

Press Release

International missions archive to move to Leuven

On 19 October in Leuven, Belgium, Peter Conlan of Operation Mobilisation International (OM) will formally hand over the organisation's records to EVADOC, Belgium's archive for Protestantism and Evangelicalism. The archive will include sixty years of material which covers Bible smuggling into Soviet Russia, shipwreck, overland passage to India, mountain adventures in the Himalayas, and the growth of a movement estimated to have touched the lives of one billion people worldwide. Linked with KADOC-KU Leuven, Catholic University of Leuven, Evadoc is a leading research unit in the history of evangelicalism and protestantism in the Low Countries. Evadoc's first task will be to catalogue the materials. Some restrictions will apply for security reasons. Peter Conlan has been with OM since the 1960s. The handover will take place at Evadoc's 10 year anniversary Study and Meeting day, at the Evangelical Theological Faculty, Sint-Jansbergsesteenweg 95-97, 3001 Leuven, Belgium.

Aaldert Prins, spokesman for EVADOC, said today: "The OM archive is one of the greatest treasures of the modern protestant missionary movement. I am delighted that OM has chosen to entrust its records to EVADOC."

Dr George Verwer, founder of OM, said today: "Dr. Louis Palau said the story of OM is 'one of the most thrilling, visionary, motivating stories in the history of Christian missions'. More than 100,000 young and older people have now served with this movement - often among the least reached peoples on earth. It's their written reports and stories that have shaped OM's legacy. That's why today I'm thankful to EVADOC for this significant step we have taken together to conserve our history. As OM's archives move to Leuven and become more widely available for historical missions research, my prayer is that many will be encouraged to believe God for even greater things than OM's early pioneers could ever have imagined!"

OM was founded by two teenagers in 1957, who took a Dodge truck full of Christian literature down to Mexico from Moody Bible Institute, Chicago. In 1960 the organisation, then called STL, began to work in Europe, opening a Christian book store in Spain despite restrictions imposed by General Franco. The founders went on to smuggle Christian literature into Soviet Russia. Shortly afterwards the organisation became Operation Mobilisation. During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, OM teams travelled overland from Zaventem, Belgium, to India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In 1971 OM launched its first ship, Logos. This was followed in 1977 by the Doulos, then the world's oldest going passenger vessel and largest floating book-shop. In 1988 the Logos sank off the coast of Argentina, resulting in the dramatic rescue of all on board. Within a year, Logos was replaced with Logos II, and in 2009 a much larger ship, Logos Hope, replaced Logos II. The original Logos visited 257 ports in 103 different countries and territories.

From 1989 to 2001, OM's Love Europe programme saw more than 30,000 young people travel to cities and rural areas ranging from Lisbon to Moscow and Oslo to Istanbul to share a message of hope and love through, music, art, dance, the printed word and intercultural contact.

OM celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2017. OM in Belgium celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2015.

Further information on OM is available at www.om.org.

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For further media information and interviews, please contact Martin Turner, national director of OM, Belgium, at martin.turner@om.org, or on +447753683337 (English, French and Dutch)

Notes for editors:

1 EVADOC vzw is the Protestant-Evangelical Archive and Documentation Centre for Belgium and works closely with KADOC-KU Leuven, Catholic University of Leuven.

2 Operation Mobilisation (OM) is an international Christian missions organisation, separately registered in the USA, UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and most other countries in which it operates. In Belgium, OM is based at Fabrieksstraat 63, 1930 Zaventem, and registered as Operatie Mobilisatie vzw, Opération Mobilisation asbl. General contact with OM in Belgium is be via info.be@om.org.

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