things like this, they would have to pay for it at one point. But many of them continue. They are armaments manufacturers. The first United Nations was built in an army place in Long Island, and half of it was armaments and the other half of which I was part was the United Nations!

That is another part that is very important, but we cannot say it. [It] is not able to become a reality, although it would be good for the entire world. The poor countries are beginning to complain and say, "Look, we cannot develop economically any more because we are completely invaded by Coca-Cola and this and this and that, and all the advertisements in our countries. These are advertisements that come from the North, from the US or Europe. We cannot compete with the rest of the world any more." That is another problem which we have in our laps.

Douglas: And yet, we are moving towards a better world. You see that and you believe that in your heart.

Robert: Absolutely. Whether or not you like it, you have to. (*Laughs*). You have to be positive if you want to get good results from anything. This happens for a lady who makes a good luncheon, and it happens for a company that starts to produce something. You have to believe it and you have to even be in love with what you're trying to do.

Douglas: Your background is as an economist. You received your masters in economics and your doctorate in law. You have always worked in the UN in the Economic and Social Council. One of our

writers asks: I am curious how market economics will work in Paradise Earth. Is Paradise Earth a more sensible form of capitalism or is it something else, entirely different?

Robert: What happened to me, is that I was the United Nations man working with several others in οικονομισ, economics, which is the Greek word for the organization of the home. When I was there, at one point, I began to send very personal notes to the secretary-general.

There was a meeting on the highest floor of the United Nations. And they said, "We at the highest floor of the United Nations should be progressing more quickly. We should get a guy like Robert Muller to come up." It was they who asked me to come up and become a right hand to the Secretary-General. I was the advisor to three Secretaries-General.

And I told them I will always come up with new ideas. You do not have to tell me whether you do them or not. It is my view to break into the creation of the world community of the united world, which is not easy, and very few people do it. So let me do this and then I can tell you here is something that you can do in the United Nations. Do not tell me that you will do it or not do it. It is completely your affair. I was able in that way to get many, many changes at the level of the United Nations. They tell me today, "Robert Muller, if you had not been around this would not exist today."

Douglas: So the United Nations for you was an experience that has led you to believe we are moving into a better and better world. Sometimes when we hear about the United Nations it sounds as if everything is going wrong and the UN is powerless to do any thing about it. What was your experience of the United Nations? Was it a frustrating experience or did you find it encouraging?

Robert: I am recommending very vocally that they should have an entirely new United Nations. The UN has practically had no reform during all these decades since its creation because it was taboo. You cannot change the UN. The UN today is not in a position to deal with many of these problems.

One of my recommendations is that we should have a number two United Nations. We should have a world meeting with all the big businesses. Why not? With big businesses, and the Washington organizations dealing with money in the world, all these should come together and create practically a new United Nations. That is one of my reform proposals, among many others in the world. The UN is no longer capable of playing the roles which have become much more difficult today than they were at the time of its creation.

Douglas: Of course, when you were in the United Nations you were in New York City. Once you completed your service you moved to a place in Costa Rica that you described over and over again as a “natural paradise.” I would like to read just a sentence or two from a two-page pamphlet called *Paradise Earth*.

The last two paragraphs say this: “The earth is our precious garden, our temple, our paradise. Our passion must be to preserve it, to embellish it, and to see peace, happiness, and love reign everywhere, always, and forever. Build your own local paradise wherever you live. Don’t let others pretend to build it for you. If we all do that, we will make the world a paradise. A little paradise multiplied by 6 billion people — what a wonderful planet that could be.” That’s the last two paragraphs of *Paradise Earth*. I have posted it on the web. Just go to www.paradisearthlings.com.

How can each of us in our lives create that precious garden? Our temple? Our paradise?

Robert: When a new idea comes, at the beginning it is rejected. And as Machiavelli said, a new idea goes through the following phases. Number one, it is hated. Number two, it is ignored. Number three, it is half looked at. And the last one is that they take it over! And they do it! And such is the whole of history of humanity. You cannot create something on something which is already created, by saying, “Oh, you are now good enough. We cannot now take risks in starting something else.”

So for example, to have this new view of the world, I tried it in the United Nations. To every Secretary-General, I said, “You should do this. And for example, every day you should come out with a Good Morning World that would go to all nations on the earth, in which you, the Secretary-General, would say something good. Here is something good which has been done somewhere which is excellent, which would be followed by the others.” They all refused. They said, “Muller, we would not be allowed by governments to do that.”

And then one day, my second wife (since my first wife died unfortunately) when I mentioned this, she said, “Well, Robert, why don’t you do it?” And then created it, printed it out in the paper *Good Morning World*. I have more than a thousand people who receive it every day. And they are concrete proposals. I do not even need to tell them. They tell them, themselves, and they read my documents, etc., etc. This would be better if it came from the whole United Nations.

