

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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OUR BRUDERHOF HOUSE IN GERMANY

WINTER 1954



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THE PLOUGH is the quarterly journal of the Bruderhof Communities in England and South and North 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 1954

O HEILIGER GEIST, o ewiger Gott!
Laß uns nicht ertrinken in kleinlicher Not!
Wir bitten dich, du Himmelslicht!
Du wollst dich von uns wenden nicht!
O heiliger Geist, o ewiger Gott!

O heiliger Geist, o ewiges Wehn!
Du heiliger Wind, du Flamme so schön!
Geuß aus auf uns dein's Geistes Flamm',
Auf daß wir kommen all zusamm'n
Zur wahren Gemein, zum ewigen Gott!

O heiliger Geist, o ewiger Gott!
Laß unter uns wohnen dein kräftiges Wort.
Des Satans finsternes Reich nimm ein!
Laß uns schon heute Sieger sein!
Vom finsternen Reich zur wahren Gemein!

EMMY ARNOLD.

O HOLY SPIRIT, everlasting God,
Support us that we drown not in a sea
Of petty needs. We beg thee, Light of heaven,
Turn not from us,
O Holy Spirit, everlasting God.

O Holy Spirit, Breath of the Eternal,
Thou holy Wind, thou Flame of glorious light,
Pour out on us thy Holy Spirit's flame,
That we may every one discover thee,
The Fellowship divine, eternal God.

O Holy Spirit, everlasting God,
Let dwell among us thy all-powerful Word,
Take thou possession of the realms of hell,
And let us now the victors be,
From darkness win to true community.

PROSE TRANSLATION.

THE MESSAGE OF FRANCIS OF ASSISI

FRITZ WENZEL

We must acknowledge that the lives of some men are of significance for the whole human race. Those factors which usually differentiate men and are so often, unfortunately, the cause of division, are here used in the service of one great whole, leading men together into an ultimate unity. Such men show us ever anew that the forces that separate are unessential and those which bind us together are powerful. These men have shown us the true and decisive values. Through Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who incorporated God and man in a manner truly beyond our understanding, men learned to look at the face of God. His face is one of love and mercy, although we lack the understanding and enlightenment to perceive it. In the light of this love Jesus gave meaning to our life on earth, thus producing a reassessment of all values; only since his coming has man known what human life truly is. We can well understand that since then men and women have found the highest and ultimate meaning for their existence in following this Jesus and living according to his truth and demands.

One of the greatest and most significant men, for whom the discipleship of Christ was the content of their lives, was Francis of Assisi. The bounds of confessionalism and nationalism are broken by his overpowering personality—his Christianity and humanity.

Francis of Assisi is certainly among the few who are loved and respected by Christians and non-Christians alike. He knew no other goal than the service of Christ and the proclamation of his word and kingdom. He wished to make it easier for men to believe in the God whom Jesus Christ proclaimed and revealed. Francis of Assisi was a man to whom nothing in human nature was unknown. He suffered great disappointments and had to bear the whole burden of human existence in sickness and pain of body and soul. As experiences of his youth show, he had won clarity as to his way in life through hard, inner struggle. His life had not been easy. Yet Francis of Assisi went through life as the 'Happy Brother'. His independence and inner freedom from property and all the good things of life had given him peace of heart; he was in every sense a man of peace. Francis of Assisi is one of those of whom the Gospel says that peace shall be with them because they are men of good will. So he, who encompassed all creatures in his love, is counted among the heroes of peace, of whom this earth possesses only too few.

Every person of significance in history, such as Francis, has meaning for us apart from his historical associations. Historical associations as

such have little value. Much more important is the significance that a great personality continues to have for us at this present time. What has Francis of Assisi to say to us today? This question concerns all of us who have been through the horror and frightfulness of the last war, whose lives have, to a great measure, become joyless and meaningless—who are seeking for the highest values in life and are longing for love and peace. We know only too well from our own experience that love and peace, together with a changed outlook and new spirit, can come only from the strength of the Christian religion. It is important to portray to the men of our time—and especially to young people—through great examples, the essential character of a living Christianity and what it can mean in the forming of one's personal life as well as the life of a nation.

Francis of Assisi stands as an example and exhortation before us today, pointing the way and himself leading towards a purposeful life that can be lived in love and peace. He is 'the rich poor one' showing men through the centuries a prototype of the real values in life and in the world. He had seen through the shallowness of earthly joys. Money, power, possessions and fame had not deceived him. Therefore he had entrusted himself to 'Lady Poverty' because he had realised that a life led in simplicity and frugality, making no demands or claims, could be more pleasing to God and therefore more worthy of man, than a life in which wealth and power constituted the real meaning and final values. If we bear in mind that most of the conflict and discord in the world between both individuals and nations have greed, envy and the craving for power and gain as their roots then we shall understand how Francis, living in poverty and simplicity, gives an example that could be a valuable contribution towards peace on earth. We must become simple and unpretentious if we want men and nations to live together peaceably. In his letter to Timothy contained in the New Testament the Apostle Paul wrote words which Francis taught and loved: 'There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs. But as for you man of God, shun all this. Aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.'

Francis of Assisi called money 'the devil's sacrament'. He himself had experienced and observed during his life-time how much harm was caused by money. Being consistent he had therefore rejected it completely and never allowed his followers to have anything to do with it. Of course, this attitude cannot simply be imitated. To follow can never mean merely to imitate, but rather to live in the spirit and with the outlook that has been demonstrated by another as a great pattern and example. Seen in this way, Francis of Assisi's attitude to money has really much to say to us—we who have to such a large extent made ourselves completely dependent on money. Goethe's words in 'Faust' express clearly and unmistakably this shattering fact: 'We cling to gold, we crave for gold—O, how poor we are!'

As a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, Francis of Assisi knew why he made poverty and simplicity of clothing, food and dwelling an absolute condition for those who wished to be his disciples. Only those who follow Jesus in this way will have inner freedom from, and be independent of, those possessions and goods which otherwise rule and enslave them. The course of history shows clearly enough that only men who are inwardly free and independent can make 'peace on earth' a reality and can establish love and fellowship among men.

Francis never intended to advocate idleness and indolence by his preaching of poverty, simplicity and lack of possessions. The opposite is true—a basic demand he made of his followers was that they show the maximum amount of kindness to others while requiring as little as possible in return. Francis did not expect himself and his brothers to be provided for by others without serving the community. He knew that work is as necessary to men as their daily bread. The Franciscan brothers helped people with their work wherever and in whatever way they could, and they accepted their bread as a reward. This point of view also contains an essential contribution towards peace in the world and between men. Whoever gives men work and provides occupation which has meaning and corresponds to their ability creates the foundations for a world at peace; for peace can only be on earth with men of goodwill when we have rightly understood the charge of God to make the earth subject to us through work which has a purpose.

Francis' attitude, not only to men but also to the whole creation, demonstrates his significance as educator towards a world which shall be peaceful, united in love and brotherliness. In all things he sees God's creation and God's gift. He beheld, 'lost completely in God's love, the Lord's greatest goodness in every creature, and therefore devoted himself with great love to them all'. He looked at the world with the eyes of Christ; to him sun, moon and stars testified to God's greatness and love; birds and all animals were God's messengers, and his dear brothers and sisters. The same brotherly bond united him

also with the elements, water and fire. Thomas von Celano reports in his life-story of Francis that he told Brother Gardener not to plant the whole garden with vegetables but to leave parts free around the sides for herbs and flowers, that these might tell of the dear Father in heaven. And in the garden itself one plot should be left free for flowers so that visitors should be reminded of the eternal, heavenly joy. When the brothers felled a tree he exhorted them to leave a stump standing so that the tree could hope to grow again. We have a particularly impressive testimony of Francis' love for the whole creation in his 'Hymn to the Sun'. There we find a stirring, living godliness, such as is otherwise only found in the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament. He, too, chose for his metaphors and parables the birds in the sky, the sun and fire in order to impart to men ultimate and decisive truths about God and the divine world. God and the world, the creation and his eternal love have become a unity anew in the 'Hymn to the Sun'. Therefore this godliness overflows in praise and gratitude, in joy and love.

Whoever goes through the world with seeing eyes knows how great is the sin and how heavy the guilt that man bears in his relationship to all created things. How much unnecessary and inexcusable suffering we men bring to God's creatures. How far are we western men from that Franciscan attitude which sees our brothers in all God's creation, in animals and plants. Francis was a peacemaker because he made love and brotherliness a reality in God's creation. Wherever he was he broke through the curse which sows hate and enmity, war and discord between man and the creation. Gratitude for, and joy in, all created things can enter our hearts only when, in the spirit of Jesus Christ and in the attitude of Francis of Assisi, the original relationship of man to God's creation is restored, so that we look at the world with new eyes and then learn to establish a fragment of God's peace as a reality in his beautiful, great and free creation.

