

## MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

NEWSLETTER 3

27th July 1987

Dear friends,

'Es totals chrüsi müsi' is Swiss German for all mixed up - it came into one of the sketches presented by the 'units' at the end of the youth training session. The Swiss Germans present appreciated hearing their mother tongue from the platform - a rare event. And I must confess that my head is still spinning from these rich and rewarding days, movingly punctuated with decisions and determination to set new trends. The weather too seems rather mixed up - we have gone from one of the wettest springs on record to autumn with hardly a trace of summer. Woollen sweaters are 'de rigueur'. But we must not give up hope; perhaps summer is still to come!

Monday saw 'units' walking, swimming, climbing, picnicking, getting to know each other better, and relaxing. Communication was not always easy. In my unit, which included equal numbers of Japanese (who spoke little but Japanese), Dutch, and Germans, and a willing Japanese translator who only understood English, it took time to transmit even the simplest thought. Yet so many said that they had come to learn about the world, to meet other peoples and races - an aim that would have been frustrated had we planned language groups.

A young French professional pianist gave a concert, linked with the theme of new trends in music, explaining and discussing with his audience. He left from here to play Stockhausen in the presence of Stockhausen at a music festival. Then later in the week, a young Filipino dancer and artist, Genis Ibot, (who was with 'Song of Asia') came specially from London, at his own expense, to present a much applauded evening of Filipino history, culture, music, dancing and faith.

Then we have continued to have a string of unexpected guests, for a few hours or days. During the short time Genis was with us, his ambassador from Bern, driving through Montreux, was intrigued by the extraordinary building he could see up above, and decided to come and have a closer look. Met in front of the house by a Malaysian, the ambassador and his party were soon inside for a visit. The ambassador hopes to be represented during the dialogue of the continents here in August, when Genis has agreed to come again to present his show. We have also had the visit for several days of two South Africans who had taken part in the much-reported meetings in Dakar, Senegal, between a group of 50 or more Afrikaners and some of the ANC. Another old friend here with his wife and three children is Osman Ibrahim Shum, who was with 'Anything to Declare?'. He shared movingly of his decisions in

Caux before he left to go into business, and how he has battled to remain faithful, despite the tremendous pressures to dishonesty.

A young businessman was one of the first to start the avalanche of shared decisions in the 'Daybreaker' meetings when he told how the note book he'd got when he came, then worth a couple of francs, was now worth millions to his enemies and competitors. He himself could hardly believe 'the tricky things' he'd admitted to himself. There were things he didn't want to share with us because he wanted to talk to his wife at home first. On the 'phone she had been worried about him and his health, since she had just received her first letter from him in married life. 'I didn't know that courage was a choice,' he said. 'Here I've found the courage to say "no" to myself.' He had given up smoking, and described vividly the agonies of a train journey to Lausanne in a smokers' compartment to test his resolution!

'I find friends here who'll help me to the best,' said a Dutch girl in our unit. A young Swiss was looking for a way to make her faith more practical. A physically handicapped girl said, 'I want to get new energy to fight the problems and the emotions that I face.' A pretty German girl expressed the desire to have a part in the future and in creating new trends, and added, 'I want to find out how not to be so superficial.' 'We care for each other in our Christian group, but we don't have a world outlook, and we don't set new trends,' said another young German. A computer addict, who already at 19 is selling programmes to business, said that his work had undermined his faith in moral values. 'I came hoping to find values, and looking to see what I should do in the future. I'd read books about MRA, but I wanted to see how it works in reality.' A Japanese girl said, 'I'm fed up with friends who work all the time for exams. My view is getting narrower and narrower.'

A highlight of the week was the presentation over the last two days of the eight different units - on Thursday and Friday, two groups morning and afternoon presented their 'productions' to everyone. There was a magic carpet, draped over a kitchen trolley, which whizzed us around the world, to a strange musical dance encounter/reconciliation between 'Land of hope and glory' and an Argentinian tango, and a moving picture of teamwork between the North and the South of Sudan - 'you cannot play the drums and dance alone'.

Another unit presented a fairy tale of the rich man and the poor man, followed by the recipe for a quiet time, since they were all on a cook shift. The Lebanese presented a poignant picture of the war and suffering in their country, but also a hope for the future. There was a TV variety show, with poetry and pop; a world-spanning weather forecast; a bus queue before and after change; a rail journey to Caux and back with the passengers so engrossed in telling each other all they'd learned that they end up in the terminus - Tokyo; and a family scene in Swedish, French and English.

'I knew exactly what I had to decide,' said a primary school teacher. 'Young men are like a magnet to me. It's up to me to change. I have to make the decision to be free, and I can't do it in my own strength. I need His help.' A young Swede, dressed as a punk with orange hair, spoke after his unit's presentation, and admitted,

'I don't know how to handle life.' Thanks to what he had learned of quiet times he was starting to fight against temptations. 'I said "yes" to God without conditions, and I feel all the better for it,' said a radiant German girl. Others shared decisions to end with flirting and bad language.

All this was before the last meeting on Saturday morning, when 25 people from 13 countries and all five continents spoke. 'We have found new friends, but the most important thing is a new and deeper relationship with God,' said Margrit Schmitt-Gehrke, the young German who led the session, before inviting others to come up and sit on the stool beside her in front of the microphone. She pointed out the different 'props' that had been used in the 'Daybreakers': a glass of clear water, and another glass full of odds and ends, a steel helmet to stop the crows nesting in one's hair, a parcel with the new me inside, a rucksack with the needed equipment of alarm clock, note book, Bible, map and compass - and 'Freeway', a magazine linking together the committed young MRA team worldwide. For many the stress on times of quiet alone with God and a note book had proved crucial.

'I've always been glad I was an Austrian and not a German, because of the burden of history they carry,' said a young woman who had just spoken of her decision to claim God's purity and love. 'I've started to think about our own Nazi history and past,' she said, before asking the Germans present to forgive her for her attitude. A French student spoke of thoughts of suicide. 'There is something hard in me, always trying to be self-sufficient,' she said. 'Now I am learning to live by love, and to take the risk of being hurt, admitting that I'm afraid, and not pretending that I know. All that costs me something adds a few more centimetres to my faith.' 'I came to meet old friends and make new ones,' said a Dutch high school boy. 'I've been cynical about MRA,' he went on, 'but I had a long talk with my mother last night. I didn't come for nothing.'

It is hard to digest all this, to know quite where we go from here, to guess what comes next. We have a sense that this has been an important step in the creation of the new young force. Some quieter days with fewer people will help us to see clearer perhaps. There are a host of initiatives for the coming year, ranging from the study programmes in Tirley and Armagh, to the work week in Caux next Easter, and meetings in Germany and Austria. Certainly we have seen some of the fruits of these training times, in the young people taking responsibility here.

With best wishes from us all here,

Andrew Stallybrass