

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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WINTER 1953



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THE PLOUGH is the quarterly journal of the Bruderhof Communities in England and South America, a group of people of fifteen nationalities who live together in full community. Its aim is to unite more closely those who seek to live by the standards of justice, brotherhood and peace.

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THE PLOUGH

The Quarterly of the Bruderhof Communities

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Winter 1953

A CHRISTMAS GREETING TO FRIENDS OF THE BRUDERHOF

In the midst of the unrest encircling our planet from America to Russia, from South America and Africa right up to the North, we extend to you a greeting of peace. Our expectation of a true peace comes from our faith in God's final kingdom which will bring with it the reign of a peace such as no human striving can ever attain.

With all believing Christians, we are certain that the peace of God must originate in the heart. Christ is born! The believing man achieves peace with God through the rulership of Christ in his heart. In him, Christ brings about the peace of complete surrender, the surrender which leaves everything behind in order to do but one thing—to live a life of peace, God's peace. We wish you all the peace of God in your hearts, for you know this can never be attained by effort of thought or human intelligence. The prophetic word shows us that peace with God reaches out over and beyond the individual soul and its inner being. God's activity is unlimited. His peace comprehends everything, conquers everything and overcomes everything.

Peace which is the work of Jesus is unity, the unity of the body of Christ. He established this on the cross, the peace of a new people of God. There, crucified by Romans and Jews, he broke down the barrier between the Jews and every other nation. There, he united them into a living organism. Jesus entrusted his Church with a peace born of unity such as the world can never achieve. He prayed to his father that the unity of his disciples might show who are his true followers and might reveal the source of his mission. Christ will only be revealed in the peace which comes from unity.

We extend this peace to you! It is a call to gather together in the unity of a communal life, guided by the Spirit. The gathering of men is necessary in order to give unity a visible form. It means a common life and communal work. We believe this in itself must be of great significance in disturbed and troubled times. It is the light on the candlestick, the city on the hill, the real testimony to unity in the communal life of the Church!

It is true—and we know it—that communal life in reality looks weak and insignificant. Of all the two thousand million inhabitants of this earth only a few thousand have trodden the way of unity and peace and remained true to the end. Nevertheless, the experience of such a reality does show that it is possible to live together as brothers in complete fellowship, in real unity and peace, in unselfish common property, in a true peoples' community.

The experience that has been given to us at the present time is an indication of great things to come. What is vital and essential, although just now it is only lived and testified to by a small insignificant group, will one day have dominion over all worlds, in the future reign of God's kingdom. The Church proclaims the peace of God's future to all men. This peace will be a last new-creation of the whole world and therefore a new-creation of the whole of mankind. Jesus Christ will reveal himself as king over all the kingdoms of the world, as king of peace and righteousness. The son of Mary is God's new-born king.

THE HOUR OF THE ATOM

SYLVIA BEELS

God has given to men—so limited in understanding and so blind—the gift of freewill, the gift of choosing good or evil, light or darkness. And so the ages have rolled on in a great and tragic conflict to the present hour in which man stands trembling on the brink of an abyss—the abyss of self-destruction. In his hands is the terrible fruit of his misdirected knowledge, the powerful weapon of destruction—the Atom bomb.

This is the Atom age, the hour of the Atom, the last hour of decision. There is a choice for every man, for there is another Atom. A tiny babe lies in a poor stable. All light is concentrated on one fragment of humanity, as when a shaft of sunlight enters a dark room through a tiny crack. The Atom of darkness holds power—for disintegration, destruction, death. Here in Bethlehem's stall is the Atom of light, the power which brings unity, love, joy and peace. This tiny child—source of eternal light—draws to himself the hosts of heaven, the angels of his Father's realm of glory.

The gift of faith given to God's chosen people and to Mary, the mother, has opened the doors for the Redeemer, and so, born in a point of time, he is born eternally to believers, to the true Church, his mother. How small and weak is the company of his followers, how insignificant the work of their hands! Yet what power lies hidden there for true seekers to find—the pearl of great price—Jesus!

He is the hope, the light of the world; his is the future of peace and justice; his is love's kingdom, which is to come.

Which will men choose at this hour, darkness or light, hate or love, death or life?

CHRISTMAS 1953

STANLEY FLETCHER

The time has come when the thoughts of Christendom turn once again to the manger of Bethlehem, and we shall sing those words that have rung down the centuries, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will'.

Peace on earth! Is there anything men want more desperately? Is anything to-day more remote? Rather the sombre words of Jesus seem to have been abundantly fulfilled in our time, 'Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven'. It is not the song of the heavenly host that causes men to look up into the sky to-day. It is not the glad tidings of a saviour that fills the world with hope. Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and they look up with foreboding at the jet fighter, the rocket missile and the boiling cloud of the atom bomb.

Fear and perplexity. These are the dominant factors of our age. Without light, men struggle despairingly with the problem of survival. Yes, that is the problem. Survival. How to survive in the age of the hydrogen bomb, the concentration camp, the torture confessional of the totalitarian state, and the struggle for bread in a competitive world. In this situation men seem to have wholly lost their bearings. It is not even a case of a Christian world facing the threat of a non-Christian world, for Christians have slaughtered Christians by the million on the battlefields of our day. No wonder our mental homes are full to overflowing with those for whom the fear and perplexity of our age have been too much.

For us all, dark questions press to the front. Is there no way out? Is there no truth—no God? Is the message of the heavenly host which we sing at Christmas time just the reflection of our own wishful thinking? Are there no glad tidings for mankind? Is peace on earth a delusion that will mock us until the final hour of destruction? Is the cloud of the atom bomb the only sign in the heavens?

Those of us who still cling to faith and hope, and yet feel ourselves lost in the perplexities of our times, may do well to consider the contrast between our preoccupation with our survival and the way of Jesus. Jesus did not seek to survive. He constantly told his friends that he must die, that his death was unavoidably connected with the fulfilment of his task. To the man who handed him over to the executioners he said, 'To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should witness unto the truth'. The first concern of Jesus was with truth and not with survival. But we are preoccupied with our own survival. We must survive at all costs—we individuals, our family or our nation. Of course, we are convinced that what we live and fight

for is something better than that of our opponents. We necessarily identify our lives with good, and the lives of our enemies with evil; and in the interests of our survival (which has become for us the survival of good) we have now produced the most destructive weapon the world has seen, and with a single blow destroyed countless thousands of human beings, even innocent children, to whom, Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven belongs. Can we really believe that we are called upon by God to perform or to sanction these dreadful deeds? Are we really preserving the good, or even defending ourselves or our fellowmen from slavery and destruction, by such actions? Peter wanted to defend Jesus with his sword, but Jesus told Peter to sheath the sword and went defenceless to his death, saying that they who take the sword shall perish by the sword. For Jesus, in the hour of the cross, physical survival was incompatible with truth.

We need to remind ourselves again that truth is love, and love only seeks good for all men—even the worst. Were it not so, then also we should not be able to stand before God, for we are all evil in the light of his pure love. Nevertheless, God has not sought to destroy us but to win us back to himself. The apostle Paul wrote in the letter to the Romans, 'God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'. We destroy our enemies so that we may survive. Christ died because he loved his enemies and, for him, love was life. We cannot love if our first concern is to preserve our lives. Then we must fear and hate our enemies and seek to do them every injury because in them we see a threat to our lives.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, 'Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you: so that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust'. The nature of God is love and we are called to be his sons by partaking of his nature. We can become the children of our Father only by surrendering ourselves to his love and loving all men, even at the cost of life. We cannot even preserve our freedom by destroying our enemies, because then we destroy our only true freedom—the freedom to love. We become slaves of the forces of fear and hatred, and find ourselves driven relentlessly to every fearful deed that enables us to destroy those whom we fear. That is the world situation to-day. The nations are straining every nerve to keep ahead of one another in the production of destructive weapons. Yet men tremble at the work of their hands and look despairingly into the future.

If we as Christians feel ourselves lost in this world predicament it is because we have lost sight of our calling. We have assumed we can enjoy the security and privileges of this world order, and have taken up

arms to defend them. In the hour of disaster, we feel abandoned and bewildered. We should have known that these are not the things which belong to peace. Indeed, our privilege-seeking is our greatest offence, and is that worship of mammon which has drawn us away from the worship of the God of peace and love. We have become like the people of Jerusalem of whom Jesus said, 'If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes'.

