

## MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

CONFIDENTIAL - NOT FOR PUBLICATION

NEWSLETTER 1

14th July, 1986

Dear friends,

At the start of another summer of conferences here in Caux, our thoughts reach out to you all across the world. This time together will not be just rich in blessings for us, nor yet the celebration of an anniversary alone, but a time given by God for the sake of a world in great need, no less than at that first conference 40 years ago. The fact that the first eight days are being hosted with such depth and harmony by French and Germans together heightens our expectation that God intends to apply their hard-won secrets of reconciliation to the toughest and most dangerous divisions of today's world.

Promise and expectancy are hard to define and quantify, yet they are very real for us here after these first days. 'Glory be to Him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine,' (Eph.3,20). This beginning has indeed been more than we could imagine. So many prayers have been answered that it takes your breath away!

Rightly or wrongly, we don't record the church services here. But on Sunday 6th we had a stirring message and prayers from one of our local ministers. Then yesterday, Jean Piguet gave us a profound and deeply felt sermon on the Biblical significance of the figure 40. The president of our local government (see the accompanying news story) made a humorous reference on the Saturday to the dangers of putting on weight, and the natural time in a man's life of evaluating the distance run, and the targets to fix ahead. Jean spoke of the years in the desert for the people of Israel, and of the great promise at the end of the time of testing. He spoke too of the heavy responsibility of carrying on the message that Frank Buchman in turn had inherited from others.

I cannot put off any longer my poor attempt to describe Saturday. It was beyond our dreams, but there are so many pieces to the puzzle, and I'm afraid I only see a small part of it. 250 guests from outside the conference pouring in for tea and the 5pm event; figures of note and neighbours from the village; ambassadors and diplomats and the postmaster and his wife; 'Mr. Gardener' from the well-known Swiss radio phone-in programme, and his wife, the head of the canton's farming women; many old friends here for the first time in years; one bed un-allocated in all our buildings.

A great hall full to bursting, with the doors at the back open, and people seated down the main corridor and in room 401. The morning's weather forecast of rain proving royally wrong, and a host of people sitting out on the terrace as the sun went down. Sally Purvis

and Leone Exton flying from Britain just for the weekend to lend their expert advice and their hard work on preparing the magnificent buffet for 800 people. Many Swiss, young and old, likewise coming to serve and work for the day. The Japanese Ambassador in Geneva bringing his cook and majordomo. The ambassador himself setting aside his prepared text and speaking from the heart, painting a picture of himself as a young naval officer 20 miles from Hiroshima when the first atom bomb fell. The apples on the buffet sculpted with surgical care in the shape of birds. The silence at the end of 'For the love of tomorrow' (shown simultaneously in 4 languages), ending with a Lebanese diplomat commenting, 'Well, maybe there is hope for my country then.'

In the midst of all this, unwatched by most of us, the Swiss French- and German-language main evening TV news carried reports and interviews - the former an excellent five-minute mini-documentary, the latter straightforward and factual too. We will type back the scripts.

So we are now launched out into this first period prepared by a Franco-German team of 20-30 who have been meeting through the winter every month, on alternate sides of the Rhine. The first fruits of their teamwork were revealed with laughter and tears. French and Germans spoke of the pain of their past, and the need to heal the divide that still cuts our continent in two, the changes in attitude that are needed in us and in our society. An East German spoke of the broadening of her horizons, 'Something moves inside me, almost painful at times. I have a clear job to do at home - to pass on what I have found here.' She pleaded with us to visit her country, and with open hearts and minds. 'Don't let our mistakes be a barrier that keeps you out,' she said.

And as always, there is the totally unplanned, unlooked-for element. In the thick of our last week of preparations, our local Catholic priest brought a group of 20 young Catholics and Protestants from Belfast, Northern Ireland, for tea, a visit of the house, the Irène Laure film, a preview of part of the Nordic revue in preparation, and supper with some speaking. The day before our big reception, we had the visit of the Gasser clan and enterprise from Luzern. Father and son have been closely involved in the work of Caux, and their firm is celebrating its 40th anniversary too. The company outing brought 90 workers and wives or husbands for lunch and part of the day - a good warming-up exercise.

Behind this pyrotechnic launch, and all the efforts that have gone into it and will follow in the weeks to come, we pray for the new life in people that is the raison d'être of it all. Your thoughts and prayers will be woven into all that we experience here.

We will send out a similar letter every Monday through the summer, and we rely on you to pass it on to others who should see it.

With best wishes from us all here,

Andrew Stallybrass