

MOUNTAIN HOUSE • CAUX

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Monday, 5th August 1985,

Dear friends,

'The shouting and the tumult dies/The families and the kids depart', to misquote Rudyard Kipling. These days there is a considerable turnover of people in the house, and the average age will be rising steeply. We have just ended the family session with a weekend 'round table' on 'The family, its status and role in society', on the initiative of French M.P. Jean Briane, and on Wednesday we launch into 'Asia, the Americas and Europe'.

This is the 7th consecutive family session, this year gathering 61 families, and participants from 20 countries. The children decided to raise money for the repairs on the roof. In reply to the question 'Can we listen to God?', one of the children said, 'Oh yes, because He sometimes comes into my heart.' Another of the younger participants added, 'We come here to learn not to fight but to make friends from other countries.'

The weather again played its part to order - it stayed fine for the afternoon celebrations of the 1st of August, Swiss National Day, and the rain fell briefly between the barbecue supper and the procession up the hill to the bonfire I

A young Canadian said, 'I came to the conference as an atheist. Now I've even started to read the Bible, which is a big change for me! But it won't mean much unless I put it into practice. After the meeting on healing the wounds of the past (in the Youth forum), I wrote letters of apology to the people I felt I'd hurt.'

Discussion groups brought together the parents of small children, and of teenagers, to discuss their experiences in the freedom and honesty of smaller circles, where friendships could be made. In one of these groups alone, among the dozen or so present, one young woman grappled with her revolt against her domineering father, a mother started to see how she could act differently towards her 19-year-old son from whom she was deeply divided, a father came to understand why his three sons had not accepted the faith that he had proclaimed, and a young unmarried woman began to see how she could lead a fully satisfying life as a single person.

The 9.30 session for all ages, with puppets, also included the singing of a new 'action song' in French and English:
'J'ai deux oreilles (I have two ears), yes, I do, pour écouter mon ami (to listen to my friend),
j'ai deux yeux, yes, I do, pour chercher la lumière, (I've two eyes, to search for the light),
j'ai deux mains, yes, I do, pour partager mon pain, (I've two hands to

share my bread with),
j'ai deux pieds, yes, I do, pour marcher vers demain, (I've two feet to walk towards tomorrow),
j'ai un coeur, yes, I do, pour l'offrir a la ronde, (I've a heart to give to those around me),
j'ai un coeur, yes, I do, pour chanter mon refrain. (I've a heart to sing my song).

The main meetings were well-prepared and of a high level: 'What is MRA?', 'Authority and the role of the father', 'Openness', 'The calling of the family', 'Friendship'. The top Swiss civil servant with responsibility for family policy took part in the weekend gathering on the legal and legislative framework for the family. It was not his first visit to Caux, and he spoke with great warmth and appreciation. He commented on the high level of the discussions.

The French-Canadian television were back to make the last of their three documentary films on the conferences this year. For them, this session was the highlight, and we look forward to being able to see the fruits of their work. If their previous film is anything to go by, we may be using their films a good deal in the years to come. A Swiss couple told the interviewer how their nearly-grown family had recently been shaken by the news of a new and unplanned pregnancy. Abortion was a possibility. The parents had turned to God for guidance, included the children, and decided to welcome the new member of the family - all before the doctors realised that a rare medical condition had led them to the wrong diagnosis in the first place.

Last week, a group of 11 from here went to the small Swiss village where 5000 visitors were meeting to celebrate the Dalai Lama's birthday. They were received by his representative in Switzerland, and taken to seats at the front. 'Birthdays aren't important,' the Dalai Lama told the crowd, 'but we can make every day a relevant day, with content and meaning.' His Holiness received the group from Caux afterwards in a caravan converted into a sitting room. To R.D. Mathur, an old friend who will be his host at the next dialogue in Panchgani, he said with a twinkle in his eye, 'You're putting on weight. You'd better watch it I'

We are already turning our minds to next summer, and the chance that the 40th anniversary of Caux will give us to reach the media, and speak to Switzerland in a new way. We are at a very early stage in our reflections - please do send any thoughts and convictions that you have, and we will try to keep you in touch with our thinking here as it develops. One of the clear lessons of the Washington conference in June was the great value of enough preparation done well ahead.

I enclose a new little leaflet on the finances of Caux that we now give to people when they arrive - it is in preparation in other languages. We hope that people will read it, and that the number of those who ask for their bill when they leave will drop, and that their contributions will rise! I

Andrew Stallybrass