The first Christians constituted a small minority living in a wholly hostile world. They did not defend their rights against the ruthless power which surrounded and threatened them. They had to hide in the catacombs and were thrown to the lions. They knew well enough that they had no abiding place in the uneasy security of the world, but also they knew their task was to bear witness to the truth and love of God, not merely to preserve their lives. They knew that just as Jesus had lived and died to show forth God's love and mercy towards men they, too, as his people, had the task to be a people of peace, showing forth this same love. They were to be citizens of God's city of peace. They were to be a united people, distinct from a torn and divided world. They were to be defenceless, to harm no-one and to be the cause of fear to none. Their peace was to embrace the whole of life: not peace in the sense of being left undisturbed, but a fighting peace which returns good for evil, a peace where there is community of work and a readiness to share with all men of goodwill. It was the peace on earth to men of good will which was proclaimed by the heavenly host of Bethlehem and which the first Christians experienced and lived.

The vast multitudes of the world are still living in injustice and preparing for war. They have not paid heed to the call to peace and brotherhood. But the day of the sword is rapidly drawing to a close. Even now, those who press on in the arms race of the nations because they know of nothing else in which to put their trust have to confess that their weapons will, in all probability, mean the end of civilization. It might well seem that every effort has been futile, and that in the end everything must perish in the universal destruction that is threatening the earth. Here again we may turn to the early Christians and learn two things which can help to guide us in our struggle for clarity and direction. Firstly, these Christians did not imagine their witness was going to bring about a gradual betterment of the world. They envisaged a rising tension in the struggle between good and evil which would come to a final world crisis. They endured on their way, not because they counted on it to preserve their own lives, but because they believed it to be the true life which God wants for all men. They saw it to be the life of his spirit of love, which is the only eternal life. Also they knew that mankind would find peace on earth in no other way than by

surrendering to this spirit. They bore witness to these truths for the sake of all who were likewise hungering for truth and righteousness.

Secondly, they put their faith for human destiny, not in man, but in God. They prayed as Jesus taught them, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', because they believed that God would have the last word in history. They remembered and wrote down Jesus' words about the last days, 'And except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened'. If we can share the faith of the first Christians we shall not be able to despair of the world and mankind, for we shall know that the last word is not with the sword or the bomb, but with God.

It is impossible to know how humanity will at last be brought to think upon the things that belong to peace, what immeasurable disasters must yet be experienced before men are prepared to turn towards God, away from the life of privilege-seeking which is the real ground of strife and disunity in the world. Faith knows that out of the blood and devastation of this age a new humanity will be born, doing the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. In the last hour of history those who will possess the earth will not be the proud, wealthy and powerful ones who seek to live by the sword, but men ruled by the same spirit that broke into the world at Bethlehem. Jesus said it in the beatitudes: 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth'.

A SONG OF ISAIAH

WE have had other lords, oh God,
Who held dominion in our heart,
But thou hast swept them all away
And in thy place, they bear no part.

The gods are dead—they shall not live,
They have gone down, and shall not rise,
For thou hast swept their power away
And cast their glamour from our eyes.

The people labour in thy sight,
Like women in the pangs of birth,
But all our labour is for nought,
We bear no glory in the earth.

But though we die, in thee we live,
Nor can the earth hold down our trust,
Thy dew shall call us back to life,
Awake and sing, who dwell in dust!

PHILIP BRITTS.

TRADITION AND REALITY

WERNER BERGENGRUEN

The birth of Jesus Christ in the Bethlehem stable, the proclamation by the angels in the fields, even the worship of the shepherds at the manger were all bare events with nothing that was not essential. They occurred in a forsaken and naked poverty which modern man, accustomed as he is to elaborations, can hardly imagine, and which would fill him with a sense of terror. What happened there is pre-eminently not a matter for sense and sentiment, something poetical: it is radical and it is brutal. It is the overwhelming thrust of eternity into time and no lifetime of thought could penetrate and grasp all this tremendous fact. The shepherds felt this. Before the angel could call upon them to rejoice he had to encourage them to master their terrible fright.

This, then, is the real meaning, the essence of the Christmas festival. All else, however beautiful, revered, beloved and familiar it may be, remains accidental. But with 'all the trimmings' it has gradually covered with its creeping growth the place that should have been reserved for the real meaning.

The words 'Christmas time' remind us in the first place of lights and presents, the smell of mince-pies and singed pine-needles, the dear customs particular to each family, which, unlike other traditions, are treasured and transmitted chiefly by the women folk. There are certain foods and drinks, each of which is more than it seems because it has the power to conjure up whole nostalgic worlds of remembrance. For many people, fatigued by Christmas preparations to begin with, the festival of Christmas is completely taken up by the perilously vague concept of 'mood', in comforts, recollections and subsidiary joys, in the lump-in-the-throat emotion of the idyll under the Christmas tree. I am no Puritan; I freely admit to enjoying festive celebrations in general and to being heartily attached to all Christmas customs in particular. But every year I am unable to defend myself against my dismay at this dense growth of incidentals.

I certainly cannot say that these thoughts are uppermost in my mind all during the Christmas days. But every Christmas time they make their disquieting entrance, and then, human life being what it is, I resign myself to them, or quell them, or push them to one side in some way or other. But they keep coming back, they crystallize into a longing to get away, for once, from 'all the trimmings', away from the moods, away from the sentimentalities, and away from everything akin to these sentimentalities, away from the recollection of childhood bliss, away from these rooms full of Christmas trees, carols, presents, puddings and punch—away into some total withdrawal, away into the lonely encounter with the real meaning of Christmas.

Tolstoi's departure stands before us like an accusation, like a condemnation. At eighty-two, under the shadow of approaching death, he left all the trimmings and stood stripped bare to confront the essence of life.

In the lines along which we are thinking here, the festival of Christmas represents not only itself alone but vicariously the whole of our existence and this earthly world with its manifold stains of compromise. Even the most irreproachable things come in some sense under the heading of the 'many possessions' whose power as obstacles the rich young man of the gospel was obliged to realise in such a devastating way. There are few stories in the New Testament that express the human situation with such ruthless sharpness.

The disturbed conscience belongs to the essence of Christmas. It is the dark and bitter drop that mixes with the light wine of joy. Even more forcibly and painfully than at other times we are reminded that we do not live in the dimensions of the absolute but in the prison of qualification. Yet precisely this homesickness for an absolute condition, purified of 'all the trimmings', finds its real celebration in the Christmas festival. What else is the mystery of Christmas meant to assure us of, if not that other-worldly condition of essential things toward which we sense that we and all creation are striving—that condition in which everything accidental falls away and the absolute receives into its arms those who have been freed?

WHERE THE LOVE OF GOD BREAKS THROUGH

The little stable in Bethlehem was the place where the love of God broke through. The mysterious men out of the East followed the star and discovered the place of breaking-in, where the mystery of love lay in the helplessness of a human baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes in the feeding-trough of an animal. They discovered the place where the love of God had broken through. That is the most important thing for every man, to discover in his time and at his hour the place where God's love has broken through, and then to follow the star that has risen for him and to remain true to the light that has fallen into his heart. Then King Herod may come with his threatening and pursue the followers of the star through the various countries. He may even drive the child of God itself out of the land—that is nothing to those who follow the star. The angel of the Lord will guard the revelation of love in the midst of times of the greatest hatred and the thickest darkness and gloom that have ever spread over the earth.

EBERHARD ARNOLD.

‘ . . . AND ON EARTH PEACE AMONG MEN . . . ’

The three following contributions come to us from different parts of the world. They have been written by people who for many years were seeking, in quite different spheres, for a way of life which was genuine and which gave them the opportunity to find a true relationship with their fellow-men. The first article is written by a Paraguayan, who is now a full member of the Bruderhof, as is also his wife. When joining they brought their ten children with them. The second contribution comes from a Chinese woman who has recently joined the community in England, whilst the third writer is a woman who came to us from Holland a few months ago, where she was a very active worker in the peace movement for a number of years. All three testify that there is a way of peace for mankind, and that it can be lived in all its fullness in our own day and generation.

