

## MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

18th July, 1988

Dear Friends,

Another week has rushed by already, dense with life. It's hard to believe that the conferences have been running for only ten days now. But before giving you something of this ongoing flow, I wanted to give you a little more from Sunday 10th, our big day marking the 50 years of a call for moral and spiritual re-armament. Some of the vivid details only came to my attention after the last letter was winging its way to you. A great day, a really great day, can sometimes get rather lost in the continuing rush of events.

The Soviet diplomat commented to his neighbour after the meeting, 'Here you say simple things, but things which are true.' He then went on to comment about the faces of the people he met. 'These are the faces of people one could trust,' he said, and then about the people serving the lunch behind the buffet, 'These are not the faces of people who are paid to serve.' Michel Sentis, who with his wife and three sons looked after the man and his family, shared with us some interesting reflections afterwards. Since I thought that they might help any of us who meet such people in the future, I pass them on: We need to understand with such types that you are operating simultaneously on three different levels: the genial, jovial diplomat; the professional collector of information, who will probably have to write a report for his superiors; and finally, the human being, perhaps in need, perhaps searching for something more in life. It may even help to think out in advance what harmless information can be given for the second level, and the official report! Let it be said that the Sentis have since spent an afternoon and evening with the family in Geneva, at their invitation, including a visit of the fortress-like Soviet mission.

Our Chinese diplomat friend confided to his Swiss neighbour at table that he found the Swiss cold, but then added, 'But you are an exception. I've made more friends here today than I have in Geneva.' One of the Swiss ambassadors noted, 'It is so refreshing to listen to this kind of talk after all the long and boring speeches that we have to listen to, or sometimes make ourselves.'

There have been several articles in the press, all positive. The largest circulation paper in the French-speaking part of Switzerland headlined its report 'The inner voice'. The local Montreux paper had a four-column article on the opening, with the title 'Heading for the centenary', and concluded, 'doubtless Moral Re-Armament will have much to do in the next 50 years.'! The influential 'Neue Zürcher Zeitung' had a short factual report, and several major articles are in preparation - for the French-Swiss newsweekly, and for the 'Journal de Genève' notably. We have also had the visit, for 24 hours, of the religious correspondent of 'Le Monde', the most influential paper of the French-speaking world, and his article should be coming out any day now. So there's a lot to pray for, but we can't complain that the media aren't interested!

The Mediterranean focus continued into the week, with more guests, expected and unexpected, from this part of the world, and now more young Lebanese are arriving to take part in the youth training session which starts on Wednesday. The week has also seen a two-day meeting of our Swiss publishing house, including a look at our French and German language periodicals, and our strategies for the future.

Friday saw us launched into a short but intense health care conference, strongly focussed on the family. I hope none of the participants have harmed their health with the rich diet of full meetings! 'New ways of thinking go hand in hand with a new way of living,' noted one of the speakers, Dr Reinhold Gromotka from Germany. He went on, 'Only as a result of a new thinking and a reborn responsibility can the individual and society in general extricate themselves from the threat to their existence... A highly essential part of the struggle for fitness must bear the stamp of change - a change in our behaviour... The place where basic and decisive values essential to health must be preserved is within the family.'

The head of the department responsible for family matters in the Swiss Ministry of the Interior, who has been to Caux several times before, warmly expressed the greetings of the Federal Government in Bern. Dr Marc Jaccottet, from Lausanne, and one of the organisers of the conference, noted, 'The medical psychologist and Buchman had in common the intention of provoking change, and the conviction that there are moments in a man's life that are propitious for such change. It is not unusual for an illness to represent such a moment, leading to a deepening, a maturing, to a change.' Prof. Dr Bernard Courvoisier, President of the central committee on ethics of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences also spoke.

Patients also had their part, and Luc and Suzy de Montmollin talked about their experiences of setting up a self-help group for lupus patients, speaking with simplicity and faith about the changes that illness had brought to their family life. Quite unknown to them, there was another lupus patient present, from the United States, who then also shared her experience, with her husband. A Lebanese nurse spoke movingly about the stresses and lessons of nursing in Beirut, and an Israeli doctor talked of finding himself between the lines, rejected by both sides. 'Between the lines is the right place for a doctor to be,' he said.

Saturday night saw some lighter entertainment, of a very high quality, with a young French magician sawing a lady in three - and then putting her together again, without the help of the surgeons present. He also skillfully relieved several of them of their watches. Two German girls who have just finished their music studies gave us some lovely music on bassoon and piano, and have also provided musical interludes in the meetings to aid 'digestion'. The health practitioners themselves produced two sketches on the need to care for patients as people, rather than as cases.

Now the house sees one of those big turnovers, and the average age of the household is dropping hourly as young people arrive for the next session.

Yours ever,

Andrew Stallybrass