Maybe in the new United Nations which should be created there should be a *Good Morning World*. In order to associate the people

with what is happening at the top of world. People will feel better. They will say, "That's very interesting. That is an idea which I had for a long time. But nobody listened to me. Here the United Nations recommends it to the entire world." Then you have happy people who would support you.

Douglas: Even as we are talking, questions continue to pour in. What advice would you give a young man who wants to do something effective for the climate-change crisis?

Robert: The important thing is to find a good job. And to do the job which the young man feels is an important one. For example, one as a thinker in world affairs, and another one in promoting peace. And then, once he has this, namely what he would really would like to do with his life, then to approach agencies that exist in the world and which are already in the business of doing this. They are very happy when they get young people because it is normally old people who come up with these ideas. So the young people should even create an association. They should request that in each university there should be a big paper in which the latest news on world affairs would be given to all the students. The professors could adopt the new things that are happening in the world. Education should be *inducation*! [The educational system] is something awful, which will have to find a worldwide reform. It has to be uplifted. The young people would be the uplifters of a new education in the world.

Sometimes I see the education of little children, and I have the surprise of women who tell me, "Oh, Mr. Muller, thanks to you our children are doing this and that." One of them said to me, "My little girl went to school for the first time, and she came back in the evening." I asked her, "How do you like your school?" She said, "Mommy, do you know that we are living in the heavens?"

I could not believe it! That is what the children in the [Robert Muller Schools](#) are being told. You are a living member of this incredible big universe! You have to be helping it, not to have wars anymore, not to kill each other anymore, and to have your children develop the same way, with an education you are receiving today.

I have been asked once by an English magazine, "Mr. Muller, could you write us an article about educational reform?" I said, "My God. I have never been an expert on education. What can I do?"

I wanted to refuse by saying I am not an expert. But, finally, I said I'll have to try. Let's try to write this article. I was thinking day after day and then I do what I do when I really want to come to a conclusion: I walk in the forest, totally away from the people, but seeing the trees,

seeing the life of a forest. And in the life of a forest I elevate myself and I can come up with ideas which should be adopted by humanity.

I sent them an article which created almost a little revolution. I have learned that there are 43 Robert Muller Schools in the world. (*Laughs*). I have not even the name of them! I cannot take all my time for the Robert Muller Schools, but they are born by themselves on the basis of what I created later. The English people told me, "Mr. Muller, you are right. But could you put this into a one-paper scheme?" And I wrote a paper scheme in which every education can be started and cover the entire world. It is something at the basis of these Robert Muller Schools. I have no merit in it. All this merit comes from the fact of having worked in the United Nations, and having worked with all the nations in the world.

Douglas: How can one person communicate with people who are in war and so on? I am hearing in your answers a part of the answer, it is not what one person can do, it's what people can do when they get together and work as a team. I think of the thousands of organizations that have been spawned by your discussions, by your ideas, and by your speeches. These organizations were not successful because one person did it all. They succeeded because a number of people got together and combined their ideas and worked as a team to get something to happen. Your experience at the UN was that you were on a very large team. So when someone asks you what can one person do, what would you say to them?

Robert: I write about the situation where once an organization has been created, very often it doesn't want to change. They say, "We have trouble enough with what we have started, and do not come up with new ideas to add or to change." We have a problem in the way new ideas are becoming again self-serving, instead of trying to service the entire world. If I could advise someone, a young person about education, I would have a whole list of what to do. To start like the young girl who said, "Do you know that we are living in the heavens?" That I can do.

The other one is the young people. And for young people I have always recommended that they create unions among themselves. Be a few people who are of the same view in the same city. Even as an individual, what you can do and should do is to become a member of one of the local organizations. From inside of this organization you will come up with new ideas, which are the ideas of young people.

If you write to a prime minister, they have so much to do that they send it to one of their officials who will send a nice little letter but not do

anything. I have one rule, for example, with all the heads of state with whom I am in correspondence. I say, "Please do not answer me." In other words I prefer them to keep my proposal and text in their office and to say, "Hey, wait a minute! That idea of Robert Muller could be good in a speech of mine, if I am asked in such and such a field. ... This is a very good idea. I want to be remembered for having taken this or that initiative." So you have a better chance if you write to the head of state or write to the Pope. He asked to get letters from people who say, "Wait a minute." He must have dozens of letters over the years. And I never asked him for an answer. Never!

Douglas: Everyone is aware your birthday is tomorrow. You will be 84 years old and that makes you an elder among us. Even as we were talking a question came in: Is there one greatest lesson that life has taught you in your 84 years?

Robert: The greatest lesson I have received is to be a good and great myself.

