

MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

NEWSLETTER 1

13th July 1987

Dear friends,

Here we are again at the beginning of another summer in Caux, and the house is burgeoning with life as this year's conferences, with the theme 'Living the way we want the world to live', opens. Numbers may be less than last year with its great celebration of the 40th anniversary, but we have started with a bang - or as some have preferred to say, with a four ring circus. But with a reminder too of how close we are to the other world and another life, beyond the transition of death.

Later this morning we all meet to remember Irène Laure and give thanks for her life. Next week's letter will give you a flavour of this time. But we can be grateful that she continues to reach and touch people through the film 'For the love of tomorrow', and her message of forgiveness and reconciliation remains tailor-made for so many people and situations. Her going was so simple, swift and merciful.

Then on Saturday morning, in the midst of another of the round tables for Italian lawyers that he has organised and animated over the last years, lawyer Melpignano died quietly, having just finished his talk on 'The universal heritage of the American Constitution', and just penned a note to one of his colleagues. Our Italian friends were deeply shaken, yet united too in the face of the mystery that is death, and determined to carry on his work and commitment. Cardinal König said a mass in Italian yesterday for M. Melpignano, in the presence of his two sons who had travelled post-haste from the boot of Italy where he lived.

Saturday also saw another ring of the circus, with the visit of Cardinal Roger Etcheagaray, President of the Justice and Peace Commission in the Vatican, who came with the Papal Nuncio from Geneva, and of the Catholic bishop of Fribourg, Lausanne and Geneva, in whose diocese Caux lies. Here they all met up with Cardinal König who is here for several days. I enclose a copy of a prayer by Cardinal Etcheagaray which inspired us greatly in the preparations for this year's conferences.

At the end of the special luncheon in his honour, the Cardinal expressed the hope that he would be able to come back again. 'We really are one family,' he said, 'I felt it straight away. All share the same concern for man. I felt the depth of spiritual commitment. To help men rise up, it's not enough to spend a passing day with them. You have to accompany them on their way. Only those who are driven by something within, which we would call a faith can do it. A big open family, open not just to the future, but to all peoples. And as in all

families, there are joys and pains.' He ended by speaking of peace and plenitude, and comforting the Italians in their loss with the prayer that God would welcome their friend into His peace.

The other major element of the opening has been a Mediterranean dialogue. 45 people from the northern and southern shores of 'our sea' met for 24 hours. They included ten parliamentarians from the Council of Europe and the European Parliament in Strasbourg, who boarded a special bus there at the end of a week's sittings, and who after a brisk tea on their arrival here, plunged straight into an intense and fruitful dialogue with Lebanese, Turks and Greek Cypriots and others. Cyprus, Malta and Yugoslavia sent ambassadors as official observers.

The group studied the existing structural, economic, political, social and spiritual links between the European Community and the Mediterranean countries, and talked of the need not just for closer formal ties, but for healing in areas of conflict. One Cypriot commented, 'Over these 24 hours, I've found new hope for the future of my country.' The personal representative of Claude Cheysson, the 'foreign minister' of the Community concluded, 'This kind of non-structured gathering suits me fine. In the years to come, there should always be 48 hours reserved during the Caux conferences for this dialogue.'

M. Jacques Mallet, a French Member of the European Parliament, who stayed on for the Sunday meeting yesterday, said, 'We leave here enriched, and with more confidence in the difficult but historically important enterprise of building Europe. We are sometimes discouraged by the difficulties.' He concluded, 'The important thing is that this Caux gathering has been sufficiently rich and fruitful for us to feel the need to pursue it.' Teilhard de Chardin had spoken of all those who climb up coming together. You almost need to be a climber to get up the steep road to Caux, M. Mallet added, but 'here, minds come together'.

Saturday evening saw the premiere of 'Turn-around', a play drawn from a chapter of the spy story of the same name by Vladimir Volkoff. Presented by a French professional cast (including Michel Orphelin), the play is a dialogue (another one!) between a Russian Orthodox priest and a mysterious convert who turns out to be a senior KGB agent. 'This play puts us on trial on both sides of the divide,' said the deeply moved wife of an East European diplomat afterwards.

Then of course there has been the 'general conference', in between herculean efforts and double shifts in the kitchen and dining room by some. We are in the thick of preparing for the training session for young people which starts on Wednesday - there will be somewhere near 150 young people in the house. But the numbers will stay over 300, and already include Gebreyohannes Tesfamarian from Ethiopia and Eritrea, back here for the first time in 15 years, and after 7 years in prison for his convictions, a Polish professor and a senior Sikh lawyer from India... One young woman has already left after a short stay. She came wondering whether or not to divorce her husband, and left determined to make her marriage work and decided on certain costly steps to that end. May all who come over these weeks having at least clearly seen the new life that could be theirs for the asking.

With sunny, summery best wishes from us all here,

Andrew Stallybrass

A PRAYER

Lord, we are the servants of a plan
of which we are not the masters,
and which we discover day by day, step by step,
but we believe that You are the master of the unforeseeable.

Lord, teach us not to overburden ourselves
with questions about our credibility, our priorities, our identity,
but to simply taste the savour of Your Good News
proclaimed beside a well to which more and more thirsty people come.

Lord, teach us to live out our calling
not as a breathless duty in danger of defeat,
but as a poor and humble sign
which is content to point the way towards You.

Cardinal Roger Etchegaray,
President of the Justice and Peace Commission.

translated from the French by ABS

SEIGNEUR, nous sommes les serviteurs d'un projet
dont nous ne sommes pas les maîtres,
et que nous découvrons jour après jour, pas à pas,
mais nous croyons que tu es le maître de l'imprévisible.

SEIGNEUR, apprends-nous à ne pas nous encombrer
de questions sur notre crédibilité, nos priorités, notre identité,
mais à goûter tout simplement la saveur de ta Bonne Nouvelle
prêchée sur la margelle d'un puits où viennent de plus en plus d'assoiffés.

SEIGNEUR, apprends-nous à vivre notre ministère
non comme une fonction essoufflante et exposée à l'échec,
mais comme un signe, pauvre et humble,
qui se contente de te montrer du doigt.

Mgr Roger Etchegaray