It was in his relationship with men that Francis brought his Christian discipleship to final perfection. He was the herald of love and guardian of peace not only for the people of his day, but for all ages. He wanted nothing more than that men should return to the abundance of joy, to the fullness of peace and love which God had intended for them. He tried to lead men to true wealth by making them beggarly poor in earthly goods.

Francis knew there were bad men in the world, just as he knew suffering and sorrow from his own experience. This knowledge did not crush him but through it he grew inwardly more mature. It would be wrong to consider Francis as a simpleton who thought that real men and the real world were harmless. But he recognised and mastered the powers which overcome what is mean and evil in men and lead to

victory what is divine and good in them. So he trod this earth as one of God's peacemakers, in the sense that Jesus portrayed in the beatitudes.

To the last he longed most fervently that peace and love might be among men on earth. The peace of God filled him and took possession of him. In his discipleship of Jesus he learned to wage the hardest of all fights, the fight against himself and his own ego. His inner peace was also powerful enough to stream outwards. Only he who is filled with this inner peace can become a powerful messenger for external peace in this world of hate and war. Friedrich Wilhelm Förster, one of the most courageous, though much disputed, fighters for world peace has written some penetrating words about the significance of Francis of Assisi as a peacemaker in our time: 'The great edifice of a unified mankind upon which we are all working will collapse irremediably and will crush and bury beneath it the League of Nations and Pan-Europe and all other new edifices if the spirit of Saint Francis in a new form and pattern does not come to life again among the divided peoples and classes. This may draw a smile from "liberated" writers who know neither the world above nor the one below, who do not accurately observe either themselves or their fellow men and are unwilling to draw the inexorable conclusion from what they see. All the Foreign Offices likewise smile. They live under the illusion that their game of dominoes determines world history and that a man who lives and speaks from the world of the stars cannot be taken seriously in matters of this world. Actually, everything which is not wrested from the demons, through the powers of that higher world, helps toward the building of the Tower of Babel. No peace is more than a treacherous armistice, no bond between the classes more than a robbers' pact, unless the object of the dispute, that is material goods, is stripped of its value from above and from within, and something different draws to itself the powers of our souls. Every other order in the world depends upon the position men give to material goods in their hearts.'

As a humble servant of the highest God and his Lord, Christ, Francis lived a life of poverty, demonstrating to all high, powerful and mighty ones that poverty and simplicity, love and peace are the means above all other means which can lead this earth back to her origin and restore man, now disfigured and distorted, to the image of God, as he was once created. There is a prayer which is not proved to have been formulated by Francis of Assisi but which is in perfect harmony with his spirit. This prayer expresses with a wonderful clarity and simplicity the real, complete Franciscan attitude to life, and should be said by all men today who, like Francis, take their stand upon the gospel of peace and love. It should be said by all men who wish to follow Jesus of

Nazareth in the same spirit as Francis and his brothers did 800 years ago, because they know that this discipleship is the key to the transformation and salvation of the world.

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much

seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

FRENCH COMMUNITIES OF WORK

HENRIK F. INFELD

There are two basic traits that set off the *Communautés de Travail*, or Communities of Work, from other known types of co-operative community: first, they are predominantly urban; and, second, though they work together and share in many social activities, their members do not usually live together.

Until the appearance of the Community of Work all attempts at urban communities were limited to industrial producers' co-operatives only. In Israel, where an effort was made to establish a 'City Kibbutz', the results were disappointing. The question of whether co-operative community was applicable in practice to city conditions thus remained open.

The main significance of the Community of Work lies in the fact that it helps to answer this question in the affirmative. Its origin and development is closely connected with life in the city as it is being faced today by the industrial worker. Marcel Barbu, the initiator of the first Community of Work, was a worker himself. He was a watch-case maker and, assisted by his wife, set up a shop of his own in 1939, in Besançon. In doing so, he was prompted by the vision of a new kind of industrial enterprise in which there would be no 'bosses'; where all who

did the work would share in the planning of it and in the making of decisions concerning themselves; where all would be friends and companions in a common enterprise; and where, above all, the working man would cease to be a mere adjunct to the machine and be restored to his dignity as a human being. What Barbu had in mind, in other words, was a communitarian organisation of industrial workers. After many trials and tribulations—which included the German occupation, the destruction of his factory and a flight to Valence, where a new beginning had to be made only to be interrupted again by German persecution—the first Community of Work emerged, in January 1944. It was called 'Boitiers de Montre de Dauphiné, Communauté Marcel Barbu', known today under the name of *Boimondau*, a contraction of the first syllables in the first three words of the original name.

The 'formula' developed by Barbu and his group proved effective enough to win adherents not only among the workers but also among some of the employers. Once the war had ended, Communities of Work sprang up in many parts of France as well as, though in much smaller numbers, in Belgium, Holland, Italy and Switzerland. Most of these undertakings were launched by the workers themselves, but there was among them also a number of 'transformations', or conversions of originally capitalistic enterprises into Communities of Work, usually initiated by the owners themselves. In 1950, the number of communities and related projects had risen to eighty-three, with a recorded membership of 1,460 households, the size of membership ranging from 150 households in the largest of the communities, to two households in the smallest. Some of the trades and occupations practised by the communities, in the order of frequency, were: mixed farming (thirteen); construction (six); watch-case making (five); footwear manufacture, mechanics, woodworking and furniture manufacture (four of each). This list shows that a great variety of trades and occupations can serve as an economic basis for a Community of Work. Since the above compilation was made, the number of all these communities has been considerably reduced, to some fifty at present. In the process, all the farming communities but one have disappeared, while, curiously enough, the 'transformations', of which there are about ten, have stood their ground and are among the most promising establishments of the movement.

In their search for community, Barbu and his companions early realised that it would have to be essentially of a moral nature. They felt the need for a 'common ethical basis' and on such a foundation their community developed the essential features which can briefly be described as follows:

In legal terms, a Community of Work may be either a 'co-operative in communitarian form', a joint stock company or a limited company.

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Whatever its legal status, the highest authority rests with the General Assembly, in which each member has one vote. The Assembly, which meets at least once a year, elects a head of the community and different committees. All rules and directives issue from the General Assembly and are accepted by unanimous consent rather than by majority vote. Two consultative bodies, the Management Board and the Administrative Council, assist the head of the community in the performance of his various tasks. Other committees are the Control Committee, which is in charge of financial affairs, and the Arbitration Committee, charged with settling any disputes that may arise between members.

In addition to the General Assembly, two regular meetings serve to keep the members informed on matters of current interest. The one is the Assembly of Contact, which convenes once a week and is open to all who in any way are connected with the community; the other is the Assembly of Companions, which meets less frequently and may be attended by the full members only.

The organisation of a fully developed Community of Work consists of several departments, the activities of which are carried on by teams, headed by a foreman or officer.

The Communities of Work neither disregard nor do they exaggerate actual or potential differences, in the capacity for work or in the actual performance, that exist among the members. Status and remuneration, consequently, are differential. To become a full member any applicant must pass through two consecutive probationary stages, an apprenticeship of three, and a candidacy of thirteen months. Membership itself may be of two kinds. The *productifs*, or productive companions, are men and women who participate directly in the functions essential to the community, be it in the shop, in the office, or in its social activities. The *familiers*, or family companions, are those who acquire membership by virtue of their marriage to a companion. More uniquely communitarian is the principle that regulates remuneration, as illustrated by the following statement from the manual of Boimondau: 'The aim of the community is to give people and society an opportunity to live again a full life. Consequently, remuneration will be based on what constitutes for the community the full value of a person. This is in accordance with the communitarian concept of work which includes every activity that is likely to advance men and humanity towards their goal. In this sense, the right to enjoy the fruits of their work must be granted to those whose contribution tends not to be fully appreciated in capitalistic society—the wives, the mothers, the children. Thus the entirety of wealth produced by the work of all should be equitably distributed among all who belong to the community.' The implementation of this principle offers considerable difficulties and has produced several quite complicated schemes, which it would lead too far to discuss here.

But the concern of the Communities of Work with remuneration according to 'human value' is by no means a mere fad and one of those peculiarities that so often afflict dissident groups. It is rather indicative of their sober determination not to evade the issues co-operative community has to face in the specific complexity of an urban setting. The solutions are far from being conclusive and some may yet be subject to substantial modification; but the way they are being conceived shows a great deal of ingenuity. This is true also with regard to the institution which some of the more advanced groups have evolved in their attempt to meet the problem posed by the fact that the members, even after joining the community, remain dispersed throughout the city. This institution is the *groupe de quartier*, or Neighbourhood Group.

A typical Neighbourhood Group is formed by five to eight families, or by ten to sixteen members, who live in the same part of the city. People who have moved away from the neighbourhood sometimes choose to continue with the same group. They usually meet once or twice a month. The topic or topics discussed, as well as the conclusions reached, are briefly noted by the secretary. The record is then forwarded to the head of the community, who keeps in direct contact with the Neighbourhood Groups by means of a monthly meeting with their directors.