I

I was born in the year 1909 in the village of Itacurubí del Rosario, about five miles from Primavera. My parents were very poor. When I was five years old my father died, leaving my mother with three children. At that time my mother had to sell almost all our property, even our cows, in order to feed us children.

When I was eight years old, I had to leave home to earn my own bread. In this way I came into the house of a man in better circumstances. He was owner of a transport business with a number of *carretas* (ox-carts). My boss had a good race-horse which I had to care for. I had to ride the horse out at four o'clock every morning in wind and weather, summer and winter, to keep the animal in condition for racing. That was often hard for me, for I had only a thin shirt and neither stockings nor shoes to put on. In the afternoons I had to work as an ox-hand. Like all the other ox-boys I ran in front of the high-wheeled cart, over long, marshy stretches of road or for hours through water and mire, in summer in the hot glowing sun, in winter in the cold, cutting south wind. If the oxen were unhitched on the way to rest, I had to watch them—often a hard job. At times there is only a very sparse growth of grass here, and the oxen wander far from the carts to find pasture on the wide stretches of pampas. So it is not at all easy for a small boy to find the oxen again and bring them back to the camping place.

But my job as an ox-boy had one advantage. I was able after some time to attend school, and that for a whole year. There I could learn something. But my time in school was a hard apprenticeship. Like the other poor boys I was often ill-treated and struck by the sons of rich parents. If I defended myself I was the guilty one and was beaten by the adults as well. The rich boys made a point of treading with their shoes on our bare feet. In winter it was very cold in the school room and those who came from poor families had nothing warm to wear.

During the pauses we stood in the sun to get warm, while the other children could play. So very early I learned what a difference there is between the poor and rich. I was not happy in school and after a year wanted nothing more to do with studying. I became an ox-boy again and, when we undertook longer journeys with heavy loads, often spent whole nights in the cold rain to look after the oxen.

When I was fourteen my situation improved. I found myself with a wealthy owner of a wood-cutting business in Irapobó in the neighbourhood of Concepción. He had perhaps fourteen ox-carts, most of them *alzaprimas* for transporting tree trunks. There I was *carrero*, that is, I sat on the wagon and guided the oxen with a long bamboo pole, and another boy now had to run on in front of me. Although I myself was scarcely more than a boy I had to do like the other *carreros* who were grown men. In this work I used up a good share of my strength, particularly in dealing with the great weight of the heavy logs.

At seventeen I was called to military service. I went to Paraguairí in southern Paraguay and served in the cavalry. Eleven months later I left there for the Casado district in the Chaco. We were stationed in the midst of virgin bush-forest, very far from Puerto Casado on the Paraguay River. There were as good as no roads there, and oxen served as the means of transport; with a ring through the nose they were used for riding, and with them we had to get the provisions to our station. The principal food consisted of meat and *galletas*, a kind of hardtack. I had to spend two years and four months in military service, although according to the law the time was only two years.

After my military service I went back to Itacurubí, where my mother was still living and where I had worked as ox-boy and attended school. I began working again with ox-wagons but found no satisfaction in the work. I had long had the idea of trying my luck in another region and so finally I set out for Argentina.

From Puerto Rosario I went by river steamer *via* Asunción to Alberdi. From there I crossed with a rowboat to Formosa. There I began again to work as *carrero* with *alzaprimas*. For a short time I worked in the Argentine woods as a wood-cutter. Our job was to fell quebracho and to peel off the sap-wood in order to make so-called *lampiños*. We soon noticed, however, that at this heavy work we earned our money hard. We heard that the quebracho trees in Alto Paraná district were softer and easier to work. So with three companions I decided to travel by way of Asunción to Alto Paraná in Paraguay to seek work there.

As we arrived in Asunción the war with Bolivia was breaking out. We were called up immediately. My companions succeeded, however, in getting back to Argentina, but I had to go to the war. I was twenty-two. First I was permitted to visit my mother and was able to help my

family for a short time. My eldest brother was already in the war, Soon I had to go, too, and was sent to the Chaco as a *tropero*, that is. a cattle-herder, to supply the troops with meat. Although we were not at the front we had a very hard life. The cattle-driving was always done at night, as by day there was continual danger of attack by Bolivian aeroplanes. Through the day the animals were penned in a corral or hidden in thick bush. When twilight came began the driving through the thick bush, with its endless prickles and thorns which tore our clothes to shreds and scratched our skin raw. We were bitten and tormented by great clouds of mosquitos. Off and on I crossed the border on to Argentine soil, but I always turned back to Paraguay. After the end of the war I went back first to Itacurubí, but I planned to emigrate to Argentina.

When I got home my eldest brother had died, after coming back from the war seriously wounded. For this reason I gave up my journey to Argentina and worked again as an ox-driver. Later I went to the nearby hamlet of Mbocayaty (palm grove) and worked as a wood-cutter. There, too, I found my wife Teodora.

As father of a family I had a hard struggle to earn our daily bread. During the week I worked at a distance and could go home only Saturdays. We had just a tiny cabin, a wattle and daub house with thatched roof, and lived in great poverty like many of my countrymen. In the year 1940 I found work as wood-cutter on the Primavera Estancia (ranch) which at that time belonged to Mr Rutenberg. Half a year later this ranch was bought and taken over by the Bruderhof community. I stayed on there, however, and worked in the forest, while my wife and family remained in our little house in Mbocayaty. Later I worked also with the cattle. At that time a worker who sawed wood for the brothers in Isla Margarita told me that in this community all who wished to could live and work together. Jokes were made about the brothers, and a neighbour said one could only be a member if one put in two hundred pesos (about five shillings) as a guarantee. Another thought he would sell his razor to get the two hundred pesos! What I heard interested me greatly, however, and I wanted to know more about the Bruderhof.

Soon there was an opportunity, for shortly afterwards the first Bruderhof wedding in Paraguay took place, that of Dr Cyril Davies and Margot Savoldelli. Many neighbours were invited, I among them. At this celebration I heard more about the life in community. A leaflet was distributed to the guests describing the community life and its principles. I read everything curiously but understood only in part. What I did understand, however, was that these people wanted to live a life for God in brotherhood. It pleased me most that in this life there was no difference between rich and poor, and that here everybody

counted for the same, for there was no longer master or servant. This question had occupied me much in my youth.

Then once, when I was in the woods with a brother, I asked him whether I also could come into this life. He answered me that life in community was open to all. He asked me, too, why I wanted to live in community with them. I did not know how to explain myself clearly, and said only that I was looking for a calmer and more peaceful life, and would like to leave the old life I had known. The brother was of the opinion that he would like to speak with others about my inquiry and then some members would visit us in Mbocayaty. At that time there was a lot I had not understood correctly. I talked also with my wife Teodora and she agreed that we should try it. Thereupon some time passed, however, and I did not ask the brothers again.

At this time I built the ranch house at Isla Margarita where one of the employed workers was to live. When the house was finished the man who was to move in had changed his mind and taken on other work. I was asked whether I wanted to undertake this job. The proposal pleased me at once because in this way I could live with my family during the week also. So we moved into the new house and were then able to send our children to the nearby Bruderhof school. During this period I saw how our children were taken fully into the group of Bruderhof children. It impressed me very much that there was no difference at all between our children and the Bruderhof children, and that our boys and girls felt so happy in the community. We sent our bigger children to the school, the smaller ones to the kindergarten. It pleased me very much, too, that I never saw disputes between members of the Bruderhof. All this occupied me and made me think.

But something else now came into my life. I was able to earn much more money than before, and the impulse to keep on earning more and to become richer and richer rose in me. Often the brothers asked me, 'Well, Wence, how do you feel now?' I kept seeking an excuse, for earning money was now in the foreground of my thinking. I could buy myself horses and wagons and keep improving our life. I began to save in order to have more possibilities of earning by purchasing more wagons and horses. I bought cattle, too, and our little herd grew from year to year. Visibly things began to get better in a material way.

