

## MOUNTAIN HOUSE • CAUX

15th July, 1985.

Dear friends,

This is the first of a series of weekly letters from Caux through the summer conferences, to keep you in touch with all that is going on here. It is not for publication, and I hope we can include news of a more confidential nature. This is not a press story, but an attempt to sketch swiftly on paper some of the life that flows through this place. Please feel free to let me know how it could be done better. With New World News now fortnightly, and tending to do special issues to report the different sessions, we felt the need for something new.

The theme of the summer 'Hope in a world of tension' has not lost its relevance in the months since it was decided on. Our hearts do go out to a world in need of hope. Behind the ever-fresh beauty and peace of this amazing place is the ever-present backdrop of a world in desperate need, and the power of a mighty and loving God.

We here are in great need too, and will greatly value your prayers. We have rarely, if ever, gone into a summer with such a reduced team. Untrained goodwill can go a long way, but we need a few who will make a long-term commitment to the running of the conferences, and take on one of the more specialised areas of the house. Yet the spirits are high, and a sense of need keeps the doors open to the Holy Spirit.

For a week before the opening we were a growing group, mainly of young people, preparing the house and themselves for the Youth Forum. We had times to share and learn - and committees, sub-groups, meetings on a host of details.

This weekend saw the opening of the summer conferences: 150 young people from 22 countries, marking the International Year of Youth with a forum posing the question 'What brings light to life?' were among the 350 present for the opening meeting. There were many people from the region, including the president of the Cantonal Parliament, the mayor of Lausanne, and representatives of the church. An informal lunch buffet mixed locals and 'distant' in the dining-room re-arranged in reception style, and out on the sun-bathed terrace.

The first evening programme of the conference gave a glimpse of what young people with conviction have already done - from the favelas of Brazil, to the Sudan, a visit to the Dalai Lama, and an extract from the Scandinavian revue, with a challenging refrain about 'daring to choose life'.

Addressing the young people, Mr. Abd-El Rahman Khane, the Executive Director of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, said, \* It is a precious thing that you are interested in the major problems that face the international community and the

peoples that make it up.' He had already heard of MRA in the 1950's, he said, 'but I never dreamt I'd come here, and hear so many things that have concerned me in the few hours that I have been here - as an Arab, as an Algerian, and as an African. I have found it fascinating. I was very moved by what I have heard: the out-of-the-ordinary sharing which seems to me of vital importance for each one.'

He concluded, 'The active social role which each member of society must play starts with inner peace. In this difficult task, you must not let yourselves get discouraged. You must persevere.' A greater involvement in the problems of development was in the interests of the rich countries as much as the poor, he said, warning of the dangers of catastrophic conflict comparable to nuclear war. 'We are not interested in apportioning blame for the past, but in looking to the future,' he said.

Speaking with Mr. Khane was Mr. Olivier Giscard d'Estaing, the Deputy-Director of the Fontainebleau business school, INSEAD. Mr. Giscard d'Estaing added, 'The struggle against misery, against the inequalities between continents and countries demands the mobilisation of all. This is the fundamental problem of our times. We talk here about attitudes. We need to act with our hearts, our judgement, our generosity, and avoiding conflicts between dug-in positions.'

Mr. Giscard d'Estaing continued, 'There are historic conflicts and mutual suspicions, and it is up to us to dominate these problems and to re-launch the industrialisation of the rest of the world.' He stressed that Mr. Khane and himself were not representing conflicting positions from North and South, but were pleading together for development, 'a development with greater balance and justice'.

Over the opening weekend, there was also a gathering on the theme of minorities and their contribution, which involved a Sardinian Member of the European Parliament, a group of Italian lawyers and legal experts, and a group of 28 from Carinthia, a region of Austria, representing the German- and the Slovene-speaking populations.

In the Austrian group were the President and members of the Carinthian regional parliament, from the three parties representing the German speakers. From the Slovene side came the President of the Council of the Slovenes and other members of that organisation, along with the General Secretary of the more militant Slovene grouping. After some hesitation they decided to meet, and spent three hours in an open, constructive though sometimes heated session, and they decided to pursue their dialogue back in their region in September. As one said, 'It was a beginning, but you have to start at the beginning.'

Articles have appeared in regional and national newspapers, and there is a crew from the French Canadian Television making the first of three half-hour documentaries on Caux (youth, medicine, and the family).

Andrew Stallybrass