In addition to being centres of the community's social life, the Neighbourhood Groups constitute also the natural units for the practice of mutual help. When, in 1948, the watch-case market virtually collapsed and *Boimondau*, instead of going into bankruptcy, decided to continue with what amounted to nominal wages, co-operation in its Neighbourhood Groups became almost all-inclusive. In several of these groups the members put the pittance allowed each family into a common purse; those who grew vegetables in their small gardens contributed them freely for the use of all; they shopped, cooked, and ate together; and those with small families took in children from the more crowded households. Thus resorting to fuller communal practice they managed to survive the emergency which lasted several months.

Remuneration in accordance with 'human value' and the Neighbourhood Groups, ingenious as they are in themselves, represent no final solution to the issues that have to be faced by the urban co-operative community. Whether the present differential wage scale will be made obsolete by further refinement or by a growth of communitarian spirit that will render meaningless concern with 'mine' and 'thine', must at the moment remain a matter of conjecture. Open must also remain the question of whether the Neighbourhood Group will eventually be absorbed by a development that will lead to the establishment of suburban communal settlements, such as are even now being

contemplated by some of the Communities of Work located in small towns. One thing, however, is certain. Whatever the future may hold in store for them, the Communities of Work already have succeeded in demonstrating that urban co-operative community is possible. They have discovered some of the essential modifications co-operative community must undergo in this new setting and they are implementing them with a great deal of ability.

A sign of the vitality of the movement is the strong federative tendency it displays. There were in existence hardly more than a handful of communities, when they proceeded to establish contact with each other. Out of these efforts grew the *Entente Communautaire*, the Communitarian Federation, which to-day includes three regional federations, one in the south, one in the north, and a most active one in the Paris area, the so-called FECOPA. The *Entente* serves as the co-ordinating agency for all the Communities of Work, in and outside of France. It represents them in their dealings with the government and municipal authorities; it assists them in drawing up their bye-laws; and advises them in financial matters. In addition to quarterly regional meetings the *Entente* convenes at least once a year a general assembly attended by delegates from all the communities. Several of the larger communities have their own house organs, among which the most impressive is the *Lien* of Boimondau. The official organ of the *Entente* is *Communauté*, issued monthly from its headquarters in Paris. In 1953 the *Entente* took an active part in the establishment of the *Bureau d'Études Co-opératives et Communautaires* (Research centre for Co-operative and Communitarian Studies), modelled after the Group Farming Research Institute. The purpose of the *Bureau* is to carry out studies in: (1) communitarian theory and practice of the past; (2) economic aspects and living standards; and (3) inter-personal and inter-group relations. The *Bureau* is affiliated with the newly founded International Council for Research in the Sociology of Co-operation, which has representatives in all leading countries of Europe as well as in Israel and India. In this way, the French Communities of Work link up with the many groups which all over the world today carry on the sociological experiments that go by the name of co-operative communities, the great common goal of which might be defined as the search for a new and better ethically committed society.



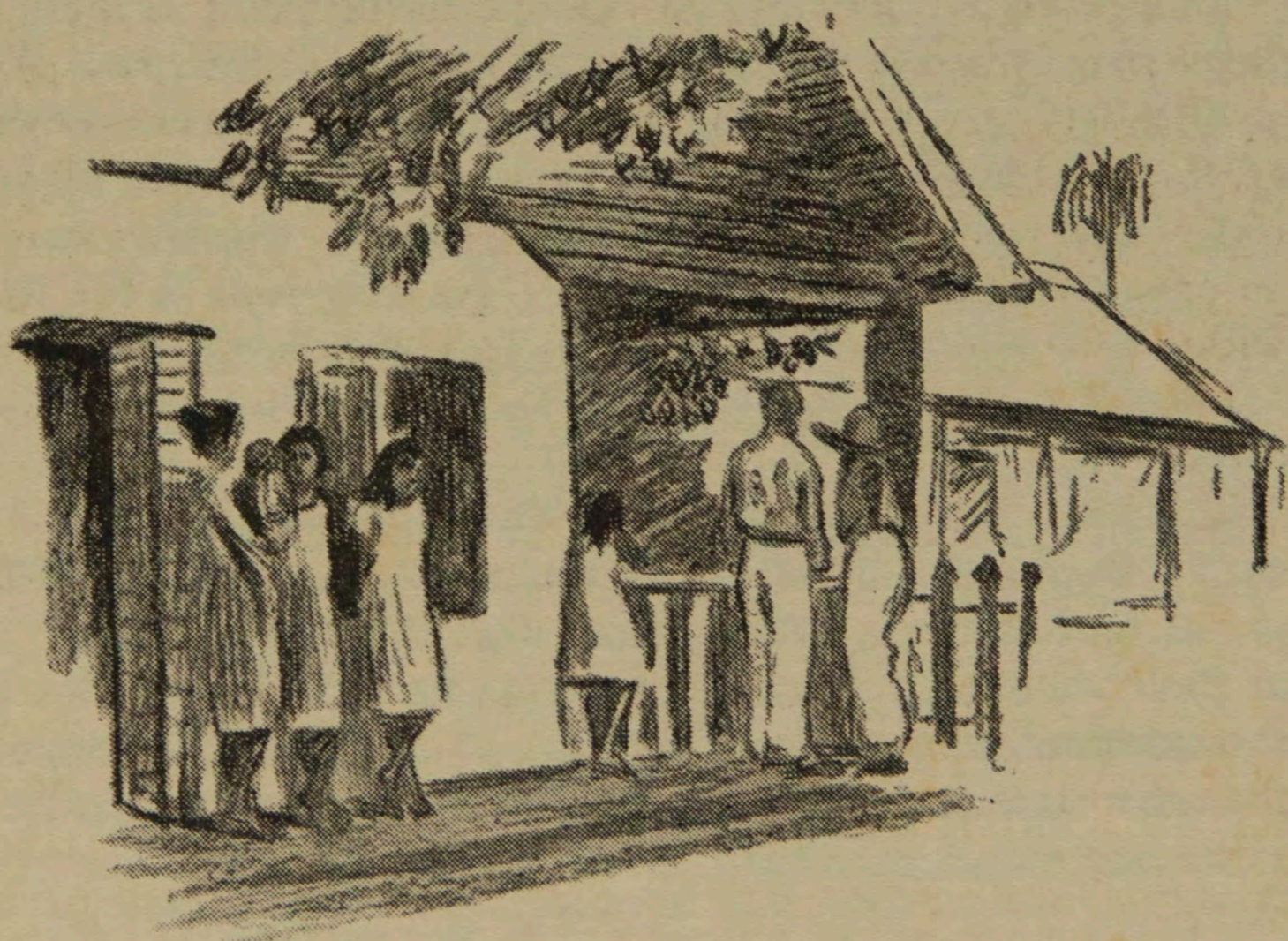
HOSPITAL AT PRIMAVERA

MAUREEN BURN

The hospital began when the Primavera community began. To say that both of them started from scratch is an understatement. Emigrating from England in 1941, we arrived with three hundred and fifty people of all ages at a cattle ranch in the centre of eastern Paraguay. On the land we had bought in the haste of necessity there was one single house, several huts and corrals, two long expanses of grassland bordered by forest, and little else. Our first shelter was a series of grass roofs provided with canvas walls. To build the first real house we went out and cut posts, joists and bamboo laths from the forest and thatch-grass from the range land.

The three doctors who had joined the group shortly before it left England started work in one end of this first building, where the operating room was provided by putting up walls of boards hand-sawn from logs in sawpits. What with the poor food, emergency housing and change of climate, there was plenty of illness among community members. The news that the new people had doctors among them began to spread from one village to another in the district. Soon the first patients from the neighbourhood began to come in, or to send for the doctors. People were there and had to be helped. That was the beginning of the hospital.

Things have changed since those days. The living conditions in Primavera are better and our adaptation to the country is more effective. There is therefore proportionately less illness within the community which, however, has doubled in size in the thirteen years. Meanwhile the readiness of the people round about to seek medical help when they need it has increased. The hospital has grown from a single section in one house, where consultation, treatment, preparation of medicines and laboratory analysis all had to be done in a space about twenty by thirty feet. Now there are two main buildings with twenty-four beds, operating theatre, X-ray room, special rooms for consultation, a laboratory and pharmacy, besides a fine brick maternity house, a kitchen, a laundry and an isolation house.