Yet we could not feel happy, and I began to reflect more and more on the Bruderhof life. I noticed that the more I earned the stronger were the dissatisfaction and the urge to possess more. I thought often of my youth and how I as the son of poor parents had had to suffer, and of the cold-heartedness which I experienced in the wealthy. Now that same spirit was laying hold of my heart. I had myself a big family for which I was responsible as father. And now I was faced with the question of deciding for one or the other. Should my children do to

the poor what others had done to me earlier? For ten years I had worked as an employee of the Bruderhof. Finally came the decision. I moved with my family on to the Bruderhof. Now for the first time I was able to join in and experience true community and to work practically with the brothers. It became clearer and clearer to me why the Bruderhof members live as they do, and no doubt existed any longer for my wife and me that this life was for us.

So now at last I have a share in a life where class differences are fought against and conquered, and where peace and harmony rule among men.

WENCESLAO JAIME.

II

I was born at Swatow, a small seaside town in South China in the province of Kwangtung. We were often disturbed by earthquakes which destroyed a large number of houses and killed many people. On such occasions we sought comparative safety in wide open spaces away from falling buildings. Here our only danger was the sudden opening of the ground under us. Frequent typhoons and floods also caused extensive damage and much distress among our people. There were political disturbances too. During these times our family spent long periods with our maternal grandmother in a small village in the hilly pine woods. When I was about seven years old my sisters and I helped our older cousins with their work. Our day started at 5 a.m., when we went out to the hills with baskets on our backs to gather pine needles for fuel. We also helped with the housework and washing, which was done in a stream near home. We squatted on the rocks in the stream, scrubbed the clothes on the rocks and held them in the running water to rinse. In summer this was quite enjoyable, but in winter it was a hardship. Most of our women brought in extra income by making lace and embroidery. Thus at the age of six I learnt to use the needle and other lace-making tools. To begin with we had to practise with our hair, as cotton was too expensive to buy.

When I was fifteen our family moved to Penang, Malaya, where my elder sister and I went to a Roman Catholic convent school. We attended classes during school hours and spent some of our free time cleaning the First Class Boarders' dormitory and shoes in order to pay for our board and school fees. Waves of rebellion often surged through my mind while I cleaned. We left after four years.

I was very much disturbed by the continual political unrest and particularly the 1937-1945 Sino-Japanese war which brought such suffering on my country. For some time I found employment in commercial offices but was dissatisfied. To earn a living was not my aim in life. I wanted to do something useful and decided to be a nurse, but

no hospital would accept me for training, as I had not had the necessary education.

Then, in 1941, I heard of the arrival of the Friends' Ambulance Unit in China. The pacifist views of its members, their spirit of service, their work on a voluntary basis, and especially the complete breakdown of social barriers among them, seemed wonderful to me. I soon became a member and worked with them till the end of the war. This was my first contact with the pacifist movement and my first experience of community living.

While with the Friends' Ambulance Unit in West China, one of the members told me about the Bruderhof. He had spent some time with the Cotswold Community. When the war ceased the Friends' Ambulance Unit disbanded and, in 1947, I came to England, where I had been accepted for nursing training. I got into contact with the Bruderhof and first visited the community in July 1948. The sincerity, simplicity and above all the brotherliness which I found there attracted me so much that I broke off my training and returned to the community in September of that year for an indefinite stay. But I found it impossible to accept the religious basis and left after ten weeks.

Then I finished my nursing training, and the search for peace and brotherhood went on. I heard of the International Voluntary Service for Peace and spent a few vacations in the work camps of this organisation but did not find satisfaction.

Recent contacts with various members of the Bruderhof who were visiting London brought me back to the community once more in January 1953, and during my two weeks' stay I became convinced that only by living in community and sharing completely all goods, work, joys and sorrows can true brotherhood and peace be attained and a way found whereby mankind can be served in the most fundamental and thorough manner.

TERESA HSU.

III

When I became a Christian rather late in life (I was 37 years old when I was baptised) I was fully aware that it was a matter of life and death, that a total surrender of self was involved. However difficult this seemed to be, it was very little in the light of the rich promises which Christ gives to all who are willing to follow him.

As soon as I had joined a church, however, I became seriously disquieted by the discrepancy between Christ's promises and the complacency with which the Christians took it for granted that they could *not* be fulfilled in this world. There was especially the matter of unity. I was very active in church work, where we tried to re-establish the old principle of Christian non-resistance, and in relief work which was one of the consequences of our belief in Christian love. Here,

certainly, there grew a bond, a unity, for which one could be thankful from a human point of view. But when I read the Bible and realised what Christ meant his Church to be, that he wanted to bestow on human beings this great gift of unity, so that they might become members of his body and live here on earth in communion with him, I could not possibly be satisfied with that lower level of unity which the churches offered. Of course there was the idea of the invisible Church, and I realised too that throughout the ages Christians seemed to have found some sort of mystical, personal communion with Christ. But though many times I was tempted to be satisfied with the lesser things, Christ kept showing me our poverty and the riches which he was still willing to give.

Thank God for the holy dissatisfaction which he created in my heart, through which he compelled me to continue seeking. What I found was this:

There is no private life with Christ; we can have full communion with him only when we have full communion with our fellow-men. Full surrender to Christ can be lived only in a life where one tries to give up everything of one's own and humbly seeks to serve. This is no easy way. Not only does it mean a constant struggle against self, but also it means joining the suffering Church on earth, for the way of the cross is the only way to the light.

When I left my church to join the Society of Brothers, one of the ministers expressed his heartfelt concern that I should probably be disappointed again, because really I was looking for the kingdom of God, which could not be fully realised on earth.

But Christ said, 'The kingdom of God is in the midst of you', and we read in the Acts, 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: *and great grace was upon them all*'. Jesus Christ is the same to-day as he was then and he will make his promises true for those, and through those, who really try to follow him. Ever since I have come to the Bruderhof a new light shines upon what Christ once said about his teaching, 'My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself'.

Only when we cease compromising with the world and earnestly try to go the way that Christ shows us, one with him and with our brothers, shall we be able to receive what he wishes to give us, true communion with him, the communion for which our hearts are longing. Only then shall we be able to show to the world that the Christmas message of peace is a God-given reality for all those who are willing to follow Christ.

PAULA THYSEN.

SUBTROPICAL CHRISTMAS

TRAINDEL KLEINER

The sun burns down on the Paraguayan countryside, on the far expanse of pampas, great forests and dusty roads. But our houses in Primavera are closely set about with shade trees, which make the heat easier to bear. Christmas! You can hear it everywhere. Christmas without Christmas trees, snow or cold. Is it possible to celebrate Christmas in the heat of a subtropical summer?

For weeks in advance the Primavera communities are at a high pitch of activity. Preparations are being made everywhere. So many people must be lovingly considered, especially the children. All the workshops emit loud noises of sawing, hammering and whirring machinery. The men are making toys, children's furniture and games for the nurseries, kindergartens and schools. A happy holiday mood pervades the work. The women are busy in the sewing room or in a specially arranged Christmas room, where the finishing touches are put on home-made toys, and where stuffed dolls and animals, leather balls and other Christmas presents are made. Sweet smells drift out of the bakery. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, great loaves of cake and thousands of biscuits of every variety are being baked.

The bigger children also are producing presents in their own workshops and helping wherever their nimble hands can be used, painting toys, cutting out biscuits from dough, sewing, making dolls, and, finally, cleaning up and decorating.

Everyone is energetically and enthusiastically preparing for the great holiday. Christmas will soon be here! Old and young almost forget how hot it is, and hardly anyone misses the snow. The real Christmas spirit is in everyone's heart. The old carols are sung in the kindergartens and schools and at the common meals throughout the time of advent, and a few new ones are learned every year, for this is the time we inwardly prepare for Christmas.

We want to provide joy not only for our own group of people but for others outside the community, and wish to bring something of the meaning of Christmas to them also. What is its meaning? Why do we hold this celebration? Surely, at this time, the centre of our thoughts and the common bond of our experience is a joyous festival for all men, a rejoicing at the birth of Jesus.

Christmas is the festival of love and joy, and part of its meaning is that this shall be proclaimed to all men, particularly to those who are not yet touched by the life-renewing, uniting power of God's love, that Christmas may come to their hearts too. We young people meet to consider how this message can be brought home to the Paraguayan people who live in our neighbourhood. What is the best approach to their particular experience? Someone has the idea of acting a play in

Spanish, a play that first has to be written by one of us. This plan is received with enthusiasm, and soon the young people from our three communal villages are meeting evening after evening to practise. Gradually the play begins to take shape, and we all look forward to the moment when we can present it to our neighbours, most of whom have never seen a Christmas play before.

