

ONE FURTHER TREK

To Caux and back

The announcement that Mr. J. T. Slater, Headmaster of Kingswood College, had, at short notice, flown off at the end of last term to the Moral Rearmament Conference in Switzerland has, we know, excited considerable interest in Grahamstown, and Mr. Slater has been good enough to comply with a request by "Grocott's Daily Mail" to tell our readers something about this decision to make that journey and about the outcome of it.

"What were you looking for and what made you think you might find it in Switzerland? This question has been put several times since my return, so perhaps the answer may be of wider interest. It certainly is of vital significance.

A DILEMMA

"Like Dr. Keppel Jones and no doubt many others, too, I had not been unaware of the disturbing sense that, in spite of numberless sincere efforts—individual and denominational as well as national—to stem the tide that was carrying the peoples of this country further and further apart, we were being hurried towards impending catastrophe. As a South African attached to the land of my birth and occupying a sector in the sphere of education, I had pondered this matter from many angles, but could see no likely way out of the dilemma other than by uprooting my family and myself to seek a fresh beginning elsewhere.

"This, however, did not commend itself partly because roots had gone very deep in three or four generations and partly because world news left me with the impression that, although surface symptoms in most other countries were different, the underlying causes were probably the same. This, by and large, was my frame of mind when I decided at short notice to accept an invitation to attend the Moral Rearmament Conference at Caux-sur-Montreux in Switzerland; the August school vacation making the trip possible.

ABSORBING

"Just a month ago I left by plane from Port Elizabeth. Two and a half hours took me to Johannesburg and a further 5½ to Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo, followed by a long hop over Lake Chad and its marshy surrounds, then the desolate Sahara, the smiling Mediterranean, to arrive at Rome just in time for lunch. Owing to cloud over the Alps we bore westwards, crossed over Nice and landed at Geneva. A fast train carried us to Montreux and a funicular car hoisted us up to the commodious and comfortable Mountain House that overlooks the southern tip of the lake and part of the Rhone Valley. Here I spent the most interesting and challenging three weeks of my life, so absorbing that there was hardly time for sightseeing, though brief visits were made to the Castle of Gruyeres, Rochers de Naye, Kruger House in Clarens and the famous Chateau Chillon at the lakeside that Byron made famous.

THE REAL ISSUE

"I had come with an open heart and an open mind and I return with open eyes, probably not wide open yet but sufficiently alert to see the real issue that confronts me and all of us in the global war of ideas and loyalties. Make no mistake: this desperate struggle for human freedom is already far advanced, for the most part still under cover, but nevertheless being waged in deadly earnest and on a world-wide front.

"I had realised, of course, that World War III had already begun—not that bombs were falling or that great cities were being demolished—that may well never happen! What had not been clear was the fact that somehow the democracies were actually being outwitted by an enemy that was not using conventional weapons, but was availing himself of an even deadlier tool of war—an adversary that was waging an ideological war against us, his object not the material wealth the countries had accumulated—that he did not want destroyed!

—but instead his immediate objective was in the sphere of the spirit.

DOOMED

"It was the spirit of God-fearing men that he would first weaken and then destroy, for he well knew that men without the will, the moral fibre and the deep spiritual fortitude to stand firmly in defence of what was right would be doomed to see their freedom lost, their God-given rights denied, their hope of love and life and laughter unfulfilled.

"At Caux I found some 700 men and women from scores of countries—India, Japan, and every part of Africa, Cyprus, Algiers, Australia and the Philippines. All the older countries of Europe were represented and the Americans, too, even though there was another huge conference in session at Mackinac.

"From every land came the same report of the insidious white-anting of traditional institutions, the subtle corrupting and subversion of their youth, the same overtures to come and be friends and trade and 'co-exist'—precisely in the spirit of the spider's invitation to the fly.

"The pattern was so much the same that there could be no question of coincidence. Was it not Lenin himself who stated that when the democracies could be brought to trade with Soviet Russia they would be signing their own death warrant?

A SUPERIOR IDEOLOGY ESSENTIAL

"An ideology like Communism, committed and dedicated to achieve world domination through exploiting hate and division, can be halted only by a superior ideology powerful enough in its simple truth to win and mobilise the hearts of men, for it is in the hearts of men and women—nowhere else—that hate and greed, resentment and selfish arrogance, lurk and create the conditions that promote the rapid spread of Communism here in our own country, and also throughout Africa and the whole world.

"At Caux I saw such an ideology in vital action, a cross section of a world force which is radically changing men's motives, healing wounds on a personal and national level and drawing a clear-cut battle line between truth and falsity, good and evil. This battle line, since it runs through each human heart and family circle, is the concern of every man of goodwill. It occurred to me that a South Africa, seeing this great issue and rallying to the challenge, would rise above the lesser differences that are robbing us of both unity and freedom. What Caux further clarified for me was the part that each man, whether he live in Port Elizabeth, Pimlico or Peking, can play in this global showdown. History records many instances where God has raised up men to lead an upsurge of His Spirit, and I believe that He has raised this movement of spiritual regeneration to match the desperate need of this hour in human progress."