

MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

1st August, 1988

Dear Friends,

As I sit down to start writing, I can hear the distant sounds of a band, the thump, thump, thump of a bass drum. But this isn't an enthusiastic pop group, a left-over from the just-finished youth session, it is the Swiss way of celebrating their national day (with the support of Pauline Strongman, an honorary member of the 'Fanfare de Glion'). They celebrate by getting up even earlier to play for their neighbours, before going to work - today is not a holiday, people may have the afternoon off at most!

On Saturday morning, the youth session ended, with a long silence, and then a flow of decisions shared. Two of us in the translation cabin, knowing that one young woman was wanting to share something, were praying fervently that she'd find the courage. 'I want to get rid of the feeling of being alone with a decision to give my life to God,' she said. She was so happy, she said, and yet so afraid too. She went on, 'It was like someone talking to me, asking me questions about my friends. "Try to say to your friends 'fear not'; don't try to live your life your own way, but put it into my hands. Trust me. You doubt yourself, not me. Try to understand that I won't ask of you more than you can give." I thought about it and said "yes".' She had again started to doubt, and there'd been a fight between her own will and God's, she said, but she had cemented the decision on her knees in the chapel.

A Lebanese girl appeared on the stage with a trolley and coffee on it, which she served to her Lebanese friends as she called them up to speak or to sing - a highly original way to help them over their stage fright. A Palestinian Arab, living in the USA, joined them. 'I live far away, but I still care,' she said. 'It is hard to be an Arab in the Western world, but it is a privilege to be a bridge. This time has given me new hope for peace. I want to be part of a continuing trend towards understanding.' A Lebanese apologised to the Palestinian for her prejudice against the Palestinians, whom she and many others felt were responsible for many of the problems of the Lebanon. One of the largest national groups in the session, the dozen Lebanese made a powerful impact, and made sure that the reality of a suffering world was never far from our thoughts.

An Indian spoke of his longing for reconciliation with Pakistan, and his determination to come back with a Pakistani friend. Another girl talked of her decision to write to an estranged cousin. A Swiss student got everyone laughing when he talked of how he dealt with temptation - by giving himself a slap on the cheek, at least in thought! 'You can't cheat with your inner voice,' said a young Frenchman, who questioned the point of absolute moral standards, but then went on to conclude that they were a help when no thoughts came, and you needed a steer. The children have also picked up some of the spirit. We heard

of one little boy who'd told his parents how moved he was to be with so many other people who believed in God. He then burst into tears when he said his prayers, and spontaneously confessed a theft of marbles and a cheap ring he'd said he'd found. Another toddler told his mother that he'd decided not to bite his cousin any more. The cousin will doubtless be much relieved!

Of course, much of the sharing and discussing has been going on in the "units", the groups of a dozen or so, who worked together, and over the last days, filled the morning and afternoon sessions with their sketches, music, dance and mime. Two of the presentations took the form of media shows - one a TV quiz game (one of the prizes was a lifetime's supply of guidance books!) and the other a visit to the studios of 'Helvetia Mountain Radio Action'. The kitchen inspired two productions - one a humorous contrast between French cuisine and Indian cooking, the other a late night party in the Caux kitchen, which ended with the arrival of an English lady in search for milk to go with her early morning tea - a familiar sight!

The weather was fine for the day planned for outings, and all returned safely from picnics, walks and swims with glowing faces and sun-burned shoulders. We were not so lucky with the barbecue which was meant to come on Friday night: we had a barbecue without the barbecue, in the cafeteria, and had a sing-song round a bonfire, without the bonfire! But on another evening, there was Scottish dancing on the terrace; and Michel Orphelin's evening with St. Francis was played again, outside under the trees just outside the dining-room.

The 'daybreakers' continued to surprise people, and wake them up for a good quiet time. One morning we had a motor cycle driving in the main door, and doing a tour around the hall, in a race with a kiddy car, to illustrate a point about the power we run on - effort or grace! One of the last mornings, we carried in a big trunk, with all the necessary equipment for leaving Caux, including a team-mate, and then rolled in a massive dustbin on wheels, into which people threw little slips of paper on which they had written what they would like to leave behind in Caux. (The papers went up in smoke afterwards). In the 'trendsetter' slot in the main meetings, a few young people talked about their convictions for and experiences of the other half of Europe, the Kriegers from Berlin spoke about their work with the parents of drug addicts, and a Ugandan talked about his country and his faith - facing 'a few problems' and making a home in a garage.

Now we are saying goodbye to at least some of the young people, as we welcome Africans and Asians, and another group busily prepare for the next phase. We now look forward to an even busier and fuller month of August. On the 12th of August, we now expect over one hundred arrivals for the 'Change in the Cities' session. We've counted all our beds, and we come to 563; we've counted people and come to 605! So there'll be many more adventures and miracles to talk about in the following letters, but we can be very grateful that so many want to come. Today we expect 15 Chinese from the diplomatic mission in Geneva, to celebrate Swiss national day with us, but more of that next week!

Yours ever,

Andrew Stallybrass

ASIAN-PACIFIC-AFRICAN SESSION (AUGUST 3RD - 10TH, 1988)
MORAL RE-ARMAMENT CONFERENCE, CAUX

Address by Mrs. Pacita Manglapus at the Opening Meeting:

If I had my way I would not like to be standing on this platform tonight. If I had my way I would prefer my husband just to be a teacher, a plumber or a bookkeeper so we could live a quiet life. But God had other plans and I have no doubts that His plans are better than mine.

So here I am - the wife of the Foreign Minister of the Philippines - delivering a speech before this MRA gathering and other important guests.

Most people take it for granted that a woman's life is closely intertwined with her husband's. But when your husband has a cause for which he believes and is ready to die for that cause, then your life becomes three-dimensional. There is not only self and family but also country.

God really has a way of turning you and your life upside down. In the late '50s, a life abroad was farthest from my mind. We love our country, it was home to us and our family. But martial law was declared by Marcos and my husband got an order of arrest. Luckily he left the day before for California on a speaking engagement with plans to be back home after a week. Instead he stayed away for practically fourteen years. My children and I had to escape through the back door and then through Malaysia. We had to escape without either a passport or a visa for the USA. Marcos refused to let me leave. I was kept as a hostage so my husband would not organise any activities against his dictatorial rule for fear of my safety.

Once we reached the U.S. he organised the movement for free Philippines.

Then came the February Revolution. Marcos left for Hawaii on the 25th February and we boarded the plane on the same day for home.

Since then our life has taken a totally different pace. I have come to believe that God has a plan for each of our lives. His plan unfolds gradually in ways that often surprise us. He has a mission for each of us. As a wife, my mission is to be alongside my husband, to absorb his inner tensions - so that you have to be, in a sense, made of stronger stuff than him. In a sense, while he's out there trying to save the world, I'm hanging in there taking care that the world does not step all over him. And with God's help, I know I will succeed.

Now we have a democracy again in our country with President Cory Aquino as our leader. She is a very prayer and God orientated person - so I hope that God will guide her to the right path for a better future of our country.