While all these preparations are going on the day itself draws near and time proves too short for all we had intended to do. Now the final arrangements are finished. All the rooms have been decorated with green branches and the golden-yellow blossoms of our summer forests. A large garland woven from green twigs and set with four red candles is hanging in the dining room. The walls and beams are decked with green boughs. We find something especially characteristic and beautiful in the way everything around us blossoms and stands in green leaf just at Christmas time. It is as though nature were adorning herself for this festival. Trees bear their golden blossoms like great Christmas candles, and birds flit and twitter among the branches in joyful merriment. All through the moonlit nights the long leaves of the palm trees glisten, softly swayed by the wind.

Christmas eve! As soon as it begins to grow dark, children and grown-ups gather in the open space in front of the dining room. We sing carols as we join in the long procession to the manger scene. Over us gleam the stars. Far off, the dark silhouette of the virgin forest rises on the horizon. Majestic palm trees line the path. Some way off we come to a hut where the manger scene is represented, and once more we experience the great mystery of Christmas. A tree radiates the light of a hundred candles. We hear the story of Christmas and it sinks straight into our hearts. What a miracle happened that night in Bethlehem, almost two thousand years ago! The richest of all became the poorest; he came to live and suffer among men. Here the mystery of love, which is still seeking realisation among us to-day, was revealed. The children, too, sense the greatness and beauty of this wonder and listen quietly with us in the silence of the night. Everyone gladly joins in the old Christmas song:

In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty
Jesus Christ.

The experience at the manger is the beginning of the Christmas celebration and sets the keynote for what follows. The children receive their presents at home on the same evening. Candles gleam in every house; all around are happy faces, and Christmas songs can be heard late into the night.

Before sunrise on Christmas day, we are awakened by carols, proclaiming the joyful news: Christ is born! In the dining room a symbolic design in silhouette and coloured paper shines out from the 'Christmas window', and the four candles on the garland burn brightly. The community gathers for breakfast. Our neighbours have been invited too. The Christmas message is proclaimed, and the great joy of this festival is expressed in community singing. Those who are here with us at Christmas for the first time realise that this joyful holiday can be celebrated everywhere, in the heat of summer as well as in biting cold, in Europe or North America just as in subtropical Paraguay—if our hearts are ready for it. In the evening we all join in a meeting of consecration. The room is bright with the light of many candles. Out of the reflective silence, people freely express what concerns them for mankind on this day. They speak of their sorrow at the spiritual and physical misery so many are enduring, and at the cold emptiness of human hearts. How much we need love and warmth, like that shining out from the little child in the manger! He must be really reborn in us, as is said by Angelus Silesius, 'Even if Christ were born a thousand times in Bethlehem and not in thee, thou art still lost eternally'.

Our awareness of this truth is renewed every Christmas, and it inspires us to try to celebrate this festival in a new spiritual sense. We try to be receptive to its profound meaning, so that every year we are filled with fresh wonder at the marvel of Christ's birth. The mystery speaks to the hearts of the children in particular, and they express their joy in song and poetry or a simple Christmas play. Christmas is everywhere and in everyone!

In joyful anticipation we all wait for the performance of the play in Spanish. On the second evening of Christmas everything is finally ready. Walking, on horseback, or in wagons, our neighbours come from all directions and gather in a half-circle round the open-air stage, which is just a division of the players from the background by a screen of green branches. The silence is profound. There is not a word from the usually boisterous and talkative Paraguayans; no one even so much as whispers; they just listen and watch eagerly. A mood of absorbed reverence has settled on all.

The play is a great experience for us young people too, strengthening the spiritual bonds between us. We do not act the play for its own sake, although we enjoy acting very much; what moves us deeply and makes our hearts tremble is the message that has to be conveyed through word and action. When the soldier lays down his sword before the child in the manger, henceforth to serve him, not force, something decisive has been said and shown. When the negro king becomes equal with all others by humbling himself before the child, something

important in relation to the racial conflict of our times and the sufferings imposed upon coloured peoples in many countries has been expressed.

Now the play is over, and everyone goes home under the vivid impression of the message it contained. The plain truth of the Christmas story speaks a language all can understand. Particularly is this so with the simple country people of Paraguay who cannot grasp complicated ideas.

The Christmas days go by only too quickly, but the spirit of love, which is the essence of Christmas, goes on living, filling all hearts with joy and with love for others. May this joy prevail in men's hearts, bringing Christmas everywhere!

DOWN IN YON FOREST

DOWN in yon forest there stands a hall:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
It's covered all over with purple and pall:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

In that hall there stands a bed:
It's covered all over with scarlet so red:

At the bed-side there lies a stone:
Which the sweet Virgin Mary knelt upon:

Under that bed there runs a flood:
The one half runs water, the other runs blood:

At the bed's foot there grows a thorn:
Which ever blows blossom since he was born:

Over that bed the moon shines bright:
Denoting our Saviour was born this night:

(Traditional Version of a 15th century carol)

FORUM

The Jesus Homes in China

A visitor to the Bruderhof who has spent many years as a missionary in China gave an account of her contact with the Jesus Homes from which the following extracts are taken. This is the latest information we have received.

First I must explain that I have never had an opportunity to visit the Jesus Homes myself, but I have met some of the leaders. One of their characteristics is a deep devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and this expresses itself in their service to men, in their daily life and in their singing. The next thing that impressed me was their deep humility. Many of the members are well educated, cultured people who come from good homes and hold university degrees. They live simply and dress like coolies. Their voluntary poverty and humility are wonderful. On one occasion some visitors asked one of the members to fetch his leader and then were told by a bystander that the man whom they had addressed was the leader. They were greatly surprised for he was dressed so poorly. Another thing that impressed me was their prayerfulness. Every need and problem was placed before God. They spend many hours of the day in prayer. Each prays aloud his own individual prayer at the same time as all the others, which may seem strange to us but is quite natural to the Chinese. They speak in tongues, they see visions and go into trances, sometimes even to excess. But this should not cause any alarm. If you read the story of the Christian Church, you will find revivals are often accompanied by such manifestations.

On one occasion, we asked some of the leaders of the Jesus Homes to visit our hospital and to have a prayer meeting with our leper women. Two of the women leaders came but were so emotionally upset by the condition of the lepers that for some time they were unable to speak.

The Jesus Home in Shantung has now been disbanded and many of the members have been killed, as they anticipated they would be. They have undergone the most subtle and cruel persecution.

Some time before this, a Swedish woman missionary was accused of being an agent of imperialism and of making the Chinese adopt a foreign religion. The 'roughs' and irresponsible elements in the town were gathered together for a mock trial and told beforehand to shout 'Guilty!' when the verdict was asked for. The so-called trial was held, and when the judge appealed to the crowd they shouted, 'She is guilty!' And so the Swedish woman was stoned to death by the mob.

The leader of the Jesus Home, Ching T'ien Ying, was also killed after a similar mock trial. He had one of his eyes put out and was then stoned to death. I am sure that he died bravely, rejoicing that he had been found worthy to die for his Lord. One of the accusers, Ching

T'ien Ying's own nephew, was afterwards so filled with remorse that he committed suicide. Although the central Home at Ma Chuang has been disbanded we are sure that the movement will go on, carrying the message of the gospel far and wide in China.

[The information contained in the above account, telling of the dissolving of the Ma Chuang Home, has been confirmed from a number of sources. It appears that the so-called 'Accusation Movement', which is at work in the country, reached the group at Ma Chuang, and the leader, Ching T'ien Ying, had to appear before an accusation meeting. There are said to be one hundred 'Families' in China and it has been recently reported that the Nanking and Shanghai groups have also been dissolved. We shall endeavour to keep in touch with the actual position, for it is obvious that the reports which have come through, telling of the breaking-up of the communities, have been circulated mainly by those whose aim it is to effect the extinction of the Jesus Homes.—ED.].

Reply from Aiyetoro

We are in receipt of your letters dated 9th April, 15th July and 28th September respectively this year, 1953, and we have to thank you for them.