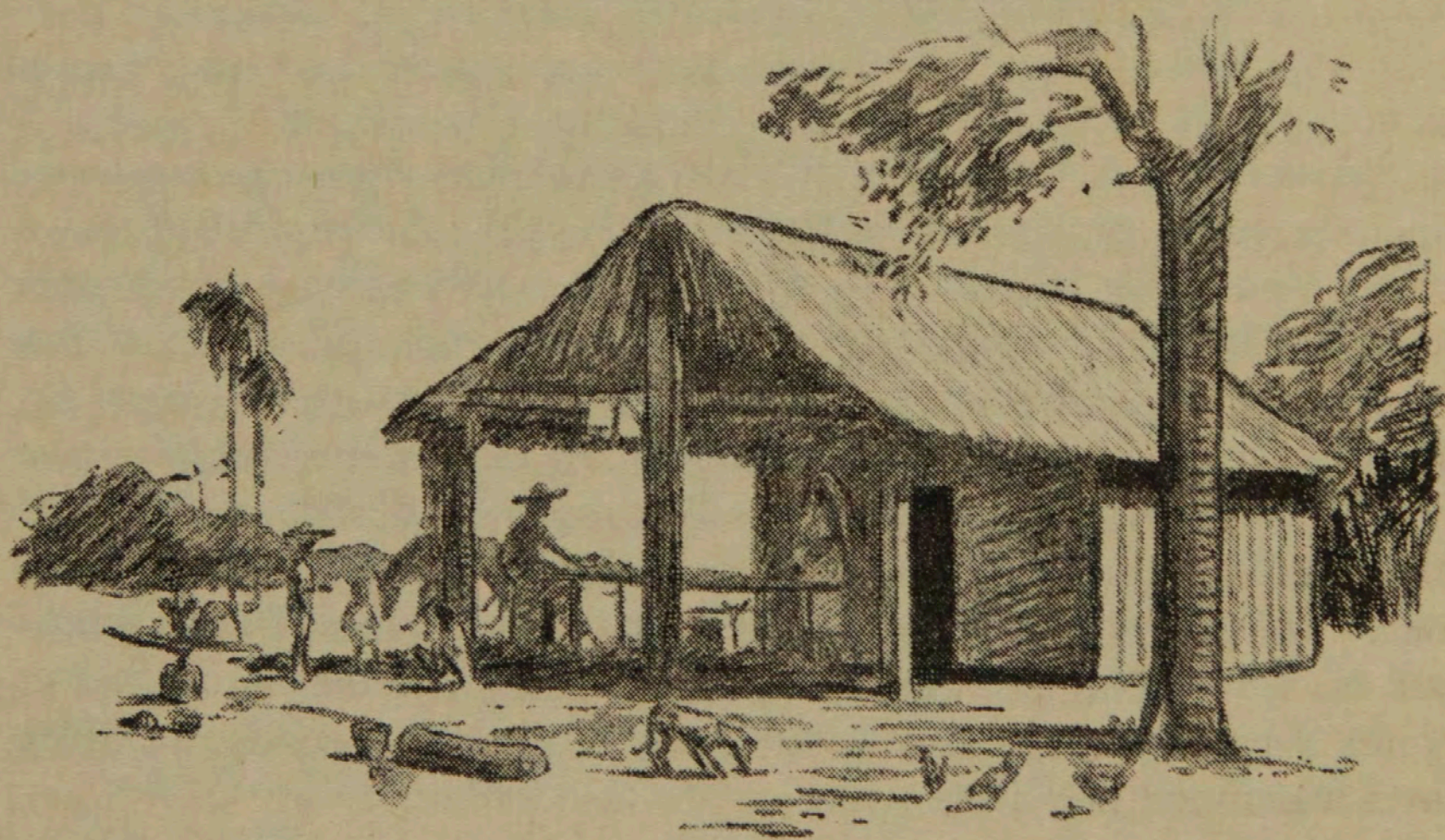


And still the demand for medical service has always grown faster than we could provide facilities and personnel to cope with it. Even twenty-four beds will soon be too few, especially as contagious cases must be isolated. There always have been and still are too few capable nurses, so that the doctors are overburdened with nursing work. There is an urgent need for decent housing for patients' relatives and regularly treated outpatients whose homes are far away. Every year more patients are treated, but the medical care available to the approximately thirty thousand people in the thousand square miles around us is still far from adequate, even if we accept much less than European or North American minimums as 'adequate', or even if we say: adequate for a 'backward country'.

In this under-developed country there are not only fewer doctors, there is much more injury and disease. In both cow-herding and forest clearing—and these are the two main jobs for the men—there are plenty of broken bones, and the woodsman often suffers severe axe and *machete* (bush knife) cuts.

Housing outside the towns is below even most slum standards. The usual home of the Paraguayan *campesino* (country dweller) consists of a thatched roof covering two rooms. One of these with mud walls is the family bedroom, where father, mother and up to eight children sleep. The other room, actually only a porch since it has no walls, is the kitchen and sitting-room, with a fire on the floor and seats and utensils grouped around it. The climate here is called sub-tropical, but it is continental as well, which means severe extremes of temperature. Winter temperatures frequently go below freezing point at night. The father's *poncho* (a blanket with a slit in the middle for the head) is often the only blanket in the house. But since he uses it as an overcoat during the day, there are times when it is too wet to sleep under at night. On cold nights the wooden shutters of the glassless windows are shut tight to preserve what warmth there is. Days may pass in the winter-time without the shutters being opened. In the dark, cramped, warm, moist atmosphere inside, tuberculosis and other contagious diseases spread readily.

Clothing is scanty. When there is frost on the ground, the men wear their year-round trousers and shirt, with only the *poncho* in addition, and go barefoot to work. Women stay near the fire or wrap a shawl around their shoulders. Most young children wear no clothes at all until they are four or five, or at most a shirt which stops short somewhere near the waist. It is the children who suffer most. Half die before they



are ten, many just after birth from tetanus caused by dirty methods used by local 'midwives'. Exposed naked to the constant cold of winter and to occasional sharp drops in temperature—as much as thirty-five degrees in ten minutes before a storm—they develop severe chills, bronchitis, pneumonia and gastro-intestinal troubles. Even in warm weather, they pick up hookworm from the filth of the floor and yard. Children two and three years old are brought to the hospital with swollen stomachs and white lips—the anaemia and malnutrition characteristic of hookworm. Cured, they go back home and pick up the worms again. In such poverty, lack of sanitation and ignorance, this can go on indefinitely.



It is estimated that ninety per cent of the Paraguayan people have hookworm, which accounts for much general listlessness and low resistance to infection. The hospital has one day a week especially for hookworm cures, and there is as much work as the staff can manage.

We treat many of the diseases found in North America and Europe, also malaria, some leprosy and a mild form of smallpox. Venereal disease is particularly prevalent in Paraguay, due partly to social and moral conditions and partly to the disastrous war of 1865-70 in which four-fifths of the population and most of the men were killed and the country left, so to speak, for dead. There are many difficult maternity cases, some due to delayed assistance owing to transport difficulties, others to superstitious traditional practices.

In addition, there are rarer diseases peculiar to the tropics. *Leishmaniosis* is a spreading sore contracted in the woods by some means not yet fully understood. The sores never heal of themselves and can cause prolonged suffering, later disfigurement of the nose and eventually death, if they are not treated in time. One of the most striking cases was that of a man of twenty-eight who had not been able to work

for nine years. He arrived at the hospital white and haggard, looking as though he had forgotten how to smile, with an evil-smelling sore down the side of one leg, covered by a strip of leather in place of bandages. After six weeks' treatment the smell began to disappear from the dressings, the sore began to heal and the man took interest in life again. He finally recovered completely and was able to start working again.

In many cases the margin between life and death is a matter of hours. A short time ago a man who had been bitten by a poisonous snake in the woods was carried in to the hospital by two friends. Since nobody knew which kind of snake it had been, we could not inject a specific anti-venom. There was nothing to do but try a polyvalent (an anti-toxin acting against all the common snake poisons) and wait for results. Tests showed that the poison had attacked the blood so that it no longer coagulated. There was bleeding from the lungs and kidneys. We increased the doses of anti-toxin and watched the man's condition carefully until his blood began to return to normal. His wife, who arrived next morning from their distant home, was overjoyed and immensely grateful to find him still alive and already recovering. If he had come half a day later it would have been too late.



All too often, it is too late because of ignorance or reluctance to go to a doctor. A strong wood-cutter twenty-two years old was brought in gravely ill from tetanus. He had cut his foot with a *machete*. When 'lock-jaw' set in he had hoped it would pass away, not knowing what the infection was or how dangerous it could be.

Not until a week later was he brought to us. The doctors stayed with him night and day but it was too late.

Another great cause of delay in treatment is the state of transportation in the country. To say that the country has practically no railroads and that there are no paved roads except in the neighbourhood of the capital and the more progressive South, still does not convey the full impression. The roads here are not what a European or North American means by a dirt road. They are one-lane tracks over the grey or red clay, cutting through the intermittent pieces of forest and even through swamp. In

places the tracks are deeply rutted and washed out by heavy rains, with one side several feet deeper than the other. When we came to Primavera the prevalent method of travel for an invalid was still the two-wheeled ox-cart which moves with jolts and jars at about the pace of a man walking slowly. There were patients who came thirty miles to the hospital in these *carretas*. Now there are more horse wagons and even trucks which bring patients more quickly. Still some die on the way. Around the edge of our land are several of those little wooden crosses which these people use to mark where someone has died. On certain days the relatives come and decorate the cross with flowers or set up a burning candle in a jam jar or an old tin. One of these crosses is for a woman who died two miles from the hospital after eight days of delayed labour and a *carreta* journey of twenty-two miles.