Today I will be 84 years old. I say, look, for heaven's sake, none in my family reached that stage. My father died at 58, my mother died at 62 and I personally felt that I could play a role in the world which might be useful. And I should continue to live as long as possible, to have new ideas, to have now the 7,000 ideas. I began to write them and I continue to write them. When I have an idea I write it down. One never knows how good it is.

Now with my 84 years, I am so happy that I made it to 84, that my only preoccupation in my life is to make it at least to 100 or maybe 110. Why? Because now my heart and every part of my body are very happy. It will not even allow us to die. So let's be very good. Let's have a good heart. Let my brain continue and help this guy, and we will live longer too, so it's quite possible that this will happen.

What is happening around me is to look at everything and not to impose things. Not to come up with wild ideas in wild places. No! I want to be part of the further evolution of humankind on this beautiful planet. This is what I will continue to do and I will not be working extra or be having crazy ideas. I took my pulse this morning when I had ideas, and I made sure my pulse was not exaggerated. I came up with 64, which is fantastic! At the same time I have ideas, but I do not have ideas by being all excited about it. It is very natural, so take it easy. Write it down!

Barbara Muller: I just want to add he was getting confused between the 64 of his pulse and the 84 of his years. His pulse is 64 and his years

are 84. I am going to add a postscript to what makes Robert tick, what makes Robert 84. You know what it is? Happiness. This is the happiest man on the planet. He wakes up in the morning and he is happy. And even though he's tired at night he is still happy. Even his book [*Most of All They Taught Me Happiness*](#). Every story, the people in his life who meant the most to him taught him happiness.

Robert: You are so right. And as I came to the telephone for this, I took two things which I have in front of me. The first one is a little 10-hole harmonica, which I was allowed to buy when my parents said, "Nothing of a piano! We are very poor people. You will not have an income if you learn the piano." But they gave me the little harmonica on which I am even able to play the *Ode to Joy* of Beethoven.

The second thing comes from the indigenous people, with whom I have very good relations from the United Nations, they always had a stick which they kept before speaking, and they would look at it, and on it they wrote down ideas as to what they should do. I took one of these sticks and I have had it for years. I have it in front of me. Here, I write for example, "Speak with love. Speak with the heart. Love is the answer. Happiness, very much happiness in your life. Think with love. Smile a lot. Act with love. Behave with love."

I have it, and then when I go for a speech, when people ask me to speak, I take it along, and I look at it to see if there is not one of these philosophies which will be applicable. Can you imagine! My future is based on a stick and on a little harmonica.

Douglas: Do you have that harmonica with you now?

Robert: Yes, of course! I have it always in my pocket. When I see a lady with children, I smile at them and they smile at me. I say to the mother, "Do you think I can play a little harmonica for them?" And these children are so happy! Very often my wife even has bought plenty of little harmonicas and she gives a little to the children! (Laughs.)

Douglas: How about if we all were to finish this conversation by hearing you play *Ode to Joy*?

Robert: [*Plays Ode to Joy, now the anthem of the European Union.*]

Douglas: Thank you, Robert Muller for that concert and for sharing a part of your 84th birthday with all of us. I am very grateful that we have had this conversation today.

Robert: And I am very thankful and grateful that you gave me the opportunity to think about my life and to find the conclusion that after all I am not so bad.

Douglas: You're not so bad, that's for sure.

About Robert Muller: Robert grew up in Alsace-Lorraine and survived World War II as a member of the French Resistance, once captured by the Gestapo. The multiple wars between Germany and France waged over the identity of the region inspired his life's work.

In 1948 he entered and won an essay contest on how to govern the world, the prize of which was an internship at the newly created United Nations. Robert devoted the next 40 years of his life behind the scenes at the United Nations, focusing his energies on world peace.

He rose through the ranks at the UN to the official position of Assistant Secretary-General, reporting successively to Dag Hammarskjöld, U Thant, and Kurt Waldheim. From his vantage point of a top level global statesman he has seen a strong connection between spirituality and the political/cultural scene.

Robert Muller created a "World Core Curriculum" and is known throughout the world as the "father of global education." There are 29 [Robert Muller schools](#) around the world with more being established each year. The World Core Curriculum earned him the UNESCO Peace Education Prize in 1989. Based on this curriculum and his devotion to good causes, Dr. Muller has recently drawn up a "Framework for World Media Coverage" as a public service, as well as a "Framework for Planetary and Cosmic Consciousness" and a "Framework for the Arts and Culture."

Now in active "retirement," Dr. Muller is Chancellor of the University for Peace created by the United Nations in demilitarized Costa Rica. He is in great demand to make speeches to educational, environmental, spiritual and political conferences around the world. Dr. Muller concentrates his efforts on promoting greater human understanding and global awareness. He was recently the recipient of the Albert Schweitzer International Prize for the Humanities and the Eleanor Roosevelt Man of Vision Award.

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