We are also in receipt of the three PLOUGHS accompanying one of your letters. We regret our inability to have replied in time but this was due to the pressure of work in respect of our electric plant to be installed in our community at Aiyetoro.

Now our communications with you will surely be regular. We shall be very pleased if you can seize an opportunity to travel to Nigeria and make us a visit, and we too shall do the same if chance permits.

We live in community and we are peace loving and religiously-minded people under the spiritual leadership of Peter Ojagbohunmi. We are conscious that we are being guided and directed by the Spirit of God. In our community we have all things in common and share things equally.

We wish you to take our warm greeting to the delegate who has returned to Paraguay, South America. We are very pleased to see that such communities as ours are developing in other parts of the world.

In your letter dated 20th July you mentioned all the activities of the communities both in England and America and we are interested.

We shall be very much pleased if you can send us a catalogue of sawmills if available. This is what we are now looking out for, so that we shall soon be able to have one.

We send you all our warm greetings hoping to hear from you soon.
Nigeria.

THE HOLY APOSTLES COMMUNITY.

Extracts from Letters

I was very glad to receive your letter and the two copies of *THE PLOUGH*, which seems to me to be a most fascinating magazine. Enclosed is a cheque for a year's subscription, because I should like to know very much more about your brotherhood: I feel we have a great deal in common.

... After reading the chapter on 'Three Beginnings' in the Spring number of *THE PLOUGH* I'm convinced that there are the makings of an excellent broadcast—unless it has already been done. . . .

I had only the vaguest knowledge of the Society of Brothers but your magazines have greatly impressed and touched me: You seem to be so closely akin to the Quakers and also to Moral Re-Armament in which I am also interested. There is so great a need to-day for a vital expression of belief and for an inspiration for the individual and for the world. A journalist like myself—moving among such a variety of people—becomes depressed by the ineptitude of so-called Christians and the absorption of materialism. We see a helpless shrugging of the shoulders by the ordinary members of the public and by the politicians: there's a hopeless attitude of drift and a constant whining of 'What can we do about it!' Jesus gave the answer and it's a complete one for every modern problem, and yet the dunderheads won't listen. Meanwhile through our own stupidity we are once again heading for war, and we get an intelligent newspaper ending its leader the other Sunday with the words: 'The ultimate deterrent to war is the power to strike back'. Have you ever heard of anything so silly? We never learn. Cheshire.

V.N.

We do thank you for your interest, and the enclosed pamphlet ['Which Way Africa?'] will give you a little indication as to the future in the African Literary Campaign.

Yes, we have quite a deal of information about 'apostles' living at Aiyetoro. I am most anxious to visit them personally when I return to West Africa. They are certainly the most progressive group of people in the Colony.

Auckland, N.Z.

G.S.

Thank you for your letter with its interesting enclosures. I used to subscribe to *THE PLOUGH* before the war—long before I myself came into community (barely six years ago) and it is with pleasure that I start my subscription again. May *THE PLOUGH* 'towards the new order' and all that it represents flourish exceedingly. . . .

One of our families with four young children has just taken in a homeless five-year-old and we ourselves on urgent entreaty of Borstal

Association and authorities a twenty-four year old girl straight from a year's prison. Two of our families between them have adopted six illegitimate babies from birth and one has a homeless fourteen-year-old as well. And piece by piece community grows. . . .

I'm afraid the only contact I have been able to maintain with Paraguay is to send occasionally the rough report I prepare each year for the Christian Pacifist Society Conference which is due again next month. Riverside is national and district headquarters of the society (I'm national secretary). I had hoped to get out an occasional newsletter to be known as *Riverside News* which would be a means of keeping contact with the Bruderhofs and other communities and individual friends, but so far I haven't managed to start.

I shall be drawing attention to THE PLOUGH in my monthly page for *The New Zealand Christian Pacifist* and also at the annual conference of the society. Naturally we are always pleased to hear of the Bruderhof.
Riverside Community, N.Z. A.C.B.

My nine and a half thousand mile bicycle trip has come to an end now; I returned home by way of Canada last week. Copies of THE PLOUGH were received a few days ago, and I shall be glad to distribute them among the many community-minded people here in California. We have several organisations representing the many small communities spread throughout the state. One of these, the Rural Life Association, will hold its annual conference here, at our community. This will give me an ideal opportunity to acquaint the hundred or so attendants with my impressions and the literature of the Bruderhof.

This will be a winter of much building activity: one family has recently completed their home; a second are adding two more bedrooms to theirs; a third are just starting out with a new home. We are now working out a programme for incorporating the three hundred acres into a non-profit organisation. There are many laws—both state and federal—which control the use of land. An architect at times seems to be of less value here than a lawyer. But we are all happy over the fact that several more families contemplate moving here and joining our group.

My week's visit last month was certainly inadequate to receive a true perspective of a full community life, but even though strongly impressed I still feel there are other values equally as important as community. One of these is creative work, and I could not see how it would be possible for me to engage in my architectural work in a limited community environment.

One of our families seriously considered visiting Primavera this summer, but were held back through lack of funds—they may be able to make it next year. . . .
California, U.S.A. K.K.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

A VISIT TO PRIMAVERA

This past summer I was sent on a visit to the Bruderhof communities by my own little group, Kingwood Community, located near Frenchtown, N.J., U.S.A. Therefore an account of this visit and its impression on us must be preceded by a word about our own group.

We number only seven adults and two children and we have lived for four and a half years in community. We started as members of a co-operative house in Harlem, the negro section of New York City, and were drawn together by our mutual interest in a community that would nurture the life of the Spirit through meditation and the brotherly life. Several of us had been influenced by Gerald Heard and his conception of spiritual growth but we remained established in the Christian tradition and three of us became members of the Society of Friends. When we were led to found a community the plan we agreed on was a combination of the principles of the primitive Christian Church, Quakerism and Catholic monasticism, with the practice of community and daily meditation as the basic disciplines.

Our plan also called for a country community located near the large urban centres so that a vital contact could be maintained with the social and religious movements of our day. Thus we bought a property of twenty-four acres, with a house of sixteen rooms and a few farm buildings, about sixty miles west of New York City and forty-five north of Philadelphia.

Contact with the Bruderhof began, the very month that we were led to form community, with the arrival of the first Brothers sent to the States since the war. We had already gained considerable momentum in a semi-monastic direction, however, and so there was little thought in those days, indeed for almost three years, of union between the groups. As the Brothers, and finally a Sister, continued to visit us at Kingwood, we found our talk going ever deeper into the issues that united or divided us and we discovered that we were much closer than we had thought. At the same time our own experience began to teach us that the very life of a religiously based community can be as powerful for spiritual growth as the monastic practice of interior prayer, or even more so. Thus we experienced a shifting of emphasis, though not a changing of fundamental beliefs. Finally it became clear that discussions had taken us as far as they could and that a visit to Primavera would be necessary for further clarification. We still felt that we were more at home with a Quaker than an Hutterian orientation, and so we were not at all clear that a visit would remove our questions, but we felt it desirable in any event.

COMMUNITIES

I left the States by plane on the 3rd of July, had four days in Montevideo, one in Asunción and then two months at the three villages of Primavera. The trip home gave me several days again in Asunción and Montevideo and then three days each in Koinonia and Macedonia Communities in the States before my return to Kingwood.

From a chronological point of view the time was more than adequate. I was so caught up in the spirit of the Bruderhof life that I soon became convinced that the primitive Christian Church lived again and that its appearance was one of the most important signs of our times. It was witnessing and experiencing the fruits of the Spirit that gave me this conviction and the most important of those fruits I have long known to be love, peace, joy and power. I have been associated with many groups in my life but none have shown forth these fruits in the same abundance as the Bruderhof.

The visitor is quickly made conscious of the warm love shown towards all guests. When the plane in which I travelled came in to land at the Primavera air strip it was greeted by a crowd of people waving hats and handkerchiefs, and when it came to rest all surged forward and surrounded it. The wagon trip to the village of Ibaté ended in a semi-circle of all the available members, singing a song of welcome. The simple room to which I was led had many extra touches that revealed something more than gracious hospitality.