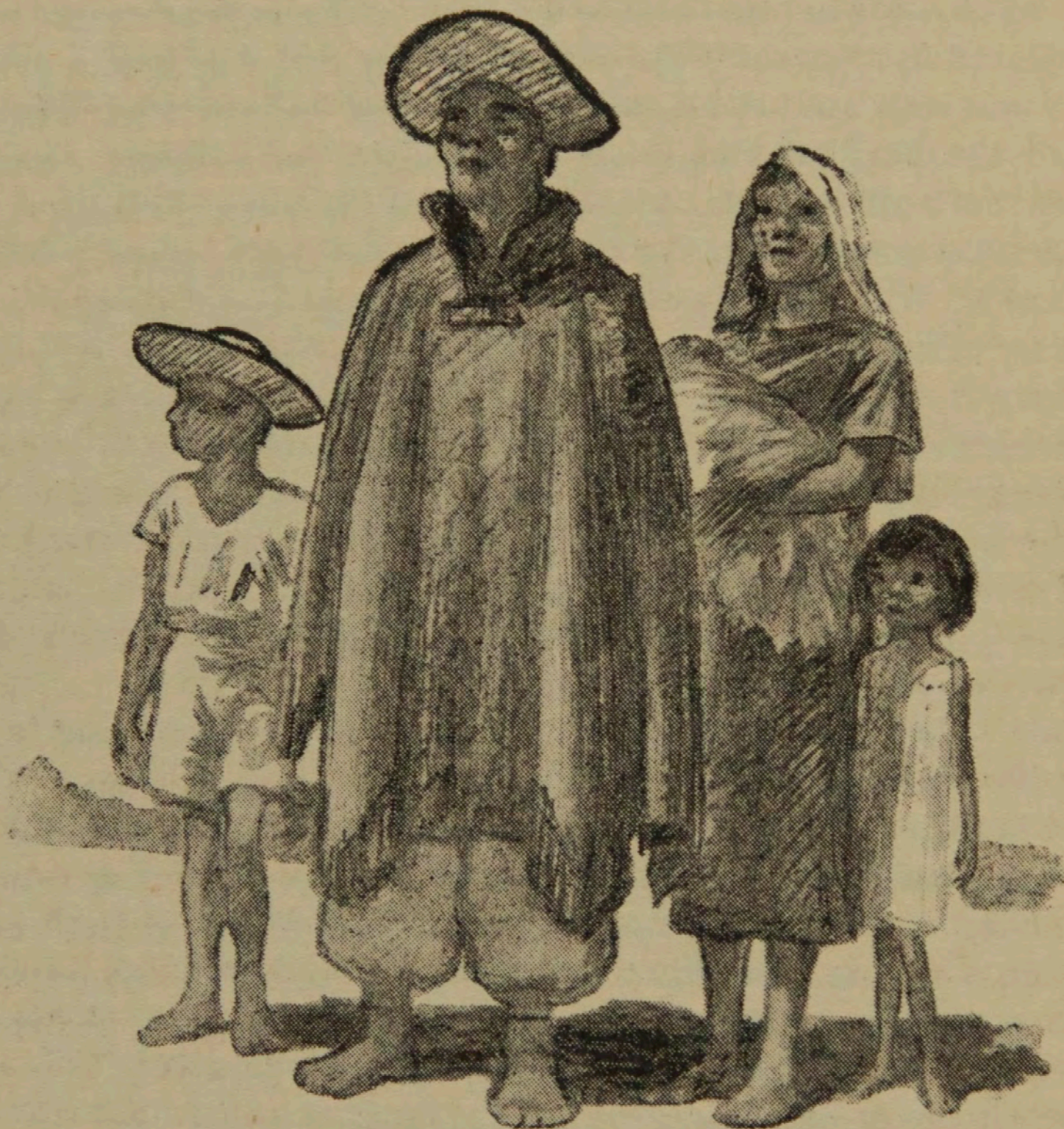
In another case which turned out more happily, we were able to act quickly after initial delay. A small boy from a few miles away had been kicked in the forehead by a horse. He was unconscious when his parents got a wagon ready to bring him to the hospital. Just after they had set out a tropical thunderstorm broke with such fury that they had to pull into shelter and wait until the flooding of the road had subsided. The child reached the hospital twenty-six hours after the accident. Diagnosis showed that a piece of bone was endangering the brain. This required an operation by a specialist. We kept up constant radio contact with our members in Asunción, the capital and only large city of Paraguay, until all arrangements had been made. Then the boy was carried to the airstrip next to our village, picked up by a light plane and flown, together with a nurse, to Asunción. The treatment there resulted in full recovery.

There are times when our own doctors have to do emergency operations. These and accident cases usually require blood transfusion. It is a good thing that the hospital is part of the community, because in addition to relatives and friends of the patients we have our own list of donors ready to help when necessary.

In the beginning, people would sometimes delay coming because they knew they couldn't pay for the treatment. This happens less often now, since they have learned that we give medical service according to need and not according to ability to pay. The general medical insurance (Institución de Previsión Social) begun by the government several years ago is also an encouragement to them though it cannot provide all that is needed for serious cases. Often patients without money offer some of the crops from their house-gardens in payment. This is not much help to us in buying medicines, most of which cost expensive U.S. dollars. (A daily wage here is the equivalent of 6s. od. or \$0.85 U.S.) The cost of treatment is often much more than these poor people can afford. They may offer a wagon-load of corn (maize), a big part of what they have grown in a year. One young woman laid a few pieces of

a broken silver bangle on the table to pay for the treatment of her small brother whose legs had been broken under the nine-foot wheels of an ox-cart. To pay for a very difficult and complicated stomach operation with a long treatment period, a man offered us two golden wedding rings. He gave up only because we kept on refusing. But a week or so later two loads of corn arrived in payment. When we asked the wagoner, we were told they had been paid for by two wedding rings.

Our hospital now treats about ten thousand patients a year, and though we feel it is urgent to expand if we are to cope even with this, such an extension would still be only the beginning of an approach to the real magnitude of illness and suffering in this country. But when people come, as a woman did who walked twelve miles under the gruelling Paraguayan sun with one child in her arms and two more tugging at her skirt, there is only one answer: Help them.



ARE WE MADE FOR A BROTHERLY LIFE?

The two following contributions have been written by men who have joined our community, together with their families. The first statement was contained in a letter written by a friend in the Argentine to explain to a relative why he and his wife, who both escaped from death or imprisonment in Hitler-Germany, feel called to community life. The second contribution is by a former French pastor, who came to us earlier this year from France.

I

H. has written to me briefly about your telephone conversation with her and mentions your saying, we are not made for life in community. Unintentionally, your words express more than you meant to say, for 'to be made' or created means 'to be a creature', and implies the existence of a Creator. Therefore, when we ask of someone whether he has been made for this or that, our question really is whether the Maker has created him for this or that purpose. If one looks at your question in this way, we must say that certainly we have been made for such a life, namely a life of love, hope, unity and fulfilment, although we have to admit that we are unfitted for it – entirely and absolutely.

Why do we suppose that we have been made for something for which we are really unfitted (we and all men)? Perhaps we shall get nearer to the answer if I ask you whether we have been made for the life we have been living up to the present, and if we (and all men) are particularly fitted for it. Are we meant to believe that the ultimate purpose of our being, the basis of our life, of this wonderful, unique mystery, is a form of existence such as the present one with its wars, its acts of violence, injustices, its concentration and labour camps, its hospitals, asylums, starving children and slums? Are we made for this?

Perhaps you will ask: 'What have you to do with all this?' Now that is just the point. We have a great deal to do with it, even though so far we have been spared these particular aspects of the normal existence, influenced as it is by the forces of history. All men have 'to do' with it, only they do not see it because it is not easily visible, and if they do recognise such things they deny them because the recognition that one really could have something 'to do' with them is painful and even shocking.

Let us forget for a moment that it is by mere coincidence that we have escaped hunger, gas-chambers and other horrors of war. To say: 'But you are leading a perfectly normal life,' is to give vent to an empty phrase springing from habit and thoughtlessness. Our life is indeed normal, but that of the jobless, those put to death in gas-chambers, the cripples, the deportees, the exploited—is that perhaps not normal? It is so normal, so right, so reasonable, that every year men all over the world are being trained for war even when there is no war going on.

One often hears the argument that the world is like that, and each individual should be thankful if he is spared; it is just hard lines on the other and, after all, it is not really our fault!

