

## MOUNTAIN HOUSE • CAUX

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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Dear friends,

Those of us who have been here all summer are puffing a bit as we come into the last curve, and try to find the reserves for the final sprint for the line! Africa is giving way to Industry - and sun is giving way to rain.

French M.P. Jean-Marie Daillet, said at a 'panel-dialogue\* between Europe and Africa, 'Africa is a shock to the heart. African values are deeply spiritual values: there is a love of children, of the family, a spirit of community and a spirit of solidarity. They have something important there for us Europeans; we are so sunk in materialism. Africa may wake up our hearts.' Africans could well re-Christianise Europe, he said. He noted the Lome convention as being but one of the forums for dialogue between our continents, a dialogue which has political and economic elements, but also spiritual and ideological elements too. There needed to be a marriage between reason and the heart, the best of what each continent had to give.

But how do you put such a spirit into words? The qualities of the heart deny analysis and explanation. Yet such has been the faith, simplicity and directness from Africa, that despite the grimness of reality, hope shines through. 'Hope starts to grow as people commit themselves to live differently,' says the invitation to this year's conferences. And so we have seen hope growing out of the commitment of many from the African continent to live for God's will to prevail, a commitment in many cases already tempered in the fire of experience.

An Ethiopian living outside his own country spoke of 'the frightful situation in Africa'. 'Many of us are afraid,' he said. 'I am afraid. It would be a lie to say we are not afraid.' He spoke of overcoming fear to follow a sense of leading to go back to his country for a visit, despite 'the many friends who have vanished or are languishing in prison'. 'Many times fear stops us from doing what God wants us to do,' he said, 'but I am also open to fear if I want anything from anyone.' An Asian exile commented, 'You Africans have the secret of winning the hearts of people through your honesty and openness.'

A meeting on 'Corruption and absolute honesty' saw a young health-worker tell how he was offered a bribe amounting to five times his monthly salary for drugs that he gave for free. 'I'd rather be a slave to God's word than to the intentions of evil men,' he said. Unsurprisingly, drug losses had dropped dramatically in the hospital where he worked. 'I could have been a millionaire overnight,' said another African, who had been in a position to influence fertiliser contracts, but who had chosen instead to pioneer co-operative

development, founded on honesty. A young Nigerian painted a vivid picture of the temptations put in his way to change the marks of a provocatively dressed young lady leaning over his desk. He prayed hard, and then said, 'Stand up straight'!

A young couple of white expatriates serving in Africa spoke of the ridicule they had faced from colleagues when refusing to exploit the possibilities of allowances to the full. The husband spoke of the need for the international aid organisations to re-discover the spirit of service - and he saw signs of this beginning to happen. 'Our aim should be to help others to grow,' he said, 'and that's what I pledge myself to do.' 'What do the expatriates go to Africa for?' his wife asked. In the past, it had been the excitement of exploration, the glory of the flag, or to convert and save souls, as well as to make money. Now all the make-up was stripped away, and the hard core of selfishness was revealed - servants, swimming pools, bridge parties. It was said that the outsiders were all mercenaries or missionaries. She described the shock it had been to be corrected by black people - despite her liberal ideas - 'but that is normal if you go to live in a black independent country'. 'You lose some white friends,' she concluded, 'but you gain other friends, and have the joy of serving our heavenly Father.'

One of the highlights of the week was a morning with all the South Africans filling the platform, and speaking one after another in 'a spirit of friendship, honesty, and helplessness before our Maker' in the words of Sam Pono. Along with the Nigerians, they made up the largest single group, and their honesty and anguish touched many hearts. 'I never think to myself "Another black death", but always another South African lost,' said a white grandmother. 'I couldn't choose where I was born,' added an Afrikaner, 'but I can choose the way I live. So many of us say "We have never hated anyone", but we have never cared for anyone either, and it is our indifference that creates the hate.'

It was a deeply moving moment when a young black South African, living in London said, 'My anger does not help that situation forward. I am sorry to all the white people for my hatred.' A white concluded, 'We may have wanted good things for the blacks, but we have wanted the best things for ourselves.'

At a meeting over the weekend on 'More food, less selfishness', as part of the African-European dialogue, another Ethiopian exile thanked the world for all the aid received. 'We still need more help,' he said, 'but the greatest need of our country is for changed men with an answer to corruption, war and the famine. I want to be part of the cure to the problems of my country by being a changed man myself, and by working for the changed Africa we all long to see.'

The 'panel-dialogue' referred to at the beginning saw a dozen spokesmen round a table in the theatre, and a lively to and fro, with participation from the audience. 'We need an answer to the corrosive materialism that endangers our life,' said a European diplomat. An African diplomat from a country going through great traumas noted that 'young nations often reflect the bad behaviour of older nations'. 'We import too much drink, tobacco, and too many luxury cars,' he said.

Karl Mitterdorfer, member of the Italian Senate, and lifetime

spokesman of the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol took part in a passionate debate on violence and its limitations. He recalled with force his first experiences of Caux, at a time when his people were turning to violence in defence of their language and culture. 'Here we found a spirit that was helpful - a spirit that can be helpful on a different road,' he said. 'We must re-discover the spiritual values that will allow us to tackle the difficulties. We need more of the spirit of Caux applied to specific situations.' A Nigerian doctor working in London, but with links to many African leaders, Dr. Godfrey Agbim stressed the need for a new spiritual order. 'It is really revolutionary to listen in quiet,' he said. 'Man is not just the five senses. There is that still small voice.'

Two variety evenings gave something of the colour, life, humour and variety of our two continents - from cave men to rock band, through dancing, sketches and folklore, and a panel-interview (panels seem to be all the rage this year!) filled another evening, giving insights into the variety of Africa's experiences.

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