As I came to know the life I realised that this warm reception of visitors is a natural result of a love which is all-inclusive and which wants every man on earth to come into its brotherly relationship. I discovered that the door is truly open to all—rich or poor, brilliant or simple, stable or disturbed, coloured or white—and that within the life itself there are no distinctions of status. Every man feels loved, wanted, and needed, and every task is treated with equal respect, whether it is washing dishes or going on world missions. Every person gives fully of his labour in love and shares the same standard of living with all others. The weak are carried, the sick are cared for, the fearful are given security.

The most poignant experience of this love was the sharing in the death of a little child of the community. I was working close at hand when the word was phoned from the hospital to all three villages that Maria was struggling for life. To see those three villages bring their life to a stop and to share in the corporate prayers that were given for her life was a deeply moving experience.

Almost at the same time there came word from England that one of the youth of Wheathill was critically ill. Very few of the people in Primavera had ever seen this young man and yet their hearts and prayers reached out to him in the same loving embrace that had gone to Maria and her parents.

When the excitement of my arrival was over, I soon settled into the routine of the life and began to feel and observe it in its quiet movement. The spirit that I became aware of was peace, broken often, not by arguments and discord, but by joy.

Perhaps the fruits are most obvious among the children. One sees many groups of children throughout the day—studying, playing, going for walks—and since the families are large, the proportion of children to adults is high. Peace and joy are evident among them all, not that they are perfect and have no quarrels, but that they are given excellent supervision in an atmosphere that breeds peace.

The life is far from sombre or dull. There is an underlying joy that shows itself forth in a readiness for quick and hearty laughter. A more fundamental experience of peace and joy came to me several evenings when I sat near the edge of a village at sundown and listened to the evening sounds. There were no blaring radios but there was much music. From many homes came the tones of violins and recorders, the two most common instruments, and, an even more wonderful music, the laughter and call of children's voices. Such times were enchanted hours.

Then there was the fruit of power. How many times people have stated to me their feeling that the Bruderhof is escaping the world to build a little utopia all its own! The truth is that the very fact that it is in Paraguay is an evidence of the power of its life. Driven by the persecuting forces of Europe, refused sanctuary in Canada and my own country, the group did not crumble but migrated thousands of miles to a wilderness to begin anew. Here is the power of the primitive Church at work again.

Nor is it self-contained. There is a deep concern for the whole world and a remarkable knowledge of what is happening everywhere. Above all, however, there is a sense of mission, of a truth to be told, of a way of life to be witnessed to, and there is a pulse of excitement that can often be felt beneath the outer calm. In the meetings concerned with mission work, this phase of the life becomes fully revealed. At a farewell worship meeting, held for a group being sent to England, the pulse of power reached a pitch. With song after song of a stirring nature ringing out, about three hundred men and women passed by the little group, shaking hands as an expression of unity. It was then that I knew this was the same power that flowed at Pentecost. It was then that I saw clearly there was no sacrifice too great for these folks to make in witnessing to their life and in calling all to it.

Such were some of the experiences that within four weeks brought me to the conclusion that I was already spiritually at one with these people and that none of my previous questions any longer had real

weight. It was not that they were all answered and removed but just that I then had faith that there was a unity beneath them all and that searching in the Spirit would reveal that unity. Discussions were, in fact, going far to remove those questions. I discovered a close historical similarity between Friends and this group, and soon I knew that it is the experience of the Spirit in Christ and not forms or creeds that is the important test of the life. Also it became clear that the presence of a number of Friends in their midst was making an impression so that differences were becoming even less apparent. I was led, therefore, to desire with all my heart that a full unity might come between my own little group of nine people and this large group of nine hundred people. It was an occasion of joy, therefore, to hear from home finally that several of the folks there already felt the same eagerness for unity that I did and that all welcomed the coming of folks from the Bruderhof.

It is perhaps strange that a growing openness to unity between communities was coming to a head in Macedonia Community of Georgia at just the same time, and that there were stirrings in that direction in Koinonia Community, also of Georgia. Thus it was decided that I should visit these two groups for a short time on my way home. Since Koinonia is the farthest south, I arrived there first and, incidentally, was met by my wife. This is an agricultural group, owning about eight hundred acres of fairly flat, fertile land, mostly arable. There are about eight full members, as many novices and twenty children. Most of the group are southerners and they have been keen to make a witness for racial brotherhood in the heart of the South. They were grateful for the testimony I brought from my visit and during the course of three evenings asked many searching questions. These were weighty and can probably be removed only by one of their group having an experience similar to my own. There was a deep meeting for worship the final morning, and Pearl and I left with a sense of close fellowship and a feeling that there was a new degree of interest in the possibility of full unity.

Macedonia had been going through deep waters because of both external and internal difficulties and, before we arrived, was also deeply interested in the possibility of a closer association. They had won through the worst of their difficulties, and the joy of their newly-found togetherness was contagious, so it was a thoroughly happy visit. The group owns about nine hundred acres of mountainous, wooded land in a beautiful setting, and they earn their living primarily by an industry of manufacturing blocks for schools and nurseries. They too had many questions, questions based on an eagerness for unity. Pearl and I thought that a good visit (now in progress) by some of the Brothers might very well result in that unity. We certainly felt at one with them.

Our group at Kingwood has had many talks by now. The majority are most desirous for unity but there is not yet complete agreement among us about this. We shall have much to work through when the Bruderhof members from South America are in our midst and we are now composing ourselves to wait as patiently as we can until they come.

Just how the relationship will form is therefore not yet clear, but there is no doubt that we are standing at the beginning of a great stride-forward in the community movement here in the States. It is a joy to have furthered this work by the trip to Primavera and to stand in the midst of what is now taking place.

FRANCIS HALL.

YOUTH TRIP TO GERMANY

Our dream was coming true. We were on the boat, with the white cliffs of Dover fading into the distance and Belgium a few miles ahead. The sea was deep blue and beautifully calm.

There were twelve of us, twelve young people of four different nationalities: German, Swiss, Dutch and English. We were sitting on the top deck, singing folk songs and sea shanties.

We were looking forward to a fortnight's stay in Germany. We wanted to see the country, to visit the old Rhoen Bruderhof and, most important of all, to get to know other young people. We hoped to join in singing and folk-dancing, to wander and camp with them and to exchange views and experiences of life.

Germany is a country of contrasts. Old and new stand side by side, but the bridge to span the gap is lacking. Country life appeared solid and undisturbed. Peasants are still wearing their old traditional costume and driving ox-wagons. The towns display the most modern achievements in architecture, and in mechanical and technical devices. The old culture appears to be fighting a losing battle with the new cheap values of 'the American way of life'. Old black ruins, with distorted, hanging staircases, still line the main streets, contrasting with the super-modern cinemas and hotels that are being erected. Ancient legends linger round old castles, while at the same time anti-communist propaganda and terror stories of germ warfare and napalm bombs are spread by press and wireless.

Germany is a divided country, both in a political and in a social sense. Our very first impressions were a sharp reminder of the reality of the cold war. We arrived in Cologne at two o'clock in the morning. Here and there we saw sleeping men, huddled up in quiet corners of the station or propping their heads on the restaurant tables. We were

told these men were homeless down-and-outs, and, more often than not, penniless refugees from the East Zone.

Germany is tense, waiting, listening, constantly wondering what the next political move will bring. The Russian Zone is very near and fear of the Communists is real and intense. Along the boundary line American army manœuvres are constantly in progress. When we visited the old Rhoen Bruderhof we saw deep ruts in the fields where tanks had been practising. At night, light signals rose and fell near by, and the sound of firing could be heard in the distance.

The June riots in Berlin had made a deep impression; everyone was still talking about them. While we were there, France was struggling to throw off a general strike. At the same time, the trial of the Rosenbergs in America was causing considerable anxiety and indignation. In a few weeks time the general election was to be held. Germany seemed to be wide awake, planning, discussing, analysing. In comparison, England, the country we had come from, seemed very peaceful.

German people talk freely. Wherever we might be, in trains, buses, youth hostels, shops or colleges, we soon found ourselves engaged in lively conversation. What are the young folk of to-day thinking and talking about? What is their attitude to the present situation and to life?