Is life then indeed something from which man should be spared? Is it only a question of survival, of saving oneself and, if possible, those near to one, and nothing more? There are, of course, still concerts and travel and 'good' books, and one can also do a good deed now and again. . . . No one can ask more than that!—Not to want more than this is, I believe, the real, the black despair—it is the despair of the possibility of a better and truer life. To be satisfied with this, to say to oneself it is sufficient to lead a 'normal' happy life while others lead a 'normal' unhappy life, this is, when all is said and done, despair of oneself, for it is a belief that man is not called to anything higher than to live as the dice fall—at the top or at the bottom. That is a sterile despair (though there is a fruitful one); and such a despair, which springs from resignation, short-sightedness and indolence, is guilt. This is the guilt which binds us with invisible bonds to the persecuted, to the unprivileged. Therefore *we* are to blame for every man who falls in Indo-China, for every child who starves, for every act of violence committed in the name of property and law, because we think it must be so, that it always has been so and that it cannot be changed. That is our guilt, the guilt of our fathers, our forefathers and all mankind. We, too, have despaired of the world that has been handed on like a hot potato from one generation to another, and every time there has been only one fool, amongst thousands of wise men, who has attempted to break the chain of evil, to stand against the current. I, too, have despaired, not of the purpose of my life nor the meaning of creation but of that which has arisen from the sin of all men. If I have to acknowledge that our present mode of existence is final and right, then indeed Marx, Ford, Rosenberg and Sade were right; but then there would be no point in any kind of 'noble' deeds.

You are bound to ask me where my guilt lies in all this, I who have lived such a quiet, peaceful, amiable kind of life, I and my forefathers, where then—apart from what has just been mentioned which one could, if one wants to, call philosophical—is real guilt?

It lies in this, that I have been able to look after myself in a system which, in its final repercussions, leads to war and murder; that we three have lived comfortably in our home while others have had to live eight in one room. It lies in this, that I am prepared for my children to go to the same schools and to discharge the self-same military service which together renew and perpetuate the existing order of things; and that as long as I live in this order I am saying yes to it, even though my lips may say no, and even though in conversation at social gatherings I may deplore it. If I have recognised this guilt, and

have received a child from God, and if I bring up this child in a world order which I continue to support, then I am twice guilty: not only because of my own child but because of all children. For all those people who have died behind barbed wire were once innocent children, born of guilty parents into a world which men thought they could not change, a world in which everything ought to have been changed—not by Five Year Plans and collectivism or racism or 'United Nations', but by a change in each one of us. This has not happened, however, and each believes it is not his fault that all are suffering.

Men have been told how they should change. They have been told what they should do and should not do. In a simple, clear and straightforward way it has been put before them. They have known all about it, but they have been cowardly, petty, unbelieving and possessive. They have thought if only they have their own house they need not despair of life, even though others freeze to death under bridges. They have heaped guilt upon guilt and have mocked those who do not wish to do the same.

I know that the few thousand men who listen and who have listened to God's voice cannot change the course of history—not we ourselves, and not our sons or our grandsons. But I know, too, that if this curse-ridden history is ever to come to an end it can only come about through such men. Even if there is, as yet, no visible result, it is only men who say no to evil and live accordingly who preserve the meaning of life and the dignity of man. Every individual—in this case I—can find the purpose of life, its fulfilment, only in this attitude, if he is not to despair. That is the reason for such a decision as ours.

We are certain that we are far too small and weak to achieve this right attitude. And here I come to what H. said in her letter. Obviously we can only try to live according to the will of our Maker (for which we are 'made') if we *believe* that this is the only true way to live. But if one does believe this one may hope that through this faith strength can be given, visible or invisible. We live as God demands we should only when we believe in him, and only then can we hope for his love, that is, his strength. Faith, however, does not mean to speak sacred words, it means living. Therefore we want to live so that life, faith, heart and mind may become one. To live in unity means to live in a unity which embraces everything, it means to reject all that separates, divides and breaks up. It means, finally, life in community, not for its own sake but as a necessary consequence. This is not flight from evil but an effective stand against it. It is also not indifference to others 'in the world', for as all men are responsible for each other even in their ignorance, they are all the more so if they recognise their responsibility. Practically speaking, I might add that the Bruderhof communities are in far greater danger than isolated citizens of becoming the victims of evil

forces in history because of their open, if peaceful, rebellion against the existing 'order'. But if one must expect to lose one's life through war or in a concentration camp, then let it be as a victim and a conscious opponent and not as one who is indifferent or who even unwittingly participates in that same evil which would eventually crush him. This is only to reply to the argument of 'flight'; as far as 'separation' is concerned, the community is open to one and all.

Dear E., I am writing all this in an endeavour to explain to you just a little why it is our wish to live in this way. I feel that if you agree with what I have said we no longer have the right to shake our heads over the brothers, but should support them in our hearts and warmly encourage those who want to share their life.

Argentine, S.

II

I always have the impression that I began to live when I was twenty years of age, for it was then that I realised what it means to become a Christian. I shall never forget one scene from that time. While in hospital for three months I was cared for by a nurse who merited the name 'sister' more on account of her warm heart than the white garment of her Order. She showed great patience in looking after the bed and cleanliness of each patient in her ward as well as in carrying out the doctor's instructions. She reported about each one to the doctor when he came round. Down on her knees, in the sweat of her brow, she waxed and polished the linoleum of the immense corridor. She it was, too, who, with a confiding, happy glance for each one of us, quietly wished us 'good morning' or 'good night'. The longer I observed her the more I said to myself: it seems that one who surrenders herself completely for others finds a peace that for me is almost inconceivable.

At that time, among other books, I began to read the Gospels. Sometimes I understood what I read, sometimes not. The more I studied these writings the greater became my desire to know more of him whom men call Jesus. Later on I studied to become a minister of the Reformed Church. Although I found good comrades among my fellow students, deep down within myself I felt a great loneliness which only came to an end when my friendship began with the young woman who was to become my wife.

I was sent to a church and began my appointed work. Soon, however, I started to question whether it was honest and right, on the one hand to talk a lot about the Gospel, and on the other hand to accept as normal that the revolutionary power of the Gospel is scarcely ever expressed in deed. Why should it not be possible for, say, a business man who every Sunday morning in church meets a certain postman (even if they do not sit on the same bench) to decide at long last to

approach him, and why should they not come to understand and agree with each other? And yet it does not happen. I, too (so I said to myself), whenever I talk with a worker, do I not find the same wall built of all manner of injustice and selfishness rising up between us? I have no need, as he has, to fear unemployment; my salary would not be reduced on account of illness; I have a home which is really more than adequate. I saw no way of removing this wall. More than once I asked myself, as I fastened the countless buttons on my black gown before ascending the pulpit: 'Would it not be better to be silent this time?' I soon realised that I was becoming merely an official, and rather than this, together with my wife, I made the decision to work for our daily bread and to accept the conditions of life of a worker in order to experience and share these conditions, instead of merely talking about them from afar off. And so I became a fitter in a firm manufacturing electrical fittings.

I was very happy to find myself all day long banging holes in walls of concrete or brick with a big hammer and chisel. At every blow splinters fly into one's face and eyes, but such troubles are rewarded by the successful completion of the job—for the worker loves a job well done. What he does not like is the fact that from the moment he begins to work for a concern he becomes a commodity. The current price on the labour market is what his wages will always be. More than that he will not get, no matter whether he works well or does as little as possible. And when at about fifty the worker's strength declines, he comes into the category of those who are liable to get fired. The inadequate wage not only makes it difficult for the worker's wife to make ends meet, but it also means that he never has time for his family and particularly not for his children, for he will try to earn more money by working overtime. It means further that his dwelling will be too small and of such a kind that he is forced to turn on his radio so as not to hear that of his neighbour, and that the decisive role in his children's education will be that of the street and cinema. So the prospects for the future are not very encouraging and one can understand that the worker, having received and counted his pay, sometimes prefers to spend the evening with others at a public-house.

The worker does not often speak of his misery, but he feels it, and so, when some priest or parson puts on overalls to join in the work, such a gesture is appreciated by the worker. 'But why does he do that?' he will say. 'Surely to make propaganda for his church!' I have met fellow-workers (I need not here describe the intense and yet shy curiosity of the worker about this mysterious person who penetrates into his world) who tried to find a way out of this fate which crushes their existence. Perhaps one could sometimes help them a little. But could I show them that there is a power which can completely free men

from a social system (including its smelly lanes and noise-filled tenements) where they are shut out from everything apart from the public-house and the cinema? No, I could not do this. For I would have had to show them an actual beginning, a place where this is a reality, a society which has an open door for them.

My wife and I reminded ourselves that there had been times when people had the courage to share everything with one another, and that amongst the Christians of those days everyone had enough. Sometimes we read together the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. But how could we find this way again in the present-day world? We had friends who helped us and were helped by us, especially during holidays; but it was generally the case that we could not even find the time to meet together once a month. We lived too far apart, had one or several small children and came home late from work. I had given up the belief that community life could exist today. I did not see anything which was not subject to the ubiquitous law of the struggle for existence, and I was on the way to becoming resigned. What good did it do to take on oneself the conditions of a working man, when it only led to the recognition that one could not do anything and had to resign oneself to things as they are just like everybody else.