The past still hangs over them like a heavy burden. Some try to forget, others are weighed down by it. The present is not encouraging: the cold war tension undermines real confidence in the future. A third world war is generally regarded as inevitable, and that Germany will be the battlefield is taken for granted. And yet there is feverish activity, especially amongst the young folk; an urgency to learn, to rebuild, to make money and to plan for a better future. Is this caused by a feeling that time is short? Is it a struggle against hopelessness? Or is it an attempt to avoid facing the fundamental issues?

In Cassel we stayed at the Froebel College, where two of our girls are in training. The students were lively, friendly and cheerful. We sang together, danced country dances, wandered through the forests nearby and returned long after dark. Our procession was guided down the forest paths by the light of flaming torches. Yet that was not the whole picture. In the evenings, when most of the girls were already asleep, one or two would come up to us, show us their family photographs and tell us the story of their own lives. One young girl had left the East Zone to get her training in the West. She had not been able to see her parents for three years. Beneath the surface was much loneliness and suffering, and sometimes even fear of the future or a sense that life was not worth living.

In Frankfurt we made a day's outing into the hills with a church youth group. We wandered through the pine woods together until we reached one of the hill-tops with a beautiful view of the city at our feet. The question of the moment appeared to be: Which party should we vote for, as Christians? They felt it their duty to vote. The world could never be changed if not by political means. The problem, however, was: Which party can we support whole-heartedly? They did not know. In the evening we met once more in the church hall. Questions were asked about our common life. One important question was the following: You are building up a kind of ideal society. But are you not withdrawing from the world and escaping from its problems? We answered: On the contrary, we are trying to face up to world problems squarely and to offer a working solution by example. Our communities are not havens of refuge from the troubles of life, but gathering centres for those who wish to follow Christ. These living cells of brotherhood shall be the base from which men and women will go out into the world with the message of love and peace.

In Hanau we spent some hours in a hostel for orphans and boys in training. The home was a beautiful, well-planned building and the lads were well cared for. One boy said, however, 'It is very nice here, but it is not like home'. His companions nodded. We sat in the dining-room, singing. One or two of the boys came closer and joined in. They told us about the war and what they had experienced: how they had lost their parents; how they fled from the Russians, sitting on the roofs of train-coaches for days on end. Often whole families were scattered and only in later years, bit by bit, news travelled from orphanage to orphanage, and brothers and sisters were reunited. One fourteen-year-old said: 'I've still got my parents—I'm going home for Christmas'. A fifteen-year-old answered: 'You're lucky'.

In the evening, young folk from Hanau gathered at the lake outside the town. There were dancers in colourful costume and a group of singers. Young people from the nearby village, boys from the hostel and one or two youth welfare workers also came along. Tents had been pitched for us, for our group was going to stay the night. The Communist Youth Organisation must have got wind of our coming. Perhaps in their minds 'English Youth' was synonymous with 'Capitalist Youth'. We do not know. However, during the previous night, two tents had been ripped to ribbons, and abusive slogans scrawled all over the canvas.

We made a huge circle around a blazing fire that reflected its light in the dark waters of the lake. One of our group stepped into the ring and stated briefly who we were, why we lived in community and why we had come to Germany. We danced folk-dances and sang round the

fire till late at night. The boys from the hostel stood together in a block and sang a song that impressed us deeply:

The road is endless, continuous the rain,
I have no home and no goal,
For I am a poor vagabond
Without rest, without peace,
My feet are sore, I have tramped so long
I must go on for ever.

We parted and said goodnight as the different groups trooped back to the town.

It was well past midnight, yet we gathered once more around the fire to sing a last song together. The picture of the homeless boys singing the vagabond song with all their hearts was still before our eyes. The words haunted us: ' . . . we have no home and no goal. . . ' In the deepest sense this is true not only of the orphans but of many young people. So many had a strong feeling of responsibility. They were planning to make a better world through social, medical or educational work, and some hoped to solve the urgent problems of their country by political means. We are all vagabonds on the open road of life. We have the choice, either to walk our own road alone, or to join with comrades in the search for the path of Christ.

We left Germany wondering what the future would hold for them and for us.

JENNIFER HARRIES.

'AND THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH'

Many of our friends will have heard of the serious illness of our young brother, Peter Böning, and will wish to share with his mother and sister and the whole community in his passing from this life on the 12th of November 1953.

Peter, who was seventeen years of age, came to the community with his mother and sister in April 1950. His mother, Margarete Böning, had known the Bruderhof for very many years, and had come to the decision to join in the community life for the sake of her children and because she saw it to be the one true solution to the great need in post-war Germany.

From the beginning of their stay at the Wheathill Bruderhof Peter entered fully into the life of the school, and later, the youth group, sharing enthusiastically in everything which took place. Even after one of his legs had been amputated in February of this year Peter continued to share in the meetings and activities of the youth, and it was a great disappointment to him that due to his illness he could not take part in the trip to Germany which is described in this number.

Although, during the last months of his life, Peter was fully aware of the serious nature of his illness, he nevertheless took the liveliest interest in the experiences of the community, and faced his critical position with an unswerving and childlike faith. His passing into eternity was a very strong challenge to the whole community, leading many of the young people and newer ones amongst us to affirm their determination to go forward on the way of complete surrender to the cause of God.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

In sending out this first Christmas number of *THE PLOUGH*, it lies on our hearts to bring to our readers something of the true character and essence of Christmas. The good news of Christ's birth is a message of hope for every man, woman and child, of whatever race or condition. Peace shall reign in men's hearts everywhere! This certainty is proclaimed in the two opening articles which come as a greeting from our whole circle.

Stanley Fletcher, who in his article challenges Christians to take earnest heed of the Christmas message, was one of the small group of our members who helped in the establishment of the Wheathill Bruderhof, in Shropshire, in 1942. He returned from the community in Paraguay during the past year. Werner Bergengruen is a Catholic writer and poet. He was born in the Baltic States and has become one of the best known modern writers on the continent. In the article we have printed he expresses concisely the essential difference between what should be in people's minds at Christmas and what so often occupies our thoughts. How both the inner and outer celebration can find true expression is indicated in the article by Traindel Kleiner, one of our young people in Paraguay. She shows the concern felt by the youth group there to bring the Christmas message to our Paraguayan neighbours. 'Youth Trip to Germany' describes the journey undertaken by the young people from Wheathill this summer. We are glad that both our young people in South America and England desire to find a vital contact with others, as indicated by these reports.

We include in the *Forum* a further short account of the Jesus Homes in China and a letter received from the negro fishing community at Aiyetoro. Many readers have expressed interest in the articles previously published about these two groups and we are very glad to be able to give this further information.

'Youth Trip' and Francis Hall's account of his visit to Primavera take the place of the usual Bruderhof news. This last article forms an interesting comment on the report of the conference at Primavera contained in the last issue of *THE PLOUGH*. As Francis Hall mentions, the movement towards community in North America is striding forward and we hope to give much fuller reports about this in the next number.

The three contributions brought together under the title of '... and on earth peace among men ...' are practical evidence that the truth which was proclaimed at Christ's birth is as potent to-day as it was two thousand years ago.

EBERHARD ARNOLD

From his Life and Writings

A Witness to Community

An enlarged edition of the Autumn number of this quarterly will appear under the above title, seeking to represent the life and witness of the late Eberhard Arnold, the founder of the first Bruderhof community, whose 70th birthday would have been celebrated this year. It is our wish to make this edition available to a wider circle of friends, for it is not just a description of Eberhard Arnold's life but contains writings fundamental to community living. For this reason we request the help of our readers in circulating it as widely as possible.

After the First World War, Eberhard Arnold was very well known through his activities in the Student Christian Movement, in the *Furche-Verlag* (Furrow Publishing House) and through his lectures. His later years, and also the development of the Rhoen Bruderhof, were determined by the particular circumstances in Germany which made it impossible at that time to further the witness of peace and brotherhood for which Eberhard Arnold and his associates stood.

As this publication shows, our communal life began under the influence of the shattering experiences of the First World War. Today, men, whose lives and thoughts have been affected by the experiences of the Second World War and who are now facing its consequences, have every reason for asking whether a life in peace and unity is possible. It is our hope that Eberhard Arnold's words may be a guide to those who are seeking a clear direction.

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