In May of this year (at the age of twenty-nine) I came with my wife and young child to the Wheathill Bruderhof. We could hardly believe our eyes at finding here so simply realised what we had found so difficult to imagine. Here love, the surrender of one's self, has been translated into action and has created a form of economy which frees men. As a result of the experiences we had gone through we came here full of doubts and criticisms. But all these have evaporated: here is something different at work from men's good intentions.

G.L.

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following expedient. Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self-rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.

M. K. GANDHI

FORUM

The Spirit of Prophecy

In the last number of *THE PLOUGH* (Summer 1954) I read an especially appreciative and understanding review of my book on 'Mennonite Piety', and wish to thank you very warmly for those words. This formulation of my ideas was perhaps the best among all the reviews I have seen. The reason is clear. You, dear brothers, understand my meaning, whereas most reviewers have an outer approach to this question of piety. As you know I concluded the first part of my book with a quotation from Eberhard Arnold, which I still believe touches most deeply the core of the problem.

In August of this year I visited your new Bruderhof, Woodcrest, near Rifton, N.Y. I was only there for one evening and the best part of the next day, as I was on a trip with my son and could not spare more time; but as we were there for a Sunday meeting and the meal which followed, our stay was rich in impressions and inner experiences.
U.S.A. R.F.

I am always glad to read *THE PLOUGH*, for the spiritual atmosphere I find there is also that of my family and myself. You know that I have followed the development of the Bruderhof since the time when it was in Liechtenstein, and later on my friend Henri Lasserre gave me a long article on his visit to the English Bruderhof, for the paper 'L'Esson' which I edited and the last number of which I send you herewith.

I therefore feel moved to share with you here a few observations regarding the article by Artur Mettler and particularly about pages 5 to 7 where he speaks about Quakers. I am afraid that owing to the fact that he views them from the outside, or through the channel of certain books, he is not fully aware of the deep meaning of the contact with God, with the divine voice in the depth of the human conscience, which characterises the centre of the spiritual life of those Quakers who are worthy of the name. I have written two books on the attitude of Quakers, which I also share. One of these, 'The Source of all Life', is about Jesus and St. Paul, and about the various psychological types. Among these types there are some who need a certain collective framework, others go straight to Christ and unite on this way. Among Quakers one has to distinguish between those who remain within Protestantism where either they or their parents were born; those who, perceiving the different sectors of Christianity which in the course of history have issued from Christ, strive to re-establish unity, being in this way related to the Ecumenical Movement; and finally those who perceive the voice of God in all human souls which are open to him, also in

Hindus, Chinese, or Africans; and these Quakers find brothers in U.N.E.S.C.O., I.V.S.P., etc. Service is, however, as Eberhard Arnold points out on page 12, but a secondary radiation of God's love through a man who is open to grace. That which matters is precisely this receptivity, this contact between the human person and the voice of God.

In another writing, 'Religious Education and the Psychology of the Unconscious', I set forth how Quaker education opens the child's soul to God, and in 'The Essential' I show the call of God in all religions. Switzerland. A.F.

From an American Indian

An old-timer Navajo friend brought my mail in by pony from the Trading Post yesterday, and your good letter with several copies of THE PLOUGH was in the bundle. Some white people are going out to Flagstaff, Arizona, today or early tomorrow, so I shall have to hurry a note to you before getting to read those PLOUGH copies if this is to go out now. I shall be more than glad to offer comments, or ask questions, if either arise, and I thank you for asking for both. And speaking of being 'more than glad' this expression also includes my interest in spreading the news about the Bruderhof, and the plans for a U.S. community. In fact, in the bundle of mail I have just received was a letter requesting more Bruderhof news. In the same mail as this will go that information and an extra PLOUGH. Perhaps this would be a good time to say that although I will be, and am, 'more than glad' to publicize the Bruderhof—and I will do it, too—I am not a Christian. Judging from my meagre understanding of your way of life, it is Jesus centred, and if that be true, I personally would perhaps find it difficult to adapt. Many other Indians would feel similarly; but since there are relatively few Indians in the U.S.A. this fact would have very little influence on the size or success of an American Bruderhof. Although I am not a Christian, I can clearly see that any philosophy which results in the physical manifestation of small self-reliant communities, with no leaders, is strictly on the right track. Since the Bruderhof is on that track, and since it is also pacifist, and since it appeals not only to white people but to Christian white people (the two groupings which need community most) I will be glad to help you as much as I can. When I speak of white people, I really mean those who think like the whites, those who have been environmentd in the tradition of exploitation and its iron-bound values of personal property.

The reason why I wrote to Mr Arnold in Primavera was because a friend had told me of plans to start an American community in the near future. From the description an artist named W— had given me of

the Bruderhof communities in Paraguay I knew you were very desirable people. I was in hopes that if your plans weren't already too definite that I could perhaps get you to come and settle in the S.W. where you could not only provide the perfect example to the tourists and local whites of the practicability of living peacefully, but you could also give some of these Indians a much needed boost in their self-respect—encourage them by example that they are indeed on the right trail, no matter if the Government schools, traders, missionaries and businessmen keep telling them otherwise. Perhaps, also, I was in hopes that a Bruderhof community within practical communication of some areas of Navajos could give even more than moral support and new techniques in the old ideas of human relations; perhaps the Bruderhof could even have enough time left over from making a living to run a dispensary, or clinic, or self-sufficient hospital—because until ideas of sanitation and correct diet and preventative medicine do take definite root in their culture, I am afraid that more medical service is needed than they are getting now. But the letter from Mr Arnold showed me that not only had the plans for an American community already advanced too far, but also that perhaps such 'charity work' as a hospital or a clinic would be a little out of the ordinary for Bruderhof activity—which doesn't, of course, mean that it couldn't be done. Perhaps, too, the heavily populated whites need you people in the east more urgently than we do here; theirs is a disease of the spirit which only your example, and similar examples, can really heal. We have not yet caught the said disease (as a people, though sections of us are starting to slough off) so in time we could raise ourselves up to a healthier way of life. These were the reasons I wrote to Primavera. These are the reasons I take an interest in the Bruderhof—a very keen interest.

By the way, this artist, W—, that I spoke of: I was at a very important Hopi ceremony, a spectator, minding my own business and not talking to anybody. W— walked up and said, 'I know some people you would be interested in'. I answered, 'Tell me about them and let's see if you are right in your guess about me'. He did, and he was. During the conversation I learned that he became acquainted with you while he was with the United Refugee Organisations out of Geneva, Switzerland, and was sent to Primavera as a representative to see if you were fit to send refugee children to. He said you sure were, and he was so enthusiastic about your villages that he told me he wants to go back and live there. W— was the only name he would give me. I don't know whether he is famous—or infamous—but he sure is a good egg. I remember him just as vividly as the ceremony, and like I said, it was a very important ceremony.

Arizona, U.S.A.

C.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

IMPRESSIONS OF A FIRST VISIT TO GERMANY

In the Autumn two of our members, Hugo and Margot Brinkmann, undertook a journey through some parts of Southern Germany, visiting many friends of the Bruderhof. This was the first time that Margot Brinkmann had been to Germany, and in the following report she records her impressions and mentions some of the people they met.

My first impression of Germany was one of tremendous rush and ceaseless activity, in which people seemed to be using up all their strength in the very hard economic struggle taking place in that country. The last war has torn terrible gaps in the towns and cities. I was struck by the feverish building activity as a result of which buildings in the most modern style are springing up out of the ruins. The stream of traffic surging at great speed between the ruins and the palatial business houses is quite terrifying at rush hours. There is little regard for road courtesy and a resultant high number of accidents. At night the cities are lit up with the electric signs of many advertisements, but one knows that this deceptive glittering façade conceals broken lives, people who have lost their homes and families, and for whom the future is dark and purposeless.

What a contrast is to be found between the rush and turmoil of cities like Frankfurt and Munich and the old-fashioned charm and homeliness of the out-of-the-way villages of Franconia; yet in the midst of this beauty and outward peace life is far from ideal. Many farmsteads are occupied by old couples with no one to take over. One often heard that the young men had been killed in the war. We were also told that town life has a strong attraction for young people. They prefer to work in factories and offices rather than on the land. It is a common thing to see careworn, bent old peasant women working hard at ploughing, scything and fodder-gathering, performing tasks which in other countries are done by men—even such heavy jobs as beet-pulling.

Over town and country alike, however, hangs the grim shadow of a threatening new catastrophe more fearful than anything yet experienced, preparations for which are much more obvious here than in England, where the sea forms a certain barrier, at least psychologically. 'We are travelling in a non-stop express train from which we cannot get out,' said one high-school teacher, in a resigned way. The remilitarisation of the Federal Republic is everywhere the topic of the day. One hears of vehement protests from young men of military age. Yet in the face of such a situation the various peace organisations have not found agreement amongst themselves. They are unable to show young men

who are unwilling to take up military weapons an alternative whereby they may use all their strength in a positive and creative way. It is even more regrettable that the churches, who profess to serve the Prince of Peace, give no clear united witness for peace; instead they are occupied in maintaining the barriers that exist between them. One hears on all sides that the old confessional rivalry is coming to the fore again.

In the midst of the division and disunity of the churches, however, we were very glad to find here and there in Southern Germany little groups of people who feel in an especially deep way the guilt and need of this tragic situation. Although they respect their confessional background they believe that the unifying power of Christ will overcome confessional barriers and bring about true unity. Following the example of those who were known in the church history of the past centuries as 'Brothers of the Common Life' these circles call themselves 'Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life in the Ecumenical Service of Christ'. For a number of years one or two little groups of men (for instance in Munich) have been engaged in such a common life and they have maintained a friendly relationship with us at the Bruderhof during this time.

Since the last war the 'Ecumenical Sisterhood of Mary' has established a home in Darmstadt, and they have joined the movement as a living and fruitful branch of the same tree. On our journey we paid a short visit to this group and were immediately struck by the free and joyful atmosphere. We met more than sixty women, most of them quite young, actively engaged in various kinds of work, such as printing, sculpturing, weaving and gardening. They told us that they had done most of their own building work, with very little practical assistance from skilled men. We were invited to take part in their communal supper. We shared our common experiences and they sang some of the six hundred songs which have grown out of their life together. Their activities include nursing, prison visitation, educational work among young children and social work in a poor area of the town. We came away deeply impressed by the spirit at work among these dedicated women.

What especially interested us in some of these circles was to hear of plans to establish centres where families would live together. At Augsburg two families are sharing a house. At Nuremberg a large house is being built to accommodate several families and a number of single people, including the group of brothers from Munich. We had some lively talks with the members at Nuremberg and Augsburg, and we shall follow the development of their plans with great interest.

The following letter was received from one of the members who was formerly active in National Socialism but who experienced a radical change of heart in a prisoners-of-war camp:

'I should like to thank you once more for the witness you gave on the occasion of your visit. It has encouraged my wife and myself to go forward on the way to community life. I personally set out on this way in 1945, while still behind barbed-wire, and my family joined me in the search after my release from prison-camp in 1947. Now I know what I had previously sensed for a long time, that out in the wide world we have comrades on the way who have long ago done some concrete pioneering work towards the same goal. In one of your booklets I read that you have been on the look-out to see whether, after the Second World War, especially in Germany, there are people who find a similar answer to that given to your spiritual fathers in the founding of the Bruderhof movement after the First World War. The impressions you have received on your journey in the Federal Republic (West Zone) will already have shown you that there is no reason to abandon your hopes in this direction. (From my knowledge of the German Democratic Republic [East Zone], I also know that there, under the surface, many things are ripening.) In the first place there is the example of the unmarried people of both sexes who have grouped themselves together in a closer order, and who intend to remain unmarried (the Sisterhood of Mary, Darmstadt, and the Brotherhood of Christ, Selbitz-Ofr.; also a growth of the movement known as the "Brothers of the Common Life", which was in existence long before 1945). . . . Yes, if it were left to my wife, with her more sanguine temperament, then we should even today ask you to accept us as novices, together with our four children. I, too, respond fully to what I sensed in your report and what I have since read in *THE PLOUGH*: that our religious life is justified before God and men only if at the same time the social side of our life also comes to fulfilment, so that we become truly brotherly people, with all that this entails. Next spring we shall be moving into our new House of Brotherhood in the centre of the industrial area of Nuremberg, and with that into the first school-year of community-life, and then even less will stand between us than is the case now, when my status is still half-private and half-dedicated.'

It was a particular joy for us to meet such groups. In the coming spring we hope it will be possible to establish a small Bruderhof centre in that area of Southern Germany in which we were travelling, and we are looking forward to being led more closely together with these and all other seekers for a new order of brotherhood.

OUR BRUDERHOF HOUSE IN GERMANY

Since the last war our journeys to Germany have had to be undertaken from our Wheathill Bruderhof in England. Now however we are about to open a Bruderhof House once again in Germany, which we hope will become a centre of communal living in that country.

Through special circumstances a large house has been placed at our disposal which can in the first place accommodate about twenty-five people. It belongs to the Castle of Hohenstein near Hersbruck, not far from Nuremberg. This castle is situated amidst the Jurassic limestone mountains of Franconia, one of the loveliest parts of southern Germany, and actually constitutes the highest point of these mountains. Below the towering castle and as part of the outer ring of fortifications, there

stands a long building which originally provided accommodation for noble guests and their retainers and later became the dwelling-house of the warden of the castle. This house has its own particular story, and Else Vogelsang, the present owner, will write more fully of its historical associations in a later issue. Soon after the First World War, while we were beginning our communal life in the village of Sannerz in Hesse, one or two people were given the certainty through an inner vision that one day men and women would come to Hohenstein who in spirit and in truth would be ready to serve God and live together in unity and love. We regard this happening as a leading from God, and it is our intention to use Hohenstein for a new beginning of our communal life.

Our old friends will know that for many years we have wanted to re-establish a cell of communal life in Germany. There was a time when we believed that our real task was in the German-speaking countries. When we had to leave Germany in 1937 it was due to powers beyond our control. Since that time the witness which could no longer be given in Germany had to be carried out in other countries and among other peoples. These years were exceedingly fruitful ones, with the result that our task today encompasses men speaking varied languages, and this task we may no longer relinquish. It is therefore not a question of all those who once had to leave Germany now returning again. It may be that there is a greater openness and receptivity to the witness of community life among people of other nationalities. For example, at the Woodcrest Bruderhof in North America there are today, just six months after its inception, no less than one hundred people gathered together, with more expected to come either as visitors or co-workers. We often feel how great the harvest is and how few the workers!

There are many questions which still remain open, also with regard to the future work departments of our new Bruderhof House. One thing however is clear: we want to make a fresh start in Germany in this year in which we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the death of Eberhard Arnold, who once called people to community life in the Rhoe district.

In this issue, due to lack of space, we are only able to report about our work in Germany. In the next number accounts will be given of developments in our other communities. What we can say generally and with joy is that there is good progress everywhere, and that the total population of all our various settlements now numbers more than one thousand people of many nationalities. All are urged by the Spirit to be of one heart and mind, and believe that this witness of unity must be lived and represented amidst the isolation and division which is the need of our present world.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The poem by Emmy Arnold printed on page one of this issue was written in the year 1931 as an expression of our communal life. Emmy Arnold is the widow of Eberhard Arnold. From her article 'Eberhard Arnold's Life and Work', in the Autumn 1953 issue of *THE PLOUGH*, our readers will know how she identified herself with the practical realisation of life in community. The poem is included in this number as a greeting to Emmy on the occasion of her 70th birthday celebration in our community in Paraguay on the 25th December 1954. The translation into English is by Gordon Wright.

The article on Francis of Assisi is an excerpt from a writing by Dr. Fritz Wenzel, a Member of the Bonn Parliament. The book, entitled 'Francis of Assisi and the Peace of Christ for this Earth', was published in Germany by the Waisenhaus-Buchdruckerei Publishing House, and Dr. Wenzel has kindly given his permission for us to use this excerpt.

In the Spring 1953 issue we published an article by one of our members following a visit he made to Paris for a conference on community. We are now glad to be able to include a longer report on the French Communities of Work by Henrik F. Infield of the Group Farming Research Institute in the United States of America, Editor of 'Cooperative Living'.

The article about our hospital at Primavera, written by one of our members, Maureen Burn, will inform readers about the work which is being carried out by our members in Paraguay. The drawings were made by Stanley Fletcher, who for some years shared in the work of the hospital. Reprints of this article are available on application.

The words of Gandhi which follow the two contributions on the theme, 'Are we made for a brotherly life?' were a personal message to Grace Rhoads, one of our newer American members.

We are very glad to be able to include in the Forum a letter from an American Navajo Indian written to our new American Bruderhof. We want this periodical to find its way into every circle where there are people looking for something different from the accepted order, and we shall look forward to a further contribution from the writer of the letter. We invite all our friends to send their comments and criticisms.

EBERHARD ARNOLD

FROM HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS
A WITNESS TO COMMUNITY

The Autumn 1953 number of this periodical was devoted to a selection of writings of and about the late Eberhard Arnold, commemorating what would have been his 70th birthday. The extra edition of this issue includes a collection of some of his own writings, a biographical sketch by his wife, and early recollections from friends who had a personal contact with him.

It was in the period following the oppressive years of the First World War that Eberhard Arnold, seeking to bring about a *living* expression of true Christian brotherhood, guided the beginning and growth of our first Bruderhof community.

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